

Council Priority #3: Pursue an Integrated, Intentional Approach to Economic Health

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1. Economic Health Context

- Preview Discussion Questions
- 2024 – 2026 Council Priorities Background
- Council Priority #3: Pursue an Integrated, Intentional Approach to Economic Health
- Why it matters

2. Current Efforts

- 2024 accomplishments and Aha's
- A changing landscape
- Curiosities and monitoring

3. Building to the Future

- Discussion

Preparing for Discussion

Are there other things Council is hearing from the community about the economic health of Fort Collins that we should be considering?

Does the work plan align with Council expectations?

What additional strategies would Council like staff to explore?



Neighborhood & Community Vitality

- Operationalize City Resources to Build and Preserve Affordable Housing
- ***Improve Human and Social Health for Vulnerable Populations***

Economic Health

- **Advance a 15-minute City by Igniting Neighborhood Centers**
- **Pursue an Integrated, Intentional Approach to Economic Health**

Environmental Health

- Accelerate Zero Waste Infrastructure and Policies
- ***Reduce Climate Pollution and Air Pollution Through Best Practices, Emphasizing Electrification***
- Protect Community Water Systems in an Integrated Way to Ensure Resilient Water Resources and Healthy Watersheds

Transportation & Mobility

- Advance a 15-minute City by Accelerating Our Shift to Active Modes

High Performing Government

- Develop a Hughes Site Master Plan
- ***Make Government More Accessible, Approachable and Fun***
- Modernize and Update the City Charter

- 1 Expand Business Retention and Expansion Program to Include Attraction (BREA)** – establish foundational groundwork for effective BREA within targeted industries.
- 2 Understand barriers to businesses** to support small businesses (policy, MBEC, navigation of City processes).
- 3 Develop a high-performing business research department** to support the region with **access to quality economic and market data** for decision-making.
- 4 Support and accelerate workforce training programs** focused on reskilling and upskilling, including underserved and underrepresented communities, to unlock new opportunities.
- 5 Coordinate and leverage economic opportunities in innovation** with institutional partners to leverage historic federal funding to address workforce and economic upward mobility within targeted industries.



Vision Statement

Fort Collins is a healthy, equitable, and resilient community where people and businesses can thrive.

- Many focus on small business OR primary businesses. In Fort Collins, it is small businesses AND primary businesses.
- The economic health of Fort Collins is not done in a vacuum.
- There is no easy button.
 - True engagement, relationship/trust building takes time.
 - Willingness to fail, be vulnerable, talk about it and iterate is hard.
 - Economic health is not done by one department, one customer segment, or one physical location.

POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

- Fort Collins: 170,000
- Median Age: 30.6
- Growing but more slowly
- Aging and slowly more diverse

WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS

- 70% Labor Force Participation
- 67% of women in the labor force
- 59% of the workforce has an advanced degree

BUSINESS OVERVIEW

- Number of Businesses: 7,000
- Average Annual Wage: \$67,000
- 96% of businesses are small businesses (less than 50 employees)

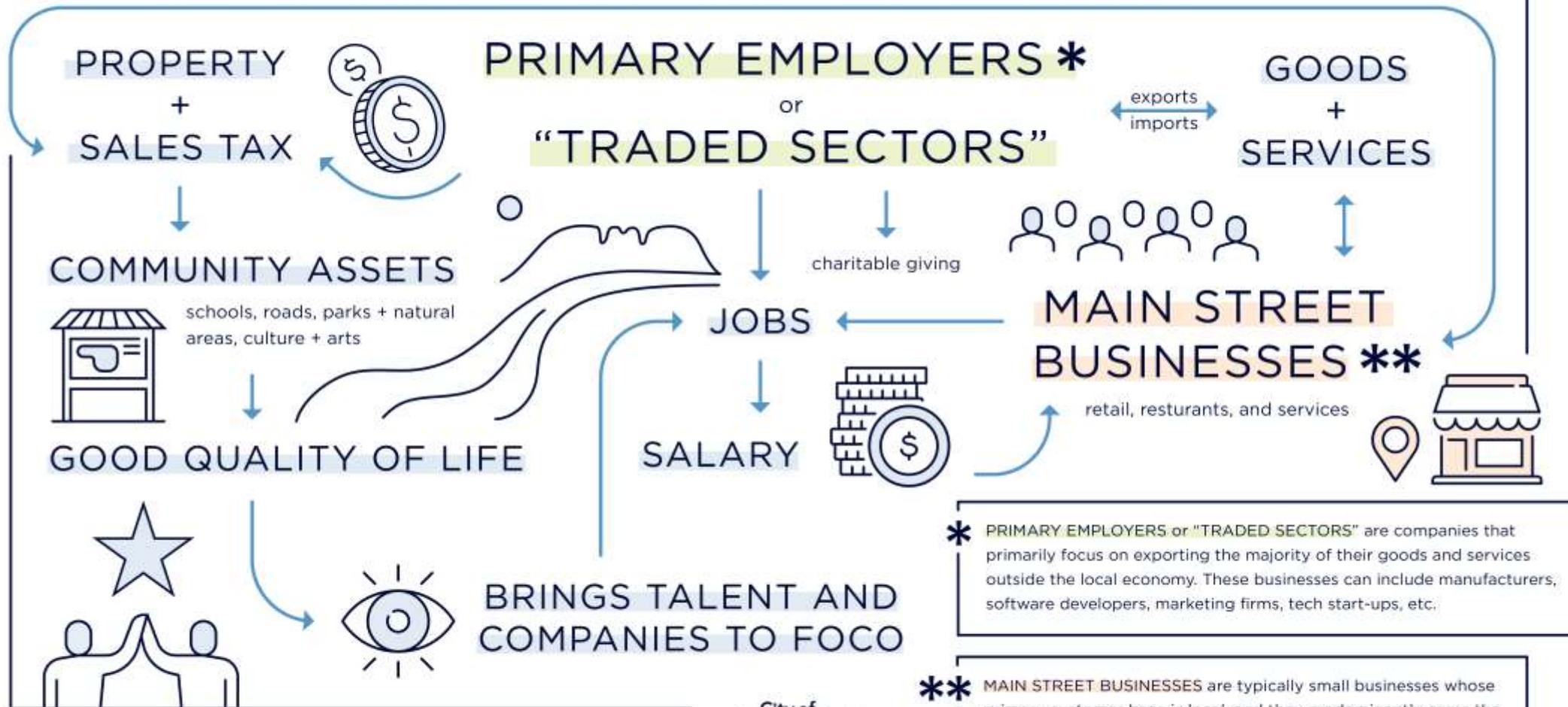
TOP EMPLOYERS

- Colorado State University
- Woodward
- Broadcom
- City of Fort Collins
- UC Health
- Poudre School District

Good jobs and opportunities for economic mobility, especially in key economic sectors like climate-tech and bioscience, are missing for many in our community, particularly those from underrepresented, underserved populations.

Processes related to doing business in the City of Fort Collins can be unclear, unnecessary, and unfriendly to business customers.

THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BUSINESS & COMMUNITY



IN FORT COLLINS, CO



* PRIMARY EMPLOYERS or "TRADED SECTORS" are companies that primarily focus on exporting the majority of their goods and services outside the local economy. These businesses can include manufacturers, software developers, marketing firms, tech start-ups, etc.

** MAIN STREET BUSINESSES are typically small businesses whose primary customer base is local, and they predominantly serve the needs of the local community. These businesses can include retail stores, restaurants, dryer cleaners, salons, auto-shops, etc.



Implementation while Adapting

- **Moving from reactive to proactive**
 - Helping businesses navigate challenges before they become crises
- **Policy & Structural Shifts**
 - Aligning City systems with economic sustainability, and ease of doing business
- **Business Support**
 - Building resiliency and growth potential across all business sizes and stages
- **Economic Mobility**
 - Ensuring local talent can access quality jobs in our key industry clusters, and have mobility within those target industries

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1 – Expand Business Retention & Expansion Program to Include Attraction (BREA)



SelectUSA Representation

What we're doing:

- Invited by the State of Colorado represented the City of Fort Collins at the 2025 SelectUSA Investment Summit.
- Focused meetings with site selectors in clean tech and bioscience.

Why it matters:

- Competing for high-quality jobs and investment means being visible in national and international conversations, especially in clean tech and innovation sectors where Fort Collins can lead.



Headquarter Visits

What we're doing:

- 2 visits planned in 2025 with companies headquartered outside Fort Collins.
- Nurturing relationships, identifying opportunities for collaboration and alignment on community values.

Why it matters:

- Many companies in Fort Collins have deep local roots but still have options on where to grow.
- Direct engagement reinforces that Fort Collins is invested in their long-term success.



Shared Business Visits

What we're doing:

- Proactive, coordinated outreach to minimize fatigue and maximize value.
- Ongoing partnership with multiple ecosystem partners .

Why it matters:

- Businesses benefit when local institutions collaborate.
- Partnerships strengthens trust, improves responsiveness, and makes it easier for companies to engage.

1 – Expand Business Retention & Expansion Program to Include Attraction (BREA)

Our Role Extends Beyond What We Lead

While the Economic Health Office directly leads several intentional initiatives, we also play a critical support and advisory role in many others.

Because the voice of the business community is often overlooked in broader City and regional discussions, we work to ensure business needs and perspectives are integrated, even when we're not in the lead.

Other initiatives:

- Economic Roundtable
- NoCO REDI Marketing Strategy
- Aligning with Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade (OEDIT)

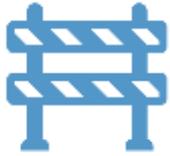
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Barriers to Business

What we're doing:

- Institute for Justice conducted internal and external engagement.
- Identifying friction points in City processes, especially for small and underrepresented businesses.

Why it matters:

- City processes can be complex, time-consuming, and costly.
- Businesses are choosing/relocating to other more business-friendly communities.



Land Use Code

What we're doing:

- Partnering with Planning and Community Development to ensure the Land Use Code supports **employment centers, small-scale production, and clean tech growth**, not just residential development.

Why it matters:

- Economic development is shaped by where and how businesses operate.
- Code must be conducive to good jobs and diverse industry.



Improving Access to the Small Business Ecosystem

What we're doing:

- Working with partners to reduce barriers to access resources
- No wrong door approach.

Why it matters:

- Businesses have a hard time accessing resources.
- The business community should have a consistent experience regardless of which resource partner they interact with.

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Other initiatives:

- NOCOBiz Connect
- Larimer Small Business Development Center
- Development Review Exec
- Affordable Housing Exec
- Customer Experience Steering
- 15 Minute Cities
- Capital Projects
- Building Performance Standards

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Job Quality Access Tool

What we're doing:

- In development with TIP Strategies; map access to high-quality jobs by income race/ethnicity, and geography.
- Beta version expected Q3 2025.

Why it matters:

- Advancing equity in the economy means ***understanding where disparities exist.***



Regional Labor Force Update

What we're doing:

- Produced in partnership with the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce and Larimer and Weld County partners; the first update since 2017.
- Includes participation trends, wage growth, and skills gaps and will serve as a strategic guide for future workforce initiatives.

Why it matters:

- Helps us understand how our workforce is changing, and who's being left out
- Equips partners with shared data to better align workforce, education, and business support strategies.

3 – Support Region with Access to Quality Economic & Market Data for Decision Making



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Other initiatives:

- Regional Business Climate Survey
- Retail Analysis
- Labor Force Dashboard

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LIGHTR Grant

What we're doing:

- \$36,000 of \$50,000 awarded to small businesses to-date.
- 50+ employees trained in roles ranging from welding to digital marketing.
- Administered jointly with Larimer County.

Why it matters:

- Creating local access to workforce training programs that businesses cannot access from the State.



Sector Partnerships

What we're doing:

- Active support for healthcare, hospitality, construction, clean energy, and bioscience.
- Participation in monthly convenings to match training to employer demand.

Why it matters:

- Industry specific problems often require industry-specific solutions.
- Collaboration is key.



NoCo Works

What we're doing:

- Continued development of one-stop regional workforce website.
- SourceLink platform soft launched in Q2 2025.

Why it matters:

- Many business owners experience barriers to accessing resources.
- NoCo Works is focused on reducing barriers to accessing vital workforce resources.

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Other initiatives:

- Front Range Community College
- AIMS Community College

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Supporting Innovation in Clean Tech and Bioscience

What we're doing:

- Advancing efforts to support clean tech, climate tech, and bioscience as strategic growth industries that align with Fort Collins' community values. This includes ecosystem development, business attraction, and partnerships with organizations like Innosphere Ventures and Colorado State University. We're also exploring how innovation can support broader goals in sustainability, equity, and economic mobility.

Why it matters:

- Fort Collins has the research, talent, and infrastructure to lead in sectors that solve big problems — from climate change to health outcomes. But innovation doesn't thrive in isolation. It requires a connected ecosystem, clear incentives, and intentional strategies that make space for emerging industries to grow in ways that benefit the whole community.

EHO 5 – Coordinate & Leverage Economic Opportunities in Innovation with Institutional Partners

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Other initiatives:

- Marvel
- Xcimer
- CSU Strata
- Our Climate Future

- **Softening sales and use tax**
 - Particular softening in retail and hospitality sector
 - Changing consumer spending habits attributed to general economic uncertainty
- **Federal policies and impacts to the local economy**
 - Rapid changes at the federal level causing high levels of uncertainty
 - Particular sensitivity in Fort Collins surrounding federal office and lab space, research funding
 - Trade & Foreign Policies, Tariffs – impact on the supply AND demand
- **Business Owner Mental Health & Burnout**
 - Many small business owners are experiencing fatigue, stress, and anxiety at higher-than-usual levels
 - "Uncertainty is a business killer"
- **Restaurants profit margins are at a record low**
 - Industry benchmarks and local reports suggest average margins hovering around 2%
 - Rising food costs, labor expenses, and price sensitivity among customers

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Thank you!



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