



5—Economic Development

Guiding Principle

Maintain a strong employment base; help create a jobs/housing balance; define appropriate locations for a range of industry and businesses (including green businesses); and be a home for major corporations.

Introduction

Economic Development is the expansion of economic wealth for the city and the prosperity of residents. Beneficial and sustainable economic development can elevate the economic, political, and social position of the city. Economic progress should occur in conjunction with other environmental and social factors. Commerce City aims to maintain its strong employment base, while expanding and diversifying appropriate jobs, commercial activity, housing, and neighborhoods.



The information in this chapter is supplemented by the Commerce City Economic Development Strategic Plan. The Commerce City Economic Development Strategic Plan is a companion document to this Comprehensive Plan. The goals and policies outlined in this chapter are more general in nature, while the Economic Development Strategic Plan outlines the specific strategies, business sectors, and implementation policies that Commerce City will pursue in the future.

Influencing Factors

The following factors helped inform and define the economic development goals in this chapter.

Clear Economic Strategies

Before this process began, Commerce City did not have a clear, bold strategy to guide future economic development. The city determined it needed a strategy to address issues related to economic development such as retaining and recruiting businesses; appropriate locations for employment development; targeted industries; and economic clusters, infrastructure, strategic marketing, and diversification.

Locational advantages of Commerce City

- ✓ Proximity and access to major highways.
- ✓ Access to railroads.
- ✓ Proximity to Denver International Airport.
- ✓ Location near downtown Denver.
- ✓ Existing industrial and employment clusters.
- ✓ Availability of ample housing and quality neighborhoods with parks and schools.
- ✓ Vacant lands along major transportation corridors, particularly E-470.
- ✓ World-class amenities such as Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake.
- ✓ Further examples are included within the Economic Development Strategic Plan.



Strong Existing Industrial Base

One of the city's great strengths and unique attributes is its strong industrial and manufacturing base, particularly in the Historic City and Irondale. This base is supported by two of the city's biggest economic development competitive advantages which are its locational assets, including its geographic position along multiple interstates/highways and railroads, and the availability of industrial land and multiple industrial zoning classifications.

Land Availability

The city has opportunities for future commercial and employment development in the Northern Range and along E-470. This effort aims to plan for future commercial development and employment, reserving land to ensure future economic balance and to provide accessible goods, services, and jobs within the community.

Community Need

In a 2006 Community Needs Assessment, the community at-large identified grocery stores and sit-down restaurants as two of the city's greatest retail needs. Furthermore, a recent retail gap analysis, performed in 2009, showed that nearly \$58 million in annual grocery sales and over \$88 million in annual eating place sales are taking place outside of the city limits. This challenge presents a huge opportunity for specific retailers to locate within Commerce City and to provide these necessary goods and services for its residents and businesses.

Directions and Goals

Economic Diversification

A separate Economic Development Strategic Plan will be one of the primary means for city decisions about locations, types, and strategies for future employment and commercial development. A holistic strategy for economic development also relies on other goals in this Plan that address a well-balanced community, including cultural and educational facilities, and parks and open space (e.g., Barr Lake State Park and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge).

Retaining/Increasing Strong Employment Base

The city believes that a strong and vibrant economy depends first and foremost on the well-being of Commerce City's existing industry and job base. Studies indicate that existing businesses account for 85% of new job growth; small businesses typically account for 75% of those new jobs. To this end, an integral part of the city's economic development strategy is to build on effective relationships, with existing businesses, that focus on partnerships with the business community to address obstacles to expansion in Commerce City.



Reserving Land for Commercial Development

Commerce City’s next employment frontier is near DIA and along the E-470 corridor. Preserving land in those locations for appropriate businesses and industries will be important for the economic future of Commerce City. Moreover, the city will actively promote and support commercial and employment development throughout the city, particularly in the commercial and employment centers designed on the Future Land Use Plan map.

Attracting Quality Retailers

In order to create a truly sustainable community, the city needs a healthy mix of retail businesses. The city plans to identify specific retail needs and to attract quality retailers to provide these necessary goods and services. Having an aggressive retail attraction and retention strategy also will help to prevent retail leakage and curtail retail surplus.

This chapter’s goals address:

1. Economic diversification;
2. Retaining and increasing a strong employment base;
3. Reserving land for commercial development and employment; and
4. Attracting quality retailers.

How Does the Economic Development Element Relate to Sustainability?

Economy and commerce itself is one of the major categories of sustainability. A healthy economy is what keeps a city alive. Retaining and attracting green businesses, as well as encouraging the business community to use green development/business practices, will contribute to the long term viability of our city.

Sustainability/Related Chapters

This Element Contributes to Sustainability...



Economic development is important for the city’s future welfare. The goals in this chapter permeate many other chapters of this Plan and contribute to the sustainability triad, because they help:

A Robust Economy and Commerce:



- ✓ Retain, recruit, and attract businesses.
- ✓ Contribute to fiscal stability.
- ✓ Generate wealth within the community.
- ✓ Maintain a tax base to allow the city to provide services and build and maintain infrastructure

A Quality Environmental Context:

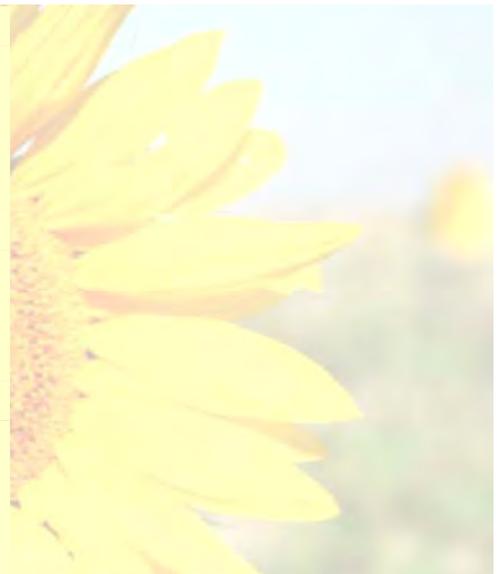


- ✓ Encourage green businesses that fit the community and its neighborhoods.
- ✓ Limit environmental impacts of industrial land uses.
- ✓ Encourage the business community to adopt green practices.

A Resilient Community:



- ✓ Diversify the local economy to provide employment options and opportunities for existing residents to be prosperous and lead meaningful lives.
- ✓ Provide key factors to achieve balance of live, work, and play.
- ✓ Create a sustainable economic base.





These Goals in Related Chapters

The economic development goals relate closely to other Plan elements and chapters. Table 5.1 below identifies where goals link with other Plan elements.

Table 5.1: Economic Development Goals and Related Chapters

Plan Element/Ch. #:												
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Land Use, Growth	Economic Dev.	Fiscal Stability	Housing	Redevelopment	Transportation	Safety, Wellness	Parks, Open Space	Public Facilities	Appearance	Cultural Facilities	Environmental
Goals												
1. Economic diversification	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗			✗	✗	✗	✗
2. Strong employment base	✗	✗	✗			✗				✗		✗
3. Reserve land (commercial/employment)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗		✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
4. Attract quality retailers	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗			✗		✗



The Economic Development Strategic Plan addresses industry and jobs.

Economic Development Goals and Policies

Goal ED 1—Increase economic diversification and opportunities for clean, prosperous business

The *Economic Development Strategic Plan* will allow Commerce City to chart its economic future, increase prosperity, and provide workforce opportunities. The city will recruit and retain new businesses and major corporations in the targeted industry sector/clusters, as a part of the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*.

Citywide Policies:

ED 1.1—Economic Development Strategic Plan

Policies in this section reflect the *Economic Development Strategic Plan* and should be updated, as needed, in accordance with it.

ED 1.2—Recruitment of Businesses

The city will aggressively recruit businesses within identified targeted industries (as identified through the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*). They are currently identified as the following:

- Advanced Manufacturing



- Logistics and Distribution
- Business and Professional Services
- Retail/Hospitality/Leisure
- DIA Technology

ED 1.3—Business-Friendly Climate

Identify and provide services and incentives that spur development and the growth of Commerce City’s economy.



A successful economic development strategy also overlaps with other plan elements such as land use, fiscal stability, housing, redevelopment, transportation, parks and open space, appearance, education, culture and tourism, and other quality of life aspects. All these aspects contribute to attracting knowledge-based workers that are a driving force for economic development. See Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, respectively.

Goal ED 2—Retain and increase a strong employment base

The city will retain and expand its existing industrial base, and attract and recruit new businesses that contribute positively to city revenues.

Citywide Policies:

ED 2.1—Further Develop Business Retention

Protect and support the retail sector of the economy, which adds to overall economic diversity and provides goods and services to city residents. Continue to foster the development of the Business Retention and Expansion Program of the city.

ED 2.2—Educated Workforce

Retain and continue to develop a highly-educated workforce. Establish partnerships with K-12 and higher educational organizations to develop facilities and programs within the city that could provide industry-specific training for students, residents, and existing businesses.

Policies for Strategic Planning Areas:

ED 2.3—Strengthen Employment Land Base

Retain and strengthen the industrial base in the Historic City and Irondale Areas.

ED 2.4—Housing and Jobs Balance/Revenue Producing Uses

Ensure a balance of housing and jobs as new growth occurs in the Northern Range and E-470 areas, by reserving land for employment uses in the Office/Flex and DIA Technology designated areas.

Development Opportunities

- ✓ Prairie Gateway (National Wildlife Refuge),
- ✓ The Northern Range,
- ✓ Along E-470 and locations near DIA,
- ✓ Along I-76,
- ✓ Established industrial areas,
- ✓ Redevelopment areas, (identified in this Plan), and
- ✓ In commercial and employment centers designated on the Future Land Use Plan map.



Retaining and strengthening existing industry is a city goal.



Goal ED 3—Recruit new employment and commercial development

Attract and promote new commercial and employment uses to the Historic City that will provide jobs and services for residents and revenues for city operations. The city will reserve undeveloped lands for future commercial and employment activities, as designated on the Future Land Use Plan.



Commercial centers can include civic space, such as fountains or plazas that serve as community gathering places.

Citywide Policies:

ED 3.1—New Centers with Emphasis on Commercial

Focus new commercial and retail into the designated centers shown on the FLUP. The types of centers at different scales will provide for retail and other needs ranging from neighborhood to regional markets. The city is focused on enhancing the image, quality, and diversity of retail that contributes positively to the community.



See Chapter 3, *Future Land Use Plan (land use categories and centers criteria)* and Chapter 4, *Land Use and Growth*.

ED 3.2—Reinvestment/Redevelopment of Targeted Areas

This Plan identifies targeted areas for reinvestment and redevelopment, including Clermont, Wembley, the FasTracks Station Site, Derby, and East 104th Avenue infill.

ED 3.3—Ensure Availability of Industrial Land and Buildings

In accordance with the Future Land Use Plan, monitor and maintain the amount of land zoned for office/flex, technology, and industrial uses, and limit or restrict rezoning of industrial land to residential, to preserve these areas for existing or new business and industry.

Goal ED 4—Attract and support quality retailers to become a more balanced city

The city will actively recruit retailers to locate in growth areas and the Historic City, while retaining and supporting existing retailers.



Other quality of life factors, such as parks, schools, and housing, contribute to a healthy business environment.

Citywide Policies:

ED 4.1—Support Retail Development

Protect and support the retail sector of the economy, which adds to overall economic diversity and provides identified goods and services to city residents, such as grocery stores, sit-down restaurants, and the like.

ED 4.2—Enhance Existing Commercial Developments

Encourage improvements to upgrade landscaping, facades, parking areas, undergrounding utilities, and other upgrades for retail centers.



ED 4.3—Retain Space for Retail Development

Monitor the supply of land zoned for commercial development and retain an adequate supply of land for future retail needs.

ED 4.4—Develop Retail Retention/Expansion Program

Develop a program to involve and inform existing and potential retailers about city policies and incentives. Continually monitor the retail needs of the community, and strive to attract and establish retail to meet those needs.



The Future Land Use Plan retains space for future retail development.

Economic Development Strategies

This section contains a list of strategies to implement the economic development goals. Table 5.2 coincides with the goals of this chapter and identifies specific actions to achieve the goals.



See Chapter 16, Implementation, for the Priority Action Plan summarizing key strategies for the city to accomplish in the next several years. Appendix E contains a full list of all the chapters' strategies.

Table 5.2: Economic Development Strategies

Goal/ Strategies	Related Goal/Strategies
Goal ED 1	Increase economic diversification
ED 1a	Economic Development Strategic Plan Implement strategies of the <i>Economic Development Strategic Plan</i> .
ED 1b	Business Incentives Examine policy that would provide incentives for beneficial city economic development projects.
Goal ED 2	Retain and increase strong employment base
ED 2a	BRE Program Continue to expand the business retention and expansion programs of the city.
ED 2b	Educational Partnerships and Workforce Training Expand existing programs and implement workforce training.
ED 2c	Monitor Jobs to housing Similar to strategy LU1c.



Goal/ Strategies	Related Goal/Strategies
Goal ED 3	Recruit new employment and commercial development
ED 3a	Future Land Use Plan to Guide Decisions Use the Future Land Use Plan to guide land use decisions.
Goal ED 4	Attract and support quality retailers
ED 4a	Community Retail Needs Identify surpluses and leakages to direct community needs.
ED 4b	Incentives Examine policy that would provide incentives for beneficial retail, which is directly targeted to community needs (grocery store, sit-down restaurants, etc.).
ED 4c	Retail retention and expansion Develop a comprehensive retail retention and expansion program.

Monitoring Economic Development

This section identifies possible performance indicators for monitoring progress over time toward achieving the economic development goals within this chapter.



See Chapter 16, Implementation, for a description of Plan Monitoring, which describes how to narrow down and select appropriate performance indicators and how to fine-tune and set targets.

Table 5.3: Economic Development Indicators

Related Goal	Target	Possible Indicators
ED 1—Economic diversification	Increase diversity of businesses and jobs in the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New business starts (yearly). ▪ Number of business establishments (ongoing, new). ▪ Employment/unemployment rates. ▪ Average wages and salaries for new jobs. ▪ Number of school and business partnerships.
ED 2—Retain and increase employment	Increase per capita employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Industrial, commercial, and office vacancy rate. ▪ Number of new jobs (office, retail, industrial). ▪ Manufacturing jobs.
ED 3—Recruit new employment	Increase commercial and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of permits issued for industry and employment uses. ▪ Total valuation of commercial building permits.
ED 4—Attract quality retailers	Increase retail development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual increase in sales and use tax. ▪ Variety and balance of retail goods and services offered, citywide and in sub-areas. ▪ Decrease in retail leakage for specific retail sectors and net leakage. ▪ Increase and/or net zero change in surplus retail sectors. ▪ Number of jobs created by retail sectors.