

QUALITY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE (QCI)



January 2013

Stakeholder Group FINAL REPORT

Quality Community Initiative (QCI)

STAKEHOLDER GROUP FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION:

This document details the work of the Quality Community Initiative Stakeholder Group (QCI) and their recommendations on potential capital projects and funding strategies to meet the long-term needs of Commerce City. Formed by the Commerce City Council in November of 2011, QCI included diverse representation of the Commerce City residents, business owners, non-profits, developers, land owners, utilities and other stakeholders. The mission of QCI was to conceptualize the needs of our growing community as proposed on the City's Long Range Financial Plan, obtain feedback from the community and develop a set of recommendations for City Council on how to proceed.

This report is organized into seven sections: Introduction, Background, Guiding Principles, Formal Recommendations, Key Issues for City Council to Explore, and Conclusion & Next Steps, with major outcomes being:

1. QCI members grouped project needs into 6 larger areas, Transportation, Parks and Trails, Recreation, Public Safety and City Infrastructure, Storm Water and Arts & Culture. In the end two of these project areas (Parks and Trails and Recreation) were combined into one project area due to their overarching appeal and support from the community.
2. From the Capital Projects list QCI members recommend four Transportation projects, three Parks, Trails and Recreation projects, all of the Storm Water projects, one Public Safety and City Infrastructure project, and one Arts & Culture project.
3. From the list of Funding Strategies QCI Members recommend City Council look into:
 - Increases to Impact Fees on New Development
 - Entertainment Admissions Tax
 - Creation of a New Special District (Parks, Trails & Recreation District)
 - Sales Tax Increase
 - Implementation of a Storm Water Utility
 - Implementation of an Employee Head Tax
4. Significant policy issues remain, including dynamics of putting some of these funding strategies to a vote of the people and building a base of support for their passage. Also, the consideration of a phased-in approach and even a cap to protect the most at risk citizen to many of these projects and funding strategies (e.g. the Storm Water Utility). Finally a lot of consideration should be given to implementing these in a way that promotes economic development in the city. The QCI group urges City Council to explore these as part of the next steps.

BACKGROUND:

From December 2011 to November 2012, QCI met every three weeks to discuss a variety of issues related to the City's Long Range Financial Plan and Capital Improvement Projects list. QCI:

- Conducted a review of city infrastructure/project priorities and costs.
- Prioritized that list.
- Reviewed potential funding mechanisms to fund the projects.
- Studied implementation alternatives and realities.
- Conducted a community outreach in the form of a [mailed survey](#) and [over a dozen community listening sessions](#).
- Arrive at our mission of providing City Council a thoughtful recommendation on priority projects, and preferred ways to fund the projects.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Early in the process QCI members agreed that it would be crucial to identify guiding principles that would allow for open discussion and establish balanced solutions that would take into account the economic realities. After additional community feedback during Commerce City Outreaches, the mail survey and the subsequent community listening sessions, QCI was affirmed in their belief that guiding principles were required. Members were adamant that in order to develop recommendations that were truly implementable the recommendations should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Maintain what we currently have, build to catch up with current needs and continue to match future growth because the additional city amenities will attract residents and provide opportunities for economic development within the city.
- Equity between north and south to ensure that needs are met within both areas of the City and to encourage a unified population.
- Funding decisions should be a shared responsibility between the City Council and the voters to insure ownership by all parties.
- Take action now – implementing these projects as soon as feasible will demonstrate the City's commitment to make Commerce City the quality community it is striving to be.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

QCI arrived at these recommendations by utilizing the City's Long Range Financial Plan's (LRFP) [list of Capital Project Priorities](#) and the [list of possible Funding Strategies](#) as a source of key data. However, the recommendations that follow were first and foremost arrived at by listening to and applying the community's feedback that QCI received. Therefore they may differ from the recommendations or timelines originally identified in the LRFP developed by city staff.

Capital Projects Recommended

Categories	Projects	Cost	Why Selected
TRANSPORTATION TOTAL \$153.8M	Tower Road (4 lanes from 104 th to 80 th)	\$53,000,000	This area of the city has the highest potential for economic development. There was strong citizen support for the widening in the survey and the listening sessions.
	96 th Avenue RR Grade Separation	\$21,500,000	High approval by community in north and south plus promotes ED in industrial areas. These projects promote the east west connectivity for the city which as of right now is limited.
	96 th Avenue Widen I-76 – SH2	\$29,400,000	
	88 th Avenue RR Grade Separation	\$21,500,000	
	88 th Avenue Widen I-76 – SH2	\$23,300,000	
Rosemary Street 80 th – 88 th Ave. Widening	\$5,000,000	Rosemary Street serves as a conduit which alleviates the congestion on Hwy 2 (which the city doesn't control).	
PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION TOTAL \$36.6M TO \$39.6M	Community Park As identified in the city's Parks Master Plan	\$11,500,000 to \$13,000,000	High approval by the community because of the need for more team sports space and other recreational needs. Will improve the quality of life of current residents and attract new residents. Location (1 st or 2 nd creek) can be determined based on additional input from the citizens and city council.

Quality Community Initiative (QCI)

			The city owns sufficient land in both areas.
	Existing Recreation Center Renovations	\$ 5,700,000	These projects received high support from the respective communities. The existing center is limiting programming due to capacity constraints. The facilities are in need to be brought to a standard worthy of Commerce City citizens.
	New North Recreation Center (does not include indoor swimming pool)	\$19,350,000 to \$20,850,000	
STORM WATER TOTAL \$20M	Drainage Improvements & Maintenance	\$20,000,000	Because the infrastructure is not there and it can be phased in project by project. To be proactive and eliminate slow drainage and flooding in parts of the city. Also these are unfunded federal mandates that must be completed; and once understood the community members supported these project.
PUBLIC SAFETY CITY INFRASTRUCTURE TOTAL \$10.1M	Police North Substation	\$10,120,000	High approval by the community at large because it improves response times and increases safety.
ARTS & CULTURE TOTAL \$10M	Cultural arts center Museum	\$10,000,000	High approval by the community in the outreach meetings. Builds community pride, it's essential for a quality community.

Funding Strategies Recommended

These funding mechanisms were selected because:

- (1) They received the widest amount of community support.
- (2) They align with the guiding principles of QCI.
- (3) It was the most feasible group of strategies to achieve success.

Funding Mechanism	Estimated Annual Revenue Generated	Responsibility	Community Support: Survey & Listening Sessions (Very Good and Good AVG)	Comments/Direction
Increase in Impact Fees on New Development (200 homes)	\$400,000	Council Approval	57%	Increase should be dedicated to transportation ONLY
Storm Water Utility Fee	\$3,367,000	Council Approval	51%	Implementation could be phased with an additional cap on fees based on income
New Special/Improvement District (mechanism should be further researched) - Parks Trails & Recreation District at 14.8047 mills	\$10,127,925	Voter Approval	62%	Existing O&M - \$5.8M Debt Service - \$2.8M New O&M - \$1.6M
Entertainment Admissions Tax (8%) above Sales Tax	\$575,000	Voter Approval	61%	
Employment Head Tax (\$5 per month)	\$1,800,000	Voter Approval	42%	

Quality Community Initiative (QCI)

Sales Tax Increase - \$0.005 (1/2 cent)	\$4,285,700	Voter Approval	40%	Increase should be dedicated to transportation ONLY
TOTAL	\$20,555,625			

KEY ISSUES FOR CITY COUNCIL TO EXPLORE:

While there are many questions to be answered as the City of Commerce City continues to grow and current infrastructure ages, the QCI Stakeholder Group identified three key issues for the consideration of the City Council:

- I. *Dynamics and challenges of placing the funding strategies to a vote of the people and building a base of citywide support for their passage:* QCI understands that getting community support is critical. A key to success in gaining voter support will be making community advocacy a priority. Communicating the results of the survey and outreach meetings will assist in this effort since Citizen Concerns and priorities were heard and are being addressed.
- II. *Consider a phased-in approach and perhaps a cap to ensure the financial protection of the most at risk citizens:* QCI believes that a phased-in approach will ensure accountability and gain support by citizens as projects are completed as planned. QCI also acknowledges that this is only the first step of many to achieve a final plan that will meet current and growing needs of the community.
- III. *Implementing these in a way that promotes economic development as well as meeting the needs of the community. As economic development increases, additional funding will be generated to implement future projects and will also help to attract and retain residents within the City.*

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS:

The QCI Stakeholder Group final report is intended to be the first step in the process of building the infrastructure that Commerce City needs to support its future growth and economic development. We hope this group’s work will better position the City Council to make policy decision aimed at securing the long range goals of the City.

QCI is thrilled to have fulfilled its mission as chartered by the City Council back in November of 2011. We thank you for this opportunity and encourage the council to move forward based on the community's feedback.