



2024

State Legislative Issues Guide

City of Commerce City
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ABOUT

COMMERCE CITY

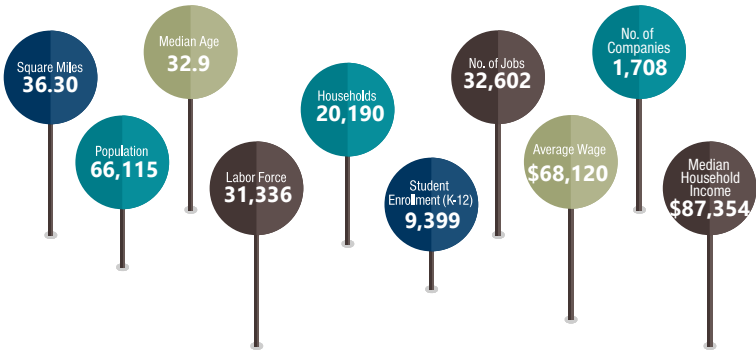


As one of the state's fastest growing cities, Commerce City is redefining itself for the next generation, building on historic values of community, industry, agriculture, and family. Centrally located along Colorado's bustling Front Range, Commerce City is a Quality Community for a Lifetime, with 25 miles of trails, a championship golf course, 840 acres of open space and parks, one of the country's largest soccer complexes, and the nation's largest urban wildlife refuge.



Commerce City at-a-glance

Just eight miles north of downtown Denver, Commerce City provides direct access to six major highways, Denver International Airport, two railroads, and two commuter rail lines. Over 1,700 companies call Commerce City home, ranging from international and national headquarters to small businesses and entrepreneurs.



Source: 2023 Commerce City Economic Profile

Diversity in our population

	State	City
Persons under 5 years	5.8%	8.6%
Persons under 18 years	21.9%	33.0%
Persons over 65 years	14.6%	7.4%
Hispanic or Latino	21.8%	49.2%
Two+ races	3.1%	4.2%
Foreign born persons	9.7%	15.7%

Source: US Census Bureau



Progressive Governance

Incorporated in 1952, Commerce City is a home-rule municipality with a council-manager form of government. An elected City Council establishes the city's vision, sets annual policy goals, and enacts laws that govern its citizens. The nine-member body includes a mayor, a council member for each of the city's four geographic wards, and four at-large council members. The mayor selects a councilperson to serve as mayor pro tem.

The city's vision is one of a Quality Community for a Lifetime. As a municipality, its mission is to provide excellent public services and customer experiences by anticipating needs, embracing diversity, and fostering relationships to sustain a growing and vibrant community.

The 2024 budgeted total government funds for the city is \$136 million. Projected expenditures are divided into 17 different funds, including \$19.1 million to the capital improvement program fund. Known as a business-friendly community, Commerce City does not have a head tax and its 2.55 property tax mill levy is one of the lowest in the state.

City Council's Goals

1. Develop and maintain public infrastructure, facilities, and transportation to improve community appearance and encourage continued development.
2. Promote a balanced, thriving, and inclusive city economy that cultivates, attracts, and retains business.
3. Protect resident health, safety, and education by promoting public safety, environmental health, and sustainability.
4. Address the full spectrum of housing needs, encourage sustainable development, and protect residents through enhanced oversight and balanced residential growth.
5. Promote city unity and support our diverse community by encouraging community connectivity, fostering civic pride, and improving resident health and wellness.
6. Provide innovative, responsive, and transparent service to the community across all city departments by assessing and meeting service levels and demonstrating efficacy through data and metrics.

SPECIFIC

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Commerce City has identified several priorities important to the community:

Home Rule: Uphold local decision-making and home rule authority on municipal operations, taxation, land use controls, urban renewal, and public safety best management practices.

State Mandates: Ensure all state mandates have adequate funding to allow Commerce City to fully comply without direct, negative impacts on its budget and priorities.

Structured Housing: Increase variety of housing that meets the socio-economic and demographic needs of our residents in a manner consistent with the city's comprehensive plan. Support efforts to enact craftsmanship and quality control measures for new construction to provide recourse for homeowners in case of defects.

Affordable Housing: Enact policies that protect and increase the supply of naturally occurring affordable and attainable housing.

Education: Advocate for improved P12, post-secondary/workforce access and accountability, ensuring all students obtain a quality education and can meet established performance metrics. Promote workforce development measures that provide workers pathways to skilled labor opportunities within their own communities.

Oil & Gas: Share local experience with oil and gas development to inform statewide policies that prioritize health, safety, and welfare of the public, environment, and wildlife.

Human Services: Support solutions that increase vital human service resources to vulnerable populations to address issues such as food insecurity, homelessness, mental health, and opioid abuse.

Railroads: Advocate solutions to safety and nuisance issues related to railroad proximity, such as crossing conflicts and quiet zone rules.



Transportation:

- *Infrastructure:* Support federal and state funding of transportation infrastructure, particularly major arterial routes such as U.S. 85/120th Avenue, Interstate 270, and 88th Avenue, with an emphasis on an integrated, multi modal network.
- *Trucking:* Support state legislation and rule-making on third-party parking availability.

Older Adults/Senior Services: Ensure adequate funding for the implementation of the Older Americans Act.

Grants: Continue needed community funding through federal block and competitive grant programs from the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Transportation and Veterans Affairs.

Taxation: Preserve tax-exempt status for municipal bonds and expand sales tax coverage to internet businesses. Provide tax relief through extending the senior homestead and veteran property tax relief measures.

Special Districts: Encourage revision of Title 32 to rein in metropolitan district financing and refinancing authority, operating costs and overhead, provide increased regulatory oversight, and enhanced transparency and disclosure requirements. Provide additional funding to enable affordable housing developments within metropolitan districts without undue burdens on existing residents.

Public Safety: Oppose measures that curtail the authority of municipal judges and police departments and impose state requirements inconsistent with the needs of the city. Support measures that uphold local decision-making authority pertaining to justice, equality, and resident safety. Provide additional resources and funding to local police departments to enable them to combat property crime. Enhance criminal penalties and consequences in order to deter and prevent crime.

Immigration: Advocate for measures designed to provide a definite path to citizenship for our large population of immigrant residents.

Environmental Justice: Support measures that provide relief to disproportionately impacted communities that suffer from the effects of air, water, and soil pollution. Seek out and include perspectives of minority and disproportionately impacted communities when developing policy and rule making.



GUIDING

LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

Home Rule and Local Control

The citizens of Commerce City adopted a Home Rule Charter in 1970, which establishes the power of local self-government to the city pursuant to the Constitution of the State of Colorado. As such, Commerce City has the responsibility and authority to adopt rules and regulations that govern the operation of the community in the interest of its residents. The city believes that home rule authority increases the effectiveness and efficiency of local government services, public safety, and municipal operations, enhancing the quality of life for local taxpayers.

State Mandates

Laws, programs and regulations mandated by the state of Colorado have the potential to stretch the city's financial resources. If additional costs brought about by mandated programs or regulations are not paid by the state government, they can have a direct negative impact on the city budget, preventing Commerce City from meeting the needs of residents and achieving our strategic priorities.

Transportation

Commerce City believes the movement of goods and people are vital to the continued economic success of our region and Coloradans' quality of life. Federal and state officials must be willing to make significant investment to maintain and improve Colorado's multimodal transportation network to preserve these benefits.

Adjacent to six major highways, Denver International Airport, two railroads, and two commuter rail lines, effective transportation is

equally important to the success of the city's economy. The city has identified numerous transportation priorities, including major arterial routes such as the U.S. 85/120th Avenue interchange, Interstate 270, 88th Avenue widening, and transit service expansion. The city is against efforts to pass along additional state roadway construction or maintenance responsibilities to local governments without increased and adequate funds to meet these additional responsibilities.

Housing

Rental costs, single-family home sales prices, and the availability of attainable housing throughout the state has created an undue burden not only for low income and homeless, but also older adults and those within the working and middle class. Commerce City believes all residents should have access to safe, quality housing throughout the city. The city supports regional, state and federal initiatives that preserve and enhance the number of quality affordable homes, incentivize new affordable and population-specific housing developments, and develop additional services and opportunities to promote self-sufficiency. Municipalities are best positioned to understand their own needs and situations, and state efforts should not interfere with local land use policy or impinge on local control. Any policy should prioritize protecting existing affordable and attainable housing as well.

Sales and Use Tax

Commerce City levies, administers and collects its own sales and use tax under its home rule authority. Sales and use tax revenue is the primary source of funding for city operations and services. Statewide, municipalities generate more than \$5 in these taxes to every \$1 of property taxes. Sales and use taxes fund public services and improvements and keep municipal property taxes relatively low. Appropriate federal, state and local actions should preserve or enhance these local revenues, while still seeking opportunities to streamline or provide business certainty across municipalities.

Economic Development

Commerce City strives to develop a thriving and inclusive city economy. Whether it is maintaining primary employers, expanding its retail base, developing a diverse workforce, or encouraging local business expansion, a healthy economic climate is critical to our municipality's overall quality of life. Commerce City advocates for and collaborates with legislators, government entities and other municipalities to encourage the creation of jobs in our city and for our residents. The city also believes in cultivating its own businesses and building an economy from the bottom up through providing workforce development and training that offer pathways to skilled labor for residents. To that end, the city supports state measures that increase partnership and collaboration in support of existing and expanding businesses workforces in the city.

Municipal Development and Land Use

Commerce City constantly works to achieve its comprehensive plan, to build a sustainable community. The city believes that local land use planning contributes greatly to the achievement of this goal and the overall quality of life in the city. In general, the city supports laws and policies that encourage new and infill residential, commercial and industrial development within the city. Conversely, we oppose efforts to restrict municipal authority to annex territory as well as delegation of our land use authority to state agencies or preemption of municipal land use controls, and any restrictions on urban renewal authorities.

Public Safety

Having a safe and secure community is one of the City Council goals. The city is working diligently to provide a safe environment, protecting the lives and property of the residents of Commerce City. The role of the police department is to enforce the law in a fair and impartial manner, recognizing both the statutory and judicial limitations of police authority and the constitutional rights of all persons. The city continues to implement a strategic policing program that accurately reflects the diversity of our community and provides equitable service to all constituents. The city supports legislation that enables local decision-making on public safety services and operations. Additionally, the city supports providing necessary funding and resources to local police departments to allow them the capacity to enact policies tailored to the community they serve, as well as policies that seek to deter and prevent crime.

Education

Commerce City believes an accessible, effective, and accountable education system supplies our municipality with an educated, well-trained community and workforce prepared for the new economy, which will allow existing businesses to expand and attract new business investment to our city. With two school districts and a state charter school, the city believes education is a community-wide value and the most effective programs are partnerships among our educational institutions, local stakeholders and local government. The city supports ensuring all students obtain a quality P12 and post-secondary education to meet performance standards and continued state funding of local school districts, finding opportunities to address the negative factor and eliminating further cuts as a result of TABOR.

Healthy Eating & Active Living (HEAL)

As an Elite LiveWell community, Commerce City supports local, state and federal policies that improve access to physical activity and healthy food. Making the healthy choice the easy choice is essential to addressing Colorado's adult and childhood obesity epidemic, the cost of which exceeds \$1.6 billion annually. Commerce City has adopted a coordinated and collaborative approach to implementing Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) initiatives and supports legislation that encourages an active community, promotes healthy work places, increases healthy food access, and improves resident perceptions of safety and security.



Energy

Colorado is well-known for its natural resources and history of oil and gas exploration. The city recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach to energy regulation. Municipalities are in a position to provide state policy makers with access to information and education concerning best practices in energy development and conservation. Commerce City strives to prioritize the health, safety and welfare of the public, the environment and wildlife and balance with municipal growth and development. The city's land development code and participation in the state local government designee program offer a layered approach to protect the interests of the community and the rights of private developers. The city is supportive of rules and legislation that maintains its home rule authority to regulate oil and gas development in keeping with state health and safety standards, increases opportunities to enforce current standards, expands communication and notification, and leverages existing knowledge to codify best management practices that protect the health, safety and welfare of the public, the environment and wildlife. When it is necessary for the state to take action, the city supports an approach that foregrounds local lived experience, particularly from minority and disproportionately impacted communities. All state efforts should be centered on ensuring environmental justice and protecting the most vulnerable. The city also supports diversifying community energy sources and promoting green alternatives to reduce consumption, as well as providing workforce training and opportunities for workers and industries to transition to clean technology.



Human Services

Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations is critical to a community's success. Homelessness, food insecurity, opioid abuse, and mental health are issues of regional and statewide concern that require integrated and partnership-oriented solutions. Self-sufficiency, health and well-being strengthen individuals and the community as a whole. The city is supportive of new policies and activities aimed at increasing vital human service resources and protecting vulnerable children and adults by ensuring they live in safe, healthy environments. The city also supports policies that create opportunities for independence through services and support while demonstrating accountability for taxpayer resources.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Commerce City prizes diversity. Nearly half of our residents are Hispanic or Latino, and one-third of residents speak a language other than English at home; these rates are nearly twice those for the rest of the state. In age, race, language, and more categories, Commerce City is significantly more diverse than the communities that surround it and the state. We also recognize that diversity includes a broad range of categories beyond age, race, and language, such as gender, disability, and neurodiversity; these populations are integral to the fabric of our community – these people own businesses, raise families, attend our schools, and make our community what it is. The promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion is therefore inextricably tied to our community's success. Commerce City champions policies designed to promote social justice for our vulnerable and oppressed communities, recognize the vital role of historically marginalized populations, and ensure inclusion for all of our residents. These policy goals are multifaceted, touching economic, environmental, healthcare, labor, education, immigration, human services, and more.



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