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ARTICLE VI

Economic Development

Sec. 22-6-10. Economic development.

A. Economic development is directly linked to a community's long-term health and sustainability. As is sometimes said, "Quality of life begins with a good job." A robust and diverse economy provides employment opportunities for County residents, as well as the property tax revenue that allows the County to provide essential services to citizens.

B. Economic development can be defined as an approach, strategy or program that aids in the sustainability and growth of an economy. A focus on retaining and creating primary jobs, in particular, leads to a sustainable economy. Primary jobs are those jobs that export products and services, in return bringing new dollars into the County. These new dollars then circulate within the County by means of salaries and other expenditures, which in turn support jobs in the retail, business services, personal services and other sectors. Primary jobs are not limited to large employers; many small employers provide primary jobs as well. One (1) of the chief sources of primary jobs in the County is in the agricultural industry, including individual farms.

C. The County strongly supports developing a healthy economy by fostering a positive relationship between the public and private sectors. Economic development is the "engine" that helps create homes, irrigation ditches, parks, shopping centers or roads – the "built environment." The ability to shape a built environment that is meaningful for its residents depends on an economy that can finance improvements over time.

D. The County encourages economic development by promoting a positive-built environment in which businesses and entrepreneurs are able to flourish. Quality development supports a strong and vital economy. A common strategy of many economic development programs is retaining and attracting businesses. Unlike municipalities in Colorado, counties are limited in the kinds of financial incentives they can offer businesses. Recruitment and attraction is more about actively marketing the County, its quality of life and the advantages of it as a place to do business.

E. The County relies heavily on its partnerships with businesses, citizens, municipalities and leaders in order to promote the County and economic development. Of particular importance is the Upstate Colorado Economic Development organization, a County-wide private economic development corporation that assists existing and prospective primary employers with resources helpful in expanding revenue and employment opportunities.

F. Property tax revenue and other revenue sources (such as from oil and gas) pay for general County services and fund the maintenance of the County road system, both of which enhance the

County's quality of life. All property in Colorado is subject to ad valorem (property) taxation by local districts. (The state government does not levy a property tax.) Separate property taxes fund local schools, special purpose districts (often water and sewer infrastructure) and a portion of the city and County government costs. The County's property tax rate has decreased each year for the last several years, while other government entities' rates have remained flat or increased.

G. The State collects 2.9% sales or use tax on goods purchased or used in Colorado that are not intended for resale. In the County, the average local sales tax collected by towns and cities is 2.9%, for an average total sales tax rate of 5.8%. The County has historically collected no sales tax.

H. Municipalities within the County are key economic centers, and municipal leaders are important partners in economic development. Most of the thirty-one (31) municipalities located in the County have developed their own goals, such as increasing sales activity and tax revenue and encouraging local spending by citizens. The municipalities recognize the value of seeking a balance between housing and job opportunities within their respective cities. Many of their stated goals concerning economic development are consistent with the County Goals and Policies stated below. A shared vision and coordinated efforts help ensure economic benefits to the County and region. (Weld County Code Ordinance 2008-13)

Sec. 22-6-20. Economic development Goals and Policies.

A. ECON.Goal 1. Encourage the expansion of existing businesses and the location of new industries that will provide employment opportunities in the County.

1. ECON.Policy 1.1. Promote the expansion and diversification of the industrial economic base to achieve a well-balanced industrial sector in order to provide a stable tax base and a variety of job opportunities for County citizens.

2. ECON.Policy 1.2. Promote the expansion and diversification of the commercial economic base to achieve a well-balanced commercial sector in order to provide a stable tax base and a variety of job opportunities for County citizens.

3. ECON.Policy 1.3. Promote the preservation and enhancement of the major assets in the County – lower costs of doing business, safe communities, a qualified and available workforce and access to agricultural and natural resources – to retain current employers and attract new ones. Maintain and improve basic County services and infrastructure, in order to ensure that the County is a viable candidate for attracting businesses, labor and capital.

4. ECON.Policy 1.4. Invest in the public infrastructure required to retain existing businesses and to readily support the needs of future industrial and commercial developments.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.1.4.a. Identify, in the Transportation Master Plan, rail corridors and public road improvements needed to support economic development.

5. ECON.Policy 1.5. Encourage local contractors to bid on County Capital Improvements Program projects and construction projects.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.1.5.a. Develop incentives supporting County businesses.

b. Recommended Strategy ECON.1.5.b. Explore ways to effectively advertise County projects.

6. ECON.Policy 1.6. Support a diversified and well-balanced economic base, recognizing that dependence on any one (1) industry or business may weaken the long-term sustainability of the regional economy. Support efforts to retain and attract large employers, while at the same time recognizing that small businesses and individuals provide the highest level of economic output in the County.

B. ECON.Goal 2. Support and facilitate public and private economic development efforts that are consistent with the Goals and Policies of the County.

1. ECON.Policy 2.1. Economic development is directly related to actual physical development; therefore, the County should foster an effective process to support development, while protecting the health, safety and welfare of citizens of the County.

2. ECON.Policy 2.2. Foster a good working relationship between the public and private sectors, recognizing that such a relationship supports economic development.

3. ECON.Policy 2.3. Work cooperatively with the Upstate Colorado Economic Development organization to encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses and to attract new industries to incorporated and unincorporated Weld County.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.2.3.a. Annually contribute to fund Upstate Colorado Economic Development.

b. Recommended Strategy ECON.2.3.b. Establish a liaison group that includes County representation that will interact with the Upstate Colorado Economic Development organization (or other similar organizations) and promote private corporate participation.

4. ECON.Policy 2.4. Coordinate with Weld County municipalities and support regional dialogue to attract businesses to incorporated and unincorporated Weld County by maintaining the quality of life in both urban and rural Weld County.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.2.4.a. Regularly host a forum (similar to the 2007 "Your Town" workshop) of business and governmental leaders to review challenges and issues throughout the County and to brainstorm solutions.

5. ECON.Policy 2.5. Participate in regular, yearly efforts – by Upstate Colorado Economic Development, the University of Northern Colorado and others – to develop an economic vision and assessment for the entire County.

6. ECON.Policy 2.6. Use all available tools to facilitate capital investment for the retention, expansion and attraction of businesses, such as federal (e.g., Community Development Block Grants), state (e.g., Colorado Performance Based Job Creation Incentive) and other programs.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.2.6.a. Consider hiring an employee for grant writing and to explore other funding opportunities for the County.

b. Recommended Strategy ECON.2.6.b. Consider a circuit grant writer to share between the County and other jurisdictions.

7. ECON.Policy 2.7. Support the use of local economic incentives to attract economic development, such as personal property tax incentives.

8. ECON.Policy 2.8. Encourage and support workforce development initiatives. Such initiatives should focus on providing a stable, available and qualified workforce, and support quality of life elements necessary to ensure an adequate workforce, such as safety and adequate housing.

C. ECON.Goal 3. Structure land use policies and regulations so that they encourage County-wide economic prosperity and economic growth.

1. ECON.Policy 3.1. County activities and regulation should protect the rights of private property owners and the public health, safety and welfare, recognizing that these basic rights and protections allow the free market to prosper and grow the local economy.

2. ECON.Policy 3.2. Ensure that County land use policies and regulations are structured so as not to impede economic prosperity and growth.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.3.2.a. Review County land use policies and regulations to ensure consistency with the Policy.

D. ECON.Goal 4. When appropriate, use economic incentives to retain and expand businesses or to attract new industries to the County.

1. ECON.Policy 4.1. Applicants seeking land use approvals for industrial uses, or for the creation of a Regional Urbanization Area (RUA), should have the option of providing a cost/benefit evaluation. This evaluation may be considered for potential economic incentives.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.4.1.a. Develop a set of local Weld County Economic Development Incentives to be applicable in unincorporated portions of the County. Develop criteria for considering if and when incentives are appropriate.

2. ECON.Policy 4.2. Target the following through economic incentives: manufacturing, entrepreneurial development; state-of-the-art agricultural uses, including value-added crop/ livestock development; technology industries; natural resource development, including alternative energy resources; and tourism.

E. ECON.Goal 5. Recognize and promote specific places and resources in the County that can uniquely support economic development.

1. ECON.Policy 5.1. The County should encourage an adequate supply of both services and land suitable for industrial development and redevelopment.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.5.1.a. Develop a program to create "shovel-ready" industrial sites throughout the County, where primary job providers would be able to develop or re-develop. Zoning, infrastructure and services would ideally be immediately available for use in such areas.

2. ECON.Policy 5.2. Encourage use of the Greeley-Weld County Airport and expanding the surrounding area uses for economic development.

3. ECON.Policy 5.3. Recognize and support existing railroad infrastructure.

a. Recommended Strategy ECON.5.3.a. Develop a Sub-Area Plan for the North Greeley Railroad Corridor, consisting of the east-west rail line running from east of Greeley to Windsor.

The North Greeley Railroad Subarea Plan has been adopted by the Weld County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners and is attached as Appendix 22-A.

4. ECON.Policy 5.4. Promote the availability of water as an incentive to attract economic development.

5. ECON.Policy 5.5. Recognize and support the role of the municipalities and other jurisdictions in providing significant economic activity, specifically from their ability to provide urban-scale services and markets.

F. ECON.Goal 6. Maintain relevant economic data that is specific to the County, and which complements other sources of similar information.

1. ECON.Policy 6.1. Regularly maintain economic data for the County.

2. ECON.Policy 6.2. Maintain a report which compiles County-level data about subdivisions, population comparisons and growth areas. (Weld County Code Ordinance 2008-13; Weld County Code Ordinance 2010-4)