

2010 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 2 – Larimer and Weld Counties

Introduction

The North Central portion of the state (Larimer and Weld Counties) is a combination of expansive rural, agricultural and concentrated urban areas. There is a transition from rural to urban at the fringe of many municipalities, a trend which is placing increasing demands on current infrastructure. Per the State Demography Office, Region 2 had a total estimated 2009 population of 554,780, a 1.9% and 3.7% increase from 2000 for Larimer and Weld Counties respectively.

Jobs & the Economy

As with many regions, North Central Colorado is facing economic challenges. Many municipalities saw a decrease in sales tax revenues from 2008 to 2009. Economists are predicting anywhere from a slight increase to a flat level in sales tax revenues for 2010. The consequence is that local governments are looking at a combination of layoffs and possible increases in sales taxes.

Some positive changes in employment come from business expansion and relocation as well as new business. These changes occurred primarily in the engineering, technology, manufacturing and health care sectors. Unemployment rates are slowly declining from this time last year. Windsor has been selected as the site for a National Guard armory and readiness center. In Greeley Leprino Foods is building a cheese factory which will not only impact the number of jobs available but also increase demand for surrounding dairies. Additionally, Vestas is expanding their operation in Windsor as well as continuing production at their new plant in south Weld County Brighton.

Companies that are drawn to this area are looking for an urban area with lower labor and real estate costs. They are also attracted by existing industry and the labor force as well as proximity to universities, colleges and transportation corridors.

Housing

County and municipal records show an upturn in the number of building permits when compared to this time last year. Overall the number of home sales is beginning to increase and the number of foreclosures is slowly decreasing. There is approximately an eight and a half month stock of existing homes. Compared to this time in 2009 there is approximately a 2% increase in sales of existing homes.

Agriculture

Agricultural products produced in the region are dairy, cattle, sheep, poultry, nursery, wheat, corn, hay, and vegetables. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture Weld County is number one in the state in the value of agricultural products

(\$1.5 billion). Commodity prices are slightly up from last year.

Larimer County is currently leading a Food Assessment study for the region, including Weld and Boulder counties. They're exploring how local food systems work in the area and how the process can be enhanced.

New Projects

Region 2 has multiple new projects in various stages of planning and completion.

- In Fort Collins, the Mason Street Corridor (a transit oriented North/South corridor) is schedule to begin initial construction. The Mason Street Corridor is a bus rapid transit system (BRT) and the first of its kind in the North Central Colorado region. Fort Collins has also begun construction to improve College Avenue at Willox to accommodate new residential and commercial development. Additionally, they've started a \$4 million intersection improvement at College Avenue and Harmony Road, and are in the midst of a Midtown Commercial Study. They're also in the process of updating their "City Plan".
- A Community Economic Development Assessment was conducted by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade for the Town of Windsor. The results of the assessment will help guide future development of Windsor.
- The City of Greeley has been working on a North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan with Weld County to develop a shared vision of the rail corridor.
- In November 2009 a \$9.7 million interchange improvement at I-25 and US Highway 34 began and should be completed by April 2011.
- To the North at I-25 and Crossroads a \$6.5 million safety improvement began in August 2010.
- Design work has begun on the 1-25/Windsor exit interchange.
- The town of Berthoud is finishing infrastructure work on its downtown improvements.
- A brand new High School in Frederick is nearing completion.