

2011 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 Census Bureau, Region 2 had a total estimated 2010 population of 552,455, a 19.14% and 39.73% increase from 2000 for Larimer and Weld Counties respectively.

Jobs & the Economy

As with many regions, North Central Colorado is facing economic challenges. While many municipalities saw a decrease in sales tax revenues from 2008 to 2009, from 2009 to 2010 we saw a slight increase in sales tax revenues for 2010.

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. While unemployment rates rose slightly from this time last year, it was at a decreasing rate. Windsor has been selected as the site for a National Guard armory and readiness center. In Greeley Lepirino Foods began building a cheese factory which will not only impact the number of jobs available but also increase demand from surrounding dairies. Additionally, Spirae, a smart grid technology company, and RoadNarrows, a robotics firm, expanded in Fort Collins, Afini, a call center, added approximately 500 new jobs in Evans, and development of Aerospace Clean Energy Manufacturing and Innovation Park began in Loveland.

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. Comparing foreclosure filings and sales for Larimer and Weld Counties finds that they decreased in the number of filings and sales increased 10.5% for Larimer County and 6.6% for Weld County. The stock of existing homes has decreased because the number of new starts has been less than the sale of new 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. Overall crop yields were up in 2010 from 2009.

Larimer County completed a Food Assessment study for the region, including Weld and Boulder counties. They explored how local food systems work in the area and how the process can be enhanced. The report summary framed actions that could or should be taken to strengthen the food system, identify gaps in information that was gathered for the report, and demonstrate the relevance of the food system in our community by showcasing related activities and showing their affiliation to this assessment.

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 scheduled 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 improved College Avenue at Willox to accommodate new residential and commercial development. Additionally, they completed 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". The performing arts center, Lincoln Center, recently completed renovations and expansion. Construction has begun on a new museum which combines science, history and culture.
- The Town of Severance is in the last stages of finalizing the update to their Comprehensive Plan.
- 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.
- A \$12 million interchange improvement at I-25 and US Highway 34 has been completed.
- To the North at I-25 and Crossroads a \$6.5 million safety improvement has been completed.
- Construction has begun on the 1-25/Windsor exit interchange.
- The Town of Berthoud is finishing infrastructure work on its downtown improvements.
- Milliken adopted its Comprehensive Plan in February 2010.