

# 2012 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 that is placing increasing demands on current infrastructure.

County	Census 2000	July 2011	% Change
Larimer	251,494	305,309	21.40%
Weld	180,936	258,448	42.84%
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>4,301,261</b>	<b>5,118,526</b>	<b>19.00%</b>

*Source: State Demography Office*

### JOBS & THE ECONOMY

The unemployment rate for the Fort Collins-Loveland MSA continues to be below the National and State unemployment rates. For 2011 the annual unemployment rate for the Fort Collins-Loveland MSA was 6.8% as compared to the State of Colorado at 8.3% and the Greeley MSA at 9.3%.

Firms with 1,000 or more employees include Colorado State University, Poudre School District, Poudre Valley Health Care, ConAgra Beef, Lutheran Health Systems, WalMart Stores, Thompson Valley School District, Greeley School District 6, Larimer County, Hewlett Packard Company, City of Fort Collins, University of Northern Colorado, Center Partners, Inc., Weld County, City of Greeley, State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance Company, Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Woodward Governor Company.

Changes are happening around the region among some of the region's high profile employers. Recently Allegiant Airlines announced it will be suspending operations at the Fort Collins/Loveland Airport. It had been hoped that a \$200 million Woodward Governor, manufacturing campus expansion would occur in Fort Collins; however, it was announced it will occur in Rockford, IL. Vestas, the Danish wind turbine manufacturer, has announced a reduction in its workforce, but it is unclear if the reduction will affect the Windsor location.

Sales and use taxes are up over the previous year in most portions of Larimer and Weld County. Larimer County sales tax is up 5.2% over 2010.

### HOUSING

The housing industry in Weld and Larimer County is improving. Single family home inventory is decreasing from a high in 2009 of approximately 7,000 homes to a January 2012 level of 4,653. Mortgage interest rates also continue to decrease as home values increase.

Berthoud is seeing an increase in housing construction. Last year Berthoud was at 17 single family building permits and this year we will be at 25 - 30. Berthoud is projecting over 35 single-family homes in 2013. Their projections are based on discussions with the builders.

The number of 2011 building permits for single family homes are also up from 2010 in Fort Collins, Windsor, Timnath and Johnstown.

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Availability of choices in housing is also important. The stock of new homes has been reduced because for the past several years new home starts have been less than new home sales. Apartment vacancy rates are down by 2% in Fort Collins, 1% in Loveland and 3% in Greeley from 2010 levels.

### **AGRICULTURE**

Weld County's primary crops are wheat and corn. Corn production is up 11% from 2010; however yield was down almost 6%. Almost all corn raised in Weld County is irrigated. The summer heat and availability of water will be factors in this year's yield. Winter wheat in Weld County is about 70% non-irrigated. Winter wheat production and yield were down from 2010 (11% and 5.5%, respectively).

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture cattle inventory has seen an increase in 2010 and 2011. The cattle inventory has recovered to the 2008 high point.

### **NEW PROJECTS**

In Fort Collins the construction on Mason Street corridor began in 2011. The five mile corridor will be home to the bus rapid transit system known as MAX. MAX is scheduled to begin running in 2014. Transit oriented development is planned along the corridor with transit stations along the way.

Evans is seeing land along US Highway 85 exchange hands for future development in significant intersections. In the next two years the trend seems to be more public/private partnerships on community facilities (schools, libraries, parks) as well as retail development.

Recently Weld County opened the first of four Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling stations. One goal set by the Weld County board of commissioners is to work with the Weld County Natural Gas Coalition to create an alternative fuel corridor between Colorado and Wyoming. Weld County, the City of Evans and the LaSalle Fire Protection District have included CNG vehicles in their fleet.