

2014 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.

Two factors that have influenced the growth in Region 2 were the September 2013 flood and the increasing impact of oil and gas. The flood either wiped out or temporarily displaced people from their homes and businesses. The movement of people, goods and services on the regions roads was disrupted. Temporary repairs were made to major roads quickly; however, long-term repairs continue to be made.

The increasing presence of the oil and gas industry impacts availability of housing, demand for goods and services as well as increased demand on the region's transportation infrastructure.

Population:

County	Census 2010	July 2013	% Change
Larimer	299,630	315,728	5.37%
Weld	252,825	269,643	6.65%
Colorado	5,029,196	5,264,890	4.69%

JOBS & THE ECONOMY

The unemployment rate for the Fort Collins-Loveland MSA continues to be below the National and State unemployment rates. For 2013 the annual unemployment rate for the Fort Collins-Loveland MSA was 4.4% and 5.5% for the Greeley, MSA as compared to the State of Colorado at 6.2%.

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, Department of Agriculture, and Woodward Governor Company.

Nearly all oil and gas production in Region 2 occurs in Weld County. According to the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission 81% of all oil produced in Colorado comes from Weld County. In Region 2, oil production and sales continued to increase from 2012 to 2013 by 7% and gas production and sales by 3%.

HOUSING

The housing industry in Weld and Larimer County continues to improve at a steady pace. Mortgage rates dropped from 4.25% in 2012 to 3.5% in 2013. Single-family home inventory has seen a modest increase.

In 2013, the number building permits in Region 2 increased by 34% while the number of units increased by 40%. The majority of building permits for multiple units were located in Fort Collins and Greeley. Greeley issued 227 multiple family building permits and 203 single family building permits. The increase

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in oil and gas employees looking for housing in conjunction with a low supply of homes and apartments is part of the reason for the increase in multiple family housing building permits.

Availability of housing choices is also important. Apartment vacancy rates reached an all-time low during the 4th quarter of 2013 of 1.92% in Fort Collins and 1.29% in the third quarter for Greeley. The rest of the region continued to see an average vacancy rate for apartments at about 2.8%.

AGRICULTURE

Weld County's primary crops are wheat and corn. 2012 turned out to be a challenging year for farmers. It was a hot, dry summer preceded by a winter with low snow pack in the mountains necessary for irrigation. Corn and wheat production was down from 2011. In 2013, there was adequate water but farmers in parts of Weld County were hit hard by hail storms.

NEW PROJECTS

In Fort Collins, Woodward, formerly Woodward Governor, has begun construction on a new global headquarters. A 275,000-square-foot Industrial Turbo machinery Systems building is scheduled to be completed by 2015. Completion of the corporate headquarters and engines technology building will follow. Upon completion it will add an additional 1,000 employees.

Construction continued in Fort Collins on the Mason Street Corridor for a bus rapid transit system known as MAX. Opening day is May 10, 2014. Transit oriented development is planned with some underdevelopment along the corridor with transit stations along the route.

Construction on a Costco Wholesale Club began in 2013 at a site located at the southeast corner of I-25 and Harmony Road. The site includes a food store, tire center, liquor store and gas station and provides six additional out lots pads for development. Opening day is expected October 2, 2014.

Noble Energy has plans to build a liquefied natural gas plant in northern Weld County. It is expected that the plant will generate 100,000 gallons of liquefied gas a day.

In 2012, the Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association (PVREA) dedicated a solar farm in Windsor with 494 solar panels generating 116,090 watts of electricity. In 2013 PVREA announced plans to build a second solar farm in Fort Collins. The new solar farm is more than four times larger than the first one.