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Commerce City adopts eco-devo plan

Denver Business Journal - by [Paula Moore](#)

The Commerce City council late Monday unanimously adopted the city's first-ever economic development plan.

The plan is part of an updating of the city's 25-year-old comprehensive plan, said Brittany Morris, Commerce City's director of economic development.

The city's economic development strategy adopted Monday has four main goals: Create a business-development campaign for targeted industries, expand support for industries and businesses already in the city, help find real estate, and provide infrastructure for new development and improve skills of the city's work force to meet employer needs.

"We felt an economic development strategy was necessary to complement the comprehensive plan," Morris said. "We had never ... looked at an economic development plan, and where we want to be. This plan will look at the next five to 10 years."

Developer Cal Fulenwider of Denver-based **L.C. Fulenwider Inc.**, as one of the largest landowners in Commerce City's Northern Range area at the north end of **Denver International Airport**, was on a technical advisory group that helped create the development plan.

"This is a coming of age for Commerce City, pure and simple. ... It's impressive and forward-thinking," Fulenwider said of the plan.

Also in that advisory group were Tom Clark, executive vice president of **Metro Denver Economic Development Corp.**, and Bill Becker, president/CEO of **Adams County Economic Development Inc.**

The economic development plan goes into effect immediately with the city council's approval, said Morris. "We'll report back to the city council quarterly, and we hope to see tangible results by this time next year – if not sooner," she said.

An incentive package to help spur new development in Commerce City is expected to be unveiled at Mayor Paul Natale's state-of-the-city address in May. The date of the speech has not yet been determined, according to the city.

The city started working on an economic development plan last June, when it hired **AngelouEconomics Inc.**, an independent economic development consulting firm based in Austin, Texas.

The consultant worked with **ConocoPhillips Co.** (NYSE: COP) on its selection of the former StorageTek site in Louisville for its new renewable-energy research and education campus. The Houston energy giant bought the 432-acre site in early 2008 for \$58.5 million from **Sun Microsystems Inc.**, and is in the beginning stages of developing it.

Commerce City's new plan is a result of AngelouEconomics' analysis as well as input from focus groups and the technical advisory committee.

The plan targets five industries for business recruitment and retention efforts, Morris said. They are:

- Logistics/distribution – This business is already "the backbone of Commerce City's economy," Morris said. "We definitely want it to grow and thrive."
- Retail/hospitality/leisure.
- Advanced manufacturing, with an emphasis on renewable energy, medical devices and aerospace.
- Business/professional services – "Fifteen percent of people who live in our Northern Range area already work in this industry, but in other cities," Morris said. "We want to keep them in Commerce City."
- DIA technology – This area has an aviation focus, including time-sensitive manufacturing and distribution, third-party logistics, e-commerce fulfillment and hotel/exhibition facilities.

L.C. Fulenwider is developing the Denver International Business Center business park near the airport, which includes **Frontier Airlines'** headquarters; several hotels, including a La Quinta, Embassy Suites and Courtyard by Marriott; and restaurants. The company also owns the land on which the 3,200-acre Reunion residential community near the airport is being developed, with **Shea Homes** is master developer.

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