

Open Letter to Commerce City Officials Regarding Suncor Sponsorship and Environmental Concerns

From the Chair of the Suncor+ Committee, 350 Colorado

December 15, 2025

City Council Members and City Manager

Commerce City, Colorado

Dear Honorable Council Members and City Manager,

Introduction

I am writing on behalf of 350 Colorado's Suncor+ Committee, an organization dedicated to advancing a fossil-free future and safeguarding the health of Colorado's communities. As Chair of the Suncor+ Committee, which advocates for a sustainable, fossil-free future, I am compelled to address a matter of growing concern among our membership and the wider Commerce City community.

Suncor's Pollution and Its Impact on Commerce City

It is with deep disappointment that I have observed the continued acceptance of financial support from Suncor Refinery by Commerce City's leadership. Our organization, alongside many residents, is troubled by the ongoing relationship between the city and an entity widely recognized as a leading source of local air pollution.

Suncor Refinery has long been documented as a major emitter of harmful pollutants^{[1][2][3][4]}, significantly impacting air quality in Commerce City and surrounding neighborhoods. In fact, the zip code surrounding Suncor has been cited as among the most polluted in the entire country^{[5][6]}. Numerous studies and community reports have highlighted elevated levels of hazardous air pollutants, which have been proven to cause and amplify respiratory issues such as asthma, environmental degradation, and a diminished quality of life for residents.

The 'Merry Market' Event and Suncor's Sponsorship

The recent 'Merry Market' event, featuring an outdoor ice rink, was promoted as a celebration of community and the holiday season. It is a wonderful idea, no doubt intended to foster family fun, community strengthening, and the building of joyful memories. However, it is both ironic and deeply concerning that Suncor—a company whose

operations are directly linked to local air pollution—is a sponsor of this event. The juxtaposition of a festive outdoor gathering with the support of a major polluter sends a conflicting message about the city’s commitment to environmental responsibility and public health.

By continuing to accept sponsorship from Suncor, Commerce City risks legitimizing and normalizing the presence of a polluting industry within our community spaces. This partnership undermines the City’s own efforts to address pollution and climate change, such as the Sustainability Action Plan, or the creation of the Environmental Policy and Innovation Commission. It is imperative that city events, especially those promoting family and community values, are not funded by organizations whose actions directly harm those same communities.

Call to Responsible Leadership

On behalf of 350 Colorado and concerned residents, I urge Commerce City’s leaders to reconsider the acceptance of funding and sponsorship from Suncor Refinery moving forward. We call for a commitment to seek alternative, community-centered funding sources that reflect the city’s stated commitments to “environmental responsibility, innovation, and sustainable economic development” and policies that “promote public health, protect our natural resources, and support a more sustainable future.” [\[7\]](#) Our organization stands ready to support the city in identifying and partnering with sponsors whose contributions align with that vision.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We welcome the opportunity for open dialogue and collaboration toward sustainable solutions that prioritize the well-being of Commerce City’s residents and the environment we all share.

Respectfully,

Braden Hellewell, Chair
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