



# 2017

## State Legislative Issues Guide

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# ABOUT

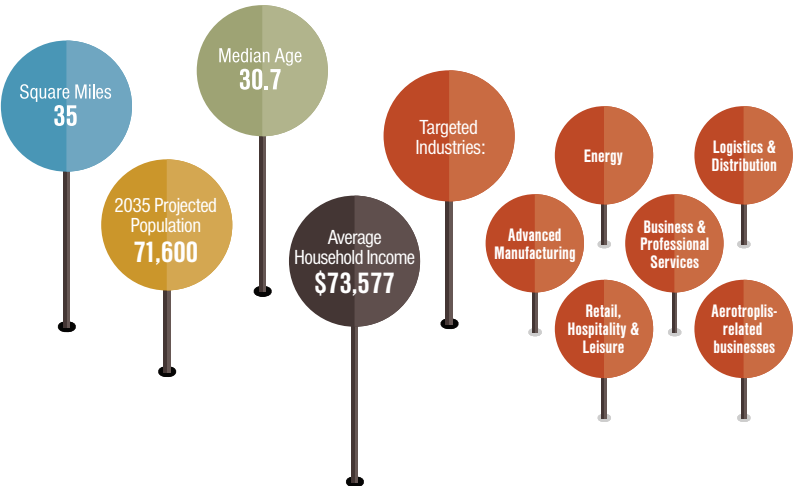
## COMMERCE CITY



As the state's third-fastest growing city, Commerce City is redefining itself for the next generation, building on historic values of community, industry, agriculture and family. The city's vibrant and culturally diverse population grew 225 percent in the last 16 years to 53,696, 46 percent of which identify as Latino or Hispanic. Commerce City is a Quality Community for a Lifetime, with 25 miles of trails, a championship golf course, 840 acres of open space and parks, one of the country's largest soccer complexes and the nation's largest urban wildlife refuge.

Nearly 1,300 companies call Commerce City home, ranging from international and national headquarters to small businesses and

# Commerce City at-a-glance



entrepreneurs. Centrally located along Colorado’s bustling Front Range and just eight miles north of downtown Denver, Commerce City provides direct access to six major highways, Denver International Airport, two railroads, Pena Boulevard and two new commuter rail lines.



# PROGRESSIVE

## GOVERNANCE

Incorporated in 1952, Commerce City is a home-rule municipality with a council manager form of government. An elected city council establishes the city's vision, sets annual policy goals and enacts laws that govern its citizens. The nine-member body includes a mayor, a council member for each of the city's four geographic wards, and four at-large council members. The mayor selects a council person to serve as mayor pro tem.



The city's vision is one of a Quality Community for a Lifetime. As a municipality, its mission is to provide excellent public services and customer experiences by anticipating needs, embracing diversity, and fostering relationships to sustain a growing and vibrant community. Total city revenue is projected to be approximately \$75.6 million,





representing a six percent increase from 2016. Projected expenditures are divided among 14 different funds, including \$57 million to cover the city's day-to-day operations and nearly \$6 million to the capital improvement & preservation plan. The city has emergency cash reserves of just over \$17 million. Known as a business-friendly community, Commerce City does not have a head tax and its 3.28 property tax mill levy is one of the lowest in the state.

### City Council's Goals

- Develop a balanced and vibrant economy to improve socioeconomic status
- Ensure a financially-sound city government to maintain or improve levels of service
- Develop and maintain public infrastructure to improve community appearance and encourage private investment
- Preserve and nurture a quality community to improve resident health and safety
- Engage the public to encourage community involvement, communication and to build trust

# FIVE PROJECTS

## FIVE YEARS

In 2013, voters approved a dedicated 1% sales and use tax to fund the city's largest capital improvement program in its history, committing to complete five projects in five years:

- Widen Tower Road from 80th to 103rd avenues.
- Three parks in the Fronterra, Turnberry, and Villages East neighborhoods
- New recreation center near Second Creek
- Renovations to existing recreation center
- Outdoor leisure pool at Pioneer Park.



The city is committed to completing these first five projects by Jan. 1, 2019, achieving the following goals:

- Build high quality facilities to lower their long-term maintenance costs
- Spend taxpayer dollars wisely and transparently
- Complete projects on time

Through participation from residents, businesses and city council, the City's vision of a Quality Community for a Lifetime can be realized with improved mobility, greater access and increased recreational opportunities.



**Nov. 2013**  
Capital improvement program  
approved by voters

**Dec. 2014** • • • •  
Fronterra Park construction begins



**Aug. 2015**  
Fronterra Park completed

**Feb. 2016** • • • •  
Villages East Park construction begins



**Aug. 2016**  
Turnberry Park completed

**Oct. 2016** • • • •  
New recreation center  
construction begins

**2017** • • • •  
Existing recreation center  
upgrades to begin

**Spring 2018** • • • •  
New recreation center  
expected completion

**Jan. 2019** • • • •  
First five capital improvement  
projects expected completion

• • • • **Oct. 2014**  
Paradise Island Pool  
construction begins



**July 2015**  
Paradise Island Pool completed

• • • • **Jan. 2016**  
Turnberry Park construction begins



**May 2016**  
Tower Road construction begins



**Sept. 2016**  
Villages East Park completed

• • • • **2017**  
Tower Road expected completion

• • • • **2018**  
Existing recreation center upgrades  
expected completion



# SPECIFIC

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## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Commerce City identified several specific priorities important to the community:

- Increase availability of affordable, owner-occupied, multifamily housing consistent with the city's comprehensive plan
- Advocate solutions to safety and nuisance issues related to railroad proximity, such as crossing conflicts and quiet zone rules.
- Support federal and state funding of transportation infrastructure with an emphasis on an integrated, multimodal network.
- Clarify urban renewal and tax increment financing legislation to address ambiguities of HB 15-1348.
- Uphold local decision-making on technology and techniques to address public safety concerns, such as photo red light cameras.
- Preserve tax-exempt status for municipal bonds and expand sales tax coverage to internet businesses.





# GUIDING

## LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

### Home Rule and Local Control

The citizens of Commerce City adopted a Home Rule Charter in 1970, which establishes the power of local self-government to the city pursuant to the Constitution of the State of Colorado. As such, Commerce City has the responsibility and authority to adopt rules and regulations that govern the operation of the community in the interest of its citizens. The city believes that home rule authority increases the effectiveness and efficiency of local government services, enhancing the quality of life in the community and the value provided to local taxpayers.

### State Mandates

Programs and regulations mandated by the state of Colorado have the potential to stretch the city's financial resources. If additional costs brought about by mandated programs or regulations are not paid by the state government, they can have a direct negative impact on the city budget, preventing Commerce City from meeting the needs of residents and achieving our strategic priorities.

### Transportation

Commerce City believes the movement of goods and people are vital to the continued economic success of our region and Coloradans quality of life. Federal and state officials must be willing to make significant investment to maintain and improve Colorado's multimodal transportation network to preserve these benefits.

Adjacent to six major highways, Denver International Airport, two railroads, and two new commuter rail lines, effective transportation



is equally important to the success of the city's economy. The city is an active partner on large-scale projects, such as Interstate 270, the U.S. 85/120th Avenue interchange and expanding transit service. The city is against efforts to pass along additional State roadway construction or maintenance responsibilities to local governments without increased and adequate funds to meet these additional responsibilities.

## Housing

Rental costs, single-family home sales prices, and the availability of affordable housing throughout the state has created an undue burden not only for very-low income and homeless, but also those within the working and middle class. Commerce City believes all residents should have access to safe, quality housing throughout the city. The city supports regional, state and federal initiatives that preserve and enhance the number of quality affordable homes, incentivizes new affordable housing developments, and develops additional services and opportunities to promote self-sufficiency.

## Sales and Use Tax

Commerce City levies, administers and collects its own sales and use tax under its home rule authority. Sales and use tax revenue is the primary source of funding for city operations and services, comprising more than 61 percent of general fund revenues. Statewide, municipalities generate more than \$5 in these taxes to every \$1 of property taxes.

Sales and use taxes have enabled municipalities to fund public services and improvements and keep municipal property taxes relatively low. Appropriate actions at federal, state and local levels should preserve or enhance these local revenues, while still seeking opportunities to streamline or provide business certainty across municipalities.

## Economic Development

Commerce City strives to develop a balanced and vibrant city economy to improve the socioeconomic status of our residents. Whether it's maintaining primary employers, expanding its retail base or encouraging local business expansion, the city recognizes the importance of a healthy economic climate to its overall quality of life. Commerce City advocates for and collaborates with legislators, government entities and other municipalities to encourage the creation of jobs in our City and for our residents.

## Municipal development and land use

Commerce City constantly works to achieve its comprehensive plan, to build a sustainable community. The City believes that local land use planning contributes greatly to the achievement of this goal and the overall quality of life in the city. In general, the City supports laws and policies that encourage new residential, commercial and industrial development to occur within municipalities such as our City. Conversely we oppose efforts to restrict municipal authority to annex territory as well as delegation of our land use authority to state agencies or preemption of municipal land use controls, and any restrictions on urban renewal authorities.

## Public Safety

Having a safe and secure community is one of the city council goals. The city is working diligently to provide a safe environment, protecting the lives and property of the citizens of Commerce City. The role of the police department is to enforce the law in a fair and impartial manner, recognizing both the statutory and judicial limitations of police authority and the constitutional rights of all persons. The city has made significant strides to implement a strategic policing program that accurately reflects the diversity of our community and provides equitable service



to all constituents. Within this context, the city supports legislation that enables local decision-making on public safety services.

## Education

Commerce City believes an effective education system supplies our municipality with an educated, well-trained community and workforce, which will allow existing businesses to expand and attract new business investment to our city. With two school districts and a state-charter school, the city believes education is a community-wide value and the most effective programs are partnerships among our educational institutions, local stakeholders and local government. The city supports continued state funding of local school districts, finding opportunities to address the negative factor and eliminating further cuts as a result of TABOR.

## Oil & Gas Operations

Colorado is well-known for its natural resources and history of oil and gas exploration. Like other local governments, Commerce City strives to balance the needs of industry with municipal growth and development. The city's land development code and the city's participation in the state local government designee program offer a layered approach to protect the interests of the community and the rights of private developers. The city is supportive of rules and legislation that maintains its home rule authority to regulate oil and gas development, expands communication and notification, and codifies use of best management practices to mitigate operator impacts.

## Healthy Eating & Active Living (HEAL)

As an Elite LiveWell community, Commerce City supports local, state and federal policies that improve access to physical activity and healthy food. Making the healthy choice the easy choice is essential



to addressing Colorado's adult and childhood obesity epidemic, the cost of which exceeds \$1.6 billion annually. Commerce City's has adopted a coordinated and collaborative approach to implementing Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) initiatives and supports legislation that encourages an active community, promotes healthy work places, increases healthy food access, and improves resident perceptions of safety and security.

## Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development defines homelessness when a family or person does not have a stable, safe place to live. This means they may spend nights in shelters, transitional housing, limited-stay hotels or motels, in a car, "couch surfing," or on the streets. It's difficult to locate and count Coloradans in unstable and changing housing situations, making it nearly impossible to know the full extent of homelessness. Homelessness is an issue of regional and statewide concern; the city believes it is important to address the underlying causes of homelessness and increase understanding so residents experiencing homelessness are viewed by others and themselves as valuable community members. The city is supportive of regional, state, and federal efforts to develop and recommend new policies and activities aimed at eliminating homelessness and hunger in our communities.

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