

## **BACKGROUND**

The City Council of Commerce City is committed to creating a Quality Community for a Lifetime, establishing goals that provide staff policy direction for administrative work activities. The city's 2017 federal and state legislative principles serve as a guide for the city in developing positions on any forthcoming federal and state legislation, consistent with city council's stated vision and goals. The document also serves as a reference for elected representatives when considering legislation that may impact the City of Commerce City.

These legislative principles describe the underlying interest Commerce City has on specific issues, providing clear direction and a framework for staff to develop positions on legislation that can impact the city. Council may revisit the city's legislative priorities, as a body or through its legislative committee. Strategic, targeted, and/or abbreviated versions of the information contained in this document also will be created throughout the year for use in further legislative communications.

Since 2011, Commerce City has contracted professional services to advance municipal interests and successfully addressed many of its priorities, from implementation of the state's first wayside horn railroad crossing and changes in city ZIP Code assignments, to approval of the Tower Road on-ramp to Peña Boulevard, securing an amendment process to existing land deed restrictions, and retention of local control.

## **REPRESENTATION**

As a member of the Colorado Municipal League, Commerce City relies on the organization's advocacy team to provide reliable information on legislative issues and their impact on Colorado's cities, towns and their residents. The city's director of external affairs serves as staff liaison for federal and state government relations. Commerce City contracts with Squire Patton Boggs to advance its federal advocacy work and with Axiom Strategies, Inc. for state advocacy activities.

## **SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Commerce City has 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.
- Ensure reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and adequate funding for implementation.
- Secure technical assistance from U.S. Department of Justice to advance identified policing reforms.
- Continue needed community funding through federal block and competitive grant programs.
- Uphold local decision-making and home rule authority on taxation, land use controls, and public safety technology and techniques.
- 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 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. Statewide, municipalities generate more than \$5 in these taxes to every \$1 of property taxes. Sales and use taxes 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.