



January 21, 2016

Boulder City Council
1777 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80306

RE: Boulder Chamber Input for City Council Retreat

Dear Mayor and City Councilmembers:

It is with exciting prospects for what we can accomplish when we work together, in a collaborative spirit, to address community challenges and opportunities that the Boulder Chamber offers these thoughts in preparation for your 2016 annual retreat.

As a foundation for the views expressed below, and similar to your efforts in bridging the broad perspectives expressed by the wide-range of stakeholders in our community, you should know that the Boulder Chamber works hard to represent the full the range of views and business interests of our 1,200 members. Further, while we always advocate in support of a strong and vital economy, please remember that we lead with the overall goal of constructive engagement around civic issues that recognizes the need to balance the other social, cultural and environmental values that we all know are critical to a sustainable future for Boulder.

We know that last year entailed an enormous weight of community issues that took a toll on City Council, staff, the community, and organizations like the Chamber that work to engage constructively in an effort help you make the best policy decisions. To that end, we appreciate the sentiments we heard from all of you regarding the effort to focus on a more concentrated list of priority goals for 2016. With that more narrow agenda focus in mind, the Boulder Chamber offers its perspective in this letter on a few key priority issues areas:

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Update: As the map for Boulder's buildout over the next five years, we also know the Comprehensive Plan update process is the chance for our community to express its true vision for its long-term future. That is why we urge you to make sure to solicit and consider the interests of the broadest range of stakeholders. This includes renters, small business owners, employees, lower income populations, and others that do not typically have the time to commit endless hours to public meetings, but deserve to have their opinions and needs justly considered throughout the process.

We know that last year's public vote on Ballot Issues 300 and 301 did not end debate over the pace and character of development in our community. However, coupled with the recent citizen survey results, it also is clear that Boulder's residents generally are comfortable with the direction our community is headed. This includes movement toward compact infill that creates

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more vibrant and attractive centers of mixed-use activity that address a number of goals for our community with respect to transportation efficiency, housing diversity, and economic sustainability. Along those lines, we ask you to sustain the forward direction in the identified infill opportunity sites, including Boulder Junction and the Arapahoe corridor. We also ask you to please give strong support for elements of the Comprehensive Plan that will advance the goals of enhanced arts and cultural programming that are key elements for Boulder's vibrancy and creative class economy.

Development Fees: We are looking forward to participating in this year's review of the various fees that the City of Boulder applies to new development in our community. We already know that the fees Boulder charges are amongst some of the highest in the Denver region and it will be good to understand if such high rates are justified. We also know that new development brings great value to our community, which is why so many other communities work so hard to achieve the level of business and residential demand Boulder is enjoying these days. With that in mind, and in order to make certain that our development fees are fairly calculated, our review must account for the enormous financial benefits that accrues to the City of Boulder from development investments.

Municipalization and Energy Efficiency: The Boulder Chamber has great respect for urgency with which the City of Boulder has confronted global climate change. That is why we have regularly supported measures that are designed to help Boulder businesses increase their energy efficiency and expand alternative transportation options for commuters. However, all energy efficiency measures must be sensitive to the constraints of sound financial judgement and other business considerations. A review of certain mandates in the Commercial Energy Efficiency Ordinance along these lines would be an appropriate step.

We approach the City's current study of the municipalization option with the same balanced perspective. We maintain our skeptical neutral position, as we keep an open mind with respect to the confidence municipalization advocates have articulated for this avenue toward reducing the carbon impact of our energy supply, within the stated reliability and cost parameters. However, given the many unknown costs and risks in pursuing the municipalization course, along with the time, expense and staff resources, we urge the City Council to consider other creative avenues for achieving our clean energy goals. The Boulder Chamber offers its services in helping Xcel and the City of Boulder move beyond the current legal and regulatory battles and return to a dialogue over the opportunities for constructively and effectively resolving this matter in a mutually advantageous manner.

Aside from the key action items for City Council in 2016, the Boulder Chamber plans to take proactive steps on a couple of key strategic fronts and look forward to partnering with the City of Boulder in these efforts:

Regional Transportation: We are all well aware of the statistics: Boulder benefits from a regional workforce that brings over 60,000 employees into Boulder on a daily basis and that number likely will continue rising. We will never accommodate all our in-commuters as Boulder residents and need to help relieve their travel burden through enhanced multi-modal transportation options. The Boulder Chamber intends to take a leadership role in outreach to

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regional businesses and our business support colleagues, engaging them in discussion regarding the optional solutions for addressing our transportation needs and an expedited path forward to turning these proposed solutions into reality. We recognize there will be a number of partners in this effort, including other regional governing bodies and support organizations, but we think business leadership in this arena will provide that extra necessary support to forge a positive path forward.

Small Business Regulatory Proportionality: Entrepreneurship and small startup business is a cornerstone of Boulder's economy. These enterprises make a positive contribution to the character of our community's business culture and are the foundation of future economic vitality. Far too often, though, we hear from new business that struggle to comply with the City of Boulder's rigorous regulatory permitting processes and costs that are more suited to impacts associated with larger business developments. In certain instances, we lose what would otherwise be desirable investments in our community that fills retail and commercial holes with exciting new activity and smothers the spark of a creative new business enterprise. Let's review our regulations to make sure we are giving small business startups a fighting chance to get off the ground and, where appropriate, special guidance to overcome hurdles to their business launch.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on these key issues of particular interest to the Boulder Chamber in 2016. We thank all of you for your service the City of Boulder and we look forward to working together, along with your dedicated and talented staff, to make many positive things happen for our community in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

John L. Tayer
President & CEO