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What matters for Boulder business in 2016

by [John Tayer](#) on March 4, 2016

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A few weeks ago, the Boulder City Council held its annual planning retreat. This is an opportunity for the entire community to take stock of where we stand on important issues of the day and to prioritize our many needs. As such, the Boulder Chamber weighed in with its own list of priorities and the approach it hopes our community's policy leaders will take with respect to issues of importance to its business membership and the community at large.

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan: 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 which creates 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, the Chamber urges City Council to sustain the forward direction in the identified infill opportunity sites, including Boulder Junction and the Arapahoe corridor.

Development fees: The city of Boulder is in the midst of reviewing the various fees it applies to new development in our community. The fees Boulder charges are among 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, the city's review must account for the enormous financial benefits that accrue to the city of Boulder from development investments.

Municipalization and energy efficiency: The Boulder Chamber has great respect for the urgency with which the city has confronted global climate change. However, given the many unknown costs and risks in pursuing the municipalization course, along with the time, expense and staff resources, the Chamber urges City Council to consider other creative avenues for achieving our clean-energy goals. The Chamber has offered its services in helping Xcel and the city move beyond current legal and regulatory battles and return to a dialogue over opportunities for constructively and effectively resolving this matter in a mutually advantageous manner.

Regional Transportation: We are all aware of the statistics: Boulder benefits from a regional workforce that brings more than 60,000 employees into Boulder on a daily basis. Since we never will accommodate all of these in-commuters as Boulder residents, we need to help relieve their travel burden through enhanced multi-modal transportation options. The Chamber intends to take a leadership role in outreach to regional businesses and its business support colleagues, engaging them in discussion regarding optional solutions for addressing transportation challenges and an expedited path forward to turning these proposed solutions into reality.

Small-business regulatory proportionality: Far too often, we hear from new businesses that they 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, the result is to kill what would otherwise be desirable investments in our community. We need to address these unintended consequences through a comprehensive review of our city's 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. The entire community will benefit from the effort to help Boulder maintain its status as a welcoming home for creative new ventures.

This is just a small sample of issues the Boulder Chamber will be following on behalf of the Boulder business community in 2016. Please reach out to me and our advocacy team if there is a perspective you want to share on these issues or if there are other concerns you need us to address.

John Tayer is president and chief executive of the Boulder Chamber.

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