

2012

Community Leadership Visit

Fort Collins, CO



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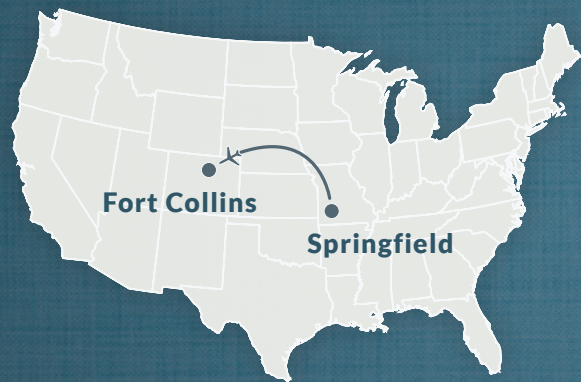
POSITIONING

for a global economy

For nearly 20 years, a delegation of business and community leaders from the Springfield area has traveled annually to a peer city to learn from the experiences of another community and bring back ideas that will benefit the Springfield region. These visits have provided the opportunity to learn “best practices” from other areas, and have been

the catalyst for many community improvement projects such as the Springfield Regional Economic Partnership, Community Focus: A Report on Springfield and Greene County, center city redevelopment, the new facilities of the Springfield-Branson National Airport and the Facing Racism Institute.

FOR THE 19TH ANNUAL TRIP, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce led a delegation of 47 community leaders to Fort Collins, Colorado in September of 2012. As we continue to explore how to best position the Springfield region to compete in a global economy, community leaders hope the lessons learned from the Fort Collins visit will serve as affirmation to reinforce the positive things happening here as well as inspiration for continued progress.





“The opportunity to visit and learn from leaders of other communities is extremely impactful for our community. Invariably, we seem to **bring back ideas that we can implement to make Springfield a better place to live and work.** The visit to Fort Collins was no exception.”

JOHN WANAMAKER,
BKD, LLP

INTRODUCTION

a world-class community

Fort Collins, Colorado is nestled at the base of the Rocky Mountains in Northern Colorado. Home to Colorado State University, a strong entrepreneurial sector and a rich quality of life, the area naturally attracts a talented workforce from all over the world.

In Fort Collins, community leaders talk about achieving world-class status to compete on a global stage, and to do that, they have a great sense of pride in the community and are relentless in continually improving their “place.” One of the first speakers we heard from after we arrived in Fort Collins was David May, president of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce, who shared with the Springfield delegation that “Fort Collins is a very proud community, and a city that thinks big, not one that maintains the status quo.”

Fort Collins has received national recognition in a number of areas. It’s been named the 3rd most generous community in individual giving, the top community for young professionals, and among the top three places in the nation to do business.

So what’s behind the Fort Collins success?

At the heart of the community is a vibrant downtown. Once shuttered businesses and desolate streets have given way to a bustling center city known as “Old Town” that boasts thriving retail, upscale restaurants and numerous local craft breweries. But behind the resurgence of the downtown area were city leaders that made a deliberate decision to make significant infrastructure investments in improved security,

better streets, sidewalks, and lighting. As indicators of their “pride in place,” and commitment to enhancing the physical environment, the City now spends over \$1 million annually on flowers for the Old Town district and also designates one percent of all city capital projects to public art.

Downtown is now the “crown jewel” and the go-to place in Fort Collins. Weekly events strategically attract the entire community with senior power walks in the morning, Halloween parades for tots and families, and nightlife in the evening to entertain college students.

The influence of Colorado State University is evident, both in terms of direct impact on the local economy and in the diversity and vibrancy that the college brings to the community – many referenced the “Fort Collins Vibe.”

A highly-educated citizenship changes the dynamic of public debate and holds local public entities to a high standard. In fact, 52 percent of the city’s population has a college degree and four of seven sitting council members hold doctorate degrees.

City leaders are proud of the community’s commitment to creativity, which can be seen in a rich arts and culture sector, through numerous technology companies that are some of the area’s largest employers, and the famous craft breweries that call Fort Collins home. There is a broad commitment to continuous improvement and a spirit of innovation – both as individuals and for the community as a whole.



Home of Colorado State University

NAMED TOP COMMUNITY FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Among top three places in the nation to do business

3rd most generous community in personal giving

A COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO CONTINUOUS
improvement and innovation



“Quality of life matters to people who can choose to live anywhere.” DAVID ATTEBERRY, FORT COLLINS CITY MANAGER

With more than ten local craft brewers, Fort Collins is known as the “Napa Valley of Brewing” and the collective impact on the local economy is significant. Combined with their strong arts, culture and outdoor amenities, leaders market the area with three simple words: “Beer, Bands, and Bikes.”

The area has an abundance of established bike trails, and is within close proximity to mountains, rivers and lakes. It boasts a unique climate that offers an average of 300 days of sunshine annually. All of these attributes help create a quality of life that city leaders agree is the #1 driver of economic development in the region. “Quality of life matters to people who can choose to live anywhere,” according to David Atteberry, Fort Collins’ city manager.

City leaders described a sincere obligation to the next generation, primarily carried out through environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Fort Collins has a strong heritage of trust between citizens and elected officials in local government. Because of this, they have been able to consistently make significant investment in city services with strong voter approval.

Perhaps Fort Collins’ greatest asset is its spirit of optimism. They talk about being a “world class” community. In the words of Peggy Lyle with Fort Collins’ Downtown Business Association, we heard a sentiment that would be repeated many times during our visit, “In Fort Collins, anything is possible. Anything can happen here; people can reinvent themselves in Fort Collins; the community and its people are open to new and big ideas.”

Optimistic, creative, innovative, forward-thinking, proud, and intensely focused on preserving and enhancing the region’s quality of life.... These certainly sound like attributes that will help a community achieve world-class status!

FORT COLLINS

entrepreneurial by nature

The connection between “quality of life” and economic success in Fort Collins is strong and direct. In particular, the natural environment and the high quality of life drive the city’s progress in entrepreneurship and innovation. People want to live in Fort Collins so they can *live* in Fort Collins. After they choose Fort Collins as a place to live, then they build and grow businesses. From semi-retired CEOs working in a variety of local businesses to the underemployed masters and doctoral degree-holders that wait tables, Fort Collins attracts a large supply of knowledge capital that directly leads to entrepreneurship and innovation. It rightly claims its place as the 5th most educated city in America and among the top ten best places to retire.

Former C-level executives make their presence felt across the business community by encouraging growth in their new companies and mentoring emerging entrepreneurs. For example, Otterbox hired 20 former CEOs just last year, and these former chiefs are now in general management positions at the company, sharing a wealth of business knowledge. Their impact contributes to Otterbox’s transformation from a manufacturer of protective cases for mobile devices to a technology company, with projections to nearly double the company’s \$650 million annual revenues by next year. In Fort Collins, innovation and entrepreneurship are part of the culture for all companies – large and small.

Colorado State University, a land grant university that ranks among the nation’s leading research

institutions, attracts knowledge capital to Fort Collins. Through their work in fields including infectious disease, atmospheric, clean energy, environmental science, and biomedical technology, CSU brings more than \$300 million in annual research funding to Fort Collins.

CSU Ventures, a non-profit affiliate of CSU, transfers and commercializes this research into the marketplace. One way they do this is through CSU’s Engines & Energy Conversion Lab. Located in a converted power plant facility, the acceleration lab combines CSU’s research and academic capabilities with private sector product development. There, students work with John Deere, Caterpillar, HP, and New Belgium Brewing Co., among many others. In one project, they re-engineered wood-burning cook stoves for use in the developing world. These environmentally-friendly and safe stoves use half the fuel of traditional cooking stoves and generate 70 percent less emissions. Prior to this project, approximately two million people died each year due to inhalation of vapors from traditional stoves. Now, the company that produces them, Envirofit, sells more than 20,000 units per month. This reflects a common theme for many of Fort Collins’ entrepreneurs, who pursue the “triple bottom line” of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Accessing start-up capital is one of the most important and challenging puzzles facing entrepreneurs and innovators. In Fort Collins, the Rocky Mountain Innosphere helps to overcome this obstacle. This non-profit corporation aids



“One of the biggest impressions of Fort Collins that I left with was one of **entrepreneurial encouragement by the entire community**. Several business leaders spoke of the openness of most CEOs of bigger firms willing to sit down with new entrepreneurs and share ideas, give feedback, and offer advice. It seemed to be ingrained as part of the community culture.”

BRIAN FOGLE,
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS, INC.

in job creation by connecting entrepreneurs to capital and other resources. RMI's ambitious five-year goals include assisting 50 start-up companies, attracting \$200 million in investment, creating 600 new jobs with salaries greater than \$70,000 per year, and providing \$2.5 million in seed funding. RMI connects budding entrepreneurs with nearly \$20 million in capital annually.

Unlike many other seed or venture capital funds, RMI takes a different approach by providing a "continuum of funding," rather than one-time seed capital. Depending on their stage of development, new companies use a variety of funding tools ranging from combined angel investor pools and cost sharing funds to early-stage grants and loans. RMI provides not just start-up funds, but also sustaining capital throughout the critical years of the development of a new business.

Despite this unique funding strategy and the broad support for entrepreneurialism in Fort Collins, the community still faces challenges related to funding entrepreneurship programs. Raising \$20 million in investment capital can be difficult, even during the best of times. To adapt, RMI has diversified its portfolio by tapping into regional investors outside of Fort Collins, and shifting away from public financing in favor of the private sector. Similarly, CSU, like other higher education institutions across the country, faces extreme budget challenges in the Colorado

legislature. Based on declining state budgets and limitations from drastic policies known as TABOR (Taxpayers' Bill of Rights), there have even been discussions about de-funding the University.

Demonstrating a true entrepreneurial spirit, Kristin Mastre, founder of Cohere, Fort Collins's shared workspace facility said, "[Entrepreneurs] can do and grow as much as we want here." Fort Collins's entrepreneurs are not worried about high unemployment, underemployment, or lack of jobs. Instead, they make their own opportunities, like Jacob Castillo, founder of Panda Bicycles. Castillo attributes the success of his bamboo bicycle company to his experiences at CSU and the inherent support for entrepreneurs in Fort Collins. In addition to utilizing RMI's programs, Castillo was mentored by well-established local executives. Mentorship between established and emerging entrepreneurs is common in Fort Collins.

Colorado brands itself as "Entrepreneurial by Nature." There is no more fitting description of the unique synergy that exists in Fort Collins. People are drawn to this community by its natural environment and quality of life, and they stay because they can grow a successful business in a community that supports entrepreneurial development and innovation. This is not something that just happens in Fort Collins – it's what defines Fort Collins.

chamber's role as the voice of business

The unique synergy of natural environment and quality of life coupled with a strong business community did not happen overnight....and doesn't thrive by accident. The growth of the diverse economy in Fort Collins has been fostered in part by the Chamber's advocacy efforts in a number of areas. These efforts have helped to engage business and community leaders in specific ways within the local advocacy process, having a direct effect on policy decisions that have positively impacted the business community.

One major area of focus at the local advocacy level is the Chamber's Local Legislative Affairs Committee (LLAC). The 23-member committee meets on a weekly basis to review the City Council agenda and 6-month planning calendar, with the goal of assessing and prioritizing potential policy proposals and updating their legislative issues tracker. Additionally, they hear updates from key public sector leadership.

Members of the LLAC make a serious commitment to the work of the committee. Participants must interview and, if selected, adhere to a 70 percent meeting attendance requirement. There is little turnover on the committee and the longest-standing committee member has served for 18 years. These Chamber volunteers believe the City listens to what the business community has to say and that their work plays an important role in positively impacting the City in which they live, work and play.

The keys to the effectiveness of this committee are the commitment by its members, the ongoing relationship and dialogue with City staff, and the ability to plan ahead and prepare to address issues that face the business community.

The establishment of the LLAC, work done by the committee, as well as other Chamber efforts, came in part as a result of the "no-growthers" domination of City Hall for over 20 years. In 2005, efforts made by the Fort Collins Chamber helped to flip the composition of council from aggressive anti-growth domination to a pro-business majority. So in 2005, the City of Fort Collins formalized its approach to economic development with the establishment of an economic health program.

Fort Collins has created a unique and delicate balance between what could be seen as opposing forces, that have actually collectively allowed the community to become the thriving place that it is. Business leaders remarked that the very commitment to the natural environment that is the essence of Fort Collins can be perceived by business interests as an obstacle to growth and development. They referenced extensive arbor studies as just one example of the costly demands and delays businesses often face that impede development. However, it hasn't prevented businesses from wanting to locate or grow in the area. In the end, various entities do work together to grow jobs, preserve the environment, attract and retain talent, and invest in quality of life.



“Fort Collins understands that **investing in the arts leads to stronger community engagement and identity.** Their focus on nurturing culture as well as engaging their emerging professionals has added a vibrancy to their community that is fresh and authentic.”

LEAH HAMILTON,
SPRINGFIELD REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL

CONCLUSION

lessons learned

The desire people have to live in Fort Collins and be a part of the “place” wouldn’t exist without a strong commitment to creating that environment. The \$1 million budget for flowers wouldn’t exist without a growing tax base and a strong economy. Businesses wouldn’t prosper without the City’s commitment to economic development. The talent and entrepreneurial spirit wouldn’t exist on the level that it does without the University presence producing and fostering a population of innovative and educated entrepreneurs. These key components of this unique community grow and flourish because of one another. And as a result, quality of life, innovation and entrepreneurship, and a strong business community make Fort Collins a place where people want to live.

There are numerous similarities between Springfield and Fort Collins including a strong higher education presence and resulting student population, an enviable quality of life, a business community actively engaged in advocacy and a culture of entrepreneurship that contribute to the local economy. Based on the lessons learned from our Fort Collins counterparts, we can build on many of these foundations.

As in Fort Collins, higher education plays a critical role in the vibrancy of our downtown, in talent attraction and retention, and in the growth of the entrepreneurial culture. Drury University’s Edward Jones Center for Entrepreneurship and the development of “The eFactory” incubator at Missouri State University help foster the growth of entrepreneurs. Upon completion, the Robert W. Plaster Center for Free Enterprise and Business Development will provide necessary support to

further encourage entrepreneurs and innovators to choose Springfield as the place to invest and grow their business by providing new start-ups with a one-stop shop for business resources, guidance and start-up assistance.

Yet, while we have made progress in our efforts to support entrepreneurs, there are still opportunities to improve the entrepreneurial culture in our community. A significant aspect of Fort Collins success in this area is their intentional and aggressive approach to capital formation and support for entrepreneurial ventures at every phase and stage of development. While an angel investor group formed in Springfield a few years ago, its growth has been limited. In contrast to Fort Collins, Springfield’s investors have a more conservative approach to funding entrepreneurs. Springfield’s appetite to invest is more cautious and increasing access to start-up capital will be a critical element to future entrepreneurial successes. Additionally, the informal network of mentors readily accessible to young entrepreneurs is a model worth pursuing in our community.

The Springfield Chamber’s efforts at local advocacy in recent years have improved the interaction between elected officials, city staff and the area’s business leaders. Specifically, the Voice of Business Committee and Springfield Good Government Committee have been important elements in improving the dialogue at City Council, and the quality of candidates running for City Council.

Good Government’s support of reasonable candidates has had a tangible result on the composition of Springfield City Council. Continued

corporate and individual financial support will be critical to sustain the effort for the long term. Complementing the efforts of the Springfield Good Government Committee has been the work of the Chamber's Voice of Business Committee. The regular presence of business leaders at Springfield City Council meetings helps ensure a balanced perspective in policy discussions. Participants on the leadership visit recognized the value of the long-term planning calendar used by the City of Fort Collins and Springfield City Manager Greg Burris quickly implemented a similar model upon our return. This is a significant improvement that will lead to a more proactive approach to issues that council will consider.

The quality of life enjoyed in southwest Missouri is exceptional, with proximity to rivers, lakes, streams and our Ozarks version of mountains. Leadership visit

participants acknowledged that the natural beauty and quality of life in our region is an understated asset that we can better celebrate and promote.

This visit reinforced that Springfield's community leaders are on the right path in many areas. Chief among those strengths is the strong collaboration that exists among Springfield's community leaders. However, we must continue to take pride in and invest in our physical space, provide the support necessary for innovative, entrepreneurial ventures, and recommit to attracting and retaining young talent.

We have learned from the Fort Collins experience, but how we adapt those lessons and respond locally will set the stage for Springfield's future economic prosperity. We must find the right way to build on our community strengths and still be open to new ideas that lead to growth and development.

“The Fort Collins community found their six-month City Council planning calendar to be a very effective way to keep their citizens updated regarding upcoming Council issues. **Since we've never been hesitant to steal someone else's good idea and give them credit, we immediately started working on our own version of this calendar and had it operational within weeks of our return.** We now have calendars available for City Council, Council Lunch Workshop, and Council Committee meetings, all available from the City's website.”

GREG BURRIS,
CITY OF SPRINGFIELD

list of participants

Jim Anderson
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Tom Bieker
2012 Springfield City Council

Brad Bodenhausen
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Richard Bottorf
Springfield-Branson National Airport
Board of Directors

Greg Burris
City of Springfield

Tim Connell
Connell Insurance, Inc.

Chris Coulter
Resource Management
Department, Greene County

Emily Denniston
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Senator Bob Dixon
Missouri State Senate

Rob Dixon
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Joel Doepker
Ozarks Technical Community College

Brad Erwin
Paragon Architecture, Inc.
The Network for Springfield's
Young Professionals

Tom Finnie
Good Community Committee

Brian Fogle
Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Inc.

Emily Fox
Discovery Center of Springfield

Kathy Fritts
City Utilities of Springfield

Ben Hackenwerth, Ed.D.
Springfield Public Schools

Leah Hamilton
Springfield Regional Arts Council

Dawn Hiles
Drury University

Sandy Howard
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Tracy Kimberlin
Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau

Allen Kunkel
Missouri State University

Darline Mabins
Metropolitan National Bank

Ken McClure
Missouri State University

Mark McFatrige
Metropolitan National Bank

Parker McKenna
Springfield Public Schools



Morey Mechlin
Care to Learn

Matt Miller
Matt Miller Company/Blue Block Lofts
The Miller-O'Reilly Company

Ryan Mooney
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Matt Morris
Missouri State University

John Oke-Thomas
Oke-Thomas + Associates, Inc.

Todd Parnell
Drury University

Thomas Prater, M.D.
Springfield R-12 Board of Education

Linda Ramey-Greive
Springfield News-Leader

Matt Russell
The Law Offices of Matthew Russell
Leadership Springfield

Jeff Schrag
The Daily Events
Mother's Brewing Company

Cora Scott
City of Springfield

Jeff Seifried
Springfield City Council

Clif Smart
Missouri State University

Dan Smith
Greene County Highway Department

Mary Lilly Smith
City of Springfield

Mayor Bob Stephens
Springfield City Council

Dean Thompson
City Utilities of Springfield

John Wanamaker
BKD, LLP

Brian Weiler
Springfield-Branson National Airport

John Wilson
UMB Bank

Rusty Worley
Urban Districts Alliance



www.springfieldchamber.com

“This was my first chamber trip and I found it extremely beneficial as a local business woman. **The information that Fort Collins shared allowed us to more clearly consider what assets Springfield has and how we could better capitalize on those.** However, the most beneficial thing for me was the quality time I was able to spend with peers from our own community during the trip.”

LINDA RAMEY-GREIWE,
SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER