Economist, mayors see brighter days ahead

Jobs are the focus today of political leaders from the halls of Congress to the city halls of municipalities.

On Wednesday, Jan. 25, the Denver Business Journal hosted the mayors of Aurora and Denver and an economist from Colorado State University for a 90-minute conversation about the state of the regional economy and local and regional economic development efforts.

The DBJ’s ‘Mayor’s Economic Forum: The State of the Cities’ was designed to bring an economic focus efforts of the metro area’s two largest cities to spur job creation.

Mayors Michael Hancock of Denver and Steve Hogan of Aurora are both first-term mayors, but with long records of public service to their communities as city council members and agency directors. They’re seen up close what works and what doesn’t.

And Martin Shields, director of the Regional Economics Institute at Colorado State University, provided the backdrop for the discussion, walking the audience through the economic challenges that characterized the last few years and taking a look ahead to what the Front Range can expect in 2012 and 2013.

His conclusion: Getting the region’s 8 percent unemployment rate down is going to require significant new job creation — more than what has been experienced in the somewhat anemic recovery that has taken place in 2011.

The two newly minted mayors outlined detailed plans by their respective administrations to clear the road for private-sector job creation, to retain businesses, and in lesser degree, the 20 jobs of small businesses that make up the lion’s share of new job creation in today’s economy.

I hope you’ll enjoy these edited remarks from “State of the Cities.”

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Martin Shields is director of the Regional Economics Institute at Colorado State University and a professor of economics. He joined CSI as a regional economist in 2008 and has produced a series of economic studies on everything from health care and clean energy to the recent economic impacts of CSI on the state of Colorado.

Shields was the opening presenter at the Denver Business Journal’s “State of the Cities” event on Jan. 25, offering a perspective on the regional economy in 2011 and what lies ahead for 2012 (transcript edited for space and clarity).

SHIELDS: Thanks for the opportunity to be here today. I always enjoy talking about the economy, and I really enjoy putting these talks together, because I do learn and I’m always fascinated about the dynamics of this Denver metro area.

My challenge today is to talk to you about 20 minutes about where we see the economy going, and provide a little bit of the day to day of the day.

And we think about what real challenges is as an economy and what our real focus is going to be, today it will be the need to occupy the labor market.

The United States and the Denver metro area are facing truly significant job challenges. When we think about where the Denver metropolitan statistical area is, 52,000 fewer jobs than four years ago, nearly 67,000 more people out of work than four years ago, and we face a decade of real challenges with household incomes, median household income adjusted for inflation.

Denver County is about 12 percent less than it was 10 years ago. So there’s a lot of significant economic challenges that policymakers such as the mayors of Denver and Aurora and all the leaders in this room are facing as we continue to recover from what we think about as the Great Recession.

We’re 60,000 jobs below where we were before the recession, but we’re really about 100,000 jobs short of where we need to be. And it’s not just people out of work. This is lost potential to the economy. This is people that should be working because they’re not working and spending their time trying to find a job, and at the same time, their skills are deteriorating in their job search.

But as we move forward, if you think about where we’re going to be in 2012, there are some glimmers of hope. What we see is not a robust recovery by any stretch of the imagination, but it’s a solid one. Unless Europe does something really crazy — and I don’t put it past them — but unless that happens, you know, I think that the recovery is underway. And there is not as much of a threat to it as we think there could be.

One of the questions I always get in these forums is, "Where are the jobs coming from?" If we have limited economic development resources, how should those resources be allocated, and who are the target businesses to work with? The bulk of new jobs are going to come from businesses with 20 and 250 workers. So when we think about where the energy is, where the dynamics are in the economy today, it’s in these smallish companies with 20 to 250.

Up in our neck of the woods in Fort Collins, the OsterBox company is making iPad cases and iPhone cases, which allow my kids to throw away their cell phones and without too much damage. This was a small company with a great idea that grew to one that has nearly 400 employees in Fort Collins, and it’s just over a short period of time.

From left, Aurora Mayor Stephen Hogan, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock and Martin Shields, director of the Regional Economics Institute at Colorado State University, presented their economic outlooks during the Denver Business Journal’s State of the Cities forum Jan. 25.
Continued from page 10.

These young, dynamic companies, which are not necessarily service-oriented. In the past, the job growth has come from as we started to emerge from this recession, and there is no reason to think that pattern is going to change. So when we think about who are our target audience for economic development, where some of these companies fit in, one of those mdxidy, dynamic young companies.

So let's think about where the region is going to deal with their own business are. We talked about small and mid-sized companies, 25 to 200 workers, being the groups that engage us, and so one of the industries that do better and some industries that are having difficulties continue to struggle.

What industries along the Front Range are, in particular, growing?

Energy, of course, with the new shale developments and health care, which has been a strong performer over the decade, will continue to grow; professional and business services, which can be a consequence of the dynamics and attorneys and others, we're seeing some growth in that. One of the interesting things within that sector is we're also seeing some activity in the architecture world and in the civil engineering area, which may be part of our construction... we're seeing some of these areas that have really struggled over the last couple of years, but are now turning around. Then, of course, in the wholesale trade is another sector that as the economy continues to grow.

Areas of struggle

Struggling areas are going to be government, as the state and local governments continue to deal with their own revenue shortfalls. What had been a sector that was growing at the same rate of population growth has been a lot of these small areas, towns, that have a lot of different capacity to deal with their own fiscal challenges, financial activities. We've got mortgage and title search companies and others that are struggling. And then the information sector, the software industry, is struggling a little bit in the region and has been for the last couple of years. And this housing sector has been the result of a lot of this unemployment problem. The housing market bubble burst and, with it, the new residential construction essentially stopped in the northern Front Range or in the Front Range overall.

If you read the media reports, they say that the housing market is close to stabilizing. We've actually seen an uptick in new starts recently, and that's true, but the fact is, that we can't really very easily have fewer housing starts than we had over the last couple of years, OK. What this region did, not just in the 2004 to 2006 housing bubble, but what did they really do over the last 20 years or so, on a monthly basis, we might be having 1,200 or 1,000 housing starts. And we think about what we've done over the last two years or last three years, it's about 200 housing starts, OK. So, 1,000 housing starts a month, fewer than average, 12,000 fewer housing starts a year.

You can see why we don't have people working as plumbers and electricians and drywallers any more, and you can see why the unemployment rate is too damn high because a lot of important work isn't being done. But economists are starting to talk

about this to the extent to which we might actually see the remnants of a housing shortage. We've actually continued to grow our population. We've stopped building houses. We have a lot of overhang, and we have a lot of properties in foreclosure, but now what we have to start paying attention to (is) perhaps we have built too few houses (I know that's what to say that, and I can't believe I'm saying that right now. But that's one of the things that you know, you're going to be looking at a little bit closer at.

But there are some signs that that market is turning around. We've seen a slight uptick in starts. When we look at the different sectors in housing, construction, buildings, especially trade contractors, they are actually starting to add jobs. But by far, the housing sector hasn't turned around in any measurable way. Construction starts are still very, very low by historical standards. And housing prices in the region continue to fall, although not as fast as they did fall 12 months ago.

So, while we think the recovery continues in 2012, when we think about the overall economy, it's a lackluster recovery. We've got some little green shoots or whatever we were optimistically calling them a year ago, I think that they are actually starting to emerge now, but it's still a lackluster pace.

While I think the US economy has stabilized, we are really tied into what happens in Europe, and we have to keep a close eye on what happens over there because if Europe goes into a severe recession because of the sovereign debt crisis, then there could be problems. Japan is our largest trading partner as a whole.

We have to think about the unemployment rate going to be high in the region, but lower than the national average. So that's an encouraging sign, but a real challenge, and it's not just a challenge out of the Great Recession, but a decade-long challenge in recognizing household incomes. So we're not just focusing on jobs, but focusing on the economic development strategy that creates high-paying jobs.

So let's talk a little bit about our 2012 outlook. Last year, we added about 10,000 new jobs in the region. Looking at 2012, maybe we'll see 13,000 to 14,000 new jobs, which would be a 2.5 to 3.5 percent growth rate, which is good news.

If you think about it, though, if we have a 100,000-job gap, 10,000 new jobs per year, for 10 years at that rate would get us back to where we should be today. And then you've got five more years of population growth to today. So it's going to be a while until we get back to where we need to be.

The unemployment rate currently, 8 percent in the region. If we have a 1.5 percent type of growth, we might see a full percentage drop in the unemployment rate by this time next year, which is pretty impressive given a lot of the issues and the dynamics of the labor market. So, you know, still much above where we want to be, where we need to be, and obviously heading in the right direction.

One of the most remarkable things about the recession was despite the fact that the 7 million or 8 million people lost their jobs nationally is that wages continued to grow for those that were fortunate enough to keep their jobs. It kept in pace with inflation and kind of reflected some of the productivity and efficiency needs that the economy was able to do, but at the same time, we're not seeing a lot of real household income growth. Even though wages are growing, household incomes are not growing very much, so that continues to be a primary challenge locally and nationally.

So, you know, this is the upshot. I have to tell you that, because you might not think that I am quasi, sort of kind of bullish on 2012 and feeling better about 2013. But it is indeed too early to declare victory, it is too early to say that this is over, that we've turned the corner, and that happy days are here again. We can't do that.

Our policymakers, our local business leaders, our individual small businesses, and even entrepreneurs at the heart of these partnerships, our economic development corporations, our chambers of commerce, our labor leaders, the people that are in this together have to continue to work hard to turn this economy around.

It's not to say that things are back to normal, we can go on to other things, it certainly requires a much greater commitment. And, you know, the things are even in the good times, it's essential for us to remain committed to helping individuals and businesses prosper in Colorado.

In addressing the crowd at the State of the Cities Forum Jan. 25, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock said, "I often think that one of the first lines of my responsibility as mayor is to instill confidence in every person that I walk into that we're going to be all right."
CONTINUED FROM P.17

I was at this reception where we were, of course, trying to raise money. And a business leader walked up to me in downtown Denver. I had never met this guy before, but he walked up and he said, “I don’t know you, but I’m here to support you.”

And he said, “I’m going to tell you why I’m here to support you, because yes, we’re struggling in an economy but the reality is people just simply want to know we’re going to be OK, and yes you project the perception that we’re going to be OK.

More than anything in the world, I don’t want to let the people of Denver down or the people of Colorado down. And I know that Mayor Steve Hogan is going to come up here and he’s going to say the thing: Bottom line is, we’re going to be OK. We have a lot to be proud of here in Colorado, and we have a lot to be proud of here in our great city of Denver. And you’ll hear about the great city of Aurora.

Even in the midst of this very difficult, challenging, and yes, disturbing and depressing economic downturn, we have shown, I believe as a state and as a region, that we have the building blocks to come through this and to be OK. When you say the fact that we have one of the most educated workforces in the country, we have a culture of innovation and sustainability here in Colorado, we have a modern infrastructure that connects us to the world, and we have a commitment to regionalism, we have the building blocks to not walk away, because we’re in this together, kick the damn door in and to run through it. And that is the power of what we are experiencing in this recession.

People, businesses want to be in Denver.

I am proud to say that we are a first among the nation’s most desirable places to live. Even today, in the midst of this economic recession and even though Denver decided to embark upon its largest infrastructure investment in the history of the city, the beginning of this recession, we still maintain a solid, Triple A bond rating nationwide. Our housing sector is growing, our economy is growing. But we’re beginning to see that we’re leading the nation out of the doldrums, out of the abyss of this housing recession.

Wages in Denver are going up, and as we walk around today, I am thinking that this is a sign of hope. Unemployment is beginning to decline. There are 10,000 more people in Denver working today than there were at this time last year in 2011.

I want to return just give you a rose-colored perspective of Denver. I am going to be very clear and very basic. We have a long way to go. There are still too many people out of work. As Martin Shields told us, the unemployment rate is still too damn high. There are too many businesses not surviving in our economy, and there is still too much uncertainty in the marketplace.

Over the last six months, we’ve had to approach our economy and we had to approach our process around economic development in very practical terms. I fundamentally believe that we have to create a government that both our business and local level, that has to be a better partner with the private sector. We have to be more efficient, by removing obstacles to permitting and inspecting services. And we have to help our employers and businesses as best we can to turn the processes, and the tools that we have available to help them grow, to help economic development strategies advance.

You all may have read on Monday, I received a report from our structural financial task force, which recognized the fact that Denver starts its budget process every year $10-$25 million upside down. We simply cannot sustain what we consider to be a great city with such a process and with such a deficit every year. We’ve got to get—that is, and we will.

They came back Monday, and they said three things. One: We can’t cut our way out of this. We’ve looked at the expenditure side, and we’ve tried to do everything we could to help Denver come out of this just by cutting it. If we had done that, we would have severely impacted Denver’s ability to deliver core services that we, as a citizen, have come to expect in a great city.

No. 2, we have to look at revenues. Denver has to fundamentally shift from a product sales-tax-based revenue-generation budget to a service-based revenue generated budget, and you are going to have to make some very tough decisions when it comes to fines or fees or city, the City of Denver.

And then finally, the budget task force said something that Paul Washington, who is here as a director of economic development, has said since the day he took the jobs, “We’ve got to grow the pie. We’ve got to find ways to increase our stature in this city.”

And so we have taken a look at the structural task force, and we’re going to have to make some tough decisions. I’m going to get to that aside because we’re not here to talk about the financial task force, but let me take that third leg that they presented to us in the final minutes of my presentation, growing the pie.

On Monday he and I will unveil what we call our economic strategy for 2012, JumpStart Denver 2012. The plan has seven pillars of economic development that we believe are necessary for us to lay the foundations for future years beyond 2012. The first one is what Martin talked about.

The one sector that is growing jobs today in our economy is small and medium-sized companies. And as a city, we simply are going to focus on advocating for small businesses and begin to put to some building blocks to help our small businesses get started and growing in the City of Denver.

Creating a common vision

One of the things that I struggled with as a member of City Council and as a candidate for mayor is that we didn’t have a solid vision strategy around economic development in the City of Denver. I tasked 10 people in the Office of Economic Development what our vision was, I would get 10 different answers. And unfortunately, we were kind of like a hungry soul going into a grocery store. You know how it is if you are hungry and you go grocery shopping, you put anything and everything in your basket, a lot of things that you don’t need or want. And that’s what we were doing as an economic development strategy in Denver.

The whole idea of this economic JumpStart Denver 2012 is to put at least a vision and a strategy in place that will focus our team and allow us to move forward with the goal of driving jobs. No. 1. Our goal for our small businesses is to work with our financial partners, our banks and other lending institutions to raise $20 million to invest in community development and financial institutions. They will be the ones who start by lending to our startups and small businesses to give them the opportunity and the legs to get to a point where they can really build a fundamental partnership with traditional lending institutions.

We get this idea from pooling together our banks. And they simply said, if you play your role as a city and you nurture small businesses from startup to five years, we’ll take it from there. But they have to have the fundamental building
blocks to get to our front door, and we’ll begin to lend and we’ll partner with them. So we’re going to stand our lane, we’re going to be a strong partner by advocating for small businesses and startups in the city, and we’re going to help them to get to the five-year marks so that the traditional lending institutions can take over.

No. 3. Business retention is an issue that, of course, the business community has said very clearly, you must focus on helping companies stay here. We’re going to start by creating a lease-expiration database in Denver so we have an idea about companies that are primed to expand and to grow and maybe move, so we can be more proactive on the front end and communicate relationships with that.

Paul Washington and his team in economic development are going to be extremely busy in visiting companies that exist in Denver. We cannot only be focused on the outward talking about bringing a company in. We’ve got to stop sometimes and thank all of you business leaders who are here and say thank you for being in Denver. We want to be your partner today, and give you the tools for employing our people today in Denver, Colorado. So business retention is going to be extremely important.

Business recruitment is the third pillar of our economic development strategy. We will follow our focus business development program that includes identifying and recruiting suppliers, vendors, and service providers for the largest manufacturing companies in the Denver metro region. Again, we look at companies that have moved into Denver. SMA Solar, for example, responsible for 30 plus five new companies moving into Denver because those companies want to be a part of their supply chain. They are critical partners to our supply chain activity.

Folks, by recruiting the companies to Denver, we get a chance to turn our attention to selecting smaller companies they are partnering with, but we have to have a focus strategy, and that’s what we plan to do under pillar No. 3.

No. 4. Sustainable neighborhood development, being very intentional about working with energy-efficient projects and efforts in our neighborhoods, but also being very intentional about investing in the small mom-and-pop shops in our neighborhoods and being intentional about making sure those retail opportunities that exist in our communities grow and get stronger.

One of the things that we have going on now is a retail strategy development project. And we hope to unveil this year a whole new retail strategy for Denver that is focused on something we haven’t had in a long time that will give us a blueprint when we attend an international conference and say who do we want to recruit to Denver, where do we want them to go.

KATHRYN LAINE-ROBERTS/CRONOS

Metro Denver business leaders gathered Jan. 25 for the SBID’s annual State of the Cities forum.
and have a strategy to attack it when we get there. Very intentional, sustainable neighborhood development strategy, the fourth pillar.

No. 5, getting better at lending again. We want to try to pull back the cap of creating opportunities and lending opportunities for our businesses, being strategically focused, and working with our partners in the market.

No. 6, helping strategic projects get moving in Denver. Ninth Avenue and Colwood, Arapahoe Avenue, Union Station, Brighton Boulevard, National Western Stock Show, these are all the projects growing the opportunity corridor from downtown to DIA, the Aerotropolis. These are opportunities to leverage new economic opportunities to bring in international investors and to really put our stamp on Denver going forward. These are transformative projects that we can help partner and get them moving. This job creation is investing for the future, and it’s sustaining our economic efforts going forward.

No. 7, workforce development. We have to think smart. We have to think more sustainably about our efforts around workforce development.

We know that people have to be retrained and prepared to compete in this new economy more than the normal. No longer can we just help people with their résumé; no longer can we just help them with finding a job to sustain their families. We need to help them obtain the skills that will keep them marketable for the rest of their lives.

So employment and training takes on a whole new meaning for us. People need to have good quality training, but understand the skills that are necessary in this new economy.

And as Washington shifts its focus, as the president talked about his jobs and employment training locally, we must shift our focus and make sure we have quality partnerships with our community colleges and other community-based institutions, and we are training folks to take on marketable skills so they can be employable for the rest of their lives.

Taking advantage of opportunities

We have some great opportunities that are going to be facing Denver and our region coming up. I’m very proud that TID will host the very first presidential debate in October. Very proud. It is the most-watched presidential debate in all of Denver, and we’re kind of drunk with this Republican debate, but I’m talking about the presidential debate. So we will have a very similar exercise that we saw with the DNC here in Denver.

And Oct. 3, I don’t want us to miss that opportunity to once again showcase Denver on an international stage. Over 3,000 journalists will be in Denver. It’s an opportunity for us, again, to increase our presence internationally.

We are hosting the international Airport Cities Conference later this year, and I’m extremely excited to put on stage the fifth-largest airport, fifth-busiest airport in the country and the third in the world, and to talk about our possibilities around the Aerotropolis.

FastTracks — not passing the final fund-

ing for FastTracks is not an option. It is our
connectivity to the rest of the world. It’s
that time that Denver move into the 21st cen-
tury with its transit system, and complet-
ing the funding for FastTracks in our ticket
to do that. We’ve got to do it. It’s a bigger
pill, but I’m going to tell you something,
what we will receive from finishing Fast-
Tracks will pale in comparison to what
will be gigantic compared to what we’re
being asked to pay.

And then finally, as we explore the pos-
sibility of the 2023 Olympics, huge oppor-
tunity for us. We’ve got to be smart and
thoughtful about it, and that’s what the
expansory process is all about.

I don’t mean to come here and, again,
give a rose-colored analysis. We have
some difficult challenges ahead of us,
some tough decisions that have to be
made, but all in all, as a region and as a
state, we have the tools to be awesome
coming out of this recession and to take
our rightful place on that global stage.

Thank you all very much.

Mayor Stephen Hogan’s career in ser-
vice to Aurora began in 1974 when he ran
successfully for House District 40. After
serving in the state Capitol as a legislator
for one term, Hogan ran for one of Aurora’s
two-large city council seats in 1979. His suc-
cessful run that year began a remarkable
and unprecedented record of service on
the Aurora City Council, six nonconsecutive
full terms spanning more than 30 years,
It's an example of the kind of thing that we, in Colorado, and we, in local government, must do today to help ourselves, to bring ourselves out of what we've been through for the past few years. This particular moment was taken to Europe, and it was used in a presentation to help bring an international power-wielding conference to Aurora and to metropolitan Denver later this year and next year. It's exactly the kind of thing that has to be done.

But it's also the message that we, as a city, are open for business and that it's real. It's not only more than a time to dream and a time to create and a time to build and a time to read, because we don't do it, nobody else will.

Job creation not the only challenge

Now, part of my comments this morning are not only talk about what we're doing in Aurora in the State of the City. If you will, but some of the challenges, and to go beyond just jobs, but, jobs, because that has to be the mantra. We need to talk a little bit more about our communities, and we need to get messages out to everyone, because that's what becomes valuable in that communication and that metropolitan cooperation that we need to see, whether it's Denver and Aurora, whether it's Aurora and Arvada, what is it? It's Aurora and Commerce City, Aurora and Centennial, or any of the other 40 odd communities in the metropolitan Denver area.

Aurora is doing well. That doesn't mean we don't have our challenges. On the doing-well side, we've identified by a recent University of Michigan report, as one of the most successfully integrated cities in the United States. At the same time, we have faced some problems, not one. The largest of those school districts, Aurora Public Schools, estimate that at home in that district, the home languages come from 120 different countries and 36 different home languages. That's what our schools are facing today.

And yet at the same time, Aurora Public Schools has adopted some of the most creative programs in the state of Colorado. They don't take a K-12 approach. They take a student approach, and that includes programs such as Career Pathways, which involves getting students in high school involved in career tracks, not like the old vocational education that I went through when I was in high school, but getting actively involved in programs that are sponsored by entities like Buckley Air Force Base, the Anschutz Campus, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Prologis, Staples, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and the Denver Museum of Nature and History; health; science pathways; science, technology, engineering and math pathways; business pathways; arts and communications pathways; and a pacemaker program that allows gifted and talented and ahead-of-the-curve Aurora Public School students to enroll for free in college courses at the Community College of Aurora while they're still in high school. Those are the kinds of things that we, as governments, and we, as communities, need to advocate.

Aurora is not a city and a county. And as such, we don't have a responsibility for health care services such as you may find in Denver, but at the same time as a city, we have responsibilities to address homelessness issues. We have a responsibility to address health issues and health access issues, and we're doing so. Those are the kinds of things that we need to do as communities today. We can't fix our problems unless we acknowledge our problems.

The same thing is true in the area of law enforcement and crime reduction. Aurora has experienced a 32 percent reduction in major crime in the last six years. We are today identified — by Forbes Magazine — as the ninth safest city in the United States of cities of population over 250,000. We are consistently, and have been for years, on the FBI list of the 10 safest cities in the country again, cities over 250,000.

We involve a community entity that was created specifically to address any sensitive or potential issues, controversial issues involving the police department or the fire department; we call it ECKL. It's a community response team that involves business, schools, clergy, and the police and fire departments.

We've initiated foreign language-based multicultural neighborhood watch programs. Those are the kinds of things for us, as a community, need to be involved in. And we've done all that with six consecutive years of city budget cuts and a balanced budget every year. And the only question that we are facing in 2012 with the city budget is whether there will be no increase or a minimal $3 million to $5 million budget cut. And that's a good news. It's a city that has been cutting budgets and cutting budgets and cutting budgets for six years. That is our reality. But as

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FORUM: Aurora creating incentive packages for jobs

Continued from A21

I said, it's a time to dream and it's a time to create and it's a time to build and it is a time to lead.

We currently have in one square mile in Aurora more than $1.5 billion worth of construction contracts under way. That one square mile is the Anschutz Campus, the Fitzsimons District that contains the University of Colorado Hospital, Children's Hospital, the new VA Hospital. That activity is under way right now. Those aren't contracts that are waiting to be let. That isn't activity that we are anticipating. That's what's happening today.

Across the street from the Fitzsimons campus, Corporate with has just completed the first phase of a new, 32-acre Fitzsimons Village project with a hotel, structured parking, Class A office building, and that Class A office building is already occupied, and they are looking at Phase II.

The Children's Hospital expansion is a $238 million, 10-story, 350-square-foot-lot facility, adding 125 beds to their efforts; University Hospital, $400 million expansion, 12 stories, 720,000 square feet, 144 immediate beds, with the possibility of 144 more. The VA is an $800 million contract for a new hospital, $40 million health and wellness center, $20 million addition to the Anschutz Cancer Center.

At the same time, there is a $50 million improvement at the interchange of Colfax and I-252 that also includes the building of an additional exit off of 225 at 17th Avenue to serve the Fitzsimons area.

In addition, the city has huge opportunities for growth and the creation of jobs.

As a matter of fact, in the last month, the City Council of Aurora has tentatively approved three new incentive packages that will bring a thousand new jobs to the city of Aurora in the next year upon final approval. It's because we have tremendous opportunities. We have land. We have water, we have services, we have citizens, we have people — all good news.

And it's not just all in Aurora. Our neighbors at Front Range Airport, as Gov. Hick-

endoomed Governor Hick代办over the month ago, are interested in a spaceport designation. That's in Adams County. That's not in Au-

nora. We are excited about that possibility, and we will do everything that we can do to help make that a reality. Aerotropolis, Mayor Hancock's offering, something we're excited about, something we want to be involved with.

Green is good for Aurora

We are also focused on renewable energy, green jobs. At the end of last year, it was announced that General Electric will be coming to Aurora with a new thin-film solar manufacturing plant, production to begin in 2013. They were looking for a ready-made site, Aurora had one. It will employ 350 workers, workers who aren't in Aurora today.

Just out close to that Front Range Air-

port site, some of you may or may not know about what we call the ACRE (Au-

rora Campus for Renewable Energy) — 1,782 acres. It is the largest renewable-energy research and development testing facility in the world. Already there today are Xcel, Abengoa Solar, SunEdison, the Electric Power Research Institute, the At-

lantic for Sustainable Energy ... the Mid-

west Research Institute and the Colorado Renewable Energy Collaboratory, and they only take up about 10 percent of that 1,700 acres. That won't be just a benefit to Aurora as it develops. It will be a benefit to the entire Denver metropolitan area, and that's what we need to think about in this community as how we come together.

And a few years ago, we were named the No. 1 sports city in Colorado by Sports Illustrated magazine, even though we don't have the Broncos or the Rockies or the Avalanche or the Rapids or any of the other professional teams. And that's all well and good, but, again, what we need to do is talk about cooperation and working together. We will not succeed individually in this metropolitan area unless this metropol-

ropolitan area succeeds. And that means Aurora must help Denver, Denver must help Aurora and all of our other sister cit-

ies in this community.

Now, in conclusion, I'll finish with a couple of lines that I delivered at an Au-

nora Chamber of Commerce talk about a month ago ... Aurora today is saying to business, "If you have a vision, let us help you to achieve it. If you have a dream, let us help you to make it come true. We are open for business. Our success will be your success."