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Website to get facelift in 2012

Pages 12-13

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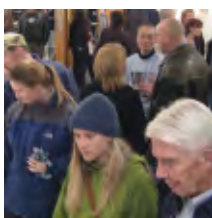
NEWS



Brinkman planning Loveland project
\$9M, 55-unit complex in downtown slated for 2013 completion
Page 2



Encompass routes a path to profits
Software firm helps beer distributors track deliveries
Page 3



THE EDGE
Art Lab helps build 'creative' economy
Experimental Fort Collins cooperative offers space to artists
Page 9

FOR THE RECORD
Pages 19-21

LISTS

Private Health Clubs
Page 14

Public Recreation
Page 15

Land sales making a comeback

By Molly Armbrister
marmbrister@ncbr.com

Land sales are slowly yet steadily coming back across Northern Colorado, with builders and investors alike closing a rising

number of deals in recent months.

"Activity is way up across the board," said Cassidy Turley Fuller Real Estate Vice President Russell Baker, who specializes in land sales. "Last year we were selling

more to investors; this year it's been to builders."

It is likely to be years more before land sales reach peaks seen before the downturn, but Baker said he began to note a rise in lot sales over the last six to nine

months.

In one of the larger deals, Landmark Homes, a Windsor-based developer, purchased 88 condo lots and associated water credits from CTF in the Centerra

See LAND, 16

Ski-equipment recycling outfit hopes for a lift

By Joshua Zaffos
news@ncbr.com

It's sort of a black-diamond run environmental problem: Skiers and the resorts they visit buy 1 million pairs of skis annually, leaving older equipment to pile up in garages and sheds and eventually end up in the trash.

The high-tech and mixed compositional makeup of snow-sports products makes recycling a difficult affair and, until recently, no one was collecting and reprocessing the materials as commodities.

Now, Waste-Not Recycling, based outside Loveland, is helping to lead a pioneering initiative to recycle and reuse skiing equipment. Its objective is to change how manufacturers do business, triggering a revolution in a multibillion-dollar industry with deep ties to Colorado.

"Nobody in the world is doing this," Anita Comer,

See WASTE-NOT, 17



Joshua Zaffos, Northern Colorado Business Report

Commodity broker – Waste-Not's Todd Loose with a couple of handfuls of aluminum parts taken from recycled ski and snowsports gear.

Oil boom ushers gusher of legal, accounting work

By Steve Porter
sporter@ncbr.com

Oil and gas companies and the landowners who lease to them are enjoying a boom time in the Niobrara shale play in northeast-

ern Colorado. But others are also profiting – including attorneys and CPAs – from the stepped-up drilling activity.

Fort Collins attorney Robert Pickering, who has been working with oil companies and landown-

ers in Wyoming and Colorado for nearly 30 years, says his business in Colorado has definitely picked up.

"It used to be almost exclusively Wyoming, but now it's about 50-50 – maybe a little more now in Colorado," he said.

While Pickering works both sides of the operator-landowner fence, he keeps the lines clearly drawn between who he represents in each state and in each situation.

"I work for the landowners

See OIL, 16

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\$9M apartment project in the works for Loveland

By Molly Armbrister
marmbrister@ncbr.com

If all goes as planned, downtown Loveland could be home to a new \$9 million, 55-unit apartment complex in 2013.

But first, the city must do some shifting of its Urban Renewal Areas to pave the way for the project, which is planned for 533 N. Lincoln Ave.

Because of the tax increment financing that helps fund projects in URAs, that block of Lincoln must be moved from one URA to another to help provide the developer some of the financing it needs to make the project a reality.

The block in question is currently part of the downtown Loveland URA, but the Loveland city council is working to move it into a separate, smaller URA, formally known as Block 41-Finley's Addition.

The smaller, two-acre Block 41 URA is bounded by Lincoln on the west, Sixth Street on the north, Jefferson Avenue on the east and Fifth Street on the south. The area is currently generating \$158,000 in TIF revenue annually, according to Loveland City Planner Mike Scholl.

Block 41, more commonly known as the Lincoln Place Project URA, was carved out of the existing downtown URA in 2005 to accommodate parking



Courtesy Brinkman Partners

IN DEVELOPMENT – Construction could begin in June so long as the city can shift the block where the project is planned from one Urban Renewal Authority to another.

See **LOVELAND**, 16



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THE EYE

Software survey signals soreness

A nationwide survey of U.S. workers – outside the IT industry – found 61 percent of respondents think that they could design “better, user-friendlier and more productive” computer programs – if they knew how to design software.

The Eye sees it another way: 61 percent of respondents feel professional software designers deliberately design programs to be difficult and counterintuitive. Why? Because software engineers *love* receiving customer calls to the support line.

The survey – administered by Amplitude Research and sponsored by Denver-based **TrackVia**, which helps business users build their own software-as-a-service applications – also found three-in-five respondents admitted to catching themselves yelling at their computer over software frustrations.

Really, what does yelling at a computer accomplish? It doesn't respond or react, which can only compound your frustrations.

And if any computer could understand you, then you're most likely yelling at IBM's Watson – an artificial intelligence computer that beat the “Jeopardy” biggest all-time money winner, Brad Rutter, and longest champion streak holder, Ken Jennings, in a mental throw-down in February.

What is one computer I don't want to get into a verbal bout with, Alex.

In total, 350 non-IT and C-level employees completed the survey. For more information and survey results, visit www.trackvia.com/trackvia-blog/ – but only if your Internet browser is well designed.

INSIDE

Banking	8
Classifieds	17
Commentary	22
For The Record ...	19-21

SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE

Encompass routes a path to profits

Software firm helps beer distributors track deliveries

By Steve Porter
sporter@ncbr.com

FORT COLLINS – It all started when a father asked his son a favor.

Could he create a better software program to help dad more efficiently manage

his beer distributorship?

That request from Kent O'Neil to his son, Jonathan, resulted in Encompass Technologies Inc., a Fort Collins company that specializes in developing software to help beverage distributors better track their products as they move from the warehouse into the marketplace.

Jonathan, then still a Colorado State University electrical engineering student,



O'NEIL, J.

wrote the software program for his dad as his senior-year project.

“I wanted a program that basically could handle everything from the supplier to the retailer, including inventory, accounts receivable, general accounting – everything we needed to do,” said Kent.

He said the route accounting software



O'NEIL, K.

See ENCOMPASS, 15

Hay producers fetching record prices

Drought-induced shortage affects dairies, other buyers

By Steve Porter
sporter@ncbr.com

NORTHERN COLORADO – There's a shortage of hay this year, and it's hitting dairies and other buyers in the pocketbook.

Everyone who buys hay for feed is feeling the pinch, as droughts in southeast Colorado and in states south of Colorado – notably Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico – drive up the price, especially for the alfalfa hay sought by dairies for its high nutrient content. Lower grade hay yields lower grade milk.

Aggravating the problem: many farmers in recent years reduced the size of their hayfields or plowed them under to grow corn and other crops with more predictable demand and higher cash value.

That low supply and high demand has resulted in some local hay producers selling to the highest bidder on what was already a fairly limited supply in Northern Colorado.

Some hay producers are getting nearly twice as much as they did in 2010 for their premium hay, according to Rodger Ott, deputy director of the National Agricultural Statistics Service Colorado field office.

See HAY, 11



Business Report file photo

Funding cuts headed for Fort Collins DDA

By Molly Armbrister
marmbrister@ncbr.com

Tighter times are coming to the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority in 2012, due to state legislation that altered the way DDAs throughout the state are funded, resulting in a 57-percent decrease in funding for the Fort Collins DDA in the coming year.

The legislation was signed by former Gov. Bill Ritter in Fort Collins in 2008. At the time, former DDA president Chip Steiner told the *Business Report* that Ritter chose Fort Collins for the signing because Ritter considered Fort Collins to be one of

the state's best examples of how tax increment financing has paid for redevelopment and new projects in the city.

The bill ushered in an extension of the funding mechanism for the DDAs of Fort Collins and other Colorado cities that employ TIF revenue to fund projects. That was a welcome change. Less welcome was a new 50-50 split with other taxing entities that will mean less money in DDA coffers.

Most Fort Collins entities that use TIF revenue, such as Urban Renewal Areas, operate on a timeline that allows them to collect the funds for 30 years, beginning when the TIF district is created.

TIF dollars are generated by taxes col-

lected from enhanced property values. When a TIF is set up, all governmental entities continue to receive the tax revenues they collected prior to the establishment of a URA. Any increases seen in tax revenue as a result of development induced by the establishment of the TIF are funneled back to the TIF district to help fund further improvement.

Once the 30 years have passed, all taxing entities begin to collect taxes on the new base, which will have presumably increased over time due to redevelopment.

The extension passed in 2008 allows DDAs to collect TIF revenue for an addi-

See DDA, 11

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Homegrown job-listing service finds traction

NOCOJobsList founder marks first year of operation

By Steve Porter
sporter@ncbr.com

FORT COLLINS – For Kris Erlewine, it's been a long year. But things are looking up.

Erlewine is marking one year of offering his own homegrown job-assistance service to those trying to navigate a tough jobs market.

And he's turning a corner on the service's profitability.

"This month is the first month I'll break even," Erlewine said. "I'm just starting to break even and pay my bills."

Erlewine started NOCOJobsList in December 2010 after his own bout of unemployment and frustration with the usual job-assistance tools found on the Internet – CareerBuilder, Craig's List, Monster, LinkedIn and others.

"It was founded because I was in the job market myself and it's based on the dissatisfaction I had with the tools of who's hiring and even who's out there," he said.

"I looked for a job for six months and got a real education," he said. "I looked in all the major job sites, but it was really only maybe 10 percent of the jobs out there."

Erlewine said he discovered most of the best available jobs are only listed on company websites. "What I found was the greatest repository of jobs online are living on employer websites and they are

all over the place."

Erlewine pores over more than 750 websites of companies in the Northern Colorado region, basically looking at "everything north of Denver."

"I thought, there's a niche here – I could probably create a business around that," he said. "I'm trying to provide the best available window on the job scene from Boulder to Greeley."

That's resulted in the creation of a proprietary 1,000-company database, and the jobs he finds by combing his database are the NOCOJobsReport, a weekly email listing of the newest positions in the region.

To access the weekly update, job seekers pay \$15 a month, a nominal fee that Erlewine says provides a picture of the region's professional level jobs market but is still "kind of an uphill battle because, in general, job seekers don't feel they should have to pay to see the jobs."

"They think everything on the Internet should be free," he says with a note of disbelief.

"The average job I send out requires at least one degree and pays \$70,000 to \$80,000 a year," he said. "If they go back to work even one day earlier, that's worth several hundred dollars to them."

The other product Erlewine offers is the NOCOJobsList, a free service to his 3,500 job-seeking subscribers. Employers pay \$75 to list a job on noco-jobslist.com, and subscribers receive emails with the latest postings.

Fort Collins resident Noelle Maestas is one former subscriber who eventually found a job with help from NOCOJobsList.

"It was helpful," she said. "There's a lot of great jobs listed, and what I liked about it was they were all from this area in Northern Colorado."

Maestas found employment at a Fort Collins company – Couragent – that

See **JOBS, 14**



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C O R R E C T I O N S

The Geek Chic column in the Dec. 16 issue incorrectly reported that compact fluorescent light bulbs use 25 percent less power than an equivalent incandescent bulb. Compact fluorescents use 25 percent of the power used by an equivalent incandescent. Also, if each household in the U.S. replaced a single 60-watt incandescent with a 7-watt LED, the country would save 23,600 megawatts per day.

The *Business Report* will correct any errors that appear in its pages. To suggest a correction or clarification, please contact editor Allen Greenberg at 970-232-3142, or email him at agreenberg@ncbr.com.

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Retail property sales outpace all others in 2011

By Paula Moore
news@ncbr.com

Sales of Northern Colorado commercial real estate in 2011 improved slightly over 2010, with demand highest for properties in high-traffic locations and stable cash flow.

Overall, there were roughly 120 sales transactions in the first three quarters of '11, compared to 112 for the same period the previous year, according to a third-quarter report by Sperry Van Ness/The Group Commercial.

Total dollar volume, though, was down for the same periods — to roughly \$135 million in '11 from nearly \$150 million in '10 — because there were more properties on the market than buyers, which meant deals closing at below asking prices.

In the biggest shift from 2010, sales of retail properties by dollar value in 2011 outpaced those of office buildings most of the year, with roughly \$48 million in sales through the third quarter compared to \$44.5 million in the previous year.

In some ways, that's not quite so surprising. Retail property sales by number of deals have been roughly double those of office and industrial properties for the last few years, and the market isn't exactly home to many trophy high-rise office buildings.

Because supply remains high, buyers have been selective.

"Investment deals have been mostly for single-tenant retail properties, with

investment-grade credit and long-term leases," said Mike Eyer, senior advisor and investment broker at SVN in Fort Collins.

Sales of retail properties increased to 19 transactions in the third quarter of '11, from 15 for the prior-year period, according to SVN. By comparison, there were about eight sales each of office and industrial properties in that quarter.

Significant third-quarter retail deals included the sale of the 12,000-square-foot Harmony Village in Fort Collins for \$3.8 million.

One of the region's major recent office deals was Greeley-based Big Beaver Properties LLC's sale in early December of the 30,000-square-foot, Class A office building at 6125 Sky Pond Drive in Loveland to Gravel Real Estate Holdings LLC of Golden for \$8.3 million. Major tenants include the Kennedy and Coe LLC accounting firm and Morgan Stanley Smith Barney.

Northern Colorado apartment properties were another bright spot for investors, according to brokers, largely because there's been no significant new apartment construction in recent years. That trend has driven up values of existing properties. One of the biggest 2011 sales in the region was the \$30.5 million acquisition in April of the 229-unit Settlers' Creek apartments in southeastern Fort Collins by TMP Settlers' Creek LLC, part the Transwestern real estate company of Chicago, according to Larimer County property records.

Apartment developers bought land

for new projects, as well.

Elsewhere, distressed commercial properties such as foreclosures continued to attract investors in '11, but there weren't many good options.

"There are not a lot of quality distressed properties on the market here, and there weren't a lot to start with," said Kevin Brinkman, president and investment broker at Brinkman Partners in Fort Collins, another major commercial real estate firm. "If you're looking for distressed, Class A assets, you're not going to find them."

Real Capital Solutions of Louisville is a distressed-property investor that owns the 230,558-square-foot TriPointe Business Center office property in Evans just south of Greeley, and wants to buy more in the region as part of a strategy to buy financially challenged properties it can improve, according to Chairman and CEO Marcel Arsenault.

The company likes Northern Colorado because of its high-quality real estate and good quality of life, including proximity to higher education institutions such as Colorado State University and the University of Northern Colorado. The TriPointe building, for example, is a former State Farm Insurance regional headquarters and offers a prime location at U.S. Highways 84 and 85 plus amenities such as a cafeteria and 800 surface parking spaces.

"We're anxious to build a book of business in Northern Colorado," Arsenault said. "We're looking at a few deals there. ... But we haven't seen much

available from banks that we can buy."

Among Northern Colorado's largest distressed property dispositions of 2011 was the September sale of three Fort Collins hotels — the Marriott at 350 Horsetooth Road, the Residence Inn at 1127 Oakridge Drive and the Courtyard by Marriott at 1200 Oakridge — for \$20.5 million. Private investor Southwest Value Partners of San Diego purchased the hotels from Integrated Capital LLC of Los Angeles, after the seller fell behind on payments for a \$32 million note secured by the properties and the lender foreclosed.

Prices that area property sellers got in '11 were affected partly by the fact that there were five property offerings for every buyer, according to the SVN report. Because of the imbalance of buyers to sellers, it was typical to see a 10 percent difference between asking price and final selling price by the third quarter.

The imbalance also accounts for the increased time a property stayed on the market. As of the third quarter of '11, the median time to sell a property was 325 days, up from 180 days at the end of 2008, according to SVN.

Still, investors are expected to continue to have an appetite for well-leased Northern Colorado commercial properties with solid cash-flow yields, according to brokers. Strongest demand is for single-tenant properties occupied by financially strong tenants.

"There's still money out there looking for good deals," Eyer said.



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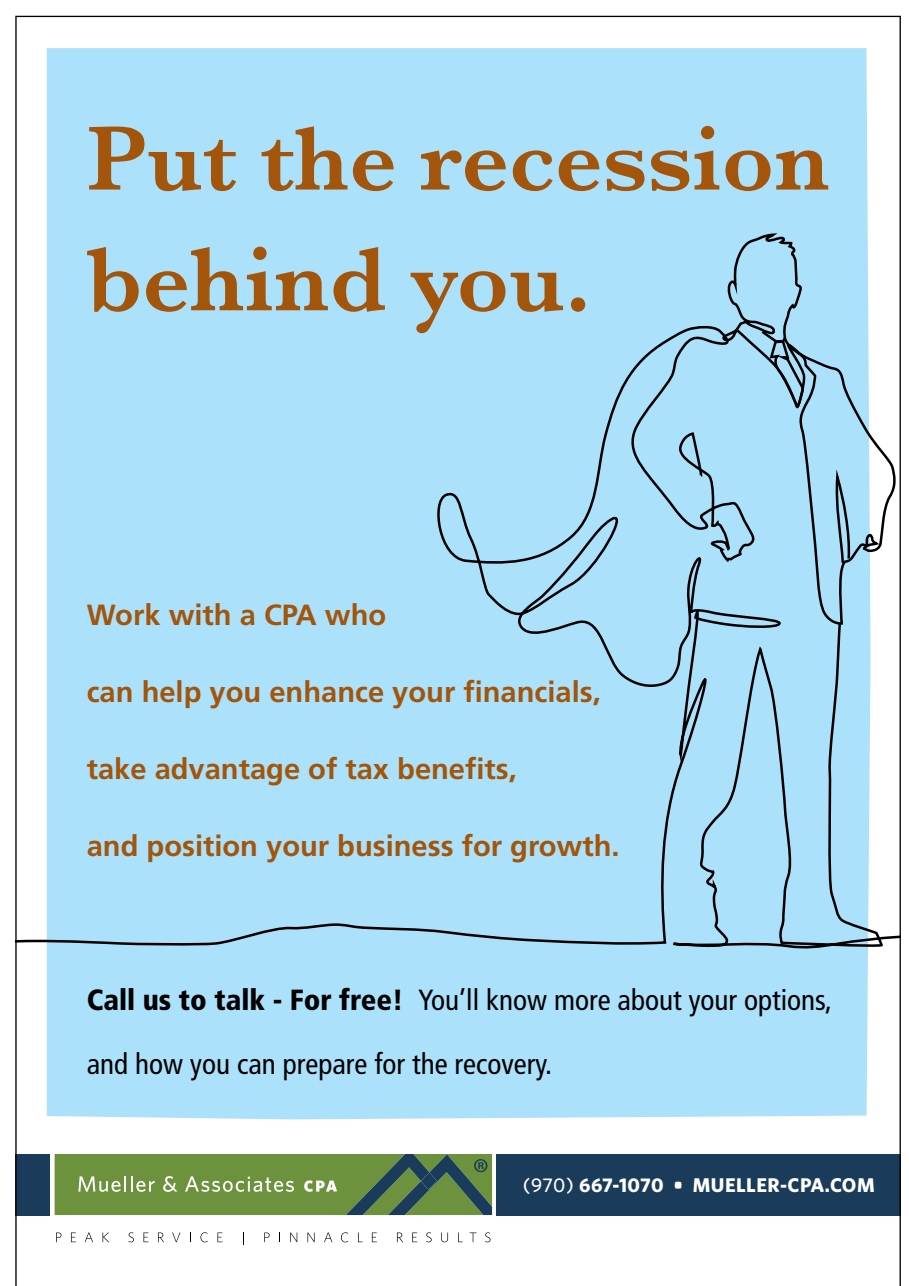
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PEAK SERVICE | PINNACLE RESULTS

CSU working on livestock emissions-fighting tool

By Molly Armbrister
marmbrister@ncbr.com

FORT COLLINS - A project led by Colorado State University could help livestock producers nationwide reduce airborne emissions such as dust, odor, methane and ammonia, which are often the source of tension between rural and urban neighbors.

In Colorado, the project has the potential to help address issues in Rocky Mountain National Park, where nitrogen loads have increased dramatically during the past two decades from sources including vehicles, industry and agriculture.



ARCHIBEQUE

Inventories show that up to 50 percent of the ammonia emissions in Colorado come from livestock, according to Jay Ham, a CSU professor of environmental physics who is working on the project.

The project, which began at Michigan State University four years ago, received new grant money in September and is now being spearheaded by Shawn Archibeque, assistant professor of animal sciences at CSU.

Archibeque and his colleagues are working on refining an online tool – what they're calling the National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool – that allows livestock producers to evaluate



Courtesy CSU

METHANE PRODUCERS – With nitrogen “loads” on the rise, researchers hope to help the livestock industry find ways to cutting emissions.

whether they could make changes at their facilities to improve air quality.

The tool, found at <http://naqsat.tamu.edu>, can be used for a variety of confinement livestock operations with as many as 50,000 animals.

“The purpose of the tool is to help producers identify what practices they’re engaging in that might contribute to emissions,” Archibeque said. “The goal is for producers to make more educated

decisions about the kinds of management practices they’ll use.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded the project \$370,000 through its Conservation Innovation Grant program this fall. The project will be receiving matching funds from other organizations.

This is the second phase of the project, which garnered nearly \$1 million in

“Airborne emissions are an emergent issue in livestock production.”

Bill Hammerich,
CEO, Colorado Livestock Association

funding from the USDA and partnering organizations in its first phase.

One such partnering organization was the Colorado Livestock Association, who donated \$25,000 to initiate the project. Members of the CLA representing the dairy and cattle-feeding sectors are helping to test the tool.

“Airborne emissions are an emergent issue in livestock production,” said Bill Hammerich, CEO of the CLA. “As we and others looked around for some solid research data, to help guide best management practices, we realized that information was woefully lacking.”

Enhancing the tool will be a graduate project for a student of Archibeque’s, beginning in January. Work is expected to be complete on the tool at the end of 2013, Archibeque said.

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CarePilot offers service to compare health costs

By **Steve Porter**
sporter@ncbr.com

Scot Wooley began wondering a few years ago why no one had created an online marketplace where consumers could compare prices and save money.

Wooley, a Fort Collins native who now lives in Castle Rock, knew from his own experience that a person needing an MRI could go to a hospital and pay \$3,500 while an outpatient facility across the street might have charged \$600 for the same service on similar equipment – perhaps with the same doctor reading the scan.

That thought eventually took root, and last summer Wooley launched CarePilot, which he describes as a “more transparent health care marketplace.”

In a nutshell, CarePilot is a free online service (www.carepilot.com) that helps consumers who have high deductibles, are uninsured or just looking for the best price for elective health care services find providers who can offer significant discounts.

Wooley, 40, a former principal partner in Denver-based Health Images,

said CarePilot focuses mainly on non-emergency services such as physicals, hearing tests, allergy screenings, well child visits, eye tests, teeth cleaning, mammograms and acupuncture treatments.

The providers have open slots in their schedules that CarePilot helps fill. “We basically are listing their empty inventory,” Wooley said.

“We send an appointment request and (the provider) downloads it into their calendar.”

The attraction for the provider, of course, is filling the empty slots and keeping their practices humming with health care consumers. And, Wooley said, the providers don’t have to deal with insurance paperwork because patients pay directly to CarePilot in advance.

For the consumer, it’s a savings on their health care expenses that Wooley says can be up to 50 percent but generally averages around 20 to 30 percent.

CarePilot keeps a percentage of the service fee and remits the balance to the provider, resulting in payment that’s much faster than through insurance, he said.

So far, CarePilot has primarily focused on the greater Denver area but about 20 Northern Colorado practices



WOOLEY

in Fort Collins, Loveland, Greeley and Longmont have also joined.

Dr. Lee Whittemore, owner of Loveland Wholistic Health Center, said he signed with CarePilot to help market his chiropractic service.

“I think one of the biggest things was having a brand new market of potential customers we could attract,” he said. “Eighty percent of the population has never been to a chiropractor.”

Whittemore said the model is good for natural health care and nontraditional providers because “a lot of insurance plans don’t cover the kinds of things we do.”

“We’re really optimistic and excited about it,” he said.

Wooley said he expects CarePilot to soon add many more providers outside Denver and across the state. “We’re getting lots of requests to expand it into surrounding communities.

“That was my biggest worry – whether the providers would see the value. But adding providers has not been as hard as we anticipated. They see the value pretty quickly.”

Since July, Wooley said CarePilot has signed more than 500 health care providers and 100 physician offices have agreed to refer patients to it. “We’ve had a great amount of success with the providers signing up, especially with so many patients having the high-deductible plans,” he said.

“Employees are dropping out of

employer-based coverage because of the high deductibles. They still need the care but they need access to the best possible price, and that’s why CarePilot is there.”

Wooley said CarePilot is initially targeting consumers who aren’t well insured.

“What we’ve chosen to deal with is the uninsured and underinsured category to start with,” he said. “The reality is it’s a huge market as it is.”

Wooley said studies have shown about one-third of the Colorado market is either uninsured or underinsured.

Wooley said CarePilot works with only certified, accredited providers who have procedures in place to protect patient privacy. Patients rate the providers and overall experience to help others make informed decisions about their care choices.

CarePilot recently received \$3 million from local investors, and Wooley said the money will be used to expand the program. “It’s going to help us build out Colorado,” he said. “That’s what we’re focused on.”

At some point, Wooley said the program will expand to other states if it achieves the success he’s expecting. “I think at some point we’ll be a national company.”

Steve Porter covers health care for the Northern Colorado Business Report. He can be reached at 970-232-3147 or at sporter@ncbr.com.

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House bill takes aim at over-zealous regulators

Bankers would be able to take their case to ombudsman

Yet another bill aimed at relieving some of the strain felt by community banks and small businesses is circulating in Congress, though regulators, unsurprisingly, think it's unnecessary.

H.R. 3461, or the Financial Institutions Examination Fairness and Reform Act, was introduced in the House in November by Republican Rep. Shelley Capito of West Virginia. Since then, our very own 4th Congressional District Rep. Cory Gardner has added his name to the legislation.

This bill would make a number of changes, including the creation of an Office of Examination Ombudsman to serve as an intermediary between financial institutions and their regulators. The bill would also "clean up" the examination process and give banks the right to appeal regulatory decisions to an independent administrative law judge.

Gardner said he decided to put his name on the bill after a series of discussions with community bankers in which he heard protests about regulations imposed by agencies that require underwriting standards so strict banks are having difficulty lending money to would-be small businesses.

This concern has been the reasoning for many decisions made by legislators and industry groups since regulatory agencies began cracking down on bank operations, but this bill would take a different tack than others similar to it.

Rather than make a change to the way banks operate or handle their accounting, like the Capital Access for Main Street bill introduced earlier this year, supporters of H.R. 3461 said it would simply allow for better communication between banks and their regulators and increase regulatory transparency.

The text of the bill outlines six responsibilities of the ombudsman, not the least of which is: "The ombudsman shall receive and, at the ombudsman's discretion, investigate complaints from financial institutions, their representatives, or another entity action on behalf of such institutions, concerning exami-

nations, examination practices or examination reports."

In other words, the bill would create an impartial office for listening to the issues bankers are experiencing and, when valid, exploring the regulations and agencies behind the complaint.

Supporters say it would allow banks a modicum of input and better understanding of why regulators do what they do, which would not only make for happier bankers, but happier customers when their local lending agent is able to better explain the rules.

Expediting the examination process is important to bankers as well, according to Don Childears, president and CEO of the Colorado Bankers Association.

The legislation would require regulators to provide their report of a financial institution's examination no more than 60 days after the exit interview of the examination. This is a dramatic improvement over the way such reports are handled currently, Childears said. He has heard of the report return process taking as long as 10 months.

"That kind of delay of reports makes it difficult for banks to adhere to what regulators want," Childears said.

Typically, it is with federal regulators, rather than those at the state level, that banks have these kinds of problems, he said.

Gardner and Childears said a shortened examination process and increased regulatory transparency would trickle down to customers of banks, benefitting local businesses.

Childears said that the CBA is expressing its support of the bill by providing information on it to member banks and requesting that they contact their legislative representatives.

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Financial Services. Aside from Gardner, the bill has 65 cosponsors, two of whom are from Colorado. These include Democratic Rep. Ed Perlmutter of the 7th Congressional District and Republican Rep. Scott Tipton of the 3rd District.

Regulators feel that the bill and the changes it calls for, including the establishment of an ombudsman, are not necessary to maintain the communication channels between banks and those who make the rules.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. maintains that regulations are helping to avoid a return to the lending procedures that first created the issues that led to the recession by enforcing stricter underwriting standards and increasing litmus tests for potential borrowers.

Molly Armbrister covers Banking for the Northern Colorado Business Report. She can be reached at marmbrister@ncbr.com or 232-3139.



BANKING
Molly Armbrister

"That kind of delay of reports makes it difficult for banks to adhere to what regulators want."

Don Childears,
Colorado Bankers Association



Art Lab helps build 'creative' economy

A recent exhibition called "Sticks & Stones" at Art Lab featured well-known Fort Collins artists Bob Koontz and Gary Hixon. Temporary walls with shelving were installed in the storefront on Linden Street, transforming the space into an elegant gallery to best display Koontz's sculptural jewelry and Hixon's vibrant paintings. "Sticks & Stones" illuminated the possibilities of Art Lab, a space in which art, experimentation and the entrepreneurial spirit intersect.

Art Lab Fort Collins is a cooperative, experimental art space open to the spectrum of creatives, including but not limited to fine artists, musicians and performers. "The idea for Art Lab came from having artists hanging art in the Toolbox offices," says Dawn Putney, one of the founders and owner of Toolbox Creative. "We saw that some artists didn't know what to do. It's a way to help build the design and creative economy and a cool Fort Collins



BUSINESS AND THE ARTS

Kiki Gilderhus

See ARTS, 10



Courtesy Art Lab

HIGHLY COOPERATIVE – The Art Lab stages exhibits but is also as intent on encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit.

From bartender to insurance agency owner



Jon Susa is an independent insurance agent for Farmers Group. He started the Susa Insurance Agency in 2006. His office is located in Fort Collins and he currently has one employee. Jon's startup cost was \$5,000 with no outside funding. He had no previous entrepreneurial experience. Jon had worked as a bartender for 15 years when he finally made the jump into the insurance world.

WHAT'S WORKING

Brian Schwartz

Q: What was the genesis of the idea?

A: It was a conversation with a friend who ran a job placement company. The question that sparked the desire was, "What do you want to get out of your job?" In other words, first look at what you need to get out of your

job, then look for a career that can fulfill that need. I was literally recruited into Farmers Group by the area manager who saw that I possessed excellent customer service skills, something I feel you either have or you don't. It is a skill that can't be taught.

Q: How long did it take you until your business earned a positive cash flow?

A: About two years. I stayed at my former job until I had built up enough clients to make the leap to pursuing my business full-time. I cut my hours back to 20 hours a week as a bartender and worked 40 hours a week building my insurance practice.

Q: Did you use a business plan?

A: I did.

Q: Have you had to modify it to meet the demands of the market?

A: Yes, I update it about once a year.

Q: Where do you see yourself and your company in 10 years?

A: I see my agency having six to 10 employees, doing the tasks that I don't enjoy. That will give me more time to focus on building relationships with my clients and it will allow me more time to spend on marketing and promotions.

Q: What is the passion that it fills for you personally?

A: Personal relationships. Being an insurance agent allows me to connect at a deeper

See WORKING, 10



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WORKING, from 9

level with others.

Q: What were your biggest challenges? What do you know now that you wish you had known sooner?

A: Convincing people early on that you are in it for the long haul was the biggest challenge for me. When people pick an insurance agent they want someone who'll be there for them when the need arises. Early on, I could have utilized better time management. What I mean by that is being productive vs. busy. I found that for the first six months, I was very busy, but not necessarily productive. My philosophy is that in my business, you should treat your office like a boat: you only spend 20 percent of your time actually in it!

Q: What were your biggest rewards? Any unexpected rewards?

A: The transferability of the skills as a bartender to being a good agent. It's all about customer service. My client base with my bartending job dovetailed nicely into my prospect base for my insurance business. The switch from working nights to working days was a great bonus.

Q: Are there one or two things you can attribute your success to?

A: Being like a chameleon, that is, being able to leave my personal beliefs and opinions at the door. Getting along with anyone and listening to what is

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September 2012

most important to them. I also had a strong desire to become an expert in this field in order to help my clients. I have always viewed myself as self-employed, which I believe has also helped encourage me to get to this point in my life.

Q: Strongest core beliefs?

A: That you are always on duty. In other words, you are always maintaining high integrity and a strong work ethic, even outside of work.

Q: What is the most important attribute you look for in an employee?

A: You can find excellent employees in any industry – you just need to look for superior customer-service oriented people. I am proof that it is one of the most vital transferable skills. I believe bonuses are an ideal method to motivate employees to stay with their company and work harder.

Q: Do you recommend any books, resources or an MBA?

A: My wife got her MBA and I felt that it was highly beneficial for her. I was even able to pick up a few tips from her along the way. For books, I would recommend Michael E. Gerber's *The "E-Myth: Why Most Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It"* and *"The Millionaire Next Door"* by Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko.

Q: Slogan to live by or what it might say on your tombstone?

A: 'You can't learn to swim if you are hanging on the side of the pool.' If you are not having fun, go find something else to do!

Brian Schwartz is the founder of 50 Interviews Inc. He can be reached at www.50interviews.com.

ARTS, from 9

experience."

Now in its second year and second location, Art Lab is not only a resource for artists, but a training ground for the business of art. "Resources for artists are desperately needed," says Putney. "Art Lab gives people the latitude to experiment in an accessible and safe space." Accessibility extends to financial considerations. For visual artists, Art Lab requires a two-week commitment and no commission is taken. Artists keep what they make on sales, and one may offset small usage fees by volunteering.

The cooperative, experimental model leads to exciting and sometime mixed results. "The plus is that it opens the space for people to try it out, to see what it's like to hang a show, to construct the gallery, to promote it and communicate with the community at large. We had a kid who hung his first show at Art Lab, and then went to Aspen and got his work into the galleries there," she says. "We've also had some really unsophisticated art. Artists need to do it to gain proof of concept – if no one engages with you when they come in the gallery there might be a problem. At Art Lab, artists are allowed to fail and allowed to succeed."

This kind of artistic development extends beyond the gallery to offerings like the Art Lab Build-Your-Own-Website Workshop. "Selling yourself is part of the process," says Putney. Websites are now an integral part of constructing an artist's portfolio, cultivating attention, and sales. She describes Art Lab as a "pre-incubator" graduating people in to business classes at CSU or into arts incubators like Beet Street's Creative Capital Workshop, which will run between March 30-April 1.

Creative Capital is a national non-profit organization, based in New York City whose mission is to provide financial and advisory support to artists in five disciplines: Emerging Fields, Film/Video, Innovative Literature, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts.

Painter Amelia Caruso, who participated in the Creative Capital workshop in April, says the workshop "helped me clear out a few things. For example, I wasn't confident about licensing deals for my art. It was the kick in the pants that I needed. As an artist, you should be looking for the opportunities to get your work out."

For Caruso, this means translating her immediately recognizable abstract style of dots and color to fabric and

"Art Lab gives people the latitude to experiment in an accessible and safe space."

**Dawn Putney, co-founder and owner
Toolbox Creative**

phone cases or skins for electronics. Part of the challenge is, "finding the things that fits well with your work. The bigger picture is defining your brand, seeing the wider range for consumer projects."

This kind of marketing can help develop revenue streams, but it also serves to introduce people to the art itself. Caruso, who painted the first transformer box in downtown Fort Collins, says projects like the fabric or the skins "allow people to take a piece and that may lead to them purchasing an original work."

Fort Collins realist painter Kirsten Savage reiterates in conversation an idea she recently explored on her blog. "The reality is that traditional gallery sales are often a small percentage of what makes up the local artist's viable income," she says. "The artists that I know in the Northern Colorado region who are 'making it' are either creating true high quality work and selling in multiple locations nationally, or they are diversifying their skill set. The idea of dropping your work off at a gallery and waiting for the checks to roll in doesn't really play here."

As she notes, full-time artists in Fort Collins seek out all kinds of things to support themselves: commissions, private lessons, classes, workshops, public art projects, online sales, or travel to larger national arts festivals.

Business acumen continues to transform the job description of fine artist in Fort Collins, but an exciting question remains: how will business-savvy artists shape the gallery scene and visual culture of the city at large?

Kiki Gilderhus, Ph.D., Dean of Fine + Liberal Arts at the Rocky Mountain College of Arts + Design in Denver, covers the arts for the Northern Colorado Business Report. Contact her at news@ncbr.com.



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HAY, from 3

Ott said hay has been generally selling at record prices. In November, the average price for alfalfa hay was \$235 per ton. That compares to \$125 a ton for alfalfa in November 2010.

Devin Murnin, a spokesman with the USDA Colorado Department of Agriculture Ag Marketing News Service, which puts out the Colorado Weekly Hay Report, said hay prices have been "definitely the highest since I've been following the hay market."

Murnin said while Northern Colorado hay growers had generally favorable growing conditions in 2011, the hay they produced went fast because of demand from out-of-state and south-eastern Colorado buyers.

"This was one of those years we wish we had more because it was in such high demand," said Kate Green of Native Seeders farm near Timnath.

Green said the majority of Native Seeders' buyers are local. "We try to take care of our long-time customers first," she said. But Green said she knows some of Native Seeders' hay likely went out of state. "I didn't sell anything directly but I know some of our hay went that way."

Ralph Prior, a farmer who grows hay west of Eaton, said he heard repeatedly from out-of-state buyers desperate to find hay.

"I just didn't know anybody" with any to sell, he said. "All the hay's spoken for or gone."

Ron Shelton, owner of Shelton Dairy near LaSalle, said many dairies are feeding their cows less alfalfa this year because of the shortage and supplementing it with more corn silage, soybean meal and other nutrients.

Steve Koontz, associate professor in Colorado State University's Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics, said hay prices jumped this year because many farmers switched from growing hay to other crops, demand from drought areas like Texas, and generally a very strong demand for animal feed.

Koontz said that's resulted in local hay consumers – especially dairies – looking far and wide for the high-quality hay they need.

"They are beating the bushes for everything they can find," he said. "Bad hay is going for a good price and good hay is going for a mint. And that really hurts your dairy producers."

Koontz said the hay situation on Colorado's eastern side has been a tale of two sides of I-70. "The dividing line was kind of I-70," he said. "South of the interstate was very dry, while north was fairly wet."

Koontz said northern hay producers did well in 2011, "if they had water."

"If they were not growing it on irrigated ground, they had nothing," he said.

Koontz said the general shortage of quality hay has led some dairies and hay consumers to look as far north as North Dakota and Montana for their supplies.

"Those who already had it procured are in good shape," he said. "Those who didn't are definitely paying higher prices."

Going that far to get hay is adding significant trucking costs to buyers, Koontz said, but for some it's unavoidable.

"It's rough to pay to have it shipped that far, but if you have to have good quality hay, that's what you have to do."

DDA, from 3

tional 20 years after the initial 30 years has passed. For the Fort Collins DDA, founded in 1981, that threshold is Jan. 1, 2012.

Although the legislation will allow the DDA to continue collecting TIF revenue, for the Fort Collins DDA, the 50-50 split will mean a reduction in funding from \$5.7 million in fiscal 2011 to \$2.5 million in fiscal 2012, according to executive director Matt Robenault.

This means less revenue with which to finance debt and complete projects, Robenault said, which will lead to fewer, smaller DDA projects in the coming years.

Beet Street, the local arts-focused nonprofit responsible for programs such

as Streetmosphere and Culture Cafes, is the largest project that will no longer receive DDA funding as the new year begins. (For more on Beet Street's plans for the future, go to <http://www.ncbr.com/article.asp?id=6114>.)

Other projects, such as the Alley Enhancement and Art in Action programs that have been backed by the DDA, will also be cut back.

Moving forward, the agency intends to direct most of its attention to fostering private projects rather than public ones in the next several years, Robenault said, though it is unclear at this time exactly which projects those will be.

Projects that generate the most TIF dollars will be most valuable to the DDA, according to Patty Spencer, former chairperson and current member of the DDA

board. As an example, Spencer offered up recent DDA assistance with financing improvements or construction to the publicly viewed portions of private buildings in the downtown area.

When the DDA gets involved with renovation or construction, it does not assist with interior work, Spencer said, but rather focuses on the public aspect of a given building.

While the funding cut will be a drastic one, the DDA was prepared for the change, said Spencer, also a commercial real estate broker for Realtec Commercial Real Estate Services, specializing in the downtown Fort Collins area.

"We knew this change was coming, and we'll focus on projects that will bring us some tax increment," she said. "But the DDA is still alive and well."

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Largest Bank Branch Locations

RANK	BANK	DEPOSITS 2010
1	First National Bank	\$523,394,000
2	Wells Fargo	\$192,448,000
3	Wells Fargo	\$189,485,000
4	Wells Fargo	\$186,411,000
5	Bank of Choice	\$176,051,000

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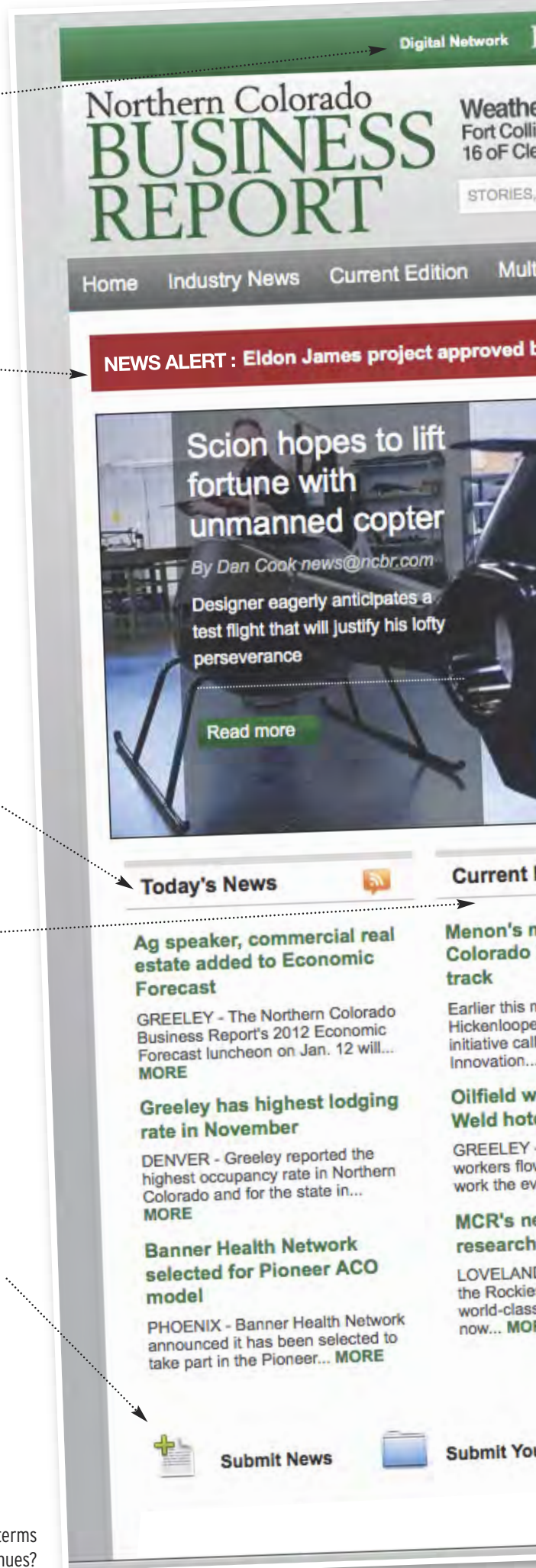
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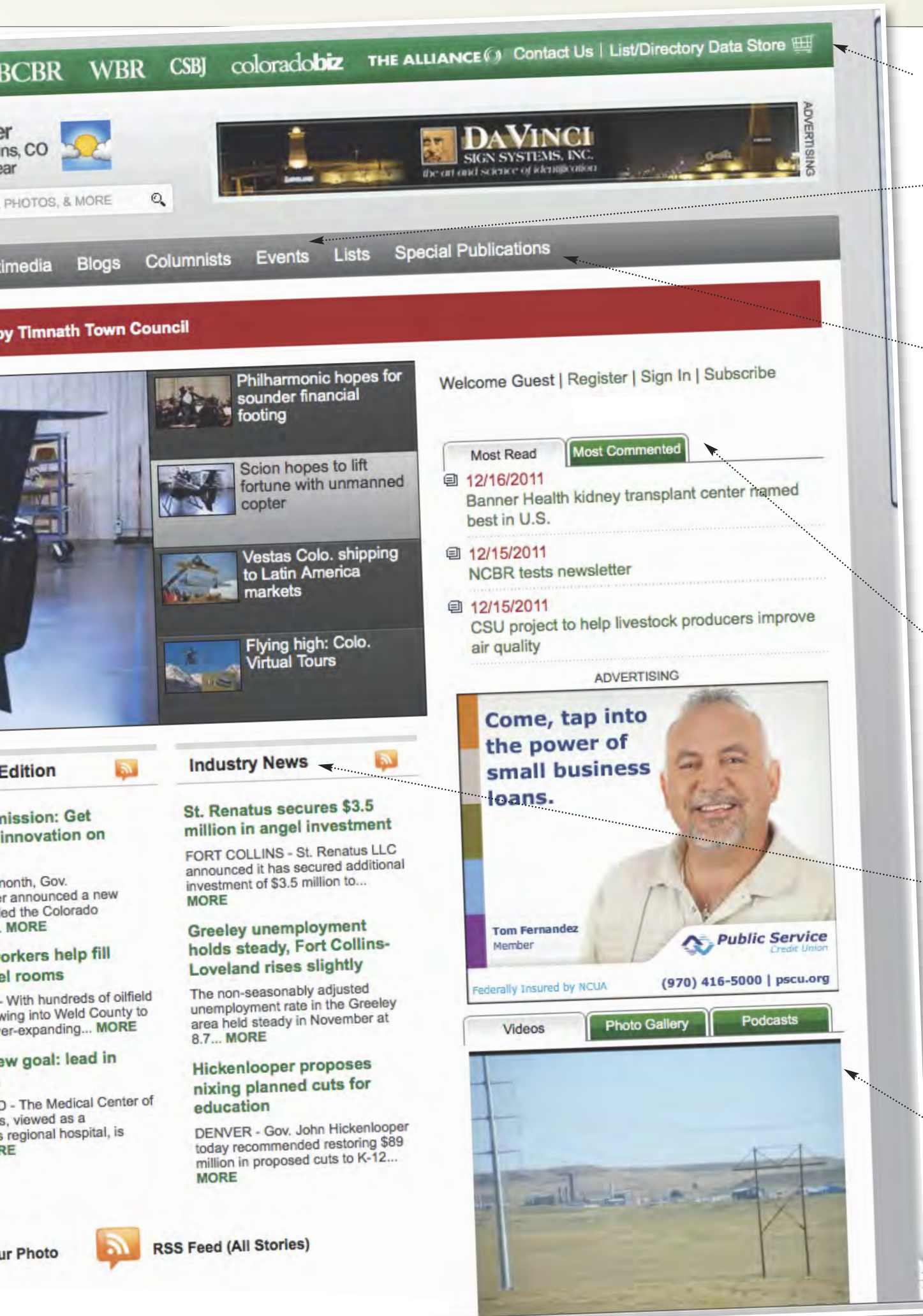
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1	1	MIRAMONT LIFESTYLE FITNESS 901 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525 970-282-1000	22,500 50 270	\$39-69 \$65-110 \$75-110	35 Co-Ed	Three facilities: north, central and south locations. Senior programs, wellness programs, kids programs and other.	Chris Ramers Shane Hunsinger General managers chris@miramontlifestyle.com www.miramontlifestyle.com
2	3	RAINTREE ATHLETIC CLUB 2555 S. Shields St. Fort Collins, CO 80526 970-490-1300	5,500 15 80	\$35/Student - \$47/month \$75/month \$85/month	All ages Co-ed	Remodeled full-service health club, includes 25m indoor lap pool, sauna, steam room and hot tub, indoor running track, free weight room, machine weights, private yoga center, heated yoga, pilates, basketball/volleyball/pickleball courts, racquetball, wallyball, indoor cycling theatre, les mills group fitness classes, senior programs, muscle restoration, eager beaver swim school, massage, laser clinic, cafe and bar, WiFi.	Martin P. Johns General manager martinj@raintreeathleticclub.com www.raintreeathleticclub.com
3	NR	WORK OUT WEST, HEALTH & RECREATION CAMPUS 5699-5701 W. 20th St. Greeley, CO 80634 970-330-9691	5,500 10 55	\$39/month and up \$54/month and up \$64/month and up	45 Co-ed	Fitness and tennis.	Meegan O'Connell CEO info@workoutwest.com www.workoutwest.com
4	2	FORT COLLINS CLUB 1307 E. Prospect Road Fort Collins, CO 80525 970-224-2582	5,400 20 110	\$63/month reg. hours or \$49/month special hours \$92/month reg. hours or \$72/month special hours \$118/month reg. hours or \$97/month special hours	N/A Co-ed	Indoor/outdoor pools, group fitness and spin classes, water aerobics, kids club, restaurant and lounge, Salon Giorgio. Racquetball, basketball, climbing wall, kids exercise area. Silver Sneakers certified facility. Online Life Traits fitness personality quiz.	Todd Heenan Owner info@fortcollinsclub.net www.fortcollinsclub.net
5	5	CONDITIONING SPA 2640 11th Ave. Greeley, CO 80631 970-352-0974	4,200 2 45	\$40/month \$65/month \$5 each additional	40 Co-ed	Racquetball, squash, cardio, weight room, aerobics, pool, Nautilus, women's-only fitness center, youth center, Pilates, yoga, Forever Fit and Humana Gold Silver Sneakers.	Pam Balzer Tim Balzer Owners info@conditioningspa.com www.conditioningspa.com
6	NR	GOLD'S GYM LOVELAND 910 E. Eisenhower Blvd. Loveland, CO 80537 970-593-9111	3,000 N/A N/A	\$44.99/month N/A \$99.95/month	35 Co-ed	Free weights, cardio cinema, Nautilus, women-only workout area, tanning, locker room, saunas, steam rooms, massage therapy, kids club, group classes, personal training, basketball, physical therapy & chiropractic.	Lynn Mecham General manager, Owner lovelandco@goldsgym.net www.goldsgym.com/lovelandco
7	6	ORCHARDS ATHLETIC CLUB 289 E. 29th St. Loveland, CO 80538 970-667-3800	2,500 5 30	\$45/month, first month is free \$75/month Varies.	30 Co-ed	Full-service health club and sports facility.	Ainsie MacEachran Hugh MacEachran Owners orchardsjoe@gmail.com www.orchardsathleticclub.com
8	NR	POUDRE VALLEY MEDICAL FITNESS 1870 Marina Drive, Suite 103 Windsor, CO 80550 970-674-6500	1,200 4 9	Call for consultation Call for consultation Call for consultation	50 CO-ED	Medically supervised health and fitness facility.	Rebecca Crocker Manager N/A N/A
9	7	WINDSOR HEALTH CLUB 655 Academy Court Windsor, CO 80550 970-686-2582	1,000 2 25	\$35/month \$56/month \$11/month add on under 18	40 Co-ed	Cardio, free weights, pilates, yoga, kickboxing, circuit training, aerobics, personal training and massage.	Eric L'orange Owner windsorhealthclub@hotmail.com www.windsorhealthclub.com
10	8	ANYTIME FITNESS 200-B Foothills Parkway Fort Collins, CO 80525 970-223-2248	1,000 2 2	\$35/month \$64/month N/A	30 Co-ed	We offer a wide variety of cardio, strength, and free weight equipment, 24-hour tanning is available at many clubs, personal trainers, private restrooms with showers.	Chris Cattolica Owner fortcollins@anytimefitness.com http://www.anytimefitness.com/en-us/clubs/69/Fort-Collins-CO-health-club
11	9	THE CLUB AT OLD TOWN 351 Linden St. Fort Collins, CO 80524 970-493-7222	800 3 20	\$32.50/mo \$50/month \$32.50/month + \$17.50 per additional person	35 Co-ed	Health club, weights and fitness facility.	Josh Slattery Owner juppenkamp@theclubatoldtown.com www.theclubatoldtown.com
12	10	FITNESS1 8017 First St. Wellington, CO 80549 970-568-4444	728 N/A 20	\$39/month \$59/month \$69/month	34 Co-ed	Yoga, spray tanning, spinning, cardio theater, massage, tanning, sauna, child care, personal training, Zumba, weight management center.	Matt Beeners Owner fitnessclubs@hotmail.com www.fitnessclubs.com

Region surveyed includes Larimer and Weld counties and the city of Brighton. Miramont Lifestyle Fitness serves multiple locations, all figures reported represent all locations. N/A-Not Available. NR-Not Previously Ranked.

Based upon responses to Business Report survey researched by Ross Manley To be considered for future lists, e-mail research@ncbr.com

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JOBs, from 4

manufactures hand-held mobile scanners.

"I never would have found (my job) if (Couragent) hadn't connected with NOCOJobs.

"What Kris is doing is better than headhunting," she said. "I don't know where else those jobs would have been posted."

Maestas praised Erlewine for creating NOCOJobs. "Obviously, it takes a passion to create a path for others," she said.

Erlewine said that's the kind of response to what he does that keeps him poring over company websites.

"Having that kind of positive feedback is what keeps you motivated," he said.

"I help people connect the dots," Erlewine said. "People just need to know of opportunities that are around, and if those things don't get together, nothing happens."

Erlewine estimates he's published 8,000 jobs over the last year, now adding about 1,200 a month. He said he only posts "professional level" jobs that include such fields as accounting, administration, engineering, graphic design, information technology and software development.

He says job postings in general are increasing. "I would say it's improved. Certainly over this time last year the job market is healthier."

But it's still a tough slog to finding a job, he acknowledges.

"There's a disconnect now between people's skill sets and what a lot of employers want," he said. And with so many looking for good jobs, employers can be

"I'm trying to provide the best available window on the job scene from Boulder to Greeley."

Kris Erlewine

extremely choosy about who they hire.

Erlewine said the No. 1 job for getting hired seems to be software engineer.

"If you can write code, you're good."

Erlewine notes that of the 1,200 new professional-level jobs generated in Northern Colorado each month, about 70 percent are located in Boulder and Broomfield counties.

Why?

"It's for lots of reasons," he says. "That area has more of a high-tech emphasis; there's (CU-Boulder) which has lots of research and there's lots of Internet start-ups locating there because of the culture."

Checking out so many jobs through the year, Erlewine – with a background in marketing and internet startup companies and an MBA from the University of Colorado Leeds School of Business – might be expected to have found his own golden opportunity. But he says he's really not looking for himself.

"I don't really want a job," he said. "I want to do my own thing and be creative."

"I'm creating a business. My job is helping other people find a job by connecting those dots."

Largest Public Recreation

Ranked by number of employees



RANK	COMPANY	FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES PART-TIME EMPLOYEES	FACILITIES/PROGRAMS	WEBSITE	PERSON IN CHARGE TITLE
1	CITY OF FORT COLLINS - RECREATION DEPARTMENT 215 N. Mason St., Third Floor Fort Collins, CO 80522	45 400	Indoor/outdoor swimming pools, ice rink, community center, racquet complex, senior center, youth activity center, spas.	www.fcgov.com/recreation	Bob Adams Recreation director
2	CSU - STUDENT RECREATION CENTER ① Colorado State University Fort Collins, CO 80523	27 350	180,000 gross square feet facility includes: Aquatic center with 4-lane pool, 35-person spa, lazy river with fountains, shallow activity/play area and 12 ft. climbing wall; 6 basketball/volleyball courts; 1/8 mile track; multiple cardio & weight areas on 2 levels; 4 exercise studios for fitness classes, Yoga, Pilates; cycling studio; martial arts/boxing studio; Climbing Center with bouldering wall/cave and two 38' climbing towers; multiple activity area for sport activities and large events; two massage therapy rooms; large/small meetings rooms.	www.campusrec.colostate.edu	Judy Muenchow Executive director
3	CITY OF GREELEY - RECREATION DIVISION 651 10th Ave. Greeley, CO 80631	21 250	Recreation Center: volleyball, basketball, racquetball courts, weights and cardio room, dance and yoga studios, climbing walls, shooting and archery range, pool with a diving well, slide and separate shallow area with ramp. Family FunPlex: indoor water park, miniature golf, fitness center, dance facilities, indoor track, amphitheatre, community rooms, field house, softball park and playground. Ice Haus: NHL regulation sheet of ice, pro shop, skate sharpening, party and meeting rooms.	www.greeleygov.com/recreation	Kyle Holman Recreation superintendent
4	CHILSON RECREATION/SENIOR CENTER 700 E. Fourth St. Loveland, CO 80537	20 100	Two gyms, racquetball, cardio fitness, pools, track, gymnastics, indoor cycling, aerobics/dance studio, free weights and strength training.	www.ci.loveland.co.us	Ashlee Taylor Facility manager
5	ESTES VALLEY RECREATION AND PARKS DISTRICT 690 Big Thompson Ave. Estes Park, CO 80517	14 20	Two golf courses, aquatic center, gun range, Lake Estes Marina, Stanley Park outdoor facility has ball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, picnics, dog park, youth and adult sports leagues.	www.estesvalleyrecreation.com	Rick O'Dell Acting executive director
6	CITY OF FORT LUPTON - PARKS & RECREATION 203 S. Harrison Ave. Fort Lupton, CO 80621	12 48	Personal trainers, aquatics, hot tub, fitness area, weights, rock wall, running track, child care, Zumba, etc.	www.fortlupton.org	Monty Schuman Director of Parks and Recreation
7	FORT COLLINS SENIOR CENTER 1200 Raintree Drive Fort Collins, CO 80526	11 40	Indoor pool, Jacuzzi, track, basketball, treadmill, bikes, conference rooms and kitchen, pottery studio, aerobics, Tai Chi, Yoga, wellness education.	fcgov.com/seniorcenter	Peggy Bowers Recreation administrator
8	TOWN OF WINDSOR COMMUNITY REC CENTER 250 N. 11th St. Windsor, CO 80550	8 13	Adult and youth classes and activities, adaptive recreation classes and activities, senior activities and trips, adult sports leagues, youth sports.	www.ci.windsor.co.us	Tara Fotsch Manager of recreation
9	EVANS RECREATION DEPARTMENT 1100 37th St. Evans, CO 80620	4 10	Two basketball/volleyball courts, cardio and weight room, dance studio, meeting rooms, game room, locker rooms.	www.cityofevans.org	Brian Stone Recreation superintendent
10	ESTES PARK SENIOR CENTER 220 Fourth St. Estes Park, CO 80517	1 1	Fitness classes including Tai-Chi, Zumba and an aerobics, strength training and flexibility class.	www.estes.org/seniorcenter	Lori Mitchell Manager

Region surveyed is Larimer and Weld counties.
① CSU students, employees and their families only.

Based upon responses to Business Report survey researched by Mariah Gant
To be considered for future lists, e-mail research@ncbr.com

ENCOMPASS, from 3

program he'd been using often left many questions unanswered about the deliveries being made. But his son's program put those questions to rest.

"Today, we can track the minute (the product) hits the warehouse," he said. "The amount of detail we can provide an operation now is almost infinite."

The O'Neils, originally from Akron, founded Encompass in Fort Collins in 2001 with four employees. Since then, the company has grown to a staff of 24 in its Fort Collins office at 324 Jefferson St.

Most of its employees install software and provide customer support for Encompass's subscribers in the U.S. and Canada.

The software is installed on customer smart phones, allowing a dramatic savings from the typical specialized handheld tracking devices, which can cost about \$2,500 each.

"I guess the biggest difference between us and our competitors is they're really tied to the (routing) hardware," said Jonathan. "It's a major part of their sales."

"People who use Encompass software can run it on their own cell phones. No special hardware, no special software – other than our own – is needed to run it."

"We got out of the hardware business and just went into the software," added Kent.

Serving as Encompass president, Jonathan, 34, focuses on the constant revision of the software, which is specific to the needs of each company that uses it. He notes that the software is not for sale and is continually being updated with new features.

"The amount of detail we can provide an operation now is almost infinite."

Kent O'Neil, owner, co-founder
Encompass Technologies Inc.

"We do ongoing updates for our customers, changing it about every six weeks," he said. "It's gotten much more complicated because computers have gotten faster and can hold more data, and we just keep adding to it."

Kent, Encompass owner and co-founder who works the sales side of the business with Darin Spence, general manager, said an initial subscription for the software costs between \$50,000 and \$500,000, depending on the customer's operation size and needs.

"That's quite a range, but there's quite a range in the chores we have to do," he said.

Jonathan said New Belgium Brewing in Fort Collins and High Country Beverage in Loveland are among the 100 or so companies now using Encompass software.

Ben Hockett, New Belgium's Brewery Direct Services team manager, said the company has been using Encompass software since 2008, replacing a hand-written invoice system.

Hockett said the software has allowed New Belgium to "intelligently streamline

our sales and delivery routes and improved accuracy in the field," among a host of other function improvements.

In addition to the company's 24 local employees, there are another 25 in China.

Jonathan said the Chinese workers are "basically just employees who also do (software) development."

"We're all working on the same problems," he said.

Jonathan said he studied in China during his college years and learned to speak Mandarin while at CSU. Contacts he made during those China studies led to hiring some workers there in 2006.

Jonathan visits China about four times a year to maintain personal contact with the Chinese operation, although everyone stays in daily contact via the Internet. "We're working together with them all the time," he said.

Encompass is in a growth mode, and Jonathan said the company hired seven people this year and expects to hire at least six more in 2012. General manager Spence

said the company's revenues are now growing at a rate of about 50 percent every year.

Encompass earned about \$3 million last year and expects that to jump to about \$4.4 million this year, Spence said.

The company was honored earlier this month by the Colorado Department of Economic Development, which selected it as one of 50 "Colorado Companies to Watch" in 2011.

Projected rapid growth at Encompass will require a new building in the next few years, and Kent said the company has purchased a 1.1-acre site a few blocks away on Linden Street, where Encompass plans to build a 16,000-square-foot office building — four times the size of its current home.

Construction is expected to begin in 2012 or 2013 with occupancy in 2014.

Kent O'Neil, 64, recognizes that the company has already seen tremendous growth in its first 10 years.

"It's come a long way for an old man and a boy," he said proudly.

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LAND, from 1

development in Loveland. The development is called Lakeshore at Centerra, and its homes are priced between \$138,000 and \$144,000, according to Landmark CEO Jason Sherrill.

The development is currently under construction, but those homes that are complete have already been sold, Sherrill said.

A lot of the movement in land sales is a result of distressed property sales, allowing builders to acquire sites at much more affordable prices, according to Sherrill.

"People want the best with interior features, like high-quality finishes," Sherrill said, "and buying distressed land at a good price allows builders to be able to offer those things at a competitive price."

Being able to sell homes at a lower price with higher quality finishes allows new-home builders to better compete against existing homes on the market including the inventory of residences in foreclosure, he said. Landmark is planning on buying up a few more distressed lots in the new year, according to Sherrill.

Baker also expects to see more land sales in 2012, as banks try to cleanse their books of the distressed properties they acquired during the recession.

Investors also are taking advantage of the lower prices, according to Peter Kast of Realtec Commercial Real Estate Services.

Kast has seen an increase in land sales in the last four to five months, and said

"I believe that we talk ourselves into a recession, and we can talk ourselves out of it."

Michael Ehler,
Broker/Partner
Realtec

that often investors are holding on to what they acquire, either to develop later or sell for a higher price when the market recovers more fully.

The deals are plentiful

In some cases, prices are down 60 to 80 percent from their peak in 2007, according to Michael Ehler of Realtec.

Ehler cited a recent sale in Loveland in which 8.6 acres of industrial land sold for \$2.50 per square foot, down from as much as \$8 in 2007.

Ehler also said demand is slowly picking back up.

"I've seen more optimism in the fourth quarter," he said. "Things are looking good for 2012 as well. I believe that we talk ourselves into a recession, and we can talk ourselves out of it. The positive thinking is going to go a long way."

LOVELAND, from 2

for Lincoln Place, a mixed-use development consisting of apartments, retail and private parking space. But a change of direction on the part of the developer meant that the city no longer needed to provide for parking.

Now, Scholl said, there is a URA producing TIF revenue without an active project within it. Expanding the boundaries of Block 41 would enable the TIF dollars generated by the expanded URA, which will continue producing funds for another 14 years, to be put toward a meaningful project – the planned apartment complex.

Lincoln Place was meant to be a "catalyst" project, with hopes that it would encourage other developments in the surrounding area.

That's why Loveland made a deal with Brinkman Partners of Fort Collins to complete construction of its multi-family structure, which will be a 70,000-square-foot rental complex.

According to Kevin Brinkman of Brinkman Partners, the complex is aimed at people who are seeking an

upscale, urban living experience but who are not yet able to purchase a home.

Brinkman also hopes to include aspects that will work with the thriving artistic community in Loveland and said that the development will feature a variety of living space, ranging from lofts to 3-bedroom units.

If construction goes forward as planned, the complex will open in the summer of 2013, Brinkman said. His company will also provide property management services for the units.

The city performed a market study before seeking out a developer for the project, Scholl said.

"Our vacancy rates are low, and we found that there is a significant demand for rental housing," he said.

According to the Colorado Division of Housing's quarterly report, the vacancy rate in the Fort Collins-Loveland metropolitan statistical area is one of the lowest in the state, at 2.3 percent in the third quarter.



BRINKMAN

OIL, from 1

down here (in Colorado) and for the companies in Wyoming," he said, noting that the Wyoming oil companies he advises are not the same companies his Colorado landowner clients are negotiating with on lease and land use agreements.

Pickering – a partner in the office of Jouard and Pickering PC — said while the practice specializes in personal injury and wrongful death cases, his experience in energy law has come in handy, especially with the acceleration of drilling and land leasing going on in the rapidly evolving Niobrara oil shale play area.

Pickering said his landowner clients are asking for advice on how to best structure their lease and other agreements with the oil companies that want to drill on their land.

"For most landowners, they're interested in the impact of the trucks coming on their property and the impact on the integrity of their wells and their water," he said. "They're also interested in the fracking companies – where those chemicals go and what's in there. And they're interested in royalties."

"There's a whole host of things they want to mitigate."

Fracking refers to the hydraulic fracturing of underground rock layers by horizontally pumping a combination of water, sand and chemicals into the layers to loosen and remove gas and oil deposits and send them to the surface.

Pickering said oil and gas companies and landowners are always looking for the same thing – getting the best deal they can.

"Hopefully, everybody can be reasonable, and they meet in the middle 99 percent of the time," he said.

Clinton Baker, a certified public accountant with Kennedy and Coe LLC, said his work with oil and gas industry clients and landowners in Colorado has grown dramatically since the Niobrara play began.

"In our oil and gas industry business, I would say we've seen at least a doubling of that," he said. "I would say the oil and gas industry is growing as fast as any other industry in our firm."

"It kind of ebbs and flows, but now it's just crazy ..."

Robert Green, Greeley CPA

Robert Green, an independent certified public accountant in Greeley, said his work in the oil and gas business over the last 33 years has witnessed some industry ups and downs.

"I've seen probably two or three oil booms and busts, and they're in a boom at the moment," he said. "It all depends on the price of the product – oil and natural gas."

In addition to oil company clients, Green said he's also doing lots of work for small local businesses that service the big oil operators in the region, including water haulers, trucking firms and roustabout companies that provide drilling rig workers.

As a CPA, Green specializes in helping his clients navigate the complex tax regulations they must abide by.

"The oil and gas industry has its own unique tax rules," he said. "They're very complicated and there aren't many of us (in Northern Colorado) who deal with that area of taxation."

Green said his CPA energy business is definitely in a growth mode because of the Niobrara play.

"It kind of ebbs and flows, but now it's just crazy because of the horizontal (hydraulically fractured) wells," he said. "There's a big question as to how long it's going to last because there's been some dry holes drilled."

Still, Green said for the moment the oil and gas activity is in the strong part of the boom cycle.

"They've just been leasing everything in sight," he said. "They're trying to tie up all the land they can for future drilling."

And the royalties being paid to landowners?

"It's all negotiable," he said. "But I'm just amazed at the prices the leasing companies are paying."

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WASTE-NOT, from 1

president and CEO of Waste-Not, said of the ski-recycling program.

Working with the national trade group Snowsports Industries America, Waste-Not began testing its new processing line last summer to break down hundreds of tons of used and old equipment into components that can be reused or repurposed. The line should be fully operational at the start of 2012. If things go as planned, the effort now focused in the Rocky Mountains could spread across the country, stimulating growth and creating jobs for Waste-Not and the region.

Heading into manufacturing

Comer began Waste-Not Recycling in 1989, with just a pickup truck and a storage shed near Greeley. In those early days, Waste-Not provided curbside residential pickup of glass, paper and cans for homes around Weld County, following garbage trucks around towns. Over time, the company shifted to serve large businesses, such as hospitals and industrial clients, and to handle electronics and other products that require several steps of processing to prepare them for recycling, reuse or destruction. In 2000, Waste-Not moved to its present facilities in Kelim, between Loveland and Greeley on Highway 34.

For Waste-Not and similar companies, collecting materials is only half of the job. Many products – appliances, electronics, furniture and ski equipment – must be broken down to components that can be recycled or repurposed, and markets have to be developed for the materials. As an example, many recyclers bale and ship corrugated cardboard overseas to be processed in order to divert it from local landfills. But Waste-Not has gone a step further, said Todd Loose, Waste-Not vice president, by turning the cardboard into a marketable product, shredding the material and selling it as animal bedding for farms.

“We’re heading more into manufacturing,” Comer said. “Because Waste-Not’s been around for a long time, we’ve ridden some of the highs and lows of the markets. We now fully understand why we need to have more end-use manufacturing in this region – closing the loop – because, if we don’t, we’re subject to the whims of everyone else around the world.”

Loose joined Waste-Not as a business partner in 2010, and Comer credits his presence and work with bringing new energy into the enterprise. The height-



Joshua Zaffos, Northern Colorado Business Report

PIONEERING EFFORT – Waste-Not believes it’s on the cutting edge of the ski-equipment recycling business.

ened desire to grow the company came just as Snowsports Industries America came calling.

A strategic partnership

Beginning in 2007, SIA, representing winter sports gear manufacturers and retailers, voluntarily launched a corporate-responsibility recycling program. The project was aimed at educating consumers to bring old equipment to retail stores, and its pilot phase focused on the Rocky Mountain region.

In three seasons working with just a handful of retail outlets, the SIA’s Greg Schneider said the program has compiled a whopping 300 tons of skis, boots and other gear. But the group had struggled to figure out how to actually process the trashed equipment, because winter sports products use composite plastics, wood fiber, aluminum and other metals that must be separated into usable materials. In the meantime, the backlog has sat in a Goodwill warehouse in Denver.

Schneider began working with a Canadian recycling company, but it went out of business during the economic downturn. As he made calls across the continent, he connected with the Colorado governor’s office, which led him to approach Waste-Not in 2010.

“I was looking for someone that was

“We now fully understand why we need to have more end-use manufacturing in this region.”

Anita Comer,
President, CEO
Waste-Not Recycling

in a vertical position that they could collect, recycle and process the materials, and then look to (manufacturing) end products,” Schneider said. Waste-Not and its business experience fit the profile perfectly.

The company and trade group formed a strategic partnership and, in 2011, won a state Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity grant, which is funded through fees collected at land-

fills. The grant provided \$420,000 to acquire machinery and to scale up the recycling line at Waste-Not. The partners contributed additional matching and in-kind support, and university labs are also sharing their expertise. Through SIA, consumers contribute to the program by paying a \$1 fee on the purchase of new skis or a 79-cent fee on rentals at resort areas.

Like the ‘holy grail’

The processing line at Waste-Not moves through a six-step process that shreds, separates and reduces skis, bindings, boots and helmets into materials ready for repurposing. The processed materials can be used in landscaping or composite building materials, but both Waste-Not and SIA are, again, hopeful that equipment manufacturers will reuse the materials to make new products.

“We’re always looking for ways that we can repurpose the old equipment,” Schneider said. “It’s like the holy grail.”

At the same time, Loose and Comer are exploring other opportunities. They expect the new processing line to handle other composite plastic products, and Waste-Not is already developing new deals with companies to break down and repurpose similar materials – and to find or create new goods and markets.

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All four community Bravo! Entrepreneurs must meet these criteria:

- » The entrepreneur must be the individual who was the founder of the business or has been instrumental in its growth.
- » The company the entrepreneur founded or developed must be based or have been founded in Larimer or Weld County.
- » The business' origin should have included vision, risk and creativity.
- » The entrepreneur's company should be profitable.
- » The entrepreneur and the company should be contributing to the community through charitable and/or leadership roles.

- » The company must have demonstrated innovative employee programs and corporate culture.
- » The company should have demonstrated an ability to overcome adversity.
- » The company should have demonstrated significant growth and long-term potential.

The Emerging Entrepreneur must meet these criteria:

- » The criteria for the community Bravo! Entrepreneur awards apply to this category.
- » The additional requirement is that the company must have been in business five years or less.

The Lifetime Achievement Award will be given to an individual who meets this standard:

- » In addition to being an entrepreneur this individual will have at least 10 years experience in the Northern Colorado business community.

The Regional Spirit Award will be presented to an individual or organization:

- » Who has demonstrated a commitment to regionalization of the Northern Colorado economy.

Today,

nobody knows who the 2012 honorees will be except you. You know the people and organizations who exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit. We need you to tell us who among your associates and colleagues deserves recognition based on meeting these Bravo! Entrepreneur criteria.

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- the organization you work for

NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 9, 2012

For which award are you submitting this nomination? Please select one:

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- Bravo! Entrepreneur – Fort Collins
- Bravo! Entrepreneur – Greeley
- Bravo! Entrepreneur – Surrounding Communities
- Emerging Entrepreneur
- Lifetime Achievement
- Regional Spirit

Tell us the individual's name.

At what company is she or he employed?

What's his or her title?

What is the telephone number and email address for this person?

Telephone _____

Email _____

On a separate page supply a brief description of the company, and tell us why this person or company should be nominated for a Bravo! Entrepreneur Award.

What year was the company founded?

The last part is to give us your name, a telephone number and an email address.

That's it. The NCBR research department will add relevant information to your nomination, and the entire packet of information will be given to the Bravo! Entrepreneur evaluation panel.

Your name _____

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

MCR's promising new push into research realm

The Medical Center of the Rockies is embarking on what could be a very promising expedition:

It is hoping to transform itself into a world-class research center, developing drugs, therapies and devices in a variety of areas including neurology and obesity.

Medical advances that can help improve our well-being and cut the costs of illness to society are, of course, welcome.

With federal funding in short supply, MCR's grant-application writers won't have it easy. But public support of research has long yielded a solid return on investment and we hope MCR can get its fair share.

The Association of American Medical Colleges in November put out a report acknowledging that the full economic benefits of research are difficult to quantify, and not always well understood.

It commissioned Tripp Umbach, an economic consulting firm, to examine the economic impact of federal- and state-funded research conducted by medical schools and teaching hospitals that are members of the association.

According to the report, every \$1 invested in research at medical schools and teaching hospitals results in \$2.60 of economic activity.

That means job-creation inside as well as outside of the hospital and its research lab. The report says that the funding for research received by its members directly supports nearly 300,000 full-time, mostly high-skilled, jobs, or about 1 in every 500 jobs in the United States.

But, wait, there's more:

"As dramatic as the numbers are, they are a fraction of the full economic impact of research," the AAMC said in its report. "The drop in overall mortality rates from cancer over the last 20 years has saved more than three-quarters of a million lives. Similar gains are being made in heart disease, HIV, and many other devastating diseases. All in all, millions of Americans have been able to live their lives and continue to provide for their families and contribute to the nation's economy and growth as a result of medical research."

MCR is getting help raising dollars for research from the MCR Foundation, which solicits donors on the hospital's behalf. Since 2007, the foundation has raised just over \$6 million to help fund research and education at the hospital.

Many more millions will be needed for MCR to achieve its ambitions. Its success could mean good things for health care. Not to hyperventilate, but an MCR with a national or even global reputation would also help put Fort Collins on the map as a medical research center. We wish it well in its pursuits.



Good, bad and ugly in the new fracking rules

First, the good: Earlier this month, the State of Colorado passed the strongest rules in the United States for publicly disclosing what cancer-causing and other types chemicals are used in oil and gas fracking. In a groundbreaking and intense set of negotiations between oil and gas companies and environmentalists, frackers are now forced to publicly disclose when they are fracking and what chemicals they use in fracking.

This disclosure gets at two very serious concerns posed by fracking: 1) when fracking pollution occurs in groundwater, in streams, or on land, the public should be able to connect that pollution back to the fracking chemicals that caused it, and 2) it will allow landowners to test their wells and groundwater prior to fracking, and then re-test after fracking to check for fracking pollution.

Importantly, the new rules removed the "trade secret loophole" that were proposed in the original version of the rules that would have allowed frackers to not disclose the names of the chemicals in fracking fluids by saying those chemicals were "trade secrets." Led by attorneys from Earthjustice in Denver, the environmental community held its ground against this ridiculous exemption.

Thank you, industry leaders, Gov. Hickenlooper, and environmentalists for passing these new rules. You did good work.

Now for the bad: These new rules do nothing to stop or slow down fracking, do nothing to address the fracking pollution that's already occurred, and do nothing to directly protect water, land, wildlife, or people from oil and gas pollution and fracking. These rules simply allow the cancer-causing chemicals to be named and tested for after the poisoning and pollution has occurred.

Obviously, there's still a long ways to go to protect Coloradans from fracking. What, at a minimum, needs to happen next?

First, like the laws passed a few years ago to protect northern Coloradans from in situ leach uranium mining, oil-and-gas companies and frackers should be required to prove that they have not polluted or poisoned your property and should be required to pay for long-term groundwater monitoring. If a company is injecting cancer-causing chemicals into the ground on your property, why should you have to pay for the expensive groundwater and lab tests? Frackers should pay to prove that your land and water is clean and protected, not the other way around.

Second, the industry should be required to better manage fracking chemicals, drilling water and fracking wastes so that pollution and poisoning does not occur. For example, in Weld County alone, which has more active oil-and-gas wells than any county in America (almost 18,000), public documents on the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's website reveal that there have been over 1,000 "Spill Incident Reports," over 800 "Notice of Alleged Violations," and hundreds of public complaints associated with oil and gas drilling and fracking. Pollution and poisoning are occurring – much of that due to mistakes that involve spilling frack fluids, improperly handling drilling wastes, improperly lining waste ponds.

Third, far more "Mechanical Integrity Tests" by state regulators should occur on drilling and fracking jobs in Colorado. Again, public COGCC documents reveal that of the nearly 18,000 wells in Weld County, there have only been 232 tests reported by state regulators to make sure the well casing is intact so that fracking chemicals cannot migrate back up the bore hole.

Fourth, the oil-and-gas industry needs to collect and publicly disclose the amount of water it uses for drilling and fracking and the source of that water.

See GUEST, 23



GUEST COLUMN

Gary Wockner

Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

OFFICE

1550 E. Harmony Road, 2nd floor
P.O. Box 270810
Fort Collins, CO 80527
800-440-3506 • 970-221-5400
Fax: 970-221-5432

www.ncbr.com

PUBLISHER

Jeff Nuttall
Direct: 232-3131 jnuttall@ncbr.com

NEWS

Editor
Allen Greenberg
Direct: 232-3142 agreenberg@ncbr.com

Reporters

Steve Porter
Direct: 232-3147 sporter@ncbr.com

Molly Armbrister
Direct: 232-3139 marmbrister@ncbr.com

Copy Editor/Web Editor

Noah Guillaume
Direct: 232-3152 nguillaume@ncbr.com

Chief Researcher

Mariah Gant
Direct: 232-3149 mgant@ncbr.com

MARKETING

Director of Marketing and Events

De Dahlgren
Direct: 232-3132 ddahlgren@ncbr.com

Marketing/Events Assistant

Melissa Matonis
Direct: 232-3135 mmatonis@ncbr.com

ADVERTISING

Senior Account Executive

Lindsay Gilliland
Direct: 232-3133 lgilliland@ncbr.com

Account Executives

Julie Constance
Direct: 232-3148 jconstance@ncbr.com

Jill DeLeary
Direct: 232-3145 jdeleary@ncbr.com

CUSTOM PUBLISHING

Custom Publishing Manager

Sandy Powell
Direct: 232-3144 spowell@ncbr.com

PRODUCTION

Production Manager

Bernie Simon
Direct: 232-3140 bsimon@ncbr.com

Art Director

Chad Collins
Direct: 232-3141 ccollins@ncbr.com

ADMINISTRATION

Office Manager / Front Desk

Tiffany Moore
Direct: 232-3130 frontdesk@ncbr.com

CIRCULATION

Circulation Manager

Janet Hatfield
Direct: 232-3146 jhatfield@ncbr.com

BIZWEST MEDIA LLC

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Vestas president urges Senate to extend wind tax credit

(*Business Report Daily*, Dec. 15, 2011)

Perhaps the most significant recent cause of the economic downturn in economic growth and the resulting current economic climate is resource scarcity, as evidenced by current pricing of oil, food and metals. It is critical to our future economic well-being that our economic policies encourage resource conservation and renewable energy production. It would be foolhardy to not further support renewable energy development at this critical point in time. Failure to address energy scarcity will only assure a long-term decline in our standard of living.

Henry Obermeyer
Wellington

Shedding new light on LED debate

(*NCBR*, Dec. 16, 2011)

The great thing about LEDs also is that they can be used to create virtually any spectrum of light. So there is the potential to have a very realistic flame color.

The energy saving was enough for me though when I got my Hanging Fireplace.

Great read, thanks for sharing!

Andrew Saron
Ohio

Great article, I think you will be surprised how quick you will be getting those cheap four-packs, especially with the average LED bulb price dropping 10 percent in one month (Oct. 2011). As for brightness, I'm using one right now an 8-watt T-Opto R20 and it's as bright as most 60-watt bulbs. 2012 will be the "year of the LED."

Rob Huston
Canada

We have vast supplies of 100-watt light bulbs ready for the light bulb ban. Hell will freeze over before I buy one of those new ones, and yes, we can very easily afford the extra \$50 a year.

Steve Robinson
Portland, Maine

CSU researcher to run for state Senate in District 14

(*Business Report Daily*, Dec. 19, 2011)

If Ms. Anderson truly cares about responsible government, education, environment and the economy, she should support state Rep. John Kefalas, who has championed those very things for three terms, and who is running to replace Sen. Bacon.

Eric Fried
Fort Collins

Actually, the best candidate in the race who will honor such things as responsible government, environment and the economy is Syndi Anderson. Her initiatives will give Colorado the boost it has been needing for quite some time. I'm very excited that she is running and I see very positive things coming from her in the future.

Rhianna Feis
Fort Collins

Costco may be headed to Northern Colorado

(*Business Report Daily*, Dec. 13, 2011)

Move to our town of Fort Collins. I bet you won't regret it!

Rachel Davis
Fort Collins

We love to shop at Costco, they have some great products, along with monthly sales, a great return policy and fine services for their members. It's not hard to see why they want to open in the

Northern Colorado area, we would be happy to see them in this new location because we live in the Greeley area.

Stephen Mokray
Greeley

The intersection of Hwy. 56 and I-25 would be ideal. Second choice would be Hwy. 402 and I-25.

Jay McCombs
Berthoud

Consider Loveland. The heart of Tri-City area (Greeley-Loveland-Fort Collins) connected by I-25 and U.S. 34 (Gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park and Estes Park). Closer distribution run with other Costco locations.

Russ Batz
Loveland

I'll bet it costs you less to operate your store in Greeley. And have better access throughout the city.

John Valencia
Greeley

POLL COMMENTS

Did state regulators go far enough in adopting new fracking chemical disclosure rules?

The government almost always over-regulates. That drives up prices and cost to the customer!!! Less government and taxes are the way to help the bring by the economy and create jobs!!!

Freddy Keil

GUEST, from 22

Northern Colorado has very serious water supply and river protection problems already. Though likely in the billions of gallons per year, the amount of water used in fracking is still relatively unknown, as is the source of that water, as drilling and fracking continue to march across the landscape.

Finally, the ugly: The director of COGCC was recently quoted saying that the "first line of defense" against the threat of drilling and fracking pollution is to maintain the "integrity of the wellbore," to make sure fracking chemicals do not migrate into groundwater.

I completely disagree.

The first line of defense against the threat of drilling and fracking pollution is to aggressively switch to a clean-energy economy. Remember those words? Clean energy? They were the two words most often spoken by our previous pro-environment governor, Bill Ritter, but now are completely lost in the public debate. Windmills, solar panels, biofuels

– remember all that?

Instead, the public debate has become insane: Billions of gallons of clean water are drained out of Colorado's endangered rivers every year in order to mix that water with cancer-causing fracking chemicals and then inject that toxic cocktail in the ground around our homes, schools and farms in order to extract non-renewable global-warming-causing fossil fuels that are being burned at a faster and faster rate. But, insanely, the public debate is solely about making sure everyone knows the name of the cancer-causing fracking chemicals.

Colorado made a good start with these new disclosure rules, but has a long ways to go to stop our health, our economy, and our state from really getting ugly.

Gary Wockner is director of *Save the Poudre* (<http://savethepoudre.org>) and *Colorado program director for Clean Water Action* (<http://cleanwater.org>) in Fort Collins. He can be reached at gwockner@cleanwater.org.

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NCBR poll watch

Did state regulators go far enough in adopting new fracking chemical disclosure rules?

Yes



62%

No



38%

These results reflect responses to the online poll at www.ncbr.com Dec. 13 - 22.

Next question:

Would relocating CSU's Hughes Stadium on campus be a good move?

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July 1st



Montgomery Gentry

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July 3rd

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