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Adams County News and Information

Adams County Communities and Denver Announce New Regional Pact

Leaders from Adams County, Aurora, Brighton, Commerce City, Denver, Federal Heights and Thornton today opened a new chapter in cooperative business development and job creation for Denver International Airport and the region it serves.

Culminating more than two years of discussions, officials unveiled the first major amendment to the original 1988 intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) that enabled the creation of DIA and guide commercial development there.

The pact, which will require approval from voters in Denver and Adams County communities this fall, sets the stage for continued job creation and economic opportunity regionally for decades to come, while strengthening the global competitiveness of DIA, the entire metro area and all of Colorado.

Adams County, Aurora, Brighton, Commerce City, Federal Heights and Thornton participated in the discussions that led to the agreement as members of the Airport Coordinating Committee (ACC).

Under the new agreement:

- Denver and Adams County communities would create a 1,500-acre pilot program on DIA to allow a wider spectrum of commercial uses than is currently permitted under the original 1988 IGAs. For example, the pilot program clearly would allow uses such as retail, office parks, warehouses and manufacturing even if they are not directly related to airport operations or aviation.
- Adams County and Denver would evenly split tax revenues generated from the new commercial uses on these 1,500 acres. ACC members have set a formula to apportion the Adams County share of revenues among themselves.
- Denver also would provide Adams County with an upfront payment of \$10 million, to be divided among Adams County communities based on the same formula.
- DIA would retain all of the lease revenue from these new commercial businesses.
- The 1,500-acre pilot program could be expanded with approval from the ACC.
- Denver and Adams County communities would create a regional entity to jointly market these new commercial business opportunities at DIA and the region – and possibly over time plan, fund and develop regional infrastructure.

- Land-use restrictions also would be lifted on property on the edges of the airport. These “clear zones” were initially created as a buffer around DIA but there is now consensus that the restrictions are no longer needed. Adams County and overlapping municipalities would receive 100 percent of the tax revenue from new development in the clear zones, while DIA would retain the lease revenue.
- DIA would not seek new commercial businesses that would compete with the nearby Anschutz Medical Campus and Fitzsimons Innovation Campus in Aurora.
- The agreement requires approval from the Denver City Council and Adams County Board of Commissioners and would take effect following ratification by voters in Denver and Adams County communities. Voters will be able to inspect the agreement and learn more about it before Election Day on Nov. 3.

The original 1988 agreements paved the way for the relocation of overcrowded and outgrown Stapleton International Airport. DIA opened on its current 53-square-mile site in 1995. As part of the 1988 IGAs, Denver and Adams County made commitments that ensured Adams County and its cities would join Denver in reaping benefits from DIA.

The agreement announced today builds on those commitments and will strengthen the regional economy. Over the past 20 years, DIA has become Colorado’s No. 1 economic engine, driving more than \$26 billion into the regional economy each year and supporting a workforce of about 35,000 people, about half of whom live in communities in Adams County.

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Statements from Leaders of Communities that Participated in the Agreement:

ACC Chair and Adams County Commissioner Erik Hansen:

“Working through the complexities of this historic agreement with all of the stakeholders opens a new era for the ACC members and Denver. We were able to find common ground with jobs, regional growth and long-term benefit for our residents always at the core of the negotiations.”

Adams County Commissioner Charles “Chaz” Tedesco (Chairman of Board of County Commissioners): “This agreement protects the spirit and intent of the annexation that our residents voted for in 1988. This agreement ensures that all Adams County residents will benefit from the potential that development around DIA presents.”

Adams County Commissioner Eva J. Henry:

“While ultimately the voters will decide whether to adopt this agreement, it is exciting to think about the jobs and other opportunities it presents for the entire region. DIA has been a catalyst for growth and this agreement has the potential to bring shared prosperity to all of the stakeholders.”

Adams County Commissioner Jan Pawlowski:

“It’s reassuring to know that the spirit of regionalism is alive and well in the metro area. There are few agreements where everyone at the table comes away feeling successful; this is one of them.”

Adams County Commissioner Steve O’Dorisio:

“We believe that this agreement lays the foundation to attract world-class businesses. The hard work that went into crafting this agreement sends a clear message to potential investors that all stakeholders will go to great lengths to ensure success.”

Aurora Mayor Steve Hogan: “From day one, we have viewed DIA as an enormous opportunity for economic development, not only for Aurora, but all of Colorado. While the negotiation was complex and took time to reach, it is good news for all of our communities. This agreement will allow us to take full advantage of the enormous economic development and job creation opportunities that deliver tangible benefits for area residents. Because of the hard work of all the jurisdictions in coming to this agreement, the future of Adams County, DIA and the entire region is stronger, brighter and more exciting.”

Brighton Mayor Richard McLean:

“After several years of negotiations, we are pleased with the level of cooperation that has allowed us to reach this agreement. We trust that our residents, too, will see the economic growth opportunities that will come with the expansion of the Denver International Airport and vote to support this agreement this fall.”

Commerce City Mayor Sean Ford:

“Commerce City has been planning land uses and infrastructure to support airport-related development for more than two decades. That’s why city council supports today’s agreement that not only benefits the entire region, but also our residents. Commerce City borders DIA to the west and the north, less than 10 minutes from DIA’s main terminal. Today, the city has nearly 12 square miles of available land directly bordering the airport and several mixed-use projects underway. We look forward to working with all parties to advance infrastructure, land planning and marketing efforts that will reaffirm our collective position in the global marketplace.”

Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock:

“This historic agreement will have a seismic impact on metro Denver’s competitive edge in the global marketplace. Not only has our region come together once again to take hold of our shared future, but we are setting ourselves on a trajectory abundant with opportunity. I’m immensely proud of where we stand today because I know the possibilities we are creating for Colorado’s economy. By coming together to forge this new agreement, Denver and the communities of Adams County are providing certainty and clarity for the businesses seeking to locate on and around DIA, and the result will be significant economic development both on and off DIA. Together, we are marking a new era of regional cooperation, job creation and economic prosperity.

Federal Heights Mayor Joyce Thomas:

“The City of Federal Heights was party to the original 1988 IGA between Adams County and Denver regarding the new airport’s impacts and ensuring everyone’s interests were recognized. The Adams County voters approved the land sale to Denver for the new airport and Federal Heights had a seat at the table during the recent negotiations to ensure the voters’ interests continued to be recognized.”

Thornton Mayor Heidi Williams:

“The city of Thornton is pleased to see the culmination of over two years of negotiations end positively and in a manner that will set the stage for all residents of Adams County to share in the creation of jobs, businesses and the revenues generated by these businesses on DIA property.”