

## Rocky Mountain News

### Costly name change considered to alter Commerce City's image

By Charley Able, Rocky Mountain News  
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COMMERCE CITY - There's a push on to give this town a tonier name, but change won't come cheap.

Street signs, park signs, lettering on police cars and other city vehicles, the official government letterhead and stationery and who knows what else would require overhauling.

According to a memo compiled for the city council, the cost, including changing the city's logo, would be at least \$926,000.

Residents will go to the polls April 3 to decide whether the city's 45-year-old name should be changed to reflect what supporters of the proposal say is the new city - one of new homes in upscale developments, parks, schools and modern shopping areas.

But much of the city remains industrial, with modest homes from the 1950s and 1960s nestled in aging neighborhoods near gritty used tire shops, car wrecking yards and manufacturing and warehouse facilities.

If voters decide change is needed, a second vote next fall will determine which of three names - to be nominated after a series of community meetings - to go with.

"I think we are a beautiful city and I think we need a beautiful name to go with it," said City Councilwoman Reba Drotar.

That opinion, Drotar said, is her view as a citizen. As an elected city official, Drotar said she just wants voters to have a chance to decide a question that has lingered for years.

"I've had lots of town meetings and lots of open meetings and at every single meeting, people would bring this up," said Drotar, a six-year council member and native of the former community of Derby.

She remembers the day her community was annexed by what then was known as Commerce Town without a vote of the residents.

"We were Derby and then we weren't," Drotar said, adding "I want citizens to answer the question. . . . Over and above everything, the people have to decide who we are."

But Mayor Sean Ford is concerned that a rebranded Commerce City would be thought of by metro-area residents "for the next 25 to 30 years, minimum, as 'the City formerly known as Commerce City.' "

"Like the singer Prince: He changed his name and was 'the singer formerly known as Prince.' He had to go back to 'Prince'," Ford said.

And Ford, a lifelong Commerce City resident who has been an elected official of the city for eight years, believes that media coverage of the name-change proposal already has tarnished the city's changing image.

"We are shooting ourselves in the foot publicly to the metro area," Ford said. "The negative stuff that this has generated, I think, has already set this community back on repairing its image and we have worked extremely hard on building that image."

Ford, citing the city's estimated cost of a name change, said the city's money could be better spent to help attract and develop the burgeoning retail area known as "downtown Derby" or to fund such youth programs as a pool and park lighting in a current project with the Boys and Girls Club.

For Councilman Paul Natale, the question is a lingering one that needs to be answered, no matter what the voters decide.

"I moved to Commerce City and knew it was Commerce City and I love it here and it's people. I don't have a dog in this fight. As far as would I care one way or the other? It wouldn't bother me at all," Natale said.

### **The results are in**

#### **Poll results from Colorado's Morning Show on KOA-AM (850) on a new city moniker:**

- Stinky Town .....54 percent
- Derby .....18 percent
- Reunion .....11 percent
- Platte Park .....10 percent
- Springfield .....7 percent

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