

REPORT TO LONGMONT CITIZENS

Despite Challenges, Longmont Makes Great Strides in 2002

The year 2002 was both challenging and rewarding for all of us in Longmont. The year began and continued under the cloud of a sluggish economy, summer brought drought of historic proportions and with it multiple wildfires, and as the year came to a close, uncertainty about the financial health of our local school system.

Like many of you, the City tightened its belt and began to decrease its spending level to compensate for lower revenues. Although the 2003 budget was just completed in October, we will re-visit the budget early in 2003 to ensure that actions to date are adequate. The Council was disappointed that we could not give salary increases to City employees, and that some planned expenditures had to be cut or reduced, essential city services remain intact. We were able to continue funding for important services such as public safety, transportation, youth services, affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization.

In addition, we were able to continue to contribute to vital programs run by local non-profits such as the Coalition for Women in Crisis, Salud Clinic, Special Transit, the Longmont Area Economic Council, Downtown Development Authority and others.

Despite the challenges of 2002, there were significant accomplishments made in Longmont this year. From the opening of the new recreation center to helping families purchase homes through the City's Community Housing Program, the needs of our residents continued to be met.

Public Safety



To better serve the neighborhoods in north and east Longmont, construction began on a new fire station. Station 3, located at 1000 Pace Street, is scheduled to open this month. With the addition of this new station the fire department will be better able to meet its goal of responding to every emergency call within five minutes.

In mid July, a forest fire started near Big Elk Meadows just west of the City's Button Rock Preserve and watershed. The City's first response centered on protecting people by clearing the area and closing the area to visitation during the course of the fire.

Fire mitigation efforts minimized fire potential around city structures and our watershed. The City contributed water and firefighters in support of this and other

fires in Boulder County. Thanks to the hard work of the U.S. Forest Service the fire was controlled before it impacted the City's watershed.

The events of September 11, 2001 served as a tragic reminder of why the City maintains a crisis response plan. This past year our emergency plan was updated, and a major disaster scenario was enacted last fall to test the system. The revised plan will allow us to better respond to a multitude of different types of crisis incidents, both likely and unlikely.

The Longmont Ending Violence Initiative (LEVI) received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice. LEVI, in partnership with the Longmont Police Department, is an awareness project designed to educate and engage the entire community in an effort to reduce domestic violence.

Additionally, the Longmont Police received a \$32,000 LEAF (Law Enforcement Assistance Fund) Grant in 2002 to help combat alcohol-related traffic incidents. Another \$30,000 has been awarded for 2003. Funded by the State of Colorado, the money is raised from DUI arrests throughout the state.

Community Involvement

In partnership with the community at-large and Latino Taskforce, the City facilitated a community strategic planning process to "encourage the people of Longmont to work together to be caring and inclusive community, proud to embrace, respect and celebrate each other." The result of this process is a series of goals, objectives and strategies in the areas of employment, economic development, education, community participation, health care/housing, and political involvement. Each of these areas has itemized specific action plans to reach Longmont's community vision.



area median income.

Another example of Longmont reaching out to all parts of our community is seen in the successful first full year operation of the Community Housing Program. The program processed 53 total applications with 13 families purchasing homes with an additional five homes under contract. The City development code requires that 10% of all housing units built are affordable for ten years with purchase prices at or below 80% of the area median income or for 20 years with rental rates at or below 50% of the

Neighborhoods

Longmont was honored to host the fourth annual Colorado Neighborhoods Conference this past year. With approximately 120 neighborhood residents and city staff from all over the Front Range in attendance, people met to share ideas and learn how to proactively improve their neighborhoods.

The City is putting the neighborhood ideal to the test with our first neighborhood revitalization project. A \$100,000 grant was offered to one neighborhood to develop its own plan to create a clean, friendly and safe environment in which to live. From the competitive selection process, the Kensington neighborhood in east Longmont was chosen as the first recipient of this neighborhood revitalization grant. The unique aspect of this grant is that the people in the neighborhood are the ultimate creators and decision-makers in the process. Early success is evident already – the neighborhood turned out in force to paint an entire house in one morning for an elderly resident.



Transportation

Effective transportation planning and traffic management will continue to be a challenge for us. Although additional population certainly adds to congestion, the greater impact is from large increases in the “vehicle miles traveled” by each individual. This means that each person is driving more than ever before.



This year Council authorized the addition of a Neighborhood Traffic Mitigation Program Coordinator to city staff. This new staff member has been working with several neighborhood groups to find ways to address traffic impacts on neighborhood livability. Because the program relies so heavily on direct involvement from the neighbors it is a fairly slow process, but one we believe will solve problems and suggest solutions for many other parts of town.

Arterial road improvements were recently completed on Pace Street from 9th Avenue to Highway 66. The project included lane widening, addition of on-street bicycle lanes, drainage improvements, additional turn lanes, pedestrian improvements, and the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Mt. View Avenue and Pace Street.

The city also joined forces with Boulder County for the completion of the design and construction of improvements to Airport Road from the Diagonal north to Pike Road. This project will make getting around the city much more convenient.

To provide traffic relief to the diagonal highway, the City is working with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Boulder County and the City of Boulder to improve the Diagonal and SH 52 intersection with a grade-separated interchange. The new interchange will be built to allow future rail and bikeway connections between Boulder and Longmont.

Longmont was allocated \$10.2 million in Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funds for work on the diagonal rapid transit program (DART) and 3rd Avenue entryway improvements. Funded by the Federal Government and Boulder County Sales Tax, the project will double bus service to and from Boulder.

The City also received a \$600,000 federal grant to help pay for a bike path and landscaping project along 3rd Avenue from Martin Street to County Line Road. The three-year, \$1.2 million project begins in 2003

The City also worked with RTD to include a heavy rail line component to Longmont in its upcoming FasTracks initiative. As specified on RTD's current map, the proposed commuter rail will follow the Burlington-Northern line along the Diagonal Highway from Boulder to Longmont.

Currently underway is the State Highway 119/Ken Pratt Boulevard Extension. During 2002 road design was completed, right-of-way acquired and construction started. Bridges necessary over the St. Vrain River, Lefthand Creek and Dry Creek were completed by year-end and work on roadway sections has already begun. With luck, this new section of highway will be lowering congestion on parts of 3rd and Main Streets and provide better access to the East Side of the City by December 2003.

In an effort to reduce the number of vehicle trips throughout the City, a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) task force was formed in cooperation with Longmont businesses. The goal is to develop and recommend alternatives to offload demand from the transportation system through such tools as employee ride sharing, Eco-passes, staggered work hours and the like.

Finally, the City Council approved a plan to improve the parking situation in the Downtown area. The plan studied and suggests better utilization of the limited number of parking spaces (long-term vs. short-term parking) in the downtown area.



Electrical Utilities

As most of you know, the city operates its own electric utility – Longmont Power & Communications (LPC) and is a co-owner (along with Fort Collins, Loveland and Estes-Park) of Platte River Power Authority, our electricity provider. Formed in 1912, LPC celebrated its 90th year of serving the residents of Longmont in 2002. Residents enjoy the fourth-lowest electrical rate in the state of Colorado thanks to LPC. It also ranks in the top 25% of utilities nationwide for electric service reliability.



Platte River Power Authority is voluntarily reducing emissions at its Rawhide Energy Station. When considering all its electric generating resources (coal, hydropower, natural gas, wind, etc.), Platte River has total sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions lower than any other utility in the state. The plant also ranks as the fifth cleanest coal-fired power plants in the United States.

Water



This past year started out dry and became drier as the year progressed. Stream flows dropped to record lows and water conservation became the “hottest” topic throughout Colorado. Longmont responded by developing the 2002 Drought Response Plan and subsequent monitoring and intensive management of our water supply. This effort included revision of ordinances to encourage water conservation and

ultimately to allow for mandatory watering restrictions to conserve water. The plan also required the development of systems and procedures to respond to citizen questions, issue special permits, and enforce ordinances and watering restrictions. All of us should be very proud that we were able to conserve approximately 650 million gallons of water in a very hot year!

Expansion of the City’s Wastewater Treatment Plant from a treatment capacity of 11.5 million-gallons-per-day (MGD) to 17 MGD will be near completion at the end of 2002. Actual start-up is



expected in early 2003. Although neighbors on the east side of Longmont will attest that odor issues are still not completely resolved, the Plant expansion includes a change in the secondary treatment process as well as further expenditures for odor control. In addition to adding capacity, odors from the plant will be greatly reduced by early 2003.

Long before this summer's drought, the City began saving funds to build a new water treatment plant to meet the City's future drinking water demands. In November, with a 77% margin, Longmont voters approved a \$19 million water bond issue to provide additional funding to this \$60 million project. This is this type of proactive planning and support from residents that keeps us in good shape even in a drought and ensures adequate water for Longmont's future.

Youth and Recreation

Longmont truly cares about its youth and continues to work closely with youth and families to develop activities and programs that will strengthen their lives. Advocated and planned by local teens, the City provided funds to establish a new teen dance club to give young adults a safe, fun place to meet and socialize. The new club, called "Club Breakdown," is scheduled to open in January.



All of us now have a couple of new places for recreation. Opening to rave reviews in the spring of 2002, the Longmont Recreation Center has been a huge success. Residents and non-residents frequently use the many amenities including three-court gym, suspended running track, weight and aerobic rooms, climbing wall and activity pool.

In December an \$11.9 million Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant was awarded to the St. Vrain Open Lands and Trails Project. The City has spent several years working with jurisdictions including Weld County, Boulder County, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Parks, and other neighboring Weld County communities preparing for this project. This project is a preserve and trail system looping from Longmont to Barbour Ponds State Park to Firestone, Frederick and Erie, and back to Longmont. Longmont's share is approximately \$2.2 million and can be used for land acquisition in the project area east of town.

Culture

Another "new" popular destination in town is the Longmont Museum and Cultural Center. Re-located to the recreation center campus complex from the old building on 4th Avenue, our new museum is the first new-from-the-ground-up museum in Colorado in twenty years and makes an impressive architectural statement in

Longmont. The Center provides a superior venue for the continued preservation of the community's rich historic artifact, photographic and archival collections, and their interpretation for Longmont residents. Since expanding Museum hours to include additional weekend and Wednesday evening hours, visitation has increased by nearly 50% over previous years.



We are very fortunate in Longmont to have a great parks system. Roosevelt Park also benefited from bond funds recently authorized by Longmont citizens. In addition to the beautiful senior center, St. Vrain Memorial building expansion and remodel and the new running trail, the City was named an "All-American Rose Selection Public Display Garden" upon the re-opening of the stunning rose garden, one of only two in Colorado that have received this designation. After a couple of false starts, the ice-skating rink has opened at the new events pavilion in the park. Bring your skates and hot chocolate!

Finally, our public library continues to be immensely popular. The demand for services from this facility prompted a remodel that began in November. With scheduled completion in March 2003, the library will be able to accommodate more resources and provide even better customer service.



Planning

The impressive list of accomplishments mentioned in this report comes from citizen suggestions and support along with prudent planning. Each project that we undertake is based on specific, identified needs. A very important example of this intense community involvement process is the recent update and adoption of the City's development code. The update to the development code was a multi-year project which included extensive involvement from community groups, civic and business organizations, neighborhood groups, real estate and development interests, individual citizens and multiple city boards and commissions. To assure that the development code is meeting the expectations of the parties who were involved in the process of reviewing it, the City Council regularly reviews the implementation aspects of the new code. Amendments to the code have already been accomplished and additional revisions are planned for early 2003 based on community feedback.

City Council signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Weld County Commissioners this year to work cooperatively on future urban development

projects in Weld County. This was the culmination of several years of work with the County to help ensure quality development near Longmont.

Finally, one of the most critical current activities in the City is the targeted update to the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan (LACP). This document is second only to the Municipal Charter in importance as a decision-making guide for the city. It establishes a framework for the city to identify and evaluate key economic, land use and quality of life issues facing the city. This LACP update, a 15-month process, began in 2002. A draft of the plan document and associated future land use maps will be released for public review and comment in early 2003. Although only a 15 month process, the LACP update is also an example of intensive community involvement including community forums, presentations to community and neighborhood groups, outreach to youth, seniors and Latinos in the community as well as a comprehensive catalog tracking all comments received during the update process.

When I conceived of this annual report to Longmont Citizens, I hoped to provide a concise look at only the most important activities, concerns and accomplishments of the year — a report to you about how your tax dollars are being spent. However, please remember that there are so many other valuable, critical efforts being discussed, beginning, or in some stage of development not mentioned here. And that is only locally – regionally, there are many more.

As we look back over the past year we recognize that although some efforts began this year, many more have been in planning for much longer than that. We all should recognize too that there are many ongoing services provided that we all take for granted (that is until they aren't done!). So much is done through a wonderful combination of citizen input and support along with over 800 dedicated City staff professionals and volunteers. It is a reminder to be vigilant in planning for many future years and to be grateful for all those that contribute their time and energy for every one of us.



At our January retreat, the City Council will be discussing several very important topics for the City work plan in 2003. Please don't hesitate to call me 303-776-8018 or e-mail juliapirnacklg@earthlink.net to discuss your concerns or suggestions for this planning session.

In my mind, of particular concern and interest are identifying methods to make the absolute best, lowest cost use of affordable housing funds – to get help to where it is most needed while making sure the plan is equitable to everyone involved.

Another critical component of planning for 2003 must be to evaluate how we will remain economically viable in a sluggish economy, including taking a look at telecommunication infrastructure needs and opportunities. Our citizens need jobs and businesses need people who are making a decent living.

Future land planning, including multi-modal transportation system planning, along with re- use and re-development opportunities for the City will become more and more important as our growth slows. This type of planning takes years – I believe we must begin now.

Along with land use planning comes identifying additional methods to conserve and make good use of our water resources. Finally but certainly not least, we will discuss with the St. Vrain Valley School District whether we can assist them in some way during this difficult time.

Thanks to all of you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Mayor this past year and to brag to you (and many others!) about the many accomplishments that our community has achieved in 2002.

Realize our successes are only possible through the combination of two things – the generosity and support of Longmont citizens and volunteers and the hard work and dedication of more than 800 employees that work for Longmont’s citizens. We don’t accomplish all that we could without the community working together.

I urge all of you to continue talking to us – your elected officials and City staff, and I encourage every Longmont resident to be an active, not passive, member of the community. Happy New Year to all of you and together, we will attain even greater successes in 2003.

Julia Pirnack,
Mayor, City of Longmont