

Intergovernmental Relations and Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan (LACP) 2008 City Council Retreat

Introduction

This white paper provides information to assist City Council in clearly refining the policy concerning the City's actions towards the urban development in Longmont's eastern boundaries within Weld County. This paper provides background information regarding:

1. The status of intergovernmental relations with cities and special districts
2. The LACP (including an overview of the 2003 Targeted Update, the Three Tier Planning System and the Neighborhood Planning Concept, and goals, policies, and strategies that are pertinent to infill/redevelopment and Weld County-related issues)
3. Past City planning efforts concerning Weld County
4. The Weld County/Longmont Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)
5. Other planning and development-related activities in Weld County

Questions for Consideration

1. What is the City Council's vision for the future of Intergovernmental Relations with respect to Longmont's eastern boundary?
2. What actions, if any, should the City take in reaction to the inevitable situation of southwest Weld County urbanization moving westward until it reaches Longmont's eastern boundaries?
3. Would Council choose to continue the current policy regarding urban development in Weld County and the actions listed at the end of this paper, or detail another policy approach towards urban development in Weld County and modify the list of actions as appropriate?

Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan – Overview and 2003 Update

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* (LACP) is the City's primary document for planning its future. It is second to the *Municipal Charter* as the City's most important document that guides the City as it matures towards sustainability at build out. It is flexible and continuously revised to reflect changing circumstances and community values. The City makes decisions about development based on the LACP. Although approved by ordinance, it should be considered a guide and not a regulation. The City adopts and relies on other measures to implement it. Such tools include the *Land Development Code* (LDC), the annual *Operating Budget*, the *Capital Improvement Program* (CIP) and others.

“Many competing goals, policies, and strategies exist within the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*. While the City attempts to integrate the various goals, policies, and strategies in its actions, it will necessarily emphasize some goals, policies, and strategies

over others depending on the circumstances associated with a particular issue.” (LACP page 1-7)

In 2003, the City completed a targeted update to LACP which indicated that the City should initiate a review of the entire document no later than January 1, 2013. There were five targeted issues:

1. Sustainability – The focus was to consider how best to expand City Council’s quality of life benchmarks and suggest changes where the LACP can better support and build upon the City’s benchmarks.
2. Transportation – This evaluation included updating and running the TransCAD computer transportation model, reevaluating the need to construct 6 lanes on Hover Road between the Diagonal and Third Avenue, and reevaluating a direct connection between Pike Road, an arterial, and the Diagonal.
3. Land Use Mix – This evaluation had four related elements: jobs/housing and financial health, retail sector, land uses north of SH66, and evaluation of whether or not it is in Longmont’s interests to prepare a neighborhood plan within Weld County for the area around Union Reservoir.
4. Regional and State Requirements – The focus of this topic was to ensure that this comprehensive plan update was consistent with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG’s) *Mile High Compact* which the City had signed as well as with State law. The *Mile High Compact* includes principles for guiding updates to local comprehensive plans as well as specifying what elements and information should be included in those plans. In addition to complying with the *Mile High Compact*, the LACP update needed to comply with House Bill 01S2-1006 Concerning the Mandatory Adoption of Local Governments Master Plans.
5. Housekeeping Issues – The focus of this item was to evaluate whether the LACP need to be revised to reflect changes necessary as a result of City Council adoption in 2002 of the *Open Space and Trails Master Plan* as well as strategies that the City used to guide the work on the *Land Development Code*.

Comprehensive elements – physical, social, economic, environmental Elements (chapters) of the LACP address issues such as economic vitality, environmental health and community well being. The goal of sustainability or meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is incorporated into the LACP. Each chapter of the LACP includes measures or indicators of trends which provide a relative measure of change with respect to specific goals. Since 2003, City Council has received an *Indicators Report* to help City Council weigh decisions regarding growth and development as they relate to the LACP. This *Indicators Report* supplements City Council’s Quality of Life Benchmarks. City Council received the most recent version of this *Indicators Report* in November 2007

(Appendix 1). The LACP also includes a Comprehensive Plan Map that designates land uses and transportation improvements (Map 1).

Three-Tier Planning

The “three-tier planning process” is a key foundation or premise that the City uses for planning for growth and development (LACP Strategy G-1.3(a)). The City uses the three-tier planning process to establish mutual expectations between the City, private landowners, and developers and to encourage private investment that furthers the City’s goals.

The first tier (Tier One) is known as the Municipal Service Area (MSA) (Map 2). It includes all land that has been annexed to the City as well as some areas of unincorporated land that the City can and should serve. According to the LACP:

“The Municipal Service Area represents the greatest level of public investment for installation and/or maintenance of capital improvements. The City considers the area appropriate for urban development. Development in this area would be able to use, for the most part, existing or programmed capital improvements.”
(LACP page 2.3)

Once an annexation is recorded, it automatically becomes part of the MSA since an annexation is subject to an annexation agreement. That annexation agreement establishes the expectations of both the City and the private property owner with respect to responsibilities for providing services to the development.

The second tier (Tier Two) is known as the Longmont Planning Area (LPA). It includes land outside the MSA that the City plans (in cooperation with property owners and the community) in advance of development using the neighborhood planning area concept (though it is not uncommon that this planning is done in conjunction with an annexation). It is during the neighborhood planning process (also called an LPA amendment) that the City will designate land uses, plan streets (primarily collectors), and locate park sites and school sites. With the information from neighborhood plans, the City (and other agencies such as the St. Vrain Valley School District) can do more specific, functional planning (various utilities, etc.) and programming of projects to implement the LACP.

The third tier (Tier Three) is known as the St. Vrain Valley Planning Area (SVVPA). Unlike the MSA and LPA which designate land uses and transportation improvements on properties, the Comprehensive Plan Map in the LACP does not typically designate land uses in the SVVPA. The SVVPA is an area

“within which land use, transportation, and water rights changes may have a direct or indirect effect on the City. The City monitors

change in this area so as the City grows it can realistically understand all opportunities and constraints.” (LACP page 2-4)

The City has many interests and assets within the SVVPA. Examples of them include the City’s water treatment plants near Lyons, utility lines outside the City limits that serve the City, and land purchased for reservoir expansion and open space in Weld County.

The SVVPA is the area in which both Boulder County and Weld County send development applications for the City to review and comment. These applications also are known as “county referrals.” City Council frequently sees referral review comments as “Information Items” in City Council packets.

Neighborhood planning

When the City plans areas in advance of development (LPA amendments), the basic unit of urban expansion is called the “neighborhood planning area”. Ideally it is an area large enough to warrant the location of one elementary school and one neighborhood park. Residential neighborhood planning areas can have a mix of housing types for a planned population of between 4,000 and 8,000 people. They are larger than what people may think of as their neighborhood.

Neighborhood planning areas should be self-contained, have a sense of place, and be centered on schools, parks, and other services that are in walking distance. Readily identifiable boundaries such as significant natural or man-made features (rivers, drainage basin limits, arterial streets) bound neighborhood planning areas.

There are 15 established neighborhood planning areas in the City, and 12 planned neighborhood planning areas (Map 3). Only the latter have gone through the public neighborhood planning process (LPA amendment) in advance of annexation and development. In light of the give and take of competing interests and issues that arise during the neighborhood planning process, each of these planned neighborhood planning areas comply with the neighborhood planning concept to varying degrees.

Redevelopment and Infill For Longmont’s Future

As Longmont approaches a scarcity of lands around the periphery in which to grow, tools and strategies to encourage positive infill and redevelopment projects will become increasingly important (Appendix 2). While the change may not be evident, Longmont has become a city where the emphasis on community building has been shifting towards infill and redevelopment rather than on peripheral growth at the community’s edge. Now it is the Central Business District (CBD) or downtown, Twin Peaks Mall, and existing neighborhoods that become the focus of opportunity for infill and redevelopment which is both challenging and exciting for the City. The City has in previous retreats and work programs identified the Sugar Factory and Flour Mill as two specific infill projects

that were the impetus for the Southeast Urban Renewal Plan that was adopted by the City Council in 2007 (with the Council serving as the Urban Renewal Authority). By encouraging quality infill growth and redevelopment as well as forming positive partnerships with the City's neighborhoods and the business community, the City has a strong potential for positive infill and growth that will meet the vision of the City Council and the community.

Longmont has a number of tools currently in place to make redevelopment and infill a positive and successful contribution to the City. As new techniques emerge as best practices at a national level, the City is also evaluating these tools to determine which will provide our community a competitive edge. Numerous local workshops to see how other communities in the Front Range are dealing with infill and redevelopment are being monitored, and national trends are being evaluated to determine which strategies are best suited for inclusion into the *Land Development Code* (LDC). These workshops and training sessions for Council members, Planning and Zoning Commission (P/Z) members, and staff present opportunities to bring new ideas forward that can enhance how the City does business.

The LDC currently provides for alternative site design as it pertains to infill projects throughout the City. Given the constraints typically found in these development areas of the City, these allowances can encourage projects that are of similar scale and character to the existing community while adding diversity in housing types and providing business opportunities that do not currently exist. These tools exist for both the City in general as well as for the downtown.

The LDC allows special consideration for the Central Business District (CBD) to encourage reinvestment in the downtown. Setbacks and height allowances in the CBD encourage infill and redevelopment in the downtown area that is similar in character to the existing and historic buildings in the district. The *Midtown Redevelopment Plan*, adopted by Council in 2005, serves as a guide for growth from Longs Peak to 17th Avenue along Main Street and the immediate vicinity. The Mixed Use Overlay zone is one type of tool that can be utilized to assist in the implementation of the Midtown Plan.

The proposed Mixed Use Overlay District represents an update to Longmont's LDC. The amendments are intended to facilitate redevelopment opportunities associated with future transit and/or pedestrian friendly development plans, and other areas of the community targeted for redevelopment. The final version will be brought to Council shortly after the City Council retreat for review. The proposed overlay district will:

- Create incentives for development and redevelopment projects
- Build in flexibility in development standards for redevelopment and infill projects

- Include standards that address building placement, form and design, vehicle and pedestrian access, parking control, and streetscape and signage design
- Create a sense of place in areas of redevelopment in conjunction with goals and policies stated in the *Midtown Redevelopment Plan*, the *Southeast Longmont Urban Renewal Plan*, and the Longmont Station/Transit Oriented Development Analysis (also known as the Station Area Plan to begin in 2008)

These are just some of the redevelopment and infill strategies which will aid our City to redevelop in a way that is complementary to the City's rich history and quality of life. Development requests are becoming increasingly infill-oriented. It appears that Longmont is past the point of being a greenfield community and is now one focused on creating successful self-sustaining places through infill and redevelopment opportunities.

Overview of Weld County Planning Activities

Longmont Planning Area – Weld County

Although the City has not completed a broad scale neighborhood planning effort in Weld County, it has a history of considering such efforts. In 1987, the City completed the *Resource Management System Study for Southwest Weld Study*. The purpose of this study was to determine the benefits and constraints to development in this area, jurisdictional issues, and how the City might deal with development in unincorporated Weld County. Attached to the study was a memo discussing options for the City. It indicated that ideally the City would like no development to occur until the City was ready to annex. Listed objectives for the City were:

- A. Development in the Del Camino area should not create social or economic problems for the City
- B. Maintenance of an attractive entrance to the City
- C. The future expansion options of the City should not be precluded, especially with regard to wastewater treatment
- D. Preservation of an open space buffer between Longmont and Del Camino
- E. Expansion of the City's tax and economic base

The above list summarizes to a great deal the discussions the City has had concerning development in Weld County in subsequent years. Additional issues include those associated with the City preferring urban level development to be in municipalities that provide a full range of urban services rather than occurring in unincorporated areas with special districts that provide some urban services. The location of the City's assets such as the Union Reservoir expansion, the St. Vrain Greenway, the former City landfill (now High Plains Preserve Open Space) and the City's East St. Vrain Public Works and Water Utilities Facility have also figured into City discussions concerning development in Weld County.

In response to some property owners in 1996, the City decided not to undertake a broad scale neighborhood planning effort and allow individual property owners to submit concurrent LPA amendments and annexations. Consequently, the one planned neighborhood planning area in Weld County (McLane) is the result of several concurrent LPA amendments and annexations (McLane, Concepts Direct, Mayeda, and Sandstone Ranch).

In 2000, one property owner (Don Sherwood) began a neighborhood planning effort for an area south of SH119 and east of County Line Road 1. It was not completed. A great deal of the land included in this effort is now open space (either fee simple or conservation easement).

Weld County I-25 Mixed Use Development (MUD) Area

Unincorporated land near Longmont in southwest Weld County has been largely undeveloped until recently. Within the last 15 years, the Towns of Firestone, Frederick, Dacono and Erie have experienced increased development activity. In this same period, the areas of unincorporated southwest Weld County also began experiencing more and more development. In 1987, Weld County created the I-25 MUD area which now encompasses most of the land area east of Longmont to I-25 (Map 4). Weld County MUD policies provide that urban development may occur with County approval outside of cities or towns. Many special districts have been formed to provide utility services to these unincorporated developments.

Many of the West Union properties, the Lifebridge property, and the Fairview property are currently within the MUD. Since its inception, the MUD has been modified several times in order to accommodate urban growth. Currently the MUD covers approximately 23 square miles (Map 5). The City has commented on numerous development applications within the MUD since its inception. In general, when processing these development referrals in the past, the City's comments have been that urban development belongs in municipalities where a full range of urban services can be provided.

City Pursued Neighborhood Planning in Weld County

In the year 2000, the City Council determined that it would be beneficial to conduct long range or comprehensive planning in Weld County. The purpose of this planning was to assure that proper land use management and buffering principles be established in Weld County east of Longmont. The City budgeted \$50,000 for land use planning in this area subject to participation by property owners. A public meeting was held, and over 50 Weld County residents attended. Only one property owner showed any interest in this planning activity so it was not pursued by the City.

Weld County Coordinated Planning Area (CPA)

In the late 1990's, it became apparent to the City of Longmont that the comprehensive plan goal to remain a freestanding community was in jeopardy

given development occurring east of Longmont. Careful growth management programs in place with Longmont and Boulder County provided Longmont with a community buffer on all boundaries except the Weld County eastern boundary of Longmont. Owners of several properties adjacent to and east of the LPA boundary along County Line Road submitted development applications to Weld County for urban style residential developments. Longmont expressed significant objections to Weld County regarding these developments. Further discussion with Weld County eventually led to the creation of the CPA through an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Weld County covering development issues (Map 6). This agreement took almost two years to negotiate with Weld County and has been only marginally successful in establishing the basic principle that urban development in the area should be handled by a municipality.

The IGA basically allows Longmont to review and provide comments on Weld County development applications in the CPA. The IGA also says that prior to considering development applications, the County will refer the applicant to the City for the City to determine whether or not it wants to require the applicant to first petition for annexation to the City. The City can only consider an annexation application for property that is contiguous to the City limits. If the City has not acted on the annexation petition after seven months from its submission, and the applicant has acted in good faith, the County can then consider a development application on that property. The initial term of the IGA ends on June 30, 2008, with provisions for automatic renewal for successive one-year periods unless either party decides to terminate the IGA by giving at least twelve months written notice to the other party.

The CPA is a little over 13 square miles. About 6 square miles includes open space, Union Reservoir, and land purchased for Union Reservoir's expansion. The remaining 7 square miles is land that is or could be developed. Of these 7 square miles of developable land, the City estimates that a little over 1 square mile is already urban (McLane, Concepts Direct, Vista Commercial, Longview, Meadowvale Farm, Meadowvale - Map 7). Over 9 square miles of the CPA is also included in Weld County's I-25 Mixed Use Development (MUD) area.

Even though the LPA has been identified as the potential limit of Longmont's future physical growth, the City is not required to grow within the LPA since annexation is a discretionary act by the City Council. Longmont is also not required to grow within the CPA. Yet, the agreement with Weld County recognizes the development pressures within the CPA and the need for greater coordination between Longmont and Weld County. Among the provisions of the agreement are:

- The City has an opportunity to annex property eligible for annexation prior to the County approving development (§3.3(a) on page 3)
- The City will allow the extension of sanitary sewer service to property subject to City requirements (§3.3(b) on page 3)

- The City will require the extension of treated water to property subject to City requirements (§3.3(c) on page 4)
- The County will require the provision of public water as a condition of approval of any subdivision, rezoning or planned unit development (§3.3(d) on page 4)
- The County will not grant waivers from City street standards without the City's consent (§3.3(e) on page 4)
- To the extent legally possible, the County will deny proposals for non-urban development (§3.3(f) on page 4)
- The City will give serious consideration to all petitions for annexation (§4.1 on page 6)
- The City will not annex property outside the CPA unless it is eligible for annexation and the property is necessary for municipal purposes such as utilities (§4.2 on page 6)

Longmont's purpose in establishing this IGA and CPA was to put the City in a position to influence, if not control, land use in this critical eastern buffer area of the City. For example, this CPA has assisted the City in making extensive purchases of open space that may have otherwise been developed.

Most recently, and as a by-product of the CPA with Weld County, property owners between Union Reservoir and County Line Road were forced to seek annexation to the City. According to the CPA language, if the City does not decide to annex, then the property will develop under Weld County with special districts. City Council authorized LPA amendment and annexation referrals for the West Union property owners to work with the City on an LPA amendment to add the West Union properties to the LACP. In addition, annexation requests could be reviewed and considered by the City on a case-by-case basis. This planning effort for private development was conditioned on the requirement that expansion plans for Union Reservoir and the Union Reservoir Recreational Master Plan Update be incorporated into the land use planning for the West Union neighborhood planning area. The West Union planning work has been on hold to allow the Union Reservoir Recreational Master Plan Update to be completed. This update was presented to the Council in December 2007.

City Council reviews applications on a case-by-case basis and has not always agreed to consider an LPA amendment and annexation for properties where the CPA required the applicant to first seek annexation to the City before submitting development applications to Weld County. In 2006 Village Homes submitted an LPA amendment and annexation referral to City Council. City Council did not approve the referral. Subsequently, a development application for Newby Farms (a portion of the properties that were part of the referral) was submitted to Weld County.

Special Districts

The ease of creating Title 32 Metropolitan Special Districts in southwest Weld County has been another factor in the rapid urbanization of this area. Water service is available through both the Longs Peak and Left Hand water districts. Wastewater service is available to most of this area as well. In addition, there has been a trend of special districts being created to assist developers in financing site development costs. Additionally, the presence of a special district creates another level of government and taxation for the residents of that district. It is likely that the area of southwest Weld County will continue with the trend of special districts to finance infrastructure for new development and fuel further development in this area.

208 Water Quality Planning Area

Federal Clean Water Act regulations provide for water quality planning in urban areas. This is called the 208 Water Planning Areas which correspond to the geographical areas of service provided by municipal sanitation services or special districts like the St. Vrain Sanitation District, which provides sanitary water service for much of the area of southwest Weld County near Longmont. The City and the St. Vrain Sanitation District entered into an IGA in 2002 which determined that Longmont would provide sanitary sewer service to properties in Weld County west of Union Reservoir, and to all City owned properties east of Union Reservoir (Map 8). St. Vrain would then provide waste water service to properties east of Union Reservoir. In the event that Longmont decides to not annex the land between County Line Road and the reservoir, the Council would need to determine whether or not providing extracorporate sanitary sewer service clearly benefits the citizens of Longmont as required by the City Charter, in the event the property develops outside of the City.

Mead, Frederick, Firestone, unincorporated Weld County

Since the IGA with Weld County was signed in 2002, there are more governments involved in the CPA than just Longmont and Weld County (Map 9). Both Mead and Firestone have annexed property within the CPA. Mead has annexed property in the northeast corner, and Firestone has annexed properties near and including St. Vrain State Park. The Town of Frederick amended its comprehensive plan in 2006 to include the portion of the CPA that is east of Boulder Creek and south of SH119, and Frederick currently is reviewing an annexation in the CPA that is located west of Boulder Creek (35 acre properties). The Town of Frederick and Boulder County have also negotiated an IGA in 2007 that includes land in the CPA (though the IGA has not yet been signed and is not yet in effect). This IGA does not become effective until Boulder County successfully negotiates a separate IGA with the Town of Erie. According to Boulder County, Spring of 2008 may be the earliest that such an IGA might be approved with Erie. The City currently is having discussions with both the Town of Mead and the Town of Frederick concerning IGAs. The Mead Town Manager currently is reviewing a draft IGA.

The City learned in December of 2007 (from the Town of Frederick) that the Town of Firestone is updating its comprehensive plan. A “study area” for Firestone’s update appears to include land in the CPA on both the north and south sides of SH119 and as far west as County Line Road. With these additional governmental interests, development pressures are continuing to increase in and near the CPA. Also in late 2007, the *Longmont Daily Times-Call* reported the approval of approximately 1,800 homes at the proposed Waterfront at Foster Lake development.

Conclusion regarding the joint planning from 2003 LACP Update

During the last update to the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* (LACP) in 2003, planning in Weld County was one of the targeted issues that City Council reviewed. The conclusion was that it would make sense for the City to plan land use in the City’s Coordinated Planning Area (CPA) with Weld County if it were done jointly with Weld County. The result would be one land use plan for the area that would be the same regardless if a property developed in the City or in unincorporated Weld County. Given the recent activities of the Towns of Firestone, Frederick, and Mead in the CPA, joint planning would now need to include more parties than just the City of Longmont and Weld County. The LACP includes considerable language pertinent to Weld County issues (Appendix 3).

Open Space

Open space is a major “land use” in the CPA. The City of Longmont has preserved over 1,500 acres of open space either by purchase (fee simple or conservation easement) or by lease (Map 10).

St. Vrain Annexations (of the St. Vrain Greenway area in Weld County)

North of SH119, the City has purchased property both for the expansion of Union Reservoir and for open space. Subsequent to these purchases, the City has annexed this property. The City currently has an active annexation program involving City-owned open space in the CPA south of SH119 along the St. Vrain Greenway (Map 11). In conjunction with open space property ownership, the annexation of these properties (with agricultural or public zoning) helps to protect the City’s boundaries from development incursions by Weld County and now Firestone, Frederick, and Mead.

Weld County Comprehensive Plan/2007 Update

In early 2007, Weld County began an effort to update its Comprehensive Plan. The County Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2001. The County has formed a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to consider issues and policies and ultimately provide a formal recommendation on the updated Comprehensive Plan to the Board of County Commissioners. Staff from the Planning and Development Services Division has attended a number of these meetings and continually monitors TAC activities through the County’s website and contacts with Weld County planning staff.

Weld County staff has indicated they are targeting the second quarter of 2008 for plan adoption. The City will be given an opportunity to provide formal comments on the draft plan through the standard referral process that is already in place. Information updates will continue be provided to Council at key milestones and when written comments are submitted to the County for their consideration.

Another planning activity in Weld County is the Committee for Positive Weld County Partnerships. At the 2006 Colorado Municipal League (CML) conference, several Weld County municipalities expressed an interest in developing County-wide partnerships to discuss issues related to growth and development in the County. This concept was reinforced by a CML workshop on successful county-wide collaboration, which highlighted the Partnerships of Douglas County Governments (PDCG). As an outcome of these preliminary discussions, the Greeley City Council agreed to take the first steps to convene a group for forming positive partnerships in Weld County. This effort resulted in the creation of the Committee for Positive Weld County Partnerships.

In early August of 2006, several municipalities in Weld County, including the City of Longmont, convened to begin discussions concerning growth and development issues in Weld County. Later that month a group of elected officials representing the municipalities, met with the County to begin discussions on how to move forward with meaningful cooperative planning efforts. A joint meeting was held with all of the participating municipalities and the County in September of 2006.

Prior to meeting with the County Commissioners, the participating municipalities identified their top three issues related to growth and development in Weld County. These concerns were presented to the Commissioners; the top three concerns presented were:

1. Meaningful intergovernmental agreements that respect municipal planning areas
2. Land use vision and execution
3. Compatibility of municipal land use with county and adjacent development

Although the Committee has been moving slowly, the group has committed to meeting regularly during 2008. At Council's December 13 meeting, the group agreed that Mayor Lange would represent Longmont in this group. The first meeting of 2008 is scheduled to take place on January 31, 2008.

Coordination of Regional Transportation Projects Shown as Part of the North I-25 Environmental Impact Study (EIS)

The North I-25 EIS is currently advancing two unfunded alternatives to mitigate congestion in the I-25 corridor from Denver to Ft. Collins.

The alternative known as Package A includes the completion of six total general purpose freeway lanes from 120th Avenue in the Denver Metro Area north to the Ft. Collins area (Map 12). In addition to the six general purpose lanes, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)/consultant team is proposing longer-distance commuter bus service from Greeley to Denver on US-85. Package A includes a commuter rail component which connects the established city cores of Ft. Collins, Loveland, Berthoud and Longmont to the Denver Metro Area by way of the BNSF Railroad lines (paralleling US-287).

Package B proposes use of I-25 as the single travel corridor by constructing express lanes within the freeway right-of-way (ROW) which may also be used for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Map 13). Feeder buses would bring commuters from the established communities along US-287 and US-85 to the I-25 busway for connections to Denver or Ft. Collins.

Historically, Longmont has supported the ideas proposed in Package A as the commuter rail links the established communities and reduces the need for additional infrastructure along and within the I-25 ROW. Package A also supports and reiterates the need for the FasTracks connection in Longmont at the 1st Avenue/Terry Street station site. The planned FasTracks connection from Denver/Boulder and Longmont would rely on the Longmont station as the connection to the Northern Colorado communities. Additionally, any connection to the North Metro Rail FasTracks corridor, currently planned to terminate at I-25/SH-7, would also require a transfer station at or near the Sugar Factory site in Longmont. Package B is seen as moving more traffic onto I-25 without alternatives beyond BRT and HOV. As mentioned previously, more of the basic infrastructure needs would need to be built if new transportation hubs are created along I-25.

Upcoming critical decisions in the North I-25 EIS process include:

1. Finalize the environmental impact assessment – 1st quarter 2008
2. Develop phasing and financing plan – 2nd quarter 2008
3. Draft EIS public comment period & public hearings – during 3rd quarter 2008
4. Final EIS public comment period & public hearings – during 3rd quarter 2009
5. Record of Decision – 4th quarter of 2009

Policy Options to Consider for Longmont in Southwest Weld County

The land use activities and development projects pending in southwest Weld County are at a point that it has become a competitive atmosphere among local governments to capture development opportunities in this area. This environment conflicts with the LACP policies that seek to maintain Longmont as a free standing community. The mapping presentation for this retreat topic underscores what various communities and Weld County believe is at stake in capturing and sponsoring development activity in this area near Longmont. The

northern portion of the CPA is the only area within the CPA not known to have urban development plans (Map 14).

Longmont has been pursuing a policy of trying to create an open space eastern buffer, and in some instances, the City has made the decision to annex properties in Weld County as opposed to having the development occur in the County.

Fundamentally, the policy question for discussion is:

What actions, if any, should the City take in reaction to the inevitable situation of southwest Weld County urbanization moving westward until it reaches Longmont's eastern boundaries?

If this happens, Longmont will not have achieved its goal of preserving its status as a free standing community. Previous versions of the LACP (the 1986 and 1995 versions for example) include a policy about directing urban development to the City of Longmont.

Policy 1.4: Ensure that urban level development within the St. Vrain Valley Planning Area is guided toward the City of Longmont in accordance with the goals and policies of the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*.

With the complementary policies of Boulder County, i.e., that urban development should occur in municipalities, Longmont has been able to remain a free standing community. Weld County's policies allow urban development to occur in unincorporated areas of the County and be served by special districts: particularly in the area immediately east of Longmont. Municipalities within southwest Weld County are responding to this Weld County development philosophy, often by planning and upon a property owner's request, annexing land themselves. Longmont is not in a position to ensure that urban level development is oriented to the City. In recognition of this reality, in the 2003 version of the LACP, Policy 1.4 has become

POLICY G-1.4: Ensure that urban-level development within the St. Vrain Valley Planning Area is directed toward the City of Longmont in accordance with the goals and policies of the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* **or with adopted intergovernmental agreements.** (emphasis added)

Longmont has been pursuing a policy of trying to create an open space eastern buffer as noted on the Comprehensive Plan Map with the acquisition of about 1,500 acres in Weld County. In some instances, the City has made the decision to annex properties in Weld County, after a property owner's request, as

opposed to having urban development occur in the County. McLane Western, Concepts Direct and the Mayeda properties are examples of this strategy.

The elements of the City's current policy toward urbanization in Weld County include:

- Concurrent land use planning (Longmont Planning Area amendment) and annexation for property on a case-by-case basis
- Land acquisition (reservoir expansion, open space) that creates a buffer
- Annexation of City-owned land
- IGA with Weld County (that gives the City the option of requiring annexation of land contiguous to City limits)
- IGAs with other service providers (such as Left Hand Water District, St.Vrain Sanitation District)
- Negotiation of IGAs with other jurisdictions (Mead, Erie, Firestone and Frederick)
- Planning/extension of the St. Vrain Greenway Trail (the Colorado Front Range Trail)
- Participate/monitor other planning efforts
- Review/comment on other jurisdictions' development applications
- Advocate that urban level development occur in municipalities and that urban level development receive urban level services

Appendices

Appendix 1: Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan 2006 Indicators Report

Appendix 2: Infill/Redevelopment Language in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* (LACP) (dated January 15, 2008)

Appendix 3: Weld County-Related Language in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* (LACP) (dated January 15, 2008)

Maps

NOTE: Maps 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14 highlight different information on the City of Longmont and Weld County Coordinated Planning Areas, Open Space, and Development Activity Map

Map 1: Comprehensive Plan Map (Includes amendments through June 12, 2007)

Map 2: Three Tier Planning System Map (with Longmont City Limits)

Map 3: Neighborhood Planning Areas Map

Map 4: I-25 Mixed Use Development Area Structural Plan (dated January 8, 2007)

Map 5: I-25 Mixed Use Development (MUD) Boundary

Map 6: City of Longmont & Weld County Coordinated Planning Area (CPA)

Map 7: Areas within the Coordinated Planning Area (CPA)

Map 8: 208 Water Quality Planning Area

Map 9: Other Jurisdictions' Activities in the CPA (Boulder County, Firestone, Frederick, Mead)

- Map 10: City of Longmont Open Space (fee simple or conservation easement)
- Map 11: St. Vrain Annexations (of the St. Vrain Greenway area in Weld County)
- Map 12: North I-25 EIS: DEIS Package A: GPL + CR + CB85
- Map 13: North I-25 EIS: DEIS Package B: TEL + BRT
- Map 14: Area Within the CPA Not Known to Have Urban Development Plans