

City-Wide Strategic Plan

Planning, comprehensive planning and master planning have been a part of the city of Longmont from its establishment as the Chicago Colorado Colony in the 1870's. The Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan has been updated three times since 1974, various iterations of master plans have successfully guided various infrastructure improvements throughout recent years and two versions of the Envision 2020 Community Strategic Plan were completed in the 1990's. All of these efforts have served the community well. Guided by various planning documents, Longmont has successfully transitioned from a small agricultural community to a city of approximately 80,000 residents with a diversified base of business and industrial employers and numerous commercial establishments.

As we enter the year 2004, the dynamic environment in which the City of Longmont must thrive is experiencing change at a faster and faster pace. As we begin to pull out of the most recent national and local recession, it is evident that changes are in progress at the local, state, national and world levels that portend major impacts for our community. At the regional level, major transportation infrastructure improvements, large population increases, emerging cities and towns and the arrival or departure of major primary employers will continue to have significant impacts on Longmont's quality of life and its ability to provide adequate public services to a growing population. By observing how the City of Boulder has had to adjust to changing situations over the past five years one can get a sense of the tremendous impacts external dynamics can have on a thriving community.

Recognizing the significant impacts regional changes may bring, they could pale in comparison to the impacts we may experience from national and global changes that are already in motion. Economic globalization is rapidly reshaping the competitive arena in which all communities must exist. Jobs of all educational and skill levels are now subject to relocation into any part of the United States or the world. Recent announcements from HP and IBM make it clear that high paying Colorado high-tech jobs are potentially vulnerable to movement to Asia, Eastern Europe or Mexico. Most economic experts predict that these are just the beginning of many such announcements. As we all know, a job to support our family is the first need most of us look to have filled when we assess our quality of life. Our community needs to be prepared to make the appropriate choices that will keep Longmont competitive in the changing world marketplace.

Conditions are never static at the local level even though the impact they bring may be less dramatic than at more global levels. Many changes at the local level are the result of deliberate initiatives aimed at preparing for the future. One such event was the adoption of the update to the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan (LACP) in August of 2003. After extensive community involvement, this document should reflect the collective thinking of the stakeholders regarding the extent of Longmont's development within Boulder County. Although somewhat less defined in Weld County, a number of factors make it quite clear that the extent of Longmont's development to the east is also pretty much determined. According to the adopted LACP, at build out the community will have

a population of approximately 102,000 residents and contain a balance of land uses for residential, commercial and employment based activities. The timeframe in which we will grow from 80,000 residents to 102,000 is difficult to forecast, however, it is not too early to strategically plan for that time. Providing acceptable levels of service to a community that is built out requires a different approach than one that is experiencing rapid outward growth.

The City Council approved \$150,000 in the 2004 budget for assistance in completing a city-wide strategic plan. The few items listed above are only a small number of the reasons why we believe such an effort is timely. The plan will allow the community to determine the strategic areas in which we will focus our attention so that we are in the best possible position to successfully negotiate the myriad of dynamic changes that we will face at the local, state, national and global levels. At the same time, it provides the opportunity to be properly prepared to take advantage of the future conditions. A few areas that should be examined during the planning process are:

1. How to ensure a fiscally sound and responsive government?
2. What types of public services will the community want and be able to afford with future tax bases?
3. What partnerships will be available to provide services and quality of life amenities (schools, community colleges, universities, other institutions of learning)?
4. Does regional government have a different or expanded role in the future?
5. What types of economic development will be necessary to compete in the future?
6. Will there be a role for the City of Longmont in keeping the community up to date with emerging technology?
7. What opportunities exist for the City to increase our return on our investments and assets?

A question some may have is why a city-wide strategic plan when we already have the updated LACP and Envision 2020? Both of these documents serve as long-term visions for the community. However, they provide little guidance or focus as to how we are to maneuver toward the future vision. The strategic plan will help focus the City Council's attention on key policymaking questions and clarify the risks, opportunities and choices which must be addressed to position the city for long-term sustainable day-to-day operations. A strategic plan of this sort would have distinct, positive ramifications on all internal citywide strategic planning processes. Because of the nature of the strategic plan, it will require clear and frequent policy direction at the same time as all stakeholders are involved utilizing intense inform and consult level of community involvement.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the City Council expect out of this planning process?
2. How should consultants be used in this process?
3. What role does the Council wish to play in the process?

4. What role will stakeholders play in the process?

Attachments:

1. Parts of Envision 2020: A Strategic Plan for the Community of Longmont, 1990.
2. Envision 2020 Update, 1995