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**City of Longmont: A Greener Community**

Written by Ashley McGown

In recent years, the green movement has penetrated the US, impacting the way many businesses, cities, and individuals operate. According to Bill Ewer and Ron Shaw, who, respectively, hold the positions of marketing manager and environmental sustainability coordinator, the Colorado city of Longmont first turned its attention to sustainability in 2005 when a new long-term environmental plan introduced many green initiatives.



Ron Shaw, environmental sustainability coordinator

**The City of Longmont** provides water, wastewater, electric, and residential sanitation services to the community. Shortly after the 2005 plan was laid out, city utilities began to introduce new resource conservation programs, and as time went on, the city joined forces with other governmental and nonprofit organizations, ultimately leading to the evolution of certain initiatives.

Despite great progress, the efforts within Longmont remained fairly segmented until 2008. Early on, several departments within the city had their own environmental programs, but because they all operated independent of one another, they all had separate objectives and budgets. The position of environmental sustainability coordinator was created in an attempt to bring all of those ideas together, and in March 2008, Shaw joined the team in that position.



Bill Ewer, marketing manager

"The main purpose was to bring all of the efforts together and develop an integrated, city-wide strategy," Shaw explained. "Now, there's a common focus and a shared set of goals, and everyone knows what everyone else is doing. We're always in communication with other cities in the area, which allows us to stay informed about what they're doing, and we'll often align our programs with their efforts."

**Looking forward**

Currently, Longmont is in the process of reworking its long-term sustainability plan once again, and its operational team has identified seven key focus areas: energy, water, waste recovery, transportation, natural environment, economic vitality, and community and individual wellbeing.

These key focus areas, however, are all tied to an idea Ewer and Shaw refer to as the triple bottom line, which essentially means every program, service, and investment Longmont approves has to consider the impacts from an economic, social, and environmental point of view.

"We shouldn't move forward with something just because it has a good effect on the environment without considering the economic and social impacts it will have, which is why we incorporated all three of these measures into our definition of sustainability," said Shaw.

Once the plan is finalized, these focus areas will act as guidelines for Longmont's team, and according to Ewer and Shaw, various city



This Colorado city is making a concerted effort to introduce more sustainable programs and services in its community.

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departments will be responsible for implementing programs that contribute toward long-term goals. Significant steps are being made in the energy sector in particular.

In a partnership with Boulder County, the city of Longmont participates in a program called Neighborhood Energy Efficiency Sweep. "We gather volunteers and go into low- and moderate-income neighborhoods," Ewer explained. "We target between 400 and 500 houses, and traveling door to door, we offer to install energy and water conservation equipment at no cost to the resident."

Residents who agree to take the equipment usually receive up to 20 compact fluorescent light bulbs, low-flow shower heads, and free clothes-drying racks, among other things. In addition, they're provided with supplemental information regarding resource conservation, which details easy ways they can become proactive with recycling, transportation, and water and energy conservation.

"There's definitely an educational aspect involved with the program. We try to teach them how to reduce their consumption, and it's our hope that they'll go out after we visit and invest a little of their time and money into these things. We go out twice a year; once in the fall and once in the spring," Ewer said, noting the city of Longmont first became involved with the program in 2007.

In addition to targeting families with specific income levels, the Neighborhood Efficiency Sweeps Program generally targets residences that were built before 1980. In 2009, the city contacted just under 400 homes through this program, gaining access to 183. In total, 2,655 compact fluorescent light bulbs and 88 low-flow shower heads were installed; 44 clothes-drying racks were given away; and 220 information kits were distributed. According to Ewer, these totals result in an estimated annual energy savings of 149,791 kWh and an estimated utility cost savings of \$12,726, which translates to just under \$70 per household.

To address populations with a slightly higher income level, Longmont's team partnered with the Center for Resource Conservation, a nonprofit organization in Boulder County, to introduce a program called REAP (Residential Energy Action Program). The program provides follow-up assistance to homeowners who elect to have a subsidized energy audit performed at their house.

"This program is geared toward people who know they want to do something to help conserve energy but aren't sure what they should do or don't have the time to manage the project," Shaw said. "We go over the energy audit report with them, talk about the findings and cost figures, and we offer to do more research for them if they're interested in certain technologies. We also offer to help them find contractors and apply for incentives that are available."

Looking to the future, Shaw and Ewer both agree that the city of Longmont will continue to introduce programs that focus on sustainability. Each idea initiative will, of course, have to align with the triple bottom line, impacting the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the community.

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