

**OPEN SPACE**  
**LONGMONT, COLORADO**

CITY OF LONGMONT, COLORADO  
Department of Parks & Recreation, Open Space and Trails  
**OPEN SPACE AND Trails**  
**MASTER PLAN**  
VOLUME III



Adopted May 7, 2002

### **III. NEEDS ASSESSMENT**



#### **A. Foundation For The Plan**

##### **History of the Longmont Open Space and Trails Program**

In April of 1987, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council approved the first Open Space Plan for the City of Longmont. This research and planning effort resulted in a recommendation of a goal and a series of policies and strategies. This language was altered somewhat, and ultimately adopted as Goal 31 of the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan (LACP). The section of this Plan containing Goal 31, entitled PARKS, GREENWAYS, AND OPEN SPACE, is found in its entirety, in the appendix.

Goal 31 States:

“Preserve the natural features and resources of the Longmont area, maintain the City’s separate identity, provide outdoor recreation, and enhance the visual quality of entrance corridors to the City.”

Policy 31.5 calls for the adoption and implementation of an open space plan and management program with the following strategies:

Strategy 31.51: Detail an open space plan and management program that defines and prioritizes open space parcels for preservation and/or for acquisition, that outlines methods appropriate for either approach, that identifies available resources, and that establishes land management policies and procedures.

Strategy 31.52: Designate the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to advise City Council on the preservation, acquisition, and management of open space.

The recommendations of the 1987 Open Space Plan did not address the issue of funding.

In November of 1995 the citizens of Longmont were asked to support a .25 cent sales tax increase and bonding authority for ten years for the acquisition of open space. The Open Space Focus Group, comprised of Longmont residents, attempted to implement this tax for purposes of acquiring, maintaining, and administering an open space program. With split support from City Council and the community, this effort failed.

In 1993 the original St. Vrain River Greenway Master Plan was adopted and an East Corridor Update was undertaken in the summer of 2000. The East Corridor Update indicates that the LACP designated the St. Vrain River Corridor as a District Park, an identified element of the Longmont open space system, and further identified it as the primary focus of the City's open space network and gave it the highest priority.

The City of Longmont saw a population increase in 2000 to 12.3% above the population originally anticipated based on 1990 Census data. (Department of Community Development Planning Division Memorandum, June 29, 2001). There has also been significant growth along the Front Range, and continuing concern about the uncontrolled growth in both Weld and Boulder Counties. These conditions influenced a second attempt at an open space sale tax for Longmont.

Through the efforts of the Longmont Open Space Committee, a citizen driven task force, and unanimous support by City Council, Goal 31 of LACP was begun to be fulfilled. In November 2000, City of Longmont citizens voted to increase the City sales tax by two-tenths-cents to be designated as the Open Space Sales Tax Fund. The funds from this increase are to be used for acquisition, development and maintenance of land for open space. The parcels of land under this program must meet one or more of the criteria established as Open Space Attributes in the Open Space Program (These attributes are articulated in the ordinance language found in section 3 of this portion of the Needs Assessment). Throughout public presentations, prior to the November, 2000 election, the city promised that, should the tax pass, the City would apply the Open Space Attributes to all land acquisitions, only negotiate with willing land owners, pay fair market values, and complete a comprehensive Opens Space and Trails Plan.

With the passage of the sales tax, the City of Longmont established the position of Superintendent of Open Space and Trails to head a division of the Parks and Recreation Department by the same name. The efforts of this division are guided by the advice of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

To further Goal 31 and Policy 31.5 and promises made during the election, the City of Longmont commissioned the development of this current effort, known as the Longmont Open Space and Trails Master Plan.

## **Goals and Key Issues**

### GOALS

*Build consensus for the Plan through an extensive community outreach process.*

*Develop vision and goal statements to guide future open space and trail acquisitions, alignments and management.*

*Develop a comprehensive inventory of current and potential open space parcels and trail corridors.*

*Provide a comprehensive analysis and recommendations, considering impacts and multiple options.*

*Develop an Open Space implementation plan, including general strategies and specific recommendations for actions.*

*Base recommended policies and implementation strategies on the Open Space Criteria that has been refined and prioritized through a community outreach process.*

*Develop a comprehensive Trails Plan including integration with other jurisdictional trails plans, connections, standards and design guidelines.*

### KEY ISSUES

The Staff Advisory Committee identified the following as key issues.

#### FUNDING

- Open Space funding should be used where appropriate when there is no other source of funding.
- The Conservation Trust Fund should continue to be dedicated by policy to the St. Vrain Greenway, since it has been identified as a high priority open space land acquisition area.

#### ACQUISITION

- This Plan must include a process for decision-making when a parcel is up for selection, identifying staff role, board role

and city council role. It must also provide guidance to determine when to say “no.”

- All acquisition tools should be considered to best match the desires of the property owner, while accomplishing the goals of the Open Space and Trails Program.
- This Plan will be much more detailed than the Comprehensive Plan. This document is intended to stand-alone with a reference to the Comp Plan.
- The project boundary will continue to be viewed as the target acquisition area, however, acquisitions may not be limited to this area, as land with open space values around a city facility, or in some way providing an important connection, may be deemed a critical open space acquisition and should be considered.
- Habitat provision/protection is a high priority criterion.
- Cultural and Historical Preservation is recommended as a refinement to be adopted as part of the overall plan. It is not our intention to change the wording of the voter-approved criteria in the ordinance.
- A wetland banking system might be considered as a way to generated funding to help further the acquisition of open space lands.
- Clarify the process to address the potential of disposing of open space land, conveying easements.

#### COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

The following items need to be explored with the public:

- criteria for how much open space land is available for public access
- definition of low impact/passive recreation
- acquisition of gravel mine to operate or reclaim to natural condition
- priority of acquisition for infill and/or buffering
- acquisition of land for prairie dog relocation/conservation

#### MANAGEMENT

- A comprehensive management plan is necessary to deal with such item as Russian Olives, prairie dog, and beaver issues.
- Open space properties need not be annexed.
- Definition of terminology as defined in the Comp Plan will be used

- There are established procedures for going through the development process depending upon which jurisdiction the property falls in.
- Coordinate with County Open Space and State Parks where adjacent for joint management potential.

#### PUBLIC SUPPORT

- The public should understand:
  - the funding for the project and how it is available;
  - that funding is allowed to be used for management, maintenance and limited development;
  - that there is a difference between acquiring land in Boulder and Weld Counties;
  - the goals of wildlife protection and preservation of agricultural purposes and that funding may be used to acquire land to which the public may not necessarily have access.
- Business Owners need to be included in the process. Business groups may be most focused on southwest Weld County.

#### OTHER

- Make data and graphics transferable to other map uses.

### **The Ordinance**

The ordinance passed by voters in November of 2000 allowed increasing the city sales and use tax rate by 0.2 percent (two tenths of one percent), beginning January 1, 2001 and ending December 31, 2020. It also authorizing bonded debt, with proceeds to be used for open space acquisition, improvements and maintenance. Ordinance O-2000-41 can be found in the appendix.

The ordinance also provided criteria for how that funding should be used.

#### ESTABLISHED CRITERIA (OPEN SPACE ATTRIBUTES)

- Preservation of natural areas, wildlife habitat, wetlands, agriculture and visual corridors.
- Linkages and trails, access to public lakes, streams and other usable open space lands, stream corridors and scenic corridors along existing highways.

- Conservation of natural resources including, but not limited to, forest lands, range lands, agricultural lands, aquifer recharge areas, and surface water.
- District parks devoted to low-impact recreational uses.
- Implementing greenways and open space policies or strategies of the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan.
- Urban shaping buffers between or around municipalities or community service areas and buffer zones between residential and non-residential development.

The Ordinance provided further detail about the use of the fund in the following quoted sections:

- G. The ordinance establishes that all revenues derived from the 2001 two-tenths-cent increase shall be allocated to a special public improvement fund, designated the Open Space Sales Tax Fund, which shall be used solely for the following purposes;*
- 1. To acquire, for open space, interests in real property, including, but not limited to, fee title, leases, development rights, mineral and other subsurface rights, conservation easements, rights-of-way, easements, and options through all means available and by various types of instruments and transactions, when determined by the Longmont City Council, to be necessary to preserve such areas;*
  - 2. To acquire water rights and water storage rights for use in connection with real property acquired for open space;*
  - 3. To acquire rights-of-way and easements for access to open space;*
  - 4. To acquire options related to these acquisitions;*
  - 5. To pay for all related costs of acquisition, improvements and maintenance;*
  - 6. To improve all City of Longmont open space property in accordance with Open Space policies recommended by the Parks and Recreation Board and adopted by the City Council as part of the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan (LACP);*

7. *To manage, patrol, and maintain all City of Longmont open space property in accordance with LACP policies adopted by Council;*
  8. *To permit the use of these funds for the joint acquisition of open space property, with other governmental entities in accordance with intergovernmental agreements, or with land trusts;*
  9. *To establish reserves for, and to pay the costs of issuance and debt service of revenue bonds, including principal and interest thereon.*
- H. *Open space, for the purposes of this section, is generally described as: those lands in which the Longmont City Council determines that it is, or may in the future be, within the public interest to acquire an interest, to assure their protection and to fulfill one or more of the functions described below. Interests acquired may include, but are not limited to, fee title, leases, development rights, mineral and other subsurface rights, conservation easements, water rights and water storage rights, rights-of-way, easements, and options.*
- I. *Open space shall serve one or more of the following functions: (see open space criteria above);*
- J. *Once acquired, open space may be used only for purposes set forth above.*
- K. *Specific annual expenditures for qualifying projects shall be determined annually through the City's capital improvements program and annual operating budget.*
- L. *On December 31, 2020, unless the electors authorize extending the two-tenths-cent open space acquisition component of the taxes imposed by this section, the tax rates listed in subsection A of this section shall be reduced in the amount by which they were increased by Ordinance O-2000-41, and subsections G through L of this section shall be repealed.*

**Section 4 Bonded Debt Authorized**

*City of Longmont debt may be increased \$22,000,000 with a repayment cost of \$40,500,000, to acquire, improve and maintain open space for purposes identified in this ordinance.*

## **The Process**

### THE TASK

The task of researching and writing the Longmont Open Space and Trails Master Plan included the following:

- Complete an open space and trails inventory
- Build consensus on process, vision and goals
- Define implementation strategies and plan
- Create trail guidelines and standards
- Define acquisition and protection strategies
- Present preliminary report to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Present final product to City Council for adoption

### THE PUBLIC

The community outreach process included meetings with landowners and the public, as well as a widely distributed survey. These efforts focused on information seeking; the development of program vision, goals, and priorities; identifying current and potential uses; long term maintenance; and, reviewing land/natural resources inventories, and potential trail inventories.

### THE CITY COUNCIL

A final plan presentation will be made to City Council in a public hearing for plan adoption.

### THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

The preliminary plan is being presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in a public hearing, for input and an advisory recommendation.

### THE STAFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

To guide the development of the Plan, a Staff Advisory Committee was brought together to identify key issues, help integrate this effort with those of surrounding and overlapping jurisdictions, provide input on approach and methodology, and provide other expertise.

The Staff Advisory Committee met July 23, 2001, August 21, 2001, September 26, 2001, and November 27, 2001. Agendas and minutes of these meetings are included in the appendix.

Staff Advisory Committee members included:

#### City of Longmont

- Don Bessler - Parks and Recreation Director
- Paula Fitzgerald - Parks and Recreation Project manager

Froda Greenberg	- Principal Planner
Ron Holmes	- GIS Analyst
Ken Huson	- Water/Wastewater – Civil Engineer IV
Gene Kraning	- Superintendent of Parks and Forestry
Rae Mims	- Assistant to the City Manager/Public Information Officer
Karen Schlarb	- Open Space and Trails, Administrative Assistant
Kathy Shepard	- intern, Denver University
Glen Spagnuolo	- Recreation Program Supervisor I
Dan Wolford	- Superintendent of Open Space and Trails, Team Leader

Outside Resources

Suzanne Closter	- Colorado Division of Wildlife
Rich Koopmann	- Boulder County Parks and Open Space
Nancy Dayton	- Dayton Land and Real Estate
Kim Ogle	- Weld County Planning
Katie Paris	- Trust for Public Lands
Brent Wheeler	- Boulder County Parks and Open Space
Janis Whisman	- Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)

THE CONSULTANTS

The City of Longmont commissioned a team of consultants to research and write the Longmont Open Space and Trails Master Plan. This team was compiled to provide the expertise and experience to address all aspects of the plan and consists of:

- **GreenPlay, LLC**, specializing in overall parks, recreation and open space management and planning;
- **Design Concepts**, specializing in high quality design, technical and land planning and construction documentation;
- **TSR Group**, a design, research and planning firm specializing in the use of spatial data technology; and
- **Greystone Environmental**, experts in environmental and cultural resources.

## **B. Community Outreach Program**



### **Public Meetings and Workshops**

A series of three public meetings were held in September and October 2001. Two additional public hearings before the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and City Council are being held in December and January. Advertising for the meetings included public notices and direct mail post cards invitations. Meeting notices were submitted for each of the meetings by Rae Mims, City of Longmont Public Information Officer, to the Longmont Daily Times-Call, The Boulder Daily Camera, and the Denver Post (Boulder column on Thursdays), Channel 3, Channel 14, Outdoors web site in Boulder on the Boulder Community Network, Boulder County Nature Association's "Nature Network," and also the City of Longmont Employee Connection. Notices were submitted to run twice. Comment cards were available at each meeting.

Sign-up sheets (hard copy only), meeting agendas and summary reports are included in the appendix.

### **Public Meeting #1 – Landowners Open House, September 5, 2001**

Very early in the process, landowners of sizable properties in the study area were invited to view maps of the planning area and talk one-on-one with staff members. A mailing list was developed by identifying landowners within the planning area, (other than government) of properties within the Longmont City limits that are 10 acres or more in size, and properties outside of the City limits,

that are 35 acres or more in size. 349 postcards were mailed and notices were placed as indicated above, resulting in an attendance count of 35 people.

The goal of the open house was to introduce landowners to the effort, identify their interest, allow them to provide input, and learn about land preservation opportunities and how to stay informed and/or involved in the process.

The open house was very positive with many expressing appreciation for being included and informed. Interest in selling property or granting an easement was expressed by some, no interest was expressed by others.

### **Public Meeting #2 – Community Open House and Workshop, September 12, 2001**

Also early in the process, the community at large was invited to attend an open house and workshop. A list of stakeholders had been compiled by the Staff Advisory Committee including representatives of other governmental entities, previous or related planning efforts in the region, recreational, environmental, business interests and other identifiable concerned citizens. 450 postcards were mailed and notices were placed as indicated above, resulting in an attendance count of 50 people.

The open house was set up to allow people to review maps of the planning area. A presentation followed to familiarize everyone with the goals of the project and the process. This was followed by a community workshop requesting active participation of attendees, through several exercises, to help shape the vision for the Open Space and Trails Program.

Detailed summaries of the work of the groups are included in the appendix.

#### Map Exercise

Assignment: Each group was given a map, green paper, scissors and glue. They were asked to cut and paste to reflect their group's vision of how open space lands should be distributed in the future, within the planning area. Six maps were completed by citizen groups (see Public\_Vision map in the appendix) and comments were reported from each of the groups.

Following the meeting, all maps were digitized and a composite map was created and analyzed, along with other information, to reflect citizen desire. The six citizen maps and a composite map are included in the appendix.

#### Refining of Open Space Criteria Exercise

Assignment: Each group was asked to brainstorm and suggest wording that would help bring clarity to the already established Open Space Criteria (Attributes). All comments were grouped in alignment with the existing Established Criteria for analyzing.

Following the meeting, comments were analyzed to determine suggested changes to the wording of the Established Criteria. Ultimately, comments were determined to be supportive of the existing language and no changes were recommended.

#### Definition of Low-impact Recreational Uses Exercise

Assignment: Each group was asked to identify which types of activity are appropriate, inappropriate, or “in some cases” appropriate, on open space lands.

Information recorded by each citizen group was consolidated into one page and put in alphabetical order. In a quick sort, items appearing on both the appropriate and “in some cases” appropriate columns were highlighted as well as those appearing in both the “in some cases” appropriate, and not appropriate columns. No items appeared in both the appropriate and not appropriate columns.

In addition to the information recorded by each group, general comments were made during report out including: quiet activities, no spectator activities, address safety if necessary with lights, keep need for level of maintenance low (including plant materials), put everything in appropriate places, have designated areas for specialized uses, no collecting/harvesting plant or wildlife, use seasonal closures for protection of wildlife.

Following the meeting, low-impact recreational uses were included in the Citizen Survey for additional input on appropriateness.

#### Visioning Exercise

Assignment: Back together as a full group we wanted to hear what individuals held as their vision for the Open Space and Trails Program and staffing effort. This was a brainstorming session. Participants were told that, from information collected at the workshop, we would articulate a vision statement to bring back to

them at the next public meeting to assure it is reflective of the community's values.

Following the meeting, all comments were grouped according to theme and a vision statement was drafted for presentation at the next public meeting.

#### Dot Voting Exercise

Before participants left the meeting they were given a limited number of "dots" to place on various pictures reflecting aspects of open space and trails. They were asked to vote with three blue dots for those pictures that best represented their image for the future of the Open Space system, and with one orange dot for a picture that did not fit into their vision.

Following the meeting, this information was also used to help draft the open space and trails vision statement.

#### **Public Meeting #3 – Community Open House and Workshop, October 24, 2001**

The community at large was invited to review the efforts to date, including the draft vision statement, low-impact recreation definition, and wildlife and agricultural land mapping. Attendees were also informed of the citizen survey and were invited to complete one. The workshop included small group discussions regarding acquisition strategies for selection and prioritization, prairie dog issues, gravel mining issues, infill and buffering issues, and trail issues. Citizens were asked to let us know if we were on track or if we had missed anything. 510 postcards were mailed and notices were placed as indicated above, resulting in an attendance count of over 65 people.

There was general acceptance of the vision statement and wildlife and agricultural land mapping, and understanding of the status of the low-impact recreation definition being further tested in the citizen survey.

The acquisition strategies group discussed potential ways to stretch the city's open space dollars and ideas important to selection and prioritization. Acquisition strategies are explored in more detail in the Proposed Plan section of this document.

The groups dealing with prairie dog issues, gravel mining issues, infill and buffering issues, and trail issues discussed the positives

and negatives surrounding each issue, their suggestions and concerns. These issues are explored in detail in the implementation section of this Plan as management issues.

Detailed summaries of the work of the small groups are included in the appendix.

Forty-nine (49) surveys were completed by participants in the meeting. Forty one respondents were Longmont citizens and there seemed to be fairly good distribution across the study area. The results of the survey responses from those who chose to attend the public meeting will be compared with the responses of the general public in the final report.

Two additional public meetings are being held to finalize the Plan.

**Public Meeting #4 - Parks and Recreation Advisory Board,  
December 10, 2001**

The mailing list for the presentation consisted of 470 names and addresses. A preliminary report was provided to the Board for their input and recommendation and a public hearing was held. The Board was pleased with the public process and content to date and asked that the final draft be brought back to the Board at their January 14 meeting.

**Public Meeting #5 - Parks and Recreation Advisory Board,  
January 14, 2002**

**Public Meeting #6 - City Council, January 22, 2002**



## **CITIZEN SURVEY**

During the planning process for this project, there were some issues brought up by the advisory team or in the public workshops that were deemed important enough to warrant broader input. Although general opinions could be discerned from the workshops, it was decided to conduct an opinion survey of the public at-large. The Citizen Survey was prepared to accomplish this.

The survey instrument was developed by city staff and the consultant group. It was distributed in the local newspaper and people were asked to return it by mail. It was not intended to be a scientific survey, but rather a questionnaire to get additional public input. 26,000 surveys were distributed in the Longmont Daily Times-call on Sunday, October 28, 2001. Prior to the survey being distributed, an article was run in the paper letting citizens know that this opportunity was coming. This was followed up with a notice two days before the return deadline, reminding citizens to complete their surveys. Copies of the survey were also made available in the library, the museum, and the Civic Center. Another 1400 copies were printed in Spanish and distributed by mail to households through a mailing list provided by the St. Vrain School District.

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> public meeting 49 surveys were collected. A total of 850 surveys were returned. The responses were sorted and tallied according to the respondent's location of residence within the study area, and the totals for each were combined into an area-wide total. A separate tally was taken of the surveys received at the public meeting for comparative purposes. This tally can be found in the Appendix, along with charts and graphs for the citywide tally. The following is an analysis of the city-wide tallies. The English version of the survey, as well as raw data on responses, and comments from the responses are provided in the appendix.

### **Questions 1 through 3 relate to trails.**

The intent was to find out what types of trails were needed and how people would use them.

*Question #1: What would encourage you to use local trails more often?*

The majority of responses (55%) chose "better trail connections between destinations." About a third of the respondents felt that the trails were either "fine, I use the trails a lot" (20%) or were "not familiar with the local trails" (15%). A small number of

respondent's chose "better choice of trail surfaces" (7%) or "improved accessibility for wheelchairs, etc." (3%). It may be useful to note here that similar surveys in other communities have indicated that 3% to 5% of households responding to surveys like this one typically have members in the household who have some form of a mobility disability, whether permanent or temporary.

*Question #2: In general, do you use the trail system for...?*

A majority (57%) chose "walking/jogging". Nearly a quarter (24%) chose "recreational bicycling". "Bicycle commuting" (6%) and "rollerblading" (6%) were equal to one another, while "horseback riding" (2%) was chosen least. Five percent of respondents chose "other". Their comments included a request for where to find trail maps, "camping out", and comments about current trails being too short.

*Question #3: How would you rate Longmont's **trail system** in meeting the needs of the community?*

The highest number of respondents (33%) chose "Average". Next highest (30%) chose "Good". This was followed by "Poor" (18%) and "no opinion (14%)". A few respondents (4%) chose "Excellent".

In general, the survey responses indicate that most households use the trails in some way, and that a majority use them for walking or jogging. Improving connections and linking trails to form a complete system is far more important to citizens than the type of trail surfacing. The most frequent activities – walking, jogging, and recreational bicycling (which likely includes a large percentage of "off-road" or mountain-bike type cycles) are more dependent on having a suitable route than on having a paved surface. This would suggest that the immediate priority be placed on acquiring trail corridors and identifying them with signage and mapping, then shifting the priority to surface improvements at a later date, when use and resources allow.

**Question #4** is intended to determine whether the functions of open space, including those listed as criteria in the city's Open Space Ordinance, should be prioritized in some way.

*Question #4: What do you think are the most important functions of **Open Space**?*

Respondents were asked to rank 10 items in order of priority from 1 to 10. Answers to this question were tallied as to the # of responses ranking each item for each priority from 1 to 10. These tallies were converted to a numeric score by totaling the ranking points assigned to each item. The resulting scores, from high to low are:

▪ Wildlife habitat	4979
▪ Preserve agriculture and natural areas	4861
▪ Conservation of natural resources	4605
▪ Preserve views and view corridors	4513
▪ Provide access for people to natural areas	4330
▪ Buffering between different land uses	4017
▪ Reduce density/traffic	3756
▪ Preserve cultural and historic sites	3752
▪ Provide for low-impact recreation	3615
▪ Handling run-off and reducing flood potential	3142

Charting these scores on a graph shows that there is a relatively balanced support for each item. This balance is even greater when responses for the flood and historical items are ignored and focus is placed on just the items from the ordinance. If any general assumption can be inferred by the results of this question, it is that the top three items are all conservation and natural resource based (if you consider agriculture lands to be a resource rather than a use), while the three lowest are more related to human use and interaction with the resource base.

This suggests a slight bias towards a priority for preservation and conservation of habitat and farmlands over the use of open space for the purposes of buffering or recreation, but in general a balanced approach is recommended.

**Question #5** was intended to find out how the public feels about several policy issues.

*Question #5: Please circle the degree of your agreement/disagreement with the following possible statements:*

*a: "Prairie dogs occupy only 2% of their historic range and are considered a keystone species. Longmont should acquire open space specifically to provide a place to relocate prairie dogs affected by local development and city projects."*

The responses give no clear direction on this highly sensitive issue. While 18% of responses fell in the middle (selection "3"), 40%

agreed to some degree with the statement (selection “1” or “2”) and 42% disagreed to some degree (selection “4” or “5”). It should be noted that among those who disagreed, they chose strong disagreement at a rate of more than twice as often as moderate disagreement, while those who agreed with the statement were evenly split between strong and moderate agreement.

This question shows that the issue of prairie dogs in Longmont is quite complex, and suggests the need for further study and public process beyond the scope of this plan.

*b: “Some open space lands should be acquired to preserve agriculture and wildlife habitat and be closed to public access”.*

This question is intended to determine if there is support for acquiring lands or conservation easements that would preclude access by the public. It is related to the questions asked in #12, and will be discussed further along with #12.

*c: “Early public input indicates protection of land along the St. Vrain River is the highest priority for open space acquisitions. How do you feel about this”?*

This question took input from the workshops and tested it with the general public. The responses clearly show agreement with this statement. 20% of respondents were neutral (selection “3”), while only 7% expressed some degree of disagreement. 73% of respondents expressed some degree of agreement, with the largest number of all responses falling into the “strongly agree” category (42%)

**Question #6** was aimed at investigating the public’s opinion on where the limited funds available for open space purchases should be spent.

*Question #6: Funds for the purchase of Open Space are limited, yet land continues to be developed throughout the region. Given this, what do you think the priorities should be in purchasing land for open space?*

Citizens were asked to rank the following categories of where land should be purchased: inside the City, at the outside edge of the City, along spokes such as water or transportation corridors, or a balance of all of these. The responses were fairly evenly distributed, however, the largest number (306) of respondents ranked balanced as the highest priority. The next highest number

of respondents (250) ranked inside of the City as the lowest priority. This supports a balanced approach, with a slight emphasis on lands outside of the City, however, it also reaffirms feedback from the public workshops indicating that location is secondary to other criteria when determining which lands to acquire. It is also worth noting that it is hard to determine how citizens are using the word “balance.” In addition to the geographic balance, they may have intended a balance of where the funding is used or a balance of the functions of open space lands.

**Question #7** was used to evaluate the distribution of responses from within the study area, and to allow for comparisons of answers from one area with another or with the areawide results. This question was used to get a sense of where people would like to see open space purchased.

*Question #7: From the locator map on the back of this survey, please indicate the area in which you would like to see open space land acquired?*

With the exception of Areas A and B, the answers to this question correspond generally to where the population is within the study area. While no attempt was made to assure a statistically valid representative sampling from across the study area’s demographics, the answers suggest that the distribution of responses was proportional to the population and do not seem to favor any particular area disproportionate to its population.

A high number of responses favored the acquisition of open space in the western half of the study area, especially the area west of Airport Road. The developed part of town between Airport Road and US 287 also scored high. The reasons for these results could be due to the fact that the largest population by far is located in area “D”, and that they are most familiar with the lands to the west, and would like to see them preserved due to their proximity. These same people might be less familiar with lands east of town, or perceive them to be less threatened. However, there is no way to make such inferences based purely on the survey data. As indicated earlier, location seems to be a secondary consideration after the criteria in the open space ordinance have been met. Fortunately, preservation of lands within the areas ranked highest in the question is within the goals of other agencies, such as Boulder County Open Space, and Longmont may be able to work with them to assure preservation of open space within this area,

while focusing its own funds on properties in areas less likely to be addressed by other entities, such as the Weld County portion of the study area. The overall goal would be to achieve a balance throughout the area of open space under all entities.

**Question #9** was used to determine what portion of the respondents are residents of Longmont versus those who are not.

*Question #9: Are you a Longmont Resident?*

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents answered YES.

### **Question #10**

There was no question #10 on the survey.

**Question #11** was used to ask the public's opinion on issues related to the mining potential of lands that could become open spaces.

*Question # 11: Much of the land that would make desirable open space is also eligible for gravel mining. The City desires to determine which alternatives are supported by the community:*

- A. Buy the land and the mining rights, mine and sell the gravel, and then reclaim the land for open space. Use the proceeds from the mining to buy additional open space.*
- B. Buy the land after private owners have mined the gravel and have done the reclamation work.*
- C. Buy the land and mining rights now to prevent mining altogether on the land.*

Through the citizen survey there appears to be some support for the acquisition of land and mining rights, mining and selling of the gravel and using the proceeds to purchase additional open space (Alternative A.) The highest numbers of people (162) ranked Alternative C as their least preferred and Alternative A (159 people) as the highest preference. This was followed by 128 people ranking Alternative C as their highest preference.

**Question #12** addresses how the public feels about public access to lands that are acquired or managed with public open space funds.

*Question #12: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:*

- a. *Open Space land is owned by the public. So the public should be allowed access to ALL open space.*
- b. *Open Space is intended to preserve precious natural areas and agricultural lands. Access should have some limitations in order to protect these resources.*

Question 5b was similar to 12a and 12b. Specific responses vary depending on how the question was asked, but the answers to these questions all indicate the general willingness of the public to spend some money purely for the sake of preserving the natural and agricultural resources, and managing lands specifically to protect the resources, even at the expense of limiting public access.

**Question #13** While the Open Space ordinance includes “low-impact recreation” in the criteria for open space, there is no generally accepted definition of what this is. The intent of this question was to find out what types of recreation would be considered appropriate, inappropriate, or perhaps appropriate, depending on circumstances.

*Question #13: According to the criteria established by passage of the open space bond issue, low impact activities are acceptable for City of Longmont open space lands. Please help us identify which of the following activities you consider to be low impact by indicating “appropriate”, “inappropriate”, or “maybe” appropriate depending on circumstances.*

Answers were charted as to the percentage of responses for each activity that fell into each category of “appropriate, inappropriate, and maybe”.

The complexities of this issue make it difficult to sort out clear answers to what is and is not low-impact recreation. The following can be determined from the survey results:

- The top five activities in the “appropriate” category were, in order of high to low (the percentages show what percent of the responses rated that activity in the “appropriate” category).
  - Photography (95%)
  - Reading (94%)
  - Wildlife Viewing (92%)
  - Hiking/Jogging (89%)
  - Picnic/Camping (83%)

Of these, hiking/jogging was rated “inappropriate” by only 1% of respondents, and the others by only 2% of respondents.

- The top five ratings in the “inappropriate” category were, in order of high to low:

- Commercial Use (87%)
- Fireworks (84%)
- Weapons (84%)
- Motor Vehicles (81%)
- Paintball (79%)

- Another way to look at this is to see which activities scored lowest in the appropriate category. These were from lowest to higher:

- Commercial Use (2%)
- Concessions (3%)
- Motor Vehicles (4%)
- Fireworks (5%)
- Paintball (6%)

- Activities with a high “maybe” score included (along with their ratings in the other two categories):

	Maybe	Approp.	Inapprop.
- Horse Use	(43%)	(39%)	(18%)
- Athletic Activities	(42%)	(32%)	(26%)
- No Dogs	(42%)	(23%)	(35%)
- Tubing	(40%)	(38%)	(22%)
- Swimming	(37%)	(44%)	(19%)

Of these, it should be noted that swimming scored higher (44%) in the “appropriate” category than it did in the “maybe” category.

- Except for “weapons”, activities with the lowest “maybe” score tended to be associated with a high “appropriate” score, including:

	M	A	I
- Photography	( 3%)	(95%)	( 2%)
- Reading	( 4%)	(94%)	( 2%)
- Wildlife Viewing	( 7%)	(92%)	( 1%)
- Hiking/Jogging	( 9%)	(89%)	( 2%)
- Weapons	( 9%)	( 7%)	(84%)

Other activities where a significant “maybe” response was associated with a high “inappropriate” response included “concessions” and “Dogs off leash”. This indicates that, along with “weapons”, these are uses that should be very carefully considered before determining when or where to allow them.

**Question #14** This question was used to get a sense of the demographics among the respondents. This information might be useful in determining policies for managing recreation activities, accessibility, etc. It also gives an indication of the population size represented in the survey.

The responses indicate a total of 2005 persons represented in the 850 households responding. This is an average of 2.4 persons per household.

#### **Other Forms of Outreach**

- Information about this planning effort is being made available on the City’s website.
- A presentation was made to the Neighborhood Group Leaders Association to let these community leaders know about this planning process. The goal of the meeting was informational and to address questions of the participants.