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## INTRODUCTION

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The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* is the latest in the City of Longmont's efforts to plan for its future. City planning cannot be a static process. It must be flexible and continuously revised to reflect changing circumstances and community values, particularly in a dynamic, growing city such as Longmont.

The Longmont community has a tradition of city planning that dates back to the establishment of the Chicago Colorado Colony in 1871. With the adoption of the *St. Vrain Valley Plan* in 1974, the City solidified this tradition in response to a period of rapid growth and change. The City revised the *St. Vrain Valley Plan* in 1982. In 1986, the City of Longmont again revised the *St. Vrain Valley Plan*, in response to conditions affecting the City at that time, and renamed it the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*. The City updated the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* in 1995 and again in 2003.

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* establishes the type of city residents want Longmont to become by presenting a comprehensive view of the community, defining the visions of the City's future, and establishing general methods by which to realize those visions. Its purpose is to articulate the collective desires of the community. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* is second only to the *Municipal Charter* as the City's most important document.

The updated *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* is designed to be process-oriented in guiding the growth and development of the City. It establishes a policy framework for the City to use to discuss and evaluate key issues facing the City, amendments to the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* and to City regulations, and development proposals. It is flexible in its support of planned unit developments. By submitting a planned unit development to more stringent review criteria, the City may approve densities or land uses that are not shown for a particular location on the Comprehensive Plan Map. For example, the City may approve a planned unit development with higher residential densities if the planned unit development includes more amenities and higher development standards.

The City of Longmont's mission statement succinctly states the focus of the updated *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*:

***Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for those  
who live in, work in, or visit our community.***

What many people value about Longmont is its "small town, friendly atmosphere." People know their neighbors. They care about the community and routinely invest their time and money to make Longmont a better place to live. They find it a good place to raise a family.

The challenge in implementing the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* as Longmont grows is to use the plan to enhance the aspects of the City that the community values. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* is a guide to help the City make decisions that recognize, incorporate, and strengthen the physical and nonphysical aspects that make Longmont a great place. Regardless of Longmont's size in the future, people should still be able to say they value its small town, friendly atmosphere.



This document contains the goals, policies, and strategies of the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*. Other important documents are useful to consider as components in the City's planning process. *Envision 2020: A Strategic Plan for the Community of Longmont* captures the community's dreams of what it wants Longmont to be in the future and makes specific recommendations to achieve those dreams. Functional master plans deal with specific topics, such as the water and wastewater systems, the airport, and the downtown, and provide specific guidance for particular areas. The *Longmont Community Profile* provides the database for planning. The *Capital Improvement Program* prioritizes available funding for public improvements. The Metro Vision 2020 tracking system monitors urban area so that the City is aware of the amount of land consumed for development.

## **2003 Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan Emphasis**

The emphasis on certain issues facing Longmont naturally changes if the City is to continue to grow and mature. The outward growth of the City has been and still is important to the City. However, the City recognizes that quality of life and other issues are equally important to a thriving and vibrant community. As the community grows and matures, its focus will naturally shift from outward growth to more emphasis on internal development, through infill, redevelopment, and reinvestment.

The updated *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* recognizes that its current residents are the stewards of the community charged with ensuring that its future growth is sustainable. A sustainable community seeks to balance economic growth, community development, and environmental conservation to anticipate and accommodate the needs of current and future residents.

The chapters of the plan emphasize a wide range of goals and policies intended to achieve the City's vision of a community that is sustainable in the long term and that provides a high quality of life for residents, as described below. Each chapter also contains a list of benchmarks and indicators designed to help the City weigh decisions about growth and development as they relate to the goals and policies within the chapter. These indicators are described at the end of this chapter.

### **Growth of the City: Balancing Objectives to Achieve Sustainable Quality of Life**

The Longmont community supports growth and development that balances economic vitality, environmental health, and community well being over the long-term. This concept is also known as sustainability, which can be defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* incorporates goals and policies to support moving in the direction of becoming a community that is sustainable in the long term, and to further explore what this concept means to the City.

The City's existing quality of life benchmarks program helps it to make decisions about growth and development, and this plan includes additional indicators designed to measure progress and trends toward or away from individual goals. A sustainable community approach would require that the City consider the trends that these indicators are measuring in a more interconnected way. The indicators can also be used as a sustainable community monitoring tool—to understand a community's strengths and weaknesses. The City will explore ways to adapt the current benchmark programs into a sustainable community program.



The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* has been expanded to promote a balance between economic development, community-building, and environmental quality concerns when making decisions about the provision of public services and facilities to meet the needs of the community.

### **Growth of the City: Balanced Land Uses**

Longmont has made great strides in changing itself from a bedroom community to a community with a stronger economic base. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* emphasizes the notion of land use balance between residential and non-residential land uses in comprehensive planning, and between housing and jobs, to incorporate the concept that a variety of land uses will provide a high quality of life for Longmont's residents. Furthermore, this balance of land uses needs to generate revenues sufficient to build and maintain the public facilities necessary to serve those uses.

### **Land Use and Urban Design: Quality Development**

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* emphasizes that development should enhance the community's image and the overall quality of life for new and existing residents. Development should make a positive contribution to Longmont and not merely mitigate the negative impacts of development. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* encourages people to do more than meet the City's minimum standards. Goals, policies, and strategies encourage quality design into new development. Pedestrian-friendly site design, buildings of human scale and landscaping integrate new development with the immediate neighborhoods. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* also continues to emphasize preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods.

### **Housing: Wide Range of Quality Housing Options for Residents**

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* promotes housing options for Longmont's residents and promotes the availability of housing types that are in short supply, including affordable housing.

### **Economic Development**

The Economic Development chapter goals emphasize a well-balanced, diversified, and stable economic base for Longmont. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the importance of quality educational opportunities and community services as complementary to a good business environment. The City emphasizes retaining primary businesses in Longmont as well as locating new primary businesses to Longmont.

### **Commercial Development**

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* promotes the integration of commercial development within its immediate neighborhoods so that it is an enhancement to the neighborhoods. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* also embraces the notion of having more than one regional commercial center in Longmont, and provides for regional commercial centers on the north and east sides of the City.

Furthermore, it also includes a new mixed-use corridor concept for the lands north of State Highway 66. This area is intended to facilitate the development of a mixed-use area that is unique to Longmont; one that has a special "sense of place". A place that has a balanced mix of uses



(entertainment, retail, residential, employment, civic, recreation) and a strong pedestrian orientation with frequent outdoor gathering spaces. This mix of uses will have uses that are destination anchors as well as those that are neighborhood-oriented. The mixed-use corridor will incorporate well-planned access and parking areas, landscaped areas, and high-quality architectural design.

To encourage the quality development that the City expects in the mixed-use corridor in the Terry Lake neighborhood planning area, the City Council has approved the *Highway 66 Mixed Use Corridor Framework Master Plan and Design Guidelines* (August 30, 2006). This document is incorporated into, and made a part of, the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* by reference. The *Highway 66 Mixed Use Corridor Framework Master Plan and Design Guidelines* (August 30, 2006) will be used when the City reviews planned unit developments to realize the strong and consistent community design necessary to create a unique sense of place in the mixed-use corridor in the Terry Lake neighborhood planning area.

### **Central Business District**

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* supports continued revitalization of the Central Business District. The policies in the Central Business District chapter support enhancing the downtown's appearance and vitality, creating a pedestrian-friendly district, enhancing the quality of business opportunities, and encouraging compatibility between the Central Business District and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

### **Public Improvements**

The Public Improvements chapter outlines goals, policies, and strategies that guide the City in determining what public improvements the City needs, when the City needs them, and who should pay for them. This chapter further refines how development pays its fair share of the public improvements necessary to serve it.

### **Transportation**

The Transportation chapter focuses on having an acceptable level of mobility as Longmont continues to grow. Ease of travel around Longmont contributes to its desirability as a place to live, work, and visit. Goals, policies, and strategies support the continued development of a multi-modal transportation system that is capable of serving existing and proposed land uses and that encourages travel by means other than single-occupant automobiles.

The Transportation chapter also incorporates recommendations from the Bicycle Task Force and the Transportation Demand Management Task Force. New policies also reiterate the pursuit of commuter rail from Boulder to Longmont as part of the Regional Transportation District's FasTracks proposal and incorporate the *State Highway 119 Diagonal Highway Alternatives Assessment: Boulder County Transportation System Study (July 2001)* recommendations for multi-modal enhancements to the State Highway 119/Diagonal Highway. Although not included in a formal policy, a discussion of tradeoffs in the transportation planning and decision-making process is included in the Transportation chapter.



## **Human Services, Culture, and Education**

The Human Services, Culture, and Education chapter's goals, policies, and strategies support and enhance a wide range of resources so that all of Longmont's residents have an equal opportunity to maximize their potential. This chapter also supports efforts to improve cultural opportunities and to foster an appreciation of cultural diversity. Longmont's residents have a history of caring for each other, a quality that contributes to Longmont's small town, friendly atmosphere.

Quality educational opportunities in Longmont are a key ingredient to Longmont's continued growth and prosperity. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* includes goals, policies, and strategies that allow the City in partnership with educational providers to evaluate methods for ensuring those opportunities.

## **Environmental Quality and Resources Conservation**

The Environmental Quality and Resources Conservation chapter includes goals, policies and strategies concerning environmental health, the preservation of wetlands and other natural areas, and the extraction of subsurface resources such as aggregates, oil, and gas. The plan emphasizes preserving environmental resources and unique natural areas, maintaining a high-quality domestic water supply, reducing energy and water consumption, reducing solid waste, and minimizing the public's exposure to hazardous materials.

## **Parks, Greenways, and Open Space**

The Parks, Greenways, and Open Space chapter describes the public system of parks, greenways and open space designed to serve residents, the workforce, and visitors of Longmont. It includes location and design criteria so that the City will contain adequate parks to serve recreation needs. It also includes policies to develop a greenway system and sets forth policies to preserve natural and cultural resources of the Longmont area to help maintain the City's separate identity, provide connections to useable open space, provide low impact passive recreation, and enhance scenic entryway corridors to the City.

## **Role of Government: Partnerships**

The City has the power of local self-government and home rule. City government will implement the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* in partnership with the people of Longmont, the business community, and other service providers. In addition, local government can influence the private sector to help implement the plan through many different mechanisms, including regulations, incentives, information, education, advocacy, and budgeting expenditures. The City's relationships with Boulder and Weld Counties are especially noteworthy in the context of the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* since Longmont is in both these counties. Goals, policies, and strategies throughout the plan support coordination and cooperation.

## **Tourism and Recreation Element**

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* includes elements regarding tourism and recreation to comply with House Bill 1006 (Colorado legislation) concerning tourism and recreation uses. The



Central Business District; Human Services, Culture and Education; and Parks, Greenways, and Open Space chapters include modifications to address the provision of recreational opportunities for visitors as well as Longmont area residents.

### **Sustainable Community Indicators and Benchmarks**

Indicators are measures of economic, community, and environmental trends. When used individually, indicators provide a relative measure of change with respect to specific goals. When evaluated collectively, the composite analysis will show the City if it is achieving its goals for sustainability, balance, and improving the general quality of life. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* incorporates indicators to help the City measure its progress towards achieving its goals and policies.

The purpose of the indicators is to:

- Enable the City to improve quality of life and achieve balance by evaluating conditions across economic, environmental, and community categories;
- Identify specific indicators where action is needed, and to increase awareness of how actions may impact other goals of the City; and
- Integrate current indicator and benchmark analysis with *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* goals and policies.

A series of indicators have been linked to each chapter of the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*, which measure a specific condition related to the economy, the environment, or the community. The strength of indicator programs lies in the ability to evaluate trends collectively. While many issues in a community can be evaluated independently, the relationships between specific indicators provide insight into sustainability and balance among a broad range of goals. Examples of how data can be used to understand the inter-relationships among the indicators are provided in Appendix A. It is recommended that an indicators report be provided to the City Council annually, providing baseline information for each measurement, trend data as it becomes available, as well as correlations among key related indicators.

The indicators included in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* have been selected using the following criteria:

- They reflect existing community goals related to the long-term economic, environmental, and community health of the City.
- They are statistically measurable, and relevant data are readily available.
- They represent issues that City policy can influence.
- They include a majority of the City's quality of life benchmarks (first approved in October of 2000), as well as benchmarks incorporated into the *Land Development Code*.



City actions to solve individual problems will have ramifications on other important concerns of the community. A solution to one problem can make another problem worse. Therefore, understanding the interdependent nature of the indicators is key to understanding balance. It is this balance that will lead to improving the community's quality of life. The purpose of incorporating the indicators is to help the community understand the connections between categories to achieve balance among the community, economic, and environmental concerns of the City.

Some indicators included in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*, have associated benchmarks or standards that set a measurable goal for the community. While some of the indicators do not have specific benchmarks, the annual or quarterly measurements of specific conditions in the community will provide valuable trend data. Over time, the trend data will show how much progress Longmont has made towards the goals listed in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* and may be used to set benchmarks in the future. The City may initiate action to address certain trends and solve problems based on quantifiable conditions identified through monitoring these indicators.

## **Implementation**

City government makes decisions, particularly decisions concerning land use, based on the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*. It is a guide and not a regulation. The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* is of value only if the City accepts it as a guide for making decisions. Since the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* does not have the force of law, the City must adopt and rely on other measures to implement it, such as regulations that the City uses to review individual development applications. The *Land Development Code*, public improvement plans, annual City Council work program, annual *Operating Budget*, *Capital Improvement Program*, annexations, and other ordinances are all methods of implementing the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*. For development in the mixed-use corridor in the Terry Lake neighborhood planning area, the City will use the *Highway 66 Mixed Use Corridor Framework Master Plan and Design Guidelines* (August 30, 2006) to evaluate planned unit developments to ensure quality development that contributes to a unique "sense of place" in Longmont.

The Metro Vision 2020 tracking system is a tool the City uses to monitor urban area so that Longmont's growth and development are consistent with *Metro Vision 2020*, the comprehensive guide for the development of the Denver metropolitan region.

The *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* includes strategies that attempt to tie the plan more closely with implementation devices. Each strategy links to a specific policy and sets forth actions that the City should take to implement the policy. Some of the strategies are more specific than others, and some may be relatively simple to implement compared to 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.

The indicators program and monitoring approach incorporated into the 2003 update to the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* give the City an opportunity to weigh trends and evaluate progress toward achieving goals. The City will then be able to determine when the *Longmont Area Comprehensive*



*Plan* may need to be updated, or whether new goals, policies, and strategies may be necessary to achieve balance in the community. On the other hand, if the basic goals remain valid over time, the City may need to decide if it should take other actions to foster a balanced community if the indicators show trends away from achieving the City's goals.

In order for the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* to be a useful document, the City must update it to respond to changing conditions and community values. Amendment procedures allow the City to change specific elements of the plan. Evaluation of the entire plan on a continuing basis is also important to ensure that the underlying assumptions and philosophies remain valid. The City should initiate a review of the entire document no later than January 1, 2013 to determine whether or not the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* needs another comprehensive update. When the City does initiate a comprehensive update, the City will carry out its commitment to follow certain fundamental principles for amending comprehensive plans that are specified in the *Mile High Compact*, an intergovernmental agreement between jurisdictions within the Denver Regional Council of Governments.