



Focus on Longmont: Share your vision, Create our legacy



Deliberative Forum Interim Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Focus on Longmont* initiative is a 10-month project launched by the Longmont City Council at their 2004 planning retreat. The purpose is to develop community-supported strategic policies that, if implemented, will result in a balance between resources and expenditures that sustains Longmont's capacity to provide desired municipal services as the City approaches build-out of its planning boundaries.

Phase 1 Overview: Positive Core and Future Vision

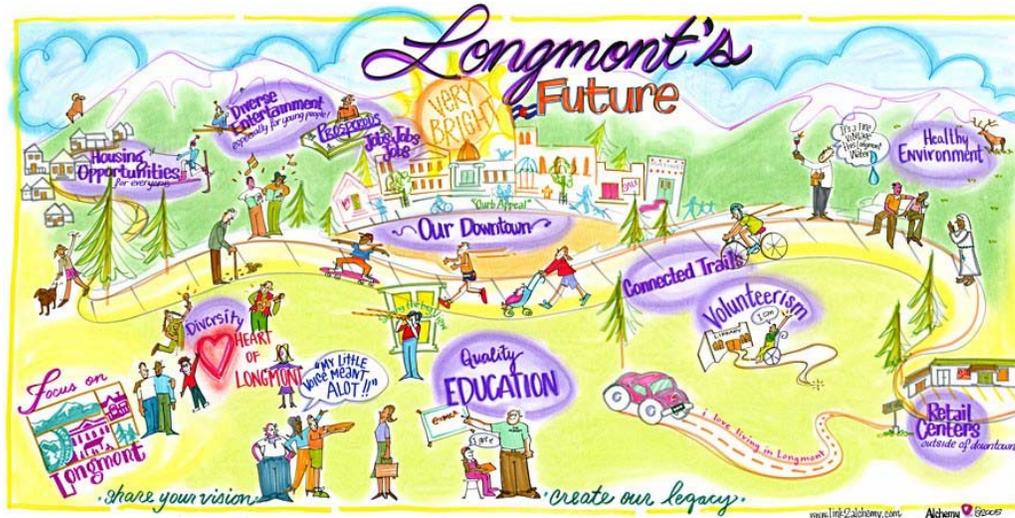
Phase 1 of the project, completed in May 2005, invited members of the community (1) to describe Longmont's positive core and (2) to sketch their vision for the city's future. Six key elements of Longmont's positive core capture what is uniquely good about Longmont, and what it is like at its best:

- **Small-town feel.** Longmont is a community with a "real" downtown and a "small-town feel." The community values small businesses and the community's history.
- **Quality natural environment.** Natural spaces are important, and the city has an eco-friendly attitude.
- **Celebrating together.** Longmont provides a friendly environment for people from all walks of life. The community is committed to breaking new ground in reaching across cultural divides.
- **Opportunity for all.** The community values education. There are many different job and business opportunities. People care about seeing others succeed.
- **An engaged community.** Longmont supports a culture of "giving back." There is room for everyone to make a difference.
- **Facilitative city leadership.** City government has adopted an entrepreneurial style with employees who are personal and responsive. The city also helps support and facilitates community action.

In the Community Summit at the conclusion of Phase 1, approximately 175 people described their hopes and dreams for the city. They created a community vision built upon the foundation of Longmont's core strengths.

Phase 2 Overview: Directions for the Future and Community Priorities

In Phase 1, the community contributed more than 500 ideas, suggestions, and recommendations for the future. At the beginning of Phase 2, these "core elements" and "images of the future" from Phase 1 were "boiled down" to four basic "Directions for the Future" that could serve as the foundation for



Longmont's efforts to ensure that it continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents:

1. Enrich the Experience of Living in Longmont.
2. Enhance the Environment, Natural and Built.
3. Expand Prosperity through Innovation, Efficiency, and Education.
4. Extend the Principles of Cooperation and Shared Responsibility throughout the Community.

The four Directions were described in detail in the Deliberation Guide distributed in advance to participants in the deliberative dialogue events held in July. In these forums, participants were asked to examine and weigh the four Directions.

Key Findings from the Deliberative Forums

The deliberative forums yielded information that sheds additional light on the outcomes of Phase 1, enabling us to provide a more-revealing and more-nuanced understanding of what Longmont residents value about life in their community and the kind of community they want it to be in the future. A key theme that emerged was *balance*. For example, rather than choosing one Direction to the exclusion of the others, forum participants embraced aspects of different directions as the strategic priorities for the city. Six central themes emerged as the common ground in the two forums. They are consistent with the community vision that emerged in Phase 1, while at the same time they yield priorities to be consulted in the course of crafting and adopting strategic policies. The six themes are as follows:

1. Promote a healthy business climate, especially by supporting small, local businesses.
2. Support education, recognizing its importance both in attracting good jobs and in helping community members obtain good jobs.

3. Enhance the attractiveness of the natural environment and the strength of the community's commitment to a healthy environment.
4. Focus on downtown as a symbol of our "small town" identity and as a functional center of the community.
5. Promote a sense of community identity and cultural integration through community-wide celebrations, partnerships, public dialogue, and open, inclusive decision making.
6. Adopt strategic and balanced policies and be wise stewards of public resources.

Highlights from the deliberations related to each theme are described below.

1. Business Climate. Forum participants identified a strong economy as the foundation of any successful community. Business activity generates the wealth we require to raise our standard of living and to support those things that do not pay for themselves. If we "get business right," everything else will fall into place. The question is not whether we need to achieve and sustain a robust economy, but rather the form that economy should take and the means by which we should go about achieving it. In this connection, participants offered a number of important considerations:

- Economic development should be "strategic" in the sense that there should be a clear strategy for attaining both the level and the type of prosperity that serves the community's desire to sustain its quality of life.
- A vital, prosperous local economy requires jobs—jobs for *everyone*. All residents should have work that others respect and appreciate.
- Both new development and re-development should be consistent with the values and community visions held by Longmont residents. That means recruiting, supporting, and assisting those businesses whose purposes and activities are in keeping with Longmont's character and quality of life.
- Longmont needs a balance between local small and large non-local businesses. The challenge is to take advantage of what the "big boxes" offer without adversely affecting the things small businesses offer the community.
- Support for small local businesses should be reflected in our economic development policies. We need a business climate in which a wide range of businesses can take root, grow, and thrive.
- The community should be made aware of the importance of supporting small businesses through purchasing locally whenever possible.

2. Education. More forum participants expressed concern about education than about any other topic they discussed. Participants believed that any future improvement in Longmont's present depends upon the quality of education that young people receive today.

There appears to be broad agreement that the public school system that serves Longmont, the St. Vrain Valley School District, needs to be strengthened. The schools, however, do not by themselves determine whether the young people of a community receive the sort of education they require. The community must value education, support it, complement it, and reinforce it through a variety of principles, practices, and activities. Forum participants said, in effect, that as a city and community, Longmont is not contributing as much to the education of its young people and it could, or should. The community should make full use of its considerable capacity for responding to the wide range of educational needs that all residents have.

The city—along with business, not-for-profit-organizations, and individual citizens—needs to find an appropriate way to be involved in the education of Longmont’s young people. Many participants urged a “partnership between the city and the school district” as the beginning of an answer. They also offered a number of concrete suggestions:

- The community must support education through a variety of practices and activities: early childhood education, vocational education or occupational training, etc.
- We must find ways to help parents meet their responsibilities. Addressing the pressing need of working parents for after-school programs would be a good start.
- The schools need business support—not just financial support or in-kind donations, but also mentoring, apprenticeships, teaching how the skills and knowledge businesses need are used in the work they do.
- Enable and encourage residents to donate their time and talents to the schools. Mentoring programs are both do-able and helpful.
- Care needs to be taken not to make matters worse or to waste resources in ill-advised attempts to do what education professionals are already doing.

3. Natural Environment. The opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the natural environment is a key component of Longmont’s quality of life. The city’s trees, parks, mountain views, open space, trails, and the like constitute a major community asset. Participants recommended in particular that Longmont’s trail system be strengthened by extending trails so that they facilitate intra-city movement, not just offer recreational opportunities.

But participants also raised questions. While generally applauding the city’s acquisitions of open space, they wondered whether open space—especially land to be acquired in the future—should be more “usable.” They asked whether the community could come up with a mixed-use approach. They proposed that the city be more “strategic” in its purchasing of open space, acquiring it not simply because it’s available but because it will serve specific widely-supported purposes.

One way forum participants echoed the Phase 1 vision of a city with an “eco-friendly attitude” was by urging that Longmont move more quickly toward “built-green” construction requirements for both new construction and renovations. Yet

others cautioned that a blanket built-green policy could narrow the range of housing options available to people and raise prices to the point where neither current residents nor newcomers could afford to live in Longmont.

Participants also praised the city's recycling program. They urged that it be expanded and that the city "make it too convenient [for residents] *not* to recycle."

The topic of traffic congestion came up in the July forums. Not everyone who participated agreed that Longmont has a "traffic problem" (or a "parking problem"), but most recognized that the community faces a challenge in preventing traffic from *becoming* a problem detrimental to Longmont's environmental quality (and to its "small-town feel"). Participants saw improved public transportation as a precautionary measure to hold at bay the congestion that is mounting in the north suburban area as a whole. As Longmont builds out and begins to "build in," the city should be planned so that public transportation becomes more practical, more attractive, and more economical.

4. Downtown. In its current state, participants said, downtown is not the sort of place the community wants or needs it to be. Many said downtown is the symbol (as well as a source) of Longmont's small-town appeal. They described downtown as the business, cultural, and civic center of the community. Some argued that Main Street is the key to Longmont's identity as a distinct city, and so must have its own identity that is aligned with and reflective of the community's self-conception.

Participants offered a number of specific criteria for a vibrant downtown:

- It should be more of a "destination" than it is today. It should offer residents and visitors alike more than a single reason or purpose for spending time and money there. To achieve this, downtown should feature mixed uses: residential, retail, entertainment, and civic. Downtown should afford people a pleasant experience no matter what one is doing.
- It must be economically viable—a functioning center of commercial activity, not a "movie set" or "theme park." It should open up opportunities for new or relocated business activity. The city should do more to help and support businesses on Main Street.
- It should be a place *all* residents can identify with, feel a part of, and make use of. Some participants cited the need for "public" or "civic" space where people can come together, where community events can be held, where people can find a variety of things to do, or where they can "just be." They argued that a genuine community requires a central public space—it needs a focal point, such as a pedestrian-only public square where people can gather.
- It should be aesthetically pleasing—nothing should detract from the physical attractiveness of the area. Some supporters of maintaining downtown's character suggested that an architectural theme consistent the city's 19th century architecture should be encouraged in both new construction and in redevelopment projects throughout the city. (Other participants, however, expressed skepticism about, and occasionally outright opposition to, the idea that

private property should be subjected to regulation by the city to any degree greater than it is at present.)

- Downtown should be accessible by bus, by bicycle, and on foot.
- It should be more pedestrian-friendly without necessarily banning vehicles from Main Street (though some participants did call for a pedestrian-only zone with adequate parking within easy walking or shuttle bus distance.)

Participants urged that the city ascertain what residents think downtown should be in order for it to become the authentic heart of Longmont for everyone, including the merchants who operate businesses there and people who at present don't spend much time there.

5. Community. In “community,” people are more than residents. They are *neighbors*; they show concern for each other and take responsibility for helping each other when help is needed. For people who embrace its importance, “community” is built on empathy, tolerance of differences (or, better, appreciation of them), and a sense of reciprocal obligation.

This is the vision, the ideal. And to some extent—certainly more than in many communities—it is the reality in Longmont. Yet already Longmont is large enough a city that most people will remain strangers to each other, even when they live in close proximity. This poses a problem for a community beginning to wonder how to integrate a growing ethnic minority into the general population.

As it did in the Phase 1 conversations, “cultural diversity” resonated quite strongly with some participants in the deliberative forums. These folks argued that it’s important for residents of a community like Longmont to celebrate together. Community-wide events that put people together in the same space sharing the same experience go a long way toward helping people see not only that they differ from each other, but that they have things in common as well. Accordingly, a substantial portion of forum participants recommended that the city play an important part, if only as a catalyst, in creating and sustaining regular city-wide celebrations that span and connect Longmont’s various communities.

Forum participants were optimistic about Longmont’s capacity for effective action, provided that residents’ experience, knowledge, ingenuity, persistence, and energy can be marshaled and brought to bear on the tasks that have to be performed. This is why Longmont needs processes for discussion and decision-making that are widely regarded as fair, accessible, and responsive by all members of the community. Participants thought the city could create more one-time involvement opportunities like the July forums.

At the same time participants acknowledged that achieving broader participation by residents and sustaining their engagement over time present a formidable challenge. It may be unrealistic to expect that more than a very small percentage of Longmont residents will ever participate frequently and substantially in activities of a public nature. In response, some participants suggest that we need to make involvement more attractive, to present it as a potentially gratifying undertaking and to avoid making it look like a job or a chore.

People talked about cultivating a civic norm of *volunteerism*; strengthening and connecting *neighborhoods*; and building *partnerships*:

- There ought to be a highly visible and accessible list of volunteer opportunities to make it easier for people to donate their time, experience, and skills.
- The city should recognize that healthy neighborhoods are the key to sustaining Longmont's quality of life. Longmont has 51 registered neighborhood groups. Strengthening them both internally and externally would do much to maintain Longmont's small-town feel and at the same time enhance its ability to act as a community.
- The city should make it a priority to stimulate the formation of partnerships throughout Longmont.

In the discussion of diversity, one point that surfaced that had not been raised in Phase 1: There are not enough amenities and events for young people. Not enough attention is paid to their needs and interests. What Longmont really requires is more daily activities for young people.

6. Strategic and Balanced Policies. In discussing the four Directions, many of the comments related to being strategic (e.g., establishing incentives for businesses according to pre-determined community priorities) and balanced (e.g., recognizing a need for both large and small retailers.) Some participants were concerned that the city "do no harm." They cautioned that the status quo is good and that taxes should not increase in an effort to change. Some of the comments related to striking a strategic balance in policy-making included:

- We understand that, in the end, a balance must be struck between a commitment, at one extreme, of going after new businesses irrespective of the consequences and, at the other extreme, imposing excessively severe restrictions on what kinds of businesses may locate in Longmont.
- We need a balance between small local and large non-local businesses that offer products and services that aren't provided locally or that residents wish to patronize because it makes economic sense for them to do so.
- If we recruit businesses, we need to strike a balance between the desirability of supporting locally-owned small businesses and the benefits of having large companies come to Longmont from elsewhere.
- Similarly, revenue from retail sales tax is important, but it must be weighed against other values, such as its impact on downtown, which contributes so much to Longmont's small-town feeling and to the small local businesses that are concentrated there.

In Sum

From the combined results of the post-forum questionnaires administered in July 16th and July 30th we may reasonably infer that participants left their deliberations together feeling that Direction 3 was relatively most important in their minds as they considered the question of how to ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents. Direction 2 came in a strong second, while Direction 1 and Direction 4 were judged to be rather less important.

Six central themes emerged as the common ground in the two forums:

- Promote a healthy business climate, especially by supporting small, local businesses.
- Support education, recognizing its importance both in attracting good jobs and in helping community members obtain good jobs.
- Enhance the attractiveness of the natural environment and the strength of the community's commitment to a healthy environment.
- Focus on downtown as a symbol of our "small town" identity and as a functional center of the community.
- Promote a sense of community identity and cultural integration through community-wide celebrations, partnerships, public dialogue, and open, inclusive decision making.
- Adopt strategic and balanced policies and be wise stewards of public resources.

Participants in the deliberative forums did not speak with one voice, but they articulated priorities for Longmont in the future that are consistent with the vision developed in Phase 1. In some instances, what was revealed is ambivalence, uncertainty, or disagreement. But that, too, is valuable information.

Participants in the deliberative forums painted a picture of a community in balance, where no value or priority is taken to an extreme and overrides all others. Residents want Longmont to continue to be an "eminently livable" city. They have ideas about how to achieve that goal, but they have no definitive answers about how to implement a plan to make the city sustainable at build-out. They believe, however, that they can count on one another—on their collective experience, knowledge, common sense, abilities, skills, pragmatism, mutual goodwill, and commitment to preserving what is good about Longmont. They look to the city for leadership in charting the path toward sustainability.

Introduction

The *Focus on Longmont* initiative is a 10-month project launched by the Longmont City Council at their 2004 planning retreat. The purpose is to develop community-supported strategic policies that, if implemented, will result in a balance between resources and expenditures that sustains Longmont's capacity to provide desired municipal services as the City approaches build-out of its planning boundaries.

Because of the importance of this initiative to Longmont's future, the City chose an approach that would engage a broad cross-section of the community in the development and eventual implementation of this citywide strategic plan. The process combines two proven methods for community-wide planning, Appreciative Inquiry (Phase 1) and Deliberative Dialogue (Phase 2.) This approach was selected in order to capitalize on the following strengths in the two methods:

- The ability to personally engage people with diverse experiences in working together on defining the city's strengths and ideas for the future.
- Framing issues and providing pertinent information in a way that makes sense to the community.
- Fostering in-depth and forward-looking deliberations among community members concerning the trade-offs of different policy directions for the future.
- Exploring common ground among choices that capture the community members' values.

Phase 1 of the project, completed in May 2005, invited the community to 1) describe what they consider uniquely good about Longmont and what the city is like at its best, and 2) to sketch their vision for the city's future. Participants in Phase 1 identified and affirmed a core community vision and offered more than 500 ideas, suggestions, and recommendations for the future. The collective vision and compelling ideas for the future provide the foundation for deliberation in Phase 2 of the Focus on Longmont process.

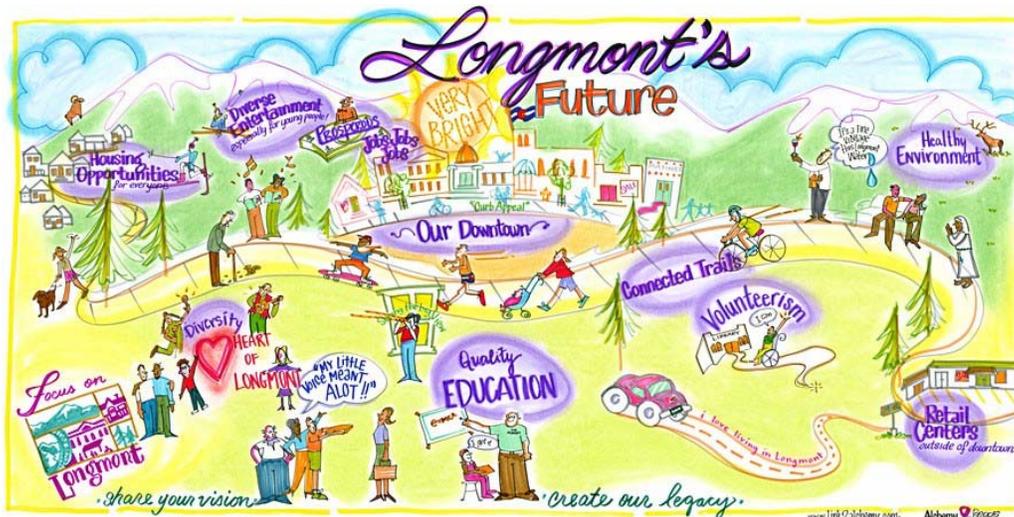
The Deliberative Forum Process

The Phase 1 data provided the basis for identifying four Directions for the Future for Longmont:

Direction for the Future 1: Enrich the Experience of Living in Longmont.

This Direction for the Future says we can best ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents *by preserving Longmont's "small town*

feel” while giving it more “big city appeal.” Residents who favor this Direction stress the desirability of promoting the arts and of celebrating our cultural richness and variety.



Direction for the Future 2: Enhance the Environment, Natural and Built.

This Direction for the Future says we can best ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents *by ensuring that we continue to live in a place where the landscape is open and pleasing to look at, and where everything that is built on it—houses, stores, office buildings, schools—preserves and even accentuates its beauty.*

Direction for the Future 3: Expand Prosperity through Innovation, Efficiency, and Education. This Direction for the Future says we can best ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents *by emphasizing efficiency and innovation in both business and government, and by ensuring that all our young people graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they will need to become productive adults.*

Direction for the Future 4: Extend the Principles of Cooperation and Shared Responsibility throughout the Community. This Direction for the Future says we can best ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents *by improving the ability and willingness of citizens and city government to work together in partnership, and of citizens to work constructively and productively with each other.*

The Focus on Longmont Deliberative Guide (see Appendix A: Focus on Longmont Deliberation Guide) described these four directions, some advantages and disadvantages of each direction and possible strategies or actions the City

might pursue under each Direction. The Guide provided the basis for community members to engage in what the National Issues Forums calls “Choicework” where people work through the “pros and cons” of different directions for policy development.¹



What is a Deliberative Forum?

The deliberation process was developed by Public Agenda and the Kettering Foundation as a productive way to engage people with different values and views in discussing challenging issues. The intent is to move beyond positions and opinions to a dialogue where citizens gain increased understanding of different views and where groups with different perspectives weigh options together. The result is a “public judgment,” or how the community views different policies and where public policies are most likely to connect with what people care about.

Forum Objectives

The objectives for the deliberative forums were as follows:

- To help us, as a community, express our sense of what Longmont’s priorities should be as we plan for the future.
- To help us, as a community, develop a better understanding and appreciation of each other’s concerns, interests, and values as these relate to Longmont’s future.
- To help us, as a community, move closer to a shared sense of what the City can and should do in order to ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents.

¹ “Choicework” resembles (“cost-benefit”) policy analysis, but actually operates at the level of the values underlying competing policy positions, not at the level of policy analysis. It begins with the assumption that people’s political preferences—their positions and prescriptions for action—are rooted in *values* (i.e., beliefs about what holds value, what is good or desirable). Stable, effective public policy thus depends on people making difficult *choices* between *values*.

Before people can choose between values, everyone’s values must be recognized, acknowledged, and affirmed. To meet this challenge, Choicework transforms the typical public decision situation into a “*Public Choicework Situation*,” in which shared (or at least shareable) *values* replace incompatible *positions*. Choicework thus turns *individual* priority-setting (i.e., construction of the individual’s preference ordering) into *collective* priority-setting, in effect collapsing the two into single process; deliberating together becomes one and the same with deliberating individually.

In Choicework, people deliberate over and choose between (i.e., prioritize) *Directions for Action*. These Directions are constructed around *values* that can be mutually appreciated. Mutually appreciated values exert a motivational “pull” on all parties, and thereby transforms the perception of zero-sumness into a “win-win” decision situation, rendering interactions more cooperative and creative.

Forum Format

The two forums began with a presentation on current trends to help participants deliberate against a background awareness that the future may be different than today. Participants were then asked to join small groups of 8 to 12 people. Volunteer professional facilitators moderated the small group discussions and city staff members volunteered their time as recorders. The process for each small group was as follows:

- Discuss all four Directions – Participants identified pros and cons of making each Direction a priority for the future.
- Identify priorities for action – Each participants identified and posted their top 5 potential strategies or actions from the Deliberation Guide or discussion in their small group, Participants then used dot voting to rate their top three.
- Discuss results on priority actions – Each group discussed results and where the group agreed and did not agree on priorities and why.
- Develop small group report – Each group developed a small group report that identified the group’s recommendation to the city with respect to planning for a sustainable future in alignment with the community’s vision.



Forum Participants

On two Saturdays in July, community members gathered to deliberate on the city’s future. The July 16th forum was open to everyone in the community, including residents who had participated in Phase 1 activities, such as the Community Summit. In order to bring new voices into the process and reach people who might not typically participate in city planning processes, a random polling method was used to recruit participants for the July 30th forum.² More

² Random sampling is a procedure for choosing people for some purpose—in this case for the purpose of inviting them to the Deliberative Forum on July 30th. Random sampling ensures that every person has an equal chance of having his or her name drawn. A random sample is the group of people who are chosen.

Obtaining a random sample is desirable because it enables us to do two things we couldn’t do without it. First, a random sample ensures that the people chosen are representative of the community as a whole. The chosen group reflects the community’s diversity. So, for example, if 52 percent of the community are women and 48 percent are men, and if the size of the random sample group is 100, 52 members of the sample group will be

than 70 persons identified in this manner participated in that forum. Altogether, more than 150 residents joined in the deliberations.

As Appendix B indicates, a representative sample of Longmont's population consisting of 100 participants required that at least 20 be Latino. Because the number of Latino participants fell short of this number, two supplemental activities were conducted to reach additional Latino members of the community. These included a "walking survey" concerning the four directions at the 25th Year Celebration for El Comite on August 14, 2005, and a modified deliberative forum among monolingual Spanish-speakers at the Micro Enterprise Training Course on August 24, 2005, held at the Longmont Civic Center. Results from these additional activities were combined with results from the two Saturday forums. (Data from the deliberation that occurred in these two events are presented in Appendix C: Deliberative Forum Results.)

Questionnaires

Forum participants in both July forums completed questionnaires about their individual views on the Directions and their rating of the deliberative forum process. These findings are presented in Appendix D: Deliberative Forum Questionnaire Results.

The results of the questionnaires are fully consistent with the findings presented and discussed in the following section of this report. The results also indicate that participants felt that the forums did a good job of accomplishing the objectives set for them. The rating on all three objectives was slightly higher for the second forum of randomly selected participants than for the first forum, in which participants were self-selected. Participants in the forums on both dates were quite positive as well about the potential for deliberative forums to improve the ability of citizens to work together and the city and the community to work together. There was near-universal agreement that forums of the sort conducted in July should be a continuing feature of Longmont's civic life.

women, and 48 will be men. The same goes for other community characteristics, such as the percentage of people who are Latino, the percentage who have graduated from high school, and so on.

Second, a random sample lets us say something that's true about the community as a whole based on what's true of the sample group. So, for example, if the sample group prefers that Longmont City vehicles be painted blue rather than green, we can say that it is highly probable that the community as a whole would prefer blue. In short, random samples enable us to generalize accurately from a small group to a much larger group.

In Phase 2 of the Focus on Longmont project, we obtained an initial random sample of just over 200 people. If 100 had attended the forum on July 30th, the conclusions this group reached would have permitted us to say, within plus or minus 10 percentage points, that Longmont residents as a whole would arrive at the same conclusions if they had a similar chance to deliberate. For example, if 70 members of the sample believed the city should give priority to economic development over environmental protection, then we would have been able to report that between 60 and 80 percent of the residents of Longmont as a whole would give priority to economic development if they deliberated together.

Additional information on our effort to obtain a random sample for the July 30th forum can be found in Appendix B: Focus on Longmont Random Selection Process.



What We Learned about the Community's Priorities

Here we present and discuss the key findings with respect to each Direction for the Future. A summary of the chief themes that emerged from the deliberative process follows the findings. This information will be used to prepare draft Policy Directions for the City's consideration.

Direction for the Future 1: Enrich the Experience of Living in Longmont.

This Direction for the Future argued that the best way to use City resources to secure a sustainable quality of life is by preserving Longmont's "small town feel" while giving it more "big city appeal." Direction 1 emphasized the importance of cultural richness and variety achieved through building a thriving arts community and holding multiple citywide events that would enable residents to celebrate the cultural diversity of the many different people who make Longmont such a special place to live. Direction 1 suggested that both of these goals should revolve around a lively downtown where people work, live, and shop. In this view, downtown should be the focal point of community life, and renewing it should therefore be considered an essential ingredient in the effort to enrich the experience of living in Longmont.

1. Longmont's "Small-Town" Feeling

Forum participants agreed that Longmont's "small-town feeling" is important. It plays a central role in giving residents the sense that Longmont is a free-standing community with its own unique identity. Although some participants lamented that the city has already lost its small-town character (owing to the growth in Longmont's population; to proliferation of "big box" retail stores and other national commercial chains; and to the nature of the contemporary economy), **no one dissented from the assertion that the small-town feel ought to be retained (or perhaps re-created) as far as possible.**

2. Culture and the Arts

A sizeable number of forum participants agreed with the proposition that emphasizing "culture and the arts" would help Longmont continue to be an attractive place to live without losing the "small-town" feel that residents prize so highly. **A distinction emerged, however, between "culture" defined as "the arts" and "culture" defined**

as the beliefs, traditions, norms, and institutions that distinguish social groups from one another.

2.1. The Arts

- Participants who favored an emphasis on the arts as the foundation for Longmont’s future pointed out how they enrich our lives by providing perspectives different from our own. They extend our understanding and appreciation of the different groups that make up the community, and in doing so build a sense of community that (paradoxically) reveals what we have in common as it shows us what is distinctive about each other. The arts afford opportunities for mixing not only people of different backgrounds and heritages but also people of different age groups.
- The arts are also “energizing”—they infuse a community with an air of creativity and possibility that carries over into business, civic affairs, and other aspects of our lives.
- Even after build-out, some participants argued, Longmont will have to attract visitors. The arts make a community attractive to outsiders, whether visitors or businesses or families looking to relocate. In addition, they help keep residents’ spending dollars at home.
- In the view of some participants, promoting the arts would help downtown by “keeping the sidewalks from being rolled up” at the close of business every day. Helping downtown become an active place during non-work hours would draw more people, which in turn would generate additional business and create new commercial opportunities on Main Street.
- Increased consumption in arts-related activities would enhance city sales tax revenues.
- Moreover, it would bring people together in an easy, unforced way—surely one of the defining characteristics of a community with a “small-town” feel.
- On the other hand, **many participants argued that there are a lot of questions about the ability of the arts to sustain Longmont as a distinct and distinctive community over the years to come.** It has to be asked, they said, whether Longmont residents would in fact turn out for arts and cultural activities to a greater extent than they do currently.
- The arts, other participants pointed out, by their very nature will never appeal to a wide range of people. Most things we consider “culture” or “the arts” appeal to very few people simply because appreciation for them has to be cultivated.
- The fact is, the arts for most people are a luxury. They seldom have the time, energy, and money to indulge in such activities. The result is that the great majority of Longmont residents may not benefit in any substantial way from emphasizing culture and the arts.
- As a practical matter, the scope and variety of what Longmont could offer both residents and non-residents is limited. It would be very difficult to compete with the larger and better-established cultural centers: Denver, Boulder, and Arvada.

- Even if we did succeed in building up the arts, that success might result, ironically, in the loss of Longmont's small-town feel.
- We should distinguish between “the Arts” and “the arts.” “The Arts” are a major industry. “The arts,” in contrast, are a cottage industry. **Longmont can support—indeed, it already supports—arts activity of the latter sort. Attempting to move up to the “big leagues” in the art world might bring unwelcome competition to existing arts-and-culture efforts. At the most, we should focus on enhancing the artistic resources Longmont currently possesses.**
- A number of participants objected to building Longmont's future around the arts on the grounds that they are a luxury the *community* can't afford so long as many residents' are in need of key services and this need still isn't being met. The city would do better to channel resources into meeting the more-pressing basic needs of the community's less-prosperous residents.
- Some participants suggested that it really isn't a proper role for city government to promote arts-and-culture. There are private resources available, and not-for-profit organizations are already active in the arts. Occasionally, the city might provide some modest seed money, but not continuing support. **It would be more effective for the city to work on improving business conditions so that the private sector might contribute more to support of the arts in Longmont.**

2.2. Culture—as in “Diversity”

- **A number of forum participants observed that Longmont derives an important measure of its identity from the events it puts on annually.** Events that have become traditions, like Rhythm on the River, contribute a lot to the sense of a smaller, free-standing town. At least in part, any community's small-town feel owes to repeated opportunities to see people residents know or recognize. Community-wide events are especially valuable in a community of Longmont's size because daily life affords most residents too few opportunities to feel they are among familiar faces.
- Participants also noted that **it's important for the residents of a community, especially one that is growing more ethnically diverse, to celebrate together.** Community-wide events that put people together in the same space sharing the same experience goes a long way toward helping people see each other as having things in common as well as possessing differences. In this connection it should be noted that in one of the Spanish-speaking forums it was suggested that additional “green space” in the city would not only promote the sharing of cultures but would enhance the ability of the to gather as a community.
- Accordingly, **a substantial portion of participants recommended that the city play an important part, if only as a catalyst, in creating and sustaining regular city-wide celebrations that span and connect Longmont's various**

communities. Fortunately, there is already a base to build on in the form of the Art Walk, Rhythm on the River, Cinco de Mayo, and other events.

- Some participants wondered, if the city commits itself to promoting festivities that celebrate Longmont's diversity, how does it decide what's worth doing and what isn't? What counts as an aspect of the community's diversity that warrants recognition?
- Other participants pointed out that cultural diversity and its celebration are *not* part of what gives Longmont its small-town feel. On the contrary, real small towns typically *lack* cultural diversity. If Longmont's small-town feel is to be authentic and sustainable, shouldn't we stress what residents share over what they don't share?
- A few forum participants pointed out that **it's very difficult in practice to stage festivities that are genuinely meaningful to the folks who identify with what's being celebrated while not making other folks feel out of place, or even uncomfortable.** This challenge is compounded when people don't speak the same language. We tend to express strong support for diversity, at least principle. But would most people be indifferent or unconcerned if their neighborhood were changing into one in which they had little in common with the new folks on the block? We need to be more realistic, participants said, about the cultural transformation Longmont is undergoing and less naively optimistic about well-intentioned but wholly inadequate gestures like the celebrations many people envision.
- If there is a culture in Longmont that is being neglected and that deserves more attention, it is the culture that young people inhabit. **A number of participants said there are not enough amenities and events for young people.** Not enough attention is paid to their needs and interests. What Longmont really requires is not more annual events but more daily activities for young people.

3. Focus on Downtown

Whether they were more inclined to emphasize "the arts" or "cultural diversity," participants who viewed either of these paths as essential to securing a sustainable future for Longmont warmed to the idea that **downtown (or "Main Street") should be the focal point of the broader community.** Again they invoked the importance of Longmont's "small-town feel." Some argued that Main Street is the key to Longmont's identity as a distinct city, and so must have its own identity that is aligned with and reflective of the community's self-conception.

- In the eyes of many participants, it is downtown's historic architecture that gives it character. They would like to see buildings of historic significance or interest preserved and, where necessary, restored.
- Some supporters of maintaining downtown's character suggested that an architectural theme consistent the city's 19th century architecture should be encouraged in both new construction and in redevelopment projects throughout the

city. None were specific, however, about what that theme might be (though it can be easily imagined); how it might be embodied; or the degree of adherence to the theme that should be promoted (or possibly even required). At least an equal number of participants, on the other hand, expressed skepticism about, and occasionally outright opposition to, the idea that private property should be subjected to regulation by the city to any degree greater than it is at present. A more-or-less “middle” position was taken by participants who recommended that new construction be required to exhibit certain traditional features (e.g., front porches on houses) cited frequently in discussions of the so-called “new urbanism.”

- Few participants disagreed, however, with the contention that **downtown should be more of a “destination” than it is today**. Some cited the need for “public” or “civic” space where people can come together, where community events can be held, where people can find a variety of things to do, or where they can “just be.” They argued that a genuine community requires a central public space—it needs a focal point, such as a pedestrian-only public square where people can gather.
- Others went farther, suggesting (as noted above) that downtown should embody and reflect the community’s image of itself as a unique place with a unique history and a unique set of values that contribute to its quality of life and its sense of being a cohesive community.
- Most participants seemed to agree that **downtown should feature mixed uses: residential, retail, entertainment, and civic**. They want it to afford a pleasant experience no matter what one is doing. They also recognized that **downtown must be economically viable**—a functioning center of commercial activity, not a “movie set” or “theme park” imitation thereof.
- **Participants offered a number of additional criteria for a vibrant downtown:** it should be **aesthetically pleasing** (nothing should detract from the physical attractiveness of the area; it should be **accessible** by bus, by bicycle, and on foot; it should be more **pedestrian-friendly** without necessarily banning vehicles from Main Street (though some participants did call for a pedestrian-only zone with adequate parking within easy walking or shuttle bus distance; it should offer residents (young people not least of all) and visitors alike more than a single reason or purpose for spending time and money there; and it should **open up opportunities** for new or relocated business activity.
- A few participants summed up their vision for **Main Street** by saying it “**needs a bit of what Pearl Street in Boulder offers, without becoming Pearl Street.**” Others suggested that the types of businesses that would be best for downtown are what people often call “boutique” businesses: small enterprises that offer interesting, unique products and services that can’t be found in the large retail chain businesses.
- At the same time, however, some participants urged that the city refrain from making any changes that would result in a new downtown with limited appeal or that would give the impression of “not being for ordinary folks.” **It should be a place all residents can identify with, feel a part of, and make use of.**

- Most participants understood that the vitality of downtown is a function of the vitality of the businesses that operate there. They proposed that the city **do more to help and support businesses on Main Street.**
- Participants also understood that making downtown truly attractive without becoming difficult to get to or to get around will require substantial changes to the area to ease (or prevent) the problem of parking and the problem of traffic on Main Street. **The fact that Main Street is part of a federal highway (U.S. 287) raises a major hurdle to creating the kind of inviting, mixed-use, economically healthy, pedestrian-friendly “destination” most participants envisioned during their discussion of downtown.**
- A few participants noted that, even if Main Street doesn’t become a pedestrian mall, stricter limitations on vehicle access (especially commercial vehicles) and on business density would help keep from feeling like “every other commercial district.” It was also suggested that "Main Street" should be expanded to include the blocks surrounding it, which would reduce traffic and parking pressure on Main Street proper.
- In its current state, participants said, downtown is not the sort of place the community wants or needs it to be. They urged that the city **ascertain what residents think downtown should be in order to become the authentic heart of Longmont for everyone**, including the merchants who operate businesses there and people who at present don't spend much time there.

Direction for the Future 2: Enhance the Environment, Natural and Built.

This Direction for the Future 2 proposed that the best way to use city resources to achieve a sustainable quality of life is to preserve or even enhance Longmont’s natural environment. The city’s many trails, parks, abundant open space, and plentiful clean water constitute a unique community asset. An “eco-friendly” attitude toward the environment will recommend such practices as an expanded recycling program and support for “build green” construction methods. Direction 2 maintained that the firmest foundation on which to construct a sustainable future for Longmont is a commitment to living in harmony with the natural world.

In all of the deliberative forums, participants appeared to agree that a healthy, pleasing physical environment is an important element in Longmont’s image in the eyes of others and as a place for people to live and work. **The opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the natural environment is a key component of Longmont’s quality of life. The city’s trees, parks, mountain views, open space, trails, and the like constitute a major community asset**, a resource that can serve the community well in the future, but that if not protected can also deteriorate in value.

1. Traffic

One of the most apparent threats to Longmont’s small-town feel is traffic. Not everyone believes there is a “traffic problem,” but most folks recognize that continuing

growth will put more and more vehicles on city streets and roads. **The challenge is to prevent traffic from *becoming* a problem.**

Most participants acknowledged that people—themselves included—will not be dissuaded from relying on their cars. At the same time, a substantial percentage called for **improved public transportation**. In the forums, “public transportation”* **was understood** by participants less as a way to reduce the volume of automobiles on the street than **as a precautionary measure intended to hold at bay the congestion that is mounting in the north suburban area as a whole**. As one participant noted, reducing traffic depends largely on cooperation between Longmont and neighboring communities.

Participants discussed as well the following points:

- **As Longmont builds out and begins to “build in,” the city should be planned so that public transportation becomes more practical, more attractive, and more economical. The city should commit itself to realizing this goal.**
- Reducing the number of private vehicles on city streets is desirable, even if the number is small. At least some drivers will respond to incentives to utilize public transportation.
- The city should work with RTD to expand and improve the mass transit system in the city.
- Better coverage of the outlying portions of the city is needed.
- Residents should have a variety of transportation options.* For example, a solution in between buses, on the one hand, and private automobiles or taxicabs, on the other, might be something like the Super Shuttle at the airport.
- **A substantial percentage of residents will not use public transportation, no matter how it is improved.** The habit of relying on private transportation is extremely powerful, and only in the face of strong countervailing pressures, such as the price of gasoline, will people relinquish the independence, privacy, comfort, convenience, and flexibility of driving.
- It is a waste of resources to invest more in public transportation. It won’t change people’s habits.

2. Trails, Parks, and Open Space

- **Longmont’s trail system** is viewed as a feature unique to the city, one of its defining features. A frequent suggestion, however, was that the system **can be strengthened by extending trails so that they facilitate intra-city movement, not just offer recreational opportunities**. Trails should connect different areas of

* “Public transportation” for most participants appeared to mean chiefly **better bus service: bigger, more comfortable vehicles stopping at more locations more frequently**. Little was said about the commuter rail service that is coming to Longmont, and intra-city light rail was not mentioned at all.

* The Multimodal Transportation Plan is too new and unfamiliar to residents to have figured substantially in the July forum discussions.

the city, including downtown, schools, job centers, bus stops (and, eventually, commuter rail), parks, and open space.

- Some participants said that **open space—especially open space to be acquired in the future—should be more “usable.”** It might be home to parks, playgrounds, or even just benches. Not all open space needs to be left completely in its natural state. For example, new open space might be turned into new parks that would help connect neighborhoods to each other.
- We need to make better use of the space we already have. **Can we think of a mixed-use approach that is compatible with the aim of retaining our small-town feel?**
- It would be better to spend more on “green space” inside the city than around it. Parks define and connect neighborhoods. A suggestion was made that there be a city program for homeowners to plant trees either at reduced price or at no cost.
- **The city should “be strategic” in its purchasing of open space, acquiring it not simply because it’s available but because it will serve specific purposes.** Factors that should be taken into account include where the space is located, how it will be used, how accessible it will be, and how much of a net positive impact it will have on the environment.

Other participants expressed skepticism about the wisdom of continuing to expand the “green space” in and around the city:

- When will Longmont have enough open space? Only when there is no more open space to be purchased? Or does the community need less than that?
- **Agricultural land is a big part of what gives Longmont its small-town feel. Is buying it up as open space the only way to preserve that land?**
- Parks and open space make other land more expensive, which translates into higher housing costs. At least in part, the high cost of housing in Boulder owes to its acquisition of open space. We can see this happening already in Longmont. **Property values are going up, taxes will increase, and it will become progressively difficult for current residents to remain in the city.**
- Building more trails and parks and acquiring more open space will cost money that could be directed to more pressing needs.
- It's not clear that the city is getting the return on its investments in trails, parks, and open space that it should get. Perhaps the city should study the economic impact of such investments, as Minneapolis has done.

In connection with their support of Direction 2, participants also mentioned the following:

- The city should do more landscaping.
- More trees are needed in new residential and commercial developments.
- Blue grass should not be permitted, except perhaps in small areas.
- A portion of homeowners’ association fees should be dedicated to environmental improvements.

3. The “Built Environment”

Some participants expressed a desire for Longmont’s “built environment”—its buildings, houses, streets, etc.—to be as appealing as the city’s natural environment. Longmont’s “built environment” doesn’t always measure up to the “natural environment,” and often detracts from it. Other participants replied that things are fine just the way they are. A few of these argued that, at least within some widely accepted limits, the city should not impinge upon the rights of property-owners to have their property look whatever way they want it to.

A Face-lift for Downtown: The “Up” Side

Participants who favored an effort to improve Longmont’s appearance tended to support the idea of an architectural “style” or “theme” that would let people know, wherever they are in the community, that they are in Longmont, not in some other faceless suburb. They said that requiring certain design elements for new construction and renovations should be acceptable to residents if the intent is to make the built environment complement or enhance Longmont’s natural beauty. **Architectural “theming” would have much the same effect on us as the natural environment: it would reinforce our sense of identity, of place, and of living in a “small-town.”** It would help not only downtown, but the community as a whole, if people could experience even more strongly than they do at present the sense of belonging to a unique community.

The variety of architectural standards the city might adopt were not discussed by participants. These might range from mere height limitations on Main Street to specific requirements such as using brick as facing on the exterior of buildings above street-level. Nor did participants offer examples of towns and cities elsewhere that have an architectural theme.*

A Face-lift for Downtown: The “Down” Side

One of the chief reasons given for not undertaking a deliberate effort to improve the appearance of downtown was that success might render Longmont even more attractive than it already is. Achieving this might fuel growth and drive up rents and property values, forcing more residents to work and live elsewhere.

* Examples that come readily to mind include the colonial Georgian style found in many towns and cities in New England, in Charlottesville, Virginia, and (with a regional variation) in Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. Similarly, the southwest “adobe” style pervades much of New Mexico, and is especially prominent in Santa Fe. The “mission” style is common throughout California coastal towns and cities (e.g., Santa Barbara). In Colorado, there is a “Western Victorian” style that characterizes towns like Trinidad and Telluride, and that appears nearly everywhere that buildings of historical value have been preserved, including Longmont. How much of the “theming” that occurs in these places owes to municipal requirements and how much results from voluntary choices on the part of property-owners is unclear.

Some participants opposed even raising the question of downtown's appearance, arguing that a public discussion of the matter would be needlessly divisive. **Consensus about what downtown should look like will prove elusive; it's highly unlikely that residents could agree on something as subjective as architectural taste.** Even if the decision were left to a small group of people such as a blue ribbon committee, the results would almost certainly be unsatisfactory to a great many people.

Other participants offered that having an approved architectural theme, even for downtown, is going too far. The city shouldn't over-regulate the development and redevelopment of property. People want greater freedom, not less. For example, already it's difficult to find houses that aren't subject to highly restrictive covenants.

Finally, a few participants argued simply that it's good that individual businesses express themselves in different ways. No city can be pristine. **We should preserve Longmont's spontaneous character, even if it's a little rough and gritty in places.**

"Eyesores"

A number of participants contended that owners of properties that are in a poor state of repair—"eyesores"—ought to be required to fix up and clean up what's sitting on their land. Failing to maintain properties, whether commercial or residential, is irresponsible and damaging to the value—both financial and personal—of others' property.

Other participants pointed out that people can't be expected to invest further in their property if it has lost substantial value or if the owners have suffered a substantial decline in their ability to pay for maintenance and improvements. At the very least, the city should look into the reasons why owners have "let their property go" before even considering the imposition of regulations or disincentives. Forcing people to spend money they can't afford will only provoke resentment.

"Building Green"

A number of participants urged that Longmont move more quickly toward "built green" construction requirements for both new construction and renovations. The city, they said, should solicit green builders and perhaps create incentives for building green. In their view, Longmont should be at the forefront of this movement. If residents genuinely value Longmont's environment, they should do what they can to ensure that buildings are energy-efficient and that a substantial percentage of the materials used in construction are composed of recycled material. Following the built green principle would make a statement about the community's values and priorities.

Other participants were not so sure that a thorough-going built green policy is a good idea. Among them were participants who are concerned about Longmont's shortage of affordable housing. They pointed out that **a blanket built green policy would narrow the range of housing options available to**

people and raise prices to the point where neither current residents nor newcomers could afford to live in Longmont.

Recycling

Many participants spoke highly of the city's recycling program. They called for recycling of all kinds of consumer materials (e.g., cardboard, chemicals, computer equipment, etc). They said Longmont's recycling efforts would set it apart from the "throw-away society" around us. Finally, they argued that people need more of both incentives and disincentives to recycle. **The city should "make it too inconvenient *not* to recycle."**

Participants also talked about the following assertions:

- Longmont should aim to strike a balance between open space and parks, on the one hand, and commercial and residential development, on the other; between different sizes and costs of housing; between historical and contemporary architectural designs; between a strong economy and a healthy environment.
- Pursuing a city policy concerning the aesthetic aspects of the built environment tends to shift focus away from individual properties that need to be improved or better maintained.
- Members of the community need to be more actively engaged in the development review process.
- The city should create smaller, "self-contained" neighborhoods that don't require so much outside-the-neighborhood travel for shopping.
- Anything the city does to build a strong foundation for the community's future may increase the attractiveness of Longmont and thereby accelerate growth.
- The cost of housing is set by the regional and national economies, and is not subject to local control.
- We need incentives – not government regulations – for conservation and for innovations that support a clean, livable environment for both businesses and residents.
- The city can operate more efficiently. Savings could be directed to the kinds of things Direction 2 calls for.
- The city should just enforce the codes it already has on the books.
- The city needs to take a more strategic approach and a firmer hand in managing growth.

Direction for the Future 3: Expand Prosperity through Innovation, Efficiency, and Education.

This Direction for the Future proposed that Longmont can best use its resources to protect residents' quality of life by remembering that it is built on a foundation of economic success, both for local businesses and for individual residents. Thus Direction 3 argued that the city needs to do more to establish and sustain a

business-friendly environment. Because no community can truly thrive if a portion of its members struggle to make ends meet, Longmont needs a balanced local economy with a good mix of industries and commercial activities that offer a wide range of employment opportunities. Moreover, businesses can't perform at a high level without well-trained employees. Increasingly, employees need to be people who are creative, are flexible, have multiple skills, and are innovative in their thinking. Our schools therefore must produce graduates who will become the next generation of successful entrepreneurs, capable managers, and skilled workers. A community that wishes to sustain itself will offer abundant opportunities for people to acquire the education or training they need, through whatever means they learn best.

1. Prosperity

It is safe to say that **most forum participants came to the conclusion that Direction 3 must, to some substantial degree, be the city's top priority. The view appears to have been widely held that Direction 3 is the direction "sine qua non"—the direction without which it will prove extremely difficult to accomplish any of the other goals the city might wish to pursue in its effort to sustain Longmont's distinctive quality of life.** Some of the points made to support this view included:

- A successful economy is the foundation of any successful community. Business activity generates the wealth we require to raise our standard of living and support those things that do not pay for themselves.
- If we get business right, everything else will fall into place. Generating adequate revenue is the key to success in the city's efforts to achieve its goals.
- A healthy economy is basic in the way the environment is, perhaps even more so. Without plentiful, stable jobs for residents, the city will not collect enough tax revenue to make the other improvements we want for our community.
- Longmont's not-for-profit sector is quite strong, but it depends heavily on the strength of the local economy.
- If we can improve the climate for business without promoting growth, we might be able to replace city revenues attributable to growth with philanthropy from the business sector.
- The question is not whether we need to achieve and sustain a robust economy, but rather the form that economy should take and the means by which we should go about achieving it.

1.1. The Importance of Being Strategic

A number of participants stressed that a **"scattershot" approach to building and maintaining a prosperous local economy could prove ineffective, or even wasteful.** A thoughtful plan reflecting informed choices, skillfully implemented and faithfully followed, is essential to success. **Economic development should be**

“strategic” in the sense that there should be a clear strategy* for attaining both the level and the type of prosperity that serves the community’s desire to sustain its quality of life.

Participants offered a number of potential criteria for preparing or evaluating an economic development strategy:

Values-based Commercial Development

- **Both new development and re-development should be consistent with the values and community visions held by Longmont residents.** That means recruiting, supporting, and assisting those businesses whose purposes and activities are in keeping with Longmont's character and quality of life.
- We should make it clear that we will do the most for those businesses that do the most for Longmont. Companies should not receive support from the city unless they are committed to benefiting our community; for example, through employing as many local people as possible (drawing on the diversity of skills in the community as a whole) and more generally by investing time and other resources in the community that is (or that may become) their home.
- Be careful where large retail and office buildings are located. These should never detract from Longmont’s visual appeal and the small-town feeling we treasure. Above all, they should never become eyesores or symbols of economic failure. It will require careful planning to ensure that we generate more business without incurring all the problems associated with growth and sprawl, which are at odds with a small-town feel and the "greenness" of Longmont.
- The "gateways" into the city should be civic in character, not commercial. Longmont should be perceived as a community, not as just another shopping center.

The Importance of Local Small Business

- Without a strong, sustainable local economy, the resources and motivation to advance in other areas will be unavailable.
- If we really care as much about small local businesses as we say we do, this should be reflected in our economic development policies.
- **The community should be made aware of the importance of supporting small businesses through purchasing locally whenever possible.** For example, it broadens the tax base and keeps sales tax dollars in Longmont. A special campaign to “invest in Longmont” would help people understand the consequences of spending their dollars outside the city. The retail leakage study will help with this.
- We need a business climate in which a wide range of businesses can take root, grow, and thrive.

* A “strategy” in this context is a set of steps and actions linked in such a way that collectively they enable the community to realize objectives and meet goals that will lead effectively and efficiently to fulfillment of a widely-accepted purpose.

- A large number and variety of local businesses will help residents purchase locally, and thereby keep their spending dollars in Longmont. It will also help stabilize the local economy when downturns in the regional or national economies adversely affect the larger companies that operate chiefly in those markets.
- Businesses that are just opening or trying to establish themselves should enjoy more flexibility with respect to city requirements.

Large Retail Business

- As has been widely noted, businesses that are part of regional or national chains often create competition for local businesses that the latter cannot survive. If we want downtown to be economically viable, even vibrant, we should consider the potential adverse impact on local businesses of permitting large chain stores to locate close to downtown.
- It must be recognized, however, that local small businesses by themselves cannot generate enough economic product to support city services at current levels. Moreover, people will not stop buying things at big retail chain stores that they cannot find in small local stores, or that they cannot buy at a “good” price. **The challenge is to take advantage of what large businesses offer without adversely affecting the things we care about most.** It is very hard for local governments to resist the promise of substantial sales tax revenues.

Downtown

- **Downtown is the civic, cultural, and economic heart of the community.** Its well-being should be foremost in our minds whenever we are making decisions about economic development. For example, whatever the merits of having a Wal-Mart in Longmont might be, putting it anywhere near downtown would have a substantial negative impact on downtown.
- The city should work with local retail and with new retail to revitalize downtown to make it attractive and competitive.

Incentives for Businesses

- Being a “business-friendly” community doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be able to choose the kinds of businesses we want to have in Longmont. There should be clear standards for providing incentives to businesses we think are more consistent with the community’s values and priorities. For example: Do Longmont residents need the product or service? Will it create job opportunities for people who are already residents? Will it compete with local businesses that are already in Longmont?
- If incentives are to be offered to non-local firms, they should be offered as well (if they are for the same purpose) to established Longmont businesses.
- If we have to offer incentives to attract desirable businesses, we should make sure there is a net benefit and that we do not in effect “give away” assets that will

have more value in the long run than the short-term gain produced by businesses that receive incentives. In other words, will the incentives be a good investment, or a subsidy not justified by the resources diverted to create those incentives?

- **If we commit ourselves to recruiting businesses to the city, it's important that jobs be given at least as much weight, if not more, than the revenue likely to be generated through the sales tax or even the convenience they would offer shoppers.**

Jobs

- **Longmont cannot generate the public revenue it requires unless residents can afford to buy products and services that are subject to sales tax. A vital, prosperous local economy thus requires jobs**—jobs for everyone, regardless of education, experience, or skills; jobs that meet all residents' personal needs and expectations; jobs that pay well enough for people to be able to continue living in Longmont; jobs that will not disappear with the next downturn in the national economy or with the latest decision by a large employer that it would do better to leave Longmont and move elsewhere.
- The availability of “decent jobs” is especially important for us because we value the small-town feeling Longmont affords. If our community is to retain that feeling, everyone should have work that others respect and appreciate. It's also why **one of the criteria for an employer we might consider recruiting to our area should be whether it can draw a substantial number of its employees from those who already live here.**

Efficiency

- We should always be thinking outside the box, looking for more efficient or more effective ways of accomplishing what's important to us. For example, the city should establish partnerships with organizations that enable each to focus on doing what it can do best. Similarly, the city should **pursue the idea of leveraging city assets to create efficient and, if possible, revenue-producing partnerships with other organizations, public or private.**

Balance

- We understand that, in the end, a balance must be struck between a policy, at one extreme, of going after new businesses irrespective of the consequences and, at the other extreme, imposing excessively severe restrictions on what kinds of businesses may locate in Longmont.
- **We need a balance between local small and large non-local businesses that offer products and services that aren't provided locally or that residents wish to patronize because it makes economic sense for them to do so.**

- If we recruit businesses, we need to strike a balance between the desirability of supporting locally-owned small businesses and the benefits of having large companies come to Longmont from elsewhere.
- Similarly, revenue from retail sales tax is important, but it must be weighed against other values, such as its impact on downtown, which contributes so much to Longmont's small-town feeling and to the small local businesses that are concentrated there.

2. Education

More forum participants expressed concern about education than about any other topic they discussed. They believe more must be done to meet the community's education needs. People in Longmont understand that the success of a community's economy is a function of how well its residents are educated.* Businesses depend on employees who have the knowledge and skills to work as creatively and efficiently as possible. If a company cannot find those employees locally, it has to look elsewhere – and hence may end up moving elsewhere. Conversely, a community that can offer the sort of employees a business requires is an attractive one for a business considering relocation.

Participants clearly believed that any future improvement upon Longmont's present depends on the quality of education that young people are receiving today. Many of the things the community cares about – services, public safety (the crime rate), property values, civic responsibility, volunteerism, etc. – are highly correlated with the overall education level of people in the community. In their minds, **no single type of investment produces a greater return than investment in education.** One participant, for example, asserted that a dollar invested in early childhood education saves seventeen dollars that otherwise would have to be spent over the course of his or her primary and secondary education.

In short, **education is closely linked to people's vision of a prosperous Longmont.** Economically as well as socially, the community cannot afford to allow young people to grow up in Longmont without being positively engaged in the process of learning, and as a result succeeding in developing the abilities and acquiring the skills that will enable them to make a living by doing work of the sort that best suits them. *Everyone* has a stake in this effort. **The city—along with business, not-for-profit-organizations, and individual citizens—needs to find an appropriate way to be involved in the education of Longmont's young people.**

2.1. The Schools

A community's public schools are important to people because they care about the future of their children. Education is the foundation for anything a person wants to do. But it also has a tremendous impact on the community. As noted above, the schools prepare young people to enter the job market, where employers are searching for

* In fact, income and education are so highly correlated that researchers need not ask respondents their income level but can ascertain it by asking about their level of educational attainment.

potential employees to help them produce goods and services more efficiently, and hence more profitably. Businesses depend on employees who have the knowledge and skills—including the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills—to do the work that needs to be done. School teaches young people how to live in the real world they will have to negotiate as adults.

There appears to be broad agreement that the public school system that serves Longmont, the St. Vrain Valley School District, needs to be strengthened. For example, one participant observed that the District increasingly is being faced with some of the challenges the Denver Public Schools have been striving to meet, such as the educational needs of children whose first language is not English. More generally, participants take the view that the student-to-teacher should be reduced and classes made smaller. People want more choices, such as “magnet schools,” that offer an alternative to the standard curricula and instructional methods of the District as a whole. Lastly, participants understand that the District's finances are tight and always will be, because only about 40 percent of residents have children of school-age at home, which makes it difficult to increase revenues. New and better ways of operating in stringent financial conditions must be found.

Although most people look at education as individual preparation for the world of work and as a means to making a good living, it is in the schools and other educational institutions that people acquire many of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and skills that are required for the civic well-being of the community. It is in the schools that young people learn about what they share and do not share with other people, both of which are essential to constructive participation in the democratic public life of the community. It is there that they learn teamwork, cooperation, accepting differences, coping with conflict, and much else that the citizens of a community must possess if the community as a whole is to make decisions and take actions that solve problems, meet challenges, and take advantage of opportunities that affect many or most of its members. There's much more to education than preparing the young people for the workplace. They need to be prepared to be mature, well-rounded citizens and human beings. **If the schools are doing a good job, they will instill in young people the knowledge, skills, and habits that will serve them not just in the workplace, but in other roles as well.**

The public schools are important as well because most communities derive their identity and therefore much of their self-esteem from their public schools. The “sense of community” that people in Longmont, as elsewhere, value so highly finds expression in the schools. Thus, for example, even people without school-age children do not welcome the closing of a neighborhood school, because it is a community asset as well as a place where children learn. Indeed, school buildings may be the last truly public buildings that residents of a community make substantial use of.

Finally, having good schools that attract younger people with families would help keep the cost of housing down, and hence would reduce the tax burden on people with fixed incomes.

2.2. Education and the Community

The schools, however, do not by themselves determine whether the young people of a community receive the sort of education they ought to receive. **The community must value education, support it, complement it, and reinforce it through a variety of principles, practices, and activities.** It's a cliché, but it's nonetheless true that "it takes a whole community to raise a child." Forum participants said, in effect, that as a city and community, Longmont is not contributing as much to the education of its young people and it could, or should.

To begin with, the community has just as much responsibility as the schools, perhaps more, for nurturing the conviction that education begins in early childhood—and never ends. Parents, teachers and administrators, and adult members of the community need to establish and maintain this belief. The community should set clear, broadly-supported educational goals for its young people. It should make full use of its considerable capacity for responding to the wide range of educational needs that all residents have, whether they are 2, 22, or 72. It should emphasize that there are many, many jobs worth doing and being paid well for in addition to the managerial, administrative, or professional jobs to which college-bound young people are oriented. The personal and social value of all forms of labor need to be respected and honored by the community in order to send a message to young people that this is work worth learning how to do and do well.

2.2.1. Taking Action

It was difficult for forum participants to say specifically what the community or the city can and should do that the school district isn't already trying to do or that isn't the district's responsibility. Many participants urged a "partnership between the city and the school district" as the beginning of an answer. But what kind of a partnership? What opportunities for the community and city might exist in such a partnership? What might their roles be in public education given the school district's primary responsibility for it? In view of the fact that the school district serves more than 13 communities, how does Longmont as a city and community relate to a governmental entity like the district that must be responsive to all its constituents?

Despite these unknowns, participants offered a number of concrete suggestions:

- We should **place a stronger emphasis on the importance of early childhood education**, from pre-school through kindergarten, with the opportunity to take advantage of full-day kindergarten for parents of those children would benefit from it.
- There should be opportunities for **more high school students to enroll in the International Baccalaureate program.**
- **Opportunities for vocational education or occupational training**, both during and after the high school years, should be more widely available, whether through existing institutions such as the District and Front Range Community College or through new ones established for this purpose.
- **Opportunities to continue one's education should be available through the library, the senior center, the recreation center, and other community facilities.**

- Working parents badly need for someone to **offer after-school programs**.
- The city, the community, business, and the schools should work together to create incentives for young people to stay in school and learn to the best of their ability.
- Local businesses should partner with the schools so young people are ready to perform the kind of work that employers can offer them.
- The city, businesses, and other organizations might be able to show the schools how to prepare for, avoid, or mitigate tough financial situations and periods of time.
- **The schools need business support—not just financial support or in-kind donations, but also mentoring, apprenticeships, teaching how the skills and knowledge businesses need are used in the work they do.** The city, businesses, and other organizations might create internships for students that would earn them academic credit.
- The city, businesses, school district, and Front Range Community College need to work together to **ensure that the College remains viable**; to build additional instructional capacity; and to form mutually beneficial partnerships.
- The city, community, businesses, and school district should jointly guarantee that every young person who begins high school will earn a diploma that employers can take as an authoritative indication that the graduate has acquired the basic knowledge and skills that employers are looking for.
- The school district should **make it easier for organizations to “adopt” schools**.
- The city should consider creating a staff liaison to the school district.
- The city should expand community awareness of the educational resources that already exist in the community (e.g., through educational resource “festivals”).
- More residents need to donate their time and talents to the schools. There is a tremendous reservoir of experience, knowledge, and skill in the community and it's important that we tap into it. This would not only alleviate some of the pressure on school resources, but would also boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of young people, particularly those who are not performing well in the conventional classroom setting.
- Mentoring programs are both do-able and helpful.

Some participants had reservations about the ability or desirability of the city attempting to involve itself in public education:

- Some argued that it's unwise for city government to impinge upon the responsibility and authority of the school district in educational matters.
- As a practical matter, there is little that government, particularly local government, can do to get at the deep-rooted sources of educational underachieving and failure. Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children come to school ready to learn. There may be ways that business

and the community can help parents meet this responsibility; if so, it's in the community's interest to do so. But **care needs to be taken not to make matters worse or waste resources in ill-advised attempts to do what education professionals are already doing.**

- It would be difficult at best for the city to measure and assess the impact of any efforts it might undertake.

Direction for the Future 4: Extend “Community” to Everyone and Everything.

This Direction for the Future suggested that the best way to use city resources to ensure Longmont remains a distinct community with a high quality of life is by improving the ability and willingness of citizens and city government to work together in partnership, and of citizens to interact with each other with mutual respect and appreciation. Direction 4 called attention to the importance of strong civic relationships and community-oriented values. It proposed that residents take personal responsibility for their common future, share equally in the work of setting priorities, and commit themselves to moving forward together.

Although Direction 4 did not rank as highly in the estimation of forum participants as Directions 3 and 2, from the discussion that took place it is evident that the matters it raised were of serious concern because they went directly to the issue of what kind of community Longmont is and should continue to be. As one participant observed, “even if on the whole this Direction isn't our priority, it is nevertheless a very important one.”

Some participants saw Direction 4 as “one leg of the table,” its role in sustaining Longmont's way of life on a par with each of the other directions. Some viewed it as more fundamental than the other three; it should be understood, they said, as a “necessary precondition for success in pursuing those directions.” Others interpreted Direction 4 not as a prerequisite but as the consequence—a byproduct—of community effectiveness in achieving the aims of Directions 1, 2, and 3. Still others said it had no bearing on whether the other directions can or ought to be pursued. Yet probably **most forum participants took the view that, even if one or more of the other directions could be realized, neglect of Direction 4 in time would render them rather hollow achievements—perhaps even unsustainable ones.** From this point of view, to the degree Direction 4 remains unfulfilled, it should be made a priority.

1. “Community” as the Ability to Act Together

Some participants in the two July events characterized “community” as the widespread ability and readiness to engage in cooperative action for the purpose of accomplishing things that bring with them a benefit to the community that individuals acting alone could not. This ability and readiness is essential for a community that needs to meet challenges, seize opportunities or resolve issues such as those that might arise in the course of carrying out Directions 1, 2, or 3.

Participants recognized that **“the city can’t do it all.”** As one participant remarked, Direction 4 is “the embodiment of the old saying, ‘it takes a village’....” Just as schools by themselves can’t educate young people, **government can’t build and sustain a community and its quality of life. The city needs the active involvement of the community.** A partnership between the two, in which each contributes to the work that must be done, fosters a pragmatic, cooperative approach to decision-making.

Forum participants were optimistic about Longmont’s capacity for effective action, provided the community’s assets—its experience, knowledge, ingenuity, persistence, and energy—can be marshaled and brought to bear on the tasks that have to be performed. Insofar as city government has a role to play, its decisions will be better informed and will be implemented more successfully if the community has been a genuine partner throughout the decision-making process. Thus, for example, getting a much larger number and variety of people to serve on city commissions and committees is imperative. As one participant noted, **“the more things the city can accomplish by asking citizens to contribute, rather than by hiring professional staff to carry out these tasks, the better.”**

At the same time participants acknowledged that **achieving broader participation by residents and sustaining their engagement over time present a formidable challenge.** Some noted that **most people get involved in community matters only when they are directly affected, or believe they will be.** Typically, only perceived threats to something people care about will draw them out of their private lives and into the public arena. Moreover, by the time people feel threatened, they usually have formed strong opinions about what should be done and who should do it. Emphasizing the principles, behaviors, and attitudes that promote pragmatism and cooperation is desirable, but conflict can never be avoided, and often it can’t be resolved. Conflict is as natural and inescapable in our public lives as it is in our private lives.

That is precisely why, however, **Longmont needs processes for discussion and decision-making that are widely regarded as fair, accessible, and responsive by all members of the community.** The city can help demonstrate the need for citizen involvement and—even more important—help set the standard for effective public participation by the extent to which and in the manner in which city government is willing to work with residents. Participants thought **the city could create more one-time involvement opportunities, such as these forums.** One participant suggested that, whenever the city is working on a problem or attempting to respond to an opportunity or dealing with a divisive issue, **there should always be 100 residents, representative of the community as a whole, directly and significantly involved in that effort.**

Admittedly, democratic deliberative processes are much harder to create and sustain than one-time events. But perhaps the sheer number of (meaningful) opportunities for residents to discuss matters with city officials and their fellow citizens would go a long way toward securing another component of a community’s ability to function well: the belief that residents have a stake in the public affairs of their community, and ownership of the tools and mechanisms for conducting them satisfactorily. People today want to feel that they have a greater say in what happens in their lives. In particular, they want to feel assured that, if need be, they can have real influence over the decisions and actions of their local government. They want better

access to decision-makers. They want to understand what the options are and why the city is inclined to do one thing rather than another. Above all, they want to make sure decision-makers understand and appreciate their concerns and will take them into account as the decision-making process moves toward a conclusion. **Meaningful participation gives people a sense of control over things that affect them, and in so doing gives them a sense of ownership: the conviction that city government is truly theirs.**

1.1. Responsibility

One participant said that “4(a) is the most important [action] in the list of things that can be done.” That item reads:

“Ask all members of the community to take personal responsibility for responding to the needs, problems, desires, and opportunities the community encounters—urge them to ask themselves, What can I do?”

With a sense of ownership comes not only a feeling of having the legitimate authority to participate in the making of decisions, but also a sense of *responsibility* for them. **Probably no other idea resonated so much with so many participants in their discussion of Direction 4 than the need for individuals and groups to take responsibility for finding solutions or answers to the matters that concern them.**

Resonating, however, doesn’t entail agreement. For some participants, taking responsibility seemed to mean something like acknowledging an obligation to work with others, to “do one’s share,” or “contribute what one can.” In contrast, other participants appeared to believe that taking responsibility means self-reliance, not making claims on others, not asking for assistance from those who believe that they are not accountable for conditions or circumstances not of their making. On this latter view, a resident’s responsibility is confined to those matters over which he or she has control (e.g., the appearance of his or her property) and to ensuring that elected and appointed city officials do their jobs properly and effectively.

Many participants attributed rejection of responsibility for the community to the reality of contemporary life. Most Longmont residents, like most people everywhere, believe they lack time, energy, or a stake in working on matters they think city officials or others (businesses, not-for-profit organizations, state agencies, etc.) have been charged with handling. Most people are preoccupied with their private lives. They make their families, their jobs, education, their religious life, and the things they like to do for pleasure or recreation their priorities. They place private goods, interests, and values above those of a public nature. **Understandably, they tend to take public institutions and practices for granted and don’t want to have to deal with them. Even in our relatively community-oriented city, most folks prefer to lead lives only minimally connected with the lives of other people. It may be unrealistic to**

expect that more than a very small percentage of Longmont residents will ever participate frequently and substantially in activities of a public nature.

This conclusion prompted some of the participants who argued for greater citizen engagement and participation to suggest that the challenge is to make involvement more attractive, to present it as a potentially gratifying undertaking and to avoid making it look like a job or a chore. But others countered that such efforts aren't warranted, because in our system of governance the citizen's responsibility goes no farther than obeying the law and (arguably) voting. By and large, people trust the system. It is the job of elected officials to recognize the need for or the desirability of taking action; to identify and evaluate options; and to make a decision in light of what they believe is in the community's best interests. As a practical matter, "too many cooks spoil the broth"—especially when most of the cooks lack the experience, skill, or desire to be in the kitchen at all.

Thus, some participants felt there is no need for Longmont to emphasize Direction 4. Except for the ever-present danger that local government will grow too big and expensive, the system works well. **The city is doing most of the things associated with Direction 4, and is doing a good job, though most people aren't aware of it.** The city might do a better job, perhaps, of communicating with the community—e.g., apprising residents of problems, challenges, needs, and upcoming policy discussions and decisions. It might share the input it receives from commissions and committees and the recommendations they make for city action. It might do a better job of letting residents know how to get things done. In the Spanish-speaking forums in particular, participants expressed a desire to receive more information about everything the city and community have to offer. The suggestion was made that volunteers be recruited to help distribute the information. On the whole, however, the city should be commended for its good work and its efforts to keep the community informed.

2. "Community" as Caring

One forum participant remarked that Direction 4 was "the essence of Longmont's small-town feel." It reflects the vision of the community as a place where people acknowledge each other's rightful presence in their midst and where, in consequence, they show respect for the individuality (even the idiosyncrasy) of their fellows. In this vision, people are neighbors; they show concern for each other and take responsibility for helping each other when help is needed. For them, community is built on empathy, understanding of differences, and a sense of reciprocal obligation.

This is the vision, the ideal. And to some extent—certainly more than in many communities—it is the reality in Longmont. Yet already Longmont is large enough a city that most people will remain strangers to each other, even when they live nearby. If we want a community with a small-town feel, residents need more (good) experiences with folks outside the circle of their family and friends, co-workers, and fellow church-goers.

One antidote for the danger of growing anonymity and disconnection is the celebrations and festivities discussed in connection with Direction 1. Under Direction 4, **participants talked about four other solutions: cultivating a civic norm of volunteerism; strengthening and connecting neighborhoods; building partnerships; and leadership.**

2.1. Volunteering

Volunteers are always in short supply, participants observed. Even though some 600 people volunteer at the hospital and 400 at the Humane Society, many opportunities go unnoticed and unfilled. These are opportunities not only to do good and provide help, but to meet and get to know a range of people one otherwise probably would not encounter. Volunteering can establish relationships—lines of communication, the experience of working together, a sense of familiarity and mutual respect, even mutual obligation—between people of diverse backgrounds, which aids the process of “weaving the fabric” of community. Participants said that programs such as the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) need to be publicized and utilized. Similarly, there ought to be a highly visible and accessible list of volunteer opportunities to make it easier for people to donate their time, experience, and skills.

2.2. Neighborhoods

Strong communities often feature distinct neighborhoods with which residents identify as much as they do with the community as a whole—possibly even more so. Neighborhoods are places where people can and do get to know one another, and where problems, needs, challenges, and opportunities typically are experienced by everyone in roughly the same degree. They are places as well where people can and do take responsibility; show initiative; demonstrate leadership; cooperate (because they have a shared stake in what they do or fail to do); and assist each other out of a sense of reciprocal responsibility and mutual obligation. A community is like a chain. If any neighborhood is not strong and secure, the community as a whole will not be either.

Not surprisingly, a number of participants thought **the city should recognize that healthy neighborhoods are the key to sustaining Longmont’s quality of life.** They pointed out that neighborhoods provide opportunities for residents to learn and practice their civic skills. Communication is better at the neighborhood level. Relationships are easier to establish and maintain, even across social lines such as culture, ethnicity, age, education, and income. People feel safer and more comfortable with others. In their neighborhoods, residents learn about city-wide matters and begin talking together about how best to respond to them. When decisions can be made at the neighborhood level, residents gain a greater measure of control over matters that affect them, and hence develop a stronger sense of belonging to the larger community of which they are a part.

If a community is a “chain” composed of neighborhoods that constitute its individual links, then the community can be strengthened and its quality of life

sustained by creating and maintaining strong neighborhoods and strong connections between them and with the city. **Longmont has 51 neighborhood groups. Strengthening them both internally and externally would do much to maintain Longmont's small-town feel and at the same time enhance its ability to act as a community. Both established neighborhoods and new housing developments need leadership and initiative from the city to grow strong both within and without.**

2.3. Partnerships

Connections between neighborhoods, and between them and the city, represent one form of civic partnership. But there are many others: city partnerships with the schools, churches, not-for-profit organizations, community groups, demographic groups (seniors, young people, Latinos, etc.), businesses and business groups, and so on. There are in addition partnerships between each of these, not just partnerships between them and the city. Forum participants knew that when people, whether as individuals or as groups, feel they have partners, they feel more confident, more secure, more empowered, more effective, and as a result more patient, more understanding, more pragmatic, and more disposed to cooperate. For this reason, a number of participants urged the city to **make it a priority to stimulate the formation of partnerships throughout Longmont.**

Participants in the Spanish-speaking forums expressed an interest in establishing collaborative with the larger community in general and with the police department in particular. The hope was that a partnership between Latino neighborhoods and the police might help eliminate gang activity and vandalism.

2.4. Leadership

Few things in public life worth doing are achieved without someone showing leadership. If a community elects its government to make decisions on behalf of the community in order to solve problems, fill needs, meet challenges, and seize opportunities that no other entity or institution has the resources, the authority, or the interest in doing, then **it is to city government that the community must look for leadership.**

Longmont must figure out how to respond to both the potential difficulties and the potential opportunities that will arise as residential and commercial build-out approach. More generally, it must determine how it will prepare to respond to the social and economic changes that will occur in the future. Most people are aware that some of those changes are already occurring. The size of the senior population is growing. So is **the size of the Latino population. In the latter case, there are new challenges, such as educating children (and adults) whose first language is not English; ensuring that they can find work that pays well enough for them to become responsible, taxpaying citizens who have the time, energy, and inclination to participate in Longmont's community life; and enabling them to find housing they can afford.**

Some Spanish-speaking participants spoke about the need for the city to initiate and support constructive interaction between Latinos and Anglos. A stronger effort by the city to prevent discrimination is highly desirable. Participants also pointed out that Latino community itself is diverse and would benefit from support for internal communication and collaboration. They expressed a desire for more conflict resolution services to help Latinos deal constructively and effectively with issues that arise in both their intra- and inter-community interactions.

Most forum participants probably accepted, even if they did not approve, the reality that few adult residents will make even a small, brief effort to learn some basic Spanish in the interest of facilitating interactions between Anglos and Latinos and making Spanish-speakers feel more a part of the community. Here is an example of an opportunity for the city to demonstrate leadership. If in everything it does, in every aspect of its work, the city were to act (as Canadian cities have learned to act) in recognition of the presence of residents whose first language is not English, the symbolic value would be substantial. In time, the social, political, and perhaps even economic value might become evident to people. Moreover, in time it might also become the norm: not something forced or artificial, but simply a part of Longmont's unique, distinctive character and quality of life.

Conclusion

The Four Directions

Despite the favor with which most participants viewed **Direction 1**, they rated it fourth among the four Directions for the Future offered to them for deliberation. Participants in the July 30th forum were less enthusiastic about Direction 1 generally, and about revitalizing downtown in particular, than were their counterparts on July 16th.

Caution is in order, however, with respect to interpreting the results of the public's deliberation concerning Direction 1. First, the post-forum questionnaires asked participants to evaluate each Direction as a whole, not each element or aspect of each Direction. The notes from the forum discussions suggest that the weakest part of Direction 1 was its suggestion that Longmont's future could be built around an emphasis on the arts. Both "cultural diversity" and "revitalizing downtown" resonated more strongly with participants. This is especially true if the latter is viewed in light of participants' clear desire to retain Longmont's "small-town feel" and of their overall preference for Direction 3. Second, Direction 1 was "disfavored" only in a relative sense: although in the post-forum questionnaires it placed fourth among the four options, most participants concluded that it constitutes "a good approach" to securing sustainability for Longmont well past the point of build-out.

Direction 2 was second only to Direction 3 in the importance forum participants assigned it. Yet Direction 2 represented more of a "willing" priority for participants

than did Direction 3, which (in its dual emphasis on economic vitality and education) gave the impression of being to some degree a “necessary” priority. Participants seemed to regard Direction 3 as an obligation, possibly because it is a state of affairs that remains to be secured. In contrast, they seemed to regard Direction 2 as an opportunity they were happy to embrace because, perhaps, Direction 2 is a state of affairs already achieved, in need today chiefly of modest, well-planned improvement and—more important—vigilant protection.

The combination of an emphasis on the importance to the community of maintaining its economic prosperity and on the indispensable role education plays in achieving that goal made Direction 3 a powerful choice with near-universal appeal for forum participants. This fact is reflected in the results of the post-forum questionnaires. After the forums on July 16,th 93 percent reported that, in their view, Direction 3 is the best way to ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents. On July 30,th 88 percent said this. (The figure for the two dates combined was 91 percent).

In retrospect, it’s not surprising, perhaps, that forum participants would see Direction 3 as necessary for preserving the accomplishments or making the improvements associated with the other three Directions. What was surprising was the extent to which participants responded to the suggestion that economic success is in large measure a function of the quality of education a community provides its young people (and its adult members as well). Granted, the St. Vrain School District has been in the news recently and hence more on the minds of Longmont residents than it would be at other times. Nevertheless, the strong response that inclusion of education in Direction 3 elicited from participants suggests that the city would be well-advised to consider ways in which it might help Longmont residents act to meet the educational challenges they believe the community is presented with.

All things considered, participants regarded Direction 4 as less important than Directions 3 and 2, and slightly more important than Direction 1. Or maybe it would be more accurate to say that Direction 4 seemed not less *important*, but less *pressing*, because the city and the community seem at present to be working quite well.

But things can change, and change before we realize what has happened. Before the recent hurricane struck the country’s Gulf Coast, many people undoubtedly believed that cities like New Orleans possessed the civic infrastructure—the lines of communication; the clear and proper allocation of authority; the established patterns and habits of cooperation; the collective experience, wisdom, and foresight; the strong connections and robust relationships—that would enable it to cope, as a community, with the unprecedented disaster Katrina turned out to be. The point is not that Longmont might experience anything of the nature or magnitude of a hurricane. Rather, the point is to ask whether Longmont is equipped with the civic infrastructure—the structures and processes—that will enable it to respond effectively and efficiently to whatever challenges it encounters over its long life, whether they be small or large, whether they occur suddenly or gradually.

An inclusive, caring, cooperative community life is, like a community's environment and economy, so basic that people either take it for granted or have difficulty imagining what they might do to improve it. The one aspect of a community that is both indispensable and truly sustainable through all times and in all circumstances is its civic infrastructure. As the natural disaster on the Gulf Coast has made abundantly obvious, people shouldn't wait for hard times to discover that their community's civic infrastructure is underdeveloped or in need of repair or improvement. That is what **Direction 4** is all about. And that is why, for a number of forum participants, Direction 4 is, if not a priority for Longmont today, at least a very important concern.

From the combined results of the post-forum questionnaires administered in July 16th and July 30th we may reasonably infer that participants left their deliberations together feeling that **Direction 3** was relatively most important in their minds as they considered the question of how to ensure that Longmont continues to be a distinct community with adequate resources to sustain a high quality of life for all its residents. **Direction 2** came in a strong second, while **Direction 1** and **Direction 4** were judged to be rather less important.

The question of whether **Direction 1** should be ranked third and **Direction 4** fourth or vice versa is perhaps best settled by taking into account two considerations. First, **Direction 4** ranks higher in terms of both its overall approval ranking (62 percent versus 55 percent) and its position when weighted to reflect the relative intensity of participants' feelings about the four Directions. Second, and more important, **Direction 4** can be reasonably viewed as somewhat more important in participants' minds based on the discussions that took place in the forums.

Themes

The deliberative forums yielded information that sheds additional light on the outcomes of Phase 1, enabling us to provide a more-revealing and more-nuanced understanding of what Longmont residents value about life in their community and the kind of community they want it to be in the future. A key theme that emerged was *balance*. For example, rather than choosing one Direction to the exclusion of the others, forum participants embraced aspects of different directions as the strategic priorities for the city. Six central themes emerged as the common ground in the two forums. They are consistent with the community vision that emerged in Phase 1, while at the same time they yield priorities to be consulted in the course of crafting and adopting strategic policies. The six themes are as follows:

- Promote a healthy business climate, especially by supporting small, local businesses.
- Support education, recognizing its importance both in attracting good jobs and in helping community members obtain good jobs.
- Enhance the attractiveness of the natural environment and the strength of the community's commitment to a healthy environment.

- Focus on downtown as a symbol of our “small town” identity and as a functional center of the community.
- Promote a sense of community identity and cultural integration through community-wide celebrations, partnerships, public dialogue, and open, inclusive decision making.
- Adopt strategic and balanced policies and be wise stewards of public resources.

Highlights from the deliberations related to each theme are described below.

Business Climate. Forum participants identified a strong economy as the foundation of any successful community. Business activity generates the wealth we require to raise our standard of living and to support those things that do not pay for themselves. If we “get business right,” everything else will fall into place. The question is not whether we need to achieve and sustain a robust economy, but rather the form that economy should take and the means by which we should go about achieving it. In this connection, participants offered a number of important considerations:

- Economic development should be “strategic” in the sense that there should be a clear strategy for attaining both the level and the type of prosperity that serves the community’s desire to sustain its quality of life.
- A vital, prosperous local economy requires jobs—jobs for *everyone*. All residents should have work that others respect and appreciate.
- Both new development and re-development should be consistent with the values and community visions held by Longmont residents. That means recruiting, supporting, and assisting those businesses whose purposes and activities are in keeping with Longmont's character and quality of life.
- Longmont needs a balance between local small and large non-local businesses. The challenge is to take advantage of what the “big boxes” offer without adversely affecting the things small businesses offer the community.
- Support for small local businesses should be reflected in our economic development policies. We need a business climate in which a wide range of businesses can take root, grow, and thrive.
- The community should be made aware of the importance of supporting small businesses through purchasing locally whenever possible.

Education. More forum participants expressed concern about education than about any other topic they discussed. Participants believed that any future improvement in Longmont’s present depends upon the quality of education that young people receive today.

There appears to be broad agreement that the public school system that serves Longmont, the St. Vrain Valley School District, needs to be strengthened. The

schools, however, do not by themselves determine whether the young people of a community receive the sort of education they require. The community must value education, support it, complement it, and reinforce it through a variety of principles, practices, and activities. Forum participants said, in effect, that as a city and community, Longmont is not contributing as much to the education of its young people and it could, or should. The community should make full use of its considerable capacity for responding to the wide range of educational needs that all residents have.

The city—along with business, not-for-profit-organizations, and individual citizens—needs to find an appropriate way to be involved in the education of Longmont’s young people. Many participants urged a “partnership between the city and the school district” as the beginning of an answer. They also offered a number of concrete suggestions:

- The community must support education through a variety of practices and activities: early childhood education, vocational education or occupational training, etc.
- We must find ways to help parents meet their responsibilities. Addressing the pressing need of working parents for after-school programs would be a good start.
- The schools need business support—not just financial support or in-kind donations, but also mentoring, apprenticeships, teaching how the skills and knowledge businesses need are used in the work they do.
- Enable and encourage residents to donate their time and talents to the schools. Mentoring programs are both do-able and helpful.
- Care needs to be taken not to make matters worse or to waste resources in ill-advised attempts to do what education professionals are already doing.

Natural Environment. The opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the natural environment is a key component of Longmont’s quality of life. The city’s trees, parks, mountain views, open space, trails, and the like constitute a major community asset. Participants recommended in particular that Longmont’s trail system be strengthened by extending trails so that they facilitate intra-city movement, not just offer recreational opportunities.

But participants also raised questions. While generally applauding the city’s acquisitions of open space, they wondered whether open space—especially land to be acquired in the future—should be more “usable.” They asked whether the community could come up with a mixed-use approach. They proposed that the city be more “strategic” in its purchasing of open space, acquiring it not simply because it’s available but because it will serve specific widely-supported purposes.

One way forum participants echoed the Phase 1 vision of a city with an “eco-friendly attitude” was by urging that Longmont move more quickly toward “built-green” construction requirements for both new construction and renovations. Yet others cautioned that a blanket built-green policy could narrow the range of housing

options available to people and raise prices to the point where neither current residents nor newcomers could afford to live in Longmont.

Participants also praised the city's recycling program. They urged that it be expanded and that the city "make it too convenient [for residents] *not* to recycle."

The topic of traffic congestion came up in the July forums. Not everyone who participated agreed that Longmont has a "traffic problem" (or a "parking problem"), but most recognized that the community faces a challenge in preventing traffic from *becoming* a problem detrimental to Longmont's environmental quality (and to its "small-town feel"). Participants saw improved public transportation as a precautionary measure to hold at bay the congestion that is mounting in the north suburban area as a whole. As Longmont builds out and begins to "build in," the city should be planned so that public transportation becomes more practical, more attractive, and more economical.

Downtown. Many participants viewed downtown as the symbol (as well as a source) of Longmont's small-town appeal. They saw downtown as a cultural and civic center of the community. To retain the small town feel, participants said:

- Downtown should be more of a "destination" than it is today.
- It should feature mixed uses: residential, retail, entertainment, and civic.
- It must be economically viable.
- It should be a place *all* residents can identify with, feel a part of, and make use of. The city should ascertain precisely the kind of place residents think downtown should be if it is to serve as the focal point of the broader community.
- The city should do more to help and support businesses on Main Street.

Community. In "community," people are more than residents. They are *neighbors*; they show concern for each other and take responsibility for helping each other when help is needed. For people who embrace its importance, "community" is built on empathy, tolerance of differences (or, better, appreciation of them), and a sense of reciprocal obligation.

This is the vision, the ideal. And to some extent—certainly more than in many communities—it is the reality in Longmont. Yet already Longmont is large enough a city that most people will remain strangers to each other, even when they live in close proximity. This poses a problem for a community beginning to wonder how to integrate a growing ethnic minority into the general population.

As it did in the Phase 1 conversations, "cultural diversity" resonated quite strongly with some participants in the deliberative forums. These folks argued that it's important for residents of a community like Longmont to celebrate together. Community-wide events that put people together in the same space sharing the same experience go a long way toward helping people see not only that they differ from each other, but that they have things in common as well. Accordingly, a substantial portion of forum participants recommended that the city play an important part, if only as a catalyst, in creating and sustaining regular city-wide celebrations that span and connect Longmont's various communities.

Forum participants were optimistic about Longmont's capacity for effective action, provided that residents' experience, knowledge, ingenuity, persistence, and energy can be marshaled and brought to bear on the tasks that have to be performed. This is why Longmont needs processes for discussion and decision-making that are widely regarded as fair, accessible, and responsive by all members of the community. Participants thought the city could create more one-time involvement opportunities like the July forums.

At the same time participants acknowledged that achieving broader participation by residents and sustaining their engagement over time present a formidable challenge. It may be unrealistic to expect that more than a very small percentage of Longmont residents will ever participate frequently and substantially in activities of a public nature. In response, some participants suggest that we need to make involvement more attractive, to present it as a potentially gratifying undertaking and to avoid making it look like a job or a chore.

People talked about cultivating a civic norm of *volunteerism*; strengthening and connecting *neighborhoods*; and building *partnerships*:

- There ought to be a highly visible and accessible list of volunteer opportunities to make it easier for people to donate their time, experience, and skills.
- The city should recognize that healthy neighborhoods are the key to sustaining Longmont's quality of life. Longmont has 51 registered neighborhood groups. Strengthening them both internally and externally would do much to maintain Longmont's small-town feel and at the same time enhance its ability to act as a community.
- The city should make it a priority to stimulate the formation of partnerships throughout Longmont.

In the discussion of diversity, one point that emerged more strongly than it had in Phase 1 is that there are not enough amenities and events for young people. Not enough attention is paid to their needs and interests. What Longmont really requires is not more annual events but more daily activities for young people.

Strategic and Balanced Policies. In discussing the four Directions, many of the comments related to being strategic (e.g., establishing incentives for businesses according to pre-determined community priorities) and balanced (e.g., recognizing a need for both large and small retailers.) Some participants were concerned that the city "do no harm." They cautioned that the status quo is good and that taxes should not increase in an effort to change. Some of the comments related to striking a strategic balance in policy-making included:

- We understand that, in the end, a balance must be struck between a commitment, at one extreme, of going after new businesses irrespective of the consequences and, at the other extreme, imposing excessively severe restrictions on what kinds of businesses may locate in Longmont.

- We need a balance between small local and large non-local businesses that offer products and services that aren't provided locally or that residents wish to patronize because it makes economic sense for them to do so.
- If we recruit businesses, we need to strike a balance between the desirability of supporting locally-owned small businesses and the benefits of having large companies come to Longmont from elsewhere.
- Similarly, revenue from retail sales tax is important, but it must be weighed against other values, such as its impact on downtown, which contributes so much to Longmont's small-town feeling and to the small local businesses that are concentrated there.

Final Thoughts

Participants in the deliberative forums did not speak with one voice, but they articulated priorities for Longmont in the future that are consistent with the vision developed in Phase 1. In some instances, what was revealed is ambivalence, uncertainty, or disagreement. But that, too, is valuable information.

Participants painted a picture of a community in balance, where no value or priority is taken to an extreme and overrides all others. Residents want Longmont to continue to be an “eminently livable” city. They have ideas about how to achieve that goal, but they have no definitive answers about how to implement a plan to make the city sustainable at build-out. They believe, however, that they can count on one another—on their collective experience, knowledge, common sense, abilities, skills, pragmatism, mutual goodwill, and commitment to preserving what is good about Longmont. They look to the city for leadership in charting the path toward sustainability.