

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Longmont is known regionally for its parks, trails, and open space lands and systems, and the Longmont community has consistently identified these as highly valued. City Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) and City of Longmont staff have made the stewardship of parks, trails, and open space lands a high priority. In March 2012, City staff critically evaluated the system and presented a status report to the PRAB and Council, identifying several key needs:

- a guiding vision that will stand the test of time;
- comprehensive guidance about development and redevelopment of the system and its assets;
- prioritization or implementation strategies, which are necessary for continued success and progress in development and maintenance of the City's prized parks, recreation and trails system, and
- Park Improvement Fee re-evaluation and update.

City Council prioritized a systemwide planning effort, giving staff direction to bring a comprehensive system plan in spring 2013. Longmont staff began working internally on an asset management plan, and developed a Request for Proposals seeking consultant assistance to provide a fresh perspective in creating a comprehensive vision. In addition to addressing the issues raised in the "State of the System" white paper, staff posed a series of key questions and challenges the planning effort should answer and a call for a community engagement process that was representative of the Longmont community.



*Community Prioritization Workshop*

This Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan (Plan) is the result of Longmont's focus on the system in 2012 and 2013. The formal planning process was structured into four phases beginning in August 2012, with community engagement integrated throughout the phases.

## After The Flood

In September 2013, Colorado experienced a catastrophic flood event with Longmont among the hardest hit communities. Damages to City infrastructure, in excess of \$148 million, included significant damages to parks and trails. On the St. Vrain Greenway alone, 5 pedestrian bridges 6 underpasses, and 6.5 miles of trail was damaged representing 80% of the overall St. Vrain Greenway Trail. The Left Hand Creek Greenway experienced damages to 1 pedestrian bridge, 4 underpasses and 2 miles of trail leaving 60% of the Left Hand Creek Greenway Trail impacted. Another significant impact was at Kanemoto Park with complete loss of one of the outdoor activity pools.

### **Parks and Greenways Damaged in the 2013 Flood**

- St. Vrain Greenway
- Left Hand Creek Greenway
- Lykins Gulch Greenway
- Dry Creek Park
- Golden Ponds Park
- Rogers Grove Park
- Izaak Walton Park
- Dickens Farm Park (a future planned park)
- Sandstone Ranch District Park
- Kanemoto Park
- Left Hand Creek Park
- Valley Park
- Willow Farm Park

The effort to rebuild the system is an immense endeavor for the City of Longmont staff, the community and all of the partners that come into play. While recognizing the enormity of this task, this plan is based on the assumption that the system *will* be re-built. The inventory and condition assessment that is the basis of the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan was gathered in August through October of 2012 and is still relevant for planning the future system. Assuming that the system will be re-built, this inventory remains a good base to build upon for the future vision of the parks, recreation, and trails system. Although repairs present a set-back and alter the implementation timeframes and funding resources, this disaster also represents an opportunity for improvement within the existing system.

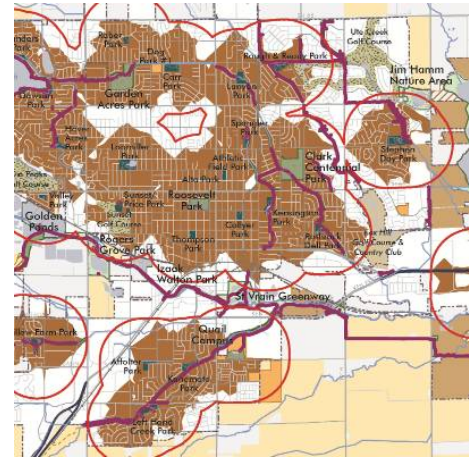
Not only will this plan guide the City of Longmont's future parks, recreation, and trail facility projects, it will also be enhanced by flood renewed projects to build upon. The timeframe and resource impacts that flood repair and recovery efforts will have on implementation of this plan are unknown; however, the goals and vision are still that of the Longmont community and remain relevant. During rebuilding, and when repair and recovery is complete, Longmont will have this plan to guide all efforts toward the community-envisioned future of the system.

## Developing the Plan

Over 1,300 community members were involved in the planning process, participating in focus groups, public intercept events, community workshops, community questionnaires, and more. This wide-ranging outreach strategy allowed for a diverse cross-section of the public to be involved, through different settings, locations, and mediums. The system-wide vision was derived from and refined with the multiple layers of community input.

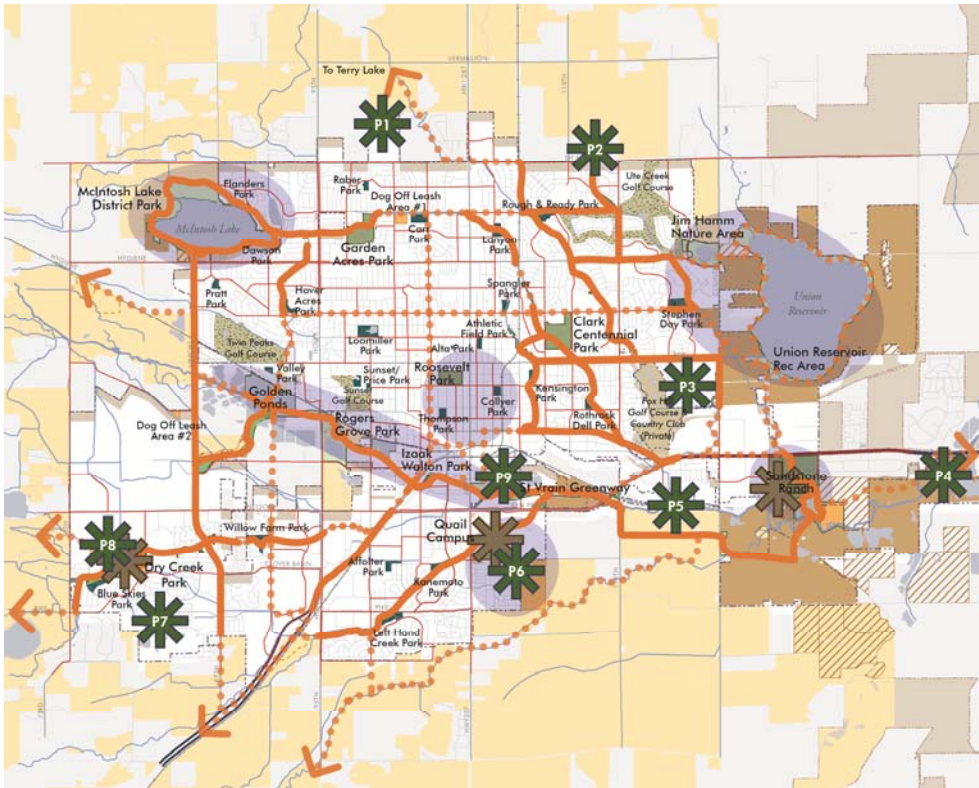
Along with the ongoing public involvement opportunities, the planning team conducted a thorough technical analysis that evaluated the places and experiences that make Longmont's parks, recreation, and trails system so special. This process included:

- Evaluating community context and building on past planning efforts;
- Analyzing the City's existing inventory of parks, recreation facilities, and trails as well as their condition;
- Retooling the level of service measures to better reflect community values and priorities;
- Documenting the current system of park maintenance and renewal needs and the funding gaps;
- Setting forth a planning framework to achieve the vision, with recommendations to achieve the desired system; and
- Establishing strategies and tools to advance the Plan recommendations.



## Parks, Recreation, and Trails Vision

Longmont's well-designed and maintained system of parks, recreation facilities, and trails are an integral part of the community: they are relevant to the times, are tailored to meet neighborhood, family and individual needs, are accessible, and support a healthy, engaged and economically vibrant Longmont.



## System Concept

The concept refocuses the City from individual sites, park standards, and projects to the broader picture of a complete park, recreation, and trails system. The physical improvements to the system include:

- Renewing Existing Assets
- Investing in New Parks and Facilities
- Creating Connections
- Building Identity

These are illustrated in Map 6: System Concept.

System Concept Map

## Goals

The envisioned system of the future is based on a set of five system-wide goals. The goals describe what will be needed over time to fulfill the vision and complete the future parks, recreation, and trails system.

**Goal 1. Renew:** Reinvest in the existing park, recreation, and trails system and the assets within it to retain their value, quality, and appeal.

Renewal is making the most of past public investments in the parks, recreation, and trails system; bringing parks and facilities back to the desired quality and function.

**Goal 2. Complete:** Provide additional parks and recreation facilities as an integral part of a complete community, making play and recreation part of daily life.

Completing the parks, recreation, and trails system will include filling service gaps in a variety of ways and creating new opportunities for play and recreation through new park facilities. Several of these projects will serve ultimate build-out of the community.

**Goal 3. Connect:** Integrate active living throughout Longmont, linking people to recreation opportunities with enjoyable and appealing routes and effective information about the system.

To build a system that recognizes trails as an essential recreational service across the community, supported by local and national recreation trends, Longmont will need to expand the current understanding of what a trail can be. Connecting the system, especially north-south connections, will require the City find new ways to provide trail experiences outside of the identified greenways. Connections are also needed beyond these physical links. Informing the community about the range of opportunities available, across seasons, cultures and recreational interests, is critical to promoting activity.

**Goal 4. Distinguish:** Strengthen Longmont’s natural, historical, cultural, and recreational identity by providing memorable places for community gathering and activities.

Identifying, highlighting, incorporating and building on the unique natural, historical, cultural and recreational characteristics of the community and parks. Celebrating this uniqueness within Longmont’s system of parks, recreation and trails will guide locals and visitors alike to the great places within the city.

**Goal 5. Sustain:** Protect the long-term health of the park, recreation, and trails system through financial policies, maintenance, and operations practices, and planning and design guidelines.

Sustaining the system includes the ongoing tasks, resources and attention to ensure that the community’s investment in park lands and recreation facilities is protected for the long-term. This goal addresses the needs of the system that begin at design, continue through construction and then on throughout the life of a park or facility. The interplay between the Sustain, Complete and Renew goals support a long-term view of an efficient and manageable parks, recreation and trails system.

## **From Plan to Action**

The Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan presents the variety of considerations and tools needed to assist the community, elected officials and staff in implementing recommendations.

### ***Prioritization of Projects***

The Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan presents a large number of projects anticipated to be accomplished over time. The Plan aims to

rebalance the investment in the system using the five goals and considerations for timing, costs and benefits to prioritize projects in the City's capital improvement plan funding process.

### ***Costs and Funding Strategies***

A major part of Plan implementation is understanding the total cost of ownership, which includes capital, operations, maintenance and renewal. This builds a greater understanding of the impacts of new capital projects, and of delayed renewal projects on operations and maintenance funding needs.



View at Jim Hamm Nature Area

The community has expressed a willingness to provide additional resources which will be necessary for the construction of new sites and facilities, as well as renewal and maintenance of the system. To protect the City's existing assets and continue to build a healthy and livable community, a wider variety of funding options will be needed to renew and sustain parks and recreation.

### ***Plan Stewardship***

Much like the system itself, good stewardship is needed to activate the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan and keep it working for Longmont. Existing plans and policies that impact City parks, recreation facilities, and trails should work in conjunction with the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan vision to be most effective. The Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan should be considered in decision making processes, serve as a guide for community advocacy and inspire future investment. The Plan will also help leverage the types of partnerships and support necessary to reach the envisioned future.

The Parks, Recreation, and Trails Plan strikes a balance between detail and flexibility that will serve the community well over the long-term implementation of the plan. The path to realizing the vision of this plan will not be a straight line. Instead the plan will guide an evolving system and will be updated periodically to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. This ongoing process will be shepherded by City staff, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and City Council with input from the community guiding specific project implementation. The community's ideas are always welcome.