

SOUTHEAST LONGMONT CONDITIONS SURVEY

Longmont, Colorado

JULY 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Definition of Blight
Study Methodology
Report Format

SECTION II: AREA OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

Study Area Description
Study Area Context
Existing Land Use and Zoning Districts

SECTION III: DETERMINATION OF STUDY AREA CONDITIONS

Slum, Deteriorated or Deteriorating Structures
Defective or Inadequate Street Layout
Faulty Lot Layout
Unsafe or Unsanitary Conditions
Deterioration of Site or Other Improvements
Unusual Topography or Inadequate Public Improvements
Endangerment from Fire or Other Causes
Unsafe or Unsanitary Building Conditions
Environmental Contamination
High Services Requirements or Underutilized Sites

SECTION IV: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Maps of Blight Conditions by Category
Appendix B - Field Survey

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The following report, the *Southeast Longmont Conditions Survey*, was completed in July 2006. The purpose of this work was to analyze conditions on all parcels located within southeast Longmont, in an area generally located south of 3rd Avenue, between the old Flour Mill and the old Sugar Mill (the “Study Area”), in order to determine whether factors contributing to blight are present and whether the Study Area is, therefore, eligible as an urban renewal area under the provisions of Colorado State Statutes. Establishment of an urban renewal area would allow the City of Longmont, through its urban renewal authority, to use designated powers to assist in the redevelopment of properties and improvements within its boundaries.

This study represents a step towards achieving goals set out in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*. An important component of future redevelopment in the area will be identification of development programs which effectively leverage public investment, as well as funding mechanisms to complete the necessary infrastructure improvements.

DEFINITION OF BLIGHT

Redevelopment and investment within the Study Area may be accomplished through the implementation of an urban renewal process. The first step in this process is to determine if the area qualifies as a “blighted area” eligible for urban renewal. The determination that an area constitutes a blighted area is a cumulative conclusion attributable to the presence of several physical, environmental, and social factors. Indeed, blight is attributable to a multiplicity of conditions which, in combination, tend to accelerate the phenomenon of deterioration of an area. For purposes of the study, the definition of a blighted area is premised upon the definition articulated in the Urban Renewal Law, as follows:

“Blighted area” means an area that, in its present condition and use and, by reason of the presence of at least four of the following factors, substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare:

- (a) *Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;*
- (b) *Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;*
- (c) *Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;*
- (d) *Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;*
- (e) *Deterioration of site or other improvements;*
- (f) *Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;*
- (g) *Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;*
- (h) *The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;*
- (i) *Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;*
- (j) *Environmental contamination of buildings or property;*
- (k.5) *The existence of health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services or substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements;*
- (l) *If there is no objection of such property owner or owners and the tenant or tenants of such owner or owners, if an, to the inclusion of such property in an urban renewal area, “blighted area” also means an area that, in its present condition and use and, by reason of the presence of any one of the factors specified in paragraphs (a) to (k.5) of this subsection (2), substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals or welfare. For purposes of this paragraph (1), the fact that an owner of an interest in such property does not object to the inclusion of such property in the urban renewal area does not mean that the owner has waived any rights of such owner in connection with laws governing condemnation.*

Source: Colorado Revised Statute 31-25-103(2).

Since this definition is a general overview pertaining to all sites, it is important to clarify its intention as it applies to the Study Area. According to state law, it is unnecessary for every condition of blight to be present in order to be eligible as an urban renewal area. Rather, an area can be qualified as blighted when as few as four or more conditions are present (or five conditions, in cases requiring the use of eminent domain). The conditions need not be present in each parcel, but must be found in the Study Area as a whole.

With this understanding, the *Southeast Longmont Conditions Survey* presents an overview of factors within the Study Area including a review of physical conditions sufficient to make a determination of blight. The “Summary of Findings” provides conclusions regarding the analysis and presence of blight in key areas; however, the Longmont City Council will make a final determination of blight for the entire Study Area based on the extent to which conditions constitute a liability for the Study Area.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The *Southeast Longmont Conditions Survey* includes a detailed analysis of site, building and public improvement deterioration as well as dangers from environmental contamination, crime, flood and fire. Qualifying blight conditions throughout the Study Area were identified and analyzed on a parcel-by-parcel basis to produce maps showing blight conditions present in the Study Area.

Leland Consulting Group personnel conducted parcel-by-parcel field investigations in August of 2004 and again in July of 2006 to document physical conditions within the categories of blight set out in the state statute. Pertinent Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data was obtained from the City of Longmont, Boulder County, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and analyzed by Leland Consulting Group. Additional supplemental and updated information was obtained through meetings and interviews with City staff, as well as other experts on local and regional market conditions.

REPORT FORMAT

The *Southeast Longmont Conditions Survey* is presented in four sections and an Appendix. Section I presents an overview of the project, a definition of “blight,” and the study methodology. Section II presents a description of the Study Area and an overview of existing conditions. Section III defines the primary categories of blight and documents conditions which are present within each category. Section IV summarizes the findings from the research.

The Appendix includes maps of parcels exhibiting conditions contributing to blight, as well as a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

SECTION II

AREA OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

As described above, the conditions survey reported here covers properties located generally south of 3rd Avenue, north of St. Vrain Creek, between Pratt Street on the west and Pace Street on the east. Exact Study Area boundaries are depicted on the maps in the Appendix to this document.

The Study Area comprises encompasses approximately 535 acres, of which approximately 523 acres are contained in 120 legal parcels (not including rights-of-way). Of this, approximately and includes 19 parcels totaling 274 acres of land that is currently outside the city limits of Longmont.

STUDY AREA CONTEXT

The Study Area contains a mix of newer construction along with improvements dating from the 1960s and before. The few single-family residences in the Study Area are approximately 20 to 30 years old for the most part, but also include some of older construction. Southeast Longmont has historically been an industrial area within the City of Longmont. Although the heavy industry taking place at the flour mill and sugar mill locations has been abandoned, the area is still dominated by primarily light industrial uses, with auto-related storage, repair and sales businesses dominating along Main Street and 1st Avenue.. The vacant heavy industrial uses flanking the study area contribute to a general appearance of deterioration in the area.

EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING DISTRICTS

Dominant land uses in Study Area include salvage/junkyard operations, RV and boat storage, auto repair and sales, mobile homes, and various light industrial uses. The heaviest industry is a foundry operating in the central part of the study area. A bed and breakfast/ranch facility operates off Main Street. A few restaurants, bars, small offices,

and retail shops are also located along Main Street. A few single family homes can be found along 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue, as well as scattered among owner-operated industrial concerns. Open space, vacant land, and railroad uses predominate towards the east and south of the study area.

Zoning throughout the study area is industrial, including Mixed Industrial, General Industrial, and Public. The Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan calls for Industrial/Economic Development for the entire study area, with the exception of an area reserved as Public (for wastewater treatment) and an area reserved as Parks/Greenways/Open space (in the southwest portion of the study area).

SECTION III

DETERMINATION OF STUDY AREA CONDITIONS

Significant findings of the *Southeast Longmont Conditions Survey* are presented in this discussion which follows. These findings are based on a review of documents and reports, interviews, field surveys, and analyses conducted throughout August of 2004. The field surveys occurred at various times throughout a one-week period and at different times of the day in order to observe a variety of conditions. Properties and buildings, along with public improvements adjacent to the properties, were evaluated and deficiencies noted. As previously explained, the purpose of this study was to determine whether conditions of blight as defined by the Colorado State Statute exist in the Study Area. The principal categories reported here and in line with the statute include: building conditions, site conditions, unusual topography or inadequate public improvements, endangerment from fire or other causes, unsafe or unhealthy work/live conditions, environmental contamination, and high municipal requirements or site underutilization.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

Slum, Deteriorated and Deteriorating Structures

This section summarizes the on-site investigations of deterioration within the Study Area. The condition of deteriorating or deteriorated structures was primarily established through field survey work and observation of exterior physical conditions among 106 parcels within the Study Area. No interior inspections were conducted. Building deterioration rating criteria considered included the following: primary structure (roof, walls, foundation); secondary structure (fascia/soffits, gutters/ downspouts, exterior finishes, windows and doors, stairways/fire escapes); and, exterior structure (mechanical equipment, loading areas, fences/walls/gates, other structures).

Although structural deterioration is most pronounced and obvious at the old flour mill and old sugar mill sites, examples of this condition can be found within properties throughout the study area. The most common examples of structural deterioration found in the Study Area involved poorly maintained exterior finishes, and fascia and roof

deterioration Many properties were observed to have outbuildings in disrepair. Some older properties were also found to have window, roof, and wall deterioration. Other Study Area structural problems, though less common, include deterioration of exterior walls, gutters, fences, mechanical equipment and loading areas. Examples of properties affected by Condition (a) are shown in the photos below.



In addition to the mill sites, this condition is most prevalent at salvage yards, industrial sites, and with residential structures located adjacent to industrial uses.

The Appendix section of this report includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

SITE CONDITIONS

The evaluation of site conditions is divided into four categories according to the definition of blight: 1) defective or inadequate street layout; 2) faulty lot layout; 3) unsafe or unsanitary conditions; and 4) deterioration of site or other improvements.

Representative conditions among each category of site deterioration are described as follows:

Faulty Street Layout - Conditions typically associated with faulty street layout include poor vehicular access and/or internal circulation; substandard driveway definition and parking layout (e.g. lack of curb cuts, awkward entrance and exit points); offset or irregular intersections; substandard or nonexistent pedestrian circulation.

Faulty Lot Layout - Conditions typically associated with faulty lot layout include faulty lot shape and/or layout; and inadequate lot size. Poor access is also considered to be an indicator of faulty lot layout.

Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions - Conditions typically considered unsafe or unsanitary include: poorly lit or unlit areas; cracked or uneven sidewalks; poor drainage; environmental contamination; buildings located within a floodplain; uneven grading or steep slopes; and, the existence of trash, debris, weeds, abandoned vehicles, high incidence of reported crime, graffiti or other forms of vandalism or vagrant activity.

Substandard Improvements - Site improvements typically considered to be substandard or undesirable include: the presence of billboards, neglected properties, and unscreened trash or mechanical storage areas; deterioration of parking surfaces; lack of landscaping; and, other general site maintenance problems.

Each of these conditions of blight as they apply to the Study Area is discussed separately in the following paragraphs.

Defective or Inadequate Street Layout

As described above, there are several conditions used to determine whether a Study Area is blighted based on faulty street layout. During numerous on-site investigations and field surveys, these conditions were observed throughout the Study Area. The most pervasive street conditions found in the Study Area were related to substandard vehicular access posed by insufficient or non-existent driveway definitions or curb cuts. Street layout is considered faulty in cases where a parking lot is not separated from the street, not defined by curb cuts, or poses awkward entry and exit to the street.

The small size of lots fronting 3rd Avenue at the north side of the Study Area contribute to unusually tight vehicular entrance and egress in this industrially zones area. For some lots, poor vehicular access is more a function of the lack of paved city streets to their interior locations. Several interior properties, in fact, were not accessible at all via public streets. Parcels with no public vehicular connections at all, such as those found along the south and east portions of the study area are considered to be lacking in sufficient access according to Condition (b). The Terry Street overpass at 1st Avenue, by disrupting the grid structure of that street also impedes access to some parcels in that vicinity.

The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

Faulty Lot Layout

There are specific conditions that can be used to determine whether a Study Area is blighted based on faulty lot layout. Among these conditions are lot shape, layout and size, as well as conformity of use. On-site investigations and field surveys, review of public records and discussions with City staff suggest that these conditions can be found throughout the Study Area.

Parcels smaller than .75 acres (not assembled under a single ownership) are considered in this analysis to be of inadequate size because of significant constraints on the range of

(re-) development options available to this lot size. Inadequately sized lots are found throughout the Study Area, but are most prevalent in the area south of 1st Avenue west of Main St. and the area south of Third Avenue between Martin Street and Lashley Street.

Lot layout is deemed to be faulty if the configuration relative to the street is contrary to what is desired for development. Lot shape is considered faulty if the shape is unusual to an extent that it deters or constraints development options.

Poor access, a condition related to poor lot layout, is discussed in the subsection above under *Defective or Inadequate Street Layout* , and is also indicative of faulty lot layout.

Faulty lots can be found throughout the eastern portion of the study area as a result of layout, shape and access issues. Lots between Kimbark Street and Emery Street in the study area also suffer from poor access and layout.

The aerial photograph presented below illustrates several examples of faulty lots in the Study Area, as per the statute Condition (c).

Examples of Condition (c)



The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

Unsafe or Unsanitary Conditions

There are several locations within the Study Area exhibiting unsafe or unsanitary conditions. The most prevalent Study Area conditions considered unsafe or unsanitary include: poorly lit or unlit areas; unscreened trash or mechanical equipment; abandoned vehicles; and flood hazard.

Poorly lit areas are prevalent throughout the Study Area particularly in large vacant parcels, parking lots in front of or behind older businesses, and industrial parcels in general. Problems with unscreened trash and mechanical equipment can be found throughout the Study Area as well, most commonly on property around older industrial and salvage businesses and in large vacant areas.

Examples of parcels exhibiting condition (d) are shown below:



Other instances of unsafe or unsanitary conditions were related to floodplain hazards and poor drainage. Twenty-six properties throughout the study area are impacted by the 100-yr. floodplain (also known as 1 percent floodplain). This area is indicated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as Area "A" in maps produced to show flood insurance risk. Because much of the study area is along St. Vrain Creek or its smaller tributaries and the study area is relatively flat, this flood hazard area is rather extensive.

Deterioration of Site and Other Improvements

A variety of blight conditions were observed within the Study Area related to the deterioration of the site and non-primary improvements. These conditions which negatively affect the appearance and utilization of the area, most commonly include parking surface deterioration and unscreened trash and mechanical equipment. Several sites were found to have site maintenance problems, a lack of landscaping, or signage problems. Although this condition was most prevalent in older industrial properties and salvage yards, examples of site deterioration problems are found throughout the Study Area, as shown in the photographs below and detailed in the maps and field inventory.

Examples of Condition (e)



The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

UNUSUAL TOPOGRAPHY/INADEQUATE PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Unusual topography is considered, in this study, to exist on parcels with steep slopes or undulating terrain. The condition of inadequate public improvements is said to exist in areas with deteriorating street surfaces, overhead utilities, lack of sidewalks, curb and gutter deterioration, inadequate street lighting, lack of water service, or lack of sewer service.

Because the study area is predominantly flat, there are few instances of unusual topography. These can be found along St. Vrain Creek and at the site of the wastewater facility.

A primary condition related to inadequate public improvements involves street pavement deterioration and lack of paved streets. Additionally, almost all parcels are considered, for purposes of this analysis, to have outdated power and phone system provision because of the reliance on overhead utilities. This is considered to be an impediment to modern development and redevelopment in the current real estate market.



Because the unit of analysis in this conditions survey is the parcel (and because public streets within the Study Area are not individual parcels) the condition of faulty street layout is referenced in the maps and tables as occurring in the adjacent parcel or parcels, rather than on the streets themselves.

Other instances of inadequate public improvements across many other parcels in the Study Area stem from the lack of adequate sidewalks or from the absence of overhead street lighting. Taken together, some subcategory of inadequate public improvements can be found in every almost every parcel within the Study Area.

The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting either unusual topography or inadequate public improvements and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

ENDANGERMENT FROM FIRE OR OTHER CONDITIONS

Fire safety information pertaining to the parcels in the Study Area was not gathered for this Conditions Survey. In a few instances, danger from fire was inferred from the obvious dilapidated condition of visible structures.

Endangerment from fire or other conditions is also said to exist, due to the risk of flood, in parcels that lie within the 100-year flood plain. As mentioned previously under Condition (d), 26 parcels are substantially affected by this condition, as indicated on the map and in the field inventory.

The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

UNSAFE OR UNHEALTHY BUILDING CONDITIONS

Unsafe or unhealthy building conditions are said to be present in parcels with environmental contamination, fire safety problems, or obviously unsafe structures or facilities.

Environmental contamination is known to exist on only two parcels in the study area (the Sugar Mill property and its associated piles of lime waste) and no separate environmental assessments were done for this Conditions Survey. Also, fire safety information was not gathered on Study Area properties for this analysis.

Although no interior inspections were conducted as a part of this analysis, a few properties, shown on the map, were considered sufficiently dilapidated and unsafe, based on outside appearance, as to qualify under this condition.

Examples of Unsafe or Unhealthy Building Conditions



The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

Again, environmental contamination is known to exist on just two properties in the study area (the old Sugar Mill and its associated lime waste piles). No separate environmental assessments were done for this Conditions Survey. This property is shown in the map and in the detailed parcel-by-parcel summary found in the Appendix.

HIGH SERVICE DEMANDS OR UNDERUTILIZED SITES

This statutory category considers two different conditions that can impact the welfare of an area. Sites (in this case parcels) exhibiting “health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services” may include areas of high crime or repeated fire code violations. Areas characterized by “substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements” may include vacant lots, parcels with vacant structures, or parcels for which the value of improvement is disproportionately small in relation to the land value.

For this analysis, only underutilization of parcels, as evidenced by site or building vacancy, was considered as an indication of this condition.



The Study Area includes 34 parcels with either vacant land or vacant buildings-- a sizable portion of the total inventory, totaling approximately 278 of the 445 total study area acres. These properties are considered underutilized for the purposes of this analysis. Note that 13 of these properties, constituting 181 acres, are on land currently outside the Longmont city limits.

The Appendix includes a map of parcels exhibiting this condition, and a parcel-by-parcel synthesis of qualifying conditions found during the field survey.

SECTION IV

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The presence of blight “...substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare...” [Colorado Revised Statute 31-25-103(2)]

It is the conclusion of this survey that within the Study Area, as described in this report, there is a presence of adverse physical conditions sufficient to meet criteria established in the state statute. Although some portions of the Study Area are in adequate or sound condition, there exist deteriorated and substandard conditions throughout the Study Area as a whole, which could lead the legislative body to a finding that this area is blighted. The conclusion of this study is based on the following summary of qualifying conditions found in the Study Area and described in this report.

LCG did not perform a title search on any properties within the Study Area, therefore Condition G (defective or unusual title rendering property unmarketable) was not identified.

(a) and (i): Deteriorating or deteriorated structures and buildings identified as unsafe or unsanitary were evident within the Study Area. Several buildings have secondary structure and exterior structure, as well as primary structure deterioration. Additionally, problems exist with the physical condition of older structures. Instances of blight, due in part to apparent neglect, were evident on several sites.

(b) and (c): Conditions of faulty street and lot layout existed throughout the Study Area. The conditions that did exist concerning faulty street and lot layout included problems associated with poor vehicular access and faulty lot layout, shape and size.

(d) and (h): Unsanitary or unsafe conditions and endangerment were prevalent throughout the Study Area. Conditions included poorly lit or unlit areas; curb and gutter deterioration, unscreened trash and machinery, and abandoned vehicles.

(e): Substandard site improvements were prevalent throughout the Study Area. Conditions included parking surface deterioration, neglect and site maintenance problems, trash/debris/weeds, with occasional instances of a lack of landscaping.

(f): *Unusual topography and inadequate public improvements* were evident throughout the Study Area. Inadequate public improvement was universal within the Study Area due to street pavement (and shoulder) deterioration, lack of sidewalks, curb & gutter, and particularly, overhead utilities.

(j) *Environmental contamination* is known to exist on one parcel within the study area

(k.5): *High Services Demand or Site Underutilization* could be found at several sites throughout the Study Area due to vacant land and buildings.

Ten of the eleven qualifying blight conditions specified by state statute were found in this study area. In all, there were 59 parcels totaling 436 acres with at least five qualifying conditions present. Of these, 16 parcels totaling 243 acres were located in parcels outside the current city limits of Longmont.

Table 1 summarizes blight qualifying conditions present in the Study Area.

Table 1
Southeast Longmont Conditions Survey - Summary of Findings

| | <i>Blight Qualifying Conditions</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) | (h) | (i) | (j) | (k.5) |
| Study Area | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | | yes | yes | yes | yes |

Source: Leland Consulting Group.

- (a) *Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;*
- (b) *Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;*
- (c) *Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;*
- (d) *Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;*
- (e) *Deterioration of site or other improvements;*
- (f) *Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;*
- (g) *Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;*
- (h) *The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;*
- (i) *Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;*

- (j) Environmental contamination of buildings or property;*
 - (k.5) The existence of health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services or substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements*
-

APPENDIX A:
MAPS OF CONDITIONS SURVEY FINDINGS
