

### 3. FUTURE PARKS, RECREATION, AND TRAILS SYSTEM

The Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan establishes a vision for the future that is particular and unique to Longmont. This vision is built on the existing, high-quality investments that the community has made throughout its history, an extensive public process and technical analysis. Through this process, a broad collection of ideas was refined into a set of goals that reflect the expressed priorities of the community. The plan goals and recommendations provide guidance for the community, the Park and Recreation Advisory Board, City staff, and the City Council toward achieving this shared vision.



Lanyon Park

#### Plan 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, tailored to meet neighborhood, family and individual needs, accessible, and support a healthy, engaged, and economically vibrant Longmont.

#### System Concept

Map 6: System Concept provides a visual guide to the future system, illustrating the plan goals and key recommendations for the physical improvements to the system. This concept brings the City’s focus to a system-wide level. The planning process has provided the community, City staff and decision makers an opportunity to look at the big picture, backing away from one site, one recreation facility or other project. Understanding the interrelationships between these varied interests is particularly important to ensuring the long-term financial sustainability and equity of City investments.



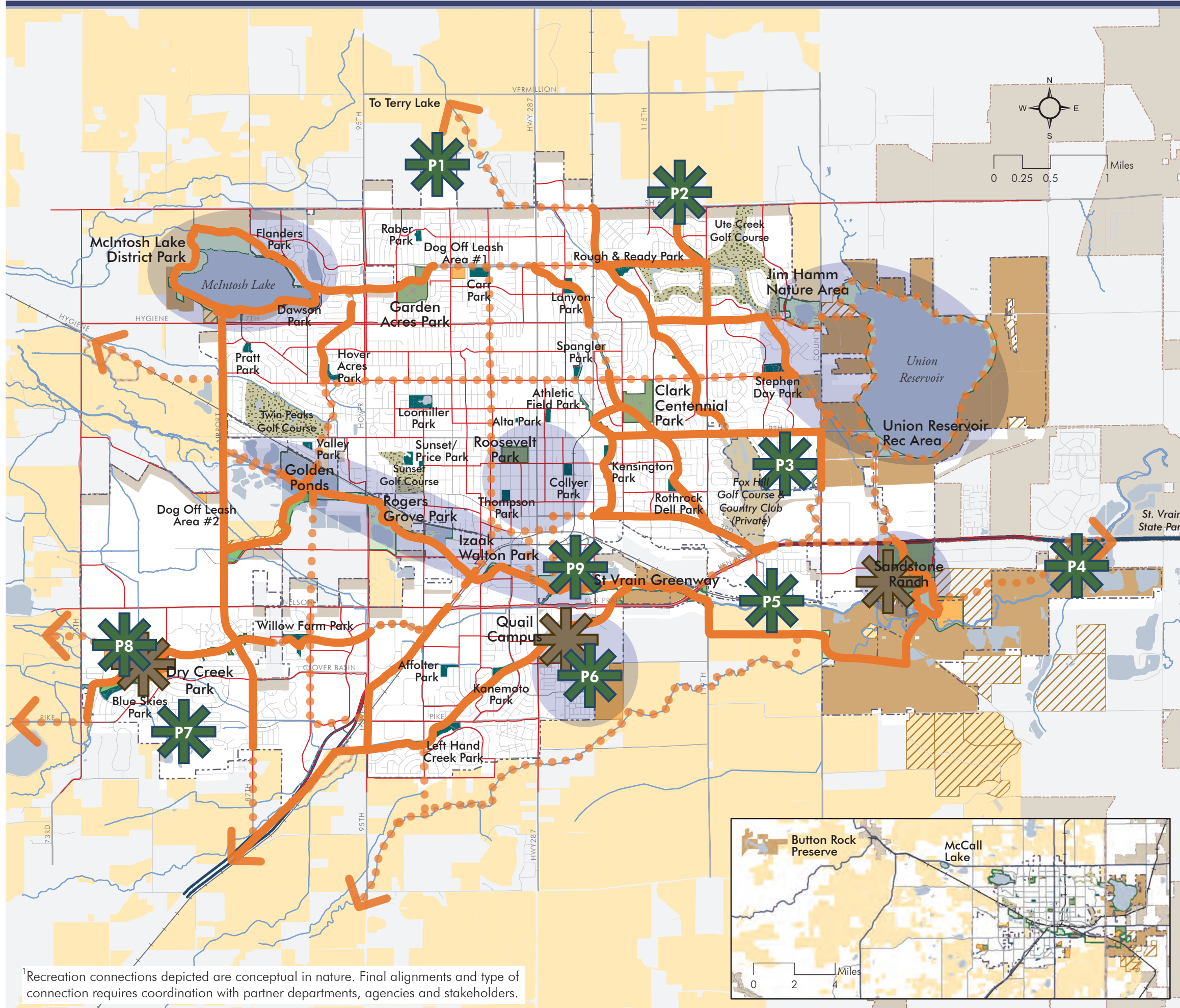
Blue Skies Park

The concept for Longmont’s future park, recreation and trails system builds on the existing assets and ties the role of trails and other recreation connections into the system plan. In this concept, **existing parks and recreation facilities** are renewed and sustained over time to acknowledge and protect the value of these community assets. **Future park and recreation facility development** complete the system, making parks and recreation facilities available equitably throughout the community. The lands and facilities are connected and augmented by trails and other forms of **recreation connectivity**. In order to spread the benefit of active transportation and trail-related activities, the recreation benefits of the trails system are pushed beyond the city’s rivers, creeks and park lands. The concept includes new types of connections that bring the trail experience to the streets of Longmont.

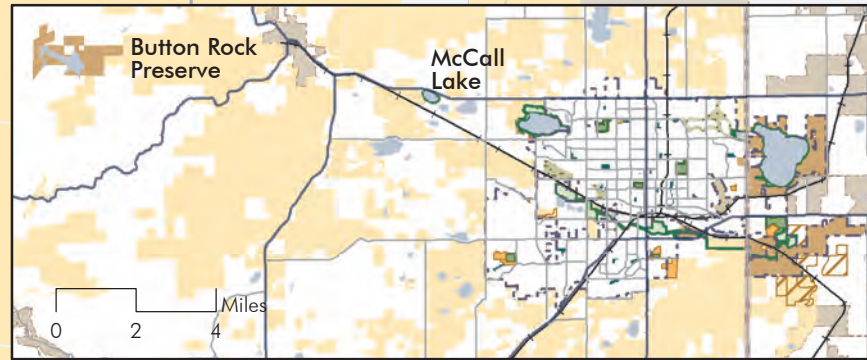
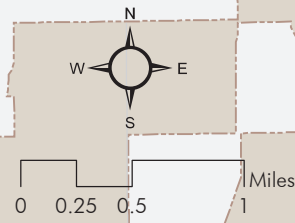
Longmont's park, recreation and trails system is made up of unique places, each of which contributes to an overall identity, livability, economic value, and environmental health of the community. Defining **community identity clusters** from these unique sites will focus City efforts to shape how Longmont is perceived within and outside of the local community.



# Parks, Recreation & Trails Master Plan



- Existing Enhanced Recreation Connection
- Proposed Enhanced Recreation Connection<sup>1</sup>
- Future Park Development
- Future Recreation Facility Development
- Community Identity Cluster
- City Limit
- On-Street Bicycle Transportation Routes (bike lanes, bikeways, bike routes, etc.)
- Multi-use Trail (Non-City)
- Railroad
- Expressway
- Arterial Road
- Local Street
- District Park
- Community Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Other City Public Lands (Intended for recreational uses)
- City Open Space - Easement/Option
- City Open Space and Public Lands
- County Open Space (fee and easement)
- Public Golf Course
- Private Golf Course
- Greenway Lands
- Other City/County/State Lands



<sup>1</sup>Recreation connections depicted are conceptual in nature. Final alignments and type of connection requires coordination with partner departments, agencies and stakeholders.

### Map 6: System Concept



## Goals and Recommendations

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 system. Each of these goals represents one aspect of the overall direction of this plan. For each goal, a series of recommendations provides the actions that will move Longmont toward its envisioned 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. It is important to recognize that not all old features need to be replaced but instead could be redeveloped to meet new recreational trends and community desires. Historic features that contribute to the identity of the site and mature trees are highly valued by the community and should be preserved as part of renewal plans.

#### **1.1 Invest Aggressively In Aging Park Sites and Systems**

In order to address the accumulated renewal needs of Longmont’s parks, recreation, and trails system, the City needs to commit to a high level of funding to catch-up. Catching up will require an aggressive initial investment; however, Longmont must also commit a steady stream of resources to future renewal for all park sites and recreation facilities to fund a measured and regular program of reinvestment.

#### **1.2 Establish Trigger Points and Prioritization for Major Park and Recreation Renewal Efforts**

While renewal as a whole is an ongoing process, there is a tipping point at which a site (or major portion of a site) or facility should be targeted for a major reinvestment. Unlike building systems, or some features of a park (such as a playground), there is no generally recognized standard for the lifecycle of a park. In fact, some features of a park get better with age, such as the highly valued mature tree canopy at Longmont’s older parks. The City should establish a threshold or trigger for focusing attention on a particular park or recreation facility. Chapter 2 includes the results of an initial analysis of renewal need. Starting from these results, the City can identify sites that will have the most impact by factoring in park use and the role of the site or recreation facilities that need reinvestment. Potential criteria include:

- Over 30% of systems/features failed or reached the end of their expected life;



Willow Farm Park

- Most recent major re-investment (more than the replacement of one feature or facility) over 20 years past;
- Upgrades needed to meet new standards or regulations (such as safety or accessibility) impacting a critical feature or more than 30% of park facilities;
- Geographic distribution of investment;
- Preserving revenue generation/cost recovery potential;
- Level of use; and
- Interest or resources available from surrounding businesses or neighborhoods.

### 1.3 Renew Parks and Recreation Facilities Strategically

When renewing parks and recreation facilities, focus on the function and desired mix of activities to ensure that it retains or increases its appeal. This could occur by replacing an existing feature with a better-suited type of recreation facility if warranted by trends and participation. For example, in-line hockey has faded in popularity. Therefore, when a park with an in-line hockey court is renewed, replacing the court with another desired recreation feature should be strongly considered prior to reinvesting. Renewal should also include an evaluation of infrastructure to see if a more environmentally friendly modification is appropriate, such as replacing irrigated turf with native grasses; as well as evaluating if the existing site furnishings – number & placement of waste receptacles, location of benches, etc. – are still appropriate to the community’s needs and current maintenance standards and practices.

### 1.4 Integrate Accessibility into Renewal Projects

Utilize the prioritization of Longmont’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan (in progress in 2013) to identify park sites for renewal projects. The ADA Transition Plan will lay out a path to removing barriers that will create opportunities to combine efforts. To the extent possible, Longmont should integrate universal design principles<sup>1</sup> to optimize Longmont’s parks and recreation facilities for usability and enjoyment by all visitors; accommodating multiple ages and levels of ability. Advancing the ADA Transition Plan should be a part of all Longmont projects. Accessibility will be required of new recreation facilities and some existing facilities once upgraded or renewed. Renewal projects represent a particularly good opportunity to integrate improved access into the existing system and double up the benefit of the capital resources expended.



Golden Ponds

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<sup>1</sup> Universal design seeks to maximize the access and usability of a site for all ages and abilities rather than simply removing barriers to defined disabilities.

## 1.5 Recognize the Revenue Impact of Renewal Needs

Strategically renew revenue generating recreation facilities to maintain or enhance their attractiveness and consider the impact of aging recreation facilities on financial targets. Facilities with direct revenue, from use or entrance fees, are more sensitive to renewal needs as the paying users will have an expectation for quality. Because of this, the timely renewal of recreation facilities and supporting amenities connected to revenue generating programs (ranging from athletic fields to fitness areas, pools and beaches) is important. Major recreation facilities, such as pools can be doubly hit by the aging process. Older facilities do not attract the same range or number of users, and the facilities are often experiencing increased maintenance costs due to aging systems. These factors will strain the facility contribution to financial targets. The renewal of revenue generating recreation facilities has the potential to free up resources for the ongoing maintenance of the system.

## 1.6 Plan for Long-Term Renewal of All Park Systems and Recreation Facilities

Renewal is an ongoing process. When new capital investments are made or the City improves existing park lands and recreation facilities, renewal planning should be integrated into the asset management system to create a timeline for future renewal. Even the newest parks in Longmont need planning for future renewal.

### ***Goal 2. Complete***

*Provide additional park land, recreation facilities and trails 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. Together with Goal 3, which focuses on developing the role of trails and connecting recreation facilities as a key aspect of the City's system, Goal 2 expands the system and makes strategic additions that bring Longmont closer to its vision. This goal acknowledges that no system will ever be complete - while lands and recreation facilities are relatively fixed, the people they serve will constantly be changing.

The analysis of park and trail access identified a series of gap areas where residential neighborhoods are beyond ½ mile from any community or neighborhood park, using the street and trail network. The facility capacity analysis identified the need for new recreation facilities. The recommendations below focus on filling the gaps, using a variety of strategies. Each gap area is addressed in the recommendations in this chapter, with a summary of the strategies presented in Table 3-1.



*Quail Campus*

## 2.1 Complete the System with Future Parks

Develop additional parks to serve an expanding population and recent or planned residential development areas. The Future Park Development Areas on the Park Concept Map (Map 6) reflect gap locations in the system. These sites are numbered P1-P8 for reference, not indicating a priority order. The discussion below provides direction for each of the future park development areas. Development timelines are proposed in Chapter 4 of the Plan. Further guidance on the size and compatible amenities for each park type is provided in Appendix B: Design and Development Guidelines.

The only planned neighborhood or community park site currently included in the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan that is not a part of this concept is the neighborhood park planned for the area south of Golden Ponds (known as West St. Vrain). This area, which has not been annexed into the City, could be more efficiently served by providing a recreation connection to the St. Vrain Greenway and the Dry Creek Greenway as illustrated in the system concept instead of another park site. Direct connections between Willow Farm Park and the St. Vrain Greenway will provide opportunities for a wide variety of park and trail related recreation activities. Additional play opportunities for children at Golden Ponds (addressed below) could also serve this area.

**P1 – Future Neighborhood Park** (Terry Lake site): Plans for future residential development will expand the northern edge of Longmont, and it is recommended that Longmont develop a neighborhood park to serve this area (gap area N2). A large (greater than 10 acres) neighborhood park site should be acquired and built as part of this development to balance the small parks that are the only alternative in this area.

**P2 – Land Preservation for Future Recreation** (Longmont Tech Center area): Future development to the north of Longmont is intentionally constrained by the Boulder County open space buffer north of Highway 66 and east of Main Street. It is recommended that a 40 acre or larger site be acquired by the City or another governmental entity and classified as Public or Quasi-Public and held for future potential recreation needs as the City heads towards build out. The site could be used for recreation facilities, such as a recreation center, a community park or a specialized outdoor adventure facility such as a bike park, a zip line course or an outdoor climbing feature. A park or recreation facility in this area would provide a balance of access to community parks as well as serve gap area N3.

**P3 – Future Neighborhood Park** (Fox Meadows site): A 9 acre parcel of land is in City ownership and is intended to be a neighborhood park to serve gap area C5. This park should be developed to the neighborhood park standard.



**P4 – Future District Park** (Boulder Creek Estates site): Develop a district park at the City Open Space property known as Boulder Creek Estates that serves as an eastern gateway and destination for Longmont and along the St. Vrain Greenway Trail/Colorado Front Range Trail. It is recommended that the site focus on providing a sense of arrival to the park, recreation and trail system, as well as interpretation of the environmentally sensitive lands at the confluence of the St. Vrain River and Boulder Creek. The site would focus on passive recreation opportunities consistent with Open Space and District Park uses. Proximity to St. Vrain State Park could be capitalized upon through development of distinctly different features or character.

**P5 – Future District or Neighborhood Park** (Mill Village - specific site not identified): This park would provide local park access to gap area S5, particularly if the site can be located close to Mill Village. Sensitive wildlife habitat, inadequate access and other issues have deterred development of potential district park sites in this area in the past. The City should not pursue development that would negatively impact environmental resources and pursue a location that will best serve the community. This site is conceptually shown on the map; however a specific location has not been determined. If access between this park and the St Vrain Greenway can also be provided, the park could be utilized as a trailhead or destination node along the trail.

**P6 –Future Neighborhood and Community Park** (Wertman and Sisters sites): Providing a neighborhood park in this area is important, as the Quail campus is focused on larger community-serving facilities. The Wertman site, a neighborhood park indicated on the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan map, is best suited to serve the existing residences in this area. The medium and high density residential areas planned east of the Quail Campus (identified as gap area S4) will need a combination of improvements to the Wertman site and to the adjacent planned community park site (known as Sisters) to provide local park service. The balance of the community park at the Sisters site at P6 (already in City ownership) is being reserved for future land-intensive recreation facilities. Similarly to P2, outdoor adventure recreation facilities such as a bike park, zip line course or outdoor climbing feature would be well suited to this edge of the city location. Since this area is designated as one of the Community Identity Clusters, consideration of the criteria for this designation should be considered during development of this site. The combination of the sites may not require as much developed space as the two parks would if developed separately.

**P7 – Future Neighborhood Park** (South Clover Basin site): A neighborhood park is planned to serve residential expansion in the area south of Clover Basin Drive and is recommended to be developed. Together with Dry Creek Greenway, this site is important to serving gap area S2.

**P8 –Future Neighborhood and Existing Community Park** (West Grange site and Dry Creek Park): The neighborhood park (known as West Grange) planned adjacent to the northwest edge of the existing Dry Creek Community Park is recommended for development as an expansion of Dry Creek Park. This combination of sites should not require as much developed space as the two parks would if developed separately. With Dry Creek Park so close and directly connected, the neighborhood park at the West Grange site could have a smaller developed area (oriented to provide access from the north and east to serve future residential growth in the S1 gap area) and natural spaces could be included in the balance of the site for efficiency and to enhance the natural functions of the greenway as it leaves Longmont.

**P9 – Future District Park (Dickens Farm Park site):** A master plan for the district park to be developed along the St. Vrain Greenway at the Dickens Farm Park site was approved by City Council in July, 2013. Plans include a river park, ponds, trails, a nature play discovery trail, shelters, an informal program space, historic and environmental interpretation, as well as parking and a restroom. This site is a central access to the St. Vrain Greenway and a unique opportunity for nature-based, passive recreation near downtown and commercial areas in south central Longmont. Funding for construction of the park was re-directed after the 2013 flood, however development of this park remains a high priority for the Greenway and the park system as a whole.

## 2.2 Optimize Existing Parks

Filling gaps in service is not enough to ensure that the community gets the best possible service out of the parks, recreation, and trails system. Many existing parks will need to add or enhance features to support the recreation access residents desire. Many of the park sites that are focused on sports or natural features are also important to serving elemental recreation needs and access, but they don't support the full range of desired recreation experiences at this time. At a minimum, the addition of play features should be considered for these sites. When adding to these parks, it is important to be aware of the context of the site (for example, not adding bright red and yellow playgrounds to natural areas) and to make the features both visible and accessible to the neighborhoods.



Roosevelt Park

### *Community Parks Serving Neighborhoods*

To fill identified gaps, key community parks (identified below), in addition to serving their primary role of providing space for large athletic facilities, also need to serve as the local park in lieu of a nearby neighborhood park.

Playgrounds, places to gather and un-programmed play spaces are important at all of these sites to serve the local neighborhoods.

1. Sandstone Ranch
2. Clark Centennial
3. Garden Acres

When development, renewal or modifications occur in the future, Longmont should consider the best way to serve the immediate neighbors with neighborhood-serving features accessible on foot or bicycle, in addition to the features designed for users driving to the facility from across town or across the region.

### *District Parks in the St. Vrain Greenway*

The St. Vrain Greenway is a signature feature of Longmont's parks, recreation, and trails system and is also considered a district park. It is made up of a variety of open space properties that contain the greenway trail but are not part of individual park sites (such as Golden Ponds, Rogers Grove or Izaak Walton). Future park development in this corridor (within the property already designated as the St. Vrain Greenway District Park) will include trailheads and access points as well as the development of park sites such as the Dickens Farm Park P9 and the proposed future parks P4 and possibly P5. The intent is that all sites within and adjacent to the St. Vrain Greenway will be unified in design and purpose under the Community Identity Cluster discussed in recommendation 4.1: Identify Community Identity Clusters.

### *Nature-Themed Play*

Three of the City's existing district parks are located in areas that would otherwise not be served by a park (listed below). While each of these sites provides unique assets to the surrounding neighborhoods and the entire city, one of the activities that they do not explicitly support is unstructured play for children. Rather than adding a park or developing a portion of these sites in a neighborhood park mode, it is recommended that the City pursue adding nature-themed play elements to the sites. These features could include play areas within the natural environment or natural-looking materials and equipment (e.g., artificial climbing boulders and logs, equipment in muted or natural colors, and integrated plantings), and should be placed outside of any environmentally sensitive areas. The following sites are those where nature-themed play would be most beneficial to fill identified gaps. Play features, in addition to improved connectivity and access would allow these district parks to reduce the need for a neighborhood park.



*Example: Natural Play Features*

- Izaak Walton Park,
- Jim Hamm Nature Area (serving gap area N4),
- Golden Ponds (serving gap area C1), and
- Future Park P5 (serving gap area S5).

### *Price Park and Sunset Park*

The current playground at Sunset Park is not very visible and the land at Price Park is nearly unused. There are also parking constraints resulting from the intensive use at Sunset during peak times for the pool and golf course. It is recommended that these two sites be considered together to take advantage of the high visibility of Price Park and the important assets of Sunset Pool and Golf Course. The existing Master Plan for Sunset Park should be updated to include Price Park, viewing the area as a campus to improve visibility, use and access to each asset and maximize the potential of the site as a whole.

## **2.3 Identify Public and Private Partner Opportunities**

New park sites will not fill all of the gaps in park access. The street pattern and existing development make the addition of entire new park sites in some areas of Longmont inefficient or costly at best, and in some cases, infeasible. Furthermore, the taxpayers of Longmont have expressed strong interest in partnerships that maximize the use of their investment in sport facilities and indoor recreation facilities. It is recommended that the City continue actively pursuing partnerships with both public and private entities in Longmont to enhance the system, focusing on gap areas.

### *Public School Sites*

Two distinct opportunities exist in relation to the public schools of the St. Vrain Valley School District (School District). The first is to reinstate efforts to renegotiate the shared-use agreement that governs City use of School District recreation facilities (everything from athletic fields to classrooms and gyms) and vice-versa. The City should continue the multi-party discussion between the appropriate parties at the City and the School District to identify the best model of cooperative use and maintenance of the City's public sport facilities (and School District facilities). The City should also engage in a discussion with the School District about the use by the community of school grounds (including playgrounds) to supplement park access. While school sites have limitations during their operating hours, these sites have important recreational value to the community. Gaining official approval and establishing a clear understanding of when and where public access is encouraged will get more benefit from the community's public school assets with little or no change to existing investments.



*Soccer at Sandstone Ranch*

In cases where a school site is within identified gaps in park service, the City should consider requesting permission to develop a portion of a School District property as a small park. Such a school park could be separated from the main campus if necessary and would allow for small-scale park facilities such as play features and seating that can be accessed throughout the day even while school is in session. This type of approach would be specifically advantageous in the vicinity of gap area C2.

### *Private Sites and Facilities*

The next level of partnership requires the City to move beyond publicly owned land and assets. In these cases, the City would explore private entities such as Homeowners' Associations, private recreation facilities and churches to establish an agreement that clarifies the level of public access that can be achieved. In these cases, the City should focus on the local access of the immediate neighbors and work with the private entities to alleviate concerns about public access. In order to secure some level of local public access, the City should be prepared to make an investment in recreation facilities to make the site appealing and safe. However, the City should only consider taking ownership or maintenance of partner sites if they are within a gap area and can meet the size, orientation, and access criteria in the Design and Development Guidelines for a neighborhood park. It will also be important to evaluate the quality and condition of any existing recreation facilities to be clear on the level of investment that may be needed to upgrade the site to public standards.

## **2.4 Complete Partially Developed Sites and Upgrade Existing Facilities**

Completing the system will include the development of remaining phases of existing park sites, such as the Quail Campus, Sandstone Ranch and Dry Creek Park, as well as enhanced or upgraded recreation facilities that increase usability and capacity. Making further investment within existing recreation facilities and building footprints is the most cost-effective and environmentally sustainable investment the City can make in the system, especially where enhancements would provide more revenue-generating use. In most cases, the facility needs and desires are identified in the master plans for each site. Examples of capacity-increasing upgrades to existing recreation facilities beyond what is currently envisioned in the individual site master plans include:

- Upgrading competitive level athletic fields to artificial turf with lights to expand the playing capacity of existing fields;
- Enlarging the fitness area at the Longmont Recreation Center; and
- Consider combining the functions of the St. Vrain Memorial Building into the future recreation center (in 2.5 below).

## 2.5 Add Major Recreation Facilities to Increase Capacity



Longmont Recreation Center

As the city grows, its major recreation facilities (pools, indoor recreation spaces, and athletic fields) will ultimately not be able to accommodate the full demand. Upgrades will increase capacity to a point, but ultimately additional recreation facilities will be needed to serve the population. Furthermore, the community's willingness and ability to financially support additional recreation facilities will reach an upward limit. Additional full size competitive fields (field type dependent on projected participation) should be considered while maintaining a balance between competitive fields and other elements of the system. With this in mind, the recommended capacity-increasing major recreation facilities include:

- Building ball fields or multi-use fields in locations with existing concentrations of recreation facilities (particularly Sandstone and Dry Creek) before developing new community parks;
- Building an additional indoor recreation center with a competitive pool (size, level of City investment, and location should be based on a detailed feasibility study), this pool should replace the existing Centennial Pool, reallocating City resources to support the new facility;
- Building an outdoor leisure pool with a lap pool (as planned in the Dry Creek Community Park master plan); and
- Additional major indoor facility (currently planned as an Ice Arena as part of the Quail Campus Master Plan) in partnership as described in 2.6, below. The need for an ice facility arose during development of the Roosevelt Park Master Plan in 1998 which resulted in the opening of the Longmont Ice Pavilion, which is an outdoor facility. An indoor ice facility remains on the community's radar and gained momentum in 2007 during development of the Quail Campus Master Plan. The current Quail Campus Master Plan indicates the need for two full sheets of ice and suggests additional program elements such as a cardio fitness area, café, pro shop, and game room. Similar to the potential indoor recreation center/competitive pool facility, a facility of this size and magnitude should be based on a detailed feasibility study to identify and determine the level of investment supported and appropriate for the community.

The identified locations of planned future recreation facility sites are indicated on Map 6: System Concept. Locations are based on existing master plans and should be considered flexible based on capacity in the system and when the community is ready to fund major projects.

## 2.6 Critically Evaluate New Major Recreation Facilities Prior to Development

Major special use facilities should only be considered after detailed operations and market studies have been completed. The decision to move forward should be tied to identified, ongoing operational support to avoid drawing resources away from other park, recreation and trail operations (which would reduce stewardship). Operational support can come in different forms: a commitment to a level of ongoing operational funding by the City Council, a revenue target from user fees, a concessionaire agreement, or a mix of multiple sources. A public-private partnership is an option for the City to explore to provide new recreation facilities or services but the partnership should be with a stable, strongly-supported outside organization. Examples of such recreation facilities include an ice arena or competitive aquatics facility.

### 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 integrates trails as an essential service across the community, Longmont will have to expand the current understanding of what a trail can be. The trail access analysis shows that the primary and secondary greenways will not be able to serve the entire city. Connecting the system, especially north-south connections, will require the City find new ways to provide trail experiences outside of the identified greenways. These new types of connections will also help to fill gaps in the system by creating access to the most desired set of recreation activities: walking, jogging, running, rolling, and biking. Connections are also needed beyond these physical links. Informing the community about the range of opportunities available is critical to promoting activity.

### 3.1 Create a Network of Recreation Connections

Build a network of “enhanced recreation connections” that are emphasized as the major recreational routes for residents and visitors. This network starts with the primary greenways and then connects them in new ways to form loops and a fully interconnected recreational network. In order to make the connections between greenways, to cross the central portion of Longmont and to make key connections north-south and east-west, the City will need to use the existing street network. Many of these connections are currently possible using sidewalks and bike routes, but the system concept envisions something much more like a greenway trail experience added to key streets rather than the on-street experience offered by a painted bike lane. While the multi-modal transportation network with options for bicyclists and



*Example: Cycle-track in a residential neighborhood*



*Example: Multi-use trail in the street right-of way*

pedestrians is vital to the transportation network, this Plan is focused on maximizing the potential in the system for the purpose of recreation and recreation connections. The two networks (transportation and recreation) will work together to create an amazingly connected city.



*Example: Seating area within a planted median*

A range of solutions for expanding the on-street recreational experience are possible, and have been tested in other communities. Example images of on-street connection options are provided on this page. The appropriate treatment will vary depending on the type of neighborhood or street the connection is passing through. The conceptualized network of recreation connections is illustrated on Map 6: System Concept with the built portions of the greenway and on-street system.

An upcoming Multi-Modal/Transportation Plan update should include further details (including where and how) on enhanced on-street connections appropriate to Longmont.

### **3.2 Utilize Recreation Connections to Address Access Gaps**

The system of recreation connections is envisioned to expand recreation access in a number of areas that are currently gaps in park access. These areas should receive additional attention when prioritizing and designing recreation connection solutions. These connections will not only make traveling to parks more enjoyable, which is shown to extend the distance people are willing to travel, they will bring desired activities closer to home by providing a pleasant destination in and of themselves.

#### **Filling Gaps: Summary**

Goal 2: Complete and Goal 3: Connect include a variety of strategies for filling the gaps in the system illustrated on Map 4: Gap Areas. Creating recreation connections, or recreation connections in tandem with another solution such as nature play at a district park, is the recommended approach to expanding recreation access in service gap areas, as shown in Table 2-1. This table also shows how Goal 2 solutions will be employed in each gap area.



Table 3-1: Filling Gaps in Access

Gap Area	Goal 3.1	Goal 2.1	Goal 2.2	Goal 2.3
	Recreation Connection	New Park Development	Optimize Existing Park Land	Partnership
N1	X			X
N2	X	X		
N3	X	X		
N4			X	X
C1	X		X	
C2	X			X
C3	X			X
C4	X			
C5	X	X		X
S1	X	X		X
S2	X	X		X
S3	X			
S4	X	X	X	
S5	X	X		X

### 3.3 Complete the St. Vrain Greenway

The spine of the network, the St. Vrain Greenway, is recommended to be completed. The completed greenway will reach across the Longmont planning area and connect to other greenway trails in the system and extend the Colorado Front Range Trail plan of which it is a part. Trail tourism can be promoted once this trail extends to the City’s planning edges. This will be the signature trail in the system and should continue to be developed to the highest standards and as soon as possible. This trail is a legacy project that is an exceptional example of the City’s ability to build partnerships, leverage grant funds and maximize City funds to the greatest extent possible for the greatest benefit to residents and the region. Completion of this trail, and the connections that it provides, is and will continue to be the highest priority of residents until it is complete.

### 3.4 Connect the Public to Information about the System

Build on existing public information efforts to inform the community about Longmont’s park, recreation, and trail system. This includes using a range of tools (social media, print advertising, etc.) and resources (local businesses, schools, the chamber of commerce and community groups) to reach as wide an audience as possible. Develop a comprehensive signage and wayfinding system, including map kiosks, mileage indicators, and color coded route markers as well as interpretive signage where needed. Organize information (City website, printed materials) to be relevant to the needs of different users, and integrate the wayfinding system and identity into public information.

### **3.5 Provide Supporting Infrastructure and Amenities for Connections**

Greenways and trails require a high level of user safety and comfort. Trail crossings and intersections with busy streets should be designed to safely and conveniently prioritize trail users in accordance with the City’s Pedestrian Treatment Guidelines. Viewpoints, public art, rest areas, and points of interest should be integrated into the trail with directional and interpretive signage and turnouts. Access to the greenway system should be provided through formal trailheads that signify the entrance to a trail through signage and clearly marked wayfinding and route markers. These facilities should accommodate users by providing places for vehicle and bicycle parking, seating, water, bicycle repair stations, and recycling/trash collection. Places for equestrian staging, and public restrooms can also be added where appropriate and practical. It is also important to design trailheads that will allow for emergency and maintenance vehicle access.

### **3.6 Operational Support for Expanded Connections**

Along with the built systems to enhance safety and comfort, the expanded system will require operational support. Patrolling efforts will need to be expanded proportionately to serve the expanding system of trails. The key feature of trails, extending long distances, requires a different type of monitoring than is required for a park site. A combination of patrolling rangers, law enforcement, and operations and maintenance staff are able to accomplish the formal and informal observation of this part of the parks, recreation, and trails system to ensure that safety issues are addressed.

## ***Goal 4. Distinguish***

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

Distinguishing Longmont from other Colorado communities happens at multiple levels, from the smallest park to clusters of sites.

### **4.1 Unify Community Identity Clusters through Planning and Design**

The identity site analysis identified six clusters of sites in the Longmont system that contribute to community identity in a specific way. Longmont should address the future sites within each cluster and unify them under one master plan or guiding document per cluster. Existing sites should have a unifying plan developed that creates context for their identity. The sites should be included in the City’s information (both printed maps and signage) and through pedestrian and bike routes to maximize park use, visitor generation and resulting economic impact.



*Sandstone Ranch Adventure  
Playground*

The Community Identity Clusters are:

- Union Reservoir Cluster
- Sandstone Ranch Cluster
- St. Vrain Greenway Cluster
- Historic Downtown Cluster
- McIntosh Lake Cluster
- Quail Cluster

Future community identity clusters could be identified around natural features or clusters of park sites, such as Dry Creek/Blue Skies, and proposed park sites, but should be added only after the unification of the initial six clusters.

## 4.2 Define Distinguishing Features for All Park Types

All parks should have unique features that create an identity for the site (for example: The Barn Park is a common nickname for Willow Farm Park, due to the distinguishing repurposed barn). However, it is important to balance the unique with the standardized (for efficient maintenance) and to apply unique features selectively and appropriately to the scale of the park. For example, a special (but still off-the-shelf) playground, such as the train-themed structure at Collyer Park, would be appropriate for a neighborhood park, but a custom bench or trash receptacle would not. Larger, highly visited sites such as community parks and district parks could warrant more custom elements. It is recommended that parks within targeted Community Identity Clusters include a consistent theme across the sites, which could include internal signage, colors and finishes as well as potentially site-specific art or equipment.



*Willow Farm Park*

## 4.3 Plan for Unique Identity

Each park site should be master planned to include distinguishing features as appropriate. It is recommended that the Art in Public Places Commission be engaged with the site design process to ensure that the opportunity for identity is maximized in the commission or location of art installations at park sites.

## 4.4 Support Distinguishing Events

Park sites should be centers of community gathering at many different scales, from the family picnic to city-wide celebrations. Parks and recreation connections should be built and managed to support the formal and informal gatherings that create and define a community. All parks should be capable of supporting a neighborhood event (that is, an event that is intended to draw from within walking distance such as a neighborhood barbeque). Community Identity Clusters should not only support large scale events, but



*Music in the park*

it is recommended that clusters be the host of community signature events. Examples of such signature events include Rhythm on the River at Rogers Grove, the Kinetics Race at Union Reservoir, or the Longmont Lights event at Roosevelt Park and the historic downtown. These events could be run by the City or simply hosted at parks and run by partner organizations. The City should support community-initiated events by providing clear and consistent messages to organizers about the requirements for a successful event. The City should also clarify the expected level of support for these events throughout the City's organization, as well as other community organizations and groups, such as the Longmont Downtown Development Authority, Visit Longmont, and community groups and members. Programming goals and objectives for events are further explored in the Recreation Master Plan.

### **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 addressed the needs of the system that begin at construction and continue until a park or facility reaches the end of its useful life, at which point renewal projects apply.

#### **5.1 Tie Capital and Operating Funding to New Projects**

It is critical that the City link the cost of building new recreation facilities with the operating expenditures required to adequately maintain and operate them, even though large, one-time capital expenditures are often easier to support than the ongoing cost of staff and maintenance tasks. At the same time, the City should continue actively pursuing efficiencies in maintaining the existing park, recreation and trails system which will help meet the system's needs. As new recreation facilities are added, a fixed or even inflation-adjusted budget will not be able to keep up with the needs of the facilities. Additional operational funding (as well as investment in future renewal) must be committed when new parks and facilities are added. In the case of revenue generating recreation facilities, the assumptions about the level of City investment and the direct financial return on that investment from fees and charges should be clearly stated.

#### **5.2 Invest in Maturing Time for Systems and Plant Material**

When new parks are developed, provide additional resources (beyond routine maintenance) for an establishment period that hardens the infrastructure and makes it more durable for its useful life. This includes adjustments to systems (irrigation, electrical) for proper operation, and grow-in of the landscape. With some materials, such as native grasses, this may



Izaak Walton Clubhouse

take several years after initial development to make weed-free. This is an effort well spent to ensure long-term durability of the system and public acceptance of that type of improvement.

### **5.3 Invest in Quality and Appropriate Scale**

This plan has emphasized the importance of creating identity and filling the gaps in the system. The City of Longmont has a long history of park and recreation facility investments, but the existing system and the envisioned improvements will be more than has ever been managed and maintained in the past. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the system will require an ongoing commitment to choosing quality over quantity and balancing the investment across the system. The City should continue to utilize the City of Longmont Design Standards & Construction Specifications that spell out expectations for quality and maintainability improvements to City parks and facilities. The Longmont Design Standards and Construction Specifications, as well as the in-house Park Design and Development Guidelines, will also need to be reviewed and updated periodically to keep them current with the industry and environmentally sound and responsible.

In addition, the City should utilize the Park and Trail Planning and Development Guidelines, included as Appendix B to this plan, to identify the types of recreation facilities that should be considered as part of developing or renewing each park type. These guidelines are intended to create a framework for individual site master plans to ensure that community desires do not result in overdevelopment of a particular site. The intent is not to keep the community from meeting these desires, but rather to spread them across the system, avoiding setting a constantly expanding expectation of what will be included in each site. These guidelines are intended to optimize the functionality of each site, crafting the right balance between maximizing recreation function and optimizing lifetime operating costs.

### **5.4 Fine Tune a Maintenance Management Framework**

Similar to balancing the investment in new and renewed facilities across the system, the City will need to balance the allocation of its maintenance resources. The needs of competitive and specialized facilities, including indoor and aquatic facilities, and higher intensity programming will naturally draw a higher proportion of the maintenance resources. The concentration of these facilities in the community parks means that the overall portion of maintenance resources committed to community parks will need to be higher than other sites on a proportional basis. However, neighborhood parks should receive adequate maintenance, and a consistent level of neighborhood park maintenance should be implemented across the City.



*Lanyon Park*

A fully developed maintenance management framework will provide the justification for the difference in the amounts spent at specific types of parks and regularize the amount spent at all sites within a park type. Examples of the cost factors that will differ between parks and should be detailed in the maintenance management framework include:

- **Competitive use:** The level of use and programming for training and events in competitive sports facilities (especially athletic fields and competitive pools) requires additional resources to keep fields in playable condition and to maintain the type of pool needed for swimming and diving teams,
- **Revenue generating use:** Facilities that are rented out or have associated fees will command higher expectations for maintenance. Meeting these expectations is important to achieving the ongoing financial goals of the system.
- **Presence, number, and usage of restrooms:** The high level of maintenance needed for restrooms means additional funding is needed where restrooms are present and these costs will increase for each additional unit as well as the portion of the year the facility is open and intensity of park use.
- **Intensity of use:** A neighborhood park designed to the guidelines will primarily serve the immediate neighbors and will not see the same level of use as a community park. Major recreation facilities should also be allocated resources based on the intensity of use to maintain the quality environment.
- **Natural or historic features:** Unique features often require additional maintenance specific to the site. While some maintenance resources for unique features, such as art, should be included for all sites, more costly features should only be considered within community identity clusters and should be budgeted accordingly. The Art in Public Places (AIPP) pieces should continue to budget maintenance dollars for art designated in the AIPP program.

## 5.5 Support Resource Efficiency

Continuing to use limited resources in the most efficient manner possible is a key to being good stewards of the system. Three resources are particularly important to the ongoing efficiency of Longmont's parks, recreation, and trails system: water, energy, and staff time.

### *Water efficiency*

Reduce water use through capital improvements and maintenance practices, including conversion of appropriate areas to low water landscapes, using raw water for irrigation where feasible, water harvesting, and adoption of technologies or materials that reduce water use. Inclusion of water quality treatment will protect water resources.



Example: Community Gardening

### *Energy efficiency*

Implement energy efficiency improvements: incorporate solar and wind energy generation within parks, LED lighting, and improved insulation of buildings where practical.

### *Staffing Efficiency*

Prioritize those improvements that reduce maintenance workload and cost, especially those that provide other benefits (more recreation value or playing time, less water use, etc.). For example, the use of artificial turf for competitive soccer fields would reduce turf maintenance needs while providing more playing time; benefits that may be worthwhile though the capital replacement cost is high. From a financial standpoint, staffing efficiency generally overwhelms the cost savings of energy or water conservation; however, the City should consider the long-term and environmental value of strategically investing staffing time into priority conservation efforts.

## **5.6 Diversify Funding Support**

It is recommended that Longmont's financial policies reflect the mature status of its system and provide more focus on its long-term management.

- Update the park improvement fee to reflect the fact that much of Longmont's future population growth will be accommodated by building more capacity into the existing system.
- Seek other sources of capital development funding for further development of the system, which includes exploring options such as a sales tax or a bond.
- Seek stable operations and maintenance funding to ensure adequate resources are available for long-term sustainability, considering options such as increasing the park maintenance fee or establishing a sales tax. Building and maintaining community support for an ongoing funding source will require the City to clearly communicate the impact of these funds and how they are targeted to the park, recreation, and trails system.
- Develop a budgetary method to collect funds for future renewal of park sites, such as a sinking fund or operating reserve.
- Account for the revenue generated by recreation facilities to balance the investment in building and maintaining high quality or specialized facilities.

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