



Urban Land Institute (ULI) Colorado Revitalizing Longmont's Great Western Sugar Mill

A Technical Advisory Panel Report



A Report from the Longmont Sugar Mill Technical Advisory Panel

By ULI Colorado

August 20-21, 2020



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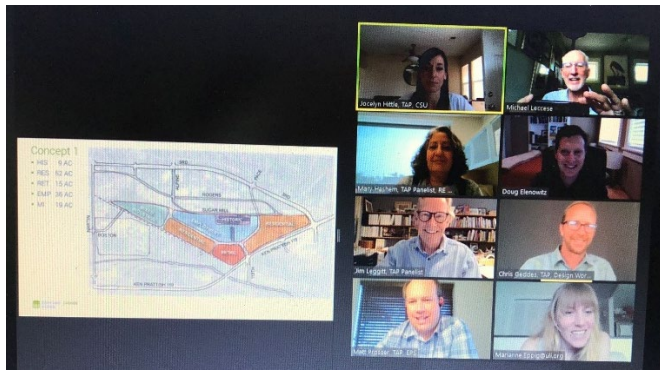
Cover image by: Kerry Garrison

Overview of ULI Advisory Services

Since 1947, the national ULI Advisory Services program has assembled 400+ ULI-member teams to help sponsors find solutions for issues including downtown redevelopment, community revitalization, and affordable housing, among other matters. In Colorado, ULI Advisory Services have provided solutions for such key sites as the Colorado Convention Center, Coors Field, Fitzsimons, and the Denver Justice Center.

Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs)

ULI Colorado’s Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs) offer the same expertise at the local level. Each panel is composed of qualified and unbiased professionals who volunteer their time. Panel chairs are respected ULI members with previous panel experience. Since 2003, ULI Colorado has completed more than 60 TAPs, leading to positive policy changes and built projects across the state.



ULI volunteer panelists and staff convened virtually for this Technical Advisory Panel, which took place over two days during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Executive Summary

The Great Western Sugar Mill in Longmont, Colorado, initially constructed in 1903, has been shuttered since 1977— but that has not restrained people’s fascination with the buildings. Back in 2012, Boulder County Public Health issued a warning to stay away from the buildings due to asbestos, unstable structures, and other dangerous conditions by putting up a "stay out" sign at the property. Large fires have been started by trespassers over time, increasing the instability of some of the buildings. Despite these precarious conditions, the sugar mill buildings retain a high level of interest from the Longmont community and developers who envision a new future for the site.

During Longmont’s most recent comprehensive plan update in 2016, the sugar mill buildings and surrounding land were identified as a priority for redevelopment, preservation, and adaptive reuse. The City has and continues to receive inquiries of interest from the development community, particularly since its inclusion within Longmont’s Opportunity Zone.

The City of Longmont asked ULI Colorado to study six contiguous land parcels, including about 125 acres and the historic Great Western Sugar Mill structures. In August 2020, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) composed of volunteer experts to provide recommendations related to the revitalization and reuse of the Sugar Mill and the surrounding land. This report includes the findings and recommendations that came out of that TAP.

The City of Longmont sought the panel’s insight and recommendations in answer to the following problem statement and questions:

The Longmont Sugar Mill complex is deteriorating, contributing to visually unappealing and unsafe conditions. Challenging land ownership configurations and environmental conditions have prevented redevelopment, which could transform the area into a unique and highly desirable area. The primary challenge is finding a strategy that can appease the concerns/interests of the current landowners, particularly relative to the property upon which the historic buildings sit, that would lead to consummation of a sale(s) to development interests. Another primary challenge to overcome is the complications involved with the known and unknown environmental conditions, and associated risk and liability accordingly. Addressing the ownership issue is the lynchpin to moving reuse and development forward. Along with the challenges to gaining control of the site, there are questions about potential adaptive reuse of the historic buildings, and well as the urban design framework, land use, and types of complimentary development on the remaining undeveloped sections of the site. Environmental stewardship and sustainability will need to be critical elements for any development project on this site. The City of Longmont hopes to move forward with restoring and preserving the historic buildings, while pursuing optimum development and reuse opportunities.

1. What strategy(s) could be pursued to gain control of the historically significant property prior to remediation, to minimize or protect a private party or the City from any associated risk or liability?
2. What strategies could be employed to remediate and restore the historic structures and what types of uses would be best suited to reuse the existing buildings?
3. What opportunities exist to incorporate diverse housing types into this overall area, including more affordable and attainable housing?
4. Can the project area, or even the historic buildings themselves, incorporate agricultural-based production, research and/or marketing facilities either in a stand-alone complex or integrated into a community, incorporating other elements such as housing, culture, recreation, entertainment, and commercial space?
5. What is the opportunity for the project to serve as a pioneering model for development of an environmentally conscientious and sustainable community, and what elements should be incorporated?
6. What are some solutions to provide robust, multi-modal connectivity to other parts of the city and larger region, and how should they be incorporated into an overall development framework?

The panel’s recommendations are divided into sections based on the questions posed to them:

- **Site Remediation:** pages 10-17
- **Master Planning the Site:** pages 18-26
- **Creating an Agri-Hub:** pages 27-32
- **Developing a Sustainable Community:** pages 33-34
- **Financial Strategies:** pages 35-36

Key Takeaways:

- City investment can help support the historical legacy of the site and its role as a gateway into the city
- Risk of missing this unique and important opportunity to make this iconic site accessible to the public
- Need for due diligence & data on the site
- Resolve water issues to move forward
- Need for Master Plan & collaboration between owners and/or land assembly
- Plan for a mix of uses on the site to fit with City’s Comprehensive Plan
- Importance of agriculture to the community
- The site could be an example of pioneering sustainability



An aerial view of the Great Western Sugar Mill. Photo by Richard M. Hackett.

II. Introduction

The Great Western Sugar Mill in Longmont, Colorado, initially constructed in 1903, has been shuttered since 1977—but that hasn't restrained people's fascination with the buildings. Back in 2012, Boulder County Public Health issued a warning to stay away from the buildings due to asbestos, unstable structures, and other dangerous conditions by putting up a "stay out" sign at the property. Large fires have been started by trespassers over time, increasing the instability of some of the buildings. Despite these precarious conditions, the sugar mill buildings retain a high level of interest from the Longmont community and developers who envision a new future for the site.

During Longmont's most recent comprehensive plan update in 2016, the sugar mill buildings and surrounding land were identified as a priority for redevelopment, preservation, and adaptive reuse. The City has and continues to receive inquiries of interest from the development community, particularly since its inclusion within Longmont's Opportunity Zone.

The City of Longmont asked ULI Colorado to study six contiguous land parcels, including about 125 acres and the historic Great Western Sugar Mill structures. In August 2020, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) composed of volunteer experts to provide recommendations related to the revitalization and reuse of the Sugar Mill and the surrounding land. This report includes the findings and recommendations that came out of that TAP, which took place virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Overview

On August 20-21, 2020, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide guidance on the revitalization and adaptive reuse of the Great Western Sugar Mill and surrounding property in Longmont, Colorado. For this two-day workshop, ULI Colorado assembled six land use experts (see panelist bios on pages 39-40) who volunteered to offer objective, third-party advice. The panel reviewed a detailed advance packet of prior studies, virtually toured the site with drone footage, and interviewed local stakeholders, including City staff, public officials, property and business owners, and local residents and organizational leaders (for a list of stakeholders interviewed, see page 38).

The City of Longmont gave the panelists the following problem statement and questions to address during the TAP:

Problem Statement

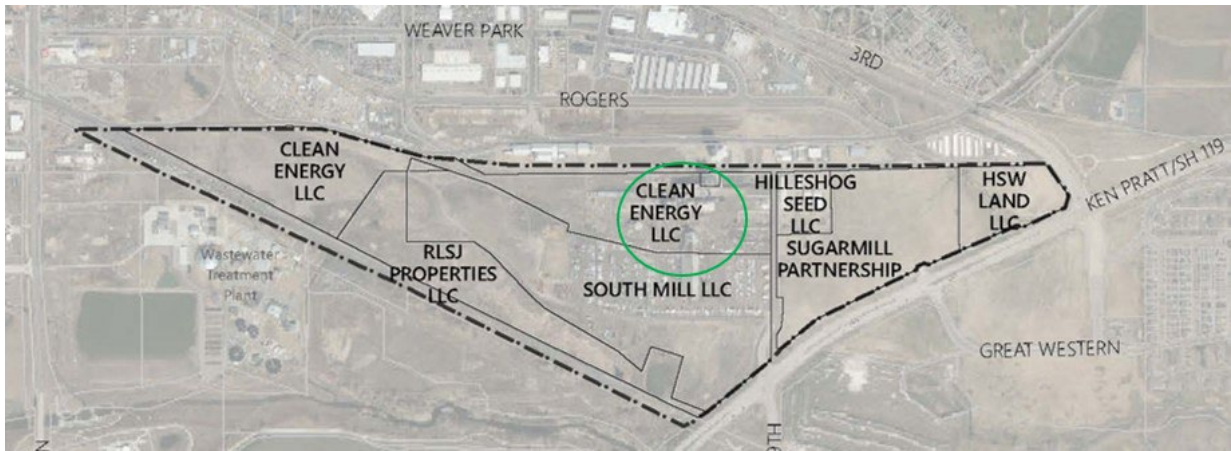
The Longmont Sugar Mill complex is deteriorating, contributing to visually unappealing and unsafe conditions. Challenging land ownership configurations and environmental conditions have prevented redevelopment, which could transform the area into a unique and highly desirable area. The primary challenge is finding a strategy that can appease the concerns/interests of the current landowners, particularly relative to the property upon which the historic buildings sit, that would lead to consummation of a sale(s) to development interests. Another primary challenge to overcome is the complications involved with the known and unknown environmental conditions, and associated risk and liability accordingly. Addressing the ownership issue is the lynchpin to moving reuse and development forward. Along with the challenges to gaining control of the site, there are questions about potential adaptive reuse of the historic buildings, and well as the urban design framework, land use, and types of complimentary development on the remaining undeveloped sections of the site. Environmental stewardship and sustainability will need to be critical elements for any development project on this site.

The City of Longmont hopes to move forward with restoring and preserving the historic buildings, while pursuing optimum development and reuse opportunities.

The City of Longmont sought the panel’s insight and recommendations in answer to the following questions:

1. What strategy(s) could be pursued to gain control of the historically significant property prior to remediation, to minimize or protect a private party or the City from any associated risk or liability?
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5. What is the opportunity for the project to serve as a pioneering model for development of an environmentally conscientious and sustainable community, and what elements should be incorporated?
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This report includes findings and recommendations related to each of these questions.



Parcel map of the study area. The green circle indicates the location of the Great Western Sugar Mill. Map courtesy the City of Longmont.

About the Study Area

The Longmont Sugar Mill buildings retain a high level of interest from the Longmont community; the City regularly receives emails and phone calls about saving this historic site. During the most recent comprehensive plan update in 2016, this area was frequently identified as a priority for redevelopment, preservation, and adaptive reuse. More specifically, the Sugar Mill, as part of the East Highway 119 Gateway, was identified as one of four citywide focus areas (visit <http://bit.ly/EnvisionLongmont> for more information). This priority area has also been acknowledged by the Longmont City Council and is specifically identified as a priority item in its 2020 work plan. The City has and continues to receive inquiries of interest from the development community, particularly since its inclusion within Longmont's Opportunity Zone.

The City of Longmont asked the TAP panelists to study six contiguous land parcels, including about 125 acres and the historic Great Western Sugar Mill structures. Most of the land is undeveloped, except for about 10 acres where the historic sugar beet processing buildings still stand. The western edge of the site is around a half mile from Longmont's historic downtown, and the sugar mill complex itself is just over a mile away. About one-third of the site is currently located within City limits. The balance of the site is situated in unincorporated Boulder County, but within the Longmont Planning Area.

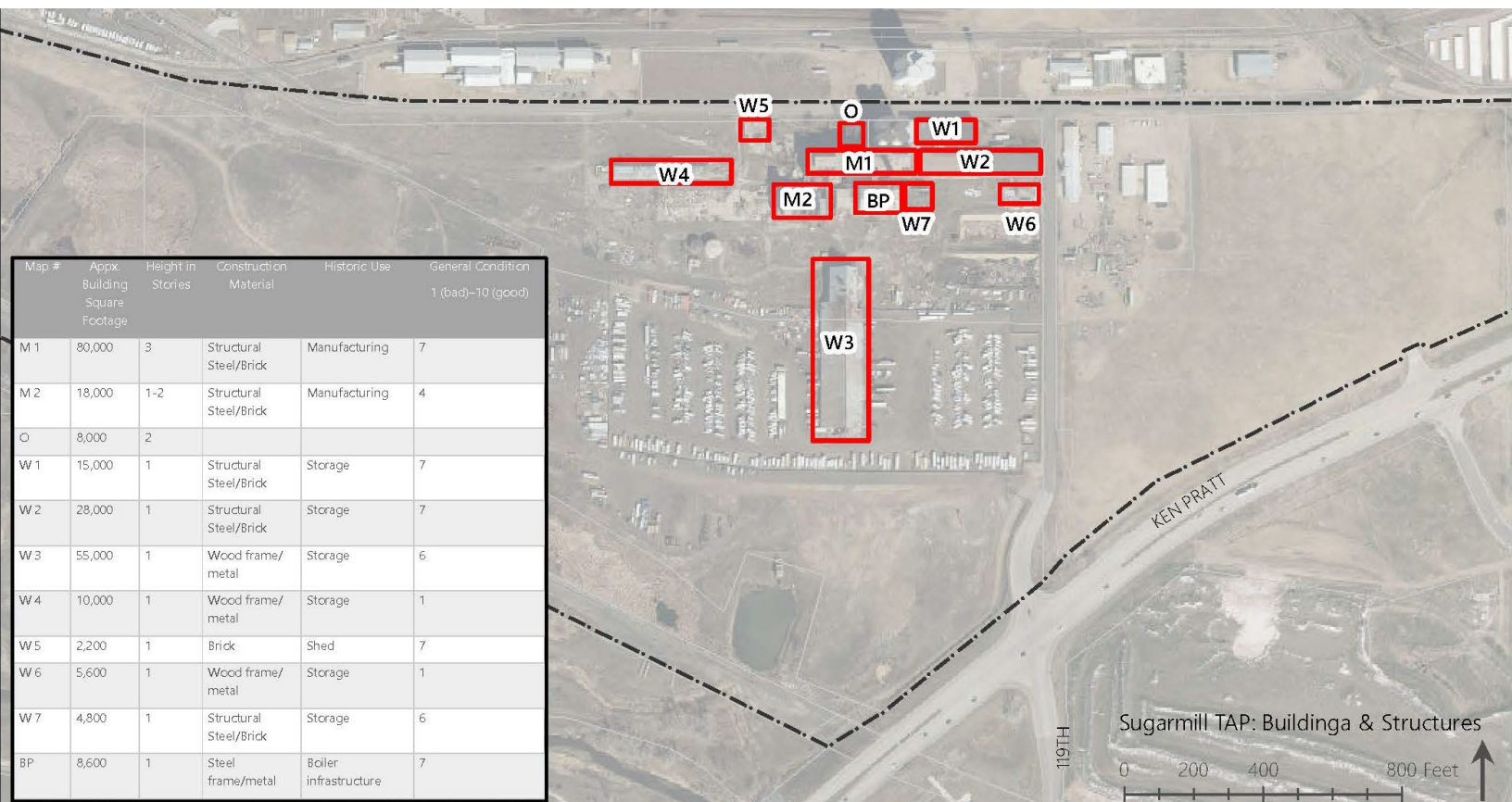
The Sugar Mill is located at the eastern gateway of the City of Longmont along Colorado State Highway (SH) 119/East Ken Pratt Boulevard. The Sugar Mill complex is comprised of several significant historic structures constructed in phases starting in 1903, with a significant modification made to the boiler plant in 1947. Based on information provided by the property owner, these buildings were constructed with structural steel membranes and brick façades. A significant amount of the brick work, most of which is not a structural element, has collapsed over time since the Sugar Mill was shuttered in 1977. The office building referenced as O on the map on page 7 suffered significant damage from a fire, which destroyed the upper level of the building, and the roof of structure M2 has collapsed.



An interior view of the Great Western Sugar Mill. Photo courtesy SUBSTREET.



A historic photo of a Great Western Sugar Mill billboard. Photo courtesy Colorado Preservation Inc.



The Sugar Mill complex includes eight historically significant structures, comprising approximately 160,000 square feet of building area. These structures stand as a relic of the plant’s history as a sugar beet processing plant that was built and expanded in phases starting in 1903. The building with the most reuse potential has three stories and offers about 60,000 square feet of adaptable space. Another 52,000 square feet of space is situated within two adjacent multi-story buildings, one of which was severely damaged by fire. The rest of the historically significant structures are one-story with high ceiling clearances.

The owner of the historic buildings currently uses one of the single-level structures for storage, salvage, and repair operations related to off-site business activities. The other historic buildings are in such disrepair that they cannot be occupied. Most of these buildings have been impacted by transient activity, fires, and the continuing crumbling and collapse of brick structures. The adjacent parcel to the south has been used for RV storage and fencing supplies.

The City is highly motivated to preserve the historic structures since they chronicle Longmont and Boulder County’s history. The buildings offer immense potential for adaptive reuse that, in part, could interplay with the nearby agricultural and urban landscapes and activities. The vast amount of surrounding undeveloped property provides an opportunity to blend old with new, creating a legacy community respectful of the area’s history. This site offers a tremendous opportunity to integrate a diverse range of land uses including housing, employment, commerce, recreation and culture, based on sustainable development.



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire at the Sugar Mill in 2016.
Photo courtesy Mollie Kendrick.

IV. Findings

During the workshop, the panelists toured the study area virtually, spoke with local stakeholders, and reviewed materials from the City of Longmont about the site. Before diving into recommendations, the panelists came up with the following findings.

Assets & Opportunities

Panelists agreed that this site has many assets that could be leveraged for successful redevelopment and revitalization. Some of the specific assets and opportunities include:

- Historic buildings that present adaptive reuse opportunities
- Two large boilers on site with unknown potential to be reused to produce energy
- Regional transportation access to the site (I-25, SH 119, 3rd Ave.)
- Around 125 acres, much of which is currently undeveloped land
- Spectacular mountain views from the site
- Funding availability from public sources for site cleanup and planning
- City owned and provided 1-GB internet service
- City owned electrical utility
- Proximity to St. Vrain Creek and its regional bicycle/pedestrian trail
- Proximity to vast amounts of City and Boulder County open space
- Strong and growing development market for Longmont and the surrounding region

Challenges

The City of Longmont is wise to proactively pursue recommendations for overcoming the significant challenges to redevelopment. The panelists identified the following challenges specific to this site:

- Multiple land ownerships & irregular shaped parcels
- Large amount of developable land relative to absorption capacity
- Poor condition of historic structures, along with trespassing & fires
- Known asbestos contamination in historic buildings
- Unknown viability for reuse of two large boilers along with the cost to remove them
- Unknown and/or limited information regarding ground/water contamination
- Lack of infrastructure to support redevelopment
- Lack of consensus over water rights on site
- Proximity of wastewater treatment plant on the west end of the site
- Rail tracks restrict access to St. Vrain Creek
- Bicycle/pedestrian trail along opposite side of river from site
- Major electrical transmission lines run along southern edge of site
- Limited budget and financial capacity for the City of Longmont to provide direct funding
- Lack of due diligence on the site (such as site and environmental assessments)
- Unknown costs of clean up
- Site is like a large island with a lack of multi-modal connectivity



A south-facing view of the Great Western Sugar Mill. Photo courtesy SUBSTREET.



Photo of the Great Western Sugar Mill in Longmont courtesy SUBSTREET.

V. Recommendations

The panel's recommendations are divided into sections based on the questions posed to them:

- **Site Remediation** Recommendations begin on page 10
- **Master Planning the Site** Recommendations begin on page 18
- **Creating an Agri-Hub** Recommendations begin on page 27
- **Developing a Sustainable Community** Recommendations begin on page 33
- **Financial Strategies** Recommendations begin on page 35

SITE REMEDIATION

The Panel's Approach

To provide guidance on remediation of the environmental conditions in and around the site, the panelist reframed the City's questions to the following:

- How do you manage the risk and liabilities to parties taking title to and remediating the site?
- What strategies could be employed to remediate and restore the historic structures?
- How can the City influence outcomes on the site?
- What are the considerations for effectuating the sale or control of the site?

Managing Risk & Liability

Since the Great Western Sugar Mill was shuttered in 1977, known and unknown environmental and structural hazards have accumulated. The historic structures are in desperate need of stabilization and repair. Friable asbestos—a known carcinogen—has been identified in the buildings, with significant amounts believed to have been released over time. Large transformers remaining in the buildings are known to have Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), which also have harmful health effects. Environmental conditions relative to the soils and water in the area have not yet been determined.

Overall, there is insufficient data to characterize or quantify the nature and extent of environmental hazards in this area, or to estimate the cost of addressing the issues. It would be difficult to underwrite a development project here with so many unknowns. Identifying and managing risk and liabilities is of primary importance for anyone who takes title to and remediates the site.

Recommendations for managing risk & liability:

Collect more data

- Characterize and quantify the environmental conditions
- Determine if there are other conditions on site that must be addressed
- Sample for asbestos in the surrounding soil to determine if there is a significant risk to public health

Extinguish the liability

- Take advantage of the [Colorado Voluntary Cleanup Program](#) (VCUP), which provides property owners with resources to facilitate cleanups, as well as assurances against regulatory enforcement
- Remediate environmental conditions on site
- Redevelop the structures to eliminate safety hazards

Manage the risks

- Secure [Environmental Insurance](#), which protects owners of brownfields
- Screen and select qualified contractors
- Leverage contracting mechanisms such as guaranteed fixed price remediation (GFPR) or risk sharing contracts

Appropriately identifying the site conditions is a necessary first step for entry into the VCUP program, for underwriting environmental insurance, and for quantifying costs to support the pro forma, financing and development of the property.

How the City Can Influence Outcomes on the Site

Since the City of Longmont does not have control over the site, it would be difficult to influence site outcomes, as the owners have property rights. There are, however, options for restructuring that can be considered by stakeholders.

“Asbestos has likely been dispersed around the site.”

**- Jesse Silverstein, Principal,
Development Research
Partners**

FRIABLE ASBESTOS

Friable asbestos containing material (ACM) is any material that contains more than one percent asbestos by weight or area, depending on whether it is a bulk or sheet material and can be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by the pressure of an ordinary human hand.

“Great Western went bankrupt in the 1980s and we backed into the sugar mill with a sale-leaseback. I never expected that we would be trying to redevelop the property, and now we’re responsible for environmental cleanup. We’re concerned about the environmental unknowns. We want to try to reuse the boilers for biomass generation of electricity, which would be a win-win since it’s so cost-effective and could bring in money for cleanup. We originally had 300 acres and had to sell off pieces for financial reasons. In terms of redevelopment, retail is in trouble and office is in flux, so we’re in a state of wondering.”

**- Dick Thomas, Owner of the
Sugar Mill Property**

Options for structuring:

1. **Private party buys the property:** An arms-length purchase and sale of the property is the best-case scenario for shielding the City and current owners from risk. This option provides the least opportunity for control over development outcomes other than through standard entitlement processes. Several parties have mentioned an interest in purchasing the whole site, going through the annexation process with the City of Longmont, and conducting environmental cleanup and master planning with the community. The current owners could negotiate to retain control of the boiler building if the boilers are deemed viable for energy production.
2. **The City or Urban Renewal Authority (URA) takes title to property:** This option provides the highest degree of control over the development outcomes, but as an owner, the City or URA would be stepping into the title, with the attendant liabilities.
3. **The City of Longmont enters into a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) with a private party:** DDAs involve the sale of City-owned land to a developer in exchange for restrictions on the use of the property. This would require that the City take title to the property first, but a DDA would shield the City from liability while allowing contractual control over development outcomes. Alternatively, a voluntary Development Agreement between the landowners and the City could help to negotiate the provision of infrastructure, public spaces, and amenities on the site.
4. **The City creates or supports the creation of a new entity specifically for development of the site:** The panel believes that creating an entity, such as a Community Development Corporation (CDC), would best shield the City from liability while providing for contractual development controls and long-term management of the property. A CDC is a nonprofit organization incorporated to provide programs and services that promote and support community development. This could also be achieved in the form of a public-private partnership with a third party that takes title to the site.

It is the panel's recommendation that **Scenario 4** would be the best option for the City. It is, however, likely to be the most expensive option. **Scenario 3** is the preferred alternate recommendation. Regardless of site ownership, the City of Longmont can support existing and future stakeholders as they conduct necessary due diligence, structure deals, and create a master plan for development of the site.

Considerations to Effectuate Sale or Control of the Site

There are a variety of alternatives for moving forward with remediation and redevelopment of the site:

- Current owners voluntarily complete remediation of the site
- Current owners partner with a qualified developer to remediate and redevelop the site
- Current owners sell the site to a developer
- Public entities incentivize and/or pressure current owners to complete remediation and/or sale
- Public entities use statutory powers, such as eminent domain, to move forward remediation and redevelopment of the site

"I'm a real estate investor specializing in brownfield redevelopment. We look for properties around the country and we'd be interested in acquiring this site if we can put the parcels together under one ownership. It works better to have one group do all the site planning. Then we can go through the annexation, do the master plan, and do the environmental cleanup. We have patient capital and would need a return, but we'd be willing to work with city and community on a master plan."

- Dwight Stenseth,
President, Real Estate
Recovery Capital

Understanding the Motivations of the Current Owners:

Legacy

The current owners of the historic Sugar Mill structures, Dick Thomas and his son Steve Thomas, care about the legacy of the site. They envision a campus centered around the historic structures that combines agricultural research with a mix of high-quality uses such as housing, retail, and office space. They agree that it makes sense for the multiple properties within the site to be planned as a whole, as opposed to piecemeal development within current property lines, and that environmental studies could help all the property owners with cleanup.

Renewable Energy Production

Dick and Steve Thomas' company is titled "Clean Energy Partners LLC," indicating their intention to pursue renewable energy production. They hope to reuse the Sugar Mill's boilers to burn waste wood—such as beetle kill wood to minimize forest fire threats—and produce biomass energy. This energy could be sold to Xcel Energy, the Platte River Power Authority, or to the City of Longmont to help fund the cleanup and redevelopment of the site, and then could be used on the newly developed campus as part of a localized renewable energy district. According to the owners, this would be carbon-neutral energy production and the forest service mentioned to them that they would be excited to have a place to take the wood, which they currently burn in piles. In terms of emissions and impacts to surrounding uses, the owners cited the [St. Paul Cogeneration](#) biomass plant in downtown St. Paul, Minnesota, saying that people don't even know the plant is there.

The integrity of the existing boilers, however, is unknown. While boiler explosions are uncommon, they can be deadly. The owners said that the boiler inspector claimed the boilers were in good condition before the Sugar Mill was shut down, but they would need to be recertified. Local experts in biomass energy, such the [bioenergy group at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#) (NREL), could help assess the feasibility of reusing the boilers for biomass energy production and the cost of creating a district system for energy.

Valuing the Property

Setting a financial value for the sugar mill property has been a challenge for the current owners. Anyone who seeks to redevelop the property would need to be able to absorb the property acquisition price in addition to covering the costs of remediation and redevelopment. A number of factors that interplay in a potential purchase price negotiation, and that need to be addressed, include:

- Comparable land sales in the immediate area
- Value of the historic buildings given present conditions
- Projected environmental remediation and structural restoration costs
- Determination over the existence of water rights and/or eligibility for water credits from the City of Longmont
- The property owner's interest in retaining ownership of boilers to generate and sell electricity back to a utility

Each of these matters require resolution to make a land sale transaction a reality. The panel advised that it would be in the City's interest to facilitate processes that could provide the necessary information. For example, working with the property owner to conduct needed environmental assessments and/or a study determining the viability of boiler

"I like the idea of reusing the boilers. I have to ask though: what's the likelihood of this happening? How expensive? How viable? Boilers are big and dangerous – when things go south it gets really expensive and dangerous. People die when they explode. Permitting is a challenge."

- Tony Curcio, Vice President, Iron Woman Construction

BIOMASS PRODUCTION EXAMPLE

In 2003, Ever-Green Energy developed [St. Paul Cogeneration](#), a biomass-fired combined heat and power (CHP) plant, to improve the efficiency and environmental profile of District Energy St. Paul in Minnesota. This facility provides renewable, reliable electricity to Xcel Energy and heating to the district heating customers.

reuse. Since the water credit issue has become a roadblock to progress, the City may want to consider establishing criteria or policy through which some level of consideration for water credits could be offered to facilitate a desired redevelopment outcome (i.e. preservation/reuse of historic buildings, affordable housing, sustainable development elements, etc).

Incentives (“Carrots”):

City investment in the site could help to advance desired outcomes. The panel recommended these public incentives for cleanup and redevelopment:

- **Early Stage Assessment and Planning:** Remove obstacles for current owners to collaborate on environmental assessments and site planning.
- **Assessment Funding:** Provide support and help to corral public resources for environmental, structural, and historic assessment, testing, and observation.
- **Feasibility Funding:** Support energy feasibility and assessment of boiler reuse, renewable energy production, and an energy district on the site. This could involve partnering with NREL and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on their [RE-Powering Feasibility Studies](#), which evaluate the feasibility of renewable energy production on brownfields.
- **Master Planning:** City staff can help the site owners with community engagement and overall site planning, which can maximize value for all owners.

The panel encouraged the City to limit the strings on these investments, since information related to assessments, feasibility, and planning benefits all stakeholders.

Panelists also recommended meaningfully investing in “but for” costs (i.e. “but for the city’s investment, these things would not occur”), such as those related to:

- **Specific desired outcomes**, like remediation, infrastructure, historic preservation, development agreements, energy district creation, etc.
- **Reducing investment risk** and supporting returns and capital efficiency (public investment reduces risk for private capital).

Overall, the panel recommended public investment in the site because public capital measures return on investment (ROI) differently than private capital, which typically has a shorter timeline and higher financial ROI requirements. Public capital can be used to deliver on the community’s goals.

Enforcement (“Sticks”):

If necessary, public entities can also enforce existing regulations to make progress on the site, including:

- Enforcement of health and safety, use, and code violations
- Foreclose on tax liens
- Statutory powers, such as eminent domain

“The City has to lead the effort. The risk profile is different for a private developer is than it is for a public entity.”

- Carl Koebel, Chief Operating Officer, Koebel & Company

“But for the City’s investment, redevelopment along the lines of what they are hoping for will not occur.”

- Panelist Doug Elenowitz, Principal, Trailbreak Partners



An interior view of the Great Western Sugar Mill. Photo courtesy Scott Haefner.

Remediation and Reuse of Historic Buildings

The historic structures of the Great Western Sugar Mill are in need of stabilization and repair, hopefully before they deteriorate beyond salvation. The panel concluded that information gaps related to environmental and structural conditions, and the water rights issue, must be filled before significant forward movement will occur.

Assessment required:

- Environmental
- Structural
- Cultural inventory and historical significance
- Systems and infrastructure
- Code, health, and safety considerations

Determination of elements to be preserved, replaced, or removed:

- Determine costs and uses of specific elements
- Find out financial and historical value of elements
- Consider use and associated constraints of [Historic Preservation Tax Credits](#)
- Assess impacts to development timeline

Early engagement with experienced contractors:

- Evaluate means and methods for deconstruction, reconstruction, replacement materials, and efficient systems
- Contractors can help identify unknowns that will influence cost and schedule
- Get a cost estimate and scope of work to get to a white box, core and shell condition
- Assemble the costs to stabilize or demolish buildings not identified for reuse

Anticipate:

- Removal of regulated building materials—such as asbestos, PCBs, and lead—that pose a health risk. This should include an asbestos abatement plan and there may be an opportunity for an asbestos in place plan.
- Considerations should include modern building codes and expectations, such as ADA compliance and energy efficiency. Elevator service, stair dimensions, corridor locations relative to egress, points of access, and temperature and moisture management should also be considered.
- Plan to develop spaces that are flexible for end users, since uses will likely change over time.

Examples of Adaptive Reuse of Old Industrial Buildings



Rendering of the Garver Feed Mill in Madison, WI. Photo courtesy Garver Feed Mill.

[Garver Feed Mill in Madison, WI](#)

Garver Feed Mill was built in 1905 for the U.S. Sugar Company, serving as a sugar beet processing plant from 1906 to 1924. The site was purchased in 1930 by James R. Garver, remodeled and became the main facility for Garver's Supply Company. The property was foreclosed in 1972. After decades of neglect and decay, the Feed Mill was renovated and reopened in 2019 as home to a collection of producers, artisan food makers, wellness studios and hospitality providers. The renovated Feed Mill honors and preserves Madison's rich agricultural and industrial history by re-activating the building as a next-generation food production center and provide visitors with the opportunity to taste the best of Madison. The historic Mill has been transformed into a platform for local food businesses to grow, and in turn, expand Madison's profile as a Midwestern hub of high quality, hand crafted food and drink. Private and public events in our indoor and outdoor event spaces keep Garver bustling throughout the year. In winter months, Garver is home to the Dane County Farmers Market, the largest producer only farmers market in the nation.



Monadnock Mills in Claremont, NH. Photo by Sally McCay.

[Monadnock Mills in Claremont, NH](#)

Monadnock Mills included four vacant and historic textile mill buildings on the Sugar River crumbling from decades of neglect. Over time, the City of Claremont acquired the properties and in 2004 publicized a Request for Developers. Around 130,000 square feet were renovated and converted for corporate offices, conference facilities, a boutique hotel and restaurant, 47 residential condominiums, and a parking garage. The mills project is considered the centerpiece of the revitalization of the city and has won numerous awards.



Pearl Brewery in San Antonio, TX. Photo courtesy AtPearl.com.

[Pearl Brewery in San Antonio, TX](#)

As a former brewery operating from 1883 to 2001, Pearl reflects a vivid past while embracing the future with environmentally sustainable buildings mixed with historic architecture. The mixed-use space features retail, dining, picturesque green spaces, a riverside amphitheater, and the third campus of The Culinary Institute of America. From Pearl's innovative 2009 solar installation to drought-resistant xeriscaping, Pearl is committed to sustainability. It started with preserving the historic brewery buildings and has grown to a host of environmentally friendly practices.

More Examples of Adaptive Reuse:

- [Artspace Loveland in Loveland, CO](#)
- [Ginger & Baker in Fort Collins, CO](#)
- [Historic Flour Mill in Salina, KS](#)
- [Iron Works Village in Englewood, CO](#)
- [Optimist Hall in Charlotte, NC](#)
- [Steel Yards in Boulder, CO](#)
- [The Source in Denver, CO](#)
- [Tivoli Station in Denver, CO](#)
- [Windsor Mill in Fort Collins, CO](#)



Ginger & Baker in Fort Collins, CO. Photo courtesy PHOCO.

MASTER PLANNING THE SITE

The City of Longmont asked the panel about what uses would be best suited for the existing buildings, and whether diverse housing types could be integrated into the site along with other agricultural, recreation, entertainment, and commercial uses. City staff also asked about incorporating multi-modal connectivity into an overall development framework for the site. The panel provided the following recommendations in response.

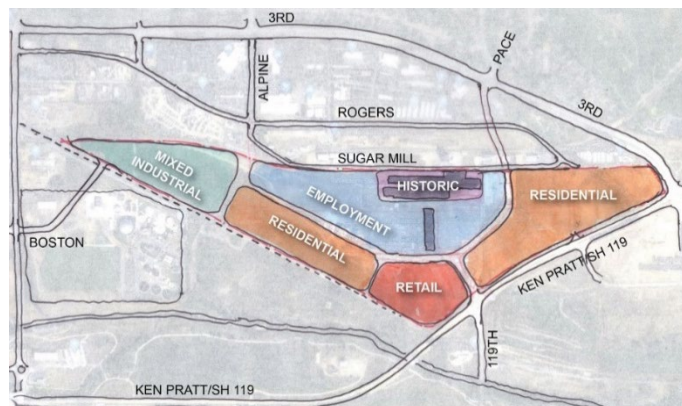
Need for a Master Plan

An overall site master plan will ensure that development phasing, land use distribution, circulation, and open space support the vision for the entire 125 acres. The panel noted that planning and developing the properties as a unified district will result in better outcomes for all stakeholders than a piecemeal approach.

The panelists drafted the following concept plans to begin the brainstorming process for the site. Ultimately, the property owners, city staff, and members of the community can work together to develop a shared vision for the site. The panel's "bubble diagrams" below illustrate where uses could be situated on the site and they included example images of what the uses could look like. Multiple concept plans are used to show possibilities for the site, which can be helpful for getting feedback from stakeholders.

While the bubble diagrams indicate general locations of uses on the map, the panel recommended that green space and other design elements be added throughout the site and to buffer uses from surrounding streets and floodplains. Panelists also suggested adding a gateway element to welcome people into Longmont and announce the public entrance of the Great Western Sugar Mill as they drive up East 3rd Avenue from State Highway (SH) 119/E Ken Pratt Blvd. Those elements could be designed with artists and public input.

Concept Plan 1



Acreage by use in this concept plan:

- Historic Buildings: 9 acres
- Residential: 52 acres
- Retail: 15 acres
- Employment: 36 acres
- Mixed Industrial: 19 acres

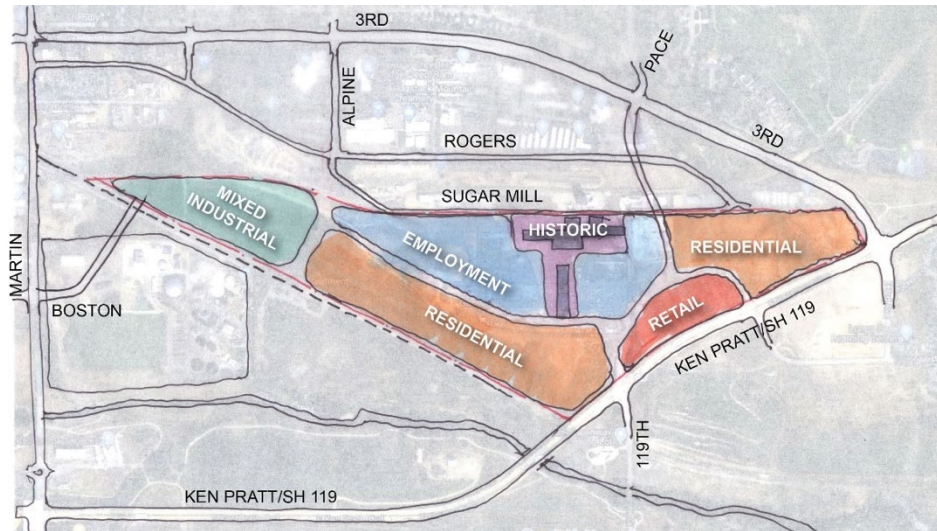
“It would be great to have a comprehensive vision with regulatory documents for the overall site. It doesn’t need to be a PUD. A concept plan for this area could provide a framework for development on the site without too much discretionary review. Annexation, zoning, and entitlements would be important and discussions regarding various uses could happen before application.”

**- Brien Schumacher,
Principal Planner, Longmont
Planning & Development
Services**

“We termed this the Gateway Project because we see this as the gateway to Longmont.”

**- David Tschetter,
Developer**

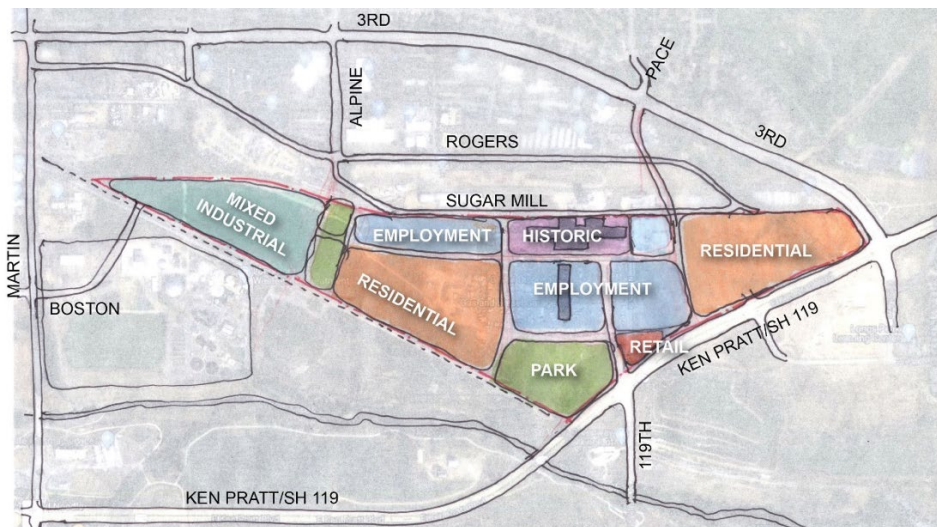
Concept Plan 2



Acreeage by use in this concept plan:

- Historic Buildings: 12 acres
- Residential: 57 acres
- Retail: 10 acres
- Employment: 33 acres
- Mixed Industrial: 20 acres

Concept Plan 3



Acreeage by use in this concept plan:

- Historic Buildings: 9 acres
- Residential: 46 acres
- Retail: 3 acres
- Employment: 33 acres
- Mixed Industrial: 20 acres
- Park: 16 acres

Overall Site Yield for Uses

To help calculate the site yield for uses in all the concept plans, the panel provided the following:

- Historic buildings adapted for the Agri-Hub or other appropriate uses: 9 to 12 acres (depending on which buildings are reused)
- Retail: 3 to 15 acres (30,000 to 150,000 square feet)
- Employment/Office: 30 to 36 acres (around 500,000 square feet)
- Mixed Industrial: 20 acres (around 175,000 square feet)
- Residential: 45 to 55 acres (1,750 to 2,250 units)

Design Guidelines

The panel suggested that design guidelines, rather than strict standards, should be developed to ensure that the quality and character of buildings and public spaces are consistent across development phases. These design guidelines could help to create a sense of place, align with the City of Longmont’s design standards, and highlight the historic buildings, while not being overly prescriptive. Branding the area collectively with design guidelines could help with high-quality placemaking and cohesive, attractive development.



Joanna Gaines, famous for her designs on “Fixer Upper,” is a co-creator of Magnolia Market at the Silos in Waco, TX. Photo courtesy WildlyCharmed.com.

“I like the idea of branding the project collectively. We could lead with creative placemaking—public amenities, design, architecture, native landscaping, renewables—and could bake Longmont’s values for the built environment into the process.”

- David Tschetter, Developer

“This could be a catalytic project for the area with public-facing amenities that serve the site and the broader region.”

- Justin Croft, VP of Development, Zeppelin Development

Mix of Commercial

Many of the stakeholders and the panelists agreed that the site is large enough to host a variety of commercial uses. Some of the ideas for this mix include:

Agri-Hub



Flower Day at Eastern Market in Detroit, MI. Photo courtesy Know Detroit.

- Flexible future re-use of historic buildings, featuring their agricultural history
- Locally sourced food & beverages available onsite
- Consumer-facing growing, processing, storage, production, and distribution of agricultural products

“With COVID, there’s more interest in locally sourced food products. Longmont Dairy added cold storage due to increased demand. There’s also a large labor force for food and agriculture in this area, and food and beverage production nearby. It would be great to highlight the agricultural heritage of this area with an employment center that could also contribute financially to the city.”

- Jessica Erickson, President & CEO, Longmont Economic Development Partnership

Retail



Nordic Brew Works in Bozeman, MT. Photo courtesy Armstrong Marketing Solutions.

- Comfortable community hub centered around historic buildings with integrated retail
- Support for local businesses
- Fresh food from the Agri-Hub
- Retail along SH 119/E Ken Pratt Blvd
- All retail fits in with site aesthetic
- Integrated parking (not the front door)
- Sales tax revenue from retail generates opportunities for the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) on the site

Employment



The Cannery office building in Campbell, CA. Photo by Jeff Peters, Vantage Point Photography Inc.

- Employment space related to the Agri-Hub (research, production, storage, distribution)
- Research & development
- Food and beverage business incubation

Mixed Industrial



From left: Gotham Greens greenhouse next to the Stanley Marketplace in Aurora, CO (photo courtesy Gotham Greens). The Shepherd's Corner, Inc. in Bridgeport, WV serves as a distribution center (photo courtesy Shepherd's Corner).

- Agricultural “back-of-house” with space for processing, storage, production, and distribution of agricultural products
- Light manufacturing space
- Artisan makerspace

Mix of Housing

City of Longmont staff asked the panel about opportunities to incorporate diverse housing types into this site, including more affordable and attainable housing. There is strong demand for additional housing in the region; however, the amount of residential development allowed would be limited if the site is annexed by the City of Longmont and the formation of a Metro District is desired in this area (both recommended for financial reasons; for more information see page 36). Also, the City of Longmont’s Comprehensive Plan does not currently allow for suburban, detached single-family housing and has specific density requirements relative to this site.

Since this is the case, the panelists recommended adding a diverse mix of housing types at medium density to serve an intergenerational population.

Agricultural Village Orientation



Magnolia’s Spring at the Silos in Waco, TX. Photo by Audrey Duke.

The panel recommended creating an agricultural village by adding a mix of housing around the Agri-Hub. The suggested multifamily housing within mixed-use areas and townhomes and cottage style housing in surrounding areas. A variety of housing types allow for a range of price points, meeting the existing demand in the region.

“We continue to need housing as a community. I would not want that to be overlooked. Housing has to stay in the mix.”

- Joni Marsh, Assistant City Manager, City of Longmont

“Start with for-sale housing to build critical mass on the site and to support the other developments and uses. The Metro District can help. A residential community can surround the core of the site and the City can control the cleanup and remediation of the historic buildings.”

- Carl Koebel, Chief Operating Officer, Koebel & Company

Senior Housing



Galloway Ridge, a Life Plan Community, at Fearington Village in Pittsboro, NC. Photo by Brent Clark.

The panel noted that senior housing could work well as part of the community. They suggested around fifty-five or more units of apartments and small homes that provide a continuum of care for seniors. In addition to offering lifecycle options, senior housing does not require as much parking as other housing types.

Cottage Communities



The Patch explores an infill version of the 'Agrihood' concept for residential development. Image courtesy KTG Architecture.

The panel also recommended for-sale and for-rent cottage style residential homes with communal open space. To achieve an average density, these single-family homes could be built on small lots, with around twenty dwelling units per acre and around 750-1,250 square feet per unit.

Townhomes



Modern Mueller Row Home by the Muskin Company. Photo courtesy Mueller Silent Market.

Townhomes are a great choice for the site because they fill demand for middle income housing with high quality products. The panel recommended around 6-10 townhomes per building with around 1,000-1,500 square feet per unit. At this density, the site could host around 15–20 dwelling units per acre.

Mixed-Use Multi-family Housing



Serenbe Textile Lofts in Atlanta, GA. Photo by Peachtree Photography.

Mixed-use development with multi-family housing above commercial space makes sense close to the Agri-Hub core. The panel recommended for-sale condominiums above ground floor commercial that helps to activate public spaces. Panelists suggested around 800-1,500 square feet per residential unit with around 25-30 dwelling units per acre.

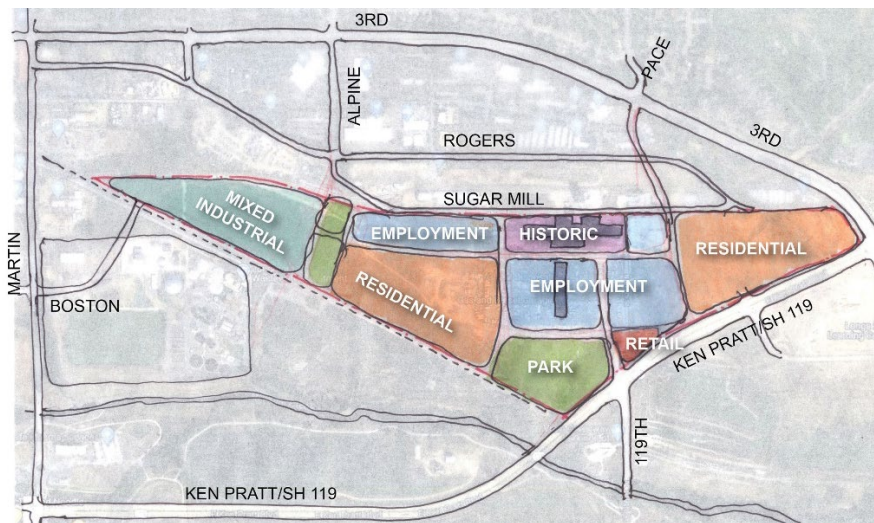
Multi-family Attached Apartments/Condominiums



Modern apartment buildings in Berlin, Germany. Photo by querbeet.

Multi-family attached housing, such as rental apartments and for-sale condominiums, are important for providing needed affordable housing in the region. These could include high-quality community amenity spaces for residents. The panel recommended around 800-1,200 square feet per unit and around 40-50 dwelling units per acre.

Transportation Network



“There are a lot of barriers between this site and the rest of the community. This site is an island, so it needs connections to the rest of the city.”

- Phil Greenwald, Longmont Transportation Planning Manager, City of Longmont

The City of Longmont asked the panel for ways to provide robust, multi-modal connectivity throughout the site and to other parts of the city and larger region.

The panel recommended the following transportation solutions:

- Add multi-modal streets interior to the site, as well as bike and pedestrian improvements to existing streets, such as East Rogers Road and Sugar Mill Road
- Connections to Pace Street, as physically and financially viable, through the site for multi-modal access to downtown Longmont and other areas north of 3rd Avenue
- Bike and pedestrian linkages to surrounding neighborhoods, tying into existing trail systems and to Downtown
- Local access connections with Boston Avenue at Martin Street (around the city owned waste treatment facility on the west side of the site) and Pace Street, which would likely need to curve to the east due to topography
- Regional access connection at East 3rd Avenue and SH 119/E Ken Pratt Blvd
- Collector streets around the exterior of the site for cars and buses
- Transit stops along the site

Since connectivity to the rest of the community is important, the panel recommended including specific connectivity solutions in the master plan for the district. A site plan could tie into current and future plans for the area, such as the rail system, bus rapid transit, transit hub, and SH 119 plans.



The trail system through open space at Stapleton in Denver is an example of connectivity. Photo courtesy Westerly Creek Metropolitan District.

CREATING AN AGRI-HUB

At the beginning of this process, the City of Longmont asked: “Can the project area, or even the historic buildings themselves, incorporate agricultural-based production, research and/or marketing facilities either in a stand-alone complex or integrated into a community, incorporating other elements such as housing, culture, recreation, entertainment, and commercial space?”

The panel answered definitively: yes.

Creating a Regional Food Hub and Agricultural Production and Distribution Center

The panel embraced the idea of creating a regional Agricultural Hub on this site. They envisioned a campus with the historic structures at the core. The buildings with structural integrity could be reused to showcase the history and current methods and research related to agriculture in the area, much like the [Tillamook Creamery](#) with interactive information displays in front of active production and shops.

The panel imagined farm-to-market production, along with a distribution center on the site. The production could be small scale with demonstration farms and gardens that could support commodity production locally. The Hub could show how food is produced and distributed, and provide visitors with opportunities to purchase local, fresh produce and engage with the research and demonstration gardens (think vertical hydroponics and aquaponics, native plants, and test kitchens). The buildings could also be used for events and programming for the public. The land around the buildings could be used for agriculture, production, storage, distribution, and a mix of uses including housing, office, and retail (more details about suggested uses are on pages 18-25).

Local stakeholders interviewed were supportive of transforming this site into a community resource centered around local agriculture, including housing, farmer services, processing, storage, events, and retail. These uses, and other agriculture-related uses, would allow people to learn about the agricultural heritage of the site and the current processes of agriculture, drawing tourism like Napa Valley. It was suggested that local farmers could form a co-op so that the services they pay for are invested in the infrastructure and operations as opposed to third-party profits. One vision presented this site as a community asset that would not charge for entry and that would not make shopping the primary purpose—instead, people could come to learn, explore, hang out, and eat.

To move forward on this agricultural hub concept, the panelists suggested connecting with the [Colorado State University \(CSU\) Food Systems Team](#), some of

“The agricultural heritage of this area is important to the community and we hope to continue this connection. There is also interest in the county for local agriculture and food production. We could use a public space to showcase food production, which could include a market. We’d like to preserve as much as possible of the structures here for reuse and we could make use of the large site.”

- Dale Case, Director, Boulder County Community Planning & Permitting

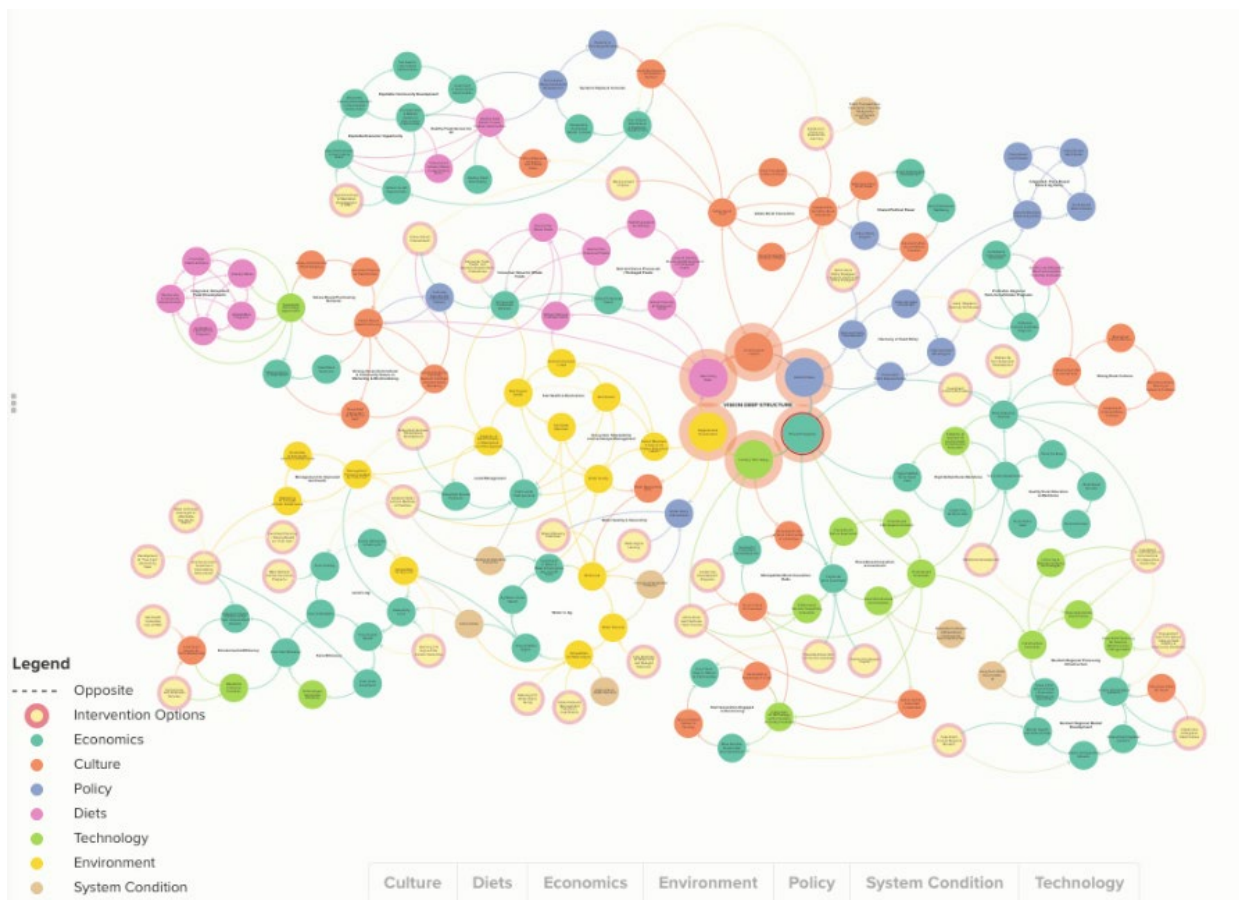
“Larger scale ag operations could buy into a vision like this. It could tie into surrounding agricultural land. In Boulder County we grow grain, corn, wheat, sugar beets, hay, and small greens. There is a shared vision for a central hub.”

- David Bell, Natural Resources Manager, Longmont Public Works & Natural Resources

whom are in Longmont. CSU Extension could help with research and incubation and would serve as an excellent long-term partner.

The panelists recommended that the next step for creating an Agri-Hub on this site would be to conduct a feasibility study, including these details:

- Assess feasibility of agricultural production, storage, and distribution on site
- Conduct market analysis
- Interview and engage regional farmers
- Understand potential competitors and collaborators (e.g. [LoCo Foods](#), [Bio-Logical Capital LLC](#), [Rocky Mountain Farmers Union](#), and [Mile High Farmers](#))
- Determine scale of producers that could work on site
- Determine what services to provide on site



FOOD SYSTEM MAPPING IN COLORADO

The National Western Center’s 2050 Food System Vision, “[How the West Was One](#),” includes a food system map for Colorado in 2050 that can be [viewed here](#). This site could help to build upon the existing agricultural system and to help meet existing needs in the system.

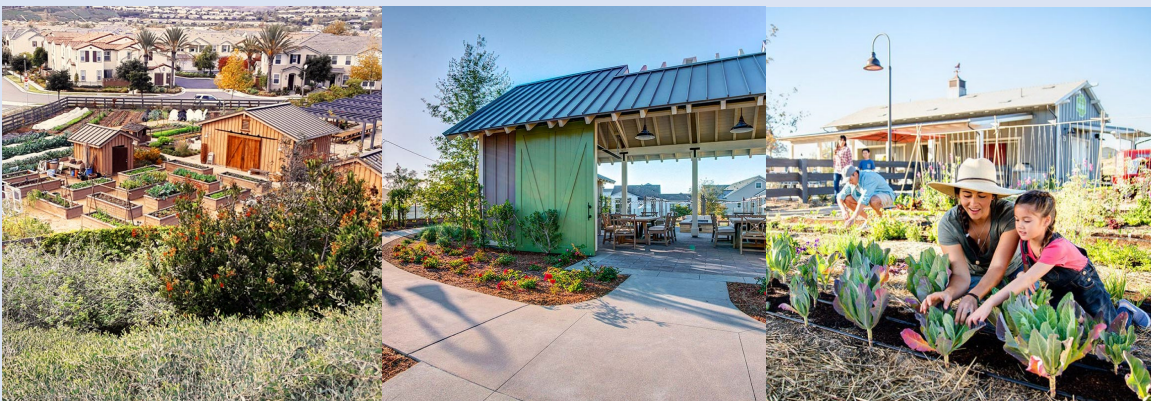
FARMS AS COMMUNITY HUBS: AGRIFOODS

“Agrihoods” (agriculture + neighborhoods) are becoming increasingly popular and were the subject of the 2018 ULI report, “[Agrihoods: Cultivating Best Practices](#).” Defined as single-family, multi-family, or mixed-use communities built with a working farm or community garden as a focus, agrihoods present several benefits to developers and residents. Seventy-three percent of US residents consider access to fresh, healthy foods to be a top priority when deciding where to live. Further, studies find a 15 to 30 percent premium on properties adjacent to parks and open space (including working farms). Residents would also benefit since agrihoods promote healthy living and encourage community social ties. Panelists noted that farms and gardens will likely need to be professionally managed and subsidized by the overall site development.

Benefits of Agrihood Development

Agrihoods offer proven financial, health, and environmental benefits—to the stakeholders involved in their implementation, to surrounding communities, and to the planet.

- *Agrihoods present a competitive edge.*
Of U.S. residents, 73 percent consider access to fresh, healthy foods to be a top or high priority when deciding where to live.¹ Interviews with agrihood project leaders show that including food-production spaces in residential or mixed-use developments can be less expensive to build and operate than certain other amenities, such as golf courses.
- *Agrihoods promote health and social interaction.*
A community farm can be the centerpiece of a development, and associated programming and educational opportunities can foster community social ties. Studies show that people who have satisfying relationships are happier, have fewer health issues, and live longer.² Farms in communities provide residents with access to fresh produce, supporting positive health outcomes.
- *Agrihoods can support an attractive return on investment.*
Many studies find as much as a 15 to 30 percent increase in the value of properties adjacent to parks and open space,³ which can include working farms.
- *Agrihoods can provide environmental benefits.*
Clustering development around working farms allows developers and communities to conserve productive farmland and natural areas and to mitigate increases in impervious surfaces.
- *Agrihoods create jobs and support the local economy.*
Growing and selling food locally keeps food dollars in the community and provides jobs for farmers.
- *Agrihoods are growing*
The number of agrihoods in North America has been expanding in recent years. As of 2018, ULI has identified projects in 27 U.S. states and Canadian provinces.



Rancho Mission Viejo in South Orange County, California, offers an example of how farms can be a community hub in a master-planned development. Images courtesy ranchomissionviejo.com.

Examples of Agri-Hubs



Photo of Agritopia in Gilbert, AZ by Lisa Jackson.

“The history of the site is really interesting. I could see agricultural and artisanal food production and food-based retail here. The biggest draw is the final product, so it would need delicious food and drink options that are consistently open. Things on display are additive – people feel more connected to the story of the place and the process of how their food is made.”

- Justin Croft, VP of Development, Zeppelin Development

[Agritopia in Gilbert, AZ](#)

Agritopia is a thriving neighborhood with approximately 450 houses centered around a 160-acre urban farm that yields about 200 crops per year. Parcels were carved out and converted to create permanent urban farming plots. Residents can rent garden space and grow their own crops — an option that’s so high in demand that there’s a waiting list for plots. Adjacent to the fields, the outdoor food court attracts locals and tourists alike, eager to dine on farm fresh food, sip on lattes, and buy produce from the 24/7 grocery stand that functions on the honor system. On Wednesdays, food trucks dock onsite. But the biggest draw is the farm to fork eatery, Barnone. They are currently developing the Epicenter, with ground-level shops, health clubs, yoga centers, restaurants, and cocktail bars. Above the retail and dining storefronts will be luxury apartments, from studios to penthouses. And everywhere will be sidewalks and pathways connecting Epicenter to the rest of Agritopia.



Conceptual map of Middlebrook Farm by Design Workshop courtesy Des Moines Register.

[Middlebrook Farm near Des Moines, IA](#)

Middlebrook is planned community of about 1,000 residential units built around a working farm and community gardens. 100 of the total 540 acres is dedicated to food production, including orchards, animals, gardens, and a 20-acre farm. Middlebrook's farm has a farm stand inside a converted barn, showcases gardens with edible and native

plantings, "you-pick" flower gardens, pumpkin patches and orchards, an "event green" for gatherings, and a large vegetable farm that visitors can walk and bike around. A 1900s schoolhouse was repurposed as a brewery, which along with the onsite wedding venue, orchard and flower gardens, is a standalone business. The area offers a broad mix of apartments, condos and townhomes, as well as cottage, family and estate homes. All the housing has similar architecture — Cape Cod cottage, Hampton and modern, and traditional farmhouse styles — to connect the projects.



Rendering of the planned expansion of Magnolia Market at the Silos in Waco, TX. Rendering courtesy Magnolia.com.

[Magnolia Market at the Silos in Waco, TX](#)

Magnolia Market and its landmark silos currently occupy two city blocks in downtown Waco, but construction is currently underway to expand the site as pictured above. The iconic silos are not in use, but they add a unique focal point to the retail shops that are built around public open space. Current uses include retail for food, plants, and furnishings and the open space is used for events and gatherings. Plans for the expansion include additional commercial space, a repurposed historic church, and a baseball diamond. Admission to the complex is free and visitors can play free games on the lawn or picnic in the shade.



Rendering of Aria in Denver, CO. Rendering courtesy AriaDenver.com.

[Aria in Denver, CO](#)

Aria Denver was a former convent owned by the Sisters of St. Francis, who embodied the ideals of community improvement and environmental stewardship. To weave in those ideals into all aspects of Aria Denver, the community features different kinds of housing to encourage a diverse mix of people, and open space and urban agriculture to promote social interaction. The 17.5-acre site includes a 1.25-acre production garden, community plots, and permaculture pocket garden named, The Sister Gardens, after the site's heritage. Aria Denver also features an 1800 square foot Groundwork Greens Greenhouse. Both the Greenhouse and Garden are operated by Frontline Farming

sell fresh produce to the neighborhood, Denver businesses, and provide job training to low-income youth. Regis University's Center for Food Systems and Community Health offers classes to community residents as well as to students in the Gardens. Aria Denver is intentionally designed to reduce carbon footprints and includes a variety of green housing options – from rental apartments to for-sale townhomes to cohousing units – as well as commercial retail space.

More Examples of Agri-Hubs:

- [Bucking Horse Neighborhood in Fort Collins, CO](#)
- [Plant Chicago in Chicago, IL](#)
- [The Barlow in Sebastopol, CA](#)
- [Tillamook Creamery in Tillamook, OR](#)
- [Gotham Greens at Stanley Marketplace in Aurora, CO](#)
- [Amped Kitchens in Los Angeles, CA and Chicago, IL](#)
- [Vertical Harvest in Jackson, WY](#)
- [Packing House in Anaheim, CA](#)
- [Ponce City Market in Atlanta, GA](#)
- [5 Fridges Farm in Wheat Ridge, CO](#)
- [Jasper Hill Farms in Greensboro, VT](#)
- [Farrington Village in Pittsboro, NC](#)



Rendering of the upper level of the new Tillamook Creamery, where visitors can see and learn about cheese production, courtesy Tillamook.

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ON SITE

The City of Longmont staff asked the panel: What is the opportunity for the project to serve as a pioneering model for development of an environmentally conscientious and sustainable community, and what elements should be incorporated?

Goals

The panel recommended creating a master plan for the entire site with clear sustainability goals. They suggested aligning those goals with the City of Longmont's [sustainability goals](#) and metrics as well as recommendations from the [Climate Action Task Force](#).

Equity

The City of Longmont has an Equity Team that emphasizes equity as a fundamental value. The Master Planning process for this area should include robust community engagement to ensure that social, environmental, and economic sustainability goals are met for the area.

Energy

With the size of this site and the property owners' interest in renewable energy, this area has great potential for district energy fueled by renewable energy. The panel recommended looking into the [National Western Center's district energy action plan](#) as an example of how this could work to create a net-zero energy campus, where onsite renewable energy production will completely offset district energy consumption.

Local partners could connect with nearby energy experts, such as NREL, Xcel Energy, and Longmont Power & Communications staff, to explore renewable energy potential, a district system, battery storage, and infrastructure. In addition to the owners' interest in biomass energy, the building rooftops could be rebuilt so that they're solar-ready. Solar gardens (a.k.a. agrivoltaics), which integrate ground-mounted solar panels with food production beneath, could also work well with the Agri-Hub concept. Another idea is to explore using heat from an adjacent wastewater plant to help fuel a district energy system.

Water & Natural Environment

A key part of sustainability is protecting the natural environment. Since Colorado's water is an increasingly precious resource, the panel recommended reducing water consumption through water efficiency and xeriscaping. Native and xeric

"It would be great to incorporate circular economy opportunities in this site, especially with the food hub and agricultural production. The site could also include affordable housing, multi-modal connections, EV charging, and natural areas with native plants."

**- Berenice Garcia-Tellez,
Economic Sustainability
Specialist, City of Longmont**

"We need to think of the site as a district to accomplish the goals of sustainable development."

**- Panel Chair Jocelyn Hittle,
Senior Director of Denver
Programs and Sustainability,
Colorado State University**



Agrioltaics integrate ground-mounted solar panels over food production. Photo courtesy Conservation Magazine.

landscapes and gardens could be used to demonstrate and teach techniques for green infrastructure and water efficiency. The panel also suggested adopting a “[One Water](#)” plan early, allowing for the reuse of gray water within the district, among other water-smart strategies.

Food System

Creating an Agri-Hub is a perfect opportunity to provide access to local, fresh food. Urban agriculture of various types could demonstrate methods for growing food, and the resulting produce could be sold in onsite retail and programmed spaces. A distribution center on site could also help to ship fresh produce to retailers in the area.

Embodied Carbon & Material Use

Embodied carbon is the sum of all the greenhouse gas emissions (mostly carbon dioxide) resulting from the mining, harvesting, processing, manufacturing, transportation and installation of building materials. By focusing on reuse of existing buildings and materials, along with infill development, the carbon footprint of this site will be far lower than if it were built with entirely new materials on a greenfield. For structures that require new materials, consider low-carbon options, such as concrete strengthened with fly ash (a byproduct of burning pulverized coal in power plants that improves the workability of plastic concrete and the strength and durability of hardened concrete). For materials that won't be reused onsite, consider other potential end users and/or revenue streams from salvaging the materials. An analysis of existing and new structures regarding embodied carbon and reuse potential could help with this decision making.

Transportation & Mobility

The panel recommended including multi-modal transportation solutions in the overall master plan for the site. This should include future transit stops, bike and pedestrian trails and facilities that connect with existing systems, electric vehicle charging stations, and appropriate infrastructure for cars. The focus should be on connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and to Downtown Longmont, with an eye toward moving people and not just cars.

Waste

Including a waste strategy as part of overall master plan could dramatically increase the sustainability of the site. For example, waste can be used as a source of renewable energy and composting for rich agricultural soil. The [EPA provides best practices in the procurement process](#) for transforming waste streams in communities.



Vertical Harvest in Jackson, WY employs people with developmental disabilities and demonstrates how to farm with less land and water than traditional farming. Images courtesy Vertical Harvest.

FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

Financial strategies for remediating and redeveloping the site are vital for moving forward. There is a wealth of financial tools available and the site will require the use of many. A key question is who takes the lead on pursuing financial support for assessment and remediation—and who is able to access certain tools. If the City is involved, many more grant opportunities become available.

Financial Tools

The following financial tools are available for the various stages of redevelopment.

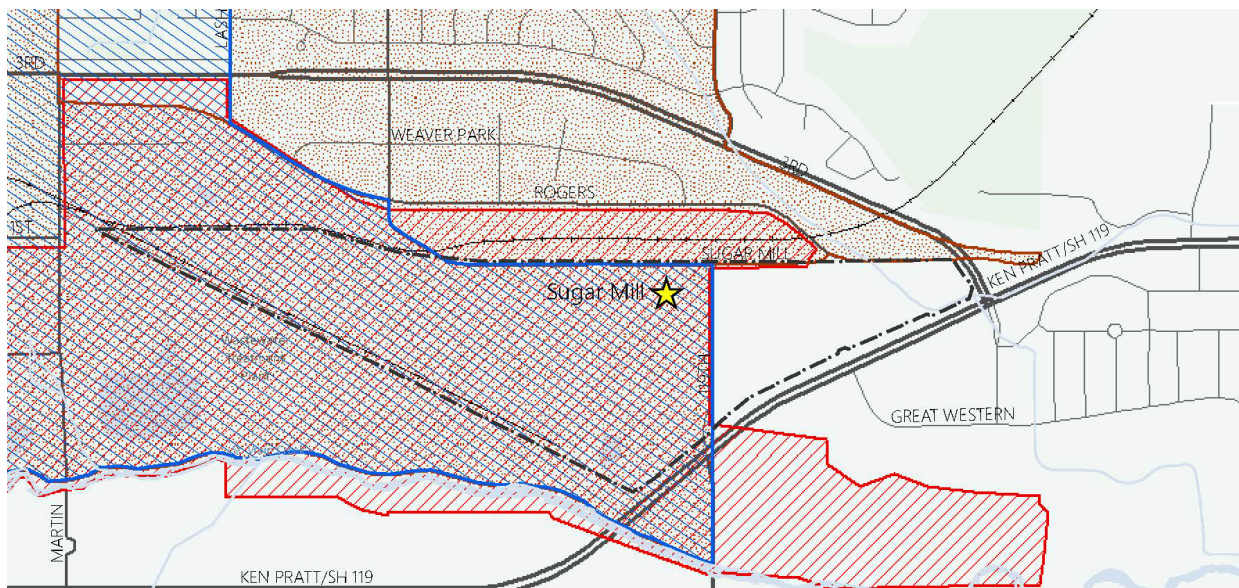
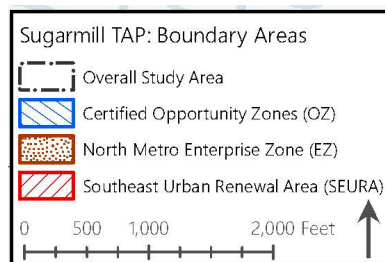
Planning, Due Diligence & Clean Up

- Environment Protection Agency (EPA) [Grants](#)
- Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) [Brownfields Program](#)
- [Community Development Block Grants](#) (CDBG)
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) [Energy/Mineral Impact Assistance Fund Grant](#)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Grants](#)
- Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) [Grants](#)
- EcoDistrict [consulting services](#) and [financing toolkit](#)

Public Improvements & Development

“Opportunities for the site are huge, but the cost is going to be huge. They will need to use all the financing tools available. The eventual use of the site will drive how much money can be generated from public finance tools.”

- Alan Matlosz, Managing Director, Stifel Investment



The site is well positioned to take advantage of public funding opportunities. Over two-thirds of the site is located within a federally designated [Opportunity Zone](#) (OZ) and a state designated [Enterprise Zone](#) (EZ), both of which provide significant tax benefits. That area west of North 119th Street is also in the designated [Southeast Urban Renewal Area](#) (URA), which provides the opportunity to capture and reinvest Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for redevelopment. Since the unincorporated parts of the site are within the URA boundaries, they would need to be annexed into the City to become eligible for access to TIF.

The City of Longmont does allow for the creation of [Special Districts](#) within its jurisdictional boundaries (such as Metropolitan Districts, General Improvement Districts, Public Improvement Districts, or Local Improvement Districts) that could be used to assist with funding. However, current City policy relative to the creation of a Special District in Longmont requires a project to be mixed-use with no more than fifty percent of the development square footage being residential. Any changes to this current policy would require City Council approval by ordinance.

Depending on the plans for the redevelopment, other available financial tools could include [Historic Preservation Tax Credits](#) and [Low Income Housing Tax Credits](#).

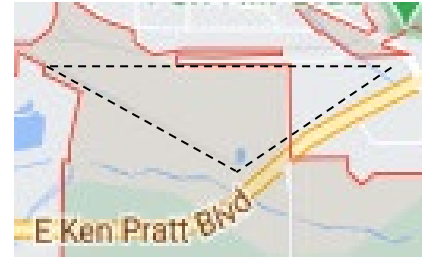
Financial Strategies

The panel recommended that people with development interest work with the City of Longmont to pursue needed financial tools for the entire site as a district, since the properties are much more likely to attract resources together rather than individually. Since contamination has likely spread beyond the buildings, surrounding properties need remediation as well.

After working together on a Master Plan for the district, City staff and the development interests can work simultaneously on parallel tracks (illustrated in the chart to the right). While City staff can work on district formation, annexation, TIF, and Metro District updates, the development interests can apply for available grants to pursue due diligence, environmental remediation, and restoration.

Since the majority of the site lies outside of the City of Longmont’s boundaries in unincorporated Boulder County, annexation of the site into the City will likely be necessary to access the resources necessary for redevelopment. Following annexation, TIF resources could be focused on remediation and on-going public improvements of the Agri-Hub’s community amenities.

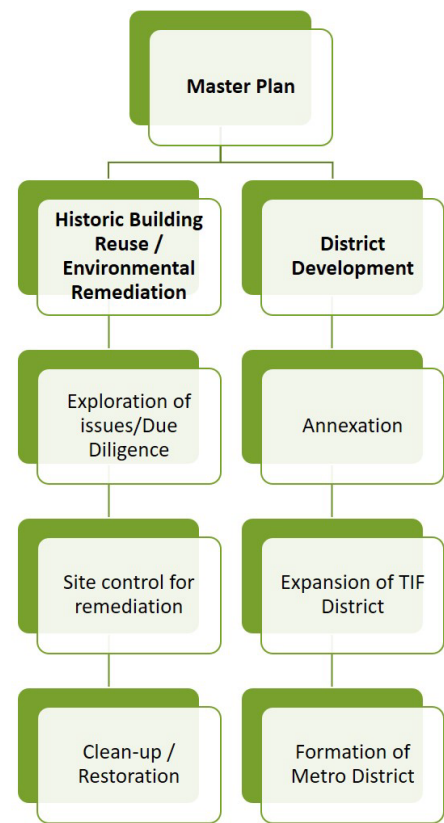
Forming a Metro District for the new district could generate resources for transportation system expansion, project amenities, and on-going operation and maintenance. A Metro District could also help to fund major capital projects for non-residential properties. Over time, a low mil could support property upkeep and operations of amenities.



The lighter areas of the map surrounded by the red line are within City of Longmont boundaries. The darker parts of the map are in unincorporated Boulder County. The site is surrounded by the dotted line. Image courtesy Google Maps.

“The City of Longmont could annex the site to fully leverage public resources for redevelopment.”

- Panelist Matt Prosser, Vice President, Economic & Planning Systems





Historical photo of the Great Western Sugar Mill courtesy the CSU Library, Archives & Special Collections.

VI. Conclusion

The Great Western Sugar Mill is an iconic site in Colorado. The City of Longmont is wise to proactively look for solutions and opportunities to invest in restoring the historical legacy of this site for public use. At this critical juncture when the buildings have not completely deteriorated and the surrounding land has not yet been fully developed, the city can support redevelopment that provides access and benefits to the surrounding community.

Overall, City investment in the site can attract additional private and public resources. How long it will take to redevelop the site depends on willingness of the site owners and the City to collaborate. This could happen within a couple years if the parties are willing to plan together and work in a cohesive way to implement the plans.

Key Takeaways

- City investment can help support the historical legacy of the site and its role as a gateway into the city
- Risk of missing this unique and important opportunity to make this iconic site accessible to the public
- Need for due diligence & data on the site
- Resolve water issues to move forward
- Need for Master Plan & collaboration between owners and/or land assembly
- Plan for a mix of uses on the site to fit with City's Comprehensive Plan
- Importance of agriculture to the community
- The site could be an example of pioneering sustainability

“Time frame is a challenge for redevelopment and collaboration between property owners. A master plan is interesting to us, but we don’t want to wait for decades.”

- Andy Welch, HSW Land LLC

“You can and should make this happen!”

- The TAP Panelists

VII. Stakeholders

Stakeholders Who Participated in the Workshop

Site Readiness, Remediation & Financing:

- Dale Case, Director, Boulder County Community Planning & Permitting
- Tony Chacon, Redevelopment Program Manager, City of Longmont
- Tony Curcio, Vice President of Business Development and Preconstruction Services, Iron Woman Construction and Environmental Services
- Jessica Erickson, President & CEO, Longmont Economic Development Partnership
- Erin Fosdick, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Services, City of Longmont
- Jim Golden, Director of Finance, City of Longmont
- Michele Goldman, Fire Marshall, City of Longmont
- Doug Jamison, Superfund/Brownfields Unit Leader, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
- Jade Kruger, Associate Planner, Planning and Development Services, City of Longmont
- Chris La May, North Central Regional Manager, Colorado Department of Local Affairs
- Alan Matlosz, Managing Director, Stifel Investment
- Brien Schumacher, Principal Planner, Longmont Planning & Development Services
- Jesse Silverstein, Principal, Development Research Partners
- Jeff Webb, Assistant Chief of Administration, Mountain View Fire Protection District

Connectivity, Mobility, & Sustainability:

- Bob Allen, Director of Operations, Public Works & Natural Resources, City of Longmont
- Jim Angstadt, Director of Engineering, Public Works & Natural Resources, City of Longmont
- David Bell, Natural Resources Manager, Public Works & Natural Resources, City of Longmont
- Brian Coppom, Executive Director, Boulder County Farmers Markets
- Berenice Garcia-Tellez, Economic Sustainability Specialist, City of Longmont
- Ana Lucaci, Core Owner, Walk2Connect Cooperative
- Joni Marsh, Assistant City Manager, City of Longmont
- Kimberlee McKee, Executive Director, Longmont Downtown Development Authority
- Annie Noble, Environmental Services Manager, Public Works & Natural Resources, City of Longmont
- Chad Stearman, Volunteer, Bicycle Longmont
- Lisa Warren, Co-Chair, Denver Metro Farm Starters Collaborative

Vertical Development, Use Mix, and Adaptive Reuse:

- Justin Croft, VP of Development, Zeppelin Development
- Carl Koebel, Chief Operating Officer, Koebel & Company
- David Tschetter, Developer
- Charles Woolley, Founding Principal & President, St. Charles Town Company

Site Ownership:

- Dick Thomas, Clean Energy LLC
- Steve Thomas, Clean Energy LLC
- Wendell Pickett, Manager, Frontier Companies LLC
- Barbara Brunk, Manager, Resource Conservation Partners LLC
- Andy Welch, HSW Land LLC

VIII. ULI Volunteer Panelists



Panel Chair Jocelyn Hittle, Senior Director of Denver Programs and Sustainability, Colorado State University

Jocelyn’s primary role is facilitation of CSU’s role in the redevelopment of the National Western Stock Show into the “National Western Center” (NWC) with a focus on CSU’s emerging programs around urban water resource management, and on creating sustainable systems that will help achieve the project’s aggressive “net zero” goals, including green infrastructure and nature-based solutions for the site’s challenges. She works to ensure the National Western Center provides, year-round, an opportunity for

Colorado residents and visitors to take advantage of world-class educational and research opportunities and new environmental, cultural, and historic features. She develops authentic partnerships with the surrounding underserved communities to collaboratively develop programs and amenities at the NWC. She also works closely with History Colorado, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Western Stock Show Association, and multiple agencies and offices at the City and County of Denver on site programming, implementation of the master plan and its sustainability goals, and long-term strategic direction.



Doug Elenowitz, Principal, Trailbreak Partners

Mr. Elenowitz is a co-founder and principal of Trailbreak Partners where his focus is investment in and development of Colorado real estate assets. He is an expert in urban redevelopment having managed the origination, structuring, and execution of urban infill and environmentally complex real estate developments across the United States for nearly two decades. Previously, Doug was Executive Vice President and Director of Development for EnviroFinance Group (EFG), a development company that acquires, remediates and

repositions environmentally impaired real estate throughout the United States. He joined EFG following its 2011 acquisition of Brownfield Partners, the development firm he co-founded in 2003. In Denver, Doug oversaw redevelopment of the former St. Anthony Central Hospital, a 19-acre TOD urban mixed use development and redevelopment of the ASARCO Globe Smelter; a challenging public private partnership and one of Denver area’s most significant remediation and urban redevelopment projects. He is an expert in public finance having originated more than \$30 million in financings including negotiation of urban renewal areas, tax increment financing agreements, metropolitan districts, HUD Section 108 loans, and federal and local grants.



Chris Geddes, Principal, Design Workshop

Chris, a planner and urban designer in our Denver studio, is driven by the desire to provide clients and community members a meaningful voice in the planning and design of public spaces. With over 20 years’ experience, he believes that it is the responsibility of designers to draw out the desires of those who use public space, illustrate those desires in ways that all can comprehend, and engage stakeholders in a way that builds trust. Chris works on projects of all scales, from community planning to the detailed design of public spaces and is particularly fond of projects that tackle social and physical challenges. Chris holds a

Master of Urban and Regional Planning and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering degree from the University of Colorado, is an active member of the Downtown Denver Partnership and American Planning Association and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.



Mary Hashem, Co-Founder & Principal, RE Solutions

Mary Hashem is a co-founder and Principal of RE | Solutions, LLC (RES). She is an MIT-educated geoscientist with over 30 years of business experience in real estate, environmental consulting and risk management, the last 20 years of which has been in the Brownfield redevelopment industry. Ms. Hashem’s career has focused on the underwriting, remediation, redevelopment and divestiture of commercial and industrial properties, including distressed assets with significant financial and environmental challenges. This involves working directly with the sellers and buyers of brownfield

properties, environmental regulatory agencies, financing sources, lawyers, and with the communities impacted, both positively and negatively, by the properties and planned development projects.

Jim Leggitt, Principal, Leggitt Studio



Architect, urban planner, illustrator, educator and author, Jim Leggitt, FAIA has been practicing for over forty years in Denver, Colorado. Principal of LEGGITT STUDIO LLC, Jim focuses on community planning, placemaking and design visualization. Jim has participated in numerous planning projects, generating hybrid sketches that reflect context, character and excitement that comes with urban redevelopment. Leggitt authored DRAWING SHORTCUTS: Developing Quick Drawing Skills Using Today’s Technology published in 2002. His books have been adopted by more than 50 universities and published in numerous

languages.

Matt Prosser, Vice President, Economic & Planning Systems

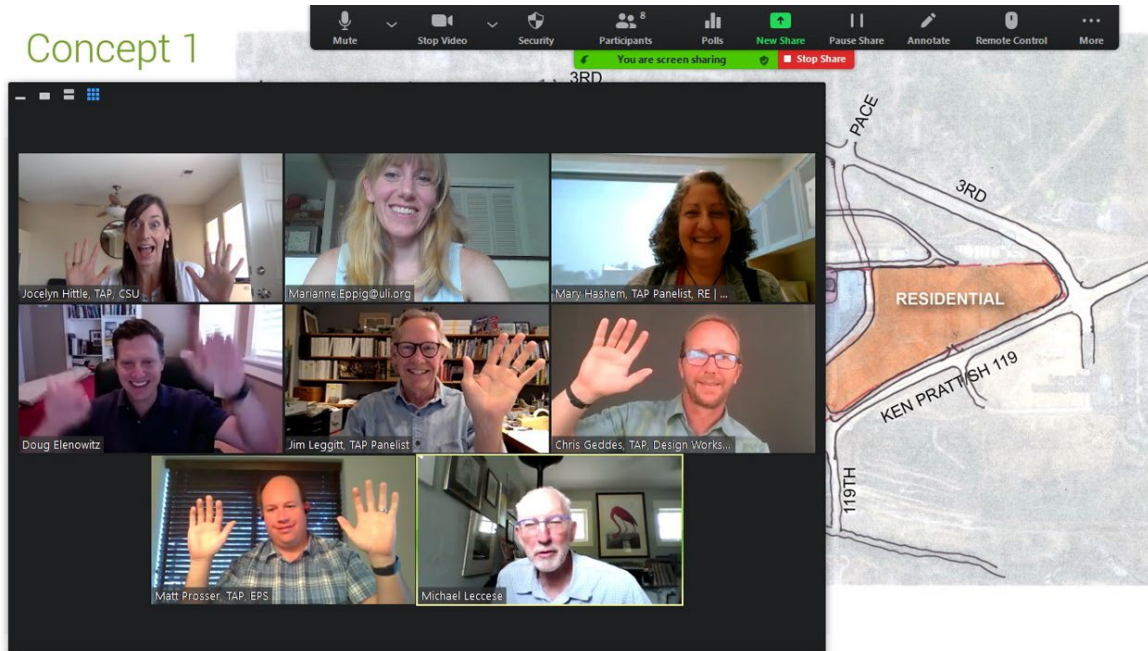


Matt Prosser is an economist and planner with 10 years of experience in land planning and real estate economics. Matt has provided consulting specialized services related to real estate development feasibility, retail market analysis, comprehensive and subarea planning, fiscal impact analysis, and transit-oriented development to several communities throughout the western United States. He has a broad base of experience and education in land use and entitlement planning, urban design, real estate development, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Mr. Prosser has a master’s degree in Urban and

Regional Planning from the University of Colorado, Denver, and a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Design from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Special thanks to the ULI Colorado TAP Committee Chairs Al Colussy, Andrew Knudtsen, and Anna Jones and to the sponsorship of the City of Longmont and the Denver Regional Council of Governments.

Concept 1



ULI Colorado Leadership in Responsible Land Use

ULI Colorado is the 1,400-member District Council of the global Urban Land Institute. ULI Colorado consists of a four-person staff, 25-member executive committee, and 15 committees with more than 250 volunteers. More than 40 programs a year include advisory panels, leadership and mentoring programs, panels, project tours, publications, and community service. ULI is a non-lobbying educational and research institute supported by its members, sponsors, and foundations. Key issues include affordable housing, healthy communities, transit-oriented development, and sustainable design and planning.

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