

Forming and advancing the development agenda within commercial corridors requires a keen understanding of the goals and aspirations of its stakeholders, the realities of the marketplace, peculiarities of the political landscape and constraints of local public / private resources. With this understanding, project advocates are positioned to establish priorities for action and investment.

In the context of defining a strategy for revitalization of the Midtown Main Street Corridor in Longmont, Leland Consulting Group (LCG), Real Estate Strategists, together with Matrix Design Group and Carter & Burgess, Planners and Urban Designers, assisted the City of Longmont by providing: a technical platform for discussions about market opportunities, development framework and program alternatives, regulatory and policy solutions, and financial incentives. Their efforts focused on investigating economic, financial, and market conditions in the Corridor and region (trade area); identifying niche opportunities; and formulating strategies to overcome barriers to investment. The results of this work are generally summarized in the discussion which follows and presented in greater detail in the supporting sections of the full report.

Purpose

Through the planning effort described herein, the City of Longmont initiated a process that will ensure future improvements within Midtown (the study area) occur with aesthetic and functional continuity. *The Midtown Redevelopment Plan* is intended to serve as an approved redevelopment plan providing recommendations for improvements and policy reform which can be implemented over the near- and long-term. As a strategic document it is designed to promote (re) investment. Ultimately, it was developed to articulate a vision, concept and strategy for the future use and development of the Main Street Corridor from Longs Peak Avenue on the south to 17th Avenue on the north, Kimbark Street on the east, and Terry and Coffman Streets on the west.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vision and directives presented herein were developed with input from business and property owners in the study area, representatives of the City, and guidance from the consultant team. Questions which were answered through the process include:

- What can the City do to promote and support existing businesses and increase the appeal of the area for redevelopment?
- What types of redevelopment options exist for the study area?
- What are the roadblocks or constraints to redevelopment within the study area?
- What market niche or niches are served by the area?
- What connections exist or should be made between the Central business District / Downtown Authority (DDA) and the study area?
- What building types and development pattern would be appropriate for infill sites along Main Street?

The results of the analyses presented here will assist the City of Longmont and property owners in the project area with identification and implementation of projects, programs and policies, as well as funding options for investments, necessary to serve future development and redevelopment initiatives.

Report Format

The *Midtown Redevelopment Plan* identifies specific objectives and strategies in order to make the Midtown Corridor a better place to conduct business, shop, visit and live. It is based on a realistic understanding of physical and market conditions, and is intended to be responsive to the community's needs. It describes current conditions as analyzed by the consultant team; niche market opportunities which the study area could capitalize on; potential catalyst concepts which public initiatives



should support in order to grow the larger whole; and, actions for change designed to remove barriers and advance investment and reinvestment.

Input

During the process, which lasted approximately 10 months, the consultant team facilitated discussions with a range of stakeholders in a variety of venues. Among these forums were: community, corridor and block meetings; small group (delivery system) meetings; one-on-one interviews; and a community and



merchant survey. Additionally, representatives from the City sought to raise awareness about the project through presentations to various business and special interest groups. An Advisory Committee received the input of the stakeholders through the consultants and guided their work. Each of the primary outreach efforts is summarized in the discussion which follows.

Community, Corridor and Block Meetings

Community and corridor meetings were held for area and at-large stakeholders throughout the process, providing participants an opportunity to review assembled data, identify study area issues and impacts and discuss concepts and strategies required to move concept recommendations towards adoption and implementation.

Delivery System Meetings

In addition to the community meetings, the consultant team facilitated a series of small group meetings held over several days at the beginning of the planning process. Meeting participants included real estate brokers, property owners, developers, institutional leaders (schools and

churches), lenders, business owners and city staff (members of the “delivery system”¹) who were selected for the breadth of their experience and familiarity with the community. Each session lasted approximately one to two hours during which time the consultants asked participants to complete a series of statements defining aspects of the community and study area, its economy, and land base, over the near- and long-term. The discussion focused on opportunities and barriers to accomplishing specific aspects of a redevelopment program for the Midtown Corridor. The groups’ input was used by the consultant team during subsequent phases of the analysis to define - strengths and vulnerabilities within the study area, and barriers to growth and investment; to outline a framework for implementation strategies; and, establish a foundation for supportive policies and ultimately a vision statement for the area.

Community and Merchant Survey

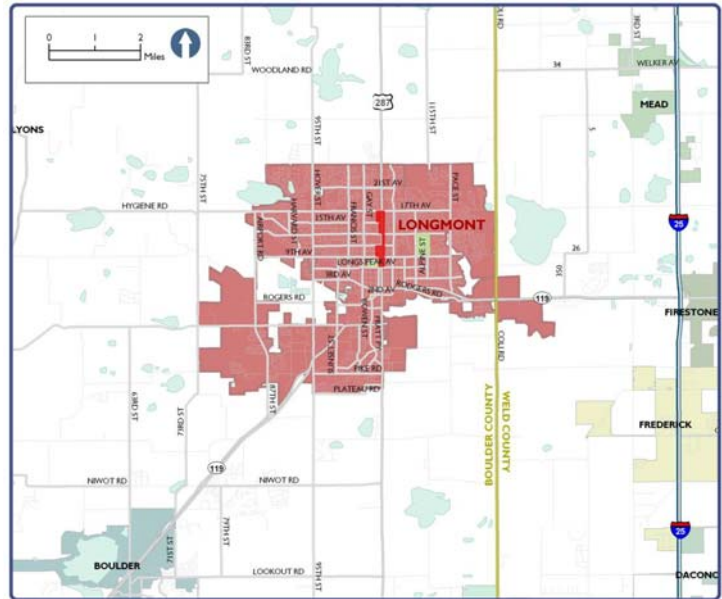
During the first quarter of the process, the consultant team solicited the input of business and property owners in the study area regarding opinions about the business climate on the corridor, their merchant profiles and vision for the future. The results of the survey efforts demonstrated that most businesses in the study area have been in business as long as they have been on the corridor. Among these business owners, most chose Main Street because of traffic, access and visibility. As reported by the owners, the majority of their customers are from Longmont.

In all, more than 141 residents / business and / or property owners participated in one of the forums. Among these individuals, many expressed their commitment to participating in future development initiatives, improving the character of the area and implementing the recommendations contained herein. Regardless of how they participated in the process, all of the stakeholders appeared to understand that opportunities existed for a greater diversity of housing; growing the commercial and business base; attracting users which would diversify the area’s daytime population; expanding cultural and civic programs; and, making infrastructure and economic development public priorities.

¹ The “delivery system” includes those individuals and organizations which affect delivery of a project or product to the market.

Development Conditions

Planning for the strategic revitalization of business corridors requires that a community understand its physical limitations and know its market. The market analysis, conducted by Leland Consulting Group (LCG) and summarized in the report, focused on identifying market opportunities within a representative project trade area. What the analysis showed was that there is market demand and the Midtown Corridor, with strategic



public and private reinvestment and supportive policies, could be positioned to capitalize on select niche and destination opportunities which serve the community and region. However, several issues need to be acknowledged, both benefits and challenges, in order to most effectively ready the environment for this investment.

Characteristics that make the area appropriate for development of retail, office, residential and community uses include: limited competition among areas located in the central portion of the community; access and visibility along a critical north-south thoroughfare (Main Street) and gateway from communities north and south; adjacency to a variety of residential and employment uses in a currently under-served sub-market of the community; access to regional transportation corridor (U.S. Highway 287); and, a limited range of attached residential product inventory anywhere in the market.

Challenges (primarily market-driven) that need to be addressed if the benefits of development efforts are to be maximized include: its location in an older, established commercial corridor, proximate to a range of residential, commercial and industrial uses, yet lacking a significant level of contiguous activity; low- to moderate-density residential developments in the area which limit

the immediate trade area population; and, recent competitive commercial development on the fringe of Longmont, yet limited activity proximate to the study area.

Market Profile

Whereas the Longmont Central Business District (CBD) has continued to define itself as a shopping and service destination serving the community and region, the study area has yet to establish itself with an identifiable “address.” As described in the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan*, the majority of land uses within the study area



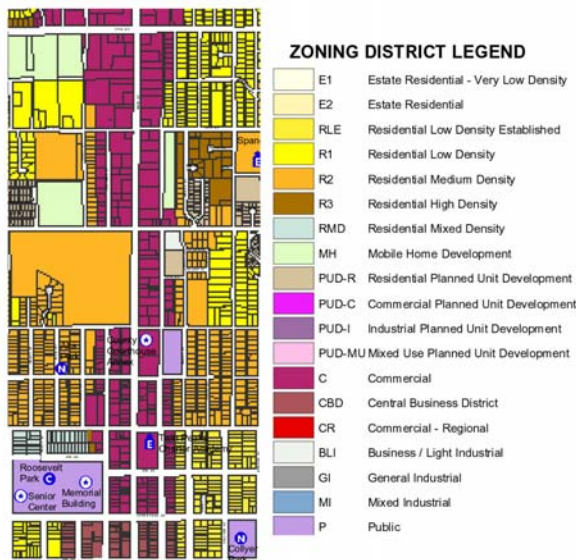
include central business district, strip commercial, medium density residential, and public and quasi-public. Uses surrounding the study area include established residential neighborhoods, downtown service and commercial space, civic and institutional facilities, and some light industry. The total study area, between Longs Peak Avenue and 17th Avenue, includes 205 properties comprising approximately 84 acres, primarily zoned commercial with a minor number of residential medium density designations. Including rights-of-way, the study area totals approximately 120 acres.

The Midtown portion of Main Street can best be described as a mature transportation corridor, with limited new investment, fragmented ownership and distinct concentrations of commercial and service areas. The planning process concluded that its role as a commuter access route will have a significant impact on any future re-development program within the City for the near- and long-term. This fact influenced the identification and character of catalyst projects identified for the study area, as well as the strategies to implement them.

Physical Profile

At first glance, the Midtown area conveys two distinct impressions, one from the north and one from the south. The role of Main Street / State Highway 287 varies from one of service to local business (primarily between 7th and 11th), to one more focused on “access” to other parts of Longmont and northern communities (between 11th and 17th Avenues). While the R.O.W. of Main Street is generally consistent throughout the study area, the operation of travel and turning lanes varies, depending on the availability of on-street parking and access into development parcels. While south of 9th Avenue, on-street parking occurs on both sides of Main Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues, only the west side includes on-street parking; north of 10th Avenue no on-street parking exists due to the number of curb cuts to serve development parcels.

The Main Street Corridor, particularly through this section, also serves neighborhoods east and west, representing a need to comfortably and safely accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. The physical condition of buildings, massing and density are primarily single story, post war with little or no theme or distinct character. Additionally, numerous curb cuts and parking areas perpetuate the discontinuity of the street edge.



Key assets that should be preserved and developed even further to create an identity for the area include its ethnic anchors and nostalgic automotive outlets. The existing Hispanic culture, neighborhoods and businesses provide a catalyst opportunity unique in the market. Creating a focus on the Hispanic culture will assist in creating an image for the area and begin to advance its new “address.” Its strong automotive focus anchored by establishments such as Ralph’s Castle,

identified as a historic icon for the old Lincoln Highway, further define the place. A few strong storefronts that exist within the project limits, mostly in the southern project area, create a strong street wall that appeals to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

asset. This evolution will obviously be expedited if assisted by a favorable regulatory environment which encourages a denser product model, tighter building form, balanced parking requirements, and stronger connections.

The Vision

“A vision is an image of the future shared by the people of a region and comprehended in physical, social, economic, and environmental terms.” Urban Land Institute

A well-crafted vision is realistic and recognizes economic, political and environment constraints. Successful visions must have their roots in the community and must accurately reflect the views and aspirations of those who live and work there. It is regularly evaluated and if necessary modified. Implementation of the vision requires consistent and disciplined public policy. Courage, patience, good planning, commitment, and money are required to stick to the vision over a long period of time.

One of the key directives for this plan by participants in the process was articulation of a vision for the study area. The vision statement for Midtown Main Street drafted by the consultants with input from the stakeholders and affirmed by community meeting participants is presented as follows:

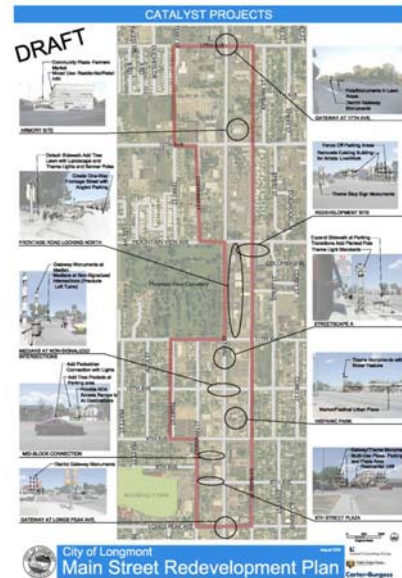
By 2015, the study area portion of Main Street will be one of the community's premier shopping, business and entertainment centers. Seventy percent of businesses within the study area will be local or regional versus national. Residential uses on the study area will represent 25 percent of the overall land use mix. Transportation modes used will include buses, bikes, trains, and autos. The City of Longmont will preserve public, historic and residential elements deemed to be valuable and those which make it unique. Major community initiatives which will have served to stabilize and enhance the Midtown business environment will include pedestrian / roadway, financial incentives and creation of an organization to promote businesses in the study area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ownership housing, retail, public), 8th Street Plaza (rental housing, ownership housing, public space), redeveloped Former Hajek Chevrolet site (restaurants, public space), Courthouse Parking Structure (retail, public), and Streetscape / Mid-Block Nodes (public right-of-way improvements).

Catalysts were generally identified and evaluated based on screening criteria, with guidance from stakeholders and community leaders. While an expressed interest in an immediate development or redevelopment project influenced the selection of certain areas, most were selected because they presented a compelling location or market

advantage for future investment. However, experience has proven that implementable plans must maintain a high degree of flexibility. As markets change, the physical realm must change with them. Therefore, while these areas have been identified today as offering potential for leveraged investment, the criteria used to identify them will provide the City with the tools to evaluate future projects which might occur outside these areas, and which are still consistent with the vision for Midtown.



Conditions Survey

Among the tools identified which might assist with financing catalyst initiatives in the study area was Tax Increment Financing (TIF). In an effort to determine if the area qualified for this type of financing assistance, a conditions survey was completed as defined by the Colorado State Statute. The principal categories analyzed included building conditions, site conditions, unusual topography or inadequate public improvements, endangerment from fire or other causes, unsafe or unhealthy work / live conditions, environmental contamination, and high municipal requirements or site underutilization among properties within the study area.

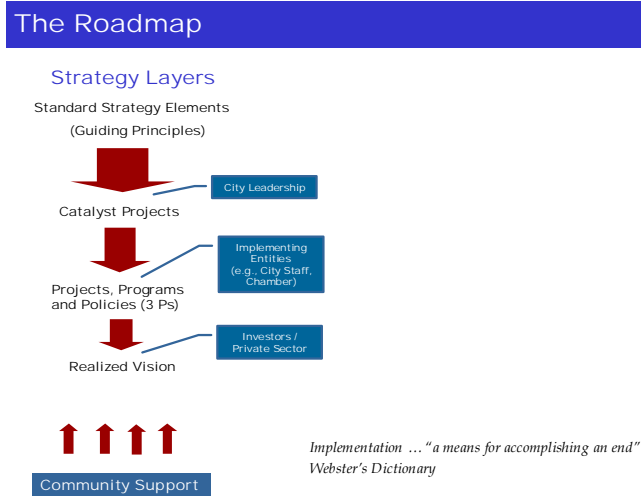
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It was the conclusion of the survey that within the study area, there is a presence of adverse physical conditions sufficient to meet criteria established in the state statute. Ten of eleven qualifying conditions specified by state statute were found in the area. In all, there were 38 parcels totaling 26 acres with at least five qualifying conditions present.

Actions

As explained during the plan process, no one project will revitalize the Midtown Corridor. Rather, revitalization will be dependent on a series of actions designed to capitalize on market opportunities and overcome barriers - effectively readying the environment for investment. Key to the successful implementation of the Plan will be the continued identification and implementation of actions tailored to the unique issues of the Corridor and catalyst projects within the study area.² This approach will build community goodwill; provide on-going opportunities for public participation; allow special-interest groups to have a role in the revitalization effort; send a

message that the area is successful and making positive strides; and, create an increasingly attractive environment for investment and development. Investors, developers and lenders seek environments with market opportunity and prospects for success, devoid of obstacles and sound in sustainability.



Just as the challenges or "barriers" to investment are multifaceted, so too must the solutions be. Together, the public and private sector face the challenge of revitalizing the Midtown Corridor.

² The definition of "actions" is broad as it applies here - it includes public, private or public-private physical projects, social programs, and educational programs: public relations and goodwill-building programs; and policy reform - identified to promote opportunities and overcome barriers.

Its competitive position will continue to be eroded unless there is a significant repositioning of its role in the market; restructuring of its physical layout; recognition of the economic challenges inherent in infill and corridor redevelopment; and, aggressive recruitment of niche opportunities. Key priorities of the plan include: development / redevelopment incentives; parking solutions; traffic management; parks / open space; balance among pedestrians / bikes; ethnic elements; flexible entitlement process; streetscape / gateway improvements; code enforcement; business promotion; promotion / advocacy organization; mixed-use zoning; tenanting strategy – fewer negative uses; refined sign ordinance; business assistance; and, design standards. A detailed description of each of these actions is presented in the last section of the full report.

Framework

Sound economic development tenants provided the framework from which potential implementation actions were identified. Economic development is ... *“the process of raising the level of prosperity and material living in a society through increasing the productivity and efficiency of its economy.”* *“Any effort or undertaking which aids in the growth of the economy.”* Source: Unknown

Following are elements of the implementation framework for advancement of the Midtown Redevelopment Plan:

- City maintains pro-business attitude towards redevelopment
- Underdeveloped properties are put into productive use
- Commitment is made to remedy existing problems and prevent future ones
- Higher-density infill projects will be encouraged
- Public commitment will be long-term
- “Bones” before beautification
- Physical environment will balance the role of the vehicle
- Advocacy entities will be identified and empowered
- Catalyst projects will be expected to leverage a financial return
- Creative reinvestment strategies and “tools” will be diverse
- Awareness will be heightened
- Study findings and strategies will be enforced and supported
- Area will have a distinct set of standards, regulations and incentives

Conclusion

The *Longmont Midtown Redevelopment Plan* has been developed to articulate a vision, concept and strategy for the future use and redevelopment of the Midtown area between Longs Peak Avenue and 17th Avenue. The analyses and recommendations presented here are intended to assist the City of Longmont, as well as property and business owners in the study area, with identification and implementation of projects, programs and policies, as well as funding options for investment, necessary to serve future development initiatives. It identifies specific objectives and strategies in order to make Midtown a better place to conduct business, shop, visit, live and play. It is based on a realistic understanding of physical and market conditions, and is intended to be responsive to the community's needs. Together, the public and private sectors face the challenge of advancing the Midtown "address" defined herein. This purpose of this document is to serve as the guide post for those efforts and should be continually revisited and amended as more is learned about the market and challenges to investment in Midtown.