

As part of this assessment, an easily understood school report card format was used to assign grades to how the community is addressing each Best Practice for Longmont’s redevelopment-readiness. Each redevelopment-ready category was evaluated on its current ability and capacity to meet the expectations of the Best Practice of that category. Longmont received an **overall grade of B** based on a self-evaluation of how the community addresses the seven Best Practices for being redevelopment-ready. In a nutshell, the community is doing many things right and is well on the right path toward being a redevelopment-ready community. The community has the right tools in place to make Longmont an attractive community to invest in and redevelop and has the framework and vision to address the Best Practices into the future. This self-evaluation also included top-level strategies that the community can undertake, or continue to perform, to achieve the Best Practices based on the seven categories for redevelopment-readiness.

COUNCIL OPTIONS: Provide direction and/or comments related to the Redevelopment-Ready Guide.

RECOMMENDED OPTIONS: Provide direction as necessary.

FISCAL IMPACT & FUND SOURCE FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION: N/A

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE ANALYSIS:

What is Redevelopment and Why Is It Important?

Redevelopment, in its most general sense, can be described as any new construction on a site that had pre-existing structures or uses prior to the development. These can include brownfield sites (contaminated properties), greyfield sites (e.g. failing shopping malls), adaptive reuse of existing structures and urban infill development. Longmont has had several key redevelopment projects that have been completed in recent years, including the Roosevelt Park Apartments mixed use project in downtown, redevelopment of the former Twin Peaks Mall site into Village at the Peaks commercial center, and the planned redevelopment of the former Butterball turkey plant in downtown to be transformed into South Main Station, a mixed use development with more than 300 multifamily residential units and ground floor commercial space along Main Street.

Redevelopment projects can range from the adaptive reuse of an old grain building into collaborative office space to the redevelopment of a several hundred acre infill site that includes multiple parcels into a new mixed use neighborhood center. Urban renewal can also be used to describe redevelopment. In Colorado, urban renewal authorities (URAs) are created by municipalities to redevelop areas within their jurisdiction that are found to contain blight or slum conditions and in some instances require public participation to attract redevelopment, primarily through tax increment financing.

Redevelopment is important because these projects can eliminate blighted conditions on a property; can transform an underutilized property into productive uses; can rehabilitate a vacant or under-improved building to serve a current market use; can reclaim contaminated property; can provide needed housing, retail, office, and services uses within a community; and can help spur reinvestment in areas of the community that are in need of assistance or that have high barriers to entry.

What does it mean to be Redevelopment-Ready?

This **Redevelopment-Ready Guide** is a tool for the City of Longmont to evaluate its current policies, practices and public investment toolbox that use limited public dollars and investment to attract private investment, grow jobs, provide new housing, and build tax base for the betterment of the community.

This guide is based, in part, on the State of Michigan's Redevelopment Ready Communities[®] (RRC) Program. This program, administered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, is a state-wide certification program that supports communities to become development ready and competitive in today's economy. Once engaged in the program, communities commit to improving their redevelopment readiness by undergoing a rigorous assessment, and then work to achieve a set of criteria laid out in the RRC Best Practices.

City staff used Michigan's RRC program, criteria and best practices as a framework to evaluate Longmont's redevelopment-readiness. Staff research found that this appears to be the only program nationwide that focuses on how a community can become redevelopment-ready. The criteria and best practices were modified and expanded to reflect local and Colorado conditions, in particular the role of public/private partnerships in facilitating redevelopment projects. The seven **Best Practices** evaluated for Longmont include:

1. **Clear Community Vision and Infrastructure Investment** - Evaluates community planning and how a community's redevelopment vision is, or is not, incorporated in the comprehensive plan, downtown plan, small area plans and capital improvements plan. The community's investment in public infrastructure, primarily through a Capital Improvements Plan, within and around key redevelopment areas can help jumpstart reinvestment and redevelopment efforts in those areas.
2. **Proactive Community and Policy Leader Outreach, Education & Engagement** - Assesses how well a community identifies and engages its stakeholders and the community-at-large and provides strong leadership in advancing redevelopment objectives.
3. **Supportive Land Use / Zoning Regulations** - Evaluates a community's Land Development Code, including zoning, land use, and development standards, and how well it regulates for the goals of the community's adopted plans and facilitates redevelopment.
4. **Predictable and Transparent Development Review Process** - Examines the community's development review process, policies and project tracking. A predictable, well documented and up-to-date review process ensures a smooth and transparent review process is vital to creating a business friendly development climate that makes it attractive to investment in the community.
5. **Available Redevelopment Opportunity Sites** - Assesses how a community identifies and markets priority redevelopment sites or areas. Having available redevelopment opportunity sites, a vision for that site/area, and the tools to assist owners in marketing these sites can

help stimulate the market for properties that may have challenging site or environmental or building issues which may represent an obstacle to redevelopment.

6. **Public/Private Partnerships** - Evaluates if the community has entered into public/private partnerships with the private sector to facilitate redevelopment projects. A community which takes the steps to reduce the risk of development, such as partnering with the developer, to close the financial gap to level the playing field to attract private sector investment to areas that have high cost of entry.
7. **Community Prosperity** - Looks at what goals and actions a community has identified to strengthen its overall economic health such as the presence of an overall economic development strategy that includes redevelopment as an important component of this plan.

How Redevelopment-Ready is Longmont?

Longmont is well on its way to being a **redevelopment-ready community**. Longmont received an **overall grade of B** based on a self-evaluation of how the community addresses the seven Best Practices for being redevelopment-ready. The community has the right tools in place to make Longmont an attractive community to invest in and redevelop and has the framework and vision to address the Best Practices into the future.

With its recently completed comprehensive plan update called **Envision Longmont**, small area plans (e.g. 1st and Main Transit & Revitalization Plan), two urban renewal plans, and plans for a Midtown/North Main Corridor Study expected to commence in 2016, the City has taken a proactive, collaborative approach to providing a **clear community vision** and framework to facilitate reinvestment in key redevelopment focus areas. This includes the recognition of the role of **infill and redevelopment** as one of Envision Longmont's Growth Frameworks. The community continues to make progress on a number of **infrastructure improvements** and other public projects planned within and around the two urban renewal areas and 1st and Main Transit Station area, such as **Focus on South Main**, which is expected to facilitate reinvestment in these key areas of the City.

The community's business climate is very competitive within the state. The community embraces an **entrepreneurial spirit**. The community's investment in infrastructure is highly touted and offers highly affordable electric power, a **Giga-bit City** with high-speed fiber optic broadband, and the best water supply along the Front Range, which is critical to supporting the existing community and (re)development efforts in the future. The community's economic development strategy, **Advance Longmont**, provides the vision and targeted industries, along with strategic goals and top level recommendations for enhancing the overall economic development health of the community.

While these strengths are truly opportunities to be maximized, challenges for redevelopment remain. The City continues to improve and refine its development process to be more transparent, predictable and user-friendly. Due to the complexities of infill and redevelopment, the ability to execute a timely manner (**from all sides --public and private sectors**) is crucial to whether the project takes off or not. The ability to be **flexible, creatively problem solve and find solutions** (developer and community) to advance redevelopment projects that are looking to respond to market opportunities should not be overlooked. Nowhere is this more evident than in

those infill and redevelopment areas that may be challenged by infrastructure that does not meet today's needs, blighted buildings and sites, environmental contamination, lack of market demand or property owners unmotivated or unable to make further investment in their properties. The community's one-stop development review process is an excellent example of collaboration among multiple departments. Ensuring that everyone who is responsible for seeing a project through, from the developer to city staff to the community at large, understands the benefits of redevelopment, its impact on the community (e.g. creating jobs and housing) and how it fits into the long range vision for the community is critical to successful implementation.

Central to the success of any (re)development effort, is **strong community leadership**. Bold leadership is essential to advancing the vision of the community. Leadership comes from many places. It can be representatives from the local government and political leadership, the local business community, community-based groups, institutions and non-profits, and individuals. Highly effective **community champions for redevelopment** are able to engage and inspire the community and provide that leadership to move the community redevelopment vision forward to successful implementation.

Public/private partnerships play an important role in redevelopment. They are an effective means to intervene in a weak or uncertain market and can help level the playing field in these markets, with both the public and private sectors sharing in the financial risks to bring forth projects that help implement that vision. The community has engaged in several public/private partnerships, most notably the redevelopment of a former dead mall into a community retail center and the redevelopment of a former turkey factory in the downtown area into a planned mixed use residential and commercial project. The need to have a positive working relationship between the community and (re)developer is paramount for these types of projects to succeed.

The guide provides a detailed assessment of how the community is doing in terms of being redevelopment-ready based on the seven Best Practices and includes an easily understood school report card format to assign grades to how the community is addressing each Best Practice for Longmont's redevelopment-readiness. Each redevelopment-ready category was evaluated on its current ability and capacity to meet the expectations of the Best Practice of that category, which are further detailed in the evaluation section of the guide.

Raising the Grades – Strategies to Meet Best Practices Criteria

The report details 37 top-level strategies that the community can undertake, or continue to perform, to achieve the Best Practices based on the seven categories for redevelopment-readiness. These action steps can serve as a framework and roadmap for City redevelopment staff, working in collaboration with other City departments, partner organizations and the development community, to advance redevelopment and facilitate reinvestment in key focus areas of the community.

ATTACHMENTS:

Redevelopment-Ready Guide – Self-Evaluation for the City of Longmont