

2025 Longmont City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from Council Candidates: Ward II

We asked every candidate to respond to a set of 26 community questions. These came from both the Chamber’s Public Policy Committee and members of the public, with some questions combined for clarity. Candidates were free to skip questions, so not every answer will appear.

- A single star (*) means the question came directly from a community member.
- Two stars (**) mean the question reflects both committee and community input.

The Chamber shares these questions and responses without endorsing any viewpoint. Responses to questions are exactly as the candidate wrote them.

It is additionally worth noting that some questions and responses refer to the following documents, which we encourage you to familiarize yourself with:

- [Envision Longmont](#)
- [Advance Longmont 2.0](#)

Ward II Candidates

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Matthew Popkin

Campaign Website: popkinforlongmont.com

About:

Matthew and his wife moved to Longmont in April 2021 and got married at Sandstone Ranch in 2022. They live in Southmoor Park with their dog and 4 chickens. Matthew is 34 years old and works as a technical manager on the US Cities & Communities team at Rocky Mountain Institute, a non-profit think and do tank focused on market-based solutions to advance the clean energy transition. In January, Matthew was appointed to fill a vacancy on City Council for Ward 2 and now chairs the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority. He also serves on Longmont's Brownfield Advisory Committee and is on the board of the Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center. Before City Council, Matthew served 2 years on the Longmont Planning & Zoning Commission. He previously worked for a small municipal consulting firm, Sustainable Strategies DC, where he helped more than 30 small municipalities apply for and secure over \$15 million in grants for community and brownfields revitalization priorities. He also worked at the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Maryland Energy Administration. Matthew's collaboration with cities began in College Park, Maryland, where he advised on transportation, public safety, and sustainability in the City of College Park and University of Maryland. He has a master's in energy and environmental policy from the University of Maryland, College Park.

General Vision

If elected, what would be your top priority in office?

My top priority would be managing how and where Longmont grows by prioritizing sustainable redevelopment in our old industrial areas and ensuring we expand, support, and offer safe and convenient transportation options for people of all ages and backgrounds. My focus on urban renewal and infill redevelopment has been a widely popular cornerstone of not just this campaign but my service on City Council, as chair of the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority, on the Brownfields Advisory Committee, and on the Planning & Zoning Commission. In fact, no other candidate, current city councilmember, or past city councilmember has ever served in all 4 of those capacities. By reinvesting in our older industrial areas—from the Sugar Mill through Lower Downtown to the River District, we reactivate key sites, bring more housing and retail where we already have existing infrastructure, and increase foot traffic for local businesses. Moreover, we expand our tax base without increasing taxes or increasing our municipal footprint.

What is your plan for advocating Longmont's business needs at the state and federal levels?

The City of Longmont does take positions and advocate at the state level, and I think it's important to work more closely with the Chamber of Commerce to identify legislation that we can advocate for together. This February, as the new City Council liaison to the Colorado Municipal League, I got to see first-hand how key municipal groups advocate in Denver, and I personally spearheaded the City's efforts to support and testify in favor of reforms to the Construction Defects Law and the on-bill financing seed funding legislation to make it more affordable to finance energy upgrades.

Professionally, I previously worked for 3.5 years as a consultant, grant writer, and registered lobbyist for small cities and towns. In this capacity, I helped cities and counties far smaller than Longmont secure over \$15 million in federal and state funding for sustainability, economic development, trails and riverwalks, brownfields assessment and cleanup, and community infrastructure priorities. I did this by not only writing the grant, but being the strategic lobbying partner for multiple communities in Washington, DC during both the Obama Administration and Trump Administration. Longmont does not have a particularly active federal lobbying strategy, but if elected, I would want to ensure that we especially plan for this for Sugar Mill cleanup and revitalization efforts.

***What will you do to protect the council and staff from being distracted by issues that don't fit within the city's strategic plan?**

As the new chair of the Urban Renewal Authority, I've already helped prompt staff to prioritize the most time-sensitive and near-term negotiations. Additionally, I think the City Council retreat is underutilized and should be more intentionally planned by staff and City Council together. This is a unique time to set the agenda strategically. While the Council's primary job is to set the policy direction for the city, we also need to be much more intentional about the process—especially on topics that might balloon from increased time and attention. In the past year, I observed that City Council was not intentional about the minimum wage (until the fishbowl discussion), land swap, or sex offender housing issues—all of which dragged on extensively.

Minimum Wage

****Do you support setting a local minimum wage above the state requirement? If so, what rate do you believe is appropriate, and how do you anticipate it would affect local businesses? Given the pressure from county commissioners and special interest groups to accelerate minimum wage increases — and considering the reported business closures and job losses in cities like Denver, and Niwot — what would be your approach be on this issue?**

I do not support a higher minimum wage than the state minimum wage at this time. When considering a local minimum wage increase, I believe it is necessary to consider local, regional, and state implications, especially when Colorado already has one of the top 10 highest minimum wages among states that is already tied to the CPI. Whether and at what level to implement a local minimum wage increase should factor in local economic conditions, macroeconomic supply chain considerations, overall employment rates, expected impacts on current employment levels, and other price/cost pressures. There are many unintended consequences that of a price floor policy in any industry, and considering Longmont's economy is growing, Sundance is coming, and more than 90% of employees are paid above the minimum wage already, I would intend to track the market closely to see how our businesses and wage rates adjust. This also comes on the heels of Boulder County recently announcing it would be revisiting its minimum wage approach.

That said, I do understand why increasing the minimum wage has gained traction. When the costs of housing and other expenses increase substantially, affordability becomes key—for employers and employees. That's why I'll be focused on managing costs that are within the city's purview, from permits to utilities, to ease the burden on workers, business owners, and families overall.

Environment & Sustainability

What are your plans/programs for balancing growth and environmental sustainability?

Co-locating residential, retail, and recreational areas with a range of mobility options reduces the need for people to get in a car and helps strengthen communities. Here's how I would tangibly advance this vision:

1. **Formalize an “Urban Renewal Innovation Zone”:** Prioritizing redevelopment along the river corridor, from the Fairgrounds through the River District and Lower Downtown to the Sugar Mill, creates a walkable, bikeable ~3 mile [STEAM and Sugar Mill](#) corridor already aligned with Longmont’s infrastructure jewel: the St. Vrain Greenway. In May, I [secured unanimous City Council support](#) to create an Urban Renewal Innovation Zone overlay, which will focus development downtown and make it easier to redevelop underutilized areas (which are primarily in this corridor) and attract mixed-use development. The City is already working to create the URIZ zone and I would work intently to ensure it is as effective as possible for the modern growth needs of Longmont.
2. **Reactivating Our Brownfields:** Building on my response in question #1, cleaning up brownfields is intertwined with environmental sustainability. To safely reactivate these sites, the City and its partners will need to carefully remove longstanding contamination from previous industrial operations, structural decay, fires, vandalism, and other activities. This directly helps improve soil and water quality—and air quality if it reduces the likelihood of structural fires (i.e. burned down parts of Sugar Mill).
3. **Operationalizing TOD:** Urban renewal efforts will also enable transit-oriented development (TOD) at the anticipated 1st and Main RTD transit station. Due to RTD timelines, the next council must bring a clear vision for the transit station, what type of housing and retail are located around it, and how well connected our trails, greenways, bike lanes, and transit service are at this location.

Enabling a Bikeable Paradise: With the growth of e-bikes, the incoming regional bikeshare that I advanced, and our greenways, Longmont could be a cyclist’s paradise. To do that, Longmont needs more protected bike lanes, well-planned bikeshare stations, and plentiful bike parking.

***Longmont is five years away from its 2030 goal of sourcing all electricity from carbon-free sources. However, with Platte River Power Authority planning to replace its coal-fired turbine with a natural gas unit, this goal will not be fully met. Projections suggest the cumulative cost to Longmont residents will be around \$100 million by 2030 due to steeply rising electric rates (~\$2,500/ household).**

Given Longmont’s negligible contribution to global CO₂ emissions, and the fact that roughly half of the city’s electricity reportedly now comes from carbon-free sources, should the city reconsider its goal and recognize that the progress made so far represents its fair share, or should it stay committed to the original target, regardless of the financial cost?

Professionally, I help cities across the country embrace market-based strategies for a clean, prosperous energy future. I directly work with communities to plan for and procure renewable energy projects that

are the 'best value' for achieving their goals. Ambitious renewable energy projects, when done well, can reduce air pollution, reduce the need for utility bill increases, and increase grid flexibility.

Longmont's 2030 goal was established in a very different economic, policy, and technological context. In fact, PRPA did not even model for a 100% by 2030 pathway in its 2024 plan. I believe we should revisit the 100% renewable energy goal to reflect the realities of current pathways to 100%, not because I don't think having aspirational targets is valuable, but so we can set reasonable expectations for ratepayers. This can also factor in what the current market will support, the impacts of PRPA joining the Southwest Power Pool, and priorities that enhance near-term resilience for our ratepayers and system. That said, even if we don't achieve 100% renewable energy by exactly 2030, we should still be ambitious in our pursuits because a more renewable energy-powered grid paired with energy storage is both more flexible and less vulnerable to macroeconomic fuel price volatility, which helps Longmont better manage costs for residents and businesses.

I would prioritize energy efficiency and powering with strategic renewable energy technologies:

1. **Energy Efficiency:** We need to greatly increase participation in PRPA's Efficiency Works program. Regardless of fuel type, efficiency reduces pollution. Updating our building code in alignment with the [Metro Regional Building Policy Cohort](#) is critical. Moreover, this involves evolving our rate structures to align most efficiently with our grid needs and customer/ratepayer needs.
2. **Powering with Renewables:** Due to recent federal changes, PRPA and LPC will have to be more strategic in adding renewables to our grid so as to not increase rates too heavily or risk eroding support for a renewable future. Prioritizing energy storage will be financially and environmentally responsible once the wind and solar tax credits sunset after 2027.

Lastly, it is worth noting our investments in a more efficient and electric power system keep dollars local; investments in fossil fuels send dollars outside of Longmont. In other words, the more we invest in a more electric, renewable, and flexible system, the more we invest in Longmont and keep costs within our control.

Housing Development

****How will you balance sustainable growth and affordability with concerns about increased density—such as traffic, noise, and strain on infrastructure—while also addressing homelessness and panhandling linked to mental health and substance use challenges?**

In addition to my previous answers on urban renewal and brownfields reuse, most people agree that our old industrial sites are reasonable locations for higher density and mixed-use developments. My strategic focus on reactivating these areas enables us to reinvent ~400 acres of downtown Longmont, most of which is not in anyone's backyard. This will preserve our city's character and open spaces, reduce development pressures from existing neighborhoods, increase housing options for all residents, support our growing community of small businesses, and slow traffic growth.

In terms of housing and homelessness, we need to make sure we continue to support the city's human services, housing authority, and non-profit partners providing critical mental health and substance use support. The city also needs to innovate with transitional housing, including 'tiny home' village opportunities for transitional and supportive housing to help residents who are homeless have more

stable, healthier, and safer lives. This could involve collaborating with local partners like Veterans Community Project, Habitat for Humanity, HOPE, and Our Center.

Fiscal Responsibility

What strategies would you implement to increase city revenue and enhance local economic sustainability without burdening residents or relying heavily on federal and state funding?

I've previously discussed two strategies: increasing our tax base where we have existing infrastructure (urban renewal areas) and keeping dollars local in our energy system. Additionally, the more we prioritize redevelopment in our urban renewal areas, the more we can leverage tax increment financing to invest in site improvements that enhance the city's tax base. This will activate new investments, economic activity, and sales and use taxes as well.

In both February and September, [led the push to annex 2 existing dispensaries already](#) operating within Longmont boundaries but technically in County enclaves. As a result, the City has not been receiving tax revenue from these businesses despite these businesses benefiting from city infrastructure and public safety services. This also would allow all operating dispensaries within city boundaries to compete on a level playing field.

Advance Longmont

***What do you see as the key strengths of Advance Longmont 2.0, and what, if any, modifications would you propose? Additionally, what steps will you take to protect its integrity and promote its effective implementation?**

Advance Longmont takes a holistic perspective on Longmont's economic future—from infrastructure investments like Nextlight and downtown revitalization to quality of life. Building on my answers previously about managing growth and housing development, investing in our urban renewal areas, particularly the Sugar Mill, transit station area, and River District, will help enhance placemaking and pedestrian friendliness, which helps retain talent and support existing businesses. Ultimately, if done right, Longmont has the potential to reinvent our downtown and river corridor identity and become a regional destination and more connected community.

Arts Funding & Recreation

What is the city's role to support and fund the arts, cultural programs, parks, recreation, and community spaces in Longmont?

Arts and recreation are integral to a healthy community and vibrant economy. Fortunately, Longmont has invested heavily in our parks and community spaces already, though these will be key components to effectively integrating urban renewal redevelopment. See response to Sugar Mill and brownfields question for more detail.

While Longmont already has wide range of cultural and art programming, I would love to see more intentional arts and music programming opportunities for the younger generations of Longmont. As our world becomes ever more digital, creating unique opportunities to collaborate across our community.

What role do you see the Sundance Film Festival playing in Longmont’s cultural and economic landscape, and how would you balance its benefits with residents’ concerns about congestion and affordability?

This is a unique moment for Longmont and how we prepare in the next 14 months will be critical. Between 2018 and 2025, Sundance has attracted between 72,000-125,000 people annually. And in the past two years alone, the festival generated \$332M for Utah’s economy.

Sundance is a perfect opportunity to enhance the local experience and activate our economy during one of the historically slowest times of year. Many visitors won’t be coming from out of state, so this is a prime time to showcase our small businesses and independent restaurants for Sundance and future visits to Longmont. Imagine a ‘Winter ArtWalk’ and temporarily close Main Street for an evening or weekend to encourage window shopping and eating downtown. Other visitors will fly in—Park City’s nearby airport (HCR) saw approximately a 25% increase in flight traffic during Sundance. Modernizing Vance Brand Airport will enhance the quality of our aerial gateway and make Longmont even more welcoming. And Sundance is a perfect catalyst to help us finally invest in public signs and placemaking along our greenways, parks, and commercial areas to guide visitors around town and to key destinations—ultimately helping people and businesses throughout the year.

To do this right, the City must play a proactive role in preparing for both in-state and out-of-state visitors who will need to move around. This could bring tens of thousands of vehicles over 3 weeks—unless there are convenient, accessible, and comfortable alternatives. First, we need to work with RTD and/or Via (RIDE Longmont) to establish a bus to and from Denver International Airport that gets people to the heart of Longmont without needing a car. Then, we need to make it easy to get around Longmont without a car by increasing RIDE Longmont capacity or with the forthcoming bikeshare and to other key destinations like Boulder, Eldora, and Estes Park. All of these need to be convenient with a “Sundance Guest Pass”. (This will also mean being strategic about Longmont’s construction plans, including Hover/119 and the St. Vrain Greenway reconstruction. Coordinating construction around a new regional peak travel season will be key.)

Additionally, Longmont has been reluctant to enable more flexibility for short-term rentals, but Sundance will bring an influx of visitors, many of whom will be looking for flexible accommodations. We should revisit our licensing process and current restrictions—even if just for the winter holidays until February, and whether there are opportunities to capture additional revenue to invest in our infrastructure, public safety, roads, and parks.

We should not let Sundance ‘happen’ to Longmont. Instead, let’s proactively embrace the opportunities to make Sundance work for Longmont.

Civic Discourse & Engagement

What strategies would you implement to foster more respectful, productive discussions on local issues and encourage civil engagement while reducing vitriolic discourse?

Past and present city councils have underutilized Longmont Public Media. As the only member of City Council currently below the average age of Longmont, I'd like to personally embrace and experiment with more consistent interviews with leaders and residents across Longmont. I'd even consider co-hosting a new podcast that can help promote thoughtful discussions on complex local topics. Most of the challenges we face are not black and white solutions or simple answers. Embracing complexity and bringing more people into the conversation is critical.

Most importantly, modeling constructive and thoughtful discourse is essential. That starts—but does not end—at City Council meetings. Showing up prepared, asking thoughtful questions that help educate interested stakeholders, and explaining the “why” behind our votes on more topics is critical to a more informed, more thoughtful citizenry.

Business Startups, Costs, Commercial Development & Permitting

How would you address concerns over blighted or underutilized commercial areas?

One of the projects that the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority has been working on in 2025 has been redeveloping the old Wal-Mart property next to Hobby Lobby. The proposed 265-unit housing development will directly address extensive public safety calls for service and reactivate a site that has been abandoned for 14 years. This not only brings more housing, but helps neighboring businesses by removing blighted areas that attracted illegal activities and increasing foot traffic next to a wide array of businesses in and around the Village at the Peaks.

See other responses on General Vision and Housing that speak to my focus on Longmont's urban renewal areas.

****What steps would you take to make Longmont a more competitive and business-friendly city, especially for startups and commercial development? Some have stated concerns that the planning and permitting process has become slow, complex, and costly — making it difficult for businesses to build and occupy space — how would you work to streamline these processes? Additionally, what strategies would you support to help keep commercial rents within reach for small businesses?**

I have heard concerns about Longmont's permitting process directly, through both the minimum wage fishbowl and private conversations with business owners. This is within the city's control and should be an early priority for the next city council. Even if the goal is to make starting a business 10% easier, that would be a huge improvement.

Building on my response to question #5, I believe the Urban Renewal Innovation Zone (URIZ) that I've already started creating with city staff will be key to a more competitive and business-friendly city. While the initial focus will be streamlining our planning processes, permitting, utility easements, and construction in key industrial areas, my hope is that the URIZ will be successful and offer direct insights for how we can reform other planning, permitting, and economic development processes across the whole city.

***Downtown businesses are estimated to be about 80% locally owned and operated. What would you do to protect and support that character? What top goals would you prioritize to ensure downtown remains vibrant, accessible, and welcoming to local businesses and the community? (Question submitted by Longmont Downtown Development Authority, our economic partner)**

Sundance is a perfect catalyst to help us finally invest in public signs and placemaking along our greenways, parks, and commercial areas to guide visitors around town and to key destinations—ultimately helping people and businesses throughout the year. This is also an opportunity to consider enhancing our downtown incentive programs, including reactivating the Facade Improvement Program and be extended to fund improvements and upgrades internally as well.

Lastly, all businesses use energy and water, but sometimes upgrading to the most efficient and modern sinks, toilets, and appliances is not within budget. This is an opportunity to help businesses maintain their character while ensuring they are vibrant and welcoming, and I would like to examine creative ways—such as low-interest financing or on-bill financing—to restructure, support, and pair LDDA programs with city and utility programs.

Social Issues & Equity

***Are there or could there be local initiatives you would support to ensure a strong safety net for Longmont residents who may be disproportionately affected by broader policy changes—such as immigrants, refugees, low-income families, and those facing barriers to healthcare?**

The City of Longmont funds numerous programs that support more vulnerable community members. What I consistently see here is that there is not enough funding and that funding is spread too thin, specifically on mental health, food assistance, and housing assistance services.

In addition, while we do have utility assistance programs like CARES, I want to specifically create a utility cost savings task force for renters to evaluate how we can work with landlords and renters to address barriers to more comfortable, safe, affordable, and efficient living in rental properties. This would evaluate options to reduce costs for energy, water, internet, and sanitation, specifically trying to address split incentive situations where the landlord is not incentivized to make efficiency and appliance improvements but the tenant pays the bills.

RTD & Public Transit

Should Longmont explore new public transit options such as Front Range Passenger Rail? If so, what are they?

Yes, both the Front Range Passenger Rail and Bus Rapid Transit have the potential to better connect the region, create new opportunities for Longmont, and meaningfully reduce the growth in traffic. I would actively support current efforts with CDOT, RTD, and Front Range Passenger Rail to finally connect passenger rail to Downtown Longmont by 2029 after decades of Longmont residents paying RTD for promised light rail lines and getting nothing for it. This will help concentrate new development in lower downtown where we already have existing infrastructure to support people, bikes, and vehicles. If current efforts do *not* succeed, I would push for Longmont to demand the Governor's office hold RTD accountable for this breach in public trust and require that RTD re-invest Longmont's FasTracks contributions in other critical transit infrastructure.

Additionally, I will prioritize creating bus service from Longmont to DIA—like the ABI from Boulder to DIA. To do this I would work with RTD, Via (RIDE Longmont partner), or another provider to establish a dedicated bus line to Denver International Airport by reevaluating current bus routes and needs within Longmont and collaborating with interested neighboring cities to offer affordable, convenient access to DIA. This also directly relates to how we can make it more affordable to travel for work, pleasure, or other needs and how we can prepare for all the new Sundance Film Festival visitors while reducing increases in traffic and air pollution. This is a common-sense and highly desirable bus route that supports all residents, employers and employees, friends, family, and other visitors.

I didn't own a car until I was 28. I understand how important quality public transit can be, but if the transit and transit stations are not safe, comfortable, and convenient, most people will not consider it to be a viable option.

Business Acumen

Have you signed the front of a paycheck?

Yes, for digital payments to employees and independent contractors. No, to a physical paycheck.

What real-world business experience do you bring, and how would that experience affect your approach to budgeting, hiring, or marketing to help shape city policy?

From 2016-2020, I served as the president of the Metropolitan Washington Soccer Referees Association (MWSRA), a non-profit corporation providing qualified soccer referees to soccer leagues and schools across the Maryland and DC region. The president is the highest officer and serves functionally as the organization's executive director. As president, I managed an 11-member board of directors and 7 paid staff, led communications and marketing strategy, and led the contract negotiations and client relationships—ultimately responsible for the part-time and full-time livelihoods of ~500 soccer referees (independent contractors). My primary responsibility was to increase referee fees—aka revenue—for referees and the organization. Long-time board members wanted to leverage the regional referee shortage to ask for higher fees, but my strategy was to align referee quality—our services—with increased revenue so that our clients were investing in our referees, not just paying them. I restructured our contracts, operations, and training programs accordingly, and our clients recognized this.

I measured success in three ways. First, I was not only the youngest elected president in MWSRA's 60-year history, but I was also re-elected. Second, I led the negotiations and renegotiations for over 15 league contracts, including 6 new clients altogether. Third, under my management, the organization surpassed and sustained \$1 million in annual gross revenue for the first time in at least 30 years with a net positive operating budget all 4 years I was president—even though we had more staff and more paid mentors than ever before.

From this experience, I learned that aligning incentives—quality of services and fee revenue—helps increase business and creates a shared organizational mission. I also learned that retaining strong talent is essential, and that gaps in talent, when not addressed quickly, can create real problems and gaps in service.

Sugar Mill and Brownfield Developments

Do you have a vision for redeveloping the historic Sugar Mill site? If so, how would you address environmental concerns, sustainable infrastructure and engage the community and developers to benefit Longmont as a whole?

We get one chance to reinvent the Great Western Sugar Mill. When I think about the optimal vision of the Sugar Mill's future, I think about San Antonio's Pearl District—formerly the home to Pearl Brewery's bottle manufacturing facility now reinvented and reactivated as a hub of commercial, retail, housing, tourism, education, and yes—public spaces for performance, outdoor films, and recreation and intentional placemaking that embraces the history of the Sugar Mill and the character of Longmont. It's both Longmont's Eastern Gateway and a regional destination that retains our industrial character (and some of the current structures) and embraces one of the best views of the Rocky Mountains from Longmont.

The site will likely require over \$20M in cleanup, demolition (hopefully only some of the buildings), and site preparation with modern infrastructure and utilities. This is not a pipe dream. In fact, this is what motivated me to get involved in the Longmont Planning & Zoning Commission, Brownfields Advisory Committee, City Council, and offer my time as chair of the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority (LURA). LURA specifically brings redevelopment tools, like tax increment financing (TIF) and condemnation authority to the table, if needed. It is also expected that the US EPA will soon open up the next round of brownfields cleanup grants, which offers Longmont the opportunity to potentially secure \$4M in federal funding for these exact needs. In addition to funding, we will need to robust community input. As LURA chair, I've already started educating groups around Longmont about what we're working on, including the Chamber's Public Policy Committee. Bringing these groups together and other residents to help shape the site's master plan will be critical.

This will not be easy, but ambitious, transformational projects rarely are—and I bring extensive professional expertise to Longmont on brownfields reuse and revitalization. Beyond my local credentials, I have directly helped cities reactivate brownfields, closed landfills, and other challenging sites for most of my professional career. This includes *successfully* writing and lobbying for 8 federal brownfields and economic assistance grants totaling approximately \$9 million for assessment, cleanup, and reuse planning in communities from Weirton, WV to Norfolk, VA to Green Bay, WI. This funding has leveraged hundreds of millions more in private capital investment and new jobs, from Weirton's new Form Energy manufacturing facility to Green Bay's Shipyard Revitalization project. Additionally, I've created and led trainings on leveraging funding for brownfields revitalization and been a featured speaker and panelist at 4 National Brownfield Conferences and multiple state and regional brownfield conferences.

Are there specific commercial areas in Longmont that you would prioritize for redevelopment or improvement? If so, which areas, and what strategies would you use to enhance them?

I would prioritize the Sugar Mill, 1st and Main Transit Station, and the River District for redevelopment. We have ~400 acres split between these 3 areas along our river corridor and greenway that would make other cities jealous. 400 acres that will shape Longmont for generations.

My answer here is not what I would do but what I am *already* doing. Through both my roles as chair of the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority, a member of City Council, and a member of the Brownfield Advisory Committee, I'm actively helping drive and coordinate Longmont's urban renewal and reinvestment strategy.

This includes creating the Urban Renewal Innovation Zone (as already discussed in questions #5 and #14) to streamline redevelopment and attract innovative developers hungry for a career-defining project and supporting negotiations with property owners and Boulder County. Additionally, to make tax increment financing go as far as possible, LURA has established the Southeast Urban Renewal Area. When the Sugar Mill is annexed into Longmont, we can leverage already accrued TIF in the Southeast Urban Renewal Area from projects like the 2nd and Martin apartments to help cleanup the Sugar Mill.

Lastly, for the 1st and Main Transit station, it will be integral to coordinate with LDDA and the Chamber to ensure a smooth, integrated redevelopment that complements existing downtown businesses and infrastructure and filling strategic residential and commercial gaps.

Vance Brand Airport

What role does Longmont's Vance Brand Airport play in supporting the economic growth and transportation needs of local businesses and residents?

Our airport lacks a sustainable financial model and has outdated infrastructure and services. This impacts quality of life for residents (including pilots), our environment, and our economic potential. With Sundance coming, this is also the time to ensure this is a modern gateway to Longmont - a part of our community that is not just a facility in our community. I envision the airport as stronger economic and community asset:

1. Reimagine the Airport as a Community Amenity for Pilots and Non-Pilots Alike: Modern general aviation airports have restaurants, lounges, and meeting spaces that are destinations in their own right. Longmont does not have any of these. At the same time, many in the community want another recreation center, library expansion, and other community gathering spaces. These are not mutually exclusive and would integrate the airport and other community facilities to serve all of Longmont, potential sharing capital retrofit costs across departments.
2. Embrace Electric Aviation & Unleaded Fuels: Support the rapid innovation in cleaner and quieter electric aviation by prioritizing investments in electric upgrades with Longmont Power & Communications and collaborating with other Front Range airports on coordinated deployment of compatible charging infrastructure. Owning and operating our own electric utility is a huge asset here. If you build it, they will come. We also need to aggressively pursue grants and FAA support for unleaded fuels, which is already an [FAA stated priority by 2030](#).
3. Refocus Vance Brand Airport as a Local Gateway and Innovation Hub: Our airport master plan and airport infrastructure is vastly outdated. We need a new fixed-based operator (FBO) that is a modern gateway for Longmont. We also need to invest in infrastructure that enables sustainable and electric aviation innovation that enhances quality of life in our community and attracts the next generation of aviation innovation companies. We run our own electric utility and Nextlight and have local opportunities with the St. Vrain Innovation Center. This is in our wheelhouse and merits intentional focus. Otherwise, we let opportunities fly right over us.

Envision Longmont calls for development, including residential, near the Vance Brand yet some airport stakeholders have expressed concern about noise complaints and safety. What's your philosophy on land use planning in that area to balance the City's housing needs with concerns about airport operations?

Growing toward the airport has inherently led to more conflict. This is not rocket science, nor is prioritizing our growth in our urban renewal areas where we have no shortage of opportunities to invest in housing. See previous answers on urban renewal and brownfields redevelopment.

Going forward, as Envision Longmont gets reinvisioned in the coming years, I would like to see the comprehensive planning, urban renewal planning, airport master planning, and sustainability planning processes overlap more intentionally. Process, who's involved, and what's included are critical to creating the next generation of our comprehensive plan.

***What is your position on allowing housing development near the Longmont airport, and how should the city manage potential conflicts between aviation activity and residential growth?**

I would not prioritize this. See previous answer for more details.

Tourism

In 2023, nearly 600,000 visitors generated over \$277 million in economic impact for Longmont and supported more than 3,000 local jobs — outcomes made possible through strategic destination marketing and management. What is your perspective on the role of tourism and continued investment in destination marketing to benefit both residents and visitors?

How would you work to align City priorities with tourism and destination goals—particularly through collaboration with nonprofit partners like Visit Longmont? What is your vision for the future of Longmont's tourism economy and its broader contribution to the community? (Question submitted by Visit Longmont, our economic partner)

Throughout this past year, I was a consistent supporter of the newly proposed Tourism Improvement District. This is something that Longmont hotels were asking for, directly impacts their businesses and customers, and ultimately helps strengthen Longmont's tourism marketing and services.

See response to question #15 regarding Sundance Film Festival. (I know that's not all of Longmont's tourism, but it will be a critical opportunity, if we plan appropriately.)

Childcare

Childcare costs in Longmont and Boulder County are among the highest in the state of Colorado. What could you do as a councilor/mayor to help bring down the costs of childcare for families while helping childcare providers earn more thriving wages?

Colorado is [ranked 5th most expensive](#) in the US for early childhood education. We can make it easier for new providers to operate or expand operations in Longmont by:

1. Updating Our Zoning Laws: There are limitations on where educational facilities [are allowed in Longmont](#). Revisiting this can allow early childhood education facilities in most residential, mixed-use, and employment zones to increase the supply of local childcare options (as of August 12, 2025, Matthew secured City Council support to allow childcare and daycare facilities in most zones);
2. Considering Conditions with Future Annexations: Including early childhood education facility space as a condition in future annexation agreements for new development, where allowed; and
3. Making It Easier to Build: Offering streamlined development reviews and fee waivers for developers who partner with early childhood education providers.

----- **End of Questionnaire Responses from Candidate Popkin** -----

Teresa Simpkins

Campaign Website: teresa4longmont.com

About:

Hello! I'm running for City Council because I bring a wealth of experience and a public servant mindset to the creation of public policy. I offer balanced, practical, and collaborative leadership focused on controlled, coordinated growth that preserves the spirit of Longmont. Professionally, I've worked for more than 25 years at all levels of government, including time as a Town Clerk in Nederland, a Boulder County Attorney, and a marketing specialist for the City of Longmont. I obtained my undergraduate degree from Penn State and my law degree from Georgetown. I lived in several East Coast states, as well as in England, before settling in Boulder County in 1997 and moving to Longmont in 2013. I'm married to a wonderful man and have seven kids that call me "mom" - two that I gave birth to, three that I acquired in a previous relationship, and two foster children. I hope to give Longmont's Ward 2 the kind of thoughtful, genuine representative we deserve.

General Vision

If elected, what would be your top priority in office?

My top priority will **be to listen to and actively represent the concerns of all the residents of Ward 2 and beyond**. When constituents ask how I will vote on things, I will not equivocate on my positions or give myself an "out" with "what if" or hypothetical situations. And that pledge isn't hard to keep because all of my positions are based on deep conversations with Ward 2 residents, not on my personal preferences or "day job" advocacy. I have spent 25+ years working in government and for government-associated nonprofits; I intend to incorporate the traits of the most effective elected officials I have worked with. But more importantly, I aim to bring a sense of public service back to Longmont's political arena and remind our elected officials that we are here to serve the people, not our own agendas or professional goals.

Based on those conversations with Ward 2 constituents, **I will focus new high-density housing in existing transportation corridors and near existing services and amenities, such as the St. Vrain River and the Sugar Mill site**. In established neighborhoods, **I will argue aggressively for in-fill development that reflects the character and density of the existing neighborhood and that fills a specific housing need we have**, such as senior housing or affordable housing for purchase. We don't need more apartments on the west side of Ward 2; those who need affordable housing don't need yearly rent increases; they need downpayment assistance and access to mortgages designed for people with poor or nonexistent credit scores. Oftentimes, these individuals and families have enough income to pay for a mortgage, but their credit score has tanked due to medical bills or previous job loss.

Again, aligned to my Ward 2 neighbors, **I will never vote to develop or change Open Space** because I believe that is a question best put to all the people in Longmont who have paid Open Space taxes for decades. And **I won't terminate conservation easements to enrich a developer**. Our open and public lands are one of the main reasons many of us settled in Ward 2.

What is your plan for advocating Longmont's business needs at the state and federal levels?

The City Council needs to proactively and aggressively inform and educate state and federal officials around how their statutes and policies can support or undermine local businesses. Small businesses in particular are really feeling the burden of recent state budget decisions, and with the current economic uncertainty and decline in consumer spending, they need our support more than ever. It will be imperative for the next Council to take better care of our small businesses lest we risk losing them in large numbers. Also, oftentimes policymakers at the state and federal level, who are removed from the day-to-day impact of their decisions, will create rules or laws that have unintended negative consequences when implemented. It is our job to spot those consequences and raise them to the decision makers as early as possible in the process to try and minimize those effects on local businesses.

***What will you do to protect the council and staff from being distracted by issues that don't fit within the city's strategic plan?**

Governing necessarily entails confronting emerging issues that we hadn't planned for, and the best leaders are the ones who are nimble and able to emerge from tunnel vision around their own projects to critically and thoughtfully assess new problems as they arise. Refusing to address issues as they come up simply because they weren't part of the original plan only kicks the can down the road for future leaders to deal with and frustrates the constituents impacted now. Having said that, **I don't think that significant Council time should be devoted to issues or problems that are outside the scope of Council's ability to solve.** Resources, including meeting time and staff time, are finite and need to be deployed to best solve the problems and promote the plans that directly impact city residents and are under the Council's control. Time spent grandstanding on issues beyond our control is wasteful and self-serving, and I will be quick to point it out when I see it and encourage my counterparts to return to the issues around which we can have meaningful impact.

Minimum Wage

****Do you support setting a local minimum wage above the state requirement? If so, what rate do you believe is appropriate, and how do you anticipate it would affect local businesses? Given the pressure from county commissioners and special interest groups to accelerate minimum wage increases — and considering the reported business closures and job losses in cities like Denver, and Niwot — what would be your approach be on this issue?**

I am not opposed in theory to a higher minimum wage, but I don't think that the current economic uncertainties are compatible with that move. Most of our businesses already pay above the Boulder County minimum wage because they have to in order to attract and retain good workers. But I believe that an overall minimum wage hike right now would result in us losing many of our small businesses, who are already severely hurting from drastic increases in goods and food and consistent increases in City fees. Small business owners have told me they are suffering a "slow death by a million papercuts." With neighboring towns like Frederick and Firestone offering huge monetary incentives to attract small businesses to relocate or start up in their towns, the risk of our small businesses relocating in order to stay afloat is very real.

I believe that **the primary wage issue facing our neighbors who are struggling financially is the need for more high-wage employers** and "primary employers" – those large companies that employ a lot of people and whose salaries help set the standard of living in a community. Attracting and keeping higher-wage employers – be they manufacturing, pharmaceutical, or high tech – is the secret to a

thriving community. I would place a priority on driving the City's efforts to attract those employers. And those employers are drawn to communities with charming neighborhoods and robust small businesses and restaurants, so we must support our small businesses, too. They provide the character and sense of local community that gives small towns and cities their identity. If we have a strong business community, our workers will enjoy higher wages overall – far above any minimum wage we set.

Environment & Sustainability

What are your plans/programs for balancing growth and environmental sustainability?

I spoke to this a bit in my answer to Question 1, but I will elaborate further here. **I strenuously believe in preserving our Open Space, conserved lands, and riparian corridors.** Our easy access to natural spaces is a common reason many of us moved to Ward 2 and Longmont generally. I would carefully examine proposed developments for their negative impacts on our natural spaces. For example, the proposed mixed-use riverwalk along the existing St. Vrain Greenway through downtown is a phenomenal idea and made more possible by the extensive flood mitigation efforts the city made in the decade after the 2013 flood. However, I would work hard to find a plan that would incorporate our riparian areas rather than concreting them over entirely.

Growth is absolutely necessary, but **how and where we grow should be up to us, not developers or pro-growth advocates.** We have plenty of areas in which to build the necessary housing we need for segments of Longmonters not currently being adequately served. We don't need to build high density projects in the middle of existing low-density neighborhoods, and we absolutely don't need to build on Open Space or conservation easement.

In 1982, the Kanemoto family granted approximately 29 acres of land adjacent to southwest Longmont along Airport Road to Boulder County for a mere \$10 in exchange for a conservation easement on the land. Now, Boulder County would like to terminate the conservation easement in exchange for \$2.3 million from a local developer who has proposed 400+ high-density homes on the land. This development can only happen if the City of Longmont agrees to annex the property, thereby terminating the conservation easement and supplying the necessary utilities and other infrastructure to the property. My opponent's opposition to annexing, terminating the Kanemoto Conservation Easement, and building on it is based entirely on its existing zoning designation as agricultural. But that zoning can be changed by a vote of City Council, which would presumably unburden him of his reluctance to permit the housing development, and he could happily greenlight the development. I do not believe that a simple zoning change should eliminate a conservation easement meant to persist in perpetuity. My **commitment to preserving the Kanemoto Conservation Easement** as originally guaranteed to the Kanemoto family is based on my belief that Boulder County and the City of Longmont should work to preserve our natural and agricultural lands, not build upon them, and especially not break a promise to the earlier landowner and our local community.

Similarly, I am adamantly **opposed to the Distel-Tull Open Space land swap.** While I can agree and recognize that a local composting facility would be an asset, that the Distel land designated for Open Space is well-suited to a light industrial use, and the Tull space would provide more open land, I am still opposed to it and for one simple reason: The Distel property was presumably purchased with Open Space funds generated from the taxes that Boulder County residents have paid for decades. When the land was designated for Open Space, rather than simply zoned something else, the government made a promise to the people. The City of Longmont and Boulder County are only stewards of that land – the land itself belongs to the people. We live in a time of plummeting trust in government institutions and

elected officials; the very last thing we need to do is break that promise. I understand that the City is within its legal rights to make the land swap, but just because you can do it doesn't mean you should to. The City Council could have very easily chosen to put this decision to the voters. It would have cost the City almost nothing and respected the promise made years ago. But they didn't, and since they didn't do it the right way, they shouldn't do it at all.

***Longmont is five years away from its 2030 goal of sourcing all electricity from carbon-free sources. However, with Platte River Power Authority planning to replace its coal-fired turbine with a natural gas unit, this goal will not be fully met. Projections suggest the cumulative cost to Longmont residents will be around \$100 million by 2030 due to steeply rising electric rates (~\$2,500/ household).**

Given Longmont's negligible contribution to global CO₂ emissions, and the fact that roughly half of the city's electricity reportedly now comes from carbon-free sources, should the city reconsider its goal and recognize that the progress made so far represents its fair share, or should it stay committed to the original target, regardless of the financial cost?

I am **personally in favor of electrification** – by way of full disclosure, my husband and I own an electric car and two e-bikes – and I support our ambitious goals. However, these goals were set before COVID arrived and changed everything. During the two plus years of pandemic, everyone, including the City, did their best to simply stay afloat. The pandemic drove up prices on nearly everything, and they never came down. Consumers, businesses, and the City budget have all felt those long-term effects, and many priorities, including our push for electrification, have been slowed. Given the times we have lived through in the last 5.5 years, I believe our progress toward this goal is commendable. We are no longer living in the times we were when these goals were made, and we have to account for life as it is now. **I do not think that we should unduly burden our residents now simply to meet a goal from another time.** I believe we **need to continue to push forward to our goal but also account for the challenges and realities of our current situation.**

Housing Development

****How will you balance sustainable growth and affordability with concerns about increased density—such as traffic, noise, and strain on infrastructure—while also addressing homelessness and panhandling linked to mental health and substance use challenges?**

I think these are two separate issues, so I'll address them separately. **I support a coordinated growth approach and strongly believe that we need to build housing to answer specific needs in our community and to serve people at various stages in life.** That looks like:

- **Focus our high-density housing on areas along existing transportation areas and near existing amenities and services.** The people typically desiring high-density living also want to be near those things. They are often young and willing and able to walk, use public transportation or bike, and support local restaurants and businesses.
- **Build affordable housing options that are deed-restricted, income-based, and allow for residents to have housing cost stability while they save money** for a downpayment on a home they can purchase, which is often impossible when people get stuck on the rental increase hamster wheel.

- **Create additional pathways for home ownership for low-income individuals and families,** especially those who earn too much to qualify for public housing vouchers but don't have enough wealth or income to obtain a typical mortgage. Options include:
 - Expanding funding for the City's downpayment assistance program;
 - Identifying and partnering with mortgage lenders accustomed to working with people who don't have high credit ratings but do have stable incomes currently; and
 - Additional City-built, quality affordable housing projects like True North.

- **Build more affordable housing designed and designated for seniors and people with less mobility due to age, illness, or disability.**

I also think that we **need to consider carefully the impact of new developments on infrastructure, traffic, noise, and neighborhood character, and we need to stop relying on standards and ignoring input from the community.** Ward 2 residents don't want to be told that the roads on the west side of the ward aren't more congested now than they were a few years ago; their experience on their roadways every single day tells a different story, and we need to start listening.

Homelessness is a complicated problem and can't be addressed by a single solution. **I really support and value the Veterans Community Project (VCP) model and would like to see that approach replicated in other areas.** VCP targets a particular segment of people experiencing homelessness, designs tiny homes specifically to that groups needs and challenges, and offers wraparound supportive services to promote successful transitions to stable housing. Veterans have specific needs, but so do young families living in their cars, people with mental health challenges, and those struggling with substance use disorder. I support Longmont's active participation in the Boulder County Coordinated Entry Program and would eagerly support efforts to partner with nonprofits who have creative, targeted solutions like VCP.

Fiscal Responsibility

What strategies would you implement to increase city revenue and enhance local economic sustainability without burdening residents or relying heavily on federal and state funding?

I've addressed some of this in Question 2 and on the minimum wage question, but I will add some additional points here.

The best way to generate revenue without burdening residents or local small businesses is create new revenue streams and use the new revenue to fund city services and decrease cumbersome fees on residents and businesses. Creating new revenue through sales, use, and other taxes and fees is best accomplished by attracting new businesses to town. To do that, we need to make Longmont more attractive to those businesses, primarily by making it easier for businesses to open and operate in our community.

The City of Longmont has long had a policy of using federal funding for special projects only, not for ongoing administrative or operational expenses. Thanks to this, we are far more insulated from the uncertainty and controls of federal funding streams than many of our neighbors. However, to free City funds for creative incentives to attract new businesses, I would strongly advocate for temporarily tapping state and federal funding opportunities in a controlled manner and with the stated

commitment that once we'd managed to build out our business community, we would again retreat from reliance on federal funding streams for on-going operations.

Advance Longmont

***What do you see as the key strengths of Advance Longmont 2.0, and what, if any, modifications would you propose? Additionally, what steps will you take to protect its integrity and promote its effective implementation?**

I am a fan of the Advance Longmont 2.0 plan, in large part because I think it recognizes and incorporates some of Longmont's unique assets and ongoing challenges. I appreciate that it values and promotes inclusivity, focuses on large and small businesses, and understands and advances a collaborative approach to solving challenges. As a guiding document, Advance Longmont 2.0 should and does leave a lot of room for flexibility and sets goals that are reasonable and attainable. I especially value the construction of a steering committee that represents multiple views of the city.

I am also a firm supporter of the Longmont Economic Development Partnership because I believe, as stated elsewhere in my answers, that primary businesses establish and drive that standard of living in a community, and that small businesses contribute to a city's identity and character. LEDP also takes a holistic view of our business community, which helps us drive in all directions simultaneously.

Arts Funding & Recreation

What is the city's role to support and fund the arts, cultural programs, parks, recreation, and community spaces in Longmont?

In my campaign, I talk a lot about the "spirit of Longmont," and part of what I mean is our **community identity and our ability to have fun together, learn together, and build our community together**. The programs mentioned in this question are often seen as "nice-to-haves" but their impact is much greater than simple "amenities." The arts, recreation opportunities, and cultural programs are the glue that hold a community together and forge its identity. Other things our city does – paving roads, policing crime, issuing building permits, etc – are the framework of our city, but they don't define what makes us different from other places. Our parks, trails, cultural celebrations, neighborhood character, art in public places, museum, and library – those are the things from which we derive a sense of what Longmont is about and what our values are. So, I believe it is vital that the City continue to invest in those "nice-to-haves" even, or maybe especially, in times of economic and political strife.

What role do you see the Sundance Film Festival playing in Longmont's cultural and economic landscape, and how would you balance its benefits with residents' concerns about congestion and affordability?

Having lived and worked in municipalities that hosted events that completely dominated their communities, **my experience tells me that the impact of the Sundance Film Festival will be powerful and temporary**. The economic value of the 11-day festival will far outweigh the inconveniences we'll endure as residents. The State of Colorado provided \$34 million in incentives to bring the festival to Boulder, and the City of Boulder and local organizations pledged in-kind assistance packages of nearly \$2.5 million per year, plus necessary infrastructure upgrades. Longmont will make infrastructure improvements to support the festival costing only a fraction of that but will likely receive a healthy share

of the expected \$132 million generated by the festival. Additionally, the tourism brought to Longmont will allow us to showcase our city's charm, natural beauty, and wonderful community. That visibility is invaluable as we try to entice new businesses. And, with some slight modifications to our short-term rental regulations, local residents could avoid the congestion entirely and generate income by leaving town and renting their homes to festival attendees.

Civic Discourse & Engagement

What strategies would you implement to foster more respectful, productive discussions on local issues and encourage civil engagement while reducing vitriolic discourse?

This has been a huge focus of my campaign. There is more nastiness in local politics than most people realize, and **when I decided to run, I pledged to myself and my supporters that I wouldn't contribute to that.** When other candidates or their supporters have called Longmont residents derogatory names for not supporting their positions, I have publicly called them out on their behavior and informed them that I will only engage in productive, respectful conversations that don't involve name-calling.

I also made a **commitment to the people of Ward 2 that I would represent everyone in the ward and Longmont,** regardless of political affiliation or alignment to my personal beliefs. That commitment has earned me, a lifelong Democrat, an endorsement from the Boulder County Republicans that I neither sought out or was informed of until after it was issued. **As a public servant, it isn't my job to tell people what to think or believe in; it's my job to find areas of common ground among my constituents, build consensus around that those areas of agreement, and represent those needs, desires, and values to the best of my ability.** I have a reputation for asking the hard questions, pointing out the uncomfortable truths, and treating everyone with respect, and I will expect the same from those I work with and encounter during my period of service.

Our country is devastatingly broken. It is incumbent upon our elected officials to promote healing, respectful dialogue, and productive outcomes for our whole community.

Business Startups, Costs, Commercial Development & Permitting

How would you address concerns over blighted or underutilized commercial areas?

We have to be **more creative with how we think about the underutilized commercial areas in our city.** We need to accept and embrace the new realities of retail commerce and commercial office space and lean into the opportunities those new realities create. We own our own electric utility, have some of the country's fastest internet, and have always been an innovative city. These properties provide us the opportunity to become a significant incubator for new technology and small businesses, but we have to create the correct incentives and platforms to attract those new businesses. Additionally, our city has significant housing needs, such as affordable housing, senior housing, and housing near existing public and multi-modal transportation corridors. We need to thoughtfully consider how those spaces might address some of those needs, partner with developers willing to try new approaches, and identify where we can streamline permitting and review processes to simplify the creation of those homes and reduce the fees that drive up home costs.

****What steps would you take to make Longmont a more competitive and business-friendly city, especially for startups and commercial development? Some have stated concerns that the planning and permitting process has become slow, complex, and costly — making it difficult for businesses to build and occupy space — how would you work to streamline these processes? Additionally, what strategies would you support to help keep commercial rents within reach for small businesses?**

I covered some of these questions earlier but will add a bit here for the specifics in these questions.

I believe that we have scapegoated our local businesses to generate more and more revenue for the City. It is certainly true that the City Council frequently opts to burden our small businesses with new or increased fees rather than spreading them out more evenly across Longmont. I think **we need to dial back those fees to better support our existing small businesses and attract more.** In previous answers, I detailed my approach to do so.

I also will add that **we have some significant competitive advantages to attract startups and innovative businesses, including owning our electric utility and having some of the very fastest internet in the country.** Those are two elements in extremely high demand for AI server centers. We have underutilized light industrial areas and empty warehouses that would be ideal for those businesses. However, we'd also have to be cognizant and guard against potential negative consequences of these businesses, such as overtaxing our electrical grid or creating potentially harmful EMT saturation. We must choose our business partners carefully and balance the need for new revenue with impacts on current residents and businesses.

***Downtown businesses are estimated to be about 80% locally owned and operated. What would you do to protect and support that character? What top goals would you prioritize to ensure downtown remains vibrant, accessible, and welcoming to local businesses and the community? (Question submitted by Longmont Downtown Development Authority, our economic partner)**

I've answered this question in other answers. Please refer to those above.

Social Issues & Equity

***Are there or could there be local initiatives you would support to ensure a strong safety net for Longmont residents who may be disproportionately affected by broader policy changes—such as immigrants, refugees, low-income families, and those facing barriers to healthcare?**

I think the best thing we can do as community in these times of social and economic inequity is stand tall and firm in our protection of those who are most threatened. That includes **identifying and financially supporting successful programs that drive positive outcomes for the vulnerable segments of our community.** Each of the groups mentioned above has specific and often different needs – as a City, our job is to direct those with needs to services and programs that can answer those needs. Some of those will be city-funded, some will be nonprofits, and some may be faith-based groups. **The magnitude of the problems we face at the moment demand a whole menu of solutions.** There is no silver bullet for our problems, but working together with our community partners, we can absolutely help ensure that no one is left behind.

RTD & Public Transit

Should Longmont explore new public transit options such as Front Range Passenger Rail? If so, what are they?

I think that Longmont should **focus on the public transit solutions that have already shown success in our community**, like RIDE Longmont, which provides on-demand ride service to any Longmont resident for \$2 and \$1 for students, seniors, and those with disabilities. It's an innovative solution with proven rider usage. That success is key, because the hardest aspect of public transit is getting people to actually use it. I am interested in successful solutions, not those that just sound good in theory.

The Front Range Passenger Rail project has a long history of broken promises by RTD, and that trend continued when RTD recently announced a delay in getting the FasTrack system to Longmont. Now we are told that the rail program won't be completed until 2034, at a cost of \$650 million. However, I'm highly skeptical that the rail will ever be delivered, because RTD also announced an adjusted rider estimate of only 1,100 riders per day. At that rate, it would cost \$590,000 per rider to build out FasTracks as promised, not including ongoing maintenance. I've worked in government a long time, and that sounds to me very much like the beginning of a justification to not complete the project. **Longmont residents have paid millions of dollars in taxes to fund FasTracks across the Front Range and haven't seen a single benefit to our community. To the extent possible, I would work for an accounting of how our money was spent and a commitment that it will be refunded in full if we are not provided the promised services.**

Business Acumen

Have you signed the front of a paycheck?

I have owned a couple of small businesses, but both had only me as a paid employee. While serving as Town Clerk, I signed paychecks for town employees in the absence of the Town Treasurer.

What real-world business experience do you bring, and how would that experience affect your approach to budgeting, hiring, or marketing to help shape city policy?

I have owned two small businesses, but neither were large enough to have a complex budget or to hire others. However, in my 25 years in government, **I have worked on countless federal, state, and local budgets and sat through many budget hearings and deliberations, providing me with a solid foundation of how public organizations have to weigh their priorities and maximize their resources.** I have also served on numerous hiring committees during decades in government and with nonprofits, as well as during my 3.5 years with my current private sector company. Finally, I spent almost 10 years working in marketing and communications for the cities of Longmont and Westminster, so I have a unique understanding of the importance of marketing for the city and how to most effectively accomplish it. Specifically, during my time at Longmont, I acquired considerable knowledge of how to market to and engage hard-to-reach segments of our community, like our primary Spanish speakers.

Sugar Mill and Brownfield Developments

Do you have a vision for redeveloping the historic Sugar Mill site? If so, how would you address environmental concerns, sustainable infrastructure and engage the community and developers to benefit Longmont as a whole?

My opponent and I strongly agree on the wonderful possibilities available to the City at the Sugar Mill and other brownfield sites, and **I wholeheartedly back those developments without reservation.** What my opponent fails to recognize is that development at the Sugar Mill and lower downtown is not his new idea; it has been excitedly discussed since before I joined the City right after the 2013 flood. **Having only lived in Longmont for a few years, Matthew doesn't have the benefit of understanding why progress in those areas has been so slow, but I do understand because I was there.** After the flood, the City's primary focus was on flood recovery, restoration of affected areas, and future flood mitigation. All of those things cost a whole lot of money – money that was planned to go toward redevelopment of these areas. Then, just as the City coffers began to recover from the flood, the COVID pandemic arrived and again focus shifted to keeping our small businesses afloat and ensuring delivery of services to our most vulnerable populations. The City staff haven't been ignoring the importance and vast potential of our Sugar Mill and other brownfield sites nor have they been without the expertise to act on that potential; they have simply been responding to the realities that have emerged. This happens a lot in government. It doesn't mean the plan is dead, only that we have had to accomplish other, less exciting things first.

Longmont has a rich history of coordinated growth and development of our downtown areas, and I would continue to promote that. **I would work to ensure that we address all the necessary environmental concerns in our brownfield sites, and I would carefully evaluate our infrastructure and building plans to promote sustainably building practices. But most importantly, I would advocate that we judiciously pick our development partners to join with those who understand our community and share our vision for what lower downtown can contribute to our economy, culture, and the spirit of Longmont.**

Along the Front Range, Longmont has a reputation for successfully repurposing, improving, and redeveloping underutilized parts of the city. Main Street is the most obvious example, as well as the flood recovery along the St. Vrain, and the improvements to Boston Avenue, east Ken Pratt Blvd, and the Harvest Junction areas in Ward 2. We are really good at this! We just **need to keep replicating our successes and learn from our missteps.** The changes coming to lower downtown in the form of the 1st & Main transit hub are very exciting and a great opportunity for Longmont to showcase its dexterity at marrying our fascinating history with our modern needs and desires without sacrificing the unique character that reflects the spirit of Longmont. I am very interested in applying this same approach to the **planned Riverwalk development, the Golden property along the St. Vrain, and parts of north Main streets.**

Are there specific commercial areas in Longmont that you would prioritize for redevelopment or improvement? If so, which areas, and what strategies would you use to enhance them?

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marrying our fascinating history with our modern needs and desires without sacrificing the unique character that reflects the spirit of Longmont. I am very interested in applying this same approach to the **planned Riverwalk development, the Golden property along the St. Vrain, and parts of north Main streets.**

Vance Brand Airport

What role does Longmont's Vance Brand Airport play in supporting the economic growth and transportation needs of local businesses and residents?

In 1929, Longmont's innovative spirit was on display when our forefathers built the third airport in Colorado (following Stapleton and Colorado Springs) where Roosevelt Park is now. In 1945, Longmont officials moved the airport "way outside of town" to its current location. Since then, our airport has been home to three astronauts and many war heroes, and nowadays students can study aviation at the SVVSD Innovation Center and get their pilot's license at the airport. The airport was once home to crop dusting planes for our local farmers, and later it supported the development of many of our nationally known businesses, like Oskar Blues. The airport has incubated start-ups and encouraged aviation innovations. And every week, you'll see people pulled over on Airport Road, watching the planes take off and land and the parachuters glide slowly to the ground in front of a majestic mountain background.

In recent court decisions, the FAA has successfully defeated challenges to close municipal airports, so whether or not we have an airport is likely not a decision we can make, but **we are able to decide what kind of airport we want.** Most Ward 2 residents that I speak to like having an airport in our town but wish that it could be quieter and less busy. There are absolutely things we can do to get closer to those goals, but I would go a step further. **I think it would be wonderful if the airport could be like Main Street – a charming little asset that reflects the rich history and modern sensibilities of our dynamic city.** We could raise revenue by constructing a small terminal building where pilots and local residents could have a nice meal, learn about aviation, and watch the planes and helicopters. Instead of a somewhat shabby airport, we could have a small, beautiful destination for residents and local tourists. And during the Sundance Film Festival, we can showcase our natural beauty, character-rich neighborhoods, and friendly people to airport visitors while also generating additional revenue from special tie-down fees and fuel charges. Additionally, that kind of positive exposure can drive future businesses – large and small – to settle here.

Envision Longmont calls for development, including residential, near the Vance Brand yet some airport stakeholders have expressed concern about noise complaints and safety. What's your philosophy on land use planning in that area to balance the City's housing needs with concerns about airport operations?

The Envision Longmont comprehensive plan did not account for FAA rules and regulations, so a lot of its recommendations regarding development in and around the airport was lacking a critical consideration. Much of the current development proposals near the airport would, if built, be in direct violation of FAA land use rules. One of these developments specifically, Modern West, unfortunately got caught up in the confusion around different FAA land use rules. After investing significant money and receiving initial approval, Modern West and the City learned that the proposal was actually prohibited by FAA regulations. This was an error that never should have progressed as far as it did. Our City planners and attorneys must do a better and more thorough job of understanding where we do and do not have control of land use around the airport.

***What is your position on allowing housing development near the Longmont airport, and how should the city manage potential conflicts between aviation activity and residential growth?**

I have proposed the **formation of a task force** to work on uncovering the common ground between local residents and our aviation community. Concerns about the airport, particularly financial stability, noise, and leaded fuel emissions, have grown beyond the small group of activists that existed when I moved to Longmont almost 13 years ago. In fact, airport noise was one of the top three issues west side residents spoke to me about during my campaign. Given this situation, I think **before we build more near the airport, we need to focus on overarching airport goals of increased airport solvency, decreased noise, and decreased use of leaded fuel. Until we solve for those issues, more residents will only result in more tension and conflict between our resident aviators and airport neighbors.**

In keeping with my pledge to try my best to represent all of Ward 2, I have been actively dialoging with our pilot community as well as residents with legitimate concerns about the airport. What I have told both is that **we must find areas of compromise**. Many of the solutions proposed by airport detractors are literally illegal under FAA regulations, and some pilots won't entertain discussions of raising certain fees and amending leasing terms. There are solutions we can tap into and we need to turn those into policies and ordinances.

Some specific policies:

- **Landing fees:** FAA regulations prohibit implementing landing fees to control noise and that has been the main focus of landing fees debate among the City Council, even after they've been advised of FAA regulations. Rather than a lengthy legal battle in federal court with the FAA, I would prefer to focus revenue generation that is allowable, such raising hangar rental fees and amending leasing terms to be more favorable to the city. There is a high demand for airport hangars, and the City should raise rates to market level to improve airport solvency.
- **Electric aircraft:** My opponent loves to talk about electric aircrafts, and we agree that it is an exciting option for the future. Owning our electric utility will enable us to build and serve profitable electric chargers for airplanes of the future. However, those planes are many years away from being widely available to anyone other than the wealthiest pilots. They are absolutely something that we need to encourage and incentivize, but they aren't going to solve our noise and leaded fuel issues any time soon.
- **Leaded fuel:** Leaded fuel is a genuine concern for many. Unleaded fuel is a current option for planes but due to performance issues with the fuel, the FAA has yet to endorse an unleaded fuel for widespread use. So, again, better fuel options are emerging, but they aren't here yet for most planes.
- **Saturation and noise abatement policies:** Not everyone is bothered by aircraft noise, just as not everyone is bothered by the train whistles through town. But for those who are bothered by airplane noise, it becomes a significant quality of life issue.

The Vance Brand Airport has a Voluntary Noise Abatement Program (VNAP), but it hasn't generated much success in decreasing noise according to most airport neighbors. The voluntary nature of the program allows less considerate pilots to ignore it without repercussions. The Flight Pattern Saturation Policy recently considered by the City Council is a good step in the right direction to improve safety, but again that policy is entirely voluntary and likely won't solve our problems.

Tourism

In 2023, nearly 600,000 visitors generated over \$277 million in economic impact for Longmont and supported more than 3,000 local jobs — outcomes made possible through strategic destination marketing and management. What is your perspective on the role of tourism and continued investment in destination marketing to benefit both residents and visitors?

How would you work to align City priorities with tourism and destination goals—particularly through collaboration with nonprofit partners like Visit Longmont? What is your vision for the future of Longmont’s tourism economy and its broader contribution to the community? (Question submitted by Visit Longmont, our economic partner)

Longmont has benefitted significantly from smart destination marketing and local tourism generated by our incredible access to natural and open spaces, charming downtown, rich history, and welcoming neighborhoods. That tourism contributed notably to our local economy without overly burdening our resources. **I would continue to support the City’s partnership with Visit Longmont and the ongoing investments in downtown businesses.** As mentioned in my previous answers, I would protect the character of our city and neighborhoods, as they are what distinguishes us from other cities marked by sprawl, indiscriminate building, and a lack of character. All the marketing in the world won’t generate significant tourism for a lackluster destination.

Childcare

Childcare costs in Longmont and Boulder County are among the highest in the state of Colorado. What could you do as a councilor/mayor to help bring down the costs of childcare for families while helping childcare providers earn more thriving wages?

The value and impact of high-quality early childhood education cannot be overstated. It has been shown in study after study to exponentially improve a child’s later school performance and social success, but childcare is a significant cost for most families with young children, particularly if both parents need to work. There are, however, **incredible academic and financial models for childcare, and I would be especially interested in exploring ways that the City could promote and incentivize the creation of more of those centers.**

My own children, for example, attended Boulder Day Nursery, a 100-year-old nonprofit early childhood center in downtown Boulder, that delivers high quality enrichment and uses a sliding scale tuition model to create socioeconomic diversity within its classrooms and provide opportunities to children whose parents could not otherwise afford high quality care or maybe any care at all. Additionally, due to its nonprofit approach, rather than generating profit for investors, it is able to pay its educators a better wage than most other centers. It’s a remarkable school and a successful operating model that I would like to see replicating more widely. I also think it’s time to reframe our whole concept of childcare from the idea of “babysitting” to the reality of “educating” and work harder to specifically support the organizations that offer better wages for those who so importantly influence our youngest residents.

----- End of Questionnaire Responses from Candidate Simpkins -----



Thank You for Reading

This questionnaire was prepared by the Longmont Area Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Committee with input from our economic partners and community members.