

2025 Longmont City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from Mayoral Candidates

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](#)

Mayoral Candidates

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Shakeel Dalal

Campaign Website: shakeelformayor.com

About:

I build and test spaceships for a living, but public service is my passion. As an immigrant who came to the United States at six months old, I feel a deep responsibility to contribute to the American project -- and make sure that the opportunities that allowed my family to thrive are available to the next generation.

As co-founder of LAUNCH Longmont Housing, I've worked with people all over the community to pass policies through City Council which have made housing more affordable like legalizing ADUs and eliminating parking minimums. From 2018 to 2020, I covered local politics for the Longmont Observer and moderated 12 city council debates and the 2018 [U.S. House of Representatives debate](#). In 2020, I helped found Longmont Public Media and ran the campaign to [amend the Longmont Charter](#) to make an arts and entertainment center financially viable. Since 2021, I've served on the board of the Longmont Community Foundation. For 5 years, I have been a member of the City of Longmont Professional Standards Unit, reviewing police misconduct allegations.

I live in Old Town with my fiancée Krista Ahlberg and our dog Remy.

General Vision

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

Longmont is a great place to live – if you can afford it. For 150 years, we didn't need the second part.

My top priority is to restore affordability while protecting quality of life. We must be a city affordable for the people who make our community work—teachers, healthcare workers, young families, and seniors who want to age in place. And we have to do it while protecting the things that make Longmont a great place to live.

This isn't just about making Longmont more affordable—it's about proving that local government can be responsive, effective, and focused on what families actually need.

Housing families can afford: [65% of the residential zoned land](#) in Longmont is restricted to the most expensive type of home. They cost the most to build and are the most expensive to maintain. By legalizing townhomes in every neighborhood in the city, we can create more opportunities for home ownership for everyone.

Fix traffic by making it safer to walk and bike: Longmont families spend 15% of their income on their car. [Longmont's Transportation Mobility Plan](#) estimates that 20% of Longmont's workers commute to Boulder. By improving our walking and biking infrastructure, we can maximize the number of people who can use the [Bus Rapid Transit](#) (BRT) starting in 2027. Each commuter that rides the bus 3 times a week instead of driving [saves \\$1,100 per year](#). By making it safe to walk or bike, we reduce traffic for those who choose to drive, and improve the quality of public transit service for those who don't.

Childcare solutions that scale: The [annual cost of childcare in Longmont](#) now exceeds tuition at CU-Boulder. This is not a problem Longmont can solve by itself. But instead of only subsidizing childcare for the neediest families – a solution which can only help a small number of people – we must look for solutions that are as big as the problem. We should take seriously the need for regional cooperation and

innovative solutions to fund childcare and creative ways of increasing the supply. See my answer on Childcare for more details.

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

It is imperative that we lead from strength instead of waiting for permission on issues which are clearly within local jurisdiction. By implementing policies I have been advocating for, Longmont has [started winning statewide awards](#) for being ahead of the curve. As mayor, I'll leverage that leadership position to shape policy rather than just react to it.

We can't let one-size-fits-all mandates undermine the flexible approaches we've already developed. I'll advocate for local control provisions that protect our setback reforms, ADU policies, and transit-oriented development rules. Longmont should be the model other cities follow, not a casualty of overly prescriptive state mandates.

We should also lobby the state to make childcare more affordable by adopting the wildly successful reforms [Oklahoma enacted in 1998](#). They have free, universal pre-K along with childcare costs that are half that of Colorado.

To influence state level legislation, I'll continue to build on the 2018 reforms which have the City take positions on matters occurring in the State General Assembly. I'm grateful to the many Longmont residents who spend time in Denver every spring to testify on Longmont's behalf at the Assembly. I look forward to working with them.

I'll work closely with the Early Childhood Council of Boulder County, Chamber, Latino Chamber, Longmont Economic Development Partnership and any other organization with good ideas to advance Longmont's agenda at the state to identify priority issues early in each legislative session. Using my agenda-setting authority, I'll ensure Council takes timely positions that actually influence outcomes, not symbolic votes after bills have already passed.

We have to be more realistic about the role of the Federal Government in Longmont. We know that Federal funds to states are being heavily cut. [It is irresponsible for local elected officials to continue to rely on federal funding to create the affordable homes we desperately need.](#) Instead, we should be building local wealth and resilience by legalizing townhomes to create affordable starter options for young families and duplexes for senior citizens who want to age in their own homes.

There is, however, one Federal anti-trust statute, [Robinson-Patman Act](#), also known as the "Magna Carta of Small Business." It ensures that neighborhood grocery stores pay the same price for wholesale goods as Kroger and Walmart. Enforcement of this law has been idle for decades, [but is seeing a resurgence.](#)

While Longmont doesn't have the authority to enforce the Robinson-Patman Act, the State Attorney General does. I have already had one-on-one conversations with many candidates for State Attorney General (a 2026 election) to ensure they understand how important this is to Longmont.

***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?**

Longmont has many strategic plans. Envision Longmont. Advance Longmont 2.0. Downtown Longmont Master Plan. Main Street Corridor Plan. Midtown Redevelopment Plan. Sugar Mill + STEAM Sub Area Plan. Longmont Sustainability Plan. Transportation Mobility Plan. 2025 Water Conservation Plan.

These many strategic plans are well thought out, often with tens of thousands of hours of resident input and millions of taxpayer dollars.

What we lack is the delivery of outcomes that residents want.

The Mayor, working with the City Manager, sets and prioritizes the meeting agenda. My goal for every meeting will be to spend Council time focused on outcomes, removing barriers which prevent staff from implementing strategy, and directing staff when they need to know what path to take.

This will be a very different approach to Council meetings than the past, which often operate on a first-in-first-out prioritization and can become mired in details which do not impact residents' lives. By investing in this vision with other Councilmembers, we can work together to keep staff focused on the work which matters most to the city.

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?**

If elected, I would vote for a minimum wage increase in Longmont to \$16.50 per hour starting on January 1, 2027. This will impact very few Longmont employers. This is because the City of Longmont has already raised the minimum wage – just not for everyone. The 2025 minimum wage for City of Longmont employees is \$21.41, and \$26.21 for city contractors. As a result, almost all businesses inside the city already pay more than the minimum wage in order to attract employees.

Many of the business owners I talk to believe that what is being debated is increasing Longmont's minimum wage directly from \$14.81/hour to \$25/hour. This is NOT being considered, and is a failure of communications and a key driver of resistance to raising the minimum wage.

I support a regional minimum wage, which improves living standards for Longmont workers while insulating Longmont businesses from unfair competition from outside city limits. However, the Boulder County Commissioners could have done a much better job with their regional minimum wage proposal, and this has caused a lot of fear and doubt among local businesses.

As I write, [the Commissioners are reconsidering](#) the implementation of the County minimum wage. I hope they will also rethink their communication plan when they do it.

I'll also note that we cannot fix our cost of living issues just by making businesses pay more. Longmont's City Council has another responsibility – avoiding a wage-price spiral to make sure employers' and employees' money goes further by implementing policies to make Longmont more affordable. See my responses on General Vision, Housing Development, Fiscal Responsibility, Business Startups and Childcare.

Environment & Sustainability

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

There's no tradeoff—smart growth IS environmental protection.

When a home owner converts a single-family home into a triplex of townhouses, we're simultaneously increasing housing supply and reducing per-unit environmental impact. Each new dwelling uses less energy and water than what it replaced, generates more property tax revenue, and requires zero new infrastructure.

Legalizing townhomes also advances environmental sustainability by protecting Open Space – because it is more financially sustainable to build homes in the city we already have instead of sprawling further out.

Allowing neighborhood businesses like corner grocery stores, preschools, and veterinarians also makes the neighborhood more walkable and eliminates car trips which contribute to traffic and carbon emissions. It also provides these locally owned businesses with a strong competitive advantage over big box stores – proximity.

Investing in transportation alternatives besides cars – whether sidewalks, bike lanes or ride-hailing systems like Ride Longmont – will encourage residents to choose to own fewer cars and use multimodal transit more of the time.

And the data consistently shows that implementation of these kinds of options, not requirements, improves quality of life, lowers the cost of living, and protects the environment. This is even true for persons who choose to drive, as they will encounter less congestion and ultimately find it easier to park.

***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?

First, let's correct the premise: PRPA's new natural gas plant doesn't replace renewable energy—it provides backup capacity required by federal regulators to prevent blackouts. Wind and solar already generate power more cheaply than coal or gas, [but they're variable](#). The gas plant runs only when needed, far more efficiently than the current coal plant that has to stay running constantly.

While Longmont's emissions are small globally, leadership matters. We are far from the first community in the United States to embark on this goal, and [will not be the first to achieve it](#). But we are among a small set of global cities (and the only one in the United States) [recognized by the United Nations](#) for

the resilience of our infrastructure investments— including our city owned electric utility. Longmont is being spoken of in the same breath as Venice, Barcelona, Mexico City, Bogota, and Sendai.

When we prove that 100% clean electricity enhances quality of life while keeping costs affordable, we provide a model that other communities can follow. Our municipal utility ownership gives us advantages that investor-owned utilities don't have—we can prioritize community benefit over shareholder profit.

We're already partnering with PRPA to install utility-scale batteries at Longmont substations. Combined with local rooftop solar and smart grid technology, these Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) can store excess renewable energy and deploy it when wind and solar production is low. This approach actually reduces costs by eliminating peak demand charges and reducing purchased power during expensive periods.

Our 88% carbon-free grid (soon to be 100%) creates competitive advantages for energy-intensive clean manufacturing. Companies like UQM (now Danfoss) already choose Longmont partly for our clean electricity. This attracts good jobs while advancing environmental goals.

The question isn't what others do—it's what we do with the power we have. Making our grid 100% clean makes it easy for residents to do the right thing without lifestyle sacrifice.

The goal isn't just clean electricity—it's showing how our [environmental leadership and economic prosperity strengthen each other](#).

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?**

As I outlined in my General Vision and Environmental plans, the solution isn't choosing between density and livability—it's rethinking the design choices that resulted in tradeoffs between affordability and quality of life.

Integration is key. Environmental sustainability, housing affordability, transportation efficiency, and homelessness prevention aren't separate challenges—they're interconnected systems that strengthen each other when designed thoughtfully.

When we legalize townhomes in existing neighborhoods and allow corner grocery stores, childcare, and small businesses, we create walkable communities where families drive less. Our Transportation Mobility Plan shows 20% of Longmont workers commute to Boulder—each person who switches to [Bus Rapid Transit](#) three times weekly saves \$1,100 annually, starting in 2027. More walking and biking infrastructure means less traffic for everyone, including those who choose to drive.

Allowing the construction of townhouses [generates more property tax revenue](#) while requiring zero new roads, sewers, or utilities. Because our current development review process incentivizes big projects instead of small ones, sprawl forces expensive infrastructure expansion; smart infill uses what we already have more efficiently.

According to HOPE for Longmont, 65% of homeless clients have jobs but can't afford housing. [Pew Research confirms](#) the strong correlation between housing costs and homelessness rates. The same policies that create homeownership opportunities for teachers and healthcare workers also prevent working families from becoming homeless.

For individuals with mental health and substance abuse challenges, we need trauma-informed permanent supportive housing like LHA's Zinnia project. If [Boulder County's Issue 1B](#) passes, additional mental health funding will expand these proven programs. We'll continue Longmont's successful community-based policing and smart-cities approaches rather than relying on enforcement alone, especially given our limited detention capacity.

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?

As I've outlined in my Housing and Environmental plans, legalizing townhomes in existing neighborhoods [dramatically improves our revenue-to-infrastructure ratio](#). When we convert single-family homes to townhouses, we generate more property tax revenue while requiring zero new taxes. roads, sewers, or utilities. This is [financially sustainable development](#) that does not burden existing residents.

Federal funding is unreliable and comes with strings attached that often contradict local priorities. Instead of chasing uncertain federal housing subsidies [that will never be big enough](#) to help the 90% of Longmonters who can't afford the average home, we must create affordable options through market mechanisms while generating wealth for existing homeowners. The strengthened tax base that results can fund major infrastructure projects more reliably than hoping Congress or Colorado stay engaged with local needs.

We must also address the real constraints on local business growth. When asked, [local businesses say housing costs are the biggest downside to doing business in Longmont](#). When teachers, healthcare workers, and service employees can't afford to live here, businesses struggle to find workers and customers struggle to afford services. My housing policies solve this constraint more effectively than any business tax incentive could.

When we allow corner grocery stores, coffee shops, and small professional services in residential areas, we give local businesses a competitive advantage over big box stores—proximity. Families who can walk to neighborhood businesses spend more money locally instead of driving to chains. The work I've already started to influence the state legislature and next attorney general to take [Robinson-Patman Act](#) enforcement seriously will help small retailers compete on fair terms.

We also need to recognize, and strengthen, our competitive advantages. Our clean-and-getting-cleaner carbon-free electricity attracts energy-intensive manufacturers like Danfoss. As we reach 100% clean power, we'll become even more competitive for cleantech manufacturing that creates good local jobs.

More housing means more taxpayers. Walkable neighborhoods mean stronger local businesses. Clean energy means competitive advantages. This builds lasting economic sustainability rather than depending on political winds in Washington.

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 2.0 provides a time-tested strategy for economic development that suits Longmont's size and needs on issues highly salient for local businesses. Its collective-impact approach aligning public, private and non-profit stakeholders gives us the tools we need to attract great employers while playing to our strengths instead of trying to change who we are.

I'd change it in 3 key ways –

First, we need to rebuild the relationship between the City of Longmont and the Longmont Economic Development Partnership (LEDP). The [adversarial relationship that's developed over recent years](#) serves no one. LEDP needs resources commensurate with the scale of problems we're asking them to solve. I'll advocate for stable funding at the level they've requested, while holding everyone accountable for measurable results.

Second, make for-sale housing options for young families and aging residents an explicit economic objective. Not everything has to be about housing, but the cost of housing has become the issue that is eating all of the other issues in Longmont. It's hard to run a business if [your employees can't afford to live near where they work](#). We need townhouses, multi-story duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes that working families can actually buy.

Finally, fundamentally rethink our childcare approach. Rather than simply subsidizing families who can't afford childcare and workers who don't earn enough, we should examine what's broken in our economic model. Taking inspiration from successful approaches in [Oklahoma](#) and [Larimer County](#), we need systematic solutions that address root causes—co-locating private childcare with schools, stable long term funding to ensure workforce availability and regional cooperation that creates sustainable funding models rather than perpetual subsidy dependence.

Advance Longmont 2.0 is one of many plans we have. It's time to deliver. As mayor, I'll use my agenda-setting authority to ensure regular progress reviews, clear metrics, and council accountability for delivering on commitments. Advance Longmont 2.0 can't become another vision document gathering dust—it needs to be our operational roadmap for creating opportunity while preserving community character.

Arts Funding & Recreation

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

Parks, recreation, and community spaces are fundamental infrastructure for addressing the loneliness epidemic. These aren't luxuries—they're essential for community health and social connection and At-Large Candidate Crystal Prieto has spoken persuasively to me about this.

When children can safely play in neighborhood parks and families can gather in well-maintained public spaces, we build the social fabric that makes communities resilient. This directly supports my broader

vision of walkable neighborhoods where people interact naturally rather than being isolated in cars and private spaces.

As we legalize townhomes and allow neighborhood businesses, we need parks and community spaces that serve higher-density, more walkable areas. The Greenway System's slow progress through developer contributions shows promise—we should incentivize trail connections as part of new development and connect existing neighborhoods through creative use of required utility easements.

The Art in Public Places program works well and provides sufficient resources for ambitious projects. While arts and cultural programs contribute to Longmont's creative energy and community character, I think Longmont voters would rather we focus more of our energy on cost of living issues.

One place where these forces come together and allow us to address multiple challenges simultaneously is the Sugarmill redevelopment. It is a complex, multi-jurisdictional project that advances environmental sustainability, public amenities, multimodal connectivity, and housing diversity simultaneously. [With the support of the County Commissioners](#), we have an opportunity for meaningful city-county collaboration.

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?

Boulder lacks sufficient hotels, restaurants, and services to handle Sundance's influx without creating shortages and congestion. Longmont should position itself as a logical basecamp for festival employees and technical workers who will need a place to stay to make the festival happen, but are unlikely to be able to afford Boulder prices. Visit Longmont can coordinate shuttle services, promote local businesses, and work with RTD to potentially accelerate BRT service—benefiting both cities while generating significant revenue for Longmont.

At-Large Candidate John Lembke has advanced an idea that has broad support among candidates for this year. For the festival period and surrounding weeks, we should temporarily relax short-term rental restrictions to accommodate technical workers and attendees. This means waiving registration fees and creating a city-managed platform through Visit Longmont to ensure quality and safety standards. This provides greater community control, while allowing Longmonters to directly benefit from the presence of Sundance.

Rather than treating Sundance as an isolated event, we should use it to test and demonstrate our walkable city vision. Festival shuttles become pilot programs for improved transit. Temporary housing arrangements help us understand demand for smaller, more affordable accommodations year-round. Local business promotion during Sundance builds ongoing relationships that support neighborhood commercial development. By being the basecamp for the festival's technical workers, Longmont becomes a logical place for them to develop new businesses.

While Sundance offers meaningful economic opportunity, it's not a silver bullet for our core challenges. The festival can generate revenue and raise Longmont's profile, but our fundamental work remains housing affordability, transportation safety, and government effectiveness. Sundance should complement these priorities, not distract from them.

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?

Local government must be the most accessible and responsive level of government. As Mayor, I'll be a visible public figure who takes real responsibility for hearing people's concerns instead of just limiting input to 3 minutes during a City Council meeting. The Mayor sets the tone for how the community discusses challenging issues.

Most residents have reasonable expectations—they don't expect their view to be the only one that matters, but they do expect their view to be taken into account.

Most Longmonters want the same things: safe streets, a lower cost of living, a nurturing place to raise their kids, and the opportunity to pursue their economic ambitions. When we focus on these shared outcomes rather than getting bogged down in procedural arguments, we find common ground quickly.

I'll reduce the time tax on civic engagement by expanding communication methods outside of official forums that most people don't hear about, aren't interested in, or can't attend. Instead I'll try to reach people where they are by appearing on local podcasts, thoughtfully using social media and being findable at Longmont's many public festivals that people attend for fun.

I'll continue using plain language, specific examples, and data-driven explanations. When disagreements arise, I'll focus on policy merits rather than questioning motives or values.

Business Startups, Costs, Commercial Development & Permitting

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

Part of being a leader is knowing when to follow.

Ward 2 Councilmember Matthew Popkin is the clear expert in this area on the City Council, targeting the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority as an underutilized mechanism to improve blighted properties. I agree with him that we need to make better use of the tools available to it, including tax increment financing, to catalyze private investment in what would otherwise be desirable commercial and residential areas of the city.

We already waive affordable housing fees for developments that include affordable units. We should apply the same logic to brownfield redevelopment—ease height limits and streamline approval processes for projects that remediate contaminated or underutilized sites. This approach costs taxpayers nothing while encouraging the cleanup and productive reuse of problem properties.

We should also carefully scrutinize limitations on business opportunity in the city. Currently, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and machinists who want to start their own businesses face a six-month conditional use permit process just to operate contractor shops. This is bureaucratic nonsense that penalizes our substantial population of skilled tradespeople. These should be permitted uses in mixed-use zones, not conditional secondary uses requiring planning and zoning review.

Demolition, however, is not the solution to every problem. It's important that we do not repeat the mistakes of the "urban renewal" era that replaced many historic buildings on Kimbark Street with unproductive parking lots. Many "blighted" commercial buildings have good bones and strategic locations. Rather than pushing for teardowns, we should encourage adaptive reuse through streamlined permitting and revisit the parts of our city's design standards that incentivize disposable, [single-use buildings](#).

****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?**

We should eliminate regulatory barriers that force businesses to pay commercial rent just to start. We need to ease land use requirements so entrepreneurs can launch from home offices, garages, or shared spaces before they're ready for expensive storefronts. Currently, our zoning forces artificial separation between where people live and work, driving up costs for everyone.

Too many straightforward business proposals get routed through planning and zoning when they should receive simple administrative approval. A coffee shop in an existing commercial space shouldn't require the same review process as a major development. I'll work with staff and Council to clearly define which proposals need extensive review versus quick administrative approval.

We can further strengthen local businesses by allowing corner grocery stores, small professional services, and home-based businesses in residential areas. This gives local business owners a massive competitive advantage over chains—proximity to customers. When families can walk to a neighborhood cafe or bookstore, those businesses thrive while big box stores lose market share.

I'll use my agenda-setting powers to lobby for robust state enforcement of the Robinson-Patman Act, which prohibits large retailers from using predatory pricing to eliminate local competition. Small businesses deserve a level playing field.

***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)**

Downtown's strength is serving Longmonters, not tourists. Unlike Pearl Street, downtown Longmont thrives because residents actually use and enjoy these businesses daily. This local customer base naturally supports locally-owned enterprises over chains, which is why we maintain that 80% local ownership rate. We're not competing with Boulder for tourism—we have a completely different and more sustainable economic model. Downtown's local character thrives when we make it easy for Longmonters to choose local businesses over driving to chains and big box stores.

I'll prioritize walkability improvements and bike infrastructure that make downtown easily reachable without driving. [Walkability is great for business](#). Supporting robust public transit connections, including the [upcoming BRT service](#), will bring more customers while reducing parking pressure. When people can safely bike or walk downtown, local businesses get more foot traffic and customers save money on transportation.

The Main Street Master Plan identifies opportunities to extend downtown's mixed-use character both north and south of the current 2nd to 8th Avenue core. This doesn't dilute downtown—it expands access to downtown-like amenities throughout more of the city while creating a larger market for local businesses.

As we allow corner stores, cafés, and small professional services in residential neighborhoods, we're not competing with downtown—we're creating a network of local businesses that complement each other. Someone might grab coffee in their neighborhood but go downtown for dinner and entertainment.

We can continue the DDA's successful incremental improvement approach by reducing regulatory barriers for small business expansion, adaptive reuse of downtown buildings, and mixed-use development that puts residents within walking distance of locally-owned businesses.

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?**

Yes, Longmont has an important role in ensuring a strong safety net for vulnerable residents. Our robust ecosystem of community organizations—[Veterans Community Project](#), [BRITE Collaborative](#), [Recovery Cafe](#), [HOPE for Longmont](#), [OUR Center](#), and many others—provides essential services that government alone cannot deliver. The city should support and strengthen these partnerships rather than creating duplicate functions.

Regional collaboration will amplify our impact. I support Boulder County Ballot Issue 1B, which funds a 0.15% sales tax providing an estimated \$13.8 million annually for mental health services. As Commissioner Claire Levy outlined, about \$11 million would be available as grants to school districts and nonprofits throughout the county. Longmont's strong nonprofit sector positions us to secure significant funding that directly serves disadvantaged community members.

By granting money directly to service providers rather than passing it through city bureaucracy, we avoid [the cascade of rigidity](#)—where compliance requirements consume resources that should go to actual services. As a [Longmont Community Foundation trustee](#), I've seen how no-strings-attached grant making improves effectiveness by letting experts focus on outcomes rather than process.

The way we do policing is a national model. As a member of the Professional Standards Unit reviewing police misconduct investigations, I've witnessed how [El Comite's advocacy transformed Longmont's approach to public safety](#). This accountability work protects vulnerable communities and provides a model other cities should study.

Strong safety nets require both robust services and accountable systems that earn community trust. At-Large Candidate Crystal Prieto knows this area well, and I would want her expert opinion to best understand which of these programs are effective and why.

RTD & Public Transit

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

RTD's 20 years of broken promises and subpar bus service has destroyed a lot of trust. So I want to start by saying what's different about this time. Getting rail service to Longmont by 2029 is a priority for Governor Jared Polis, and one that requires no federal funding. The lack of federal reliance is particularly important right now.

Front Range Passenger Rail represents the right generational investment for our region. Just like Longmont's water rights, electric utility ownership, internet utility, and Open Space program, intercity rail requires long-term vision and sustained commitment over decades. These infrastructure investments transformed Longmont precisely because previous generations had the patience to build and improve them over time.

We're on track for [rail service beginning in 2029](#), but we need to understand what that means—three trains morning and evening on weekdays for commuters. This isn't the high-frequency European-style service we might dream of, but even those systems didn't emerge overnight. They started with basic service and expanded based on ridership and political support.

It is crucial that we start right away to make public transportation the easy to choose option for as many Longmonters as we can. The [BRT connection to Boulder](#) launching in 2027 represents our more immediate opportunity to develop transit culture. 20% of Longmont workers commute to Boulder, and each person who rides the bus three times weekly will save \$1,100 annually. But if getting to the BRT stop requires driving your car, the BRT is useless. So we need to ensure that we are adding homes to our city near transit stops, and making the areas around transit stops walkable and bikable, so that it is easy and convenient to use.

BRT success will demonstrate demand for quality transit service. High BRT utilization will justify further investment in the rail system we ultimately want. Transit ridership is a habit and a muscle we need to build systematically. People who learn to rely on BRT to Boulder will become the core constituency for expanded rail service throughout the Front Range. Success breeds success in public transit planning.

Business Acumen

Have you signed the front of a paycheck?

Yes. I moved to Longmont to co-found a business which manufactured specialized coatings for the tool-and-die, aerospace and semiconductor industries. We had multiple employees and at various times would hire contractors for specialized tasks.

I also co-founded [LAUNCH Longmont Housing](#), a nonprofit with the mission of promoting city-level housing policy reform to help average people. While LAUNCH is operated entirely by volunteers, we have employed paid interns every summer. I paid those interns \$20/hour out of my own pocket, because I believe that doing work that is good for the community shouldn't mean not getting paid.

I have treated running for Mayor of Longmont like running a startup business – one which has a very narrow time window to achieve its goals and for which there is either total success or total failure. Like

all new businesses, it is a high stakes venture where every dollar must be thoughtfully spent. While almost all work for my campaign has been done by volunteers, I have selectively paid for the services of some professionals.

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?

The first business I ever ran was a convenience store located in the lounge of the Purdue University Society of Physics Students. As president, I ran our convenience store with \$15,000 annual revenues funding club activities. This taught me the day-to-day realities of managing tight margins, preventing theft, and ensuring every expense advanced our mission—skills directly applicable to city budgeting where taxpayer dollars must deliver maximum value.

The second business I ever ran was landlord to the Alpha Chi Sigma fraternity at Purdue University. I collected rent, managed leases, oversaw maintenance, and paid down debt from previous leadership mistakes. I learned how to have hard conversations with people who didn't want to pay rent and experienced firsthand the punishing costs of fixing others' mistakes. This background helps me understand both the landlord and tenant perspectives in housing policy discussions. I am also motivated that no one in the future will have to clean up a mistake I've left behind.

The third business I ran was the first business I co-founded. We were located here in Longmont, making coatings for tool-and-die, aerospace and semiconductor companies. While some of the technologies worked and others didn't, I learned that a good product and even a good value proposition isn't enough. Manufacturing is an expensive enterprise, and it takes careful planning and courage to make the infrastructure investments necessary.

Marketing specialized B2B products in the digital age completely changed how I approach reaching people in local politics. You have to meet people where they are, use data to understand what resonates, and communicate complex technical concepts in accessible ways.

This experience reinforced my commitment to thrift as both a personal quality and governance principle. Every year I run a personal budget that is planned out at least a year, with a 5, 15 and 30 year goal. Whether managing a \$15,000 student organization budget or Longmont's \$473 million budget, the fundamental discipline remains the same: every dollar must advance measurable outcomes that matter to the people you serve.

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?

This is another area where I have the self-awareness to recognize when someone else knows more, and I would plan to follow Councilmember Matthew Popkin's lead. As Mayor, my contribution would be better directed to ensuring good cooperation with Boulder County (as the Sugarmill is currently outside city limits).

Councilmember Popkin's vision for the Sugarmill, as I have heard him describe it, is excellent. By taking advantage of the powers of the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority, we can incentivize the creation of

a commercially viable, sustainable development which will clean up the site. The same process will require only a minimum amount of city money, while simultaneously incentivizing private activity directed towards the betterment of the entire city instead of the enrichment of a few.

I do see a more expansive role for the City in this project, following a model similar to [Covington, KY](#). Rather than relying on a single developer, which pools substantial risk in a single entity, we should make it possible for many small builders to work together to build this new Longmont neighborhood

The City of Longmont, acting as developer, should lay down the infrastructure and plat the property. This will help the City better understand its own processes and how they (don't always) work. Then, the City should sell individual lots to builders who want to build.

By diversifying the buildout of the property among many smaller businesses, we fill the neighborhood with a diversity of building heights, types and designs. That'll mean a variety of people, with a variety of incomes, supporting all different kinds of local businesses. This de-risks each individual project, and dramatically improves the resilience of the city. While it may not be as "efficient" as building a subdivision, ["efficiency" isn't always the right goal](#).

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?

Beyond the Sugarmill, we should prioritize commercial areas that have poor pedestrian and bike connections despite sitting on major roads. The goal is creating nodes of good multimodal connectivity where successful design practices can spread and influence surrounding areas while attracting viable businesses.

Longmont should encourage property owners [along the BRT route](#) to critically evaluate their land uses. This is particularly true on north Main Street, where large parking lots occupy valuable street frontage [despite being almost entirely empty](#). These empty parking lots are a prime opportunity for transit oriented development (housing which needs fewer parking spots because of the proximity to public transit and retail).

The former Walmart at Nelson and Hover is a prime opportunity. This location has become a place where businesses fail and vacancy encourages problematic behavior. More critically, this intersection will host a future BRT stop, making it a strategic transit-oriented development opportunity. We should work with property owners to create development that capitalizes on this transit investment— high density residential with surface improvements to prioritize resident access to the adjacent commercial and access to Village at the Peaks.

While we finally have someone taking on the vacant Safeway at 17th and Pace, the preponderance of asphalt and unwalkability of the active King Soopers across the street means nearby residents drive instead of walk. This area should receive tactical urbanism improvements: better crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, and street trees that make walking feel safe and pleasant. When King Soopers customers can safely walk or bike, nearby housing becomes more valuable, the commercial area thrives, and local business owners get more opportunities.

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?

The airport is irreplaceable transportation infrastructure that positions Longmont for sustainable aviation leadership. Our clean energy advantage—88% carbon-free electricity moving toward 100%—creates unique opportunities to lead in sustainable aviation businesses. Electric aircraft development, sustainable aviation fuel production, and clean aviation technology companies could find Longmont's shared ownership of the airport and electric utility irresistible.

We have to think of the airport as part of our transportation network. First, we should develop the airport as a hub for regional connectivity—businesses offering shuttle services to ski towns and mountain destinations. These customers have significant disposable income and represent revenue opportunities that benefit the broader community. Second, we can position the airport as core infrastructure for Sundance, where private aviation brings high-spending visitors who need ground transportation, lodging, and services throughout Longmont.

The key is ensuring airport-related economic activity generates revenue that supports our broader transportation objectives. Fuel taxes, hangar rentals, overnight fees for out-of-towners and related business licensing should make the airport self-sustaining. When wealthy visitors fly into Longmont, their spending should benefit local businesses and put money in residents' pockets.

The airport attracts businesses that need cargo capacity, quick access to regional markets, and proximity to Denver without Denver costs. This includes everything from specialized manufacturing to emergency services to research facilities that benefit from both airport access and our municipal utility advantages.

Airports become more valuable as regional development increases. Protecting and enhancing Vance Brand ensures Longmont maintains transportation options and economic opportunities that many communities lack.

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?

As a well known local housing advocate, several people in recent years have attempted to convince me that [we should do what Boulder has tried](#) – close down the airport and build housing on top of it. I think we would miss benefits of the airport to Longmont's economy and transportation network. But also, I am against urban sprawl.

It is always going to be alluring to imagine that if we sprawl just a little further out we'll be able to add enough homes to satisfy our needs. This is an illusion, and always has been, and one that has been foreclosed in perpetuity by the Open Space program. Green field development is usually not environmentally sustainable, and [it is definitely not financially sustainable](#). The choice to avoid sprawl and protect Open Space is something generations of Longmonters will benefit from – in the same way that we do for the founding of the Platte River Power Authority (which enabled Nextlight, among many other things).

The reality is that with our current land development rules, we just cannot build enough homes on a green field to have a meaningful impact on the cost of housing in Longmont. There aren't that many green fields left anyway, and even ambitious proposals only add a few hundred of the 14,000 homes we need.

In comparison, the City of Longmont is quite large. The homes we need will barely be noticed when distributed across Longmont's existing neighborhoods [if we embrace incremental methods](#). And at the same time, we'll strengthen Longmont's long term financial resilience by getting more revenue from our existing land without raising taxes, and without taking on any long term infrastructure maintenance obligations.

***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?**

See my answer above.

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's model of tourism](#) – where we primarily serve people from nearby cities but only a few visitors from far away – is perfect for us. The \$277 million in economic impact it generates makes life better for residents without any of the externalities of a tourism-based economy.

Rather than competing with Boulder's Pearl Street or Estes Park's mountain tourism, Longmont should focus on the industries that support tourism infrastructure—hospitality services, event coordination, transportation logistics. This allows us to benefit from our neighbors' tourism investments without the downsides of crowds displacing residents from local amenities.

The Sundance Film Festival is a perfect example of this. The film festival will generate approximately \$132 million in economic impact across the state, including \$13.8 million in sales taxes. While most of this economic benefit will go to Boulder, about \$3.5 million in sales tax revenue is likely to be generated in Longmont with comparatively low impact. The key is planning well enough that residents who aren't participating don't have their lives disrupted. This indirect, short-duration model maximizes economic benefit while minimizing ongoing infrastructure strain.

Tourism should advance our walkability and transit objectives. Shuttle services developed for visitors become transit options for residents. Downtown improvements that serve tourists also benefit locals. Infrastructure that supports events can enhance daily life.

See my answers under Arts Funding & Recreation for more.

Diversifying beyond direct tourism prevents regional economic correlation risk—when tourism struggles regionally, we're not entirely exposed. Supporting tourism infrastructure businesses creates more stable, year-round employment than seasonal visitor services.

Tourism revenue should support the fundamental infrastructure that makes Longmont livable for residents—better transportation, stronger local businesses, and community amenities that serve everyone.

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?

We should make it easier for small childcare providers to locate in residential neighborhoods. Childcare is the quintessential neighborhood business—families need it where they live, not across town. Currently, home-based childcare faces unnecessary zoning restrictions. I'll work to allow family childcare operations and small centers in residential areas through administrative approval, eliminating costly conditional use permit processes that price out small providers.

While I am leery of adding too many requirements when what we need is more housing, we should examine the requirements we have for mixed use developments. Many new mixed use developments have vacant ground floor commercial space. We should evaluate those requirements, to ensure commercial childcare providers can use them and consider incentives for a developer who brings a childcare provider.

The [Early Childhood Council of Boulder County](#) has developed comprehensive approaches that recognize childcare as workforce infrastructure, not just social services. I support their policy recommendations including employer-assisted childcare incentives and regional funding models. Longmont should actively participate in county-wide coordination rather than attempting isolated local solutions.

Economic development conversations must include childcare capacity. LEDP should facilitate convenings between major employers and childcare providers to create workplace partnerships, explore co-location opportunities, and address the workforce constraint that childcare costs create for business recruitment.

[Following Oklahoma's model](#), we should work with St. Vrain Valley Schools to allow nonprofit childcare facilities on school property. This preserves provider economic viability by allowing them to offer services beyond universal pre-K while leveraging existing public infrastructure.

----- End of Questionnaire Responses from Candidate Dalal -----

Diane Crist

Campaign Website: dianecrist.com

About:

I have lived in Longmont 30 years, and as a truly non-partisan practitioner, City Council has been the right place for me to further serve my community.

I've supported elections as a Boulder County Election Judge since 2014 and polling station judge for years before, and entered my own race in 2021. I currently represent Ward 1 as a Longmont City Councilwoman and prior to that was vice chair of Longmont's Transportation Advisory Board.

As our contemporary Mayor retires, it is important for sitting Councilors to step into leadership, elevate the conversation, and more fully inform voters about the work ahead.

I own an Accounting and Business Development practice helping local businesses start up and become successful. I have had my ears, eyes, and hands creating success in every type of business in Longmont. I have the skills, education and knowledge to move the City forward.

- Business Design and Development Accountant
- Prior Vice Chair of Transportation Advisory Board
- Business Owner
- Current Water Board Liaison

We raised and schooled our family in Longmont. I am an avid cyclist, enjoy sports and creative pursuits, and growing things, especially trees.

General Vision

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

My top priority is bringing us together as one people again (see how on question 12) by focusing on Beauty, Science, and Business. We need to realize the vision of our founders by protecting our natural resources including our water, open space, and conservation easements. Conduct responsible growth using a Right Projects, Right Place, Right Time, and Right People (integrated and considering demographics) process. And treat each other in a way that creates a positive, clean, safe Longmont, turning our differences into innovation rather than division.

It's called a Committed Model and I've done this with many of the Businesses I have worked to make profitable.

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

We have got to reverse/remove the 44 additional burdens our State has put on Businesses this past year. See my website www.dianecrist.com for a full list. AND convince the State Legislature to stop penalizing business as they did by removing the Vendors fee from Sales tax filings.

***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?**

The first thing our NEW Council – potential for 4 new Councilors – will do is engage with each other at a Council Retreat in February. This may be the most important Retreat in that we need to focus more on the operational aspects of “how” and “why” our priorities will be developed. Along with a good helping of analysis using data to determine what we have tried and whether it has been successful. Currently, our plan of “Housing for All”, “Early Childhood Education”, “Transportation”...etc. lacks the defining elements for building the results we want to see, consequently, any topic that mentions the categories of interest can become a distraction. Having a defined plan and measurable goals will help the Council stay on track.

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?**

No, I support wages being set by Business rather than Government. Most of our Local business pay above minimum wage now as a way to keep and attract talent. Removing burden's to Business will create better profitability for both Business and the City through increased tax revenue. It will also allow Business to hire more, pay senior employees more, and contribute to the Community more through sponsorships, charitable contributions, and support of Commercial real estate.

Environment & Sustainability

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

I have a Right Projects, Right Place, Right Time, and Right People (integrated and considering demographics) process in mind. Will the project stand the test of time –more than 20 years - and compatibility with adjoining property? Where does it make the most sense and is it innovative? Is this the right time to build in that space and who will it serve? Also, will this solve a temporary or permanent problem? Often we build in a permanent way to solve temporary problems. The Gen Z demographic is smaller, and expected to have fewer children. There were concerns about the ability for Gen Z to be as productive as Gen X who had the benefit of a technological boost. The introduction of AI will be a great equalizer to this Generation's productivity but it also means excessive building will be underutilized in future.

The Council has also recognized the City is currently unable to recycle building waste effectively at this time. In order to meet our sustainability goals, we must be mindful to build judiciously and not create excess waste.

***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?

Energy is one arena where Longmont's great history of innovation, scientific, and technological edge can make a bit difference moving forward. It is true that most energy usage has been an add-on to prior energy sources, historically. That is to say, we have added on to our fuel methods rather than changing to a new method and eliminating a prior method. With that in mind, we are at a moment of moving forward but we will not stop and pitch a tent here.

Small Modular Reactors using Thorium are showing great promise in creating the levels of electricity we will demand in the future. The major cost to this innovation is regulation. A thinking, scientific-minded, City consortium or commission will be helpful to informing the Council regarding our City readiness and the viability/safety/productivity of emerging energy technology. Cost of energy will be part of this discussion.

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?**

The more we build, the less affordable the housing. This is a function of Wrong Time (during high inflation) development and the subsidies provided to "affordable" projects that eventually pass onto rate payers and ultimately affect rents, the ability to qualify for attainable housing and the Longmont Cost of Living. "Right place" is important to reduce travel times to essential services and infrastructure.

Councilor McCoy initiated, and I supported an initiative to redirect cash contributions to the homeless into an account that supports homeless-directed non-profits. This would reduce and over time eliminate panhandling. Longmont currently leads the County on mental health and substance abuse initiative. There is always room to improve and having defined goals can help Longmont be more strategic.

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?

Now is the time to buy locally! More sales equals greater sales tax revenue for the City and less reliance on State and Federal Funding

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?**

One of the key strengths of Advance Longmont 2.0 is our new Director, Kelly Sage, she is experienced, connected, and effective. Additionally, having a group of local business people help direct efforts is priceless! Having an airport in our City is another signpost that Longmont is open to business and will be an economic powerhouse.

Arts Funding & Recreation

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

Please see answers to 11 [Sundance Film Festival (below)], 13 [Business Costs] and 20 [Sugarmill redevelopment].

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?

When it comes to the Sundance Festival, the squeeze is worth the juice in terms of any inconvenience being worth the economic benefit Longmont will derive.

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?

I mentioned to staff that one of my first Proclamations as Mayor will be to have a "No Opinion" day. The feedback I received was, "let's have it on a Monday so everyone is relaxed by City Council Tuesday." Often we are pushed to have an opinion about everything in today's society. Having "No Opinion" give us the chance to develop a habit of active listening with, "I hadn't heard that," "that's interesting," or "tell me more."

Additionally, I was reminded that prior Mayor Brian Baum asked Citizens to mention something they liked about Longmont when approaching the microphone at Public invited to be heard.

Let's remember no matter our ideas, in the end we are all still neighbors, co-workers, and part of the same community.

Business Startups, Costs, Commercial Development & Permitting

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

We find a way to fill them. I ran on a platform of filling the North Side Safeway on 17th and Pace. Given my Business Development Accounting profession I have developed a large number of business contacts and resources in Longmont and beyond. Those resources paid off and now VASA is rehabilitating the store and will offer more recreation service in Ward 1 for a reasonable monthly fee. See my website www.dianecrist.com for more information.

****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?**

Lower property tax for Commercial concerns is really a function of the state legislature. Removing the Gallagher amendment without an adequate replacement caused a huge uptick in property tax. This is being addressed and the City Council should continue to weigh in and support efforts to correct the shortfalls in Gallagher that penalized Business more heavily. The City MUST reduce burdens to businesses in the form of less permitting, applying, and upgrading costs. I have voted against these cost increases at every turn. Having more Councilors with business acumen on Council will help in that regard.

***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)**

One of the most important projects we can do in the next two years is increase our way finding signs throughout the City and especially for out-of-towners who enter the City. I know LDDA has plans to update and implement more signage downtown but the simple fact is we need to show people who enter the City how to get to important economic centers in order to enhance the profitability in those areas. The City has planned \$50K in the budget to address this but I think we much accelerate the funding and be more aggressive here.

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?**

Most importantly we need to discuss Citizenship with immigrants. Being 2nd generation from an immigrant family I know from my own family history that being a sponsored employee is not enough to ensure equal treatment and equal rights. Without being a Citizen, immigrants can be taken advantage of and abused in many sectors, even from employers who often see immigrants as being a cheaper working class. There are 4 ways to achieve Citizenship in the United States. I have links on my website at

www.dianecrist.com. I also have a Facebook interview with Ginny Schuster regarding how my family secured Citizenship in the US.

RTD & Public Transit

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

Longmont should explore new transit options. These options should be ones that take us into the next century, not ones that were built a century ago. I have and still do support the introduction of a Hyper loop or magnetic levitation train solution. We have already paid \$99 Million into Fast Tracks for a train we never received. Let's make sure our dollars go to something that is innovative and will go the distance for another 100 years.

Business Acumen

Have you signed the front of a paycheck?

Yes, I have signed the front of a paycheck, many times.

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 am a Business Development Accountant and own my own business working with other businesses. I have been instrumental in developing start-ups to the point of profitability, turning struggling businesses into successful enterprises, and helping 100s of businesses get their books in order, relate effectively, build supply chain, build business contacts and sales, and find and develop talent. I will say I have learned more from 30 years working with local businesses about developing a thriving economy than I ever learned earning my business degree or professional Accounting degree. But the Economics tutelage I received from my oft quoted in the paper Economics Professor has been unequalled to any information I have learned since.

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?

I would like to see a Coliseum build on the Sugar Mill property: A stadium, arena, or event center that brings people from out of town to Longmont for performing arts and other scheduled events.

We need to understand the costs of clean up on the site and we need to find a developer with lots of experience in this type of large project.

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?

Yes, I would like to see more business development on the North side of town. I believe better signage, attractive and interesting businesses, and full commercial storefronts would help to bring Rocky Mountain National Park traffic into the City to spend money here.

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?

Air travel is the newest transportation system, (about 70 years old). It is therefore still finding itself in terms of being widely used and making meaningful connections regionally as a commuting solution, for example. Because it is the newest, we must recognize that it is still not fully realized in terms of potential, and also that we must persist with it otherwise be left behind others who do continue with air exploration.

Noise is a problem but solutions are in the pipeline. We are at that moment of change when things are uncomfortable but ready to make a giant leap forward. The solution is to keep marching forward.

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?

We need to look at the City with a wider lens. Often we get caught in a solution for today that may not coincide with the situation of tomorrow. We agreed to revisit Envision Longmont in 2026 and so we will. During that process we can revisit all the factors surrounding 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?**

This is a situation that has been brewing since I first attended City Council 30 years ago. Change is inevitable. We cannot solve this problem with the same thinking that created it. I hesitate to create a permanent solution to what will become a temporary problem.

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)

We need to bring more outside economic traffic to Longmont. Better signage will help bring people into the city from the highways, an event and performing arts center will bring people regionally into the city. Tourism Marketing is a big part of getting the word out about Longmont and things to do, see and experience here..

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?

I think we are asking the wrong question here. I think a better question is how do couples make a living while also raising a family? Right now we have a solution in corporate childcare we seem to strictly believe is the only way forward. Our current City Council Vision neglects to mention families and family aged priorities. This is one version of the “Missing Middle” that must be addressed going forward. How do we best support working families in housing and choosing to school and raise a family here?

----- End of Questionnaire Responses from Candidate Crist -----

Sarah Levison

Campaign Website: levison4longmont.com

About:

Sarah has lived in Longmont for 28 years. She and her husband Hal raised their two now adult daughters in the Historic Eastside Neighborhood. Sarah was twice elected to an at large city council seat, serving from 2007 to 2015. In her time on council, Sarah distinguished herself with service on many state and national boards and policy committees. Sarah has learned and been mentored by Longmont's very best leaders and individuals whom she served with on the Economic Development Taskforce, the Museum Board, the Neighborhood Group Leaders Association, The board of El Comite de Longmont and the St. Vrain and Niwot Rotary clubs. Sarah loves living in Longmont. Sarah enjoys cooking, riding in antique British cars, theater, music, travel, walking her three dogs and thrifting. Most people know Sarah's serious side, however, her friends and family know she is very funny.

General Vision

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

I have three priorities for my first year in office. My first priority is to end the city sales tax on food you purchase to consume at home. The 3.53% tax equates to \$353 per year if you spend \$10,000 or \$192.30 a week on groceries. This tax is the most regressive kind of tax. In these difficult economic times and higher food prices, eliminating this tax will give tangible benefits to everyone. Longmont's middle and lower income households, families and seniors are having difficulty keeping up with food costs. The city council can give them relief. The revenue from this tax is not "lost". The money stays in our economy with taxes collected on non food purchases. When Lakewood ended their food tax, then Mayor Bob Murphy called the end of the tax "a highlight of our accomplishments of 2008". While the city must ask voters to approve a tax, the Mayor and city council can end a tax. As Mayor, I will end this tax.

My second priority is to enact a moratorium on new housing starts. A moratorium makes sense now. We need some time to absorb the impacts of recent development. Beginning in 2026, the city will update the Multimodal and Comprehensive Plan, Envision Longmont. This new ten year plan will guide planning and zoning decisions and every aspect of our city transportation system and built environment. It will identify strategies for infrastructure and public investment. Let us take the opportunity to set the vision and shape of our future city and then move forward with new development.

A third priority is to give residents a bigger say in setting budget priorities. I want to add a new dimension to the process. I propose to set aside 5% of the Capital Improvement Program for individuals or groups who have an idea for a project to propose it in a Shark Tank like competition with residents voting for the projects they deem worthy of funding.. Proposers will gather information from staff and draft a realistic budget and timeline for completion. The winning "Budget Bucks" proposals will be fully funded in the next budget year or funded over five years. I look forward to the ideas that will come forward from our innovative, thoughtful and community minded residents. This new program will promote direct engagement of residents with the Capital Improvement Budget. This process has worked in Chicago and many other cities and has produced great outcomes.

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

The city council as a body guides the direction of the city's advocacy of state and national legislation for staff, the city council and individual council members. I support Longmont's businesses asking city staff to consider recommending bills affecting business to be brought to council for discussion and a vote. I will vigorously advocate for Longmont's business needs at the county, state and federal levels with the direction of the council. More importantly, I will advocate for Longmont business when the council is voting on a policy position or legislative direction.

***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?**

The Mayor is the moderator of the city council meetings. The Mayor along with the City Manager sets the agenda for council meetings. The council must not add agenda items to the regular sessions that do not need to be on the agenda. Study sessions also must be managed to allow ample time to discuss items but not cluttered with extraneous matters.

The council has a pre-session session which might be the place for 'distractable issues'. I have seen how a cluttered council agenda delays crucial agenda items until later in the evening. The best decisions happen before 10 pm. I will be vigilant in keeping the council on task.

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 setting the local minimum wage above the state requirement.

Recently the county commissioners have backed off of raising the minimum wage. I think this was a prudent decision. At the Minimum Wage Fishbowl event, both the higher minimum wage advocates and those not in favor of raising the minimum wage discussed not just wages. The theme of the discussion was about affordability. If the cost of living is lower, then minimum wage workers can afford to live on the current minimum wage.

The challenge is not just the level of the minimum wage, it is how prices for everything are going up.

Environment & Sustainability

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

The City of Longmont has developed strategies and policies on growth and environmental sustainability. I will not propose big changes. I will take a common sense approach. With the current state of our economy, we should be careful not to be so strict about policy so that it halts growth completely.

***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?

Once again, I would take a measured approach. Due to current economic conditions, the council will have to weigh the economic impacts to its rate payers, the city's residents and businesses and consider the financial cost of reaching the goals on time. I think that the second part of the question assumes that any small city like Longmont has little contribution to global CO₂ emissions implies that we should not even try. Every city no matter how small makes a contribution that adds up when you total up all of the cities in the world. Progress, even small strides are still important.

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?**

As stated in my answer to the first question, I believe it is time to have a moratorium on new housing applications. There are a lot of applications already in process. The city will be updating the Multimodal Transportation and Comprehensive Plan, Envision Longmont in 2026. We can address the capacity of streets and infrastructure as we update Envision Longmont. With the new Comprehensive Plan, the city can accept new applications that will be evaluated under the updated plan. As we approach buildout, the city will need to have comprehensive evaluation standards to gauge the impact of each new development. We have adhered to the philosophy that "development must pay its own way". I believe we should continue this approach.

Addressing homelessness and panhandling linked to mental health and substance abuse with the goal of moving this population to a drug free and healthy mental state will cost the city millions of dollars. We do not have enough resources to take on this work. I believe that we engage only with those who are ready to change their lives. Like the RISE antipoverty program I initiated when I previously served on council, we can initiate a program to work intensively to help those who are motivated to resolve the barriers trapping them. It may be time for Longmont to work in partnership with our homeless and mental health non profits to create a program to house only those who want to escape drugs and mental illness. The goal is to move people from substance abuse and mental illness to a better life.

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 am fiscally conservative. I look at revenue several ways. The first is what you have coming in. The city can raise revenue without raising taxes by collecting more in fees for service. Is the city under charging for users of its facilities? Another view of revenue is to look at the revenue you don't collect for various reasons - incentives, tax waivers, tax increment financed special districts, and not collecting taxes owed. A third view of revenue is the commitment that comes from the city with state and federal grants. Are we applying for a grant because it is a core operation or function or are we applying because we want to get our "fair share" of grant money? Is the program sustainable and critical? Will the city commit to continue the program after grant funds run out? The council must weigh all options and think about local impacts to understand revenue.

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 2.0 is a great communication tool and promotion document. The 2018 document may need an update as the pandemic has changed the nature of work. With many workers working remotely, we still need to have a vision and strategy for attracting primary employers who require in office attendance.

What Advance Longmont 2.0 may want to do is study and strategize how we get the new class of primary employees to locate in Longmont. These employees can choose to live anywhere in the country, we want find those primary employers who have large numbers of remote workers and attract the workers to live in Longmont.

The theory around economic development is to boost primary employment. In this new world of remote work, we need to attract these employees who are not tethered to an office. Imagine all the new talent we will have in Longmont if we have these remote workers as residents.

Arts Funding & Recreation

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

The city should and does support the arts and cultural community with direct grants and by leveraging in kind resources. Through the budget the city allocates resources to city owned parks, recreation and community spaces. I believe the city should continue financial support. The city can also encourage residents to support arts and recreation non profits by making direct donations to arts and cultural non profits.

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?

It is unknown what the impacts of the Sundance Film Festival will have. I have never attended the film festival. We will not know how to balance the benefits with concerns until after the first few years. I am not going to guess because I do not have enough information.

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?

The fundamental strategies for civil discourse are to be respectful, keep an open mind, strive to understand many points of view and actively listen to everyone.

The first strategy is to model the behavior you want others to use. I have always been respectful and actively listened to others. Secondly, at the beginning of each meeting, the moderator should request that participants agree to a standard of conduct for the discussion. If things begin to get out of hand, a third strategy to take the discourse back to a civil and respectful tone is to halt the meeting and ask people to walk away for a time. A break can help diffuse a tense meeting.

Business Startups, Costs, Commercial Development & Permitting

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

No one wants to see rundown buildings. On our main corridors, we all drive by a property we don’t own and imagine what we would do if we could develop that property. First, we have to remind ourselves that we do not own the property. Second, the city cannot do much beyond code enforcement to ‘clean up’ a property. I do not use the word ‘blight’ because it carries a legal definition that does not apply to every underutilized property. The improvements to an underutilized property or commercial area will come when the property owners are willing to make the investment. The investment happens when the market supports it. The city’s role is to invest in public improvements ahead of revitalization. When the city directed capital improvement funds to the downtown alley ways it made them cleaner, safer and encouraged pedestrian access to the backdoors of businesses. Businesses responded by making their own improvements to their properties. The city can create the right environment and invest city dollars to lead property owners to invest.

****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?**

If elected, I would take time to do a deep dive into this issue. I will analyze what is working and what is not. Many times we only hear about the delays and frustrations about permitting. I will talk to businesses who have planning and permit applications approved and those whose are still pending. In

other words, I will do my own research. I will examine and understand the regulations and how the city applies them. What is working? What can work better? The city has a responsibility to uphold health and safety regulations and whatever state and federal regulations the city has to apply. The city also has an obligation to process permits and applications within a reasonable and predictable time. In other words, the city has to give “good customer service” to our businesses.

The city cannot and should not create policy to help keep commercial rents within reach. The city cannot subsidize commercial rents. It can, however, support small businesses to make them more successful and able to pay the market rate for rent.

The city has some business assistance programs. The programs may need to be revamped to meet the true needs of businesses. The Mayor can convene a business roundtable group to let business have a direct connection and advocate in city hall. If elected, I will reach out to businesses and listen to their perspectives.

***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 love our downtown! It is the reason our family chose to live in Longmont. The character of downtown lives in its historic buildings. I have always supported city assistance for owners who want to tap into state and federal tax credits. To remain vibrant and accessible, the city must continue to maintain infrastructure through the Capital Improvement Program. The pedestrian friendly mid block crosswalks are a great improvement. For years, the city found the cost of this improvement was too high. With more pedestrians downtown safety became a higher priority and it made sense to invest in the mid block crosswalks.

Top goals for downtown: Identify and invest in infrastructure improvements that are the biggest bang for our bucks. Continue to work with the LDDA on projects and incentive programs. Focus on maintaining a clean and safe environment. Listen to business owners. Brainstorm new ideas and fund these ideas. Foster a strong relationship with property owners and businesses to respond to challenges and problems. Promote our downtown as the ‘place to be’. Celebrate downtown’s success! I will participate in all these efforts.

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?**

We have a good social safety net in the many nonprofits who serve Longmont. The city allocates funds to support nonprofits in the budget. The city should continue to do so. The city can also encourage residents to donate to support our great nonprofits.

I have thought that the city with the help of the Longmont Community Foundation could create a signature non profit fundraising and volunteer recruitment event to showcase all of the non profits in

the city. Longmont is a city of residents who are generous and will support non profits. We could help them connect as new donors and volunteers through a non profit event.

One non-profit I know well is El Comite de Longmont. It has for 45 years provided resources for our immigrant and Latino community members. It is but one of many worth non profits the city funds. I am a big supporter as I served on its board both as the city council liaison, 8 years and 9 years as a community member and as the board secretary. I may know El Comite well, however, many in the city do not realize the depth of the relationships they have built and the many resources they provide to our community.

RTD & Public Transit

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

I am following the new Front Range Passenger Rail project. I am hopeful we will get some rail in the next 10 years. I think that most Longmont residents are waiting to see. I do know that the community will be in favor of paying more taxes since we have already paid RTD 20 years of taxes for no rail service.

Business Acumen

Have you signed the front of a paycheck?

No I have not.

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 worked for small businesses; a small restaurant and catering company and a small title company. The businesses were so small that employees saw and to a degree were part of day to day operations. We knew how the owner handled budgeting, marketing and hiring. My most relevant experience comes from my eight years on city council. Even though I have little direct business experience, I understand the impacts city policy has on business. I have always met with and listened to any business owner who wants to meet. I am fiscally conservative. The council relies on city staff's advice and their own common sense to craft the best policies.

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?

Undoubtedly, the Sugermill will be redeveloped in the next decade. The city has been developing some ideas of what a redeveloped Sugarmill could be. I would like to have good studies and data on the scope of environmental cleanup. There is an opportunity for a partnership with Front Range Community College to start up a program to train a local workforce to do the environmental cleanup.

Just as FRCC Longmont campus has advanced manufacturing, they could also support the need for trained environmental clean up workers.

While we have the beginnings of a master plan, the Envision Longmont update will engage the community to inform the vision and strategies for redevelopment. Some communities have begun using a Community Benefit agreement to ensure there is a true long term positive outcome for the entire community. Longmont could have such an agreement for not only the Sugarmill but the entire 140 or so acres of adjacent properties and any urban renewal projects.

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?

The mid-town and north Main street corridors should be the next priority for improvement. I think the city needs to address strategies and design standards for these areas as part of the Envision Longmont update. I would support strategies identified in any new master planning documents. Strategies should not rely exclusively on Tax Increment Financing for financial support. In fact, redevelopment's goals should be to increase revenue to the city. If new revenues are paying back loans and there are more people and businesses needing services, the city needs revenue for those businesses and residents. If there is no significant new revenue the rest of the city's commercial and residential areas will have to generate more revenue to provide services. Therefore, there is no revenue growth for the city from a revitalized area.

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?

Vance Brand Airport plays an important role in our economy and transportation needs. During the 2013 flood, it was a crucial resource for the city and county to access flood damage. It has helped many residents learn to fly. Longmont's airport is an underutilized resource that with targeted investment, could add significantly to our local economy. I have had conversations with airport enthusiasts and airport business owners who know our airport can be a place where new transportation options and businesses will come to life. The airport can grow in its contribution to the development of electric airplanes for example. My experience tells me that if the city leads the way with well thought out public investments, business and airport users will also become more invested. Let us first start with a well researched strategic plan and update the 2012 Airport Master Plan.

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?

In Envision Longmont, the city allowed a land use change and did not check to see if our zoning matched the Federal Aviation Administration regulations. It is not airport stakeholders who are concerned about safety, the FAA is. Airport noise has been a hot topic since the early 2000s when residential developments were approved and built in the airport influence zone. I acknowledge that few had any indication about how airport noise would or would impact their homes. As one who lives a block from the train, everyone who ever comes through or lives in central Longmont understands the impact of the train. My approach to planning near the airport is that prior to development, the city

planners and airport staff review the plan and zoning with every FAA department to be sure what is in the updated Envision Longmont does not conflict with Federal regulations.

***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?**

Residential and commercial development can be permitted near the airport as long as it complies with the Federal Aviation Administration guidelines and regulations. In fact, I would go further and recommend that the city monitor the FAA proposed rules and regulations to ensure the city is aware of proposed changes that impact development around airports. The city could also ask for help from our federal representatives to help us follow rule and regulation changes.

When the Federal Railroad Administration proposed the rule change to increase the volume and length of train horns at intersections, there was an opportunity for public comment. Our city and most of the cities in the country with railroads running through them, were unaware of the rules change and did not comment. In hindsight, Longmont could have spared thousands of residents headaches with train noise if we were checking on the FRA. Now we are aware of how FAA regulations and rules can impact Longmont, we need to start monitoring the FAA actions.

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)

Visit Longmont is an asset for tourism marketing for Longmont. They have a lot of very good businesses and activities here that attract visitors. Visit Longmont has a dedicated fund from the Lodgers tax and through the newly formed Longmont Tourism Improvement District which was recently approved by the city council. Establishing a special tourism district is a new tool that I am sure will support Visit Longmont in attracting visitors and boosting hotel occupancy.

Visit Longmont can solicit the opinions of Longmont residents and businesses as they develop new strategies and a marketing plan. We want visitors to come and experience what I believe is the best small city in America. Longmont’s residents are the number one, low cost marketing team Visit Longmont can leverage this resource to its fullest. By the way, personally, I would love to see a Visit Longmont commercial on local television when I am visiting cities in other states. We see lots of local commercials for South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska on local TV. Do we have a come to Longmont campaign? We should.

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 City of Longmont, cannot by itself bring down the costs of childcare. The state and federal governments both have a large role to play in funding childcare.

As a long time member of the Boulder County Early Childhood council and the Longmont's Bright EYES Committee, I am informed about the challenges parents face in finding childcare that is reasonably priced, high quality, safe and stable. I have viewed childcare and early childhood education as both a family issue and an economic development issue. Our children are our future workforce. Quality childcare and education is the first step to prepare them to be successful adults.

The City of Longmont has supported childcare with general fund dollars especially funding programs for lower income families. The city can devote more funding if it chooses to. The city can support scholarships for childcare workers for professional certificates and for continuing education and professional development.

When I was on city council previously, I connected the city to a National League of Cities 2013-2016 technical assistance grant called "Educational Alignment for Young Children" initiative which was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Longmont was the smallest city in the cohort of Hartford, Connecticut, Fort Worth and Austin Texas, Richmond, Virginia and Rochester, New York. It was my advocacy and membership in the NLC Youth, Education and Family Council that helped Longmont be selected.

The accomplishments of the grant can be found in the NLC report. The reason I mention this work is that we discovered that early childhood and childcare initiatives take very targeted and specific investments. When the city moves forward with new initiatives and financial resources, we should update our assessment of what resources we already have in our region.

Aligning the small and large resources available to support early childhood services, educators and providers is critical to focusing on where to best invest public dollars.

How would I bring down costs for families? Invest in the "infrastructure" of childcare. This can be everything from city grants to improve a childcare facility or neighborhood childcare provider and also business grants. The city can fund tuition and underwrite professional development training for childcare workers. The city can support non profits who need gap funding to care for lower income families.

Where will the resources come to bring down costs? First, I am not in favor of a new Special Taxing District for Childcare and Early Childhood Education. Increasing property taxes in these hard economic times will further burden working families with higher property taxes if they own and higher rents as property owners pass the tax increase on to renters.

I am in favor of exploring ways to allocate a portion of certain revenue streams to early childhood programs. Since childcare is a piece of workforce and economic development, I would like to explore ways we could use some of the business personal property tax revenue the city collects to help support childcare and education. I am not suggesting we increase this tax. The city could work with the

Longmont Economic Development Partnership to support child care in any new business incentive. We start the conversation with new primary employers with a conversation about being a good partner in the community. We can request all of our employers invest in childcare by joining the Colorado Child Care contribution tax credit program and/or the Child Care Facility tax credit. When we as a city invest in young children, we are investing in our future workforce at the same time as their working parents. There have been many studies down that conclude that parents of young children are much more efficient and high performing at work when they are not worrying about child care.

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

Susie Hidalgo-Fahring

Campaign Website: susieforlongmont.com

About:

I have lived in Longmont for over 20 years and a 22-year educator in SVVSD. I currently serve as Mayor Pro Tem and have been the Ward 3 representative since 2019. As a Longmont City Council member, I dually serve the role of Longmont Housing Authority Commissioner. When I made the decision to first run for City Council in 2019, I wanted to bring forward the voice of residents who often felt disfranchised by current systems and practices. Throughout my term, I have had the opportunity to truly understand the priorities and needs of the residents of Longmont. These priorities guide my decision-making process because I am a public servant first and never forget that I was elected to serve the people of Longmont. I carry that role in high regard.

I am a community advocate at heart. Over the years I have volunteered in many capacities; from teaching catechism at St John the Baptist Church, to seamstress work and designing tutus for the Longmont Dance Theatre/Centennial Ballet, to serving on the St Vrain Valley Education Association Negotiations Team, SVVEA Vice President and SVVEA Board member. More recently, I have focused on efforts to break the stigma of mental illness and advocate for quality mental health. As a certified ASIST suicide first aid practitioner, I have been able to support residents in crisis get access to mental health care. I truly believe that as a member of City Council, policy is only one part of what we do—a larger responsibility is service to the community through our engagement and outreach

General Vision

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

My top priority as mayor is keeping Longmont strong by focusing on reliable core services, resilient infrastructure, and affordability for residents. I believe effective leadership starts with taking care of what we have: securing and maintaining safe streets, dependable utilities, and well-supported public safety, while planning responsibly for future growth. By investing wisely in our infrastructure, Longmont can stay ahead of costly repairs, protect critical resources like water, and ensure that the city remains safe, sustainable, and efficient for generations to come. I learned early on in my 2019 term what happens when we neglect core services and infrastructure. In an immediate pivot, we had to allocate dollars to cover major foundational defects in three of our major city buildings (City Hall, the Longmont Library and the Public Safety building) and major investments to modernize and secure water infrastructure needed to be made our all within my first few months in office. As we continue to navigate city operations and a sustainable tax base, I am also committed to keeping Longmont affordable for the people who live and work here. Longmont residents are bearing the brunt of inflation and economic uncertainty, that is why I support funding programs and resources that provide a safety net for our most vulnerable communities. As your mayor, I will be thoughtful in budgeting, promote transparency in city spending, and forward policies that balance growth with fiscal responsibility. Through my experience on city council, I believe focusing on practical solutions will strengthen Longmont's foundation and keep it a community where everyone can thrive.

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

Over the years I have built relationships and coalitions with state and federal agencies. Initially, I made my presence while advocating for quality early childhood education, public education, and mental health. As I transitioned to Longmont City Council, I advocated for transportation funding and policy to address the shortage of middle-income housing. I currently serve on Congressman Neguse's Latino Advisory Council, through this role, I have been able to directly advocate for the specific needs of the Longmont community, such as funding for micro transit. As mayor, I plan to work closely with groups such as the Longmont Chamber, Latino Chamber and LEDP to identify policies that are placing undue burdens on our local businesses so that I can work with legislators to reduce the unintended consequences of these policies.

***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?**

The city's top primary function is to provide our basic services. The strategic plan is what our vision is for the city per the council's priorities. The comprehensive plan (Envision Longmont) is a fluid, working document to implement those priorities. It's a middle of the road journey for council members to work for the residents on one side while keeping our eye on the vision and the comp plan. Many times, they collide. It's our job to help merge them so that our policies work for the whole city. While the mayor has the obligation to run effective and efficient meetings, constituent input and perspective is essential in ensuring we are addressing the appropriate needs and priorities of this community. We must allow space to hear and respond to the unexpected while still addressing the city's strategic plan.

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?**

Philosophically, I support raising the wage to reduce cost burden to workers, however, this cannot happen without key stakeholders (business owners and workers) working together to determine what can realistically be accomplished and when is the best time to move forward. Tariffs, inflation, economic uncertainty and regulations that increase the cost of doing business all need to be considered. The City Council recently held a fishbowl conversation with workers and local business owners. The conversation gave me the opportunity to reflect on how some of our own city practices and policies negatively impact small locally owned businesses. There are areas we as a City Council must address first, especially when looking at our fee structure (on waste disposal, etc). As mayor, I will have a seat on the LEDP; here I plan to work closer with businesses, the Longmont Chamber and the Latino Chamber to explore ways to reduce financial burdens, so that businesses can increase wages. I would like to point out though, many of our local businesses already pay their workers well above the state minimum wage. I have not overlooked that fact. I want to be thoughtful in this process, work closely with impacted individuals, and weigh the unintended consequences of plowing through any type of policy change.

Environment & Sustainability

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

To balance growth with environmental sustainability, we must ensure we are integrating climate goals directly into land use, housing, and infrastructure planning. Longmont is in a good position because of policies we made on new builds, open space and transportation. Keeping the tightknit community feel with local businesses while balancing opportunity to bring in larger primary businesses to support workers and our tax base is important.

Through Longmont Housing Authority, the City Council has given directions to the City Manager to build the necessary affordable and attainable rental units and for sale homes. In today's market, it doesn't pencil out for developers to meet our 12% goal of lower priced units. The cash-in-lieu allows us the opportunity to leverage these dollars for affordable housing that meet the ever-growing demand. Preserving Open Space is not only essential for wildlife preservation, it also supports quality of life, mental health and well-being. People want to live with nature and be in an area that is truly the beauty of Colorado. Our commitment to building a city with bike and walking paths, trails, etc. is a part of sustainability, but also in our ability to be part of fire and flood preparedness. My commitment to finishing the resilient St. Vrain flood prevention project, equipping our fire and police departments are part of this sustainability. Through the city's efforts, in May of this year Longmont has been selected as a UN Resilience Hub ([Longmont Becomes First United Nations Resilience Hub in the United States](#)) the only city in the US to achieve this accomplishment.

I believe focusing growth within existing urban areas through infill and mixed-use development can reduce sprawl, protect open space, and make better use of existing infrastructure. Solutions for sustainability include expanding green infrastructure, such as floodplain restoration, tree canopy growth, and low-impact stormwater systems, these efforts will help manage runoff and enhance air and water quality. Throughout my time on the City Council, the city has worked hard to promote energy-efficient, climate-smart building standards and strengthen multimodal transportation options to cut emissions. It is a priority of mine to engage residents, local partners, and businesses in sustainability efforts and using data to guide progress. In doing so, Longmont can grow responsibly while preserving its natural resources and community character.

***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?

The city should stay on the path to 100% renewable energy knowing that it might take a bit longer. Tariffs are adding time to the project because of the inability to get the equipment we need for substations, transmission lines and storage. PRPA has contracts with companies that are unable to deliver on time. PRPA is joining the Southwest Power Pool. The utility companies in the pool will be able to buy and sell power, including stored power, keeping the lights on even through dark or calm days.

The Aero derivative turbines are being installed for redundancy making sure we never have black outs. AMI, which is being installed on apartments and homes allows residents to manage their own electricity use.

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?**

As Longmont continues to grow, we face the challenge of balancing affordability and sustainability with residents' concerns about traffic, noise, and infrastructure strain. The key is smart, balanced planning by directing growth to areas with existing infrastructure, investing in transit and green design, and setting clear standards so new development fits the character of our neighborhoods. The Main Street Corridor Plan and recent mixed-use annexations promote infill development and affordability while protecting open space. Together, these initiatives show our commitment to growing responsibly, supporting vulnerable residents, and building a sustainable, livable city. Additionally, I strive to actively work to balance growth, sustainability, and community well-being by supporting coordinated investments in housing, transportation, and environmental resilience. The city's Transportation Mobility Plan and projects like the Coffman Street multimodal improvements and Firestone-Longmont Mobility Hub expand safe transit, biking, and pedestrian options to reduce congestion and emissions. The Resilient St. Vrain Project continues to restore flood-damaged creek corridors, protect infrastructure, and enhance climate resilience.

At the same time, we can't separate growth from compassion. Homelessness and panhandling are often tied to mental health and substance use challenges, and the most effective solutions come from housing paired with wraparound services, like permanently supportive housing, CORE/LEADS support, and behavioral health partnerships. These approaches work to reduce homelessness, improve safety, and restore dignity. Longmont is moving the needle with supporting projects such as Zinnia Longmont, a 55-unit permanent supportive housing community, and the Veterans Community Project Village, which provides transitional housing and services for veterans. Through its Human Services Agency Funding Program, the city partners with nonprofits to deliver behavioral health, recovery, and housing stability programs. These are all actions I support and will focus to ensure their sustainability and growth.

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?

To strengthen Longmont's economic sustainability without placing additional burdens on residents, the city should focus on growing its tax base through smart, locally driven economic development. Attracting diverse businesses that create good-paying jobs, supporting small business expansion, and streamlining permitting and licensing to make it easier to start and grow a business in Longmont. Investing in infrastructure that improves mobility, broadband, and utilities will also make the city more attractive to employers and visitors alike.

Partnerships are key! By collaborating with SVVSD, Front Range Community College, and regional partners we can build a skilled workforce and reduce service costs. Strategic tourism and downtown investments can generate new revenue, while public-private partnerships can help fund major projects without overreliance on federal or state dollars. The goal is sustainable, balanced growth that expands opportunity, funds essential services, and keeps Longmont affordable for residents and businesses.

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 2.0 allows a variety of stakeholders such as business owners, councilors, experts in a field to have a place to advance an idea and find a path to implement it. For example, the idea of a shuttle or other type of transportation was born in a transportation segment of Advance Longmont. From those conversations, Phil Greenwald and Mayor Peck brought Ride Longmont to the city. It has been very successful.

Arts Funding & Recreation

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

I firmly believe access to the arts and cultural programs and amenities is key to building an inclusive community. Our parks, library, museum, and parks are such an asset and serve as a great equalizer, especially for segments of our community who do not have the luxury of attending art and cultural events outside of Longmont. We are fortunate to have so many dedicated staff and volunteers who support our current programs and always looking for ways to expand accessibility. Through partnerships with local arts and entertainment groups and nonprofits, we can further explore opportunities to bring low cost or free quality programming for residents. There is much opportunity for the city to support these efforts.

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?

Sundance Film Festival in Boulder is an amazing and exciting opportunity for Boulder and all the surrounding areas. There are already many local groups and city staff engaged in conversations. It is very important to ensure other departments, like Public Safety and Transportation, are at the table to weigh in on need and what to anticipate as visitors make their way to Longmont. To address concerns about congestion and affordability, the city should plan early with strong community input, working closely with residents, local businesses, and event organizers to address concerns about traffic, parking, and short-term rental pressures. Strategies can include enhanced transit options, temporary mobility hubs, partner with private shuttle companies, and create clear communication plans to minimize disruption. With thoughtful planning, Sundance can strengthen Longmont's economy while keeping it livable and inclusive.

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?

As mayor, I would be charged with chairing our weekly meetings. The standard set must be one of professionalism and respect. We should serve a model to the community, especially our youth who are watching. As elected officials we are here to represent the people of Longmont. When I am working with residents or my council colleagues, I listen to understand rather than listen to respond. Taking the time to meet people where that are and understand that people priorities and opinions are formed from their own life experiences. This must be respected as we debate the issues.

Over the years I have seen residents come to the podium during public comment or attend Coffee with Council upset about a particular issue, once we can either explain our decision-making process or connect them with staff to address the situation, the tension lifts. We can also get creative with our technology to expand opportunities to engage with residents in an effort to break down communication barriers that lead to frustration and misunderstanding.

Business Startups, Costs, Commercial Development & Permitting

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

Addressing blighted or underutilized commercial areas in Longmont requires strategic use of our existing tools and a proactive approach to redevelopment. One promising example is the work we are currently doing as commissioners to the Longmont Urban Renewal Authority. We are currently evaluating a project to redevelop the vacant lot that was once a Wal-Mart, next to Hobby Lobby. The proposed 265-unit housing development will transform a property that's been abandoned for over a decade. Efforts and creativity such as this will address ongoing public safety concerns and revitalizing the surrounding businesses by increasing activity nearby. This project demonstrates how reactivating blighted sites can both improve community safety and boost economic vitality.

Moving forward, the city should better leverage the Urban Renewal Authority's tools, such as tax increment financing, to attract private investment in areas with redevelopment potential. Expanding incentives, like waiving fees for projects that clean up brownfields or repurpose underused properties can spur revitalization without additional burden to the taxpayer.

****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?**

To make Longmont more competitive and business-friendly, especially for startups and small businesses, I, as mayor would focus on streamlining the city's planning and permitting process and improving communication between city departments, developers, and applicants. I would advocate for setting clear timelines, expanding online permitting tools, and perhaps creating a navigator tool or program to guide entrepreneurs through the process and help resolve delays. I have often heard from new business owners, especially in the Latino community that it is challenging to navigate the system.

Finding solutions to barriers and ensure that rules are predictable, transparent, and applied consistently will be a focus of mine. Working closely with our partners can help bridge that gap and ensure we are effectively addressing the needs.

Last year I attended a conference workshop at the National League of Cities that specifically spoke to addressing burdens on small business owners. I would love to take a deeper look to help small businesses manage commercial rent pressures and stay competitive. The city can encourage mixed-use developments that include affordable commercial spaces, expand small business grant and loan programs, and explore targeted incentives for landlords who offer below-market rents to local businesses. These were some points that stood out to me as possibilities for our community. Supporting adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, such as older retail spaces, can also provide lower-cost options while revitalizing underused corridors. Combined, these strategies can help Longmont maintain a strong, diverse business base while promoting smart, efficient growth.

***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)**

Longmont's locally owned downtown is one of our greatest strengths, protecting that character should be a top priority. As mayor, I can champion policies that keep small businesses competitive by supporting local ownership, reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers, and ensuring commercial rents remain manageable through incentives for property owners who lease to local tenants. Continued investment in public spaces and events that draw residents and visitors downtown, such as our cherished festivals and cultural programming helps sustain foot traffic and strengthen the sense of community.

Accessibility and affordability are equally important: expanding parking options, improving pedestrian and bike connections, and maintaining programs like Ride Free Longmont and Longmont RIDE micro transit to ensure downtown remains easy to reach for all. I support and will commit to a closer collaboration with the Longmont Downtown Development Authority to attract a balanced mix of shops, restaurants, housing, and arts venues to keep downtown vibrant year-round.

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?**

Throughout my 20+ years teaching in the St Vrain Valley School District, I have turned to local nonprofits and agencies for a myriad of reasons to connect families with necessary support systems. As a leader in the community, I prioritize connecting with local nonprofits already doing the work and advocate for dollars and other city supports for them to better achieve their mission. During my first year on the Longmont City Council, I worked with our former CFO to rethink how we implement priority-based budgeting. For example, if we look at a program that meets the needs of 30% of the residents, we must look deeper at that particular subgroup that is positively impacted by that program or funding. If 95% of that subgroup then that program should be weighed as a higher priority to ensure equitable funding for our residents. Prior to serving on council, I belonged to the Supporting Action for Mental Health Latino Outreach, here our team designed conversation guides for parents having difficult conversation

with their children regarding depression, self-harming and suicide; topics that are taboo in many Latino homes. Through this work I had presented for Boulder County foster families and Padres Involucrados en Educación. This is essential work that not only breaks down barriers, but it can save lives. These opportunities must be supported, funded, and prioritized.

RTD & Public Transit

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

It's difficult to know what types of public transit will be in the future. Knowing the cost of all transit, a funding source must be part of the conversation. I'm very much in favor of the Front Range Passenger Rail project from Union Station to Ft. Collins being in service by January 2029. I wouldn't consider another major transit project until that line is continued to Pueblo per SB 24-184.

Business Acumen

Have you signed the front of a paycheck?

Yes. In one capacity as a home daycare provider and the other when I co owned a plumbing business with my husband.

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?

Through my experience in running a small business and my later experience with analyzing the district budget, for teacher salary negotiation purposes, as well as understanding our own city budget, I come with an understanding of money management, sustainability, business promotion and the importance of hiring and retaining quality workforce. I bring this perspective to the city council and refer to my experiences when addressing policy.

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?

Longmont is already working and negotiating with the landowners and the county. We have available tools, Longmont Urban Renewal Authority and Tax Increment Financing that we are tapping into to see redevelopment as a reality. Part of the plans include environmental cleanup and thoughtful planning for a diversified space that will include preserving the historical integrity of the site.

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 plan to prioritize the North Main corridor. This area is often neglected and attention given is at times reactionary rather than proactive. North Main is the gateway to Longmont and there is much we can do

through similar tools we are using in other brownfield sites. We owe this to the businesses and residents in the north central part of town.

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?

The airport is and will continue to be an integral part of our city. Longmont is finally working on the infrastructure (water, sewer, fiber) because part 16 lawsuits were settled in 2019. In 2020, the pandemic slowed progress for infrastructure. Vance Brand is a business which the city owns and is supposed to bring in revenue. As of now, fuel and hangar lots are the sources. Landing fees will help. The city has been approached by aeronautical businesses interested in locating them at the airport. Our airport serves commerce, firefighting planes getting water from local reservoirs, medical flights, etc. Residents house their aircrafts at the airport. The city is exploring the future of electric aircraft, working with PRPA for a possible solar array for electricity.

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?

FAA has changed many of the regulations on land use around airports. In my opinion, staff should dive into the changed environment around land use and airports. The land that is around the airport should have been zoned to commercial use only. The research wasn't done to address the issue beforehand. Perhaps with the review of Envision Longmont which is scheduled for 2026 it can be addressed. We have the ability to look at Envision Longmont to decide if the designation needs to be changed. As the city review the comprehensive plan, we should also make sure there is alignment between that and an updated airport master plan.

There does need to be better collaboration and communication between the city council, staff, airport users and the residents. Many residents have expressed to me that they do not view the airport as an asset because they do not engage with the airport or activities at the airport. Others have expressed frustration with the increase noise and activity. There should be space where residents and airport users can come together to create solutions that support.

***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 do not believe it is the best course of action to promote building housing near the airport.

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)

The work of Visit Longmont is vital for supporting a robust local economy. There is much opportunity for the Longmont City Council to work alongside Visit Longmont to enhance and sustain our tourism industry. Recently, Visit Longmont came before city council to initiate the Longmont Tourism Improvement District. I supported this ordinance because the stakeholders involved advocated for this as a means of strengthening the industry. I plan to work closely with groups like Visit Longmont to ensure our policies and practices align and support the mission and visit of the tourism industry.

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?

As a former childcare provider, preschool teacher and longtime elementary school teacher, early childhood education and access to quality care is a high priority for me. Childcare affordability in Longmont is both an economic and workforce issue. The mayor and council can help by expanding partnerships and reducing barriers that make it costly to open or operate childcare facilities. This includes streamlining zoning and licensing for in-home and center-based care, offering fee waivers or expedited review for childcare projects, and identifying underused city or school district properties that could be repurposed for early learning centers. These are solutions that I and other municipal leaders have explored on the National League of Cities Youth, Education and Families Council.

Additionally, we have a great partner with SVVSD, who currently sits on the Early Childhood Council of Boulder County and has been a strong advocate for accessible and quality early childhood education and care options. I have recently been asked to join the Council and am hopeful we will be able to find solutions for young families seeking quality childcare, especially in the 0-3 age range. Outside of the ECC, the city can also collaborate with local employers, and the Longmont Economic Development Partnership to explore shared childcare or employer-supported care models that reduce costs for families while improving pay for providers. Investing in workforce training and wage supplements for early childhood educators is another option we can explore further. I am proud to have supported efforts that streamlined the process for the TLC Learning Center to build their new site which will provide more quality childcare and education. They are also adding space for professional development and training to enhance workforce, which will help strengthen the talent pipeline. When combining smart regulation, creative partnerships, and targeted local investment, Longmont can make childcare more affordable and sustainable for both families and providers.

----- End of Questionnaire Responses from Candidate Hidalgo-Fahring -----



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.