INTRODUCTION

The following Principles and Policies are designed to ensure that the County enhances the lives of its residents, operates within its resources, protects the environment, guides sound public infrastructure investments, and makes wise land use decisions.

They are a critical step toward community resilience to mitigate future social, economic, and environmental impacts from natural and economic disasters. The following pages define the County’s role in resilience underlain by two beliefs: 1) that County governments are not able to provide the same level of service that city governments provide (see the Code of the West); and 2) that individuals and families are primarily responsible for their own self-reliance, preparedness and the consequences of their actions or inaction.

Definitions

For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan document, Principles and Policies are defined as follows:

Principles: Desired ideals and a value to be sought; an end toward which effort is directed.

Policies: Statements of standard or a course of action that guides governmental action and decision making.

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COMMUNITY

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- **Strategic Plan**
- **Special Area and Subarea Plans:**
  - LaPorte Area Plan
  - Red Feather Lakes Area Plan
  - I-25 Corridor Plan
  - Plan for the Region between Fort Collins and Loveland (Larimer County / City of Fort Collins / Loveland)

**Principle 1. Regional Convener and Facilitator**

Larimer County serves as a regional convener, facilitator and collaborator to build relationships and increase intergovernmental cooperation, partnerships, and proactive, long-range planning.

*Figure 1 Community Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans*
1. Formulate and strengthen Intergovernmental Agreements to encourage coordination and cooperation among municipalities and local and regional agencies.

2. Facilitate planning efforts between cities, utility districts/providers, and unincorporated residents to ensure all interests are represented.

3. Establish Cooperative Planning Areas (CPAs) adjacent to Growth Management Areas (GMAs), to address future municipal and county interests in cooperation with municipalities, residents, and landowners.

**Principle 2. Proactive Planning and Engagement**

Larimer County inclusively values and collaborates with unincorporated residents, rural communities and the region through long-range, comprehensive planning and meaningful representation. (See Economy 1)

1. Prepare and regularly update master plans to achieve a healthier, more vibrant and resilient future for the County.

2. Facilitate open and respectful public participation and engagement with all community members to foster better decision-making and an informed citizenry.

3. Inform communities and residents about the realities of rural living to encourage greater self-preparedness in the event of a disruption.

**Principle 3. Targeted Urban Development**

Larimer County promotes urban-level development and annexation within Growth Management Areas (GMAs).

1. Create and/or update GMA boundaries represented by the Rural/Urban Interface and Urban Expansion Framework Categories to implement urban development and Intergovernmental Agreements according to the following criteria:
   - The GMA district boundary is sized to accommodate 20-year growth projections and be annexed within the time frame anticipated by the municipality’s comprehensive plan.
   - Urban-level densities and intensities consistent with the municipality’s comprehensive plan.
   - Similar urban design standards and fee structures so that lands may eventually be annexed as they become eligible without extensive capital improvements or costs.
   - Provision of urban level services (water, sewer, urban streets, and urban fire protection) are available or planned.
   - Urban services provided by the County are minimized by facilitating the annexation of lands that have or are designated for urban uses.

2. Achieve consistency with municipal land use plans within GMA boundaries.

3. Maintain consistent City/County standards for transportation and drainage as applicable and coordinate development standards within approved GMAs.

4. Partner and coordinate with municipalities on reviewing development proposals within GMAs.

5. Annexations and development approvals within GMAs should accomplish the densities, intensities and street patterns contained in the municipality’s comprehensive plan.
Principle 4. Subarea Planning

Larimer County promotes a mix of uses where adopted subarea plans and Community Influence Areas allow based on the availability and provision of a full range of services.

1. Encourage subarea planning for unincorporated communities to tailor the Framework Map and Categories, policies, zoning, and initiatives to location-specific needs. As identified in the Framework Map, Rural Centers indicate areas where unincorporated communities may want to create Subarea Plans in the future.

2. Establish Community Influence Areas (CIAs) adjacent to municipalities outside of GMAs as well as other identified areas, such as Rural Centers (see Framework Map) to ensure that all affected interests are considered in the planning process.

3. Approve residential upzoning requests only in GMAs, Community Influence Areas, and areas specifically designated for urban development in subarea plans.

4. Plan for smaller-lot conservation developments served by sewer and water utilities within Municipal Planning Boundaries that have not been formally approved as a GMA (i.e., Rural/Urban Interface in the Framework Map).

Principle 5. Rural Development

Larimer County balances physical growth and preservation community character through flexible and predictable land use strategies, processes, and development standards in unincorporated areas.

1. Support community separators with affected municipalities and unincorporated communities to preserve open space, natural resources, and community identity.

2. Create compatibility criteria to ensure that new development proposals adequately address mitigation of land use impacts, conflicting community values, natural resource and agricultural protection, and economic growth.

3. Outside of GMAs, encourage clustered residential uses through the application of Conservation Developments or Rural Land Use Plans as a preferred alternative to 10 to 35 acre development.

4. Create Land Use Code and development standards that are responsive to and balance the unique needs and economic opportunities of rural areas.

5. Support clustered, locally-serving non-residential and civic development in Rural Centers to preserve a sense of place and serve the long-term health, live/work balance, and daily needs of the unincorporated community in the Rural Center Framework Category.

6. Support a mix of agriculturally supportive uses and clustered residential development that act as a buffer between existing and planned urban-level development and large-scale agricultural uses, as represented by the Rural Framework Category.

7. Preserve agriculture and ranching to support a rural economy and where applicable community separation, as represented in the Agriculture & Ranching Framework Category.

8. Promote small, concentrated commercial or industrial development where utilities are available and where it supports agricultural and recreational uses, as represented by the Retail Service Framework Category.

9. Support industrial uses in strategic locations outside of GMAs only when it can be demonstrated that it minimizes land use and environmental health conflicts with residential areas and/or sensitive and unique natural areas, as represented by the Industrial Framework Category.
10. Conserve natural resources and, where appropriate, support recreational uses within public lands or privately-owned conserved lands as represented by the Natural Resource Framework Category. If a publicly-owned parcel is sold for private use, the Framework Category will default to Mountains & Foothills.
The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- **Special Area and Subarea Plans listed under Community**

**Principle 1. Regional Economic Development**

Larimer County fosters a diverse regional economy that adapts to changing needs of the workforce and supports business development and expansion.

1. Collaborate with municipalities, economic development and business groups, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions on a coordinated regional approach to economic development.

2. Develop incentives, such as infrastructure improvements, expedited development review processes or fee reductions, for desired non-residential development in the Retail and Industrial Framework Map locations.
3. Support investments in workforce development, training, technology, and education for the evolving needs of a diverse workforce and changing economy.
4. Encourage small-business development and entrepreneurship in non-residential locations.
5. Consider opportunities for non-residential development that is appropriate for its type, location, and infrastructure.
6. Support the redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial sites in both urban and rural areas.
7. Support provision of basic and enhanced services needed to foster local employment opportunities.
8. Leverage the Northern Colorado Regional Airport to increase economic activity within the region.
9. Continue efforts to establish land use compatibility within the Airport’s Influence Area.

**Principle 2. Agriculture and Innovation**

Larimer County promotes innovation and technology in agriculture that provides a regional and local economic benefit and supports the long-term viability of the industry.

1. Maintain existing agricultural operations and product development by allowing for value-added business ventures to locate in proximity to Agricultural & Ranching activities or near resource areas.
2. Be responsive and adaptable to new forms of agriculture and small-scale farming.
3. Support secondary-income options on agricultural land through the continued support of home and accessory rural occupations.
HEALTH & SOCIAL

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Transportation Master Plan
- Hazard Mitigation Plan

Principle 1: Community Connectivity

Larimer County creates integrated connectivity that encourages multi-modal transportation, physical activity, and social cohesion. (also see Transportation Principle 1)

1. Lead regional planning efforts and collaborate with state and local agencies to connect diverse mobility options (bus, bike, carpooling, and walking).
2. Use public and private partnerships to expand opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and transit infrastructure to reduce car dependency.
3. Advocate for affordable, safe, and easy-to-use transit options for everyone with emphasis on seniors, youth, people with mobility impairments, and other transit-reliant individuals.

Figure 3. Health & Social Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans
4. Complete accessible non-motorized transportation connections between adjacent land uses to assure recreational and active commuting opportunities.

5. Designate and create community gathering spaces in new and existing areas of rural residential, urban/rural interface, and rural centers for neighbors to meet, congregate, and recreate. (see the Framework Map)

6. Encourage a broad distribution and integration of open spaces and natural areas for recreation and physical and mental health opportunities.

**Principle 2: Environmental Public Health**

Larimer County works to improve environmental quality through reducing environmental public health impacts. (also see W&NR Principles)

1. Incorporate community health data and environmental considerations in the development and implementation of future plans and regulatory changes.

2. Reduce motor vehicle emissions and trips, through strategies such as telecommuting and carpooling.

3. Reduce exposure to pollutants and promptly mitigate spills and releases of toxic chemicals.

4. Consider dark sky strategies in specific areas to minimize light pollution.

5. Implement policies and legislation that improve air, water, and noise standards on a regional and statewide level.

6. Improve efforts to mitigate environmental and public health impacts associated with climate change.

7. Seek to reduce stationary and mobile source emissions of ozone and other harmful particulate emission levels remain within the state and federal air quality standards. Special emphasis will be placed on County and regional efforts to reduce those pollutants which cause adverse health effects, impair visibility and contribute to climate change.

**Principle 3: Health Access**

Larimer County supports improvement of physical, behavioral, and mental health for all members of the community.

1. Promote appropriate urban land uses within GMAs that enable communities to provide efficient need-based distribution of quality social services and health care facilities. (also see Community Principles 4 and 5)

2. Encourage development designs and infrastructure that enable residents to live in their communities as they age and promote diversity to minimize barriers to entry for all people regardless of age, income, sex, ability, or race/ethnicity.

3. Preserve and encourage new rural agriculture and farmland as a source of healthy, locally grown food and connect local food markets to local agriculture. (also see Economy Principle 2 and W&NR Principle 2)

4. Embrace new service delivery technologies to increase access to health care services in rural and limited transportation areas in an effort to support aging in place, those who have limited transportation options, and those with physical impairments and limited mobility, such as tele-health, home visits, virtual conferencing, grocery delivery, and e-commerce solutions.
**Principle 1. Housing Needs**

Larimer County supports the development of attainable housing types and opportunities to meet the needs of its residents.

1. Engage in outreach and education measures to obtain a greater understanding of the housing needs of unincorporated residents.
2. Coordinate and continue to participate with other governmental entities, housing agencies, non-profits, and institutions to provide attainable housing.
3. Develop programs that preserve current attainable housing stocks by supporting strategies for ownership options that will minimize displacement of residents living in communities threatened by re-development.
4. Encourage development of attainable housing within and adjacent to Growth Management Areas.

*Figure 4. Housing Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans*
5. Support the expansion of opportunities for attainable housing in other locations where there is adequate or planned public infrastructure.

**Principle 2. Housing Diversity**

Larimer County promotes a diversity of housing types necessary to meet the need for identified housing opportunities.

1. Create flexibility and ensure that the Land Use Code provides opportunities for a diversity of housing options including co-housing, accessible dwelling units, tiny houses, manufactured homes, mixed housing and other innovative housing options within Growth Management Areas or other areas where adequate infrastructure is available or is planned.

2. Support the housing needs of multi-generational families and non-traditional households.

3. Develop and/or revise policies for accessory dwellings to increase economic opportunities for current residents.

**Principle 3. Land Division and Residential Planning**

Larimer County coordinates planning processes and land division patterns to attain efficient and responsible growth.

1. Cluster residential subdivisions in ways that maximize contiguity and connectivity.

2. Encourage residential and mixed-use development in Rural Centers or where infrastructure is available or can be reasonably obtained, as shown on the Framework Map.

3. Create standards to ensure compatibility between land uses to address potential conflicts (i.e. buffering).

4. Support access to open and natural spaces in and around all types of residential developments.
The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Transportation Master Plan
- Facilities Master Plan
- Solid Waste Infrastructure Master Plan
- Hazard Mitigation Plan

**Principle 1. Transportation Network**

Larimer County provides a safe, integrated transportation network that considers all modes.

1. Identify and develop funding options for improvements and maintenance to the County’s transportation infrastructure.
2. Construct and maintain planned and funded infrastructure per the Transportation Master Plan.
3. Encourage alternative and multiple modes of transportation through infrastructure improvements and supporting programs and policies.

*Figure 5. Infrastructure Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans*
4. Plan for technological innovation, changing travel preferences, and future transportation and mobility needs.
5. Collaborate with state, regional, and local entities to develop a more efficient, connected and multi-modal transportation network.
6. Continue to require new development to make or pay for its equitable share of necessary improvements to existing transportation facilities.

**Principle 2. Utility and Communication Services**
Larimer County facilitates the provision of utility and communication services keep pace with demand and meet the needs of residents.

1. Collaborate with and promote coordination among utility providers to provide consistent, reliable, and affordable services.
2. Establish consistent service standards with water/sewer districts.
3. Require the future provision of reliable and affordable high speed internet and broadband in new developments and connect to such services where available.
4. Support the expansion of and accessibility to high-speed internet and broadband in rural areas.
5. Promote the resiliency of critical infrastructure systems such as water and energy delivery and wastewater management.

**Principle 3. Adequate Public Facilities and Services**
Larimer County requires the provision of adequate public and/or private facilities and services concurrent with new development.

1. Require new development to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure.
2. Allow private, on-site, water and sanitary sewer facilities only where they do not conflict with current or planned expansions of public or community systems.
3. Encourage the creation of multi-purpose districts for funding construction and long-term maintenance of roads and other infrastructure.
4. Collaborate with adjacent municipalities and unincorporated communities to develop and implement basin-wide stormwater management plans.
5. Upgrade stormwater facilities where necessary for existing developments, and provide stormwater management services within developed areas.

**Principle 4. Energy Provision**
Larimer County collaborates on oil and gas, renewable energy, and gravel extraction to reduce land use conflicts, protect environmental quality and public health, and maintain reliable conventional and alternative energy sources.

1. Encourage opportunities for wind, solar, battery, and future renewable energy sources.
2. Support municipal and private utilities plans that will provide customers with the choice to utilize clean energy.
3. Encourage resource and energy efficient building that includes site design features such as solar orientation, and water and energy conservation.
4. Implement mitigation measures to minimize land use conflicts associated with energy development.

5. Assure responsible access to natural resources and mineral rights.

6. Recognize the impacts of development of mineral and natural resources on the community.

7. Collaborate with the state and adjacent counties to increase environmental protections and awareness aimed at improved emission, disposal, and location standards.

**Principle 5: Solid Waste Management**

Implement options for the continued efficient, economical, and environmentally responsible handling of waste generated in the Larimer County Wasteshed.

1. Establish a comprehensive, regional solid waste materials management system that is implemented in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable manner.

2. Implement waste management programs and facilities that reflect the needs and desires of users.

3. Develop a set of waste diversion/reduction goals that are adopted by and implemented with all jurisdictions in the Wasteshed.

4. Consistently inform and educate the public about waste management programs and practices throughout the Wasteshed.
WATERSHEDS & NATURAL RESOURCES

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Open Lands Master Plan
- Reservoir Parks Master Plan

Principle 1. Natural Resources, Wildlife Habitat, and Ecosystems

Larimer County supports and encourages the conservation, stewardship and resiliency of our natural resources, wildlife habitat and ecosystems.

1. Maintain strategic separation between municipalities and/or Rural Centers as identified in the Framework Map, consistent with adopted County plans. Useful planning tools and incentives include conserved lands, trail corridors, and transfer of development units.

2. Collaborate across jurisdictions and with local, state, and federal land managers to promote resiliency and hazard planning and management.

Figure 6 Watersheds & Natural Resources Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans
3. Proactively encourage and educate landowners to implement strategies to minimize wildfire and flooding hazards potentially affecting life and property of neighboring and downstream properties.

4. All new development shall be located to minimize impacts to unique, distinctive, and/or sensitive natural and cultural features. Encourage well-designed conservation developments, incentives for conservation of significant lands, and the protection of key natural lands.

5. Prioritize land conservation and acquisition that meets multiple natural resource protection and outdoor recreation goals in adopted plans.

6. Establish standards for buffers between developments and wetlands, river corridors, wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and native plant communities.

7. Minimize fragmentation of native habitats and movement corridors to protect ecosystems and native species from development and infrastructure projects.

8. Encourage management practices that maintain, restore, and enhance natural ecologic function of forests, shrublands, prairies and river corridors.

9. Promote sustainable grazing and best management practices to control invasive non-native plants.

**Principle 2. Agricultural Lands Conservation and Stewardship**

Larimer County promotes conservation of healthy, viable agricultural land and water resources by undertaking collaborative strategies to minimize the loss of productive land and water and continuing to pursue water sharing between agriculture and domestic utilities.

1. Effectively sustain ranchlands and farmlands in prime agricultural areas through a combination of land use planning tools that meet agricultural land conservation goals in adopted plans.

2. Collaborate with stakeholders and other affected interests to sustain, promote, revitalize, and grow the agricultural community.

3. Investigate options for conserving associated water resources needed for sustainable agricultural uses.

4. Educate the public about the benefits and importance of agriculture and the Right to Farm policy in Larimer County and support and encourage young farming families through education and incentives.

5. Encourage private/public partnerships to incorporate best management practices for healthier agricultural lands and water.

**Principle 3. Watershed Protection and Enhancement**

Larimer County conserves wetlands and riparian areas to maintain water quality, wildlife habitat and corridors, flood protection, and other critical environmental functions.

1. Promote land use and management practices that enhance watersheds including protection of river corridor ecosystems.

2. Mitigate potential flood damage through flood control projects that maintain ecologic and geologic function of streams.

3. Collaborate with water managers to develop action plans to mitigate flood impacts during flood events.
4. Collaborate with federal, state, and municipal partners to secure and enhance in-stream flows that support important ecological functions, recreation amenities, and enhance Larimer County quality of life.

5. Protect and provide adequate water resources for present and future uses in the County, explore options in partnership with other affected interests. Evaluate impacts of proposed transfers of existing water resources out of the County on present and future land uses and natural resources, including agriculture.

6. Encourage management practices that maintain, restore, and enhance natural ecologic and geologic function of watersheds.

**Principle 4. Water Conservation and Quality**

Larimer County strives for high water quality and responsible management of limited water resources.

1. Support water conservation and efficiency measures for responsible use of limited water resources.

2. Facilitate collaboration regarding water storage and supply and water sharing with agriculture and instream flows.

3. Collaborate with regional partners and municipalities on water conservation issues.

4. Promote efforts to improve the water quality of runoff, including promotion of pervious surfaces that allow on-site infiltration of stormwater.

5. Work with the building sector to encourage design that incorporates grey water and on-site water reuse where appropriate.

6. Continue to strengthen the County’s role in protecting stormwater quality.

**Principle 5. Terrain and Natural Hazards**

Larimer County recognizes the challenges and natural hazard risks of our terrain and the necessity of compatible development practices to protect ecosystem values.

1. Promote sustainable best management practices in hazard areas (flood, wildfire, geologic, etc.) that protect ecosystem values while minimizing catastrophic damage to life and property.

2. Evaluate, strengthen, and comply with regulations in floodways, floodplains, wildfire and geologic hazard areas.