

## LOCAL NEWS

# Longmont eyes land annex for potential build near Roger's Grove



Nadine Lester, left, and Shari Malloy, view birds while standing in Roger's Grove at the edge of the proposed Rivertown Annexation area on Thursday. Shari Malloy and Nadine Lester spoke against The proposed Rivertown Annexation at a recent Longmont City Council meeting. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer)

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A developer in Longmont hopes to turn a former concrete batch plant east of Roger's Grove into a mixed use development of housing and office space, but first the land will need to be annexed into city jurisdiction.

The plan, while in its earliest stages, has already elicited some response from people who want to assure that the St. Vrain Creek and grove will be protected if the idea comes to fruition.

David Waldner, one of three owners with Rivertown LLC, said the vision is to build duplexes, apartments and 20,000 to 30,000-square-feet of commercial space.

The roughly 20 acres proposed for the project, west of Sunset Street and north of Boston Avenue, is part of unincorporated Boulder County. The first step in the process is getting city council approval to annex the land into Longmont. Waldner said a concept plan exists and if the annexation is passed, project leaders would spend the next roughly 18 months creating a formal development plan to submit to the city for approval.

Longmont City Council members on Tuesday night introduced a first reading of the annexation. They voted 4 to 1 to give it preliminary approval, with Longmont Mayor Joan Peck voting in opposition. The annexation ordinance now advances to a second reading and a public hearing during the next virtual meeting at 7 p.m. Jan. 11.

Annexing the property allows Longmont greater control in managing land use development, according to council communications, which provided background on the issues in advance of the meeting. The communication said the project "falls into alignment" with a work plan objective to "enhance economic vitality along the St. Vrain corridor in an environmentally sustainable and sensitive manner."

"This is a very long-term and far-reaching project that is going to be, I think, a real enhancement to the city of Longmont," Waldner said.

## Respect for Rogers Grove

Rivertown LLC operates out of an office space at 21 S. Sunset St., where the proposed redevelopment could occur. Rivertown is part of a development group called Confluence Builders, which is based in Golden.

During the meeting Tuesday, four people called in to share their thoughts on the annexation and project concept. One of them was Longmont resident Shari Malloy.

“There is nothing in the Rivertown proposal that suggests any respect for Rogers Grove, Fairgrounds lake or St. Vrain Creek-which shares 50% of Rivertown’s border,” Malloy said during Tuesday’s public comment. “Development in this corridor needs to be green built, LEAD certified with an abundance of native vegetation. Any development in this exception corridor should be exceptionally designed.”

In a phone interview Thursday, Malloy said she walks in Roger’s Grove at 220 Hover St. at least once a week. The grove is 50 acres of land near the St. Vrain Greenway. Here, people can find trails, an outdoor amphitheater and gardens.

“It’s a jewel right in the middle of the city,” Malloy said. “I love Roger’s Grove.”

Most of the construction of the nature area, built from 1995 to 1998, was funded through a trust created by [Roger Jones](#), the namesake of the grove.

“This Rivertown annexation is really the antithesis of someone who generously wanted to share land with all of Longmont, honor, respect and protect our natural environment,” Malloy said Thursday, “versus exploiting and overburdening it.”

Malloy said, she’s not opposed to the idea of the development, but wants to see some revisions to the concept plan, including scaling back the space that would be designated for housing.

“We are not against development,” Malloy said. “We just want it done right”

## A bid for compatibility

Longmont resident Jamie Simo, who lives on Venice Street, also spoke during the council meeting Tuesday. While said she doesn’t have an issue bringing the property into Longmont, she said there should be conditions to the annexation.

"I ask that any development of this property be thoroughly vetted for its adherence to the municipal code and that Longmont's new environmental planner be heavily involved in this and any other potential future development adjacent to our natural areas to ensure they are truly compatible with the surrounding habitat," Simo said.

Waldner described the site of the proposed development as a "bone yard of decommissioned batch plants." It formerly housed Golden Concrete and then was purchase by Aggregate Industries roughly 15 years ago. Rivertown LLC bought the property in 2013, after Waldner said the property had been sitting vacant for roughly five years.

Waldner said he doesn't believe the project will infringe on the natural area.

"I think it's going to enhance the natural area," Waldner said.

Waldner said he sees the possibility for the proposed development to address a need in Longmont.

"Longmont has specifically stated and identified a need for housing," Waldner said.

"There is a housing shortage here. What we have heard over and over again as part of the river district group that has formed along this area, made up of a bunch of employers, is that they need housing for their employees."

In an email to the Times-Call, Ava Pecherzewski, Longmont principal planner, emphasized that the plan is in its earliest stages. If the annex is approved, a formal development plan would need to be submitted.

"At that time, we will do an in-depth analysis of potential environmental impacts, but at this time, we do not investigate those matters as this is not a development proposal but an annexation request," Pecherzewski wrote.

Waldner said there is not yet an estimated cost on building the development. Looking ahead, if all the approvals are in place, Waldner said he would like to see construction begin in 2023 or 2024.



## Kelsey Hammon | General assignment reporter

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