

Flood Study/ River Renaissance

A Concept Paper By The Campaign For the St. Vrain

December 2013



**Balancing Public Safety, the Environment, and
the Economy – to Rebuild Better than Before**

Our mission is to promote the transformation of the St. Vrain River Corridor into becoming a celebrated and valued asset to the Longmont community. Great cities have great rivers! The St. Vrain River holds the promise to be resurrected as the original birthplace, heart, and soul of the town. It can lead the way to rebuilding Longmont as a world-class, information age city.

A Community Service Concept Paper
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Note; This document includes summary pages and recommendations only, for complete “white paper” contents, contact the Campaign St. Vrain

St. Vrain – RIVER RENAISSANCE

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White Paper Executive Summary

This document was prepared as a community service for the purpose of assisting with flood recovery and reconstruction efforts along the St. Vrain River Corridor in Boulder County. It focuses particularly upon the Longmont and Lyons municipal areas. Public and private economic impacts, combined, may total in excess of \$250 million dollars. The physical, cultural, and economic impacts will be felt widespread for decades. One year after Hurricane Sandy, FEMA to date has distributed less than 20% of anticipated funding. If this reflects what Colorado can expect, the impact on cash flows and budgets, both public and private, will create a “second wave” of tragedy in the months to come.

In order to promote a more positive future, it is important to engage the public in visioning and participating in recovery. Every opportunity for economic rebound and growth that synergistically assists with funding this effort must be pursued. Federal and state funds that are received should be leveraged to maximum benefit by reflecting global trends in the digital/information age. Shifts toward an entrepreneurial economy, and demographics driven by the millennial generation should be inculcated in recovery efforts.

The challenge is enormous, complex, and expensive. Leveraging the buy-in and wisdom of the crowd, by engaging in community outreach is critical. Short term thinking does not address the scope and nature of these problems. What is required is “big picture”, long-term solutions, that “connect the dots” in new creative ways. A few legislative, community action, land use, funding, and economic development solutions are proposed below and herein.

ENGAGE AND LEARN: *The flood will inevitably re-occur- commit to it not being catastrophic.*

- Learn from the past: Historic river routes & maps, and local residents
- Learn from other flooded communities, such as Denver, Pueblo, Cedar Rapids
- Engage the community and non-profits, such as the Greenway Foundation

STRATEGIC PLANNING: *We must have a long term, VISIONARY master plan to fulfill opportunities*

- Funding should be viewed as investments, to maximize beneficial return
- Meet financial shortfalls through promoting local area economic development
- Incentivize private and PPP reinvestment in river corridor reconstruction

MANAGE THE MESSAGE: *Be pro-active about our state tourism “BRAND”*

- Framing the message about the flood in a positive light
- Capitalize on post-flood tourism interest and

Leverage the flood to promote state wide eco-tourism

LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL - RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC MASTER PLANNING

As a condition, and in consideration, for providing state funding for restoration efforts through municipal areas, require that these cities commit to expediently developing long range Strategic Master Plans for their river corridors. These plans should fully investigate land use opportunities and economic strategies towards raising local revenues for flood restoration work and long-term flood mitigation. Such plans shall commit to extensive public engagement, and contain provisions for sustainability regulations in general compliance with industry standards as promoted by the “Congress of New Urbanism”, or equivalent.

Strategic Master Planning shall include current regulatory and policy review, at a minimum:

Review and perform a Codes Audit

Review of Smart Growth Policies

Review of Infill Strategies

Review of Green Infrastructure Practices

For an example of such flood restoration program policies, see the attached “Embracing the River, Smart Growth Strategies for Assisting in Cedar Rapids’ Recovery”.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Engage the public in Strategic Master Planning (as above)

Utilize information-age technology and platforms, such as “Code For America” to capture and engage the community, and offer greater participation in the process

Promote a “River Renewal” (or =) awards process for rewarding projects, initiatives, people, the arts, organizations, and community service projects in the ongoing recovery efforts in years to come

REGULATORY IMPROVEMENTS

Loosen regulatory requirements and remove impediments to public and private river corridor land use developments that provide beneficial reconstruction impacts, economic funding resources, and /or cultural amenities as long as such projects do not increase the risk of future flood impacts

RIVER, FLOODWAY AND DITCH RESTORATION

Ensure that inevitable future flooding is not destructive in urban areas. To do so, geologically historic river corridors and floodway paths upon low-lying terrain should be re-established wherever possible as defined floodways.

As a condition, and in consideration of, providing state funding for river restoration and irrigation ditch repairs, require that geologically historic, low-lying river paths concurrently be restored.

PHILANTHROPIC OUTREACH

Provide funding for the creation of a Non Profit specific to current statewide River Restoration efforts and/or

Engage existing NGO’s, such as the Greenway Foundation for assistance with the Master Planning efforts

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC/ PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Provide legislation for funding and capitalizing private and PPP development projects that promote river reconstruction efforts on the private side.

Reweight Private Activity Bond (PAB) project regulations to favor river reconstruction projects

INNOVATION DISTRICTS

Provide seed funding for cities to promote “Innovation Districts” that nurture entrepreneurial Start-Up businesses, and co-working spaces

TOURISM

Coordinate with the state tourism industry and state “Branding” campaign to pro-actively “message” our floor recovery and “resilience” efforts

Build a “RIVER RENAISSANCE CENTER” to capture flood-interested tourism traveling through the affected areas en route to RMNP. Offer dioramas of the flood event, videos, and other educational materials. Provide eco-certificates for participants in educational programs and offer discounts on state-wide water related activities. Provide onsite programs for learning kayaking, sailing, canoeing, and other such river, water, and other relevant tourism attractions. Educate and inform about the role of rivers and waterways on the development of the state and regional history. Promote and market related businesses and activity centers elsewhere in the state.

AMEND EXISTING LEGISLATION:

THE “REGIONAL TOURISM ACT”/ RTA:

Amend the RTA to target flood-damaged areas to give additional weighting to recovery-related projects

Extend the number of application grants and time frame for flood recovery projects

Create a specific goal to fund at least one River Reconstruction- TOURISM- related project that captures post-flood related tourism interest, and promotes a positive message about the flood recovery efforts. Give weight to a project located in flood impacted areas.

GO CO/ GO COLORADO PROJECT FUNDING

Amend the selection process for GOCO project funding to give greater weight to river restoration related projects

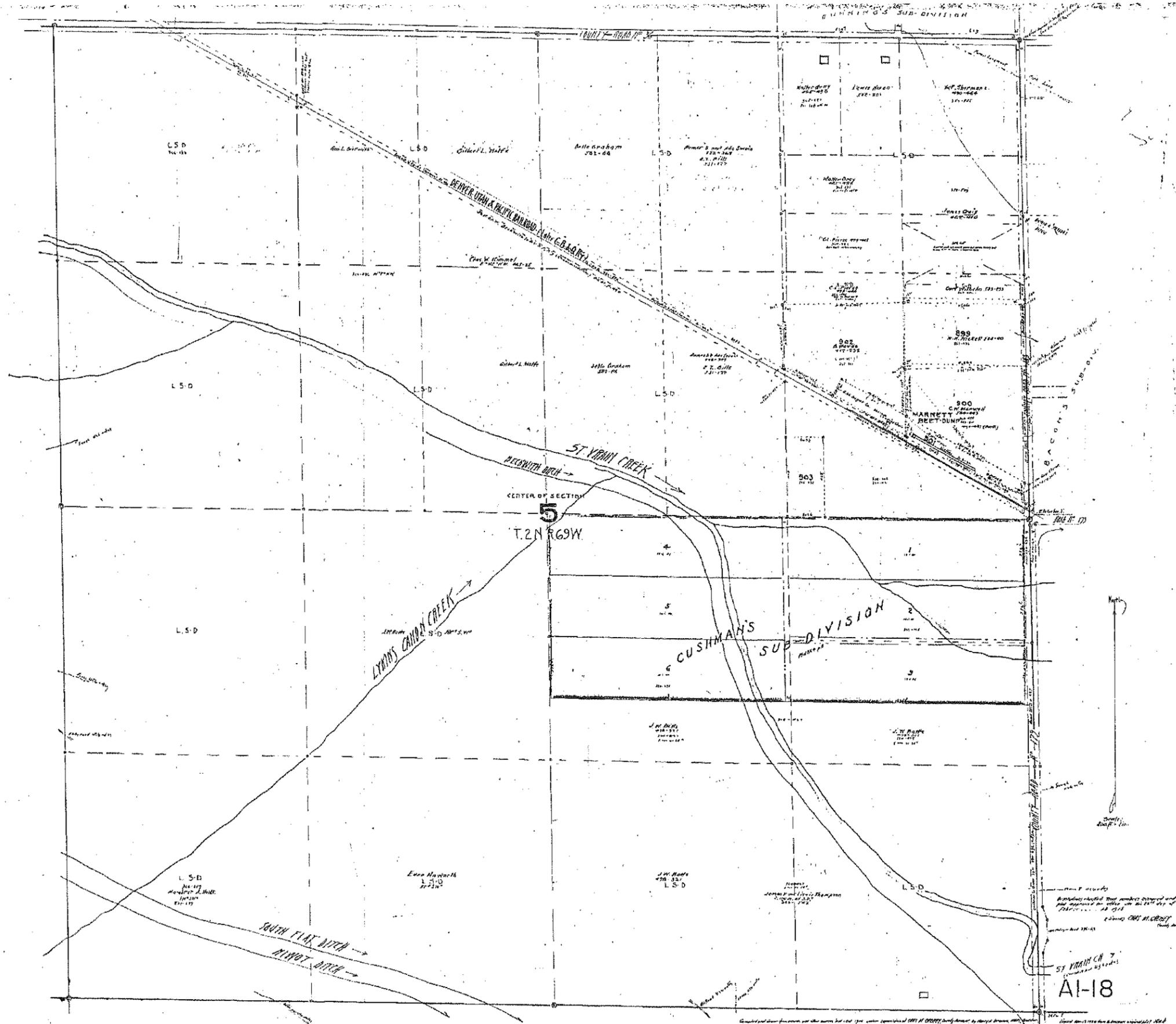
TAX INCENTIVES

Amend the tax code to give favorable treatment to private property owners who co-operate in the transfer of property necessary for flood mitigation and flood channelization efforts

CAMPAIGN ST. VRAIN: MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to promote the transformation of the St. Vrain River Corridor into becoming a celebrated and valued asset to the Longmont community. Great cities have great rivers! The St. Vrain corridor can become a vibrant, flourishing, “walkable” community neighborhood. It holds the promise to be resurrected as the original birthplace, heart, and soul of the city. Re-envisioning the River Corridor can create a cultural and economic engine that drives the success of downtown, the Twin Mall, and FasTracks.

We believe in light of the recent flood crisis, it is now more important than ever to take this moment in time to capitalize on the \$150+ million dollar reinvestment to help make Longmont a competitive, world-class, information age city.



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