
[External] Application for City Council Member – Ward 2 [#20]

From Wufoo <no-reply@wufoo.com>

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To City Clerk <City_Clerk@longmontcolorado.gov>

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Email *	mpopkin88@gmail.com
Daytime Phone *	(301) 461-3210
Evening Phone *	(301) 461-3210
How long have you been a resident in Longmont? *	3.5 years
Current occupation: *	Manager, US Cities & Communities – Rocky Mountain Institute (non-profit)
Why are you interested in serving as a City Council Member? *	Please see the attached Letter of Interest and Application Questions document for this response.
Briefly explain what you believe are the two most important issues facing City Council and how do you believe those issues should be addressed? *	Please see the attached Letter of Interest and Application Questions document for this response.
Letter of Interest *	<input type="checkbox"/> popkin_matthew_letter_of_interest_and_application.pdf 242.64 KB • PDF
Resume (Optional)	<input type="checkbox"/> popkin_matthew_city_of_longmont_resume_012025.pdf 320.28 KB • PDF
Signature *	Matthew Popkin
Date *	Tuesday, January 7, 2025

Application for City Council – Matthew Popkin

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Letter of Interest – January 6, 2025

Dear Mayor Peck and Councilmembers Crist, Hidalgo-Fahring, McCoy, Rodriguez, and Yarbrough,

Although I'm newer to the community, I should be familiar to this Council. Most of you know me from my service to the community by helping advance Envision Longmont on the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z). Others may be familiar with the technical assistance I've provided to cities across the country on sustainable development and clean energy projects. If appointed to City Council to serve Ward 2, I would bring timely and relevant experience from P&Z, deep technical knowledge on challenges Longmont is actively navigating, and a collaborative approach to solving problems.

What my application and resume won't tell you is that I agree with most of City's already-established goals. But how and when we implement existing goals and plans matters - and that's what I care about most and where I believe I can be of greatest service to the community. I believe we, as a community, must be proactive and intentional to effectively implement these goals in ways that make sense for Longmont.

I'm encouraged that Longmont is preparing for transformative plans along the St. Vrain River corridor and around the Sugar Mill in the next decade. This will be crucial to addressing the city's housing needs, supporting existing and future businesses, cleaning up areas that have attracted crime and vandalism, and responsibly managing Longmont's finite financial and environmental resources. I've seen communities do this innovatively while still maintaining their character (and others that have not), and I hope to bring a fresh set of eyes to make progress together.

Lastly, on a personal note, Longmont is the first place I've truly felt at home since leaving the place I grew up in over 15 years ago. Beyond my role on P&Z, I'm a husband, a proud father of a rescue dog and four chickens, a musician, a trail runner, and a neighbor. My wife and I got married at Sandstone Ranch, and we set up roots here because Longmont was affordable for us and offered a unique quality of life. We can and must make Longmont affordable for more people and further enhance the quality of life for all current and future residents.

The goals and issues I discuss throughout my application - sustainably managing growth, preparing for a change climate, and strengthening community trust - are not easy to achieve. But should you appoint me, I assure you that I'm up for the challenge. My passion for helping communities implement their goals defines my entire professional career. I have helped cities far smaller than Longmont advance their goals and secure over \$20 million in federal and state funding for community projects. I have also helped cities far larger than Longmont invest over \$450 million in a cleaner, more sustainable future.

Despite this unusual appointment process, I aim to earn your trust and the trust of Ward 2 for the remainder of this term. I welcome any and all questions you have, and thank you for your consideration.



Matthew Popkin

Why are you interested in serving as a City Council Member?

This is an unusual moment for Longmont. Council does not need someone to fill a vacancy just to grandstand on political issues. Council cannot afford to have someone who needs many months to get up to speed on the process and goals. What Council needs, and Longmont deserves, is someone who can roll up their sleeves on day one with an understanding of Longmont's most pressing challenges today.

Hitting the Ground Running on Day One

I believe I can most effectively serve Ward 2 because of my professional experience advising cities and counties across America, volunteer service to the community, and passion for Longmont's future.

I've directly helped cities as small as [Weirton, WV](#), [Hopewell, VA](#), and [Green Bay, WI](#) improve redevelopment former steel mills, expand trail networks, and revitalize their river corridors. Additionally, I've helped cities as large as [Chicago](#) and [San Antonio](#) deploy innovative, cost-effective clean energy projects that meaningfully reduce pollution and address their climate goals. In Colorado specifically, I directly advised [Boulder County](#) on securing \$4.9 million to expand access to EV charging at multi-family housing, and I co-created an innovative fire and rescue program using drones with [Glenwood Springs, CO](#).

Since 2022, I have also served Longmont in two ways. First, I have been a regular member of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z). This includes successfully adding conditions on multiple proposals in the past 2 years that this Council has approved to ensure projects are as aligned as possible with Longmont's existing multi-modal, accessibility, and sustainability goals. Through my service on P&Z, I've also come to better understand many neighborhoods within Ward 2 (and reviewed hundreds of public comments on specific proposals). Secondly, I also serve on Longmont's Brownfields Advisory Committee, collaborating with the City's development staff and consultants, redevelopment and housing advocates, and property owners to inform environmental planning and site cleanup priorities.

Because of my professional experience to municipalities and volunteer service to Longmont already, I can hit the ground running to:

- Sustainably manage our growth to reduce traffic increases while also filling housing gaps;
- Create a transportation system that's safe, walkable, convenient, and accessible;
- Enhance the safety and resilience of our community for all;
- Maintain an affordable cost of living for current and future residents alike; and,
- Ensure that the community trusts me and the city to do all of the above (and more) while responsibly using taxpayer dollars.

Ultimately, I want Longmont to achieve its full potential as being both affordable and desirable - a community that is safe, sustainable, innovative, and prosperous for current and future residents alike. This is personal for me too, so if there is someone else who can better deliver on these goals, I sincerely hope you will pick them instead.

Beyond my experience and service, I'm particularly passionate about two specific goals:

1. To help Longmont achieve its full potential by reactivating key areas in Ward 2; and
2. To help Longmont be more sustainable and prepared for a changing climate.

1. Achieving Longmont's Full Potential by Reactivating Key Areas in Ward 2

The Great Western Sugar Mill - this relic of Longmont's industrial past - will reach its 50th year of being closed in 2026. Many see this as a site that is neglected, left to decay, and a hub of hazards. However, having worked with communities across America with legacy industrial sites and having toured the Sugar Mill personally, I see an opportunity to reinvent the eastern gateway of Longmont and create one of the most unique places on the Front Range.

While I'm not the first to contemplate an ambitious future for the Sugar Mill, I do believe reactivating the Sugar Mill can significantly alleviate growth-related pressures. We have a housing challenge - demand for housing exceeds supply. We have a cost-of-living challenge - as demand increases without additional supply, existing housing becomes less affordable. And as infrastructure expands, taxpayers will pay more and more to maintain and repair our transportation, water, sewer, and utility systems. We also have a development challenge - because Longmont can't expand to build new housing, we will soon face the same issues Boulder has been facing. Without other options, developers will try to pack as many units as possible into remaining undeveloped land. This means more stress on existing neighborhoods, more traffic on existing roads, and more frustration with each new proposed development. All this points to a crisis in how we are (or aren't) managing our growth.

But there are real solutions to this - and the 150+ acres across Longmont's former industrial sites like the Sugar Mill and much of lower downtown are critical to not only alleviating growth pressures, but also better using our existing infrastructure and investing in our local economy. While I've been able to help shape some of Longmont's future through my role on the Planning & Zoning Commission, that role is predominantly reactive to the development proposals that come to the commission. Ultimately, I am most interested in serving on City Council because I want to proactively work with other councilmembers, city staff, community leaders, and the private sector to reinvent these sites.

2. Ensuring Longmont is Sustainable and Prepared for a Changing Climate

Unfortunately, most cities today are grappling with the impacts of climate change and how to responsibly plan for a sustainable and resilient future. From catastrophic floods to extreme heat, Longmont knows how serious these impacts can be. I'm proud that Longmont already has ambitious goals for clean energy, open space preservation, sustainability, and resilience; now it is essential that we implement these goals cost-effectively, efficiently, equitably, and timely.

I recognize that many people - including our capable city staff and Longmont Power & Communications - bring knowledge of sustainability and resilience. However, having led technical assistance for some of the largest U.S. cities at the non-profit, Rocky Mountain Institute, I bring unique practical experience implementing innovative clean energy strategies with cities across the country. I neither have all the answers nor do I think every "best practice" applies to Longmont. That said, I aim to partner with Council, Longmont Power & Communications, and Platte River Power Authority to ensure that we are able to act swiftly, cost-effectively, and equitably to meet our goals of scaling regional energy efficiency, embracing electrification, and optimally integrating technologies like solar, batteries, heat pumps, and EV chargers into our energy grid.

Lastly, the city can learn from the private sector as it implements sustainability and resilience measures. I don't believe the city should be run like a business; the city is asked to provide inherently unprofitable services for the public good. However, I do believe there are lessons we should learn from businesses to

provide better “customer” service. NextLight is a stellar example of an affordable service that supports Longmont residents and businesses in their daily lives and jobs. Longmont’s new rideshare is another example of an affordable, direct, city-to-consumer service. These are two public services - typically privatized - that now offer affordable, accessible, and high-quality benefits to Longmont residents and businesses in the 21st Century. There are other ‘customer services’ we can do better to help Longmont residents prepare for a more sustainable future and changing climate. These include simplifying rebate applications, permitting, and financing for energy upgrades, providing clear communications to residents during extreme weather, and deploying docked bikeshares to reduce traffic and improve our air quality.

Briefly explain what you believe are the two most important issues facing City Council and how do you believe those issues should be addressed?

The two most important issues facing City Council are (1) sustainably managing growth and (2) strengthening community trust:

1) Sustainably Managing Growth

The past decade of Longmont was recovery and rebuilding - along the river corridor, along Main Street, and at Village at the Peaks. The next chapter for Longmont is to manage growth. What we build matters; how and where we build matters; and for whom we build matters. These decisions - shaped by both the public and private sector - impact the quality of life for current and future residents, impact our use of resources, impact our environment, and impact the city’s budget for providing effective services and maintaining the infrastructure we need.

So what does this mean in practice? Envision Longmont motivated me to apply for the Planning & Zoning Commission back in 2021 because it offers an impressive blueprint for a growing city. It includes zoning that focuses on infill development to increase our housing supply, support local businesses and restaurants, reduce sprawl, and decrease impacts on existing neighborhoods and our environment. I’m not looking to join City Council to redefine Longmont’s core goals; I’m looking to help implement Envision Longmont to enable Longmont to better manage growth.

If appointed, my focus would be to make tangible progress on the two Envision Longmont focus areas within Ward 2: the St. Vrain River corridor near lower downtown and the Sugar Mill/southeastern gateway to Longmont. The best way to manage growth is to shape the proposals and investments that are interested in coming to Longmont. On the Planning & Zoning Commission, I have seen first-hand and understand the frustration that residents have when a new project is proposed in the middle of their neighborhood. I have heard and read countless public comments and concerns about how change might impact pockets of our community. Unfortunately, this is all reactive to the development proposals in the pipeline already. What we can shape is where future development is prioritized and encouraged. By focusing city efforts to reinvest in lower downtown and the Sugar Mill, we can both shift private sector investment to underutilized areas and reduce development pressure on established neighborhoods.

Managing growth is also fiscally responsible. By building within our existing transportation and utility systems, we reduce the strain on the city’s long-term operating budget with fewer sidewalks to repair, fewer streetlights to connect, and fewer pipes to maintain. The most costly item in the City’s 2024 capital budget for transportation is asphalt pavement management - which will increase from \$7.6M in 2024 to over \$10M by 2028. Likewise, the most costly item in the City’s 2024 capital budget for water is

rehabilitation and improvements - which will increase from \$3.9M to \$8M by 2028. These increases account for over 53% and almost 70% of the next 5 years of capital improvement expenses for transportation and water respectively. Simply put, the more Longmont builds out, the more Longmont has to maintain. Growing, but not expanding the city, slows the increase of traffic, reduces our impact on the environment, and is fiscally responsible.

Patience, persistence, and strategic partnerships with both the public and private sector helped rebuild the St. Vrain River corridor, enhance Longmont's Main Street, and create the Village at the Peaks in the past decade. Lower downtown and the Sugar Mill should be the next chapter of Longmont's economic and community opportunity. The plans for these areas are strong starts, but making these a reality is the toughest yet most necessary mountain to climb. Reinvesting in these areas will help Longmont sustainably grow, enhance our river corridor, and reactivate these obviously neglected sites. This approach will bring much-needed housing without creating battles in our existing neighborhoods and support existing and future businesses on and around Main Street. This also does not trample on much-loved open-space and does not create more sprawl like what we're seeing in other cities nearby.

By not proactively pursuing this redevelopment effort, Longmont faces 3 major risks: 1) these sites falling into greater disrepair creating further hazards to the community; 2) developers, not the community, shaping Longmont for years to come; and 3) further stalling any hope of redevelopment all together. This necessitates a Ward 2 councilmember who not only understands these challenges but can hit the ground running. I'm under no delusion that the vacant properties in lower downtown or Sugar Mill will be transformed in the next 10 months, but by proactively working with staff to accelerate the urban renewal process and start site cleanup, what was once a distant dream can become a tangible reality for Longmont.

2) Strengthening Community Trust

Let's start with the obvious here: this appointment to council is a rare process and that in of itself requires whomever filling this seat to not only be able to jump in substantively, but also quickly build trust with the many constituencies of Ward 2. This can be done through neighborhood events, coffees with councils, local community group meetings, and ensuring that I'm present and available for residents who want to get to know me and share their concerns. Likewise, I will also make sure to become more familiar to neighborhoods in Ward 2 that I know less well to better understand the full range of resident experiences and concerns.

Beyond the trust needed in a new appointee to Council, trust will be critical to Council as a whole making progress to sustainably manage growth (as discussed above), ensure that Longmont is making fiscally responsible decisions with its \$444M total budget, and embrace innovation. When Nextlight was approved, ballot measures enabled this critical innovation and funded a \$45M bond that made Longmont a leader in Colorado. However, in 2023, we saw 3 bond measures fail for proposed investments in a new library, recreation center, and entertainment center. This should send a signal beyond cost: if the public is hesitant to approve even one of these facilities, how welcoming will residents be of other asks to embrace investments in future innovations?

Trust will also be essential to meeting the city's sustainability, renewable energy, and climate action goals. While community broadband is now widely accepted, newer technologies for energy efficiency or electrification of buildings and vehicles will necessitate direct, transparent communication to gain community buy-in. Understanding why these are beneficial is one part of the equation, but helping the

community understand how these technologies are being deployed at a system level or should be used at an individual level will be critical to effectively making progress toward the city's ambitious goals. For example, Platte River Power Authority's (PRPA) recent integrated resource plan failed to model for the previously agreed upon 100% non-carbon energy mix by 2030 goal and used normative labels for the scenarios it did model for. These decisions reduced community trust in PRPA's planning and decision-making - a key ingredient in enabling cities and utilities to innovate. In this case, rebuilding trust should start with PRPA owning these mistakes and transparently outlining how it will improve its process in the future.

Having helped small cities across the country sustainably revitalize parts of their community and some of the largest U.S. cities implement innovative, cost-effective, and ambitious renewable energy deals, I am uniquely positioned to work with and, where necessary, thoughtfully challenge PRPA and LPC to ensure we responsibly advance these goals and areas of innovation. Where appropriate, I can also offer technical and strategic insights to guide staff based on my professional experience. For broader issues like development proposals and future planning directions, I would welcome this opportunity to work closely with other councilmembers and staff to prepare clear motions, amendments, conditions (for development), and/or ballot questions that not only reflect the City's intentions but also communicate those intentions to the public. Again, these efforts would all be secondary to first building trust with Ward 2's constituencies.

Ultimately, there is a reason that community trust is one of my top issues: this is something that I would take incredibly seriously because of the unusual moment prompted by Councilmember Martin's resignation. I believe that I can be both a fresh and familiar face - given that few, if any, in Longmont should have preconceived political opinions about me - yet also not start from scratch - given my existing service to the community.

MATTHEW E. POPKIN

Longmont, CO ♦ www.linkedin.com/in/matthewpopkin

CLEAN ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) – Boulder, CO

2019 – Present

Manager / Senior Associate – US Program, Cities & Communities

- Founder and lead of RMI's "[Brightfields Accelerator](#)" – a partnership with US EPA's Technical Assistance to Brownfields program, supporting 30+ communities and their utilities with technical assistance to site clean energy on brownfields and closed landfills.
- Provide and lead technical assistance to major U.S. cities in the American Cities Climate Challenge Renewables Accelerator to advance renewable energy procurement, including [Chicago's 300 MW, \\$422M solar deal](#) to offset 70% of Chicago's municipal emissions and [San Antonio's 42-site, \\$30M solar deal](#) to reduce 13% of the City's building electricity consumption and save \$7-11M over the 25 year project.
- Leading RMI effort to help local governments leverage federal funding for climate action and resilience projects, including creating the [America's Federal Funding Opportunities and Resources for Decarbonization \(AFFORD\) tool](#) to enable municipalities to more easily navigate and understand 250+ federal incentives and helping Boulder County win a \$4.9M grant for equitable EV charging.
- Lead author of RMI reports "[The Future of Landfills is Bright](#)" and "[Community Solar+](#)", and 10+ [other publications](#) on market innovation in the energy transition.

Sustainable Strategies DC – Washington, DC

2015 – 2019

Senior Associate / Associate

- Secured over \$15.6 million for smaller counties, cities, and towns by developing federal and state funding strategies, lobbying agencies, and writing grants, including:
 - \$5.8 million for a new riverfront park and brownfields cleanup for Green Bay, WI
 - \$4 million for transportation infrastructure needs for the Borough of Monaca, PA;
 - \$2.7 million for brownfields cleanup and reuse planning for the City of Weirton, WV;
 - \$1.6 million for stormwater management and trails for the City of Hopewell, VA;
 - \$500,000 for climate resiliency and brownfields planning for the City of Norfolk, VA.
- Provided technical assistance to cities by creating "Resource Roadmaps" to advance local priorities in 12 communities, researching funding, and engaging with mayors, city managers, and staff.
- Authored U.S. EPA guidebook "[New Manufacturing on Old Brownfields](#)".

White House Council on Environmental Quality – Washington, DC

2014 – 2015

Energy & Climate Change Intern

- Researched potential market and state energy production shifts from the Clean Power Plan (111d), reviewing energy data, state trends, technical analyses, and public comments.

City of College Park – College Park, MD

2014

City Sustainability Intern

- Supported launch of the city's sustainability planning by advising the Assistant City Manager, examining strategies in 13 cities, and [presenting recommendations to city council](#).

University Sustainability Council – College Park, MD

2010 – 2012

Undergraduate Representative / Subcommittee Chair

- Led policy changes for purchasing renewable energy and increasing the efficiency of a new campus building water and energy design by 40% to implement the Climate Action Plan.
- Managed [University Sustainability Fund](#) grant committee, distributing ~\$400,000 to 22 energy, sustainability, and environmental education projects for the university.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center (CALC) – Boulder County, CO

2024 – Present

Board Member

- Advance CALC's mission of showcasing opportunities at the nexus of clean energy and agriculture to: 1) facilitate opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses to embrace agrivoltaics; 2) create a policy environment at the state and local levels that enables, prioritizes, and incentivizes agrivoltaics; and 3) educate students and communities about the benefits of agrivoltaics as a solution to our food, water, and energy challenges.

Planning and Zoning Commission – City of Longmont, CO

2023 – Present

Commissioner

- One of 7 appointed regular members advising city council and city staff on new development proposals and long-term strategic planning.
- Directly proposed and advanced 4 topics for specific commission study, including helping the commission understand the city's building electrification plans and urban renewal planning process, evaluating biking trends and current bike parking requirements for new developments, and how drive-thrus align with comprehensive plan.

Brownfields Advisory Committee – City of Longmont, CO

2023 – Present

Board Member

- Appointed to ensure community needs are considered and inform property assessment prioritization, planning, and strategic implementation for urban renewal.

Metropolitan Washington Soccer Referees Association – DC Metro Area

2014 – 2022

President / Director of Referee Development / Board of Directors

- Managed 500+ referees, \$1.1 million annual budget, 11-member board, and 5 program staff, as the youngest elected (and re-elected) president in 65-year organizational history.
- [Surpassed \\$1.1 million in 2019](#) annual gross revenue for first time in organizational history as lead negotiator for 15 contracts, including 6 new clients.
- Led advocacy in Maryland to [support female referee development](#) and launched and led the [New Referee Development Program](#) in 2016 to improve referee retention. The result of this effort not only were internal organizational policy changes, but also the appointment of two female referees to the Maryland Referee Committee for the first time in history.

University of Maryland Student Government Association – College Park, MD

2009 – 2013

Speaker of the Legislature, Senior Vice President, Director of Sustainability

- Restructured and led weekly public legislative meetings, led expansion of sustainability committee, served as on-the-record press contact, and managed 35+ members and \$1.3 million budget.
- Set new policy precedent for non-potable water reuse in 2013 by leading Prince George's County, MD and University officials to change the County's [groundwater reclamation policy](#).
- Led two "safety walks" with University and County Police, City of College Park officials, students, and campus staff, overseeing 84 lighting, 5 signage, and 7 landscaping improvements.

EDUCATION

University of Maryland, College Park

Master of Public Policy – Energy & Environmental Policy

2013 – 2014

- Capstone Thesis: ["Emissions Reduction & Sustainability Planning in College Park"](#)

Bachelor of Arts – Government and Politics

2009 – 2013

- Minor Certificates in Sustainability Studies and Middle Eastern Studies

LANGUAGES

- Spanish – Intermediate Working Proficiency
- Software – PV Watts, Microsoft Office Suite, Workday, Zoom Pro, WordPress, Sibelius