

STAFF REPORT

Annexation and Zoning



Project No.: ANX240002

Project Location: Northeast corner of Ziegler and Horsetooth Roads

Project Zoning: Proposed as LMN and MMN; currently Multi Zone (MZ) in Larimer County

Project Applicant: Cathy Mathis, TB Group, 444 Mountain Ave., Berthoud, CO 80513

Property Owner: Cottonwood Land and Farms, PO Box 229, Boulder, CO 80306

City Staff: Kim Meyer, Principal Planner

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[PROJECT SUBJECT TO REVIEW UNDER PRIOR CODE – JULY 12, 2024](#)

This is a request for a recommendation to City Council for the Annexation and Zoning of a total of 147.499 acres generally located at the northeast corner of Ziegler Road and Horsetooth Road (a portion of parcel #8728000009). The site is currently vacant. 7.581 acres are proposed to be zoned Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MMN) while the remaining portion of the annexation has been proposed to be zoned Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood (LMN). The property is intended to develop as a mixed density residential neighborhood with a small neighborhood center and include an affordable housing component.

On September 1, 2026, City Council passed a resolution accepting the annexation petition based on compliance with Colorado Revised Statutes initiating annexation proceedings. Prior to City Council consideration of the annexation and zoning ordinances, a public hearing and recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission is required.

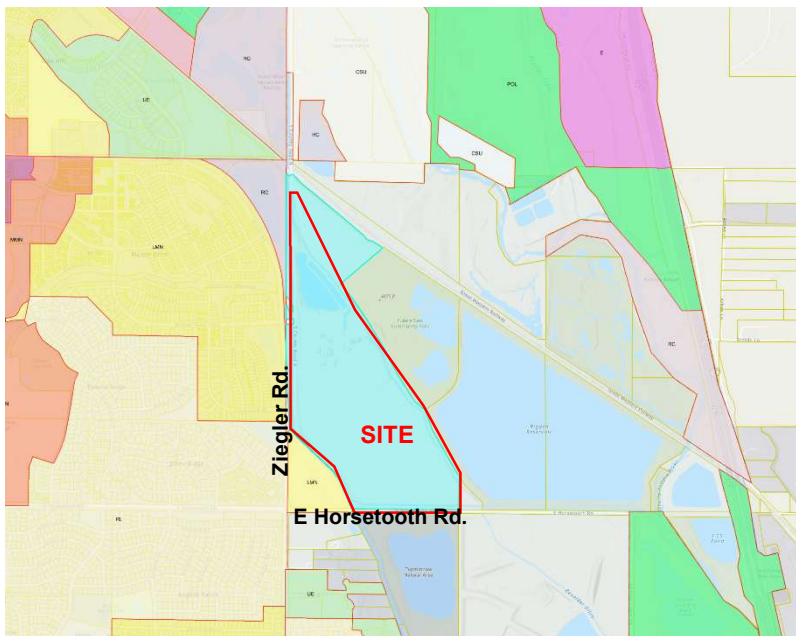


Figure 1: Project Location & Current Zoning

2. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed Strauss Lakes Annexation and Zoning, and that the property be included in the Residential Sign District and Lighting Context Area LC1.

The Commission's recommendation will be referred to City Council for a final decision.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Strauss Lakes Annexation proposes to annex 147.499 acres of land into the City of Fort Collins, requesting annexation and placement into the Low Density Mixed Use Neighborhood (LMN) and Medium Density Mixed Use Neighborhood (MMN) zone districts for the purpose of future development of the site into a residential neighborhood. The property is located within the Fort Collins GMA, and in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement with Larimer County, urban-level development should be annexed into and developed under City jurisdiction.

On September 1, 2026, the City Council passed a resolution accepting the annexation petition, finding compliance with State annexation requirements, to set dates and begin annexation proceedings. Prior to City Council consideration of the annexation and zoning ordinances, a public hearing and recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission is required.

The Strauss Lakes Annexation gains contiguity with City limits along its western edge, fronting Ziegler Road, with the Rigden Farms Annexation (ORD 93-1988), and along its southeastern edge, fronting Ziegler and East Horsetooth Roads, with the Kennedy's Strauss Lakes Development Annexation (ORD 59-2003). The annexation site has a total perimeter of approximately 13,295 feet and a contiguous perimeter with City limits of 5,384.55 feet. The contiguous perimeter is 40.5% of the overall perimeter, exceeding the one-sixth (16.66%) required by state statute.

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4. SITE BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Strauss Lakes Annexation site is 147.499 acres of a larger 208.0 acre parcel. The county lists the parcel as a combination of grazing, irrigated, and waste land under the agricultural category and has been used primarily for sand and gravel mining, the state mining permit is currently in a reclamation status. There are no structures or other development currently located on the site.

The Cache la Poudre River sits about one-half mile to the northeast of the site, on the other side of the nearby railroad tracks that act to limit the impact of the floodplain on this parcel (see map below). A Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) was approved in 2025 that reclassified the northern portion of the property from the '100-year'/1% FEMA floodplain to the '500-year'/0.2% moderate hazard zone, which primarily encompasses an existing open water pond on-site.. The site also has two large ditches that border it on the west, south, and northeast – the Fossil Creek Reservoir Inlet Ditch (FCRID) and the Boxelder Ditch.



Context:	Zoning	Current Land Use
North	Larimer Co. MZ – Multi-Zoned (Industrial & Rural Residential)	CSU Environmental Learning Center, river corridor
East	Larimer Co. MZ – Multi-Zoned (Industrial & Rural Residential)	Anticipated future city park; city reservoir and natural areas
South	Larimer Co. RR2 Rural Residential; City LMN – Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood	City natural area; undeveloped; single unit residential
West	LMN – Low Density Mixed Use Neighborhood and RL – Low Density Residential	Rigden Farm and other residential neighborhoods

5. PUBLIC FEEDBACK

An open house style neighborhood meeting was held on May 13, 2024, prior to any application submitted to the City, to present and discuss the proposed development for the site with neighbors. The majority of questions and concerns centered around future development impacts to traffic and the capacity of the existing streets, loss of what is seen as “open space” by neighbors, and other development-related issues – rather than the annexation itself. A summary of comments received to date is attached.

The property has been posted with Sign #761 as of January 24, 2025. Written notice was sent to owners within 1000 feet of the site. For this hearing, 623 letters were mailed on September 2, 2026; and a notice was published in the Coloradoan on September 6, 2026.

6. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & POLICY ALIGNMENT

The purpose of this section is to assess the proposed development project's alignment with the community's long-term vision, as outlined in the City's Comprehensive Plan (*City Plan*) and any relevant subarea plan.

A. City Plan (2019)

City Plan serves as the overarching policy framework for the city's growth and development, addressing key areas such as public safety, neighborhood quality, economic vitality, environmental services, parks and open spaces, utility services, and transit and transportation infrastructure.

“Principle LIV 1: Maintain a compact pattern of growth that is well served by public facilities and encourages the efficient use of land.”

This property is within the Fort Collins Growth Management Area (GMA). City Plan encourages managing growth by encouraging infill development within the GMA to promote a compact pattern of development.

There is no applicable subarea plan for the property.

B. Structure Plan

The Structure Plan Map found within City Plan provides the broadest land use and zoning policy guidance applicable to the site via Place Type designations. Place Types describe the general land-uses, densities, and transportation characteristics for an area to help guide potential zoning when properties are annexed into the City. For this property, the Structure Plan Map indicates opportunity for the “Mixed Neighborhood” and “Parks and Natural/Protected Lands” place types for the annexing site and surrounding properties to the east, south, and north.

The land use characteristics of the Mixed Neighborhood Place Types include:

- **Principal Land Use:** Single-family detached homes, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes.
- **Density:** Between 5 and 20 principal dwelling units per acre (typically averaging 7–12 dwelling units per acre)
- **Supporting Land Use:** ADUs, small-scale multifamily buildings, small-scale retail, restaurants/cafes, community and public facilities, parks and recreational facilities, schools, and places of worship.

Place Types represent flexible guidance to inform zoning based on the history and surrounding context of a site within general zoning categories. This place type is categorized as one of the Neighborhoods Districts, alongside Rural Neighborhoods, and Suburban Neighborhoods Designations. The Structure Plan future land use designations represent general citywide policy guidance.

C. Land Use Code

Zoning

The requested zoning for the property is Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood District (LMN) and Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MMN) which is consistent with the City of Fort Collins Structure Plan Map. The Land Use Code, Article 2, describes the districts as follows:

LMN Purpose: *The Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood District is intended to be a setting for a variety of housing, providing diverse opportunities for single unit and accessory dwellings to attached units and small and medium-sized multi-unit structures. The District also encourages complementary commercial and institutional land uses and amenities that serve the everyday needs of a residential neighborhood. Parks and neighborhood centers are integrated into new and existing development and the broader community through the pattern of streets, blocks, and other linkages, providing an attractive and walkable focal point for services, open space, and recreation.*

MMN Purpose: *The Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood District is intended to be a setting for a diverse range of higher intensity housing and complementary services and amenities within close proximity to transit and/or commercial districts. This District is intended to function together with adjacent commercial development and/or transit to provide a transition to lower density neighborhoods. Together, the MMN district and its adjacent commercial core and low density neighborhoods are intended to form an integral, town-like pattern of development with a unifying pattern of walkable streets and blocks.*

Per Land Use Code (LUC), Division 6.25, the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend approval of the requested zoning only if the proposed zoning is:

- (a) in general alignment with the principles and policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan, and/or
- (b) warranted by changed conditions in the neighborhood surrounding and including the subject property.

Meeting either of these criteria is sufficient. As noted above, staff finds that the proposed zone districts are in alignment with the Structure Plan Place Types and City Plan policies and this required criterium is met.

The Commission may also consider three additional factors:

- (1) Compatibility with existing and surrounding uses, and whether the proposed district is appropriate for the land;
 - a. Examples: residential zoning is placed next to existing residential neighborhoods; commercial and industrial zoning is located along arterial streets; transitional zones buffer heavier uses from lighter ones; or the proposal avoids spot zoning that may be out of character with its surroundings.
- (2) Potential adverse impacts on the natural environment (water, air, noise, stormwater, wildlife, vegetation, wetlands, etc.)
 - a. Example: The rezoning would significantly and adversely impact floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, or water quality, and whether appropriate buffers, setbacks, and stormwater controls could be employed to adequately mitigate those impacts.
- (3) Whether the rezoning results in a logical and orderly development pattern.
 - a. Example: The property is contiguous with existing City limits, existing or planned infrastructure such as streets, water, sewer, and stormwater are already in place or planned for the near future.

The extension of LMN zoning east to this parcel is compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods, and the MMN zoning provides the opportunity for a broader mix of housing types. Staff acknowledges that this site is within the broader Cache la Poudre River corridor and adjacent neighbors have enjoyed several years, since active mining on the site ceased, of fallow land serving as a visual open space with some wildlife activity; however, with the railroad tracks located as they are, the tracks create a physical barrier

from the larger, natural setting to the north along the river that largely fall under state and local ownership. More detailed review of natural features and consideration for needed buffers or mitigation will be further reviewed and analyzed with future development plans. The location of the site along two arterial streets, and within proximity to substantial existing infrastructure, the site does integrate into the desired “logical and orderly development pattern” for the City.

Additionally, with the City Council’s stated priority of advancing the construction of additional housing within the City, the zoning of this property for a residential neighborhood creates the opportunity for development of a variety of needed residential housing types.

Future Development & Land Use

A project development plan has not been submitted although an Overall Development Plan is under review for the site. Future development plans and land uses will be subject to the list of permitted land uses in Section 2.2.1 – Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood District and 2.2.2 - Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood District, as well as all other applicable development codes and standards.

Residential Sign District

Staff recommends that the property be placed within the Residential Neighborhood Sign District. The Sign Districts are established in the Fort Collins Land Use Code for the purpose of regulating signs for non-residential uses in areas of the community where the predominant character of the neighborhood is residential.

Lighting Context Area

The Lighting Context Area identified by Table 5.12.1 of the City’s lighting code for the LMN zone district is LC1. As part of this item, staff recommends placement of the property into the LC1 Lighting Context Area.

LC1 – Low Ambient lighting. The vision of human residents and users is adapted to low light levels. Lighting may be used for safety and convenience, but it is not necessarily uniform or continuous. Typical locations include low and medium density residential area, commercial or industrial areas with limited nighttime activity, and the developer areas in parks and other natural settings.

7. REVIEW PROCESS & PROCEDURES

Strauss Lakes Annexation was processed as an Annexation per the Land Use Code in effect on the application submittal date of December 18, 2024.

Annexation requires a hearing before and recommendation from the Planning & Zoning Commission and then proceeds to the City Council for a hearing on the Ordinances for Annexation and establishment of Zoning.

A Preliminary Design Review meeting was held prior to submittal, with the applicant team, to discuss the proposed annexation and associated development plan on May 8, 2024.

Annexation of this property will bring the site under the City's jurisdiction for future development. An associated Overall Development Plan (ODP) has been submitted and is currently in review – which provides a high-level overview of the proposed development of the entire site, anticipating future, more detailed, development plans for phased development and construction.

8. STAFF FINDINGS

In evaluating Strauss Lakes Annexation (ANX240002), to annex and zone the project site, staff makes the following findings of fact:

- A. The property meets the state's eligibility requirements to qualify for a voluntary annexation to the City of Fort Collins.
- B. The requested placement into the Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood (LMN) and Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MMN) zone districts is consistent with the City of Fort Collins Structure Plan Map.
- C. The annexation of this area is consistent with the policies and agreements between Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins contained in the Intergovernmental Agreement for the Fort Collins Growth Management Area.
- D. On September 1, 2026, City Council accepted the annexation petition and began annexation proceedings by approving a resolution determining the annexation petition is in compliance with Colorado Revised Statutes.
- E. The placement into the Residential Neighborhood Sign District as well as the LC1 Lighting Context Areas, is consistent with the City of Fort Collins sign and lighting standards as it relates to Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood and Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood zoning.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends forwarding a **Recommendation for Approval** to City Council for the annexation and the requested zoning of Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood District (LMN) and Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MMN), consistent with the Structure Plan Map.

Staff recommends that the property be placed within the Residential Neighborhood Sign District.

Staff recommends that the property be placed into the LC1 Lighting Context Area.

10. EXHIBITS

Exhibit #	Document Description
Exhibit 01	Vicinity Map
Exhibit 02	Annexation Petition
Exhibit 03	Applicant Narrative
Exhibit 04	Annexation Map
Exhibit 05	Zoning Map
Exhibit 06	Neighborhood Meeting Summary / Public Comments
Exhibit 07	Staff Presentation