

MEMORANDUM

TO: Open Space Board of Trustees

FROM: Dan Burke, Director, Open Space and Mountain Parks
Kacey French, Planning and Design Senior Manager
Katie Knapp, Environmental Planner Principal

DATE: September 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Written Information: Fort Chambers / Poor Farm Site Management Plan Update

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a written update for Fort Chambers / Poor Farm planning process ([Fort Chambers / Poor Farm Management Plan | City of Boulder \(boulder.colorado.gov\)](#)).

Context

The Fort Chambers / Poor Farm property is located west of North 63rd Street and south of Jay Road (an area map is included as **Attachment A**). The property is important to OSMP and the community due to its history and association with the Sand Creek Massacre and the land's significant ecological and agricultural resources.

City staff are working on a government-to-government basis with the three Sovereign Tribal Nations affected by the Sand Creek Massacre (the Cheyenne and Arapaho, the Northern Arapaho and the Northern Cheyenne) to receive and incorporate their meaningful input into the development of a management plan for the property. The Site Management Plan will be used to guide ongoing land management and uses associated with the property.

Background

The 113-acre property was purchased in 2018 due to its ability to fulfill many OSMP charter purposes. The previous OSBT update on March 8, 2023 included:

- an update on current collaboration efforts with Tribal Partners to date and
- an introduction to the online [site inventory information](#) that informs the site planning process and provides an overview of:
 - Fort Chambers, where more than 100 Boulder-area men assembled and trained before participating in [the Sand Creek Massacre](#) on Nov. 29, 1864
 - The property's ecological and agricultural resources and how they help fulfill open space purposes in the city charter
 - Current activities occurring on the property and surrounding land use contexts
 - A Queen Anne Victorian style house on the property, which is included in the National Register of Historic Places, and historical agricultural operations on the land
 - The Boulder County "poor farm" in use on the property between 1902 and 1918 where the county maintained a farm that sought to feed, house and care for older and sick community members, along with people experiencing physical and mental disabilities.

Information about the removal of the Fort Chambers Marker and the different types of vegetation found on the property were recently incorporated into the site inventory.

Previous updates to the board and council are available at the following links:

[OSBT Memo - March 8, 2023](#)

[OSBT Memo - Sept. 14, 2022](#)

[OSBT Memo - March 9, 2022](#)

[Council Memo – Feb. 22, 2022](#)

[OSBT Memo - March 10, 2021](#)

[Council Acquisition Memo - April 17, 2018](#)

[OSBT Acquisition Memo - March 14, 2018](#)

Site Management Plan Update

Government to Government Tribal Partnership

The city is continuing government-to-government discussions with the federally recognized American Indian Tribes affected by the Sand Creek Massacre: the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, the Northern Arapahoe Tribe, and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. It is recognized that this management plan will take time since Tribal Representatives and Tribal Nations consult with many federal, state, and local agencies across the county. Current work includes:

Guidance for site plan development: On July 27-28, 2023, Tribal Representatives visited Boulder and participated in a 1½ day workshop with OSMP staff to discuss preferences for the site and the Tribes desired long-term relationship with the property. The feedback received was positive and consistent, with the following key highlights:

- Heal the land, heal the people: acknowledge what happened on this site and its connection to the Sand Creek Massacre through education /interpretation and a space to support healing. Clean-up and ecological restoration are needed and should be prioritized, with restoration efforts starting as soon as possible to start healing the land from past land uses. There is interest in a “healing trail” with areas for reflection and offerings.
- Future management efforts should focus on ecological restoration and education, with continued agricultural use, opportunities for indigenous plantings and harvesting by Tribal members and spaces for healing and reflection. Passive recreation and regional trails were not identified as priorities for this property.
- Current agricultural uses are supported and should be continued during and after the site planning process.
- Existing houses: There are 2 existing houses on the property, including a Queen-Anne style house listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There was support for OSMP to manage both houses to support agricultural operations. There was also interest in exploring options for the larger, historic house to have an educational component. Access and other existing constraints were discussed and understood as challenges for public access to the historic house that will be further explored.
- Long-term connection: the Tribes are not interested in owning this property but would like to remain involved long-term by providing meaningful input and advice to the city on education/interpretive materials and future stewardship after the adoption of the Site Management Plan. This property can support visits from tribal youth and other tribal members to learn, heal and pray. The site can be a stopping point on the way to Sand Creek.

City/Tribal Nation collaboration agreement(s). City staff and Tribal Representatives continue to use a *draft* (unsigned) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide and document the planning process. There is agreement between the city and the Tribes that it is helpful to have flexibility and be able to update the agreement and make revisions as we continue to learn and work together. Recent discussions also included considerations for a future City/Tribal agreement to outline long-term collaboration between the tribes and OSMP regarding the property after the planning process is completed.

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Visit

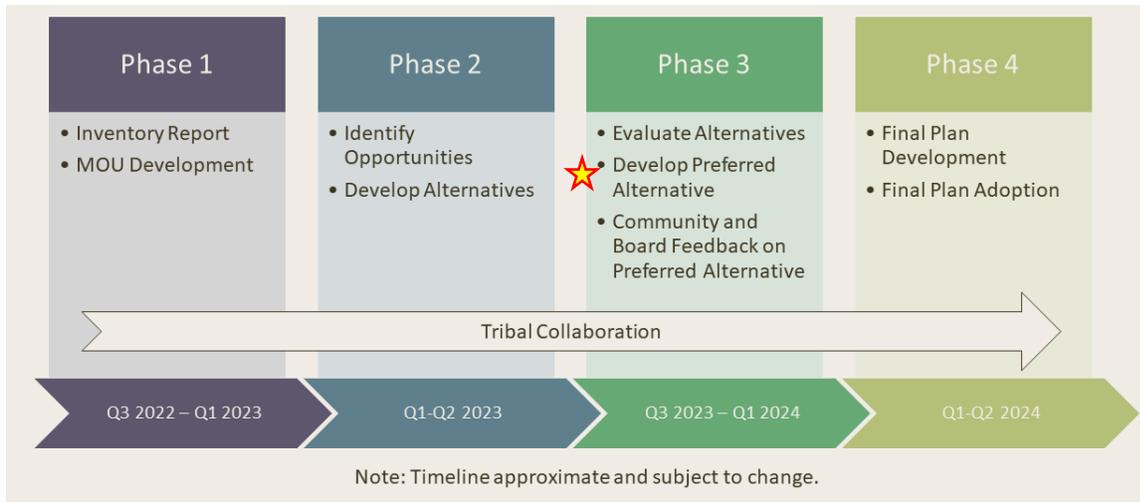
OSMP staff visited the site of the [Sand Creek Massacre](#) near Eads, Colorado, on May 22, 2023. Park Guide, Mario Medina provided an historic overview before staff toured the National Historic Site which includes a small visitor center, overlook areas to view the landscape, a trail with exhibits that share the site history, and a space for prayer, offerings and repatriation. The site visit was impactful and informative.

Next Steps

In the upcoming months, OSMP staff will:

- develop a draft site concept or preferred alternative using feedback from the July workshop with Tribal Representatives and from OSMP subject matter experts,
- host the tribal representatives in late October to review and get feedback on the draft site concept, and
- plan for future opportunities to share the draft site concept with the board and community.

Staff will continue to collaborate with the Tribes on the development of a site plan concept and will provide an update to the board after the draft site concept is developed and reviewed by the Tribes, likely in Q4 2023/Q1 2024. A summary of the process and next steps are below, with a star indicating where we are in the process.



Attachments

Attachment A: Area Map



FORT CHAMBERS / POOR FARM - AREA MAP

P OSMP Trailhead with Parking

A OSMP Access Point - parking on public roads

P Other Boulder Area Trailhead

--- OSMP Hiking Trail

--- OSMP Multi-Use Trail

--- Other Boulder Area Trails

--- OSMP Easement

--- OSMP Ownership

--- Boulder County Open Space

