

MEMORANDUM

TO: Open Space Board of Trustees

FROM: Dan Burke, Director, Open Space and Mountain Parks
Lauren Kilcoyne, Deputy Director of Central Services
Kacey French, Planning and Design Senior Manager
Katie Knapp, Principal Planner

DATE: December 6, 2023

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

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

Context

The Fort Chambers / Poor Farm property is located east of North 63rd Street and south of Jay Road (an area map is included as **Attachment A**). The property is important to Open Space and Mountain Parks (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 identify future property improvements and guide ongoing land 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 most recent Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) update was on Sept. 13, 2023, and included:

- guidance from Tribal Representatives on the development of the site management plan, and
- an update on the City/Tribal Nations collaboration agreement that guides the planning process.

Previous updates to the Board and City Council are available at the following links:

- [OSBT Memo – Sept. 13, 2023](#)
- [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

Concept Plan Development

A concept plan is being developed through a collaborative effort with Tribal Representatives. The process started with compiling information about the site and its history. Various opportunities were explored, leading to the development of 3 concepts, each emphasizing different open space values. The concepts were used to facilitate a discussion with the Tribes in July 2023 to learn what open space values were most important and how those could be enhanced on the site. The Tribes long-term relationship with the land was also discussed; it was conveyed that the Tribes are not interested in owning this property but would like to collaborate on the development of interpretive materials and future stewardship, recognizing the site's ability to support learning, healing and praying. Tribal feedback centered around the theme "Heal the Land, Heal the People". The input received guided the development of a draft Concept Plan.

On Oct. 27, 2023, Tribal Representatives visited Boulder and met with OSMP staff to review and discuss elements of a draft Concept Plan. The Tribes were supportive, relaying that the draft Concept Plan reflected the previous input received.

Plan Overview

The plan includes the following main elements:

- **Ecological Restoration/Conservation and Site clean-up:** The Boulder Creek corridor and the south/east ponds are a priority for restoration to enhance wildlife habitat, improve wetland functions and reconnect the creek to the floodplain. Debris removal and management of invasive weeds like Russian olive trees were also identified as actions to immediately start healing the land.
- **Preserving Agriculture Operations:** This includes preserving the relatively uncommon, diversified farming opportunity on a portion of the site along with maintaining the irrigated hayfields. The agricultural structures and residences will be improved to support agricultural operations. Educational opportunities related to the Poor Farm and/or agriculture history could be explored as a secondary use of the Queen Anne style main residence.
- **Interpretation with a "Healing Trail":** Provide interpretive elements that accurately and holistically tell about Fort Chamber's connection to the Sand Creek Massacre. Provide a small, looped trail with spaces for reflection, contemplation, healing, and interpretation. Include spaces to support educational programs with themes that include healing, forgiveness, and cultural and tribal history. The trail would also provide access to indigenous planting areas.

Additional Tribal Input

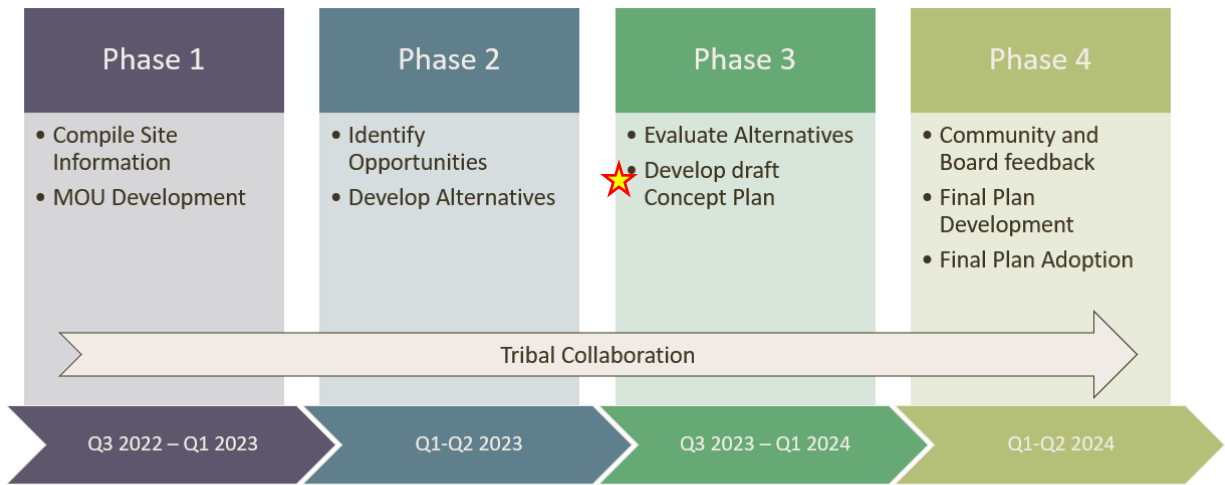
- **Site Name:** There is interest in renaming the property. The Tribes would like to work with us on developing a new name for the site that may not include "Fort Chambers".
- **OSBT Meeting:** Tribal Representatives are interested in attending an OSBT meeting (possibly in March 2024) to share their thoughts about the project and our ongoing collaboration. More on the next steps are below.
- **City/Tribal Nation collaboration agreement(s).** City staff and Tribal Representatives agreed to use a "Working Agreement" in lieu of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide and document the planning process for the Fort Chambers/Poor Farm property. OSMP staff and Tribal Representatives find it helpful to have flexibility and make revisions as we continue to learn and work together. The "Working Agreement" does not require the signatures of officials and can be revised when changes are mutually agreed-upon.

Next Steps

In the upcoming months, OSMP staff will further refine the draft Concept Plan (or preferred alternative). Staff will continue to collaborate with the Tribes and consider options for a new name for the property.

Staff will share the Concept Plan with the board likely in March, and have the tribal representatives attend the meeting and share their thoughts about the project, site plan and our ongoing collaboration. Staff are currently confirming availability and scheduling details. The concept plan will be presented to the community along with a questionnaire to gather feedback and gauge community support in late Q1/early Q2. It is anticipated that staff would return to the Board in late Q2 with the final site plan.

A summary of the overall planning process is shown below, with a star indicating our current step.



Note: Timeline approximate and subject to change.

Attachments

Attachment A: Area Map

