

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: March 13, 2024

SUBJECT: Fort Chambers / Poor Farm: Concept Plan Introduction

Executive Summary

City staff are collaborating with designated representatives from Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal Nations to create a land stewardship plan for the Fort Chambers / Poor Farm property ([Fort Chambers / Poor Farm Management Plan | City of Boulder \(bouldercolorado.gov\)](#)). The shared vision is to create a healing place for all: community members, visitors, wildlife, agriculture and natural ecosystems, and is guided by the theme “Heal the Land; Heal the People”. A draft Concept Plan (**Attachment A**) shows recommended improvements and land uses associated with the property. In the upcoming weeks, community members will have an opportunity to consider the plan recommendations and provide feedback using an online questionnaire. There will also be open office hours for people to provide input in-person and speak directly with project staff. Input received will be compiled and presented to the board at a future meeting.

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 B**). 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 develop a management plan with recommendations for future property improvements and guidance for ongoing land uses associated with the property. The Tribes long-term relationship with the land has also been 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.

Background

The 113-acre property was purchased in 2018 due to its ability to fulfill many OSMP Charter purposes. Information about the property was compiled and shared online through an interactive [site information report](#) that informs the site planning process. The most recent Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) update was on Dec. 6, 2023, and included:

- information about the ongoing planning process to develop the site management plan and the shared vision for the site: “Heal the Land; Heal the People”.

- an overview of plan elements under consideration.

Previous updates to the board and council are available on the [project webpage](#).

Concept Plan Introduction

A *draft* Concept Plan (**Attachment A**) was developed through a collaborative effort with Tribal Representatives. Recognizing the site's history and impacts from previous land uses, such as gravel mining, there is a desire to make improvements that will turn the site into a healing place for all: community members, visitors, wildlife, agriculture and natural ecosystems.

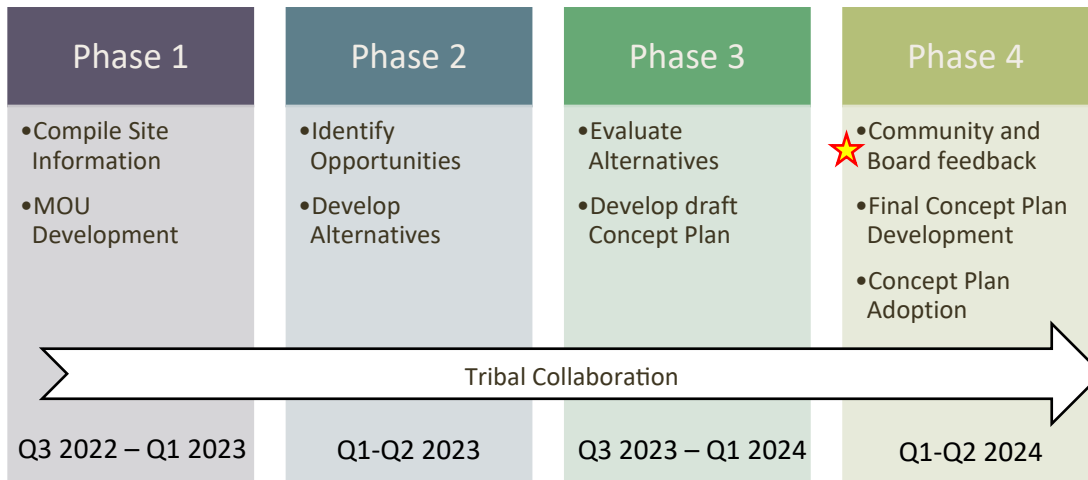
A shared vision for the property was developed in collaboration with Tribal Nation Representatives and is guided by the theme: "**Heal the Land; Heal the People**".

The *draft* Concept Plan includes the following main elements:

1. **Ecological Restoration:** to heal the land from past land uses and improve ecological health. A large-scale restoration project along the Boulder Creek corridor is recommended to improve ecological health, restore ponds that were left from gravel mining, remove berms to reconnect the floodplain and create high quality wetlands that support native wildlife. Restoration efforts could potentially extend to neighboring properties. Trash, debris and noxious weed removal is also recommended.
2. **A Healing Trail:** indigenous plantings, interpretive elements and program areas provide places for education, reflection, healing and gathering.
3. **Visitor Access:** an entrance drive leads to a parking area with a bus drop-off for public access. Two access drive options are currently being evaluated. Bathroom facilities could also be installed to support visitor use.
4. **Agricultural/Farmstead Improvements:** to support ongoing agriculture including diversified vegetable farming and irrigated hay fields. This site has a long history of agriculture that dates back to 1862. The irrigated fields are uniquely suited to support diversified vegetable farming due to its fertile soils, irrigation water and farm structures. The Concept Plan includes recommendations to preserve and enhance existing agricultural uses. Recommendations include repairing and restoring the historic Queen Anne style house that once served as the Boulder County Poor Farm to support an agricultural tenant. Educational opportunities related to the Poor Farm and/or agriculture history could be explored as a secondary use of the historic house.

Next Steps

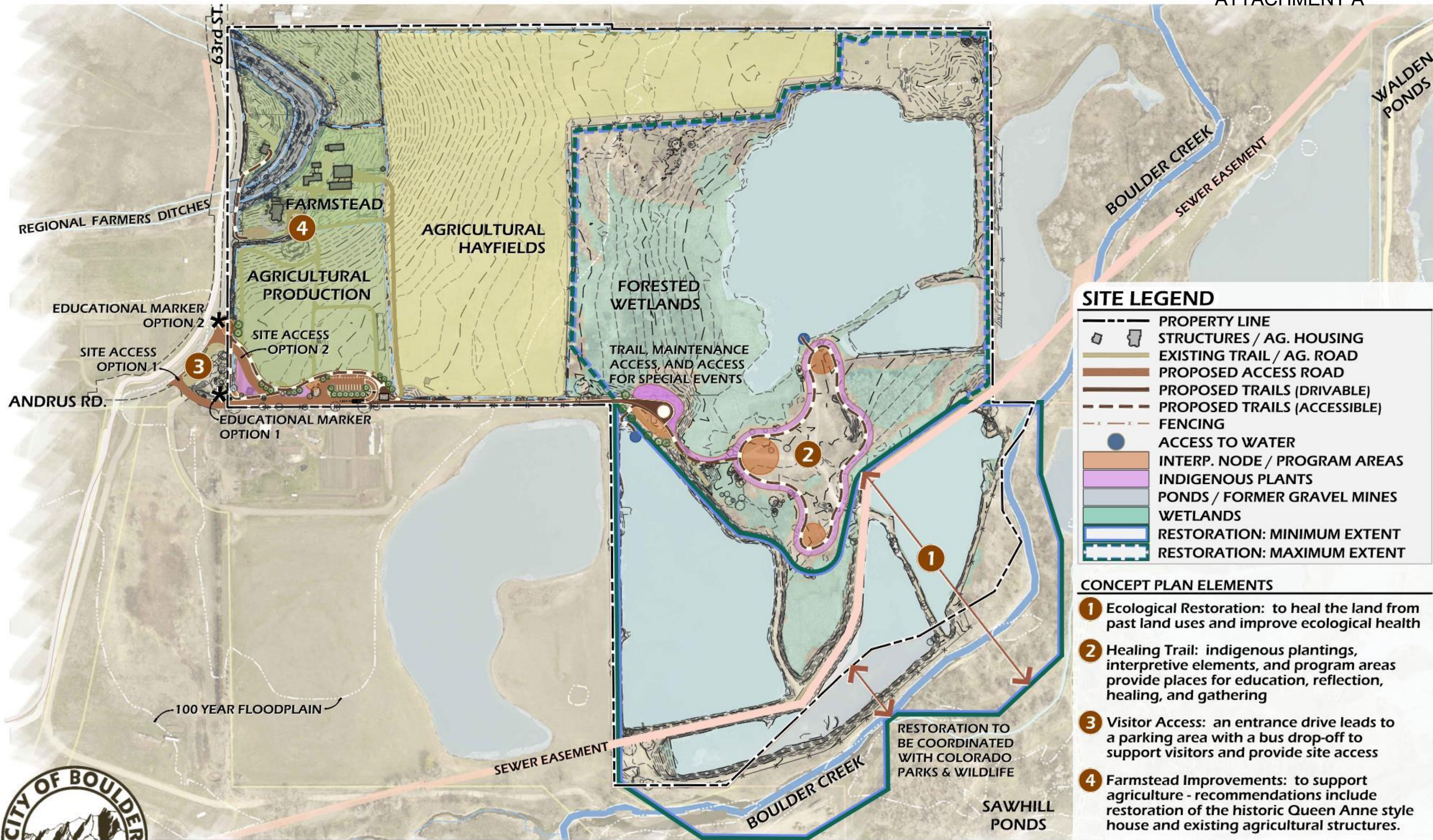
In the upcoming weeks, the *draft* Concept Plan will be presented to the community along with a questionnaire to gather feedback and gauge community support. The engagement opportunity will be broadly communicated to Tribal members in addition to the local community. Tribal Councils will also be contacted to share input. Community and Tribal input will be compiled and analyzed prior to being presented to the board. Depending on the feedback received, revisions to the Concept Plan may be considered. Any significant revisions would be discussed and considered in collaboration with the Tribes. It is anticipated that staff will return to the board this summer with a summary of community feedback and an outline of next steps. A *final* Concept Plan would be presented for board consideration at a later date. 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:** Concept Plan
- **Attachment B:** Area Map

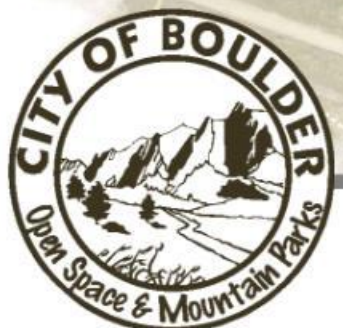


SITE LEGEND

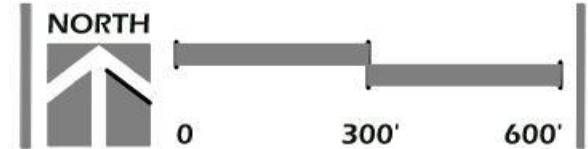
	PROPERTY LINE
	STRUCTURES / AG. HOUSING
	EXISTING TRAIL / AG. ROAD
	PROPOSED ACCESS ROAD
	PROPOSED TRAILS (DRIVABLE)
	PROPOSED TRAILS (ACCESSIBLE)
	FENCING
	ACCESS TO WATER
	INTERP. NODE / PROGRAM AREAS
	INDIGENOUS PLANTS
	PONDS / FORMER GRAVEL MINES
	WETLANDS
	RESTORATION: MINIMUM EXTENT
	RESTORATION: MAXIMUM EXTENT

CONCEPT PLAN ELEMENTS

- 1** Ecological Restoration: to heal the land from past land uses and improve ecological health
- 2** Healing Trail: indigenous plantings, interpretive elements, and program areas provide places for education, reflection, healing, and gathering
- 3** Visitor Access: an entrance drive leads to a parking area with a bus drop-off to support visitors and provide site access
- 4** Farmstead Improvements: to support agriculture - recommendations include restoration of the historic Queen Anne style house and existing agricultural structures.



SITE CONCEPT: FORT CHAMBERS / POOR FARM



SITE CONCEPT
SC-1
3.6.2024

Remove trash, debris, and noxious weeds



Restore gravel ponds and reconnect the floodplain



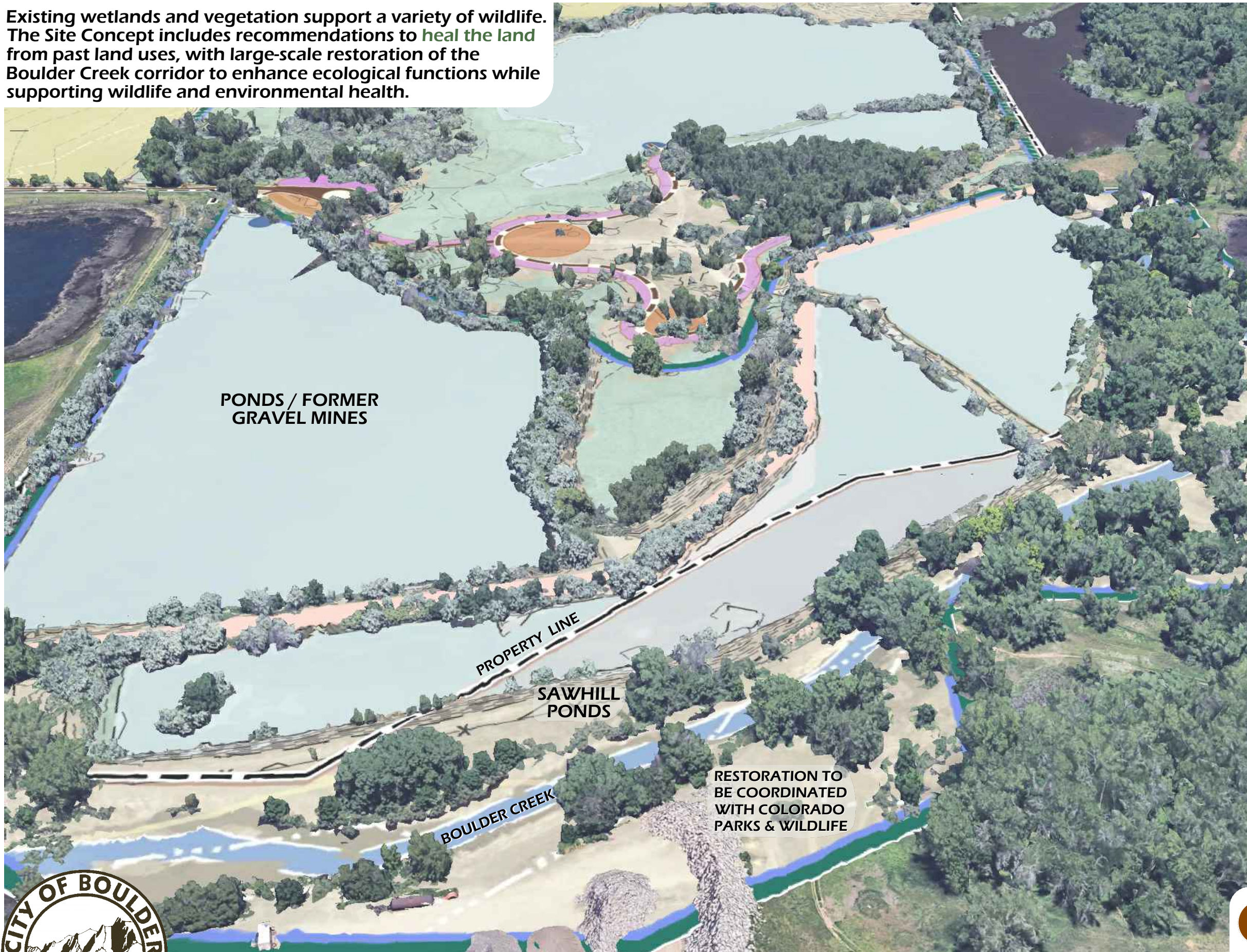
Example restoration site



1

Ecological Restoration: to heal the land from past land uses and improve ecological health

Existing wetlands and vegetation support a variety of wildlife. The Site Concept includes recommendations to heal the land from past land uses, with large-scale restoration of the Boulder Creek corridor to enhance ecological functions while supporting wildlife and environmental health.



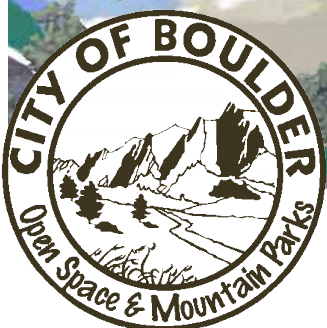
PONDS / FORMER GRAVEL MINES

PROPERTY LINE

SAWHILL PONDS

BOULDER CREEK

RESTORATION TO BE COORDINATED WITH COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE



ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION: FORT CHAMBERS / POOR FARM



Heal the Land, Heal the People

An interpretive, healing trail provides places for education, reflection, healing, and gathering. The images are examples of the types of elements that could be included to share the history of the site and connection to the Sand Creek Massacre.



Note: Trails may be subject to seasonal wildlife closures

SITE LEGEND	
	PROPERTY LINE
	PROPOSED ACCESS ROAD
	PROPOSED TRAILS (DRIVABLE)
	PROPOSED TRAILS (ACCESSIBLE)
	ACCESS TO WATER
	PONDS / FORMER GRAVEL MINES
	WETLANDS
	INTERP. NODE / PROGRAM AREAS
	INDIGENOUS PLANTS



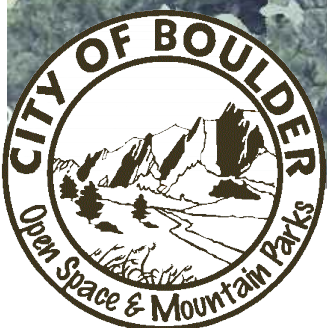
photo: Holly Lepere, Lepere Studio



photo: Clemens Franz, Creative Commons






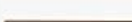

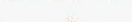


2 Healing Trail: indigenous plantings, interpretive elements, and program areas provide places for education, reflection, healing, and gathering

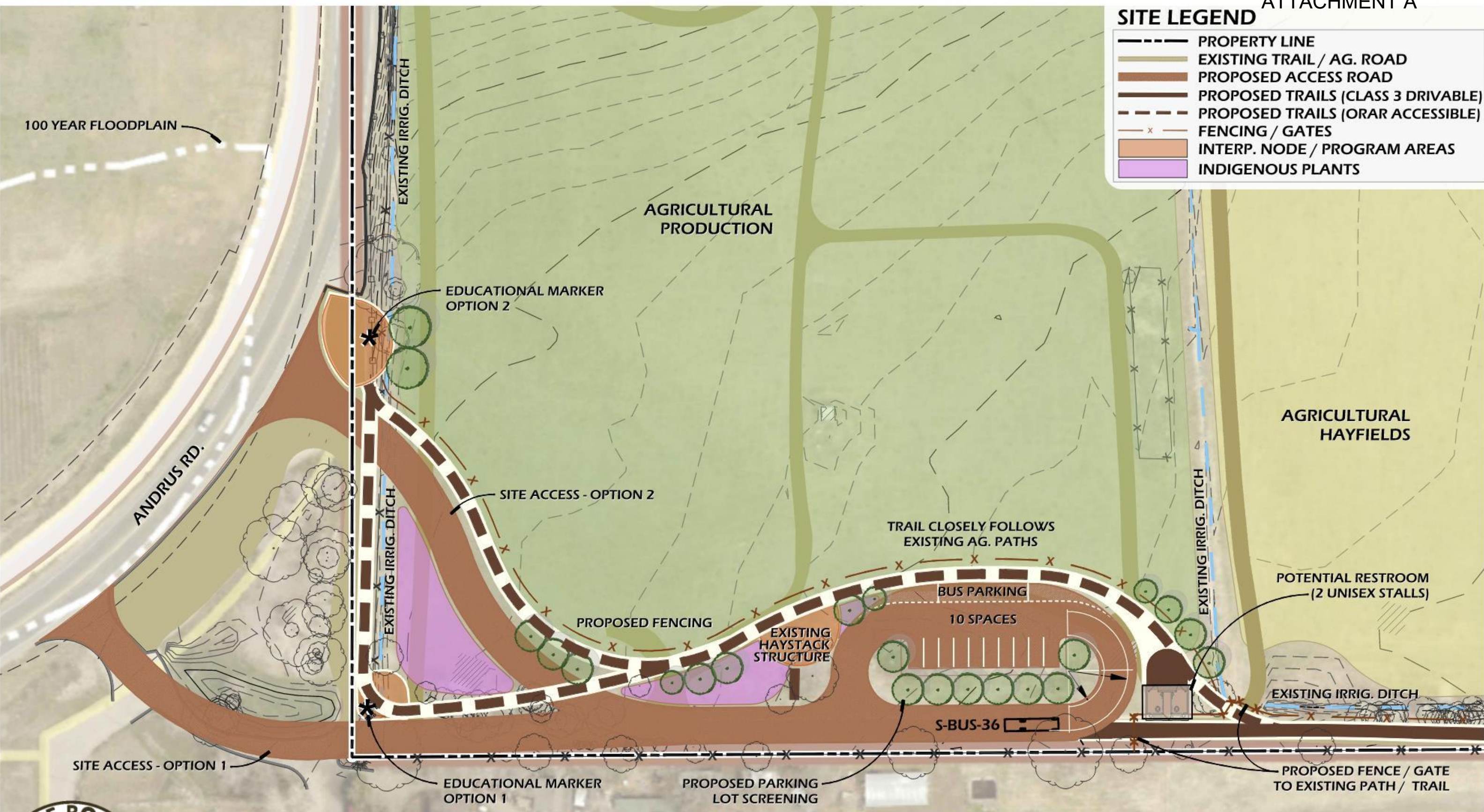


INTERPRETIVE HEALING TRAIL: FORT CHAMBERS / POOR FARM

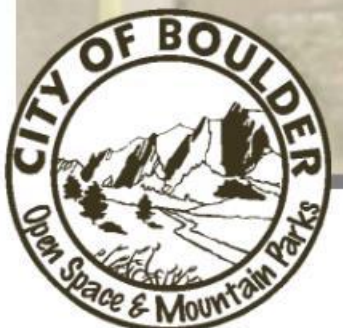


SITE LEGEND

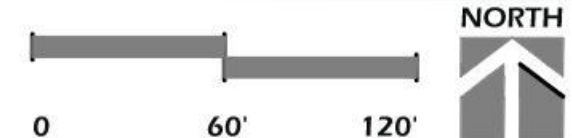
-  PROPERTY LINE
-  EXISTING TRAIL / AG. ROAD
-  PROPOSED ACCESS ROAD
-  PROPOSED TRAILS (CLASS 3 DRIVABLE)
-  PROPOSED TRAILS (ORAR ACCESSIBLE)
-  FENCING / GATES
-  INTERP. NODE / PROGRAM AREAS
-  INDIGENOUS PLANTS



3 Visitor Access: an entrance drive leads to a parking area with a bus drop-off to support visitors and provide site access



VISITOR ACCESS: FORT CHAMBERS / POOR FARM



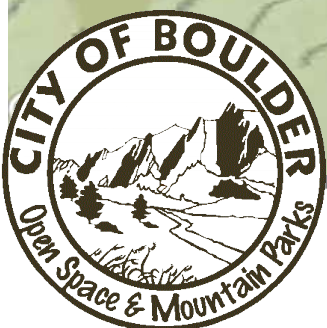
This Site Concept includes recommendations to preserve and enhance existing agricultural uses.

This site is uniquely suited to support diversified vegetable farming due to its fertile soils, irrigation water, and farm structures.

Restore the historic house that once served as the Boulder County Poor Farm. The house would support an agricultural tenant with education opportunities explored as a secondary use.
Repair existing farm structures to support agricultural operations.



4 Farmstead Improvements: to support agriculture - recommendations include restoration of the historic Queen Anne style house and existing agricultural structures.



AGRICULTURE: FORT CHAMBERS / POOR FARM



