



# Proposal

Fort Chambers-Poor  
Farm Property

Lease With Old Elm Farm

**1. Please describe the operation you propose for this property. Include details regarding your proposed grazing management practices, vegetation / forage management and irrigation management practices. Please include practices that you currently employ, and management results from them to conserve soil, water, and forage resources.**

I, Theresa Schuller, farmer and owner of *The Old Elm* propose a comprehensive agricultural approach that includes the shared vision for the Fort Chambers Poor Farm of “Heal the Land; Heal the People.” This vision will include introducing a bison herd (limited in number) onto the land where the indigenous species previously roamed. Native grass hay production at this property will supplement the winter grazing of the bison. Diversified nutrient dense vegetable production will be sold to Boulder Valley School Districts School Food Project for children’s meals, and additionally distributed at no cost through UpRoot Colorado to community members currently facing food and nutrition insecurity. Native species of flowering plants will be seeded into the fence lines and bordering areas to support native pollinators. Companion Planting the indigenous tribal “Three Sisters” of corn, beans and squash along the south side of the property will provide an educational opportunity near the healing trail as well as food production for BVSD and Uproot.



Bison herd implementation and management will be in collaboration with Dave Carter who is currently a Regional Director at the Flower Hill Institute and previously served as the Executive Director of the 1200-member National Bison Association from 2001 – 2022 (see references). Current grass species growing in the pastures will be evaluated via consults with him to determine the quality of the forage for the bison to then plan for over seeding necessary for the health of the bison as well as to improve naturalization, heal the land and maintain the agricultural viewsheds.

Drip irrigation will be utilized throughout the diversified vegetable grow areas which conserves water and minimizes soil erosion. Cover crops and mulch will be utilized to protect soil fertility, conserve water, minimize erosion, and preserve the long-term sustainability of the land and its agricultural use. Compost, manure and mulched leaves will be consistently added to the soil in order to add nutrients, shade roots and to conserve water. Shade cloth for heat-sensitive crops will be used and low tunnels may be implemented to extend the growing season. I will apply for a grant to add a high tunnel on the concrete area east of the brick house. This location would provide an area that is protected from wind and would not interfere with the viewshed, while also being closer to power for potential heat and electricity supplementation during the shoulder seasons.

Farmers ditches will be diligently maintained as needed including removal of fallen branches, leaves and other debris. Hand maintenance can be done by the farm lessee and farm workers while larger projects requested by the ditch rider will require a collaboration with the ditch rider and ditch board as needed.

The three-bedroom residential house would be part of this proposed lease and utilized for both year-round farm workers and seasonal student farmer intern(s). This would support the financial viability of both farms through the reduced cost of housing for the workforce as well as supporting the education and growth of the next generation of farmers.

Wetland hydrology of the existing hay field and pasture will be studied to determine the timing and extent of water flow and absorption into the soil. Determinations will then be made on flood frequency and duration, water table levels and their variability during the seasons and the impact of bison grazing on the land. Data collected will inform the diagnoses and impact on the land which will likewise provide an optimal solution.

Rotational grazing of the bison herd will be implemented on this leased property with native species of flowering plants, seeded along the bison fences and into bordering areas. These will be carefully chosen in partnership with People and Pollinators Action Network to have different blooming periods and ensure a continuous food source for native pollinators as well as contributing to biological soil diversity. Cultivating these native species along the fence lines will maintain the integrity of agriculturally related viewsheds while providing the needed cross fencing for bison. Fences will be constructed of a high tensile, 6 wire, minimum five-foot fence line with an integrated electric wire.



Diversified nutrient dense vegetables including mixed greens will be grown on this land. Greens are in short supply in Boulder County and there is a gap in the local supply for this agricultural product. These diversified vegetables will be sold to Boulder Valley School Districts (BVSD) School Food Project, who I currently have a working partnership with to purchase crops grown at the Old Elm farm. I have a written letter of support for this proposal from the Director of BVSD Food Services Carolyn Villa (see references) who is aware of this project and fully supports the additional food sourcing on this land as well as the educational opportunity related to Tribal Nation history, agricultural production, bison and native pollinators for both staff and students.

Produce will also be harvested and distributed by UpRoot Colorado (Uproot), a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to increase healthy food access for residents currently facing food and nutrition insecurity.

**2. Please describe your agricultural background and any existing agricultural enterprise(s). Include general location information, and the years of experience implementing the agricultural practices you have proposed.**

I, Theresa Schuller have owned the Old Elm Farm (Old Elm) since 2019 which is located in Boulder County on east Arapahoe, an 11-minute drive from the Fort Chambers Poor Farm property. I am a beginning farmer with five years of experience in agricultural food production. I also have more than 20 years of experience working in leadership roles in community food systems via the processing, preparing, retailing and distributing of local, natural and organic food. Specific areas of expertise include improving local and regional food systems through implementing nutrition education, value added processing, food safety, distribution process improvement, and people management, training and development. I have a degree in Outdoor Education, a Permaculture Certificate, and I was a 2023 Fellow at Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (RMFU). I was selected to participate on the RMFU's policy committee for 2023 and 2024 and was recently elected to serve at the 2025

National Farmers Union Convention in March to advocate for policy that supports family farmers. In November of 2024, I was awarded the Rocky Mountain Farmer's Union "John Stencel Leadership Award" which recognizes exemplary chapter leadership in RMFU, agricultural advocacy, and dedication to family farm agriculture. Currently, I serve as Vice President of RMFU's Boulder County Chapter.



The Old Elm farm is an historic agricultural property with 11 structures on five acres that was originally homesteaded in approximately 1860. When I purchased the farm in 2019, it had been unoccupied for a period and was uninhabitable. Neighbors of the farm felt it was beyond repair and wanted to purchase it to tear down all the historic structures. Since my purchase, I have been renovating the farmhouse, the two-story barn, and the machine shop building. This work included structural repair to water, electrical and sanitary systems at the farm,

along with an evaluation of the farm's neglected structures by a structural engineer. It also included the removal of accumulated scrap materials and trash plus a whole lot of power washing, painting, hard work, and hand digging of countless thistles (plus one broken ankle!).

During these first years I also began building soil health, renewed functionality for an agricultural well with water rights that had not been utilized in many years, developed the drip irrigation system for crops, planted a mixed fruit orchard, diversified vegetables, a wide variety of culinary and medicinal herbs, and five varieties of perennial lavender plants including medicinal, culinary and floral cultivars. I am now working towards developing a value-added food processing area at the Old Elm which will be available to other farmers and community groups.

The Old Elm Farm has been a supportive location for farm to table fundraisers by local community organizations including People and Pollinators Action Network (PPAN) [www.peopleandpollinators.org](http://www.peopleandpollinators.org) , Community Food Share [www.communityfoodshare.org](http://www.communityfoodshare.org) , Rocky Mountain Farmers Union [www.rmfu.org](http://www.rmfu.org) , St Benedict Health and Healing for the Unhoused <https://stbenedicthealthandhealing.org/> , and Good Samaritan Medical Center Foundation <https://intermountainhealthcare.org/give/good-samaritan-foundation>.

### **3. Please describe your proposed vegetation and soil sampling protocol or observations and how you will use this information to adapt and modify management practices.**

Vegetation and soil sampling will be conducted through Colorado State University's (CSU) Soil, Water and Plant Testing Laboratory. This includes detailed analysis of crop soil, irrigation water, plant tissue, manure, compost and sludge. Results of these tests will determine what soil amendments, mulches and cover crops will be needed to maximize soil water retention, microbial activity for soil health and conservation as well as crop health. Testing by the feed and forages division will evaluate the livestock forage which can then be evaluated by Dave Carter to determine what is needed to maximize the forage for the bison.

Additionally, in May of 2024 the Old Elm supported the CSU's "Diagnosis and Treatment on Organic Farms" course taught by Mark Uchanski, who is CSU's Vegetable Crops Program Coordinator. The field trip-based class visited my farm together to study and evaluate successful practices implemented as well as to learn about insect populations, soil quality, and the evolution of organic practices and certification. Part of the course included sampling the soil in multiple areas of my farm and providing consulting advice to my farm. I plan to collaborate with Mark to invite his CSU students to visit the Fort Chambers Property in May of 2025 to complete a full evaluation as well as to learn about a new farm while also meeting their course objectives.

**4. Please describe how the City of Boulder agricultural land you are proposing to lease improves the viability of your existing agricultural operation or improves agricultural stewardship of your existing property(ies).**

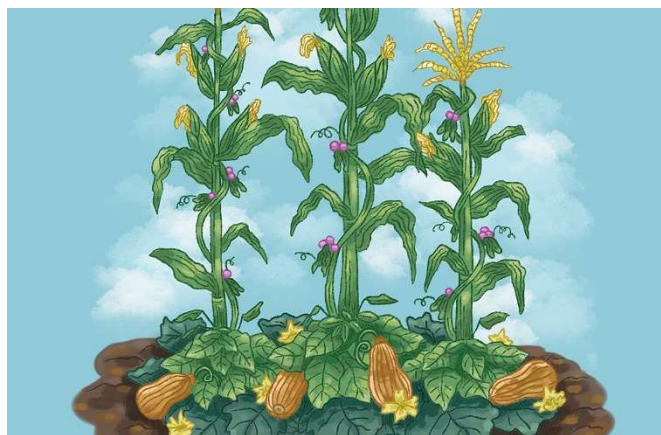
The Old Elm farm currently grows diversified vegetables for BVSD's School Food Project. Due to the 11 structures and existing gravel roads on my small historic farm, there is limited land for agricultural production – and this restricts my agricultural farm income as well as limits the quantity of products available to sell to BVSD. Leasing the Fort Chambers-Poor Farm land would expand my ability to increase the diversity and quantity of my food production and improve local food availability for students while improving income for the farm. Additionally, this lease would enable the Old Elm Farm to hire seasonal workers (ideally, agriculture students) to support both the Old Elm and the leased property. This will also create a learning ground to teach the next generation of farmers, aligning with the City of Boulder's commitment to economic sustainability for agriculture and community engagement.

**5. Please describe how your proposal supports the implementation of the Fort Chambers-Poor Farm Management Plan**

The bison herd will add value to the Healing Trail and enhance visitor experience. Herd growth of the bison would ideally be utilized through a partnership with the City of Boulder's exploration project of reintroduction of bison in the area (<https://aboutboulder.com/blog/the-bison-of-boulder-exploring-the-presence-of-buffalo-in-colorado/>). Managing the land to support the development of a new start for this native species and then distributing the yearlings along parts of the northern front range would move our community – current residents, Indigenous Peoples, ancestors, as well as the land itself – closer to a more holistic healing. Visitors, too, would find a doorway to both history – to learn from the past – and reflection, a way to witness repair in action and why it is important to establish a future of resilience and realized hope. Bison grazing on the land would enhance the healing trail and would foster connections between community and OSMP agricultural lands through education of visitors, both adults and students.

Bison primarily eat grasses, weeds and leafy plants on the natural untampered prairie and rarely eat grain. In addition, bison emit about half the CO<sub>2</sub> of cattle and graze more evenly than cattle, which benefits soil health and climate change while limiting erosion. Bison are naturally adapted to extreme weather conditions and can tolerate harsher environments with less supplemental feeding than cattle. All these components heal the land from past ecological disturbances and help sustain the area's rich natural diversity.

The integration of the Three Sisters – plantings of corn, beans and squash will be included in the southernmost section of the agricultural production area, near the planned visitor access area to enhance the Healing Trail, sustain ongoing agricultural operations and will provide future educational components. Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes inhabiting the Great Plains grew this symbiotic triad, which refers to planting the corn, beans, and squash together in close proximity for complementary benefit of all three crops. The corn grows a tall and sturdy trellis for the bean vines as they climb to reach sunlight. The bean roots house bacteria that convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form usable by plants in the soil, and squash is grown at the base of the mounds or in the surrounding area which manages weed pressure and shades and cools the soil for better water retention while creating habitat for



insects and soil biodiversity. This farming method is considered significant to both the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, as it was a crucial part of their traditional agriculture and cultural practices, representing a vital source of sustenance and holding deep spiritual meaning within their communities. The Three Sisters method is more than an agricultural practice. It's a symbol of food sovereignty and community resilience. It is a reminder that sustainable food systems are built on collaboration, adaptability, and respect for the land. This contributes towards "Healing the Land and Healing the People."

I am experienced and knowledgeable in the preservation and renovation of historic structures. I have taken the Old Elm historic farm structures from a place where they were all potentially going to be destroyed and created a functional farm and agricultural focused community gathering space. I follow organic and regenerative agricultural practices and am a sincere advocate for healing the land and healing the people. I previously was given an historic renovation award for my work on an 1890s farmhouse in another state and would enjoy collaborating on the renovation of the outbuildings and the historic brick house. I imagine that the highest future use of the brick house would include first floor educational space for visitors, students and residents of the area, second floor community meeting space for agricultural related organizations such as UpRoot, RMFU, FFC and third floor bunk housing for agricultural interns (an incubator for future farmers and ranchers). I would be honored to be sustaining the ongoing agricultural operations and to participate in the restoration of the home and farm structures on the land if collaboration is allowed on these historic structures.

**6. Describe your ability to finance the implementation of your proposed operation. Include information regarding any necessary capital or operating loans that will be required. Please describe how and where you will market the products grown on the property.**

The largest investment for this proposal will be the purchase of the bison herd and constructing the high tensile fencing for rotational grazing and naturalization. I intend to apply for grants as well as a loan through CDA's Colorado Agricultural Loan Program which offers below-market interest rates (i.e. 4%) loans to beginning farmers and ranchers to buy livestock, invest in revenue generating activities, expand diversity and quantity in farming and increase participation for next generation farmers. Funds from the CDA loans can be used for operating expenses, business improvements, livestock, worker wages and conservation projects. As a fail-safe, if those two options are unsuccessful, I have a brother who has committed to purchasing the bison herd as an investment.

Additional operations, including the agricultural fields, will be supported by the existing tools, wash tables, equipment, seed bank, existing potable water systems and overall infrastructure of the Old Elm farm.

Diversified vegetable products grown on the property will be sold to BVSD through their School Food Project program. Produce grown will be harvested through UpRoot's community-based gleaning initiative and distributed to Boulder County residents currently facing food and nutrition insecurity through UpRoot's direct-distribution network and its network of hunger-relief partners.

**7. Please describe any kind(s) of infrastructure improvement(s) that you envision for the property.**

Pasture areas will need to be evaluated more thoroughly in collaboration with Dave Carter to determine the optimal rotational grazing time and cross fencing between multiple pastures in order to rest pasture, reduce animal impact, and improve soil. The pastures will require a high tensile 6 wire fence line (minimum 5-foot) with an integrated electric wire. I am committed to repairing and maintaining existing fencing as well as upgrading and adding fencing where required to sustain the health of the land, vegetation, and bison. Funding for the fencing will be sought through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grants and other resources.

The area directly east of the brick house was showing heavy groundwater flowing without freezing during the January meeting there. The heavy vegetation around this area in addition to the winter flow suggests that it may have a high-water table or be a spring. Grading the berm into swales (following permaculture standards) in this location could lead to a successful diversified vegetable growing area even during times of drought.

**8. Please describe the machinery and equipment needed to implement your proposed grazing and vegetation management operations on the property and how you will meet those needs, e.g.: own, lease, borrow, hire custom, etc. Please only list or describe the machinery or equipment you will be using on the property, e.g.: seed drill, portable corrals, temporary fencing, etc.**

Machinery and equipment needed include:

To be rented from the Boulder County based Tool Library: <https://www.toollibrary.farm/equipment>

Compost spreader, BCS walk behind tractor, 6 foot seed drill for supplementing native seed (including native pollinator habitat management) into the naturalization areas as well as planting cover crops, Crimp Roller for terminating cover crops, dump trailer for moving manure into areas needing soil amendments, power harrow for breaking up large clumps and leveling the ground and preserving soil structure to create the optimal soil for seeds to germinate.

To be contracted:

Custom hired grass hay harvesting by Ernie Orem, who currently contracts locally and stores his equipment across the street from Old Elm Farm. This will supplement winter forage for the bison.

To be provided by Old Elm Farm:

Jang push seeder, lighted and heated indoor seedling growing area to start early and lengthen the growing season, trellis, insect netting, low tunnels, shade cloth, drip irrigation lines, water pumps and hoses, bee hives and bees for pollination, honey extractor, honey bottler, RPCs for harvesting and transporting harvested produce, industrial lettuce washing machine, a copper essential oil distiller for medicinal herbs, vegetable processing equipment, stainless spray tables for cleaning, Agri-Fab towable leaf vacuum with an impeller and mulcher.

**9. Are you involved in your agricultural enterprises on a full-time basis? If not, what percentage of your time is dedicated to agricultural pursuits?**

Yes, I am involved in my agricultural practices on a full-time basis.

**10. Please provide any information pertaining to your eligibility as a U.S. Department of Agriculture historically underserved producer. (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting->**

Theresa Schuller qualifies as a beginning farmer, a socially disadvantaged farmer and a limited resource farmer, as detailed below:

I have owned and operated the Old Elm Farm since 9.19.2019 and qualify as being a beginning farmer due to being within the threshold of producing for less than 10 years.

*Per NRCS: A Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an **individual** or **entity** who:*

- a. Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity.*
- b. Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.*

Theresa Schuller is a verified Limited Resource Farmer per the NRCS criteria, see verification at right.

Old Elm Farm is solely owned and operated by Theresa Schuller, which qualifies as a socially disadvantaged farmer due to being owned by a woman farmer under Titles I, V and VI as stated below, from the NRCS website definition.

### Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher or Agricultural Producer - Definition

According to Section 2501(e)(2) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 USC 2279(e)(2)), a Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher (SDA) is defined as a farmer or rancher who is a member of a "Socially Disadvantaged Group".

Therefore a "Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher" is defined as:

**Socially disadvantaged group**- a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. **The definition that applies to Titles I, V, and VI includes members of a group subject to gender prejudice,** while the definition that applies to Titles II, IX, XII, and XV does not. Title XIV and the Education and Risk Management Assistance provision in Title XII do not make specific reference to the statutory definition of socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher.

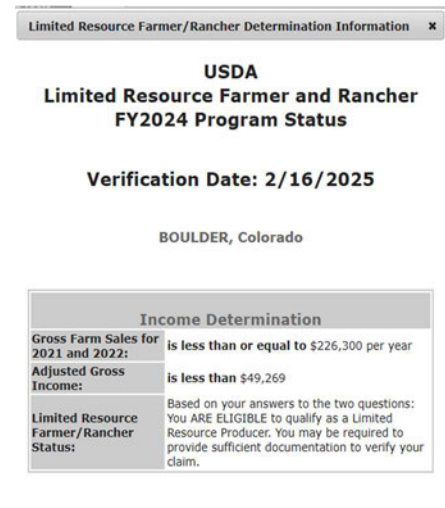
### 11. Please describe your pay and employment practices and how you have provided farm goods to disadvantaged communities or mentored first generation farmers.

The Old Elm is in an active partnership with UpRoot Colorado (UpRoot), a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase the nutrition security of Coloradans by harvesting and redistributing surplus, nutrient-dense foods while supporting the resilience of farmers. Since 2017, UpRoot staff and volunteers have harvested ~1 million servings of surplus nutrient-dense food—from farms, orchards, and “backyard” fruit trees—and redistributed this life-sustaining resource, at no cost, to community members currently facing food and nutrition insecurity. If awarded this property, The Old Elm will expand its engagement with UpRoot to include growing nutrient-rich produce specifically for hunger relief. This ties into the 1902-1918 use when the county used the “poor farm” to help feed, house and care for older and sick community members along with people experiencing physical and mental disabilities.

Old Elm Farm has mentored first generation farmers through its active presence in the RMFU as well as its support of BVSD’s School Food Project. Additionally, Old Elm supported CSU’s agricultural students who studied the crops, soil, and insect population at the farm while also learning the farm’s history and its roots in Boulder County Agriculture. Granting this lease would enable the Old Elm to hire farm workers and seasonal interns for both farms while increasing the production of food for BVSD and UpRoot.

### 12. What is your proposed bid for this property?

- \$ 300 2 acres diversified vegetable production @ \$150 per acre
- \$ 400 5 acres irrigated hay production @ \$80 per acre
- \$ 1,440 30 remaining acres for bison grazing @ \$20 per AUM harvested, est. 6 AUM
- \$16,800 Monthly rental of \$1400 for residential lease utilized for farmworkers
- \$18,940 Total yearly lease



**References**

Name	Email address and Phone Number	Relationship
Richard Biella	[REDACTED]	Neighbor and farmer
Michelle DeHaan	[REDACTED]	Neighbor and sheep rancher
Johnathon Opperman	[REDACTED]	Ditch Rider – Davidson Ditch
Carolyn Villa	[REDACTED]	Buyer of current product and Director of Food Services-BVSD
Dave Carter	[REDACTED]	Director - Flower Hill Institute and Bison Expert
David Laskarzewski	[REDACTED]	Director - Uproot Colorado
Sabrina Torres	[REDACTED]	Sustainable Agriculture Consultant for Old Elm Farm
Jennifer Bahr	[REDACTED]	RMFU Foundation Director

**Proposal Form- Required**

Failure to complete, sign and return this signature page with your proposal may be cause for rejection.

Contact Information	Response
Company Name including DBA	Elm Tree Farm, LLC d/b/a Old Elm Farm
List Type or Organization	Limited Liability Corporation
Name and Title of Person Authorized to Contract with City of Boulder	Theresa Schuller – Owner and Operator of Old Elm Farm
Name and Title of Person Submitting Bid	Theresa Schuller – Owner and Operator of Old Elm Farm
Email Address for Person Submitting Bid	[REDACTED]
Company Address	[REDACTED]
Company Phone Number	[REDACTED]
Company Website	theoldelmbouder.com
Company Fax Number	None

By signing below, I certify that:

I am authorized to bid on my company’s behalf.

I am not currently an employee of the City of Boulder.

None of my employees or agents are currently an employee of the City of Boulder.

I am not related to any City of Boulder employee or Elected Official.

I am not a Public Employees’ Retirement Association (PERA) retiree.

\_\_\_\_\_[REDACTED]\_\_\_\_\_, 2.24.2025\_\_

Signature of Person Authorized to Bid on Company’s Behalf Date