



The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

Draft Major Update - March 2026

Review the Draft Plan and Share
Your Feedback!

[Visit this link](#) or go to
ABoulderFuture.org to submit your
comments on the plan.





Land Acknowledgment

The City of Boulder acknowledges the city is on the ancestral homelands and unceded territory of Indigenous Peoples who have traversed, lived in and stewarded lands in the Boulder Valley since time immemorial. Those Indigenous Nations include the: Di De’i (Apache), Hinono’eiteen (Arapaho), Tsétséhéstáhese (Cheyenne), Numunuu (Comanche), Caiugu (Kiowa), Čariks i Čariks (Pawnee), Sosonih (Shoshone), Oc’eti S’akowin (Sioux) and Núchui (Ute).

- We honor and respect the people of these Nations and their ancestors. We also recognize that Indigenous knowledge, oral histories, and languages handed down through generations have shaped profound cultural and spiritual connections with Boulder-area lands and ecosystems – connections that are sustained and celebrated to this day.
- The City of Boulder recognizes that those now living and working on these ancestral lands have a responsibility to acknowledge and address the past. The city refutes past justifications for the colonization of Indigenous lands and acknowledges a legacy of oppression that has caused intergenerational trauma to Indigenous Peoples and families that includes:
 - For more than 10,000 years, generations of Indigenous Peoples have lived and thrived on ancestral homelands that Euro-Americans colonized as Boulder.
 - Indigenous Peoples in Boulder have, as in all parts of the Americas, endured centuries of cruelty, exploitation and genocide.
 - The westward expansion of Euro-American population and culture in the 19th century caused extensive hunger and diseases that devastated Indigenous Peoples’ way of life.
 - In October 1858, Hinono’ei neecce (“Arapaho Chief”) Nowoo3 (“Niwot,” “Lefthand”) and other Hinono’eino’ (“Arapaho”) Peoples told a party of gold-seekers camped in what is now known as Boulder that they could not remain on Indigenous land as defined by the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie.
 - After gold was found west of Boulder in January 1859, many of those same gold-seekers helped found the Boulder Town Company on Feb. 10, 1859, in violation of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie.

- By the summer of 1859, thousands of gold seekers were in the Boulder area, and many squatted on Indigenous lands, continuing the dramatic expansion of Euro-American occupation of Indigenous lands that soon exiled Indigenous peoples from the Boulder area.
- In August 1864, more than 100 Boulder County residents mobilized into Company D of the Third Colorado Cavalry at Fort Chambers along Boulder Creek east of what is now known as Boulder.
- Company D – which included 46 Boulder men and prominent Boulder County residents – later participated in the barbaric massacre of peaceful Tsétséhéstáhese (“Cheyenne”) and Hinono’eino’ (“Arapaho”) Peoples at Sand Creek on Nov. 29, 1864. Among those killed in the massacre were women, children, elders and chiefs, including Nowoo3 and Chief White Antelope. Despite having participated in horrific atrocities, members of Company D received a heroes’ welcome upon their return home.
- The city has benefited and continues to benefit directly from the colonization of Indigenous lands and from removal policies that violated human rights, broke government treaties and forced Indigenous Peoples from their homelands.

We must not only acknowledge our past but work to build a more just future. We are committed to taking action beyond these words. We pledge to use this land acknowledgment to help inspire education and reflection and initiate meaningful action to help support Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations.

We intend to use this acknowledgment when the City of Boulder develops work plans that guide day-to-day work, begins new projects, starts long-term community plans, and recruits and hires staff.

Let this formal acknowledgment — which honors and builds on the city’s Indigenous Peoples Day Resolution (1190) — stand as a critical step in our work to unify Boulder communities, combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination against Indigenous Peoples.



Acknowledgments

City Council

- Taishya Adams, Member
- Matt Benjamin, Member
- Aaron Brockett, Mayor
- Rob Kaplan, Member
- Tina Marquis, Member
- Ryan Schuchard, Member
- Nicole Speer, Member
- Mark Wallach, Member
- Tara Winer, Mayor Pro Tem

City Planning Board

- Jorge Boone, Member
- Claudia Hanson Thiem, Member
- Laura Kaplan, Vice Chair
- Mark McIntyre, Chair
- Kurt Nordback, Member
- Mason Roberts, Member
- ml Robles, Member

Board of County Commissioners

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- Marta Loachamin, Comisionada/ Commissioner
- Ashley Stolzmann, Commissioner

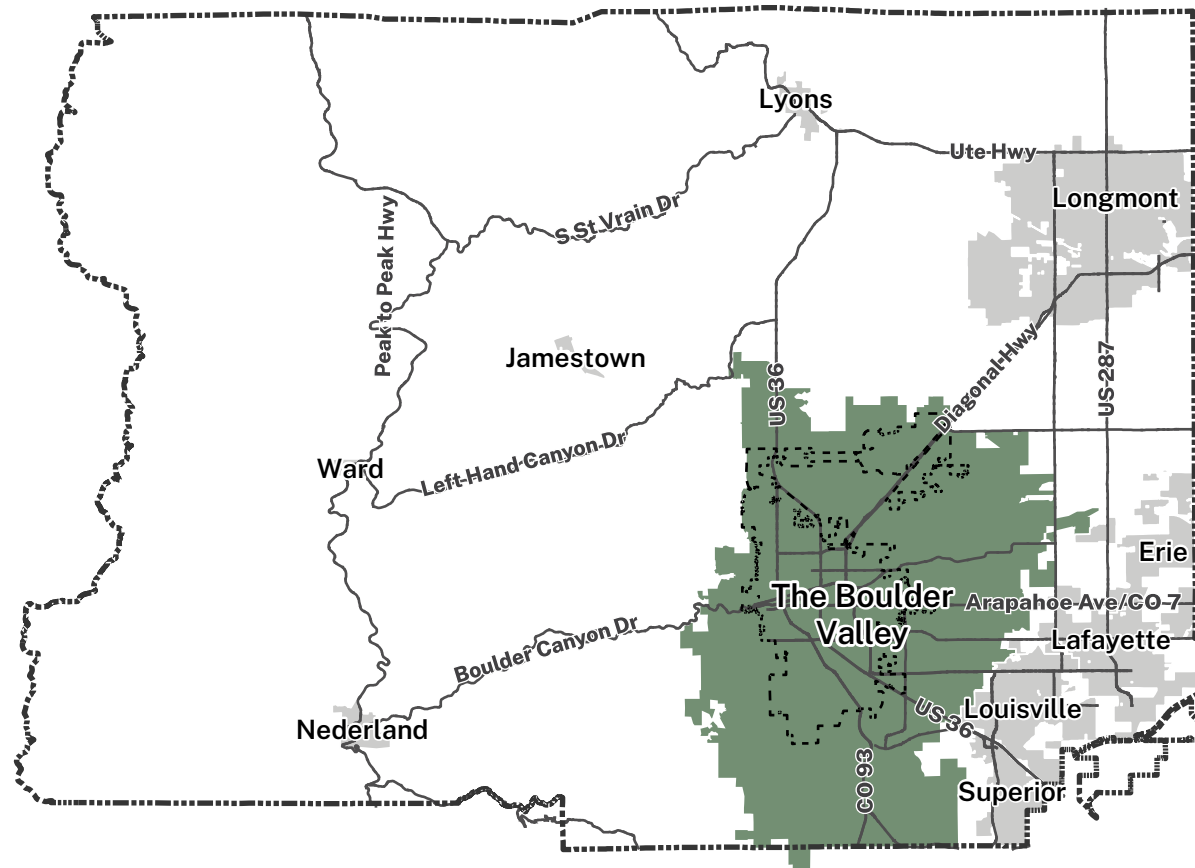
County Planning Commission

- Mark Bloomfield, Second Vice Chair
- George Gerstle, Member
- Byron Kominek, Member
- Rachel Lee, Member
- Sam Libby, Vice Chair
- Rita Manna, Member
- Gavin McMillan, Member
- Bobby Umstead, Member
- Chris Witney, Chair

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The Boulder Valley Planning Area



- Boulder Valley Planning Area
- Boulder County
- City of Boulder
- Other Towns and Cities

Chapter 1

Welcome to the Plan

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan is the community’s guide for how the city of Boulder grows, connects, and evolves over the next 20 years. The City of Boulder and Boulder County jointly adopt the plan because accomplishing the desired future often requires that we work together. It reflects a shared vision and community values that help shape decisions across the Boulder Valley.

This is a community-driven plan. It connects shared values to community choices about where homes and jobs are located, how people move around, how we collectively care for the environment and support a sustainable, equitable and resilient community; and how decisions are made.

Why the Plan Matters

A Shared Direction

The comprehensive plan acts as a compass. It is not a set of step-by-step directions, but a guide which establishes expectations and keeps policymakers and the community pointed in a shared direction to achieve desired outcomes.

A Record of Policy

The policies included in the comprehensive plan are reflective of broad community sentiment and establish a baseline of expectations for the next 20 years. They are broad in scope to be responsive to changing community needs and resilient in times of disruption.

A Framework for Decisions

The comprehensive plan will inform the citywide strategic plan, future subcommunity and area planning efforts, code updates, rezonings, and development applications that require consistency, on balance, with the comprehensive plan. However, the plan is not a checklist. There are inherent competing values that require careful analysis and consideration of tradeoffs when making decisions.

A Way to Measure Progress

The plan is intended to be put into action. It is the link between long-term community values and on-the-ground choices about the future. Having the plan as a common reference point directing the way forward ensures actions implement the community's vision in a coordinated and connected way.



How the Comprehensive Plan Relates to Other Plans

Sustainability, Equity and Resilience Framework

The city's Sustainability, Equity, and Resilience (SER) Framework reflects core community values: caring for people, protecting the natural environment, and planning for a strong and adaptable future. All other city plans, projects, and decisions are rooted in this framework.

Citywide Strategic Plan

The Citywide Strategic Plan is step forward towards action, building on the SER Framework and the comprehensive plan. This four-year plan translates the community's long-term vision into major strategies and priority actions to coordinate work across city departments.

Department Plans

City department plans are developed to interpret the vision and policies provided in the comprehensive plan for specific departments. "Blueprint" plans similarly provide interpretation of the comprehensive plan, but for broad focus areas that cross over departments (such as the Boulder Arts Blueprint). Both of these types of city plans are considered components of the comprehensive plan. They provide detailed policies, priorities, service standards, facility and system needs, and capital plans to create a roadmap for budget and workplan prioritization by each city department.

Subcommunity and Area Plans

Subcommunity and Area Plans provide direction for specific geographic areas. They provide a link between the broad policies of the comprehensive plan and more detailed goals and actions for zoning, development review and capital improvement decisions.

Development Standards and Zoning

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map provides a generalized picture of desired future uses in the Boulder Valley. The city zoning map assigns every parcel of land in the city a zoning district. The Boulder Revised Code, 1981, regulates allowable uses, the intensity of development and the form of structures on a site within the city. The county's zoning code and map regulates parcels within the Boulder Valley not annexed to the city. All new development or redevelopment projects must conform to zoning regulations which are developed and amended to be consistent with this comprehensive plan.



Discussing the future of recreation centers

Budgets

The city uses an outcome-based budgeting approach, also known as Budgeting for Resilience and Equity. This approach enables the city to perform enhanced data-driven decision-making to understand the impact of our funding choices and the allocation of resources in support of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.

Capital Improvements

Capital improvements carry out comprehensive plan policies for provision of urban services and facilities by maintaining and enhancing public infrastructure. The city funds the construction and maintenance of assets using a wide range of sources. Funding for capital improvements is planned on a six-year timeframe through the Capital Improvements Program.

Department Workplans

Each city department prepares an annual workplan that is incorporated into the citywide workplan. Workplans include on-going business activities, projects and programs that are informed by and support the policies of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.



Planning helps inform investments like new fire stations

Who Uses the Comprehensive Plan

The plan supports decision-making across the community and is used in a variety of ways.

Community members and business owners

use the plan to understand the community's long-term vision, gain insight for real estate decisions and business opportunities, and be informed of the policies that will guide future changes and hold policymakers accountable to shared values.

Developers and property owners

use the comprehensive plan to plan strategic development and redevelopment investments that contribute to the community's design quality, amenities, local economy and housing goals.

Elected officials and advisory boards

use the plan to set priorities, weigh tradeoffs and make informed decisions that are aligned with the community's long-term vision. They also use the plan to guide decisions on code changes, rezonings and development applications.

City staff

use the plan to organize work plans around shared goals; guide code changes, rezonings and development applications; collaborate with county and other agency partners; effectively allocate public funds; and provide programs, services and capital improvements to help achieve the community's vision.

County staff

use the plan to communicate expectations around the city's growth and development, to guide decisions about unincorporated lands in the Boulder Valley and coordinate and collaborate with the city on areas of shared concern expressed in the plan.



Community members contribute to the creation of the plan

Creating the Plan

Community Voices

Community voices were essential to the creation of this comprehensive plan. The city and county aimed to make this the most inclusive Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan update process to date. Community engagement began in October 2024 and continued through plan adoption in June 2026.

The process included a wide range of engagement opportunities including traditional methods and new approaches to reach people who are often underrepresented in planning processes.

Community members had the opportunity to participate in more than 60 engagement opportunities, including workshops, online feedback forms, a statistically valid survey, pop-ups at community events, community member-hosted conversation groups, office

hours with city and county staff and more. Additionally, the city and county partnered with community organizations and local artists who helped connect with and elevate perspectives of historically excluded communities. The team also received more than 250 emails from individuals and advocacy groups.

Throughout the process, the city and county used community input, policymaker guidance, technical analysis, case studies, and professional expertise from city and county staff to shape the draft plan, while staying focused on the core outreach and engagement goals of inclusion and equity. The wide range of engagement methods helped ensure an inclusive process and more equitable outcomes.



Community members prioritize issues on winter Bike to Work Day, 2025



Engagement Innovation

A key engagement innovation in this update was the Boulder Valley's first Community Assembly. Forty-eight community members were randomly selected using a representative model to ensure demographic diversity of the group. Over seven Saturdays, these volunteers learned about, deliberated, and developed recommendations on 15-minute neighborhoods. The Assembly's recommendations informed several of the plan's policies.

Focus on Racial Equity

For the first time, the city and county applied racial equity instruments, such as the Rapid Response Equity Assessment, to the draft comprehensive plan policies. The racial equity instrument guides users through a process to ensure equitable decisions and practices. The process revealed the potential benefits and burdens embedded in plan policies. Additionally, the focus on equity provided insight into potential opportunities to address systemic inequities and potential risks that policies could face through implementation of the plan. This analysis was used to edit policy language and plan for policy implementation.

Plan Adoption

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan is jointly adopted by the City of Boulder and Boulder County. As part of the adoption process, public hearings are required and conducted by the approval bodies including the City of Boulder Planning Board and City Council, and Boulder County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners. Details on which bodies review and approve different types of changes are outlined in the amendment procedures included in the intergovernmental agreement between the city and county.

50 Years of Planning: Looking Back and Moving Forward

Over the last 50 years, planning has shaped the Boulder Valley by protecting landscapes, guiding changes and creating challenges the community continues to grapple with today. As the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan marks its 50-year milestone, it is worth exploring how planning and the values behind it have evolved, the impacts of choices and lessons for the future.

Foundations: Before Comprehensive Planning

Pre-Euro-American settlement–Late 1800s: Indigenous Presence to City Establishment

City Population: Less than 5,000

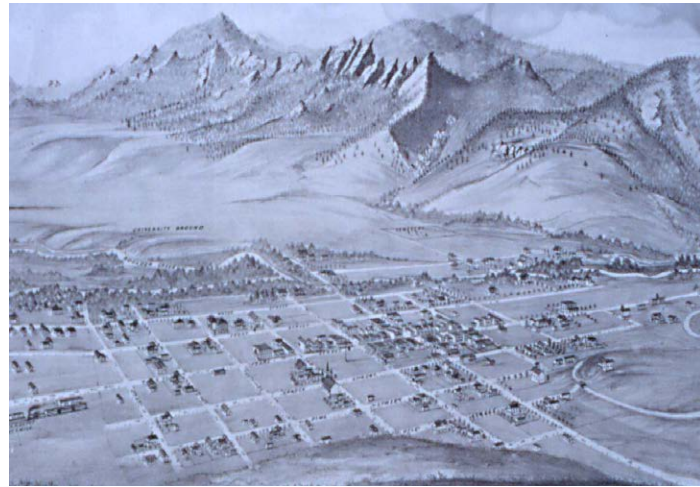
Values and Drivers of Change: Land stewardship, seasonal use, cultural connection, property acquisition, resource extraction

For more than 10,000 years, Native American tribes, most notably the Arapaho and Ute, lived in harmony with the Boulder Valley. In 1858, Hinono’ei neecce Nowoo3 (‘Arapaho Chief Niwot’) told gold-seekers they could not occupy Indigenous land. Despite this, Euro-American settlers established Boulder in 1859, violating multiple treaties. Forced removal of the First Peoples and settler expansion created a legacy of displacement that remains with today’s Indigenous community members.

Late 1800s–1960s: From Mining Camp to College Town

City Population: Approximately 38,000

Values and Drivers of Change: Economic survival and opportunity, education, civic pride, access to nature, local control



Boulder grew from a mining settlement into a college town after the University of Colorado opened in 1877. Early land ownership patterns were shaped by the arrival of the railroad. Early efforts to secure open space, including Chautauqua and Flagstaff, reflected growing civic identity and appreciation for the surrounding natural setting of the city. In 1910, Boulder’s first formal plan introduced boulevards, parks and early zoning, helping establish a lasting open space ethic that the community still supports today.

After World War II, rapid growth, annexations and the arrival of federal research labs accelerated change. Concerns about sprawl led to limits on water service on the western edge (the Blue Line) and the creation of dedicated open space funding, the first of its kind in the country, in 1967.

Early planning established Boulder’s enduring open space and growth management ethos, however, these tools often benefited wealthier community members while excluding lower-income households and communities of color. Discriminatory local and national policies contributed to inequities in housing, opportunity and access that we are still addressing today.

1970s to Today: The Last 50 Years of Comprehensive Planning

1970s: Managing Growth and Protecting Open Space

City Population: Approximately 67,000

Values and Drivers of Change: Environmental stewardship, growth management

The 1970s marked a turning point. Rapid post-World War II growth and concern for the region’s natural setting led to the first Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan in 1977. The Service Area concept coordinated city-county planning and a limit on residential growth of 2% per year established a framework for compact, managed development and rural land preservation that continues today.

These policies successfully limited sprawl and protected open space, however, they also contributed to rising housing costs and reinforced narrow definitions of community character that were not equally accessible to everyone in the community.

1980s: Urban Design, Downtown Vitality and Transportation

City Population: Approximately 77,000

Values and Drivers of Change: Livability, design quality

With growth limits largely in place, planning during the 1980s shifted from how much the city should grow to how it should function and feel. Planners focused on urban design, downtown vitality, multimodal transportation and historic preservation.

These efforts strengthened Boulder’s sense of place and urban experience. At the same time, higher development costs and design expectations contributed to exclusivity in some areas.



1990s: Balancing Jobs, Housing and Neighborhood Character

City Population: Approximately 84,000

Values and Drivers of Change: Balance, affordability, neighborhood protection

By the 1990s, much of Boulder’s easily developable land had already been built out, while job growth, particularly in technology, research and the university continued to accelerate. Geographic constraints and rising demand for jobs and housing intensified tensions between affordability, traffic, the pace of neighborhood change and community character.

There was growing recognition in the community that earlier growth limits, while effective at preserving open space, had also contributed to rising housing costs and increased traffic from commuters who worked in Boulder but lived elsewhere, due in part to affordability issues. In response, the city established its first requirements for permanently affordable housing and identified rural lands that could eventually support future urban development (i.e., Area 3-Planning Reserve). Even with these interventions, maintaining a housing and jobs balance was difficult, and the issues of affordability and congestion continued to get worse.

2000s: Sustainability, Increased Density and Mixed-Use

City Population: Approximately 94,000

Values and Drivers of Change: Sustainability, compact urban form, climate action

In the 2000s, Boulder faced the combined effects of long-standing growth limits, a strong job market and rising awareness of climate change. Planning emphasized efficient land use, mixed-use development and alignment with transit and climate values. Efforts like the Transit Village Area Plan reflected integrated approaches to higher density mixed use, transportation and sustainability. At this time, Boulder emerged as a national leader in climate change planning, but affordability pressures continued to intensify.

2010s: Resilience, Inclusivity, Climate Response and Housing Diversity

City Population: Approximately 98,000

Core Values and Drivers of Change: Climate change, inclusivity, housing options

Comprehensive Plan updates in the 2010s more fully integrated resilience along with sustainability. Policies have supported greater diversity of housing types, design excellence, affordable housing and requiring community benefits in exchange for additional height or density. Climate response in the city expanded including a commitment to an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050 and 100% renewable electricity by 2030. Planning increasingly recognized that environmental leadership and a compact urban form must be paired with social and economic inclusion. Even so, tensions between affordability, growth, traffic congestion and ambitious climate goals remain central challenges for the Boulder Valley community.

Early 2020s: Pandemic and Disaster Response, Equity and Housing Supply

City Population: Approximately 108,000

Core Values and Drivers of Change: Resilience to major disturbances, economic development, equity for all, housing supply

This period began with a global pandemic that resulted in a rapid shift in the way people lived and worked. Remote work led to mass migrations to lifestyle locations like Colorado and Boulder that accelerated rising housing costs and widened economic disparities. The societal, public health and economic challenges of the pandemic were paired with increased wildfire and high wind events that led the community to place an even higher focus on how to improve resilience to major disturbances and the impacts of climate change. National, state and local efforts to increase housing supply as an additional tool to address the housing crisis also began to take hold.



Mobile vaccination clinic in Boulder during the COVID-19 pandemic

Moving Forward

Boulder Valley planning has reflected the values and priorities of its time at each update, helping create the high quality of life many experience today. At the same time, planning decisions are not neutral. They reflect who had access to decision-making and whose voices were heard. Too often, Indigenous people, communities of color, lower-income residents, renters, students, immigrants, people with disabilities and working families were excluded from meaningful participation or directly harmed by policies. Even well-intentioned policies contributed to rising housing costs and limited who could afford to live in the Boulder Valley. These patterns continue to affect access to housing, opportunities and civic voice today.

Today, our community recognizes that good planning must go beyond physical design and environmental protection. It must also address inequities and remove barriers to participation. This update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan aims to address many of these challenges by utilizing the city's Sustainability, Equity and Resilience (SER) Framework as a foundation for community conversations and decision-making.

A central theme of this update is connection: between people and nature, housing and opportunity, neighborhoods and services, and among community members themselves. By learning from the past and widening participation and belonging today, this next chapter of planning aims to create a more inclusive, connected and sustainable future for the Boulder Valley.



Children play in Civic Area

Planning Together in the Boulder Valley

Boulder’s natural beauty, sitting against a mountain backdrop, highlighted by the Flatirons and foothills to the west, with open space and rural lands extending to the east, north and south is one of its defining features.

While the Boulder Valley has undoubtedly changed over the years, its overall form, a compact city framed by natural landscapes did not happen by chance. The City of Boulder and Boulder County have worked together for decades to preserve open space in the Boulder Valley and focus urban growth within defined areas. Coordinated planning, shared policies and long-term investments in land conservation have shaped a community where development is concentrated and surrounding landscapes are protected.

This pattern of a compact city surrounded by natural and rural areas helps define Boulder’s strong sense of place, preserves agricultural lands and sustains habitats and biodiversity. Neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the University campus are connected to both farms and foothills and anchored by greenways and urban parks throughout the city. This results in a community where urban daily life is closely linked to access to the natural environment and rural activities and character are maintained, without the pressure of potential urbanization. Community members in both the city and surrounding areas value this urban and rural distinction, and this continues to guide planning decisions today.



Activity along Boulder Creek



Play at a local court

Community Snapshot and Local Trends

This snapshot highlights big-picture trends about Boulder Valley community members, those who live, work and visit the area. The following describes where and how people live and work, how they move around and what is changing in the city. These patterns help explain why planning for the future matters and what challenges and opportunities the Boulder Valley might face. Understanding where Boulder is today is essential to making thoughtful choices about where the community wants to go next.

People and Demographics

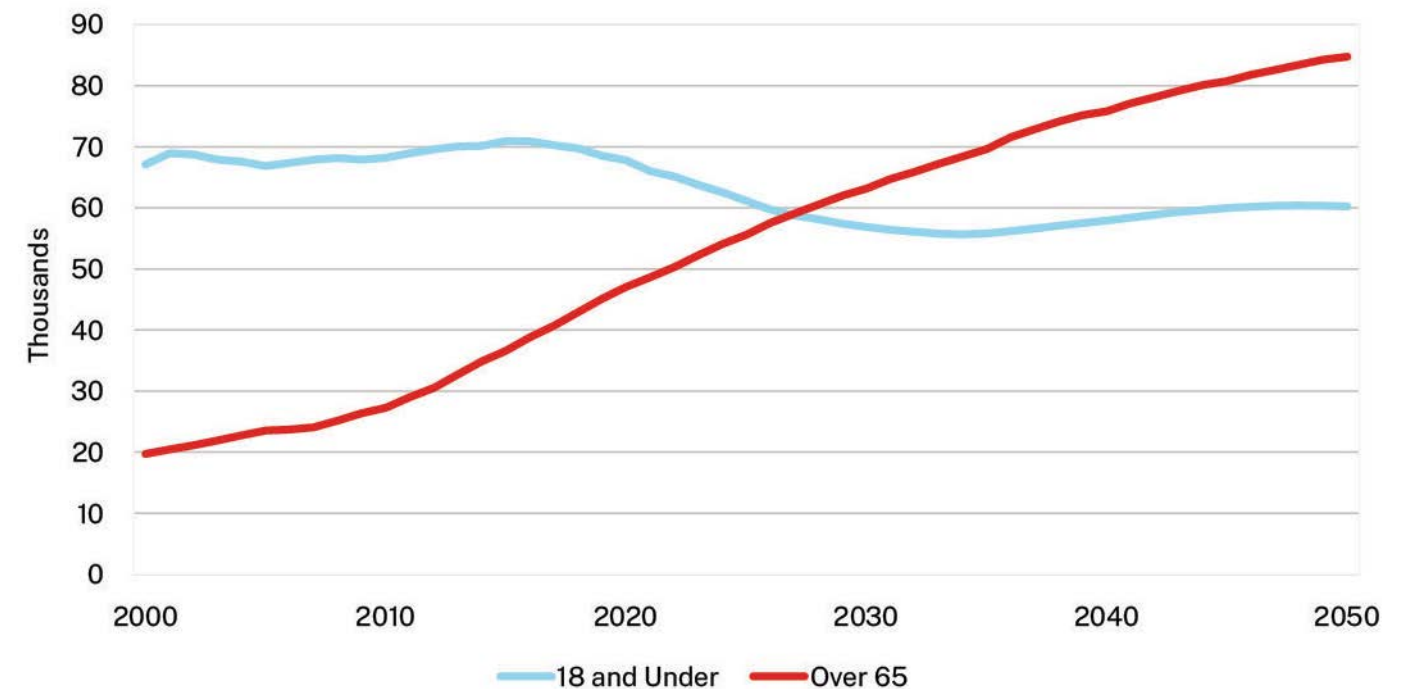
Population, Youth and Older Adults

Most people who live in the Boulder Valley live in the city of Boulder. The city is both a college town with a lot of young people and a community where many are approaching retirement and would like to age in place. This

demographic creates diverse needs for housing, transportation choices and mobility, healthcare access, various services and public spaces as people in different phases of life have different needs.

- About 121,000 people live in the Boulder Valley today, including about 106,900 in the city of Boulder.
- Young adults ages 18–29 make up about 41% of the city’s population, largely due to the University of Colorado Boulder
- About 16% of community members are aged 60 or older, and this group is growing
- The number of people over age 80 is expected to more than triple by 2050.
- The Colorado State Demography Office projects the population for the city of Boulder to be about 118,800 in the year 2045.

Boulder County Population by Age Group Over Time



Declining K-12 School Enrollment

Nationally, the school-age population is in decline. In Boulder, this is acute as enrollment in the Boulder Valley School District has declined since 2017, especially in the elementary grades. Fewer children in the area influences neighborhood activity, school facilities and long-term community health.

Housing

Local Housing

Housing plays a central role in who can live in Boulder, how far people commute to work here, and whether the community can support its workforce.

- There are about 58,000 homes in the Boulder Valley
- Roughly 53,000 are located in the city's Service Area (Areas 1 and 2). These include single-family houses, duplexes and town homes, apartments, condominiums, manufactured homes and accessory dwelling units.
- About half of all homes are apartments or condos.
- Around 40% are single-unit detached homes.
- This mix of housing types is similar to other peer cities with universities
- 47% of housing units in the city are owner-occupied homes and 53% of units are occupied by renters. The proportion of for-rent homes is higher than the state average (about 34%) and likely influenced by the presence of the university and concentration of young professionals.



New Housing

Since 2015, most of the new housing built in the city has been apartments and condominiums. An average of about 370 homes have been built each year over the past decade. These are concentrated in areas near downtown, Boulder Junction, CU Boulder, and parts of east, north and south Boulder. Manufactured housing within the city limits also increased, largely due to the annexation of a mobile home park.

Housing Cost

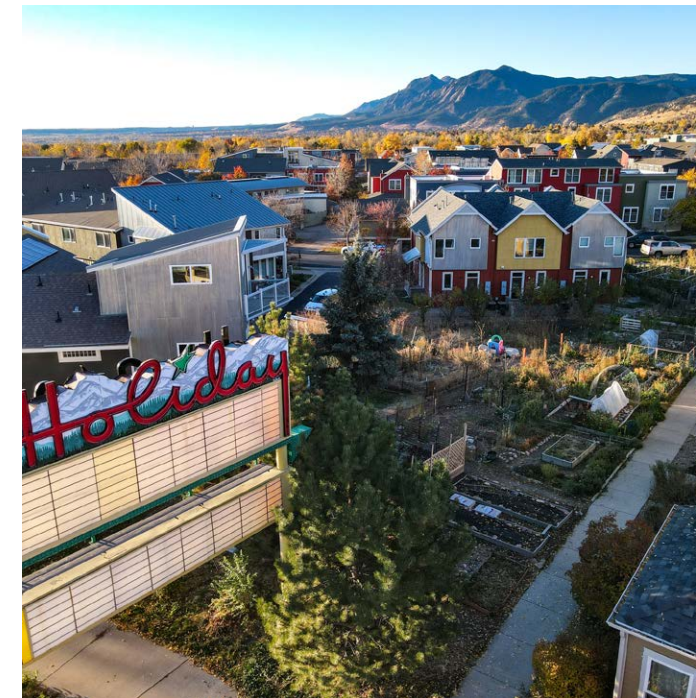
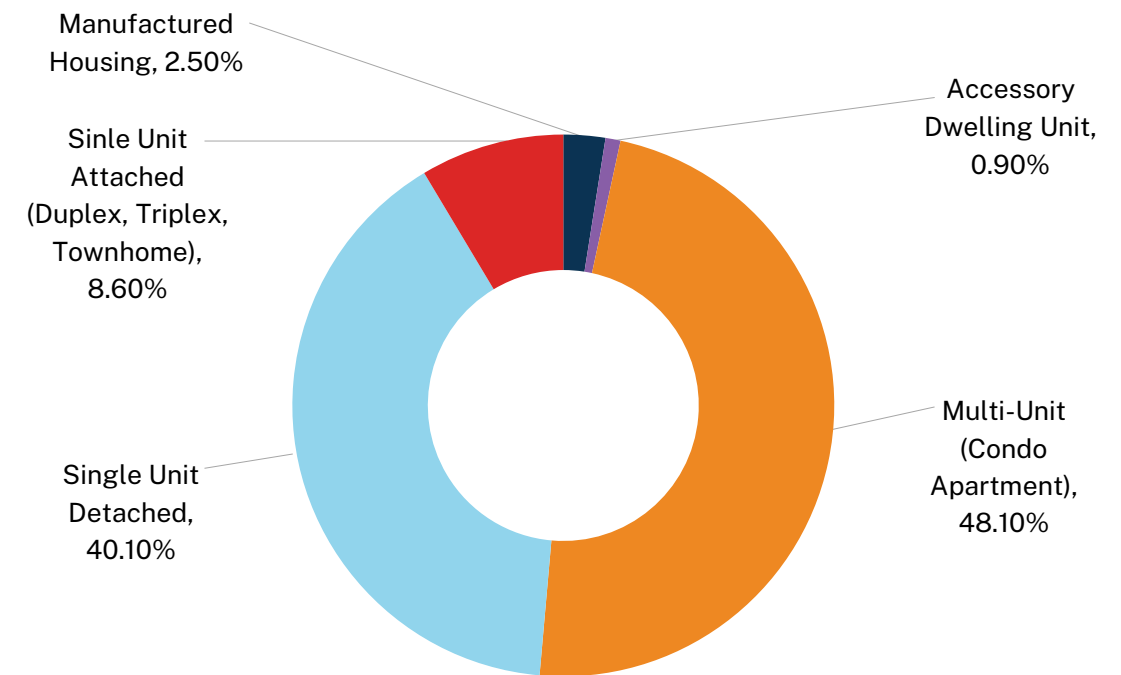
Housing prices have risen significantly over the past decade. In 2025, the median price of single-family homes sold in the city was about \$1.28 million, a 70% increase from 2015. Local rents have also gone up. The median home rent in the city is around \$2,000. This is higher than the median for the county (about \$1,900) and the median for the state (about \$1,700).

Affordable Housing

There are over 4,300 permanently affordable homes in the city. That makes up 8.9% of the total housing available and serves about 9,500 residents. Since 2000, the city has added, on average, 127 permanently affordable homes annually. From 2000 to 2014 about 40% of those homes were affordable homeownership and around 60% were affordable rental homes, serving low, moderate and middle income households. Since 2015, that proportion has shifted to about 5% affordable homeownership and 95% affordable rental homes annually.

Transportation and Daily Travel

Composition of Housing Types in City of Boulder



View of Holiday neighborhood



Single-family home in Boulder

Transportation

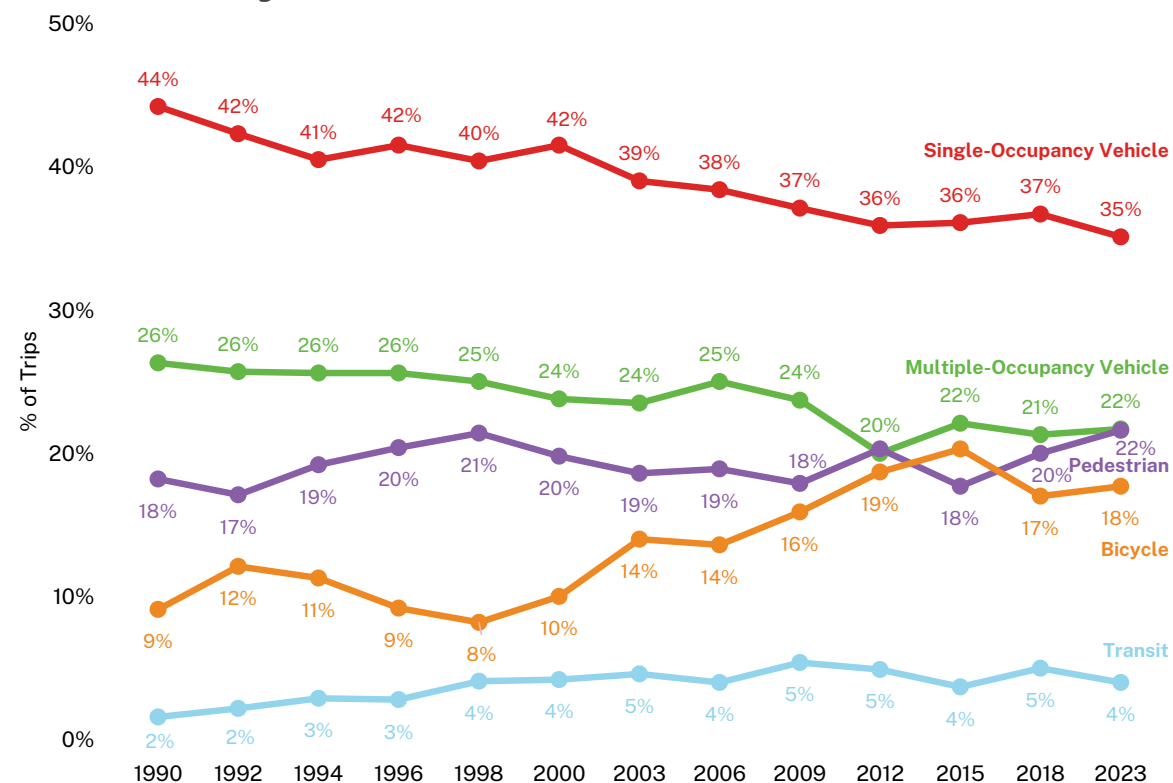
How People Travel

Travel choices shape daily life, safety, and the community's climate impact. People use a variety of ways to move around the community, including driving, bicycling, using the bus, walking and rolling. When looking at the main forms of transportation and travel patterns, there has been a shift over time.

- Single-occupant vehicle (SOV) travel for all trips by Boulder residents continues to decline. 35% of all trips by residents are in an SOV. While SOV has declined significantly since 1990, the city is not on track to meet its 2030 goal of 20%.
- Transit system ridership is recovering but has not rebounded to pre-COVID levels. Transit service cuts have not been fully restored, fewer employers opt to provide EcoPass transit passes to employees, and increased teleworking remain factors impacting ridership.

- 18% of Boulder resident trips are on bicycles or scooters, with 4% of these trips on an e-bike or e-scooter.
- More jobs in Boulder are held by non-resident employees than resident employees, and both groups continue to travel differently. An estimated 77% of non-resident employees use single-occupancy vehicles to get to their jobs in Boulder. However, resident employees have better access to multimodal options and take more multimodal trips to get to work.
- There is a growing gap between the average commute distance for non-resident and resident employees, with non-resident employees currently commuting over 18 miles on average.
- About 60% of community members who live in Boulder work outside the city, the vast majority commuting by car.

City Resident Travel Choice Over Time



Economy and Jobs

Boulder's economy is creative, innovative, and closely tied to several major influences like the University of Colorado, national government research laboratories, a diverse business base and a highly educated population. These assets help drive the economy and support a high quality of life, while also creating pressures related to costs of living, commuting, land use and equity.

Employment and Businesses

Boulder has a broad range of businesses, including a high concentration in advanced technology industries, and serves as a major employment hub along the Front Range with more jobs than working-age residents. Having businesses in a wide variety of industries helps make the local economy more resilient.

- About 95,000 jobs and 8,000 employers are located in the city of Boulder.
- Most businesses are small, 90% of the city's employers have fewer than 20 employees.
- Only 1.5% of the city's employers have 100 or more employees, however, they provide 46% of jobs in the city.

Job growth over the past decade has been modest, an average less than 0.5% per year over the past decade. Job gains were concentrated in professional, technical and manufacturing sectors. Over the past few years, retail, entertainment, and food services businesses have seen losses or uneven recovery due to several factors including changing buying habits and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many businesses face increasing costs for space, labor and operations. Increased office vacancies, especially downtown, reflect shifts toward remote and hybrid work and impact foot traffic, street activity and commercial area vitality.



Activity in downtown



Boulder Theater

Preparing for the Future: The Next 20 Years

Trends Matter

Understanding recent changes and local trends can help the community understand updated and new policies and inform how the community manages change over the next 20 years. **Below are some local trends that have informed this comprehensive plan:**

- The local population is aging and an older demographic has different needs and requires different services. Local policies and land use planning should reflect this shift to support the community in the future.
- As an older demographic makes up a larger proportion of the community, youth populations under age 18 will get smaller. Children similarly need supportive services and access to a range of programs that can help them grow and thrive in Boulder.
- Rising housing costs and limited housing choices are closely linked with cost of living in Boulder, local commuting patterns into and out of the city and county, as well as local spending and economics. Planning for distributed, diverse housing options and a range of price points can influence many outcomes, including transportation and the economy.
- Changing workplaces throughout the city and shifts to remote and hybrid work styles also affect important elements of daily life like traffic and community vitality. Evolving the city to meet new daily patterns will be essential to success.
- The changing climate and increasing natural hazard risks have serious implications for community safety. Planning for response and recovery while working towards reducing risks will help the community adapt to the changing conditions.



Additionally, the community is influenced by regional, national and global trends. **The following are trends that the community should plan for as we move to the future:**

- Feelings of safety and inclusion across the country are challenged. As key elements of the Boulder Valley's Vision and Values, the importance of local support for diversity, equity and inclusion becomes essential.
- Public school enrollment is projected to continue to decline across the country due to decreasing birth rates, migration patterns and growing popularity of private schools and educational alternatives. This impacts public school funding and can have local impacts on equitable access to high quality education for all children.
- Changes in environmental regulation and funding for programs that manage pollution of air and water, greenhouse gas emissions and the use of protected public lands could impact local efforts to adapt to climate change and manage natural resources. To stay true to Boulder's environmental values and climate action goals, the community may have to build greater strength in local and regional partnerships.
- Changes in funding and access for housing and human services programs puts additional responsibility on local agencies to support essential needs for community members.
- Misinformation and changes to the flow of information at the global, national and local levels can create confusion and in some cases, such as that of natural hazards, pose a direct threat to lives. Boulder's commitment to a responsibly governed community and transparent decision-making will be essential for establishing trust and providing essential and unbiased information.



City of Boulder Junior Rangers

Chapter 2

Vision and Values

The community was asked to think about the future and identify key issues that the plan should address. This sparked big ideas and refined priorities. This chapter offers a vision statement intended to express what the community aspires to be in the future. It also describes seven community values that lead policies throughout the plan.

Vision

The City of Boulder and Boulder County work together to build a strong future for the community. We are committed to a shared vision that reflects the values and hopes of the people who live, work and play here.

Our community works together to ensure everyone belongs, to create opportunities for all and to sustain the health of the Boulder Valley for future generations.

To realize this vision, we will:

Balance housing opportunities and economic activity with natural ecosystems and rural lands.

Serve as a model for innovation and action as we face a changing climate.

Strengthen physical and social connections that are accessible to everyone.

Embrace our differences and leverage our community assets and creative spirit to solve tough problems.

Public art installation Civic Area Park. Artist: Molly Gambardella

Community Values

The comprehensive plan is grounded in shared community values. These values guide policies, land use decisions, and public investments, helping the community make thoughtful choices about our collective future. Through the comprehensive planning process, community members reaffirmed these values.



Accessible and Connected

Our sustainable multimodal transportation system and open access to information connect people safely and seamlessly to each other and to opportunities.



Livable

Our community is a great place to live, with safe, well-built homes and buildings, and well-maintained infrastructure that supports the diverse ways people live, work, learn and play.



Economically Vital

Our economy is resilient, inclusive and driven by innovation and collaboration to benefit all who live, work and visit the Boulder Valley.



Responsibly Governed

Our government serves with integrity, manages resources wisely and makes decisions shaped by data and inclusive community voices, including those historically left out.



Environmentally Sustainable

Our community lives in balance with nature by committing to clean energy, conserving resources and improving the ecosystems that support and sustain us.



Safe

Our community is welcoming and inclusive, ensures everyone is safe and cared for during emergencies and in day-to-day life and provides reliable infrastructure to keep our air, water and land clean.



Healthy and Socially Thriving

Our community nurtures well-being where everyone can meet their needs, champions human rights, and offers rich opportunities to learn, create, connect and enjoy life.



Community members workshop local policy issues

Chapter 3

Policies

Interpreting Policy

The city and county strive to achieve Community Values. Comprehensive plan policies expand on the Community Values providing guidance and direction for achieving the Vision of the plan. Many policies contained in the plan are aspirational and indicate how the community would like to evolve over the next 20 years. Others describe clear direction on city and county processes or decisions. The policies are not prioritized and no one policy or set of policies must be satisfied by any one action, ordinance, regulation, development application or program. There are inherent competing values among the policies that require careful analysis and consideration of tradeoffs when implementing the plan in the various ways discussed above.

1. Equity, Racial Justice and Social Resilience

The city and county work to dismantle institutional and systemic racism and are committed to ensuring all voices, experiences, and needs of community members are fully and equitably heard and considered, including those of communities that have been historically excluded from local government. The city and county will work to reduce the vulnerabilities of people most susceptible to natural or human-caused stressors. Equity is a primary consideration for city investments in engagement, infrastructure, programming, and maintenance.

2. City and County Collaboration

The city and county collaborate to implement the shared goals described in this plan and other respective adopted policies and plans and mitigate cross-jurisdictional impacts.

3. Public Institution Coordination

The city coordinates with public institutions that are not subject to city regulation, like the University of Colorado, Boulder Valley School District and federal research laboratories, to address critical needs and align future plans that support shared values.

4. Regional and Statewide Collaboration

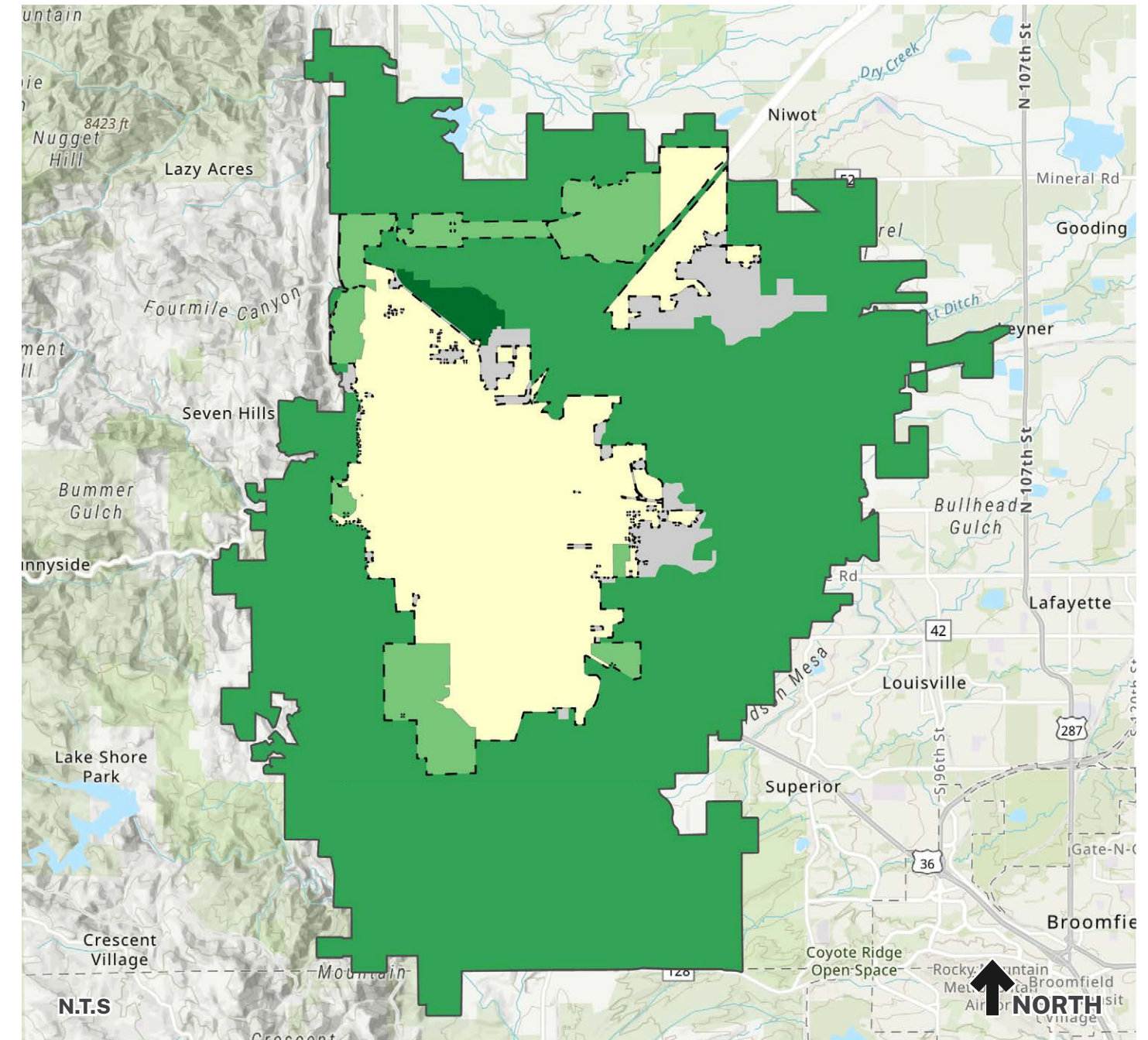
The city and county pursue cooperative regional planning, intergovernmental agreements, and shared initiatives to address needs of the Boulder Valley. The city and county will collaborate with partner agencies across the region and state to advance shared goals and actions.

5. Boulder Valley Planning Areas

The city and county establish the joint vision for urban growth and rural preservation within the Boulder Valley through a framework of defined Planning Areas. For these purposes, the Service Area is defined as Area 1-Urban Lands and Area 2-Urban Edge.

- a. **Area 1-Urban Lands** refers to land within the city of Boulder that is currently or planned to be served by the full range of urban facilities and services and where new urban development can occur.
- b. **Area 1-Open Lands** refers to publicly owned land within the city of Boulder where new urban development is not supported by the plan and is intended to remain rural in character. Limited facilities and services may be provided to these rural areas if consistent with this plan. May also include publicly owned property with a full range of services included in the city of Boulder for health, welfare and safety reasons.
- c. **Area 2-Urban Edge** refers to unincorporated Boulder County lands where annexation to the city is supported by the plan. New urban development is not supported, and the full range of urban services will not be provided by the city. Limited facilities and services may be provided if consistent with this plan.
- d. **Area 3-Rural Preservation** refers to land within unincorporated Boulder County that is intended to remain rural in character. New urban development is not supported, and this area will not be served by the full range of urban facilities and services. Annexation to the city is not allowed except in limited circumstances as described by this plan.
- e. **Area 3-Planning Reserve** refers to land within unincorporated Boulder County that may be considered for future expansion of the Service Area per the policies of this plan and procedures included in the intergovernmental agreement between the city and county.

Boulder Valley Planning Areas 1 2 3



Planning Area	Provision of City Services	Eligible for Annexation	Eligible for New Urban Development
Area 1-Urban Lands	Yes	N/A	Yes
Area 1-Open Lands	Limited*	N/A	No
Area 2-Urban Edge	Limited	Yes	No
Area 3-Rural Preservation	No	No	No
Area 3-Planning Reserve	No	No	No

Planning Area
 City Limits

* The full range of city services may be provided to Area 1-Open Lands locations that are annexed for health, safety and welfare reasons.



6. New Urban Development

New urban development may only occur in Area 1-Urban Lands and only if adequate facilities and services are available or anticipated by the city through the Capital Improvements Program.

7. Development in Area 2

The county regulates development and redevelopment in Area 2 as allowed by the Boulder County Land Use Code. The county will not allow new urban development in Area 2. Annexation into the city shall be required prior to any approval for new urban development. The county refers applications for development in Area 2 to the city.

8. Development in Area 3

The county regulates development and redevelopment in Area 3 as allowed by the Boulder County Land Use Code. The county will not allow over-intensive rural development in Area 3. The county refers applications to the city if the proposed activities could be deemed over-intensive.

9. No New Incorporated Places

The city and county oppose the establishment of new incorporated communities within the Boulder Valley Planning Area.

10. Annexation

The city will not annex properties outside the boundaries of the Boulder Valley Planning Area. Annexations are primarily initiated through a property owner petition process except as otherwise allowed by state law including, but not limited to, annexation of enclaves and city-owned property.

The city encourages annexation of the following properties:

- Area 2 properties entirely contained within the city (enclaves), substantially developed properties along the western boundary that are below (east of) the Blue Line, and other substantially developed properties adjacent to the city.
- Area 2 properties that resolve an issue of public health concern without creating additional development impacts.
- Area 2 properties that offer significant development or redevelopment potential if they offer a special opportunity or community benefit to the city.

The city allows annexation of the following properties:

- Publicly-owned properties located in Area 3 that will remain rural in character and require less than a full range of urban services or that are included under city jurisdiction for health, welfare and safety reasons.
- Portions of modestly sized privately-owned parcels located in Area 3 if they are annexed with portions of the same parcel located in Area 2 to avoid split jurisdiction.

11. Community Benefit Associated with Annexation

The city considers the annexation of land with significant development or redevelopment potential only if it offers a special opportunity or benefit to the city. The creation of permanently affordable housing will be emphasized as a community benefit, but other benefits such as preservation of significant environmental and/or historic resources, dedication of land and/or facilities for public purposes, or other community benefits may also be considered. The city will not require properties with existing development that are seeking no greater density or building size to provide the same level of community benefit until an application for greater development is submitted.

12. Service Provision to Annexations

The city requires annexation before the full range of urban facilities and services are provided. The city may provide new services and facilities in phases to substantially developed areas that are annexed and may require upgrades to meet city standards if they are needed to protect community health and safety. The city and county collaborate with urban service providers to reduce duplication of efforts, maximize economic and resource efficiencies in efforts to provide the public with reliable and equitable levels of service.

13. Provision of Urban Facilities and Services

The City of Boulder should be the sole provider of the full range of urban facilities and services for new urban development. Urban facilities and services provided by the city are public water, public sewer, stormwater and flood management, urban fire protection and emergency medical care, urban police protection, urban transportation and urban parks. The city will locate improvements necessary to deliver urban services, where reasonably practicable, within the municipal boundary.

14. Timing of Urban Services for Urban Development

The city requires adequate urban facilities and services based on established level of service standards to be available prior to or concurrent with new urban development and redevelopment.

15. Development to Pay Fair Share of New Facility Costs

The city plans and invests in urban facilities and services as determined by the Capital Improvements Program. New urban development or redevelopment will be expected to pay its fair share, including the cost of providing necessary facilities and an equitable share of services.



16. Out-of-City Utility Service

The city will consider providing limited water and sewer services to Area 2 only if consistent with the city’s annexation policies and Capital Improvement Program. City facilities located in Area 2 and Area 3 may be provided with limited urban services if consistent with this plan, or as otherwise necessary for the city to provide another urban facility and service to Area 1. Nothing within this plan prohibits the city from denying the provision of urban services to any property within the Boulder Valley for utility-related reasons.

17. The Blue Line

The city does not provide public water or sewer infrastructure and associated services above (west) of the Blue Line. In 2016, the city adopted Ordinance 8133, which changed the location of the Blue Line. Ordinance 8133 was intended to clarify the location of the Blue Line and to permit water service to existing development in the area. Land in Area 2 that was moved below (east of) the Blue Line with Ordinance 8133 shall be considered substantially developed and no additional dwelling units may be added upon annexation.

18. Assimilation of Special District Facilities and Services Upon Annexation

The city will take all reasonable and legal steps to assimilate the facilities and services of special districts and other service providers by the city upon annexation of Area 2 lands.

19. Land Use Regulations Compliance

The city and county abide by existing applicable land use regulations, where reasonably practicable, when owning and operating public facilities in the other’s jurisdiction.

20. Maintaining Existing Assets

The city maintains and cares for existing city assets and recognizes the long-term investment community members have made in shared public facilities, public spaces and infrastructure.

21. Projections for Planning

The city works with the State Demographer to develop projections of the city population and employment for twenty years into the future. Projections are based on trends and will be used to anticipate long-term changes, analyze issues and opportunities that could occur during this period, plan for long-term infrastructure needs and coordinate Boulder Valley planning with regional and state projections.

22. Open Space Preservation and Stewardship

The city and county preserve lands with open space value by purchasing or accepting donations of fee simple interests, conservation easements or development rights and other measures as appropriate and financially feasible. The city and county steward these lands to ensure ongoing protection, maintaining their open space values into the future.



23. Rural Land Preservation

The city and county preserve rural land uses and character in the Boulder Valley including natural settings and ecosystems, hazard areas, agriculturally significant lands, vistas, significant cultural and historic resources and established rural residential areas.

24. Neighborhood Character and Evolution

The city works with the community to shape how different neighborhoods evolve over time in varying ways and degrees. Change in each area will contribute to its unique and authentic character while supporting citywide goals.

25. Adaptive Reuse

The city encourages the continued use and reuse of existing buildings to recognize local history and architecture, activate vacant or under-utilized spaces, contribute to neighborhood character and retain embodied carbon by eliminating unnecessary building material waste.

26. Efficient Use of Land

The city and county work together to ensure urban development is focused to take advantage of existing urban services and avoid patterns of leapfrog, noncontiguous, scattered development within the Boulder Valley. The city encourages redevelopment and infill within municipal boundaries alongside consideration of managed expansion of the Service Area, as allowed by Area 2-Urban Edge and the Area 3-Planning Reserve, to create a compact city and prevent the negative consequences of urban sprawl.



27. Integrated Land Use and Transportation

The city aligns land use and transportation planning to integrate a variety of neighborhoods with a range of uses into a well-connected local and regional network of mobility choices. The city supports areas of higher activity near multimodal corridors and transit centers. The city and county collaborate on transit investments and improvements so that local and regional transit systems are well integrated.

28. Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Community

The city and county work to foster a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming community, recognizing that diversity strengthens community well-being. Policies and programs support equitable access to housing, employment, education, services, and public spaces, ensuring that all community members can fully participate and thrive throughout the Boulder Valley.

29. 15-Minute Neighborhoods

The city encourages the evolution of “15-minute neighborhoods.” 15-minute neighborhoods are diverse, inclusive and connected areas in which services and amenities are easily and equitably accessible within 15 minutes from home for pedestrians of all abilities.

The Future of 15-Minute Neighborhoods



Community Assembly Members, 2025

Many Boulder community members have aspired for a future that includes more walkable neighborhoods that will ensure the community’s environmental health, social equity and economic vitality. These aspirations also point to cost-effective infrastructure and facility investments, a high level of multimodal mobility and easy access to employment, recreation, shopping and other amenities, as part of Boulder’s image as a distinct community.

To explore this concept and provide community-driven recommendations, Boulder launched its first Community Assembly, a democratic process that brought together 43 randomly selected community members for seven full-day sessions. The assembly learned from experts, shared lived experiences, and developed a clear definition of a 15-minute neighborhood:

The assembly identified the following as essential components of a 15-minute neighborhood:

- **Community Center: A hub for education, social connection and emergency support.**
- **Groceries and Food: Accessible options for healthy living.**
- **Parks and Green Space: Places to relax and connect with nature.**
- **Mobility Hub: Multi-modal transportation options linking neighborhoods.**

Additional features that the Assembly identified to make a 15-minute neighborhood flourish include: medical services, gyms, restaurants, retail, public art spaces or community gardens.

The city already includes some accessible, walkable areas with a mix of housing, parks and local businesses. Areas like Downtown Boulder, North Broadway and Boulder Junction are some examples. Other areas in the city are still more isolated and require community members to travel longer distances to access things like groceries, childcare or other daily essentials.

The comprehensive plan incorporates the Community Assembly’s recommendations into policy and the land use strategy to support evolution of isolated areas to 15-minute neighborhoods.



A 15-minute Neighborhood, Downtown Boulder

“A diverse, inclusive, and connected community where essential services and amenities are easily and equitably accessible within 15 minutes for pedestrians of all abilities.”

30. Urban Natural Infrastructure

The city promotes and maintains a network of high-quality natural infrastructure including waterways, open lands, parks, urban tree canopy, and plant and habitat corridors to integrate environmental, social, health and recreation functions.

31. Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Resources Preservation

The city and county identify, evaluate, designate, and steward historic places, archaeological resources, and cultural landscapes, including associated intangible cultural heritage such as traditions, practices, knowledge, and living relationships to place. Through policies and programs, the city and county elevate diverse stories that foster a shared sense of belonging and help the community understand where it has been, where it is, and where it is going. In collaboration with departments and community partners, historic and cultural resource stewardship supports a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future that reflects and honors the full diversity of the Boulder Valley community.

32. Healthy Ecosystems

The city and county sustain healthy ecosystems and biodiversity within the valley, by integrating ecological values into planning and land management. The city and county recognize that active and intentional restoration and management of lands with potential ecological value can result in significant future benefits to the Boulder Valley.



33. Wetland and Riparian Areas

The city and county recognize wetlands and riparian areas as vital ecological and community assets. The city and county have programs that identify, improve, restore and protect the value of wetlands and riparian areas in the Boulder Valley. The city strives for no net loss of wetlands and riparian areas in the Boulder Valley through the city's wetland regulations that discourage development in wetlands and provide guidance on minimizing and mitigating any impacts.

34. Climate Action

The city and county prioritize climate action that addresses the need to reduce the production of climate warming emissions while growing the community's resilience and adaptive capacity, preparing people, buildings, infrastructure and natural systems for changing conditions. The city will advance equity and climate justice by prioritizing support for those most affected by climate impacts.

35. Environmental Design in Public Projects

The city and county plan and design public buildings, facilities and infrastructure to integrate nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure elements that enhance natural systems, increase biodiversity, increase resilience to wildfire, reduce urban heat, increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, improve water use efficiency, manage stormwater and provide health and social benefits for community members.

36. Boulder Valley Biodiversity

The city and county recognize that community well-being and environmental health are interdependent. The city and county consider the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in decision-making, ensuring that future policies, programs and projects contribute to the long-term health and resilience of local ecosystems and urban settings that may benefit from a diversity of both native and non-native species. The city and county further support biodiversity through the preservation of rural lands and open space to reduce the fragmentation of landscapes and maintain larger connected ecosystems.

37. Design Excellence for all Projects

The city expects urban development and public places to be designed and built to achieve high standards of excellence. New public and private projects should respond to Boulder's unique sense of place, including its natural beauty, architectural character and significant historic and cultural resources.

38. Stormwater and Drainageways Integrated Management

The city manages stormwater and flood risk through a comprehensive approach that emphasizes site-level drainage practices and the safe conveyance of flows through Boulder Creek and its tributaries. Urban development incorporates stormwater practices, such as natural infrastructure, that slow, store, and treat runoff at the source.

39. Greenway Preservation and Management

The city preserves and manages greenways to manage and mitigate flooding, support multi-functional landscapes and ecosystem services, protect cultural resources and offer recreation and multi-use transportation amenities.

40. Nature-Based Urban Cooling and Heat Management

The city enhances and maintains tree canopy, healthy vegetation, and other cooling strategies to reduce the impacts of extreme heat. Efforts to improve or increase cooling and heat management strategies will prioritize vulnerable populations while balancing the need for wildfire risk reduction and water conservation.

41. Water Quality Protection and Improvement

The city and county protect and improve water quality within the Boulder Creek Watershed. Both entities prioritize source water protection and watershed planning efforts to protect creeks and reservoirs for drinking water, aquatic life and recreation. The city will pursue wastewater treatment processes to achieve water quality improvements, energy efficiencies and resource recovery, including biosolids reuse.

42. Water Resources Planning

City water resource planning efforts consider climate change, have a regional perspective and use a variety of strategies, including water conservation, infrastructure improvements, water leasing and water acquisition, to meet municipal uses and open space and agricultural goals. The city seeks to achieve the water supply reliability criteria through water supply and demand management while balancing in-stream flow maintenance and preservation of sustainable agriculture. The city seeks to minimize or mitigate the environmental, agricultural and economic impacts of any necessary water rights acquisitions, including avoiding the permanent removal of land from agricultural production due to conversion of agricultural water to municipal and industrial uses.

The Future of the City's Water Supply



Boulder Creek

Long-term Planning

Boulder has planned carefully over the years to ensure a reliable community water supply guided by comprehensive plan policies and planning projections. The comprehensive plan lays a foundation for the city's approach to water supply planning, which is further detailed in the following city plans:

- **2009 Source Water Master Plan**
- **2022 Drought Plan**
- **2023 Water Efficiency Plan**
- **2023 Source Water Protection Plan**

Water Supply Sources

The City of Boulder is the primary water provider for developed lands within Areas 1 and 2. The city provides high-quality, reliable municipal water by diverting raw (untreated) water from its source areas, treating it at one of the city's two water treatment plants and distributing it through pipelines to customer

taps. Proactive and forward-looking water supply planning, management and operations ensures adequate water deliveries to the water treatment plants under a range of conditions.

Boulder's water supply comes from three sources: Middle Boulder Creek and North Boulder Creek (in the South Platte River basin) and the Colorado River basin through projects managed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. On average, about one-third of the municipal water supply comes from each of these sources, using a combination of water rights specific to each. Boulder's diversity of sources and water rights provides operational flexibility and system redundancy, allowing the city to meet water demands under variable conditions, such as seasonal or annual variation in precipitation and temperature or system outages due to planned maintenance or unexpected events such as wildfire.

Boulder's water supply is shaped by the natural variability of precipitation and streamflow. Much of the region's precipitation falls as snow, and when the snowpack melts in

the spring and early summer, streamflows are high. During this runoff period, much of the city's water demand can be met directly from the streams. Because these high flows last only a few months, Boulder captures and stores water in reservoirs during wetter periods for use later in the year. As runoff subsides and streamflows decline in late summer, fall and winter, natural streamflow is not sufficient to meet municipal demand. During these times, the city supplements stream diversions with water released from storage. City reservoirs also serve as a buffer against drought and therefore are not completely drained every year, ensuring a drought reserve. On a daily basis, the city considers water availability, water rights, water quality, legal requirements, hydroelectric generation potential and infrastructure capacity when determining which sources to use to meet water demand.

Because developing new water supplies is both time- and cost-intensive, Boulder's water supply planning must look decades ahead to ensure future needs can be met. This forward-looking approach requires making informed assumptions about many unknowns. Key areas of uncertainty include future climate

conditions, potential changes in Colorado River management that could reduce water allocations to Front Range communities like Boulder, and how land use and water demand may evolve within the city.

An Integrated Water Supply Plan

The city will develop an Integrated Water Supply Plan (IWSP), which will guide Boulder's approach to maintaining risk resilience and meeting future demands based on the policies in the comprehensive plan. As an update to the 2009 Source Water Master Plan, the IWSP will include quantification of water demands based on the land use designations and policies of the comprehensive plan, and, as appropriate, recommend updates to Boulder's water policies. A major focus area is expected to be the evaluation and prioritization of investments and policies to enhance water conservation and increase water supply in light of future uncertainties.



Boulder Reservoir



Outdoor education plays a role in managing local natural resources

43. Invasive Species Management

The city and county work to prevent and manage the introduction and spread of invasive plant and animal species that pose a risk to native species/communities, public health and/or ecosystem health. Management strategies are chosen that minimize impacts on human health, the environment, and non-target organisms, and protect overall biodiversity and ecosystem health. The city uses integrated pest management and other best practices to protect biodiversity and deliver critical ecosystem services while balancing ecological integrity with human safety and community needs.

44. Wildlife – Human Conflicts Management

The city and county partner with state and federal agencies to promote wildlife and land use management practices that minimize human conflicts with wildlife while conserving, restoring, and connecting habitat in the Boulder Valley. When a wildlife species is identified as a nuisance or public health concern, the city and county will partner with state and federal agencies to use a range of humane, effective, cost-conscious, and ecologically responsible management approaches.

45. Consideration of Hazards

The city and county consider hazards that present a danger to life and property like flood, wildfire, steep slopes, erosion, unstable soil, subsidence or similar geological development constraints when analyzing proposals for development. The city carefully regulates urban development and redevelopment in these areas to mitigate risks and avoid hazards to the extent reasonably practicable.

46. Floodplain Management

The city and county protect people and property from the impacts of flooding through implementation of high priority flood mitigation projects, while considering equity, ecosystem impacts and climate change, and through outreach and education to improve community preparedness. Floodways will be preserved or restored, where feasible, to protect natural functions, major drainageways will be appropriately maintained and infrastructure in the floodplain will be made more resilient to climate change.

47. Air Quality Protection

The city and county seek to reduce emissions and improve both indoor and outdoor air quality to protect public health, enhance community well-being, and support climate goals. Strategies should pursue local and regional solutions to address everyday pollutants as well as acute risks such as wildfire smoke.

48. Fossil Fuel Consumption and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction

The city and county innovate and act to reduce fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions to improve public health, strengthen community resilience and meet climate goals. The city will advance renewable energy generation and efficiency, sustainable transportation, sustainable land management and land planning practices that lower carbon emissions while supporting equity and economic vitality.

49. Electrification Transition

The city and county prioritize a transition to renewable energy and electrification, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and supporting a resilient, low-carbon future in pursuit of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Policies and programs encourage electrification of buildings, transportation and infrastructure while advancing energy efficiency and equitable, affordable access to clean energy for all community members.

50. Energy Resilience during Emergencies

The city and county pursue energy resilience so that critical services and emergency infrastructure can operate during power outages. The city supports development of a community-wide electricity network, resilience hubs, and evacuation sites capable of delivering essential services and supporting community members during outages and other emergencies.

51. Energy and Resource-Efficient Building Design

The city and county will pursue efforts to improve the energy- and resource-efficiency of new and existing buildings. Energy conservation regulation and programs will balance the community's goals for energy efficiency with the challenges of affordability.

52. Waste Minimization and the Circular Economy

The city and county pursue programs, partnerships and activities that reduce the local consumption of products and materials, encourage local reuse, reduce the amount of waste that must be landfilled, manage hazardous waste and support a circular economy.



Material for re-use at ReSource

The Future of Natural Infrastructure

As the Boulder Valley experiences more high heat days and more extremes in both precipitation and drought, steps are being taken to mitigate the impacts and build resilience in the city. Physical Infrastructure including roads, parking lots, buildings, sidewalks, and alleyways are usually made up of dark and impermeable surfaces contributing to the urban heat island effect. Built elements like rooftops, roads and parking lots frequently concentrate both rainwater and pollutants in ways that can increase impacts. Nature-based solutions like trees, bioswales, and rain gardens can be designed in proximity to these built features in ways that can mitigate these effects.

Natural infrastructure is a network of natural areas, designed ecosystems, and built infrastructure in Boulder that provides essential services like stormwater management, natural cooling, and resilience to extreme weather events, while supporting biodiversity and community well-being. By creating and maintaining natural infrastructure, we can cool the city, keep our creeks clean, protect wildlife and integrate community access.

Natural Infrastructure

The community's natural infrastructure is an interconnected network of living system elements that includes:

Waterways

Creeks, streams, and ponds are integral components of the local watershed. They offer places for the community to cool off and support thriving wildlife. Stream restoration projects may enhance flood mitigation, public safety, and biodiversity in these corridors.

Greenways

Greenways are areas adjacent to natural urban waterways, including Boulder Creek and tributary streams, that help manage and mitigate flooding, support multifunctional landscapes and ecosystem services, and protect cultural resources. Greenways may also offer recreation and active transportation amenities. These areas form an interconnected system across public and private lands.



Plan view of Boulder Creek and the surrounding areas between 6th and 9th Street

Urban Tree Canopy

A connected canopy of trees which provide shade to cool the urban environment, increase rainwater infiltration, capture particulate matter, provide opportunities for community members to relax and play and offer wildlife habitat.

Wetlands

Areas where water collects at or near the ground surface near waterways or isolated areas that act like natural sponges during wet periods by storing and slowing water, filtering runoff, and offering critical habitat areas for wildlife.



Section view of Boulder Creek and the surrounding areas between 6th and 9th Street

Biodiversity Habitats

Areas that include native and adapted grasses and wildflowers to attract pollinating insects and offer food for animals.

Raingarden, Bioswale, or Bioretention

Shallow basins or channels that collect, slow, and filter runoff from roofs, streets, parking lots, and other hard surfaces using moisture-tolerant plants and absorbent soils. They temporarily hold stormwater, capture pollutants, and allow water to soak into the ground or drain slowly to the stormwater system.

Moving Forward

Policies related to natural infrastructure in the comprehensive plan will be used as a framework to develop projects, methods, and policies to support or enhance natural infrastructure in the city.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- **Healthy Ecosystems**
- **Wetland and Riparian Areas**
- **Climate Action**
- **Environmental Design in Public Projects**

- **Stormwater and Drainageways Integrated Management**
- **Greenway Preservation and Management**
- **Nature-Based Urban Cooling**
- **Floodplain Management**

The plan's Future Land Use map designates areas of the city that will be Greenways, Parks, and Open Space today and into the future. These areas are the backbone of natural infrastructure today and will continue to be managed to increase the city's resilience.

53. Support for Redevelopment

The city encourages redevelopment activity that supports community vibrancy and the local economy and may use a variety of tools and strategies, at its discretion, including the creation of public/private partnerships and district financing tools.

54. Local Business and Affordable Space

The city supports and collaborates with partners to promote small, local and independent businesses and non-profits that serve the community by facilitating access to affordable commercial space and resources that contribute to long-term stability for businesses and community services.

55. Economic Resilience

The city monitors economic conditions and identifies emerging risks and potential challenges to prepare for potential disruptions to the economy. The city maintains fiscally responsible financial practices including conservative accounting policies and identifies new strategies that reduce the community's vulnerability to financial disruptions, household financial challenges and unexpected economic downturns.



Fox Theater



Small businesses in Boulder

56. Vital and Productive Retail Base

The city will encourage an appropriate mix of retail and identify opportunities to improve retail health to ensure community needs are able to be met within the city and support the city's sales tax revenues.

57. Business and Employment Diversity and Resilience

The city fosters a healthy, inclusive and resilient economy that includes a broad mix of businesses and employment opportunities through collaborative strategies that build on economic strengths and emerging opportunities. The city will consider the needs of businesses, workers and community members when planning for land use, arts, transportation, programs and services.

58. Primary and Emerging Industry Support

The city supports an industry cluster approach that provides specialized programs and tools to encourage the formation, expansion, attraction and retention of businesses in primary and emerging industries to support innovation, efficiency, workforce development and economic opportunities and growth.

59. Visitor Economy

The city supports a visitor economy that contributes to Boulder's vitality while ensuring that benefits flow back to the community. The city will balance the positive impacts of tourism with potential challenges, emphasizing local business support, workforce opportunities, natural and cultural resource protection, and long-term economic resilience.

60. Night Economy

The city supports a vibrant night-time economy that expands access to jobs, services, and amenities beyond traditional business hours. A safe, inclusive and well-connected night-time environment will support climate resilience during extreme heat. A thriving night economy will strengthen opportunities for workers, create safe activity during more hours of the day, foster creativity and tourism and reinforce the city's identity as a dynamic and welcoming place.

61. Experiential Economy

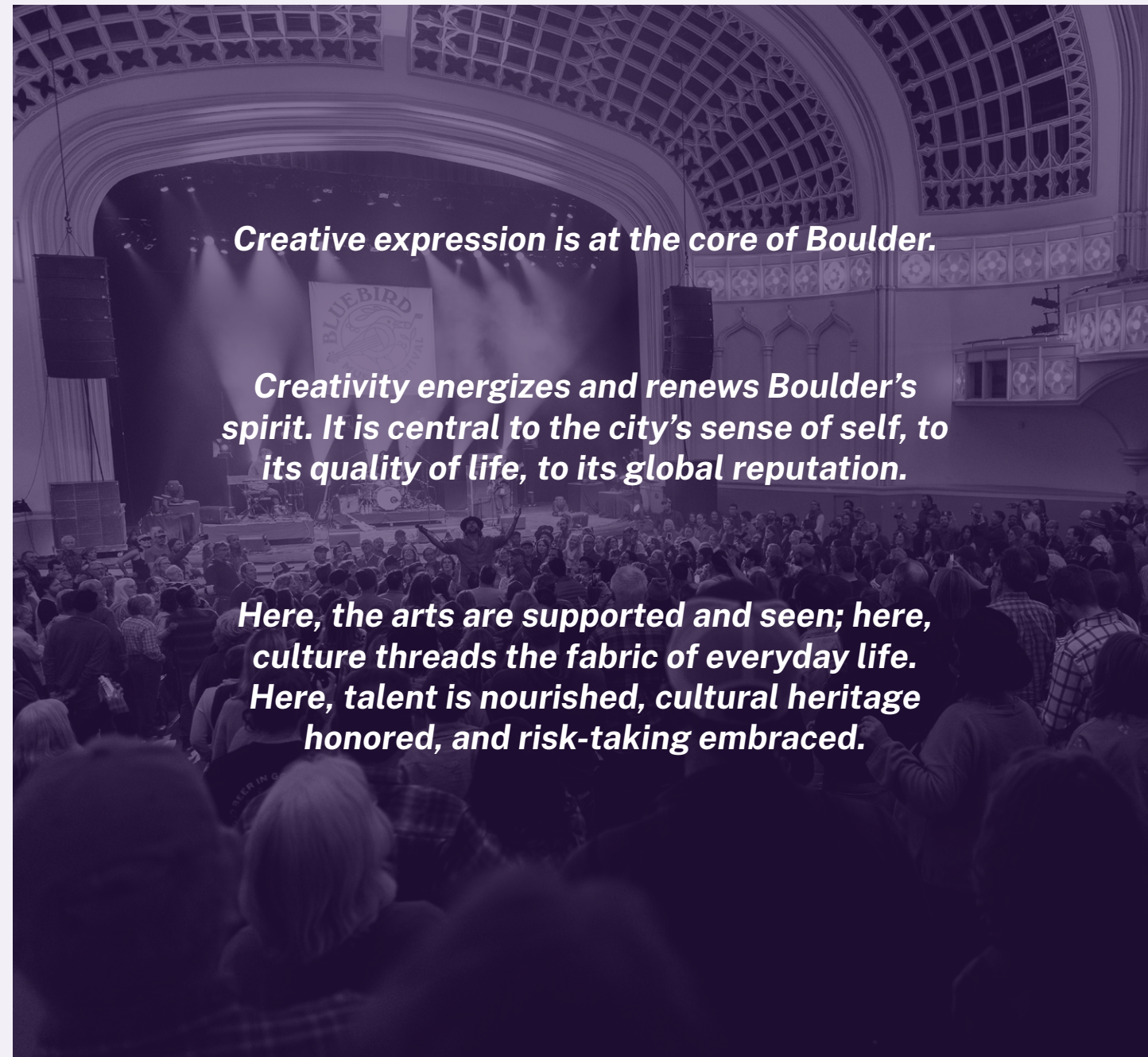
The city supports a thriving experiential economy that enhances cultural life, strengthens local business, and contributes to a resilient community. Arts, culture, heritage, dining, entertainment, events and historic places attract visitors, create jobs and enliven neighborhoods. The city will support efforts that expand opportunity, reduce barriers for arts and culture businesses and reinforce the role of arts and culture in economic diversity and cultural identity.



Events like the Bolder Boulder offer local experience and positive economic impact

The Future of Arts, Culture and the Economy

The Boulder Arts Blueprint is a strategic guide to align a vision for the arts, goals and actions across the city's arts and culture ecosystem. This Vision for the Arts builds on the community vision for Arts and Culture in Boulder's future as articulated by this plan:



Creative expression is at the core of Boulder.

Creativity energizes and renews Boulder's spirit. It is central to the city's sense of self, to its quality of life, to its global reputation.

Here, the arts are supported and seen; here, culture threads the fabric of everyday life. Here, talent is nourished, cultural heritage honored, and risk-taking embraced.

Moving towards this vision for the arts can help the community realize multiple goals related to being a Healthy and Socially Thriving place and a Livable and Accessible and Connected community. It can also have a major impact on Boulder's future Economic Vitality.

Boulder's creative sector is a defining strength of the community and a key driver of its economic vitality. Boulder County has the nation's third-highest concentration of artists, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The community is ranked as one of the top 10 most arts-vibrant medium-sized communities in the United States. The Boulder Creative Industries Report found that the concentration of creative employment in Boulder is three times the national average. The community's commitment to Arts and Culture has resulted in valuable economic activity – Americans for the Arts estimated that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$115.1 million in economic activity in 2022, \$53.5 million in spending by arts and culture organizations and an additional \$61.6 million in event-related expenditures by their audiences. And the opportunity for arts and culture in and for the community is growing. The arrival of the Sundance Film Festival will further Boulder's future as a creative and economically vital place in the west.

The comprehensive plan builds on this opportunity and provides policy that can support a robust creative and cultural economy. Explore the following policies to learn more:

- **Arts and Culture Investment**
- **Visitor Economy**
- **Night Economy**
- **Experiential Economy**
- **Social Infrastructure**
- **15-Minute Neighborhoods**

The comprehensive plan also supports place-based changes that can help this economic sector flourish:

- Community and Regional Hubs bring together housing, retail, offices, and cultural spaces in walkable, transit-connected areas. These hubs create lively destinations where residents and visitors alike support local businesses, enjoy cultural experiences, and activate public spaces, fostering a vibrant atmosphere and a strong local economy.
- Innovation and Production hubs integrate light industrial, maker spaces, and housing to foster entrepreneurship and creative industries while making an effort to retain affordable spaces that encourage experimentation, creative risk-taking and innovation.

What's Next?

As the community moves forward and begins to experience the opportunities and challenges of leaning further into the economic benefits of the arts and culture sectors, community members have voiced interest in:

- Ensuring economic benefits of major events benefit local businesses and community members
- Creating more opportunities for local entrepreneurship
- Expanding support and resources for small, local businesses
- Keep resources and wealth circulating locally
- Supporting affordable, accessible spaces for the creative community
- Elevating local voices, stories, and cultural identity alongside national and global visibility



62. Funding City Services and Infrastructure

The city promotes sustainable, diverse and flexible sources of revenue to create reliable funding for continued investment in city services, infrastructure, and maintenance to maintain high quality of life for the community. The city will explore and utilize as appropriate the variety of mechanisms enabled through state legislation, such as improvement districts, metropolitan districts, tax increment financing, and urban renewal to support redevelopment and investments in infrastructure, programs, and services.

63. City Resources Management

The city responsibly manages limited financial and staffing resources while balancing responsibilities for infrastructure investments, enhancements, maintenance, and project and program delivery. The city collaborates across internal departments to prioritize and sequence investments and programs appropriately. Sustainability, equity and resilience are prioritized in decision making.

64. Arts, Culture and Heritage Investment

The city supports a diverse range of affordable and accessible arts and cultural experiences by supporting investment in art in public places, venues, facilities, special events, and programs that reflect Boulder’s creative spirit, heritage and community diversity. Arts and cultural programs will reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of Boulder’s community members.

65. Social Infrastructure

The city supports and encourages spaces, programs and institutions throughout the city that offer social places for interpersonal connections, belonging, well-being and community cohesion for people of all cultures, generations, backgrounds and abilities. The city recognizes the value of social infrastructure to build community resilience and wellness.

66. Communications Infrastructure

The city supports and facilitates the development of convenient, affordable and secure communications infrastructure and other improvements that serve the community, help businesses thrive and grow, foster the growth of emerging telecommunications industries and support emergency systems. The city will collaborate with providers and community partners to expand access, reduce digital divides and ensure that infrastructure is adaptable to future innovations.

67. Commercial Activity in Residential Areas

The city supports small-scale commercial activity in residential areas to help community members access everyday needs and support 15-minute neighborhoods. Spaces may include small-scale standalone commercial uses at key locations, home-based businesses, accessory commercial units or live-work forms that offer affordable options for local businesses, cottage industries and creatives and contribute to neighborhood vibrancy. The city will support equitable pathways for both property owners and tenants to participate in and benefit from these opportunities.

68. Workforce Opportunity and Development

The city works with employers, educators and partners to support programs designed to help develop, up-skill and attract workers of all ages in multiple fields with a range of skills, education and experience. The city fosters a diverse and creative workforce and supports wraparound services for Boulder workers, ensuring programs are accessible to all community members.

69. Joyful and Community-Centered Transportation System

The city and county design a transportation system that prioritizes an enjoyable, safe, fun, and community-centered experience for members of the traveling public of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. It will focus on elevating the Boulder Valley as a pleasant, affordable, and convenient place to move around by all modes of transportation to ensure our community remains connected physically, socially and economically.

70. Multimodal Transportation Strategy

The city and county provide varied, reliable transportation choices to create an equitable, integrated and complete multimodal system. The innovative planning, design, operation, and maintenance of Boulder’s transportation system focuses on improving walking, rolling, bicycling, scooting, taking transit, riding micro-mobility, and driving with a focus on moving people. The city and county collaborate to provide seamless connections between local and regional transportation facilities, programs and services, including trails, transit and Transportation Demand Management programs.

71. Transportation Safety and Vision Zero

The city and county prioritize safety when investing in the transportation system and pursuing the Vision Zero goal. Vision Zero aims to reduce the number of traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries to zero. Investments, project designs, project delivery and programs, such as Safe Routes to School, prioritize safety so that no one is seriously injured or killed on Boulder’s transportation system.

72. Innovative Transportation for All

The city and county will ensure that its transportation system is innovative and adapts to new technologies. This includes adjusting policies, expanding investments, and adopting innovative approaches while ensuring progress supports safety and equity.



Bike to Work Day in 2025

73. Movement of Goods

The city and county promote the safe and reliable movement of goods, packages and freight to support the needs of local businesses and community members.

74. Resilient Infrastructure

The city designs, builds and maintains infrastructure that withstands and recovers from disasters and disruptions, such as extreme weather events or socioeconomic challenges. Infrastructure is built to contribute to long-term sustainability goals while incorporating measures to enhance resilience to shocks and stresses.

75. Curbside Management and Parking

The city manages curbside space and parking, where appropriate, as a shared and limited public resource to support safe, equitable access for a wide range of users and essential curbside needs. Approaches will be tailored to the unique context of each area and designed to support and encourage a complete multi-modal system.

76. Municipal Airport

The city continues to maintain the Boulder Municipal Airport as a safe environment for aviation business and business-related travel, scientific and research flights, recreation and tourism, flight training and vocational education, aerial fire-fighting, emergency medical flights, and disaster-related support for the city and county. The city will help manage and mitigate noise and other impacts of airport operations via land use controls and partnership with the State and fuel providers to offer unleaded fuel. The city is also forward-looking as aircraft electrification becomes reality. The city will continue to build relationships that allow the airport to be a valuable resource for a wider range of people in the Boulder community. The city will coordinate with the county to provide consistent regulations, where possible.

77. Housing and Supportive Services

The city and county encourage the development and preservation of stable, accessible and affordable housing throughout the community as well as place-based services to address the unique needs of people with physical or mental/behavioral health disabling conditions, older adults, and any anyone who requires additional housing support.

78. Housing and Supports for People Experiencing Homelessness

The city and county collaborate to support and resource the transition of people experiencing homelessness into safe homes and to help them maintain their housing through the provision of comprehensive supportive services, behavioral health assistance, community building and social integration. Housing solutions respect the dignity, autonomy and diversity of people experiencing homelessness.

79. Housing Diversity and Supply

The city promotes a full spectrum of housing types and price points throughout the city that enable people to remain in the community as their needs, incomes, and household compositions change over time.

80. Manufactured Housing

The city and county support the protection and rehabilitation of existing manufactured home communities and support increasing opportunities for resident ownership.

81. Permanently Affordable Housing Goal

The city commits to ensuring 15% of all homes will be permanently affordable for low-, moderate-, and middle-income households by 2035. City resources will be directed toward maintaining existing permanent affordable housing units and increasing the stock of rental and homeownership affordable housing dispersed throughout the community. The city is committed to expanding permanently affordable housing for households below 50% AMI while also increasing housing options for middle-income households. The county supports and partners with the city to achieve regional affordable housing goals.

82. Planning for an Age Inclusive Community

The city and county support an age-inclusive community that is mindful of and responsive to population trends and projections. An age-inclusive community has appropriate infrastructure, services and programs that benefit all members from children to older adults.



North Boulder neighborhood

The Future of Housing in the Boulder Valley

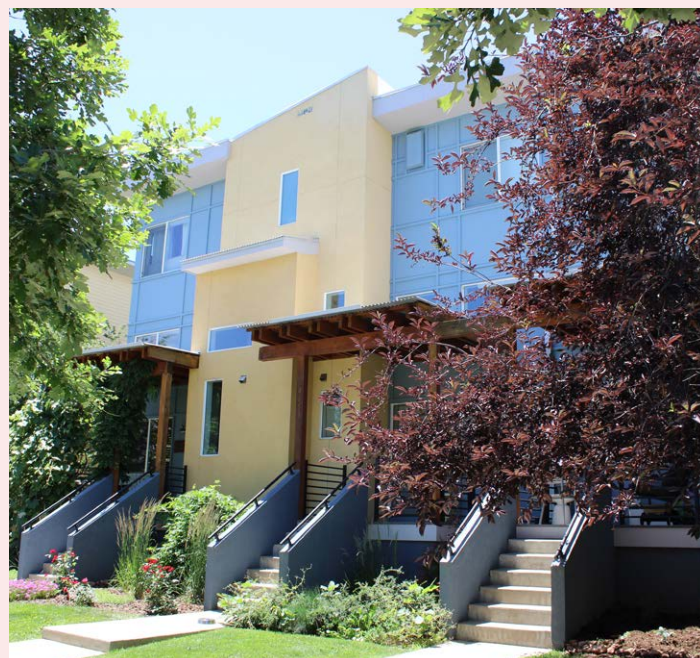
Community members described many interests in the future of housing throughout the comprehensive planning process. Many expressed needs such as greater access to housing, more affordable housing, more options and more types of homes that could meet the needs of families, local workforce and older adults. Others voiced concerns about population growth and its potential impact on resources, traffic and neighborhood character.

Today, the Boulder Valley includes approximately 58,000 homes. This includes a mix of single-unit detached homes, duplexes and townhomes, apartments and condominiums, manufactured homes, and backyard cottages or accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, regional demand anticipates an increased need for housing. The social, economic and environmental well-being of the community is enhanced when individuals and families are retained, housing for those who work in Boulder is available and community members with changing or special housing needs are served.

The high cost of local housing results in many households paying a disproportionate amount of their income for housing or finding it necessary to move farther from their work (and sometimes out of Boulder County) to find a home that meets their needs and price point. Households that find housing costs burdensome have less money available for other necessities or may find it difficult to actively participate in the community.



The comprehensive plan provides some key policies that can help to support community housing needs and influence the type, number and affordability of new and existing homes while supporting programs and assistance to those who have limited resources or special needs. Explore the following policies to learn more:

- **Permanently Affordable Housing Goal**
- **Housing Diversity and Supply**
- **Housing and Supportive Services**
- **Community Benefit Associated with Annexation**
- **Manufactured Housing**

The plan also incorporates the following land use strategies to support the above policies:

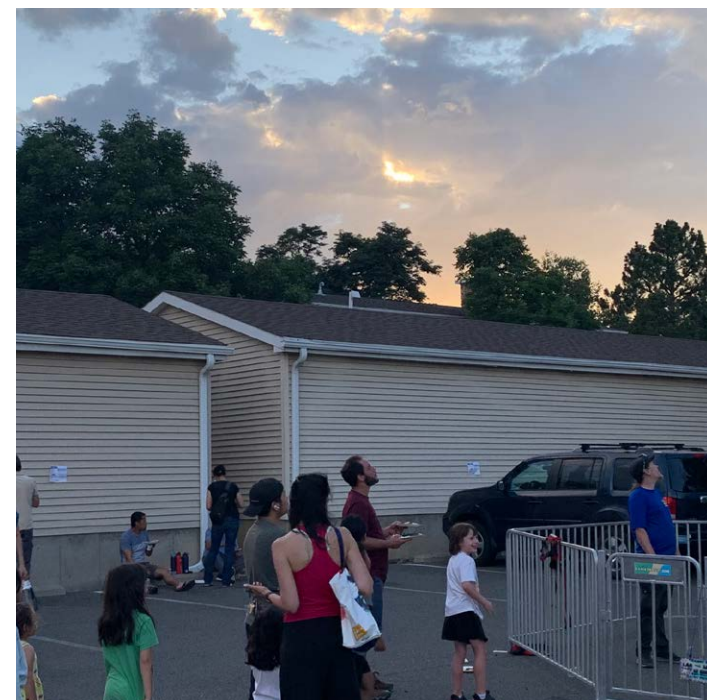
- Gentle infill in neighborhoods that can introduce opportunities for various housing forms, such as duplexes, triplexes, cottage courts, backyard cottages (or ADUs) and multi-unit buildings in areas like Neighborhood 1. This strategy could add homes over time without sacrificing character.
- Compact, mixed-use development in urban hubs that could add residential units to areas that were previously dominated by commercial uses and associated parking. This approach can allow more people to live within walking distance of amenities and services. This could reduce some reliance on cars and help manage traffic impacts as more people find housing that can meet their needs in Boulder.

83. Value of Industrial Land

The city values its existing industrial areas and will preserve them as places for innovation, services, creativity and employment. The city will use the future land use framework to guide where existing industrial areas are to be maintained and future mixed-use areas where the integration of residential use is more appropriate. In areas identified for industrial land use, residential uses will be limited and should not displace established businesses or the potential for new non-residential uses. Areas identified for a mix of residential and industrial uses are encouraged to accommodate residential infill and redevelopment while still supporting innovation, creative and manufacturing activities.

84. Community Safety

The city manages risk and employs holistic problem solving and crime prevention strategies to support a safe community, safe schools and safe participation in active public life.



85. Disasters and Public Health Risks

The city and county collaborate with local, regional and state partners to avoid, mitigate, respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters and public and environmental health risks. Following disruptions or disaster, the city and county facilitate a supportive and efficient response and recovery.

86. Fire Adapted Communities

The city and county are committed to creating and sustaining a fire adapted community through a coordinated, region-wide approach to fire and wildfire resilience and prevention throughout the Boulder Valley. Strategies will address the full spectrum of fire and wildfire risk while enhancing public safety, promoting equitable protection and supporting efficient and effective response and recovery.

87. Community Resources and Education

The city and county will work collaboratively with community partners to provide vital arts, education, health, language access and cultural services to community members of the Boulder Valley.

88. Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs

The city promotes the health and well-being of the entire Boulder community by providing high quality parks, facilities, programs and space for events. The city supports access to services for young people, older adults, those with low-income and those with disabilities. The city will prioritize thoughtful planning and management of public spaces to support a healthy and socially thriving community, economic vitality, sustainability and resilience. Public spaces and services are designed to build social cohesion, support health and well-being, and advance access for all.



Eben G. Fine Park

89. Nature Everywhere

The city supports the creation, care and activation of accessible nature spaces throughout the community, affording equitable opportunities to live, learn and play in nature to all community members.

90. Trail and Path Networks

The city and county work to provide trail and path systems with connectivity to the regional network and neighboring communities. The city and county coordinate with each other, other providers and private landowners in trail and path system planning, design, construction, management, maintenance, and programming. Trail and path connections will be developed to enhance local access and overall function of the network.

91. Local Food Production and Access

The city and county support farms, businesses, nonprofits, and programs throughout the region that grow, produce, process, glean and sell fresh local food. The city and county recognize the importance of a local food system that provides nutritious and culturally appropriate local foods and will facilitate greater community access to these products.

92. Urban Agriculture

The city supports urban agriculture, including greenhouses, in community and private spaces to increase food security, extend growing capacity in Boulder's climate, and promote equitable access to healthy, locally grown foods.

The Future of Regional Collaboration

Through this plan and associated Intergovernmental Agreement, the city and county have worked collaboratively to achieve shared goals over the last 50 years. Looking towards the future, this valuable partnership will continue to be essential to the future success of managing environments that do not recognize boundary lines between entities and planning for the movement of wildlife, people and goods that are in constant motion. The city and county work together with the following major partners to achieve regional and statewide goals:

- State of Colorado
- University of Colorado
- Regional Transportation District
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Boulder Valley School District
- Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership

Regional Connections

Proposed regional connections represent important links for the future of the Boulder Valley. These conceptual connections have been agreed upon through the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan four-body approval process and represent agreements made between agencies involved in comprehensive planning in the Boulder Valley. They are used by the city and the county to advance regional roadway, transit, multimodal and trail connectivity that public agencies hope to provide in the future.

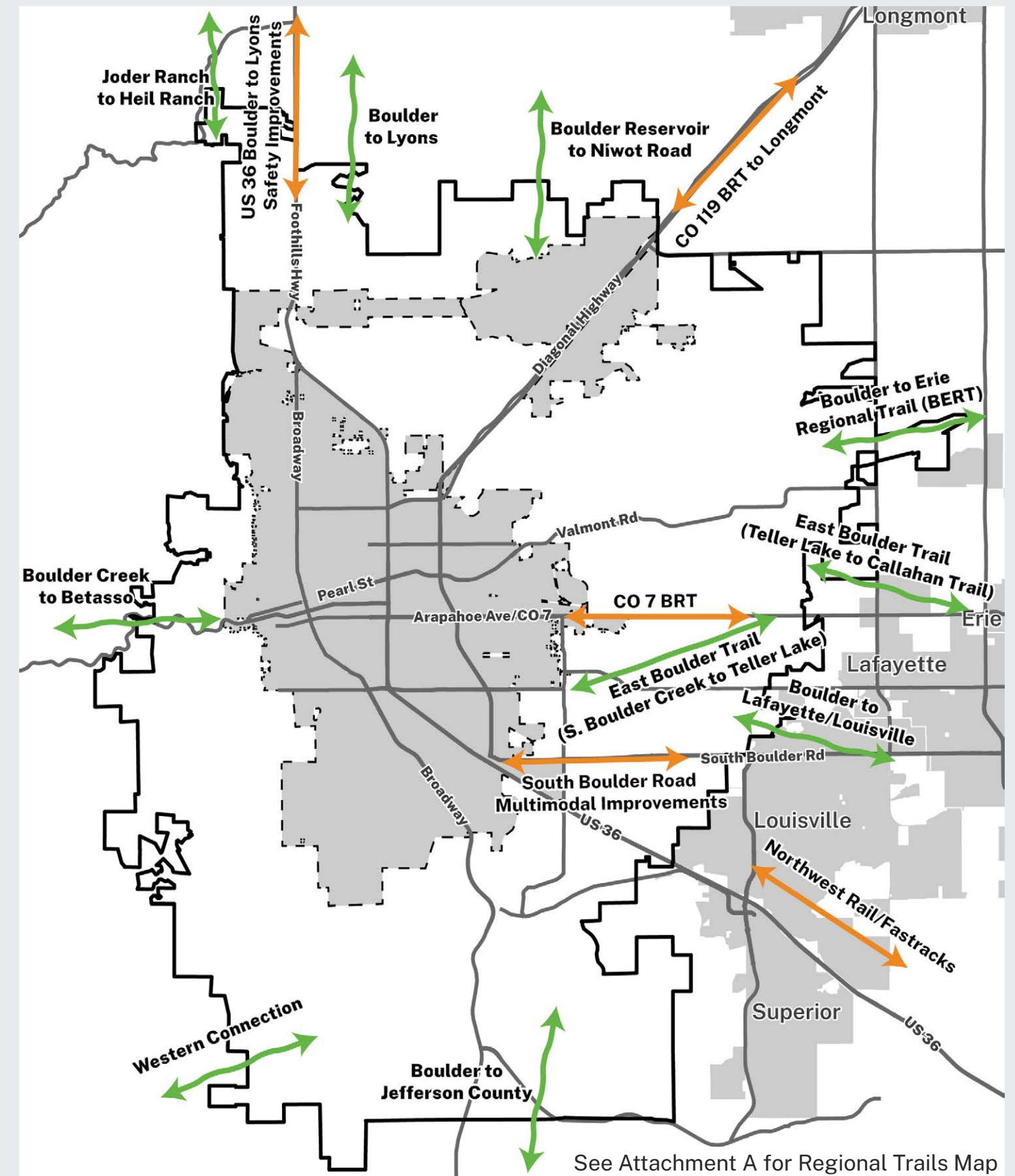
The city and county continue to support and collaborate on the realization of the following regional connections which are formally recognized within this major update:

- Northwest Rail/ Front Range Passenger Rail
- CO 119 Multimodal Improvements
- CO 7 Multimodal Improvements
- US 36 Boulder to Lyons Safety Improvements
- South Boulder Road Multimodal Improvements

The following conceptual regional trail connections describe a general direction for potential connecting trails. Specific alignments or trail corridors have not yet been selected, often because there are still issues that need to be resolved through further study or public process and usually require resolution of environmental, ownership, neighborhood or other concerns. However, the concept for the trail connection itself is supported by the signatories of the comprehensive plan. To realize these connections, trails should be implemented as one of the following: designated unpaved off-street paths, paved off-street paths and/or multi-use paths.

- Joder Ranch to Heil Ranch
- Boulder Reservoir to Niwot Road
- Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT)
- East Boulder Trail (South Boulder Creek Trail Connection to Teller Lake)
- East Boulder Trail (Teller Lake to Callahan Trail Connection)
- Boulder to Lafayette/Louisville
- Boulder to Jefferson County
- Western Connection
- Boulder Creek to Betasso

Boulder Valley Regional Connections



93. Infrastructure for Local Food Systems

The city supports expanding opportunities for facilities that sustain and grow the local food system, including cold storage, processing, greenhouses, commercial kitchens and retail sites.

94. Agricultural Water Delivery

The city and county recognize that irrigation is essential to sustain agricultural production and the ecological health of natural and working lands in the Boulder Valley and that a functional and well-maintained water delivery system is the backbone of irrigation. The city and county support and encourage investment in and improvement of irrigation water delivery infrastructure and systems to minimize water losses and to support long-term agricultural and environmental health.



Market stand off of Highway 7 in Boulder County

95. Sustainable and Regenerative Agricultural Practices

The city and county support and promote sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices on publicly-owned lands and encourage such practices on private lands. The city and county will collaborate with the agricultural community to employ and improve practices that integrate ecological conservation, enhanced soil health, responsible water use, water quality protection, biodiversity and humane treatment of livestock.

96. Agriculture Workforce Support

An agricultural workforce is critical to sustaining agriculture and a local food system. The city and county encourage training, apprenticeship and skill development programs. The city and county support exploring options to increase housing opportunities and transportation options for agriculture workers and land stewards in the Boulder Valley.



Community Connectors at Jacob Springs Farm

97. Community Engagement

The city is committed to meaningful, inclusive, and equitable engagement of all community members to lead to better decision-making and outcomes. The city supports elevating youth engagement and input in long-range policy making as they may be disproportionately affected by decisions that take decades to realize. The city recognizes there are communities that have been historically excluded from engagement and influence, and enhanced efforts and resources are needed to include them and create belonging in government decision-making. The city supports volunteer programs that engage community members in activities to improve the Boulder Valley and participate in addressing local issues.

98. Federally Recognized American Tribal Consultation

The city supports actions that encourage understanding and appreciation of American Indian Tribal Nations, their traditions, culture and our shared history in these ancestral lands known as the Boulder Valley. The city respects Tribal sovereignty and self-determination and follows federal and state consultation guidelines. The city follows a formal government-to-government consultation process to receive input on important topics with Tribal Nations.

99. Engagement with Local Indigenous Peoples

The city and county acknowledge that local Indigenous community members face distinct hardships and barriers rooted in historic and ongoing inequities. Their voices, knowledge, and priorities are central to shaping a more inclusive and just future for the Boulder Valley. The city and county are committed to strengthening and improving ongoing engagement with these community members in planning and decision-making processes.

The Future of Food Systems

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, community members consistently identified the local food system as a priority. Participants draw connections between food and issues of affordability, climate resilience, health, cultural connection, land stewardship and business vitality. Food is a basic essential for life and community access to affordable, healthy and culturally relevant food has impacts on the quality of community life and the environment.

The food system is generally considered the chain of activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management. A strong local food system can positively impact the resiliency, culture, health, economy and environment of the Boulder Valley and its surrounding areas.

As the community works towards ensuring that all community members have healthy and nourishing foods regardless of individual or family economic situations or locations, the comprehensive plan includes policies that can improve and enhance our local food system.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- **Open Space Preservation and Stewardship**
- **Movement of Goods**
- **Value of Industrial Land**
- **Local Food Production and Access**
- **Urban Agriculture**
- **Infrastructure for Local Food Systems**
- **Agricultural Water Delivery**
- **Sustainable and Regeneration Agriculture**
- **Agriculture Workforce Support**



Inside a local market

“Being able to buy from a farmer and who grew the food we’re buying is fun for [my kids]. I don’t know if we’d have the opportunity to be involved in a local food system without this program.”
- WIC Farmers Market program participant



Farm fresh eggs

Agriculture in the Boulder Valley

The city’s Open Space and Mountain Parks department manages about 16,000 acres of working lands, leasing much of that to dozens of farmers and ranchers.

Farmers produce diversified vegetables, such as lettuce, peppers and tomatoes, from 30 acres of land. An additional 250 acres have the soil and water conditions necessary to support diversified vegetable farming.

Most of the city’s agricultural land is dryland pasture and does not have sufficient water to grow vegetables. Regenerative agricultural practices and traditional livestock grazing regimes are critical in developing and maintaining healthy soils and diverse native grasslands on agricultural properties.



Grazing in the Boulder Valley

100. Transparent Governance

The city and county commit to gathering and sharing transparent information about local government processes and engagement. The city and county follow best practices in using plain language, providing digital accessibility, and offering high-quality language access for all community members.

101. Community Health and Wellness

The city and the county support the physical, mental and behavioral wellness of community members through collaborating with organizations that provide health and wellness services, and providing direct services where appropriate. The city and the county recognize the importance of providing these services to community members that face greater barriers to health services, and after significant events or periods of disruption.

102. Imagination Areas

The city recognizes that areas with distinct character, and oftentimes atypical or unusual design, provide a special connection to place and embrace the diversity and creativity of the Boulder community. The city will explore locations where 'out-of-the-box' thinking, imaginative architecture, cutting-edge technologies and creative rule-bending that provide special benefit to the community are allowed and encouraged.



Community member at a local planning meeting



Creativity in the landscape at Junkyard Social Club

Want to learn more?

Check out the following city websites to learn more about planning for...

Housing

[Expanding Affordable Housing Options](#)

[Manufactured Housing Strategy Action Plan](#)

Transportation

[Transportation Master Plan](#)

Water Resources

[Water Supply and Planning](#)

[Water Conservation](#)

Vital Landscapes and Resources

[Open Space and Mountain Parks](#)

[Parks and Recreation](#)

[Nature-Based Climate Solutions](#)

You can explore these and more at the city department plans website:

[Department Plans](#)



An example of an active neighborhood in the Pearl District, San Antonio Texas

Chapter 4

Future Land Use

The comprehensive plan includes a future land use map and descriptions of the land use designations that are applied throughout the Boulder Valley. This future land use map provides a broad vision for how land across Boulder is intended to be used and developed over time. It provides a flexible, adaptable framework that guides growth and investment decisions. It will shape new and updated zoning regulations, inform rezoning decisions, and guide infrastructure planning and public projects.

Each land use designation is described by the characteristics that define its role within the larger strategy including what it is, why it matters, and what community members can expect in terms of uses, urban design and mobility options. The future land use map organizes the designations across the Boulder Valley.

Future Land Use Strategy

Objectives of the Future Land Use Strategy

Strategy

Support Infill Development: Encourage growth within already developed areas to make efficient use of land, services and infrastructure while protecting natural features.

Promote Mixed-Use, Transit-Supportive Areas: Foster walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with a mix of residential, commercial and civic uses supported by public and shared transit.

Expand Housing Options: Increase the diversity and supply of housing types to accommodate households of different sizes, abilities and income levels.

Enhance Public Spaces and Connectivity: Provide accessible parks, trails, recreation areas and gathering places that connect neighborhoods, offer social opportunity and support healthy lifestyles.

Balance Growth with Environmental Protection: Integrate development with the preservation of critical natural features to foster a healthy, biodiverse ecosystem.

Ensure Flexibility and Adaptability: Design the land use framework to be flexible and responsive to changing community needs and future uncertainties.

Implementation of the future land use strategy will involve ongoing collaboration between city departments, stakeholders and community members to ensure that land use policies remain flexible and responsive to changing needs. Subcommunity and small area plans may tailor land use outcomes to more focused areas of the community. Monitoring development patterns, refining strategies, and making intentional code updates will further implement the future land use strategy to support equitable, resilient and sustainable growth.



Sunny side of the street

Understanding Land Use and Zoning

Land use and zoning both help achieve the community's goals and lead to more predictable development outcomes. While they work together, they are distinct tools and can easily be confused.

Land use is broad policy that sets the vision for how land across the Boulder Valley is intended to be used and developed over time. Land use also establishes the policy foundation that guides changes to zoning regulations and where different zone districts should be applied.

Zoning is the regulatory tool that sets detailed rules and standards for specific properties like building heights, densities and permitted activities.

A change of land use on a property does not automatically change the zoning. Land use only establishes a long-term vision. Additional public review processes to change the zoning are required to modify the rules that govern use and development on the property.



Birds Eye view of Boulder

How to Use the Land Use Designations and Map

Interpretation

The future land use map applies the land use designations to broad areas of the city and unincorporated county within the Boulder Valley. The areas are intentionally large to allow for a range of outcomes that are still consistent with the vision, can be resilient to future disruptions, and will minimize the need for intermediate amendments to the comprehensive plan outside of regular updates. Future land use planning that is too detailed can lead to unintended consequences and conflicts when community needs shift quickly or new opportunities arise.

The land use designation definitions describe a general qualitative sense of character, scale and use of these areas. The definitions are not intended to dictate specific outcomes or set exact standards. They allow for a dynamic and evolving community that is responsive to societal, economic and environmental changes. In some areas, this character may already exist, whereas in others it would take incremental change over time to make progress toward the vision.

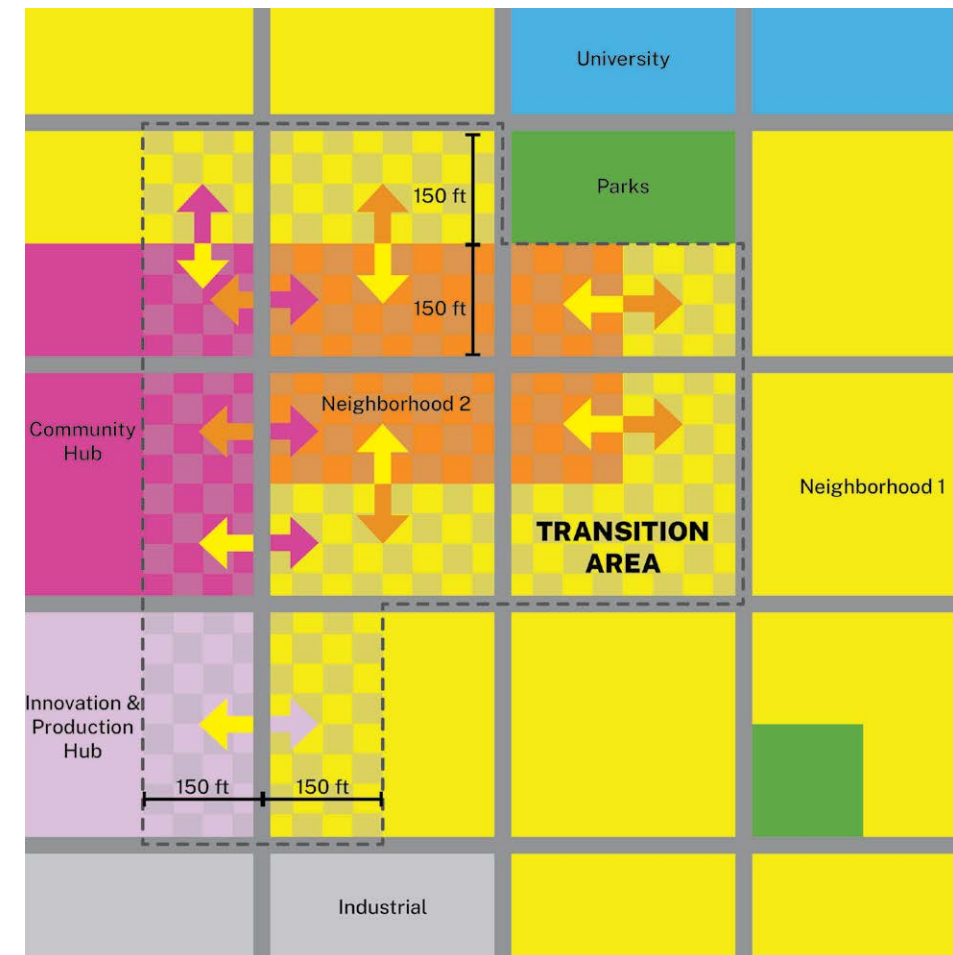
There may be times when building heights taller than described are appropriate, such as a site immediately adjacent to a transit station. Alternatively, building heights shorter than described may be appropriate where a higher intensity area is interfacing with a lower intensity area. Factors to consider when applying the policies and future land use strategy may include:

- Guidance from a subcommunity or small area plan
- Surrounding context, including existing and planned development
- Interfaces between higher intensity to lower intensity areas
- Adjacency to transit, hubs or other services or amenities
- Opportunities to achieve community benefits like affordable housing
- Furthering urban design goals

Transition Areas between Certain Land Use Designations

The future land use designations across the Boulder Valley describe an overall vision for the future. The edge of each designation generally follows logical regulatory, physical and natural boundaries found in urban locations like property lines, streets or creek corridors. In some cases, a clear and distinct boundary is important to maintain, like a boundary between Industrial and Neighborhood 1 land uses. In other situations, it may be more valuable for two land uses to blend seamlessly, like between Neighborhood 2 and Community Hub.

The comprehensive plan future land use framework envisions a 'Transition Area' of approximately one-half city block (150 feet), on either side of a land use boundary to integrate complementary land use designations. In this Transition Area, either of the adjacent land uses may be applied when evaluating a proposed rezoning, development application, or other review process that requires consistency with the comprehensive plan policies and future land use map. This Transition Area only applies to boundaries between the Neighborhood and Hub land use classes including Neighborhood 1, Neighborhood 2, Community Hub, Regional Hub and Innovation and Production Hub. The Transition Area does not apply to boundaries shared with any other land use classes or designations.



Transition Areas concept

Future Land Use Classes and Designations

The following section includes the future land use designations and their corresponding definitions. These land use definitions and future land use map should be used together to understand how different areas of the Boulder Valley may evolve over time. Each definition articulates the intended uses, urban design character and mobility expectations for future land use designations.

Neighborhoods



Hubs



Systems



Special Purposes



Neighborhoods Class

Neighborhoods are primarily residential areas and are one of the building blocks of the Boulder Valley's character and housing choice.

Neighborhood 1



Neighborhood 2



Land Use Goals

- Create more housing opportunities
- Enable diverse housing options to fit community member lifestyles and needs
- Provide community amenities and gathering spaces
- Encourage small-scale neighborhood-serving commercial opportunities that enhance walkability and access to goods and services

Environmental Goals

- Enhance pervious areas to support natural systems
- Maintain and expand the urban tree canopy and other nature-based climate solutions
- Use natural resources efficiently
- Improve community resilience to wildfire

Mobility Goals

- Improve walkability to neighborhood amenities, needs and services
- Enhance the network of low-speed streets for safe and convenient walking, riding or rolling
- Connect fast, frequent, and reliable transit to neighborhoods, local destinations and regional transit networks
- Achieve Vision Zero goals

Equity Goals

- Increase access to housing choices for all
- Increase access to economic opportunities
- Improve accessibility for travelers of all abilities
- Reduce reliance on cars for local trips



Neighborhood 1



What it is

Neighborhood 1 areas are primarily residential, featuring detached single-unit homes and small-scale, attached unit housing types. Neighborhood 1 also includes opportunities for small-scale businesses and other community uses serving local community members, such as dining, services, schools and places of worship.

Why it matters

Neighborhood 1 encourages a variety of housing choices that are complementary to the primarily small and medium-scale residential character of existing areas. These areas support citywide goals by offering housing options, many of which include private yards, with access to parks, schools, and neighborhood services. Their primarily residential character, complemented by small-scale businesses and public uses, helps maintain walkability and a strong sense of community across the city.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Residential	Detached Unit; Attached Unit; Group Living
	Residential	Multi-Unit
Supporting	Commercial	Retail; Personal services; Office; Food & Beverage; Maker, Artisans & Innovation
	Civic	Government, Health Care & Institutional
	Other	Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Residential and commercial buildings in these neighborhoods are typically moderate in scale, maintaining a residential form and rhythm along a block, generally one to three stories with massing, setbacks that are harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Street-level frontages are designed to engage the public realm, with clearly defined front doors, porches, stoops and windows that create a sense of connection between homes and the street. Commercial spaces are encouraged at intersections of major streets and may incorporate shopfronts with doors and windows facing the sidewalk and smaller setbacks to enhance street-level activity.
- Individual private green spaces, such as yards and gardens, provide residential opportunities to connect to nature, while shared outdoor spaces foster social interaction, nature experiences, play and a sense of connection to local neighborhoods.

Mobility

- Mobility in Neighborhood 1 is calm and connected, with low-speed streets and sidewalks that make walking and rolling safe and convenient.
- Paths and street trees create pleasant routes to nearby parks, schools and small businesses, encouraging short trips without a car.
- Curbside space is typically used for parking and deliveries and may be managed depending on demand, with occasional bicycle facilities, multi-use paths or micromobility parking integrated into the neighborhood fabric.

Neighborhood 2



What it is

Neighborhood 2 areas are primarily residential neighborhoods that feature a mix of denser housing types and larger buildings. Thoughtfully integrated commercial and other non-residential uses are generally concentrated near transit services.

Why it matters

Neighborhood 2 provides opportunities for more people to live close to jobs, schools, parks, shops and mobility options. The additional density in these neighborhoods supports vibrant businesses and community spaces, supports the development of a robust transit network and fosters walkable urban neighborhoods.

What you can expect Uses

Primary	Residential	Attached Unit; Multi-Unit; Group Living
	Residential	Detached Unit
Supporting	Commercial	Retail; Personal Services; Office; Food and Beverage; Lodging; Vehicle Related; Maker, Artisans and Innovation
	Civic	Government Healthcare and institutional; Education: Places of Worship
	Other	Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Residential and mixed-use building forms are generally of a medium or high intensity, scale and height compact and create a high-quality urban street frontage.
- The overall form emphasizes efficient land use while maintaining a comfortable, pedestrian scale through thoughtful building design and streetscape amenities in an urban environment.
- Structures may occupy larger portions of their lots, with limited setbacks, and shared open spaces such as courtyards, playgrounds, plazas or green spaces.

Mobility

- Neighborhood 2 offers a more urban mobility experience, where sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and transit-supportive infrastructure are integral to the street network.
- These neighborhoods prioritize safe multimodal access to homes, jobs and other local destinations, making it easy to connect without relying on a car.
- Curbsides may be actively managed, balancing parking with space for transit, micromobility, and deliveries to support the higher density and mix of uses. If off-street parking is provided, unbundled, structured, underground and shared is preferred.

Hubs Class

Hubs are mixed-use centers that range in scale and expectations for activity. Hubs can be organized around nodes or along corridors. They act as anchors for surrounding areas and bring together housing, commerce, services, public spaces and mobility choices.

Community



Regional



Innovation and Production



Land Use Goals

- Expand housing choices through infill and redevelopment
- Encourage a variety of economic activity
- Enhance cultural and civic life
- Connect community members and visitors with Boulder businesses

Environmental Goals

- Preserve open lands and lower intensity areas by focusing higher intensity activity at key locations
- Support resource-efficient building types
- Enhance and expand urban canopy and natural infrastructure into urban locations

Mobility Goals

- Provide safe, multimodal connections for all ages and abilities that prioritize transit, pedestrian, and micromobility access.
- Create walkable pedestrian-oriented streets
- Incorporate fast, frequent, and reliable transit from local destinations and provide connections to regional transit networks
- Manage curbside demand to balance access and multiple activities
- Achieve Vision Zero goals

Equity Goals

- Support diverse living and working choices for community members
- Support Boulder businesses
- Improve real and perceived safety
- Create reliable connections between where people live, work, play and gather



Community Hub



What it is

Community Hubs are vibrant, mixed-use centers that bring together homes, shops, restaurants, services, offices and community spaces. These places have a strong mix of multi-unit housing and residential mixed-use buildings with stand-alone commercial buildings and outdoor gathering areas. These hubs are designed for convenience and connection and are intended to offer places that may draw people from across the community.

Why it matters

Community Hubs help bring people together, offer space for community destinations and support a strong local economy. They include places to live, work, play and gather, all within a walkable and lively environment. Community Hubs are at the heart of many neighborhoods and concentrate local business activity and dense housing in walkable distances to surrounding residential areas. This allows community members to live close to goods and services, find opportunities to connect with others and reduce reliance on cars for daily needs.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Residential	Multi-Unit; Group Living
	Commercial	Retail; Personal Services; Food and Beverage
Supporting	Residential	Attached Unit
	Commercial	Office; Arts, Culture and Entertainment; Lodging; Vehicle Related; Maker, Artisans and Innovation
	Industrial	Research and Development
	Civic	Government, Health Care & Institutional
	Other	Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Community Hubs are moderately to highly dense areas that can include a mix of building types and range of building heights.
- Site design and building orientation create active street frontages and pedestrian-friendly building facades. Public realm along frontages accommodates spillover space for commercial and community activity. Public gathering spaces within the hub encourage social interaction, play and activity throughout the day and evening.
- Designs strive to incorporate robust urban canopy, landscaping and a healthy balance of pervious and impervious surfaces.

Mobility

- Community Hubs are dynamic, serving daily needs and gatherings. They are designed for convenience and safe, comfortable, and direct connections to and through the area. Streets provide greater protection for walking, bicycling, and micromobility, with frequent transit access that links to surrounding neighborhoods and regional routes.
- Community hubs include more robust walking and bicycling infrastructure, such as protected bicycle lanes with horizontal or vertical separation and protected intersection designs.
- The curbside supports loading zones. Micromobility, short-term parking, and social spaces are off street and occasionally spill into the public realm.

Regional Hub



What it is

Regional Hubs are major destinations for the Boulder Valley and beyond. They are busy, high-energy places where people come to work, visit, shop, dine and live. Regional Hubs enjoy activity throughout the day and night. They include a mix of stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, cultural attractions, offices and housing, often in taller mixed-use buildings.

Why it matters

Regional Hubs are defining places of Boulder’s identity and play a key role in the health of the local economy. They bring together jobs, retail, services, tourism and housing in artful, walkable, well-connected areas. These places are regional destinations for visitors and community members alike and celebrate Boulder’s history, sense of place and future.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Residential	Multi-Unit
	Commercial	Retail; Personal Services; Office; Food and Beverage; Lodging; Arts, Culture and Entertainment
Supporting	Residential	Detached Unit; Attached Unit; Group Living
	Commercial	Vehicle Related; Maker, Artisan and Innovation
	Civic	Government, Healthcare and Institutional; Educational; Places of Worship
	Other	Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Regional Hubs are high-density, mixed-use areas that accommodate taller buildings and a wide variety of uses integrated either vertically or horizontally across sites.
- Site design emphasizes high-quality shared public spaces for gathering, movement and play.
- Building orientation and ground floor design creates active street frontages. Facades provide visual interest and ground-floor transparency for pedestrians. As a regional draw for community members and visitors alike, excellent design quality of both architecture and the public realm is expected.

Mobility

- Regional Hubs are major destinations where people move around using abundant mobility options.
- Wide sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and transit connections make it easy to move between home, work, shopping, dining and entertainment.
- Goods movement is integrated into the street network to support the mix of uses in this area.
- Curbside space is highly active and managed, prioritizing transit, micromobility, loading, and social uses at a greater intensity than other areas.
- Structured, unbundled, underground, and shared vehicle parking is encouraged.

Innovation and Production Hub



What it is

Innovation and Production Hubs are primarily working neighborhoods that carefully integrate housing choices and local amenities. These areas support a wide range of industries and provide opportunities for businesses to start and grow. They also offer dynamic living options that are well-connected and close to jobs and recreational options.

Why it matters

Innovation and Production Hubs offer essential space for Boulder’s innovative economy and entrepreneurial future by integrating diverse housing types, commercial activity, and industrial spaces. These vibrant, walkable, working neighborhoods offer employers, employees and local community members a variety of local services and amenities. They support long-standing and emerging industries and create harmony between working, living, playing and making.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Residential	Attached Unit; Multi-Unit; Group Living
	Commercial	Office; Maker, Artisan and Innovation
	Industrial	Research and Development; Light Industrial
Supporting	Commercial	Retail; Personal Service; Food and Beverage; Vehicle Related; Arts, Culture and Entertainment
	Civic	Educational
	Other	Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

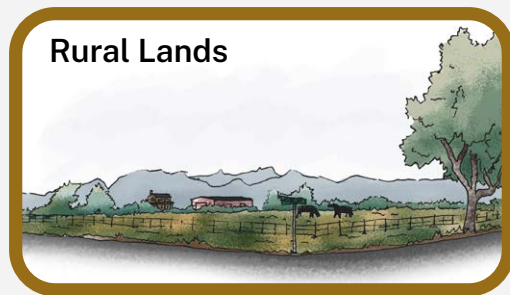
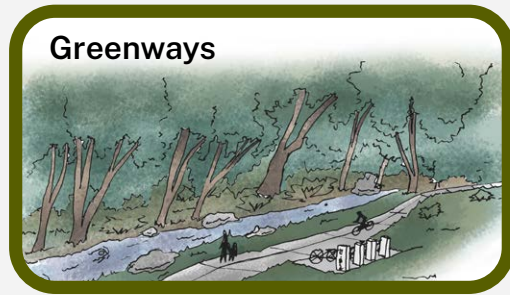
- Innovation and Production Hubs feature a diverse mix of building types and sizes that accommodate commercial, light industrial, office, research, and residential uses, including live/work spaces.
- Buildings vary widely in height and form, ranging from smaller workshop-style structures to larger multi-story facilities that support flexible work environments and housing.
- Site design emphasizes functional layouts with adaptable spaces, active street edges and shared amenities that foster collaboration and innovation. Site uses may be mixed vertically or horizontally.

Mobility

- Mobility in Innovation and Production Hubs support walking, bicycling, micromobility, and transit while maintaining safe circulation for freight, service and delivery vehicles.
- Curbside areas are designed for flexibility, with loading zones integrated alongside micromobility parking and pedestrian access, ensuring industrial activity coexists with housing and creative spaces. Off-street and shared parking is encouraged.

Systems Class

The Boulder Valley systems make up the framework that the community relies on for healthy, meaningful and sustainable living. These systems work together to support Boulder’s unique form and provide the network where the urban and natural environments interconnect.



Land Use Goals

- Maintain the urban and rural characteristics that define the Boulder Valley
- Enhance opportunities for connection with nature
- Support spaces for social activity, recreation and play
- Maintain a healthy agricultural community

Environmental Goals

- Improve climate adaptation and resilience by thinking of systems holistically across the Boulder Valley
- Recognize the critical link between urban and natural systems
- Maintain and enhance natural areas that increase biodiversity, protect water resources, sequester carbon and perform other ecosystem services

Mobility Goals

- Provide safe, multimodal connections for all ages and abilities that prioritize transit, pedestrian and micromobility access
- Maintain safe, low-intensity road networks that support rural travel needs, focusing significant commuter travel onto primary multimodal corridors and minimizing impacts on the surrounding landscape
- Achieve Vision Zero goals

Equity Goals

- Ensure community spaces and services are dispersed throughout the Boulder Valley
- Focus resources on underserved areas
- Ensure rural residents have quality access to essential services, mobility options and economic opportunities while preserving the distinct identity of rural areas



Parks



What it is

Parks are publicly accessible, active and passive recreational spaces such as multi-use lawns, gardens, playgrounds, sport courts and fields, dog parks, historic and cultural sites and recreation centers. These areas are designed for community members to gather, exercise, rest, build social relationships and enjoy the outdoors.

Why it matters

Parks support the health and well-being of the entire Boulder community. These public spaces support a healthy and socially thriving community, economic vitality, sustainability and resilience.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Other	Recreation
	Commercial	Retail; Food and Beverage; Arts, Culture and Entertainment
Supporting	Civic	Government
	Other	Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Park design supports places to socially gather, have fun, play and contribute to economic vitality. Design balances the restoration and enhancement of local ecosystems and biodiversity, climate resilient practices and the need for welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible spaces for all ages and abilities.
- Parks are well connected to surrounding uses and local mobility networks. Clear wayfinding, visible entrances and thoughtfully integrated amenities encourage everyday use.
- Design responds to Boulder’s unique natural setting, cultural history and surrounding context and reinforces Boulder’s identity as a community closely connected to its natural environment.

Mobility

- Mobility in and around Parks prioritizes inclusive access and active transportation, including transit service.
- Pathways and trails connect seamlessly to surrounding neighborhoods and regional networks, inviting walking, rolling, and bicycling for recreation and daily trips.
- Parking and transit stops are near entrances and amenities, providing accessibility and opportunities for visitors to move through green spaces.

Greenways



What it is

Greenways are areas adjacent to natural urban waterways within city limits, including Boulder Creek and tributary streams, that help manage and mitigate flooding, support multifunctional landscapes and ecosystem services and protect cultural resources. Greenways may also offer recreation and active transportation amenities. These areas form an interconnected system across public and private lands.

Why it matters

Greenways are a key feature of the community’s flood mitigation strategy. Additionally, they offer opportunities to enhance community and environmental health by supporting natural systems in the city, thereby enhancing mental and physical well-being and helping reduce urban heat island effects.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Civic	Utility Operation; Open Lands
Supporting	Other	Recreation

Urban Design and Management

- Greenways are associated with Boulder Creek and other major drainageways. These linear spaces serve to manage creek and flood waters while weaving natural systems into the urban fabric that also support mobility networks and limited recreation activities.
- Greenways management emphasizes flood control, continuity and ecological integrity to support ecosystem services, including the movement of urban wildlife into and across the system. Built elements, such as paths, trails, bridges, lighting, seating, wayfinding and interpretive signage, are integrated sensitively into the landscape to support recreation and movement that works with the needs of the ecosystem and offers minimal disturbance.
- Some Greenway segments are publicly accessible, whereas others occur on private property or within utility, drainage, or conservation easements that support flood management, ecological function, and landscape connectivity without full public access.

Mobility

- Some Greenways may provide scenic, continuous routes for walking, bicycling and rolling, offering a low-stress alternative to on-street movement.
- Multi-use paths along some Greenways link neighborhoods, parks and major destinations, creating a backbone for regional connectivity.
- Access points may include curbside parking, bikeshare stations, and micromobility facilities that support recreational, daily and commuter travel.

Open Space



What it is

The Open Space system is land used for open space purposes and goals either through direct ownership by the city or county, conservation easements held on private land or other contractual obligations like management or annexation agreements. Privately owned sites may contain urban development but contribute to open space purposes that are secured by the terms of existing agreements. Open space land is acquired, managed and/or preserved for specific purpose and goals including, but not limited to, preservation or restoration of natural resources, areas and features, passive recreation, agriculture, floodplain protection and limiting sprawl.

Why it matters

The Open Space system forms the foundation of the Boulder Valley’s philosophy of compact urban development surrounded by rural and natural lands. It provides a highly valued connection to nature and rural land and contributes to the mental and physical well-being of the residents, workers and visitors of the Boulder Valley. These lands serve as the foundation for the area’s ecological health, support local wildlife and contribute to community resilience to climate change. They also provide a backbone for local agricultural activity in the Boulder Valley.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Other	Open Lands; Outdoor Recreation; Agriculture
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Urban Design and Management

- Open Space areas are characterized by a deliberate absence of urban development. The landscape itself is the defining feature, shaped by natural landforms, vegetation, and ecological processes.
- Structures, such as trailheads, agricultural facilities, operational buildings or small shelters, are minimal, functional and designed to blend into the natural setting.
- Open Space emphasizes preserving scenic views, maintaining and restoring healthy ecosystems, supporting local agriculture and contributing the sense of openness that distinguishes these lands from the urban environment.

Mobility

- Mobility in Open Space areas provides limited access for habitat management, recreation, agricultural purposes.
- Access is primarily through trailheads or farm entrances that connect to designated walking, bicycling or agricultural paths.
- If available, off-street parking may be managed. Curbside space may be provided for transit, shuttles, or managed parking to ensure access without compromising the natural setting.

Rural Lands



What it is

Rural Lands are the unincorporated areas of the Boulder Valley that are expected to remain in the county’s jurisdiction and include a variety of land uses and county zone districts. Future use of these areas will be guided by county planning processes; the uses permitted by county zoning and policies in the comprehensive plan that intend to preserve the rural character of these areas.

Why it matters

Rural Lands support local agriculture, sustains ecosystems and biodiversity, and the cultural heritage of the Boulder Valley. These lands shape urban growth to maintain the city’s compact development pattern and provide a sense of place for both urban and rural areas of the community. Rural Lands prevent urban sprawl and leapfrog, non-contiguous and scattered development in the Boulder Valley.

What you can expect

Uses

A variety of uses as allowed by county zoning at intensities supportable in and compatible with a rural area.

Urban Design and Management

- Development in Rural Lands reflects its surroundings, protects scenic vistas from public locations and contributes to the rural character of the area.

Mobility

- Rural Lands rely on a road network that provides vehicular access for residents, farms, and services.
- Mobility prioritizes safety and compatibility with agricultural, residential and recreational uses.

Special Purpose Class

Special purpose areas represent significant community assets and/or unique opportunities for Boulder’s governance and economy.



Land Use Goals

- Support essential services and facilities to provide high quality of life for community members
- Support education, research and employment that sustain Boulder’s economy and meet community needs.

Environmental Goals

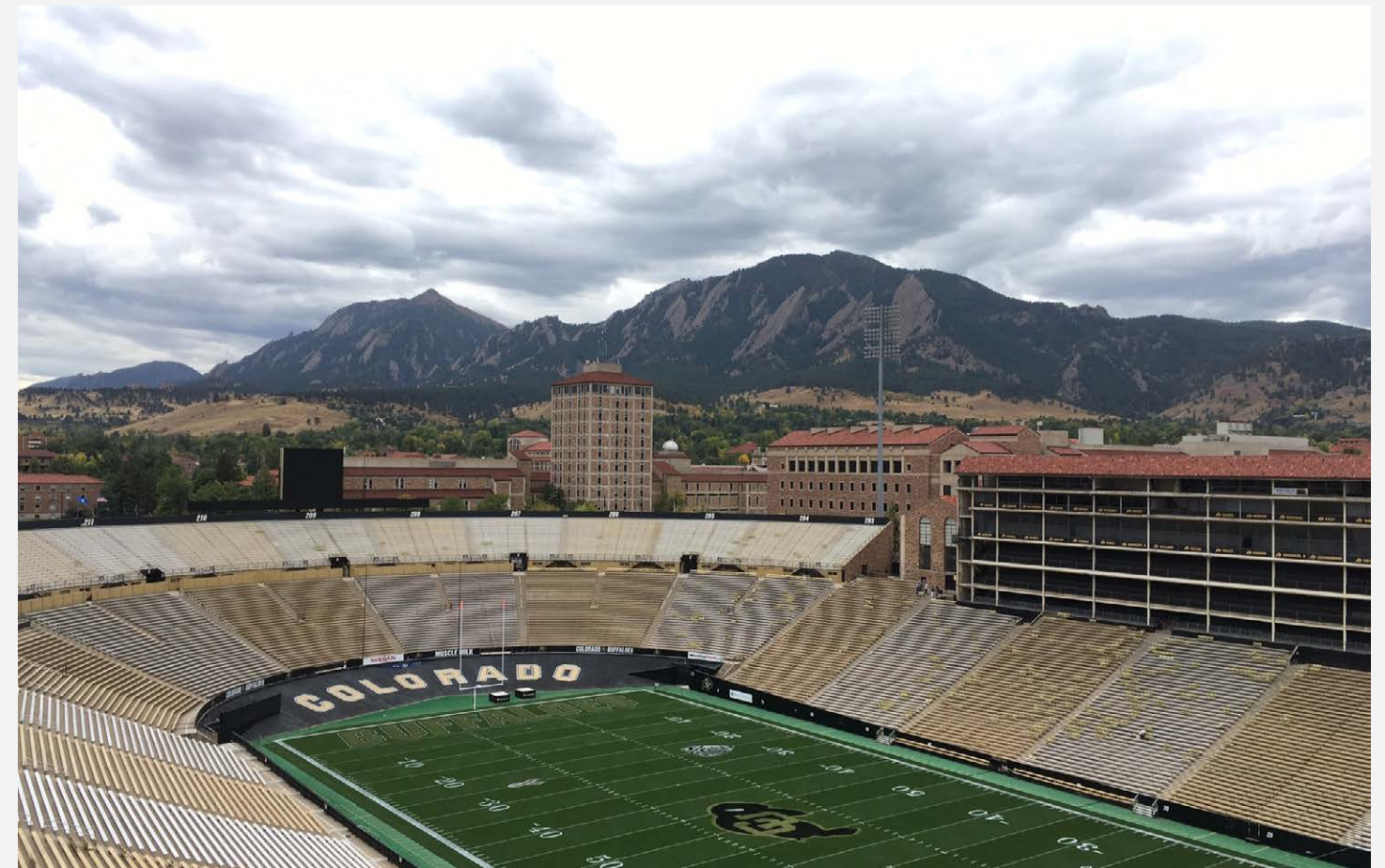
- Promote sustainable building and operational practices that minimize resource use, reduce emissions, and protect surrounding natural systems.

Mobility Goals

- Provide non-motorized connections through connected networks to and within these areas for pedestrians, bicycles and other micromobility options
- Maintain safe, low-intensity road networks that support special purposes while focusing significant commuter travel onto primary multimodal corridors
- Incorporate fast, frequent, and reliable transit from local destinations and provide connections to regional transit networks
- Achieve Vision Zero goals

Equity Goals

- Foster inclusive access to jobs, education and services
- Ensure these areas offer the potential to benefit all members of the community
-



Industrial



What it is

Industrial lands serve the community’s need for more intensive manufacturing, processing, services, commercial and other uses.

Why it matters

Industrial areas provide essential goods, services, and employment opportunities that help sustain Boulder’s economy and self-sufficiency. They support local businesses, supply chains, and trades, and contain uses that may not be appropriate in other land use categories due to space, noise or operational needs. Preserving Industrial areas helps ensure that Boulder can continue to produce, repair and distribute locally, reducing dependence on outside markets and transportation.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Commercial	Vehicle Related; Maker, Artisans and Innovation
	Industrial	Research and Development; Light Industrial; Heavy Industrial; Warehousing and Distribution Facilities
Supporting	Commercial	Office; Food and Beverage
	Civic	Education

Urban Design

- Industrial areas feature a wide range of building types and scales, from single-story facilities to multi-story structures.
- Buildings are generally designed for functional efficiency, with large footprints, high ceilings and spaces for equipment, storage and operations. Open areas are allocated for vehicle and freight circulation, loading docks and parking. Green space is incorporated to provide landscape buffers, stormwater management or other outdoor uses.
- Site layout supports operational needs, worker safety and clear, organized access.

Mobility

- Mobility in Industrial areas supports freight needs, vehicle and truck circulation, and safe and efficient access for workers and visitors through connections to regional transportation routes and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Facilities



What it is

Facilities include areas that provide essential community services and infrastructure, as well as some lands dedicated to scientific, environmental and technological research. This designation encompasses municipal operations such as water treatment facilities, energy generation or transmission sites and other utilities along with federal research campuses, laboratories, offices and support facilities. These lands often include specialized infrastructure, outdoor spaces and operational areas needed to support research, innovation and the delivery of essential community functions.

Why it matters

Facilities lands play a vital role in supporting community resilience, ensuring the efficient operation of public services and advancing scientific discovery. Municipal and utility uses enable the delivery of energy, water and transportation services while research institutions contribute to global innovation and local economic activity. Together, they reflect Boulder's commitment to sustainability, self-sufficiency and public service and strengthen the city's ability to meet environmental, technological and infrastructure challenges.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Civic	Government, Healthcare and Institutional; Utility Operations
	Commercial	Office
Supporting	Industrial	Research and Development

Urban Design

- Buildings on these lands vary widely in scale and function, from low-rise laboratories and service buildings to larger specialized or industrial facilities.
- Site layout is often organized in a campus-like pattern or functional clusters, balancing operational efficiency with environmental sensitivity.
- Outdoor spaces may be used for ecological monitoring, stormwater management or natural buffering, integrating these sites into the surrounding landscape while accommodating the specialized infrastructure required for research and operations.

Mobility

- Mobility in Facilities areas supports both operational efficiency and visitor and worker access while maintaining clear routes for service and delivery vehicles.
- Internal streets and pathways accommodate walking, rolling, and bicycling. Safe and efficient access for workers and visitors to regional transportation routes are provided where appropriate.
- Curbside areas provide flexible loading zones, parking for cars and bicycles, and space for shuttle or transit pick-up to meet diverse needs.

University



What it is

University lands are areas that will be used for public university purposes into the future. This includes educational buildings, research facilities, event space, student and faculty housing and other uses that support a high-quality university environment.

Why it matters

The University of Colorado (CU) is a cornerstone of Boulder’s identity, economy and cultural life. It attracts students, faculty and researchers from around the world, fostering innovation, creativity and a vibrant exchange of ideas. The university is one of the city’s largest employers and a key driver of local business activity. Its research partnerships and community programs strengthen Boulder’s capacity to address local and global challenges. Beyond academics, CU enriches the community through arts, athletics and public events that bring people together.

What you can expect

Uses

Uses support University of Colorado activities and needs such as, but not limited to, educational buildings, research facilities, athletic facilities, event space and student and faculty housing.

Urban Design

- University lands are composed of a diverse mix of building types and scales, ranging from low-rise buildings to taller facilities, stadiums and centers, some exceeding typical city height limits.
- Buildings are arranged in a campus environment to create active courtyards, plazas and shared green spaces that support both formal and informal gatherings, outdoor learning, recreation and events.
- The overall form emphasizes connectivity, visual interest and a cohesive campus environment while balancing dense development with open spaces that enhance the student and community experience.

Mobility

- Mobility in University areas prioritizes walking, bicycling, and transit through extensive networks of sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and transit services.
- Movement feels active and social, with pathways connecting academic buildings, housing, and event spaces.
- Curbside uses are varied, supporting deliveries, micromobility parking, and transit stops to serve the dynamic campus environment.

Future Land Use Equity Assessment





An equity assessment was performed on the definitions for each future land use designation. For each definition, the project team asked the following questions:

- Who benefits?
- Who is burdened?
- Who is missing or excluded?
- What unintended consequences might occur?
- How can equity be improved?



Across all future land uses, increased housing diversity, mixed-use development, and mobility improvements offer strong equity benefits, particularly for lower-income residents, renters, shift workers, people with disabilities, and community members who rely on transit or need access to jobs and services within walkable areas.

However, several land use types carry risks of displacement, rising rents, loss of small businesses, and exclusion of communities of color if implementation and policy do not intentionally address affordability, cultural belonging and community representation. Key findings highlight the need for targeted policies and implementation strategies that proactively mitigate these risks and ensure benefits are broadly shared.




Future Land Use Map Legend

-  Planning Area
-  City of Boulder
-  Water Bodies
-  Creeks, Streams, Ditches





Neighborhoods

-  Neighborhood 1
-  Neighborhood 2



Hubs

-  Community
-  Regional
-  Innovation & Production

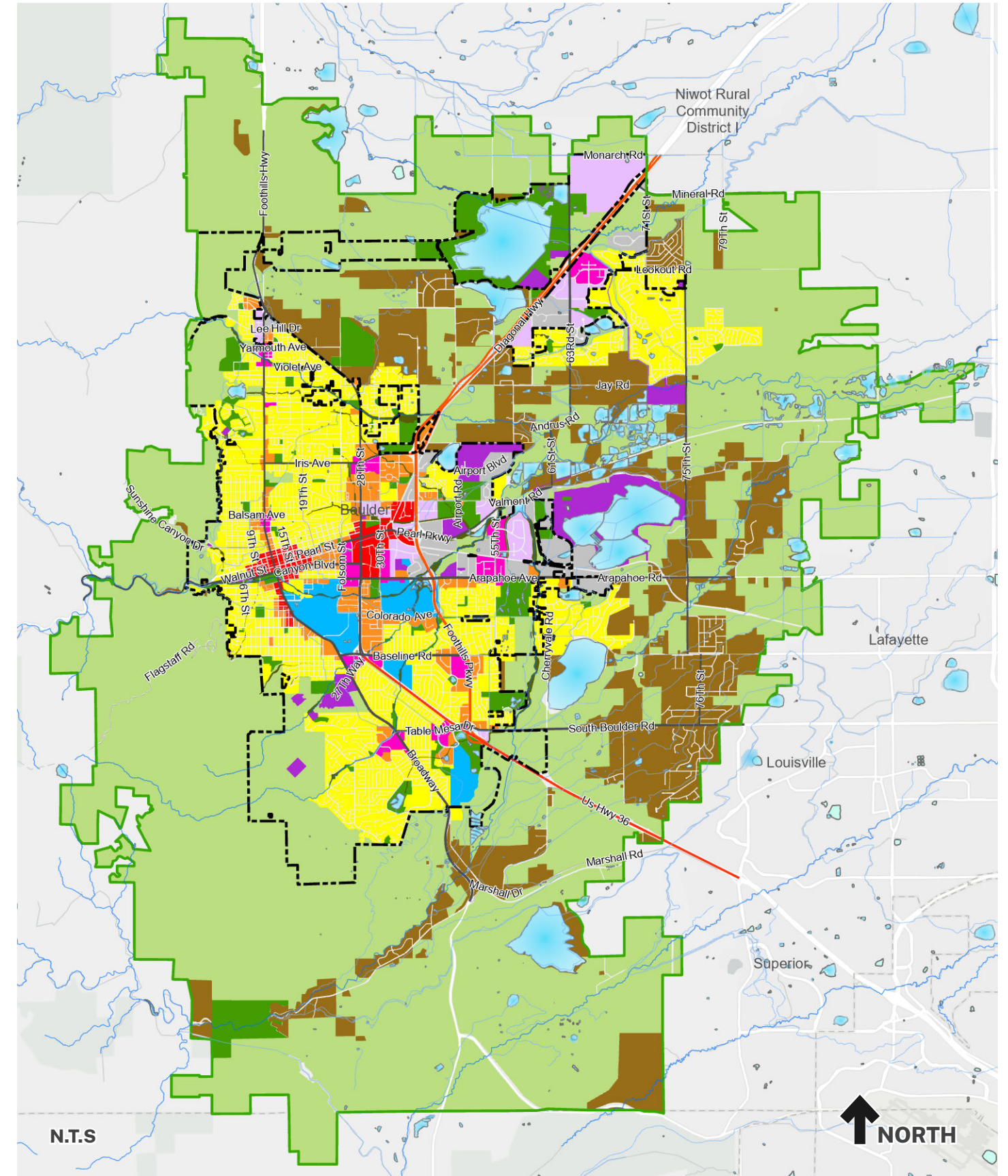
Systems

-  Parks
-  Greenways
-  Open Space
-  Rural Lands

Special Purpose

-  Industrial
-  Facilities
-  University

Boulder Valley Future Land Use Map



Design of the Built Environment

The city's urban form is the physical expression of how land use, mobility, and public spaces work together to create a livable, resilient community. The city's goal is to evolve toward an urban form that supports sustainability, equity, and climate resilience while reinforcing the distinct identity of Boulder's neighborhoods, hubs, and natural systems.

Compact and Connected

- Direct growth to Area 1 and prioritize redevelopment and infill over expansion to maintain a compact community surrounded by rural lands.
- Organize land uses into a coherent structure of neighborhoods, hubs, and systems that are linked by a multimodal transportation network.
- Ensure daily needs are accessible within 15 minutes by walking for pedestrians of all abilities reducing trip distances and community reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and increasing social cohesion and resiliency.

- Integrate greenways, parks, biodiversity and natural corridors into the urban fabric to connect people to nature and manage stormwater.

Complete and Functional

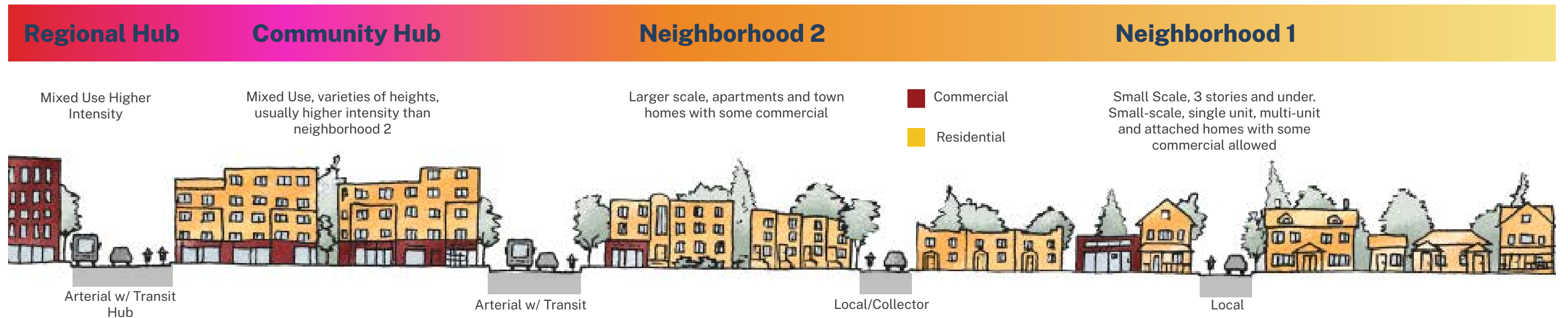
- Support mixed-use hubs and corridors that concentrate housing, jobs, and services near transit and mobility hubs.
- Design neighborhoods to include housing diversity, small-scale commercial uses and public spaces that foster social interaction and economic opportunity.
- Align land use and transportation planning to create continuous, multimodal networks that improve connectivity and safety.

Human-Scaled and Climate-Responsive

- Promote building designs that break down large facades and massing, minimize physical and visual impacts from excessive parking and create engaging architectural outcomes,.
- Prioritize a streetscape and public realm experience that incorporates human-scaled design elements, provides active uses at the ground level, is designed around movement at walking or rolling speeds, and makes meaningful contributions to neighborhood character.
- Incorporate nature-based solutions, such as tree canopy, green infrastructure and permeable landscapes, to reduce heat, manage stormwater and enhance biodiversity.
- Encourage energy-efficient and adaptable building design that supports long-term sustainability goals.

Distinct and Inclusive

- Reinforce the unique character of Boulder's neighborhoods and hubs through design that balances change with community identity.
- Provide welcoming, accessible public spaces for people of all ages, abilities, cultures and backgrounds. Create a mix of types of public spaces geared towards intended users.
- Ensure that urban form decisions advance equity, offering affordable housing and commercial spaces, safe mobility and inclusive access to amenities.





Chapter 5

Implementation

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan sets the long-term direction for the Boulder Valley through its community-driven vision.

Turning this vision into real outcomes depends on day-to-day decisions – how programs are designed, which projects move forward, how funding is spent and how policies are put into practice. Implementation is not a single action by one person or entity. It is an ongoing, coordinated effort across city and county staff, elected and appointed officials, partner organizations and community members.

Putting the Plan into Action

City and county departments are responsible for much of the day-to-day and long-term work needed to put the comprehensive plan policies and land use strategies into action. Finding clear ways to track, demonstrate and evaluate progress can help keep the plan responsive, relevant and focused on what matters most to the community.

Policymakers and city and county staff should use this section to:

Guide Decision-making

When developing plans, projects, programs, initiatives, regulations or budgets, consider how actions align with comprehensive plan. Decisions may move one specific aspect forward or may broadly support the aspirations of the plan.

Support Equitable Implementation

Consider who benefits, who might be burdened, and how actions can reduce disparities and build long-term trust. Use equity considerations to guide both process and outcomes.

Coordinate across Departments and Partners

Collaborate between departments when developing work plans, projects, programs and capital investments to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan. Identify and pursue opportunities where efforts can advance multiple policy areas among several departments.

Track and Communicate Progress

Use data, community feedback and lived experience to determine whether actions are making progress toward the vision over time. Develop indicators, an evaluation approach and process to check-in with community members to monitor the effectiveness of actions.



Discussing plans for 30th Street

How Implementation Works

The city and county work together to coordinate implementation through more detailed plans, programs, projects, infrastructure and services that shape the Boulder Valley. Regional, state and other partners also play important roles in implementation, and their work can help advance comprehensive plan goals. Achieving the community's vision depends on continued coordination among departments, policymakers and community partners.

The comprehensive plan works in concert with the Citywide Strategic Plan to help turn the long-term community vision into near-term action. The strategic plan guides where the city focuses its time, funding and effort over a four-year period. Implementation of the comprehensive plan over time will define:

- Which projects, programs and initiatives are prioritized
- How projects and programs are designed, delivered and evaluated
- How benefits and impacts are distributed across the community
- How regulations implement the vision of the community, where land uses are allowed, the design and scale of buildings and how each site plays into the larger character of its neighborhood
- How the community learns from experience and adjust our strategies over time.

Implementation Tools

For city efforts, implementation happens primarily through:

- Citywide Strategic Plan
- Department Plans and Blueprints
- Subcommunity and Area Plans
- Development Standards and Zoning
- Capital Improvements and Budgets
- Department Workplans
- Partnerships with community organizations, groups and institutions

City departments, policymakers and community members use these to make sure the everyday work of the city and county aligns with the comprehensive plan and makes measurable progress toward the community's shared vision and city's Sustainability, Equity and Resilience Framework.

Focusing on Equity

As the city and county begin implementation, it is crucial to look at who benefits and who is likely to be negatively impacted. The comprehensive plan establishes a guide for outcomes that are committed to improving access to opportunity, quality of life, housing, health and civic participation for all community members.

Putting equity into practice means moving beyond inclusive processes alone. It means focusing on measurable, data-based improvements in safety, well-being and opportunity, especially for people and communities who have been historically excluded or have faced a greater share of negative impacts and barriers. City equity analysis tools and policy evaluation processes should help guide planning, project and program design, implementation and evaluation.

When implementing the plan, city and county departments, policymakers and community partners should work directly with community members to consider questions like:

- Are projects and programs reaching people and communities with the greatest needs?
- Are investments helping reduce gaps in access to housing, nature, transportation, services and economic opportunity?
- Is trust being built through accountability and ongoing relationships with historically excluded and underrepresented communities?
- Are we identifying and addressing unintended burdens or risks?

Measuring Progress

For some goals, progress can be measured with quantitative data, like reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, improvements in transportation safety or increases in housing options. Other goals require a broader set of qualitative data, including community feedback and lived experience, cross-department learning and qualitative assessments of change. Not everything that matters can be captured by a single number or set of statistics. It takes a combination of data, qualitative feedback and accountability to make true progress.





Chapter 6

Glossary of Terms

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

A separate and complete single housing unit within a detached dwelling unit or within an accessory structure to the principal dwelling unit of the lot or parcel on which the unit is located.

Annexation

The process of moving unincorporated land into a municipality's boundary and jurisdiction. Annexation of unincorporated lands into the City of Boulder must meet certain conditions established by Colorado Revised Statutes and Boulder Revised Code.

Area Median Income (AMI)

The midpoint of a specific region's income distribution, calculated annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). AMI varies by location and household size. AMI is used to determine eligibility for affordable housing and rental assistance.

Boulder Valley

The area identified in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, Planning Areas Map. The Boulder Valley includes land within the City of Boulder and portions of unincorporated Boulder County.

Capital Improvement

A permanent physical alteration or repair that enhances a property's value, increases its useful life or adapts it to new uses. In the city, capital improvements are planned on a six-year timeframe through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Community Members

All who live, work, learn, visit or have an interest in the community.

Community Resilience Hub

A facility that supports the community during both routine and emergency conditions by providing essential services, resources and safe space. Resilience hubs may offer access to water, energy, communications, shelter, medical supplies and other critical supports during disruptions.

Enclave

Land within unincorporated Boulder County that is entirely contained within the outer boundaries of the city.

Home-Based Business

A small-scale business operated at a private home by the residents that is secondary to the residential use.

Level of Service Standards

Metrics that define the minimum acceptable capacity, quality and availability of public facilities and services necessary to support urban development within the Boulder Valley.

Micromobility

Transportation options that are low-speed, lightweight, small and can be human or electric powered. They can be personally owned or use shared services and connected technology.

Middle Housing Types

A range of housing types that typically provide fewer units than multi-unit buildings but more than single-unit dwellings. Examples include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses and courtyard clustered units.

Middle Income Housing

Housing that is affordable to middle income households. Middle income in the city is defined as ranging between 80 and 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

New Urban Development

- Any proposed development and/or redevelopment within Area 1-Urban Lands.
- Any proposed development and/or redevelopment within Area 2 or Area 3 that is determined to require additional services to be provided by the city.
- Any proposed development and/or redevelopment within Area 2 or Area 3 that is determined to be inconsistent with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan or Boulder County Land Use Code.

Over-Intensive Rural Development

Development or redevelopment of land within Area 3 that, due to its scale, intensity or impacts is determined to be inconsistent with the surrounding rural character and the intent to preserve that character. The following are examples of factors to be considered when determining over-intensive rural development:

- Project Scale
- Project Intensity
- On-site disturbance and creation of impervious surface
- Off-site impacts such as traffic or increased activity
- Adequacy of public services and/or infrastructure

Permanently Affordable Housing

A home whose affordability is legally protected in perpetuity through a deed restriction, covenant or land trust.

Service Area

The geographic area where the city may provide urban services and is already within city limits or eligible for annexation. The service area includes the following planning areas: Area 1-Urban Lands and Area 2-Urban Edge.

Substantially Developed

An area or parcel that is already improved or built out (e.g. with structures, roads or utilities) to the degree that opportunities for significant additional development are limited.

Urban Services

Services provided by the City of Boulder including public water, public sewer, stormwater and flood management, urban fire protection and emergency medical care, urban police protection, multi-modal transportation and developed urban parks.

Urban Service Provider

An entity responsible for planning, financing, operating and maintaining adequate urban services.

Wraparound Services

A coordinated approach to service delivery that addresses a range of needs of individuals or households, including health, social, educational and supportive services. Wraparound services are intended to provide integrated support, improve outcomes and enhance well-being across multiple aspects of daily life.

Zoning

The local regulatory system that regulates land uses and development for each property. Zoning for the City of Boulder is defined in the Boulder Revised Code and zoning for Boulder County is defined in the Boulder County Land Use Code.

Future Land Use Glossary

The following terms are used to define expectations for the Future Land Use designations in this plan.

Accessory Commercial Unit

A commercial space located within a residential parcel that is secondary to the primary residential use.

Agriculture

Includes the cultivation of soils and crops and the raising of animals to provide food, fiber, and other products.

Arts, Culture and Entertainment

Private facilities that provide entertainment for a fee, such as theaters, cinemas, music venues and cultural event venues.

Attached Unit

Housing unit that is attached to another housing unit via shared walls, roofs, or foundations and feature independent entrances, kitchens, and bathrooms. Examples include townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes.

Detached Unit

A standalone, self-contained principal housing unit that shares no walls, roofs, or foundations with other buildings. Examples include “single-family” homes.

Education

Provide instructional, academic, or training services, including public or private schools, colleges, universities, and specialized educational or research institutions.

Food and Beverage

Includes establishments that prepare and serve food or beverages for consumption, on or off the premises, including restaurants, cafes, bars, and similar services that may serve residents, workers, or visitors.

Government, Healthcare and Institutional

Public or nonprofit facilities that provide governmental services, healthcare, social services, or institutional functions for the community.

Group Living

A residential structure whose uses are characterized by needs of a specified group of people. The residents may receive any combination of care, meals, or treatment, as long as they also reside at the site. Examples include assisted living facilities, skilled nursing facilities and residential treatments centers.

Heavy Industrial

Includes larger-scale manufacturing, processing, or material handling that may generate higher levels of noise, emissions, or truck traffic and typically require separation from sensitive land uses.

Light Industrial

Includes manufacturing, processing, assembly, repair, or fabrication activities conducted within enclosed buildings and generally producing limited noise, vibration, odor, or traffic impacts. Includes indoor agricultural facilities.

Lodging

Provides temporary accommodation for visitors, travelers, or guests, including hotels, motels, inns, and similar facilities, often with accessory services such as meeting rooms, dining, or limited retail.

Maker, Artisan and Innovation

Includes on-site creation of custom or handcrafted goods using hand tools or small equipment. May include accessory retail sales, classes, demonstrations, and limited events that support production activities.

Multi-Unit

Housing unit structure that typically includes more than four housing units and features shared entrances and amenities. Examples include apartments, efficiency living units, and condominiums.

Office

Includes businesses providing professional, financial, administrative, medical or technical services to individuals or other businesses, including accounting, legal, insurance, real estate, counseling, publishing, architecture, engineering, and design services. Shared or co-working spaces, typically accessed through membership or lease arrangements, are included.

Open Lands

Includes undeveloped areas that may have open space values.

Open Space Purposes

Open space land shall be acquired, maintained, preserved, retained, and used only for the following purposes:

- Preservation or restoration of natural areas characterized by or including terrain, geologic formations, flora, or fauna that are unusual, spectacular, historically important, scientifically valuable, or unique, or that represent outstanding or rare examples of native species;
- Preservation of water resources in their natural or traditional state, scenic areas or vistas, wildlife habitats, or fragile ecosystems;
- Preservation of land for passive recreational use, such as hiking, photography or nature studies, and, if specifically designated, bicycling, horseback riding, or fishing;
- Preservation of agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production;
- Utilization of land for shaping the development of the city, limiting urban sprawl, and disciplining growth;
- Utilization of non-urban land for spatial definition of urban areas;
- Utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains; and
- Preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value and its contribution to the quality of life of the community.

