

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

Major Update - 2025



Cover Image: Community member photograph submitted as part of Photo Voice with Chris Carruth, Experiments in Public Art: The Comprehensive Plan Update.

This Page: Boulder was the first city in the United States to pass a dedicated sales tax to buy, manage and maintain open space.

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), Tsétsėhéstâhese (Cheyenne), Numunuu (Comanche), Caiugu (Kiowa), Čariks i Čariks (Pawnee), Sosonih (Shoshone), Oc'eti S'akowin (Sioux) and Núuchiu (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 neecee ("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 Tsétsėhéstâhese ("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
- Lauren Folkerts, Member (through November 2025)

City Planning Board

- Claudia Hanson Thiem, Vice Chair
- Laura Kaplan, Chair
- Maxwell Lord, Member
- Mark McIntyre, Member
- Kurt Nordback, Member
- Mason Roberts, Member
- ml Robles, Member
- Jorge Boone, Member (through March 2026)

Board of County Commissioners

- Claire Levy, Commissioner
- 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 Whitney, Chair
- Ann Goldfarb (through February 2025)

Approved by:

- City Council on August 6, 2026
- City Planning Board on July 21, 2026
- County Planning Commission on August 19, 2026
- Board of County Commissioners on August 13, 2026

The Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Boulder and Boulder County was approved on March 2, 2021 and is effective through December 31, 2042.

Contents

CHAPTER 1 Welcome to the Plan. 7

CHAPTER 2 Vision and Values. 25

CHAPTER 3 Policies 51

CHAPTER 4 Future Land Use. 77

CHAPTER 5 Implementation 123

CHAPTER 6 Glossary of Terms 129



Community members discussing areas they are interested in exploring with city staff as part of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan update.



Artwork by Cal Brackin.

1

Welcome to the Plan

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan is the community's guide for how the Boulder Valley grows, connects and evolves over the next 20 years. The City of Boulder and Boulder County adopt the plan jointly because accomplishing the community's vision for the future requires us to work together.

This plan is driven by our community. It connects shared values to choices about where homes and jobs are located, how access destinations and opportunities, how we collectively care for the environment and support a sustainable, equitable and resilient community. The core components of the plan are:

- Policies that inform city and county decisions
- Planning Areas Map that describes the extent of the plan's applicability, where urban development is appropriate and where rural character will be preserved
- Future Land Use Map that identifies the desired land use pattern across the Boulder Valley

Why the Plan Matters

A Shared Direction

The comprehensive plan acts as a compass. It is not a set of step-by-step directions or a forecast of exactly what will happen, but a guide that establishes expectations and keeps policymakers and the community pointed in a shared direction to achieve desired outcomes. It provides the basis for long-term decisions, expenditures and commitments that extend beyond an election cycle. This plan is the primary guiding document for the City of Boulder. Boulder County collaborates on the creation and implementation of the plan for unincorporated areas that are within the Planning Area boundary. The county also maintains the **Boulder County Comprehensive Plan**, which applies to all unincorporated land in the county.

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 future planning efforts, zoning and code updates, and development applications that require general consistency with the plan. The plan provides a framework for careful analysis and consideration of tradeoffs when community members, city and county staff, and policymakers consider future decisions.

A Way to Measure Progress

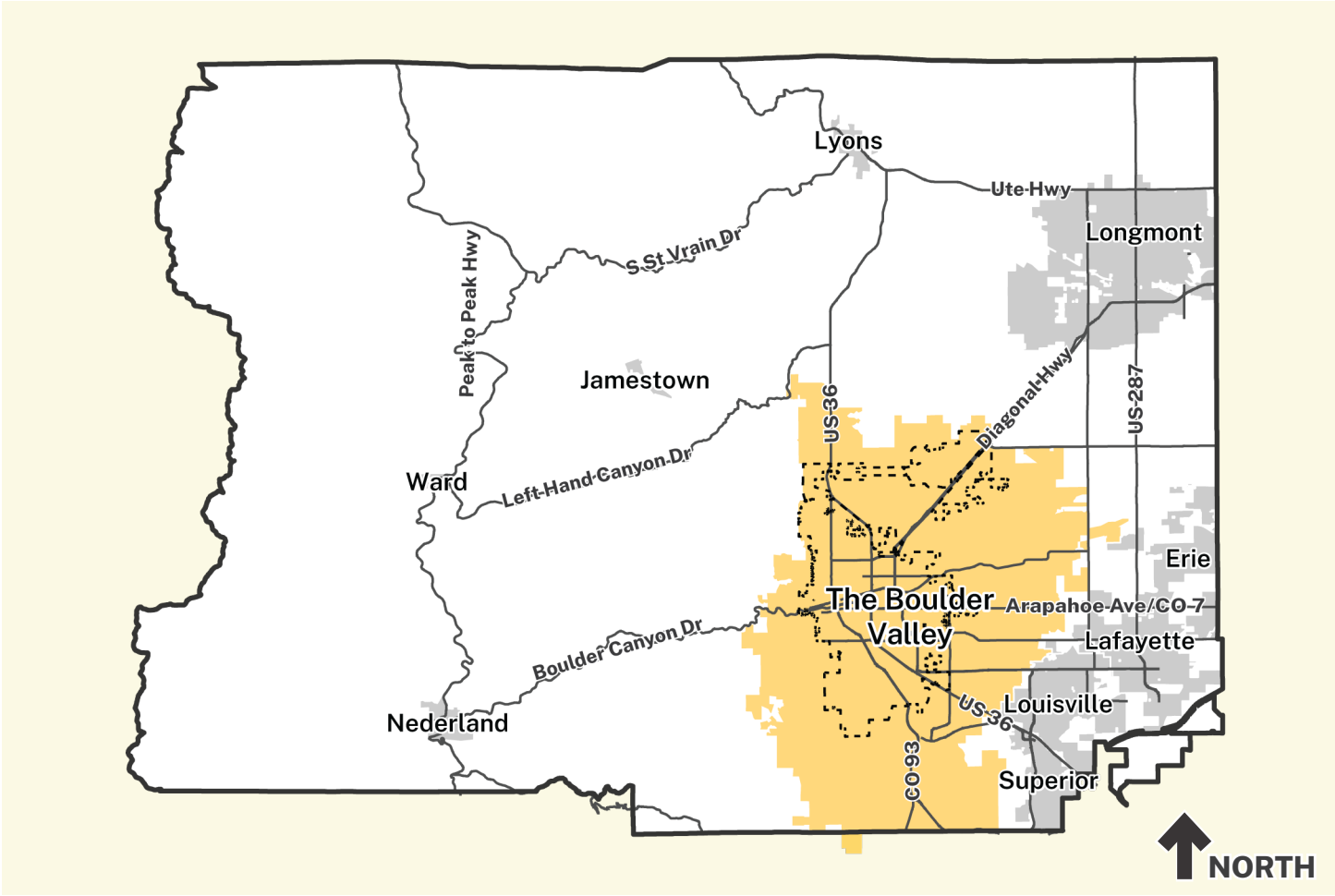
The plan is intended to be put into action. It is the link between long-term community values and near-term choices about the future. The plan is a common reference point directing the way forward to implement the community's vision in a coordinated and connected way.

Plan Adoption and State Compliance

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 County Commissioners. Details on which bodies review and approve different types of changes as well as the timing of different types of updates to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan are outlined in the amendment procedures included in the intergovernmental agreement between the city and county.

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan conforms with state regulations for municipal "master plans" as outlined in CRS 31-23-206 and related statutes. Some required elements are provided through more detailed departmental plans and documents that are considered sub-elements of this plan such as subcommunity and area plans, transportation plans, housing plans and water supply plans. The Planning Areas and Future Land Use Maps and related policies describing lands that are eligible for annexation within three miles of the city boundary serve to fulfill the requirements outlined in CRS 31-12-105(e).

The Boulder Valley Planning Area



The comprehensive plan applies to land within the Boulder Valley Planning Area. This includes all land within the Boulder city limits as well as some surrounding land in unincorporated Boulder County.

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

The Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans

The comprehensive plan plays an integral role in many other plans, programs and decisions within the city. Plans that provide greater detail on policies and priorities for specific departments or geographies are considered to be sub-elements of the comprehensive plan with the same role when evaluating general consistency with the overall vision. Plans that are operational or focused on a specific facility (e.g., a water treatment plant) are not considered sub-elements.

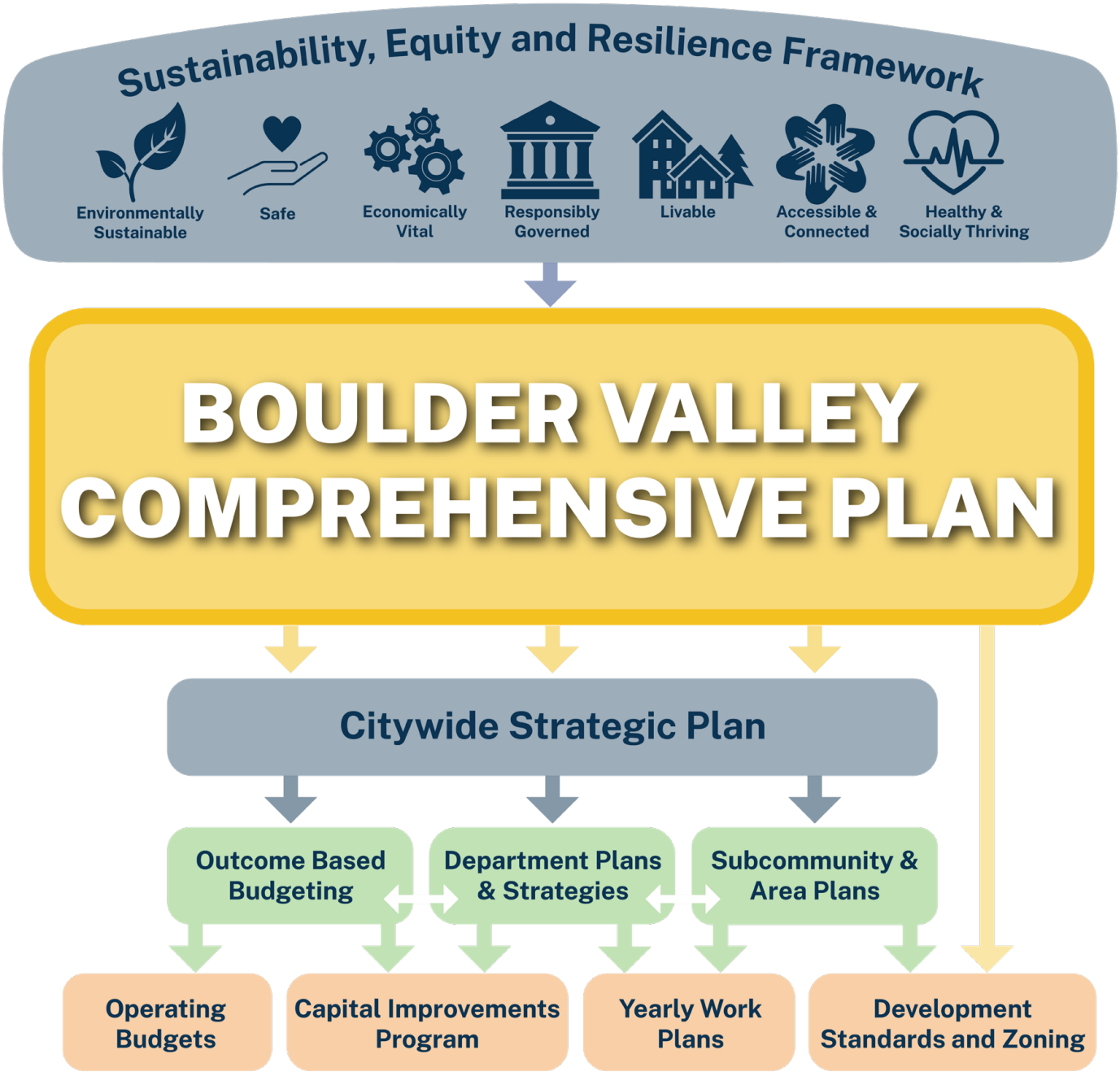


Diagram showing how the Sustainability, Equity and Resilience Framework and Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan inform other city plans and processes.

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. This four-year plan identifies major strategies and is used alongside City Council priorities to coordinate work across city departments.

Budget

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

Department Plans

City department plans 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. They provide detailed policies, priorities, service standards, asset and system needs, and capital plans to create a roadmap for budget and workplan priorities within each city department.

Subcommunity and Area Plans

Subcommunity and Area Plans provide direction for specific geographic areas. They help implement the comprehensive plan and offer more specific guidance for anticipated land uses, design character, mobility facilities and programming. Through the subcommunity and area planning process, the city identifies underutilized land for new development with potential to address community needs. These plans assess the location of sites relative to transit and jobs, infrastructure needs, availability of public facilities and services, and transportation capacity.

Capital Improvement Program

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

Department Annual Work Plans

City departments prepare a work plan each year that is incorporated into the citywide annual work plan. Work plans include on-going business activities, projects and programs that are informed by and support the policies of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.

Development Standards and Zoning

The city zoning map assigns a zoning district to every parcel of land in the city. The Boulder Revised Code (B.R.C., 1981) defines the zoning districts and 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 regulate properties within the Boulder Valley located in unincorporated Boulder County. The comprehensive plan and Future Land Use Map inform decisions about zoning in the Boulder Valley.

Who Uses the Comprehensive Plan



Community Assembly members discussing recommendations for 15-minute neighborhoods.

Community members

use the plan to understand the community's long-term vision, gain insight for local decisions, investments and opportunities, and hold policymakers accountable to shared values.

Property owners

use the comprehensive plan to understand the community vision for their neighborhood and plan for strategic development and investment that could contribute to the community's goals for environmental preservation, design quality, mobility, economy and housing.

Elected officials and advisory boards

use the plan to set priorities, weigh tradeoffs and make informed decisions that are aligned with the community's vision for the future. They also use the plan to guide decisions on budget and policy priorities, zoning and code changes and development applications.

City staff

use the plan to develop work plans around shared goals, guide more detailed planning efforts, make updates to regulations, evaluate 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 understand and communicate expectations for the city's growth and development, guide decisions about unincorporated lands in the Boulder Valley and coordinate and collaborate with the city on areas of shared interest.

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



Community members participating in a community-led conversation to inform the vision and values of the plan.

Community members had the opportunity to participate in more than 70 engagement opportunities resulting in thousands of individual comments and points of feedback, 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 500 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.

Focus on Racial Equity

For the first time, the city and county applied racial equity tools, such as the Rapid Response Equity Assessment, to the process and draft comprehensive plan policies. These racial equity tools guide users through a process to ensure equitable decisions and practices. The process revealed the potential benefits and burdens embedded in draft plan policies and was used to inform updates and revisions to improve equitable outcomes in the final plan. Additionally, the focus on equity provided insight into potential opportunities to address systemic inequities and potential risks that policies could face during implementation of the plan.

What is Equity?

Equity is an intentional, ongoing process of evaluating and changing policies, practices and systems to eliminate institutional racism and address historical disadvantages that have disproportionately affected people based on gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, age, race or ethnicity. Equity is achieved when all community members have resources and opportunities that they need to thrive. Advancing equity focuses on leveling the playing field and prioritizing efforts that drive towards social justice to improve outcomes for all community members, particularly those most often excluded by government.

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 inequality and 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 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan aims to address many of these challenges 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.



The next chapter of planning aims to create a more inclusive, connected and sustainable future for the Boulder Valley.

Community Context and Local Trends

Big-picture trends about Boulder Valley community members – those who live, work and visit the area – and how these patterns change over time provide context for the plan. These conditions help explain why planning for the future matters and what challenges and opportunities Boulder Valley may face over the next 20 years. Understanding where Boulder is today is essential to making thoughtful choices about where the community wants to go next.

To guide the policies and future land use strategy that shape the Boulder Valley's growth over the next 20 years, the comprehensive plan relies on population and employment projections from the Colorado State Demography Office. Several scenarios were provided by the State Demographer to understand a range of possible outcomes based on historic trends. The population projection is based on the city of Boulder maintaining its share of the total population within Boulder County and the employment projection is based on the city maintaining its proportion of the total jobs within the state of Colorado.

People and Demographics

Most people in the Boulder Valley live in the city of Boulder, which functions as a college town with a large population of young adults, a place with high-paying jobs and high quality of life attractive to professionals and families, and as a community where many residents are approaching retirement and wish to age in place. This demographic creates a wide range of needs for housing, transportation choices and mobility, healthcare access, services and public spaces for people in different phases of life.

- 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.
- About 16% of community members are age 60 or older, and this group is growing.
- About 12% of community members are age 18 or younger, and this group is shrinking.
- The Colorado State Demography Office projects the city's population could reach about 118,800 people in the year 2045.



While the student population of CU is expected to keep Boulder's population relatively young, the growing proportion of older adults highlights a need to adapt services, housing and infrastructure to support residents at all stages of life. Additionally, the school-age population is declining across the nation and this trend is pronounced in Boulder. Enrollment in the Boulder Valley School District has decreased significantly since 2017, particularly in the elementary grades. Fewer children living in the community affects neighborhood vitality, public school funding and facilities, and long-term community sustainability.

Housing

Local Housing

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

- There are about 58,000 homes in the Boulder Valley, with roughly 53,000 located in the city's Service Area (Areas 1 and 2).
- Housing types include single-unit detached homes, duplexes, townhomes, apartments, condominiums, manufactured homes and accessory dwelling units.
- About half of all homes are apartments or condominiums, while around 40% are single-unit detached homes. This mix is similar to other peer cities with universities.
- 47% of homes in the city are owner-occupied and 53% are renter-occupied. The proportion of for-rent homes is higher than the state average of about 34%.

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. Development has been concentrated near downtown, Boulder Junction, CU Boulder and parts of east, north and south Boulder.

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 since 2015. Local rents have also gone up, but have moderated and started to fall in the last few years. The median home rent in the city is around $2,000 per month. 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.

Rising housing costs and limited housing choices are closely linked with cost of living in Boulder and shaping who can live here. The high cost is affecting 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.

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 has declined over time. 35% of all trips by residents are in an SOV.
- Transit ridership is recovering but remains below 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. Resident employees have better access to multimodal options and take more multimodal trips to get to work compared to non-residents.
- Non-resident employees travel over 18 miles on average to reach jobs in Boulder.

While the behavior of city residents has become less dependent on driving alone over time, Boulder's role as a regional job center continues to draw workers to the community by car. Changing work patterns, accessibility of mobility options and availability of local housing will continue to influence how people move to and through the Boulder Valley.



Employment and Business

Boulder's economy is innovative and diverse, supported by major institutions such as the University of Colorado and a broad range of businesses, including a high concentration in advanced technology industries. The area 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.

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 toward remote and hybrid work and impact foot traffic, street activity and commercial area vitality.

- About 95,000 jobs and 8,000 employers are located in the city of Boulder.
- Most businesses are small, and 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.
- The Colorado State Demography Office projects the city's employment could reach about 123,000 jobs in the year 2045.
- The Colorado State Demography Office projects the city's employment could reach about 123,000 jobs in the year 2045.

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.

Climate Change and Natural Hazards

The Boulder Valley is experiencing climate change right now. Recent climate trends in Colorado include longer periods of hot and dry weather and precipitation uncertainty. Hotter and drier weather means that vegetation is more prone to wildfires. Uncertain precipitation projections reflect the potential for unexpected, intense rain events.

- Since 2000, streamflows in the South Platte River basin dropped 18% compared to a 1951-2000 baseline.
- In the Colorado River basin, streamflows have dropped 5%. While supplies go down, the demand for water in these basins has increased.

The changing climate and increasing natural hazard risks have serious implications for community safety, health and wellness. Planning for response and recovery while working towards reducing risks will help the community adapt to the changing conditions. Meanwhile, national 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.



A bird's eye view of downtown Boulder looking toward the Flatirons illustrates how the city and county work together to encourage a compact city surrounded by natural and rural lands.

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, the persistence of this form, a compact city framed by rural lands, 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 the various functions of the surrounding rural lands 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 of Colorado 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 county areas value this urban and rural distinction, and this continues to guide many planning decisions today.



Artwork by Cal Brackin.

2

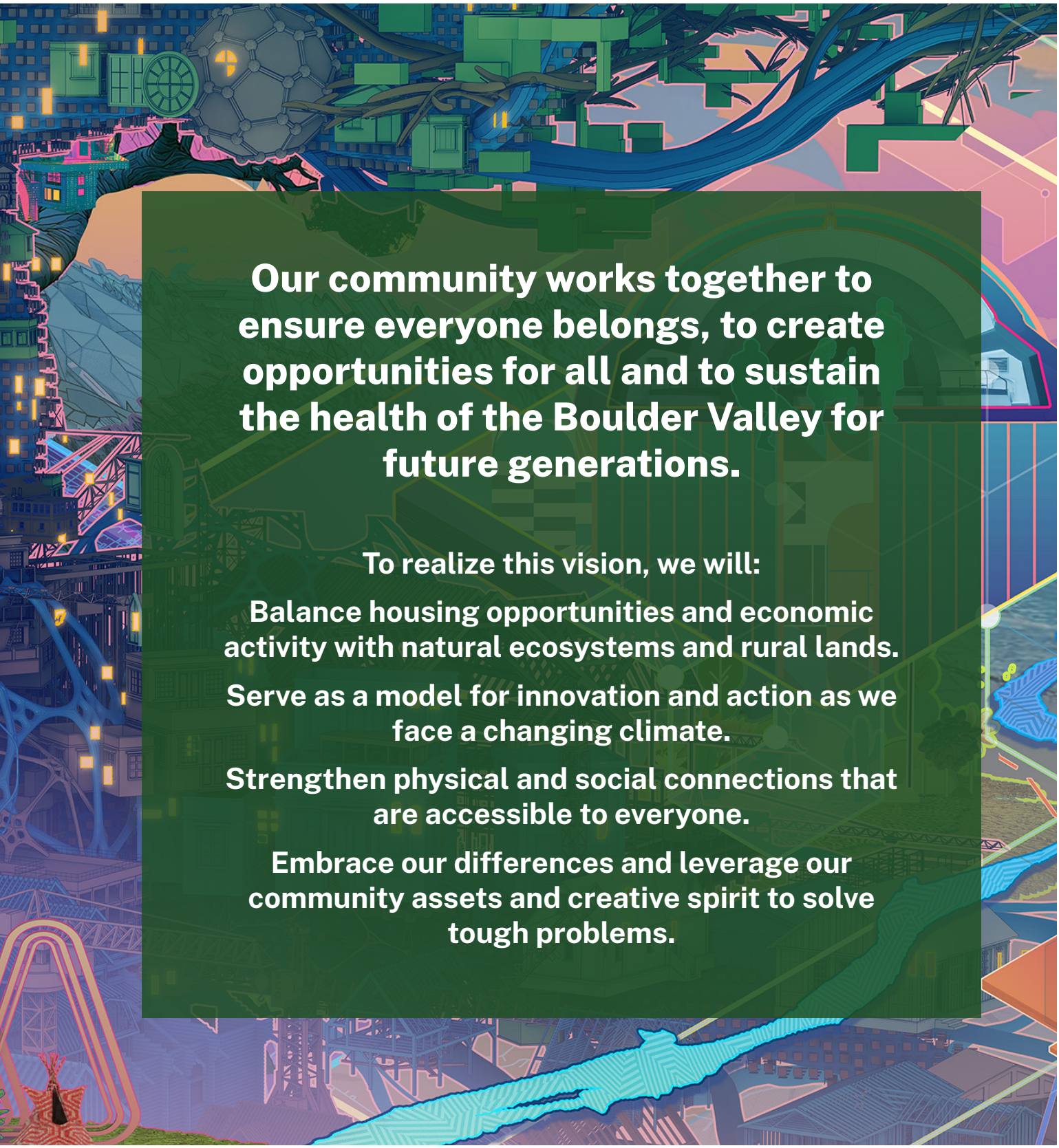
Vision and Values

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

Vision



A portion of mural artwork titled Future Flourishing by Android and Martha Jones created for the major update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan through Experiments in Public Art.



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.

Community Values

The comprehensive plan is grounded in shared community values. These values guide policies, land use planning 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.



Economically Vital

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



Environmentally Sustainable

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



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.



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.



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.



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.

Community Values Shape the Future

Throughout the planning process, several topics rose to the top of community interest and discussion. The following section explores these topics and offers a bridge between the community values and comprehensive plan policies and future land use strategy. Topic area pages are intended to be educational and connect areas of community interest to specific policies. This section reinforces the reality that individual policies within the comprehensive plan rarely operate independently. Instead, they interact, reinforce one another and at times require careful balancing of competing priorities to achieve the community's vision.



Protecting natural areas, habitat, scenic vistas and passive recreation is a core community value reinforced by the comprehensive plan.

The Future of 15-Minute Neighborhoods



Community Assembly members gathered during a meeting in 2025.

Many Boulder community members aspire 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.

To explore this concept and build towards more community-driven recommendations, the city and county launched their 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:

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

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, schools, libraries, recreation centers, restaurants, retail, public art spaces and community gardens.

The elements outlined by the Community Assembly describe the types of desired uses and activities broadly. The elements are not mutually exclusive and the scale and format will depend on the surrounding context. For example, a small café could serve as a community center, restaurant, small-scale food market, and retail space.

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 more isolated and require community members to travel longer distances to access things like food, childcare or other daily essentials.

The comprehensive plan incorporates the Community Assembly's recommendations into policies and the future land use strategy to support evolution of isolated areas to 15-minute neighborhoods. Community members can anticipate that this kind of evolution will happen at different scales and take place incrementally, over time.



Community members enjoy outdoor dining in downtown Boulder, which has many components of a 15-minute neighborhood.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- Community Character and Evolution
- Integrated Land Use and Transportation
- Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Community
- Social Infrastructure
- Commercial Activity in Residential Areas
- Joyful and Community-Centered Transportation System
- 15-Minute Neighborhoods

The Future of Agriculture and Food Systems

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, community members consistently identified agriculture and the local food system as a priority. Participants draw a link between food and issues of affordability, climate resilience, health, cultural heritage, social 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.

Agriculture in the Boulder Valley

Both the city's Open Space and Mountain Parks Department (OSMP)and Boulder County Parks and Open Space provide extensive and diverse agricultural leasing programs that support dozens of local farm and ranch families and their employees. Agricultural leases often include valuable water rights that are required to support viable agricultural production in Boulder Valley's semi-arid environment. Protecting these working landscapes and waters has been critical in preserving an important element of the valley's cultural heritage, supporting agricultural production and providing opportunities for the broader community to purchase locally grown foods from individual farmers, farmers' markets and many local restaurants.

Agricultural operations are diverse and include hay and forage production, grain production and livestock production on native prairies and irrigated pastures. Smaller market farms also produce a wide variety of vegetables including salad greens, peppers and tomatoes. Other products include milk, eggs, honey, chicken and pork. Some farms in the Boulder Valley also host weddings, farm dinners, and educational events as a way to grow awareness of local agriculture and to create secondary income streams. Promoting regenerative agricultural practices helps maintain healthy soils and diverse native grasslands throughout the Boulder Valley's agricultural and natural landscape.

Local Food System

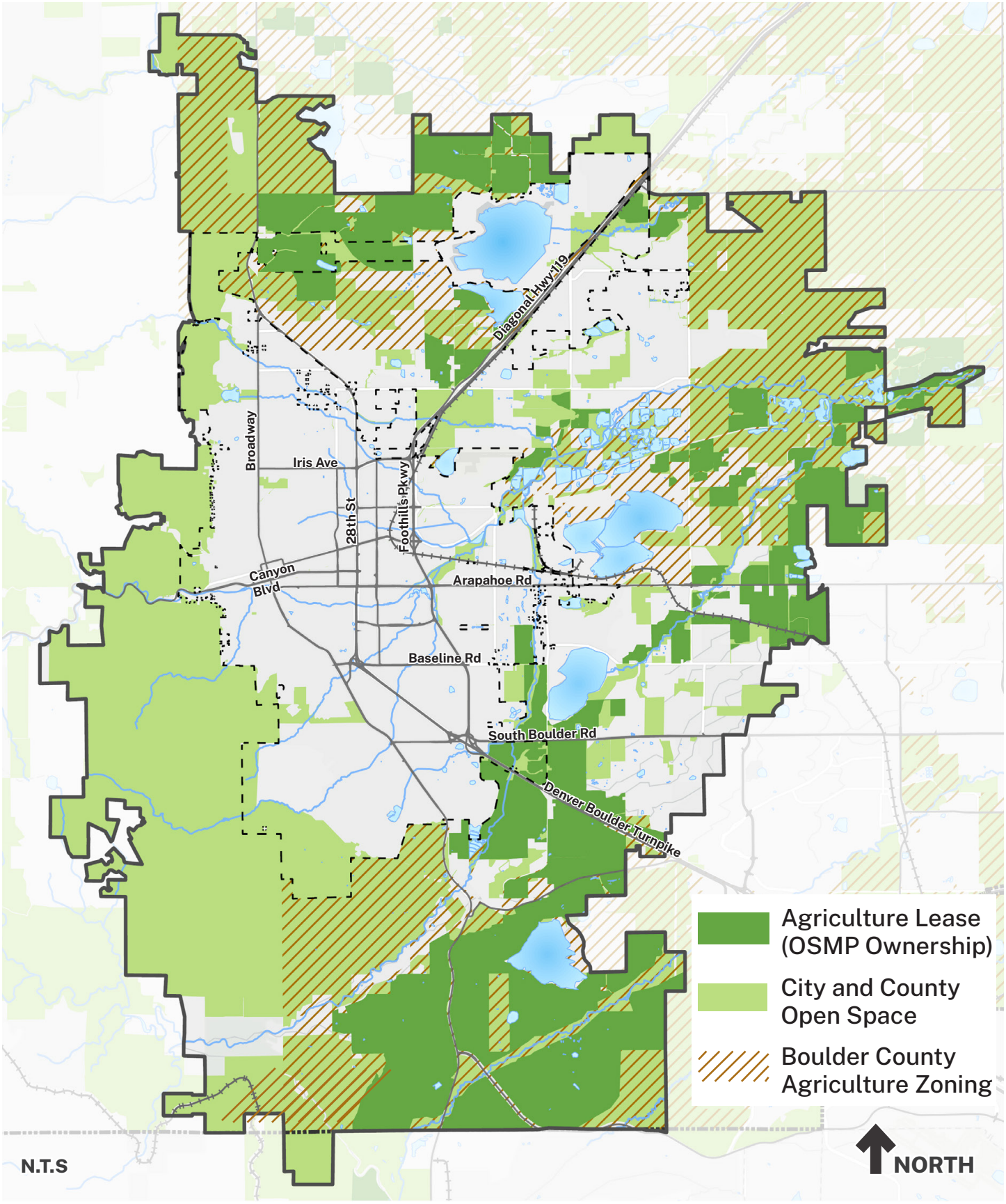
The food system is generally considered the chain of activities connecting food and feed production, processing, storage, distribution, wholesale and retail sales, consumption and waste management. A strong local food system can positively impact the resiliency, culture, health, economy and environment 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 Regenerative Agricultural Practices
- Agriculture Workforce Support

Where Does Agriculture Happen in the Boulder Valley?



The Future of Arts, Culture and the Economy

The Boulder Arts Blueprint outlines shared goals to support artists, creative businesses, vibrant neighborhoods and cultural life. The vision included in this plan summarizes the community's possibilities and potential for arts, culture and creative endeavors:



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.

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.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Visitor Economy
- Night Economy
- Experiential Economy
- Social Infrastructure
- 15-Minute Neighborhoods
- Imagination Areas



Local theater productions are an important asset in the community.



The community supports local arts activities such as the Street Wise Arts Mural festival.

The Future of Housing

Community members described many interests related to housing throughout the comprehensive planning process. Many expressed a desire for more housing choices generally, more affordable housing, and more types of homes that could meet the differing needs of families, local workforce and older adults. Others voiced concerns about population growth and its potential impact on resources, traffic and existing 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).



Community members working on land use strategy.



Local example of a single-unit detached home.



Local example of townhomes.



Local example of multi-unit homes.

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 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:

- Context-specific infill and change in neighborhoods can sensitively introduce opportunities for various housing forms, such as duplexes, triplexes, rowhomes, small houses on small lots, cottage courts, backyard cottages (ADUs) and multi-unit buildings in areas like Neighborhood 1. This strategy can add homes over time without significantly impacting existing character.
- Compact, mixed-use development in Hubs can 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.

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. The Boulder Valley's open space system provides extensive and significant ecosystem services outside the city, but it is critical to infuse nature into urban environments as well.

Physical infrastructure including roads, parking lots, buildings, sidewalks, and alleyways are usually made up of dark and impermeable surfaces contributing to urban heat island effects. Built elements 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 that provides essential services, particularly in urban environments, like stormwater management, natural cooling, and resilience to extreme weather events, while also 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, play and support thriving wildlife. Stream restoration projects may enhance flood mitigation, public safety, and biodiversity in these corridors.

Greenways

Greenways are areas adjacent to existing 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 tree vegetation that provides shade to cool the urban environment, increases rainwater infiltration, captures particulate matter, offers wildlife habitat and provides opportunities for community members to relax and play.

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

Relevant policies in the comprehensive plan provide a framework to develop projects, methods, and programs to increase and enhance natural infrastructure in the city. The plan's Future Land Use map designates areas of the Boulder Valley as Greenways, Parks, and Open Space that serve as the backbone of the community's connection to nature and resilience. Natural infrastructure will continue to be enhanced in the city to complement these areas and provide benefits at a smaller scale in the urban environment.

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 Future of Open Space

Why Open Space Matters

Stewardship and Community Identity

For over a century, the city and county have protected the Boulder Valley's surrounding landscapes that define its identity. The city's 1898 purchase of land around Chautauqua, establishing the Blue Line to limit western expansion of the city and voter-approved open space taxes by both city and county are only a few examples of the long-standing commitment to preserve the community's mountain backdrop, grasslands, creeks, agricultural lands, and wildlife habitats. Today, the open space system covers more than 38,000 acres of the Boulder Valley Planning Area. This is approximately 63% of the total area. Many more thousands of acres are maintained as open space beyond the boundary of the Planning Area.

Critically, this landscape is much more than scenery as rural lands provide a variety of functions. Open space is the foundation of the Boulder Valley's ecological health, cultural heritage, agricultural production and sense of place. As defined in city and county codes, open space must be preserved for purposes such as natural ecosystems, water resources, agriculture, passive recreation, cultural resources, floodplain protection and urban shaping.



Open Space in the Boulder Valley.

Ecological Health and Climate Resilience

The open space system supports extraordinary native species biodiversity, providing habitat for approximately:

- 740 plant species
- 300 bird species
- 130 butterfly species
- 60 mammals
- 20 reptiles/amphibians
- Nearly 20 fish species

These lands protect large unfragmented habitat areas and corridors that allow wildlife to thrive and adapt. They also buffer the community from climate change impacts at a larger scale by slowing and absorbing floodwaters, supporting cooler microclimates, and storing carbon in grasslands and soils.

A Haven for Community Well-Being

Residents repeatedly express how deeply they value their access to nature. Open space trails and passive recreation activities offer opportunities for mental and physical health, inspiration, and connection. Visitor use continues to rise with over 6 million annual visits to city-owned open space lands alone, which requires strategic planning and management of these critical resources.

Open space preservation and management is also fundamental to the on-going success of agriculture and the local food system in the Boulder Valley. Agricultural leasing programs support dozens of local families and employees, maintain an important part of our shared cultural identity and provide opportunities to access healthy locally grown foods.

The Comprehensive Plan's Commitment to Open Space

Across the comprehensive plan, open space is foundational to Boulder's environmental stewardship, urban form, and community resilience. Key commitments include:

- Protecting rural and open lands for continued environmental health, agricultural production and climate resilience.
- Limiting urban sprawl and maintaining open lands as critical buffers that define the city's compact form.
- Ensuring future decisions consider ecological protection, responsible access, agricultural productivity and hazard management.
- Continuing to fund and prioritize long-term active management of natural and agricultural lands, as well as visitor infrastructure.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- Open Space Preservation and Stewardship
- Rural Land Preservation
- Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Resources Preservation
- Healthy Ecosystems
- Wetland and Riparian Areas
- Boulder Valley Biodiversity
- Trail and Path Networks

How the City and County Address Today's Challenges

On-going stewardship of the city and county's open space system is complex and challenging. Many urgent needs, opportunities and competing values must be balanced to maintain the ecological integrity of habitats and agricultural viability in the Boulder Valley while also addressing the desires of residents and visitors to connect with these special places. Five broad focus areas guide the goal of preserving the open space system for future generations.

- **Ecosystem Health & Resilience** including restoring and protecting habitats, controlling invasive species, limiting fragmentation and actively addressing hotter, drier conditions on habitat health.
- **Agriculture Today & Tomorrow** including supporting regenerative agriculture and soil health, partnering to maintain ditches and irrigation infrastructure and enhancing local food production.
- **Responsible Recreation & Enjoyment** including planning for increased visitation, improving trail access and maintenance, protecting sensitive habitats and enhancing accessibility for all ages and abilities.
- **Community Connection, Education & Inclusion** including expanding environmental education and youth engagement, strengthening volunteer participation, and supporting access and connection to ancestral homelands for local indigenous community members and federally recognized tribes.
- **Financial Sustainability** including maintaining stable funding, prioritizing stewardship of open space land already owned and making strategic investments in acquisitions and maintenance.

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 planned or desired connections represent a commitment to collaboration between agencies involved in comprehensive planning in the Boulder Valley. Planned connections have been developed at least to a minimum level of preliminary conceptual design or community discussion, while desired connections remain at the vision stage. 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 mobility enhancements which are formally recognized within this major update:

- Northwest Rail/Front Range Passenger Rail
- CO 119 Mobility Improvements
- CO 7 Mobility Improvements
- US 36 Boulder to Lyons Safety Improvements
- South Boulder Road Mobility Improvements
- CO 93 Mobility Improvements

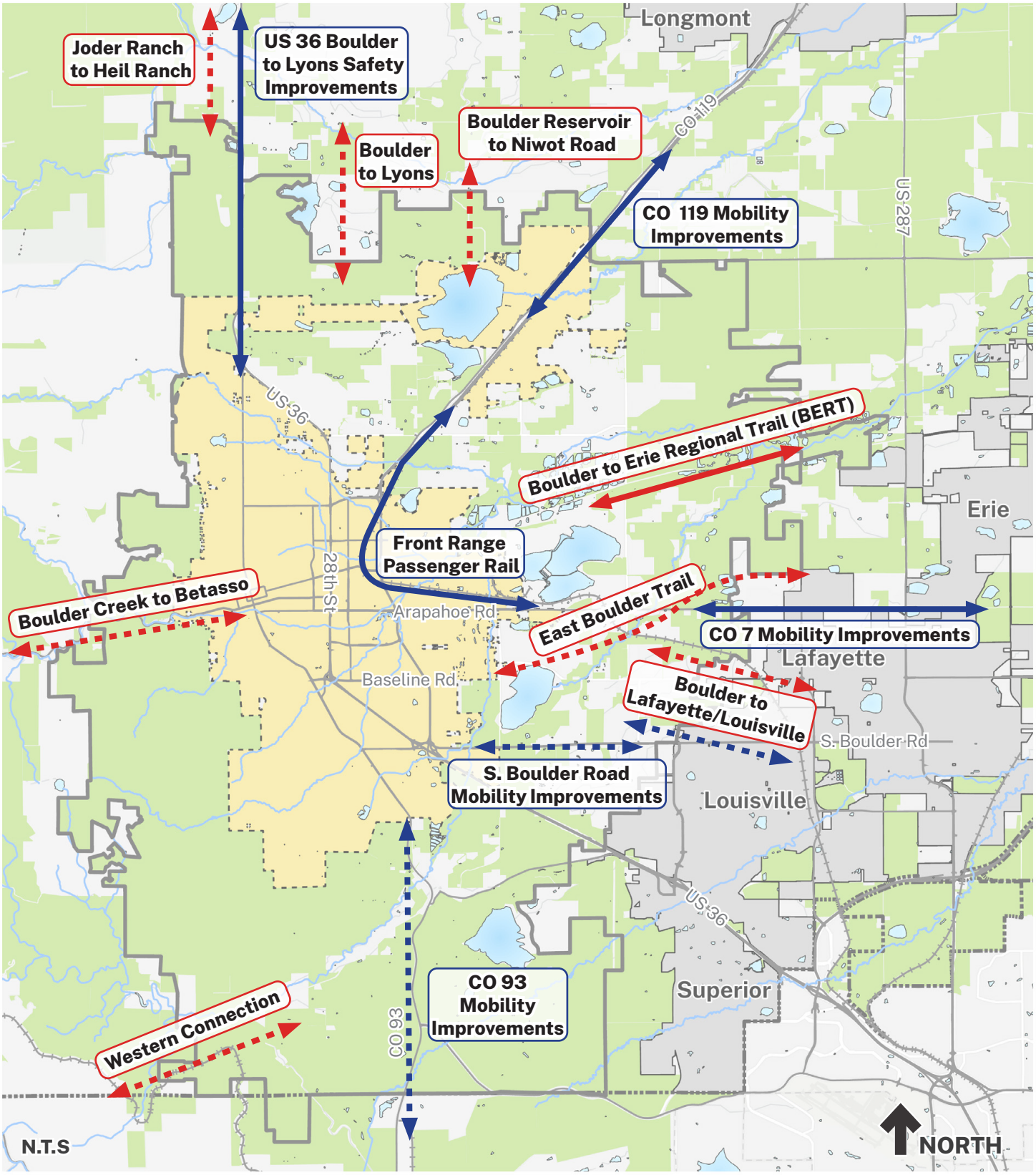
The following planned and desired regional trail connections describe a general direction for potential connecting trails. In most cases, specific alignments or trail corridors have not yet been selected; however, the concept for the trail connection itself is supported by the city and county.

- Joder Ranch to Heil Ranch
- Boulder to Lyons
- Boulder Reservoir to Niwot Road
- Boulder to Erie Regional Trail (BERT)
- East Boulder Trail
- Boulder to Lafayette/Louisville
- Western Connection
- Boulder Creek to Betasso

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- City and County Collaboration
- Public Institution Coordination
- Regional and Statewide Collaboration
- Multimodal Transportation Strategy
- Trail and Path Networks

Future Planned and Desired Regional Connections



The Future of the City's Water Supply

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 informed by the Colorado Water Plan and further detailed in the following city plans:

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

Municipal 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.

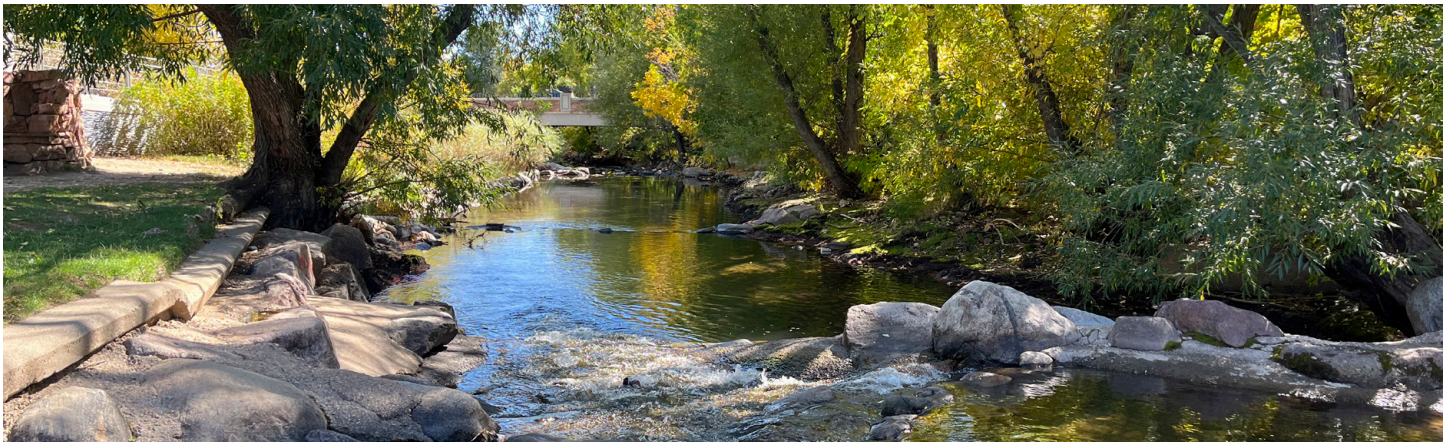
Boulder's water supply comes from three sources: Middle Boulder Creek and North Boulder Creek (in the South Platte River basin) and the Colorado River basin through projects managed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. On average, about one-third of the municipal water supply comes from 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.



Boulder Creek provides important habitat, recreation, flood management and water supply resources to the community.

Water Conservation and Drought Planning

Changing climate conditions make it increasingly important to conserve water. The city's Water Conservation Program provides a variety of services and resources to help customers use water efficiently in and around the city. This program is informed by the Colorado Water Plan and guided by the city's Water Efficiency Plan. The city's Drought Plan provides guidance for recognizing and responding appropriately to droughts that affect water supply availability.



Silver Lake is one of the city's reservoirs.

An Integrated Water Supply Plan

The city will develop an Integrated Water Supply Plan to 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.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- Boulder Valley Planning Areas
- Provision of Urban Facilities and Services
- The Blue Line
- Water Quality Protection and Improvement
- Water Resources Planning
- Agricultural Water Delivery

The Future of Resilience to Natural Hazards

Boulder's location at the edge of the Rocky Mountains is one of the community's defining features. Forested foothills, open space, waterways, and natural landscapes provide habitat, recreation and scenic beauty. These systems also shape the community's exposure to natural hazards – particularly flooding and wildfire.

Flood

The city is home to Boulder Creek, its 14 tributaries and Boulder Slough (diverted water from Boulder Creek to satisfy irrigation company water rights). Due to its geographic location and features, the city of Boulder has the highest risk of flash flooding in the state of Colorado. Events such as the September 2013 flood led to loss of life and widespread damage. Many neighborhoods throughout the city experience flooding during storms, and some are at a higher risk of extreme flooding because they are located near a major drainageway.



Flood risks are managed through natural and built infrastructure to protect the community.

Fire

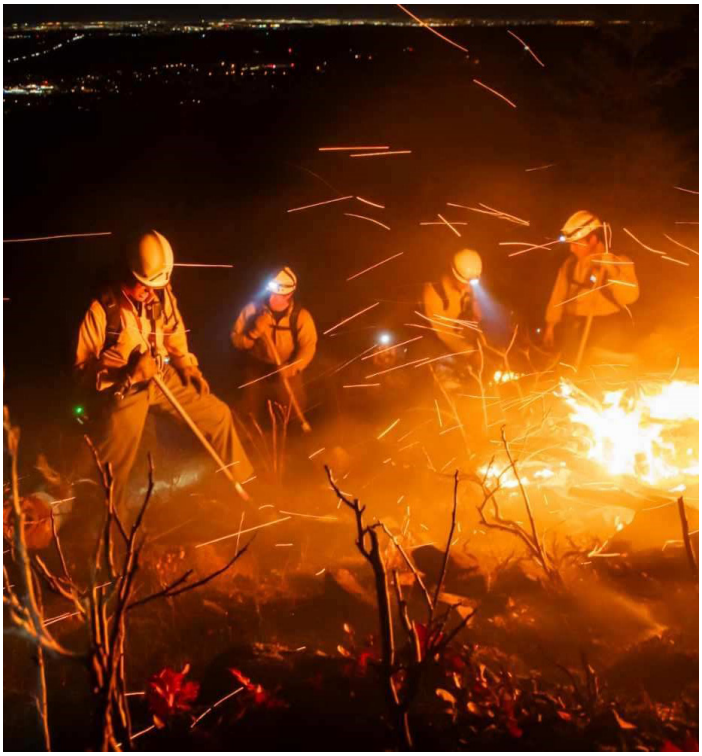
Fire is a natural part of Colorado's ecosystems, including forests and grasslands, however, drought, wind, insect impacts, and patterns of development have increased the potential for large, fast-moving, and destructive fires. Events such as the 2021 Marshall Fire demonstrated how wildfire and urban conflagration can have destructive impacts, such as loss of homes and businesses as well as negative impacts to air and water quality.

Several factors influence fire risk in the Boulder Valley:

- Vegetation and fuels – Forests, grasslands, and landscaping can accumulate dry fuels.
- Weather and climate – Hot, dry conditions, low humidity, and strong winds increase fire intensity and ember spread.
- Topography – Terrain can influence how quickly fire moves.
- Development patterns – Building materials, site design, and proximity to open space affect how fires spread within neighborhoods.
- While fire risk cannot be eliminated, it can be reduced through coordinated planning and action.

What is urban conflagration?

Urban conflagration results when wildfire spreads rapidly into urbanized areas moving from building to building.



Firefighters work to extinguish a wildland fire near the city.

Reducing Risk Across Multiple Hazards

Boulder addresses wildfire, flooding, and other hazards, such as extreme weather, drought and heat, through coordinated strategies that span land management, infrastructure, and emergency planning.

Examples include:

- Managing forests and open space to reduce wildfire fuels
- Maintaining and improving stormwater systems and flood conveyance
- Protecting and restoring natural systems that reduce hazard impacts
- Planning for emergency response, evacuation, and recovery

These efforts recognize that natural systems – such as forests, grasslands, and waterways – play an important role in both creating and reducing risk.

Preparing Homes and Neighborhoods

Community preparedness is one of the most effective ways to reduce hazard impacts. When homes and neighborhoods are better prepared, communities are more resilient to a range of hazards. Property owners, neighborhoods, and local governments all play a role.

Key actions include:

- Creating defensible space and reducing wildfire hazards around homes
- Using fire-resistant materials and resilient building practices
- Understanding flood risk and protecting structures where appropriate
- Improving emergency preparedness, evacuation planning, and communication

Natural hazards will remain part of Boulder's future. Planning for that reality means integrating wildfire, flood, and other risks into decisions about land use, development, infrastructure, and environmental management.

Explore the following policies to learn more:

- Climate Action
- Stormwater and Drainageways Integrated Management
- Greenway Preservation and Management
- Consideration of Hazards
- Floodplain Management
- Energy Resilience during Emergencies
- Resilient Infrastructure
- Disasters and Public Health Risks
- Fire Adapted Communities

The Future of Transportation

Connecting People, Places, and Opportunity in Boulder

Transportation shapes daily life. It determines whether people can easily access jobs, schools, healthcare, parks and community spaces. Boulder's strong base of walking, biking and transit use reflects decades of strategic planning and intentional investment to improve the local climate, air quality and travel options. The city is dedicated to building a people-first transportation system where everyone of all mobility levels can get where they need to go safely and reliably. The community has the following major goals for transportation:

- **Be SAFE**
- **Be EQUITABLE**
- **Be RELIABLE**
- **Provide travel CHOICES**
- **Support clean air and our CLIMATE COMMITMENT**

Today, Boulder's mobility system faces some challenges and opportunities:

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic travel patterns have changed. Many more workers are teleworking and transit service restoration efforts continue.
- Employees working in Boulder are now traveling farther to reach jobs in Boulder than in the past
- Arterial streets have not historically prioritized multimodal safety and now account for 67% of traffic crashes resulting in serious injury or fatality.
- Our community requires transportation that works for people who cannot or choose not to drive a car alone.
- The city's vision for 15-minute neighborhoods depends on strong multimodal connections.



Separated and protected bicycle lanes are an important component of the community's multi-modal mobility system and Vision Zero goals.

What's Next

There is a lot of opportunity for transportation as the community looks to the horizon. Many regional transportation connections, developed through inter-agency partnerships, are coming to fruition. The planned Colorado Connector passenger train, several regional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors and key regional trails are approaching implementation in the near future. Safety-focused improvements in corridors on the Core Arterial Network (CAN) and multimodal operational improvements across the system will ensure Boulder can accomplish its Vision Zero safety goal. Strong transportation demand management (TDM) policies and mobility technology will continue to make headway on improving travel experiences and reducing GHG emissions. Innovative pilots can blossom into programs that advance Boulder's reputation as a multimodal transportation leader. A growing number of community members express interest in trying new ways to access destinations outside of a car.

The city's streets, transit service and stops, paths, sidewalks, bike lanes, shared micromobility options (like scooters and e-bikes), traffic signals and the airport are the backbone of the city's transportation system - and will continue to be managed to ensure moving in and around Boulder is safe, equitable and reliable.

As the comprehensive plan considers these current challenges and future opportunities, there are multiple policies that will help inform future decisions about mobility across the Boulder Valley.

Check out the following policies to learn more:

- Joyful and Community-Centered Transportation System
- Multimodal Transportation Strategy
- Transportation Safety and Vision Zero
- Innovative Transportation for All
- Movement of Goods
- Curbside Management Parking
- Compact Urban Form
- 15-Minute Neighborhoods
- Integrated Land Use and Transportation
- Municipal Airport

The city's Transportation Master Plan dives into more specific policies, metrics and actions to lead transportation planning and investment into the future and addresses a range of topics, such as:

- Complete Streets
- Reduction of Single Occupancy Auto Trips
- Accessibility and Mobility for All
- Investment Priorities
- Transportation Demand Management Programs
- Emergency Response Access



Artwork by Cal Brackin.

3

Policies

Interpreting Policy

Comprehensive plan policies expand on the Community Values providing guidance and direction for achieving the Vision of the plan. Policies contained in the plan indicate how the community should evolve over the next 20 years. 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 various ways.

1. Equity and Racial Justice

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 like the University of Colorado, Boulder Valley School District, Boulder Public Library District and federal research laboratories to address critical needs and align future plans that support shared values.

4. Regional and Statewide Collaboration

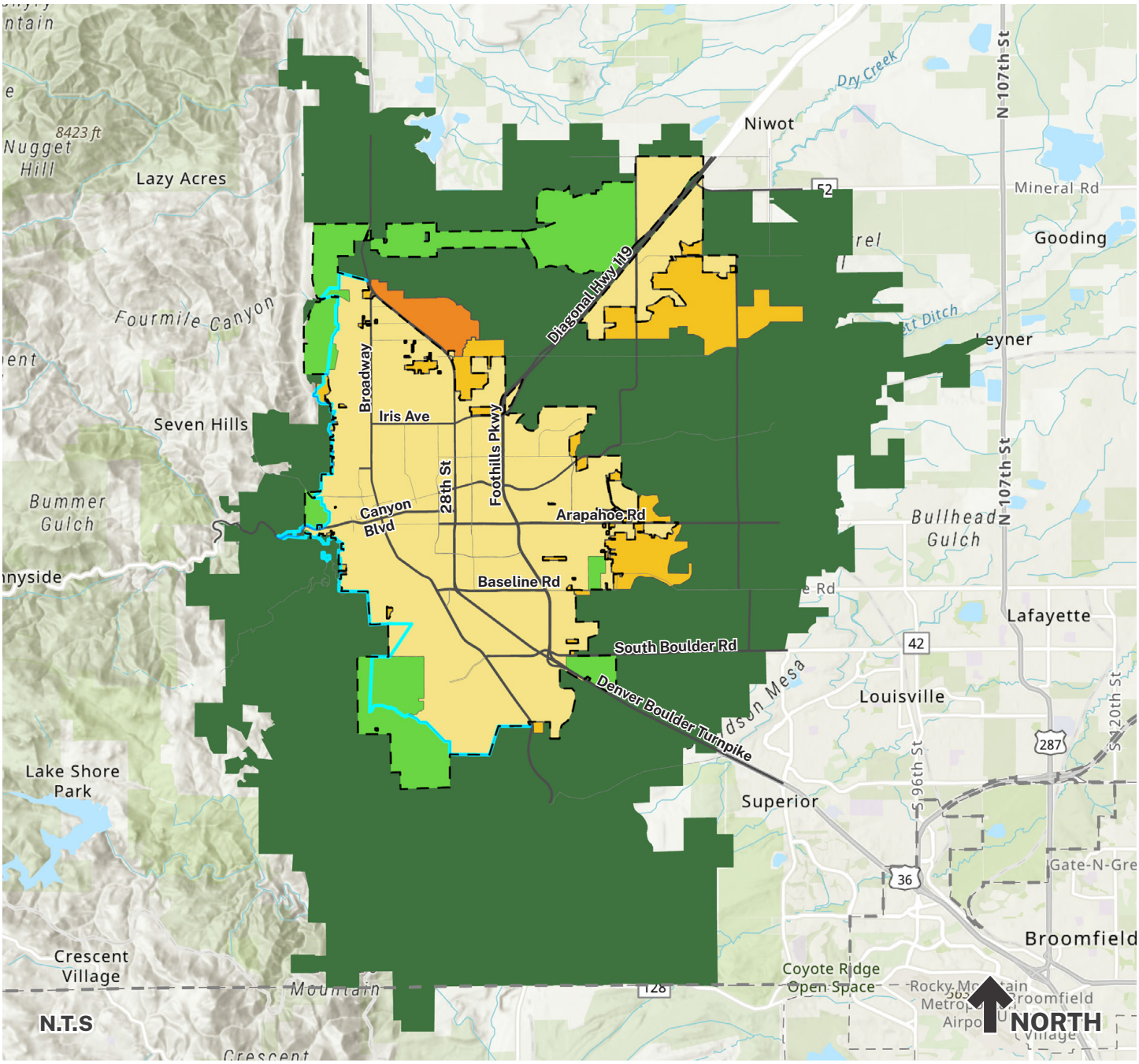
The city and county pursue cooperative regional planning, intergovernmental agreements and shared initiatives to address the needs of the Boulder Valley. The city and county will collaborate with partner agencies across the region and state to advance shared goals and actions.

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** primarily refers to publicly owned land within the city of Boulder where new urban development is not supported by the plan and that is intended to remain rural in character. Limited facilities and services may be provided to these lands if consistent with this plan, or a full range of services may be provided 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 Map



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

Boulder County
City Limits
The Blue Line

* 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

The city and county only allow new urban development in Area 1-Urban Lands. New urban development is only allowed if adequate facilities and services are available or anticipated by the city through the Capital Improvements Program.

7. Development in Area 2-Urban Edge

The county regulates development and redevelopment in Area 2-Urban Edge as allowed by the Boulder County Land Use Code. The county will not allow new urban development in Area 2-Urban Edge. Annexation into the city and a change to Area 1-Urban Lands, shall be required prior to or concurrent with any approval for new urban development. The county sends applications for development in Area 2-Urban Edge to the city for comment.

8. Development in Area 3-Rural Preservation and Area 3-Planning Reserve

The county regulates development and redevelopment in Area 3-Rural Preservation and Area 3-Planning Reserve as allowed by the Boulder County Land Use Code. The county will not allow over-intensive rural development or new urban development in Area 3-Rural Preservation or Area 3-Planning Reserve. The county sends applications for development in Area 3-Rural Preservation and Area 3-Planning Reserve to the city for comment.

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.

Properties located in Area 2-Urban Edge are eligible to be considered for annexation and a change to Area 1-Urban Lands. The city encourages annexation of the following types of Area 2-Urban Edge properties:

- 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.
- Properties that resolve an issue of public health concern without creating additional development impacts.
- Properties that offer significant development or redevelopment potential if they offer a special opportunity or community benefit to the city.

The city allows annexation and a change to Area 1-Open Lands of Area 3-Rural Preservation or Area 3-Planning Reserve properties only in the following circumstances:

- Publicly-owned properties 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-Rural Preservation if they are annexed with portions of the same parcel located in Area 2-Urban Edge to avoid split jurisdiction.



A view of the foothills looking west across Boulder Reservoir.

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, improvement of public health conditions, or other community benefits may also be considered. As part of annexation, 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, and to maximize economic and resource efficiencies 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 is 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-Urban Edge only if consistent with the city's annexation policies and Capital Improvements Program. City facilities located in Area 2-Urban Edge, Area 3-Rural Preservation or Area 3-Planning Reserve 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 the city. 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. In any case, the city may provide limited utility services when there are health and safety issues.

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 to change the location of the Blue Line. Ordinance 8133 was intended to clarify the location of the Blue Line and permit water service to existing development in the area. Land in Area 2-Urban Edge 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

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-Urban Edge lands.



Community members work on comprehensive plan concepts.

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 Colorado State Demography Office to develop projections of the city population and employment for 20 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 for open space purposes, as defined by the city charter or tax-enabling language, 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 value for open space purposes 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, agriculturally significant lands, hazard areas, vistas, significant cultural and historic resources and established rural residential areas.

24. Community Character and Evolution

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

25. Continued Use and Adaptive Reuse

The city encourages the continued use and reuse of existing buildings for new purposes to recognize local history and architecture, activate vacant or under-utilized spaces, contribute to neighborhood activity and retain embodied carbon by reducing demolition and the creation of unnecessary building material waste.



Boulder Junior Rangers prepare to assist with open space stewardship.

26. Compact Urban Form

The city and county work together to ensure urban development is focused within Area 1-Urban Lands to utilize existing urban services, maintain a clear boundary between urban and rural areas 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, safe, local and regional network of mobility choices. The city supports higher activity near multimodal corridors and transit centers that provide enhanced mobility choices and facilities. The city and county collaborate on transit investments and improvements so that local and regional transit systems are well integrated.

28. Inclusive, Diverse and Inviting Community

The city and county work to foster a diverse, inclusive and inviting community, recognizing that diversity strengthens community well-being and long-term resilience. 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.



Pearl Street is a historic and cultural asset in the community.

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 city encourages improvements that can enhance access to services and amenities, especially in areas that are currently underserved.

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 Resource Preservation

The city and county identify, evaluate, designate, and steward historic places, archaeological resources, and cultural landscapes to connect the past with the future and support sustainability, equity and resilience. Preserving intangible cultural heritage such as traditions, practices, knowledge, and living relationships to place, elevating diverse stories that foster a shared sense of belonging and shaping how places change over time honors the full diversity of the Boulder Valley to help the community understand where it has been, where it is, and where it is going.



Boulder Creek offers a biodiverse landscape with opportunities for recreation.

32. Healthy Ecosystems

The city and county sustain healthy ecosystems and biodiversity within the Boulder Valley by integrating ecological values into planning and land management. The city and county actively and intentionally restore and manage important lands, encourage regenerative agricultural practices and consider environmental factors alongside community development activity.

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 that wetlands and riparian areas provide 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 reduces and works to eliminate 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 recognizes that those least responsible for climate change often face the worst impacts. The city will advance climate justice by prioritizing support for those most affected by climate impacts and advance climate equity by distributing resources, benefits and burdens of climate actions in ways that ensure everyone has a fair outcome.

35. Environmental Design in Public Projects

The city and county plan and design public buildings, facilities and infrastructure that integrate nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure elements to enhance natural systems, increase biodiversity, increase resilience to hazards, 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.



Artwork titled Proboscis Paradise by Molly Gambardella.

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 and enhance Boulder's unique sense of place, including its natural resources and ecosystems, architectural character and significant historic and cultural resources.

38. Imagination Locations

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 values such places and encourages imaginative architecture, cutting-edge technologies and use of creative tools and strategies in limited circumstances to allow for their creation or preservation.

39. 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, absorb, store and treat runoff at the source.

40. Greenway Preservation and Management

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

41. 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.

42. Water Quality Protection and Improvement

The city and county prioritize source water protection and watershed planning efforts to protect and improve water quality of creeks and reservoirs for drinking water, aquatic life, agricultural uses and recreation. The city will pursue wastewater treatment processes to achieve water quality improvements, energy efficiencies and resource recovery, including biosolids reuse.

43. 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-efficient land use policies, 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 irrigated agriculture. The city seeks to minimize or mitigate the environmental, agricultural and economic impacts of its water rights acquisitions, including avoiding the dry-up of irrigated lands that permanently converts agricultural water to municipal and industrial uses.

44. 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 and communities, public health and/or ecosystem health. Management strategies are chosen to minimize impacts on human health, the environment and non-target organisms. The city uses integrated pest management and other best practices to balance protection of biodiversity and critical ecosystem services with human safety and community needs.



Large unfragmented native habitat contributes to the long-term health and resilience of the local ecosystem.

45. 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 the presence of wildlife conflicts with people or land use, or is a 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.

46. Consideration of Hazards

The city and county consider hazards that present a danger to life and property like flood, drought, wildfire, steep slopes, erosion, unstable soil, subsidence or similar geological 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.



The recycling center helps minimize waste in Boulder.

47. Floodplain Management

The city and county protect people and property from flood hazards through the implementation of high priority flood mitigation projects that also consider equity, ecosystem function and climate change. These actions will be supported by outreach and education initiatives to enhance community preparedness. To the extent feasible, floodways will be preserved or restored to maintain natural floodplain functions, major drainageways will be adequately maintained and infrastructure located within floodplains will be designed, upgraded or managed to improve resilience to current and future climate conditions.

48. 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.

49. 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.



Solar energy helps improve energy and resource efficiency.

50. 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.

51. 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 resilience hubs and evacuation sites capable of delivering power, essential services and supporting community members during outages and other emergencies.

52. 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 and encourage on-site renewable energy generation. Energy conservation regulation and programs will balance the community's goals for energy efficiency with the challenges of affordability.

53. Local Renewable Energy Generation

The city and county support programs and opportunities for individuals, businesses and organizations to develop, use and share local energy generation.

54. Waste Minimization and the Circular Economy

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

55. Support for Redevelopment

The city encourages redevelopment activity that advances community goals for housing, economic vitality, historic preservation, social connection, environmental sustainability and equitable access to services. The city may use a variety of tools and strategies, at its discretion, including the creation of public/private partnerships and district financing tools.



Local businesses offer opportunities for social gathering.

56. 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 equity and access to affordable commercial space and resources that contribute to long-term stability for businesses and community services.

57. 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.

58. Vital and Productive Retail Base

The city encourages a healthy and diverse retail environment that meets the daily needs of community members and visitors, broadly contributes to overall economic activity and supports the city's fiscal sustainability. The city will identify opportunities to improve and sustain retail health across the city.

59. 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 and programs that build on economic strengths and emerging opportunities. The city will consider the needs of local entrepreneurs, businesses, workers and community members when planning for land use, arts, transportation, programs and services.

60. 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.

61. 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, equitable workforce and small business opportunities, natural and cultural resource protection and long-term economic resilience.

62. Night Economy

The city supports a vibrant night-time economy that expands access to jobs, transportation, 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.

63. 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, agritourism and local food, sports, recreation, events and historic places attract visitors, create jobs and enliven neighborhoods. The city will support efforts to expand opportunities, reduce barriers for experiential businesses and reinforce the role of in-person experiences in economic diversity and cultural identity.

64. 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.

65. 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.



Events like the Bolder Boulder offer experiences for both locals and visitors and contribute to the local economy.



Friends gather for fun in Harlow Platts Park. Photo submitted by community member through Voicing Boulder.

66. 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.

67. Arts, Culture and Heritage

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.

68. 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, incomes, backgrounds and abilities. The city recognizes the value of social infrastructure to build community resilience and wellness.

69. Communications Infrastructure

The city supports and facilitates the development of convenient, affordable and secure communications and data infrastructure and other improvements that serve the community, help businesses thrive and grow, foster the growth of emerging communications and data 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.

70. Commercial Activity in Residential Areas

The city will support small-scale commercial activity in residential areas to help community members access everyday needs and contribute to the goal of 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. The city will support equitable pathways for both property owners and tenants to participate in and benefit from these opportunities.

71. Worker Opportunity and Development

The city works with employers, educators and partners to support equitable access to 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.



Moe Gram collaborates with Creature Comforts Cafe to create a mural for the Street Wise Arts 2023 Mural Festival, photo by Tyler Dittlo.

72. 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.

73. Multimodal Transportation Strategy

The city and county provide varied, reliable transportation choices to create an equitable, integrated and complete multimodal system that enables people who do not drive to fully participate in community life and access daily needs. The innovative planning, design, operation and maintenance of Boulder's transportation system focuses on improving walking, rolling, bicycling, scooting, taking transit, riding micromobility 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.



Considering the many ways that Boulderites move is a critical component of the multimodal transportation strategy.

74. Transportation Safety and Vision Zero

The city and county prioritize safety when investing in the transportation system and pursuing Vision Zero. Vision Zero aims to reduce the number of traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries to zero. The city uses a holistic, data-driven approach to identify safety risks and proactively implement improvements to reduce risk and improve crash outcomes. Safety is prioritized in investments, project design, project delivery and programs, such as Safe Routes to School.

75. Innovative Transportation for All

The city and county will ensure that its transportation system is innovative and when new technologies are introduced, they positively align with community values. This includes adjusting policies, expanding investments, adapting to new technologies and adopting innovative approaches while ensuring progress supports safety and equity.

76. 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 while supporting electrification and other innovations to address the environmental impact of goods movement activity.

77. 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.



Community members and visitors have many choices for how to move around the Boulder Valley.

78. 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 multimodal system.

79. Municipal Airport

The city maintains the Boulder Municipal Airport as a safe environment for aviation, aviation-related businesses and special events, aviation-related research and education, scientific and research flights, and medical and disaster-related support for the city and county. The city strives to minimize and mitigate noise and other impacts of airport operations via methods such as noise abatement procedures, land use tools and partnership with the State and fuel providers to offer unleaded fuel. The city promotes the adoption of electric aircraft technology. The city will coordinate with the county to provide consistent regulations addressing noise and other airport influences, where possible.

80. 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 disabilities or health conditions, older adults and any anyone who requires additional housing support.

81. 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.

82. Housing Diversity and Supply

The city supports increasing the housing supply by promoting housing types and price points that are more affordable, including middle housing and middle income opportunities, throughout the city that enable people to remain in and join the community as their needs, incomes and household compositions change over time.

83. Manufactured Housing

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



Supporting a range of housing types is one way to address affordability and social resilience in Boulder.

84. Permanently Affordable Housing Goal

The city commits to a goal of ensuring 15% of all homes will be deed-restricted, 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.



Industrial areas contribute to the local economy and workforce.

85. Age Inclusive Community

The city and county support an age-inclusive community that is responsive to population trends toward an aging population and recognizes the importance of attracting and retaining young professionals and households with children An age-inclusive community has appropriate infrastructure, services, housing, education, accessible childcare, social infrastructure, entertainment and programs that benefit all members from children to older adults.



Community members of all ages participate in local planning.

86. 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 strategy to guide where existing industrial areas are to be maintained. 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.

87. Community Safety

The city manages risk and employs progressive and holistic, community-based problem solving and crime prevention strategies that address the root cause of harm to support a safe community, safe schools, safe public spaces and safe participation in active public life.

88. Disasters and Public Health Risks

The city and county collaborate with local, regional and state partners to avoid, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from natural and human-made disasters and public and environmental health risks. The city and county support community education, pre-disaster planning and preparedness for disasters. Following disruptions or disaster, the city and county facilitate a supportive and efficient response and recovery.

89. 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, including urban conflagration, while enhancing public safety, promoting equitable protection and supporting efficient and effective response and recovery. The city considers an integrated approach to wildfire risk, including emergency management planning and egress capacity, when evaluating development within mapped wildfire ignition zones.

90. Community Resources and Education

The city and county will work collaboratively with community partners who provide vital arts, health, language access and cultural services as well as education on skills, trades and civic navigation to community members of the Boulder Valley.



Proactive land management is important to hazard resilience.

91. Planning for School Sites and Facilities

The city and county will assist the Boulder Valley School District in its planning efforts to assure that the number, size and location of school lands and facilities are adequate to serve the population for the near future. The city and county will work with the school district to ensure safe and effective mobility choices are available to connect community members to schools.

92. 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 to ensure public spaces and services are designed to build social cohesion, support health and well-being and advance access for all.

93. 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.



Agriculture and associated activities support a stronger local food system.

94. 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.

95. Local Food Production and Access

The city and county support farms, businesses, nonprofits, homes and programs throughout the region that grow, produce, process, glean and sell fresh local food and feed. The city and county recognize the importance of a local food system that provides nutritious and culturally appropriate local foods to address food insecurity and facilitate greater community access to these products. Local leaders and community members work collaboratively to sustain an agriculturally focused community with a food system that is just, equitable, inclusive, and resilient.

96. Urban Agriculture

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

97. Infrastructure for Local Food Systems

The city supports expanding opportunities for facilities that sustain and grow the local food system like cold storage, processing, greenhouses, commercial kitchens, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, farm stands and retail sites in appropriate city locations.

98. 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 with reliable access 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 of irrigated working lands.

99. 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 increase economic viability and integrate ecological conservation, enhanced soil health, responsible water use, water quality protection, biodiversity and humane treatment of livestock.

100. Agricultural Workforce Support

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



Local kids participate in community engagement.

101. 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 people in activities and efforts to improve the Boulder Valley community and help address local issues.

102. Consultation with Federally Recognized American Indian Tribal Nations

The city and county support 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 and county respect 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.

103. Engagement with Local Indigenous Peoples

The city acknowledges that local Indigenous community members and nations 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 is committed to strengthening and improving ongoing engagement with these community members in planning and decision-making processes.

104. Transparent Governance

The city and county commit to gathering and sharing transparent information about local government processes, engagement and decision-making. The city and county follow best practices in using plain language, providing digital accessibility, and offering high-quality diverse language access for all community members. The city and county support strategic decision-making informed by timely, reliable and accurate data and analysis, to the extent practicable, balanced with community input and feedback on lived experiences.

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



Artwork by Cal Brackin.

4

Future Land Use

The comprehensive plan Future Land Use Map provides a vision for how land across the Boulder Valley is intended to evolve over time. The map provides a flexible, adaptable framework that will shape new and updated regulations, inform rezoning and development decisions, guide infrastructure planning and inform investment for public projects. The Future Land Use Map works to implement the comprehensive plan by equitably applying policies to neighborhoods across the city. This approach is intended to manage change across the Boulder Valley to achieve community's vision, align with community values, respond to the challenges of our time and adapt to the changing future.

Future Land Use Strategy

Objectives of the Future Land Use Strategy

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

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

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

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

Balance Growth with Environmental Protection: Integrate natural features and infrastructure into development and protect and enhance intact habitats to maintain a healthy, biodiverse ecosystem within and surrounding the urban environment.

Ensure Flexibility and Adaptability: Be flexible and able to respond to changing community needs and future uncertainties.

Implementation of the future land use strategy will involve ongoing collaboration between city departments, the county, stakeholders and community members. Creating more detailed subcommunity and area plans, 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.



Community members workshop land use concepts.



University of Colorado students use objects to build an ideal neighborhood.

Understanding Future Land Use and Zoning

Future 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.

Future 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. Future 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. Zoning conveys a property right.

A change of future land use on a property does not change the zoning. Land use only establishes a long-term vision. Additional public processes to change the zoning map or zoning district regulations will implement this long-term vision by modifying the rules that govern use and development of individual properties.



Land use and zoning work together to manage how Boulder has evolved over time.

Design of the Built Environment

The city of Boulder's urban form is the physical expression of how land use, mobility and public spaces work together to create a livable, resilient community. The goal is to maintain a compact city that reinforces the distinct identity of different neighborhoods, hubs and natural areas in Boulder. This urban form is supported by preserving the surrounding rural and open space qualities in the county.

Compact and Connected

Direct growth to Area 1-Urban Lands and encourage redevelopment and infill alongside potential expansion to maintain a compact community surrounded by rural lands.

Organize land uses into a coherent structure of neighborhoods, hubs, systems and special purpose areas that are linked by a multimodal transportation network.

Plan for daily needs that 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 options.

Encourage neighborhoods that include diverse housing types, small-scale commercial activity 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.

Regional Hub

Mixed use at a variety of heights. Typically the highest intensity in the city.

Community Hub

Mixed use at a variety of heights. Similar or higher intensity than Neighborhood 2.

Neighborhoo

Larger scale of 3 storie more. Attached and mul homes with supporti commercial.



Human-Scaled and Climate-Responsive

Promote building designs that break up 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 community 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.

Encourage social and gathering spaces inside and outside buildings to promote interpersonal connection.

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 that are enriched with art and nature.

Ensure that urban form decisions advance equity, offering affordable housing and commercial spaces, safe mobility and inclusive access to amenities.

od 2 **Neighborhood 1**

es or
ti-unit
ng

Smaller scale of 3 stories or less. Single-unit detached, attached and some multi-unit homes with supporting commercial.

Commercial
Residential



How to Use the Future Land Use Designations and Map

Interpretation

The Future Land Use Map depicts a plan of the desired land use pattern in the Boulder Valley. The map allows for a range of outcomes that are consistent with the community vision and can be resilient to future disruptions. The land use designation definitions accompany and help interpret the map. The definitions describe a sense of character, scale and use of each designation. The definitions are not intended to prescribe 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. Amendments to the map and these designations will follow the Amendment Procedures outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement between the city and county.



Building Connections by artists Becky Wareing Steele and Shannon Geis was created in response to Community Assembly feedback.

The map and associated designations should be used to guide future land use and transportation decisions in conjunction with the policies in this plan. They will inform future zoning and/or rezoning decisions and development applications that require general consistency with the comprehensive plan. Subcommunity and local area planning can support the implementation of this map to more focused areas of the community. Other references to consider when applying comprehensive plan policies and the Future Land Use Map to decisions may include:

- Surrounding context, including existing and planned development and natural features
- Interfaces between higher intensity and lower intensity areas
- Proximity to transit, hubs or other services or amenities
- Opportunities to achieve community benefits, like affordable housing
- Guidance from subcommunity or area plans

The future land use designations that describe more urban character in the Neighborhoods, Hubs and Special Purpose classes are intended to guide change on properties under city jurisdiction in Area 1-Urban Lands and properties proposed for annexation. Land under county jurisdiction in Area 2-Urban Edge will continue to be guided by county planning processes, zoning and regulations even if these designations are applied in the Future Land Use Map.

Transition Areas between Certain Future Land Use Designations

The edge of each future land use 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 future land uses. In other situations, it may be important for two future land uses to blend more seamlessly, like between Neighborhood 2 and Community Hub.

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

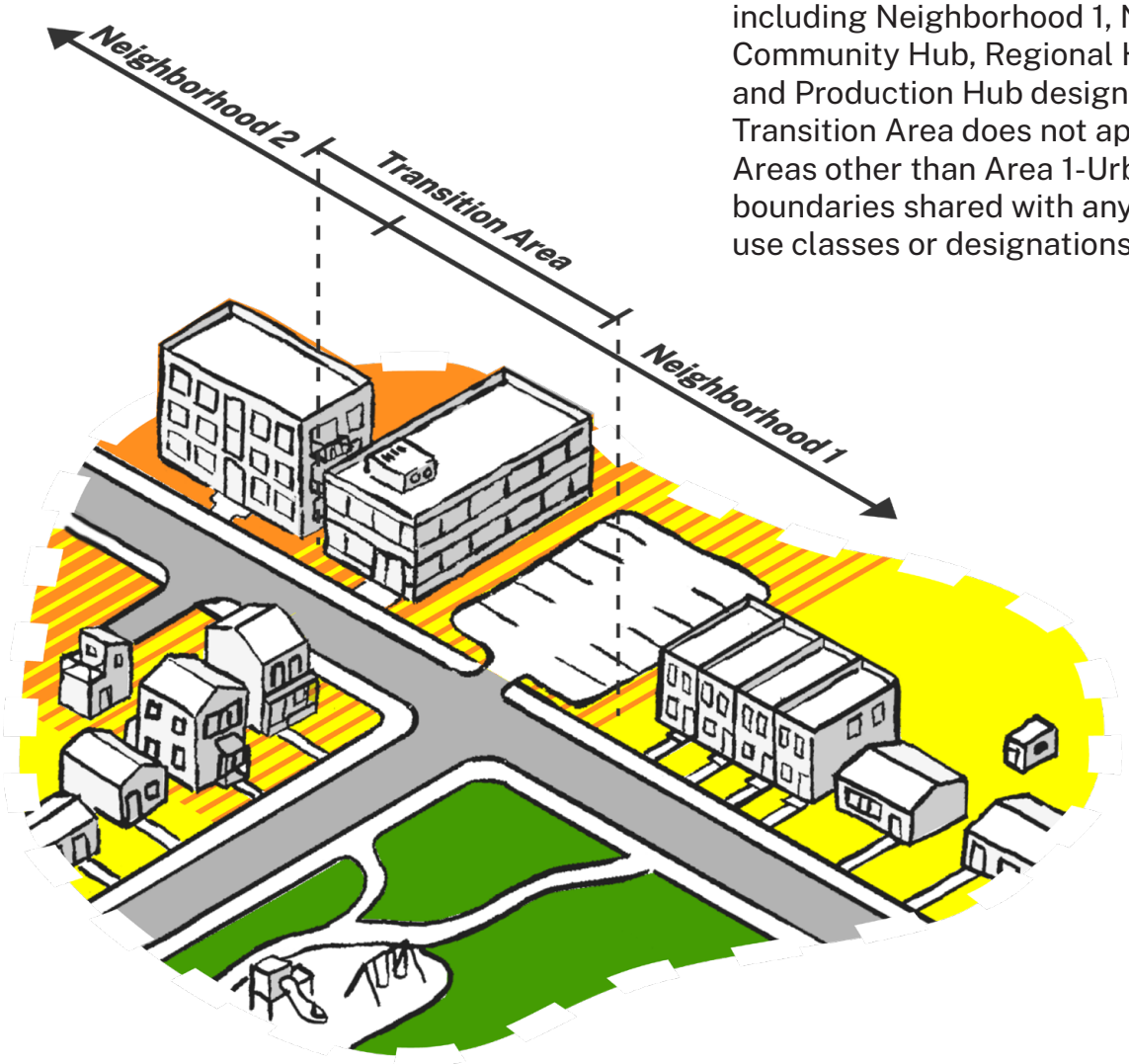


Diagram showing how the Transition Area concept could apply to future land use designation boundaries between Neighborhood 1 (yellow), Neighborhood 2 (orange) and Parks (green).

Future Land Use Classes and Designations

The Future Land Use Map includes 12 future land use designations organized into five classes. This section identifies goals for each class of future land use and definitions for each designation.

Neighborhoods

Neighborhood 1



Neighborhood 2



Hubs

Community



Regional



Innovation and Production

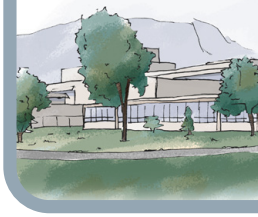


Spe Purp

Industrial



Facilities



University



cial
pose







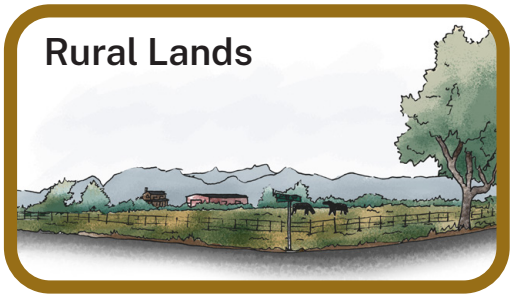
Systems







Rural



Neighborhoods Class

Neighborhoods are primarily urban residential areas and are a building block of the city of Boulder's character and housing choice.





Land Use Goals

- Create more housing opportunities
- Enable diverse housing options
- Provide community amenities and gathering spaces
- Encourage access to small-scale neighborhood-serving goods and services

Environmental Goals

- Enhance the landscape to support biodiversity and increase access to nature
- Maintain and expand the urban tree canopy and other nature-based climate solutions
- Improve community resilience to hazards
- Support lower carbon-intensive homes and lifestyles

Mobility Goals

- Improve walkability to neighborhood amenities, needs and services
- Enhance the network of low-speed streets for safe and convenient bicycling, walking, or rolling
- Connect neighborhoods to fast, frequent, and reliable transit

Economic Goals

- Support small scale, neighborhood-serving businesses
- Provide opportunities for homebased work, local entrepreneurship and maker-oriented uses

Equity Goals

- Increase access to housing choices
- Increase access to economic opportunities
- Improve accessibility for travelers of all abilities
- Encourage community gathering and enhanced social connection
- Increase mobility options and reduce household transportation costs







Examples of the variety of housing types you might find in the Neighborhoods Class.

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
Supporting	Residential	Multi-Unit
	Commercial	Retail; Personal Services; Office; Food & Beverage; Maker, Artisan & Innovation
	Civic	Government; Health Care & Institutional; Educational; Places of Worship
	Other	Active Recreation; Passive 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.
- 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 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. Outdoor spaces use water efficiently.

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
Supporting	Residential	Detached Unit
	Commercial	Retail; Personal Services; Office; Food and Beverage; Lodging; Vehicle Related; Maker, Artisan and Innovation
	Civic	Government Healthcare and Institutional; Education; Places of Worship
	Other	Active Recreation; Passive Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Residential and mixed-use buildings are generally medium or high in intensity and scale.
- Building forms accommodate up to 5 stories and create a high-quality urban street frontage.
- Overall site design emphasizes efficient land use while maintaining a comfortable, pedestrian scale through thoughtful building design, gathering spaces, natural infrastructure and streetscape amenities.
- 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, bicycle facilities, 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 urban 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.







Land Use Goals

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

Environmental Goals

- Expand resource-efficient building types
- Enhance and expand urban canopy and natural infrastructure into urban locations
- Demonstrate opportunities for localized circular economies

Mobility Goals

- Provide safe, multimodal connections for all ages and abilities that prioritize transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and micromobility access
- Create walkable pedestrian-oriented streets
- Incorporate fast, frequent, and reliable transit and provide connections to regional transit networks
- Manage curbside demand to balance access and multiple activities

Economic Goals

- Strengthen local economic vitality
- Support health of the retail market by expanding opportunities for connections with customers
- Support a diverse mix of businesses that serve residents and visitors
- Encourage the creation and preservation of affordable commercial spaces
- Foster a mix of employment opportunities accessible to community members of all incomes and backgrounds

Equity Goals

- Support diverse living and working choices
- Support local businesses and entrepreneurs
- Improve safety throughout the day and night
- Create reliable connections between where people live, work, play and gather







Existing hubs throughout the community include a mix of uses and activities.

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, Artisan and Innovation
	Industrial	Research and Development
	Civic	Government, Health Care and Institutional; Educational; Places of Worship
	Other	Active Recreation; Passive 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 and other natural infrastructure to offset the urban environment.

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, bicycle facilities, short-term parking, and social uses that are connected to the public realm.

Regional Hub



What it is

Regional Hubs are major destinations for community members and visitors to the Boulder Valley. 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.

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	Active Recreation; Passive 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, bicycle facilities, 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. Industrial in nature, these places accommodate businesses that might be considered noisy or messy. 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 creatives 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	Active Recreation; Passive Recreation; Urban Agriculture

Urban Design

- Innovation and Production Hubs feature a diverse mix of building types and sizes, 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 bicycle facilities, 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 of critical habitat, recreation areas, agricultural activities and natural infrastructure that the community relies on for healthy, safe and sustainable living. These systems work together to support our community's ecosystem services, climate resilience, cultural identity and unique built form, and provide the network where the urban and rural 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

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

Mobility Goals

- Provide safe, multimodal connections for all ages and abilities that prioritize transit, pedestrian, bicycle 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

Economic Goals

- Reduce economic losses related to climate change and environmental hazards through resilient system design
- Support the local economy by maintaining and enhancing systems, parks, greenways, open space, agriculture, and rural landscapes
- Enhance the attractiveness of Boulder's neighborhoods and employment centers by investing in natural and recreational systems
- Sustain local agricultural enterprises by preserving working landscapes and supporting local and regional food systems

Equity Goals

- Ensure community spaces and services are dispersed throughout the Boulder Valley
- Focus resources on underserved areas
- Ensure access to nature, places to cool off and recreation are dispersed throughout the Boulder Valley







Examples of Parks, Greenways and Open Space included under Systems Class.

Parks



What it is

Parks are publicly accessible, active and passive recreational spaces such as multi-use lawns, gardens, playgrounds, nature play areas, water play areas, 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. Some park areas may prioritize low-impact, ecologically sensitive design with the goal of habitat preservation.

Why it matters

Parks directly contributed to the mental and physical health and well-being of the entire Boulder community. These public spaces support a healthy and socially thriving community, economic vitality, sustainability and resilience. Together with the urban tree canopy, greenways and other open natural areas, Parks are critical to the livability of the urban environment and serve as important places to connect to and play in nature.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	**Other**	**Active Recreation; Passive Recreation**
Supporting	**Commercial**	**Retail; Food and Beverage; Arts, Culture and Entertainment**
	Civic	**Government**
	Other	**Agriculture; Open Lands**

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 efficiently and 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 and provide connected environmental corridors in the urban area that support habitat, wildlife movement and climate resilience. Additionally, they offer opportunities for passive recreation and off-street mobility networks that enhance the community's ability to connect with nature and each other.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	Civic	Utility Operations
	Other	Open Lands
Supporting	Other	Passive 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, Open Space 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 consists of lands maintained for specific purposes including, but not limited to, preservation and restoration of natural habitat and features, agricultural stewardship, floodplain protection, education, cultural resource protection and passive recreation. These purposes are further defined by the City of Boulder Charter or county open space tax-enabling ballot language. Open Space lands are stewarded by the city, county, other public entities or non-profits either through direct ownership, conservation easements on private land or other contractual obligations like management or annexation agreements. Open Space properties are not typically intensively developed and serve to limit urban sprawl into the rural areas of the Boulder Valley. Privately owned sites may contain development but still contribute to the community's open space values by the terms of existing agreements.

Why it matters

The Open Space system forms the foundation for the community's ecological health and climate resilience by maintaining plant and animal biodiversity, sequestering carbon, protecting water resources and managing wildfire risk. These lands provide a backbone for local agriculture and associated activities and support the Boulder Valley's philosophy of compact urban development surrounded by rural and natural lands. Open Space creates a highly valued connection to nature and rural land, provides passive recreational opportunities, helps to ensure agricultural viability and contributes to the mental and physical well-being of the residents, workers and visitors of the Boulder Valley.

What you can expect

Uses

Primary	**Other**	**Agriculture; Open Lands; Passive Recreation**

Urban Design and Management

- Open Space areas are characterized by a deliberate absence of typical urban development as the landscape itself is the defining feature shaped by natural landforms, vegetation and ecological processes.
- Visitor infrastructure such as trails, trailheads, shelters, recreation facilities and picnic areas is used intentionally to provide a safe and welcoming experience for visitors and allow for enjoyment and stewardship of Open Space areas. These facilities provide access to and highlight Boulder's scenic, natural, and cultural landscapes while enjoying responsible recreation.
- Structures such as agricultural buildings, operational structures, historic landmarks and irrigation infrastructure support working landscapes and sustainable, productive agriculture that support local farmers and ranchers in the Boulder Valley.

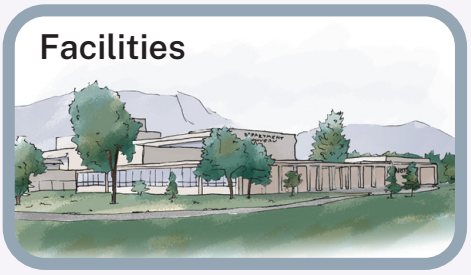
Mobility

- Mobility in Open Space areas provides defined and strategic access for habitat management, recreation, agricultural purposes and regional connections.
- Access, where allowed, is primarily through trailheads, formal access points 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 scenic, natural and cultural values.

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 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

Economic Goals

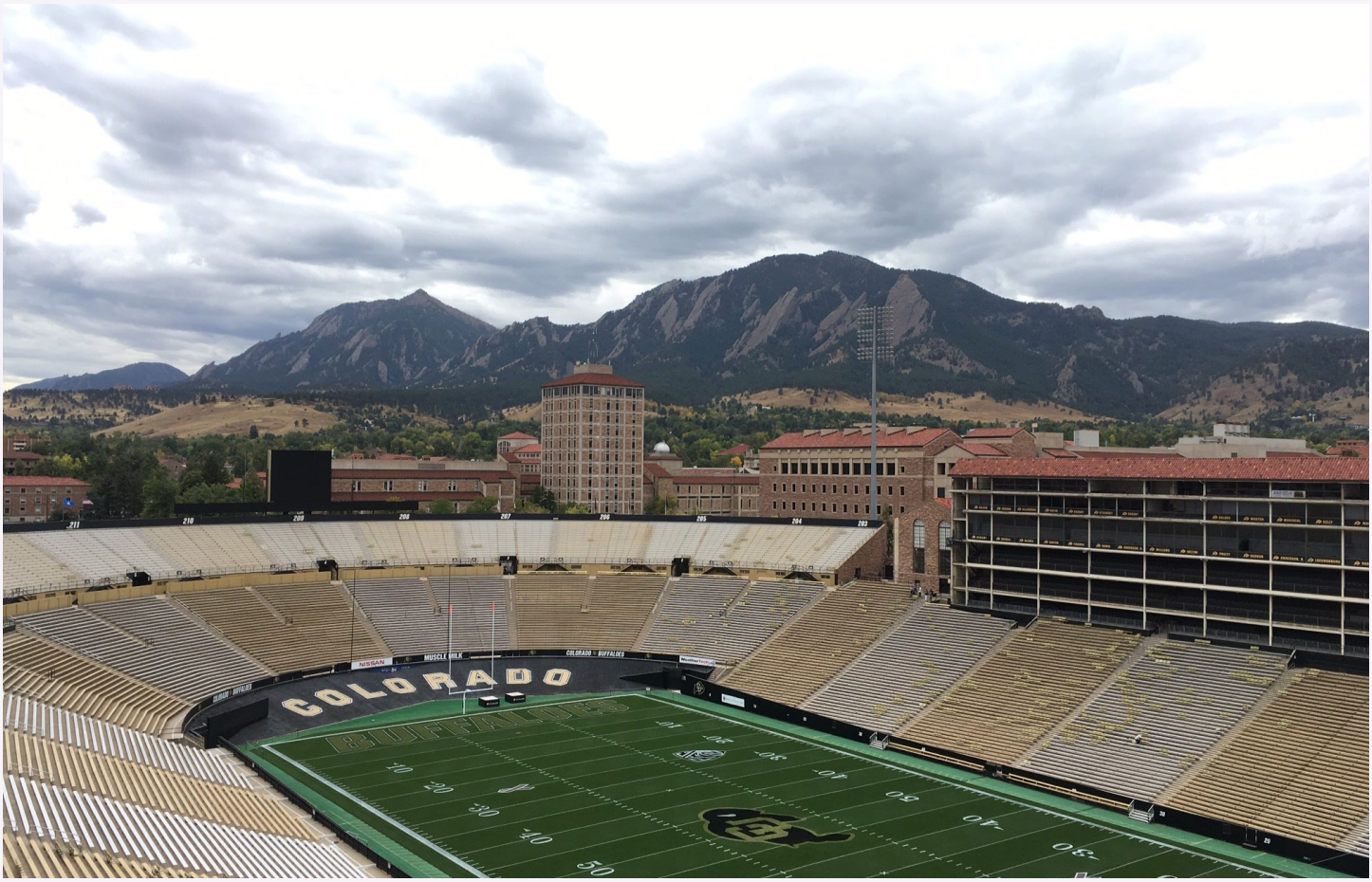
- Support essential government, research, utility, educational and industrial functions that contribute to Boulder's economic stability and resilience
- Strengthen the local and regional economy by supporting employment centers tied to research, innovation, education, advanced manufacturing and public services
- Encourage investment in infrastructure and facilities that enable long-term economic efficiency and operational reliability

Equity Goals

- Foster inclusive access to jobs, education and services
- Ensure these areas offer the potential to benefit all members of the community
- Manage major sources of pollution to ensure any one area or group in the community is not more affected than another







Industrial uses, Facilities like the federal labs, hospitals, and University uses like Folsom Field are part of the Special Purposes Class.

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

transit and bicycle infrastructure.

Primary	Commercial	Vehicle Related; Maker, Artisan and Innovation
	Industrial	Research and Development; Light Industrial; Heavy Industrial; Warehousing and Distribution Facilities
Supporting	Commercial	Office; Food and Beverage
	Civic	Education
	Residential	Attached Unit; Multi-Unit; Group Living

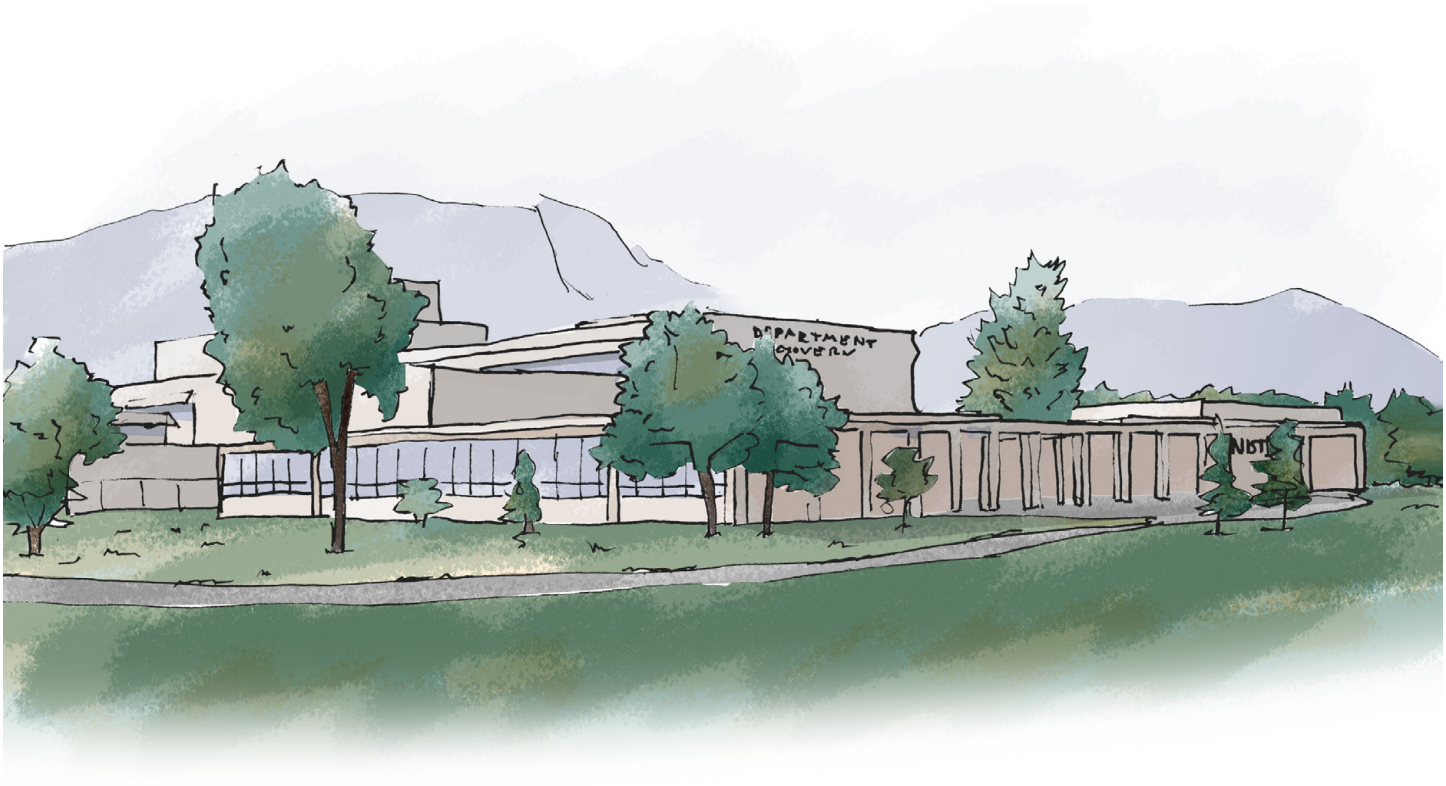
Urban Design

- 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 and natural infrastructure is integrated to provide landscape buffers, stormwater management or other outdoor uses.
- Site design supports operational needs, worker safety and clear, organized access.
- Residential uses may be allowed where appropriate. Housing infill should play a subordinate role and not displace established businesses or the opportunity for industrial businesses.

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,

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 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**
Supporting	**Commercial**	**Office**
	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 design 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, bicycle facilities 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. The city has limited regulatory control over CU, but maintains a close relationship to coordinate on development activities and support outcomes that benefit the community.

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

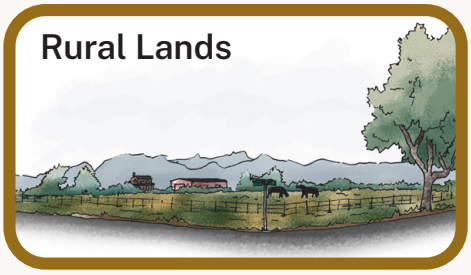
- University lands are composed of a diverse mix of building types and scales, ranging from low-rise buildings to taller facilities, stadiums and centers, some exceeding city height limits.
- Buildings are arranged in a campus environment to create active courtyards, plazas and shared green spaces that 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, bicycle facilities and transit stops to serve the dynamic campus environment.

Rural Class

The Rural class includes diverse land uses and development patterns reflecting the history of the Boulder Valley and is comprised of the privately owned lands within unincorporated Boulder County. Limiting development in these areas helps preserve the valley's distinctive landscape and character, supporting the vision of a compact city with a clear distinction between urban and rural areas of the Boulder Valley. Significant change from the development pattern existing today is not anticipated and would occur within the framework of county planning processes, zoning and regulations. Change is incremental, compatible with the rural surroundings, reflective of the limited availability of services and facilities and aligns with the goals and policies of the Boulder Valley and Boulder County Comprehensive Plans.



Land Use Goals

- Support economic livelihoods that are based on the land consistent with responsible land stewardship and environmental sustainability
- Maintain rural character and function of the area
- Prevent scattered, leapfrog, or non-contiguous urban development
- Prevent over-intensive rural development through Boulder County planning processes and regulations

Environmental Goals

- Protect and enhance ecological systems and resources
- Promote land stewardship and soil health, water conservation and sustainable agricultural practices that support the long-term viability and resilience of rural working lands

Mobility Goals

- Provide a multimodal transportation system that recognizes opportunities within the Boulder Valley generate significant transportation demand from outside the area and pass through rural areas
- Direct improvements and services to high-demand, well-connected corridors to expand multimodal options and use

Economic Goals

- Foster and promote a diverse and sustainable agricultural economy that supports the growth of the local food system, local markets and landbased livelihoods
- Support the vitality of urban and rural areas by maintaining the distinction between urban and rural economies and directing uses to appropriate locations

Equity Goals

- Include input from community members of the rural areas when city decisions impact rural residents







The Rural Class includes uses that help support the Boulder Valley's on-going rural and agricultural character.

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, except that upon annexation, any annexed areas would be expected to update to a non-rural land use designation and would be subject to city processes, zoning and policies.

Why it matters

This designation reinforces the role of the county in the implementation of the goals of the comprehensive plan. Rural Lands include residential neighborhoods and acreages, support local agriculture and associated activities, sustain ecosystems and biodiversity, and maintain 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 seek to 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 a size and intensity compatible with the rural context.

Design and Management

- Development reflects its surroundings.
- Scenic vistas and visual rural character are protected through appropriate building sizes and siting, limited lighting, minimal infrastructure, and context-sensitive design.
- Land management emphasizes agriculture, ecological preservation, hazard mitigation and stewardship.

Mobility

- Road network provides vehicular access to meet local needs.
- Mobility prioritizes safety and compatibility with the rural context.

Future Land Use Equity Assessment

An equity assessment was performed on the definitions for each future land use designation, answering 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 designations, 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.

Several future land use designations carry risks of displacement, rising rents, loss of small businesses, and exclusion of communities of color if implementation of the Future Land Use Map and comprehensive plan policies do not intentionally address affordability, cultural belonging and community representation. Key findings highlight the need for targeted 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

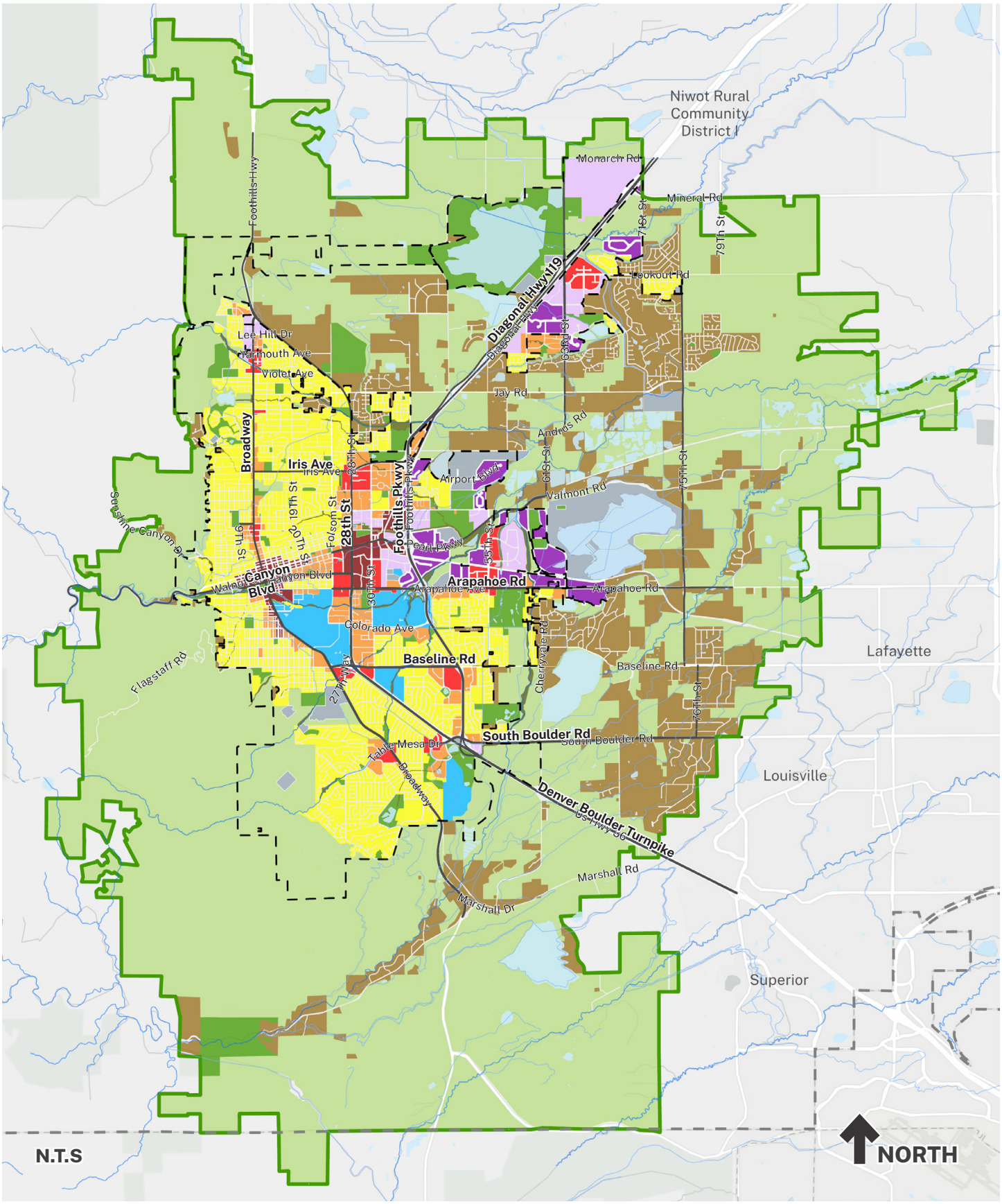
Special Purpose

- Industrial
- Facilities
- University

Rural

- Rural Lands

Boulder Valley Future Land Use Map





Artwork by Cal Brackin.

5

Implementation

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan sets the long-term direction for the Boulder Valley through its community-driven vision. The plan represents the community's collective investment of time, expertise and trust. That investment is honored through faithful and timely implementation.

Turning this vision into real outcomes depends on daily decisions – how programs are designed, which projects move forward, how funding is spent and how policies are implemented. This work requires ongoing, coordinated efforts among elected and appointed officials, city and county staff, partner organizations and community members. The comprehensive plan does not prioritize one policy over another. Implementation requires leadership, careful evaluation, weighing of tradeoffs and intentional choices.

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.

This section is intended to help policymakers and city and county staff work through the implementation process from development and decision-making to tracking progress.

Guide Development and Decision-making

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

Support Equitable Implementation

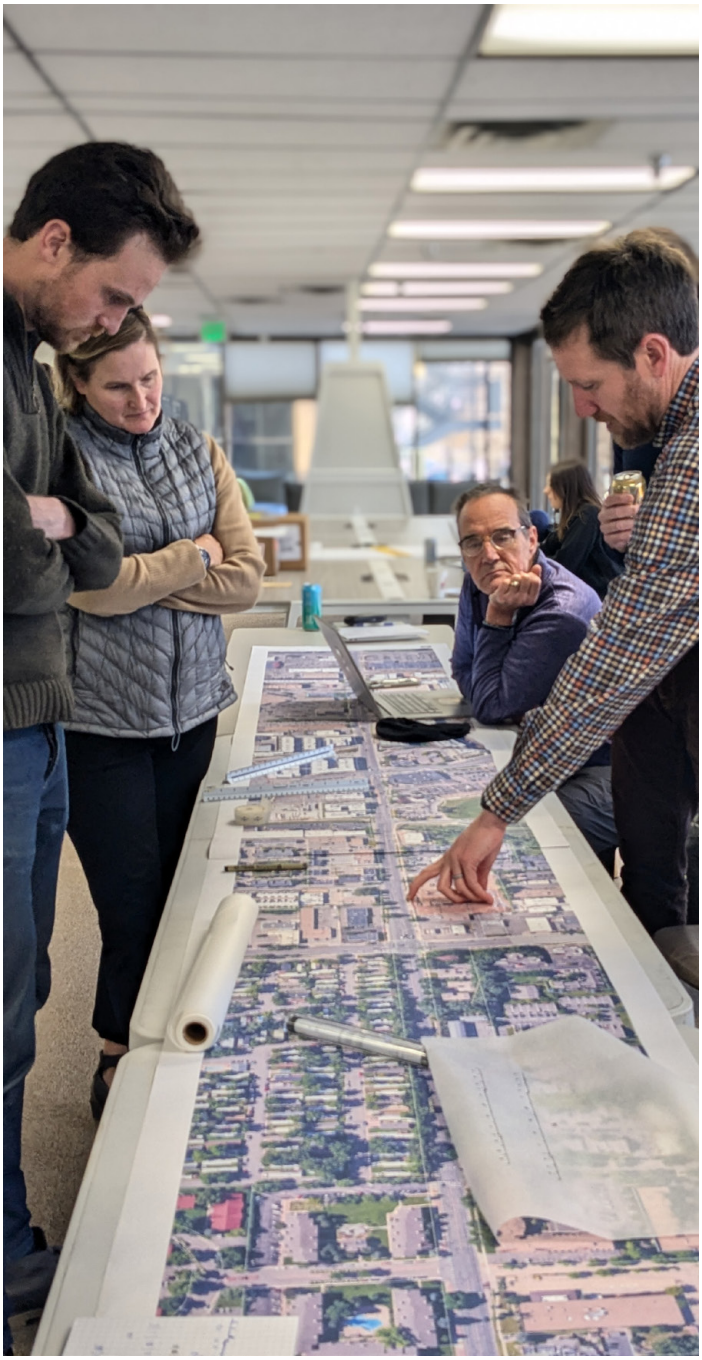
Consider who benefits, who might be burdened, and how actions can reduce disparities and build long-term trust. Use equity considerations to guide both process and outcomes.

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.



Community members discuss plans for improvements along 30th Street as part of a capital improvement project.

How Implementation Works

City and county departments will work together to translate the plan into more detailed work programs and projects through the Citywide Strategic Plan, department plans, annual budgeting processes and more. These efforts can identify priority actions, assign responsibilities and determine timing based on available resources and community needs. They will serve as the primary mechanism for identifying and advancing priority implementation actions following adoption of the comprehensive plan.

This approach allows the city and county to remain flexible and responsive while making steady progress toward the long-term vision.

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.

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 by defining where different land uses are supported, the form and scale of buildings and how each site plays into the larger character of its neighborhood;
- How the community learns from experience and adjusts strategies over time.



Implementation Strategies

The city and county will implement the plan through a range of strategies that vary in scale, timing and complexity. The strategies identified here are not exhaustive or prescriptive. They illustrate potential paths to advance the plan over time. The city will consider these strategies and others through regular updates to the Citywide Strategic Plan, City Council priority setting, annual work plans and other efforts to incrementally implement the plan over time.

1. Perform detailed planning

Additional planning for specific locations or topics may be needed to provide more detailed guidance for future decisions where more information is needed.

2. Update codes and regulations

Regulations, such as the Boulder Revised Code, may be amended for alignment with comprehensive plan policies and future land use strategy.

3. Expand or adapt city programs

Many policies in the plan are dependent on city programs and partnerships to realize. These programs may be adjusted to make them responsive to updated policies and the community's long-term vision.

4. Align city investments

As the city considers future budgets, spending should consider the advancement of plan policies. The city should consider how investments in infrastructure can support the realization of the future land use strategy, including the delivery of urban services.

Prioritizing Implementation Actions

As part of the Citywide Strategic Plan, strategies will be prioritized. Some considerations may include:

- Alignment with the comprehensive plan vision
- Advancement of comprehensive plan policies
- Potential to advance multiple policies
- Potential to support the future land use strategy
- Urgency, risk or time-sensitive opportunities
- Availability of funding and staffing resources
- Opportunities to leverage partnerships or coordinate with other efforts
- Potential to address disparities and advance equity outcomes

These considerations help guide decision-making while maintaining flexibility over time.

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?



Strength from Within by Melanie Yazzie.

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.



Artwork by Cal Brackin.

Glossary of Terms

This glossary is intended to support a general understanding and consistent interpretation of terms used throughout the comprehensive plan. It is not intended to replace or supersede more precise or legal definitions established in other city or county plans, codes, or regulations. Where more specific definitions exist, those sources should be consulted.

Policy Glossary

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 Improvement 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.

Equity

Equity is an intentional, ongoing process of changing policies, practices, and systems to eliminate institutional racism and address historical disadvantages that have disproportionately affected people based on gender, sexual orientation, ability, class and age, among others. The city focuses on leveling the playing field, prioritizing equity as a driver for social justice to improve outcomes for all community members, particularly those most often excluded by government.

Home-Based Business

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

Language Access

Services that help ensure inclusive government and meaningful participation for individuals with limited English proficiency, focusing on translation, interpretation and inclusive engagement.

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-Urban Edge, Area 3-Rural Preservation or Area 3-Planning Reserve that is determined to require additional services to be provided by the city.
- Any proposed development and/or redevelopment within Area 2-Urban Edge, Area 3-Rural Preservation or Area 3-Planning Reserve 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 where annexation is supported by the plan. 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 Conflagration

A large fire, often uncontrollable, that spreads rapidly through urban and/or densely populated areas. This type of emergency is often caused by wind-driven embers from wildfires, when typical fire suppression measures, typically located at the wildland-urban interface are overwhelmed by the event. In Colorado, wildfire initiated community conflagration (WICC) is becoming more common.

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.

Vision Zero

Vision Zero is the community's goal to eliminate all severe traffic-related crashes that result in a serious injury or fatality.

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.

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 value for open space purposes.

Open Space Purposes

Open Space purposes is generally defined as including, but not limited to, preservation and restoration of natural habitat and features, agricultural stewardship, floodplain protection, education, cultural resource protection and passive recreation.

Purposes are more specifically defined by the City of Boulder Charter or county open space tax-enabling ballot language. For reference, the City of Boulder Charter states:

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.

Personal Service

Provides personal services for the convenience of the neighborhood, including, without limitation, hair salons, nail or skin care salons, tattoo parlors, dry cleaners, laundromats, bakeries, pharmacies, or automatic teller machines. These uses also include personal goods repair such as bicycle, watch, shoe, phone, or similar items, as well as alternative healthcare and wellness services not provided by a medical doctor or physician.

Places of Worship

Used for religious worship, assembly, educations, and associated community activities.

Public Realm

All publicly owned, accessible spaces, including streets, sidewalks, paths, plazas, courtyards and urban outdoor public spaces which contribute to connectivity and enhance the aesthetic and social life in the community.

Recreation, Active

Indoor or outdoor recreation activities that are motorized or require specialized equipment or development of permanent facilities and infrastructure such as turf fields, pools, courts, gyms or parks.

Recreation, Passive

Non-motorized, outdoor recreation activities that offer mental and physical benefits, rely upon the natural setting as an integral part of the experience, and require only minimal infrastructure and services. Examples include hiking, biking, rock climbing, nature study, horseback riding, and fishing. Individual entities may have unique definitions and policies relevant to passive recreation that are specifically defined with departmental guidelines.

Research and Development

Includes product or process design, development, prototyping or testing, which may include laboratory, office, warehousing, and light manufacturing functions in support of innovation-based industries.

Retail

Includes selling of goods or merchandise directly to the ultimate consumer and supporting uses such as sales, rentals and incidental servicing of products generally provided on the premises to consumers.

Transition Area

An area approximately one-half city block (150 feet) on either side of a boundary between Hub and/or Neighborhood class land use designations where either land use designation can apply when considering consistency with the comprehensive plan policies and future land use strategy. Transition Areas are not applicable to any boundaries with Systems or Special Purpose class land use designations.

Urban Agriculture

Small-scale agricultural production and/or animal husbandry within urban areas.

Utility Operations

Support public services such as water, wastewater, energy generation or transmission, communications, and solid waste management.

Vehicle-Related

Associated with the sale, lease, fueling, charging, washing, servicing, or repair of vehicles, including automobiles, bicycles, and micromobility devices.

Warehousing and Distribution

Primarily dedicated to the storage, handling, and distribution of goods, materials or products, including fulfillment centers, logistics operations, and associated loading and delivery functions.

