



# Parks and Open Space

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**TO:** Planning Commission

**DATE AND LOCATION:** Wednesday, June 17, 3:30 p.m. Commissioners Hearing Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Boulder County Courthouse, 1325 Pearl Street, Boulder, CO

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE:** BCCP-15-0001 - Preview of the Open Space Element Update

**PRESENTERS:** Parks & Open Space Staff: Ron Stewart, Tina Nielsen, Jesse Rounds, Ernst Strenge

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Information Only

## Introduction

The purpose of our presentation is to give a preview of the Open Space Element (OSE) update and hear your comments and questions. We'll begin by showing the Boulder County Parks and Open Space 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary slideshow, to set the stage with some history and background on the evolution of the program, and then will present a brief introduction to the OSE update. The Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, including the current OSE is on the Boulder County web page at this link: <http://www.bouldercounty.org/property/build/pages/bccp.aspx>

## Background: Boulder County Comprehensive Plan

When the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan (BCCP) was adopted in 1978, it provided a vision and blueprint for how the county should develop, on the principle “that land use decisions ... should be made in a coordinated and responsible manner” (BCCP, Introduction). The underlying philosophy is that growth should be channeled to municipalities, agricultural lands should be protected, and preservation of our environmental and natural resources should be a high priority in making land use decisions.

The BCCP includes a goals section, a series of Elements containing policy statements, and a series of maps. Several elements pertain to the Parks and Open Space Department: Environmental Resources Element, Agricultural Element, Cultural Resources Element, and Open Space Element. Most of these elements have been updated at least once since 1978, including the OSE in 1996. A new element addressing Sustainability was added in 2007.

In 2010, the Land Use Department began a process of updating all the elements of the BCCP, and the Planning Commission adopted guiding principles (see Attachment A). By state law, the ultimate authority for comprehensive plans lies with planning commissions. So far the Transportation, Cultural Resources, and Environmental Resources Elements have been updated and approved by Planning Commission. Parks and Open Space staff members were heavily involved in the update of the Environmental Resources Element (ERE), adopted by the planning commission in June 2013. In the ERE update, the element was simplified considerably with a decrease in the number of policies from 67 to 19.

## The Open Space Element

When the BCCP was adopted in 1978, the Parks and Open Space Department was just three years old, and had recently acquired its first two properties in 1977: Betasso Preserve and Walker Ranch. The open space movement was still in its infancy, and a large body of knowledge had yet to be

developed about open space preservation. Therefore, the OSE was a sort of text book for how to create an open space program. The OSE includes definitions of open space and passive recreation, a description of open space acquisition methods, and a set of policies addressing Acquisition, Resource Management, Scenic Area and Open Corridor Protection, Recreation Use, Rural Character Preservation and Community Buffering, Trails, Public/Private Partnerships, and Public Decision Making.

Today the Parks and Open Space Department is a mature program in our 40<sup>th</sup> year, and the largest local government open space program in the state, managing over 100,000 acres. The OSE continues to provide the overarching guidance for open space acquisition and management. In addition, we now have over 50 management plans that provide detailed guidance at the property level, and we are in the process of developing a set of policies that provide more detailed guidance on the management of open space properties at the landscape level. Management Plans and Policies are always approved after public hearings with the Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee, which provides recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

A team consisting of staff from the Parks and Open Space and Land Use Departments has begun working on the OSE Update. Staff goals for the OSE update are to maintain the focus at a high level, bring the goals and policies up to date to reflect the range of programs and activities provided by the Parks and Open Space Department, simplify and shed the “text book” language of the document, and provide a more forward looking focus that will prepare us for future opportunities and challenges. The update in itself will not change the county’s overarching philosophy regarding open space preservation or site specific management, but will continue to provide high level guidance for open space acquisition and management.

The staff team has developed a working framework for policies, which is currently: Value, Conserve, Steward, Engage, and Collaborate.

Current Policy Framework	Proposed Updated Policy Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition</li> <li>• Resource Management</li> <li>• Scenic Area &amp; Open Corridor Protection</li> <li>• Recreation Use</li> <li>• Rural Character Preservation &amp; Community Buffering</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Public/Private Partnerships</li> <li>• Public Decision Making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value</li> <li>• Conserve</li> <li>• Steward</li> <li>• Engage</li> <li>• Collaborate</li> </ul>

**Anticipated Public Process Timeline**

- Spring 2015: Preview of OSE update to POSAC & Planning Commission
- Summer 2015: OSE Update public open house to invite comment
- Fall/Winter 2015: OSE Update hearings at Planning Commission, POSAC, BOCC

ATTACHMENT: Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Update Guiding Principles, January 12, 2012

# **Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Update**

## **Guiding Principles**

**(Approved by Planning Commission 8 – 0 on January 18, 2012)**

In shaping and navigating our future, Boulder County supports the following **Guiding Principles**:

1. Consider and weigh the interconnections among social, environmental, and economic areas in all decisions.
2. Encourage and promote the respectful stewardship and preservation of our natural systems and environment by pursuing goals and policies that achieve significant reductions in our environmental footprint.
3. Create policies and make decisions that are responsive to issues of social equity, fairness, and access to community resources for all county residents.
4. Encourage and support a dynamic, stable, and flexible local economy that distinguishes between urban and rural economies, and directs uses to appropriate locations.
5. Maintain the rural character and function of the unincorporated area of Boulder County by protecting environmental resources, agricultural uses, open spaces, vistas, and the distinction between urban and rural areas of the county.
6. Encourage and promote regional cooperation and coordination in working with other entities and jurisdictions.
7. Actively engage the public in the planning process.