



2024-26

Strategic Priorities Report





Apple Valley Bridge

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01 Introduction

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Board of County Commissioners establishes Strategic Priorities to strengthen the connection between good governance and the plans and actions required to address the community’s needs. Doing so provides direction for staff, inspires and defines partnerships, and builds community trust.

Mindful of the community’s evolving needs and the lingering impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the Marshall Fire and Straight-Line Wind Event (2021), we have identified priorities for 2024 through 2026 which reflect where we are as a community and how we lay the foundation for where we want to be in the future.

BOULDER COUNTY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2024-2026)

- Economic Security and Social Stability
- Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship
- Good Governance

In developing these priorities, we reflected on the successes of the planning period (2019-2023) and the evolving demographics of Boulder County. We speak to residents on a daily basis and the feedback we receive was crucial to ensuring our priorities address the most pressing challenges currently facing county residents. Not unlike other communities, we are faced with a myriad of climate and economic issues contributing to a current state of stretched resources, difficult decisions, and competing needs.

The prioritization outlined in this report will create lasting and transformative quality-of-life improvements for the community while elevating structural resilience and delivering positive service impacts for all.



Commissioner
Claire Levy



Commissioner
Marta Loachamin



Commissioner
Ashley Stolzmann

02

Progress on Past Priorities and an updated County Profile

The Board recognizes the many positive outcomes that were achieved during the last Strategic Priority planning period (2019-2023).

In addition to provision of ongoing county services, the following 2023 achievements lay the groundwork for the next chapter of Board service.

\$100,000,000+

Implemented EcoPass program for all BCHA sites, secured \$100+M in funding for multimodal improvements along CO119/Diagonal corridor, and adopted the county’s first Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan: Mobility & Access for All Ages and Abilities (2022)

\$790,000

Managed \$790k in criminal justice program investments and broke ground on the community-supported Boulder County Alternative Sentencing facility

400+

Through the Boulder County Housing Authority (BCHA), secured 400+ of affordable homes for low and middle-income households since 2018 and completed permitting and groundbreaking for Willoughby Corner, a phased transit-oriented workforce housing development which will add another 400 units to the local housing stock

50

More than doubled the number of battery electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in the county fleet and added 50 EV charging stations at county-owned parking lots

\$400,000

Invested close to \$400,000 in county building lighting upgrades and decreased county facility energy consumption by over 10%

92 units

Preserved permanently affordable housing units at the Casa de la Esperanza conversion project/ Longmont (32 units) and at Eagle Place/Lafayette (60 units)

Enhanced access for northern and eastern county residents through successful launches of Longmont Hub and SE Community Hub locations



Boulder County at a Glance

327K+

327,468

Total residents; up 11% since 2010 (estimate from [2022 US Census](#))

17%

More than 17% of county residents speak a language other than English (an estimated 87 languages with Spanish-speakers being the second largest population in the county).

Boulder County

Demographic Trends

Race

White 76.5%, Black or African American 1.3%, Hispanic or Latino 14.1%, Asian 5.1%, two or more races 3%,

Age

Average resident age is 39 years, up 3 years since 2019. The population of those 65 or older increased to 16.6% while the population of residents aged 4 years or younger decreased from 5.6% to 3.8%

Education

Highly educated community: 95% achieving a high school education and more than 61% having earned a Bachelors degree or higher

Cost of Living

Living Wage - 1 adult, no children = \$26.36/hr
2 adults, 2 children = \$35.15/hr

Earnings

Average Household Earnings (Annual) \$92,466/yr

Diverse Business/Industry environment

13,150 employee establishments in 2021, 148,436 employment in 2021 (US Census)

Poverty

Roughly 11% of Boulder County residents below poverty level, down 2% since 2019

4,797 children live in poverty (2023)

03

2024-2026 Strategic Priorities

We're on a mission to create a community where every resident – including those facing the greatest challenges – can flourish.



Economic Security and Social Stability

Josephine Commons

We work to ensure that everyone has access to resources essential to their health and wellbeing, including healthy food, jobs that pay a living wage, supportive family services, and crucially, affordable housing. Our approach during this planning period places a strong emphasis on equity, prioritizing the needs of residents with fixed or lower incomes and on communities of color. Meeting the needs of individual residents, where and as they are, is paramount to creating a path for long-term resident self-sufficiency.

1

Housing access and affordability

Stable housing is the bedrock of improved resilience and a linchpin for health, educational success, and community strength. The county is committed to increasing housing access and affordability and will deploy innovative and collaborative solutions to aid self-sufficiency.

Our rising local cost of living, high levels of employment and a drastic increase in the local median home price (now \$701,000) continue to pressure residents, some without adequate income, to meet even the most basic need for shelter. The county remains an active participant in the Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership which aims to expand affordable housing access and has established an ambitious goal of 12% affordability by 2035.

For its part, the county will:

- Increase the BCHA affordable units by 3% in 2025 and net 600+ units within this planning period
- Support inclusionary housing initiatives and foster collaboration opportunities which leverage and invest in affordable housing unit perseverance, acquisition and development
- Complete the first phase of the Willoughby Corner project (400+ units) and complete planning and financing for future phases, including 129 Multifamily Apartments, a community building, and significant garden and outdoor amenities introducing a mix of rental and home-ownership opportunities
- Invest in mobile home parks, a naturally occurring source of affordable housing, preserving and rehabilitating communities across Boulder County
- Study methods creating and retaining affordable housing stock beyond deed restriction including those which incentivize workforce housing ownership opportunities
- Continue a ‘housing first’ evidence-based approach in addressing the challenges of homelessness. This begins with increased annual operations funding for homelessness solutions paired with individualized service entry through the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless



Economic Security and Social Stability

2

Resident self-sufficiency

A Boulder County family of four needs \$100,000 annually to attain self-sufficiency without reliance on public or private assistance. Presently, more than 25,000 community members have some degree of food insecurity met, in part, by the SNAP program. The local unemployment rate, while enviable at 3.1%, still leaves many residents without an income capable of meeting household needs. Rising costs of living, limited affordable home ownership opportunities and other factors make it harder for families and individuals with lower and middle incomes to make ends meet. Recognizing the diverse needs of our community, the county will continue to provide support beyond housing through:

- Champion quality employment opportunities and collaboration with municipal partners encouraging alignment with competitive local wages (Boulder County passed a local Minimum Wage of \$15.69 in 2023 applicable in Unincorporated Boulder County)
- Provision of public benefits, cash assistance programs, and improved access to essential resources
- Increase awareness of and access to SNAP and strive to increase enrollment by 8% (based on eligibility)
- Maintain access to affordable and reliable childcare services which play a crucial role in empowering families to pursue employment
- Implement a Direct Cash Assistance for Families with Young Children Pilot Program which will disburse approximately \$5.3 million dollars to program participants

3

Mental and Behavioral Health

The well-being of our community extends beyond physical needs. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) and other emergencies underscored the critical importance of a sustainable and easily accessible mental and behavioral health support system. Distinct communities, including youth, Latinx, and LGBTQ+, faced heightened rates of mental health strain during these challenging times. The county is also supporting the continued recovery of those impacted by the 2021 Marshall Fire and Severe Wind Event. In response, Boulder County will:

- Enhance and coordinate locally delivered services arising out of the Behavioral and Mental Health Roadmap (2023) which increases access to mental health services, particularly for marginalized communities, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment.
- Invest in mobile response, vouchers, and navigation to services to close gaps in available services.



Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship

This is a crucial moment. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that the window of opportunity to avert a global climate catastrophe is rapidly shrinking and limiting average warming to 1.5°C over the next 10 years is critical to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Without action, there will be catastrophic effects across all human and natural ecosystems, with disproportionate suffering occurring in historically marginalized communities.

Addressing the negative impacts of human activity, especially the combustion of fossil fuels, is one answer. Great change can and must begin at a local level. As a leader in climate action, Boulder County is committed to the radical transformation needed to meet this challenge. Boulder County will continue to embrace its leadership role in modeling responsible climate action and environmental stewardship through:

1

Focus on greatest carbon emissions impact opportunities and embrace Justice40 principles

Noting the passage of the largest and most consequential climate bill in U.S. history, the county’s OSCAR team is working with internal and external partners to meet the moment. The recently enacted Inflation Reduction Act will accelerate national climate action and local governments are key to successful implementation. Regional collaboration and thoughtful coalition building are fundamental strategies to meet the scale and speed necessary to reach our objective of a just transition to a livable planet. That’s why large-scale systems change, done in an equitable way that engages the community, is vital.

- Focus monitoring and prioritization of efforts most likely to have significant mitigating effect of carbon emissions centering that work on equity and racial justice
- Implement carbon emissions footprint reduction for county operations
- Leverage Justice40 federal funding opportunities to invest in underserved communities and enhanced community engagement delivering inclusive and resident-informed policy and practices supportive of federal and local climate justice goals
- Continue Pace Program small business equipment replacement investment (emphasis on local landscaping industry)



Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship

2

GHG emissions reduction

Implementing sector-specific climate mitigation strategies toward county and community at-large GHG reduction and carbon neutrality goals (informed by the GHG inventory analysis of emissions from residential and commercial building energy, transportation, industrial processes, oil wells, and waste sectors) will set an example for other communities and reinforce the importance of the following county actions:

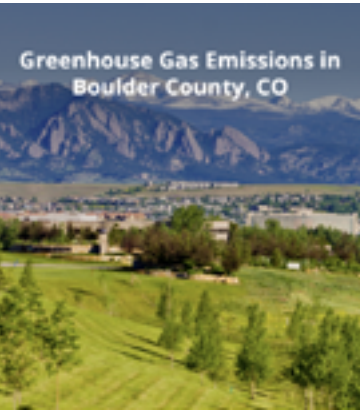
- Prioritization of environmental topics in the annual legislative agenda
- Reduce countywide emissions 80% over 2021 levels by 2030 achieving carbon neutrality by 2035
- Accelerate electrification in the county fleet and increase access to EV charging locations at county public buildings (currently 6% of county light duty fleet and 50 EV charging stations)
- Continue zero waste initiatives

3

Community environmental and climate action

The county recognizes that government cannot alone change our global climate trajectory and that an effective strategy must pursue other mitigation paths. The county will:

- Advocate for aggressive policy and systemic change at the state, federal, and global level
- Complete the 2025 Zero Waste Action Plan (2025)
- Support nature-based solutions to drawdown carbon emissions including maintenance of 106,000+ acres of agricultural space utilizing 5 soil health principles and exploring native principles in agricultural operations
- Promote and incentivize residential and commercial electrification as outlined in the [Climate Chapter](#) of Boulder County’s most recent Sustainability Plan
- Seek to meaningfully integrate climate action into financial decisions including evaluation of insurance providers, pension investments, and banking services that have or are transitioning away from fossil fuels
- Replace water pump infrastructure for Boulder County Open Space Agriculture sites enhancing efficiency in water utilization
- Fund completion of the regional composting facility
- Pilot 2025 low-carbon cement utilization project using results to inform future capital project efforts on public roads and trails
- Monitor community-wide single occupancy vehicle miles traveled and zero waste metrics encouraging increased use of public transit and adoption of recycling and composting practices by residents and businesses
- Complete Cardinal Mine water quality project



Speedwell Farm & Gardens

Good Governance

In Boulder County, good governance reflects excellent customer experience, responsibly managed public assets, and data-driven decisions informed by community engagement inclusive of those who have been historically excluded from government programs and services. The county organization exemplifies an employer of choice with policies and programs to support employee inclusion and well-being. Responsible, well-informed, and community-focused solutions will enhance community trust.

1

Racial equity and inclusive community engagement

The county is changing the way it makes decisions involving diverse groups of people to ensure all voices are heard, valued and considered regardless of background, identity, or status. Consistent with Policy 1.06, the county will:

- Reimagine its Community Engagement Framework piloting projects to enhance service access and community awareness of and participation in decision-making that effects resident quality of life
- Enhance countywide awareness and skill in providing language access for residents who speak a primary language other than English including staff training, funded translation services, & provision of vital documents in Spanish
- Update the county style guide to include an “Inclusive Language” section and change standards for communications so that county written materials are easier to understand and, as necessary, translate
- Enhance access for people of all abilities through a better coordinated and managed ADA accommodations request process (internal/external)
- Complete the website accessibility project which provides better access to county services to all
- Publish countywide resource guide in English and Spanish contributing to resident awareness and utilization of county programs



Good Governance

2

Balanced budget to available resources

Similarly, the county will seek to align its financial practices with its equitable service intent.

- By 2025, the County will apply equity-based budgeting in its annual budget proposal process
- Complete purchasing disparity study using results to inform strategies and enhance inclusive contracting opportunities
- Enhance county contracting practices to improve ease and efficiency of doing business with Boulder County while appropriately containing risk

3

Maintained and/or repurposed assets

Opportunities to respond to and learn from the global pandemic and devastating Marshall Fire and Straight-Line Wind Event have changed the way the county works, partners and serves.

- Maintenance of the county’s 100,000+ acres of protected open space remains a priority which includes the reduction of the county’s maintenance backlog for trails, buildings and other public assets in its care
- Complete a 2024 Space Optimization Study which will identify opportunities for the county to consolidate office and energy footprint with a focus on service access. Doing so will enable consideration of repurposed public space to achieve other community goals.

4

Engaged and empowered workforce

The county’s greatest asset is its dedicated staff which delivers services for the community. Ensuring the county’s workforce is engaged and empowered to provide those services means staff have the tools, skills and motivation to provide excellence in serving the community daily. The county will:

- Set local example of responsible employment practices by ensuring staff is paid a living wage and investing in employee development and engagement
- Seek to increase participation in the employee engagement survey (2025) to 61%+ and strive to exceed the previously reported number of employees responding as “engaged” or “fully engaged” by at least two percentage points
- Apply countywide compensation philosophy to increase the county’s ability to retain talent and incentivize continued service excellence
- Offer enhanced training for managers (including updated training on Racial Equity and maintaining a Harassment-Free workplace) to strengthen quality of cross-departmental collaboration and supervisory skills
- Engage workforce in policy changes considered across county operations



SE Hub Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



Transportation Multimodal Planning Retreat

Boulder County's Guiding Values

VISION STATEMENT

“As trusted stewards of Boulder County’s future, we provide the best in public service.”

GUIDING VALUES (2018)

Inclusion – *We value, respect, and support all individuals by being an inclusive, culturally responsive county government.*

Stewardship – *We honor our county’s past and work in partnership with our community to ensure a thriving, healthy quality of life for present and future generations.*

Service – *We work with passion and integrity in a supportive, positive environment to ensure accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, and justice.*

Engagement – *We listen to and provide opportunities for all community members to actively collaborate and engage with us in order to continually improve our services.*

Sustainability – *We are committed to environmental, social, and economic sustainability and build partnerships to help make the broader community more sustainable.*

Innovation – *We are motivated, progressive, and visionary. We continually challenge ourselves to lead with innovation, collaboration, and creativity.*

Resilience – *We plan for the future and forge strong partnerships that allow us to adapt quickly to challenges and manage community impacts.*



May 2024