

1. Core Values, Sustainability Framework and General Policies

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan is a joint plan between the City of Boulder and Boulder County to inform and guide their shared responsibility for planning and development in the Boulder Valley. This section of the plan sets forth the plan's core values and sustainability framework, and provides overall planning guidance for intergovernmental cooperation, growth management, annexation and provision of urban facilities and services.

Core Values

Many of the key policies in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan stem from long-standing community values and represent a clear vision of our community and our commitment to:

- **Sustainability** as a unifying framework to meet environmental, economic and social goals
- A welcoming and **inclusive** community
- Culture of creativity and **innovation**
- Strong **city and county** cooperation
- Our unique community **identity and sense of place**
- **Compact, contiguous** development and infill that supports evolution to a more **sustainable urban form**
- **Open space** preservation
- Great **neighborhoods** and **public spaces**
- **Environmental** stewardship and **climate** action
- A vibrant **economy** based on Boulder's quality of life and economic strengths
- A diversity of **housing** types and price ranges
- An all-mode **transportation** system to make getting around without a car easy and accessible to everyone
- Physical health and well-being

Applying a sustainability framework to decision-making in Boulder means considering the issues of environment, economy and social equity together. An action or decision in any one of these areas will have consequences on the others. The policies in this plan outline the future vision of the community, focusing on the built environment and its relationship to environmental, economic and social well-being and overall community livability. At the intersection of all these areas is the community's ability to sustainably meet its needs now and in the future.

Sustainability Framework

1.01 Sustainability Principles

The city and county recognize that:

- a) There are critical interrelationships among economic, social and environmental health;
- b) The way we produce, trade and consume impacts our ability to sustain natural resources;
- c) Social and cultural equity and diversity creates valuable human capital that contributes to economic and environmental sustainability;
- d) The built environment has an impact on social, economic and environmental conditions; and
- e) The quality of our environmental, economic and social health is built upon the full engagement and involvement of our community.

Therefore, the city and county seek to maintain and enhance the livability, health and vitality of the Boulder Valley and the natural systems of which it is a part, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, anticipating and adapting to changes in community needs and external influences.

1.02 Principles of Environmental Sustainability

The city and county will strive to preserve and protect the natural resource base and environmental quality on which life depends by:

- a) Maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity and productivity of ecological systems;
- b) Ensuring the efficient use of natural resources in a manner that does not deplete them over time; and
- c) Reducing and minimizing the use of non-renewable resources.

1.03 Principles of Economic Sustainability

The city and county will strive to develop and maintain a healthy, adaptable economy that is vital to the community's quality of life and high level of services and amenities by:

- a) Promoting a diverse economy that supports the needs of all community members;
- b) Promoting a qualified and diversified work force that meets employers' needs and supports a range of jobs; and
- c) Providing for and investing in a quality of life, unique amenities, and infrastructure that attracts, sustains, and retains businesses and entrepreneurs.

1.04 Principles of Social Sustainability

The city and county will strive to promote a healthy community and address social and cultural inequities by:

- a) Respecting and valuing cultural and social diversity;
- b) Ensuring the basic health and safety needs of all residents are met; and
- c) Providing infrastructure and services that will encourage culturally and socially diverse communities to both prosper within and connect to the larger community.

1.05 Community Engagement

The city and county recognize that environmental, economic and social sustainability are built upon full involvement of the community. The city and county therefore support the right of all community members to play a role in governmental decisions, through continual efforts to maintain and improve public communication and the open conduct of business. The city and county will continue to support programs and provide opportunities for public participation and neighborhood involvement. Efforts will be made to use effective technologies and techniques for public outreach and input, remove barriers to participation and involve community members not usually engaged in civic life. Emphasis will be placed on notification and engagement of the public in decisions involving large development proposals or major land use decisions that may have significant impact on or benefits to the community.

1.06 Indicators of Sustainability

The city and county will establish indicators of sustainability specific to the Boulder Valley to measure progress in the health and well-being of the community, environment and economy. The choice of indicators will be based on their ability to provide feedback that support and strengthen efforts taken to achieve the community's sustainability principles in a reasonable period of time. Efforts will be made to develop indicators to measure changes related to elements of sustainable urban form.

1.07 Leadership in Sustainability

The city and county will act as leaders and role models for others in striving to create a sustainable community. Through their master plans, regulations, policies and programs, the city and county will strive to create a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community for future generations.

1.08 Consideration of Environmental, Economic and Social Impacts

The city and the county will consider social, economic and environmental impacts in decision making for all city services, processes and facilities and in development review.

Plan Time Frame and Updates

1.09 Planning Time Frame

The time horizon for the plan is approximately 15 years. This has been determined to be a reasonable length of time for which to plan and was arrived at after weighing a combination of facts and policy considerations: land use and land use projections, Service Area projections, the capacity of the city to fund capital improvements, the growth rate, and the desires of the community in regard to accommodating growth. Each five-year review of the plan extends the planning period approximately five years.

The city and county recognize that some issues require consideration of impacts over a longer time period, and when appropriate, the plan may analyze trends and impacts over longer time periods.

1.10 Plan Update

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed at least every five years for possible amendments to reflect changes in circumstances and community desires.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

1.11 Regional and Statewide Cooperation

Many of the problems and opportunities faced by Boulder and other jurisdictions, particularly providing affordable housing, addressing the jobs-housing imbalance, creating a healthy economy, improving regional transportation, protecting the environment, managing open space, delivering human services and managing growth can only be dealt with effectively through regional or statewide cooperation and solutions.

Therefore, the city and county will actively pursue cooperative planning opportunities, intergovernmental agreements, broader information exchange and communication, collaborative initiatives and closer cooperation with each other and with other entities in the region and state. This may include other cities, counties, unincorporated communities, the University of Colorado, the school districts, regional organizations and other policy-making bodies. These entities will be encouraged to identify and address issues of shared concern for which a multi-jurisdictional perspective can best achieve mutually beneficial solutions.

1.12 Policy Assessment

The city and county will assess and be responsive to the external effects of their policies on other entities and jurisdictions. Consequences and tradeoffs will be considered before making decisions on them.

1.13 Collaboration in Service Delivery

The city and county will support consolidation and collaboration among service providers to reduce duplication of efforts, maximize economic and resource efficiencies and provide the public with reliable and equitable levels of service.

1.14 Compliance with Land Use Regulations

With regard to public facilities owned and operated in the other's jurisdiction, the city and county will respect and abide by existing land use regulations insofar as reasonably practicable.

Growth Management

1.15 City's Role in Managing Growth and Development

In order to achieve community goals and policies, the city will develop and implement urban design and growth management tools that control the scale, location, type, intensity and timing of new development and redevelopment. Where appropriate, the county will work with the city in developing and implementing growth management tools.

1.16 Adapting to Limits on Physical Expansion

As the community expands to its planned physical boundaries, the city and county will increasingly emphasize preservation and enhancement of the physical, social and economic assets of the community. Cooperative efforts and resources will be focused on maintaining and improving the quality of life within defined physical boundaries, with only limited expansion of the city.

1.17 Growth Projections

In order to ensure that past and projected growth impacts can be better mitigated or avoided, the city will develop projections for population and employment for twenty five years in the future. Projections will be used to evaluate long-term trends, analyze problems and opportunities that could occur during this period, project long-term infrastructure needs, and coordinate Boulder Valley growth projections with regional and county-wide projections.

1.18 Growth Requirements

The overall effect of urban growth must add significant value to the community, improving quality of life. The city will require development and redevelopment as a whole to provide significant community benefits, achieve sustainability goals for urban form, and to maintain or improve environmental quality as a precondition for further housing and community growth.

1.19 Jobs:Housing Balance

Boulder is a major employment center, with more jobs than housing for people who work here. This has resulted in both positive and negative impacts including economic prosperity, significant in-commuting, and high demand on existing housing. The city will continue to be a major employment center and will seek opportunities to improve the balance of jobs and housing while maintaining a healthy economy. This will be accomplished by encouraging new housing and mixed use neighborhoods in areas close to where people work, encouraging transit-oriented development in appropriate locations, preserving service commercial uses, converting industrial uses to residential uses in appropriate locations, improving regional transportation alternatives and mitigating the impacts of traffic congestion.

Framework for Annexation and Urban Service Provision

1.20 Definition of Comprehensive Planning Areas I, II and III

The Boulder Valley Planning Area is divided into three major areas.

Area I is that area within the City of Boulder, which has adequate urban facilities and services and is expected to continue to accommodate urban development.

Area II is the area now under county jurisdiction, where annexation to the city can be considered consistent with policies 1.16 Adapting to Limits on Physical Expansion, 1.18 Growth Requirements, & 1.24 Annexation. New urban development may only occur coincident with the availability of adequate facilities and services and not otherwise. Master plans project the provision of services to this area within the planning period.

Area III is the remaining area in the Boulder Valley, generally under county jurisdiction. Area III is divided into the Area III-Rural Preservation Area, where the city and county intend to preserve existing rural land uses and character and the Area III-Planning Reserve Area, where the city and county intend to maintain the option of future Service Area expansion. (See [Area I, II, III Map](#) and Policy 2.07 Delineation of Rural Lands.)

1.21 Preclusion of New Incorporated Places

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

1.22 Definition of New Urban Development

It is intended that ‘new urban development,’ including development within the city, not occur until and unless adequate urban facilities and services are available to serve the development as set out in Section IV.D. Urban Service Criteria and Standards. ‘New urban development’ is defined to include:

- a) All new residential, commercial and industrial development and redevelopment within the city; or
- b) Any proposed development within Area II subject to a county discretionary review process before the Board of County Commissioners, provided the county determines that the proposed development is inconsistent with the land use projections, maps or policies of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan in effect at that time.

1.23 Over-Intensive Rural Development

The Area III-Rural Preservation Area is that portion of Area III where rural land uses and character are to be maintained and preserved. A variety of land use activities are permitted by county zoning pursuant to examination through one or more of the review processes enumerated in the Boulder County Land Use Code. A preliminary analysis may conclude that an otherwise permitted land use proposal would have an impact of urban intensity and thus be considered an over-intensive rural development.

Criteria to be examined in making an over-intensive determination may include, but are not limited to traffic, structure size, number of users, hours of operation, outside lighting, water needs and wastewater flows, impacts extending outside of the property boundaries, compatibility with surrounding land uses, and the availability or lack of other more appropriate sites for the proposed activity. Any application for a land use that triggers an over-intensive rural development analysis will be referred to the City of Boulder for comment.

1.24 Annexation

The policies in regard to annexation to be pursued by the city are:

- a) Annexation will be required before adequate facilities and services are furnished.
- b) The city will actively pursue annexation of county enclaves, Area II properties along the western boundary, and other fully developed Area II properties. County enclave means an unincorporated area of land entirely contained within the outer boundary of the city. Terms of annexation will be based on the amount of development potential as described in (c), (d), and (e) of this policy. Applications made to the county for development of enclaves and Area II lands in lieu of annexation will be referred to the city for review and comment. The county will attach great weight to the city's response and may require that the landowner conform to one or more of the city's development standards so that any future annexation into the city will be consistent and compatible with the city's requirements.
- c) Annexation of existing substantially developed areas will be offered in a manner and on terms and conditions that respect existing lifestyles and densities. The city will expect these areas to be brought to city standards only where necessary to protect the health and safety of the residents of the subject area or of the city. The city, in developing annexation plans of reasonable cost, may phase new facilities and services. The county, which now has jurisdiction over these areas, will be a supportive partner with the city in annexation efforts to the extent the county supports the terms and conditions being proposed.
- d) In order to reduce the negative impacts of new development in the Boulder Valley, the city will annex Area II land with significant development or redevelopment potential only if the annexation provides a special opportunity or benefit to the city. For annexation considerations, emphasis will be given to the benefits achieved from the creation of permanently affordable housing. Provision of the following may also be considered a special opportunity or benefit: receiving sites for transferable development rights (TDRs), reduction of future employment projections, land and/or facilities for public purposes over and above that required by the city's land use regulations, environmental preservation, or other amenities determined by the city to be a special opportunity or benefit. Parcels that are proposed for annexation that are already developed and which are seeking no greater density or building size would not be required to assume and provide that same level of community benefit as vacant parcels unless and until such time as an application for greater development is submitted.
- e) Annexation of substantially developed properties that allows for some additional residential units or commercial square footage will be required to demonstrate community benefit commensurate with their impacts. Further, annexations that resolve an issue of public health without creating additional development impacts should be encouraged.
- f) There will be no annexation of areas outside the boundaries of the Boulder Valley Planning Area, with the possible exception of annexation of acquired open space.
- g) Publicly owned property located in Area III and intended to remain in Area III may be annexed to the city if the property requires less than a full range of urban services or requires inclusion under city jurisdiction for health, welfare and safety reasons.
- h) The Gunbarrel Subcommunity is unique because the majority of residents live in the unincorporated area and because of the shared jurisdiction for planning and service provision among the county, the city, the Gunbarrel Public Improvement District and other special districts. Although interest in voluntary annexation has been limited, the city and county continue to

support the eventual annexation of Gunbarrel. If resident interest in annexation does occur in the future, the city and county will negotiate new terms of annexation with the residents.

1.25 Assimilation of Special District Facilities and Services

Where the provider(s) of the facilities and services is (are) other than the city, the county and the city will take all reasonable and legal steps to facilitate assimilation of facilities and services by the city upon annexation.

1.26 Provision of Urban Services in the Boulder Valley

The city is an adequate provider of facilities and services. These facilities and services will continue to be supplied to Area I, and the city will make them available to Area II within the planning period pursuant to the city's annexation policies and Capital Improvements Program. The city and county intend that new urban development not occur until adequate urban facilities and services are available to serve the development. The county experience indicates that provision of the full range of urban facilities and services by a municipality is preferable to provision of urban facilities and services by special districts and private groups in part because municipalities have politically accountable leadership, general police power and the ability to coordinate provision of adequate urban facilities and services. Therefore, it is hereby presumed that adequate facilities and services can be provided only by the City of Boulder. The city will extend, furnish or provide such services at such time as it can provide them all as provided under paragraph 1.27(a) below and the Urban Service Criteria and Standards section of this plan. However, it is not the intent to preclude the development and use of alternative facilities and service systems for new urban development so long as they are adequate as provided under paragraph 1.27(b) and the Urban Service Criteria and Standards section of this plan.

1.27 Definition of Adequate Urban Facilities and Services

a) The city provides adequate facilities and services for new urban residential, commercial and industrial development within the planning area. Adequate facilities and services for:

- (i) All development include: public water, public sewer, stormwater and flood management, urban fire protection and emergency medical care, urban police protection, urban transportation; and
- (ii) Residential development also includes developed urban parks and schools.

b) The availability and adequacy of urban facilities and services as set forth in subparagraph (a) above will be determined based upon the Urban Service Criteria and Standards section of this plan.

c) In order to make efficient use of existing infrastructure and investment, new development and redevelopment will be located in areas where adequate public services and facilities presently exist or are planned to be provided under the city's Capital Improvements Program.

d) Due to size, location and other unique requirements, some city facilities that do not require the full range of urban services will be located in Areas II and III. Extending a limited range of urban services to such city facilities is appropriate when extension is consistent with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan or otherwise necessary for the city to provide another urban facility and service to Area I.

1.28 Phased Extension of Urban Services/Capital Improvements Program

a) The city and county agree that extensions, furnishing, or provision of less than adequate facilities and services for new urban development would be injurious to the public health, safety

and welfare because it would seriously impair the county's efforts implementing the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan through reasonable land use and development regulations in the unincorporated areas of the county.

b) The county requests that the city accompany any extension of facilities and services to urban development outside the boundaries of the city with concurrent annexation to the city of the land served. The city agrees not to extend or furnish facilities and services to new urban development outside the boundaries of the city without annexing to the city the land to be served, except as indicated in Policy 1.36 Out-of-City Utility Service.

c) The city and county recognize that certain properties within the Boulder Valley have filed for subdivision approval with Boulder County prior to June 13, 1977, the date on which the county approved amendments to its subdivision regulations that require compatibility of applicants for subdivision approval with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan and have previously been granted water and sewer by the city. The development of these particular properties may be permitted to occur without a full range of urban facilities and services provided that such development is otherwise in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and existing Boulder County land use regulations at the time of submission of the application.

d) The city will use the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) process, within the framework of a responsible budget of balanced revenues and expenditures, to plan for the funding of an adequate range of urban services and facilities within Area I and Area II as annexation occurs during the planning period. . The CIP is a tool to direct the location and timing of growth by coordinating and targeting public capital expenditures.

1.29 Channeling Development to Areas with Adequate Infrastructure

In order to protect and use past investments in capital improvements, new development and redevelopment will be located in areas where adequate public services and facilities presently exist or are planned to be provided under the city's Capital Improvements Program.

1.30 Growth to Pay Fair Share of New Facility Costs

Since the public costs of annexation and developing several areas concurrently could prove excessive, the city will limit said costs to those, which can reasonably be accommodated within the Capital Improvements Program and are compatible with anticipated revenues. When permitting additional development or redevelopment, the city will consider whether public facilities and services are adequate to reasonably maintain current levels of service or service standards given the impacts of such additional development or committed funding sources for such adequate facilities are sufficient to ensure their provision in a timely fashion. Growth will be expected to pay its own way, with the requirement that new development pay the cost of providing needed facilities and an equitable share of services including affordable housing, and to mitigate negative impacts such as those to the transportation system.

1.31 Adjacency of Open Space/Utility Impacts

The city and county will consider the impacts of open space management and utility installation on abutting property.

1.32 Multi-Purpose Use of Public Lands

Multi-purpose use of public lands, facilities and personnel services will be emphasized. However, in consideration of potential use of parks and open space lands, only activities consistent with the original intent of acquisition will be considered.

Utilities

1.33 Consistency of Utility Extensions with Comprehensive Plan

The installation and extension of all utilities will be consistent with the provisions of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan and with the responsibilities of the respective utility providers.

1.34 Efficient Extension of Utilities

Nothing within the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan will prohibit the city from denying the provision of utility services to any property within the Boulder Valley for utility-related reasons.

1.35 Utility Provision to Implement Community Goals

The city will consider the importance of the other objectives of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan in the planning and operation of the water, wastewater, stormwater and flood management utilities. These other objectives include in-stream flow maintenance, enhancement of recreational opportunities, water quality management, preservation of natural ecosystems, open space and irrigated agricultural land, and implementation of desired timing and location of growth patterns.

1.36 Out-of-City Utility Service

In furtherance of policies 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 1.33, 1.34, 1.35, and notwithstanding Policy 1.28, the city and county agree that it is appropriate for the city to: a) Decline support for utility provision in Area III and Area II when its provision would defeat Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan goals.

b) Extend limited utility service in Area III and Area II in circumstances that further Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan goals. c) Evaluate opportunities for cooperation with other utility service providers, in concert with the county, to further Comprehensive Plan goals.