

Alpine-Balsam City-County Working Group

Findings and Recommended Next Steps

Communiqué

Brief Overview: The process to determine if Boulder County can and chooses to be co-located at Alpine-Balsam has been informed by a joint working group of two Boulder City Council members, a county commissioner and staff. The group's role is to clarify process and decision-making to assess the feasibility of relocating county facilities to Alpine-Balsam, including analysis to understand if the criteria identified in Chapter 2 of the Area Plan can be met.

The City-County Working Group met several times over the past few months and found unsurmountable challenges to bring county services to Alpine-Balsam – specifically the inability to meet both city and county parking needs in the existing structure. This document describes the analysis and recommendations for continued collaboration to reconvene a Working Group to help guide community process at a future time when Boulder County's process has identified objectives for future decision-making.

The following describes:

1. The Alpine-Balsam Area Plan criteria
2. Working Group purpose, membership, roles and objectives
3. Working Group achievements
4. Findings from parking analysis
5. Recommendations

Criteria for Boulder County Relocation

At the time of adoption of the [Alpine-Balsam Area Plan](#), several factors were identified as needing more analysis to support the decision to potentially relocate Boulder County Services to Alpine-Balsam from the Broadway and Iris Campus. Likewise, [the County's Facilities Master Plan](#) included reasons to look at the Alpine Balsam site as a top site for consideration.

Alpine-Balsam Area Plan Criteria

1. Redevelopment of the Iris and Broadway Campus would achieve “materially” more housing and preferably a higher percentage of affordable housing in the already developed portions of the campus (i.e. excluding the ballfields).
2. The Boulder County facility can be achieved at Alpine-Balsam in the location along Alpine Avenue as indicated on the land use map.
3. The county's parking needs can be met by shared use of the existing city-owned parking structure (with an additional level of parking added).

4. The civic uses on the site can be designed to achieve high-quality sense of place, appropriate levels of activity, benefits to the community and neighborhood, high-quality public realm and community gathering spaces.
5. The city and county will determine appropriate fair compensation for the conveyance of land that reflects a combination of factors including current market value and city investment. The city and county will also decide other cost-share agreements related to public infrastructure, operations and maintenance of the site and parking to determine the financial feasibility of co-location.

Boulder County Criteria for Relocation

For the county project to be viable at Alpine-Balsam, the following are required for County participation at this site:

1. A minimum building size of 120,000 square feet and the purchase of land to accommodate the building, preferably on Alpine Avenue, near the MHP location.
2. An exemption from City height restrictions to enable both the construction of a new four-story county building and the extension of the existing parking structure up to 55 feet.
3. A flood mitigation plan for Alpine-Balsam that does not substantially constrain the County's ability to develop or operate at the site.
4. A parking strategy that ensures sufficient parking to meet anticipated operational needs, including collaboration with the city to develop an appropriate TDM program and mutual agreement on the City and County's responsibilities under any parking district.
5. Any entitlement processes required to assure that these conditions will be met prior to closing on the purchase of land.
6. City agreement on a site development plan for the County-owned Broadway-Iris campus that includes mutual agreement on affordable housing goals, prospective zoning, the historic status of eligible buildings, and the ultimate disposition of ballfields.
7. Mutual agreement on the fair market value of any City or County property that would be included in any resulting real estate transaction.

[Purpose of the Working Group](#)

The purpose of the Working Group is to guide the process of evaluating the feasibility of relocating Boulder County facilities to Alpine-Balsam and assessing the resulting development potential and planning process at Iris-Broadway. See [Working Group Charter](#).

[Group Member Roles](#)

Working Group Decision-Making Members include liaisons and proxies for both Boulder City Council and the Board of County Commissioners to provide leadership and guidance to staff for analysis, documentation, public engagement processes and planning processes. Full City Council and Board of County Commissioners have final decision-making authority.

Working Group Objectives

1. Clarify processes and decision-making steps to further assess the feasibility of relocating county facilities to Alpine-Balsam.
2. Conduct analysis to understand if the criteria identified in Chapter 2 of the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan and Boulder County's criteria for relocation can be met.
3. Guide planning and public processes for future changes at the Iris-Broadway Campus in the context of a relocation of county facilities to Alpine-Balsam.

Working Group Achievements

The Working Group met four times between late-October 2019 and January 2020. In those meetings, the group agreed to a purpose and charter, reviewed analysis regarding the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan's criteria including parking needs and feasibility to accommodate parking in the existing structure, real estate and financial considerations, initial analysis of ballfield service capacity and needs and decision-making considerations for Boulder County's consolidation process and future of the North Broadway Center.

Findings from Parking Analysis

Even a most conservative estimate concludes that parking demand for both city and county staff and customer needs cannot be met in the existing structure at Broadway and Alpine Avenue even with an additional deck. Combined city and housing parking needs appear to be able to be accommodated within the existing structure with few spaces to spare.

Staff provided analysis of the estimated parking needs for the site:

- City staff, customers, fleet: 250-330 spaces
- County staff, customers: 385 spaces
- Housing: 85 spaces
- Total Identified Parking Needs: 730-800 spaces
- Capacity in the structure: 400 (plus 60-80 spaces in an additional deck)

The group explored a range of ideas for creative ways to potentially meet the needs including more expansive transportation demand management, off-site parking and on-street parking including:

- Adding a level to the existing parking structure
- Adding a ground-floor parking level to the county office building
- Analysis of potential county square footage reductions based on available parking
- Increased use of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies such as increased parking pricing and parking cash out incentives or off-site parking with shuttles, and
- Utilizing on-street parking capacity with a Neighborhood Parking Permit Program (NPP)

A link to the [Parking Analysis can be found here](#). No decision or recommendation was made with respect to an additional deck on the existing parking structure.

The working group concluded that the parking studies have shown the Alpine-Balsam site doesn't provide adequate parking to support the county consolidation of services as described by criteria in the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan and described in the Working Group charter.

Recommendations

Working Group members acknowledged that while the parking analysis shows that parking appears to be an insurmountable challenge for Boulder County to relocate to Alpine-Balsam, the group discussed next steps and potential process for county relocation and/or Broadway and Iris future redevelopment together to inform recommended next steps.

Near term next steps will be for Boulder County Commissioners and staff to continue their work to assess potential locations and process for service consolidation that do not include Alpine-Balsam. This work is underway and is expected to continue through 2020 and will include assessment of the multiple sites including the redevelopment potential of the North Broadway campus.

Due to the complexity of the decision-making and questions around future development, the group recommends:

- Continuation of this Working Group or formation of a new group to help guide community process at a future time when Boulder County has completed its assessment of potential sites for a consolidated services hub within the City of Boulder.
- City and county commitment to cooperative efforts to provide transparent information to community members about the process, decision-making, analysis and range of options at appropriate times to facilitate community engagement and seek community input on values and priorities to inform decision-making.