

## B. Implement Alpine-Balsam Area Plan for City-Owned Properties -

## City Initiated



### Site Description

The Alpine-Balsam area is a lively and well-loved neighborhood center located north of downtown Boulder with a thriving commercial center, diverse array of housing, close proximity to North Boulder Park and western Open Space, and access to high-frequency transit along Broadway.

The city's 2015 purchase of the property that formerly housed the Boulder Community Health (BCH) Hospital was an investment for the community, motivated by the desire to shape the redevelopment of an area that has been focused around a major healthcare facility for decades, to address the city's decentralized service challenges by creating a City Service Center, and to address critical affordable housing needs.

The [Alpine-Balsam Area Plan](#) was adopted in 2019. The plan serves as a guide for decisions about land use and redevelopment of the city-owned properties and public facilities and services in the area.

### Summary of Proposed Changes for Alpine-Balsam

- **Requester:** City of Boulder as property owner to implement direction from the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan
- **Type of Request:** Land use map changes
- **Brief Description of Request:** Public (PUB) to Mixed Use Business (MUB) and High Density Residential (HR)
- **Approval Required:** Two body

### Existing Conditions

- BVCP Designations: Public (PUB)
- Zoning: Public
- Lot Size: Approx. 8 acres
- Existing Buildings:
  - Renovation of Medical Office Pavilion
  - Existing Brenton Building
  - Existing Parking Structure
  - Planned demolition of hospital

### Jobs and Housing Assumptions

- **Housing:** There are no existing housing units on the site.
- **Jobs:** Limited existing jobs in the Brenton Building and retail space of the parking garage. The site will be the future location for relocated city service center and potentially small-scale commercial spaces.
- **Projections:** The area plan estimates future dwelling units ranging 210 – 260.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending land use changes for the city-owned site for the following reasons:

- Implementing the BVCP Land Uses is one of the first regulatory steps to achieving the vision outlined in the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan.

BVCP land use designations are less specific than those outlined in the area plan but they must be updated to proceed with the next steps to develop zoning and other regulatory tools to ensure the desired outcomes described in the plan. See the analysis below for a comparison of the Area Plan Land Use Prototypes and BVCP Land Use Categories.

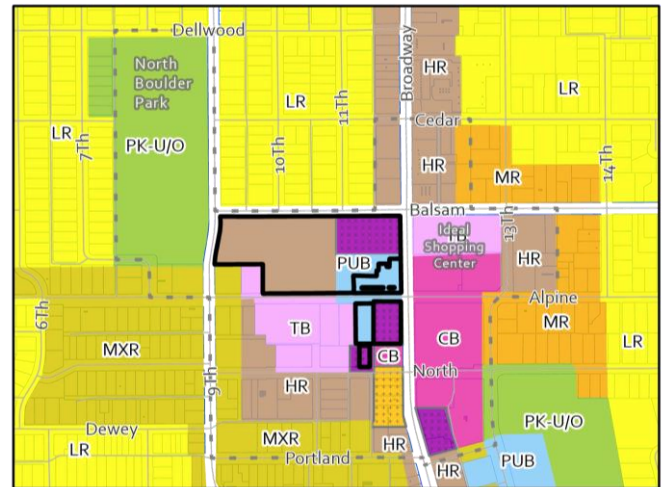
The city's approach for Area Plan implementation has been to:

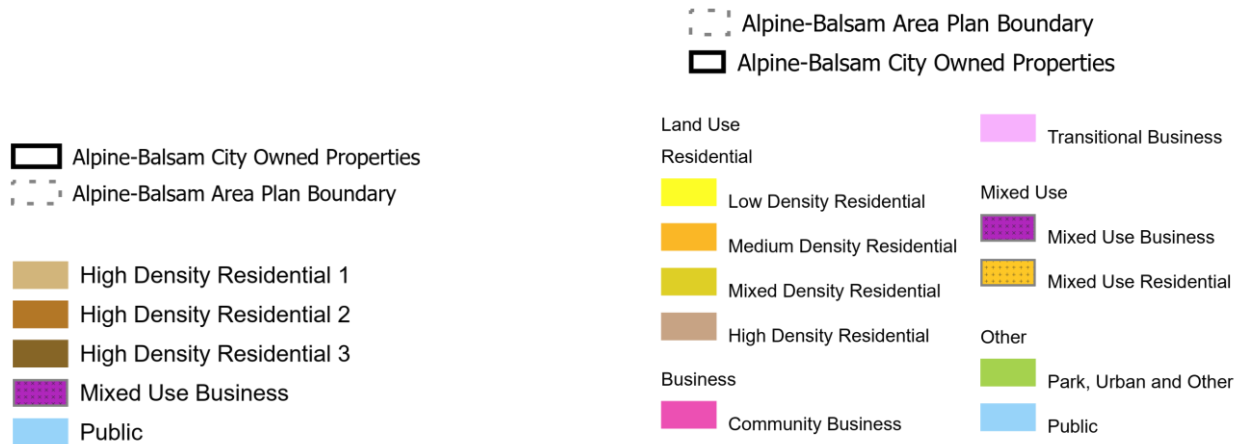
1. Adopt the Area Plan
  2. Change the BVCP land use designations
  3. Create and implement zoning that is appropriate for achieving the goals and objectives described in the Area Plan
  4. Develop other regulatory and implementation mechanisms to implement the plan (e.g. Access and Parking Districts, Urban Design Strategies, etc.)
- No other changes to land use are proposed in the Alpine-Balsam area (i.e. privately-owned properties).

**Area Plan Land Use Concept Map**



**Recommended BVCP Land Uses**





See below for a comparison of the Area Plan Land Use Prototypes shown in the Concept Map and the BVCP Land Use Categories.

## COMMUNITY INPUT

Community engagement processes for the Alpine-Balsam Vision Plan and Area Planning processes included hundreds of people over four years.

**Vision Plan:** An in-depth community engagement process informed the vision plan process resulting in the adopted plan in 2017. This included an open house, four “pop-up” events out, an online questionnaire, and a community design workshop attended by over 100 people. Altogether, **over 600 people** provided input, and thousands of written comments were submitted.

**Area Plan:** From May 2018 through August 2019, community engagement for the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan included several phases. Throughout the process, purposes of engagement included raising awareness about the project, getting feedback on goals, sharing draft site scenarios to get feedback on key policy choices, discerning community preferences for the Alpine-Balsam area regarding land use, character, access and mobility, and getting feedback on options and area plan components. [The full summary of engagement](#) to date is provided on the project website and included as a supplemental document to the Area Plan.

For the BVCP Mid-Term Update, property owners, residents, businesses within 600 ft. of the city-owned site were mailed notification and encouraged to provide feedback to staff or through BeHeardBoulder. Notification also included direct messaging through Next Door and other neighborhood contacts. BeHeardBoulder Feedback and e-mail received are attached below.

Concerns raised include:

- Ensuring the plan’s recommendations for decreasing density across the site with the highest buildings along Broadway.
- Choices for relocating city services in this location.
- Assurances that the city achieve affordable housing goals at this site.

## ANALYSIS

### Criteria for Land Use Map Changes

To be eligible for a Land Use Map change, the proposed change:

- a) On balance, is consistent with the policies and overall intent of the comprehensive plan;
- b) Would not have significant cross-jurisdictional impacts that may affect residents, properties or facilities outside the city;
- c) Would not materially affect the land use and growth projections that were the basis of the comprehensive plan;
- d) Does not materially affect the adequacy or availability of urban facilities and services to the immediate area or to the overall service area of the City of Boulder;
- e) Would not materially affect the adopted Capital Improvements Program of the City of Boulder; and
- f) Would not affect the Area II/Area III boundaries in the comprehensive plan.

### Evaluation:

- a). On balance, is consistent with the policies and overall intent of the comprehensive plan;

The recommended changes area consistent with BVCP Policies and the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan.

In 2019 the Planning Board and City Council adopted the [Alpine-Balsam Area Plan](#). The Area Plan outlines the desired future development of an area – its character and scale, mix of land uses, and the locations of streets, paths, parking, public spaces and urban services. The Vision Statement describes the vision for the former Boulder Community Health site:

*“Alpine-Balsam will be a vibrant multi-generations hub for community life and local government services – a welcoming and inclusive new model for equitable affordable, and sustainable living.”*

The Area Plan’s Chapter 2 describes the Key Components of City Site Redevelopment in detail, summarized:

**East Block:** *Recommended BVCP Land Uses: Public (PUB) and Mixed Use Business (MUB)*  
City service center in the renovated Medical Office Pavilion and flexible mixed-use for the northern part of the East Block to be determined at a future time. Uses could include additional consolidated city services and community uses (e.g. relocated Older Adult Services/ Multi-cultural Center) or could become housing or some combination of ground-floor commercial with housing above.

**Center Block:** *Recommended BVCP Land Use: High Density Residential (HR)*  
The center block is designated high density residential to support affordable housing projects that might include a variety of rental housing, Permanently Supportive Housing and middle income for-sale housing that could meet the city goals for a wide diversity of affordable housing types and price ranges.

The Area Plan included flexibility to allow for a process to determine the feasibility of

relocating Boulder County's Service Hub to Alpine-Balsam in the Center Block. The viability for Boulder County to relocate services from their campus at Iris and Broadway to Alpine-Balsam was evaluated by a joint City-County Working Group that met several times in late 2019 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. The plan indicates if relocation is determined to be infeasible, HDR3, High Density Residential 3 land use would be applied in that location.

**West Block:** *Recommended BVCP Land Use: High Density Residential (HR)*

Housing is envisioned in the West Block in the form of two to three-story town homes or apartments. Directly adjacent to North Boulder Park and furthers from Broadway, this area is envisioned as the least dense of the high-density residential prototypes.

**South Parcels:** *Recommended BVCP Land Use: Mixed Use Business (MUB)*

Two small vacant parcels on the north side of North Street are owned by the city. These will be evaluated for potential future city needs or future sale.

The area planning process and final plan were developed with attention to the surrounding neighborhood context as reflected in:

- decreasing building heights and density from Broadway to North Boulder Park,
- significant flood mitigation buffer along Balsam,
- connections improved connections to, through, and from the site.
- Urban design strategies for a significant amount of new public and private green space.

b) [Would not have significant cross-jurisdictional impacts that may affect residents, properties or facilities outside the city;](#)

No cross-jurisdictional impacts are anticipated from this change.

c) [Would not materially affect the land use and growth projections that were the basis of the comprehensive plan;](#)

BVCP Projections from the 2015 major update did not account for changes in land use at this site from a major health care facility to a mix of civic, residential and small-scale business uses. The area plan projects up to approximately 260 new housing units. Generally these changes will result in a slight improvement of the overall jobs:housing balance.

d) [Does not materially affect the adequacy or availability of urban facilities and services to the immediate area or to the overall service area of the City of Boulder;](#)

For several decades the site has been fully developed as a regional hospital and health care facility. The impact of redevelopment on urban facilities and services was evaluated in the planning process and minimal impacts are anticipated.

e) [Would not materially affect the adopted Capital Improvements Program of the City of Boulder](#)

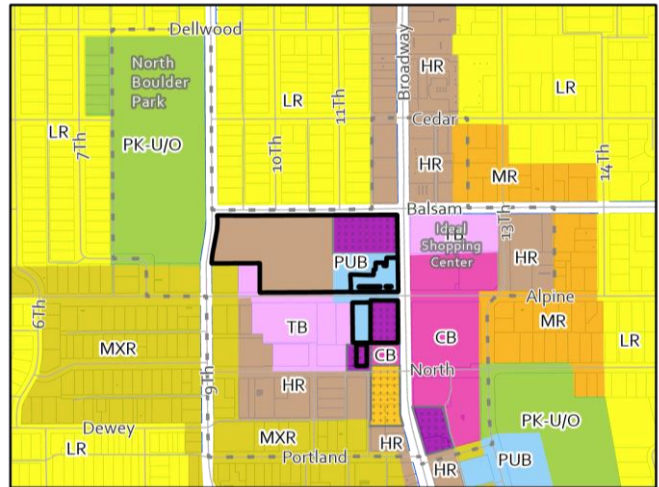
- The existing roadway network in the area is well-developed and estimated to be able to adequately serve projected residents, employees and visitors to the site. System improvements for all modes of access and mobility are recommended and will be programmed in the CIP as the site develops.
- Several areas within the areas are impacted by the 100-year, Conveyance, and High Hazard flood zones. Flood mitigation improvements are programmed in site design to provide flood conveyance for the 100-year flows so that development occurs outside the 100-year floodplain.

f) [Would not affect the Area II/Area III boundaries in the comprehensive plan.](#)

This change will not affect the Area II/Area III boundaries in the comprehensive plan.



## Comparison of Area Plan Prototypes and BVCP Land Use Designations



Alpine-Balsam Land Use Prototypes		BVCP Land Use Designations and Descriptions	
High Density Residential 1 (HDR1):	Least dense of the high-density residential prototypes. Characterized by 2-3 story, alley-loaded townhome units and/or low-rise, smaller footprint apartment buildings.	High Density Residential (HR)	The areas are generally located close to the University of Colorado, in areas planned for transit-oriented redevelopment and near major corridors and services. Consists of attached residential units and apartments. More than 14 dwelling units per acre
High Density Residential 2 (HDR2):	Characterized by 3 story, low-rise apartment buildings. Building heights would be within 35' with any exception over the 35' to allow for appropriately proportioned pitched roof forms.		
High Density Residential 3 (HDR3):	Characterized by 4 story, mid-rise apartment buildings. Building heights would be between 35' and 55' to allow for a fourth floor and any appropriately proportioned pitched roof forms. <i>This will be applied to the Center Block southern section that is no longer being considered for Boulder County services (see below)</i>		
Mixed-Use 2: (MU-2):	Characterized by mid-rise buildings up to 4 stories and	Mixed Use Business	MUB development may be appropriate and will be

	including flexibility for either mixed or single use of commercial and residential uses. Strictly mixed-use with active, ground floor uses, with residential or office uses above. Building heights would be generally between 35' and 55' with an exception over 35' to allow for a taller first floor for mixed-use buildings. The density would allow up to 2.5 floor-area-ratio.	<b>(MUB)</b>	encouraged in some business areas. Specific zoning and other standards and regulations will be adopted which define the desired form intensity, mix, location and design characteristics of these uses. Consists of business or residential uses. Housing and public uses supporting housing will be encouraged and may be required.
<b>Public (PUB):</b>	Characterized by mid-rise buildings up to 5 stories, with flexibility for renovation of the medical office pavilion for a city service center. Buildings will be designed to complement and integrate with the public realm. Building heights up to 5 stories and 55'.	<b>Public (PUB)</b>	PUB land use designations encompass a wide range of public and private non-profit uses that provide a community service. They are dispersed throughout the city.

**Alpine-Balsam Implementation Next Steps**

Information about hospital deconstruction and other implementation work can be found on the Alpine-Balsam Implementation Project website: <https://bouldercolorado.gov/planning/alpinebalsam> and [community members can sign-up to receive the Alpine-Balsam newsletter.](#)

*Zoning Analysis and Community Engagement to Follow BVCP Land Use Changes*

Analysis is underway to determine if the objectives in the plan can be achieved with existing zoning districts and to assess the benefit of developing Form Based Code (FBC) for the city-owned properties at Alpine-Balsam. FBC is a type of legal design regulation that describes the desirable physical characteristics of buildings and is established to create a sense of place in the area being developed or redeveloped. Boulder has employed Form Based Code Form in Boulder Junction area to further implement the goals of the Transit Village Area Plan.

This approach is potentially attractive for Alpine-Balsam to craft specific urban design and character regulatory tools prior to review of development applications. The process to develop Form Based Code would include community engagement to identify preferences for a range of urban design topics such as building mass, scale, bulk, orientation, configuration, and architecture character. It is anticipated that the community process to guide zoning options and decisions will commence later this year or in early 2021:

- Kickoff and Baseline Information Sharing – late 2020 or Q1 2021
- Community Engagement – Q1 – Q2 2021
- Adoption – Q3 2021



## Alpine-Balsam

### BeHeardBoulder Q&A Feedback and Compiled E-mails (through 11/24/20)

10/11/2020 07:18 AM

The higher density, the better!

10/11/2020 10:51 AM

yes I support this. it should be high density mixed use. parking maximums! get rid of the flat open parking lots, they're a hideous eye sore. if there must be parking, one small structure in the back should be adequate rather than rolling tarmac as far as the eye can see. you say you aren't changing the land use of any of the private property around this lot, well you should! it should all be medium density mixed use!! all. of. it. no more single family only zoning, especially not this close to downtown!! it's classist and racist.

10/26/2020 07:49 AM

Please require more affordable housing for families as a requirement for sacrificing views and space.

11/09/2020 10:21 PM

It makes no sense that the city purchased the most expensive land in the city and then forced the highest level of density to justify their overpayment. this purchase was made with the purpose of city offices (which also made no sense at the highest priced real estate in the city) and then the city shifted plans. Why isn't the Holiday development model being pursued here? So much more livable and in keeping with the neighborhood.

#### Comments Via E-mail

10/7/2020

Hi Jean,

Thanks for running the show with the Alpine Balsam development! I'm excited to see what goes there. My wife and I live on the east side of North Boulder Park at 2816 9th st. We moved here because we recently had our first child, and we had dreams in a few years of our kids walking across the street and playing in the park before dinner.

**I'd like to express my concern for HDR2/HDR3 in the Alpine-Balsam area for the part not directly off Broadway for the following reasons:**

The entire perimeter of the park is currently wonderfully safe, with very little traffic. I see bikers every morning. I see countless parents pulling over to pick up and drop off their kids on the side of 9th street. Frisbees and soccer balls roll into the street non-stop, and no one is nervous and getting killed picking one up. I feel safe walking across the street into the park every evening with my newborn in my arms.

If the city tries to shoe-horn in HDR2/HDR3 density into the Alpine-Balsam development, the quiet safety of 9th street will be over. In the last month, I've personally seen the trucks coming from the Mapleton site hit the telephone pole once and the street sign twice. I'm not sure what happened last week, but they seemed to hit something that required a day's worth of construction to fix. The point is that the roads aren't designed for fluid traffic. A real estate developer will pretend the roads don't need expanding, but whether it is done immediately or a couple years later when the congestion has caused frustration, the city will expand the roads, and we'll have turned North Boulder Park into Denver.

Additionally, the real winners in big high density residential development are wealthy real estate developers. I've worked with Blackstone and Broomfield and many real estate firms in my previous financial life in NYC, and they're always the ones who get the better end of the deal, and the public loses. Additionally, the state and federal tax treatment they get is basically to pay not taxes, so the public loses again. It would irk me to see North Boulder Park ruined so another real estate developer can make an extra \$100 million.

**I'm not one to protest but offer no solution, so I'd suggest the following.**

- 1.) Patience with the decision. Covid is a big deal, but a temporary one. Retail and storefront will come back, but making economic decisions for 2023 based on 2020 will be costly for the city.**
- 2.) Fade HDR3/HDR2 from Broadway to HDR1 on North Boulder Park. Place 2-3 retail stores/cafes off North Boulder Park to add additional revenue for the city.**
- 3.) Boulder is a wonderful place, and it's important that all types of people can enjoy it. Enforce that developers must offer a significant chunk of equal-opportunity housing. This will enable you to zone HDR2/HDR3 near Broadway as an opportunity zone, which will result in developers bidding up more the property driving additional city revenue, and allowing you to keep HDR1 near the park. Additionally, the tax treatment requires all profits are reinvested in the area, so it will keep the buildings and properties nice for all residents. And it will help reduce Boulder yuppiness.**

**Oliver**