Master plans provide a bridge between the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP), service delivery, future capital needs, and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The Planning Board's role in reviewing master plans is to look for consistency with BVCP goals and policies before the plans are accepted by City Council. Because of its role in reviewing the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), the Planning Board also

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

SUMMARY:

KEY ISSUES:

1. Is the master plan consistent with the goals, policies and growth projections of the BVCP?
2. Does the master plan outline BVCP service standards and a plan to meet them in the future?
3. Are the capital needs and funded sources outlined in the master plan?
reviews master plans to ensure that capital improvement needs and funding strategies have been identified to meet adopted service standards. The questions that are the focus of the Planning Board’s review are included as key issues on the next page.

Background
The final draft of the Open Space and Mountain Parks Master Plan focuses city resources, funding and expertise on a clear vision for the future. The plan is organized around five focus areas – or central management themes – and the community’s open space values. The following five focus areas organize the draft plan and were unanimously adopted by City Council and the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) in July 2018:

- Ecosystem Health and Resilience (EHR)
- Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment (RRSE)
- Agriculture Today and Tomorrow (ATT)
- Community Connection, Education and Inclusion (CCEI)
- Financial Sustainability (FS)

For each focus area, the draft plan articulates community aspirations and collective hopes as desired outcomes for the future of OSMP and management strategies for the next decade. These strategies have also been prioritized into three tiers to describe which would be accelerated or emphasized in the first few years of implementation (Tier 1). This prioritization – and the three funding scenarios described below – will inform the department’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) over the next decade.

Tier 1 (high priority) strategies are:

- EHR. 1) Preserve and restore important habitat blocks and corridors
- EHR. 2) Update system plans guiding ecosystem management
- EHR. 3) Address the global climate crisis here and now
- ATT. 1) Reduce the maintenance backlog for agriculture and water infrastructure
- ATT. 2) Increase soil health and resilience
- RRSE. 1) Update and implement visitor use management guidance
- RRSE. 2) Reduce the trail maintenance backlog
- CCEI. 1) Welcome diverse backgrounds and abilities
- CCEI. 2) Enhance communication with visitors

Over the next decade, staff will also still make steady or gradual progress towards Tier 2 and 3 strategies, but will wait to accelerate those efforts until later as additional funding and capacity allow. All strategies can be found in the executive summary.

Chapter six of the BVCP includes summaries of all city master plans. The review and acceptance of city master plans are generally accompanied by an action to amend the relevant BVCP master plan summary. Per the BVCP, such actions are a city decision, meaning it must be approved by the Planning Board and City Council. The draft BVCP summary for the Open Space and Mountain Parks Master Plan is included as Attachment A.
1. **Is the master plan consistent with the goals, policies and growth projections of the BVCP?**

Staff finds that the draft OSMP Master Plan is consistent with the goals, policies and growth projections of the BVCP. The following figures demonstrate the master plan strategy alignment with the BVCP. It should be noted that none of the strategies conflict with BVCP policies, rather some of the strategies have stronger alignment because the BVCP provides specific guidance on the topic.

**Figure 1.1: Ecosystem Health and Resilience Strategy Alignment with BVCP policies**

All of the strategies in the **Ecosystem Health and Resilience (EHR)** focus area have strong alignment with BVCP policies (Fig. 1.1). For example, the OSMP Master Plan and the BVCP call for area closures when degradation to habitat, wildlife, or visitor experience occur. There’s a long history of integrating ecological systems into planning in Boulder. The BVCP, like the OSMP Master Plan, employs a management approach to resource protection and enhancement that is based on using new information from research, and learning from that experience what works and what does not.

**Figure 1.2: Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment Strategy Alignment with BVCP policies**
Two of the strategies in the **Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment (RRSE)** focus area have strong alignment with BVCP policies, including providing welcoming and inspiring visitor facilities and improving multi-modal access to trailheads (Fig. 1.2). The BVCP does not have specific guidance for the strategies showing medium or minimal alignment.

![ATT Strategy Alignment to BVCP Policies](image)

*Figure 1.3: Agriculture Today and Tomorrow Strategy Alignment with BVCP policies*

Most of the strategies in the **Agriculture Today and Tomorrow (ATT)** focus area have strong alignment with BVCP policies (Fig. 1.3). For example, both the OSMP Master Plan and BVCP note the importance of sustainable practices for food production including methods that integrate ecological conservation objectives, and both include guidance to work with local partners including farmers and ranchers.

![CCEI Strategy Alignment to BVCP Policies](image)

*Figure 1.4: Community Connections, Education, and Inclusion Strategy Alignment with BVCP policies.*

Half of the **Community Connections, Education, and Inclusion (CCEI)** strategies are strongly aligned with BVCP policies, including direction on preserving Boulder’s cultural heritage, embracing diversity, engaging neighbors, and promoting community wellness (Fig. 1.4). The BVCP does not have specific guidance for the strategies showing medium or minimal alignment.
Figure 1.5: Financial Sustainability Strategy Alignment with BVCP policies

About half of the Financial Sustainability (FS) strategies are strongly aligned with BVCP policies, including direction on taking care of the existing assets we have, evaluating existing real estate assets on OSMP lands, and prioritizing acquisitions in Boulder Valley’s Rural Preservation Area (Fig. 1.5). The BVCP does not have specific guidance for the strategies showing medium or minimal alignment.

2. Does the master plan outline BVCP service standards and a plan to meet them in the future?

There are no BVCP service standards for open space and no national standards exist. In the absence of widely-accepted and relevant external standards, OSMP will rely on internal indicators developed through past system plans, using an integrated approach to reporting progress towards achieving Master Plan strategies. For example:

- We will evaluate and adjust our approach to preserve and restore important habitat blocks and corridors (EHR.1) as we continue assessing the health of our native grasslands and forests over time. Conservation targets and indicators have been established in OSMP’s Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan and Forest Ecology Management Plan.
- Similarly, staff asset tracking will help us understand how well we are doing to reduce the trail maintenance backlog (RRSE.2.) or youth surveys will inform OMSP on the success of how we connect youth to nature (CCEI.3). The OSMP Visitor Master Plan establishes is a framework for assessing visitor perceptions.
- Monitoring soil conditions in grasslands, farms and ranches will measure progress toward increasing soil health and resilience (ATT.2). OSMP’s Agricultural Resources Management Plan includes supporting metrics.

As staff track and communicate our status, we will also gather input from the community to determine the effectiveness of programs and projects that advance master plan strategies.

3. Are the capital needs and funded sources outlined in the master plan?

Master plans provide a bridge between the BVCP and the city’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The prioritization of strategies described above will guide the OSMP CIP requests. For example, the Master Plan identifies three funding scenarios and investment priorities: Constrained Funding (30% reduction in OSMP funding by 2020), Restored Funding and Full Funding. A summary of each scenario is below.
MAINTAIN THE SYSTEM: Constrained Funding (i.e., Fiscally Constrained)
Under scenario 1, with a $10 million annual budget reduction compared to 2018 funding levels, staff would initiate master plan implementation by emphasizing maintenance of existing lands, trails and programs over new initiatives and acquisitions. For example, reducing the trail maintenance backlog would be emphasized over adding new trail mileage. While new trail mileage may be added through existing approved plans under this scenario, less funding would be devoted to it. New or enhanced efforts that OSMP is unable to initiate early the ten-year planning horizon would be pursued later or as staff capacity and funding allow. OSMP’s work program would support implementation across all focus areas, with an emphasis on Ecosystem Health and Resilience and Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment.

In this fiscally constrained scenario, the overall level of service OSMP can provide may go down. For example, staff can accomplish fewer restoration and acquisition projects and less trail and facility maintenance under these financial constraints. This means that few strategies would be fully funded, and gradual progress would be made over time for most strategies. Conditions at some locations across the system may not improve or may even decline as projects and programs get deferred until more funding and resources become available.

IMPROVE THE SYSTEM: Restored Funding (i.e., Action Plan)
Under scenario 2, the restoration of some amount of sales tax revenues would bring funding closer to 2018 levels, allowing staff to maintain and improve (where possible) levels of service and scale up funding for master plan implementation efforts. For example, this funding would provide additional capacity to pursue more restoration and conservation projects, make additional progress toward reducing the trail maintenance backlog, and incorporate more forward-thinking approaches to responding to the climate crisis, improving soil health, as well as increasing youth engagement, inclusion and volunteers. OSMP’s work program would still support implementation across all focus areas, with an emphasis on Ecosystem Health and Resilience and Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment.

TRANSFORM THE SYSTEM: Full Funding (i.e., Vision Plan)
This scenario assumes OSMP revenues could support robust implementation of Master Plan strategies to the full extent the community envisions for the next 10 years. In addition, funding may also be generated through grants or other sources of funds. For example, strategy 1 under the Financial Sustainability focus area (FS.1: Stabilize Funding) captures staff intentions to diversify and stabilize revenue by seeking grants and other options. The aim in this scenario is to not only maintain and improve conditions but where possible transform them. All achievable work towards the Master Plan 10-year vision is completed, including proactive stewardship that deepens connections with nature and inspires a resilient future. Aggressive steps are taken to tackle the climate crisis and we manage increasing visitation to the best of our ability. OSMP’s work program would still support implementation across all focus areas, with an emphasis on Ecosystem Health and Resilience and Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT AND PROCESS
The Process Committee, including council members Brockett and Young and two OSMP members, worked to develop and implement an engagement process that piloted the citywide Engagement Strategic Framework.

Some highlights of the engagement process included:

- The System Overview Report to inform the public about all aspects of OSMP;
- More than 10,000 public comments;
- Seven community events and two drop-in listening sessions that attracted over 900 total attendees;
• Staff engaged with 1,400 people who are not typically heard from during engagement processes, including people of color, marginalized communities, people who live with disabilities and youth; and
• More than 1,300 individuals completed and returned a mailed statistically valid survey in spring 2019.

Each engagement window is described below:

1. Values – Hopes – Concerns
2. Approving Focus Areas
3. Outcomes and Strategies
4. Prioritizing Strategies
5. Draft Plan

First Engagement Window
From January through March 2018, staff kicked off the first engagement window by releasing the System Overview Report – a 200-page document describing current conditions and future trends. This approach was consistent with the ESF recommendation to begin with a foundation of information. Through an open house, an outdoor family-friendly concert, and direct engagement with underrepresented community groups, we sought to understand community values, hopes and concerns for the future of open space. Draft focus areas and values emerged from this community input, answering the question “What is it time to focus on now?”

Second Engagement Window
Confirmation of these high-level focus areas occurred in the second engagement window through an online questionnaire. City Council then approved five focus areas in July 2018.

Third Engagement Window
OSMP staff conducted a series of nine meetings in an iterative process that sought input from staff, the community and OSBT during the third engagement window to share focus area research and trends and to brainstorm preliminary outcomes and strategies for four of the five focus areas. The fifth focus area – financial sustainability – was covered in the subsequent engagement window.

Fourth Engagement Window
After a culmination of over a year’s worth of consensus-building, the Fourth Engagement Window focused on funding and prioritization across the first four focus areas. During this window, the community provided valuable input and guidance on which strategies the department should prioritize over the next decade to inform spending including the CIP. For the first time, all outcomes and strategies for the first four focus areas were shared together to support prioritization, along with draft outcomes and strategies to advance financial sustainability. Through a public workshop and micro-engagements, community members helped prioritize how their tax dollars for OSMP will be spent over the next decade. A statistically valid survey was mailed to 6,000
households in the Boulder area, and a companion version of the survey was also available online for the general public.

Fifth Engagement Window
With the goal of gaining City Council approval of the final OSMP master plan in September 2019, the fifth engagement window gathered **community feedback on the draft master plan**. This engagement window included a joint study session with OSBT and City Council to discuss the draft plan.

Outreach and public input have been a critical part of the planning process. The Open Space Board of Trustees has influenced and guided the planning process from the beginning and has provided critical insights and community perspectives in setting priorities and developing the master plan recommendations. OSBT will be asked to endorse the OSMP Master Plan at the July 31, 2019 meeting.

### IV. PLANNING BOARD ACTION

**STAFF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends two actions:

1. Recommendation to City Council for acceptance of the Open Space and Mountain Parks Master Plan; and


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**ATTACHMENTS:**

A. **BVCP Open Space and Mountain Parks Master Plan Summary**
The Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) Department preserves and protects the natural environment and land resources that characterize Boulder. The 2019 OSMP Master Plan, a product of meaningful and inclusive community discussion, helps focus our energy, funding and expertise on a clear vision for the future of Boulder's open space lands.

The plan describes five focus areas - or central management themes - and the related open space values we all share. It articulates the community aspirations and collective hopes as desired outcomes for the future of OSMP with general strategies to help achieve them. The five focus areas that organize the plan are:

1. Ecosystem Health and Resilience
2. Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment
3. Agriculture Today and Tomorrow
4. Community Connection, Education and Inclusion
5. Financial Sustainability