



## City of Boulder City Council

Mayor Suzanne Jones

Mayor Pro Tem Mary Young

Council Members: Matt Appelbaum, Aaron Brockett, Jan Burton,  
Liza Morzel, Andrew Shoemaker, Sam Weaver, Bob Yates

October 21, 2016

Dear Boulder Board & Commission Members:

At the end of each year, the Boulder City Council asks members of the city's boards and commissions to provide input on the next year's goals and objectives in order to help Council and the city staff prepare the annual work plan at the January city council retreat. In the past, some board and commission members have found the questions too narrowly focused. Because you are leaders in our community, and you are certainly aware of a spectrum of issues, this year we decided to broaden the questions, seeking input in any area where you have views.

Please see this year's questions below. You need not limit your responses to the area of expertise of your board/commission. Your entire board/commission may provide a single set of responses or, if you prefer, each member can provide his or her own responses (if the latter, please submit all of the member responses in a single packet). So that Council may have the benefit of your views before its pre-retreat Study Session on January 10, please deliver your responses to your board secretary no later than the close of business on Friday, December 16.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Lisa Morzel  
Bob Yates  
Council Retreat Committee

1. How do you think the City can improve its public engagement process? How would you recommend that Council engage with the community?
2. What do you think the City's top three priorities should be in 2017?
3. What do you think will be the City's three biggest challenges over the next five years, and how should we address them?



**CITY OF BOULDER**  
**Planning Board**

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December 28, 2012  
Mayor Appelbaum  
Members of the Boulder City Council  
P.O. Box 791  
Boulder, CO 80306

Dear Mayor Appelbaum and Members of Boulder City Council,

The Planning Board appreciates the opportunity to offer ideas to Council for its consideration for inclusion into the next year's work plan.

These past years' numerous and costly extreme weather events<sup>1</sup> have generated much vigorous discussion among the Board about Planning Board's role in combating climate change and the urgent need for greater measures toward reducing GHG emissions and increasing the sustainability of development. Consequently, our recommendations for work plan priorities are focused, with just five recommendations. Four of the five recommendations directly impact GHG emissions and climate change. One of these, **Recommendation D** (Area Plan Lite), has appeared in several prior years' letters to Council and has increasing relevance in light of its sustainability implications.

Planning Board's recommendations for inclusion in the work plan are as follows:

1 According to Munich RE, one of the world's major re-insurers, weather-related insurance losses in North America have nearly quintupled since 1980, due in part to global warming. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=zpsdVvEa8M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zpsdVvEa8M)

**Boulder Building Energy Codes, Energy and Water in Site Plan Review, and Density Bonuses**

"The biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in this nation and around the world is the buildings in which we live and work (almost 50% of all GHGs in the US) – not gas guzzling SUVs and other widely recognized energy consumers that we hear so much about," Edward Mazria told attendees at the 2006 Southeast regional meeting of the American Institute of Architects. "The architecture and design profession is the only profession that can slow this down." In Boulder, due to the coal intensity of the electrical energy supply, the amount of emissions attributable to buildings is over 70% according to the 2011 Climate Action Plan Progress Report. It seems clear that that Planning Board, as the primary arbiter of City planning policies, has an instrumental responsibility to reduce GHG emissions from the building sector. This is equally important as reducing emissions from the supply side.

**Recommendation A: Building Codes**

The periodic consideration of the adoption and/or augmentation of the International Energy Code into the Boulder building code is on the docket this year for the Planning Board and City Council. In order to reach many of the six Energy Future Goals adopted by Council, *it is imperative to push the envelope on building performance in the arenas of electricity consumption, heating and cooling, and transportation.* The Planning Board encourages Council take the energy performance code issue very seriously, and to set very ambitious goals for reduced energy consumption in new buildings in Boulder in order to advance the Energy Future goals. These codes will apply to all new buildings in Boulder,

whether receiving Site/Use review or not, and are a critical tool to reducing energy consumption and pollution in the community in the coming years.

**Recommendation B: Clarification of current site review criteria for energy use**

There is a significant difference between what the Site Review criteria appear to require in evaluating energy use in Site Review and what recent Planning Board practice has been as regards energy consumption, water consumption and quality, construction waste, heat islands, and renewable energy. BRC Section 9-2-14.h states: “Criteria for Review: No site review application shall be approved unless the approving agency finds that: (2) Site Design: Projects should [meet multiple goals]. In determining whether this subsection is met, the approving agency will consider the following factors:... (F) Building Design, Livability and Relationship to the Existing or Proposed Surrounding Area:... **(xi) Buildings minimize or mitigate energy use; support on-site renewable energy generation and/or energy management systems; construction wastes are minimized; the project mitigates urban heat island effects; and the project reasonably mitigates or minimizes water use and impacts on water quality.**”

Until now, Planning Board and planning staff practice has been to presume that the application of the existing building codes (to both by-right and site reviewed projects) satisfies the consideration of determining the fitness of the project with the site review criteria regarding energy, water, waste, and renewables. However, some of us have reservations about the current practice because this practice does not seem to reflect the written policy on this subject for the following reasons. Two key terms are used several times in the preceding code passage: ‘minimize’ and ‘mitigate’. To minimize energy or water use would be to drive it to zero (or even negative). To mitigate energy and water use requires that a use of energy/water<sup>2</sup> would be less than some reference level. One cannot mitigate unless there is a reference that forms the baseline below which there is a reduction. This portion of code inconveniently does not provide that reference level for either energy or water, so in order to evaluate a project against this criteria, Planning Board has to infer against which target levels there must be a reduction.

Planning Board requests that Council clarify this section of the BRC. As one example of a potential clarification, some of us have suggested that the baseline from which to mitigate water and energy use and maximize renewable energy be the absolute energy, water, heat island, and renewables performance of a by-right building built to code on the candidate site. As it stands, there is some disagreement and unclarity on how to interpret the evaluation of this factor in the criteria for Site Review. If the Council does not wish to strengthen or clarify this section of Code, the Planning Board will continue to use its best judgment on how to apply this important evaluation factor to projects in the Site Review process.

2 Water is used in most electric power production, so minimizing electricity use generally helps with minimizing water use.

**Recommendation C: Use impacts on overall site emissions and inclusionary housing goals**

Different building uses have different impacts on energy consumption and emissions. In particular, entirely commercial uses often impose increased impacts, including transportation and building energy and water consumption, relative to similarly sized residential or mixed uses. Often, increased site intensity can reduce the overall impacts per building user, but there can still be a significant difference in impacts on energy and water consumption between types of uses, even in the presence of increased allowable intensity on a site. In addition, the (relatively) recent intensity bonuses available to commercial projects seem to be providing an incentive to build projects that are completely commercial in the downtown core, rather than mixed-use or residential. This has the side effect of reducing both the construction of residential or mixed use projects, as well as reducing the funding for (or construction of) affordable housing units associated with downtown projects. The linkage fees from commercial projects are not nearly as great as the Cash-in-Lieu affordable housing payments (or the value of constructed affordable housing) would be from a similarly sized residential or mixed-use project. For both energy/emissions and affordable housing reasons, Planning Board requests that Council review the

current intensity bonus rules in light of the impacts of different uses on the City energy future and inclusionary housing goals.

**Recommendation D: Layered, incremental approach to area planning (Area Plan Lite)**

It is critical that the planning department have tools at their disposal to address needed changes in the Land Use code on an ongoing basis and in a time sensitive manner. Rather than viewing changes to an area as an effort with a clear beginning and a clear and comprehensive end, it is important that we view areas of the City, and therefore the Land Use code, as evolving entities.

To this end, we would like to revisit the concept of layered, incremental area planning or "area plan lite", the idea that it is possible to update or adjust an area's zoning without a multi-year effort. It is necessary to create a process with a shorter product development cycle, so that we can respond to changing needs more quickly. Without this, we will continue to see the Land Use Code fall further and further behind our current community vision, and see our zoning fall more and more out of step with what we understand to be the best planning practices that we should be implementing. There is simply not enough time to use a full area plan process on every part of the city that needs updating and keep up with the needed changes.

There are some planning changes that are quite drastic and need a good deal of community involvement. The layered, incremental approach can address changes that are not as far reaching and that the Planning Staff and Planning Board should be able to implement on a "quick-fix" basis with a basic level of public outreach. There might be intermediate steps as well that require a bit more vetting with the public, and these different processes can form the layered implementation.

Sustainable Streets and Centers is a good example of this need for a "lite" process. As currently conceived, it will take literally years of study, outreach, and process to even begin to make changes. If, however, we had a policy of a layered, incremental implementation, then we could attack the low hanging fruit immediately, such as the currently allowed large parking lots in front of new buildings. By creating a multi-tiered process and a willingness to enact base level changes without a time-consuming process, we will be nimbler, more responsive, and have a Land Use Code that is on the leading edge of our vision rather than constantly lagging behind.

Planning Board requests that Council include in the Planning Department's work plan, development of an initial framework(s) that can be applied to some key areas of concern. Currently, the areas we see as experiencing significant development or redevelopment activity are the 28<sup>th</sup> St., 30th St and Arapahoe (East) corridors and the Broadway and Mapleton hospital areas. With the expectation of imminent increased development activity after a four plus year lull, we believe this issue has only become more urgently in need of concerted planning attention. As the corridors such as 28<sup>th</sup> St. redevelop, the die will be cast for development patterns for the next several generations and all the attendant GHG emission and sustainability consequences. In the absence of a framework that reflects current City planning goals, development will (as 28<sup>th</sup> St redevelopment currently is) perpetuate the historic auto-centric pattern, delaying a more sustainable future; something we can ill-afford.

**Recommendation E: North Boulder Sub-community Plan**

We understand that staff is proposing work on the **North Boulder Sub-community Plan** in 2013. We support a revision to that plan in order to address the changed location of a potential grocery store, the Library's long term expansion plans, and the mix of affordable and market rate housing.

In conclusion, Boulder has displayed foresight and leadership in planning and sustainability but there is much more to do and the acceleration of extreme weather events in number, intensity and cost make planning an existential issue worthy of our greatest effort, not just for the effect on our city but as an example of what is possible. We look forward to working with Council on these matters in 2013.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Holicky', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bill Holicky, Chairperson

Mary Young, Vice-chairperson

Bryan Bowen

Aaron Brockett

Leonard May

Danica Powell

Sam Weaver



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January 3, 2014  
Mayor Appelbaum  
Members of the Boulder City Council  
P.O. Box 791  
Boulder, CO 80306

Re: Planning Board Recommendations for 2014 Priorities and Initiatives

Dear Mayor Appelbaum and Members of Boulder City Council,

The Planning Board appreciates the opportunity to submit this letter to Council regarding our recommendations for City priorities and initiatives in the upcoming year. With a Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan update beginning in a year, we ask the Council to begin thinking in advance, and allocate resources for staff to begin thinking in advance, about a more integrated planning process that both establishes a clearer long term vision for Boulder and a clearer path for achieving that vision.

**1. Addressing the Vision Gap between the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning**

Planning Board believes there is a gap that needs to be filled as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process between the current broad conceptual, yet vague, goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the detailed implementation tools such as Area Plans and zoning. When a development project is evaluated, we do not always understand its long term impact on key Comprehensive Plan goals such as: “protect[ing] the natural environment of the Boulder Valley while fostering a livable, vibrant and sustainable community” or “The unique community identity and sense of place”. The lack of intermediate plans and vision often means that the following types of important questions are not fully considered during development review:

- How does a project impact these and other goals at the neighborhood, area and citywide levels?
- How does a project or the aggregation of all new projects affect the jobs-housing balance, GHG emissions and sense of place?
- How will the city look 20 or 50 years into the future? Will the view shed be what we want?
- Will we still have a small town feel and is that even a long term goal?
- Will jobs and housing reach a more desirable balance and help achieve GHG emission reductions?
- Do we want to be more proactive about affecting the rate of population and employment growth relative to each other or just react to trends as they develop?

Our current development review process is usually more about making buildings rather than making places. A more integrated approach as discussed above is one part of enabling a shift to placemaking. *Placemaking should involve a meaningful dialogue with stakeholders and neighbors (business and*

*residential) if we are to be successful.* But Boulder also needs to have a community conversation about visual preference for the city form and consider changes to zoning so it has a greater form basis. We also need better data to understand our employee characteristics – ages, family profiles (single, married, with or without children), income, desired housing type or context (urban vs. suburban), reasons for living or not living in Boulder, to better guide land-use policies that directly impact housing and employment growth.

2014 is the right time to focus on these issues.

## **2. Currently Planned Initiatives**

Boulder has made good progress addressing related issues affecting the questions identified above during 2013 and is already prepared to address critical issues in 2014. The Planning Board offers its support and some thoughts on the following efforts.

### **a. Comprehensive Housing Strategy**

We encourage City Council to continue its work on the Comprehensive Housing Strategy in 2014. The City should pursue measures that allow us to create more types of housing as well as add more affordable housing. To that end, we recommend changing the Boulder Revised Code to remove some of the impediments to ADUs, OAU's (and betterment capture in zones where they are not now allowed), cooperative housing and micro-units.

### **b. North Boulder Subcommunity Plan Revision**

The North Boulder Subcommunity Plan revision has gotten off to a successful start in 2013. The City should continue the process in 2014. But, the Plan needs to be informed by data from the September floods. We need to strike a balance between waiting to know exactly how the flood maps will change and moving forward with the plan in a timely manner. Perhaps the Plan revisions can be based on preliminary flood data so that the process is not unduly delayed.

### **c. Resilience Planning**

The Planning Board applauds the City's efforts to focus on resilience in planning and operations in 2014, including its selection as one of the first 33 resilient cities. As the City undertakes this effort, we want to stress the importance of not overemphasizing the last disaster – flooding. While flood risks are critical and need to be part of the process, the City should also consider and prioritize a wide array of possible impacts that could challenge our resilience as a community, including wildfire, electric grid vulnerability, epidemics, cyberthreats, energy shocks, and other issues. In the immediate term, we believe it is important to continue efforts to address fire resiliency for existing homes and properties along the Wildland Urban Interface, a portion of the Wildland Fire Code that was not adopted in 2013.

### **d. Sustainable Streets and Centers; East Arapahoe Plan**

In previous years' Planning Board letters to Council, the Board has expressed a desire for "Area Plan Lite" to be part of the Work Plan to establish a general framework for certain high priority corridors and centers. The general idea was to develop a set of tools that have a much faster and cheaper product development cycle than the traditional Area Plan. This is an example of the needed planning in the gap between the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning code. Because of the time and resources involved with Area Planning (as we do it in Boulder), development is occurring and will occur in certain high-priority areas before the planning can be put in place. But planning is about being out in front of development, so this concept continues to be of critical importance if we want development and redevelopment of these areas over the next 50 years to be consistent with our goals. The areas we have previously expressed this concern about include (1) East Arapahoe; (2) East Pearl; (3) 30th St and 28th Street between Arapahoe

and Iris; (4) Boulder Community Hospital Broadway environs; and (5) Boulder Community Hospital Mapleton environs.

Fortunately, the Sustainable Streets and Centers initiative is evolving in a way that it will achieve the intent of “Area Plan Lite”. Continued development of the initiative and expansion of its application beyond the Pearl/30th Street pilot as soon as possible will allow these areas to redevelop in a manner consistent with general city goals and consistent with the integrated planning process we are promoting herein.

### **3. New Recommended Initiatives**

In addition to the integrated planning thinking and continuation of existing initiatives discussed above, we recommend two new initiatives which deserve attention.

#### **a. Site Use Impacts and Intensity Bonuses**

In last year’s letter to Council, PB proposed that Council address site-use impacts on overall site emissions and inclusionary housing goals (Recommendation C in the 2013 letter to Council). This continues to be an issue that would benefit from some conceptual refinement.

Specifically, after previous Councils created intensity bonuses (FAR and height increases) to promote more and higher density housing units in the downtown core, followed by extending those same bonuses to non-residential uses, a confused incentive program has resulted. The subsequent bonus extension to non-residential uses has had the effect of promoting exclusively non-residential developments over projects that include residential. That then reduces funding available for affordable housing as the linkage fees from commercial projects are substantially smaller than cash-in-lieu payments for similarly sized residential projects. Additionally, non-residential uses tend to have greater GHG emissions per site than residential uses.

The current circumstance with the incentives raises the question: “what is the vision”? How much housing and how much commercial space are sought in the core and what do we want the core to be like when built out to capacity according by current regulations? Related to this is betterment capture – is the City obtaining a benefit commensurate with the value it creates by granting increased development intensity or is that value disproportionately accruing to the benefit of property owners? If there are bonuses at all, should they be tied to attainment of specific and clearly defined City goal?

For energy/emissions, affordable housing and betterment capture reasons, Planning Board requests that Council re-examine the current development intensity bonus rules in light of the impacts of different uses on City goals.

#### **b. Energy Districts, Microgrids, Solar Gardens**

As part of the City’s Energy Future, resiliency and upcoming Comprehensive Plan update, we recommend that Council direct City Staff to consider the potential for integrating innovative energy concepts like energy districts (like Fort Zed in Fort Collins), microgrids, solar gardens, or combined heat and power into the City’s planning efforts. Current site review criteria for industrial subdivisions, mixed-use projects or residential subdivisions do not consider or encourage the potential for some of these innovations, which could help the City meet energy, resiliency and economic goals.

We look forward to working with you in 2014 to continue making Boulder a resilient and sustainable City.

For the Planning Board,

Aaron Brockett, Chair



**CITY OF BOULDER**  
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January 2, 2015  
Mayor Appelbaum  
Members of the Boulder City Council  
P.O. Box 791  
Boulder, CO 80306

Re: Planning Board Recommendations for 2015 Priorities and Initiatives

Dear Mayor Appelbaum and Members of Boulder City Council,

The Planning Board thanks you for the opportunity to share our priorities and concerns with you through our annual letter. While the Planning Board broadly supports the projects included in the 2015 Work Plan, we want to draw special focus to several areas of interest that we hope you will consider as you refine Council's priorities for the coming year. In this letter, we have arranged our remarks into the following areas: Community Engagement, Community Benefit, Site Review Criteria, Use, Housing, Growth, Design Excellence and Short Term Issues.

### **Community Engagement**

The Planning Board believes that the city's noticing procedures for land use and project development decisions should be improved and enhanced in some combination of the following ways:

1. All residents within the notification areas, including renters and tenants, should receive formal notices. This would be in addition to the present practice of notifying only property owners.
2. The size of the areas in which formal notice is required should be increased.
3. There should be enhanced and improved use of electronic media to provide project information to interested parties.
4. More detailed information on specific agenda items should be included in the newspaper public notices to improve public awareness and potential participation in Planning Board meetings.
5. The city should improve timely notification of property owners and residents materially affected by various city actions, such as proposed changes in floodplain mapping and area classifications.
6. There should be improved descriptions and information on project signage, with images if possible, and information on where to find a proposed site plan or other relevant information on the city website.

Additional effort should be devoted to providing information to neighborhoods, promoting neighborhood engagement and soliciting coherent and representative response and comment from project-affected neighborhoods, perhaps in coordination with the new city neighborhood liaison staff position. The Planning Board hopes to have regular and frequent contact with the new city neighborhood liaison.

At the pre-application stage, key city populations should be identified to the applicant to ensure their involvement.

Project and proposal-related neighborhood meetings should have a higher level of staff involvement to ensure the provision of objective information, background, and staff and Planning Board roles.

Planning Board recommends that neighborhoods be engaged in meaningful ways as part of the BVCP update. The Board supports including a neighborhood section in the updated document that identifies

neighborhoods, describes their current character, strengths and vulnerabilities (from a resilience standpoint), and expected large scale changes, if any.

## **Community Benefit**

Perhaps the greatest source of debate among Planning Board members is whether height and area increases should require specified public benefits in order to be approved.

Three members believe increased height and area help achieve wider city goals such walkable neighborhoods, improved urban form, effective transit, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, etc., and therefore no additional specific public benefits should be required for approvals for projects pursuing these desirable increases. For these members, the critical question is whether the site review criteria are sufficiently clear to meet city objectives.

Four members, however, assert that the hoped-for benefits of height and area increases (affordability, walkability, furthering our efforts to mitigate climate change, etc.) are not being achieved and therefore need to be clearly articulated in the site review criteria. Examples of public benefits and how they could be included in the criteria are illustrated in **Appendix A**.

## **Site Review Criteria**

The Planning Board believes that the site review criteria need updating to provide better results and more clarity and predictability, particularly with respect to height and FAR modifications. Any site review criteria changes should mirror the resolution and direction of the community benefit discussion above. Should Council decide not to modify the site review criteria to require specific public benefits, then clear pathways to increases need to be established, and clarification of how the by-right height and modifications up to 55 feet are to be applied and to what extent will be necessary.

Other recommended site review improvements include:

1. When serving specific city goals, Uses should become part of site review criteria to ensure that appealing offerings made by applicants are retained in projects and that Uses that activate streets are provided to the degree proposed.
2. Clarify “Minimize and Mitigate” energy use site review criteria (9.2.h.2.F.xi specifically *but also other similar terminology elsewhere in site review criteria*).
3. Explicitly require quality design rather than it being indirectly referred to in the BVCP and guidelines.
4. Enable Planning Board call-up for minor modifications.
5. Consider revising the site review thresholds—reduce property size threshold and tighten other triggers to get more projects into site review if it is generally agreed that site review results in better outcomes. Or, if by-right developments can accomplish city goals more effectively by tuning/clarifying the land use code then it’s possible that fewer projects need to be brought through the discretionary review processes. The underlying question is whether discretionary reviews like site review, use review, and BDAB review are yielding better results on balance than by-right projects are achieving.

## **Use Tables**

The Use tables should be comprehensively reviewed to make sure that they reflect city goals. They may need tightening in some areas—for example, we may want to change what uses are allowed in the BC zones to make sure they support the intent of the zoning district. In other areas they may need loosening—for example, we may want to allow more uses in the MU-1 and MU-2 zones so that they can support more neighborhood services.

We should also consider requiring certain uses in certain zones. For example, we may want to require retail uses on the ground floor in critical locations in the MU, BMS and DT zones. If they are developed as 100% residential, we lose the ability to have local services that support 15-minute neighborhoods. This is part of the reason why the Hill moratorium was necessary and has been a problem along Broadway north of Violet.

## **Housing**

The Board also recommends that the Council ensure that Housing Boulder remain a high priority during 2015. The issues related to housing affordability remain critical for the city and will require considerable staff time and resources, along with engagement from the community, Council and the Board. As the Council has seen during the year, the issues are complex and often contentious, requiring both a city-wide view and recognition that many of the opportunities and constraints are unique from neighborhood to neighborhood. As this process unfolds, the Board hopes that particular attention is paid to the recommendations by the Landmarks Board to align housing and preservation goals through incentives for the preservation of smaller, historic housing units and structures. Similarly, the Board encourages special focus on the goal of inclusion of affordable housing on site as part of community benefit for developments.

## **Growth Questions**

As regularly happens, growth is becoming a hot topic in some portions of the public eye right now, largely spurred by the recent completion of new developments in high visibility areas. Resolving growth questions is integral to issues like affordable housing, transportation, urban form, sustainability, and economics. As such, Planning Board recognizes growth as a BVCP-level issue that should be reviewed through that upcoming process with appropriate public engagement. Our key suggestions include:

1. Use visioning as a tool to help the public, the city, and the applicants for various review processes understand what sort of character we ought to expect to see in different distinct areas of town under a variety of development assumptions. These tools should focus on the character of the public realm and incorporate both streetscapes and buildings, as the ones being proposed for the East Arapahoe effort. It would also help inform the land use code and the relevant design standards.
2. Revisit residential growth management rules to understand if they are achieving what we want.
3. Compile good numbers on commercial growth so we can see if we're going in the right direction. This can be informed by efforts in item 1.
4. Update the Impact Fee Study to make sure that the current fees are appropriate.

## **Design Excellence**

Planning Board supports the design excellence initiative and encourages City Council to commit time and resources to it. We are hopeful that the outcome of the initiative will be tangible guidance, whether it is city-wide design guidelines or standards, a pattern book, form-based code, or revisions to the site review criteria, which drive us toward projects that achieve city goals while still being authentic to Boulder and embraced by the community. As part of this initiative, it would also be helpful to adopt a feedback loop that looks at successes and failures of recently completed projects, both by-right and discretionary. We also appreciate the input that BDAB has provided on projects and would like to clarify and improve the process of working on design with them.

## **Important Short Term Issues**

### **East Arapahoe Medical Offices**

The recent move of more functions to the Foothills Boulder Community Hospital has highlighted use table issues and other planning problems in the vicinity of the new location. Currently, there is inadequate close-by office space for doctors and other medical offices and that is creating difficulties for both medical professionals and patients, as well as undermining the city's objectives of reducing unnecessary car trips and enhancing the mobility of the elderly and other sensitive populations. While there is long-term potential, the hospital environs do not provide the walkable mix of jobs, services, retail and housing available at the original Broadway site. The Board recommends that the city consider, as soon as possible, short term use table and other changes to address the current imbalance between demand for, and supply of, space within walking distance of the hospital in which medical uses are allowed. In the medium and long-term, as part of the East Arapahoe planning process, the Board recommends that the city work to recreate and improve on the walkable and vibrant neighborhood that existed in the vicinity of the old Broadway medical campus.

## **Mapleton and Broadway Hospital Areas**

The Board supports planning efforts to get ahead of redevelopment applications at the two former hospital sites and their environs as more medical practices and functions move to the east Arapahoe location.

## **Linkage Fees**

Planning Board encourages City Council to pursue city-wide implementation of non-residential linkage fees for affordable housing.

## **MU-1 Zoning Changes**

The MU-1 zone was created and adopted as part of the North Boulder Sub-Community Plan specifically for the Holiday Neighborhood area. The zone has not been evaluated since it was created and several changes have been suggested that would make for a better urban design to benefit the community.

1. Allowed uses: Add (small, 2000 to 2500 sf) retail to the allowed by-right uses. Current by-right uses are overly restrictive and in fact would not allow artists to sell from their studios. Add small offices by right. Add outdoor entertainment use in public spaces—the zone currently prohibits outdoor music or performance events that can enliven public spaces.
2. Ground floor uses and FAR: In many cases the goal of providing a 50% split between residential and commercial uses has led to placing residential uses on the ground floor along busy streets. The ground floor is better for uses that create pedestrian interest and add vitality to the street. In some cases, the FAR of .6 - 1, as well as the height measurement, have created a situation where a second floor (more appropriate place for residential along busy streets) was not allowed. These constraints should be re-examined. An FAR of 1 to 1 should be considered.

## **Support Municipalization**

Planning Board is enthusiastic about playing an active role in aligning city planning to best take advantage of the opportunities from conversion to a municipal utility. Such support could come in the form of changes to zoning parameters, building codes, and site review criteria to remove barriers and/or introduce incentives to distributed energy generation, shared metering systems, solar gardens, neighborhood geothermal, and other innovations yet unexplored.

Very truly yours,

Aaron Brockett  
Chair, City of Boulder Planning Board

On behalf of the board:  
Bryan Bowen, Vice-Chair  
John Gerstle  
Crystal Gray  
Leonard May  
Liz Payton  
John Putnam

## Appendix A

1. The public benefits list would require some level of prioritization or weighting of benefits to determine what is appropriate to approve certain addition height and area increases.
2. Explore if a certain number of benefits must be provided from a minimum number of different categories *or if a point system or a hybrid of both are appropriate.*
3. Establish where geographically and to what extent of building footprint projects get to be higher or greater area than the underlying zoning limits and are allowed to extend to 55' or maximum potential area increases. Within this framework, what public benefits must be achieved to allow the increases

<b>Public benefits beyond what is already required to achieve greater intensity than by-right</b>			
Category	Public Benefit	Benefit Provision Factor	Bonus/Modification
Affordable housing	More affordable housing	g%	
	More affordable housing on site	h%	
	More market rate affordable	i%	
	More family oriented affordable	j%	
	For Non-residential - More impact fee for affordable housing.	k%	
	More Diversity of Housing: Coops and Cohousing	l%	
Affordable Business	Incubator space for artists and startups		
	Non-profit office space		
	Preserve service industrial and low cost business space		
Urban design	Uses - Street level activation occupancy	k%	
	Uses – exceptional and desired uses		
	Parks and urban space		
	Alt mode connections not otherwise required		
Architectural Merit	Architectural merit		
	Embedded mechanical		
Public Art	Public Art		
Sustainability	Net zero		
	Embodied Energy (Adaptive reuse of existing buildings)		
	TDM with teeth		
	LEED Gold, Platinum		
Historic Preservation	Landmark and adaptively reuse historic building		

## Appendix A

1. The public benefits list would require some level of prioritization or weighting of benefits to determine what is appropriate to approve certain addition height and area increases.
2. Explore if a certain number of benefits must be provided from a minimum number of different categories *or if a point system or a hybrid of both are appropriate.*
3. Establish where geographically and to what extent of building footprint projects get to be higher or greater area than the underlying zoning limits and are allowed to extend to 55' or maximum potential area increases. Within this framework, what public benefits must be achieved to allow the increases

<b>Public benefits beyond what is already required to achieve greater intensity than by-right</b>			
Category	Public Benefit	Benefit Provision Factor	Bonus/Modification
Affordable housing	More affordable housing	g%	
	More affordable housing on site	h%	
	More market rate affordable	i%	
	More family oriented affordable	j%	
	For Non-residential - More impact fee for affordable housing.	k%	
	More Diversity of Housing: Coops and Cohousing	l%	
Affordable Business	Incubator space for artists and startups		
	Non-profit office space		
	Preserve service industrial and low cost business space		
Urban design	Uses - Street level activation occupancy	k%	
	Uses – exceptional and desired uses		
	Parks and urban space		
	Alt mode connections not otherwise required		
Architectural Merit	Architectural merit		
	Embedded mechanical		
Public Art	Public Art		
Sustainability	Net zero		
	Embodied Energy (Adaptive reuse of existing buildings)		
	TDM with teeth		
	LEED Gold, Platinum		
Historic Preservation	Landmark and adaptively reuse historic building		



**CITY OF BOULDER**  
**Planning Board**

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December 21, 2015

Dear Mayor Jones and Members of Boulder City Council:

The Planning Board thanks you for this annual opportunity to share our priorities and concerns with you. We also want to thank you for carefully considering our letter from last year; we were pleased to see that many of the issues identified in last year's letter have been addressed in the 2015 Work Plan or are on the 2016 Work Plan. Looking ahead to the 2016 Work Plan, we broadly support the approach that has been mapped out by City Council and Staff. However, we also offer the following comments regarding the City's priorities and planning needs.

**1. Overall Work Plan and Community Engagement**

As an overarching consideration, much has been accomplished during 2015, but at the cost of considerable effort by Staff, Council, the boards and commissions, and the public. It is hard to sustain this level of effort and maintain high-quality products and process. As Council considers the Work Plan and priorities for next year, we encourage Council to ensure that the City -- Council, Planning Board and Staff -- engages in only so many things as the City can do very well. It can be hard to get the focus, community engagement and commitment we need if too many things are happening simultaneously. At the same time, the City should make sure there is some reserve of energy and time to allow nimble response to new developments, data, and opportunities to enhance the resilience, inclusiveness, quality of life and strength of the community.

This will be both a challenge and critical need, with vital efforts such as the Comprehensive Plan and Housing Boulder underway, and other initiatives like the Form-Based Code, AMPS and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines nearing completion.

As we noted in our letter from last year, the City needs to ensure that the public is being fully and consistently engaged during this process. The City has made good progress over the last year in improving notice and outreach. However, the City should keep working to improve involvement and process, including the approaches we identified in last year's letter (attached).

**2. Middle- and Affordable-Housing; Housing Boulder**

Across the nation, rapidly increasing prices and rents continue to make housing less affordable for middle- and lower-income families and residents. Boulder is a prime example. This has been powerfully reinforced by the results of the recent community planning survey, our recent joint meeting regarding the Comprehensive Plan, and feedback from the community during Board meetings, open houses and conversations around town. Accordingly, we expect that Housing Boulder and housing for the middle should be the top priority for 2016. Part of that effort should include education and outreach, as well as

consideration of the tradeoffs and barriers to providing middle-income housing. The relentless market and demographic pressures make speed critical, because our middle is eroding.

This housing need must be addressed throughout the planning process, from the Comprehensive Plan to the City's codes, and to individual decisions. Among other things, we recommend that the following be addressed:

- a. Evaluate all regulatory and incentive models, including the City's inclusionary housing program, to improve our ability to integrate affordable housing on site in every development. The Board is concerned that the payment in lieu requirements may be pushing affordable housing out to the periphery;
- b. Implement measures to protect existing affordable housing stock, such as the Landmarks Board's proposal to support more subdivision flexibility that might protect existing and historic small dwelling units, and steps to support public or resident ownership of mobile home parks and apartments;
- c. Implement new flexibility and fixes for the ADU ordinance, and explore how to improve opportunities for OAU's;
- d. Tackle the co-operative housing ordinance;
- e. Implement even stronger and more firm requirements for affordable housing in annexations;
- f. Broaden our inclusionary housing program to address housing at higher levels of AMI (e.g., 150% AMI) and increasing the goal of permanently affordable housing from the current 10%.
- g. Consider conversion of zoning from commercial to residential or mixed use in Comprehensive Plan, but also foster neighborhood businesses that are essential for 15-minute neighborhoods.

### **3. Community Benefit and Site Review Criteria**

As discussed in our letter from last year and supported by the recent community survey, there is a critical need to address and define the role that community benefit should play in site review, as well as to resolve deficiencies in the existing Title 9 site review criteria.

We are glad that these issues are currently included in the proposed Work Plan and are scheduled to happen after completion of the Form-Based Code for Boulder Junction. We strongly recommend that this effort remain a priority in the Work Plan for 2016, because the existing criteria are often not working well to meet City goals and community expectations. As we discussed in last year's letter, the site review criteria need revisions to better address, among other things: (1) the role that community benefit should play in discretionary approvals such as height and FAR increases; (2) the definition of what should qualify as community benefit; (3) the requirement for a diversity and affordability of housing types; (4) explicitly require heightened design excellence; and (5) the currently ambiguous implementation of the energy use minimization/renewable maximization requirements.

### **4. Area, Neighborhood and Other Focused Plans**

The Planning Board continues to believe that the City would benefit from more extensive and better planning in focused areas larger than a particular site, but smaller than the Comprehensive Plan (e.g., area planning and neighborhood planning). We strongly support the inclusion of this type of planning as one of the focus areas in the Comprehensive Plan and encourage steps to further develop these plans. In addition, the Planning Board recommends the following:

- a. As discussed at the December 15, 2015, Joint City Council/Planning Board meeting, it will be important to determine the appropriate scope of these plans. The currently-defined “Subcommunities” are not well suited for this purpose, because of the wide range of typologies, geography, transportation elements, and other factors in areas such as Central Boulder, South Boulder or Southwest Boulder.
- b. Boulder Junction remains a critical place for focus in 2015, with the completion of the Form-Based Code and consideration of the City’s approach to the Pollard Motors site. The City should carefully consider how the approved development in Boulder Junction lines up with the objectives of the Transit Village Area Plan (TVAP), especially with regard to the balance between residential and other uses, types of residential development, etc. The decision regarding how to proceed with the Pollard Motors site will have the largest remaining effect on what the City achieves in the Boulder Junction Phase I development, including the extent of affordable housing.
- c. The Broadway Corridor is an area that badly needs focused planning and vision. Broadway is seeing pressure for change (as seen in recent proposals from 385 Broadway to the north end of the City), but lacks a coherent vision as a corridor (or sub-corridors). Broadway Corridor Planning should include or closely coordinate with planning for the Boulder Community Hospital site, University Hill, Downtown (see below) and the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan.
- d. Planning Board also supports a Downtown plan to inform and create a vision for urban design, urban form, the public realm, and project review.

## **5. Zoning and Other Code Revisions**

The Zoning Code is overdue for revisions in areas that are outdated or operating suboptimally. In the last five years, only two modest changes to the Zoning Code have been made. As you know, Staff maintains a list of issues (attached to this letter) in the Zoning Code that need attention or revision. These issues often arise in site-level reviews, reflecting mismatches between the City’s current vision or direction versus the historic language of the Code. Code changes could better achieve vibrant pedestrian experiences, City objectives for 15-minute neighborhoods, effective mixed-use, design excellence, climate goals, and quality of life. Examples that we believe the City should address in the near future are:

- a. Rewrite the sign code, which was also recommended by the urban design guidelines taskforce
- b. Updates to the Use Tables to improve streetscape (such as preventing overuse of bank office space on ground floor and/or requiring retail in some locations), and fix mixed use designations to address recurring uses that would improve mixed-use neighborhoods
- c. Measures to address barriers to outdoor enclosed long term bike parking and upgraded transit stops
- d. Measures to address barriers to more active use of roof-top open space.
- e. Measures to require readiness for future photovoltaic systems and electric vehicles

## **6. Ensuring Resilience**

City efforts to promote residence should have a very high priority in the Work Plan in light of the need to protect residents from natural and other hazards. Because new floods, fires and other hazards are matters of “when” and not “if”, we need to make sure that these issues are addressed early and thoroughly. This should include:

- Efforts to ensure the adequacy of floodplain definition and maps used for planning decisions, incorporating the lessons from the 2013 floods and ensuring the best information regarding the effects of climate change
- Addressing flood mitigation plans for South Boulder Creek and CU South in the Comprehensive Plan
- Incorporating resiliency into neighborhood-level planning and neighborhoods into resiliency planning
- Consideration of critical facilities (including schools, senior facilities, and daycare) requirements in the wildland-urban interface (WUI)
- Consideration of building, landscape and other requirements in the WUI
- Consideration of food security and local production

## **7. Incorporating Climate Change into City Planning**

As the City considers Comprehensive Plan, Site Review Criteria, building and energy code, and other planning changes, it should fully integrate the City's Climate Commitment. The Planning Board believes that the City should make sure that the City's planning policies and requirements work consistently to contribute towards the glide path needed to accomplish the 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This will require emissions reductions from all sectors of the City, including new construction, existing residential (owned and rental), and commercial, utilities, and transportation.

As part of this effort, the Planning Board supports the ongoing development of building and energy codes that contribute to the necessary emission reductions needed to meet our climate goals. This development should shift from relying on a percentage improvement beyond code to an energy use intensity or some other performance or energy usage cap. In addition, the Planning Board encourages efforts to make it more viable to have energy related innovation such as energy districts, microgrids, and solar gardens. This should include requirements, incentives, codes and other mechanisms that can accelerate development of these next-generation energy innovations and pursue greenhouse gas reductions to the extent possible with or without municipalization of electric utility services in Boulder.

Very truly yours,

Bryan Bowen  
Chair, City of Boulder Planning Board

On behalf of the board:

Liz Payton, Vice-Chair  
John Gerstle  
Crystal Gray

Leonard May  
John Putnam