



# BOULDER VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ASSESSMENT

March 2015



<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Project Description.....	1
Project Process.....	1
Organization of this Analysis.....	2
Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Overview.....	2
Summary of Preliminary Findings .....	6
<b>Analysis of Current Plan and Recommendations for Improvement .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Introduction .....	7
Elements of “Cutting-Edge” Plans.....	7
Key Themes and Areas for Improvement .....	9
<b>Best Practices .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Introduction .....	24
Urban Form Best Practices.....	24
Outcomes and Metrics Best Practices .....	36
Resilience Best Practices.....	37
Action Plans Best Practices .....	39
<b>Work Plan and Community Engagement Recommendations .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Introduction .....	42
Work Plan Recommendations .....	43
Recommendations for Public Outreach.....	44
<b>Recommended Plan Update Structure .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Outline, Based on Current Structure .....	47
Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Outline, Based on Sustainability Framework .....	50

# INTRODUCTION

---

## Project Description

---

The City of Boulder retained Clarion Associates and David Godschalk, national planning consultants, to complete an assessment of the 2010 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) in anticipation of its five-year plan update. The intent was to provide a third party review of the plan identifying strengths and weaknesses of the document, and offering suggestions for improvement based on national best practices and community-identified concerns. It will set the foundation for the plan update commencing in 2015, which planning staff largely will conduct in-house.

---

## Project Process

---

The plan assessment project consisted of three primary tasks as follows.

### Task 1: Preliminary Assessment

To begin the project, the consultants met with city and county staff from multiple departments over the course of several days, and reviewed background materials. Consultants and city staff also met with boards and commissions to get their input. Consultants then reviewed the plan document and prepared a set of preliminary observations. These served as the basis for study sessions with city and county leadership during Task 2.

### Task 2: Review Preliminary Findings

The consultants met with city and county leadership to review and discuss their preliminary findings. Meetings included a study session with the Boulder Planning Board; a joint study session of the Planning Board and City Council; and a joint study session with the County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. Participants at the meetings discussed a wide variety of issues and concerns for Boulder and their relationship to the 2015 plan update.

### Task 3: Preliminary and Final Report

During the final phase of this project, the consultants refined their findings and recommendations for proceeding with the 2015 plan update. The result is this analysis, which includes the following:

- Key Themes – analysis of current plan and recommendations for improvement
- Summary of Best Practices related to BVCP update issues
- Work plan recommendations
- Recommended structure for updated plan

---

## Organization of this Analysis

---

This analysis is organized in five parts plus an appendix:

**Introduction** – describes the plan analysis effort and provides general background on the history and successes and strengths of the plan.

**Key Themes** – provides general background on elements of “cutting-edge” plans, and describes seven key themes identified during the plan analysis that guide the recommendations for the 2015 plan update process.

**Best Practices** – includes a set of “best practices” examples to help inform the plan update process.

**Work Plan Recommendations** – includes a recommended sequence of steps for the plan update, including phasing of tasks in 2015 and 2016, as well as ideas for community engagement.

**Recommended Structure for Plan Update** – includes recommendations for a revised structure for the plan, to incorporate the recommendations of this analysis.

Included in the appendix are outline examples of a revised BVCP based on the recommendations contained in this report. Also available under separate cover are summaries of issues identified during consultant/staff interviews, and a summary of study sessions with city and county elected and appointed officials.

---

## Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Overview<sup>1</sup>

---

### Early Planning Efforts

Boulder has long valued its surroundings at the base of the Front Range foothills. After examining the city for the Boulder Civic Improvement Association, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. recommended in 1910 that the foothills of the city be preserved in their natural state. Boulder's first urban service boundary, the "Blue Line," was established in 1959 as a citizen-initiated City Charter amendment. The purpose of the Blue Line is to protect the foothills from development which was considered imminent and extremely detrimental to the natural beauty of Boulder. It ensured that city water service could not be used to further urban development up into the foothills by prohibiting the supply of county water to areas lying above a certain elevation. Effectively, this line prevented the city from annexing or serving the land west of its municipal limits.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: this section is based on “Growth Management in Boulder, Colorado: a Case Study”, prepared by J.Raismes, H. Hoyt, P.Pollock, J. Gordon, And D. Gehr, 1999

Once the city had adopted the Blue Line as an urban growth boundary along its western side, it began planning for its utility capacity to serve new growth. The city's primary planning document was called the "Guide for Growth," adopted in January, 1958. It consisted of a land use and circulation map, a summary of basic studies, plans for circulation, land use, schools, recreation, central district and utilities, and action programs.

Other early planning documents included "Boulder's Fringe Area Objectives" (1964) and "The Service Area Concept: A Program for Boulder's Planned Development" (1965), often referred to as "The Spokes of the Wheel." The assumption of both of these plans was to guide growth in the fringe areas, to prevent disorderly sprawl, through contracts for water and sewer service outside of the city's boundaries.

### **Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan – a New Beginning City/County Cooperative Planning**

The adoption of the 1970 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan was important in that it set the stage for city and county cooperation and introduced the concept of staged urban growth in the Boulder Valley. The plan was primarily a land use and service area map which also defined future open spaces around the city. It largely placed the burden on the city to implement the plan through annexation and utility service policies, since the current plan was first adopted in 1977. Since then, six major updates have been completed: 1982, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010.

With the adoption of the 1977 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, the city changed its service area concept to one that is based on staged development. It divided Boulder Valley into three service areas:

- Area I, land within existing city limits, which were receiving all municipal services;
- Area II, land eligible for annexation within the next fifteen years; and
- Area III, land not planned for urban development within the fifteen year planning period.

Also adopted was a land use map that specifically defined the type and intensity of land use. The county agreed to zone the unincorporated areas in a manner that was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Ultimately, in 1984, county staff brought forward a proposal to implement the comprehensive plan's recommendations through downzoning most of the unincorporated area of the county. Much of the county had over the years been zoned to various residential and commercial districts, and most of this rezoning had been done on a speculative basis, resulting in large areas zoned for urban uses and densities, but only scattered, and minimal actual development. The county's rezoning of 25,340 acres in 1985 and 1986 was a bold step in implementing the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, and is one of the major factors for its success. Both the city and the county have lived with a stable Comprehensive Plan framework since 1977, with periodic updates approximately every five years. The most recent update was in 2010.

### **Successes and Strengths of the Plan**

By most measures, Boulder's growth management strategy clearly has been successful. It has helped preserve important elements of the natural environment. It has focused community attention on the

relationship between development and the infrastructure necessary to support that development. The sense that both the valley's natural beauty and its urban form may be protected over time has contributed to the desirability of the city as a place in which to live and work.

Unlike many cities that sprawled into the countryside, Boulder has created a sharp edge between urban and rural development. The definition of areas where services are provided allows a direct link between land use planning and infrastructure planning. The urban service areas also help to focus investment on redevelopment within the city. Through redevelopment of underutilized areas and infill development, the city has been able to capitalize on its existing public investments in infrastructure, and has transformed many of its corridors and centers into vibrant, urban places.

The city's coordination of planning efforts with the county is the bedrock foundation upon which all of these planning efforts have been implemented. The city and county have maintained relations that led to cooperative planning efforts from the days of the Boulder Regional Planning Commission in the early 1950's to today. City and county cooperation has prevented leapfrog development patterns in the Boulder Valley and other problems that occur when governments compete with each other rather than cooperate. City and county cooperation also set the stage for the highly successful Open Space Program that to date has preserved more than 70 square miles of city open space land, with an additional 150 square miles administered by the county. The result has been the preservation of two-thirds of the Boulder Valley.

While Boulder has been successful in preserving a ring of open space around its borders and limiting outward sprawl, many working people now find it challenging to live within the city due to the high cost of housing. Infill and redevelopment opportunities within which to retain some demographic balance are limited, therefore the city faces the challenge of making sure that the city's planning does not lead to social elitism and other unintended changes in the quality of life and character in Boulder, due to high costs of housing and other factors such as high levels of workforce in-commuting. The city has continuously revisited the question of balance between housing and jobs over the years, and has made adjustments to the BVCP land use plan in response. However, the dynamic between places to live and work is now a regional issue, as are transportation challenges, and Boulder will need to continue to engage with other communities as well as regional partners on this topic.

### **Current Status and Policy Directions**

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan provides a general statement of the community's desires for future development and preservation of the Boulder Valley, and is largely a policy document. The principle of sustainability drives the overall framework of the plan. The sustainability framework contained in the current plan is primarily based on the Triple Bottom Line: environmental sustainability (energy, climate, agriculture and food, and natural environment); economic sustainability (economy and transportation); and social sustainability (housing and community well-being). More recently, City Council has adopted a comprehensive sustainability framework that is based on seven broad categories:

1. Safe Community
2. Healthy and Socially Thriving Community
3. Livable Community
4. Accessible and Connected Community
5. Environmentally Sustainable Community
6. Economically Vital Community
7. Good Governance

The core components of the plan are:

**Policies:** The bulk of the plan contains policies that guide decisions about growth, development, preservation, environmental protection, economic development, affordable housing, culture and the arts, urban design, neighborhood character and transportation. The policies also inform decisions about the manner in which services are provided such as police, fire, emergency medical services, water utilities, flood control and human services.

**Amendment Procedures:** This section of the plan describes the procedures for various types of amendments to the plan, including five-year updates.

**Land Use Map Description:** The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Area I, II, III maps define the desired land use pattern for the Boulder Valley regarding location, type and intensity of development.

**Implementation:** This section describes the various master plans, subarea and community plans that provide a more detailed framework for implementation of the plan.

**Referral Process:** Establishes the referral process for land use and public improvement activities.

**Urban Services Criteria and Standards:** Describes the urban service criteria and standards that are used to determine adequacy of services for land use and public improvement activities in Area II as well as for annexation.

The most recent update to the plan, completed in 2010, focused on three areas:

1. Sustainability policy changes throughout the document, with a particular focus on urban form/community design;
2. Land Use and Area I, II, and III map changes, particularly the consolidation of Area IIA and IIB designations; and
3. Process changes for amendments to the Area III Planning Reserve; these were ultimately not approved by the County Planning Commission, thus these changes were not included in the 2010 update.

---

## Summary of Preliminary Findings

---

Overall, the plan contains a number of strengths that serve as a positive foundation for the update. These include:

- A solid foundation in growth management and land conservation, with a track record of success that is widely supported by the community;
- A long-term, successful track record of cooperation between the city and county in planning and implementation;
- A compact development pattern with policy support for diverse housing types;
- A comprehensive set of master plans, subarea plans, and other detailed documents that help implement the BVCP;
- Regular updates to the plan (five years) to keep it current and relevant;
- A multi-modal transportation network that is well on its way towards implementation; and
- A wide range of topics related to sustainability and other contemporary issues to build on for the update.

In addition to these strengths, we have identified a number of key themes for improvement to be considered during the upcoming update process. These include the following:

- Include 21st century challenges and opportunities in the update, such as climate mitigation and adaptation, planning for energy needs in the future, and others;
- Present the vision in a more compelling way;
- Expand opportunities for community engagement to include diverse perspectives, and provide multiple ways for the community to engage;
- Consider including outcomes and metrics to help track progress towards reaching the community's goals;
- Make the desired urban form of the city clearer, and illustrate it so that all can understand it;
- Strengthen linkages to implementation tools and actions;
- Clarify policies in key areas; and
- Integrate resilience throughout the plan during the update process.

Each of these themes is discussed in more detail in the next section of this report.

# ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

---

## Introduction

---

The following observations from the consultant team are based on our assessment of the plan, interviews with board members and city staff, and observing other community discussions regarding planning policy. They are based on the personal experience and national research of the authors about best practices related to effective and cutting-edge comprehensive plans. Our preliminary observations were reviewed in study sessions with city and county planning commission members and appointed officials, and our recommendations below reflect the input and discussions from these study sessions.

---

## Elements of “Cutting-Edge” Plans

---

Based on our experience with plans that have been prepared in recent years, we believe that cutting-edge, successful plans should include the following:

**Compelling Vision:** include a clear and compelling vision for the future of the community that is easy to identify and describe.

**Strong Rationale for Plan Direction and Policies:** include strong, clear rationale for recommended policies and actions. Elected officials and citizens must understand why a particular course of action is needed or desired if they are going to support its implementation.

**Visually-Oriented and User-Friendly:** use state-of-the-art graphics and images as much as possible to depict planning concepts. Maps should be legible and useful, conveying desired outcomes, not just land use categories.

**Contemporary Planning Issues and Opportunities:** advance best practices in the planning and development fields for contemporary issues such as resilience and sustainability, neighborhood design and mixed-use development, partnerships and coordination, and social equity. It is also important that plans incorporate such topics in compelling and meaningful ways.

**Integrated Approach:** serve to tie together other plans in the community.

**Clear-Cut Implementation Strategies:** include a clear set of actions and strategies to implement the plan. In many instances, elements of plan implementation can be carried out concurrent with the planning process, setting the stage for action and demonstrating early progress towards plan goals.

**Outcome-Focused and Include Measures for Progress:** set clear, desired outcomes and include mechanisms for tracking progress.



Cutting-edge plans for communities integrate multiple aspects of a community's sustainability goals

---

## Key Themes and Areas for Improvement

---

While recognizing many long time strengths of the plan, this assessment identifies a number of potential areas of improvement. Each is described below.

### Include 21st Century Challenges and Opportunities in the Update

The plan has its origins in the primary challenges facing the community in the 20th century; growth management, containment of sprawl, and preservation of open lands. In its current form, the plan is largely a land use and preservation plan, and has been so dating back to its origins in the 1970's. The city and county are nationally renowned for achieving "best-in-class" results in tackling these challenges. However, the plan's scope now needs to broaden if it is to serve the community's current needs and challenges, and vision for the future. While many of these challenges and opportunities are being addressed in some way through separate initiatives, the 2015 update could serve to bring together many of these topics in a cohesive, unified manner. Opportunities include:

**1. Address new century challenges.** While the plan's core values and vision are still solid, a new and evolving set of challenges is now before the community, such as:

- resilience and the dynamic and unpredictable pace of change
- climate adaptation and mitigation and planning for energy needs of the future
- equity, income disparity, and aging population
- housing affordability
- need to expand on local and regional partnerships to leverage scarce resources and plan to achieve mutual goals
- the role of arts and culture

Some of these topics can best be addressed through work that is now underway, such as the ongoing housing strategy and through efforts to integrate the City's ongoing resilience strategy with the plan update process. Other topics will need to be addressed through other initiatives or alliances to address topics such as social equity, or arts and culture, which could be integrated with the city's cultural plan.

**2. Expand systems and regional scope.** In our discussions with city and county leadership, they noted that many of the systems that serve the community and demographic and growth influences that affect it (e.g., water, transportation, air quality and climate, natural systems, energy infrastructure and supply, population growth) have a geographic scope that reaches beyond the boundaries of the plan. With an increased emphasis on resilience, it may be appropriate during the update to consider these systems in their larger context, beyond the boundaries of the plan area. This will be particularly important to consider as part of the resilience strategy. Note that this recommendation does not imply that the plan needs to be recast as a regional plan; rather, we are suggesting that many of the built and natural systems that support the city are part of a larger regional framework that needs to be considered. It may be appropriate for some of the maps in the plan to be more regional in scale.

## Recast the Document Format to Present the Vision in a More Compelling Way

The plan contains many powerful and innovative ideas, each of which can lead the city towards a better future. However, they are imbedded in the plan in a rather disconnected manner, not stated as a unifying vision with a clear, strategic structure. Simply stated, Boulder has a great story to tell about its vision for the future, and we believe that the plan is the right place for this to come together. We have found in our experience with other progressive communities that a cohesive vision can serve as a unifying element of the plan. The Vision and supporting Core Values can be part of a strong section that can also stand-alone outside of the plan document, and serve as a guide for high-level policy and decision-making. These relatively simple changes could go a long way towards unifying the plan update and enabling it to serve as a unifying document for the community's development. Opportunities include:

**1. Make the format more user-friendly.** The plan in its current form it is not presented in a manner that is a compelling read for much of the community, particularly non-planners, because it is heavy on text, contains few graphics and maps, and is organized in standalone chapters or elements that do not relate to a broader vision for the city. A fresher format that is more visually oriented, in addition to other recommendations outlined below, could help make the document more appealing to readers.

**2. Do a better job of telling the Boulder story.** Boulder has an incredible story to tell – its past, present, and future – and the plan can present so much more in a way that is more inspirational and accessible to the broader community. This can help build a greater understanding of the purpose of the plan. This could include a retrospective section that explains what the plan has done to shape the community over time, and how its values have been maintained over the 40+ year history of planning in the Valley. For example, a graphically illustrated timeline of areas of land conserved over time would help give the reader a better sense of accomplishments related to the vision contained in the plan.

**3. Convey a compelling vision.** The plan and other documents (Sustainability Framework, for example) contain much that speak to the community's values and vision, but this is not presented in a clear, cohesive, form that gives meaning to most people in the community. In the current form of the plan, there really is no identifiable vision per se. City and county leadership have told us that they would like to see the vision be more obvious and clear in the document. The community's vision for the future could be more evident, setting the tone for the plan and carrying forward in some manner throughout the document. Note that our recommendation does not imply that the underlying elements of the vision need to change, but rather that it could be made more obvious and clear. Simply stated, the vision should set the aspirations of the community, and the rest of the plan should describe what it will take to get there.

For Boulder, a new, creative approach to its vision might include elements of the past, present, and desired future in a series of "big idea" statements, including graphics and illustrations to fully convey the desired future vision.

For example, Portland’s draft Vision for 2035<sup>2</sup> (see figure below) is a simple narrative statement. It is supported by seven key directions to achieve the vision, that help to frame up the rest of the plan’s content:

1. Create complete neighborhoods
2. Encourage job growth
3. Create a low-carbon community
4. Improve natural areas and open spaces
5. Provide reliable infrastructure
6. Improve resiliency
7. One size does not fit all

## VISION FOR 2035

---

**Portland is a prosperous, healthy, equitable and resilient city where everyone has access to opportunity and is engaged in shaping decisions that affect their lives.**

Our diverse population, innovative businesses and forward-thinking leaders create a vibrant and unique community.

- A thriving low-carbon economy provides jobs and supports the prosperity of a diverse population.
- Portlanders feel more connected to each other, the city, and their communities and they are involved in community decisions.
- Nature is woven into the city, and a healthy environment sustains people, neighborhoods and wildlife.
- Distinctive neighborhoods and the vibrant downtown are safe, energizing civic and cultural spaces.
- Environmental risks are managed and resiliency increases, helping Portlanders prepare for change and recover from disasters.

Source: [Portland 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft](#)

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/57352>

Another example is found in The Auckland Plan – a recently completed plan for Auckland, New Zealand<sup>3</sup>. Its vision is found in a section of the plan called “Auckland Now and Into the Future”. The vision statement is a simple one:

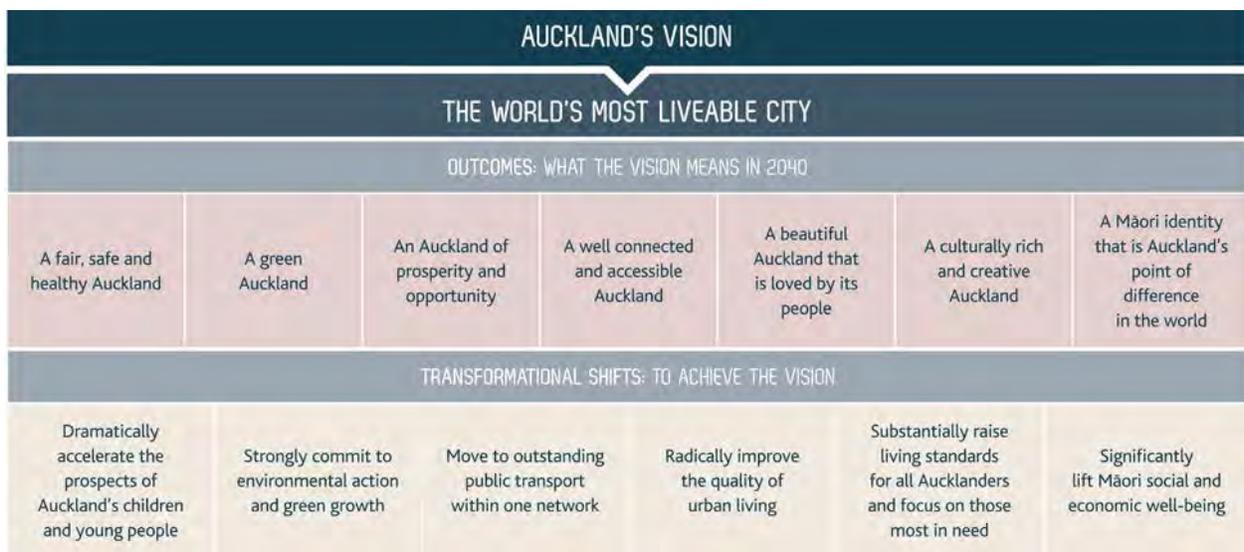
*Auckland’s vision is to become the world’s most liveable city. As the world’s most liveable city Auckland will be a place that:*

*Aucklanders are proud of,*

*they want to stay or return to, and*

*others want to visit, move to, or invest in*

The vision; the outcomes (what the vision means in 2040); and transformational shifts needed to achieve the vision for Auckland are all contained in the simple diagram below. What distinguishes both of these examples from the BVCP is that there is a clearer link between the vision stated in the plans and the actions and outcomes that are needed to achieve the vision over the longer-term.



<sup>3</sup> <http://theplan.theaucklandplan.govt.nz/auckland-now-and-into-the-future/#b-1-the-vision-for-auckland>

## Expand Opportunities for Community Engagement

Community engagement has always been an important component of planning efforts in the city and county. Recent projects (2014 Transportation Master Plan update, Civic Area Master Plan, and North Boulder Area Plan to name a few) used a variety of creative methods to involve the community throughout the planning process. In our discussions with city and county leadership, we were told repeatedly that the BVCP update must set a new standard for community engagement, and can serve as an opportunity to build consensus in the community around emerging issues. At the time that this Plan Assessment Report was completed (March 2015), city and county staff had begun the process of developing a Community Engagement Plan to help guide the BVCP update process. This report includes a number of recommendations to be considered as the Community Engagement Plan is developed (see page 44 of this report). Opportunities include:

- 1. City Council, City Planning Board, County Commissioners and County Planning Commission working together to provide overall guidance.** One of the major strengths of the BVCP is the collaborative effort on the part of city and county leaders and staff. Joint meetings throughout the process can ensure that leaders are connected to each other as well as the broader community as the update proceeds.
- 2. Involve Boards and Commissions.** There are a number of advisory boards already in place that can serve an important role in the process, representing their particular area of interest related to critical issues (e.g., Arts Commission, Environmental Advisory Board) as well as participating in broader discussions.
- 3. Partner with Organizations.** There are a myriad of organizations (public, private, non-profit) that can provide valuable assistance in building awareness of the update process through their constituent members, as well as by participating in discussions about topics of interest to their organizations.
- 4. Work with Neighborhoods.** One of the goals of the BVCP update is to integrate sub-community and neighborhood-scale issues and policy directions.
- 5. Use a Variety of Tools and Techniques to Maximize Engagement Opportunities.** One of the stated goals of city leadership is to use a wide variety of engagement tactics to ensure that multiple perspectives are captured during the update process. This should include low-tech approaches (e.g., “Meeting in a Box”) as well as web and social media-based tools.

## Use the Plan to Address Outcomes and Metrics

The current BVCP is primarily a general policies plan. For the most part, the policies do not have direct and well defined measures of outcomes, results, and actions. While this encourages flexibility of implementation, it discourages public understanding, accountability, collaboration, and organizational learning. A written policy that can be interpreted as either supporting or opposing a proposed action is not a useful decision guide. For more specifics, one must look to the various Master Plans created for transportation, public safety, and other functional areas. While these other supporting plans represent a strong approach to implementing programs and policies, we believe that the BVCP could play a stronger role in integrating the various plans (see below, *Strengthen Linkages Between the Plan and Implementation Tools*) as well as by including a set of high level outcomes and metrics. In our discussions with city and county leadership, we were told that the current plan does not answer the question of “how are we doing” because it does not incorporate a process or have metrics to help answer that question in an ongoing manner. Opportunities include:



**1. Include outcomes and metrics.** Planning has been defined as the transformation of knowledge into action. Contemporary best practices-based plans make this transformation possible by defining the community's desired outcomes and linking them to measurable metrics that assess the results of actions. Without outcomes and metrics, planning goals are abstract concepts without ties to practical actions. Experience shows that what gets measured gets done.

Plans that bring together goals, outcomes, metrics, and actions have several benefits:

- they make clear to the public how the community's planning vision will be defined, measured, and acted upon
- they lay out an agenda for government decision-makers and staff in order to activate the plan's goals
- they provide a basis for collaboration between the public and private sectors, including developers, neighborhoods, and non-profit organizations
- they support learning and understanding about the effectiveness of community development strategies in order to adapt and revise them as necessary to meet adopted goals.

**2. Indicators for baseline measures and desired targets.** Metrics are prepared on the basis of the community's goals and needs. They are stated in terms of baseline measures of starting conditions as indicators -- qualitative or quantitative measurement tools that allow comparisons of outcomes and changes over time among government units, projects, and objectives, and benchmarks that lay out desired targets (e.g., future objectives). Metrics may be derived from scientific or technical measurements such as air quality, as well as more general composite indices such as the ecological footprint. Increasingly, communities are not only publishing metrics report cards on a regular basis but also displaying them on website dashboards where the public can track the effectiveness of planning Initiatives.

The Imagine Austin Plan includes a number of urban form indicators that are related to proximity from residences. These include percent of households within a half mile of:

- a full-service supermarket/grocery store (Livable)
- a park or accessible open space (Natural and Sustainable)
- an art/cultural venue (Creative)
- a school (Educated)
- transit (Mobile and Interconnected)
- retail and mixed-use centers (Prosperous), and
- medical services (A Community that Values and Respects People).

**3. Opportunities for linkages to desired outcomes in master plans.** Cutting-edge plans contain projections, outcomes and metrics used to set objectives and track progress. Linking these to maps and other visual tools would help convey and track outcomes in a more graphic style. Opportunities include:

- include information about growth projections and land use information, to set a foundation for understanding the city's capacity for growth. This could also include information on growth rates, cost of growth, etc., as desired to support and inform the plan's policy directions.
- include high-level outcomes or objectives in the plan to provide stronger linkages between the BVCP and the many city master plans that are used to implement the BVCP (for example, the Transportation Master Plan and Fire-Rescue Master Plan)
- create linkages to the city's budgeting process
- set the stage for tracking progress over time (possibly through an expansion of the dashboard being coordinated through the City Manager's Office) to reflect community trends as well as city performance.

**4. Integrate outcomes and metrics for each chapter of the plan.** The updated plan could integrate outcomes and metrics into each major plan chapter, or in a combined section of the plan as part of the action plan. The 2010 BVCP states that the city and county will establish sustainability indicators specific to the Boulder Valley to measure progress in the health and well-being of the community, environment, and economy, including changes related to elements of sustainable urban form. These could be formulated for the plan update, along with outcomes and measures for other plan elements, and be

added to over time as appropriate indicators are developed and vetted (see Best Practices information on metrics and indicators in section III of this report). Fort Collins has implemented a Performance Measurement and Community Dashboard that integrates and displays a periodic snapshot of the community’s progress in attaining key outcomes (see figure below). The outcome categories are the same as the city’s performance-based budgeting system, as well as the organizing structure of *Plan Fort Collins*, the city’s comprehensive plan. The dashboard is a work in progress; as metrics are refined, they are added to the dashboard. Performance results are updated quarterly; the most recent results shown below are from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2014.

**Jump to:** [About Performance Measurement & Dashboard](#) | [Reports and Resources](#) | [Budget Information](#) | [Performance Excellence](#) | [Provide Feedback](#)

**Outcomes and Measures** (last updated: Nov-21-2014)

Outcome	Q3 2014 Results ?
 <b>Community and Neighborhood Livability</b> Fort Collins provides a high quality built environment and supports quality, diverse neighborhoods.	
 <b>Culture and Recreation</b> Fort Collins provides diverse cultural and recreational amenities.	
 <b>Economic Health</b> Fort Collins has a healthy, sustainable economy, reflecting community values.	
 <b>Environmental Health</b> Fort Collins promotes, protects and enhances a healthy and sustainable environment.	
 <b>High Performing Government</b> Fort Collins exemplifies an efficient, innovative, transparent, effective and collaborative city government.	
 <b>Safe Community</b> Fort Collins provides a safe place to live, work, learn and play.	
 <b>Transportation</b> Fort Collins provides safe and reliable multi-modal travel to, from, and throughout the City.	

Source: City of Fort Collins Community Dashboard, 2014

### Illustrate the City's Desired Urban Form

When asked about issues that the plan update should address, one of the most oft-heard comments from staff and city leadership was about urban form and the lack of clarity about the desired future form and shape of the city. While the plan includes broad policies and a narrative definition of “sustainable urban form”, it does not clearly articulate and illustrate what the desired sustainable urban form might look like, and how it might be affected and implemented by individual projects or public policies. Words alone cannot convey this vision – the plan needs to use new tools to show what the desired outcome is (graphic images, pictures, perhaps 3d modeling, either city-wide or for targeted sectors). This could help inform ongoing efforts to update the city’s development regulations and procedures, as well as provide a more clear picture of the types of change that are expected in the city’s physical realm. Opportunities include:

**1. Illustrate desired urban form outcomes.** A clear statement and image of the desired future urban form could help to inform public expectations and assist staff, decision-makers, and developers in judging the appropriateness of potential changes to Boulder’s regulations and ultimately built urban form. This could be done at several levels – visual models to illustrate build out of centers, prototype buildings and blocks, or perhaps visuals that conceptualize build out of sectors of the city, if desired. Auckland’s plan includes excellent examples of how visuals can be used to convey differing levels of intensity. This could be particularly useful in illustrating that the various areas of the community may have different outcomes for their built form – that there is no “one size fits all” approach. Urban form policies, with accompanying illustrations, could be prepared for prototypical districts, neighborhoods, and major corridors. As part of this approach, it would be useful to clearly identify and distinguish areas where change is expected (and desired), from areas that are expected to remain largely stable, with little change in their current physical form. The urban form policies should clearly illustrate the differences between transforming and stable areas.

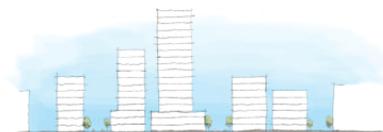
NEIGHBOURHOOD –  
LOW RISE (UP TO 4  
STOREYS)



TOWN & LOCAL CENTRES –  
LOW/MEDIUM RISE  
(UP TO 8 STOREYS)



CITY & METROPOLITAN  
CENTRES –  
MEDIUM RISE  
(5-8 STOREYS)  
HIGH RISE  
(9+ STOREYS)



The Auckland Plan (Auckland, NZ) uses 3D graphics and drawings to illustrate the desired urban form for different sectors of the city.

**2. Consider including a structure or framework plan that illustrates how all areas of the city fit together.** Many contemporary plans include an illustrative plan that conveys how various centers, corridors, open lands, and other community elements fit together. Depending on the desired usage, this could supplement the Future Land Use Plan map. Portland 2035, the city’s draft comprehensive plan, includes an excellent example of a framework plan that illustrates the city’s overall physical framework (see figure on page 20). For Boulder, a framework plan approach could be expanded to illustrate the many systems that support community life, such as layers for natural systems and open lands; multi-modal transportation corridors, trails and pathways; community facilities (schools, parks, etc.); and neighborhoods and districts. This approach would reinforce the interconnectedness of these elements. However, such approaches tend to be more conceptual. While they are effective for describing the urban form of the entire city, this scale is often inappropriate for illustrating the desired outcome of developments at a specific site or parcel within the city.

**3. Consider reinventing or supplementing the Future Land Use map designations to focus on desired physical characteristics for “places” rather than land use type.** One emerging trend in comprehensive plans is the concept of form-based or place-based land use plans. Place-based planning is a way to shape the future of the city by concentrating on the look, feel, form, and character of places instead of focusing on conventional categories of land use. In general, they are organized around “place-types,” the characteristic patterns of development that citizens live with every day. Typically, they are built around three place-types: neighborhoods, districts, and corridors, which are often further divided into more specific place-types or categories. This approach to a future land use plan is less concerned with the specific use of each parcel, but rather is more focused on the collective uses and development patterns within an area to establish a “place”. The idea of place-based plans is not to create unique place-types for every neighborhood in a community, but to create prototypes or “building blocks” of the types of places or development patterns residents desire to see in their city. In addition, plans often assign basic urban design characteristics, such as building heights or right-of-way designs, as well as desired land uses to each place-type. Some degree of generalization is often necessary, as place-types need to be applied over multiple areas of a city to avoid overly-complicated schemes. To capture the unique characteristics of existing areas, these plans often rely on small area or district plans to provide more specific guidelines, similar to what Boulder has done for specific areas of the community. Place-based plans are not meant to take the place of small area or district plans; rather, they are intended to provide overall guidance about the form and pattern of areas of the city, with area plans providing additional levels of detail where needed, such as in a downtown or a focused corridor.

Many cities that have adopted place-based plans have also adopted form-based codes as an implementation strategy. The [Buffalo Green Code](#) is a good example of a city that has taken this approach, creating both a place-based land use plan and a form-based code as a means to implement the goals and objectives of its comprehensive plan. A place-based land use plan, if applied to the BVCP, could help create a stronger linkage between the desired physical form of areas of the city and the land use maps and code that will be used to implement the desired patterns. As a relatively new approach, there are few examples of communities that have used this approach over an extended period of time, since the completed examples are all recent. As a result, Boulder has the opportunity to be a trailblazer

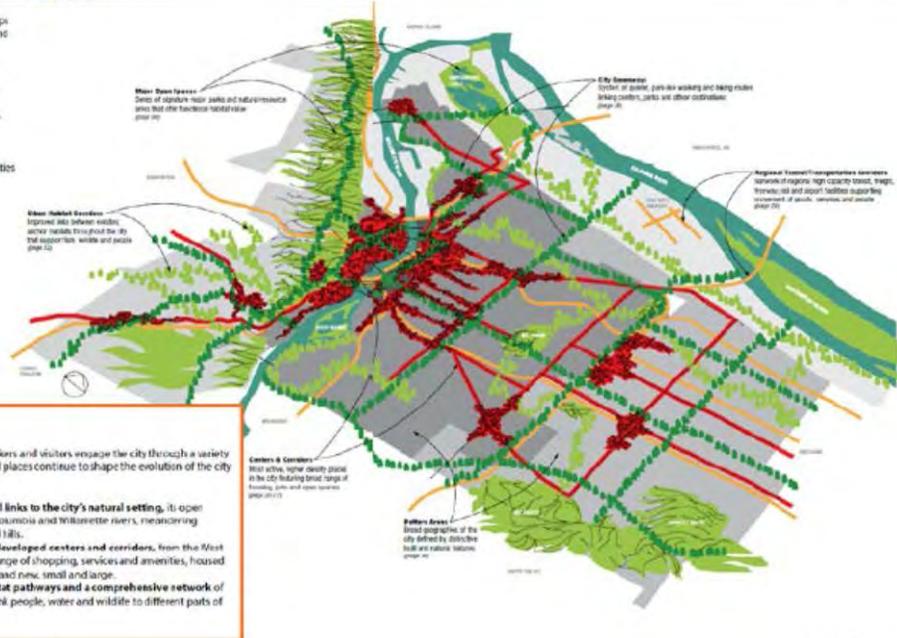
in this area. For more information on this approach, see section IV of this report – Best Practices for Urban Form.

Should Boulder wish to pursue this approach in future updates to the BVCP, there are a number of steps it could take to move in this direction over time:

1. **Determine Place-Types** - The first step is to create the place-types to be used in the plan, starting with the types of places and development patterns that currently exist within the city. These could be organized by sub-community, if appropriate.
2. **Test Place-Types with Community** - Once these basic place-types have been identified, the next step is to seek input from the community to see what place-types the public likes and does not like, and where change might be appropriate. It is important to remember that the place-types do not have to reflect only what currently exists in the community, but can be aspirational; reflecting the types of places residents would like to see in the future. More targeted public outreach might be necessary to establish specific land uses, building types, densities, etc. for each place-type, perhaps at the neighborhood level.
3. **Apply to Areas in the Community** - After the place-types have been decided, the next step is to decide what areas of the city should be included in each place-type. It may be helpful to develop both current and future place-type maps in order to understand the changes that need to take place in order to create the types of places the community wishes to see in the city. As in the previous step, community input is critical, and the public should be involved in drawing the boundaries of each place-type.
4. **Implementation** - The final step is implementation, which would bridge to code revisions that reflect the desired characteristics of each place-type.

Urban design is a process that helps describe the qualities of existing and future places in cities.

Urban design concepts are diagrams that convey big ideas or move without strict specificity to geography, population or land use. Most urban design concepts are intended to be flexible, allowing implementation options as technology, priorities or opportunities shift over time.



6 | Urban Design Direction

Urban Design Direction | 7

Portland’s newly adopted plan update includes an Urban Design Framework diagram that locates centers and corridors (areas that are expected to grow and change) within the City’s physical context.

### Strengthen Linkages between the Plan and Implementation Tools

The plan should serve as the guiding document for the tools that are used to implement planning in the community. These include: departmental master plans and strategic plans; area and sub-community plans; priority-based budgeting that drives programs and services; and development regulations contained in the Land Use Code. In its present form, the plan does not clearly describe how it relates to the implementing tools. More could be done to strengthen and more clearly articulate this role for the plan. Although there is a separate Action Plan document that was prepared as part of the 2010 plan update, it is not clearly linked to the BVCP. Opportunities include:

**1. Strengthen linkages to other plans and implementation tools within the Plan.** Although the Introduction and Implementation sections of the plan describe the various other plans and regulatory tools that are part of the implementing mechanism for the BVCP, they do not describe how they relate to the policies contained within the plan. The BVCP is the place for the conversation about how all of the pieces fit together. The update could provide stronger linkages to the various master plans and other operational plans and tools, to illustrate more clearly how all of the component parts of the community’s vision and planning framework are integrated. This could be done in a number of ways, such as a matrix that illustrates linkages and connections between the policies in the plan and the implementing plans and regulations and programs; an expanded section in the plan Introduction that more fully explains the relationships between the plan and implementation tools; or perhaps “bridge”

language at the beginning of each chapter that describes the plans and other tools that implement the topics in the chapter.

**2. Increase the Plan’s focus on implementation by retooling the Action Plan.** In its current form, the Action Plan for the BVCP is prepared as a separate document. It is structured on the seven themes of the Sustainability Framework and does not clearly describe linkages between the BVCP’s policies and the implementation items contained in the Action Plan. While implementing actions generally are contained in master plans and other documents as well as the Boulder Revised Code, it may be appropriate to include high-level strategies within the plan itself so that it serves as a unifying element, to show how the master plans and other implementing documents are linked to it, and how they serve to carry out the overall vision contained in the plan. Even if the Action Plan remains as a separate document, it could be more clearly connected to the vision, policies, and directions in the BVCP as well as to the overall directions contained in the master plans and other implementing plans and regulatory tools. The Action Plan could provide the direct linkage between desired policies and outcomes in the BVCP and the actions that are needed to be taken to implement them. The Action Plan could also identify near-term as well as mid and long-term strategies, and continue to be subject to a mid-term review to ensure that it is aligned with work plans and available resources.

### Clarify Policies in Key Areas

The plan contains a large number and range of policies. While for the most part they are clear and well-written, users of the plan have told us that it can at times be all things to all people; that policies can be used to both advocate and repel proposed actions. Opportunities include:

**1. Make the intent of policies in key areas clearer.** Sharpening the focus of key policies can help make them less subject to interpretation. For example, the Growth Requirements policy states:

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

While well intentioned, this policy leaves a number of unanswered questions. What does it mean to add value, improve quality of life, provide significant community benefits, achieve sustainability goals, and maintain or improve environmental quality? The policy would be clearer if it specified outcomes and metrics for the desired qualities of proposed growth. Example outcomes could be a measureable increase in affordable housing and transit usage in new development. Target metrics could be an increase in affordable units and transit ridership in growth areas, both of which are contained in master plans and could be incorporated into the BVCP.

A second example is the policy on Preservation of Floodplains, which states that:

*“Undeveloped floodplains will be preserved or restored where possible through public land acquisition of high hazard properties, private land dedication and multiple program coordination. Comprehensive planning and*

*management of floodplain lands will promote the preservation of natural and beneficial functions of floodplains whenever possible”.*

While the written policy specifies the intent of floodplain preservation, it would be clearer if accompanied by a map of floodplains and their land use, including those areas already in public ownership. It would be more effective if it were integrated with the subsequent floodplain policies on Flood Management, Non-Structural Approach, Protection of High Hazard Areas, and Larger Flooding Events into one unified floodplain policy, rather than a series of separate policies.

**2. Address development issues at the urban edge.** One specific policy area identified during initial discussions with county staff is related to development at the urban edge (i.e., in Area II) and update policies and regulations for these areas. As part of the update, the plan could include updated policies and regulations to govern annexation and the management of parts of Area II at the urban edge where development connected to urban services may be desirable, in order to clarify what form of development is appropriate, and how it is to be processed under joint city/county procedures. This could also include describing how the boundaries are determined, to clarify why properties are included (or not) in these areas.

## **Integrate Resilience**

Community resilience is generally defined as the ability of a city to bounce back after being struck by a severe shock. Another definition is the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. “Evolutionary resilience” recognizes that community systems constantly shift between states of equilibrium. Under changing conditions, continual adaptation is required.

Resilient cities aim for development that can withstand major disruptions without failure of critical systems; they are concerned with survivability, reducing impacts from future crises on their populations, infrastructure, and institutions. Sustainable cities aim for development that balances the demands of environmental protection, economic growth, and human equity. They are concerned with intergenerational equity, meeting the needs of present residents without disadvantaging future populations. Resilience and sustainability are closely related; a sustainable city is resilient and a resilient city is sustainable. This interdependence shows up in overlapping goals, policies, and metrics of comprehensive plans. Opportunities include:

**1. Integrate resilience throughout the BVCP by leveraging the Resilient Cities effort.** As the recipient of a Resilient Cities grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Boulder is committed to develop its resilience. The updated plan could be an important tool in achieving this goal by addressing resilience throughout its policies and topics. Boulder has previously committed to becoming more sustainable. Both resilience and sustainability require foresighted planning, aware and prepared populations, and relevant outcome measures, though their main goals are somewhat different.

**2. Develop a new model for addressing resilience in a comprehensive plan.** Boulder has the opportunity to develop a new model for incorporating resilience in the comprehensive plan, based on its own hazards and vulnerability. The model should recognize that a resilient city is a complex network of

physical systems and human communities requiring combinations of apparent opposites: redundancy and efficiency, diversity and interdependence, strength and flexibility, autonomy and collaboration, planning and adaptability. Because the most vulnerable populations are the weakest links in resilience, there is an opportunity to integrate hazard mitigation, economic development and social justice. In addition to traditional physical system hazard mitigation, Boulder could seek social and institutional resiliency by monitoring vulnerability reduction, building distributed hazard mitigation capability, developing broad hazard mitigation commitment, operating networked communications, adopting recognized equity standards, assisting vulnerable neighborhoods and populations, and mitigating business interruption impacts.

# BEST PRACTICES

---

## Introduction

---

As part of the assessment process, the consultants prepared a set of best practices to help inform the BVCP update by providing examples of what other communities are incorporating into “cutting-edge” plans for progressive communities. The topics below – urban form, outcomes and metrics, resilience, and action plans – were chosen to align with the recommendations contained in this report. Each best practices topic includes a general description; a discussion of applicability to the BVCP update; and several summary examples, with links for additional information.

---

## Urban Form Best Practices

---

Urban form best practices focus on the integration of urban form and character into the realm of comprehensive plans, as a means of implementing a community’s vision for its desired built environment. Plans achieve this goal either by providing urban form and design guidelines, as the Portland example illustrates, or by creating place-based land use plans to replace traditional land use plans, as in the Baton Rouge and Buffalo examples. One of the key issues for Boulder is how to achieve high-quality design that fits the context and scale of the different types of places in the city. Best practices plans are focused on including standards and principles that make areas more livable, more vibrant, and more people-oriented. These principles include walkability, connectivity, mixed uses, housing diversity, character protection, neighborhood form, and transportation alternatives, to name a few. A sophisticated and nuanced approach is required, as there is no “one size fits all” solution. The Boulder community already has numerous excellent built examples of districts and neighborhoods that embrace these principles, including both historic areas (e.g., downtown districts and neighborhoods) as well as more recently built examples (such as North Broadway). The challenge is to integrate information about the desired built environment into the BVCP as a form-based “toolkit,” to provide both policy and visual guidance for new projects as well as redevelopment.

## Applicability to BVCP

Boulder could adapt many of the approaches in the examples below as a means of better integrating urban form into the plan update. Including a framework plan with a series of overlay illustrations, similar to the concept contained in the Portland Design Framework, could help illustrate the linkages and relationships between the various elements of the built and natural environment. This would build on many of the concepts already contained in the Plan, such as centers and corridors, but would present them in a more interconnected manner. This framework could also be used to develop a series of character districts for each of the various place-types that would address and illustrate basic urban form characteristics. Similarly, the use of drawings, urban framework diagrams, visual models, etc. would reinforce the narrative objectives that are already contained in the Plan, and could serve as a guide or “roadmap” for the preparation of more tailored policies and regulations for the city. While some of

these areas would continue to be supported by design standards and other implementing tools, the urban form framework would help develop a greater understanding of the desired built form for areas of the city.

## Examples of Urban Form in Comprehensive Plans

### St. Albans, Vermont

As part of an innovative approach to establish a renewed direction for this small community in Vermont, the city sponsored a charrette-based effort to develop a fresh vision and “toolkit” for the community. They developed a character and form-based toolkit that establishes a vision for the community; a set of character area directions and illustrations; and a toolkit for implementing the plan in a strategic manner.

The toolkit includes a set of character area diagrams that are a good example of illustrating urban form policies in a visual manner, containing information on building character, configuration, setbacks, building/street relationships, and parking. For more information, see [St. Albans Character and Form-Based Planning Toolkit](#).

## T5 DOWNTOWN CENTER CHARACTER AREA

The Downtown Center Character Area refers to places within St. Albans where attached buildings are pulled to the back of the sidewalk, and typically have a height of two to four stories. Often the first floor is occupied by retail, with office or residential above. The Downtown Center includes Main Street as well as the side streets that share similar characteristics.

**T5 DOWNTOWN CENTER CHARACTER AREA**  
The T5 Downtown Center Zone consists of higher density mixed use buildings that accommodate retail, offices, professional and government. Situated in a tight network of streets, with wide sidewalks, nearby transit and parking and buildings set close to the sidewalks.

**General Character:** T5 Downtown is the historic heart of St. Albans.  
**Building Placement:** Shall have no setbacks, buildings oriented to street defining a street wall.  
**Permitted Types:** Storey, townhouse, dooryard, shopfront, gallery, 2 to 5 stories.  
**Typical Open Space:** Parks, Plaza and Squares, median landscaping.

**BUILDING CONFIGURATION**

- Building height shall be measured in number of stories, including attics and raised basements.
- Stories may not exceed 14 feet in height from finished floor to finished ceiling, except for a first floor Commercial function that is at least 14 feet shall be treated as 2 stories.
- Height shall be measured to the eave or roof deck.



**e. BUILDING FUNCTION**

Residential	open use
Lodging	open use
Office	open use
Retail	open use

**f. BUILDING CONFIGURATION**

Principal Building	4 stories max., 2 min.
Outbuilding	2 stories max.

**g. LOT OCCUPATION**

Lot Width	18 ft. min., 36 ft. max. #
Lot Coverage	95% max.

**h. BUILDING DEPOSITION**

Edgeward	not permitted
Sideward	not permitted
Streetward	permitted
Courtyard	not permitted

**i. SETBACKS - PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

g.1) Front Setback	0 ft. min., 12 ft. max.
g.2) Side Setback	0 ft. min. **
g.3) Rear Setback	3 ft. min. *
Frontage Buildout	800 ft. min. at setback

**j. SETBACKS - OUTBUILDING**

h.1) Front Setback	40 ft. max. from rear
h.2) Side Setback	0 ft. min. or 3 ft. at corner
h.3) Rear Setback	3 ft. min. **

**k. PRIVATE FRONTAGES**

Common Lawn	not permitted
Porch & Fence	not permitted
Terrace or L.C.	permitted
Forecourt	permitted
Sloop	permitted
Staircase & Awning	permitted
Gallery	not permitted
Acade	not permitted
Baywindow Court	not permitted

\* Or 15 ft. from center line of alley, whichever is greater.  
# Corner lot side setbacks shall match corresponding front setback.  
\*\* Corner lot minimum must be 8 ft. wider.

**T5 - Downtown Center Character Area**



**T5 - Downtown Center Character Area**



St. Albans, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont



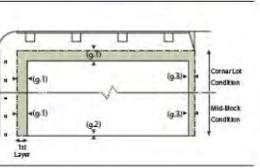
St. Albans, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont

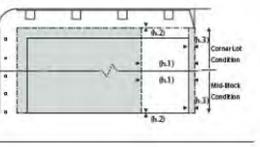
**SETBACKS - PRINCIPAL BLDG**

- The facade and elevation of principal buildings shall be distanced from the lot line as shown.
- Buildings shall be built along the principal frontage to the minimum specified width is available.



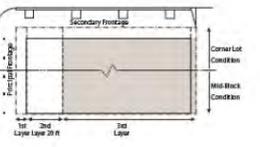
**SETBACKS - OUTBUILDING**

- The elevation of the Outbuilding shall be distanced from the lot line as shown.



**PARKING PLACEMENT**

- Uncovered parking spaces may be provided within the Third Lot Layer as shown in the diagram.
- Covered parking shall be provided within the Third Lot Layer as shown in the diagram.



## T4 GENERAL NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA

The General Neighborhood Character Area, which is largely missing in St. Albans, is characterized by a mix of attached and detached buildings, with varied, shallow setbacks. Buildings are typically two to three stories and include a diversity of uses. The General Neighborhood character area would accommodate a mix of new building types geared to young adults, retirees, and entrepreneurs, including live/works, loft apartments, and artisan industrial space.

**T4 GENERAL NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA**

The T4 General Neighborhood Zone consists of a mixed use but primarily residential urban fabric, with ground floor office, retail, and artisan industrial uses. It may have a wide range of building types: single family, duplex, triplex, and rowhouses. Setbacks and landscaping are variable. Streets with curbs and sidewalks define medium-sized blocks.

**General Character:** Mix of Houses, Townhouses & small Apartment buildings, with scattered Commercial activity; balance between landscape and buildings; presence of pedestrians.

**Building Placement:** Shallow to medium front and side yard setbacks.

**Frontage Types:** Porch, fence, dooryard, firecourt, stoop, shopfront, gallery.

**Building Height:** 2- to 3-story

**Type of Civic Space:** Parks, Squares, Greens

**BUILDING CONFIGURATION**

- Building height shall be measured in number of stories, including Attics and raised basements.
- Stories may not exceed 14 feet in height from finished floor to finished ceiling, except for a first floor Commercial function which must be a minimum of 11 feet and may exceed 14 feet. A first floor Commercial function that exceeds 14 feet shall be treated as 2 stories.
- Height shall be measured to the eave or roof deck.

**T4**

**e. BUILDING FUNCTION**

Residential	limited use
Lodging	limited use
Office	limited use
Retail	limited use

**f. BUILDING CONFIGURATION**

Principal Building	2 stories max., 2 min.
Outbuilding	2 stories max.

**g. LOT OCCUPATION**

Lot Width	18 ft. min., 80 ft. max. #
Lot Coverage	70% max.

**h. BUILDING DISPOSITION**

Edgeward	permitted
Sideyard	permitted
Rearyard	permitted
Courtyard	not permitted

**i. SETBACKS - PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

(g.1) Front/Build-to	0 ft. min., 18 ft. max.
(g.2) Side Setback	0 ft. min. ^
(g.3) Rear Setback	3 ft. min. *
Frontage Buildout	60% min. at setback

**j. SETBACKS - OUTBUILDING**

(h.1) Front Setback	20 ft. min. + bldg. set.
(h.2) Side Setback	0 ft. min. or 3 ft. at
(h.3) Rear Setback	3 ft. min. *

**k. PRIVATE FRONTAGES**

Common Lawn	permitted
Porch & Fence	permitted
Terrace or L.C.	permitted
Firecourt	permitted
Stoop	permitted
Shopfront & Awning	permitted
Gallery	not permitted
Arcade	not permitted
Bungalow Court	permitted

\* Or 15 ft. from center line of alley, whichever is greater.  
^ Corner lot side setbacks shall match corresponding front setback.  
# Corner lot minimum must be 8 ft. wider.

**SETBACKS - PRINCIPAL BLDG**

- The Facades and Elevations of Principal Buildings shall be distanced from the Lot lines as shown.
- Facades shall be built along the Principal Frontage to the minimum specified width in the table.

**SETBACKS - OUTBUILDING**

- The Elevations of the Outbuilding shall be distanced from the Lot lines as shown.

**PARKING PLACEMENT**

- Uncovered parking spaces may be provided within the Third Lot Layer as shown in the diagram.
- Covered parking shall be provided within the Third Lot Layer as shown in the diagram.

T4 - General Neighborhood Character Area



Burlington, Vermont



Burlington, Vermont



Burlington, Vermont



Burlington, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont



St. Albans, Vermont

### Portland, Oregon

As part of its ongoing Comprehensive Plan update (see <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/57352>), the city prepared an Urban Design Direction document, to illustrate how the goals and policies of the city's draft comprehensive plan are supported by an urban design direction and framework. As stated in the document, the purpose is "...to provide a clear sense of what these design directions will look and feel like at the level of streets and neighborhoods". In addition to describing the city's physical evolution over time, the framework identifies current design issues and urban design objectives that inform the shape of growth and change. The five objectives include:

1. Create Complete Neighborhoods
2. Plan and Design to Fit Local Conditions
3. Connect People and Neighborhoods
4. Improve Natural Areas and Open Spaces
5. Encourage Job Growth

The urban design framework outlined in the document (see figures below) is based on a network of place-types; centers, corridors, transit station areas, city greenways, urban habitat corridors, and employment areas. It also identifies a set of “pattern areas” – broad geographies that are defined by existing patterns of natural and built features, such as the central city, neighborhoods, and inner ring districts, and provides basic urban design characteristics and comparisons for different types of centers, corridors, and other features.

Finally, the document includes a series of urban design framework maps that illustrate how these corridors, greenways, and other features are connected together to provide a basis for the city. While it is not clear from the document how these maps will relate to zoning, it does state that the urban design framework materials will be used to help tailor more specific policies and regulations to better respond to each area’s unique natural and built assets and characteristics.

## URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK



## CENTERS: A COMPARISON

### NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



<b>HOUSING</b>	3,500 units
<b>JOBS</b>	Primarily retail/ service
<b>BUILDING SCALE</b>	Up to 4 stories

**Local hubs.** Neighborhood centers are hubs of commercial services, activity, and transportation for surrounding neighborhoods. They typically include small parks or plazas that support local activity and gathering. These smaller centers provide housing capacity within a half-mile radius for about half the population needed to support a full-service neighborhood business district (surrounding neighborhoods provide the rest of this population base).

### TOWN CENTER



<b>HOUSING</b>	7,000 units
<b>JOBS</b>	Diverse employment/ institutions
<b>BUILDING SCALE</b>	Up to 5-7 stories

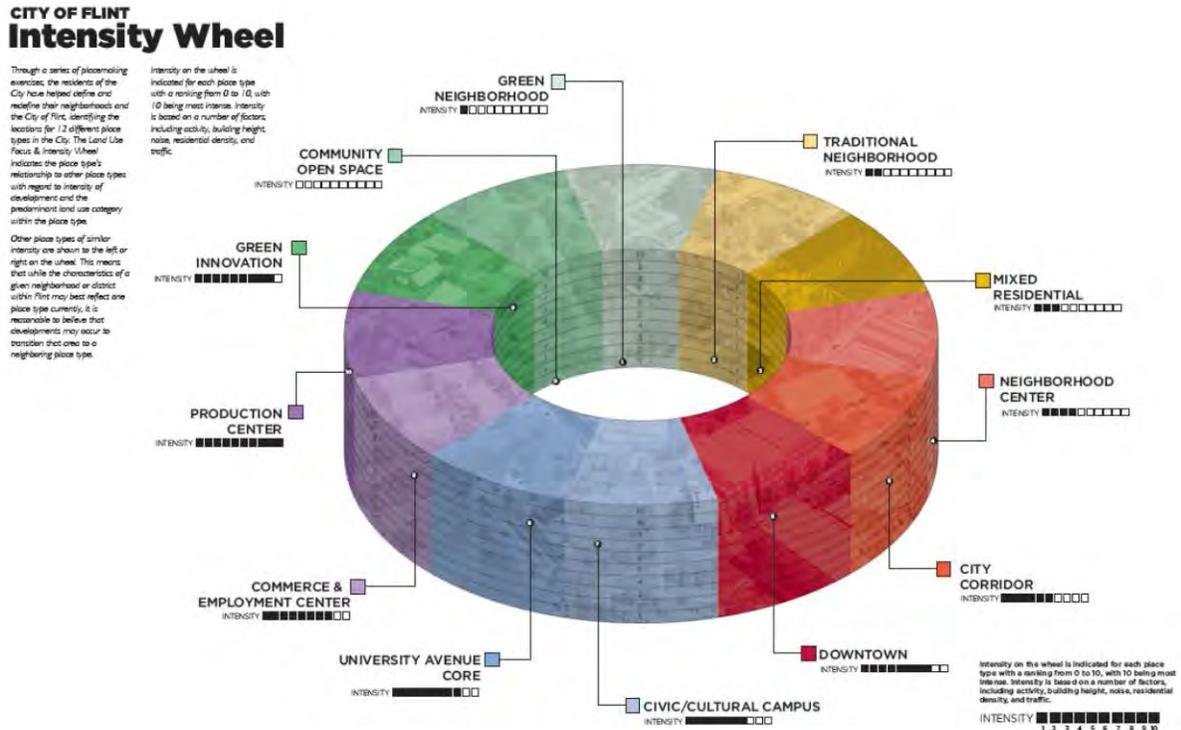
**District hubs.** Each Town Center is a hub of commercial and public services, activity, and transportation for the broad area of the city it serves. Town Centers include parks or public squares to support their roles as places of focused activity and population. They provide housing capacity within a half-mile radius for enough population to support a full-service neighborhood business district.

Corridor  
 New Development

## Flint, Michigan

As a part of its new master plan adopted in 2013 (see <http://www.imagineflint.com/>), the city of Flint, Michigan developed a creative approach to its future land use plan based on the concept of place-making. The plan identifies 12 different place-types within the city. This approach was particularly relevant for Flint since, like many communities in the Midwest, its population is shrinking and their planning is focused on revitalization and redevelopment of existing, traditional development patterns. One of the more interesting aspects of their approach was the development of an Intensity Wheel (see below) that illustrates each place type's relationship to other place types with regard to development intensity and predominant land use. The location of place-types in the wheel is important, as adjacent place-types are meant to be compatible with one another, and may overlap in transition areas between the two zones. In addition, the wheel illustrates how the city should try to manage neighborhood character changes in different parts of Flint. For example, a traditional neighborhood might see increasing investment and development, leading it to transition to the mixed residential place-type. In this way, the intensity wheel is a useful tool for managing the changing character of an area.

Each place type is described in the plan by a series of diagrams and illustrations to capture the intent of its land use character and attributes, along with recommendations for implementation. However, there are few specifics regarding the desired urban form in each place-type. While the characteristics of the community are quite different from Boulder, it may be a useful model for a different approach or supplement to the community's future land use map.



Flint's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan includes a series of place-based districts that reflect character, use-type, and relative intensity.

## San Francisco, California

San Francisco's City Design Group was established in 2005 as a distinct unit within the city's planning department. They focus on multiple projects within the city with an emphasis on placemaking; urban design policy development; and design review. There are numerous examples of projects and supporting visual materials that can be viewed on the City Design Group's website located [here](#).

Examples of visual materials prepared by the City Design Group that may be helpful to inform Boulder's efforts to convey high quality and context-appropriate design include the following:

*Central SoMa Plan.* The city recently completed a draft plan for the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood, which is the bridge between the traditional central business district near Market Street and the burgeoning activity center of Mission Bay. While the seeds of the Central Corridor Plan began under the basic tenet of supporting transit-oriented development, planners recognized that managed growth could bring with it a number of tools to transform and improve the neighborhood. Infill fabric, if designed with high quality architecture and active ground floors, could increase visual quality as well as safety of the area's streets. The plan includes an urban form element that addresses design policies and implementation strategies, as well as extensive use of visualization to convey overall desired urban form.



*Upper Market Community Vision.* In 2007, city residents and planners created a community vision for the upper portion of Market Street. While primarily focused on the roadway corridor, it includes examples of the use of visual models to convey street character and building/street relationships. A set of accompanying Design Guidelines provides further examples of desired attributes of new development and redevelopment (see examples below).

FIGURE 2A POTENTIAL FOR 55' BUILDING ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL PARCEL

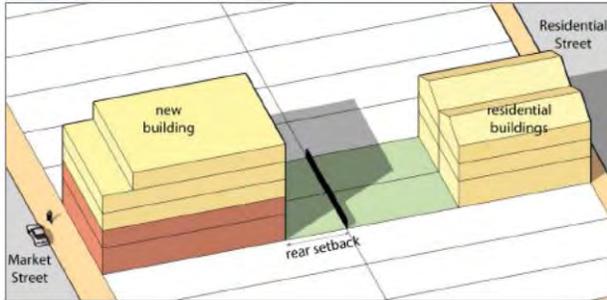


FIGURE 2B POTENTIAL 85' BUILDING ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL PARCEL

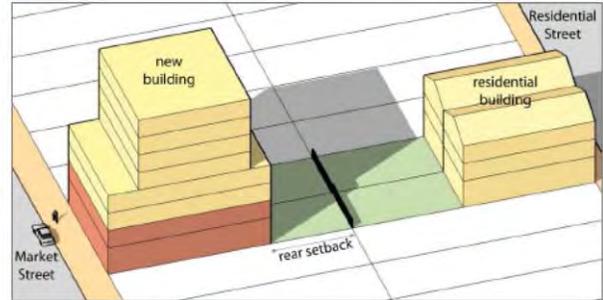


FIGURE 2A POTENTIAL FOR 55' BUILDING ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL PARCEL

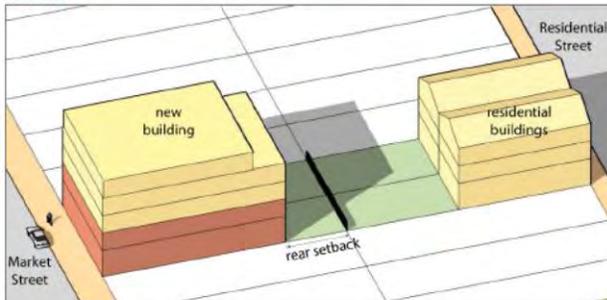
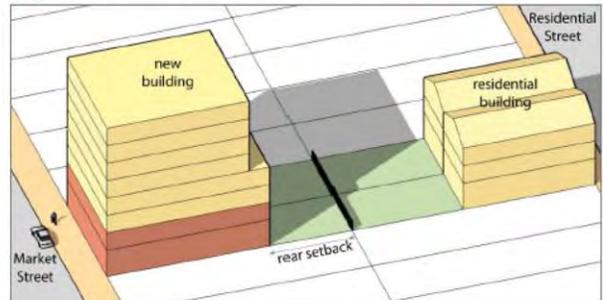


FIGURE 2D POTENTIAL 85' BUILDING ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL PARCEL



**B. INVITING GROUND FLOOR DESIGN FEATURES**

The following guidelines were the most important for the community. Many participants noted a desire for stronger language for the following recommendations due their relative importance relative to other development guidelines.

*B1: Promote active uses of the sidewalk building zone through ground floor building design elements such as transparent, operable windows, open partitions, awnings, goods and wares visible in front, and informational displays.*

*B2: Create inviting building entrances for large and institutional buildings through the following techniques:*

- Integrate the sidewalk area into building entrances.
- Use light features to highlight buildings.
- Set back entrance from the rest of the building.
- Install plazas, fountains, and sculpture in front of buildings.



*Attractive outdoor dining options*

FIGURE 4.7 PROPOSED MARKET STREET TRANSIT PLAZA



### East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Another example of a place-based plan is the East Baton Rouge Comprehensive Plan (or FUTUREBR) adopted in 2011. The plan identifies what it calls “building blocks” or the types of land uses residents of East Baton Rouge identified as the basic elements that help to create livable communities. The building blocks are derived from a framework of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. From these three basic elements, the plan identifies 17 plan categories (similar to place-types) which correspond to specific areas of the city-parish. The plan gives a general description of appropriate types of buildings and uses, detailing the ideal characteristics of each plan category. As a way to further describe the desired urban form, the plan links specific plan categories with an urban design level. Four urban design levels are described in the plan, which prescribe uniform standards for buildings, parking, pedestrian walkways and landscaping, and other site considerations across the entire city-parish. Furthermore, the transportation chapter of the plan describes four different street building blocks which are designed to be compatible with and complimentary to the character of each of the different plan categories. In order to provide more specific guidelines and recommendations for certain unique districts or neighborhoods, the plan encourages the creation of small area plans. These small area plans could cover a neighborhood, a corridor, or a district.

Illustrations and diagrams in the plan help to convey the types of places the plan hopes to encourage throughout the city-parish. Currently, East Baton Rouge is in the process of updating its zoning ordinance in an effort to better align zoning and development regulations to the plan categories created in the FUTUREBR plan.

Aspects of this approach may be relevant to Boulder, including the identification of levels of urban design appropriate to different types of character areas with similar characteristics, such as neighborhoods or mixed-use corridors, to avoid having multiple sets of design standards.

Plan Category	Complete Street Transportation Building Blocks	Urban Design Level
Downtown Core	Mixed-Use/Main Streets/Downtown Neighborhood	4
Neighborhood Center	Mixed-Use/Main Streets/Downtown Neighborhood	3 or 4
Town Center	Mixed-Use/Main Streets/Downtown Neighborhood	3 or 4
Regional Center	Commercial Mixed-Use/Main Streets/Downtown	3 or 4
Main Street	Mixed-Use/Main Streets/Downtown Neighborhood	2, 3 or 4
Mixed-Use Arterial	Mixed-Use/Main Streets/Downtown Neighborhood	2, 3 or 4
Commercial	Commercial	1, 2 or 3
Employment	Commercial	1 or 2
Industrial	Commercial	1 or 2

In order to illustrate how future development in the various plan category areas should look, FUTUREBR relates plan categories to corresponding urban design levels and street designs.

### Recommended Urban Design Level 3:

Figure 3: Design Level 3



Commercial



Residential

#### GOALS AND RECOMMENDED DESIGN STANDARDS:

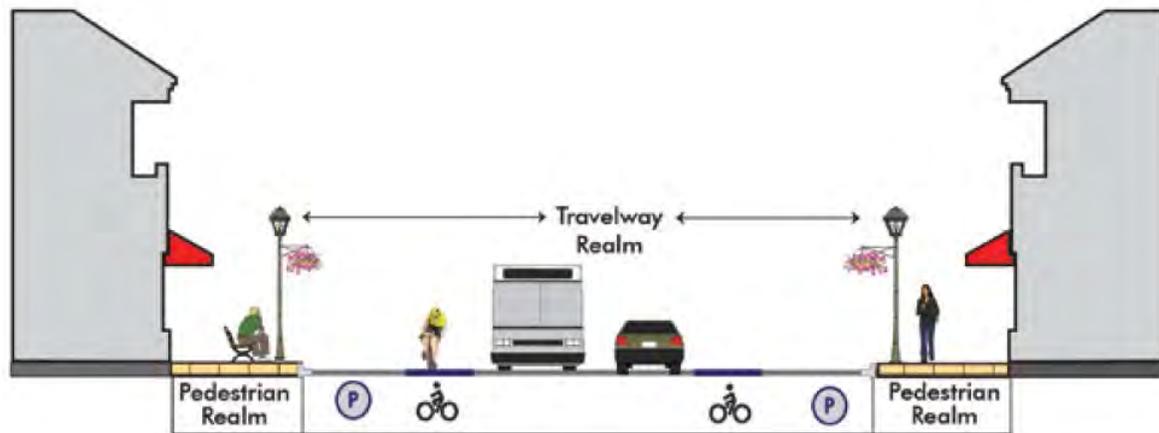
**Buildings:** Buildings should front the street. Entrances should be prominent and street facing. Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts.

**Parking:** Parking should be located on-street and/or at the rear of buildings. Parking credits and “in-lieu of” programs are encouraged.

**Pedestrian walkways and landscaping:** Wide, highly visible crosswalks and sidewalk bulb-outs should be included. Trees should be located in tree grates between the sidewalk and street. Any surface parking lots should be screened from view of the street by landscaped hedges or low walls and located on sites.

**Site considerations:** A well connected network of streets with small blocks is encouraged.

Figure 9: Mixed-Use, Main Street, Downtown Cross-Section



### Buffalo, New York

As part of an effort to implement the goals and objectives of the city’s new comprehensive plan, the City of Buffalo initiated Buffalo Green Code. The project started by creating a land use plan, in which the city established “the vision for the city’s physical development over the next 20 years.” Another example of a place-based plan, the land use plan for Buffalo Green Code identified 26 different place-types or “characteristic development patterns that citizens wish to promote.” As with other place-based plan examples, these place-types were derived from neighborhoods, districts, and corridors which were further classified based largely on the existing development patterns found in different areas of the city. The second step of the project was the creation of a new Unified Development Ordinance, essentially a form-based zoning code for the entire city that seeks to reinforce and encourage the ideal development patterns for each place-type. As in many form-based codes, the Unified Development Ordinance regulates the urban design and form of new development, as well as appropriate building types and uses.



### Neighborhood Place Types

Place Type	Variant	Description
N-1 Urban Core Neighborhood		N-1D Downtown/Regional Hub Downtown or regional hub of substantial scale with an intense mix of office, residential, and retail uses
		N-1E Downtown Edge The edges of downtown composed primarily of connected, moderate-scale commercial block structures with consistent pedestrian-oriented frontages
		N-1S Secondary Employment Center High-intensity centers containing a mix of light industrial, office, residential, and retail uses and many tall and large-footprint structures

The Land Use Plan for the Buffalo Green Code first identified the location of neighborhoods (above left), districts (above center), and corridors (above right), before creating more specific place types based on each one (below).

### 3.1.5 N-2E MIXED-USE EDGE



#### A. Purpose

The N-2E zone addresses transitional areas, typically at the edges of more intense mixed-use centers, in Buffalo's most compact neighborhoods. These areas are defined by a mix of homes and stores.

#### B. Building Types

The form requirements of the neighborhood zones are tailored to each building type in accordance with Section 3.2. The following building types are permitted in the N-2E zone:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Attached house   |  Loft building   |
|  Carriage house   |  Shopfront       |
|  Civic building   |  Shopfront house |
|  Commercial block |  Stacked units   |
|  Detached house   |  Tower           |
|  Flex building    |   |

#### C. General

All development in the N-2E zone must comply with the form standards of Section 3.2, as well as any applicable standards in other sections, including, but not limited to, the following:

Frontages	Section 3.3
Principal Uses	Section 6.1
Accessory Uses	Section 6.2
Temporary Uses	Section 6.3
Landscape	Section 7.1
Fences & Walls	Section 7.2
Stormwater	Section 7.3
Outdoor Lighting	Section 7.4
Corner Visibility	Section 7.5
Site Impacts	Section 7.6
Pedestrian Access	Section 8.1
Bicycle Access & Parking	Section 8.2
Vehicle Access & Parking	Section 8.3
On-Premise Signs	Section 9.2
Blocks	Section 10.1
Rights-of-Way	Section 10.2
Nonconformities	Section 12.1

This example from the Unified Development Ordinance shows how the city's form-based code regulates development in different place-types as well as clearly illustrating the desired urban form of each one.

---

## Outcomes and Metrics Best Practices

---

Outcomes and metrics best practices focus comprehensive plans on expected results, linking goals and actions. Leading comprehensive plans provide explicit guidance to stakeholders, decision-makers, and the public about what to anticipate as a result of implementing the comprehensive plan. In some cases, the connections are strengthened by focusing the plan on a limited number of high priority goals, each linked to the community's overall vision.

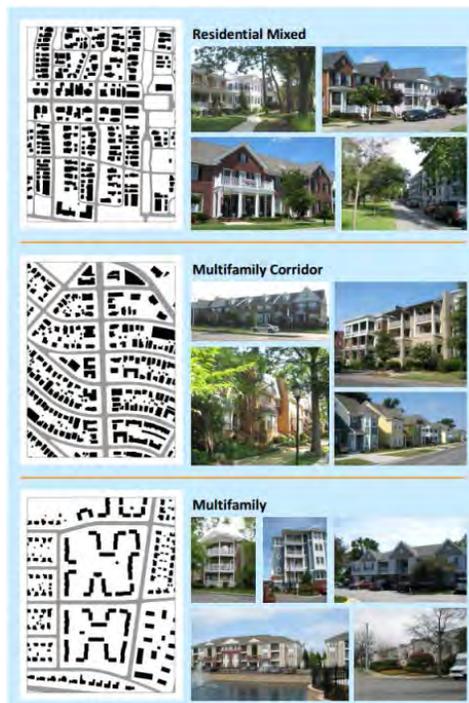
### Applicability to BVCP

The current BVCP includes policies but few outcome measures or metrics. To facilitate implementation, the updated plan could add priority outcomes and metrics for each chapter, along with graphic examples of desired results. In some cases, the outcome and metrics could be synthesized from existing master plans. In other cases, they would need to be derived from best practices and can be added over time. The important lesson from Imagine Austin and other similar projects is that the metrics and indicators program should be seen as an ongoing process, to be refined and added to over time. Austin's program was designed with the anticipation that metrics would be added, deleted, and changed over time. Simply stated, it is not necessary to have a complete set of metrics for all aspects of the BVCP as part of the 2015 update. It is more important to get the program underway and set the stage for the addition of more metrics over time. It is also important to develop criteria that are used to identify and rate the suitability of metrics for use in a plan, to avoid using metrics that are inappropriate for this purpose (see indicator criteria for Imagine Austin, below).

### Examples of Outcomes and Metrics in Comprehensive Plans

#### Norfolk, Virginia

---



The Norfolk, Virginia, comprehensive plan, *plaNorfolk2030* ([www.norfolk.gov](http://www.norfolk.gov)) contains a vision chapter, eleven chapters each based on an element of the vision, and an implementation chapter. The element chapters start with descriptions of current conditions and expected trends, and then highlight key issues. They set one or more key goals, define desired outcomes, and list related metrics and actions for each identified key issue. For example, Chapter 2, *Identifying Land Use Strategies*, notes that Norfolk is essentially a built-out city and includes a single goal: Ensure that the type and quality of land uses will complement or enhance the community's physical characteristics. An outcome for this goal is for future land use to respect neighborhood characteristics and meet the demand for each type of use.

Actions include implementing residential land use categories that reflect existing successful neighborhood patterns with

regard to lot width, structure type, setback, and vehicular use areas. Desired characteristics are shown described in text and shown graphically, illustrating footprints and visual types (see figure with Residential Mixed, Multi-Family, and Multi-Family Corridor). Metrics include change in linear feet of unbuffered lower intensity residential land and more intense land uses, percent of development within areas with design guideline mandates that comply with design regulations, and others.

### **Austin, Texas**

---

The Austin Texas 2012 Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan ([www.austintexas.gov](http://www.austintexas.gov)) links policies, goals, metrics, and actions in its chapter on Implementation and Measuring Success. For example, under the number 1 priority program, *Invest in a Compact and Connected Austin*, there are two goals: increase non-vehicular trips, and improve access to transit. The metrics for the goal to increase non-vehicular trips are: transit-ridership numbers, number of transit stops, percentage of trips by biking and walking,

In selecting indicators to use for Imagine Austin, planners developed the following set of criteria:

- relevance to the priority programs
- staff resources available to support data collection
- information that can be used by planners and others when faced with decisions
- measurable information, with achievable results, as opposed to anecdotal information
- a tendency to show change over a relatively short period of time
- reliable, consistent, and relatively free sources of data

and annual trips per capita. The metrics for the goal to improve access to transit are: population density within ½ mile of transit stops, employment density within ½ mile of transit stops and high capacity transit stops. The Imagine Austin comprehensive plan calls for an analysis and assessment of indicators or metrics that can be used to measure progress after the plan's fifth year. Many of the indicators that were contained in the original plan were suggested and not completely scoped, and some were aspirational or not measurable at the time. More than 100 draft indicators were originally identified; 34 core measures were selected as the initial set that could reasonably be used by city staff to track plan progress. While there is no “right number” of metrics for a community, experience has shown that generally, fewer, high-quality indicators are better than a large number of indicators that is hard to administer.

---

## **Resilience Best Practices**

---

Resilience best practices in comprehensive plans are relatively rare because the concept of resilience has only begun to be applied to community development in the last decade or so. Attention has grown since Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, and Hurricane Sandy in the Northeastern U.S. Current best planning practices focus on disaster resilience: reducing risk, building

community awareness, and instituting recovery planning, often integrated with sustainability goals and policies, as described below:

- Reducing risk takes the form of integrating hazard mitigation into overall community development policies and actions through directing development away from known hazard areas and strengthening vulnerable structures and facilities to resist disaster impacts.
- Building community awareness takes the form of engaging citizens and organizations in hazard scenarios and creating neighborhood support networks to function in disaster preparation and rebuilding.
- Instituting recovery planning takes the form of preparing a plan to guide decisions on recovery and redevelopment following a disaster in order to increase resiliency and to contribute to a more effective and efficient recovery.

FEMA has published a report, *Integrating Hazard Mitigation into Local Planning: Case Studies and Tools for Community Officials* (2013) with fact sheets on “Building Community Resilience by Integrating Hazard Mitigation into Local Planning”. Topics include: Integrating Hazard Mitigation into the Local Comprehensive Plan, The Role of Local Leadership, Social and Economic Benefits, Planning for Post-Disaster Redevelopment, and Protecting Community Infrastructure. The report has case studies on planning in: Cedar Rapids, Miami-Dade, New Orleans, Tulsa, and other locations.

### **Applicability to the BVCP**

Boulder could follow the traditional examples of other communities in applying disaster resilience practices in its comprehensive plan, but it could also extend the resilience lens to cover other plan goals and policies. On the traditional front, the BVCP should add resilience to the natural hazards identified in the very thorough 2012 *City of Boulder Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan*. It lists: as “highly likely” (happens every year) extreme temperatures, thunderstorms, lightning, windstorms, and winter storms; and as “likely” (recurrence interval of ten years or less) drought, West Nile Virus, hailstorms, and wildfire. It rates dam failure and floods as “catastrophic” (over 50 percent property damage, facilities shut down for more than 30 days, and/or multiple deaths), and includes a map of 100 year and 500 year flood hazards. A map of buildings in the 500 year floodplain shows that most of the development in the city’s central area is located there. All of these factors have significant potential impacts on future development, public expenditures, infrastructure, environmental preservation actions, and other planning decisions.

At the same time, the BVCP update could develop a lens with which to view the city’s social, institutional, and economic resilience. This means asking “the resilience question” of plan policies and actions that affect disadvantaged populations, deployment of city staff and resources, and vulnerability to shocks stemming from potential economic breakdowns. This is a broad question with both tangible and intangible elements. For example: Does this policy increase our vulnerable neighborhood communication linkages? Does this program build our crisis response capability? Does this metric assess our ability to come back from the loss of a major element of our economic base? Together with its new Resilience Officer, Boulder can create a pioneering model for formulating and answering the resilience question, based on its unique conditions and needs.

## Examples of Community Resilience in Comprehensive Plans

### Norfolk, Virginia

---

Norfolk, Virginia is susceptible to flooding from coastal storms and sea level rise. A Category 4 hurricane would flood the entire city and a Category 3 storm would flood about 70 percent of the city. Its 2030 Plan (2014) includes resilience under its goals, outcomes, metrics, and actions for Environmental Sustainability in Chapter 6:

**Goal:** Prepare for the consequences of natural hazards.

**Outcome:** Reduced risk and increased resilience to gradual and catastrophic natural events.

**Metrics:** Percent of properties in flood zone that do not receive a variance to waive requirements related to flood protection; area of wetland restoration projects; change in FEMA Community Rating System evaluation.

**Actions:** The Plan includes many actions related to this goal. Examples include: evaluate impact of potential sea level rise when reviewing development proposals and in preparation of budgets; revise development regulations to respond to the impact of potential sea level rise; continue to monitor changes in tide data and its effect on flooding throughout the City; ensure that all new development in designated flood-prone areas complies with the City's flood protection regulations; ensure that residents and property owners in flood prone areas are notified of the threat to their properties; identify areas of the City that are particularly susceptible to inundation and develop a communication strategy to notify residents in advance of and during flood events; among others.

### Lee County, Florida

---

Lee County includes hazard mitigation in the Conservation and Coastal Management policies in Chapter VII of The Lee Plan ([www.leegov.com](http://www.leegov.com)). While it does not include a specific resilience goal, the plan designates a goal to protect the public from the effects of natural and technological hazards through the county emergency plan. It defines the hazards by reference to the County's Hazard Vulnerability Analysis and includes policies to inform the public, coordinate governmental emergency programs, protect natural systems and water resources, limit public expenditures in high hazard areas, and maintain a post-disaster strategic plan. The 2014 Lee Plan is a policies plan; it does not include outcomes and metrics.

---

## Action Plans Best Practices

Action Plan best practices focus comprehensive plans on the strategies and actions that will lead to implementation of the plan policies. Leading comprehensive plans provide explicit guidance to staff, decision-makers, and the public about what specific steps need to be taken.

### Applicability to BVCP

Including the action plan in the BVCP would help achieve two purposes: reinforce the role of the plan as the unifying document among all of the city's master plans and implementation tools, and provide a

stronger linkage between the vision and policies in the plan and the steps to be taken to accomplish the desired outcomes.

## Examples of Action Plans in Comprehensive Plans

### Austin, Texas

---

The Austin, Texas comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin (<https://austintexas.gov/imagineaustin>) has an action plan that is organized into eight priority programs that provide the structure and direction to implement the plan. The eight programs are:

- Invest in a compact and connected Austin
- Sustainably manage our water resources
- Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses
- Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city
- Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy
- Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin
- Create a Healthy Austin program
- Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected community

Each priority program has a lead department, cross-disciplinary team, community partners and a work plan that is reviewed and revised on an annual basis. Each of the programs is moving forward through a series of actions organized into five categories: education and engagement, internal alignment, regulation, capital investment, and partnerships. The city administration is also organizing its operations, core services, decisions, and investments around the priority programs in Imagine Austin. The eight priority programs are grouped into four topic groups as a way of further consolidating efforts in the city towards implementing the plan.

The city charter requires that the Planning Commission and staff provide an annual report to City Council about the implementation of the comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission has just published its second annual report since the adoption of the plan in 2012 ([see Imagine Austin 2014 Draft Annual Report](#)). This is somewhat similar to Boulder's mid-term review process, but is a more rigorous approach, with a detailed review of the Action Plan; metrics and outcomes; and a recasting of strategies, in a formal report that is prepared for the Planning Commission.

## Fort Collins, Colorado

---

*Plan Fort Collins*<sup>4</sup>, the city's comprehensive plan adopted in 2011, contains an Action Plan that identifies high-priority actions and strategies for implementing the plan. The Priority Actions and Strategies outlined in this section are organized into three key time frames:

- Immediate actions - Concurrent and ongoing with plan adoption
- Near-term actions - Following plan adoption, all actions already funded within current budgeting cycle
- Longer-term actions - Several years following plan adoption within the next budgeting cycle
- The Plan Fort Collins approach is unique in that while it is simple, it is strategic, focused and prioritized, and all immediate and near-term actions must be funded to be included in the Action Plan.

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fcgov.com/planfortcollins>

# WORK PLAN AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

---

## Introduction

---

The purpose of this section is to provide recommendations for the update to the BVCP, including public outreach strategies, and a targeted and phased approach to accomplishing the recommendations of this analysis. It suggests a strategy for how to accomplish the recommendations in the preceding sections of this report.

During our meetings with city and county officials, we discussed that the 2015 plan update may be narrow or broad in scope, ranging from minimal changes to the plan to a major overhaul of its content and structure, with a continuum of options in between. The direction to be taken in the 2015 update would depend on direction from city and county leadership, based on their perception of need, community priorities, and availability of resources.

In general, most of the city and county leaders believe that the 2015 update should not constitute a major overhaul, but should comprise a moderate level update that incorporates many of the recommendations contained in this report as resources allow and as the work plan for the update is developed in more detail early in 2015. Particular areas of focus that city and county leadership would like to see the update address include:

- Clarify and incorporate the vision
- Make policies more clear and succinct
- Incorporate more direction and visual clarification of desired urban form, particularly as it might provide more clear direction for needed development code changes
- Integrate resilience throughout the plan; and
- Include outcomes and possibly metrics to begin to move towards tracking progress towards the plan's goals.

Given staff resources and the multitude of other efforts already underway, it is likely that the update will be completed in phases over an 18-month to two-year cycle. During the first quarter of 2015, staff began developing a work plan outline focusing on phase 1 of the update, and worked with the Planning Board and City Council and County Commissioners and Planning Commission to establish priorities for the phasing of tasks during the update process.

---

## Work Plan Recommendations

---

Based on discussions with staff to date, we recommend that the 2015 work program (Phase 1) focus on foundational work for the update process. Foundational work will include:

1. Developing a detailed Community Engagement Plan (see outreach section below)
2. Foundational Technical Work generally includes:
  - Prepare an updated Community Profile, focusing on key trends that will influence the update
  - Forecasting (land supply, population and employment projections) and other technical foundational work
  - Updating map layers needed for analysis purposes and begin work on 3-D mapping
  - Identify Stability/Change Areas
  - Develop initial concepts for plan formatting
  - Work plan for development of visualization tools for urban form element
  - Work plan/approach for integrating resilience into update process, including coordination with resilience strategy foundational work
  - Identification of potential outcomes and metrics to be integrated into the plan (from existing master plans and other sources)
  - Begin process of Future Land Use map clean up and analysis

We also recommend that the foundational work for the updated vision and “Boulder Planning Story” be commenced as part of 2015 activities. As an initial step in the process, staff could develop a working version of these two elements to be reviewed at initial community forums.

The final element of work to be completed in 2015 (Phase 2) would include identification of issues; public engagement launch; and refinements to the Work Program, based on information collected during initial efforts.

Subsequent tasks to be completed during 2016 (phase 3) would include:

- Verification of the Vision
- Policy options, revisions and additions, including development of new elements as needed (see outline in appendix)
- Mapping updates (including development of new approaches to the future land use plan, urban form, and supporting materials)
- Incorporation of metrics and outcomes into plan draft update
- Preparation of draft BVCP document (in new format)
- Preparation of revised City/County IGA

All of phase 2 and 3 tasks should be closely coordinated with Resilience Strategy efforts.

---

## Recommendations for Public Outreach

---

Based on our initial discussions and meetings with city and county officials, it is evident that many citizens and other organizations will have strong interests in the planning process. We recommend the city consider creative, focused ways to engage the community in the planning process, either in focus groups or forums on specific topics. A targeted approach will allow for input on specific topics of interest to all at appropriate points in the process.

Our recent experience in dynamic communities like Boulder is that there is no single "best" way to accomplish a high level of participation by the community in planning efforts. Based on our discussions during the preparation of this analysis and preliminary work completed by staff on development of a Community Engagement Plan, suggestions to consider include:

- A. **City Council, City Planning Board, County Commissioners and County Planning Commission working together to provide overall guidance.** One of the major strengths of the BVCP is the collaborative effort on the part of city and county leaders and staff. Continuing to conduct joint meetings throughout the process can ensure that leaders are connected to each other as well as the broader community as the update proceeds.
- B. **Involve Boards and Commissions.** There are a number of advisory boards already in place that can serve an important role in the process, representing their particular area of interest related to critical issues (e.g., Arts Commission, Environmental Advisory Board) as well as participating in broader discussions.
- C. **Partner with Community Organizations.** There are a myriad of organizations (public, private, non-profit) that can provide valuable assistance in building awareness of the update process through their constituent members, as well as by participating in discussions about topics of interest to their organizations.
- D. **Work with Neighborhoods.** One of the goals of the BVCP update is to integrate neighborhood-scale issues and policy directions. This could be done in a variety of ways, including issues forums conducted at the sub-community level; and organization of events with Homeowners Associations and other neighborhood representatives. In addition, the groups that have formed to focus on flood recovery activities may represent a new pool of community members to engage during the process, as well as coordination with the new neighborhood liaison position.
- E. **Use a Variety of Tools and Techniques to Maximize Engagement Opportunities.** One of the stated goals of city leadership is to use a wide variety of engagement tactics to ensure that multiple perspectives are captured during the update process. This should include low-tech approaches (e.g., "Meeting in a Box") as well as web and social media-based tools, and could include the following:
  1. **Public Ideas Forum:** Numerous members of the community as well as city and county officials have suggested that an Ideas Forum be conducted as part of the kick-off activities for the update process. This could involve speakers as well as table discussions and exercises among attendees

to begin a dialogue about the range of topics to be addressed in the update. Given the diverse range of views, we recommend that the forum be convened by an organization that is seen as a neutral party by most in the community or co-hosted by several organizations together.

2. **Educational Forums:** Given the range of new topics and challenges to be addressed during the update, it may be useful to conduct a series of educational forums about a variety of topics. These can be recorded and made available via streaming from the website.
3. **School-Based Activities:** Workshops involving youth can achieve two objectives. First, they bring a fresh perspective to the planning process, and second, activities involving kids often will attract parents who are curious about what their children are involved in related to planning. Recent planning events in the community, such as the Civic Center planning process, have already used this approach with a successful outcome by partnering with Growing up Boulder.
4. **Displays in Public Places:** Ongoing displays can be placed in multiple locations around the community where people gather, such as the library, cultural institutions, senior centers, recreation centers, etc. If resources allow, kiosk technology can be utilized to capture feedback on a range of topics.
5. **Robust Dedicated Website:** Today's technology-savvy community requires a well-constructed website for use throughout the process, as a means of gathering input and feedback on ideas and proposals during the plan process through various social media tools. Techniques such as "topic of the week," online surveys, blogs, and virtual meetings can all be used to raise awareness and generate interest. Web sites for plans often attract a different audience than the typical meeting-only based process; offering both can increase the range of participants and viewpoints heard.
6. **Creative Engagement of Business Community:** In addition to the traditional focus on business owners, consider focusing on employees and in-commuters, using focus groups and employee surveys.
7. **Take the Plan to the Community:** The most effective strategy for engaging hard-to-reach members of the community is to take the planning process to them. This may include senior living centers, schools, and places of worship (particularly important for minority community members).
8. **Portable Meetings:** Create meeting materials that can be used by neighborhoods and other groups to address planning questions (e.g., "Meeting in a Box").

## RECOMMENDED PLAN UPDATE STRUCTURE

Based on the recommendations contained in the report, we have developed two possible options for a possible structure for the updated plan document. Our primary recommended structure assumes that the current 2010 plan structure will be maintained, with revisions and additions to incorporate new and updated material. As an alternative, we have suggested an approach that is based on the city's Sustainability Framework. While resources and priorities may not allow the 2015 update to follow this alternative approach, we have included it for consideration as a possible direction for the plan's transformation over time. The approach based on the sustainability framework may be particularly beneficial as the city's priority-based budgeting process is fully integrated with the Sustainability Framework, and as the city's metrics dashboard is implemented. This change would ensure that the BVCP, budgeting process, Sustainability Framework, and metrics dashboard were all in alignment by sharing a common organizational structure. The two outlines are included in the appendix to this report.

# APPENDIX

---

## Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Outline, Based on Current Structure

---

### Introduction

- History of BVCP
- Boulder Valley Today and Tomorrow – Challenges and Opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Summary of 2015 Major Update – and what’s new (including resilience)
- How this Plan is Structured
- Incorporating Outcomes and Metrics (note: these could either be in each section or consolidated in the Action Plan)

### Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Policies

#### Section 1: Vision and Core Values (note: this would be the new consolidated Vision section)

- Community Vision and Core Values

#### Section 2: Built Environment

- Growth Management (relocated from General Policies in BVCP chapter 1)
  - City’s role
  - Limits on physical expansion
  - Growth projections
  - Growth requirements
  - Jobs/housing balance
  - Framework for annexation and urban service provision
- Intergovernmental cooperation
- Partnerships with community organizations
- Sustainable urban form (note: integrate current work on urban design, include visual materials that support and illustrate desired urban form)
- Community identity and land use patterns
- Neighborhoods
- Mixed-use development
- Activity centers and corridors
- Community conservation
- Rural lands preservation

### **Section 3: Natural Environment**

- Biodiversity and native ecosystems
- Urban environmental quality
- Natural hazards and geological resources
- Water and air quality

### **Section 4: Energy and Climate**

- Climate commitment
- Energy conservation and renewable energy production
- Green building
- Waste stream management
- Sustainable purchasing

### **Section 5: Economy**

- Strategic redevelopment and sustainable employment
- Diverse economic base
- Sustainable business practices
- Job opportunities, education, and training
- Fiscal sustainability ( new topic to address city revenues and linkage to budget)

### **Section 6: Transportation**

- Complete transportation system
- Land use integration
- Air quality

### **Section 7: Housing**

- Community housing needs
- Housing choices
- Affordable and workforce housing
- Housing diversity
- Growth and community housing goals

### **Section 8: Safety and Community Well-Being**

- Human services
- Social equity
- Diversity and inclusion
- Community health

- Community infrastructure and facilities
  - Schools
  - Community facilities and services
  - Parks and trails
- Arts and culture
- Community safety and police services
- Fire protection
- Emergency preparedness
- Public safety through design

**Section 9: Agriculture and Food**

- Support for agriculture
- Local food production & access to healthy foods
- Sustainable agricultural practices

**Amendment Procedures**

- Procedures
- Changes at any Time
- Mid-Term Review Changes
- Five-Year Review

**Land Use Maps and Descriptions (note: could include Framework Plans here)**

- Land Use
- Open Space

**Implementation**

- Subcommunity and area planning
- Master plans
- Trails map
- Action plan
  - Matrix with all actions organized by element
  - Identification of priority actions

**Referral Process**

**Urban Services Criteria and Standards**

---

# Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Outline, Based on Sustainability Framework

---

## Introduction

- History of BVCP
- Boulder Valley Today and Tomorrow – Challenges and Opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Summary of 2015 Major Update – and what’s new (including resilience)
- Incorporating Outcomes and Metrics (note: these could either be in each section or consolidated in the Action Plan)

## Section 1: Vision and Core Values

- Community Vision and Core Values (note: this would be the new consolidated Vision section)

## Section 2: Safe Community

- Community safety and police services
- Fire protection
- Emergency preparedness
- Public safety through design

## Section 3: Healthy and Socially Thriving Community

- Human services
- Social equity
- Diversity and inclusion
- Community health
- Local food production & access to healthy foods
- Community infrastructure and facilities
  - Schools
  - Community facilities and services
  - Parks and trails
  - Arts and culture

## Section 4: Livable Community

- Sustainable urban form
- Land use patterns (note: land use categories and land use maps could be consolidated into this element or remain in a separate chapter as per the current plan)

- Creating and maintaining healthy and vibrant neighborhoods
- Activity centers and corridors
- Housing (integrate findings/policy directions from housing strategy)
  - Community housing needs
  - Housing choices
  - Affordable and workforce housing
  - Housing diversity
- Growth Management (from General Policies in BVCP chapter 1)
  - City's role
  - Limits on physical expansion
  - Growth projections
  - Growth requirements
  - Jobs/housing balance
  - Framework for annexation and urban service provision
    - Areas I, II, and III
    - Annexation
    - Provision of urban services
    - Phased extension of urban services
    - Utilities
- Rural lands preservation and community conservation

#### **Section 5: Accessible and Connected Community**

- Complete transportation system
  - Transit
  - Roadways
  - Bicycle network
  - Pedestrian network
- Land use integration
- Air quality

#### **Section 6: Environmentally Sustainable Community**

- Biodiversity and native ecosystems
- Urban environmental quality
- Natural hazards and geological resources
- Water and air quality
- Climate commitment
- Energy conservation and production
- Green building
- Waste stream management

## **Section 7: Economically Vital Community**

- Strategic redevelopment and sustainable employment
- Diverse economic base
- Sustainable business practices
- Job opportunities, education, and training
- Fiscal sustainability (new topic to address city revenues and linkage to budget)

## **Section 8: Good Governance**

- Engaged community
  - Collaborative approach to decision-making
  - Inclusive and accessible
  - Information accessibility
- Effective local government
- Intergovernmental cooperation (from General Policies)
  - Regional and statewide cooperation
  - Policy assessment
  - Collaboration for service delivery
  - Compliance with land use regulations
- Partnerships with community organizations
- Sustainable purchasing

## **Plan Amendment Procedures**

- Procedures

## **Implementation**

- Subcommunity and area planning
- Master plans
- Trails map
- Action plan
  - Matrix with all actions organized by element
  - Identification of priority actions

## **Referral Process**

## **Urban Services Criteria and Standards**