

BOULDER'S OPEN SPACE & MOUNTAIN PARKS THEN AND NOW

Boulder's Open Space & Mountain Parks program is the product of a long history of actions taken by the City of Boulder government and the citizens of Boulder in response to their concern for the preservation of buffer areas and the mountain backdrop.

One of the first efforts to preserve the mountain backdrop was the purchase of Chautauqua Park at the foot of Flagstaff Mountain through a bond issue in 1898. In 1907, the City purchased 1600 acres of land on Flagstaff from the federal government. An additional 1200 acres was purchased in 1912 - at the cost of \$1.25 an acre!

Since the early 1900's when Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. encouraged the City to preserve mountain backdrop and major waterways, Boulder's citizens have been concerned about protecting the foothills. In 1959, a charter amendment was passed, establishing a "blue line" above which city water would not be supplied. Citizens who helped pass the bill realized that this would slow development of the foothills, but would not stop it. This, along with the fact that Boulder's population doubled between 1950 and 1960, led concerned citizens to organize an action group known as PLAN Boulder. The group successfully campaigned for passage of a bond issue to save from threat of development the 160 acre Enchanted Mesa.

Citizen involvement in the open space preservation effort continued with public education a major focus. Council lent its support to the effort. A conference was sponsored by PLAN Boulder to further educate the public. "Greenbelts, why and how" included speakers from the city and county government, Colorado Open Space Council, Bureau of Outdoor Education, planning consultants and other interested groups. Committees were formed, slide programs presented, and local drivers sported bumper stickers supporting the greenbelt issue.

As a result of a 1967 municipal election, Boulder became the first city in the country to tax itself specifically for the acquisition, management and maintenance of open space. The measure to add 4/10 of one cent sales tax passed by a 57% majority, an overwhelming demonstration of support in an era of citizen tax concern. Shortly after the election, the City Manager and City Council appointed an Advisory Committee on Open Space, and in 1973 Council created the Open Space Board of Trustees to set policies and priorities for open space land acquisition and advise Council on budgets, use and management of open space land. In 1989 76% of voters added 3/10 of one cent to the sales tax for a period of 15 years to accelerate open space preservation. An additional .15 sales tax was approved by voters in 2003.

The sales tax revenues, coupled with passage of a charter amendment in 1971 allowing City Council to issue bonds for the acquisition of open space, set into motion an aggressive open space acquisition program. In 1986 a charter amendment providing more permanent protection for open space lands was adopted with passage by 79% of the voters.

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City and County in 1977, recognizes open space as providing the basic structure for the Plan. Purposes for open Space & Mountain parks include: *preservation or restoration of natural areas; preservation of water resources in their natural or traditional state; preservation of scenic areas or vistas, wildlife habitats, or fragile ecosystems; preservation of land for passive recreational use; preservation of agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production; utilization of land for shaping the development of the city; utilization of non-urban land for spatial definition of urban areas; utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains; and preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value and its contribution to the quality of life of the community.* Once acquired, the land may not be improved unless for its protection and maintenance or to provide for passive recreational, open agricultural or wildlife use of the land.

Today, Boulder citizens enjoy nearly 45,000 acres of Open Space & Mountain Parks in and around the City. Some of the land is in agricultural production, preserving the historic nature of Boulder County while keeping the land open for wildlife and passive recreational uses. In addition to the aesthetic pleasure of Boulder's Open Space & Mountain Parks, over 140 miles of trails are available for hikers and horseback riders. Bicyclists enjoy riding on over 40 miles of designated trails. Picnicking and fishing areas also appeal to area residents, as well as a program of scheduled hikes and activities conducted by Open Space & Mountain Parks staff.

As Boulder embarks on the 21st century, the need for open space buffers between growing communities, close-in passive recreational access and preservation of wildlife and riparian areas remain. The success of the Open Space Program has been and will continue to be a direct result of citizen advocacy. Boulder's Open Space belongs to all of us and your involvement as supporter, visitor or volunteer will ensure a successful tomorrow for this special part of Boulder.