



*Frolic . . .* The Mesa Trail by the Flatirons is part of the property already purchased for the greenbelt program.

Photo by Harold E. Malde



*Enjoyment . . .* The City of Boulder already has contracted to purchase this land which is south of Wonderland Lake.

Photo by Oakleigh Thorne, II

## Boulder's Race for THE GREENBELT

What is beautiful, practical and impossible? The answer might very well be Boulder's greenbelt program which not too long ago was thought to be only a wistful desire. The greenbelt program is simple in purpose. Its aim is to preserve the majestic mountain backdrop for the City of Boulder and the natural wilderness areas in and around the city. Officials envision a belt of land in its natural state surrounding the present city with wilderness and park areas accessible to everyone in the community. Because water-based recreation offers sport as well as beauty, all bodies of water in the city are included in the greenbelt area.

Although simple in purpose, the program offers, perhaps, the most unique and meaningful concept present in modern day society. With the rapid growth of today's cities, the open space areas are fast being absorbed

by industrial complexes and residential sections. In the Boulder Valley alone, the population is expected to increase from 75,000 in 1967 to more than 150,000 by 1985, and the amount of land needed for development also is expected to double.

While the greenbelt program was initiated to retain the rare beauty of the area, it has other advantages. Unlike many cities, Boulder is relatively free from congestion and the monotony often associated with popular, growing communities. And the citizens want to keep it that way. In addition, the open space would make the remaining land more valuable. It would act as a buffer between residential and industrial areas and between different types of industrial areas. With the popularity of hiking, bicycling and horseback riding, the prospect of a trail around and through the

future city also is appealing. Furthermore, the program is expected to be a catalyst in the creation of open space areas and use of aesthetic design within private developments.

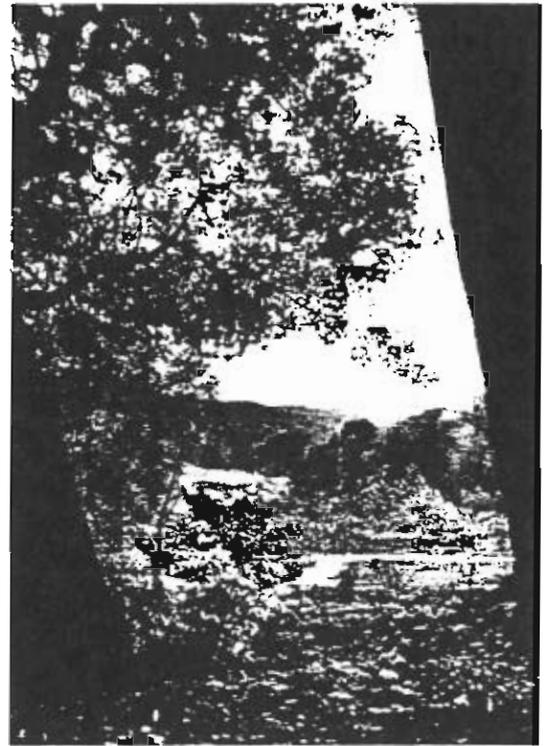
To further the program, municipal officials will negotiate this fall with the public utilities company to place all future residential lines underground in order to avoid distracting lines and structures on the city's surface. And an extensive program to plant trees along the streets also is being contemplated.

This comprehensive plan for the future was not developed over night, although once begun, it mushroomed rapidly. It had its beginning when several citizens commented to Dwain Miller, parks and recreation director in Boulder, that it was too bad the city couldn't save its scenic beauty from urban sprawl. With that, Miller



*Peace . . . Boulder Creek is slated for greenbelt use, as are all bodies of water in Boulder.*

Photo by Harold E. Malde



*Beauty . . . Boulder Creek in East Boulder flows gently through the wilderness area by Flagstaff Mountain.*

Photo by Oockleigh Thorne, II

# for (Open) Space T CONCEPT

and his department went to work on the "impossible" plan in early 1966.

At the outset, Miller envisioned the creation of parks and recreation facilities in areas where industrial and residential developments would destroy the natural settings. As finally evolved, however, the greenbelt program calls for the preservation, but not the development, of these areas. They will remain in their natural state unless funds other than for the greenbelt program are apportioned for the development of some areas.

Undoubtedly, the most unique feature of the entire concept is that it called for a tax increase which the citizens had to endorse. There have been other open space programs in the country, but none that demanded the community's approval of a tax increase.

It would have been easy to scrap

the plan by simply saying the people are fed up with taxation. Luckily for Boulder, however, its city officials decided the plan warranted a try. The city council with Mayor Robert W. Knecht gave the preliminary plan tentative approval and recommended that the Parks and Recreation Department develop it further. The council was seeking answers to such questions as: Specifically what kinds of land are involved? Would the city attempt full or partial ownership or what extent would be the city's interest in the land? and What kind of priorities were needed?

It was at this time, in September of 1967, that the council began to ponder the knotty problem of financing the venture. It also was at this time that Andy Brisco, public works director, broached a plan to Ted Tedesco, city manager, for street improvements.

Tedesco analyzed the two projects and saw that a one-cent increase in the sales tax possibly could finance both projects. The city council concurred with Tedesco.

Because the city's tax ordinance provides that a sales tax increase must be approved by the citizens, an election was scheduled for November, 1967. Before the tax increase plan could be put to the voters, however, city officials had to make some provision for food and drug purchases. Accordingly, a Boulder councilman recommended a credit arrangement similar to that of the state. The idea took hold, and the last stumbling block to a greenbelt election had been overcome.

With that, the council organized a three-man steering committee to plan the greenbelt crusade with the assistant

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city manager. The proposal called for earmarking 60 percent of the tax funds for the thoroughfare program and 40 percent for greenbelt purposes.

Although the people voiced enthusiasm for the greenbelt program from the start, a comprehensive promotional campaign was needed to make all aspects of the plan known and to win support for the necessary tax increase.

Prior to the actual campaign, the Parks and Recreation Department produced "The Value of Green" slide show and presented it to the officials of community organizations. From there, the organizations scheduled showings for all their members. In all, there were 52 presentations of the 15-minute slide show with a total of 3,700 viewers.

Several community organizations jumped into the project then and waged an all-out campaign to ensure passage of the tax increase. The

League of Women Voters prevailed on councilmen to speak at coffee hours held in every precinct. Another organization, Plan Boulder, assisted in the promotion and also organized the Citizens for Greenbelt. The latter organization developed and distributed bumper stickers, literature, press releases and letters to the editor and arranged for telephone committees to spread the word about the greenbelt concept. Private citizens also were involved in the program's promotion.

The people, without a doubt, were consulted about the program. And this probably had a great bearing on its success.

The wide acceptance of the greenbelt program and its accompanying tax increase is easier to understand if a past event is examined. In 1959 the people of Boulder voted to create an imaginary blue line above which the city would not provide water service.

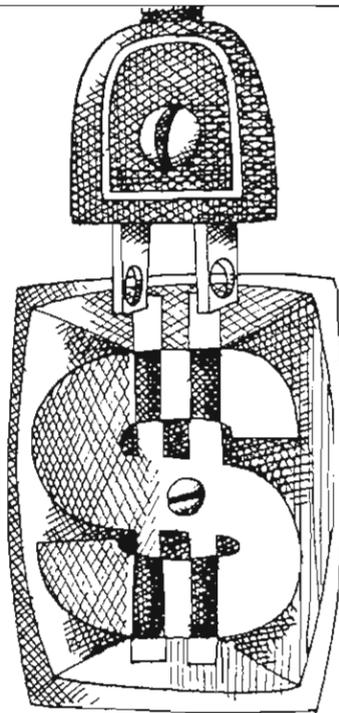
The line extends, generally speaking, along the base of the mountains upward to the ridge and was intended to discourage development in the mountain area. The only exception was water service to the National Center for Atmospheric Research. When approached by NCAR, the city officials went to the people who voted approval for the water service.

The pressure for development in the mountains, however, has increased steadily. Because there was danger of industrial and residential developments obtaining water from other sources, the blue line became inadequate for preserving the mountain backdrop. It was this realization that helped prompt acceptance of the greenbelt program.

According to Larry Blick, newly-appointed assistant city manager and administrator of the program, citizen interest in the greenbelt concept was high from the beginning because the citizens realized Boulder's unique setting and felt strongly about maintaining it. Blick also cited the educational level of Boulder citizens as a factor in the program's endorsement. Since the city has a university and many scientific establishments, the educational level is high.

Once voter approval had been secured, the "impossible" concept came to life. If all the land originally pinpointed for the greenbelt program is obtained or maintained, it will involve 18,900 acres. Boulder has been well endowed and already has 5,700 of the 18,900 necessary acres. The rest of the land will have to be obtained over a period of several years. Because

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money is not available to secure all the land now, the program's planners are setting priorities.

Priorities will be set, based on the general character of the area, benefits which could be derived from the land, relationship to other greenbelt areas, potential size, frequency of observation or use, isolation, accessibility, estimated cost, relationship to other public needs, possibility of obtaining use without purchase and the possibility of obtaining outside funds. The priority schedule for operational purposes will take into consideration economics, available revenue and the location of current and pending development.

Realizing that there will be insufficient funds to purchase all desired lands, the City of Boulder will rely heavily on the purchase of scenic, trail and flooding easements, the purchase of options, lease-back arrangements and cooperation with other gov-

ernmental agencies to preserve open space. Agricultural and grazing lands are compatible with open space purposes, and therefore, lend themselves to lease-back or easement arrangements.

At the time of this publication, Boulder officials were recruiting to fill the position of land officer, a newly-created post. The land officer, when selected, will buy the land for the greenbelt program as well as for the thoroughfare program which was approved by the voters along with the greenbelt plan. The land officer also will make appraisals which will aid in evaluating proposed alternate thoroughfare routes.

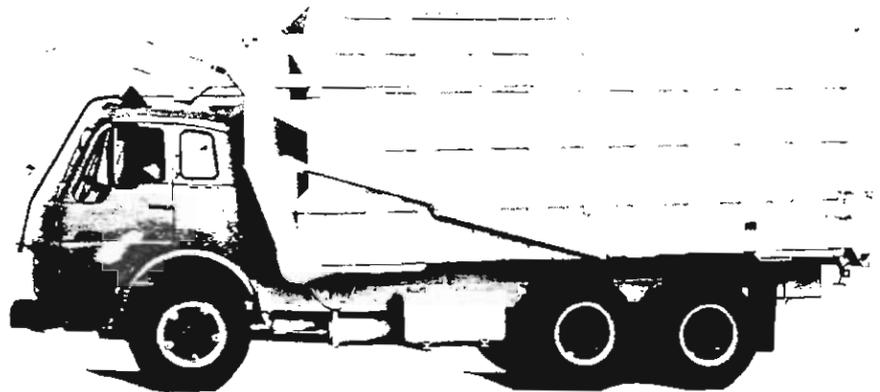
"Several people a week come in to find out if the city is willing to purchase land they have for sale. After discussing the property, and based on its location, cost, pressure of development and scenic benefits, the city man-

ager's Advisory Committee on Open Space will advise as to whether the land should be purchased." Blick explained.

Already the city has taken steps to acquire three major areas which total 1,021 acres. These purchases pretty well ensure the preservation of Boulder's mountain backdrop.

Even with the greenbelt program going full steam ahead, some of the chosen land may have to be forfeited because of the lack of immediate funds. How well the project works out will depend, to a large extent, on how adroit the administrators are in using the available money. The intricacies of the project are many, but the city intends to be able to flash a victory sign when the project is scheduled to end in 1985. And that victory sign may very well be symbolized by one of the most scenic and well-planned cities in the nation.

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