

BOULDER VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – Input from Oct. 14, 2014 City Study Session of the Planning Board and City Council

Staff Presentation:

L. Ellis introduced the project and consultants with PowerPoint slides.

Planning Board Overview:

A. Brockett provided an overview of Planning Board discussion on BVCP from previous board meeting discussions.

Consultant Presentation:

B. Herman and **D. Godschalk** provided consultant observations as included in the packet and the Range of Approaches, as follows:

- Retain Current Plan/Focus on Implementation Tools
- Minor Plan Update with focus on Vision and Policy Refinement
- Plan Repackaging/Sustainability Integration and Outcomes
- Major Update with Community/Partnership Process

Discussion Topics:

The following questions guided the council discussion:

1. New Topics and Issues: What new issues and opportunities should the 2015 plan update address?
2. Update Approach: What is the appropriate level of effort and community engagement for the plan update?
3. Resilience Strategy: Should the resilience strategy process and/or outcomes be bundled with the BVCP update?

City Council and Planning Board provided the following comments and questions:

M. Cowles: Like the upper end of range of approaches for the comp plan update, because the community has had floods, fires, and seen increased focus on climate change. The plan should address areas of the city that are less resilient and have more vulnerable people. We should do the plan in line with the resilience strategy. It is surprising that the plan is not expressing the vision. It is expressed with heavy text, and many desires without priorities. It may be time for analysis related to outcomes.

J. Gerstle: We have been well served by the plan's vision and goals of existing plans, and it is not obvious that the vision needs attention. It makes sense to incorporate resilience, but it is not clear we need to redefine the vision. It is appropriate to talk about it and ensure agreement. Focus on implementation is absolutely appropriate and most useful to issues raised by Planning Board.

M. Young: Seems the plan does not have a correlating Master Plan to the built environment. The text is good, but it needs visualization of the definitions. Make it clear to the whole community what is appropriate. Do a minor update and focus on the implementation of the built environment section and then do code changes. Weave in resilience.

Consultant response: The plan could include a more defined version of urban form definition (e.g. San Francisco or other examples). It could be part of the plan or a separate element.

L. May: The value statements are clear if you use it a lot. I would not call for a minor update, but we need to an update with focus on vision and policy requirements. Roll in resilience. As part of that, a significant community partnership process needs to be incorporated. Do a modest update and incorporate topics that have not previously been in there, and flesh out the built environment topic.

S. Weaver: Take a holistic look. The values are there. The vision is there but is not clear to all. The update should be somewhere between minor and major. It needs an urban form component that gives more guidance – for both by-right and site review projects. The climate goal that was adopted needs to be included and flow down to implementation. If not we will miss our goals. The BVCP is the place to include big aspirational goals. Add resilience and net energy goals. Key is to show what goals look like to the community.

A. Brockett: Focus on implementation tools. Add prioritization particularly in built environment and outcomes. A separate built environment plan is intriguing, if it guides the shape of development, areas of city, different streetscapes. Maybe not in this plan if it is to be done. Achievability of completing the built environment plan is a concern.

J. Putnam: With plan repackaging, be careful not to lose what is in the comp plan. Policies are there, but there are holes in translation. The plan needs a good definition of compact urban form. We have good understanding and policies to prevent sprawl. With visual and graphic tools we can address urban form. Take a hard look at urban form goals with the public, as people may not agree with text. Then, look at implementation tools and outcomes. Agree that resilience needs to be integrated with the plan to take it seriously. This may mean that we have something rougher and less perfect that can be refined later, rather than wait. Get to implementation.

S. Jones: Agree that the plan has served Boulder well. The values are solid – don't rehash them. But, repackage to tell the story better. Resilience is important. Rough out the visualization piece where details will happen with other processes. Other issues have been ripening in the community, such as arts. The plan doesn't really address, but people seem ready to embrace it more holistically.

L. Morzel: Agree with plan repackaging, sustainability, and outcomes. The comp plan is great. When I was a neighborhood advocate, it got me into planning and action. It will be important to integrate sustainability and resilience – they have to be done in parallel. Don't do much visioning. Sharpening and refining policies could help. It will be critically important to add implementation tools. There is too much wiggle room from Planning Board approval through site review, and we need more certainty. Address the map changes. Want to look at Area III – Planning Reserve and where we are going with that. The last thing we want to do is to loosen our belt and go sprawling into Area III. We should not consider developing into Area III. Not something city should go talk to county about. Discuss area II as well. Want to have time to discuss map.

A. Shoemaker: Ditto to what Aaron said, including built environment. Allow the update to evolve culturally and reflect demographics. There is a lot of change in the city – implementation tools are critical. If we do not have those tools, we lose opportunity to shape things as they are happening. Perhaps the vision statement needs more clarity. Improve the graphics of what is a wonky document.

B. Bowen: Agree with what others said. Address plan update at the appropriate level of light touch. Address urban form more deeply and sustainability and resilience. We have won past battles. Need to be doing a deep enough revision to address current issues and get ahead of them.

C. Gray: The report was interesting and I appreciate the consultant observations. A process with resilience integrated into the comp plan update makes sense. Use the new neighborhood liaison to have a real involved process in the community. Community partnerships are important in Boulder (e.g., with major employers, university, labs, art and culture). Not so much about growing the community but understanding the needs of those partners.

T. Plass: The bones of the plan are strong. We may be too close to see that the vision is not clear. It's worth looking at how to make it clearer. Tie in resilience – it's the next really important thing. Would like to also see local food as part of implementation, as it is currently aspirational, but we need to get more specific. Another more detailed topic is to incorporate better cellular coverage in our community, as it is a safety issue and desired by the community.

M. Appelbaum: Agrees with Tim and John, and would like to address built environment, possibly as a master plan or separate element. Concerned we might focus on built form too much, and it will slow down the process. The comp plan is not just a land use plan – that is what people see, but it is much more than that, and we should remind people it is more. Other sections probably need some revision and updating to get them more in sync with other plans. Sometimes, the land use drives other things and sometimes it's the other way around. Resilience is like that as well. Map is a working component but not the only thing. Not sure about prioritizing goals. Despite the ability to use policies to justify anything, that may not be a bad thing, as we can't always have it all. Projects (on project-by-project basis) cannot be expected to solve all the problems. A giant battle about ranking the goals will not get us far. Sort out the detailed needs in area plans. Regional is important, but not just for partnerships. Boulder is part of a bigger metro area. The way we look at implications and the way we measure things is important. We cannot just look at how things affect Boulder. Regional impacts need to be considered, in how we measure (e.g., housing). We need to consider "if it weren't here what would that mean?" We need a full and accurate picture of not just Boulder's sustainability but the sustainability of the region.

G. Karakehian: Minor update rather than major. Agree with other comments. Update and modernize, but not interested in seeking a major work effort. The plan works and needs fine tuning.

L. Payton: Part of the reason we have so little community engagement is because we average across the community. We should have a section on neighborhoods (e.g., a couple of pages per neighborhood). Get people involved to describe and set vision for the future, identify ways they are vulnerable, resilient, sustainable, or could be more sustainable. It would get people involved and thinking about it. Policies are too generic and that creates distance between people and the plan.

M. Young: Would like to reiterate support for the arts. Resilience it has the potential to weave into other areas also. Also, like Liz's idea of defining neighborhoods and having them define themselves.

S. Jones: Agree with Tim on local food; it fits with resilience.

G. Karakehian: Agree with review of maps – confirm they still reflect what we want them to. Value of neighborhood planning in general should be stressed – neighborhood plans indicate what may be expected of individual developments.

S. Weaver: Like idea of a very light touch of neighborhood plans – preparation for that could be useful. Not going to get so many area plans in the next five years.

L. May: Reinforce maps and neighborhoods. As we look at developing neighborhood plans, we need to look at growth and development pressures and the question of growth paying its own way.

M. Appelbaum: Neighborhood plans are not where the action is. They have almost no changes unless we started some real rezoning or increase in density. Not saying I am in agreement with no changes, but we need to focus on where change is happening and where it is likely to change. For most neighborhoods, very little is happening. For areas where things are changing, that might be helpful, but that is different than the conversation we're having. Neighborhood planning could spread us too thin.

T. Plass: Agrees that the neighborhood planning idea by Liz has merit. It gives the residents more buy-in, engagement. There is value to calling out neighborhood and having pride in where they live.

M. Appelbaum: Need to address scope of what is possible.

L. Morzel: Agrees with Tim that neighborhoods could help create better social fabric (e.g., flood resulted in people getting to know each other). Buy-in to the comp plan is important. It isn't just land use.

Consultant summary: Common themes tonight are middle range of level of effort; integrate sustainability and resilience; not a redefining of vision, but clarify policies in some cases and make the plan more graphic. Explore integrating metrics and outcomes, and add new or emerging topics, such as built environment clarification.

NEXT STEPS

David Driskell closed the meeting by highlighting the following next steps:

- Consultant will provide recommendations related to Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Assessment and thoughts on process and scope.
- Our goal is to get suggestions to you on work plan prioritization and options in advance of your January retreat.
- Didn't hear concerns around new thinking about engagement strategy for Comprehensive Housing Strategy. We will move to implement.
- Victor Dover is now planned for Dec. 9 with City Council as part of Design Excellence Initiative.