

Executive Summary

“The environment, after all, is where we all meet, where we all have a mutual interest. It is one thing that all of us share.” -Lady Bird Johnson

Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) system has a central role to play in preserving biodiversity - for the benefit of nature and people alike. Just as a diversity of human cultures, backgrounds and perspectives enhances our community, natural and agricultural lands need a diversity of plants, animals and crops to thrive. In turn, this biological and agricultural variety provides us clean air, clean water, local foods, a vibrant economy and scenic beauty to inspire us, our children and their children.

We are all connected - nature, people, farms, ranches - through an intricate network of inputs and outputs, through the air we breathe and the water we drink, through our long history and relationship with Open Space and Mountain Parks.

These meaningful connections with the land and with each other make us who we are. They unite community members and staff with deep appreciation for the environment and a commitment to protect it. And they inspire us to work together to ensure our landscapes are enjoyed long into the future.

A product of meaningful and inclusive consultation with community members, the Open Space Board of Trustees, City Council and OSMP staff, this Draft Master Plan helps focus our energy, funding and expertise on a clear vision for the future. It describes our five **focus areas** - or central management themes - and the related open space **values** we all share. It articulates our aspirations and our collective hopes as desired **outcomes** for the future of OSMP with general management **strategies** to achieve them.

The 2019 Draft OSMP Master Plan also proposes a set of **high priority strategies**, or efforts we will emphasize first. In summary, these strategies would guide staff to focus on:

- Keeping healthy habitats healthy and bringing degraded ones into better condition;
- Taking care of and improving the condition of our existing assets, including trails, visitor amenities, agricultural structures and water infrastructure;
- Addressing visitation growth;
- Enhancing soil health and carbon storage in irrigable agricultural lands to improve productivity and slow the effects of climate change; and
- Fostering environmental literacy, wellness and stewardship among youth and underserved communities.

The following sections summarize the five focus areas that organize the draft plan, which are described further in Section 3 of the document. This summary also introduces the priorities that we will get to work on first in the next few years, which are described further in Section 4.

Helping Nature Thrive: Our Central Purpose

At the center of it all is the natural landscape itself. It is where we began over a century ago. It is a focus for our future.

Boulder's natural landscapes play a central role in preserving biodiversity. They support more than 740 kinds of native plants, 300 bird species, 130 species of butterflies, 60 kinds of mammals, 20 reptile and amphibian species and 15 types of fish.

While generations of Boulder residents have long worked to preserve and protect these important natural areas, our two major ecosystems - grasslands and forests - still need our help. Ecological monitoring tells us these ecosystems are, on average, only in fair condition. Thus, it is critical we are good stewards, protecting and preserving the natural areas that are healthy and addressing threats that weaken their health. Invasive, non-native plant species are making it hard for native plants to survive, affecting the animals that depend on them and the waterways we all depend on. Drier, hotter conditions in the future, coupled with more frequent and intense fires and floods will further challenge nature preservation.

Restoration is a key stewardship tool used to return degraded areas to more natural conditions, build in resilience, and recover from disasters or degradation. But can restoration remain effective given the pace of environmental change? As temperatures and climate change affect our ecosystems, how can we prevent species loss? Can we restore habitats to have even more ability to be resilient to change and recover from disturbance? What makes natural landscapes resilient in the first place?

The following guidance in the master plan will help us address and prioritize the most vexing challenges and important opportunities over the next decade, as we work together to enhance **Ecosystem Health and Resilience**.

FOCUS AREA	Ecosystem Health and Resilience (EHR)
VALUE STATEMENT	<i>Using the best available science, we protect healthy ecosystems and mend those we have impaired.</i>
OUTCOMES EHR Outcomes, continued	EHR.A) HIGH DIVERSITY OF NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS: OSMP lands represent a high diversity of native plants and animals, expansive natural areas and some of the most critical wildlife habitat along the Front Range.
	EHR.B) RESTORED, RESILIENT HABITAT: Degraded habitat with high potential to support native or extirpated (i.e., locally extinct) native species is restored and made more resilient to stressors like invasive species or direct and indirect human impacts.
	EHR.C) CLIMATE ACTION COMMITMENT: Native ecosystems withstand and slow the effects of climate change.
	EHR.D) INFORMED, SHARED STEWARDSHIP: OSMP and the community work side by side to develop a greater understanding of the land and to safeguard our natural heritage.
STRATEGIES * HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES (Identified with input from community members, staff and the Open Space Board of Trustees)	* EHR.1) CONSERVE AND RESTORE BOULDER’S NATURAL HERITAGE: Sustain, expand, enhance, connect and restore habitat blocks with high ecological value and potential through conservation practices.
	* EHR.2) REDUCE UNDESIGNATED TRAILS: Close, designate or reroute undesignated trails, especially in sensitive habitat areas.
	* EHR.3) EXTEND ON-TRAIL REQUIREMENTS: Reduce off-trail travel in targeting locations, especially in sensitive habitat areas.
	* EHR.4) REDUCE HUMAN DISTURBANCE: Understand and address impacts from noise pollution, light pollution, and adjacent development on wildlife and sensitive habitat areas.
	* EHR.5) MANAGE ENTIRE ECOSYSTEMS USING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO PLANNING: Use management and planning approaches that consider all elements and processes of natural systems rather than focusing on one species or attribute at a time.
	* EHR.6) CONTROL INVASIVE SPECIES: Prioritize management and control of species that have severe and/or widespread impacts, particularly those that are non-native and most likely to be controlled.

EHR Strategies, continued	EHR.7) PREPARE FOR A CHANGING ECOSYSTEM: Maintain or increase the capacity of natural ecosystems to buffer impacts from extreme events like fires and floods.
	EHR.8) DEVELOP A LEARNING LABORATORY APPROACH TO CONSERVATION: Conduct, support, apply and widely distribute the findings of long-term, scientific research to inspire community stewardship.
	EHR.9) REDUCE AND OFFSET GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Support the citywide climate commitment by reducing and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions related to departmental operations and visitor travel.

Inspiring Responsible Recreation

Boulder residents, when you voted over a century ago to purchase the 75-acre Chautauqua Park near the base of the Flatirons, you made history. In 1967, you did it again: Boulder became the first city in the United States to tax itself for the purchase and care of natural lands. Nature has long motivated innovation and quality of life in Boulder.

Residents' long-term investment in natural landscapes pays dividends today in the form of physical, mental and even spiritual wellness. National Geographic recently recognized Boulder as the "happiest city in the United States" for the benefits natural landscapes affords residents. Friends head out on their favorite trail to see what wildflowers are in bloom and to spend time together. Parents enjoy weekend hikes and picnics with their children. Busy professionals walk their dogs after a stressful workday. World-class athletes train on OSMP trails. If enjoyed responsibly - future generations will reap these same rewards.

As the Front Range population grows, so too has interest in outdoor recreation grown across Colorado. In 2017, OSMP attracted roughly 6.25 million visits, up 34 percent from 4.7 million in 2005 (Visitation Estimate, 2018).

OSMP has also seen a growing interest and participation in volunteering as a form of recreation in which community members enjoy taking care of their open space lands. In 2018, 2,156 volunteers provided 18,810 hours of their time to help their public lands - contributing service valued at more than \$503,730.

Nonetheless, rising visitation stresses a system designed to accommodate far fewer residents and visitors. While maintenance needs throughout the system expand, increased trail use may have unintended impacts on certain wildlife and plants,

facilitate the movement of weeds and pests, and cause erosion. So how do we ensure visitors can continue to enjoy high quality, inspiring experiences on open space while we address visitation and its related impacts?

The following guidance for **Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment** will help us address and prioritize the most important needs over the next decade.

FOCUS AREA	Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment (RRSE)
VALUE STATEMENT	<i>We are united by our connection to and enjoyment of nature and our obligation to protect it.</i>
OUTCOMES	RRSE.A) DIVERSE RANGE OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: A fun and diverse range of recreational opportunities reflects visitors’ interests and abilities that contribute to our physical and mental well-being.
	RRSE.B) ENJOYABLE, RESPONSIBLE RECREATION: Amid changing visitor use levels and patterns, ecosystem health is sustained, and visitor experiences remain positive.
	RRSE.C) WELCOMING, ACCESSIBLE TRAILHEADS: Welcoming trailheads and supporting recreational amenities provide access to and highlight Boulder’s scenic, natural and cultural landscape.
	RRSE.D) GREAT EXPERIENCES FOR ALL: Visitors respect and care for each other so all can enjoy themselves.
	RRSE.E) HIGH-QUALITY TRAIL NETWORK: Visitors can enjoy OSMP lands and reach a range of recreational destinations through a well-maintained, connected network of local and regional trails that is welcoming and accessible to all.
STRATEGIES	RRSE.1) SUPPORT A RANGE OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: Continue to encourage a diverse range of passive recreation opportunities that honor and respect the unique character and history of the Boulder community and its surrounding open space lands, providing fun and memorable experiences.
	RRSE.2) ENCOURAGE MULTIMODAL ACCESS TO TRAILHEADS: Explore and partner on a range of coordinated transportation and design solutions to reduce parking congestion and promote active living, ecosystem health and public transportation.

<p>* HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES (Identified with input from community members, staff and the Open Space Board of Trustees)</p>	<p>RRSE.3) PROVIDE WELCOMING AND INSPIRING VISITOR AMENITIES: Continue to provide and improve welcoming, sustainable and accessible trailheads and other amenities, such as the Ranger Cottage, Flagstaff Nature Center, Panorama Point and other viewpoints, picnic areas and wayfinding, to enhance visitor experiences and inspire understanding of the surrounding landscape for a range of visitor demographics.</p>
	<p>* RRSE.4) UPDATE GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR QUALITY TRAIL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Design and construct quality trails that facilitate a range of experiences through a variety of landscape types, using design guidelines and construction standards that elevate the quality and sustainability of trails and encourage the use of native materials that blend with natural surroundings.</p>
	<p>* RRSE.5) REDUCE THE TRAIL MAINTENANCE BACKLOG: Use technology to anticipate and address long-term maintenance needs and changing conditions through a prioritized, life-cycle approach to improving the condition of OSMP’s diverse portfolio of historic and modern trails and amenities.</p>
	<p>RRSE.6) IMPROVE TRAIL CONNECTIONS: Connect and improve the trail network where lands offer high recreational potential, leveraging citywide and regional partnerships.</p>
	<p>* RRSE.7) MANAGE INCREASING VISITATION: Develop an adaptive visitor use management toolkit that explores the expanded use and coordination of management tools that address visitation growth and support positive visitor experiences.</p>
	<p>* RRSE.8) REVIEW AND IMPROVE FEE-BASED RECREATION PROGRAMS: Support enjoyable and compatible recreation experiences by periodically evaluating and refining fee-based recreation programs, commercial use permits and related regulations to make programs easier to understand for visitors and easier to manage for staff.</p>
	<p>RRSE.9) DEVELOP A LEARNING LABORATORY APPROACH TO RECREATION: Combine community engagement results with scientific research and comprehensive data analysis to understand trends, develop and assess practical initiatives, and design management approaches that seek to improve community well-being, enjoyment, understanding and stewardship.</p>

Harmonizing Agriculture and Nature

In a unique partnership, one-third of OSMP lands - or about 15,000 acres - are leased to about 25 ranchers and farmers. As such, lessees do the stewardship work of 15 full-time staff members, saving OSMP more than \$1 million in labor and material costs annually. These ranchers and farmers also preserve Boulder’s agricultural legacy, creating stunning views of working landscapes against the mountain backdrop. Focused on producing food, feed and fiber, OSMP’s agricultural program also conducts research and restoration projects to maintain healthy soils and habitat, encourage integrated, non-chemical pest management, promote water conservation and increase resilience to environmental change.

Many farmers and ranchers are aging, and they hold the institutional knowledge of how to manage OSMP’s agricultural lands. And as the climate changes, more carbon dioxide may lead to more crop yields, but higher temperatures, lower water availability and increased winter survival of pests will likely offset those gains. The timing and availability of forage for cattle also will likely become less certain, making ranching operations more difficult. And with a portfolio of \$60-\$70 million in water rights plus extensive infrastructure like ditches and farm buildings, OSMP’s maintenance and management requirements for agriculture is extensive.

Farmers and ranchers on OSMP lands play a critical role in addressing these challenges, but how will we encourage and support the next generation of farmers and ranchers? How will we continue to sustain viable agricultural operations and infrastructure on open space? How should we better integrate agricultural activities with the ecological health and resilience of the larger landscape?

The management approach described below for **Agriculture Today and Tomorrow** was developed using the recent Agricultural Resources Management Plan, as well as additional staff, board and community input throughout the master plan process to date.

FOCUS AREA	Agriculture Today and Tomorrow (ATT)
VALUE STATEMENT	<i>Our legacy and future are based on working landscapes that are in harmony with nature.</i>
OUTCOMES	ATT.A) VIALE AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOODS: The city’s ranchers and farmers are valued and supported in their contributions to the stewardship of Boulder’s agricultural heritage.

ATT outcomes, continued	ATT.B) SUSTAINABLE, PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURE: OSMP’s agricultural lands and infrastructure remain productive and sustainable long into the future.
	ATT.C) DIVERSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FOR LOCAL MARKETS: A diversity of food and agricultural products is grown on suitable open space properties to better meet the changing demands of the local agricultural economy and the needs of ranchers, farmers and city residents.
	ATT.D) HIGH-VALUE HABITAT ON RANCHES AND FARMS: City agricultural lands provide high-value habitat for rare and native species, integrating both agricultural and ecosystem objectives.
	ATT.E) SOIL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE: Appropriate agricultural practices protect high-quality soils from erosion, improve productivity, maintain soil health and increase resilience in a changing climate.
	ATT.F) RESILIENT AND EFFICIENT WATER SUPPLY: OSMP emerges as a leader in the acquisition and preservation of water assets and the application of innovative irrigation practices that anticipate environmental change.
	ATT.G) APPRECIATION FOR WORKING LANDSCAPES: Community members experience and better understand working landscapes, contributing to the preservation of Boulder’s agricultural lands and heritage.
	STRATEGIES
* ATT.1) MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR AGRICULTURE AND WATER: Focus investments on maintaining and improving existing agricultural infrastructure to standards - both water-related and structural.	
ATT.2) INTEGRATE NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS AND AGRICULTURE: While maintaining the viability of agricultural operations, evaluate and increase the potential for improving the quality of habitat on agricultural lands through staff programs and partnerships with ranchers and farmers.	
ATT.3) SUPPORT THE SUCCESS OF RANCHERS AND FARMERS: Where appropriate, evaluate and pilot cost-sharing, partnerships and other mechanisms to encourage both responsible land stewardship and economic viability for a diverse range of current and future farmers and ranchers on OSMP lands.	

<p>ATT strategies, continued</p> <p>* HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES (Identified with input from community members, staff and the Open Space Board of Trustees)</p>	<p>ATT.4) DIVERSIFY AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS: Partner with open space ranchers and farmers to analyze and where appropriate expand the variety of agricultural operations on OSMP lands, focusing on the infrastructure and technical assistance needed to support local food systems, including diversified vegetable farming, pastured livestock, micro dairies and taking products to market.</p>
	<p>ATT.5) ENHANCE ENJOYMENT AND PROTECTION OF WORKING LANDSCAPES: Partner with community members, farmers and ranchers to maintain and enhance the condition and experience of working landscapes, viewsheds and historic structures.</p>
	<p>ATT.6) REDUCE OR ELIMINATE PESTICIDE USE: Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides wherever possible. When reduction or elimination of pesticides is not possible, use the least toxic and least persistent pesticide that is effective.</p>
	<p>* ATT.7) REDUCE IMPACTS TO FARMS FROM PRAIRIE DOGS: Increase the viability of agricultural operations to the extent possible by reducing impacts from prairie dogs on agricultural lands, especially in prioritized irrigated fields, while maintaining ecologically sustainable prairie dog populations across the landscape.</p>
	<p>ATT.8) PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF WATER: Develop and implement a water management approach that balances sustainable agricultural operations, ecosystem stewardship, protection of OSMP water rights, efficiency of water use and resilience in a more variable climate.</p>
	<p>* ATT.9) ENHANCE SOIL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE: Manage agricultural activities in tilled lands and native grasslands to prevent soil erosion, maintain and/or improve soil health, and protect ecosystem function.</p>

Building an Inclusive Community of Stewards

Named “the best place to raise an outdoor kid” by Backpacker Magazine, Boulder boasts an extensive network of trails, amenities and programs for youth, families and people of all ages to connect with and explore nature. Our efforts help forge connections that inspire a life-long love of the land, inspiring current and future generations to understand, value and protect open space lands.

Like many communities along the Front Range, Boulder’s demographic profile is shifting, which will affect who visits open space in the future. For example, since 2000, the number of people of Hispanic origin has increased more than 8 percent in Boulder,

while across the nation, the Hispanic population increased by 43 percent (City of Boulder, 2017). Moreover, national trends point to young people spending less and less time outdoors and work needs to be done to understand how this national trend may be affecting Boulder.

Even in light of visitation growth, how do we inspire children to fall in love with nature so they will then protect it in years to come? How do we engage and welcome underserved communities and honor our legacy of designing experiences for all to enjoy? And how will we work as a community to take care of OSMP lands for future generations? We hope some of these answers lie in the guidance below for **Community Connection, Education and Inclusion**.

FOCUS AREA	Community Connection, Education and Inclusion (CCEI)
VALUE STATEMENT	<i>Together, we build an inclusive community of stewards and seek to find our place in open space.</i>
OUTCOMES	CCEI.A) INSPIRING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: Visitors participate in education programs and other forums that deepen their sense of place and appreciation for Boulder’s natural, cultural and scenic heritage and broaden their understanding of OSMP land and its management.
	CCEI.B) FULFILLING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Community volunteerism, partnerships and neighborhood involvement serve an increasingly vital role in OSMP’s fulfillment of the City Charter Purposes for open space.
	CCEI.C) LIFETIME CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE: Long-term connections with OSMP lands are strengthened and deepened over the course of our lives and across generations.
	CCEI.D) PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING: Increase awareness of the benefits of nature and the ways visiting OSMP lands can reduce stress and increase physical and mental well-being.
	CCEI.E) ENGAGED YOUTH INSPIRED BY NATURE: OSMP is an emerging leader in promoting an increase in the time that youth spend outdoors and caring for their open space system.
	CCEI.F) PROMOTING EQUITY & INCLUSION: We are all part of an inclusive community, where all people feel welcome, safe and able to enjoy the benefits of open space.

CCEI outcomes, continued	CCEI.G) CONNECTIONS TO BOULDER’S PAST: Cultural landscapes and historic resources on OSMP lands are preserved so that people can enjoy and understand the places and stories of Boulder’s past.
STRATEGIES * HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES (Identified with input from community members, staff and the Open Space Board of Trustees)	CCEI.1) INSPIRE ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY AND NEW INVOLVEMENT IN OSMP: Foster interest, competence and confidence in enjoying and sustaining the OSMP system through a continuum of educational and service-learning experiences for people of all ages.
	CCEI.2) CULTIVATE LEADERS IN STEWARDSHIP: Advance skill-building and training for volunteers and stewards through expanded mentorship and leadership opportunities that increase OSMP’s capacity to address needs and support career development in open space management.
	CCEI.3) FOSTER WELLNESS THROUGH IMMERSION IN THE OUTDOORS: Working with schools and organizations, raise awareness of how open space improves physical and mental well-being.
	CCEI.4) HEIGHTEN COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF LAND MANAGEMENT EFFORTS: Heighten community and neighborhood understanding and involvement in OSMP management and planning efforts through targeted education, outreach and in person engagements in support of on-the-ground action.
	* CCEI.5) ENHANCE SIGNS AND COMMUNICATIONS: Foster discovery, enjoyment and stewardship through a coordinated effort to enhance signs, communications and media that incorporate effective design, messaging and languages for a range of audiences.
	* CCEI.6) WELCOME DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND ABILITIES: Improve understanding, services and amenities for underserved communities through outreach, listening sessions, culturally-relevant programming, language translations, visual signs and materials, staffing and other creative means of empowering and engaging underserved members of our community.
	* CCEI.7) CONNECT YOUTH TO NATURE: Foster youth interest, competence and confidence in enjoying and preserving nature for youth through a continuum of educational and service-learning experiences.

CCEI strategies, continued	* CCEI.8) CONSULT AND COLLABORATE WITH FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED NATIVE AMERICAN NATIONS AND HELP SUPPORT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: Work in partnership with American Indian Tribes and other city departments through formal government-to-government consultations to support Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples' connections to their ancestral homelands.
	CCEI.9) PRESERVE AND INTERPRET BOULDER'S CULTURAL HERITAGE: Complete an inventory and resource management approach for OSMP-managed cultural landscapes and historic resources to improve community connections with Boulder's past.

Funding Our Future

Starting in 2020, funding for OSMP may decrease by as much as \$10 million a year. Portions of city sales tax dedicated to open space have either expired or will be repurposed to other city departments. Staff have been preparing for this reduction, but our capacity to provide the same level of service to our community members will be challenged. Meanwhile, more frequent and intense weather events may increase future costs, and our maintenance backlog remains a significant burden despite great strides. There are also fewer opportunities to purchase large swaths of open space and the price of land - when it does become available - is climbing. While these conditions present challenges for maintaining fiscal health, the following outcomes and strategies set up a creative, efficient approach to **Financial Sustainability**.

FOCUS AREA	Financial Sustainability (FS)
VALUE STATEMENT	<i>Shifting financial conditions require planning for the future.</i>
OUTCOMES	FS.A) LASTING VALUE FOR THE COMMUNITY: OSMP effectively and efficiently manages city taxpayer dollars to build both trust and lasting open space value.
	FS.B) RESILIENCE TO CHANGE: Financial management strengthens adaptability and resilience to local, national and global market forces and environmental change.
	FS.C) PROTECTED INVESTMENTS: The community's long-term investment in open space is protected or enhanced by prioritizing maintenance of OSMP properties and assets.

FS outcomes, continued	FS.D) TARGETED ACQUISITIONS: Strategic acquisition of land, mineral and water interests continue to play an important role in preserving, enhancing and managing Boulder’s legacy of preservation, agriculture and passive recreation.
	FS.E) EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: Financial information is proactively and clearly communicated to promote accountability, increase community understanding of OSMP financial management, and ensure alignment of spending with community priorities.
STRATEGIES	FS.1) STABILIZE FUNDING: Steadily generate funds through sales and use tax collections while strategically leveraging other revenue streams and local dollars to support OSMP’s capacity to deliver open space services.
	FS.2) BUDGET FOR FUTURE UNCERTAINTY: Create, optimize, and manage budgets that anticipate major change drivers such as extreme weather events and fluctuations in revenue and spending.
	FS.3) UNDERSTAND TOTAL COST OF SYSTEM MANAGEMENT: Adopt or create models to understand the total value and cost of managing the OSMP system and its many diverse assets, including impact and investment tracking for upfront and ongoing costs regarding land management, agriculture, trails and other infrastructure.
	FS.4) TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE: Focus capital investments on retaining the health of ecosystems on OSMP properties, as well as maintenance of existing trails, amenities and agricultural infrastructure.
	FS.5) TARGET ACQUISITIONS: Prioritize opportunities to acquire land, mineral and water interests in the Area III - Rural Preservation Area of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan to advance its goals, OSMP Master Plan focus areas and city charter purposes for open space.
	FS.6) PARTNER TO PROTECT LANDS BEYOND TARGET AREA: Consider acquisition of land, mineral and water interests outside the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan boundary where partnership opportunities help leverage costs and advance master plan focus areas and charter purposes for OSMP.
	FS.7) PARTICIPATE IN OTHER ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES: Consider acquisition of land, water and mineral interests within Area I and II of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan only when coupled with planning, development or annexation projects or where citywide priorities or partnership opportunities emerge.

FS strategies, continued	FS.8) EVALUATE EXISTING REAL ESTATE ASSETS ON OSMP LANDS: To improve the protection of, and align with, Open Space purposes in the City Charter, assess real estate assets and explore alternative preservation and stewardship options to better enable staff to steward and manage for those purposes.
	FS.9) INVEST IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONAL NEEDS: To provide effective management of the OSMP system over time, maintain a team-oriented workforce that benefits from experience and ongoing training and is equipped with adequate resources to meet the expectations of the community.
	FS.10) UPDATE PLANNING FRAMEWORK: Refine OSMP planning methods and products to better inform and prioritize the efficient use of limited funding.

Prioritizing Our Work

All 46 strategies across the five focus areas described above are important, and they are all designed to guide our work over the next decade. However, finite capacities require a realistic view of what is achievable, so staff and community members have a shared understanding about what to expect and when.

To that end, staff set out to understand how residents would prioritize their tax dollars through a series of community surveys and in person engagements. Over and again, community members told us efforts aimed at ecosystem health and resilience are most important, and that opportunities to enjoy and protect nature are vital. We heard strong guidance to protect the substantial investment our community has made in open space and to prioritize conservation and maintenance of our existing system.

We listened. With this input as a guide, staff identified 17 high priority strategies (indicated with an asterisk in the tables above). This means we would emphasize funding for these strategies as compared to others, especially in the next few years. However, we would still make progress on other strategies as capacity allows.

If and when additional funding becomes available, we would then scale up funding and effort for our high priority strategies while also devoting more toward other strategies. For example, additional funding would provide more capacity to pursue restoration and conservation projects, make additional progress toward reducing the trail maintenance backlog, and incorporate more forward-thinking approaches to climate change, soil health, youth engagement, inclusion and volunteers.

Inspiring Action

As Boulder residents, we are twice lucky - first for living side by side with such a beautiful landscape; secondly for having had the foresight to protect it.

Over the decades, scientists, land managers and volunteers have demonstrated the kind of patient, careful work it takes to protect healthy lands from deteriorating. Forests have been thinned to help nature thrive and reduce fire risk to nearby homes. Deteriorated areas have also come back to life, like once-plowed grasslands where prairie grasses and songbirds now thrive. Agricultural soils have been studied to learn how they can slow the effects of climate change.

Our work together is not done. The master plan process has helped us talk about our future with creativity, empathy and optimism. We have learned from each other about what we all value and how to honor those values by designing an inclusive future.

We can bring this kind of success to many other places on our system if we continue to put our minds, energies and resources toward it. If we do, more critical wetlands and miles of stream frontage will be restored and more of our forests and grasslands will reach good condition. We can also restore more undesignated trails and improve official ones, so we all enjoy the benefits of nature. Even if funding for OSMP declines in the coming years, we can still make a positive difference by strategically leveraging and prioritizing the time and money we have available.

We hope you join us in making our legacy our future.

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