

TOPICAL REPORT: OVERVIEW OF PLANNING AREA

Purpose of This Report

This Topical Report represents subject-specific research findings that will ultimately inform the content of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The information contained in this report does not necessarily constitute the final narrative that will be presented in the plan. After the findings of this report are reviewed and deemed to be accurate and sufficiently comprehensive, they will be fully synthesized with research from other topical areas as part of the Needs Assessment process. The final content of the Master Plan may reflect significant portions of this report, but will not consist entirely of it. Table 1 depicts the progress of research and planning for this topical area.

Table 1: Topical Area Research Progress

Development Phase	Notes
✓ Research methodology approved	
✓ Preliminary research and analysis complete	
✓ Data gaps identified and remaining research assigned	Some relevant data has not been obtained and/or verified. Instances of this are noted. When applicable, these issues will be addressed in the Needs Assessment.
✓ All data obtained	
✓ Preliminary community plan integration review	
✓ Preliminary department leadership review	
✓ Technical (TAG) review	
✓ Board (PRAB) review	
✓ Department leadership review	Approved by KK (11/13)
<input type="checkbox"/> Topical Report research and analysis complete	
<input type="checkbox"/> Synthesis for needs assessment and community plan integration	

Location

With a population of approximately 97,000, Boulder is the 11th-most-populous city in the state of Colorado. Located in north central Boulder County at an elevation of 5,430 feet, the city is 25 square miles and approximately 25 miles northwest of Denver. Boulder sits within the Boulder Valley, the meeting point of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains. The Flatirons to the west of the city are widely recognizable features and a part of Boulder’s wide variety of protected natural and recreation areas.

Boulder lies in a wide basin beneath Flagstaff Mountain just a few miles east of the Continental Divide and about 30 miles (48 km) northwest of Denver. Arapahoe Glacier provides water for the city, as does Boulder Creek, which flows through the center of the city. The primary water flow through the city is Boulder Creek. The creek was named well ahead of the city's founding for all of the large granite boulders that have cascaded into the creek over the eons. It is from

Boulder Creek that Boulder City, and hence Boulder, is believed to have taken its name. Boulder Creek has significant water flow, derived primarily from snow melt and minor springs west of the city. The creek is a tributary of the South Platte River.

History

Boulder Valley was originally home to the Southern Arapaho tribe of Native Americans; several other tribes routinely visited the area. In 1858, gold seekers established themselves in the area, and, in 1861, the Territory of Colorado was created by Congress to support the growing mining industry. To encourage economic stability, the town campaigned to bring railroad service and the University of Colorado to Boulder. In 1871 the town of Boulder was incorporated.

Also developing in the late 1800s was the concept of the Chautauqua, a movement focusing on adult education and enlightenment. Chautauqua settlements attracted musicians, artists, entertainers, philosophers, and cultural exhibitions. Boulder hosted the opening of the Colorado Chautauqua on July 4, 1898, and it continues today, both as a place and a movement. Chautauqua Park contains one of the few such remaining institutions in the US and stands as a center for knowledge, arts, music, and recreation in Boulder and beyond. After World War II, the Boulder population grew, but not without an eye toward managed growth, preserving historic and natural treasures, and building a strong economy. In the 1950s, Boulder residents focused on improving transportation and recruiting low-impact industry to the area. With the opening of the Denver-Boulder turnpike, the National Bureau of Standards' Radio Propagation Lab, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder's strong economic climate allowed businesses, large and small, to thrive.

Boulder Today

Boulder has undertaken several initiatives to control urban sprawl and has adopted policies to manage growth. Boulder instituted taxes specifically to preserve open space and prevent urban services like water and sewer from expanding outside of a defined boundary, including into higher elevations. Additionally, Boulder is home to many "green" initiatives ranging from transportation to building construction to water and energy conservation.

Boulder is home to a variety of public, charter, and private schools and to the main campus of the University of Colorado, which enrolls approximately 30,000 students. Boulder is widely seen as a progressive community with a vibrant arts, recreation, and entertainment scene. It is regularly regarded as a city with a high quality of life, physically active residents, and many options for fine dining, as well as a top tourist destination. Sustainable initiatives and environmentalism are key components to the overarching environmental ethic of the city.

Boulder has a mild, dry climate and moderate, comfortable seasons. Annual precipitation averages 19 inches, and while snowfall can be heavy in winter, daily snow melt is common due to the high elevation and warming sun. An average of 300 days of sunshine per year give residents and visitors many opportunities to participate in the wide variety of outdoor recreation options available in the many protected natural areas and parks in and around Boulder. Dozens of trailheads begin within the city limits, and many others are a short drive away. Rock climbing and skiing enthusiasts can find world-class routes nearby, and outdoor enthusiasts of all disciplines and skill levels have access to urban and natural trails and open spaces in addition to annual athletic competitions and events.

Overview of Planning Areas

The City of Boulder Department of Community Planning & Sustainability has identified three areas to assist with the planning of long-term growth and service delivery. They are described in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) as Areas I, II, and III.

- Area I: Land within the City of Boulder, provided with city urban services (US Census definition of "City of Boulder").
- Area II: Unincorporated land in Boulder County, planned for annexation and provision of urban services within the 15-year planning period of the BVCP.
- Area III: Unincorporated land in Boulder County outside the Service Area, not expected to annex within the 15-year planning period of the BVCP.

Appendix A contains a map portraying each area. For the purposes of this and other master plans, Areas I and II are referred to as the City of Boulder's Service Area.

The Department of Community Planning & Sustainability has also defined physical boundaries within Areas I and II that create subcommunities. Boulder has nine subcommunities: Central Boulder, Crossroads, CU, East Boulder, Gunbarrel, North Boulder, Palo Park, South Boulder, and Southeast Boulder. A map of these subcommunities is presented in Appendix B. It should be noted that the Crossroads subcommunity is distinct from the shopping center and includes the entire Boulder Valley Regional Center. The CU subcommunity is also distinct from the University and includes residential property north and east of the campus.

Overview of the Parks and Recreation Department

The City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department manages over 1,000 acres of maintained turf and natural land and runs hundreds of programs promoting mentally and physically active lifestyles for Boulder residents of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. These programs are offered across three recreation centers, three athletic complexes, two outdoor pools, an outdoor skate park, a golf course, a reservoir, and over 60 urban parks. The planning process will be used to identify, describe, and analyze all of the features of the department in additional detail, to be discussed in other Topical Reports and, ultimately, in the Master Plan itself.