



# Parks & Open Space

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## PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, January 23, 2025

**TO:** Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** Janis Whisman, Real Estate Division Manager  
**AGENDA ITEM:** 2024 Closing Summary (Real Estate Division Annual Report)  
**ACTION REQUESTED:** Information Only

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*For much longer than Parks & Open Space's history of stewarding open space, the land in this community has been important to the diverse Indigenous communities that continue to thrive here. We are partnering with Indigenous people to make meaningful changes to how we do our work that include Indigenous people, incorporate their perspectives, and honor their land stewardship legacy. Parks & Open Space operates within modern legal constructs of land ownership to steward Boulder County open space and accomplish these efforts on behalf of our community.*

This memo summarizes the Real Estate Division's 2024 accomplishments. I look forward to presenting this information at your meeting and answering any questions you may have.

### Acquisitions

At any given time, the Real Estate Division is working with willing landowners on approximately 100 potential acquisition projects, including new acquisitions and conservation easement amendments.

In 2024, Boulder County invested a net of \$11,938,646 for 645.74 acres. The county completed 15 acquisitions: 10 fee properties, two conservation easements, two conservation easement amendments, and one water-only acquisition. The county acquired 9.182 shares of priority agricultural water rights in the Bonus, Highland, Left Hand, Palmerton, and Rough and Ready ditches. The year's most significant acquisitions were:

- Haystack Mountain: The county purchased this 106-acre property at a live online auction. The county paid \$6.2M and received the land and mineral rights, along with 31 shares of Left Hand Ditch, 31 shares of Reformed New Hinman Ditch, and an 85/160 share of Holland Ditch. The property contains the Haystack Mountain Natural Landmark and is closed to the public.
- Cottonwood: The county acquired this 102-acre property on the north side of Highway 66 west of Hygiene. The property contains Agricultural Lands of Statewide Importance and Preble's meadow jumping mouse (PMJM) Suitable Contiguous Habitat (Zone 3). It is also marked as part of the View Protection Corridor and the property is part of the Rabbit Mountain Environmental Conservation Area, the Rabbit Mountain Natural Landmark, and the Rabbit Mountain High Biodiversity Area having a B1 rating for Outstanding High Biodiversity Significance. The property is primarily irrigated agricultural land and came with substantial priority water rights, including 1 share of the Highland Ditch, 3.475 shares of the Palmerton Ditch, and 0.1 share of the Rough & Ready Ditch.

## Dispositions

At any given time, the Real Estate Division is working on about 30 disposition projects. Most open space dispositions are due to temporary and permanent takings by entities with condemnation power over the county because they need land for roads and utilities.

In 2024, Boulder County received \$2,354 in proceeds from four dispositions. Describing these four illustrates the fact that takings typically have a small impact on county open space:

- Alexander Dawson: The United Power Company took a small area (0.15 of an acre) for its power line needs on the north end of the property west of Highway 287. United Power had condemnation authority over the county to take the land and the county was paid the \$2,354 fair market value of the land that was taken.
- Braly-Ramey-Western Mobile Open Space: When Lake 4 at Western Mobile was reconstructed following the 2013 Flood, the outlet pipe was relocated onto adjoining county open space properties. Three new non-exclusive access easements needed to be granted to the St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District over the Braly, Ramey, Western Mobile and Western Mobile-Lake 4 properties so the new outlet pipe can be maintained. Because Lake 4 is jointly owned by Boulder County and the water district and because the project was a joint county/water district project, the easements were granted without compensation from the water district.
- Ruth Roberts Park: The City and County of Broomfield manages a trail through the county's Ruth Roberts Park. Broomfield's trail easement needed to be expanded to allow Broomfield to stabilize an area where the trail crosses a drainage. Because the trail serves users of Boulder County's Ruth Roberts Park property, this disposition was done for no compensation.
- Von Reyn: Boulder County's Public Works department took a 0.5-acre portion of this property at the southeast corner of Lookout Road and 95<sup>th</sup> Street so the county could make the east edge of 95<sup>th</sup> Street safer to travel.

## Real Estate Stewardship and Maintenance

Our 2024 stewardship and maintenance of real estate included these typical activities to manage the 'real estate resource' of county open space properties and interests:

- Managing the county's conservation easement program, which encompasses conservation easements and similar restrictions over 1,046 properties and involves these primary tasks:
  - Monitoring several hundred conservation easement properties and resolving violations. In 2024, we monitored 450 properties subject to county-held conservation easements, restrictive covenants, and deed restrictions. (Boulder County currently holds conservation easements and similar restrictions over 885 private properties covering 42,442 acres.)

- Reviewing land use applications over private properties for compliance with conservation easements and other property restrictions that protect open space values.
- Managing 154 conservation easements that the county has granted to city partners over 16,756 acres of county open space.
- Tracking six conservation easements where the county is a backup holder and would step in if the original grantees decide they can no longer hold and manage those easement interests.
- Coordinating the department's response to oil and gas operators' requests for approval to conduct well maintenance activities on county-owned open space, properties subject to county-held conservation easements or similar restrictions, and even private properties not subject to county open space restrictions. This work regarding private properties assists the county's Community Planning & Permitting department in minimizing oil and gas development impacts throughout the county.
- Coordinating with the State of Colorado's Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) to close hazardous hard-rock mine openings on county open space. DRMS pays half of the closure costs and the county partners to cover the remaining half. Because of this partnership, DRMS can annually address about 20 hazards in the county.
- Ensuring that only allowed uses of open space occur. This includes telling landowners and other members of the public that private use of open space is not allowable.
- Maintaining data about the county's ownership of open space and conducting research to answer questions that facilitate department projects. For example, department colleagues need to know what easements and interests could affect department construction projects.
- Coordinating with county colleagues on matters affecting county open space. For example, the division manager collaborates with the director, the county attorney, and the long-range planning manager and director at Community Planning & Permitting on intergovernmental agreements between Boulder County and its municipalities.
- Responding to inquiries about the county's open space real estate interests and addressing suggestions for new acquisitions. Members of our community call us frequently and very much appreciate our answers to their questions.

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We look forward to the opportunities that 2025 will present for the county's open space acquisitions and we will continue working with condemning authorities to minimize impacts to county open space.

2024 Open Space Acquisitions																		
#	Closing Date	Property	Dev. Rights Acquired	Dev. Rights Retained by Seller	Acres	Price	Donation Value	Grants	Total Value	Fee	Water Shares/Units	CE Am.	CE Am.	Trail	Other	Land Ofcr	Para-legal	Notes
1	1/2/2024	Highlands Camp	7	1	294.00	\$0	Being Appraised	\$0	TBD			1				TB	MG	Landowner donated CE to Estes Valley Land Trust. Boulder County helped with transaction costs and received a CE backup interest.
2	2/21/2024	Elk Draw*	1	0	40.00	\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000	1						MA	ES	Colorado Open Lands (COL) donated fee interest to county; county granted CE out to COL
3	2/27/2024	Sky View*	1	0	42.60	\$1,750,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,750,000	1						TB	ES	County had a CE interest in this land as the Haas NUPUD-Outlot AA and now owns 42 acres in fee. Water acquired: 1/21st share South Flat Ditch and all mineral rights. Residential house and various agricultural buildings. Residential house with well, septic, propane and various agricultural buildings.
4	3/13/2024	Wall Street Mill*	1	0	1.09	\$63,000	\$0	\$0	\$63,000	1						TB	MG	Acquired the western portion of the mill structure; the county already owned the eastern portion
5	4/9/2024	Bergen Family Farm NUPUD-Outlot AA-2024 CE Amendment	0	0	No new	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0			1				MA	None	Boundary line adjustment
6	4/30/2024	Cottonwood*	1	0	101.73	\$2,975,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,975,000	1	8.575					AC	ES	County had CE over land as Randleman CE and now owns 101.73 acres in fee. Also, county now owns a 100% interest in the following water rights (previously had owned an undivided 60% interest; CE landowner owned the other 40%): Rough and Ready 1/10 share; Palmerton 3.475 shares; Highland Ditch Comp 1 share; Lake McIntosh 4 shares. Residential house and various agricultural buildings.
7	5/7/2024	Alpenglow Acres NUPUD-Outlot AA-2024 CE Amendment	0	0	No new	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0			1				MA	EN	Property was divided into two parcels, as permitted by the CE
8	5/15/2024	Simkin TDC	0	1	7.50	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$94,000			1				TB	EN	CE acquired in exchange for bonus TDCs.
9	5/23/2024	Mariposa Passage*	1	0	2.43	\$365,000	\$0	\$0	\$365,000	1						MA	ES	Acquired 2.43 acres in fee and all mineral rights.
10	5/30/2024	Elk Tracks*	1	0	35.79	\$535,000	\$0	\$0	\$535,000	1						AC	MG	
11	6/3/2024	Loveland	1	0	4.68	\$28,000	\$0	\$0	\$28,000	1						AC	MG	
12	6/27/2024	Divide	1	0	5.00	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000	1						TB	ES	Acquired 5 acres in fee and all mineral rights. Full donation; landowner did not seek donation value.
13	7/23/2024	Sunny Belle	0	0	5.16	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000	1						TB	MG	
14	10/16/2024	Fairgrounds North Water Exchange	0	0	0.00	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		0.607					TB	None	County exchanged its 1.66 shares in the Beckwith Ditch for 0.607 shares of the City of Longmont's Bonus Ditch water.
15	10/22/2024	Haystack Mountain*	0	0	105.76	\$6,200,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,200,000	1						TB	MG	Included 31 shares of Left Hand Ditch, 31 shares of Reformed New Hinman Ditch, and an 85/160 share of Holland Ditch.
15	Detail Totals:		15	2	645.74	\$11,941,000	\$225,000	\$0	\$12,260,000	10	9.182	2	2	0	0			
Fee Disposition Acres and proceeds (net:)			Grant \$	N/A		\$0												
						-0.50												
			Net:	645.24		\$11,938,646												
2024 Easements Given But Land Still Open Space																		
#	Closing Date	Property	Dev. Rights Sold	Acres	Sale/Taking Price	Donation Value	Grants	Total Value	Fee	CE Am.	CE Am.	Trail	Other	Land Ofcr	Para-legal	Notes		
1	3/19/2024	Braly-Ramey-Western Mobile-Western Mobile-Lake 4-2024 SVLHWCD Access Easements	0	13	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0						DD	N/A	Three non-exclusive easements granted to SVLHWCD across Braly and Western Mobile (2.5 acres); Braly and Ramey (6 acres); and Western Mobile and Western Mobile-Lake 4 (5 acres).		
2	10/15/2024	Ruth Roberts Park-2024 Broomfield Trail Easement	0	1.22	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0						DD	N/A	Non-exclusive easement over portion of Ruth Roberts Park Parcels 3 and 4 for trail and drainage purposes.		
3	10/15/2024	Alexander Dawson-2024 United Power Easement	0	0.15	\$2,354	\$0	\$0	\$2,354						DD	N/A	Non-exclusive utility easement to United Power along the north property line of the Alexander Dawson Open Space Property.		
Total Non-Exclusive Easement Dispositions:			0	14.37	\$2,354			\$2,354	0	0	0	0	0					
2024 Fee Dispositions Subject to County CEs																		
#	Closing Date	Property	Dev. Rights Sold	Acres	Sale/Taking Price	Donation Value	Grants	Total Value	Fee	CE Am.	CE Am.	Trail	Other	Land Ofcr	Para-legal	Notes		
None																		
Total Fee Dispositions Subject to County-Held CEs:			0	0	\$0			\$0	0	0	0	0	0					
2024 Fee Dispositions No Longer Open Space																		
#	Closing Date	Property	Dev. Rights Sold	Acres	Sale Price	Donation Value	Grants	Total Value	Fee	CE Am.	CE Am.	Trail	Other	Land Ofcr	Para-legal	Notes		
1	4/18/2024	Von Reyn-2024 Transfer of Management	0	0.50	\$0			\$0						DD	N/A	Transfer of Management to Boulder County Public Works Department. No funds were paid to Parks & Open Space, because Public Works had previously purchased an open space parcel that was transferred to the Parks & Open Space Department.		
Total Fee Title Dispositions:			0	0.50	\$0			\$0										
4	Total Dispositions:			14.87	\$2,354			\$2,354										

19 Total Deals Completed  
8 Temporary Access Requests  
27 Projects Completed

\* Priority Acquisition