



Community Planning & Permitting

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Staff Memo for Docket BVCP-25-0001

BOULDER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

March 18, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

All public hearings and meetings will be offered in a hybrid format where attendees can join through **Zoom** or **in-person** at the Boulder County Courthouse, 3rd Floor, 1325 Pearl Street, Boulder.

Public Meeting – Public Testimony will not be taken

Staff: Hannah Hippely, Long Range Planning Division Manager

Docket BVCP-25-0001: Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Major Update

Work session on the ten-year major update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan. Presentation of the draft plan for review and comment.

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BACKGROUND

The city and county share a common goal of directing urban development to urban areas within the city limits, preserving the distinction between the urban environment and the rural character of the county, and limiting the outward expansion of the city. For the last 50 years the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) has been instrumental in achieving these goals. City and county coordination identified in the plan has grown to include topics where joint goals can only be achieved with cooperation (including the ongoing effort to create more integrated, multimodal, and user-friendly transportation networks) and to address topics that do not respect jurisdictional boundaries (noxious weed management).

The draft Plan released March 3, 2026 maintains the core vision of the original comprehensive plan adopted in 1977 and makes some significant changes.

Staff is seeking feedback from Planning Commission that will help lead to the development of a final recommended plan that will come before Planning Commission for adoption in June 2026 (see below for more detailed timeline).

THE DRAFT BOULDER VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

While many of the ideas and concepts in the existing BVCP have been brought forward into the draft BVCP, it is not a line by line edit of the previous plan. The draft BVCP maintains the big picture vision of a compact city surrounded by rural lands, this is visualized by the Planning Areas Map and implemented by the associated polices. As in the current plan, the draft BVCP includes a Future Land Use map although the land use designations have been rethought and redefined. The most significant changes to the land use designations are related to land within the city or land which could potentially be annexed by the city. Changes to the land use designations applied in the rural preservation areas (Area III) simplify and clarify the polices of the previous plan. Polices in the plan have been reduced in number, updated and rewritten for clarity, added to include new ideas, and written at a level of detail to set an aspirational vision for the community.

The draft BVCP has been published at [aBoulderFuture.org](https://www.boulderfuture.org). The [full plan](#) can be downloaded via the website. The website includes [interactive versions](#) of the Planning Areas Map and Future Land Use Map. This includes a side by side comparison with the currently adopted maps. The [Future Land Use Strategy](#) is also available for exploration on the website as are the polices organized by the plan values.

COMMUNITY REVIEW

The Draft Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan was published March 3, 2026 and will be open for community review and comment through April 6, 2026. In addition to the Open House held on March 10, 2026 office hours are available to community members who might like to meet with staff in person. These are scheduled for:

March 19, 2026 | 2 to 4 p.m. | Penfield Tate II Municipal Building, 1777 Broadway, Room W101 OR Online

April 1, 2026 | 4 to 6 p.m. | Penfield Tate II Municipal Building, 1777 Broadway, Room W101 OR Online

Written comments on the plan can be submitted through the [aBoulderFuture.org](https://www.boulderfuture.org) website in a variety of ways or can be provided directly to staff at future@bouldercolorado.gov.

MEETING DATES AND MILESTONES

Staff anticipate reviewing and incorporating feedback from the public and city and county boards, council and commissions throughout April and May. A recommended plan is anticipated to be completed in late May 2026.

The city and the county will proceed forward with consideration of the adoption of the Plan in June 2026. The dates for these 2026 hearings and meetings are anticipated to be:

- June 4 Joint Public Hearing with Planning Board and City Council
- June 11 Joint Public Hearing with Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners
- June 16 Planning Board
- June 17 County Planning Commission
- June 25 City Council
- June 24 Board of County Commissioners

FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS

This is Planning Commission's final workshop for development of the final recommended plan, and it is a critical time for staff to hear any feedback that Planning Commission believes should lead to revisions to the draft. This is also an appropriate time to ask staff any questions about the draft plan so that Planning Commission is confident in their reading of it and prepared to consider the final recommended plan for adoption in June.

Staff offers the following questions as prompts for discussion:

1. Does the draft plan align with previous direction given at the workshops held with staff in the past year and/or community feedback you have heard?
2. Are there elements of the draft plan you strongly support and/or think are particularly critical to the success of the BVCP update?
3. Are there any potential tradeoffs or unintended consequences in the draft plan that warrant additional analysis before the final recommendation is prepared?
4. Are there any specific elements of the draft plan (issues, policies, maps, etc.) that are recommend for refinement or revision?

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners Sam Libby and Bryon Kominek are unable to attend the March 18th, 2026 workshop but have provided the comments included as Attachment A.

ATTACHMENT A

From: [Byron Kominek](#)
To: [Hippely, Hannah](#)
Cc: [Sanchez, Kimberly](#); [Morgan, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan - Draft Plan Release & Other Updates
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 7:13:15 AM

Hi Hannah,

Great work on this document! It's beautiful, well-written, and great content!

I, of course, have some brief comments:

1) Pg 37 - 23. Rural Land Preservation - I'm curious why there isn't more of an emphasis on rural lands being working lands. I understand that "agriculturally significant lands" is within this brief, but that says nothing of the people, livestock, grassland, and forest management that occurs that aids in the preservation of rural lands for the benefit of those that live around it. I would prefer that the BVCP acknowledge the working lands and those that manage it upfront in this sentence and I wouldn't want to see those people and their activities discounted.

2) Pg 37 - 25. Adaptive Reuse - I'm curious if the City & County would be interested in going beyond the terminology of 'encourage' continued & reuse of buildings.

3) Pg 54 - 73. I'm curious if the BVCP would have interest in adding thoughts here towards environmentally conscious movement of goods, or a movement of goods that balances community, business, and environmental conditions?

4) Pg 59 - 91. Local Food Production and Access. I'd be more interested in the second sentence reading "The city and county seek to promote consumption of locally grown food that provides nutritious ..." rather than "the city and county recognize the importance of a local food system that provides ...". This slightly altered language would look to the local governments to help encourage and promote consumption of locally grown products to reduce our carbon footprint of moving food while keeping consumer spending within our local economy.

5) Pg 62 - 93. Infrastructure for Local Food Systems. Given this brief includes examples of facilities support for local agriculture, local agricultural organizations would be interested in seeing a year-round market facility built (not just summer/fall farmers markets) - would adding a 'year-round market' to the list of examples be amenable?

6) Pg 98 - Rural Lands. Why it matters. I'd be interested in having this showcase that these lands enable agriculture. Without rural lands, there would be no agriculture in Boulder County. These lands don't just support agriculture, they are what make local food production possible. Rural lands provide livelihoods to community members that feed our cities or provide tourism opportunities. Please acknowledge the people that manage these lands to benefit their families and our communities.

7) A quick illustrative list of the number of times a profession or type of people appear in this document:

- a) Farmer - 4
- b) Rancher - 1
- c) Community member - 64

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- d) Youth - 3 / Young People - 2
- e) Older Adult - 5
- f) Indigenous People - 11
- g) Student - 5
- h) Researcher - 1
- i) Lower-Income Resident - 2
- j) Immigrant - 1
- k) People with disabilities - 2
- l) Educator - 1
- m) Employer - 7
- n) Artist - 3
- o) Volunteer - 1
- p) Resident - 64

This is just to highlight how these different groups would see themselves within this document and potentially weigh their importance against other groups - this is not exhaustive, just illustrative. I'd be curious if staff have considered how they want community members to see themselves in this document and if looking at how many times a people are mention compared to others would matter to them, or in what context they are discussed.

That's all! I wish y'all luck and I look forward to April meetings!

Cheers
Byron

ATTACHMENT A

From: [Sam Libby](#)
To: [Hippely, Hannah](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Feedback on draft BVCP
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 12:19:02 AM

Hi Hannah,

As I will not be able to attend the March 18th PC meeting, I wanted to provide my feedback on the draft plan by email so it can be included in the public record. Please take these comments with a grain of salt as I do not have the extensive background that staff has in the history of the Plan and how the specific structure was developed, so there very well may be valid reasons for these decisions that I do not appreciate. Some of these may also be easily explained and I do not ask you to or expect you to respond in detail in the meeting. I read through the draft sequentially and recorded feedback along the way:

Policy Feedback:

- Policies Section Overall:
 - I feel there is quite a bit of intentional use of "the city" vs "the city and county" and more of the policies should include "the county" explicitly. I.e. policy #20, I think there is a clear argument that "the county" should be included in the policy as the County should also care about existing county assets. I may misunderstand the context here but the varied use of City vs City and County was hard for me to parse.
 - I do not know if there is an intentional ordering of the policies, but I was left wondering why policies ended up in the order they are in, it seems there could be some more logical groupings or potentially covering the "bigger" policies earlier rather than the mix there is now. Probably you have thought a lot about this but I was left wondering.
- Policy #7: it may be worth changing the last sentence to " The county refers applications for <urban> development in Area 2 to the city. "
- Policy #8: Why would overly intensive development in Area 3 be referred to the city universally/by definition? Wouldn't this only be the case if the parcel in Area 3 was contiguous to the city thus a candidate for annexation? Otherwise overly intensive proposals in Area 3 can just be reviewed by an existing County process without universal referral which this implies.
- Policy #17: it may be useful to add the Blue Line to the Future Land Use map as it is described here but not visually shown in the Plan.
- Policy #29 / Pages 38/39: I like this policy but would suggest that one way to encourage a scenario where more residents live in 15 minute neighborhoods is to increase the density of those neighborhoods rather than seeking a world where all neighborhoods become 15 minute neighborhoods through some process of intentional development. Density by definition increases the proportion of residents who will be in that 15 minute neighborhood definition.
- Policy #35, Why limit the importance of Environmental Design to Public Projects, why not also encourage this for Private projects such as privately-developed housing or commercial sites?
- Policy #41: Does the Boulder Creek Watershed fully enclose the Boulder Valley as defined in this plan? I don't know offhand, but I think a policy that refers to a physical area that is far beyond the Boulder Valley (much of the watershed is outside BV) is a bit confusing in the context of this plan.

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- Page 42: This seems like a City-specific pair of pages, is this better positioned as the future of water in the Boulder Valley, not only The City?
- Policy #73: I don't really understand the importance of this policy as written, or how it would be actionable or inform further policy or land use decisions.
- Policy #81: I was left wondering what the current %is, in order to understand the feasibility and how optimistic or reasonable this policy goal is.
- Policy #91: I would like to suggest the potential addition of the term "affordability" in this policy, as well as something related to "supporting food security" (it is mentioned in 92 but specifically related to urban ag, where I feel that food security is an important higher level policy goal.)
- Page 60 Map: there is no legend on this map so I did not understand if Orange and Green meant different things for trails or not. This page also seems to be titled "Regional Collaboration" but only the first paragraph is about that, the rest is about Regional Connections which is a better title I think. Maybe the regional collaboration part goes into a policy or a prefatory section?
- Page 108 - it would be helpful to provide information on how to access either a higher resolution or more dynamic version of this map (guidance to refer to the current county website for example) -- this map is very detailed and not fully legible in one print form.
- Future Land Use map overall: as I reviewed this, I did not understand how the overall boundary of the Boulder Valley Planning Area was defined, or how that might grow or change over time (i.e. what parcels are candidates for inclusion in this map vs not included). Has this changed since the last plan, or is it firmly defined somewhere else which parcels fall within the Planning Area and which do not? I was genuinely curious and did not find information on how this boundary was defined.

Excellent work to the whole team! I had no further comments on the Future Land Use Classes and Designations as we discussed those at length in a previous meeting.

Sam