



Land Use

Courthouse Annex • 2045 13th Street • Boulder, Colorado 80302 • Tel: 303.441.3930 • Fax: 303.441.4856
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 471 • Boulder, Colorado 80306 • www.bouldercounty.org

BOULDER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM #5

April 21, 2010 –1:30 PM

**Hearing Room, Third Floor
County Courthouse**

PUBLIC HEARING

DOCKET BCCP-010-0002: BOULDER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE – WORK PLAN PROGRESS REPORT:

Progress report on the BCCP Update Work Plan approved by Planning Commission September 16, 2010.

Informational Item – No Action Requested

Public Testimony will be taken.

(Staff Planners: Pete Fogg, Planning Division Manager; Denise Grimm, AICP, Senior Planner; Bill Davidson, AICP, Planner II)

SUMMARY

At the September 16, 2009 Planning Commission meeting, staff presented a proposed work plan to make certain updates to the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan. This work program was proposed to occur in four phases. Planning Commission endorsed the concept at that time. Land Use staff had offered to bring a status update report to the Planning Commission in approximately 6 months. An update of the status of the four phases of the Land Use update project is presented below.

Staff would remind Planning Commission that the components of this work plan are discrete, but that the timing of their occurrence is not fixed. They may occur sequentially, but may also take place simultaneously, or even in a different order. To this point, progress on each of the four phases has proceeded as anticipated in the order originally presented. Each of the four phases has now been started, although as expected, are progressing at different rates, with as-yet unscheduled dates for completion of each phase.

Phase I – Initial Needs - Special Use Revision

Initial Anticipated Timeline

This phase was anticipated for completion in fall of 2009 and presentation to Planning Commission. Refinement of the proposal and associated additional public input have delayed but improved this portion of the Land Use Regulation update. Comprehensive Plan changes associated with the Land Use Code update process have extended the timeline have also delayed any necessary BCCP revisions.

Description

Phase I of the BCCP revision consists of considering the need for potential amendments to provide more explicit policy language for in-process LUC amendments. A LUC amendment to address certain Special Uses has been identified as a priority for the BOCC. For this topic, we seem to be leaning toward a policy that favors existing uses over new uses. The Comprehensive Plan has a limited number of relevant references to this sort of policy. There are a few statements in the goals of the BCCP that support this idea as well as some discussion in the Economics Element. There are also goals and policies in the Plan that discourage urban-scale development.

As the guiding vision for the future land use pattern of Boulder County, the Comprehensive Plan should contain goals and policies that provide direction for the Land Use Code to make a distinction between existing uses (in order to allow their upkeep and perhaps slight expansion) and new uses (in order to create upper limits on the intensity of new uses). We should also formulate policies that state our intent as to how the County can preserve its rural integrity while taking into account uses that are not clearly rural but which are already existing in rural areas. The primary concern is with those uses that already exist; to a lesser degree policies should address potential new uses.

Options for making the County's policies clear in this area could occur by different approaches, including a policy statement in the early part of the Plan outlining the County's intent regarding the issue, amendments or additions to goals and policies within existing Elements, or adding a new subsection within the Sustainability Element addressing the sustainable nature of such existing uses. In any case, sustainability plays heavily into this concept.

Status

Abby Janusz, lead planner for this effort, is making steady progress on revisions to the Land Use Code. The project is continuing with an extensive public process and the associated refinement of the proposed regulatory changes. Updated regulations should be finalized this spring, with anticipated adoption this summer. The project phase will also be discussed at the April 21, 2010 meeting under Docket DC-09-0005, Evaluation of the Special Use Review Process and Uses.

The project focus has evolved during the process, and has been narrowed to address specific categories of special uses. The specific uses include such examples as camps and churches. Such uses are among those that may be eligible candidates to gain designation as a "Use of Community Significance." The refocusing of the project now relates more closely to higher impact uses and those which exist at this time, rather than any which might be proposed in the future.

The original anticipated timeline has been extended through continued efforts to work with the public in addressing their needs, and the complexity of the problems to be addressed. The change in schedule is positive in ensuring that the result is more equitable, workable, and appropriate.

As a portion of this project, the BCCP is being examined for ways in which issues of this nature can be addressed in a manner consistent with current County goals and policies. Staff will continue to consult with the County Attorney's Office to determine if it may be necessary and/or desirable to process a BCCP amendment docket for this purpose.

Phase II – Style and Format of Plan

Initial anticipated timeline

Approximately 1-2 years, depending upon the scope of changes selected. Initial research 2-3 months. Work on this will be ongoing until the completion of the project. The format component will coordinate with the County-wide web update process that is currently underway.

Description

While the content of the Comprehensive Plan remains current and progressive, the graphic style and layout of the plan show its age and piecemeal construction. The plan was initially created before the advent of the internet, and while adaptations have been made to make it friendlier to view online, it is still a text-dominated document more suitable for print viewing than online.

To correct this, research is being done to see how other counties and municipalities have incorporated graphics, plan substance, and maps cohesively to make a document that is equally pleasing to read both electronically and in paper form. Attention will be given to plans that not only utilize graphics to enhance the visual aspects, but also to better guide the reader through the plan itself. The best examples involve using pictures, maps, etc to guide the reader through the plan as if they were reading a story. The graphic revision will also incorporate a significant number of links to guide the reader to related concepts, definitions, and explanatory material. This helps to reduce the “wall of words” that is typically found (and often resented or mind-numbing to the reader) in government documents. Additional measures, such as assigning colors to various sections of the book not only enhance the Plan aesthetically, but also help to better organize the Plan itself. The application of contemporary technology and sources of access to the BCCP will hopefully make it more appealing to and widely read by a broader audience.

Attachment C is a draft version of one early example of a revised graphic format for the BCCP. Please note that this is only an example of a reformatted approach, and is not necessarily the particular format that staff may develop. It shows a reformatted version of the Cultural Resources Element and the newly adopted Transportation Element as it could appear when converted to a style consistent with the rest of the revised Plan.

Status

Ongoing. Staff has researched other plans, and seen options that are prompting ideas for staff's own concept of how the BCCP should be presented. The updated version is intended to result in a much-improved graphic style for both internet and hard-copy use.

Phase III – Super Goals and Organizing Principles

Initial Anticipated Timeline

Approximately 4 –8 months, depending upon the scope of changes selected. A better estimate of the schedule will become clearer as the interviews with other agencies continue.

Description

Perform an analysis of the Plan structure. Multiple options for change are available; a limited number of these will be selected for more detailed examination. Staff has done a considerable amount of work in laying out different organizational design ideas. These have included a simple rearrangement of the current format/structure to the jettisoning of some elements, merging of others, and expansion of certain ones. There should be a consistent Element structure throughout the Plan for issues, goals, objectives, and policies. As part of the process, all team members will critique both the potential principles and structures. Among the models examined are those with the most forward-thinking approaches from jurisdictions in California, British Columbia, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

The major thrust of this phase will be to develop overarching principles for the Plan. These are also being referred to as Super Goals. Such principles inform the organization of the Plan. This will be a synthesizing of the current Plan precepts and goals, since these are not proposed to change.

Attachments A and B show draft examples of one version of a potential Plan structure, and one example of a revised Introduction. The final products may vary greatly from these examples.

Status

Work is well along on the production of the updated Introduction and Super Goals. Land Use staff is coordinating with other departments to determine the best approach to make the Plan more useful and consistent. At the time of preparation of this memo, staff has held a number of productive meetings with other departments including Parks and Open Space, Transportation, Public Health, Mental Health, the County Commissioners' Office, and Community Services. In addition, staff has met with staff from the City of Longmont, which has embarked on a department-wide Integrated Sustainability Plan, to discuss their viewpoint of the relationship of our respective comprehensive plans and potential sustainable. Future meetings will involve Housing and Human Services as well as Lafayette, Louisville, Superior, and Erie.

Among the outcomes Land Use staff is seeking from these meetings is to determine whether or not the department or agency refers to the BCCP, sees it as relevant to their work, and whether it reflects their current goals and work programs. As a result, we hope to get ideas and suggestions as to how it may effectively incorporate their needs and desires to become more relevant and useful for all parties. Staff is taking particular care to note that the BCCP is a policy document, and that our interest in speaking with other departments and agencies is

at that level and is not intended to intrude into their respective programmatic and project operations.

Staff notes that the results of many parts of Phase III will be the starting point for the individual Element updates of Phase IV. Consequently, tasks such as the departmental meetings are valuable in both the larger context and the detailed analysis of Element critiques.

We recognize that Elements, many of which are under the banner of other departments, will likely be revised at different times. A consistent structure should be a part of the revision of all forthcoming Elements. Transportation recently completed a revision of their Element, and set out a solid organizational model that may serve as a template for a consistent approach to goals, objectives, and policies structure.

Parks and Open Space has also recently identified issues and subjects within four of the BCCP Elements that have linkages to their department responsibilities which need to be revised or updated. These four are the Agricultural, Open Space, Environmental, and Cultural Resources Elements. To begin moving ahead, Parks and Open Space has held an initial meeting with Land Use to discuss their proposed schedule and staffing assignments for these updates.

In developing the underlying principles, the prime candidate for an organizing structure for the Plan is the incorporation of the sustainability concept as the underlying theme of the Plan. The BOCC has clearly endorsed sustainability along with collaboration and public service as one of their primary initiatives for the County. Other approaches are being considered and analyzed, including maintaining the growth management/location/IGA focus of the current BCCP, and keeping the current focus but moving the keystone goals to the front of the document so that the vision of the Plan is clearly articulated at the beginning of the document. The Super Goals will be given over for critique to Land Use and other interdepartmental staff prior to bringing them to the Planning Commission and BOCC for their consideration.

Phase IV – Content Analysis for Each Element

Initial Anticipated Timeline

6 months, to begin in 1st quarter of 2010. This portion of the project began on schedule.

Description

Each of the existing Elements of the Comprehensive Plan will be analyzed and critiqued by Land Use as well as those departments/agencies which have a policy investment or ownership in the Elements to determine which are in need of revision; what should be discarded, changed, or added.

The benefit to looking at all of the Elements at once is that changes to an Element may relate to portions of other Elements. The deletion of an Element may be the simplest task in relation to other portions of the Comprehensive Plan, but items that are added or changed will clearly require detailed analysis regarding their relationship to other Plan Elements.

ATTACHMENT A

DRAFT

Potential BCCP Reorganization Outline

Preface – 3rd Edition reorganization

Message from Planning Commission

Table of Contents

- Including glossary, key dates since 1978, amendment chronology, web site information, maps/graphics, appendices, departments' names/addresses/baseline functions)

Preamble – intent (sustainability building on growth mgmt from 1978

- Transition, values evolution
- “Super Goals”

Introduction (some of this could be in appendices)

- Users' Guide – intent, goals, policies, maps, etc.
- Role of the BCCP in Land Use – inc. other departments' roles, county/municipal relationships
- History (1978 – 2009; include key goals, content in current Intro, Consortium, MetroVision, Super IGA, Land Use Code, etc)
- Context Today (changes since 1978 – refer to PowerPoint slide lists – global, national, state, regional, local – maps, etc)
- Presumptions/Assumptions About Change
- Strategic Direction (specifics based on Preamble)
- Implementation
- Amendment Procedures (revise, include new application form, annual map update window)
- Distinction Between Policies and Programs
-

Goals

Planning Areas

- Plains
- Mountains
- IGAs
- MetroVision

County-Wide Elements

- Intent statement for each (connectivity to Preamble)
- Policies
- Maps

ATTACHMENT B

DRAFT

BOULDER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 3RD UPDATE (Example Ideas)

Introduction

“We are stewards of a view that is mindful of the past, engaging with the present, and bound to the future”

The original Boulder County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1978 in response to a growing alarm about the spread of development types and patterns that were having adverse, undesirable, or irreversible negative impacts on the land. At its core, the Plan's intent was to provide guidance for (a) preserving the agricultural, forested, and open lands environments and ecosystems found throughout the county by channeling urban development into and adjacent to urban areas; and (b) establishing and retaining diverse, compatible, and functional land uses to prevent urban and rural decay. Subsequent amendments and actions over the years have been developed with these goals in mind, and the county, with the persistent participation and support of its residents, has been quite successful in meeting them. Refining the Plan to move beyond its roots in preservation to sustainability is an appropriate and important evolutionary step to take.

Boulder County embraced the sustainability concept as an organizing principle for our Comprehensive Plan in 2008. The major thrust of the current update is a rearrangement of Plan structure such that the values and vision stated in the 2008 Sustainability Element are incorporated throughout the Plan, and brought to a prominent place at the front of the document to form an organizing structure. As such, the current update leaves the current goals and policies of the Plan intact.

Sustainability Defined

The concept of sustainability has emerged as growing numbers of people recognize the need to balance social, cultural, and economic progress with environmental stewardship. The concept gained more recognition when in 1987 when the Brundtland Commission of

the United Nations developed a concise view that “sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

1. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

2. Thus the goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries - developed or developing, market-oriented or centrally planned. Interpretations will vary, but must share certain general features and must flow from a consensus on the basic concept of sustainable development and on a broad strategic framework for achieving it.

3. Development involves a progressive transformation of economy and society. A development path that is sustainable in a physical sense could theoretically be pursued even in a rigid social and political setting. But physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits. Even the narrow notion of physical sustainability implies a concern for social equity between generations, a concern that must logically be extended to equity within each generation.

The Sustainable Urban Development Association warns that, “A community is unsustainable if it consumes resources faster than they can be renewed, produces more waste than natural systems can safely process, or relies on distant sources for its basic needs.”

A sustainable society is one that is far-seeing enough, flexible enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support. *Donella H. Meadows, Beyond the Limits*

“Sustainability is, at its very heart, a political construct rather than a technical or scientifically objective notion. The policy goal of sustainability can be usefully understood as what might be termed an ‘over-arching societal value’. In this sense, it is more akin to notions like ‘freedom’, ‘justice’ or ‘democracy’ than to a specific policy commitment.”

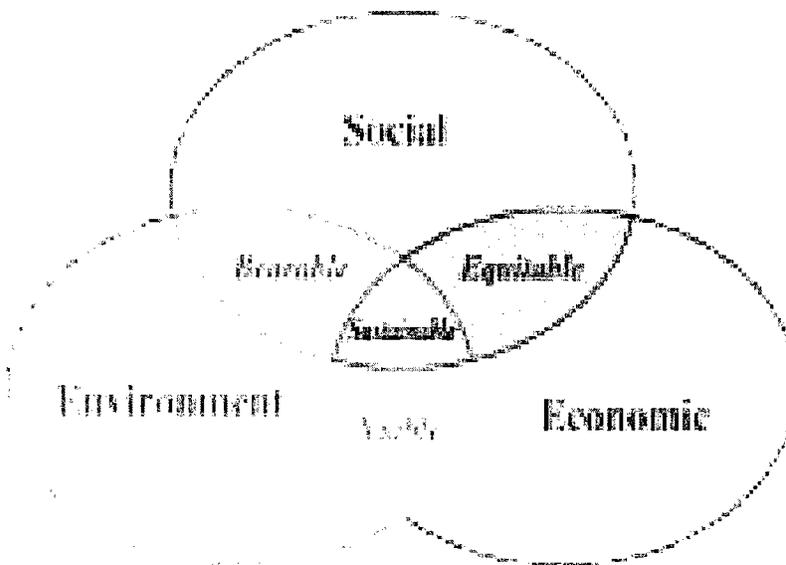
- Julian Agyeman

Agyeman's view of sustainability as an overarching societal value is an essential view. Until the concept of sustainability is internalized and wholly accepted by the world's

culture, it will not fully succeed. Sustainability is the destination the county is striving to achieve.

Sustainability encompasses three realms—environmental, social and economic. Instead of making trade-offs between these realms, (jobs or the environment; economic growth or environmental health, development or habitat), sustainability aims to optimize all three. These three are inter-related and inter-dependent. For example, without a healthy environment, we deplete the resources upon which our economy depends and contribute to human illness. Without a healthy economy, unemployment will be high, leading to a host of social problems.

The relationship of the elements of sustainability is frequently depicted as:



Alternatively, the relationship between the three elements may be viewed as being one of nested circles. The outermost circles are increasingly dependent upon the inner circles for existence. There is no equality in these relationships. The outer circle is the environmental component. Without a healthy environment capable of supporting human life, our species cannot exist on the planet. Within the environmental component is the social component. As long as humans have existed on the planet, they have formed some type of social structure. Within this social structure, humans have developed economic systems. Thus, we can see sustainability as a group of circles with environment forming the largest circle, society contained within that, and the economy contained within society. Both of these areas – our economy and society – exist within the natural realm. Everything we do, make, touch or use comes directly or indirectly from nature. Nature defines the limits and laws within which we have to operate.

Environment

The environmental component gives primacy to air and water quality, species protection to ensure the survival of the ecological cycle, avoidance of hazards, and the like. From a planning standpoint, the environmental sector also includes items which are unrelated to health and survival such as visual resources and open spaces, both of which have quality of life implications.

Society

The social component of sustainability encompasses a wide range of issues. Decent and affordable housing, health, social services, good jobs for all, social justice, equality of opportunity, diversity in all its forms (racial, cultural, age, gender, educational level, social class, etc.), education, culture, recreation, spiritual expression, inclusionary self-government, and countless other pieces are those which make up a desirable, stable, and sustainable society.

Economy

The economy is the component that has the greatest difference in opinions of how to achieve sustainability. For many, it implies job growth. Growth as an accepted part of life is not sustainable, whether for population or job activity. One economic principle which does enjoy wide support is the concept of good jobs for the population. Endless growth is not necessary to any economic system. Viable economic systems can exist in a steady-state form. It is that stability that we seek for Boulder County to ensure that the economy will remain sustainable.

Sustainability as a Lens for Decision-making

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.
- Albert Einstein

A significant part of the update is to utilize a different approach to problem solving. We call this approach using sustainability as a lens or framework for decision-making. Viewed through the sustainability lens, the past was narrow and reductionist. Now the desirable future is a holistic and systems approach

Sustainability is a lens through which we see our businesses, our lives, and our buildings — the world around us. It's a way of thinking that shapes all decisions for every kind of bottom line you can think of: profit, people or planet. That said, sustainability is dynamic by nature. This means that every situation presents its own challenges, some are more complex than others, thus the sustainable choice for each situation is different.

Visualizing sustainability in this way allows us to see the relative importance of each element to the other, and allows us to make judgments on their relative importance when making goals and policy.

Each of the elements has dependencies, so tradeoffs must be analyzed and negotiated carefully. This is important when relaying sustainability goals, as different groups have

different interests. Having a common knowledge base and acknowledging each other's differing goals and expectations fosters understanding, acceptance, buy-in and negotiation.

A Sustainability Lens:

Results in a list of highly strategic actions that answer our 3 strategic prioritization questions:

- Is this action moving us toward or away from our sustainability vision?
- Is this action a flexible platform from which to move toward our sustainability vision?
- Will this action offer an adequate return on investment?

Stated another way:

Prioritization of actions to ensure that all selected actions are (1) moving in the right direction (towards sustainability), (2) flexible platforms that avoid dead-end investments, and (3) good business decisions (ie. offer an adequate return on investment).

Triple Bottom Line is sometimes called “People Planet & Profit” or “Environment Economics & Equity. Whichever way you look at it, it compels a business to make decisions and strategize using a much wider lens. Increasingly businesses are recognizing that short term thinking will not lead to long term prosperity.

Sustainable business practices encourage the organization to consider the effects of all their decisions on people, planet and profit.

When a business strives for sustainability they look towards social benefits (community, employees, vendors and customers), regenerating the environment (reducing energy, water & waste, closing the loop on manufacturing processes and designing products/services to work in harmony with nature's laws) and economic profit (interestingly enough, companies with formal sustainability plans outperform traditional counterparts.

Super Goals

The overarching goals of the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan are:

- Working within ecological limits.
- Acknowledging social, cultural, environmental and economic interrelationships and making decisions which weigh the impacts on each of these systems.
- Continuing to provide a clear distinction between urban and rural areas.

ATTACHMENT C

Draft example of a graphic reformat of a portion of the Plan