Our Vision
Mountain vistas, golden plains, scenic trails, diverse habitat, rich heritage... a landscape that ensures an exceptional quality of life.

Boulder County’s Conservation Easement Program

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and Boulder County to protect a property’s important conservation values. The landowner limits the development and allowable uses on the property and retains all rights not limited by the conservation easement. Boulder County monitors the property for compliance with the terms of the conservation easement. Conservation easements are usually perpetual and remain in effect when the property is transferred to a new owner.

Boulder County holds conservation easements over more than 36,000 acres. These involve nearly 800 private properties, including:

- Agricultural properties that help preserve working farms and ranches;
- Mountain properties that protect significant natural habitat;
- Properties that preserve scenic open space and buffers around municipalities; and
- Rural properties that preserve natural areas, agricultural land, historically important buildings and pastoral character.

Ways to Protect Your Property For Future Generations

Landowners who desire to protect their properties by conservation easement may consider one of the following programs. County staff will visit the property to assess its conservation values and will work with landowners throughout the process of negotiating, obtaining approval by the Boulder County Commissioners and closing the transaction. This typically takes several months, particularly for donations, because state and federal regulations require the landowner to have an appraiser prepare a detailed appraisal of the property.

1. Conservation Easement Donation
   Landowners who desire to protect their land that has significant conservation value might consider donating a conservation easement to Boulder County. Landowners may be eligible for tax benefits and should obtain expert tax advice before donating a conservation easement.

2. Conservation Easement Purchase
   When Boulder County believes properties have exceptional conservation values, Boulder County may consider purchasing a conservation easement. This occurs in very limited circumstances.

3. Transferable Development Right (TDR) or Credit (TDC) Conservation Easement
   Landowners whose properties qualify under one of these County programs may sell the development value off of their properties, typically to third-party buyers. When this occurs, Boulder County requires a conservation easement to protect the property from future development.

4. Non-Urban Planned Unit Development (NUPUD) Conservation Easement
   Boulder County also holds conservation easements created through the non-urban planned unit development process. Few properties are large enough to qualify for this program. Interested landowners can contact the County’s Land Use Department at 303-441-3930 for information.
Colorado continues to experience sustained and significant growth. Projections indicate that seven million people will live here by 2030 – a 63% increase from the 2000 census. Boulder County contains many desirable features – its magnificent views and geography are among the reasons so many people enjoy “the good life” here.

Boulder County has wisely been working since the 1970’s to preserve the reasons people want to live here. Boulder County is now a national leader in using land use planning to manage growth and protect natural resources through land conservation. County citizens have generously taxed themselves since 1993 to protect the natural habitat, scenic views, community buffers and other open space in Boulder County. To date, Boulder County has invested more than $150 million to acquire nearly 100,000 acres of open space for its citizens to enjoy.

After a landowner grants a conservation easement to Boulder County, they are partners in protecting the property’s conservation values. Boulder County’s conservation easement program staff can be a great resource for landowners who have questions about managing their property and what uses are allowed after the easement has been granted.

For more information, please contact...
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