



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



2019-2023

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Adopted Dec. 11, 2018

THE PRIORITIZATION

PROCESS

Boulder County serves our community and protects our natural environment through a myriad of services and programs each day. As Boulder County responds to key issues affecting our communities, departments and offices have continued to develop in-depth and complex strategies to address societal and environmental needs. Some of these strategies involve regional partnerships, collaborations with other community organizations, or integration of programs across multiple departments and offices in the county. Often these larger projects require the investment of Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) time and resources alongside time from staff and resources from across the county organization.

In May 2018, in response to requests from employees and partners to understand the BOCC's priorities and goals, and to help better identify and support key initiatives across the county the BOCC - in collaboration with Boulder County's key leadership - implemented a process to define the Board of County Commissioners' five-year strategic priorities.

Setting and communicating the priorities of leadership within an organization is considered a best management practice, and the BOCC will utilize priorities to provide clarity around the Board's decision-making process in budgeting and other county management decisions. The process is intended to identify priorities that go above and beyond the statutory and core services and functions that we are proud to deliver in Boulder County. And while the priorities identified are important, they will not - and are not intended to - cover the full breadth nor depth of services that the county provides and will continue to provide.

The five priority areas identified align with existing programs and projects within departments, work that has been developed using community input and feedback via the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, Regional Affordable Housing Plan, Public Health Improvement Process, Transportation Master Plan, Parks & Open Space Vision2020, and Sustainability Plan among other planning efforts.

The BOCC collaborated with leadership and staff from across the county in a streamlined process to identify priorities that are future-focused while considering past successes and current leadership goals. Moving forward, over the next five years, the BOCC in collaboration with leadership and staff at Boulder County and others across the community, will implement strategies to achieve goals identified in each priority area, reviewing progress annually and refining approaches as necessary to ensure success.

2019-2023 BOCC STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Affordable
Living

Climate
Action

Equity &
Justice

Land & Water
Stewardship

Organizational
& Financial
Stewardship

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PRIORITIZATION

In the spring of 2018, leadership from across the county organization worked with the BOCC and Commissioners' Office staff to develop a timeline and structure for the prioritization process. Departmental leaders and other elected officials weighed in on the design of an interview template, ensuring agreement on the questions that the strategic priority process was intended to answer.

During the summer of 2018, Commissioners' Office staff interviewed each Commissioner, directors of each department, and county elected officials using the template. These leaders were asked to look at past successes, address key barriers and challenges, and identify areas where Boulder County's actions could significantly improve social and environmental conditions in our communities.

Responses from interviews were analyzed and coded (by category and by frequency) with key themes emerging from across the county organization. Many of the key themes aligned with priority areas from the 2018 Boulder County resident poll where residents were asked, "What do you consider the single most important issue facing Boulder County today?"

Data were organized and vetted by leadership from each department in the county and organized into priority and goal areas. The Board of County Commissioners then reviewed the data from interviews, the residents poll, and the recommended priorities from department heads, leading to the Board's identification of a final set of priority areas and goals.

Throughout the fall of 2018, Commissioners' Office staff worked with department directors, staff, leaders, and elected officials to further define and identify objectives to achieve the goals outlined in each priority area. The strategic priorities document presents the priority areas, goals, and objectives, and as the work continues moving forward, additional strategies, action steps, and resources needed to achieve objectives will continue to be identified. Over the next five years, Commissioners' Office staff will work with the BOCC, departments, elected offices, and partners to review progress on an annual basis, celebrate successes, and adjust strategies as needed to ensure achievement of the outlined goals.

IMPLEMENTATION

PRINCIPLES

During the development of the strategic priorities, the BOCC and department leaders identified principles that cross-cut each of the priorities and that will be used to best achieve goals related to each priority:



Data Driven Decision-Making

The BOCC and leaders at Boulder County utilize data whenever available to identify priorities and how best to utilize resources to address challenges impacting the county. Data utilized by leadership comes in many formats: published research studies, geo-spatial data related to the county's public land, aggregated input from constituents, comparative analysis of program results, and more. Data, science, and an empirical approach underpin the county's decision-making processes and operations.



Focus on Prevention

Boulder County invests early within the continuum of interventions available to achieve goals within a priority area. For example, providing mental health treatment and supportive services for young children and their parents can prevent or lessen the need for more expensive services for those children later on in life.



"Stake in the Ground" Leadership

In the era of ever-increasing competing demands, the BOCC provides clear leadership in the priority areas they have identified, especially when their leadership and ability to tackle political challenges related to implementation can further support successful outcomes with the priorities.



Equity - Internal & External

Boulder County defines equity as all people having full and equal access to the opportunities they need to survive or succeed. The County is committed to increasing opportunities and equity within each priority area.



Using Best Practice Tools

This principle aligns with the first principle of data-driven decision-making. The BOCC is committed to utilizing evidence-based practices when available and utilizing data to develop new practices, when evidence-based practices have not yet been developed.

AFFORDABLE LIVING

Economic inequality has been growing steadily in the United States over the past 30 years. America's top 10% of income earners now average nine times more income than those earning in the bottom 90%. In Boulder County, disparities in wealth and income are as significant as across the U.S. In addition, Boulder County's high cost of living has seen median home prices in Boulder County rise 5.6% over the past year to \$529,000, while estimated self-sufficiency wages for a family of four living in Boulder County are more than \$75,000 per/year. These factors make it much harder for families and individuals with lower and middle incomes to make ends meet.

Boulder County, a leader in increasing access to both affordable housing and transportation, supports strategic and collaborative interventions at the local, regional, state, and federal levels to address the accessibility and preservation of affordable housing and all modes of transportation. Boulder County is a part of the Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership, which has established a goal of 12% of all homes (18,000) being affordable to a diverse mix of families and individuals with low and middle-income by 2035. Boulder County recognizes the importance of statewide efforts in achieving its regional housing goals and is committed to working with the Colorado legislature and other stakeholders to achieve those goals.

Setting specific targets for permanently affordable housing, improving regulatory processes to support affordable and accessible housing, and focusing on innovative approaches to ensure affordable and sustainable transportation for all community members are strategies the county will continue to implement over the next five years.

GOAL 1

Increase access to a diverse stock of workforce housing and affordable housing for Boulder County's residents and employees with lower and middle incomes by implementing and supporting Boulder County's Regional Affordable Housing Plan.

Objective 1a

Establish a Boulder County Affordable Housing Trust Fund by 2020 to raise \$5 million in five years toward the creation and preservation of affordable housing.

Objective 1b

Commit through the Boulder County Housing Authority to build or acquire, at minimum, 500 permanently affordable housing units in five years.

Objective 1c

Land bank three parcels of land for new affordable housing developments within 5 years.

Objective 1d

Preserve the affordability of existing affordable housing stock, provide support services to maintain housing stability, and support the rights of mobile home owners and low and middle income renters.

Objective 1e

Establish regulatory processes that help facilitate the creation and preservation of diverse housing options and program, policy, and regulatory frameworks that boost affordable housing preservation and creation in areas of unincorporated Boulder County that are suitable for development.

Objective 1f

Explore Employer-Assisted Housing Programs to provide options for supporting public sector and community service employees in obtaining housing within Boulder County. Conduct research on options including employer-assisted programs that increase the affordable housing supply as well as programs that create and extend loans and grants to help employees purchase or rent housing in Boulder County.



GOAL 2

Increase access to all modes of transportation.

Objective 2a

Increase access to transit via pass pilot program and other programs for people with lower incomes.

Objective 2b

Ensure transportation affordability through long-term transit and mobility planning efforts.

Objective 2c

Advocate for bus rapid transit and affordable mobility on major Boulder County transportation corridors.

| CLIMATE ACTION

Boulder County has long understood the importance of local and regional climate action. Boulder County residents and businesses were among the first in the country to implement programs like EnergySmart, BuildSmart, Colorado Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CoPACE) financing, solar and electric vehicle (EV) bulk purchasing programs, and a host of other energy efficiency and clean energy initiatives. Despite local success and replication of these programs across the county, the scale of the climate crisis is even greater than we originally understood and demands greater response.

Scientists now tell us that we need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 80% by 2050 to stop the trend of warming (and to limit the impacts already underway). Indeed, there is widespread consensus that human-caused emissions of GHG are impacting Earth's climatic system, causing potentially unprecedented, large-scale, adverse health, social, economic, financial, security, and ecological effects. The risks associated with climate change have driven many counties and cities to plan for a different future. Boulder County has been at the forefront of this effort for more than a decade.

Recent analyses have expanded our knowledge of the impacts of climate change in Boulder County, increasing awareness of the challenges that residents will face in the near future. Boulder County and other Colorado communities are already experiencing the impacts of a warming climate in the form of reduced snowpack, earlier snowmelt, increased risk of high intensity wildfires, extreme weather events, and an increased number of "high heat" days. Average annual temperatures are already more than 1° Celsius (2° Fahrenheit) warmer. If significant emissions reductions are not achieved, more than 20 days each year in Boulder County could be hotter than 95° in the next 15 years. By 2050, these temperatures could exist for nearly half of the summer. As temperatures continue to increase, so will unpredictable precipitation and extreme weather events. In fact, Boulder scientists recently uncovered that the severe effects of the 2013 Flood were enhanced by human-caused climate change. Climate change will clearly alter our natural landscape, and many species currently native to the area will no longer find suitable conditions for survival.

In addition to the human health and wildlife impacts, there are also significant economic costs associated with future climate conditions. The estimated total cost of mitigating only some of the potential effects of climate change across the geographic area of Boulder County through 2050 is conservatively placed at \$96 million to \$157 million for the median- and high-impact scenarios. Undoubtedly, the human health and economic costs of climate change pose great challenges to our community and beyond. Successfully addressing these challenges will require bold, broad measures. This is a critical time for our environment and our community—and we are well positioned to be a leader in facing these challenges.

GOAL 1

Reduce Boulder County's internal energy consumption and meet all of Boulder County's electrical needs with 100% renewable energy by 2024.

Objective 1a

Undertake an analysis to better understand energy efficiency opportunities within all county buildings and annually track building energy intensity.

Objective 1b

Using the analysis, make investments to increase energy efficiency within Boulder County owned buildings and facilities.

Objective 1c

Require that all existing, eligible county buildings achieve ENERGY STAR recognition by 2020.

Objective 1d

All newly constructed county-owned buildings shall be constructed to a minimum Gold level as defined by the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) for New Construction, while striving to attain all the available points under the Energy and Atmosphere category.

Objective 1e

Continue the cross-departmental solar task force, which works to address land use code challenges siting renewable energy and other sustainability facilities in the county.

Objective 1f

Expand capacity of on-site solar electric and solar thermal generation.

Objective 1g

Where possible, build solar onsite. Where solar is not possible onsite, purchase solar energy through utility offerings, subscribe to solar gardens or virtually net meter if legislation allows.



GOAL 2

Boulder County is a GoEV County and pledges to develop a transportation electrification plan and implementation strategies.

Objective 2a

100% of new light duty vehicles purchased by the county will be electric vehicles when the technology accommodates the needs of the vehicle use. All new sedans will be electric starting in 2020, all new SUVs will be electric by 2025, and all new pickup trucks will be electric by 2030.¹

Objective 2b

Support the electric vehicle charging station infrastructure needed to accommodate the transition to county electric fleet vehicles.

¹ Decisions will be made based on budget availability, yet there is recognition that while initial costs may be greater than carbon-based fuel vehicles, life cycle and fuel costs will offset many of the upfront expenses.

CLIMATE ACTION

GOAL 2 continued

Objective 2c

Transition to medium and heavy duty zero emission vehicles and off-road equipment as these vehicles become available in Colorado.

GOAL 3

Boulder County prevents and mitigates negative impacts to Boulder County's community, economy, and environment due to climate change and other shocks and stresses.

Objective 3a

Integrate resilience into policy, plans, regulations, decision-making, processes, and budgets across all departments.

Objective 3b

Boulder County departments, systems, and programs respond effectively and reduce long-term impact of disasters and shock events, including but not limited to floods and wildfires.

Objective 3c

Increase community resilience by building capacity, increasing connectedness, and fostering cooperation.

GOAL 4

Boulder County continues and expands support for statewide policy, administrative, and regulatory efforts to reduce climate change;

Objective 4a

Boulder County is an active member in statewide organizations to combat climate change and promote renewable energy such as Colorado Communities for Climate Action (CC4CA) and other climate-focused organizations.



| EQUITY & JUSTICE

Equity can be defined as all people having full and equal access to the opportunities they need to survive or succeed. The Boulder County Commissioners have identified equity both as one of the five priority areas and as a guiding principle for implementing each of the priorities over the next five years.

Included in this Equity & Justice priority area are three high level goals:

- Implement the Boulder County's Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Roadmap.
- Implement criminal justice reform actions alongside other partners in the criminal justice system.
- Improve access to mental health services.

GOAL 1

Increase equity, diversity, and inclusion at Boulder County by implementing Boulder County's Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Roadmap.

Inequities in social and political power have been a part of the formation, development, and current fabric of society in the United States. From the relocation and assassination of indigenous people, enslavement of people from Africa, lack of basic human rights of people who were not white, male, or landowners during the formation of the U.S. constitution and political structure, the U.S. population has been in a continual and challenging process of recognizing inequities and repairing and improving the sharing of power. Of specific importance is the recognition of the impact of racism on our society and the need for intentional efforts towards eliminating racism, as this recognition is foundational to transformational equity work.

Boulder County understands addressing equity as individuals, as a government organization, and in the county's intersections with its constituents is a major undertaking, necessary of significant investment of time, resources, energy, and at times, discomfort as shifts of cultural understanding and practices change. The BOCC also recognizes that improvement in equity, responsiveness, and inclusion within the organization is a continual and on-going process with no finite end.

The BOCC and members of Boulder County's Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Team have identified major milestones to improving equity, diversity, and inclusion over time at the organization. From 2014-2016, a diverse leadership board of employees supportive of and with expertise in cultural responsiveness and inclusion developed a mission, vision, and concrete goals and objectives for increasing cultural responsiveness and inclusion at Boulder County. These goals and objectives are defined in the Boulder County Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Roadmap which was adopted by the BOCC in 2016. As part of the BOCC's 2019-2023 strategic priorities, the BOCC is re-emphasizing its support and investment in this Roadmap and those implementing the Roadmap. As significant progress has been made in implementing the Roadmap and lessons have been learned, updates and revisions will be made as necessary to continue improvement in realizing equity, as prioritized by the Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, and BOCC.

Objective 1a

Ensure accountability for supporting and sustaining equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusion.

Objective 1b

Ensure leadership within the Boulder County organization has the tools and resources to support and sustain equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusion efforts.

Objective 1c

Ensure policy supports and sustains equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusion, and efforts are sustainable over time.

Objective 1d

Ensure recruitment, hiring, and retention activities within the organization support and sustain equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusion.

Objective 1e

Ensure Boulder County employees have the training and tools they need to support and sustain equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusion activities, including training to address oppression.



GOAL 2

Implement criminal justice reform best practices to decrease recidivism and crime, diverting people with low criminal justice involvement risk to appropriate programming and utilizing incarceration for people with high criminal justice risk to ensure public safety.

In 2016, the Board of County Commissioners commissioned a study to determine causes and potential remedies for the unmanageable growth of the jail population. Crime had steadily decreased in Boulder County since 1985, but the incarceration rate had nearly tripled, growing faster than both Colorado and the nation as a whole. Boulder County still has a relatively low incarceration rate compared to national and state averages, and Boulder County has seen an increase in individuals with high-risk criminal behaviors entering the justice system. The study identified that policy and practice changes – not solely changes in criminal activity – were influencing the increased incarceration rate and the jail's overcrowding problem.

The study made recommendations that fell into four main categories: coordinate the efforts across the county addressing the justice involved population, provide high fidelity evidence-based practices that are proven to reduce recidivism, decrease the use of the jail and other justice system interventions for those struggling with behavioral health disorders, and evaluate interventions to determine effectiveness. Boulder County is fortunate to have the necessary support from system partners as well as county leadership to tackle these reform practices and will work alongside partners in the Criminal Justice Management Board and the Criminal Justice Operating Board to implement reforms and ensure public safety.

EQUITY & JUSTICE

Ultimately, with the proper implementation of these objectives, especially in light of the construction of the 2018 voter-approved alternative sentencing facility, the county will see a reduction in recidivism as well as reduced costs associated with this population, allowing configuration of the jail to address high-risk criminal justice involved people, and diverting low-risk justice involved individuals to appropriate services and programs.

Objective 2a

Focus Boulder County funding in criminal justice services on reducing recidivism through data-driven decision making, fidelity monitoring, and financial accountability.

Objective 2b

Implement best, risk-based practices in sentencing and criminal justice programming to ensure long-term public safety.

Objective 2c

Support behavioral health and criminogenic programming by diverting low-risk justice-involved clients with behavioral health needs from the criminal justice system, utilizing jail beds for high-risk offenders, and providing appropriate criminogenic programming for moderate-to-high risk justice-involved clients.

GOAL 3

Increase access to effective mental and behavioral health services in Boulder County

Mental and behavioral health are areas of health equally important to well-being as physical health. In the U.S., 18% of adults and 12% of youth have a diagnosed mental health condition. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being; behavioral health includes not only ways of promoting well-being by preventing or intervening in mental illness, but also has an aim of preventing or intervening in substance abuse or other addictions.

One key element to improving mental and behavioral health is access to timely, affordable, and effective care. Boulder County is committed to improving access to affordable mental and behavioral health services via its current contracts for behavioral health services for Boulder County's clients, improving Colorado's legislative and administrative policies to increase access, improving access to services in Boulder County schools, improving access to appropriate in-home services for families with young children, and addressing access to necessary behavioral health services for justice-involved clients.

Objective 3a

Ensure Boulder County financial and programmatic investments directed to mental health and behavioral health services result in positive outcomes for those receiving services.

Objective 3b

Support statewide legislative, regulatory, and administrative strategies that improve access to mental health and behavioral health services.

Objective 3c

Support increasing access to mental and behavioral health services and prevention services for children and youth in Boulder County.

LAND & WATER STEWARDSHIP

Sound stewardship of public lands and natural resources provides a legacy for future generations and is increasingly important as our community is impacted by climate change and a growing human population. As such, there remains a critical need for the preservation and stewardship of open space lands in the county, with preserved open space being a fundamental shared value of the people in Boulder County. Boulder County acquires and manages land and water resources to support a variety of purposes including recreational use, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture. Resources are dedicated to managing the wildland urban interface for both fire preparedness and healthy forests, improving soil health and carbon sequestration, and protecting water resources to ensure sustained environmental health and agricultural productivity.

GOAL 1

Acquire interests in real property that significantly protect natural areas for flora and fauna, maintain buffers that preserve community identity, preserve important agricultural lands, and contribute to the creation of a recreational trail system.

Objective 1a

Refine and continue to implement a dynamic acquisition strategy that targets key remaining properties to fulfill open space goals.

Objective 1b

Continue collaborating with federal land management agencies to create desirable exchange projects that will be prioritized for implementation by federal agencies.

GOAL 2

Demonstrate excellent stewardship of open space, including protection of natural resources, community access, and quality of life, through improved planning, engagement, and implementation on Boulder County Parks & Open Space land.

Objective 2a

Develop and begin implementation of a Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Strategic Plan that guides Parks & Open Space's engagement with underserved populations in Boulder County.

Objective 2b

Collaborate with the Transportation Department and municipalities to create more trail connectivity among municipal neighborhoods, local open spaces, and regional trails through a Regional Plains Trail Connectivity Plan.

Objective 2c

Complete high priority management plans on Parks & Open Space land that advance Boulder County open space values.

GOAL 3

Expand and maximize utilization of Boulder County's water portfolio to support sustainable agriculture and healthy riparian and aquatic ecosystems.

Objective 3a

Refine and implement an acquisition strategy that targets key additional water interests that fulfill open space goals.

Objective 3b

Collaborate with municipalities and other stakeholders to identify opportunities where cooperative use arrangements and operational modifications can improve use of water portfolios for the benefit of agriculture, the environment, and human health in our local watersheds.

Objective 3c

Research and identify the most cost-effective areas for achieving greater water efficiency across water uses in the county.

Objective 3d

Identify and advocate for changes in state and regional water policy that ensure water efficiency gains can be used directly within the community towards identified community values.

GOAL 4

Enhance soil health and increase carbon sequestration using the best available science and technology to improve agricultural production and protect native ecosystems.

Objective 4a

Support implementation of practices that reduce carbon emissions and enhance soil carbon on agricultural land including cover crops, compost addition, windbreaks, slow release fertilizers, and reduced tillage farming.

Objective 4b

Complete the 5-year carbon sequestration pilot study initiated with Colorado State University, review results, and recommend next steps for broader implementation.



Objective 4c

In collaboration with Boulder County Colorado State University Extension Office, continue educational efforts such as the Soil Revolution conferences to improve local farmer understanding of soil health and carbon sequestration best practices.

Objective 4d

Quantify expected carbon sequestration from applicable practices (e.g., compost addition, riparian vegetation planting) in natural ecosystems (including riparian, grassland, and forest areas) and implement three demonstration projects on Parks & Open Space land that increase carbon sequestration in these areas.

ORGANIZATIONAL & FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Boulder County is committed to the effective use of taxpayer funds through efficient and sustainable organizational and financial practices. We provide and manage essential and impactful services, resources, and programs in a fiscally responsible manner through the transparent and best use of these funds.

Boulder County is updating its financial and administrative management tools and practices to allow more public access to county financial information and to mitigate administrative costs and burdens associated with county programs, services, and management.

Boulder County recognizes that our innovative and dedicated employees are essential in providing these services and programs. As costs of housing and transportation rise, Boulder County's ability to recruit and retain employees is also impacted. Boulder County is committed to supporting our employees' well-being and ensuring equity in the recruitment and retention of an effective and talented workforce, especially in the face of these economic challenges.

GOAL 1

Ensure adequate and sustainable resources and appropriate scaling of county government for effective public services.

Objective 1a

Identify and implement a strategy to increase the county's emergency and disaster reserve fund to address increasing climate change and natural disaster risks.

Objective 1b

Continue to support state-level advocacy to address the impacts of TABOR and the Gallagher Amendment.

Objective 1c

Explore additional, sustainable revenue and cost-saving opportunities.

ORGANIZATIONAL & FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

GOAL 2

Ensure a thriving, effective, inclusive, and diverse county workforce to provide public services.

Objective 2a

Ensure equity in recruitment, hiring, retention, and compensation practices.

Objective 2b

Invest in Boulder County employees by providing learning opportunities, tuition assistance, a pathway for 21st century skill enhancement, growth potential, and the ability to increase compensation within the organization.

Objective 2c

Continue to address recruitment and retention challenges due to increased cost of housing, transportation, and other costs of living and working in Boulder County.

Objective 2d

Strive to compensate employees at a level that allows them to live and thrive self-sufficiently.

GOAL 3

Increase efficiency and transparency of the county financial system and process through online access to Boulder County's budget, expenditures, and financial management system.

Objective 3a

Successfully implement an efficient and streamlined county financial management system.

Objective 3b

Provide self-service functions for public-facing county services.

Objective 3c

Ensure financial transparency and demonstrate the value of county services through communicating how and why county funds are budgeted and spent.

Objective 3d

Link county financial data to programmatic outcomes.



GOAL 4

Administrative functions are consistent, equitable, and efficient across county departments.

Objective 4a

Identify areas of inconsistencies and inequities in county administrative functions.

Objective 4b

Identify and prioritize best practices per impact on county functions.

Objective 4c

Empower the Administrative Managers Collective to standardize administrative best practices across the county to ensure consistency.

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