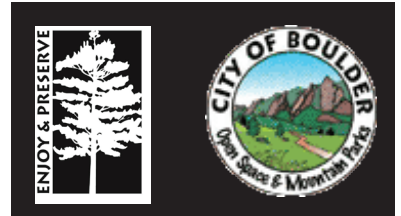


Boulder, Colorado

Melissa Martin and Garrett Devier



View of the city of Boulder, nestled between the mountains of the Colorado Front Range

(<http://www.ci.boulder.co.us>)

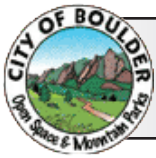
Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks is a program started by a community concerned with preserving and protecting its open space and natural environments. From the first purchase of an apple orchard, to becoming the first city to impose a sales tax for the purpose of funding and maintaining open space acquisitions, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks has been a community driven and supported program.

Open Space and Mountain Parks Provisions in the City of Boulder Charter:

1. Preservation or restoration of natural areas characterized by or including terrain, geological formations, flora, or fauna that is unusual, spectacular, historically important, scientifically valuable, or unique, or that represent outstanding or rare examples of native species;
2. Preservation of water resources in their natural or traditional state, scenic areas or vistas, wildlife habitats, or fragile ecosystems;
3. Preservation of land for passive recreation use, such as hiking, photography or nature study, and if specifically designated, bicycling, horseback riding, or fishing;
4. Preservation of agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production;
5. Utilization of land for shaping the development of the city, limiting urban sprawl and disciplining growth;
6. Utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains; and
7. Preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value and its contribution to the quality of life of the community.

Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan mission statement:

“To provide a broad spectrum of opportunities to renew, restore, refresh, and recreate, balancing often stressful lifestyles.”



City Statistics

City Population: 94,673

City Area: 17,792 acres

Density Level: 3 - 4.5 people per acre

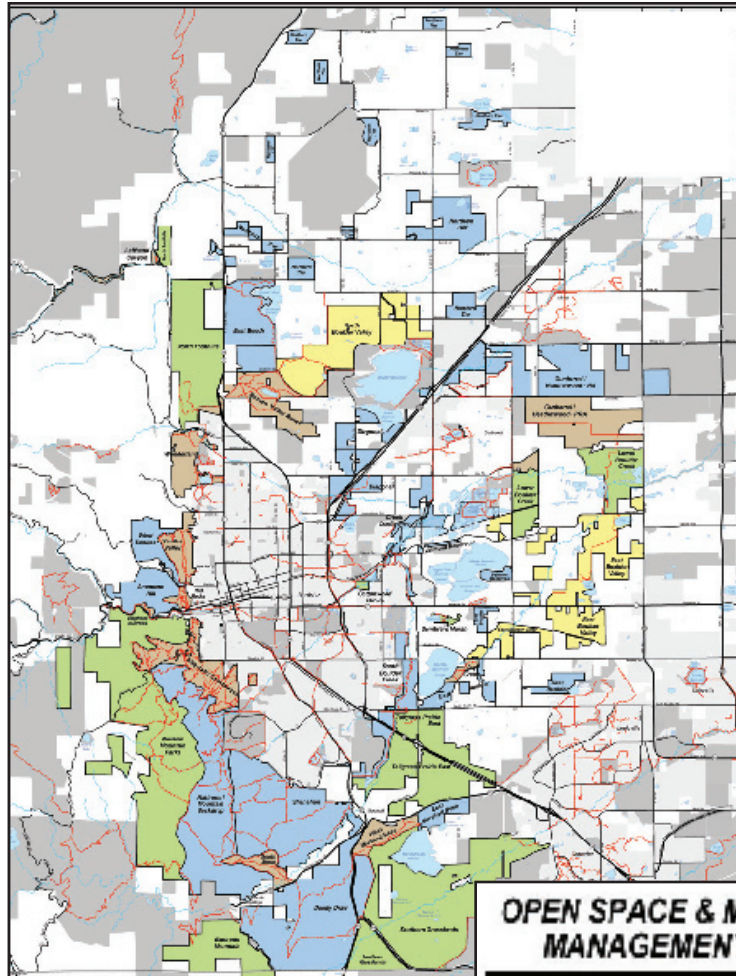
Park Acreage: 43,083

Park acreage per 1000 residents: 455

**Governing bodies:
City of Boulder, Open Space and Mountain Parks**

Boulder County

Expenditure per person: \$231.82



History of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks

- 1898: Purchase of apple orchards and alfalfa fields.
- 1907: 1,600 acres are purchased with a federal grant.
- 1912: Citizens purchase 1,200 acres.
- 1950 – 1960: The population of Boulder doubles, causing concern with citizens and the group PLAN Boulder County is formed.
- 1967: First city to vote a sales tax for the purpose of purchasing, managing and maintaining open space.
- 1978: Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan is developed.
- 2001: Merger of the Mountain Parks Division and the Open Space / Real Estate Department, to form the Open Space and Mountain Parks.

OPEN SPACE & MTN. PARKS MANAGEMENT AREAS

Map Legend

Management Area Designations

- Passive Recreation Area*
- Natural Area*
- Agricultural Area*
- Habitat Conservation Area*

- Other Public Lands*
- Incorporated Cities*
- Designated Trail*

Major Components

a. Connective corridors

The Boulder Greenways System is a network of green corridors throughout the city that provides alternate transportation routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, while also facilitating opportunities for recreation and cultural experiences. The greenways work to protect riparian, floodplain, and wetland areas, improve stream water quality through buffer zones, and provide appropriate storm drainage. The Greenways program started as the Boulder Creek Project in 1984 and has extended to include corridors along several of the Boulder Creek tributaries, including Four mile Canyon Creek, Bear Canyon Creek, Skunk Creek, Goose Creek, Wonderland Creek, and South Boulder Creek. Currently, this riparian-based corridor system anchors 200 miles of pedestrian and bike trails.

In addition to the riparian greenways, the city of Boulder boasts an extensive urban forestry program, a department of Parks and Recreation, which maintains over 40,000 trees along streets and on city owned land. More than 330,000 trees have been planted here over the last century and a half and now cover 23% of urban areas (Boulder Area Sustainability Information Network 2004).

b. Anchors

A greenbelt formed by mountains surrounds the city of Boulder. The boundary formed by the greenbelt, known as Mountain Parks, puts a physical limit on urban sprawl and provides easy city access to undeveloped natural areas. The greenbelt contains over 130 miles of maintained trails and spans 6,500 acres. Rock climbing areas, mountain bike trails, and education programs at Flagstaff Mountain's Summit Nature Center provide additional opportunities for open space use.

The 540 acre Boulder reservoir, located in Northeast Boulder, functions as a second open space anchor by providing wildlife habitat and human recreation opportunities. The reservoir is almost entirely surrounded in undeveloped, natural area, with a small portion of the perimeter developed for human recreation. The reservoir includes a roosting osprey area, which Parks and Recreation seasonally closes to human use in order to preserve habitat integrity.

Valmont City Park and Central Park also serve as open space anchors. At 132 acres, Valmont is the largest park in the Boulder city park system. It contains a large open areas, playgrounds, and recreation facilities. Boulder Central Park is notable for its central location in the city. It is adjacent to the city farmers market and is the site of the Bandshell, a event venue, making it a popular and important green space for Boulder residents (OSMP Visitor Master Plan).

c. Civic, Downtown, and Social Spaces

Despite its relatively small size, the city of Boulder has a vibrant downtown with many civic and cultural opportunities. The Pearl Street Mall, located in downtown Boulder, is an outdoor mall of retail shops and cafes. It is also the site of art festivals and street entertainment. A pop-jet fountain and children's rock garden accentuate the mall's outdoor focus. Other valued civic elements include the Boulder Public Library, the Boulder Museum for Contemporary Art, and the University of Colorado.

d. Neighborhood Parks

As of 1996, Boulder had over 434 acres at 50 sites devoted to urban parks. These parks include Harlow Platts Park, East Boulder Community Park, and Foothills Community Park, which are larger community parks. There are also several smaller, pocket parks, such as North Boulder Park, Greenleaf Park, and Scott Carpenter Park. One especially notable park is Chautauqua Park, which contains recreational facilities and historic relics, as it was founded in 1878. Additionally, Chautauqua Park contains trailheads for several Mountain Parks trails and therefore serves as an important link in the open space system. Neighborhood parks are valued as sites for active recreation that complement three indoor recreation/community facilities (OSMP Visitor Master Plan).



Boulder Reservoir
(<http://totalboulder.com/resources/53.html>)



Valmont City Park
(<http://www.osmp.org>.)



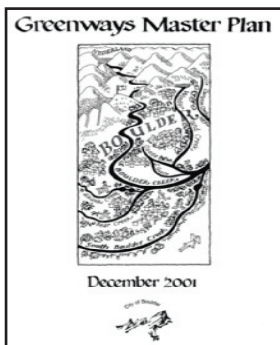
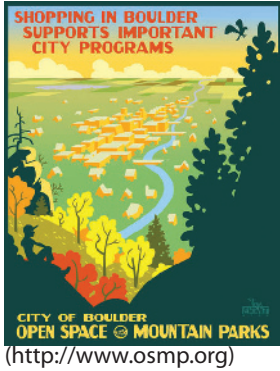
Pearl Street Mall
(<http://www.ci.boulder.co.us/comm/Gallery>)



Boulder Public Library
(<http://www.ci.boulder.co.us/comm/Gallery>)



Boulder Public Library
(<http://www.osmp.org>)



(www.ci.boulder.co.us/publicworks/depts/utilities/projects/greenways/index.htm)

Funding Mechanisms

"It pays to shop in Boulder!"

The Open Space and Mountain Parks Program is funded by a city sales tax of 0.88%.

Acquisition Methods

The Open Space and Mountain Parks made their first purchase in 1898. They have since acquired over 375 properties. Several methods that are used for acquiring properties.

1. Outright purchase at fair market values.
2. Donations of land.
3. Conservation easement purchases and easement donations.

Properties are acquired based on the Open Space Acquisitions and Management Plan (2000-2006). This plan was adopted by the City Council in 1994 and updated in 2001. Current acquisition priorities are; properties that are most threatened by development, properties that are close to or next to existing open space, and important wildlife and riparian habitats.

Contemporary Initiatives

The population of Boulder continues to increase rapidly, and the city recognizes the burden this trend could have on open space quality and acreage. Currently, there are multiple initiatives that attempt to address the need to preserve and improve open space in the face of these changes. Many of these proposals are outlined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Open Space and Mountain Parks Visitor Master Plan, and the Greenways Program Master Plan.

Despite the increasing human population, the OSMP Visitor Master Plan outlines plans for open space acquisition. A 2006 plan states a goal of acquiring 11,000 additional open space acres, focusing on property that is most threatened by development, adjacent to or near existing open space, or containing prime riparian areas and wildlife habitat. In addition to acquisition, current master plans call for improvement and development of existing parks, renovation of Parks and Rec. facilities (swimming pools, trails, buildings, playgrounds), and improvement of historical and cultural facilities.

Boulder's aggressive strategy for maintaining quality open space is admirable. However, the impressive amount of wilderness, parks, and other open space limits area available for human habitation, and building height restrictions and zoning laws compound the issue. The Boulder open space policies have clear consequences, such as elevated housing prices and population booms in neighboring towns, which should be considered when assessing their success or applicability to other cities.

Lessons Learned

As part of developing initiatives for open space management, the city of Boulder's Parks and Recreation and Open Space and Mountain Parks departments have reflected upon the successes and failures of the current system. This critical examination of the city's open spaces will help them to determine where funds and time should be focused, thus prioritizing open space improvements.

The Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan outlines specific strengths and weakness of the open space system:

What works:

- Easy access to a wide variety of beautiful natural settings
- A wide range of user groups, pursuing activities from passive to active recreation, can enjoy open spaces
- Self-imposed tax for demonstrates a high level of civilian support for open space and wilderness area

Room for Improvement:

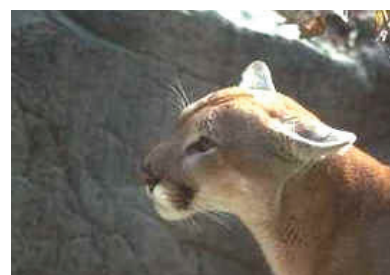
- Wildlife habitat patches are limited in extent and distribution
- Connections between individual trails and between trail networks are often weak
- Increasing crowding and consequent user group conflicts



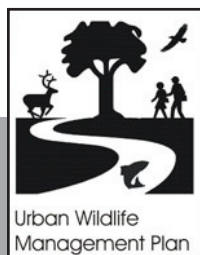
(http://www.osmp.org)



(http://www.osmp.org)



Golden eagle, Mountain Lion, Burrowing Owls (www.osmp.org)



Boulder Wildlife

It is estimated that over 500 vertebrate species, which is about half of the total species found in all of Colorado, use the Open Space Mountain Parks area. This list of animals includes elk, mountain lions, black bears, black-tailed prairie dogs, and several predatory bird species (OSMP Visitor Master Plan). The proactive conservation and preservation policies developed by the Boulder Urban Wildlife Management program and other city departments promote this impressive diversity.

In particular, city policy helps the survival of several raptor species, including golden and bald eagles, falcons, and osprey that nest in the Flatirons foothills, part of the Mountain Parks open space. Mandatory closing of park segments protect these animals from human disturbance during their vulnerable roosting stage. This policy was developed in 1984 in response to declines in bird populations due to pesticide and other pollution sources. Today, an extensive program that monitors bird health accompanies management by seasonal closure (Boulder Urban Wildlife management Plan).



(<http://www.osmp.org>)

Resources

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City of Boulder, Open Space and Mountain Parks. <http://www.ci.boulder.co.us/openspace/>

Tittle Bar Photos: <http://www.osmp.org>

Boulder, CO

