

CITY OF BOULDER, CO

COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STRATEGY



What is the Comprehensive Housing Strategy (CHS)?

The city is developing a housing policy framework and implementation toolkit that will focus on:

- Strengthening the city's affordable housing programs for low- and moderate-income households.
- Expanding housing opportunities for middle-income households.
- Exploring innovative approaches to providing additional housing and a broader range of housing options, particularly for housing needs not being met by the market.

Addressing Boulder's affordability challenges will take a creative mix of policies, tools and resources to make progress on multiple fronts. Potential tools are being developed and evaluated for City Council to make informed decisions for short, medium, and long term actions.

What are the Issues?

Housing is the basic building block of high quality neighborhoods and a diverse community fabric of experiences, backgrounds and socio-economic levels. While progress has been made since the 1999 Comprehensive Housing Strategy, conditions have changed and a new strategy, built upon the current one, is needed to address current and future challenges. The new Comprehensive Housing Strategy is intended to expand and preserve diverse, affordable housing choices in Boulder. The Strategy will take a broad look at housing from the perspectives of land use policies, city investments, affordable housing programs, and market-rate housing production with a focus on the following key issues:

- The shrinking of Boulder's economic middle (households earning \$65-150K annually) and how to create policies, programs and tools to reverse this trend;

- The tale of two Boulder housing types: detached single-family homes are increasingly only affordable to the wealthy in Boulder, while attached homes, such as condos and apartments, provide better affordability for middle-income households (however, are less attractive to families);
- The growing 59% of Boulder workers who live in surrounding communities, including city employees, CU faculty, police and fire professionals, school teachers, and service workers;
- Shifting demographics and changes in housing preferences (e.g., millennials, seniors, single-person households); and
- The challenge of limited land supply and how to redevelop existing areas in ways that respond to the community's evolving housing needs in a manner consistent with other community values and priorities.

What is the Timeline?

SPRING 2014	SUMMER - FALL 2014	WINTER 2015	ON-GOING
<p>Foundations for Action Understand the housing market and why people make their housing choices. Develop an initial list of policies and tools, identify best practices nationwide, and draft project goals.</p>	<p>Strategic Direction Identify a wide range of policy and tool options. Conduct an analysis to determine the actions that best achieve project goals. Identify community priorities for action including short, medium and long-term solutions.</p>	<p>Strategic Action Council Action on the Comprehensive Housing Strategy, including 2015 priorities for action.</p>	<p>Monitoring and Adjustment Monitor outcomes to inform periodic discussions with council regarding next-step priorities and strategic course corrections.</p>

Draft Project Purpose Statement and Goals

Draft Purpose Statement

Define priorities and goals for the expansion and preservation of diverse, affordable housing choices in Boulder and identify specific programs and tools to address them in a manner consistent with the community's social, economic and environmental sustainability principles.

Draft Project Goals

The following draft goals are intended to inspire and direct work on the Comprehensive Housing Strategy. The goals, once refined and adopted, will be used to guide the strategy development process and evaluate potential policies and tools. The goals should not be viewed individually, but rather as a comprehensive and coordinated approach toward achieving the overarching purpose of the project -- to preserve and expand diverse, affordable housing choices in Boulder in a manner consistent with the community's social, economic and environmental sustainability principles.

For each goal, examples of how the goal might be advanced are provided in order to illustrate the types of policies or initiatives that might be considered. These examples are illustrative only, and are not comprehensive. The work of the coming months will involve consideration of specific strategies and tools in each area, engaging the community and stakeholders in determining what the priority areas for action should be in advancing each goal.

1. Strengthen Our Current Commitments

Reach or exceed Boulder's goals to serve very low, low and moderate income households, including people with disabilities, special needs, and the homeless.

Examples of how the CHS could advance this goal include:

- Establish a target date to achieve the current 10% goal of permanently affordable units
- Reach the 10% goal by a certain target date
- Establish clear funding priorities

2. Maintain the Middle

Prevent further loss of Boulder's economic middle by preserving existing housing and providing greater variety of housing choices for middle-income families and for Boulder's workforce.

Examples of how the CHS could advance this goal include:

- Explore options to preserve the affordability of existing housing
- Facilitate the creation of relatively affordable attached townhomes and other higher density but family-supportive housing types through land use and zoning changes
- Identify opportunities for the city to support greater use of location-efficient mortgages to increase purchasing power
- Create a middle-income downpayment assistance or low interest financing program

3. Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood

Facilitate the creation of a variety of housing options in every part of the city, including existing single-family neighborhoods.

Examples of how the CHS could advance this goal include:

- Make it easier and more financially feasible to develop accessory dwelling units and owner accessory units (e.g., granny flats and carriage houses)
- Make it possible for groups of unrelated individuals (e.g., seniors, co-ops) to share housing (above current occupancy limits)

- Make it possible to create duplex units, small townhome developments and other appropriately scaled multi-unit housing in existing single-family neighborhoods
- Establish minimum density standards or alternative approaches to managing density to avoid creating new areas that offer only large, high priced single family homes.

4. Create 15-minute Neighborhoods

Foster the development of mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods in amenity rich locations (i.e., close to transit, open space and trails, employment centers, etc.).

Examples of how the CHS could advance this goal include:

- Identify opportunity sites for housing at densities appropriate to the context and with a variety of types and styles to meet Boulder's future housing needs
- Partner with nonprofit housing developers to create mixed income, mixed use developments on key opportunity sites
- Explore new zoning tools to incentivize or require desired unit mixes, types or sizes, such as "benefit capture" provisions connected to property rezoning
- Establish a pattern book of desired housing outcomes, particularly for family-friendly higher density housing and for housing that meets special needs, linked to streamlined review processes

5. Strengthen Partnerships

Strengthen current partnerships and explore creative new public-private-partnerships to address our community's housing challenges (e.g., University of Colorado, private developers, financing entities, affordable housing providers, etc.)

Examples of how the CHS could advance this goal include:

- Work with CU to facilitate housing development in key locations (e.g. North of Boulder Creek, Williams Village, South Campus)
- Create a project development and facilitation role within the city

6. Enable Aging in Place

Provide housing options for seniors of all abilities and incomes to remain in our community, with access to services and established support systems.

Examples of how the CHS could advance this goal include:

- Work with partners to meet the needs of seniors (appropriate housing choices and range of options)
- Work with partners to meet the needs of low and very low income seniors

- Work with partners to meet the needs of people with disabilities and others with special needs

Next Steps

There are four phases to the project:

- **Phase 1: Foundations for Action.** A housing market study was completed in 2013 as a first step to understand the city's housing market, both rental and homeownership, with a particular focus on housing opportunities for workers and low and middle income residents. Comparative data from surrounding communities is also provided where available (see the [Boulder Housing Market Analysis](#) ). A housing choice survey and analysis was completed in early 2014 and provides data on residents' and incommuters' housing preferences and needs (see the [Boulder Housing Choice Survey and Analysis](#) ). Staff also prepared a memo for a May 27, 2014 city council work session summarizing the results of the foundations work and background materials that led up to the launch of the Comprehensive Housing Strategy (see the [May 27 memo](#) ).
- **Phase 2: Strategic Direction.** With a better understanding of key issues and informed by further discussion with partners, stakeholders and council, the process will identify key strategic priorities. Starting in spring, staff developed draft project goals based on council discussion in 2013 (see [Draft Project Goals](#) ). Staff also drafted an initial list of potential policies of tools to address Boulder's housing challenges (see [Draft List of Policies and Tools](#) ). New tools will be identified by stakeholders and research of best practices in other cities. The full list of policies and tools will be evaluated against the project goals. This "bang for your buck" analysis will emphasize what level of effort is necessary or which actions or combinations of actions are needed to achieve the project goals. Through community engagement, staff will identify community priorities for action. A draft strategy will be presented to city council in late 2014.
- **Phase 3: Strategic Action.** Based on the council-approved Strategic Direction, the integrated staff team will develop a detailed work program and implementation schedule for short, medium and long-term actions.
- **Ongoing: Monitoring, Reflection and Action.** As strategic priorities are acted upon, an ongoing process of monitoring outcomes and conditions, and engaging key partners and stakeholders, will help inform periodic discussions with council regarding next-step priorities and strategic course corrections.

Background

The key outcomes of the [1999 Comprehensive Housing Strategy](#)  include:

- Adoption of the Inclusionary Housing ordinance that requires 20 percent of all new housing to be permanently affordable to low- and moderate-income households;

- Amended city annexation policies to position affordable housing as the highest priority community benefit;
- Focused on the 2000 Major Update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan to identify opportunities to expand the amount of housing and housing choices in the community; and
- Partnered with the University of Colorado to increase the supply of off-campus housing for students close to the university.

In 2000 and 2010, the [Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Housing Policy](#)  updated planning efforts such as the Transit Village Area Plan and identified opportunities to expand the amount and choice of housing in the community (e.g. designation of sites for mixed use development, 28th Street frontage road, Boulder Junction). The 2010 update also affirmed the city's commitment to supporting the following goals:

- Local Support for Community Housing Needs;
- Preserve Housing Choices;
- Advance and Sustain Diversity; and
- Integrate Growth and Community Housing Goals.

In 2010, an [Affordable Housing Task Force](#)  was formed to consider potential improvements to the city's affordable housing goals and programs. The task force resulted in a report and recommendations in eight areas. Many of the innovative policies and tools identified by that effort are included in this planning effort.

In 2013, Council recognized that the city's housing challenges require more than minor adjustments to current programs. City Council held study sessions on [February 12](#)  and [May 14](#)  in 2013 to understand the current housing challenges and provide direction on the development of a strategy. In May 2013, Council crafted a draft project purpose statement, key assumptions, and guiding principles.

To the greatest extent possible, the Comprehensive Housing Strategy is being coordinated and integrated with the following strategic planning initiatives to ensure complementary and logical outcomes that advance Boulder's established sustainability initiatives and climate commitment:

- Transportation Master Plan;
- Economic Sustainability Strategy;
- Envision East Arapahoe;
- North Boulder Subcommunity Plan Update;
- Access Management and Parking Strategy;
- RTD's Northwest Area Mobility Study; and
- 100 Resilient Cities Initiative.

In particular, the Comprehensive Housing Strategy will inform areas of focus in the 2015 update of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.

How to stay engaged?

Sign Up for Emails

To sign up for email updates, select the [Comprehensive Housing Strategy Emails](#) link and mailing list.

Participate in Working Groups

Staff is currently crafting a working group proposal for Council consideration at the September 2, 2014 meeting. Below is an early draft.

The city will host a series of working groups in the fall to explore creative solutions to Boulder's affordable housing challenges. These groups will be comprised of expert stakeholders in various focus areas to explore and evaluate the tools in the toolkit. The working groups are organized around the project goals.

1. **Strengthen Our Current Commitments** (low-income households, including those with special needs and the homeless)
2. **Maintain the Middle** (middle-income households and workforce housing)
3. **Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood**
4. **Enable Aging in Place**

Follow-on Focus Groups

1. **15-minute neighborhoods**
2. **Partnerships** (including the University of Colorado)

Focus groups. The 15-minute neighborhood and Partnerships goals will be addressed through focus groups in late fall and will have the benefit of discussions from the working groups. The 15-minute focus group will address how the CHS recommendations will be integrated in to the upcoming Comprehensive Plan Update and the Partnerships focus group will bring together traditional and non-traditional partners with a focus on implementing specific CHS tools.

Opening symposium. An opening community symposium with guest speakers to provide an outside perspective and inspiration will be held in October. The symposium will kick off the working group process.

Working groups. Each group will commit to meet 2-3 times in October/November to review and evaluate potential policies and tools specific to their goal. Prior to the first meeting of each group, staff will provide common background information in the form of a concise data book to provide common grounding. Also, staff will draft background materials for each topic and describe current programs.

At the end of the working group process, each group will prepare a summary of the key issues and identifying the most promising tools to address their specific area (not the final list of what would be in the strategy) but recommendations on the short list of items to be considered through a community prioritization exercise in the fall.

Closing symposium. A final symposium will be held in early fall to bring discussion groups together to share insights, findings, and to identify common ground. This will include an interactive panel discussion and small group discussions as way to present the work, identify interrelations, and engage the broader community in the conversation.

Community prioritization. The final step in Phase II is to share the working group and focus group results with the broader community and start to prioritize policies and tools. Various engagement activities will be utilized, including Inspire Boulder. Outreach and updates to relevant city boards will also enhance the community input and discussion opportunities.

Working Group Structure

- 6-8 members per working group
- Members are expected to have subject matter expertise and have a demonstrated ability to collaborate and seek solutions
- Members are appointed by City Manager
- Members can serve on only one working group
- No minutes - meeting notes are taken on a chart pack and a picture is posted online
- Meetings will be publicized and open to the public, but discussion will focus on members

Selection Process

Working group members will be open to anyone who lives or works in Boulder. Members will be selected to ensure geographic, demographic, and professional diversity. In addition, preference will be given to members with personal or professional experience related to the focus of the working group. Members not selected are encouraged to attend the working group meetings and participate in the symposiums.

The details of these events will be posted on the website in early September. The community is encouraged to participate in the working groups and help shape the Comprehensive Housing Strategy.