



Land Use Department

Courthouse Annex

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www.bouldercounty.org/lu/

June 2008

Dear Property Owner within the boundaries of the Townsite Planning Initiative,

In order to help preserve the unique character of each of Boulder County's historic communities, the County Commissioners are inviting several townsites¹ to participate in a community planning process where property owners and residents work together to develop a plan and proposed regulations for guiding future preservation and development in their respective communities.

Background and impetus for the Townsite Planning Initiative: In May 2005, the Board of County Commissioners (Board) began an update of the Boulder County Land Use Code. This update included extensive meetings with the public to identify issues and concerns that residents of Boulder County were having with the Code. Recurring comments included the lack of any building standards or other regulations to ensure sustainable development, in unincorporated Boulder County, the lack of certainty in the Site Plan Review regulations with respect to compatibility with existing neighborhood character, and the negative effects of new and remodeled larger scale homes on established neighborhoods. In reviewing public comments, it became clear that sustainability, in both new development and of the existing rural character in Boulder County, was a common theme.

The Boulder County Planning Commission in May 2007 adopted the Sustainability Element to the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Sustainability Element included goals and policies related to the preservation of the unique rural character in the county, especially those areas which have specific historic or contextual character. Goal 4 states that "The preservation of these diverse rural landscapes, neighborhoods and communities should be fostered and promoted through encouraging participation by the residents and property owners in those areas to identify the characteristics that are of importance to them and assist in development of land use strategies and tools for maintaining those characteristics."

One of the strategies that the County initially proposed to protect the unique character of these areas was to designate them as Special Character Areas, and adopt interim regulations for development, including maximum house sizes, in these areas. In March 2008, following many months of extensive public input, the Board decided not to designate Special Character Areas, but did feel that each community would benefit from engaging in a community planning effort and committed county resources to help these communities move forward with community plans. Subsequently, the Townsite Planning Initiative was created and a two-year full-time staff position funded.

In April 2008, the Land Use Department hired an experienced facilitator, Garry Sanfaçon, who has lived in the mountains for over 17 years, to staff this Initiative. As a longtime rural county

¹ Potential townsites may include Allenspark, Eldora, Gold Hill, Hygiene, Raymond, Riverside and the Peak to Peak Scenic Corridor.

resident and a 3-year member of the Boulder County Planning Commission, Garry brings together a wealth of firsthand knowledge and understanding about these unique areas as well as extensive experience in working with communities to help them develop their own master plans and long-range planning goals.

The County Commissioners have expressed interest in seeing the following “guidelines” - or parameters - established as part of the intent and scope of the *community planning process*:

- Work within the guidance provided by the Comprehensive Plan;
- Identify what sorts of things/changes property owners want to have happen that may not be currently allowed under the Boulder County Land Use Code;
- Strive to maintain stability of townsite character and seek ways to reduce incidences of dramatic changes in current building practices and uses.

Potential Benefits

- Community members take a leading role in formulating the desired future of their area;
- Proactive planning is done rather than reacting to the agendas and actions of others;
- Common ground is identified and future improvements planning is accomplished.

Potential Outcomes

- Creation of a shared community vision, plan and regulations that are reviewed and adopted by the County as part of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code;
- Rectify plat issues, right of ways and setbacks so individual property owners don't have to apply to Land Use individually which saves time and money;
- Identify land uses that would be appropriate, but are currently not allowed in the Code even through special review;
- Develop tailored zoning requirements and guidelines to help preserve and maintain the community's traditional feel;
- Address building height, size and scale and make legal nonconforming structures conforming.

Process: The initial approach is to meet informally with residents of each townsite to listen and learn about the main issues facing their specific community. If through this informal listening phase there is interest in exploring and participating in a *community planning process* the County will convene a community-wide meeting to engage the entire community to determine its level of interest. We have begun this process with Eldora, Allenspark, Raymond and Riverside.

Upcoming Community Meetings

Allenspark, Raymond and Riverside: Monday, June 30, 6:30 p.m., Highlands Presbyterian Camp
Eldora: Wednesday, July 2, 6:30 p.m., Nederland Community Center
Gold Hill, Hygiene, Peak to Peak Scenic Corridor: Fall 2008

To learn more about the Initiative as well as share your views and concerns please contact Garry at 720-564-2642 or gsanfacon@bouldercounty.org. To stay abreast of the latest information visit the Land Use website at www.bouldercounty.org/lu/townsite_planning/.

Sincerely,

Dale Case
Director, Land Use Department

Garry Sanfaçon
Planner II