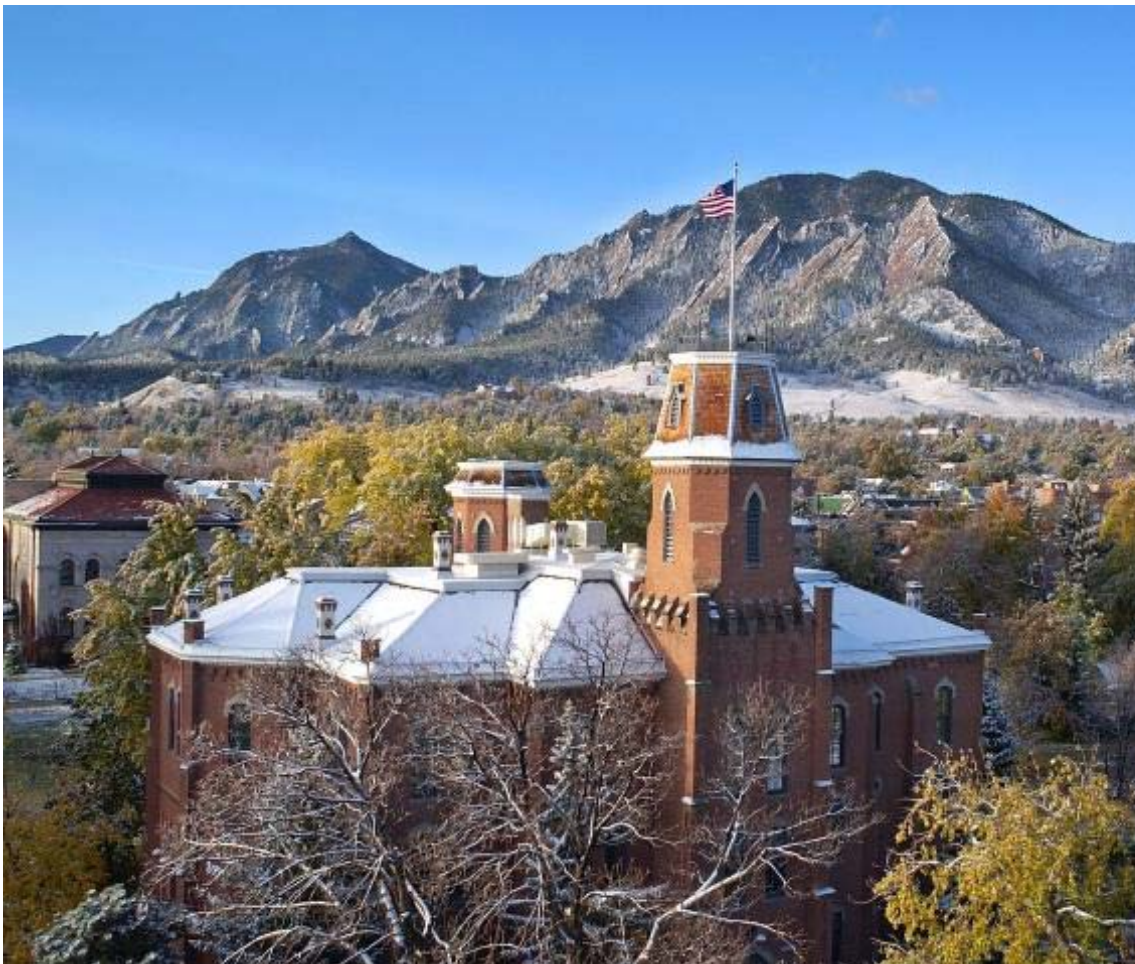


# TASK FORCE REPORTS

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## CAMPUS MASTER PLAN



**Colorado**  
University of Colorado at Boulder <sup>TM</sup>

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# REPORT OF THE MASTER PLAN TASK FORCE ON

## NORTH OF BOULDER CREEK



*"CU students and campus leaders are continuing to look for new ways to push forward on sustainability and climate action."*

*—Dave Newport, Director, Environmental Center*

## Master Plan Task Force: North of Boulder Creek – Graduate/Family Housing

January 2010

*Task Force Membership:* Alfred Flores (Chair), Deb Cook, David Chadwick, Jonathan Akins, Thomas Goodhew, Oliver Gerland, Matt Reisman, Bev Johnson, Bob Harberg, Christie Coleman, Katie Knapp, Mona Elhelbawy

Background: Our task force was assign to investigate and evaluate the uses of the geographic area north of Boulder Creek, between 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Folsom Street, Marine Street and Arapahoe Avenue. The University maintains a total of 637,274 gross square feet (gsf) of building space on this site. This area is currently primarily used as Graduate/Family Housing (502,542 gsf) with the exception of Athens North and College Inn buildings (127,748 gsf) that are temporarily utilized as Residence Hall space for single undergraduates and some parking along the creek and football practice fields. In addition this site also includes the location of the CU Children’s Center (6984 gsf)

Critical issues which face the existing use of the site include significant hazards with the Boulder Creek floodway and poor condition of existing structures. Virtually all structures in the area have issues with asbestos, poor building insulation, outdated electrical systems and structural issues. Ground floor units in most buildings would receive significant water damage in the event of Boulder Creek being flooded. In addition, these units are outdated and do not contain amenities that are typically associated with affordable housing constructed in Boulder for over 20 years. Based on these critical issues, it is the general consensus of the task force that serious consideration should be made to redeveloping this area.

The task force understands that its primary assignment was to address the campus planning implications of the geographic area; it feels that it also needs to address issues that are specific to the planning needs of Graduate/Family Housing, as this is the major current user, but depending on the redevelopment options, this use may be partially relocated to other areas of campus. Location of some housing to other areas of campus is likely to help limit the impact of redevelopment on the graduate/family housing stock and provide space for development partnerships to assist in paying for floodway improvements.

*How will land & facilities planning for the area north of Boulder creek support the increase in students that will occur 5, 10 or 20 years into the future?*

Flagship 2030 indicates that graduate student enrolment will increase from 4515 students in 2007 to 7100 students by 2030. Successful recalibration of in-state/out of state enrollment formulas dictated by the state legislature is predicated to yield an additional 450 international graduate students. This committee finds that in order to support this increase in graduate student population, land planning for the area north of Boulder Creek is a viable and in fact

desirable site to continue to provide graduate and family housing. Given the 100 year flood constraints, housing will need to be constructed in higher densities. The increase in density will be balanced with more cohesive open spaces along the creek that will serve as buffers to the natural creek area and relieve the severe flood issues. These open spaces are thought to be a combination of active and passive outdoor recreation areas available for student activities and for athletic department needs.

The North of Boulder Creek task force recognizes that this is the last reasonably viable site to continue to provide housing for graduate students and families near the core of main campus. The most recent Educational Benchmarking Inc survey and analysis indicate that current residents of graduate and family housing significantly value this location in terms of the impact on their overall educational experience and personal growth (ranked number 1 of 79 participating universities. Maintaining this site as one of the options for graduate students and families will support our desire to increase the recruitment and retention of high caliber graduate students for both the United States and throughout the world..



*What are the important considerations for utilization of the area?*

First and foremost, the area will need to be brought into alignment with FEMA and City of Boulder flood mitigation requirements. The City of Boulder has recently received for review a draft of an engineering study for the area that purports a much higher degree of accuracy than previous studies. Site constraints will need to be understood and specifically defined in light of this study in order to come into compliance in all future development of this area. Preliminary analysis of this area by UCB Civil Engineers identify between 23 to 28 acres out of a total of 50 acres that can be devoted to construction of residential housing and/or other campus buildings with the remainder utilized for open space, recreational and athletic fields and any needed flood migration structures and set back from Boulder Creek. As it would appear significant site improvements will be necessary to mediate floodplain issues should residential units remain at ground level, it may be more cost effective to consider

coupling non-residential at ground level and parking use at grade or below ground level with residential above.

This location of this area between the heart of the University of Colorado campus and Boulder's downtown presents wonderful opportunities to integrate needs of our students while serving the broader community. Graduate and Family Housing students appreciate the short walk to the core of campus academic and research facilities and report that the proximity makes it much easier pursue academic goals as well as to engage and contribute in the larger campus community with very little commuting time. In addition the proximity to the core of campus makes it very easy for parents to manage sharing childcare responsibilities when they are juggling multiple roles. Safeguarding a portion of this site for Graduate and Family Housing is currently the last viable option available in order to provide a housing option within walking distance to the core of campus for this student demographic.

The committee recognizes that the North of Boulder Creek area could be developed either singularly or in combination of one or more of the following, Conference Center, athletic and/or recreational fields and classroom spaces. However, the potential redevelopment of this area to include all or some of the above along with a culturally diverse graduate and family housing program will optimize the use of this space in terms of the Flagship 2030 University Village initiative.

The neighborhood to the north of this area is currently home to many of our students. New development of the area could provide for stronger pedestrian links across through this area, over the creek and up the hill to main campus. In addition, academic and other student programs could be expanded down the hill adjacent to the core campus and be included in existing class change time zones.

The location of the area will also present many challenges to redevelopment. In order to build higher density housing, building height may in all probability need to increase from the current height in order to achieve necessary economies of scale. Communication with neighbors and coordination with the City of Boulder will be an important consideration. Also, working along Boulder Creek and the highly popular Boulder Creek path is likely to bring significant public scrutiny. Any increases in density or use of the area will bring concerns about increase in traffic along Arapahoe Avenue. Development on the western edge of the site will bring concerns on how the campus and our students interface with the Boulder High School campus and BVSD students.

The temporary use of Athens North and College Inn for Residence Hall space will most likely shift to East Campus where development will include the design of new undergraduate Residence Hall communities that include dining facilities. Given the distance to dining operations, the temporary use of Athens North and College Inn on the north of Boulder Creek site is regarded as not desirable for a permanent Residence Hall site by HDS.

Projected changes in the state requirements will no longer allow for new child care operations to be constructed within the 500 year flood plan. This will preclude any expansion at the current location on the north of boulder creek site for the CU Children's

Center. The East Campus site may be the most viable location for any future expansion of campus child care programs.



*Is the creation of a university village concept appropriate for this area of the campus?*

A university village concept is ideal for this area. Being an interface between campus, Naropa University and the Boulder community, the university village concept could be used to break down the scale of the Boulder Creek community and provide services, curricular and co-curricular opportunities for student residents, the broader Boulder community and Colorado citizens. The potential for a community conference center, alumni housing, and academic spaces to be incorporated with graduate/family housing has the potential to enrich the student experience along with serving the needs of the broader community.

The University of Colorado at Boulder has a long standing tradition of locating much of the student housing near campus academic and research facilities. A university village concept that provides housing for graduate students and student-families, alumni and/or faculty retiree home (condo) ownership, community programming and meeting spaces and a community conference center upholds and broadens this tradition. By preserving and enhancing this site under the guidance of the university village concept toward the creation of a vibrant and globally diverse living/learning community, this approach attempts to support the vision of the university to “redefine learning and discovery in the global context”. Currently over 65 % of residents in family housing are international students/families representing over 70 nations. The university village concept will enhance learning about other cultures and support development of intercultural competence within this diverse residential community.

*What types of partnerships can be fostered in this area to better serve students, faculty and staff as well as the community of Boulder and citizens of Colorado?*

The redevelopment of this area has potential to create partnerships within the university community as well as partnerships with the City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), Naropa University, the private development community and other affordable housing providers. Within the university, HDS development of new housing units could include academic spaces for faculty offices and classrooms, particularly on the ground level of new residential facilities. Student recreation spaces along with changes to the intercollegiate athletics area should be considered for the development of the floodways. Partnerships with the City of Boulder, urban drainage, and flood control should be used to coordinate floodway improvements, pedestrian and vehicular corridors. There continues to be an expressed need for the region to have a Conference Center that serves the City of Boulder and the university. Partnerships between the city, university and possibly private developers need to be explored. Development of alumni housing could be an additional private partnership opportunity to help subsidize affordable housing for student, faculty and staff.

The committee met with local and regional affordable housing professionals that have been successful at financing and building affordable housing along the Front Range. Using a wide range of alternatives of equity funding and debt financing mechanisms, the possibility of partnering with nonprofit affordable housing providers for technical assistance or other forms of partnership to enhance our options warrant further investigation



### *Needs of Graduate/Family Housing*

#### *Background:*

The area north of Boulder Creek has 595 units available through the family housing program. An additional 228 apartment units are available at Smiley Court, in the East Campus area. Of the 810 total family housing units, 50 (6%) are studio 299 (37%) are one-bedroom, 433 (54%) are two-bedroom, 27 (3%) are three bedroom and 1 (<1%) is a four bedroom. Rental rates are targeted to be around 80% of the typical market rate for the Boulder area. Residents of the units appreciate the low cost of the units, but find the convenience to campus and a strong community to be great advantages to living in what are otherwise somewhat sub-standard apartment units.

Private sector development has provided a significant stock of apartment housing for CU-Boulder students. It is believed that an increase in demand for non-freshmen single student apartments can be largely handled through private sector development. Graduate/Family housing does meet a specific need not provided typically in the private sector with lease terms directed specifically at the academic calendar, below market rates and locations very close to campus. In addition, family housing programs help to develop a strong sense of community for student residents and provide programs designed to support unique cultural needs of international students.

Current demand for the units does not indicate a justification for a significant increase in the total number of units needed to serve the campus. Construction of new units, with finishes and amenities more in line with what is available in the private sector may increase demand.

Desire to develop the east campus area may place significant pressure to relocate the Smiley Court housing within the next 10-20 years. The Smiley Court facilities are considered to be the better of the housing stock currently in the family housing portfolio and are a low priority for refurbishment or replacement by HDS.

In the Williams Village area, the micro site development master plan for the parcel provides for 200 Faculty/Staff housing units on the east side of Bear Creek. This low/medium density housing could be developed and used to fulfill replacement needs of some of the family housing stock.

A concern of HDS is that family housing stock is not divided into small communities. Smaller housing groups are an issue for building management & maintenance operation. Residents also prefer some sense of community and community diversity that can be lost or become isolated in small housing communities. The 600+ units north of Boulder Creek are probably too large of a community without some other types of uses or activities. The Smiley Court community of 228 units does seem to be a reasonable balance.

#### *Added diversity of housing densities/cost:*

Currently all of the family housing stock is developed at a similar density (~19 DU/Acre) and is priced based on unit type, with no price variation for location, site amenities, etc. It is believed that the market has some flexibility to accept more price variation with some of the

units being priced at or near market rates. It is also believed that the market can accept that a portion of the graduate housing could be developed at much higher densities. Developing graduate housing at more urban densities (40-60 DU/acre) could be successful if close in access to complimentary services and support facilities are available to the population and would not require dependence on personal vehicles. Offering a range of housing densities and locations provide options and choices that currently do not exist on campus for such a diverse market.



*Needs of international students:*



With an increase in international student's recruitment, some consideration should be given to the cultural needs of these students as new housing is developed. In addition to offering programs to acclimate new students to the local culture, varying housing types could provide attractive amenities. Developing physical spaces that facilitate and enhance interaction along with providing a range of spaces to facilitate community building and other educational activities will have a positive impact on all residents (students, partners and spouses, children, faculty and staff) coming from throughout the United States and from across the world.

*Parking:*

Additional study should be conducted to verify the needs of the graduate/family housing residents for parking of personal vehicles. Initial information could be gathered based on current parking permit demand in the family housing areas. Any justification for reduced parking demand will help to control redevelopment cost and help to alleviate community concerns regarding higher density development overwhelming the existing street network. This location has the current benefit of access to a wide range of transportation and transit alternatives and can be expanded to new programs such as Zimride.

*Suggested Areas for Additional Studies:*

- Intergenerational/alumni housing market; needs, unit types, amenities, etc.
- Parking requirements for graduate/family housing
- Flood mitigation strategies
- Market flexibility/affordability of graduate/family housing
- Unit type demands for family/graduate/faculty/staff housing
- Arapahoe Avenue traffic study/traffic impact