



Supporting family farms through zoning in Boulder County

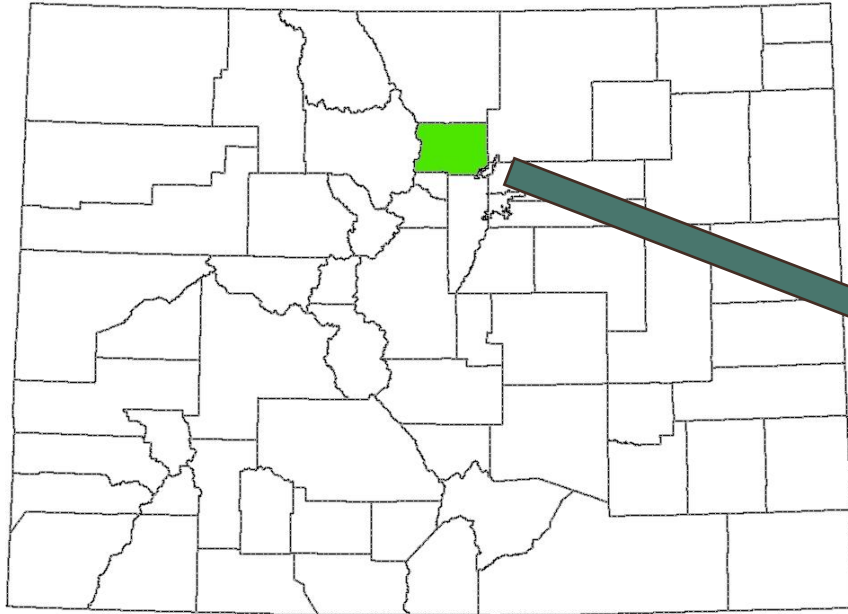
Presented by Sabrina Torres



Background

1. Boulder County
2. Importance of local farmers
 1. Local food access
 2. Soil health
 3. Social fabric

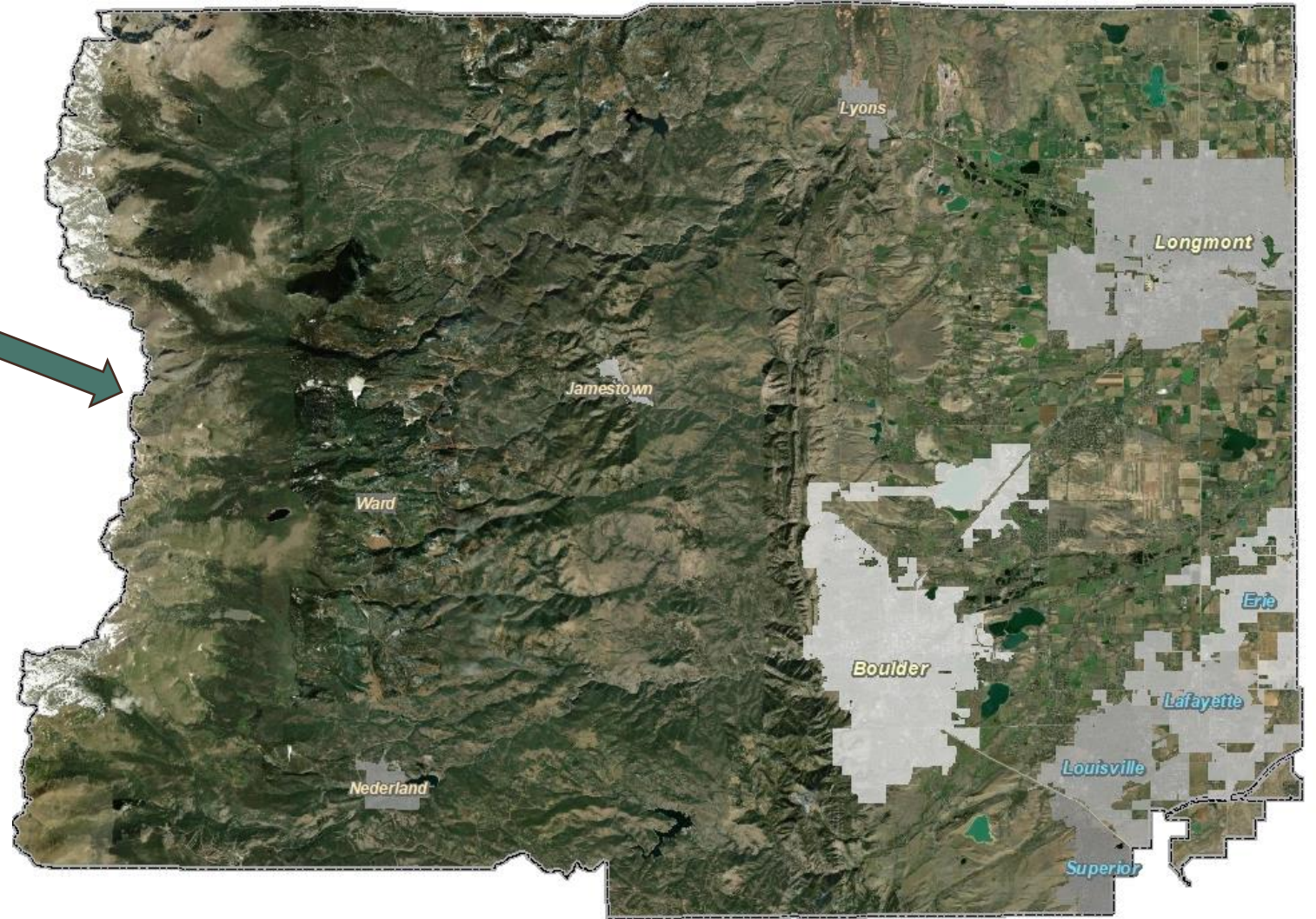
Boulder County, CO



Colorado:
5,773,714¹

Boulder County:
330,758¹

Unincorporated Boulder County:
42,177²



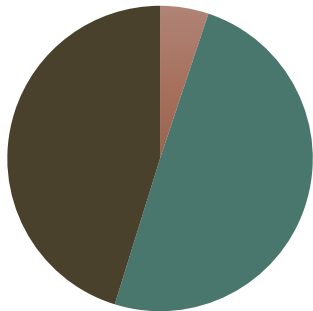
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

Boulder County, CO

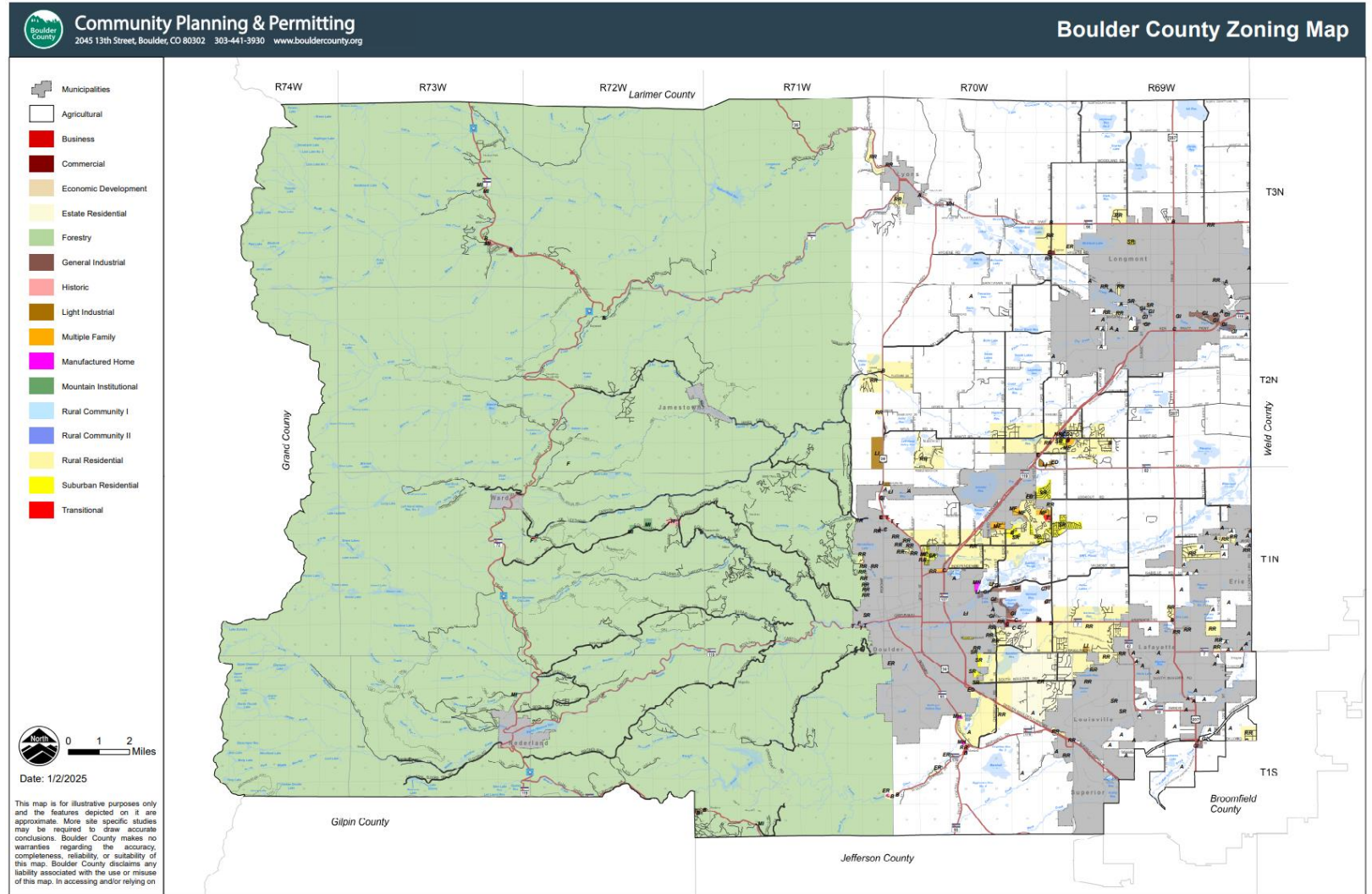
Agricultural Zoning (white):
116,307 acres

Active farmland:
74,222 acres

826 Farms
1479 Producers



■ <35 ■ 35-64 ■ 65 and older





Background

1. Boulder County
2. Importance of local farmers
 1. Local food access
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Challenges faced by farmers

- Development and rising land costs
- Climate impacts
- Market pressures



Affordable housing



Marshall Fire

Efforts to counteract challenges

Dedicated Open Space

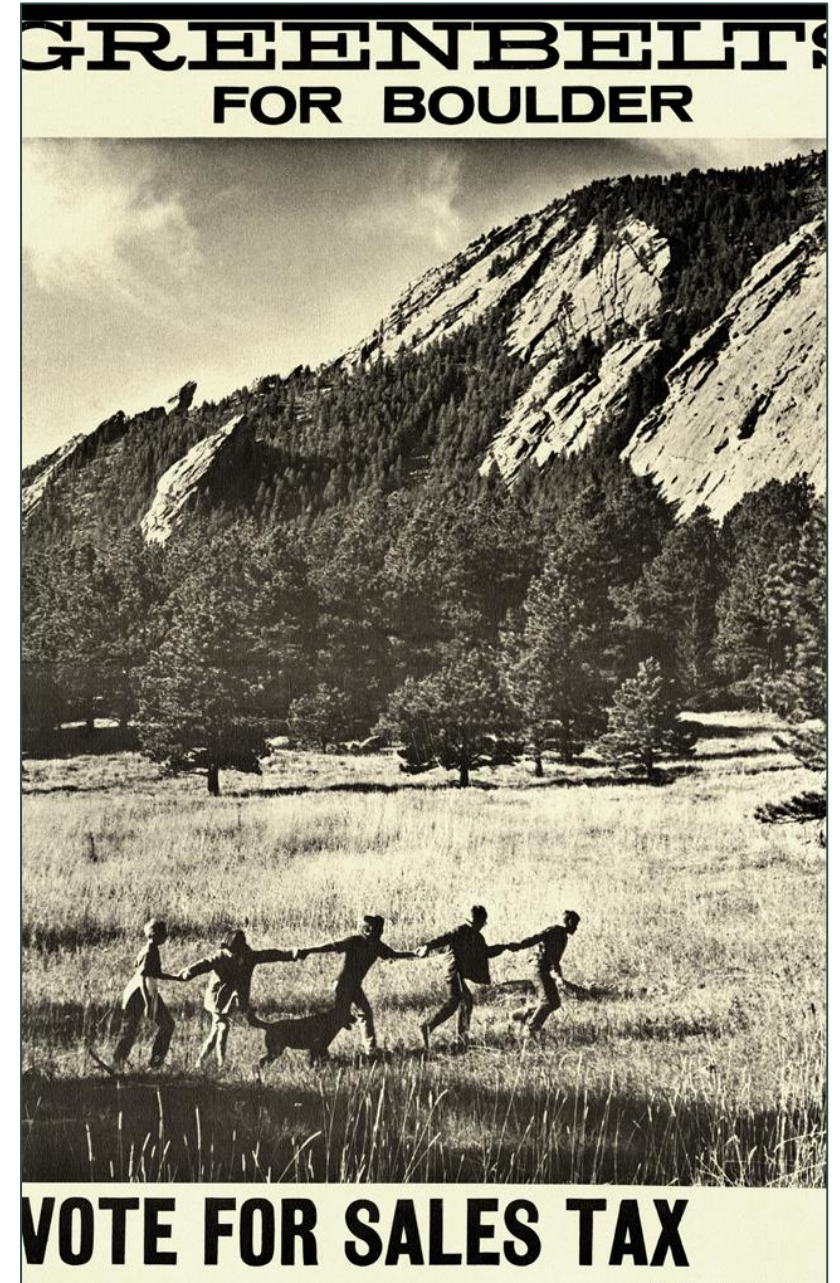
- 34,311 acres of farmland protected and leased

Guidelines for Boulder County Open Space Agricultural Leases

Updated May 2023

Applicability

This process guides the manner in which Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) agricultural lands are leased to farmers and ranchers. No agricultural lands are to be leased or assigned in ways other than those described below.



Efforts to counteract challenges

Sustainability Tax

- Funds programs supporting healthy soil practices and sustainable ag infrastructure

Sustainable Food & Ag Fund (\$100k)



Soil Health Initiative (\$1M)

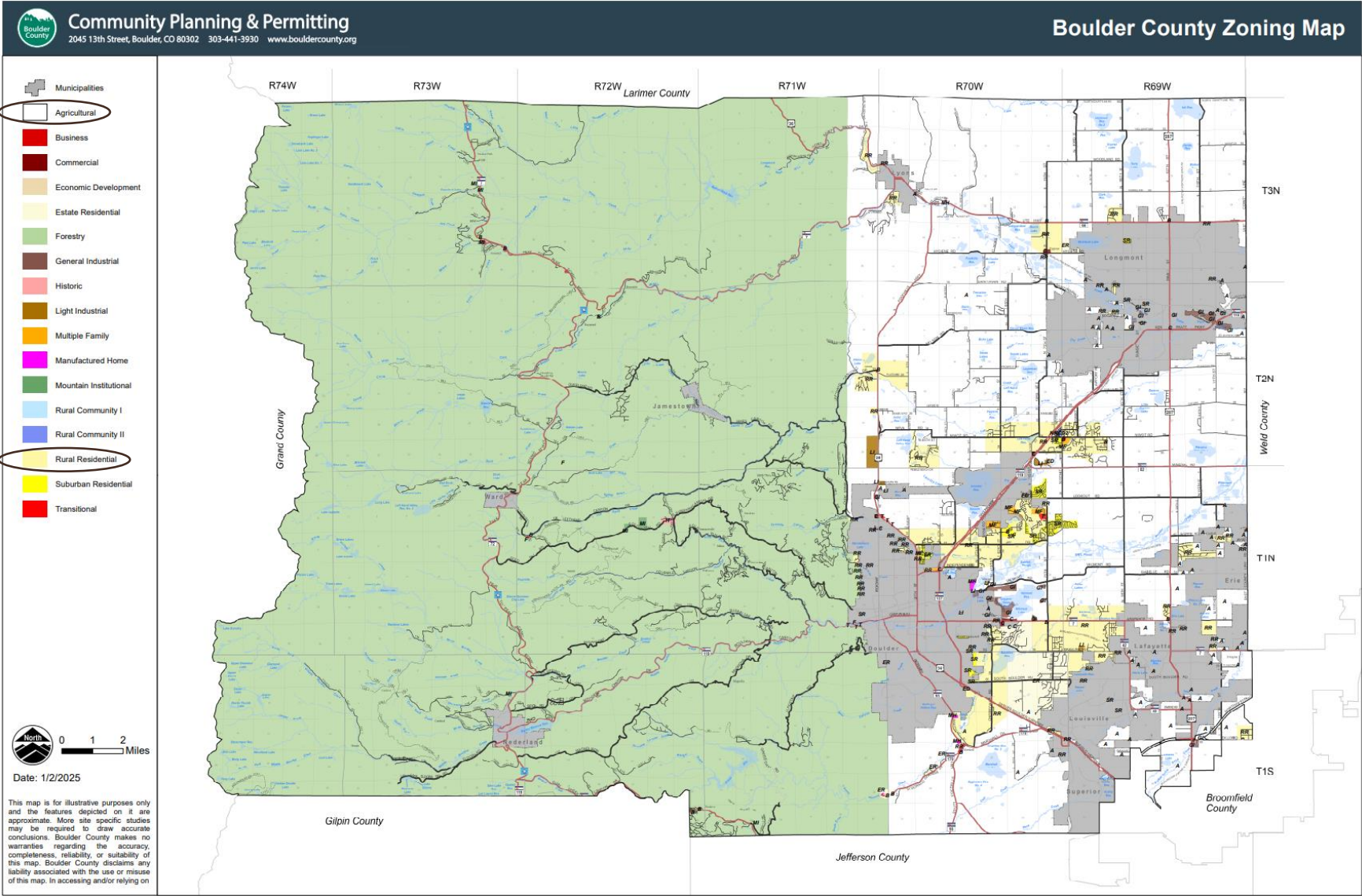


Zoning as a tool
to support
family farms

Ag Zoning Designations

Agricultural

Rural Residential



Ag Zoning Designations



Agricultural

Rural Residential

POLICIES

AG 1.01 Agricultural Land Preservation. It is the policy of Boulder County to promote and support the preservation of agricultural lands and activities within the unincorporated areas of the county, and to make that position known to all citizens currently living in or intending to move into this area.

Flexible Zoning Policies

- Ag-related uses
- Changing needs of farmers = rethink definition of ag
- Allowances that can support ag economy and land preservation



Flexible Zoning Policies



Ag sales & structures



Demonstration farm or farm camp



Farm events and home events

Use Tables • 4-516 Accessory Use*

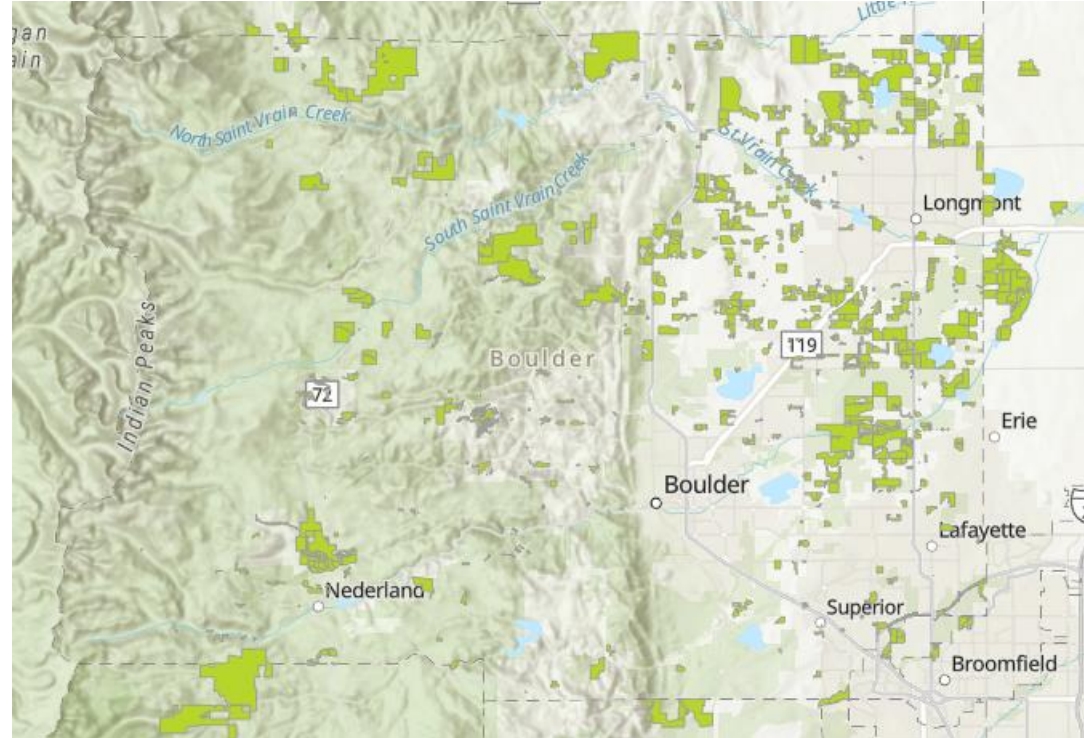
		Forestry	Agricultural	Rural Residential	Estate Residential	Suburban Residential	Multifamily	Manufactured Home	Transitional	Business	Commercial	Light Industrial	General Industrial	Mountain Institutional
A	Accessory Agricultural Composting	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	Accessory Agricultural Sales	✓	✓	✓+	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C	Accessory Agricultural Structure	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D	Accessory Beekeeping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓
E	Accessory Chicken Keeping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓
F	Temporary Accessory Community Meeting Facility		S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
G	Accessory Concrete or Asphalt Batch Plant		S									S	S	
H	Accessory Dwelling	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
I	Accessory Horse Keeping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓
J	Accessory Meat or Poultry Processing	✓+	✓	✓+	✓+							✓	✓	✓
K	Accessory Outside Storage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
L	Accessory Solar Energy System	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^
M	Accessory Structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	Backyard Composting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
O	Demonstration Farm or Farm Camp		✓/I	✓+/I+										
P	Farm Events		✓/I	✓/I+										
Q	Grading of More than 500 Cubic Yards	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
R	Home Events	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S	Home Occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T	Personal Marijuana Cultivation and Marijuana Product Manufacturing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
U	Household Pets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
V	Noncommercial Telecommunications Site, One Structure Meeting District Regulations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
W	Noncommercial Telecommunications Site, All Others	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
X	Small Wind-Powered Energy System	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^	✓^
Y	Parking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Z	Short-Term Rental	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* See Use Table Legend for this table on the following page. Accessory Parking is a Use by Right in all Districts subject to provisions.

Flexible Zoning Policies

Boulder County CE's preserve >40,000 acres and 850 private properties in:

- Scenic open space
- Agricultural properties as working farms and ranches
- Mountain properties that protect significant natural habitat
- Buffers between municipalities
- Natural areas, historically important buildings, and pastoral character in rural areas

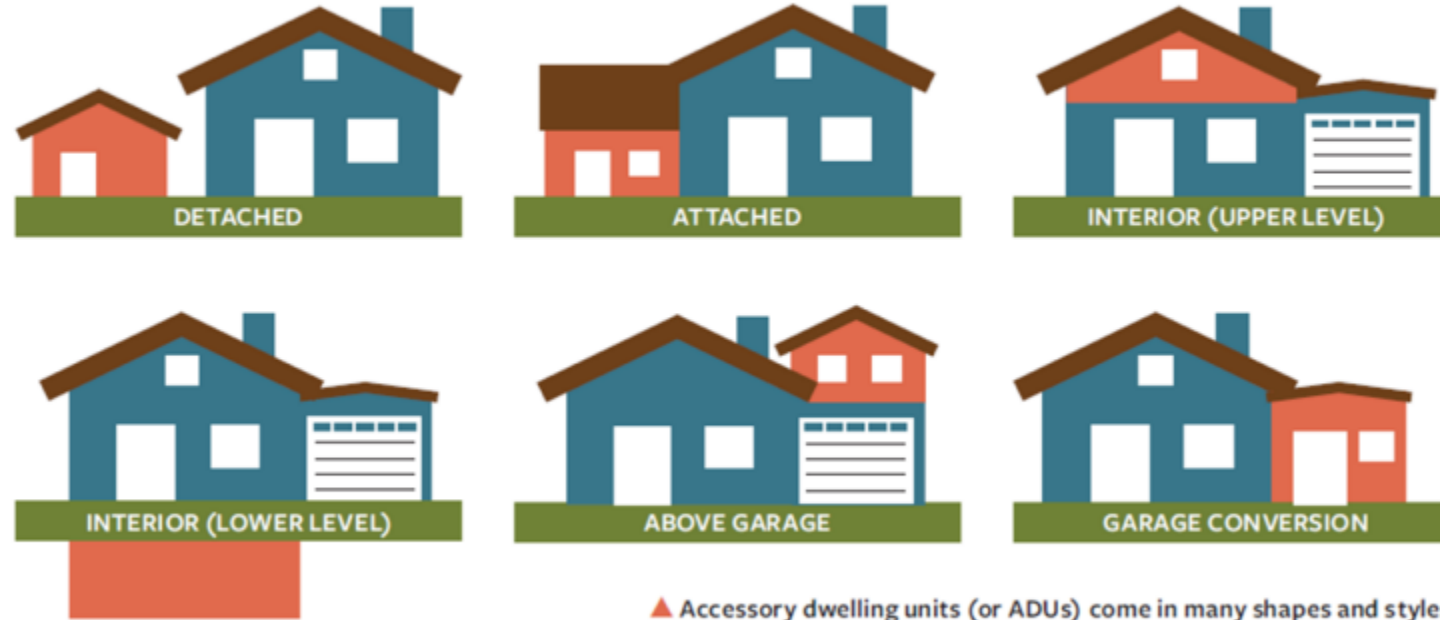


Symbology

Boulder County Conservation
Easements (CE)



Flexible Zoning Policies



H. Accessory Dwelling

1. Definition: A dwelling unit which is accessory to a permitted Principal Use and which is limited to the following, allowed purposes:
 - a. Family care units, to be occupied by a family member who either requires some level of care or supervision from, or provides some level of care or supervision to, another family member inhabiting the principal residence.
 - b. Agricultural units, to be occupied by an agricultural worker or family whose help is required to support or conduct an agricultural Principal Use on the subject property.
 - c. Historical units within a landmarked structure whose purpose is to contribute to the preservation of the landmark.
 - d. Disaster Recovery Unit as permitted under Article 19.

Flexible Zoning Policies

A 32-unit residential development for farm workers operated by the Boulder County Housing Authority in Longmont, Colorado

Affordable housing for farm workers now accepting applications

Casa de la Esperanza offers deeply affordable homes and supportive programs for families that qualify

Community Submission
Jul 14, 2023 10:00 AM



Complementary procedures

Complementary zoning procedures

Incentive	Focus	Criteria
Expedited permitting	Low impact structures	Under 5000 sq. ft.
Infrastructure exemptions	Temporary structures	Hoop houses/high tunnels/sheds
Additional allowance certificate	Verified Established Farm Use	For those contributing significantly to ag economy + responsible land management

Allowed up to 25 people per day allowed by right for farm classes (15 is standard)

Complementary zoning procedures

- **Pilot projects can inform policy**
- **Lean into innovation**

December 7, 2022

Boulder County awards over \$500k in grants to tackle climate crisis

First-ever Climate Innovation Fund recipients will restore local ecosystems, remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere

Seguido en Español

Boulder County, CO — Five projects have been awarded grants from Boulder County's newly launched [Climate Innovation Fund](#). Boulder County's Office of Sustainability, Climate Action & Resilience (OSCAR) created the fund in early 2022 to encourage innovation and provide seed capital for cutting-edge technologies that fight climate change locally through nature-based solutions, carbon dioxide removal (CDR), and landscape restoration and resilience. Through a competitive application process, OSCAR received a total request of nearly \$2 million in funding.

Complementary zoning procedures

- Pilot projects can inform policy
- Lean into innovation
- E.g., agrivoltaics



Complementary zoning procedures

*Draft example of pilot project:
free farm stand design that comes with pre-approved building permit*



BOULDER COUNTY FARM STAND



Agricultural Planner

- Dedicated to ag zoning and procedure reform
- Engagement & policy role
- Explore creative solutions

Survey Findings + Recommendations

Exploring Solutions to Boulder County Agricultural Sector Constraints



TOP 7 CONSTRAINTS & SOLUTIONS

The following seven constraints are ranked in order with the greatest frequency of responses across all respondent groups.

The team decided to call specific attention to constraint number one as it was ranked first across all four respondent groups. Additional constraints categorized highest among each group can be found in Appendix 1.

Constraint #1

Policies and knowledge of agriculture among policy makers are the top constraints for business success.

Solutions

- Increase influence with Boulder County's state representatives through engagement with local agricultural organizations.
- Create Boulder County policy that states a clear priority for the production of food on agricultural lands in Boulder County.

Call to action



Explore solutions that integrate land use, ag economy viability, and conservation

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- Boulder Colorado History | CU Boulder. *Boulder, Colorado, USA*. Photo Credit.
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