

Boulder County Food and Agriculture Policy Council

DRAFT Strategic Plan 2009-2012

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote a locally-based food and agricultural system that advances Boulder County's economic, environmental and social well-being, through research, education and public policy recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Boulder County Board of County Commissioners has identified, through the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, the preservation and improved viability of County agricultural lands as a high priority. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that agricultural land is a non-renewable resource and that aggressive development and municipal annexation over the past several decades have resulted in an alarming reduction in County agricultural acreage. The Commissioners also seek to guide the County to greater economic, environment and social sustainability¹, including the ability of the community to feed itself.

The Boulder County Food and Agriculture Policy Council, established by the County Commissioners, exists to promote a locally-based food and agricultural system that advances Boulder County's economic, environmental and social well-being, through research, education and public policy recommendations. The Council functions wholly as an advisory committee to the County Commissioners, but also collaborates with a network of Food and Agriculture Policy Councils around the country as well as other community and government entities.

The Council intends to consider the interests of all stakeholders in the food and agriculture system, including all Boulder County citizens — with their diverse needs and values — as well as local food, feed, seed and non-food agricultural producers (professional and non-professional), food processors and food retailers. The Council seeks to improve the social well-being, including health and nutrition, of all Boulder County residents and improve the economic viability of current and future agricultural and local food-related industry within the County while protecting and restoring the environment. The Council also places a priority on the education and empowerment of County residents to create a self-reliant community.

Purpose of the strategic plan

This strategic plan is a flexible, living document, designed to be reviewed, edited, and updated annually by the Council with subsequent approval by the Commissioners. Its purpose is to provide step-by-step, concrete guidance to the Council and its committees and, at a glance, show the current status of various projects. The plan consists of values and operating principles as well as specific short-term and long-term goals, objectives, actions and timelines for potential positive impact toward fulfilling the Council's mission.

¹ Sustainability is defined in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Element, adopted 5/16/07: "Sustainability' means the use, development and protection of all our resources in a manner that does not deplete them while enabling the residents of Boulder County to meet their current needs and maintain a fulfilling quality of life without compromising or foregoing the ability of and opportunity for future residents to do the same."

VALUES STATEMENT

The council believes a sustainable, thriving, food and agricultural system that maximizes local food production for local consumption for Boulder County is best achieved by:

Economic

- Identifying and advancing diverse agricultural models and strategies sustainable in our region.
- Working for income, employment, housing, transportation and healthcare policies that support farmers, farm workers and others who contribute to the food and agricultural system.

Environmental

- Fostering ecological diversity, stability and resilience while increasing food productivity.
- Supporting our food and agricultural system to minimize use of non-renewable energy and maximize local, renewable sources.

Social

- Championing the right of all residents to access safe, nutritious, healthful culturally appropriate food that is produced as locally as possible.
- Integrating the food and agricultural system with social, economic, educational, healthcare and other local systems with beneficial results for all.
- Empowering local communities and emerging community leaders, ensuring that all voices are fairly represented at the table.
- Celebrating the unique contributions that our culturally diverse populations make to the local food system.
- Serving as a model for food and agricultural systems in other counties and regions.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

- Focusing on a sustainable food and agricultural system.
- Evaluating choices against potential unintended consequences.
- Working through transparency and collaboration.
- Fostering innovations toward sustainable agriculture and food systems.
- Basing our recommendations on sound research, existing efforts and assessment of needs and gaps.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, TACTICS

Goal 1: Increase food production in Boulder County.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
<i>Increase food production on Open Space.</i>	Create database of existing agricultural Open Space usage.	02/2009	Open Space Committee
	Assess viability of municipal Open Space for food production	10/2009	
	Survey open space tenants regarding policy changes that would increase their food production.	03/2009	Open Space Committee
	Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.	05/2009	Open Space Committee
<i>Increase food production on private land.</i>	Create database of existing agricultural production on private lands in Boulder County.	04/2009	
	Survey producers farming or ranching on private land regarding policy changes that would increase food production.		
	Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.		
<i>Increase residential food production.</i>	Research Bount County and municipal policies (barriers and initiatives) for food production.		
	Ensure appropriate resources are available for education and outreach.		
	Explore intergovernmental agreements and other policy recommendations.		

Goal 2: Improve access to locally produced food.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
<i>Enhance food processing, storage and distribution infrastructure in Boulder County.</i>	<p>Assess amount and type of food processing that exists in Boulder County.</p> <p>Determine degree to which local food processing would need increase to match food production goals.</p> <p>Research barriers to local food processing.</p> <p>Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.</p>	06/2009	
<i>Improve citizen access to locally produced foods.</i>	<p>Research food-to-consumer models in other communities, including Open-Space-produced food.</p> <p>Determine County role</p> <p>Research ways to improve consumer access, examining existing points of purchase and considering transportation as well as convenience.</p> <p>Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.</p>		
<i>Improve access for institutions.</i>	<p>Research schools, government and hospital entities regarding demand for locally produced food.</p> <p>Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.</p>		
<i>Ensure food security is considered in County emergency preparedness plans.</i>	<p>Create work group to research existing plans and establish linkages.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate resources are available for education and outreach.</p>		Michael

Goal 3: Improve economic viability of agriculture in Boulder.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
<i>Identify economic factors in Boulder County’s food systems</i>	Conduct economic food assessment of Boulder County.	Q1 2009	Research Subcommittee
<i>Provide economic incentives for companies and individuals as a means to increase local agriculture and processing.</i>²	<p>Research economic incentives most effective in increasing local agriculture and processing. Examples including changes to property taxes, development granting, rewards for sustainable farming practices, ag worker benefit programs and consumer purchase incentives.</p> <p>Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.</p>		
<i>Promote wide array of agricultural opportunities.</i>	<p>Support a wide array of agriculture production (food, feed, seed, fiber, fuel, nursery stock) in Boulder County to strengthen infrastructure of agriculture.</p> <p>Research successful incentives for various agriculture specialties – what has worked in other communities.</p> <p>Explore the extent to which economic development dollars and other resources are or could be used to improve local agriculture.</p> <p>Research perennial agriculture models for economic viability.</p>		
<i>Establish and/or improve labor standards for public-land agricultural workers.</i>	<p>Research existing policies regarding housing, immigration, insurance benefits for ag laborers (both paid and volunteer).</p> <p>Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.</p>		

² Explore solar model (2008 Ballot Issue 1A) for application to food and agriculture.

Goal 4: Recognize and enhance the role of Boulder County’s food and agriculture system in conserving and regenerating natural resources and the environment.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
<i>Encourage agricultural models that are in harmony with environment (wind and water management, protecting riparian areas, wild life corridors, restoring soils).</i>	Determine incentives for sustainable farming practices.		
	Research penalties for environmental degradation.		
	Utilize Open Space to conduct research on and demonstration of sustainable farming practices. Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.		
<i>Reduce reliance on fossil fuel inputs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</i>	Explore financial incentives to reduce fossil fuel use.		
	Produce report on reducing reliance on fossil fuel and greenhouse gas reductions.	05/2009	Transition Boulder County

Goal 5: Improve health for all Boulder County residents.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
<i>Promote healthful eating patterns.</i>	Research eating patterns and attitudes related to healthful eating; analyze by demographics.		Research Subcommittee
	Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.		
	Link with other organizations, institutions and agencies involved in promoting healthful eating.		
<i>Promote physical activity through gardening and farming.</i>	Recognize that efforts to increase residents' involvement in gardening are consistent with public health recommendations encouraging physical activity.		
<i>Promote production practices that result in higher nutrition food.</i>	Utilize Open Space to conduct research on and demonstration of impact of various production methods on nutrient content of food crops.		
<i>Ensure safe working conditions for agricultural laborers.</i>	Research jurisdiction regarding safe working conditions for agricultural laborers.		
	Formulate policy and other system improvement recommendations.		

Goal 6: Build community bridges.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
<i>Encourage civic participation and leadership development</i>	Conduct a community forum on local food and agriculture twice per year at cultural centers.	Spring and Fall	
<i>Foster proactive communications with residents.</i>	Conduct outbound communications about Boulder County's local food system. For example, develop turnkey presentation for outreach and explore feasibility of developing a public Web site. Establish a process for soliciting ongoing inbound communication from County residents.	Turnkey kit Q1 2009	Liz and Cindy
<i>Promote transparency in the local food system.</i>	Research feasibility of Boulder County Open Space labeling program. Develop public database of local producers and processors engaging in sustainable practices.		
<i>Ensure community-wide access and cultural relevance in local food system.</i>	Consider diverse cultural practices and traditions in FAPC decisions. Consider diverse community interests and needs in FAPC decisions.		