



Parks & Open Space Land Use & Development Code Amendments

PLANNING COMMISSION & CITY COUNCIL
JOINT STUDY SESSION – June 9, 2026

City Staff Representatives:

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Purpose

Introduce amendments to the Land Use & Development Code (the “Code”) regarding regulations of Parks & Open Space and receive Planning Commission and City Council feedback and direction.



Background

- During study sessions before City Council on October 14, 2025, and Planning Commission on November 13, 2025, a concept for streamlining the Code was presented.
- As progress is being made toward that end, an opportunity to address other Code organization matters was uncovered.



Background – The Issues

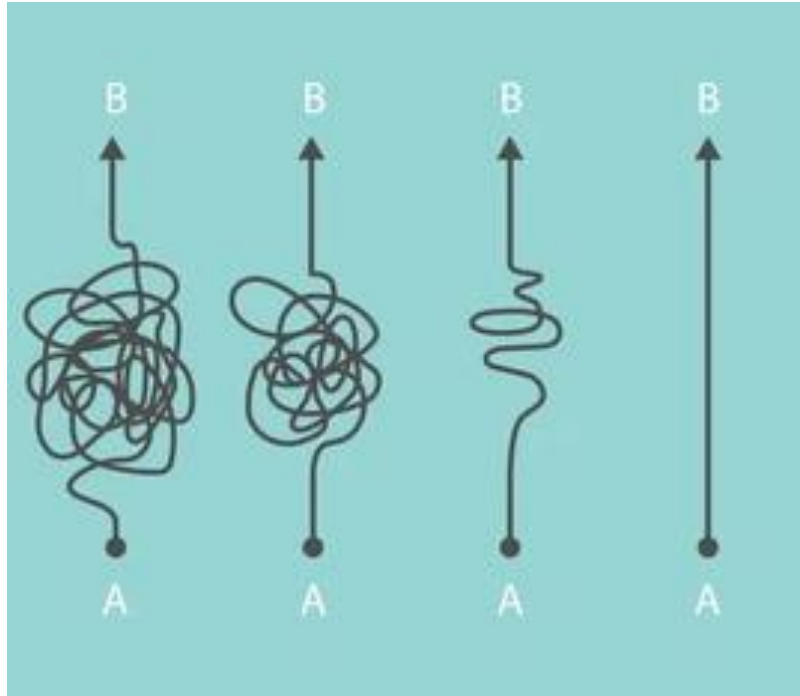


- The Code currently refers to parks and open space as “Open and Civic Space”.
“Is civic space different than open space?”
“Where do park requirements fit in?”
- The Code requires a certain area of a lot to remain free of structures and refers to it as “Site-Specific Open Space”.

Background – The Issues (Slide 2)

- Other nuances and inconsistencies were found in the Code such that amending the Code will:
 - Align terms and design requirements with those in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and
 - Clarify land dedication requirements.
- Required Parks & Open Space dedication requirements directly relate to housing affordability.

Proposed Amendments



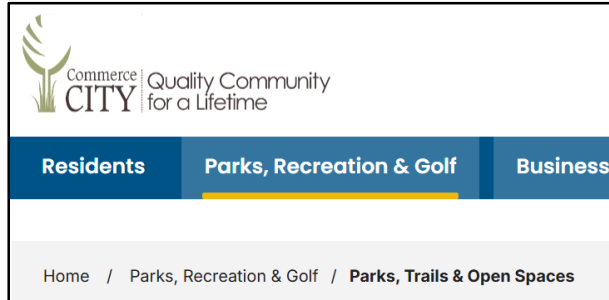
- **Rename**
- **Rewrite**
- **Reorganize**

Rename

“Parks & Open Space” is the conventional term.

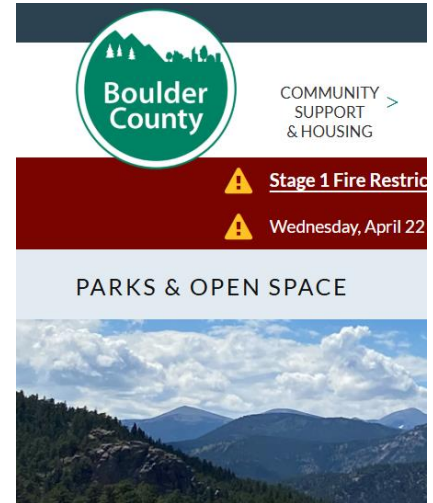
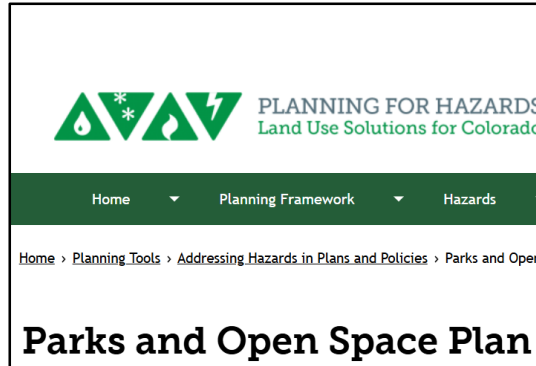


Thornton manages over 140 miles of trails and more than 2,500 acres of parks and open space for residents to enjoy — aesthetically and personally.



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Parks, Open Space & Cultural Arts



Article 6 – Non-Residential Design Standards

- Rename “Site-Specific Open Space” to “Open Lot Area”.
- Replace Table 6-3 that lists required Open Lot Area with clear text requirements.
- Move over non-residential Open Lot Area examples and illustrations from Article 3.



Alignment with Parks & Recreation Master Plan



Park names and requirements:

- Regional,
- Community,
- Neighborhood, and
- Pocket Parks.

Open Space names and requirements:

- Preserve, and
- Trail Corridor.

Land Dedication Requirements

Developer and City staff feedback suggests to:

- Clarify how each park and open space type applies to the required dedication amount and how excess area may be applied to fulfill other dedication requirements.
- Eliminate how different park types are credited toward the dedication requirement at different rates.

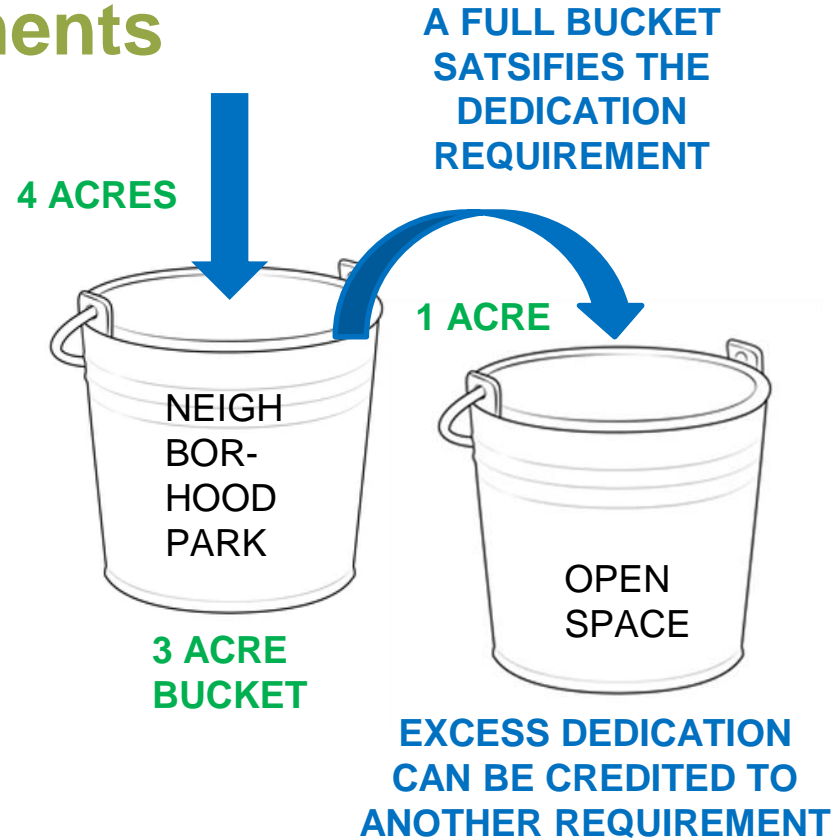
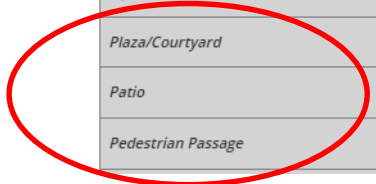
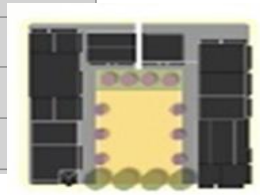


Table 3-7 Dedication Application & Credit

	Community Park (3ac./1000pp)	Neighborhood Park (3ac/1000pp)	Common Open Space (15ac/1000pp)
<i>Preserve (Natural or Agriculture)</i>	Y	Y	Y, 1.0x to 2.0x based on the significance of the space as determined by the Director
<i>Park—Regional</i>	Y	Y	Y
<i>Park—Community</i>	Y	Y	Y
<i>Park—Neighborhood</i>	N	Y	Y
<i>Park—Local/Pocket</i>	N	Y if 3+ ac. 1.5x if privately maintained and open to public	Y
<i>Trail Corridor</i>	Y 1.5x if privately maintained and open to public	Y 1.5x if privately maintained and open to public	Y
<i>Green</i>	N	N	Y, 2.0x
<i>Community Garden</i>	N	N	Y
<i>Square</i>	N	N	Y, 3.0x
<i>Plaza/Courtyard</i>			Y, 3.0x
<i>Patio</i>			Y
<i>Pedestrian Passage</i>			Y



Article 3 – Land Dedication

- Clarify Parks & Open Space dedication requirements and process.
- Eliminate non-residential Open Space dedication rather than charge the credit back in the form of Open Lot Area.
- Clarify school land dedication requirement and process.
- Remove water dedication requirements from the Code (they appear in the Municipal Code).



Land Dedication & Affordability

Parks & Open Space dedication requirements directly relate to housing affordability.

1. Developer feedback has indicated City requirements are relatively high.
2. ULI TAP report points out that higher density development (which supports affordability) comes with a high dedication cost.
3. General research by Staff of national requirements:
 - Industry baseline is 10% to 15% of developed area, and up to 25% in growth-oriented communities emphasizing parks and open space.
 - City of Brighton requirements equate to 25% to 30% (varies by density).
4. Neighboring city comparison was done.
5. Maintenance constraints and increasing impact fees are considerations.

Planning for Future Parks & Open Space

- Current combined dedication requirement is 21 acres per 1,000 persons.
- Reducing Open Space dedication requirement from 15 to 9 acres per 1,000 persons brings it more in line with neighboring jurisdictions yet maintains a growth-oriented trajectory.
- 15 combined acres (9 Open Space + 6 Parks) per 1,000 persons puts the dedication requirement at 18% to 22% of the development. (Industry baseline is 10% to 15% stable strategy / 15% to 25% growth strategy.)
- Growth to 75,000 and 100,000 residents using 15 acres per 1,000 persons:
 - At 75,000 residents = 22 acres / 1,000 persons.
 - At 100,000 residents = 20 acres / 1,000 persons.

Land Dedication Comparison

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DEDICATION REQUIREMENT COMPARISON

	Acres per	Persons	PPH	SFDs per 1000 P.s	Req'd Dedication per SFD (Acres)
Brighton	21	1000	2.96	338	0.062
Thornton	10	1000	2.96	338	0.030
	10	1000	2.70	370	0.027
Commerce City	11.9	1000	2.65	377	0.032
Proposed	15	1000	2.96	338	0.044

Housing cost difference with a 6-acre decrease in open space dedication

*Assumes Single-Family (Household) Dwellings (SFD).
Thornton uses a "Projected PPH" and two possible rates are used here.*

	Land Cost \$ / Acre	Savings \$ / Unit
Low	\$100,000	\$1,791
Middle	\$150,000	\$2,687
High	\$200,000	\$3,582

Impact on Affordability

Brighton New Home Sales Prices

- **2024**
 - Average \$543,261
 - Median \$533,985
- **2025**
 - Average \$570,968
 - Median \$551,858
- **Delta**
 - Increase of Avg. \$27,707 (5.1%)
 - Increase of Median \$17,873 (3.4%)



**“A 1,000 for each \$1,000”
rule of thumb.**

An annual household gross income of \$158,000 is needed to afford a median priced new home. The median income is \$117,000 (Adams County, 3-person household).

Code Amendment Processes

- Code allows City Staff to initiate amendments on behalf of the City Council and Planning Commission.
- Code provides review criteria to ensure that Code amendments:
 - Further the purpose of the Code, specifically here by providing parks and open space that help organize development;
 - Are in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, specifically here by remaining consistent with the parks and open space goals;
 - Promote the health, safety, and welfare of the community, specifically here by providing appropriately sized public spaces for the benefit of the community; and
 - Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of administering the Code, specifically here by simplifying interpretation and application of Code requirements.

THANK YOU

Questions?

Your Feedback & Direction Are Appreciated

