



Summary Report and Recommendations Update

Open Space Advisory Committee Town of Superior

Prepared for:
**The Parks, Recreation, Open Space, & Trails
Master Plan Recommendation Process**

**The Mayor, Board of Trustees,
& Planning Commission
of the Town of Superior**
December 2020

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(As of October 2020)

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A Preface from the Committee

Quality of life is difficult to measure. In the Town of Superior, citizens determined that Open Space is an important aspect of their quality of life. Citizens of most Front Range cities and towns desire open space. However, failure to acquire it and subsequent dense property development often inhibited the fulfillment of this desire. Open space adds incredible value to the Town of Superior and its residents. This value includes many intangible factors, such as the pleasure of gazing at majestic mountains not eclipsed by housing, offices, and stores or the satisfaction experienced during a dog walk, bicycle ride, or run on community open space trails. The wonder felt when viewing the beauty of hawks soaring high above, mink swimming below, and prairie dogs frolicking at the foot is immeasurable. Over a decade and a half ago, Superior citizens decided that elements such as tree groves nestled by a creek and wildflowers flanking a trail do, indeed, contribute to their quality of life.

Growth management and environmental protection directly tie to Superior citizen's quality of life and the Town's economic prosperity. Open Space and Trails repeatedly rank as top reasons why Boulder County towns and cities rate as some of the most desirable places to live in the entire country. Ask a few citizens who are fortunate to reside in these areas; responses will be the same. Given this compelling evidence, there is nothing more important that the Town and its Open Space Committee can do than preserve and protect Open Space land, water, and trails. The return on investment of Open Space dramatically exceeds the price paid as it continues to add value to those who live, work, and visit here. An active Open Space Committee, focusing on acquisition and preservation, strives to accomplish this goal.

In 2001, the Town of Superior passed a ballot initiative, approving a Sales Tax solely for Open Space. Since that time, the Town has been actively acquiring and protecting Open Space, successfully securing approximately 277 acres to date, with 182 acres coming in 2020 with the Century Link property. Currently, there are only five properties within or near Superior that have the potential for acquisition and use as Open Space. Property values have risen dramatically in recent years, and the Denver-metro finds itself in an unprecedented building boom. Locally, there is much development occurring, such as Downtown Superior, Calmante, Rogers Farm, and the Anderson property as well as significant interest in developing additional properties within Superior. It is now more critical than ever that the Town of Superior seize every opportunity to protect remaining potential Open Space.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of currently undeveloped properties within the Town of Superior and to offer recommendations to the Mayor, Board of Trustees, and Planning Commission on the properties that have potential value to the Town as undeveloped Open Space. In 2000 and 2001, the citizens of the Town of Superior put forth the effort to establish an Open Space program. This effort ultimately led to the formation of the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) in April of 2001. In November of 2001, the citizens passed a Sales Tax, authorizing a 0.3% sales tax for the acquisition and maintenance of Open Space. As of 2019, this tax generates approximately \$600,000 annually for the Open Space fund.

The original report, titled *Open Space Summary Report and Recommendations*, was completed by the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) in March of 2005¹. OSAC published a second update in May 2018² add third update in August 2019³. This report is an update to the original but is designed to be a standalone document. The Town of Superior has changed considerably since 2005 with significantly fewer properties available for acquisition. “Appendix A: Parcel Map” from the 2005 Summary Report lists the original properties, with any changes made to names and status.

This summary report and recommendations document is intended to be a living document. It provides a snapshot of this point in time, and it should be updated regularly. This report is provided to assist with the Town of Superior PROST Master Plan Recommendation process. Recommendations from the OSAC for all undeveloped properties may be found in the *OSAC Recommendations* section later in this report.

As written in Section 2 of Resolution No. R-25, Series 2001, dated April 23, 2001, *A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Superior, Colorado Establishing an Open Space Advisory Committee*,

The Committee is charged with the tasks of examining and making recommendations to the Board of Trustees for the preservation of lands in the Town for open space purposes considering the following factors:

- A. The areas appropriate for open space designation as wildlife habitats, trails or other similar purposes;
- B. The financial effect on the Town of removing lands from producing sales, use and property tax and additional revenues to the Town;
- C. The cost to purchase and maintain the lands;
- D. Sources of funding for the purchase of such lands;
- E. The community services and amenities that will be provided by the investment by the Town of such lands; and

¹ <http://www.superiorcolorado.gov/home/showdocument?id=724>

² http://townofsuperior.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=4&clip_id=952&meta_id=45908

³ <https://www.superiorcolorado.gov/home/showdocument?id=18258>

F. How the County and City of Boulder open space surrounding the Town can be accessed for the benefit of the public that purchased such open space.

This Summary Report and Recommendations document addresses the above areas, except comprehensive financial information that is not yet available to the Town Board and Planning Commission and actual costs of specific parcels. Additional information will be provided to the Town Board and Planning Commission by Town staff and the OSAC as such becomes available and after additional market research on specific parcels.

Approach and Methodology

The Town of Superior's OSAC members developed an approach and methodology to evaluate the remaining open space potential for undeveloped properties by first studying the original methodology developed in 2005 and then refining to adjust for realistic barriers to the acquisition of the few remaining properties. The 2005 report had the data from the recently completed wildlife assessment from Smith Environmental, Inc. to help in the analysis. The OSAC did not feel a new environmental study would provide enough new data to warrant the cost nor time needed for a new study. The 2005 approach included many categories that the current members were not comfortable judging without being experts in the field, such as threatened and endangered species, the existence of species of concern, or the level of noxious weeds on the property.

After reviewing the 2005 OSAC Evaluation Worksheet and talking through the most important information needed to rank the properties, the following criteria were used to study the properties:

- Compatibility with Adjacent Land Uses (other open space, agricultural, parks, buffer, views)
- Land size
- Proximity and Access (Overall location, grade, and potential new trail access to other open space)
- Surface Water on Property
- Migration Corridor/Connectivity - Partial Usage/Conservation Easement (how this plays into the "big picture" for corridors)
- Attainability Based on Value and Current Availability
- Level of Threats to Existing Resources

Appendix B: Open Space Evaluation Criteria contains the specific worksheet used to evaluate the properties. Each member was requested to rank order each property based on priority for acquisition. Members were requested to inspect the properties as much as possible while not trespassing on private property. The Committee agreed not to reference the 2005 assessment to avoid influencing the current state of properties. *Appendix C: Open Space Definitions* contains specific details about the terminology used in methodology and the property review.

Review of Properties

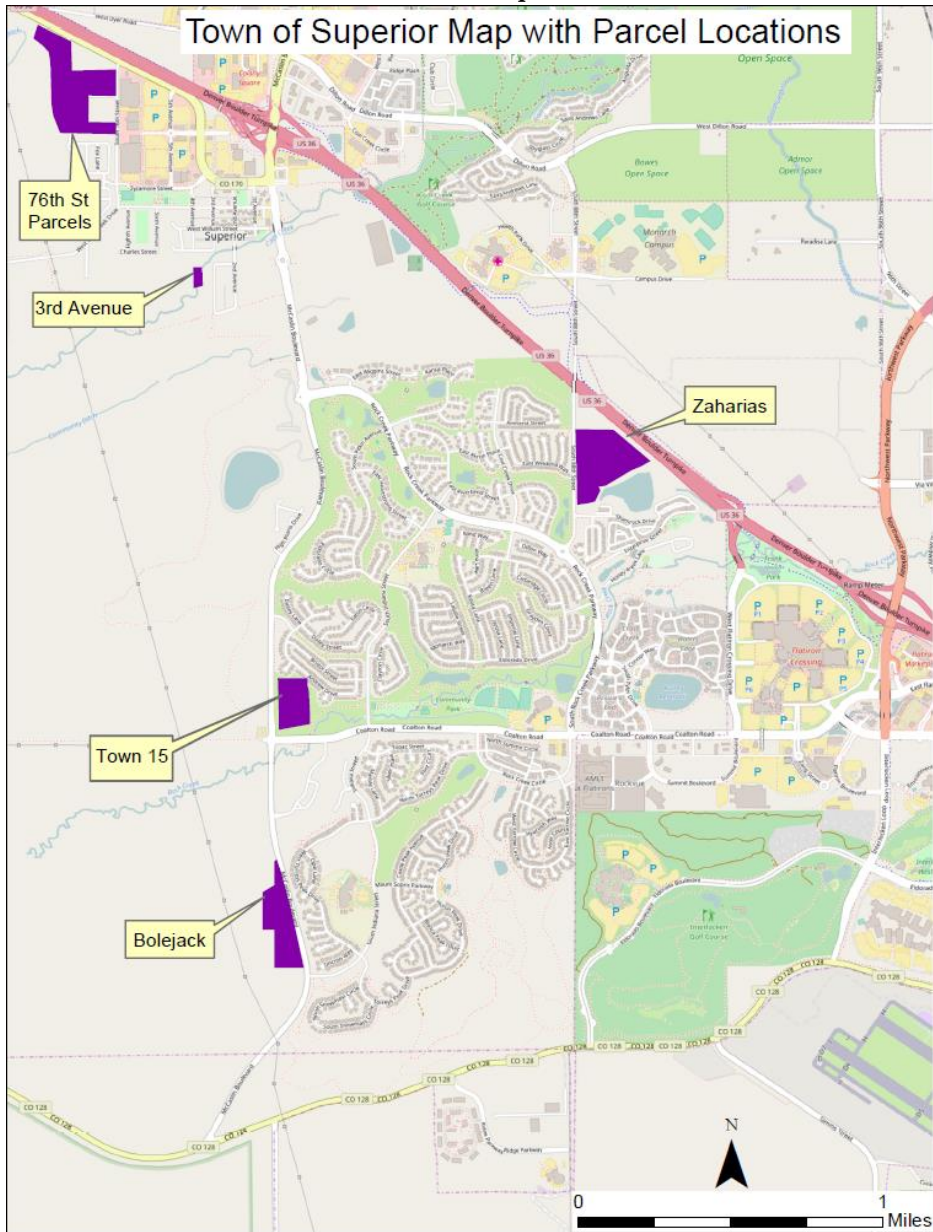
This section provides details of each undeveloped property within the Town and provides the location of each parcel, a physical description, the status, the notable attributes observed on each parcel by the members of the Open Space Advisory Committee, as well as a summary of information provided by the Smith Environmental, Inc. document titled *Wildlife Survey and Habitat Evaluation for the Town of Superior, Colorado*.⁴

Various non-physical attributes of each property are an important aspect of the properties such as the current zoning, the jurisdiction (is it annexed into the town or not) and the status of development plans. These attributes are subject to change quickly, most likely quicker than this document will be updated. Several public websites and document are good references to determine the most up-to-date information.

1. <http://maps.boco.solutions/propertysearch/> - is a map of all properties in Boulder County. As you select a property, you can get most if not all public record information about the property. The website can be used to determine physical attributes such as size or flood plain location as well as non-physical attributes such as owner, zoning, and jurisdiction.
2. [Superior Municipal Code](#). The town's municipal code will define what percentage of land must be open space, meaning not enclosed in a building but included in any property boundary. The municipal code lists this by zoning type and size.

⁴ <http://superiorcolorado.gov/home/showdocument?id=42>

Parcel Map



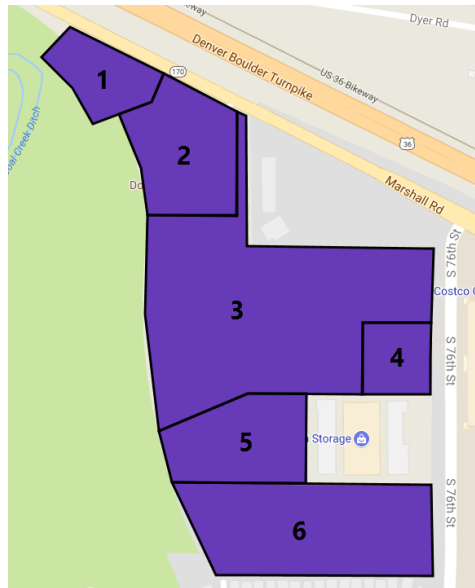
76th Street Parcels

Location: These properties reside at the southwest corner of the intersection of 76th Street and Marshall Road in the northwest portion of town. They border Boulder County Open Space to the west and the CDOT property to the north. To the east is the Superior Marketplace and on the south is the Sagamore neighborhood. The six parcels together comprise approximately 30 acres.

Description: This property contains grassy/weedy fields interspersed with private residences, debris piles (the southern half of parcel 5 and parcel 6), and a pond with accompanying wetlands (on the parcel 3). There is a horse pasture on parcel 5. The remnants of an old railroad grade are still present adjacent to the western edge of the overall property.

2003 Smith Wildlife Survey: This property was found to be 43% mixed-grass prairie, 43% weedy/disturbed, with some urban forest and a few buildings. Observers saw many types of small birds along with a red-tailed hawk. Also noted were prairie dogs and cottontail rabbits.

OSAC Observations: Observations showed this parcel to have a high buffering potential, fair views, medium air, and noise quality, and considerable nighttime light pollution. It is likely to have medium compatibility with adjacent land uses and has little or no known historical value. It is a medium sized tract with a small number of mature trees, no surface water. Restoring to open space would require effort due to the existing dwelling. It appears to be a somewhat diverse wildlife habitat. This property could potentially provide some regional draw for passive use. The combined properties are more extensive than they appear from viewing on 76th street. The western edge of the property could provide reasonable access to the Boulder County land and trails to the west with a potential trailhead. The City of Louisville shows plans to connect trails to the US-36 underpass, with one trail alignment very close to these properties. Being on the northern side of Superior, the land is not in proximity to as many residents as other pieces of land. This land would be difficult to convert to open space, considering it contains six parcels. OSAC ranked as a whole. If individual properties became available, each property would be considered individually at that time. The town of Superior has not annexed these properties, which is a requirement for town purchase.



3rd Avenue Tract 919

Location: This property is to the west 3rd Avenue in original town. Town of Superior property borders the property to the west and south. Individual home lots border the property to the east and north. It encompasses approximately 1.4 acres and is split in the middle by Coal Creek.

Description: Coal Creek runs through the middle of the property with mature trees lining the creek on both sides.

2003 Smith Wildlife Survey: The survey did not evaluate this property, but the Ochsner property is close enough proximity wise. The property has areas of cottonwood groves and riparian forest. Observers saw many types of small birds along with bald eagles and red-tailed hawks. Also noted were prairie dogs, cottontail rabbits, and red fox.

OSAC Observations: This parcel borders a large chunk of open space to the west. Setback requirements from the creek make it unclear, but it is doubtful that development could happen on this property. A for sale sign shows only a small portion on the southeast side as a building site. At the time of this document, the lots between this property and 3rd Avenue to the east are for sale as various smaller residential lots. A trail along the creek would be a great amenity to the town and county, but the grade along the river makes this difficult. This property would be a key piece to complete this trail.



Bolejack

Location: The Bolejack Property lies west of McCaslin Blvd. near the south border of Superior. It encompasses approximately 25.5 acres in the southwestern portion of town.

Description: The primary uses of this property include private residential, horse pasture, and an industrial equipment repair business.

2003 Smith Wildlife Survey: The survey found the property to be 83% grass prairie with the remainder being buildings, weedy/disturbed ground, and a pond. Observers saw many species of small birds along with cottontail rabbits.

OSAC Observations: Observations showed this parcel to have a fair buffering potential, good views, and somewhat poor air and noise quality due to its proximity to McCaslin. Nighttime light pollution is moderate. This parcel has no known historical value. It is a medium sized tract with no mature trees. The parcel is primarily grass prairie and somewhat diverse wildlife habitat. It may be used by wildlife as a migration corridor, but Boulder County owns enough adjacent land that it wouldn't be a critical wildlife corridor. The land would not have a very high regional draw. It would be important from an open space perspective as it is the only land left on the west side of McCaslin and south of Coalton that is privately owned and would help maintain the view corridor that exists today. The shape and slope of the land make this a difficult property for commercial development. This property consists of two lots. They appear to be owned by members of the same family. Acquiring both parcels could prove challenging. If one of the properties becomes available, it will be evaluated individually at that time. The town of Superior has not annexed these properties, which is a requirement for town purchase.



Town 15

Location: This property begins at the northeast corner of the intersection of Coalton Drive and McCaslin Boulevard and encompasses approximately 15 acres in the southcentral portion of town.

Description: Previously this property was known as the Richmond property. It is a weedy vacant lot, receiving intermittent human use.

Smith Wildlife Survey: This property is 52% weedy/disturbed and about 48% grass prairie. Observers saw many types of small birds along with great horned owls. Cottontail rabbits noted as well.

OSAC Observations: Observations showed this parcel to have fair buffering potential, good views, but poor air and noise quality due to its proximity to McCaslin. Nighttime light pollution is high. This parcel has no known historical value. It is a medium sized tract with no mature trees and no wetlands, and most of the parcel is weedy. Coal Creek directly flanks the east border. It appears to be a somewhat diverse wildlife habitat and could be used by wildlife as a migration corridor. It should not have a very high regional draw for passive use. The Town of Superior owns this property. Town residents are accustomed to this being an open space area. There is interest in keeping this parcel open to preserve a continuous green space corridor from Boulder County Open Space just west of McCaslin Blvd. all the way to 88th St. The parcel is included in this document because there are no immediate plans for town use of this property, and it is not currently designated open space.



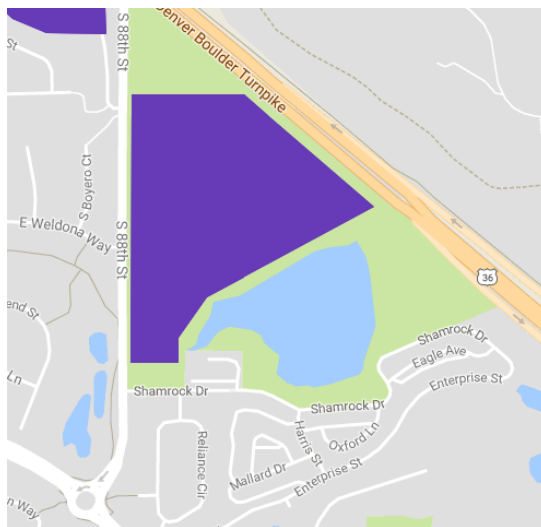
Zaharias

Location: The Zaharias property borders 88th St. to the west and resides between U.S. 36 and the Saddlebrook Townhomes. It encompasses approximately 28 acres in the northeast portion of town.

Description: This property is a weedy vacant lot receiving little human use. A large drainage ditch dominated by a cattail wetland crosses the northern portion of the property. The Hodgson-Harris Reservoir is to the southeast encouraging significant wildlife habitat. Prairie dog activity is prominent on the upland portion of this site.

2003 Smith Wildlife Survey: The survey describes this parcel as 94% weedy/disturbed and about 5% cattail marsh. Several types of small birds were observed primarily near the cattail marsh. Also noted were prairie dogs and cottontail rabbits.

OSAC Observations: Observations showed this parcel to have a fair buffering potential, fair views, poor air and noise quality, and considerable nighttime light pollution. It is likely to have medium compatibility with adjacent land uses as the town has considered a trail from Autrey park, around the Saddlebrook townhomes. It has no known historical value. It is a medium sized tract. There are few mature trees and a cattail marsh, but no real surface water. However, most of the parcel is weedy and not particularly pristine. It is part of a diverse wildlife habitat and has an active avian and migratory population, as it is adjacent to the Hodgson-Harris Reservoir. The reservoir is not suitable for recreation. This property could be used by wildlife as a migration corridor to the Boulder County land to the west, especially with the wildlife buffer between Rock Creek and Downtown Superior. There would need to be consideration of the Anderson property, if developed, to complete the corridor. It could have a high regional draw for passive use due to the wildlife diversity found. Protecting this land would help alleviate potential traffic problems on 88th Street. Commercial development was originally planned here because of a future off-ramp from US 36 at 88th Street, which set the historical price high for this property.



OSAC Recommendations

The table below illustrates the committee member’s rankings of each property based on the criteria in *Appendix B: Open Space Evaluation Criteria*. The numbers are the totals from the criteria used instead of an overall ranking based on the voting. One member abstained from voting on a property and is marked with an NA rank. The average score is adjusted accordingly.

Property	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5	Member 6	Average	OSAC Rank
Zaharias	8.6	7.2	6.1	7.1	7.4	7.4	7.3	1
Town 15	NA*	8.8	7.0	7.1	5.9	6.1	7.0	2
Bolejack	5.7	5.8	6.1	5.7	4.0	7.4	5.8	3
3rd Avenue Tract 919	5.7	1.5	5.1	5.7	4.3	6.0	4.7	4
76th St	5.7	2.5	5.4	5.0	4.0	5.6	4.7	5

*Member abstained from voting due to residing in proximity to the property.

From the rankings, it became clear there were three groups of properties. Two properties are in the top tier, including:

- Zaharias
- Town 15

The top tier has a clear order of preference from the voting, but OSAC recommends prioritizing the purchase of any of the three properties based on circumstances that may arise relating to the risk or availability of the property.

Financial Discussion

The Open Space Advisory Committee believes the Town of Superior must aggressively pursue open space acquisition and preservation in the years to come. The voters approved a 0.3% Open Space sales and use tax to provide for this purpose.

The Committee wants to maximize the amount of acreage purchased with the sales tax fund by engaging in partnerships with other open space programs, such as the city of Boulder and Boulder County. Additionally, the Committee encourages the Town to pursue grants available for acquisition programs, such as those sponsored by the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) lottery funds. Many of these opportunities would be associated with specific parcels and could be pursued further when the acquisition is imminent. An example would be a parcel with some acreage in the flood plain being eligible for Urban Drainage funds.

Financing the purchase of open space land is limited by the approved open space sales tax ballot language, which did not request the ability to issue multi-year debt. Voter approval would be necessary to issue bonds. In a memo dated July 28, 2004, from the Finance Director, with concurrence by the Town Attorney, the following financing options are possible:

- *Certificates of Participation* – These can be used as a vehicle with collateral (such as a building or park) typically necessary.
- *Cash financing*
- *Buying options on the land*
- *Conservation easements*
- *Donations* (with the property owners receiving a tax write-off in some circumstances)

Non-profit organizations exist that help town governments develop plans to acquire land for open space purposes. Non-profit services include considering various financing options, finding other funding sources, and using their experience to find creative solutions to purchase land. These non-profits make sense for a small town like Superior because committee members are not experts in this area, and town staff is usually resource limited.

In addition to the financing options presented by the Town Attorney, the PROST master plan identifies the following common acquisition and protection techniques.

Acquisition Techniques:

- Fee simple purchase
- Conservation easement/ purchase of development rights (partial interest)
- Joint purchase with other entity(s) (undivided interest)
- Leaseback or Lease
- Donations and gifts (full or partial)
- Non-profit acquisition and conveyance to the Town

Regulatory Protection Techniques: <http://conservationtools.org>

- Zoning

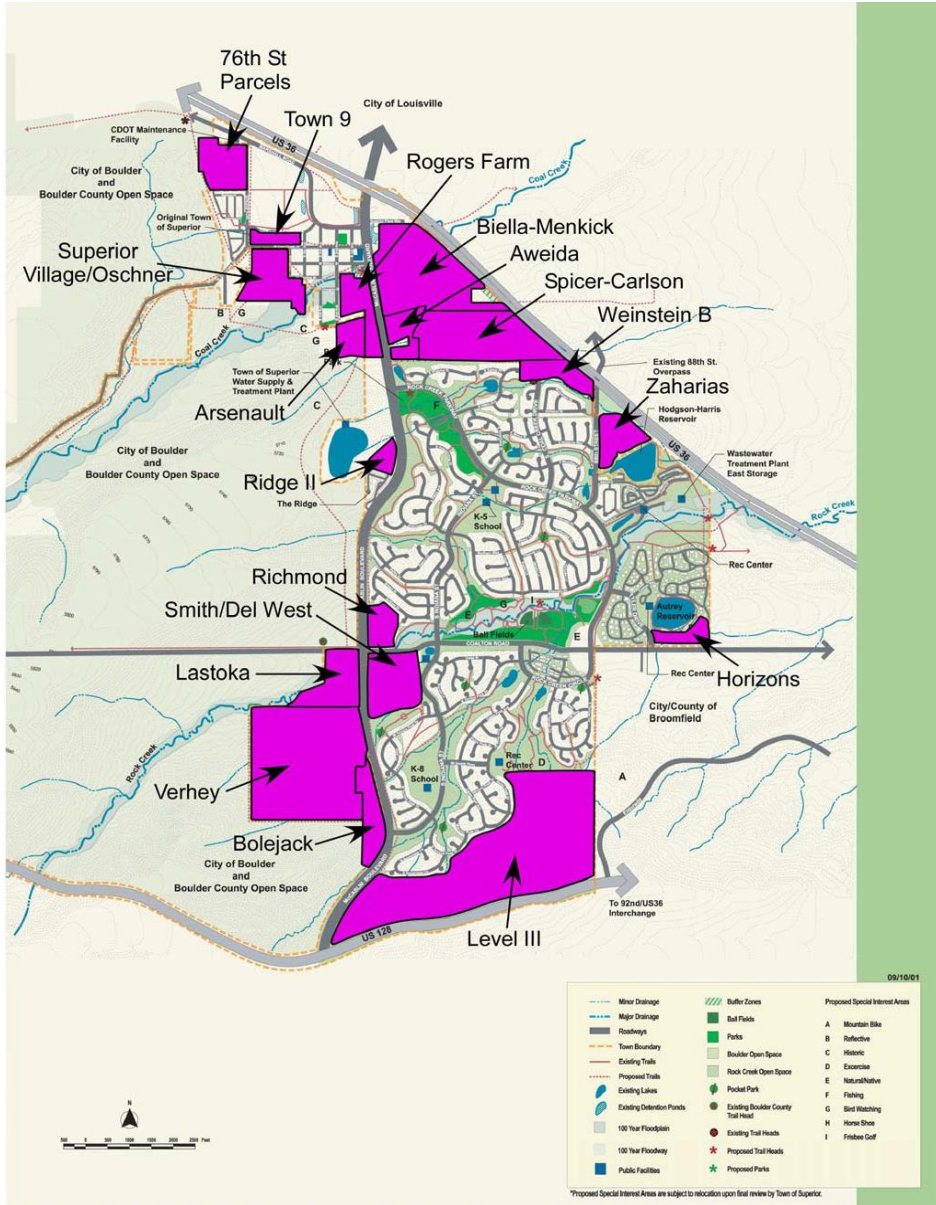
- Exaction
- Phases Growth
- Moratorium
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

Financial Incentives:

- Preferential Assessment
- Density Bonuses
- Grants and Loans

The price of land within the town of Superior's planning area will continue to rise over time. It is critical for the community to buy sooner rather than later because of the increasing prices and the diminishing amount of open land available.

Appendix A: Parcel Map from 2005 Summary Report



Property	Changes
76th Street Parcels	One property purchased and is now the “Guardian Storage” business. The current parcels group has two additional parcels to the northwest of the original area shown on the map.
Arsenault	Purchased in 2007 by Superior and Boulder County for \$1,548,946 (\$107,807 per acre).
Biella-Menkick	Now the Downtown Superior development.
Bolejack	No Change.
CenturyLink	Purchased in 2020 by Superior along with Boulder and Jefferson County for \$15,063,000 (\$82,763 per acre).
Horizons	Still privately owned, and now named the “Resolute” property, and the developer is building townhomes.
Lastoka	Purchased in 2006 by Superior and Boulder County easement for \$1,665,970 (\$80,607 per acre).
Level III	Privately owned. CenturyLink has acquired Level III as of 1 November 2017, and this property is now called CenturyLink.
Richmond Property	Purchased in 2014 by Superior, now called the “Town 15”.
Ridge II	Purchased in 2019 by Superior for \$700,000 (\$122,807 per acre) using town funds, not open space funds, and is set aside for future town infrastructure needs.
Rogers Farm	Developer building on all of the land.
Smith/Del West	Now the Calmante development.
Spicer-Carlson	Now the Downtown Superior development.
Superior Village/Ochsner	The Ochsner portion was purchased in 2009 by Superior for \$1,148,171 (\$85,000 per acre). Superior Village is now the “Coal Creek Crossing” subdivision.
Town 9	Now Founders Park.
Verhey Ranch	Purchased in 2007 by Boulder Country with Superior and City of Boulder Easements for \$7,605,794 (\$49,032 per acre).
Weinstein B	Now named the “Anderson” property and a developer is building on the entire parcel.
Zaharias	No Change.
Aweida	Now Discovery Office Park. This property was on the original map, but not in the original property listing.
Madsen	Purchased in 2009 by Superior for \$105,972 (\$77,352 per acre). Not on the original map.
School Site	Now Wildflower Park. It was not on the original map.
Shan-Shan	The property was shown as part of Rogers farm on the map. Superior and Boulder County purchased the property in 2014 for \$680,000 (\$106,750 per acre).

Appendix B: Open Space Evaluation Criteria

The following list was used by the OSAC members to evaluate each property. Each criterion was assigned a weighting factor. The committee felt strongly that each category should have equal weighting, and since there are seven categories, each weight is equal to 1/7.

Category	Attribute	Scale	Weight
Aesthetic	Compatibility with Adjacent Land Uses (other OS, agricultural, rec parks, buffer) Trees and other flora on the property	10 = High potential for compatibility with adjacent land uses. 5 = Manageable compatibility with adjacent land uses. 0 = Little or no compatibility with adjacent land uses.	14.3%
Management	Land size	10 = Parcel is a large land tract (>20 acres) 5 = Parcel is a medium land tract (10-20 acres) 0 = Parcel is a small land tract (<10 acres)	14.3%
Passive Use	Proximity and Access (Overall location, grade, and potential new trail access to other open space)	10 = Easy access or close proximity to trails or other recreational opportunities. 5 = Potential access or close proximity to trails or other recreational opportunities. 0 = No access or proximity to trails or other recreational activities.	14.3%
Water	Surface Water on or next to property	10 = High-quality surface water present (Reservoir, creek) 5 = Low-quality surface water present (vernal pool). 0 = No surface water present.	14.3%
Flora/Fauna	Migration Corridor/Connectivity - Partial usage/conservation easement (how this plays into the "big picture" for corridors) Wildlife habitat suitability	10 = Provides direct connectivity between parcels of wildlife habitat/ Portions of the parcel would be highly desirable to be partially used as Open Space. 5 = Provides partial connectivity between nearby parcels of wildlife habitat/Small portion(s) of this parcel may serve wellbeing of Open Space. 0 = Does not provide wildlife habitat connectivity/No parts of this parcel are conducive to being used as Open Space.	14.3%
Attainability	Attainability based on \$ value and/or current availability	10 = Readily available & reasonably priced 5 = Either readily available or reasonably priced 0 = Not for sale/high cost/being developed	14.3%
Management	Level of threats to existing resources	10 = Imminently threatened by development not compatible with OS use (High Priority to make OS) 5 = Foreseeable, but not imminent, threat of development not compatible with OS. 0 = No foreseeable threat of development not compatible with OS use. (Low Priority to make OS)	14.3%

Appendix C: Open Space Definitions

Prepared by the Open Space Advisory Committee June 11, 2001

Natural Open Space

Natural Open Space is undeveloped land secured for the protection of habitat for native animals and plants, for limited recreational use, and the preservation of archeological and topographical significance. Three types of Natural Open Space are defined below:

1. **Prairie:** Flat or rolling tracts of land dominated by a variety of grasses and inhabited by numerous species of animals.
2. **Aquatic:** Lakes, streams, ponds, and wetlands providing habitat for a variety of plants and animals living in water or at the water's edge.
3. **Riparian:** Riparian habitat is land occurring along streams or ditches characterized by a variety of plant life, providing habitat, migratory corridors, and nesting and breeding sites for birds and mammals.

(Natural buffers can consist of prairie, aquatic or riparian open space.)

Functions:

1. Preservation of critical ecosystems and natural areas; scenic vistas and areas; ridgelines; fish and wildlife habitats; natural resources and landmarks; cultural, historical and archaeological areas; linkages and trails; limited access to public lakes, streams, and other useable open space lands; and scenic and stream corridors.
2. Conservation of natural resources including, but not limited to, forest lands, rangelands, agricultural lands, aquifer recharge areas, and surface water.

Developed Open Space

Developed Open Space in Superior are lands that use for any or all of the following purposes:

1. **Parks:** Public recreational areas that can include playgrounds, ball fields, rinks, picnic area, etc.
2. **Landscaping around buildings or structures:** Trees, shrubs, flowers, humanmade streams, and ponds that surround commercial, residential, or public areas; urban shaping between or around municipalities or community service areas and buffer zones between residential and non-residential development. We recommend indigenous and xeric landscape materials and nursery stock in these areas, which provide food, shelter, and nesting places for wildlife.
3. **Trails:** Humanmade pathways for recreational use.
4. **Berms:** Large or small mounds of earth that may be landscaped to help alleviate site, sound, and air pollution, as well as to create new habitat for birds and animals.

Functions:

1. Developed Open Space can provide areas of landscaping to soften a development's visual appearance or to provide a buffer between conflicting land uses.
2. Developed Open Space can provide useable areas for such things as picnicking, plazas, gardens, parks and walkways.

(Developed buffers can be greenbelts consisting of parks, landscape, trails or berms.)