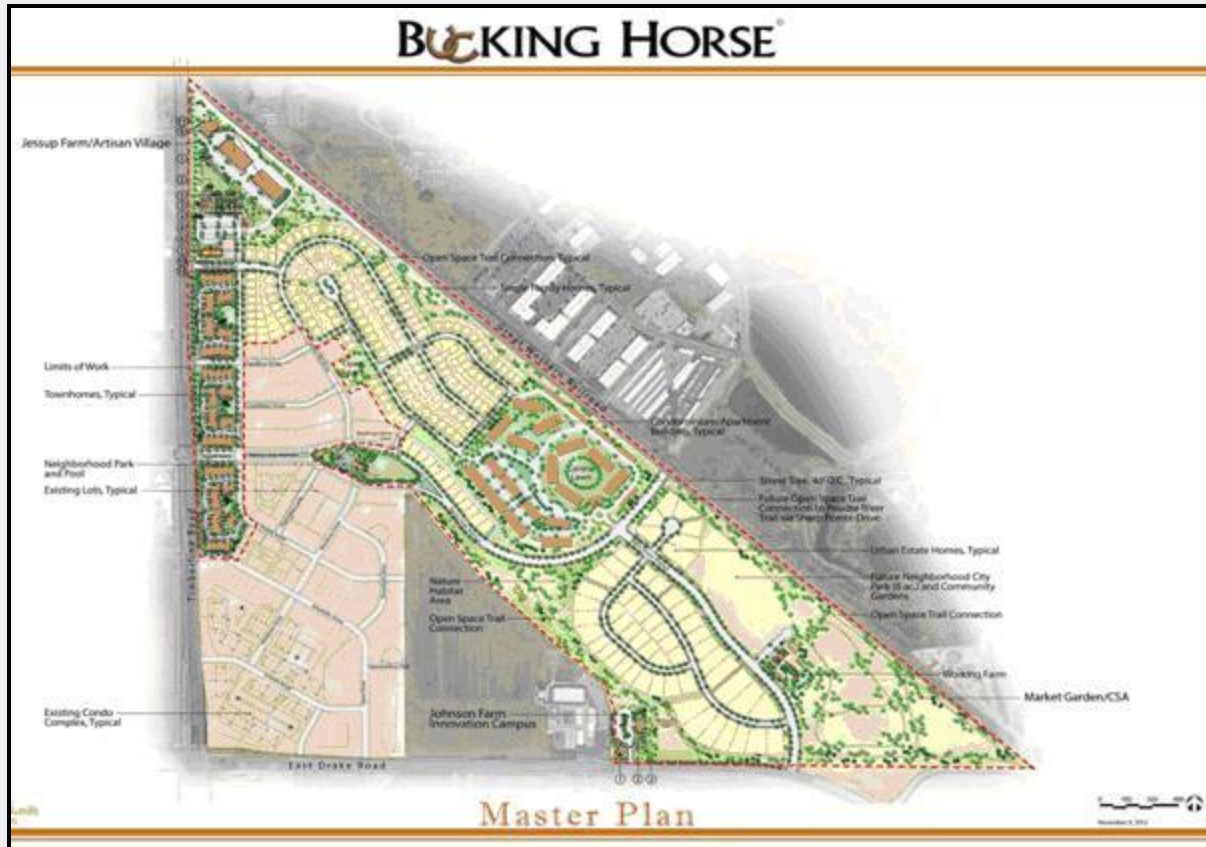


Sustainability and Environmental Planning – Merit: Bucking Horse Ranch



Bucking Horse is an infill, mixed-use neighborhood on 160 acres located in Fort Collins, Colorado. The goal of the project is to “buck” the system and demonstrate a financially successful, agriculture- oriented neighborhood centered on the values of community and quality of life. This new neighborhood will promote a triple bottom line of sustainability considering environmental, social and financial outcomes.



Environmental Sustainability - A unique example of environmental sustainability at Bucking Horse is the adaptive reuse of two century-old historic farms that bookend the development. Typically, developers tend to push for the demolition or relocation of farm buildings on developable land to maximize the economic benefits. In the case of Bucking Horse, the project team made the decision to keep the buildings in place and focus on adaptive reuse of the structures to make them a focal point of the new neighborhood. This element of rehabilitation is important in that it will keep construction materials out of our waste stream while utilizing the resources at hand. It's been said that, "The greenest building is the one that is already built." The project team believes in that statement based on the embodied energy inherent in older structures, and the lasting quality of materials used. New construction practices throughout the historic farm structures include an updating of all building mechanical systems, insulation properties and fenestration to meet or exceed the stringent City of Fort Collins Green Code. Additionally, the development team is designing a Working Farm on the property to be used by the area residents. The Working Farm will achieve net zero energy consumption through passive and active systems to further meet the project's sustainability goals.

In a larger planning context, the site is an infill project and lends itself to multimodal transportation opportunities given its central location within the City of Fort Collins. Bucking Horse is in close proximity to several trail systems, schools, and jobs, and within walking distance to existing groceries, shops, dining and entertainment. Environmental sustainability is further woven into our landscape design and management plan. Sixty percent of the landscaping planned for community spaces consists of edible species, including berry shrubs, vegetables, and apple, plum and apricot trees, all hardy to this region. A further emphasis on xeric principles applied to both residential and community landscapes makes Bucking Horse a holistic model for sustainable development.

Social Sustainability - The project excels in promoting "social sustainability" by focusing heavily on opportunities to play, supporting consumption of healthy local foods, and centering on well-being by fostering a sense of community. Opportunities for play include a 5k and 5-mile looped trail system within the site, formal and informal play areas that focus heavily on engagement in nature, and an innovation play center in the neighborhood park that will be assessed

in partnership with Colorado State University. Opportunities for healthy, local food consumption include the incorporation of a 3.5-acre “market garden” that will operate as a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), community gardens in the public park, edible landscaping, and a working farm with animals that will provide residents with fresh eggs and opportunities to engage in local food production. At the Jessup Farm Artisan Village retail space is designed for local food producers, a farm-to-fork restaurant, and a weekly farmers market. We are additionally supporting our larger food system with 38,000 square feet of state-of-the-art industrial food production space to help facilitate farm-to-institution.

Because we are sincere in our aim to promote healthy lifestyles and quality of life, we have also partnered with CSU, the Health District of Northern Larimer County, and Poudre Valley Hospital (now University of Colorado Health) to evaluate the health impacts of our community design. Baseline data collection began in the spring of 2013 to assess health habits of existing residents and future residents as they contract on housing. A time series evaluation design will assess the health impacts of various amenities on the population for years into the future.

Fiscal Sustainability - Fiscal sustainability is another driver in this project. We are actively planning for the unique features of Bucking Horse – the Market Garden, CSA, Jessup Farm Artisan Village, etc. – to sustain themselves financially. Our goal from the inception of this project has been to create a model that is financially replicable for other developers around the country. We consider local food production an amenity for the Bucking Horse neighborhood similar to the way golf courses have been a neighborhood amenity in the past. We have assessment tools in place to monitor the financial sustainability of the project in addition to the environmental and social impacts.

Innovative: From the start, our aim was to develop and build an innovative community and “buck” the system of current development practices. By building a community around two historic farms, Bucking Horse is helping to promote a new model of development that highlights adaptive reuse and meets the needs of the present while placing a value on the heritage of our land. Honoring the land’s agrarian roots, Bucking Horse is providing residents an enhanced opportunity to grow a portion of their own food and easier access to healthy local food. This provides a valuable amenity to a new community at a time when there is a strong public demand for local and sustainably grown food. This alternative development pattern also provides a level of interaction between the typically separate residential and agricultural ways of life. This is a fresh approach in this region and in Colorado and will serve as a model for urban agriculture for communities across the nation.

Transferable: As more mixed-use developments integrate farms across the United States, Bucking Horse can serve as a working model of a community centered on local food production. Bucking Horse has taken a “holistic” planning approach to integrate opportunities for healthy living into daily routines and build a sense of community. As farms become more and more scarce, especially along the urban fringe, the integration of farming into a new development provides an approach that can be appealing to public municipalities, developers, homeowners, and visitors.

Excellence: While many communities have incorporated elements of sustainability, we believe that Bucking Horse uniquely exhibits all three elements of the triple bottom line of sustainability: social, financial, and environmental. Because we are striving to change the way communities and developers think about building a community, we engaged an advisory committee to help us in our planning. Our advisory team of seven experts with diverse backgrounds in health planning, farm-to-school implementation, regional foodsheds, permaculture, large-scale agriculture, community gardens, food policy, and neighborhood-centered gardens helps us ensure that our project is built on a foundation of innovation to ensure project success and the delivery of a world-class neighborhood.

Community Progress: Bucking Horse serves the public good in a number of ways and is heavily centered on promoting public health through activity and healthy foods, and supporting mental health by fostering a sense of community and engagement in nature. On-site gardens and a farm-to-fork restaurant will teach today’s kids how a seed in the ground becomes the food on their plate. The gardens, market farm, local vendors, and production facilities also helps to increase food security in our region for both the residents of Bucking Horse and throughout Fort Collins.

In a larger policy context, Bucking Horse is serving as a driver for changes in local policies that encourage urban agriculture. While our city’s comprehensive plan calls for encouragement and support of local food production, our land use code has not yet caught up. Despite the fact that the plan for our development meets the intent of our comprehensive plan, our project had to seek, and was ultimately awarded, seven modifications to standards in order

to actually implement the goal of local food production in an urban setting. Following this process, Bucking Horse is now serving as a driver for changes to local policy and our project team is intimately involved in these efforts.

Effective: By safeguarding the farms and open spaces of the site, Bucking Horse has conserved land without the use of public funds. The vision of rehabilitating the historic Jessup farm into the artisan village has resulted in tremendous interest from over 120 local and regional artisans and food producers and we are nearly leased out. These new vendors may be opening their 2nd or even 3rd location, resulting in added commercial activity and jobs. CSU's College of Veterinary Medicine has graciously offered their veterinary services free of charge for the Working Farm animals. Both the Jessup Farm and the Johnson Farms were designated City of Fort Collins Landmarks, and were recently deemed eligible for the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties and the National Register of Historic Places.