

**BOULDER COUNTY HORSE ASSOCIATION**  
**HORSE PARK INFORMATION PACKET**  
**LONGMONT PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**INTRODUCTION**

Boulder County Horse Association (BCHA) proposes that the City of Longmont partner with BCHA to design, develop, & operate a Horse Park in the greater Longmont planning area. This is an exciting opportunity to bring diverse equine groups together, to contribute to the economy of Longmont and the County, to educate the public about horses and entertain them with fun equestrian events, and to contribute to the quality of life of the citizens of Boulder County who own horses. We envision a phased development effort, and BCHA will work with Longmont to establish development priorities based on needs and finances.

BCHA proposes to provide the expertise necessary to develop comprehensive plans for a successful Horse Park, to conduct extensive fundraising efforts, to contribute financially to the project, and to collaborate with the City in its development.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The equestrian community is unusually diverse. Individuals of all ages and abilities are involved, participating in a broad spectrum of activities including 4-H, carriage driving, dressage, eventing, jumping, polo, pony club, reining, therapeutic riding, trail riding, western pleasure, and many others. Equines come in all sizes, types and abilities. Equestrian activities require a variety of arenas and footings, round pens, open fields, trails, obstacles, jumps, and other challenges which are intended to improve and demonstrate a horse and rider's performance both in show and pleasure-riding situations.

To date, there is no place in Longmont, Boulder or any other northern Front Range counties where equestrians can participate in those activities. We desperately need a Horse Park that would offer these amenities!

We believe that Longmont and its business community will benefit from increased revenue from Horse Park visitors and overnight guests. Local restaurants and hotels could see more traffic, while vendors and craftspersons could set up booths at festivals and horse shows. Longmont High Schools could create equestrian teams based at the Park, reinforcing an outdoor lifestyle and giving teens an opportunity to spend their time in meaningful and healthy ways. The Horse Park could also serve Boulder County at large by hosting events for the University of Colorado Equestrian Team (which currently exists but has no "home"). A Horse Park would "brand" Longmont as a unique community with strong agricultural and western heritage roots that is nevertheless an upscale place very different from Boulder.

In July of 2007, the Puma 66 property (in the area between Hover Rd, Main St, Route 66, and Vermillion Rd) was approved for annexation into the City of Longmont. At that time, BCHA representatives addressed Council with a proposal to turn part of the property into a multi-purpose Horse Park, and this proposal was unanimously endorsed by Council. Since that time, Boulder County Parks & Open Space has purchased much of the northern portion of the Puma property and Longmont's water engineers provided new information indicating that most of the approximately 43 acres discussed for the Horse Park would be subject to increased flood hazards because of a need to build a very large berm on this very small parcel.

In view of Council's unwavering support for a Horse Park, staff has stepped forward to suggest several alternative sites already owned by the City. Some of these sites include the area around Union Reservoir, the old landfill and transfer station east of Sandstone Ranch, and possibly others. We are currently evaluating each of these options.

### **BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF ANY SITE**

The ideal site will have a combination of flat and undulating topography, is near water, is easy to locate off major highways, is free of prairie dogs, and is near Longmont amenities such as shopping, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses.

Our assessment of the ideal Horse Park property indicates we will need a minimum of 65 acres to support a galloping track, carriage driving areas, an obstacle course, temporary stalls, a spectator area with bleachers, at least one multipurpose outdoor arena, polo field, perimeter trail, and adequate parking. This configuration can expect to receive income from polo matches, user fees, and entry fees from shows. This scale project would be a useful addition for some user groups within the equestrian community.

To meet the needs of the larger equestrian user groups and to seriously increase the revenue potential for the City, we would need approximately 90-100 acres, with contiguity to regional open space and trails, and the possibility of indoor facilities. This larger acreage could support more arena space for prominent reining, dressage, hunter/jumper, and other discipline shows. It would allow space for a demonstration manure composting area, a venue for future agricultural education, horse camping, an extended multi-purpose track, additional horse trailer parking, landscaping, and other amenities as needs arise. The additional activities would add significant revenue from the Horse Park, as well as bringing visitors from across the country to the Longmont area.

Whatever site is chosen, we propose to start conservatively and develop the site in stages to match capital and resource outlays with fundraising and revenue streams. Our analysis indicates that startup costs could range from \$50,000 to \$2.5 million, with annual gross income ranging from \$25,000 to \$1.5 million.

## **THE IDEAL HORSE PARK (A WISH LIST, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)**

1) Access and parking. Easy access off major traffic thoroughfares is essential to the success of a Horse Park. We project a minimum area for vehicle and horse trailer parking at approximately 3 acres, large enough to accommodate multiple horse trailers, restrooms, landscaping, and some picnic tables. All users of the horse park would have use of the parking facilities.

2) Multi-use arena(s). These sand-based rectangles, comprising approximately 200' x 400', would be used for show jumping, dressage, western riding events, driving, and training. They can be subdivided creating two smaller arenas as needed. Large shows would require several outdoor arenas running simultaneously.

3) Multi-purpose track. A perimeter trail or old road could provide the basis for a carriage driving lane, a cross-country jumping course, and a galloping track where riders can condition their horses. We anticipate this trail would also provide access to a public trail on adjacent Open Space land.

4) Spectator areas. Bleachers strategically located between the polo field and the large arenas would allow spectators to enjoy both shows. The bleachers would be considered temporary structures, but could be covered with canopies to protect viewers from sun and rain.

5) Temporary Stalls. A temporary stabling facility (such as pens with canopy roofs) would be located near activity areas and the parking lot. It would be used to provide rest and shelter for the horses during the day, with possible overnight stabling as well. It could be covered with tent roofs.

6) Open fields. Undeveloped land near the parking lot can have multiple uses, including overflow parking, a grazing area, warm up area, or tents set up for special events.

7) Landscaping. The aesthetic nature of the park would be greatly enhanced and the visual effect softened by being able to build some gentle berms and other components. Horses and humans alike would benefit from shade and shelter.

8) Agricultural Education Facility. CSU Extension would like to offer a manure composting and demonstration site, where horse owners and park users could drop off manure, have it be composted and returned to the ecosystem as top-quality topsoil. This project needs space and water. A small pavilion could also be included to allow for high school classes and community college equine programs in the future.

9) Horse camping facility. Many horse people have expressed a desire to be able to come to Boulder County to visit our excellent public lands, enjoy our cultural amenities, and patronize local

businesses. Many horse shows last several days at a time, and people would not like to leave their horses unsupervised overnight.

10) Obstacle course. Many riders would benefit from a place where they could train their horses to negotiate various types of fixed obstacles, such as bridges, logs, and rails.

11) Cross Country Jumping Course. A training and competition area for horses in a natural environment will include jumps, ditches, and other barriers in an undulating topographic setting.

12) Polo field. This fast-paced team sport requires approximately 10 acres, with additional space around it for buffers. Polo fields require level ground so location is critical. To ensure consistent and safe footing for polo games, other use of this space would be limited.

13) Indoor Arena. Our ideal Horse Park would include a large building with a measuring approximately 300 x 400, with large clear spans inside for arenas. With such a building, shows, lessons and educational activities could be conducted year-round. Reservations could be made far in advance and the facility would be a reliable, predictable source of revenue.

14) Indoor (permanent) Stalls. The Longmont City Council has expressed a desire for an equestrian facility that offers riding lessons to the community. We would also like to be able to provide sheltered stalls for competitors at the Horse Park. These needs direct us to add this amenity to our wish list.

15) Horse Park Office, Community Meeting Rooms, Equipment Storage. These are necessary and desirable amenities to make an efficient facility.

16) Resident Caretaker Facility. In view of creating a “destination” Horse Park, we believe it is advisable to have an on-site person to provide maintenance, operations and security.

17) Other amenities as needs arise. Additional property and facilities would allow for more than one user group, as well as individual riders, to use the park at the same time.

18) Additional considerations. In order to irrigate the polo field and other grassy areas, and to control dust in the arenas, the Horse Park will need approximately 1 acre-foot of irrigation water per acre annually. Horses, riders, and spectators will also need a source of potable drinking water. We will need perimeter fencing, a source of electricity, and temporary or permanent sanitary facilities.

## **HORSE PARKS ARE BIG BUSINESS!**

According to an American Horse Council Foundation study in 2004, the Colorado horse industry includes approximately 256,000 horses, which produces a total economic impact valued at approximately \$1.6 billion. The direct economic impact of this activity is valued at approximately \$956 million, generating about \$21 million in annual taxes (of which \$11 million is paid to state government and \$2 million to local government). The industry involves approximately 102,400 Coloradans, including 55,700 horse owners, 5,800 direct full-time jobs and 21,300 total jobs, 35,100 volunteers, and even more spectators. Statewide, the equine industry ranks among the top ten agricultural money makers.

The US Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistics Service, in conjunction with the Colorado Horse Development Authority, the Colorado Horse Council and the Colorado State University Extension Service, conducted a comprehensive survey of the state's horse industry in 1999. It found approximately 145,000 horses in Colorado, with the value of equine-related assets (excluding racetracks and public facilities, but including land dedicated to horses) estimated at \$4.3 billion. This study found approximately 8,800 horses in Boulder County, or about 6% of the statewide total, and ranked Boulder County fourth statewide in number of horses. The study did not do the following calculations, and there is some potential for error because the value of both property and horses may be higher here than for similar animals and property elsewhere in the state, but if one were to extrapolate the statewide economic figures to Boulder County based on our percentage of the state total number of horses (6%), annual equine spending in Boulder County comes to at least \$18 million, annual equine income is at least \$7.8 million, and the value of equine-related assets in Boulder County is at least \$258 million.

We are currently researching the economic benefits of Horse Parks to their communities, and are not quite ready to present our findings... but we can cite a few intriguing statistics: the Kentucky Horse Park opened in 1978 and is estimated to have an annual economic impact of \$250 million; the Virginia Horse Center has a local impact of \$37.3 million, and the Texas Horse Park, which will break ground in Dallas this year, is projected to generate over \$350 million in revenues for the facility and other businesses during its first ten years of operation, with over \$7 million in sales and hotel occupancy. Horse Parks are big business!

## **BCHA COMMITMENT**

BCHA looks forward to the development of a suitable site. As a measure of our commitment, BCHA has already initiated the following activities:

- Formed a Steering committee of interested equestrian users from Longmont and the surrounding area.
- Created the following sub-committees and began work in the areas listed below:
  - Outreach for communicating with potential user groups.
  - Business plan
  - Marketing
  - Fundraising
  - Site Development
- Sent surveys to 70+ equestrian groups in the surrounding area requesting their input on use and composition of the horse park.
- Sent surveys to our membership and to boarding facilities in the area to determine what they would like to see in a Horse Park.
- Visited several sites for planning purposes.
- Received a grant from the Longmont Community Foundation for startup activities.
- Contributed funds for mailings, email distribution, and potential website development.
- Agreed to commit additional funds towards the success of this project when warranted.
- Established working relationships with consultants and City staff.

BCHA hopes to continue working with City staff, user groups, and interested members of the public to expand the abovementioned activities and establish a long-term relationship with city in the design, planning, and operation of the Horse Park. We can provide consultants and expertise, gather support from equestrian user groups, provide volunteers, and support the City – perhaps in a cost-and-revenue-sharing arrangement -- in this endeavor that would result in a win-win arrangement for all parties.

We appreciate your consideration.