



## Questions and Answers

Straight answers to the questions people ask first about Boulder Botanical Gardens.

### THE SITE

#### **Isn't the Justice Center staying put?**

Yes, today it is not scheduled to move. The proposal asks the County to study a better-located justice facility, such as a consolidated campus next to the County Jail on Airport Road, where courtrooms already operate. The garden follows only if that move makes sense for the County.

#### **Who owns the land?**

Boulder County. In the proposal, the City would acquire it from the County by purchase, swap or transfer, and a nonprofit would run the garden under a long-term agreement.

#### **Isn't the site in a floodplain?**

It lies along Boulder Creek's flood corridor, which is why a garden is the right use. Meadows, lawns and riparian plantings can take water; large buildings cannot. Buildings would go only on land that is already built on or paved, and a 1.7-acre creek buffer stays wild.

#### **Won't it add traffic?**

The plan is bike-first: park once along the creek or downtown, then ride or walk the Creek Path in. The goal is 30% or more arriving by bike; residents already make 18% of their trips by bike or scooter. Bike-in discounts, event-day bike valet, timed entry and event shuttles help, and no new garage is planned.

#### **What about concert noise?**

Just 10 to 14 summer shows, ending by 9:30 p.m. on weeknights and 10 p.m. on weekends, before Boulder's 11 p.m. nighttime limit. Speakers face into the garden, sound is measured at the nearest homes, and neighbors get a hotline.

### MONEY

#### **What would it cost?**

A first planning estimate is \$78–114 million to build, in three phases over about ten years, so the gardens can open first. Running it would cost about \$8.5 million a year.

#### **Will my taxes go up?**

Not without a vote. The plan pairs roughly half public funding (the land, grants and a possible voter-approved measure, as Fort Collins and Cheyenne used) with half private gifts. Fort Collins voters approved their garden with 71% support.

#### **Can a garden pay its own way?**

Yes. Admissions, concerts, festivals and private events earn most of the \$8.5 million budget, and memberships, sponsors and City support for upkeep cover the rest, as at every comparable garden.

## WHO IT'S FOR

### Is it open to everyone?

Yes. The plan includes free community days, school field trips and programs for every age, from children's nature play to level, shaded walking loops for seniors.

### How many people would come?

About 250,000 visits a year from core visitors once fully built, rising to about 275,000 with CU families, Folsom Field concertgoers and Sundance attendees. About 36% would be from out of state.

### What happens in winter?

The Conservatory stays warm and green all year, and a Winter Festival of Lights draws evening crowds, timed to carry through the Sundance Film Festival in late January.

## FIT WITH BOULDER

### Doesn't Boulder already have open space?

Boulder has extraordinary open space, logging more than 6 million visits a year on City lands. A garden adds what trails can't: curated collections, a conservatory, classrooms, concerts and festivals, a few blocks from downtown.

### Doesn't CU already have plant collections?

CU has a research greenhouse and a herbarium, both built for scientists and rarely open to the public. The garden would be their public window, not a duplicate.

### Why not build it somewhere else?

Elsewhere it would be a nice garden. Here it is woven into the creek, the Creek Path, the library, the Farmers Market and downtown, and each makes the others better.

### Won't it pull visitors away from Pearl Street?

It gives them a reason to stay longer. Visitors who spend a day at the garden still eat, shop and sleep downtown, a short walk away.

## WHAT'S NEXT

### Is this a done deal?

No. It is a community proposal. The next steps are forming the nonprofit, raising about \$150,000 for a feasibility study, and opening talks with the City and County.

## THE ASK

**Send us your question.** If it isn't answered here, we'll answer it and add it to this list.

Contact & press: Joe Pergolizzi · LetsGrowTheBoulderBG@gmail.com ·  
BoulderBotanicalGardens.org

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Sources: Boulder County Justice Center and site analysis (Brief 3; Document 2, Why This Location); capital and operating estimates (Document 3, Business Plan, October 2026); Fort Collins 1997 vote (City of Fort Collins, Gardens on Spring Creek); visitor estimates (Boulder Botanical Gardens Visitor Report, October 2026); City of Boulder Open Space visitation estimate, 2021–2023; CU EBIO Greenhouse (CU Boulder Today, 2018); City of Boulder 2023 Resident Travel Diary Survey; Boulder noise ordinance (B.R.C. 5-9-3).