

Residential/Mixed Use: 50-150 Residents and Jobs/Hectare

HOLIDAY NEIGHBORHOOD

Boulder, Colorado



Location: Broadway Street, Lee Hill Road, U.S. Highway 36, and Yarmouth Avenue

RELEVANT GROWTH PLAN POLICIES

Policy 2.2.3.7 (b, c, d, e, f): Plan and design intensification areas to provide a diverse mix of land uses to support vibrant neighbourhoods; provide high quality public open spaces with urban design standards that create attractive and vibrant places; support transit, walking and cycling; and achieve higher densities than the surrounding area, with an appropriate transition of built form to adjacent areas.

Policy 2.2.7 a, b, c, d: Plan and design designated greenfield areas to contribute to complete communities; create street configurations and densities and urban form that support walking, cycling, and transit; provide a diverse mix of land uses to support vibrant neighbourhoods; and create high quality open space with urban design standards that support transit, walking, and cycling.*

** Although not in a greenfield area, Holiday Neighborhood's location and built form make it a potential model for some designated greenfield areas.*

PROJECT DATA

Residents and Jobs Per Hectare	81
Ratio of Jobs to Residents	1:5
Gross Residential Density	30 units/ha (12 units/ac)
Site Area	10.9 ha (27 ac)
Land Use	
Residential	162 market rate units 138 affordable units Wild Sage Co-housing - 34 units
Commercial	5,413 m ² (58,264 ft ²)
Maximum Height	3 storeys
Transit	local and regional bus service
Parking	1.1 parking spaces per unit
Date Completed	2008
Developers	Boulder Housing Partners Peak Properties, Affordable Housing Alliance Coburn Development, Wolff/Lyon Architects Wonderland Hill Development
Master Plan	Barrett Studio Architects Studio 2 Landscape Architects

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Holiday Neighborhood project has turned a greyfield site in Boulder, Colorado into a low-rise, mixed-use, residential community that is transit-supportive, energy efficient, and includes a substantial amount of affordable housing.

Located at the city's northern limits, Holiday Neighborhood is surrounded by low-density, car-oriented, post-war residential, commercial, and industrial development. It is bordered by U.S.



Wild Sage Co-housing Common House



Townhouse units in Block 6



Holiday Neighborhood cottages

Highway 36 to the northeast; Broadway Street, a major transit spine, to the west; and a residential neighbourhood to the south.

The community plan for Holiday Neighborhood centres on two interconnected goals: sustainability and affordability. Fortunately, the initiatives that increase affordability have coincided with sustainability practices. The planning goals were achieved through a clustered, mixed-use, mixed-income neighbourhood of two- to three-storey buildings that reduces energy consumption and encourages walking, biking and transit use.

One of the first principles of the community plan is to take advantage of Boulder's substantial existing bike and bus infrastructure. The City's existing density zoning for the site was doubled to 50 units per hectare, which contributed to the neighbourhood's transit-supportive densities and desired urban character. Higher densities also addressed affordability - a major challenge facing the City of Boulder - by allowing for smaller homes. The project offers a range of housing types, including single detached, townhouse, studio mews, live/work, lofts, duplexes, triplexes, and apartments.¹

A mix of land uses was essential to achieve the community plan's walkability and community integration objectives. Initially, the City of Boulder was reluctant to allow retail spaces in Holiday Neighborhood. However, growing traffic congestion prompted the City to allow nearly 40 retail spaces to mitigate traffic outflow from the new neighbourhood by bringing services closer to where people live. The commercial buildings create a focus and retail centre on Broadway Street for the surrounding community. Holiday Neighborhood also includes a cluster of live/work studios along the site's main pedestrian route, allowing people to watch artists and craftspeople at work.²

PLANNING HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Holiday Neighborhood was developed under the direction of the City of Boulder, which has a population of 103,000. Boulder has been implementing growth management policies since 1976, beginning with the "Danish Plan", which limited residential growth to a maximum of two per cent a year. The *Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 1977 and last updated in 2008, directs growth into the existing urban area, promotes compact walkable communities, and protects the open space and rural lands surrounding the city.

The city's natural setting greatly contributes to its livability. Boulder's open spaces at the foothills of the Rockies, extensive parks system, comprehensive bicycle network, and compact walkable neighbourhoods all contribute to the city's desirability. However, there is a limited housing supply and prices are high - the median price for a single-family home in Boulder was USD \$450,000 in 2004. In response, the City has made affordable housing a long-term priority. It aims to provide access to housing to both low- and moderate-income households (those earning less than or equal to 60 per cent of the area median income).³

¹ Sustainable Futures Society Projects and Best Practises, "Holiday Neighborhood: Designing a Sustainable and Affordable Neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado," David Wann, http://www.sustainablefutures.us/Best_Practices/Holiday_Neighborhood/SFS_Reports/FINALOverviewDesigningAGreatNeighborhood.pdf (accessed May 2009).

² Ibid.

³ Cindy Brown, "They're Bolder in Boulder," *Planning* (June 2004), <http://myapa.planning.org/affordablereader/planning/boulder0604.htm> (accessed May 2009).

The idea to develop Holiday Neighborhood was conceived after the Holiday Twin Screen Drive-In Theater closed in 1989 and the land was annexed from Boulder County by the City of Boulder, along with many surrounding parcels outside the city's northern limits. Initially, the site's private landowners intended to build a "big-box" retail outlet. The City, however, was developing a sub-community visioning plan process for north Boulder that contrasted strongly with the landowners' proposal. The City's vision emphasized integrated, mixed-use, mixed-income communities with a New Urbanist character and development patterns that were more consistent with Boulder's urban neighbourhoods.

The City wanted to purchase the site from the private landowners to have greater certainty over its development and to prevent the "big-box" proposal from being realized. Despite opposition, city council approved the City's purchase of the property in 1997. In 1998, realizing that the City itself should not function as a developer, it sold the land to Boulder Housing Partners, an arm's-length public entity and the largest landlord in the city. Boulder Housing Partners has a long history of developing affordable housing, so it could easily meet the City's requirement of making 40 per cent of the project's units permanently affordable.⁴

To provide visual diversity to the project's streetscapes, Boulder Housing Partners hired five other developer/builders known for their innovative projects and experience with sustainability and affordability: Peak Properties, Affordable Housing Alliance, Coburn Development, Wonderland Hill Development, and Wolff/Lyon Architects.⁵

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT

Holiday Neighborhood is served by one regional and two local bus routes within a five-minute walk. Emphasizing a strong commitment to transit, Boulder Housing Partners provides a complimentary bus pass to each resident.⁶ Overall, residents have responded extremely positively to the combined convenience of access to transit and local stores and services.

Holiday Neighborhood extends the city's street network and existing residential fabric northward. The neighbourhood's street system is a connected and permeable modified grid, providing many direct connections into and within the development, in contrast to the disconnected circuitous streets of the surrounding community. This permeability reduces the need for cars by offering residents easy access to neighbourhood stores, existing transit routes, and Boulder's extensive bicycle trail system. For example, Holiday Neighborhood's bike path along Highway 36 connects directly to the city's bike trail system.



Image courtesy of David Barrett, Barrett Studio Architects

Community Gardens

Vehicle dependency is further reduced through Holiday Neighborhood's participation in the eGO CarShare program, a non-profit serving the

⁴ Sustainable Futures Society Projects and Best Practises, "Holiday Neighborhood: Designing a Sustainable and Affordable Neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado," David Wann, http://www.sustainablefutures.us/Best_Practices/Holiday_Neighborhood/SFS_Reports/FINALOverviewDesigningAGreatNeighborhood.pdf (accessed May 2009).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Boulder Housing Partners, "Recent Development - Holiday Neighborhood," Boulder Housing Partners, <http://www.boulderhousing.org/content/recent-development-holiday-neighborhood> (accessed September 2009).

Boulder-Denver Metro area. The program is pay-as-you-drive and provides the convenience of a car without the costs of ownership.

The decrease in car dependence allowed the developers to successfully apply for a variance to the parking requirement for the Wild Sage Co-housing development, a 34-unit townhouse project within Holiday Neighborhood that cooperatively shares and operates its common areas. The Wild Sage project was required to supply only 1.1 parking spaces per housing unit, as opposed to the City's standard of two spaces per unit.⁷ Additional communal green space was created as a result of reduced parking requirements.

Parking throughout Holiday Neighborhood is provided on the street and in small shared surface lots behind buildings.

PUBLIC REALM AND BUILT FORM

The *Holiday Drive-In Redevelopment Standards and Guidelines*, developed by Barrett Studio Architects, provide direction on siting and massing, parking, lighting, landscape, architectural elements, and materials for each type of housing. The document also contains guiding principles on:

- Evoking a “sense of time and place” by responding thoughtfully to climatic conditions; celebrating and highlighting the site’s natural stormwater drainage patterns; using simple forms, patterns, and materials and clear structure; and creating an architectural expression representing the contemporary time and place.
- Creating “diverse connections” through the community using uninterrupted green spaces and visual corridors that connect to the central pedestrian spine; and making the neighbourhood accessible to people of all ages and mobility levels, cyclists, and public transit users.
- Making the community “human-scale” by using smaller material modules with attention to detail in outdoor spaces and buildings; creating variety in building uses, geometry, massing, texture and colour; creating building forms and facades that are responsive to the street; and incorporating landscaping, balconies and rooftop gardens.⁸

Reduced building setbacks allowed many smaller lots with diverse purposes to be closer to the street. In conjunction with higher densities, retail amenities, and mixed-uses, the reduced setbacks contribute to a pedestrian-oriented environment, and provide for more live-work options.



Restored Holiday Drive-In sign

Holiday Neighborhood's narrow tree-lined streets are pedestrian friendly. On-street parking creates a buffer between the sidewalk and the street, and curb bump-outs at intersections shorten pedestrian crossings.

⁷ Sustainable Futures Society Projects and Best Practises, “Holiday Neighborhood: Designing a Sustainable and Affordable Neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado,” David Wann, http://www.sustainablefutures.us/Best_Practices/Holiday_Neighborhood/SFS_Reports/FINALOverviewDesigningAGreatNeighborhood.pdf (accessed May 2009).

⁸ Holiday Drive In Redevelopment Standards and Guidelines, Barrett Studio Architects, Housing Authority for the City of Boulder, September 2001.



Holiday Neighborhood Master Plan

The neighborhood's open space system provides links and pathways throughout the development and to the surrounding community. A pedestrian spine extends from Broadway Street, through the central, 0.8 ha (2 ac) community park, to an orchard and bike trail along Highway 36. The orchard and a large community garden provide fresh fruits and vegetables for residents.

Architectural expression in Holiday Neighborhood consists of a collection of contemporary, farmhouse-inspired, and Victorian-era styles. Distinct colour palettes of red, yellow and green harmonize these diverse styles, which are further unified by front porches and units that address the streets and walkways. Commercial brick buildings are reminiscent of those found on a small-town main street.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

To obtain building permits, developers and architects were required to meet environmental sustainability criteria set out in the City's Green Points Program. The development team went a step further and established Green Guidelines for the Holiday Neighborhood that "challenged project designers to use innovative, efficient designs and

technologies that were also sufficiently cost-effective to turn a profit in a project focused on affordability."⁹

A grant the Sustainable Futures Society received from the Environmental Protection Agency to 'green' Holiday Neighborhood helped achieve this goal. The Sustainable Futures Society, a Denver-based, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development, directed the grant money to project designers to research and explore design elements that would "increase project sustainability and demonstrate tangible air and water quality benefits."¹⁰

Individual buildings in Holiday Neighborhood were built with some of the most extensive energy efficiency features to date. Solar water heating systems, passive solar orientation, and extra insulation in homes have significantly reduced all forms of energy consumption and servicing

⁹ Sustainable Futures Society Projects and Best Practises, "Holiday Neighborhood: Designing a Sustainable and Affordable Neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado," David Wann, http://www.sustainablefutures.us/Best_Practices/Holiday_Neighborhood/SFS_Reports/FINALOverviewDesigningAGreatNeighborhood.pdf (accessed May 2009).

¹⁰ Ibid.

costs. The higher initial costs associated with the construction of high-efficiency homes were offset through a partnership with one of the project developers, Affordable Housing Alliance, as well as Habitat for Humanity. Under this plan, homeowners contributed sweat equity (their own labour) to the construction of their homes.

The Wild Sage Co-housing development received an Environmental Protection Agency energy rating of 5 Star Plus - the highest possible rating - on all of its 34 homes. This rating is the result of the co-housing development's many sustainable features, including recycled and low-toxicity materials, concrete floors, light-coloured, flat roofs to reduce heat island effect, cluster development, solar panels, passive solar orientation, and lowered parking standards.

Innovative stormwater management strategies, or low-impact development practices, were used to deal with the neighbourhood's surface run-off. The community park has sand filter beds that remove pollutants by infiltration and microbial decomposition.¹¹ This system allows the park to be used for both recreation and water treatment. The Affordable Housing Alliance site also used low-impact development practices, such as planted swales to capture and channel stormwater from rooftops.

AWARDS

- PLAN Boulder County Award for urban design excellence, 2005
- Colorado National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials Award, Boulder Housing Partners, 2005

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Image by Kit Seeborg, available under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike licence, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kitseeborg/143573690> (accessed September 2009)

WEBSITES

www.holidayneighborhood.com
www.boulderhousing.org/content/recent-development-holiday-neighborhood
www.sustainablefutures.us/Best_Practices/Holiday_Neighborhood/SFS_Reports/FINALOverviewDesigningAGreatNeighborhood.pdf
www.terrain.org/articles/16/wann.htm
www.wildsagecohousing.org
www.barrettstudio.com/holiday_neighborhood.htm
www.coburndevelopment.com/projects/17



Garden Crossing units