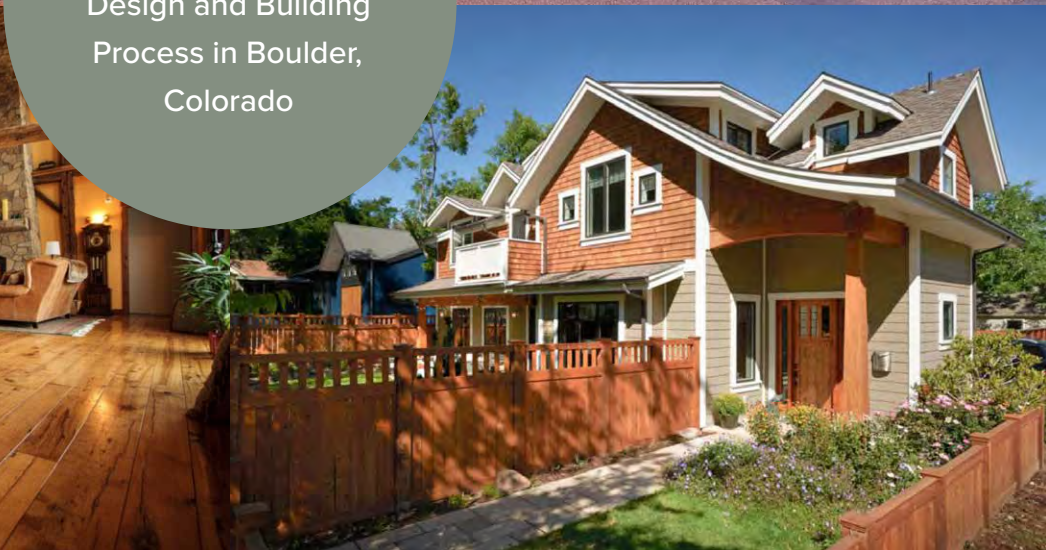


# NAVIGATING BOULDER BUILDING

A Downloadable  
Guide to Your Home  
Design and Building  
Process in Boulder,  
Colorado



Presented by:



fänas architecture  
*space / opportunity*



This guide is intended to help users identify and understand the proper procedures for building a new home in Boulder, Colorado. Navigating the process can be difficult and confusing, but this e-book is designed to explain the steps along the way, while highlighting some key differences between building in the City of Boulder and Boulder County.

## WHY BOULDER?

The draw to Boulder is strong. For those not already living in the area, the central location in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and the vibrant community that embraces a healthy, culturally enriched lifestyle are quite attractive! For those already in Boulder, the opportunity to build a new home is definitely one to seize; property values are strong, stable and in many areas on the rise. Boulder may just have the perfect mix!

**Assuming that you already know all the great things Boulder has to offer, let's dig in to the process of building your new home.**

# DIFFERENCES

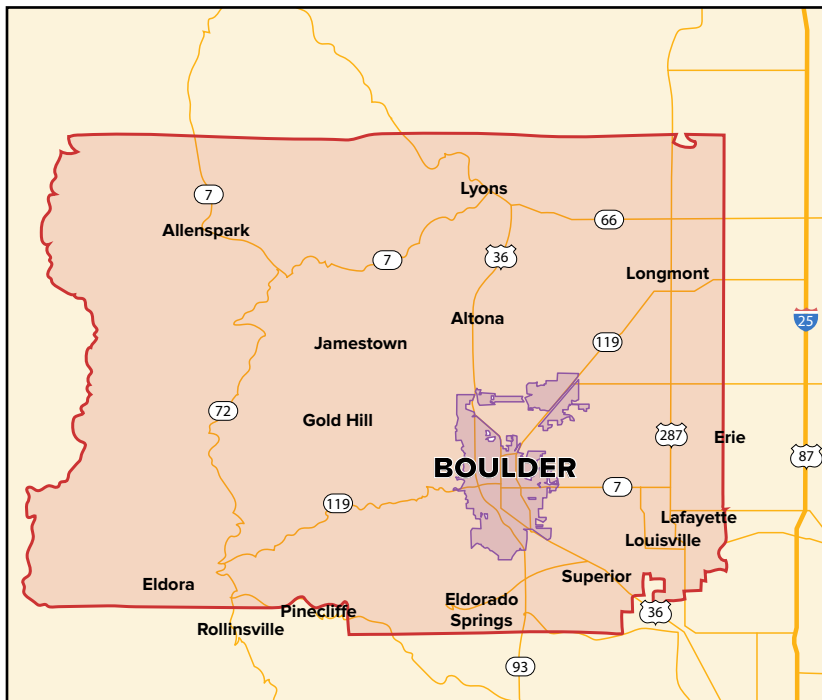
## *Between The City of Boulder and Boulder County*

Properties located within the City of Boulder limits and those located in unincorporated Boulder County are not governed by the same building codes. It is important to understand where your property is located and which rules apply before starting any type of design/construction project.

Between the City and County, there is no “better”, only “different.” Each jurisdiction requires their own forms and even different consultants to complete a building project to code.

It is critical to know these steps and have the proper guidance for getting the information completed and documents in the format each official requires to expedite the process for obtaining a permit. Incomplete documentation can significantly stall the permitting process and therefore lengthen the timeframe of your project.

One of your first steps in the process is to know whether or not your property is in the City of Boulder or Boulder County.



### THE CITY OF BOULDER:

If you believe your property is within the city, you will want to begin the process by clicking this link – the [City of Boulder’s Zoning Map](#). Here, you can enter the address of your property and confirm that it is within the city limits.

### BOULDER COUNTY:

If you believe your property is located in Boulder County, you should be able to locate it on the [Boulder County assessor’s website here](#). If the property address comes up with “unincorporated” behind it, it is a Boulder County location and you will have access to additional information on the property.



# PROPERTY ZONING

Whether the property is located in the City of Boulder or Boulder County, it will be placed in a zoning district. If you are considering purchasing a piece of land to build a new home, there are only certain zones that you will be allowed to do so on. While you may assume that the word “Residential” automatically means the land is ok to build a home on, in some cases high density zones would not be approved for single-family home construction.

The zoning classification for a property determines the “rules” for that property. Some such rules include:

- Building Set-Backs
- Height Limits
- Allowable Floor Area
- Allowable Lot Coverage

Additionally, for your own knowledge, you will want to be familiar with neighboring zones. As you begin to plan the home of your dreams it is important to not only know what is there currently, but what the municipality may allow to be built there in the future.

These same links will further help you understand the zoning of your prospective lot.

[City of Boulder’s Zoning Map](#)

[Boulder County Assessor](#)



# IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS

## *for Permit in the City of Boulder*

Properties within the City of Boulder tend to be on the small side and are, as you may expect, relatively densely arranged within the urban landscape. Many of the required documents, calculations and submittals specific to the City of Boulder therefore, relate to the perceived density and the unique requirements of building within tighter confines.

Below are some of the documents that the City of Boulder requires during the permitting process. We are providing these to help you be more informed of the requirements of the City, but please note that this list is not comprehensive.

### FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

This is the maximum floor area you are allowed to build on any given site in the City.

[https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/PDS/forms/500\\_FARWorksheet\\_Diagrams.pdf](https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/PDS/forms/500_FARWorksheet_Diagrams.pdf)

### MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LOT COVERAGE

This is the maximum area you are allowed to cover with a building on any given site in the City.

<https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/PDS/forms/826.pdf>

### COMPATIBILITY

The City is sensitive to very large new structures being built next to smaller scale structures throughout the town. This requirement focuses on the height of side walls immediately adjacent to neighbors' properties and provides an example of the City's requirement:

[https://www.municode.com/library/co/boulder/codes/municipal\\_code?no\\_deId=TIT9LAUSCO\\_CH7FOBUST](https://www.municode.com/library/co/boulder/codes/municipal_code?no_deId=TIT9LAUSCO_CH7FOBUST)

### SOLAR ANALYSIS

A solar analysis is required on every new project in the City to prove the new structure will not block sun or views from adjacent properties:

<https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/PDS/forms/solar-access-guide.pdf>

### ENERGY REQUIREMENTS AND DOCUMENTATION OF COMPATIBILITY:

The City of Boulder has well defined criteria for building materials and practices resulting in buildings of superior energy efficiency. A Home Energy Report (HERS) or equivalent documentation is required at the time of permit submittal to confirm the project meets the City's energy standards.

[https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/PDS/forms/902\\_GP%20Guideline%20Booklet.pdf](https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/PDS/forms/902_GP%20Guideline%20Booklet.pdf)

For additional information contact the City of Boulder Planning Department or go to their website: <https://bouldercolorado.gov/>

# IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS

## *for Permit in Boulder County*

There is one immediate and notable difference between the building process in Boulder County when compared to the City of Boulder. The County has an additional step before they will accept any documentation for building permit called Site Plan Review. This one step may include multiple rounds of review and approval, depending on your project, so be prepared and plan for the additional time in your project timeline. For a description of the purpose behind this as well as the requirements go to: <http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/landuse/spro1siteplanreview.pdf>

Be advised that this step is required and can add up to 2 months to the entire permit submittal process (depending on the County's workload at the time of submittal).

Additional permitting requirements for the County include, but are not limited to the following documents.

### FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

Like the City of Boulder, this is the maximum floor area you are allowed to build on any given site. Note that the County's formula is different than the City's.

<http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/landuse/spro4sprfactsheet.pdf>

### MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LOT COVERAGE

This is similar to the City's requirement but uses a different formula as well. It is still intended to calculate the area that will be covered by your proposed building. <http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/landuse/spro4sprfactsheet.pdf>

### WILDFIRE DESIGNATION

This is a unique requirement for Boulder County. The County has well defined wildfire zones which determine much of the detailing and allowable materials on a project. Please note that all residences over 3,000 sq.ft. are required to be fully sprinklered.

<http://www.bouldercounty.org/doc/landuse/firezone.pdf>

### UTILITIES:

Many properties in Boulder County do not have water, sewer, electricity and/or gas currently run to the property. Determining the types of utilities and which company is the provider for a particular property is important and information the County requires before permit submittal.

For additional information contact Boulder County Planning Department or go to their website: <http://www.bouldercounty.org/property/build/pages/default.aspx>

# THE RIGHT TEAM

## *of Professionals*

Whether you are planning to build in the City of Boulder or unincorporated Boulder County, the process can be confusing and the amount of documentation required overwhelming. Beyond the documentation, certain licensed or certified professionals are also required to be a part of the process. Each professional plays a role as a specialist, focused on understanding the municipalities' requirements and what is needed to meet them in the safest and most effective way.

At a minimum, when building in Boulder, you should have the following professionals as members of your team:

### **ARCHITECT**

The architect generates the project design. In addition to this, the architect is responsible for coordinating the other professionals on the team, making sure their information is complete and documented appropriately. The architect will issue the Request for Proposals from these individuals and review their proposals with the Owner.

### **GENERAL CONTRACTOR**

A General Contractor licensed in the jurisdiction where the project is to be built is required for new home construction. Both the City of Boulder and Boulder County require specific licensing for general contractors in addition to the basic licensing requirements of the State of Colorado.



### **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

Both the City of Boulder and Boulder County require fully designed structural drawings signed and stamped by a licensed engineer in good standing in the State of Colorado.

### **SURVEYOR**

All projects in Boulder are required to have a professional survey completed that is signed and stamped by a licensed surveyor.

### **SOILS ENGINEER**

A soils report must be completed and submitted with the documentation at the time of Building permit submittal. The report must be completed by a licensed professional.

### **ENERGY RATER**

All projects in City of Boulder and Boulder County are required to have energy analysis reporting completed and documented by a professional energy rater.

Fänas Architecture has successful on-going working relationships with professionals in all areas of the building industry. We pride ourselves on assembling the perfect team for every project: a team that not only works well together, but works well for the client. It is our goal to ensure that your project is designed perfectly and built as efficiently as possible.



# *Bring It All* **TOGETHER**

Ready to get to work? As you select the perfect piece of land for your new home, we hope you find this guide helpful. As the old adage goes, it's all about location, location, location.

Whether you are looking to design and build your next project in the City of Boulder or Boulder County though, don't forget to be prepared with the other crucial information you will need to work with your design team – a detailed budget, insurance, your list of absolute must-haves for your home...it's an exciting process and one that we would love to help you complete.

If you have found this guide helpful, we hope that you'll reach out to Fänas Architecture as you are *Navigating Boulder Building!*

## CONTACT US

Boulder Studio  
1320 Pearl Street  
Suite 103  
Boulder, CO 80302  
303.444.5380

[boulderarchitects.com](http://boulderarchitects.com)



fänas architecture  
*space / opportunity*