

MDR land use change would destroy USDA/NRCS-designated Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance

The proposed development—or any development—at Twin Lakes would pave over U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-designated *Prime Farmland* and *Farmland of Statewide Importance*. The *Prime Farmland* classification is their highest, best farmland classification. *Farmland of Statewide Importance* is their second-highest farmland classification.

Prime Farmland, as defined by the USDA, “...is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land. *Farmland of Statewide Importance*...generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for *Prime Farmland*...some areas may produce as high a yield as *Prime Farmland* if conditions are favorable.”

Prime Farmland is of major importance in meeting the Nation's short and long-range needs for food and fiber; however, the supply of high-quality farmland is limited. It is up to local governments to act responsibly to protect these lands with known *Prime* or *Statewide Importance* classifications, whether it be to convert them to Open Space, thereby preserving them for future generations, or leasing them to local organic or conventional farmers. The size of the land parcels are irrelevant, as local farmers have effectively utilized smaller, separate parcels for growing. Prime agricultural land is a non-renewable resource. Once developed, it's lost forever. *In fact, Boulder County has a history of leading the state in the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural lands.*

Reports from the USDA/NRCS for 6655 Twin Lakes Rd (north parcel) and 6500 Twin Lakes Rd /0 Kahlua Road (south parcel) yield these results:

North Parcel (BCHA) Farmland Classification:

- Approx. 62% of the total acreage is *Prime Farmland* if irrigated.¹
- Approx. 38% of the total acreage is *Farmland of Statewide Importance*.

South Parcel (BVSD) Farmland Classification:

- Approx. 92% of the total acreage is *Prime Farmland* if irrigated.
- Approx. 8% of the total acreage is *Farmland of Statewide Importance*.

In a forward-thinking 1991 memorandum, the City of Boulder Department of Community Planning & Development wisely stated to the City Planning Board and the County Long Range Planning Commission, “Lands designated as having *National Agricultural Significance* should not be considered suitable for future urban development,” and, “Lands designated as having *State Agricultural Significance* should not be considered suitable for future urban development.”

The BCCP three-pronged philosophy states, “*Agricultural lands should be protected.*” And, the Boulder County Parks & Open Space criteria for open space purchases lists, “*Prime Agricultural Land*” as second on a list of five. For more information, visit www.TLAG.org.

Cross-jurisdictional impact: Loss of prime agricultural land in Gunbarrel and reduced resiliency.

References:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/ref/?cid=nrcs142p2_054226

<http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

<http://www.bouldercounty.org/property/build/pages/bccp.aspx>

<http://www.bouldercounty.org/os/openspace/pages/acquisitions.aspx>



¹ Irrigation can take many forms, such as drip lines, solar drip, and flood irrigation.