

EAT,
STAY,
LIVE

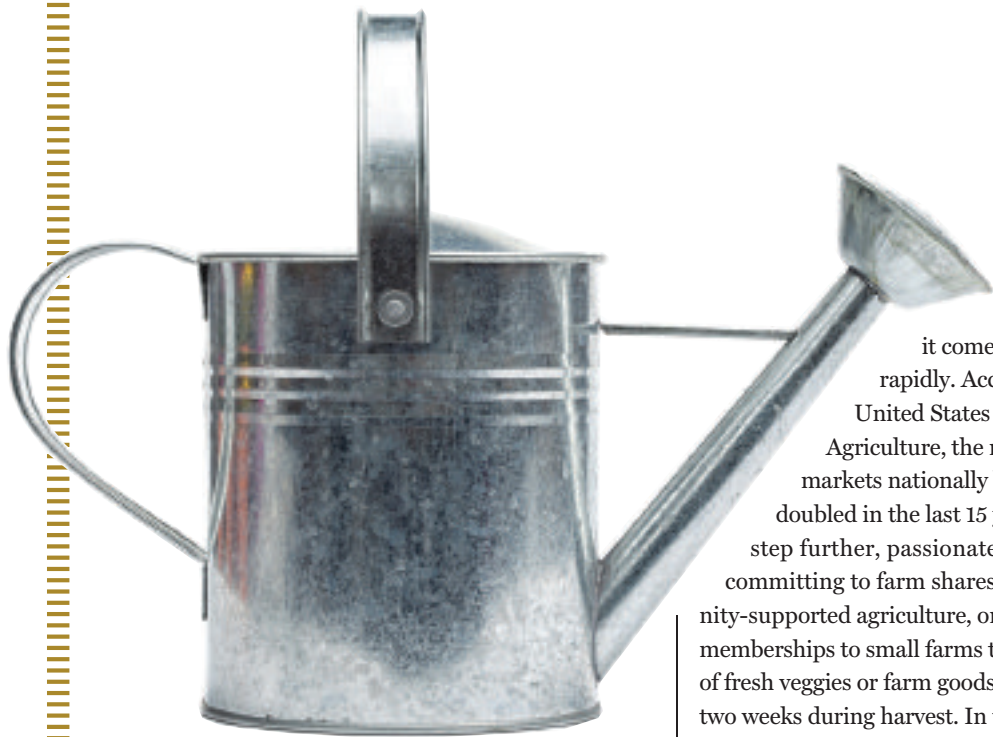
PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE GLASS AND SEQUOIA PORTER



*A Fort Collins
real estate developer
brings the local
food movement
into its newest
residential 'hood.*

BY JULIE DUGDALE





MONICA HAMILTON'S BACKYARD

is home to 18 trees, three raised gardens, and a blanket of extensive xeriscaping. Overkill in a Colorado subdivision? Maybe in a typical neighborhood. But for the new Bucking Horse development at South Timberline and East Drake in southeast Fort Collins, it's about right. She hopes to help out at the community's farmer's market when it gets up and running—she's already on the neighborhood Horticulture Committee—and looks forward to the day when her 15-year-old daughter might get a job in the local artisan village down the street. Her interest in working the land and purchasing local goods is a fitting reflection of the neighborhood, where a 3.6-acre farm will eventually grow crops for the residents, and the folks a few houses away already raise chickens in their backyard for farm-fresh eggs. It's all part of the grow-buy-eat-local concept flourishing in northern Colorado and nationally.

The locavore concept isn't new, but this burgeoning interest in what we eat and where

it comes from has risen rapidly. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the number of farmers markets nationally has more than doubled in the last 15 years. Going a step further, passionate foodies are committing to farm shares, aka community-supported agriculture, or CSA. They buy memberships to small farms to guarantee a box of fresh veggies or farm goods every week or two weeks during harvest. In the past few years, CSA farms have become more hands-on, letting their members pick their own produce instead of handing them a pre-filled box—so says Dan Moore, a software developer and farm-share supporter who owns the Colorado CSA website. A CSA farm might sell half its crops to its CSA members and the rest to local restaurants and markets. Northern Colorado is a stronghold of CSA farming in the state; according to the Colorado CSA figures, more than 40 farms offer CSA programs throughout Fort Collins, Longmont, and Boulder.

Here's the twist: Folks outside the food and restaurant biz are noticing this new consumer passion. Take real estate developers, who've picked up on this trend and have taken "local" to a new level by incorporating elements of farming and agriculture directly into their master-planned communities. Homeowners associations might pay a farmer to grow the crops specifically for the neighborhood, or the residents might take on an extent of the farming themselves. It's CSA 2.0—what's known as DSA, or development-supported

agriculture. Instead of driving across the city to a shared community garden or a market, residents can access these things within their own subdivisions; kids can ride their bikes to pick up fresh eggs for breakfast; neighbors can gather at the farm center to pickle veggies and bake bread. "Society today is looking back a couple of generations, looking for some simplicity in our lives," says Gino Campana, founder of Fort Collins developer Bellissimo, Inc., which is the mastermind behind Bucking Horse. "We sat down two years ago and said, 'we're going to change the industry.'"

Hamilton and her family were among the first to buy a home on a 240-acre tract of land that Bellissimo purchased in 2011 for exactly this reason. The mixed-use Bucking Horse development is bookended by farmsteads that are more than 120 years old—locals will recognize the historic Jessup and Johnson farm buildings, which will eventually be restored—and includes plots for 1,055 dwellings that range from condos (starting at \$136,000) to townhouses to single-family homes (up to \$900,000). Retail, dining, farming, food production facilities, landscaping, and recreational amenities, all currently in different phases of construction, will complete the design.

As of press time, 500 families reside in Bucking Horse, and the remaining lots have been sold out to builders. Bellissimo expects to complete the project, including amenities and commercial space, by the end of 2015. "Builders can sell their homes for more on our lots than elsewhere," Campana says. "People are applying a value to the lifestyle. Several people have said

to us, 'I don't really care what my home looks like; I just want to live in your community.' The lifestyle has become more important than the home."

Although only 10 percent of the land will be devoted to agriculture—and that includes 17 acres for grazing and equestrian space, leaving three percent of land use dedicated to crops—Bellissimo says this fraction figures prominently into the overall vision for Bucking Horse, a model they've dubbed "healthy lifestyle

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Monica Hamilton, in her Bucking Horse backyard, was one of the first homeowners to call the development home.

living” not only for its local food slant, but also for its emphasis on outdoors and community. The eventual integration of an edible landscape (fruit trees and consumable plants), an arboretum, and community gardens in City Park will add to the getting-back-to-the-land appeal of the neighborhood, the developers say.

In keeping with this idea is Bellisimo’s effort to preserve the land’s farming history even as it nudges forward the commercial portion of the project. In the northern swath of the triangular land parcel, Jessup Farm will be transformed with “adaptive re-use” techniques—which preserve the integrity of the structures while updating the functionality—into what Bellisimo says is northern Colorado’s first artisan food village. Residents and visitors will be able to shop at local craft-food retailers such as a

coffee roaster, cheese maker, bakery, and winery, whose storefronts will occupy remodeled farm buildings like the saddle shop, loafing shed, and barn. The actual food production facilities for the shops will be located in a support building nearby. More than 200 vendors to date have expressed interest in the 25 available tenant

spots. The main farmhouse will see new life as a farm-to-fork restaurant that hosts its own 1.5-acre garden outside and sources the rest of its ingredients from locally raised livestock and crops. Even the original chicken coops will stick around—reincarnated as public restrooms.

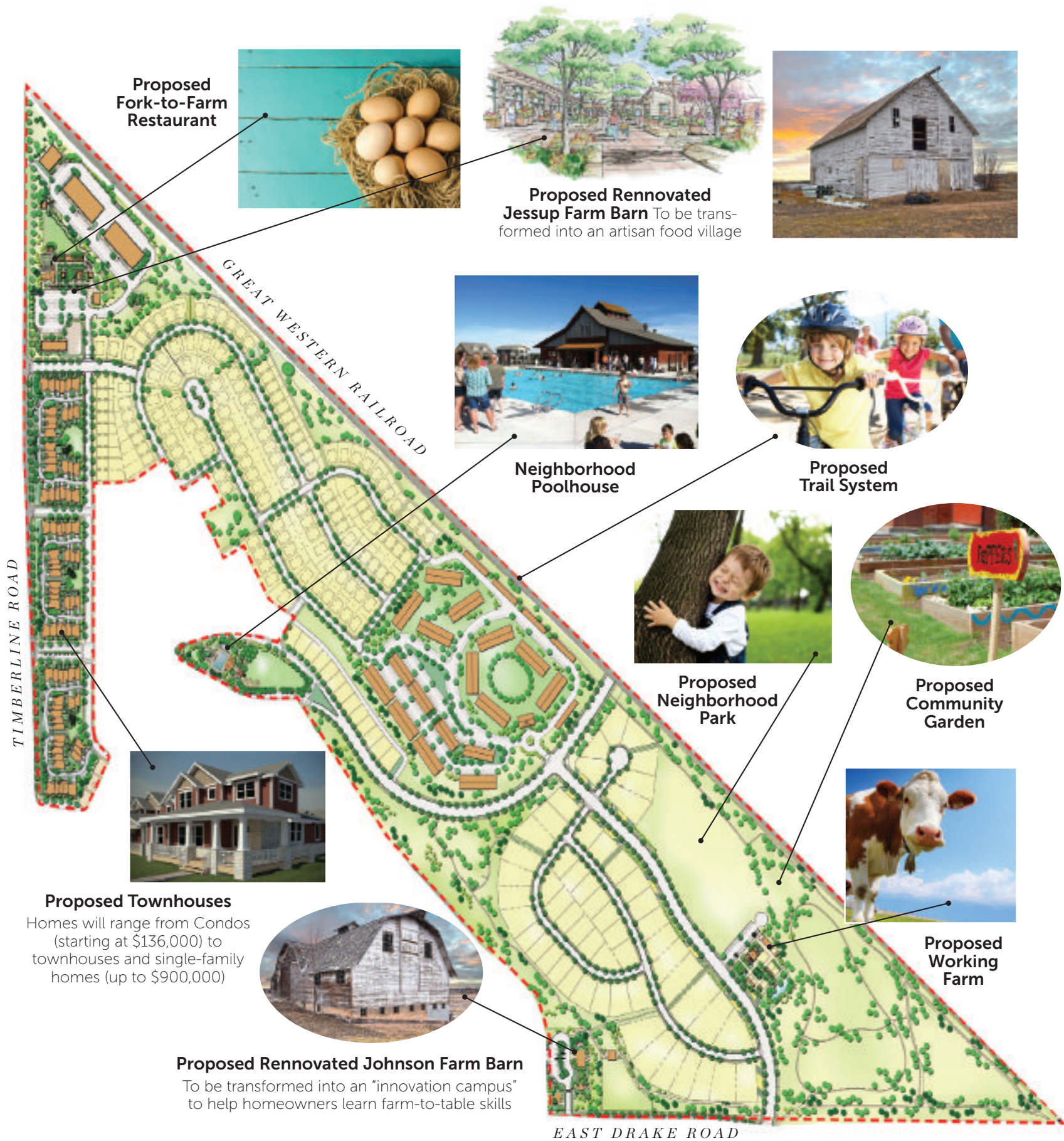
On the southern end of the Bucking Horse

“The urban farming trend—or rather, suburban farming trend—is here to stay... there’s this groundswell that’s undeniable... and the real estate is there; we’re going to see it in the next three to five years.”

– QUINT REDMOND, *founder of Golden-based environmental planning and design firm AgriNETx*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the amenities for Bucking Horse and Jessup Farm will co-exist.



land, Johnson Farm will be rehabilitated to serve as the development's operations hub, aka the "innovation campus." Nearby, the 2.5-acre working farm and stables will house horses, goats, and chickens. The proposed farm education center will help kids learn where their food comes from and offer homeowners the opportunity to develop skills like canning.

A healthy lifestyle isn't all about agriculture, though. Campana stresses that it's largely about being connected to the people who share your neighborhood. As such, Bellisimo is relying on group amenities to help foster a sense of community and wellness aspirations: a junior Olympic-size pool; an innovative playground featuring rotating play equipment that constructively challenges kids (think mini water-pump that creates irrigation ditches and tunnels to go along with the agrarian theme); 48 acres of green space that includes parks and an open-space trail system; and a residents-only micro-gym program with personalized classes such as yoga and CrossFit. "We can't find another community that has taken all the components we have and put them in one project," Campana says. "We've taken a holistic approach."

Bucking Horse is not without its critics, however. Some have suggested that the project stemmed from the principles of new urbanism—a movement to develop more walkable, mixed-use, sustainable communities and healthier living conditions. This is misleading, according to the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), which says the development's large homes and curving streets fall short of these ideals. And the small proportion of land devoted to crops is dwarfed next to other true farm-centric conservation developments, says Randall Arendt of Greener Prospects, an internationally renowned land use and conservation planning firm. Arendt's work on hundreds of projects across the country has given him a broad picture of agriculture-focused communities. He points to Farmcolony in Virginia near the Blue Ridge Mountains and Farmview, Pennsylvania, 30 minutes north of Philadelphia, as pioneering rural developments that have preserved between 30 and 70 percent of their land for productive working farms. "[Bucking Horse] is a well-planned community with open space and amenities," Arendt says. "It's unique and special, but not agriculture-focused."

But that's not necessarily the biggest draw to the community, says Tim Jordan, 26, of Fort Collins—at least, not for him. Jordan, a small business investor, and his wife, an accountant, are expecting a baby. They're building a 2,200-square-foot home in Buck-

ing Horse with one priority in mind: family. For the Jordans, it's about raising their kids in a community of people who share their ideals. Simply put, they want to live their values—to be involved in an active life, to cultivate and eat from the trees and plants in their own neighborhood, and to walk to the market and buy ingredients from the Bucking Horse garden to make dinner. "That has a lot to do with bringing a wholesome vibe to the neighborhood," Jordan says. "It's not just a home or a plot of land. Investments are being made to bring in sustainable types of businesses, not liquor stores or gas stations."

BUCKING HORSE ASIDE, the urban farming trend—or rather, suburban farming trend—is here to stay. So says Quint Redmond, the founder of Golden-based environmental planning and design firm AgriNETx and the mastermind behind Agriburbia, a development model that places "agriculture as the centerpiece of both new and existing communities." He partners with developers, landowners, and institutions to help them combine real estate goals, rural land conservation, food production, and other mixed uses to create a sustainable local food economy. He's seen a major shift in thinking across the country, and his money is on the Brighton North area, where he's running a promising Agriburbia program, as the next "fruit basket" in Colorado. "There's this groundswell that's undeniable," Redmond says, "and the real estate is there; we're going to see it in the next three to five years."

Ed McMahon, a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in Washington, D.C., says agriculture-focused communities are taking off across the country for three main reasons. First, the changing configuration of families looking for housing means that a typical subdivision might not cut it. "The one-size-fits-all model of home building no longer works," says McMahon, who notes that 78 percent of Americans have no school-aged kids. In the case of retirees and baby boomers, restlessness has become an issue—and that's something the developers wanted to address at Bucking Horse. By giving retirees the chance to volunteer with the farm animals or help at the farmer's market, Bellisimo hopes to fill a void and create a sense of community.

Second, eating and consuming local is practically de rigueur these days. For instance, most restaurant diners scanning a menu will likely ponder any item preceded by "locally grown" or "farm-raised" because it connotes a more upscale, more appealing,



BY THE NUMBERS: FARMING IT OUT

3 = Percentage of food in Colorado that is locally sourced each year

22 = CSA farms in and around Fort Collins

1,500 = CSA memberships, for vegetables, poultry, flowers, and milk, marketed to Fort Collins residents (number fluctuates seasonally)

200 = Farm-centric residential developments that exist nationwide

10 = Weekly phone calls that Urban Land Institute fellow Ed McMahon fields from developers interested in bringing agriculture into their communities

1,055 = Homes planned for Bucking Horse

800 = Edible plants and fruit trees planned for Bucking Horse landscaping

38,000 = Area, in square feet, of Bucking Horse's industrial food production facilities



21,000 = Amount, in dollars, that the price of a Bucking House townhouse has increased in the eight months since building began

“Agriculture-focused communities are taking off across the country... eating and consuming local is practically de rigueur these days... and interest in food itself is at an all-time high and starting at an earlier age.”

– ED MCMAHON, a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in Washington, D.C.

more healthful dish. “The era of the 1,000-mile Caesar salad is going to have to come to an end,” McMahon says.

And third, interest in food itself is at an all-time high and starting at an earlier age. Just look at the number of reality TV shows that highlight food and cooking. “Young people are a big part of the foodie movement,” he says.

Before growing your own food became trendy, the agri-hood movement really began, according to McMahon, with the rise of “conservation communities,” or developments that are focused on preserving the ecological integrity of forested or rural land. “Thirty to 40 years ago, we built 15,000 communities around golf courses,”

McMahon says. “And 70 to 80 percent of the homeowners did not play golf. Why did they buy? Because they liked the view across the fairway.” The takeaway: People value green space. Add to that the new wave of eat-local consumers, and you’ve got a gold mine for savvy developers. After all, the cost of developing a working farm is one-fifth the cost of developing a golf course, says McMahon, who gets about 10 calls a week from developers interested in this topic.

Bucking Horse’s “healthy lifestyle living” might not be as singularly focused on agriculture as other preserved farm neighborhoods and Agriburbia projects around the country, but local food experts say even small efforts make a difference in changing thinking and

swaying future habits. After all, 97 percent of the \$12 billion worth of food we consume in Colorado each year is imported from out-of-state—a figure fairly typical of most states, meaning only three percent of food across the country is locally sourced. More and more people realize this and want a way to help reduce this footprint—but can’t necessarily run a farm or even a garden themselves. And that’s where Bucking Horse comes in. Even if homebuyers want swimming pools and playgrounds as much as crop fields and goats in their neighborhood, it’s about recognizing the need to start chipping away at the food localization problem. “Developers are seeing the desire of residents to connect with local food,”

says Michael Brownlee of Boulder-based nonprofit Local Food Shift, “so it makes sense to build in a local food supply”—even if crops are just three percent of the land. After all, additional space will eventually fill with food artisans and production buildings. “Anything that increases the local food production and consumption capacity is a step in the right direction.”

As for homeowners like Monica Hamilton and future residents like Tim Jordan, they’re happy to be part of a community that both meets their lifestyle needs and encourages this shift in thinking. “I couldn’t ask for a better neighborhood,” Hamilton says. “With the community garden, the livestock, the proximity of places to get to the pool or walking trails—we can bike downtown and be part of that. It goes a step further than other places, tying everything together. We have our own little network. We know the importance of growing our own food. And it’s the perfect time because more people are finding that important.” **FC**

A DIFFERENT OPTION

FARM VALUES, LIGHT LIVING

SO YOU’RE INTERESTED in agriculture, green space, and a minimal footprint. You enjoy a tightknit community and wouldn’t mind paring down. And you

want a say in what your neighborhood looks like.

Welcome to the Bohn Farm Cohousing Community in Longmont.

Don’t bust out the welcome mat yet, though. The land title to the historic farmland in southwest Longmont hasn’t even been purchased. But Boulder-based Wonderland Hill Development Company is planning to acquire the six-acre plot of land to build Longmont’s first cohousing development: 36 dwelling units and other amenities designed, under the concept of cohousing, by the residents themselves. The overarching themes: sustainability; community; preservation of the farmland. Twelve buyers have commit-



ted at this point, and Wonderland would like a commitment of at least 65 percent before moving forward.

Longmont resident Susan Broidy, 73, has

already bought into Bohn Farm. “Being able to live somewhere I can afford and that takes up less environmental space is important. I want to be able to garden, cook, make chutney with neighbors—things you do with family. I’ve lived all over the world in different countries. I know what community is about. I think choosing to live with like-minded people is what makes the difference for me. Living in the apartment I’m in now, I share a plot in the community garden, but I have to jump in the car to get there. It’ll be great.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit whdc.com or call 303-449-3232.