

## **Right Relationship Boulder's Concept for Historical Interpretation at the Fort Chambers Site**

Delivered to OSMP Staff on June 10, 2014 during a meeting at the OSMP Hub

We expressed our concerns about the Concept Plan in our April 14 letter. We have been thinking about what needs to happen at the Fort Chambers property since before the City purchased it in 2018, and as you know we have been in conversations with Arapaho and Cheyenne people regularly since then, and all our thinking has emerged from those conversations. What happens on this property will say a lot about who we are as a community. We're proud of many ways that Boulder has been visionary: Taxing ourselves to purchase and maintain Open Space; approving the Indigenous Peoples Day Resolution in 2016; establishing government-to-government relationships with tribal nations; renaming Settlers Park so that now it acknowledges all the peoples who have come together in this place. What happens on the Fort Chambers property will be the next way that Boulder declares who we are as a community. What we do there really matters. We think it presents an amazing opportunity not only to record what happened in the past, but to encourage everyone in Boulder to reflect on our present and future relationships with Native peoples. **We want this site to be a window into the past and a mirror for us all in the present.**

There are models for public recognition and reflection in places where terrible injustices occurred. If you have visited museums and memorials in the South dedicated to our history of slavery and the civil rights movement, you have seen how powerful such memorials can be. In our conversations with the Northern Arapaho and the Southern Arapaho and Cheyenne representatives, they cited the Vietnam War Memorial wall in Washington

DC, as a powerful example of how public art can call us to reverence. There's an international organization that creates [Sites of Conscience](#). Their motto is: Preserving Memory, Promoting Truth, Pursuing Justice. The Sites of Conscience website offers examples and guidance that could be very helpful here in Boulder as we wrestle with what the history of Fort Chambers means for us today.

How do we want people to enter onto the Fort Chambers property? How do they need to be prepared to experience the site? How can all their senses be attuned and engaged? What do they need to see, hear, smell, learn, and feel in order to imagine the life of Native peoples before European miners invaded the Boulder valley and foothills? What do they need to see, hear, smell, learn, and feel in order to understand what was in the minds of the miners and settlers who drove the Arapaho out of the Boulder Valley, built Fort Chambers, and carried out the Sand Creek Massacre? What do they need to see, hear, smell, learn and feel in order to take in the full tragedy of the massacre and its ongoing repercussions among the Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples today? What do they need to see, hear, smell, learn, and feel in order to contemplate questions like: What does this history mean for us today? What would "justice" look like? What would "healing" look like? How can I build friendships with Native people? What do I want my city, county, school, faith community, and civic organizations to do? And as visitors to the site offer responses to these questions, how can they be recorded and channeled into actions? **How do we hope visitors will be changed by their experience on the site?**

As a Site of Conscience, the Fort Chambers property can be a window to the past, a mirror to the present, and a generative place where creative new ideas, commitments, and relationships come forth.

We know these are not all new ideas for you. The Concept plan reflects some thinking along these same lines, and it reflects your conversations with the Arapaho and Cheyenne representatives. We appreciate that. We came here today because we would like to work with you and perhaps with other organizations like the Museum of Boulder, Historic Boulder, History Colorado, and Patty Limerick's Applied History project, to make this overall vision a reality.