

# Community Benefits Project

## Phase I, Engagement Summaries

The community engagement process kicked off with a series of focus groups in 2018. About half of the focus groups were organized by a local research and planning organization, RRC Associates, and half by city staff. Focus group sessions focused on height modifications (e.g., location, criteria, etc.) and affordable housing as a community benefit.

Per council direction during its January 2018 retreat, engagement efforts expanded to explore a full “menu of options” for the community benefits program. Engagement activities in 2018 focused on small group meetings, presentations to community organizations and board input. Some examples of local, targeted outreach include: PLAN Boulder, Better Boulder, a local chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), members of the Boulder arts community and the Boulder County Human Service Alliance.

The table below summarizes several themes that surfaced throughout the engagement process and how the staff recommendation does or does not address each.

Community Input Theme	Staff Recommendation
<i>Themes most relevant to Phase I</i>	
1. Many prefer to encourage on-site housing units rather than other options to satisfy the city's Inclusionary Housing requirements (e.g., in-lieu fee).	The staff proposal requires that at least 50% of the affordable housing required through the community benefits program be provided within the building.
2. The lifespan of the building shouldn't outlast the community benefit.	Phase I of the community benefits project requires permanently affordable housing.
<i>Themes more relevant to Phase II work</i>	
3. The Site Review process should be more predictable.	Staff is currently working on updating the Site Review criteria to be less subjective and more prescriptive taking some guidance from the Form-Based Code (FBC) adopted in 2016.
4. Community benefits should be a tangible benefit to the surrounding neighborhood (e.g., usable space).	Publicly accessible open space and roof top decks continue to be on the list for possible community benefits and will be explored further in Phase II.
5. Parking, traffic, views of the mountain backdrop and building design appear to be the primary concerns with larger projects.	Some has stated that the impact of taller buildings is not necessarily the height but rather other impacts as stated to the left. Staff will look at some design requirements that could be required for all height modification projects to could mitigate concerns.

6. Enforcement mechanisms are important.	Specific enforcement mechanisms will be developed for each additional community benefit requirement.
7. Context, or how the overall development fits within the neighborhood, is an important consideration.	The Site Review criteria aim to create buildings that are compatible with context and consistent with areas plans applicable to an area. The update to the criteria will continue to explore this while also working towards a greater level of predictability in reviews.

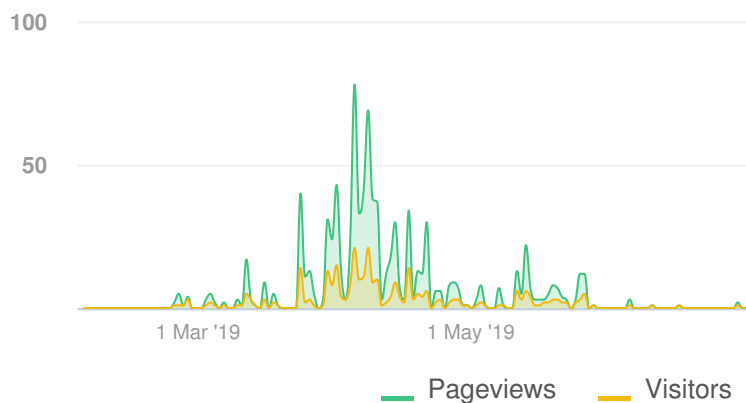
# Project Report

12 March 2018 - 26 June 2019

## Be Heard Boulder Community Benefit



### Visitors Summary

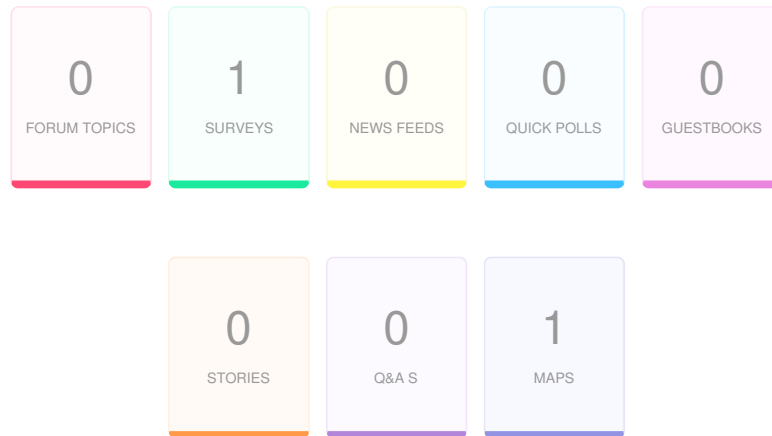


### Highlights

TOTAL VISITS	MAX VISITORS PER DAY	
326	21	
NEW REGISTRATIONS		
39		
ENGAGED VISITORS	INFORMED VISITORS	AWARE VISITORS
104	189	282

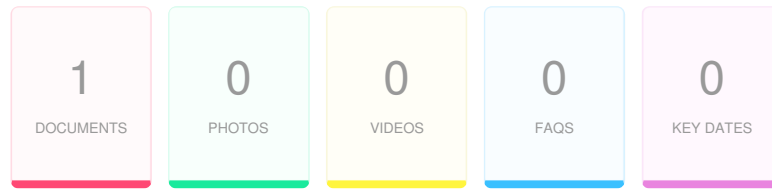
Aware Participants		282		Engaged Participants		104					
Aware Actions Performed		Participants		Engaged Actions Performed		Registered		Unverified		Anonymous	
Visited a Project or Tool Page		282									
Informed Participants		189		Contributed on Forums		0		0		0	
Informed Actions Performed		Participants		Participated in Surveys		103		0		0	
Viewed a video		0		Contributed to Newsfeeds		0		0		0	
Viewed a photo		0		Participated in Quick Polls		0		0		0	
Downloaded a document		10		Posted on Guestbooks		0		0		0	
Visited the Key Dates page		0		Contributed to Stories		0		0		0	
Visited an FAQ list Page		0		Asked Questions		0		0		0	
Visited Instagram Page		0		Placed Pins on Places		1		0		0	
Visited Multiple Project Pages		90		Contributed to Ideas		0		0		0	
Contributed to a tool (engaged)		104									

## ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



Tool Type	Engagement Tool Name	Tool Status	Visitors	Contributors		
				Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Map	Viewshed Mapping Exercise	Published	13	1	0	0
Survey Tool	Community Benefit	Archived	193	103	0	0

## INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



Widget Type	Engagement Tool Name	Visitors	Views/Downloads
Document	Community Benefit Project Handout	10	10

## ENGAGEMENT TOOL: MAP

### Viewshed Mapping Exercise

VISITORS <b>13</b>	CONTRIBUTORS <b>1</b>	CONTRIBUTIONS <b>2</b>
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2019-04-05 15:10:17 -0700	<p>park needs to keep open beautiful views of the foothills Address: 2820 7th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80304, United States</p> <p><a href="http://www.beheardboulder.org/community-benefit/maps/viewshed-mapping-exercise?reporting=true#marker-12789">http://www.beheardboulder.org/community-benefit/maps/viewshed-mapping-exercise?reporting=true#marker-12789</a></p>
DL	
CATEGORY	
Public	
Park	

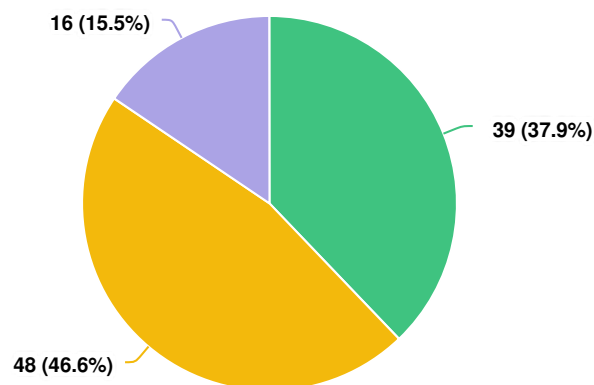
2019-04-05 15:13:01 -0700	<p>Library park 9th to 13th street needs to keep open views of foothills Address: 1100 Boulder Creek Bike Path, Boulder, Colorado 80302, United States</p> <p><a href="http://www.beheardboulder.org/community-benefit/maps/viewshed-mapping-exercise?reporting=true#marker-12790">http://www.beheardboulder.org/community-benefit/maps/viewshed-mapping-exercise?reporting=true#marker-12790</a></p>
DL	
CATEGORY	
Public	
Park	

## ENGAGEMENT TOOL: SURVEY TOOL

### Community Benefit

VISITORS	193	CONTRIBUTORS	103	CONTRIBUTIONS	103
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1. Should a developer be allowed to construct buildings up to the city charter limit of 55 feet, if the developer provides...

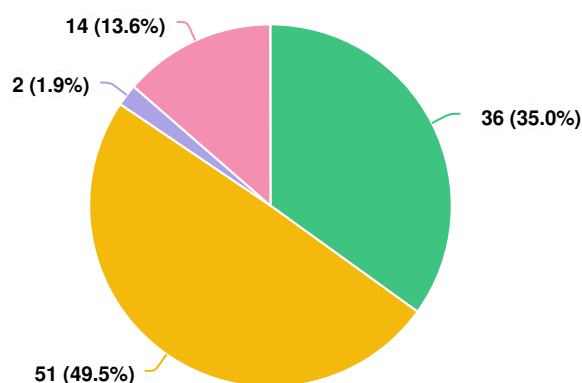


#### Question options

- Yes
- No, there should be no more buildings over three floors or the zoning limit
- Only under special conditions; Conditions such as (add to comment field below):

(103 responses, 0 skipped)

2. Should a developer be allowed to build more than the allowable amount of floor area permitted in the zone district (thro...

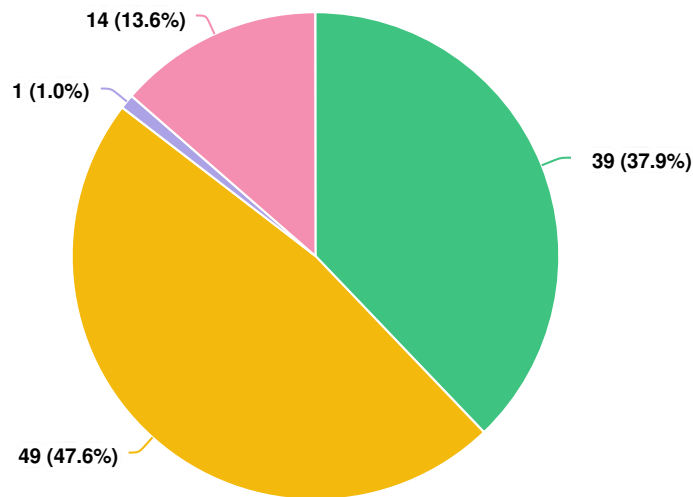


#### Question options

- Yes
- No, floor area limits should not be varied
- No opinion
- Only under special conditions; Conditions such as (add to note field below):

(103 responses, 0 skipped)

### 3. Should a developer be allowed to build a greater number of dwelling units than permitted by the zoning district (through...

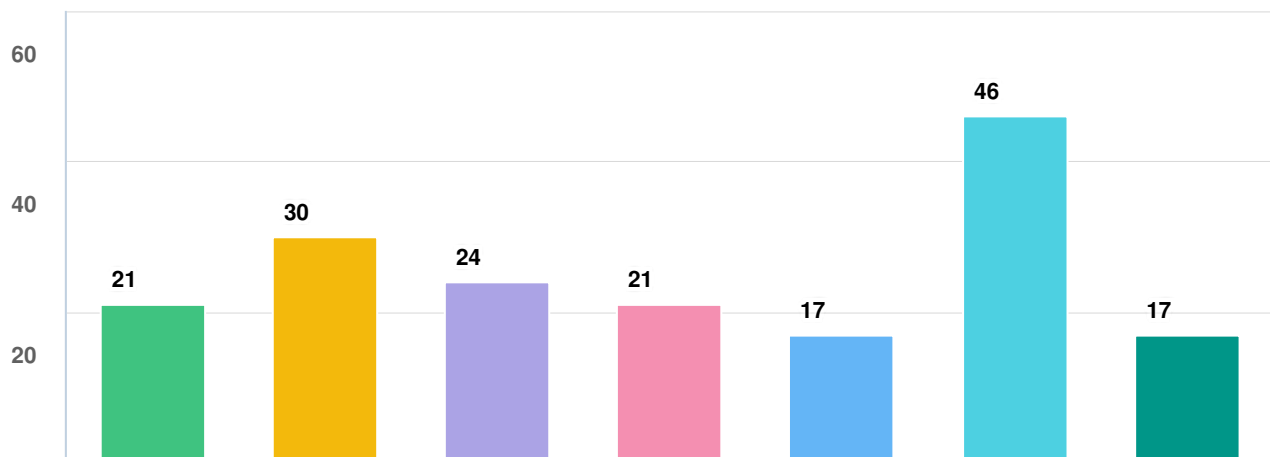


#### Question options

- Yes
- No, density (dwelling units per acre) should not be varied
- No opinion
- Only under special conditions; Conditions such as (add to note field below):

(103 responses, 0 skipped)

### 4. Would taller/bigger buildings fit better in Boulder if (check all that you agree with):



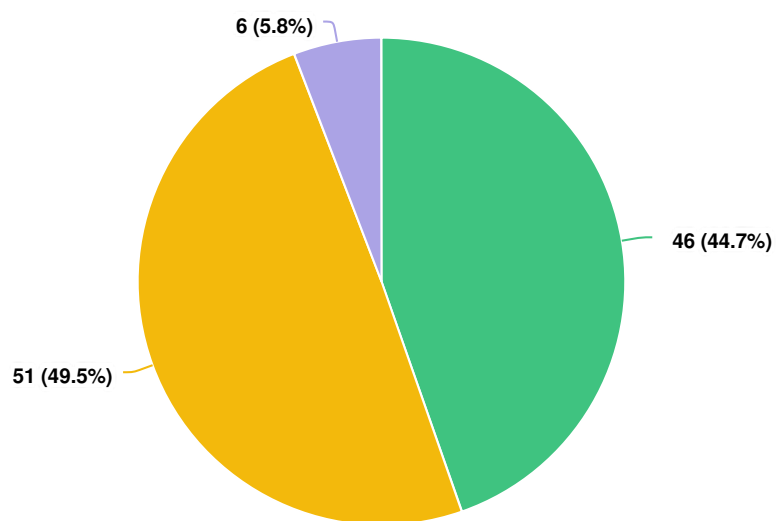
#### Question options

- Upper floors (4th or 5th) were limited in size?
- Upper floors had large setbacks from the street or residential uses?
- Building length along public street were limited (e.g., 200 feet, 150 feet etc.)?
- No, upper floors should not be restricted
- No, building length should not be restricted
- No, upper floors (4th or 5th) should not be allowed
- Other ideas? (add to note field below)

(103 responses, 0 skipped)



**5. Would extra height (e.g., 5 to 10 feet) on three story buildings be appropriate to allow without community benefits if i...**



**Question options**

● Yes ● No ● No opinion

(103 responses, 0 skipped)

**Building Height Code Amendment  
Housing Advisory Board – Meeting Summary  
July 25, 2018**

**Participants**

- Masyn Moyer, Vice Chair
- Jacques Juilland
- Judy Nogg
- Adam Swetlik

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II
- Jeff Yegian, Senior Project Manager
- Jay Sugnet, Senior Planner

**Key Takeaways**

- The board will appoint a HAB liaison for the project during their next meeting.
- Housing is a top priority.
- Context, or how the overall development project fits within the neighborhood, is an important consideration.
- There appears to be a general interest in seeing on-site units instead of in-lieu payments.
- Subcommunity and area plans should identify appropriate community benefits.

Following a brief Presentation, the Housing Advisory Board (HAB) provided feedback around the following questions.

**What suggestions might the board have to contribute to a successful community benefit project?**

- J. Nogg: of all the community benefits listed in the comprehensive plan, affordable housing is the highest priority. Additionally, context should be part of the review fabric, which would allow applicants to get a sense of what the community/neighborhood desires prior to starting a project.
- A. Swetlik: AMI should be specific designated. When looking at the menu of community benefit options, affordable housing is the number one issue; affordable commercial space is the number two issue. Permanent affordable ownership rentals are also preferred, rather than rentals.
- J. Juilland: Agrees with A. Swetlik's comments. A tiered system, as described in the staff presentation, may be a worth exploring. We may also need to establish a core package of benefits that are always required.
- M. Moyer: Top priority is affordable housing. There should be a focus on connecting community benefits to subcommunity and area planning. Does not prefer the use of in-lieu fees; if fees are allowed the requirements should be stringent (to encourage on-site units). The city should also be sure that any public art received through this program has a long-term maintenance plan.
- A. Swetlik: If we establish a menu of options, care should be taken to avoid having the cheapest option used more frequently.

**How does the board prefer to be engaged throughout the progress of the project?**

**Building Height Code Amendment  
Housing Advisory Board – Meeting Summary  
July 25, 2018**

- A. Swetlik: Wait to see how the input provided tonight is addressed.
- J. Juilland: Prefers that HAB be engaged around housing-related topics.
- J. Nogg: Would like to provide feedback at the end.
- M. Moyer: Prefers to appoint a board liaison to be involved in the project.
- The board agreed to vote on a board liaison for this project at their following meeting.

**Community Benefit Project**  
**Mobility & Parking Technical Group**  
**July 5, 2018**

## **Attendees**

Karl Guiler, COB  
Kathleen Bracke, Go Boulder  
Randall Rutsch, Go Boulder  
Susan Connelly, Economic Vitality

## **Key Takeaways**

- There are a variety of transportation needs in the community that could be achieved through either physical design (e.g., construction of satellite parking areas, shared parking, pick up and drop off areas for micro-transit or Uber like services) or monetary contributions to localized or city-wide unfunded transportation projects
- Vehicle miles traveled in Boulder is on the increase and the need for transportation related improvement to encourage alternative mobility options is more important than ever

## **Notes**

- VMTs have gone up for Boulder residents and in-commuters
- How can new development contribute to “place”?
- How do we go ‘above and beyond’ current regulations related to transportation?
- There may need to be a rational nexus analysis, but what if developers volunteer to do certain improvements?
- Ideas:
  - Transportation subsidies for unfunded projects (e.g., infrastructural connections to help create 15-minute neighborhoods)
  - On-going assessments on properties to pay for transit services – financing stays with property not the developer – like a local improvement district
  - Hop service extension
  - More B-cycle stations
  - Subsidizing micro-transit (smaller, on-demand vehicles; next generation of van-pooling)
  - Pick-up & drop off spaces for Uber type services (could be folded into Parking Phase II code change)
  - Contribute to regional transit / BRT
  - Satellite parking (short or long term)- should be shared parking that is used around the clock
  - Implementation of on or off-site mobility hubs (contribute \$\$ to nearest mobility hub)
    - Car share
    - Bike share
    - Local and regional transit
  - Contribute to building a quiet zone – Livable TOD

**Community Benefit Project**  
**Mobility & Parking Technical Group**  
**July 5, 2018**

- Opportunity Zones- East Boulder or Boulder Junction/Diagonal Plaza- opportunity funds – impact investing to a fund
- Contribute to Community Vision Zero safety goal to reduce or eliminate crashes – in lieu fee could contribute to awareness campaign
- Safe route to school improvements
- Go beyond just right-of-way dedications – rather developer could build the improvement per the vision plan
- Subsidize transit ridership – EcoPasses, require a longer duration (e.g., 10 years)
- Participation in the formation of new parking and access districts in certain areas (e.g., Diagonal Plaza, Flatirons Business Park)
- More robust shared parking
- Commit to not exceed the # of trips of a prior less intense use
- Ideas above could be implemented similar to that done in Vancouver where each is assigned a % that equates to an allowable bonus

**Community Benefit Project  
Environmental Quality Technical Group  
June 25, 2018**

**Participants**

Karl Guiler, COB  
Phil Kleisler, COB  
Kathleen Alexander, COB Forestry  
Carolyn Elam, COB Sustainability  
Kendra Tupper, COB Chief Sustainability & Resilience Officer  
Jessica Andersen, Landscape Architect  
Adam Knoff, Unico

**Key Takeaways**

- There are a number of options for environmental quality community benefits ranging from environmental restoration or mitigation beyond code requirements to net zero buildings to fees to piloting buildings that are highly sustainable
  - Some difficulties arise from the fact that city regulations are already strongly moving in the direction of some of the identified community benefits whereby a building built now with identified community benefit may only be uniquely beyond code for several years before by-right buildings may be required the same
  - Additional research into the options will be necessary to determine the feasibility of each and how each may work
- There was less support for in-lieu fees for environmental quality community benefit

**Identified Community Benefits in this category**

- Environmental Protection & Restoration
- Net zero buildings or some sort of carbon offset
- Requiring a project to be a pilot in an outcome based energy code
- Mitigation of the emerald ash borer
- In lieu fees – Energy Impact offset fund

**Discussion about Environmental Quality options as community benefit**

- **Identified Community Benefits in this category include:**
  - Resiliency: disaster and recovery community space (e.g. convening space in a disaster)
    - Stanford, CT – has done work on resilient buildings (after Hurricane Sandy)
    - Mike Chard (OEM) – reach out to him.
  - Environmental Protection & Restoration
    - We need to define this in a more specific way, like improved wetlands and flood mitigation.

**Community Benefit Project**  
**Environmental Quality Technical Group**  
**June 25, 2018**

- Restoration of wetland/riparian area.
- Net zero buildings
  - Time horizon – we may be requiring this at some point anyway. What if a building is net zero only three years early?
  - Kendra can provide some definitions –
  - Site vs. source consumption. We typically use site as the criteria
  - Could be allowed to subscribe to a solar garden.
  - Could be Net Zero building, or any number of certifications.
  - How long should we require this?
  - Must be on site or through community solar.
- Requiring a project to be a pilot in an outcome-based energy code
  - This seems identical to the Seattle's Living Building Challenge.
  - This could be a baseline requirement.
- Mitigation of the emerald ash borer impact to affected trees
  - Could be a contribution to a city fund.
  - Would have to treat \_\_\_ number of trees.
  - Need: Number of trees, with general costs
  - Should start with commercial properties
- In lieu fees – Energy Impact offset fund
  - Ma fund - Money could go to local solar projects (could contribute to this fund)
  - Community likely won't buy into this option.
- Living Building Challenge
  - Program based in Seattle.
  - The City of Seattle uses this program in their density bonus program.
  - It is applicable, especially with water and recycling.
  - In their case the fees, if the building was not in compliance, seemed to deter most projects.

**Community Benefit Project**  
**Arts and Cultural Uses Technical Group**  
**July 3, 2018**

**Attendees**

Karl Guiler, COB

Phil Kleisler, COB

Matt Chasansky, COB, [chasanskym@boulderlibrary.org](mailto:chasanskym@boulderlibrary.org)

Kathleen McCormick, Boulder Arts Commission/ULI Boulder, [fonthead@gmail.com](mailto:fonthead@gmail.com)

Madeline Halpern, BAM, [mhalpern@wust.edu](mailto:mhalpern@wust.edu)

Sally Eckert, [sallyaeckert@gmail.com](mailto:sallyaeckert@gmail.com)

Marda Kirn, [info.ecoarts@gmail.com](mailto:info.ecoarts@gmail.com)

Leah Brenner Clack, And Art Space & Arts Martin Acres, [hell@and-art.space](mailto:hell@and-art.space)

Mandy Vink, Office of Arts and Culture, [vinkm@boulderlibrary.org](mailto:vinkm@boulderlibrary.org)

**Key Takeaways**

- There is an important need for more community art spaces and venues, live/work type arrangements, art studios and unique art districts in the City of Boulder
- The city and developers should engage the community on the neighborhood level to create buy in for community arts as a community benefit
- Art is an important community value and can actually bring a lot of revenue into the community
- There is variety of ways that art can enrich the community and therefore, flexibility should be inherent in any regulations that are created relative to community benefit

**Identified Community Benefits in this category**

- I. Spaces for the arts (e.g., art venues, cultural non-profit space); studio and arts rental)
- II. Art in Public Spaces
- III. In lieu fee to pay for public art installations or programs

**Notes**

- Should have some flexibility to provide benefits the neighborhood is interested in.
- Should go to the community first, prior to a project moving forward; that will lead to community backing.
- How does the artist space become part of the neighborhood?
- Is there a way to establish principles, like social, sustainability, personal, etc. Could creativity become a principle weaved into all development decisions?
- Another benefit: creativity. It's the fountain of the arts and any successful city.
- Benchmarked cities: look at non-American, vibrant cities.
- Gathering Spaces
  - Example of Successful or Desirable Gathering Spaces
    - Subway Ballroom in New York City. It was eventually shut down.
    - Platform (Denver): Ground floor space.
    - Downtown Aurora Visual Arts



**Community Benefit Project**  
**Arts and Cultural Uses Technical Group**  
**July 3, 2018**

- Arts Street (Denver)
- Boulder Commons: Gallery Space, privately managed.
- Contractual agreement, often times through a city's arts and culture department and a community organization. Keep a lien on the property for enforcement.
- Could be a curator who manages the space.
- Flexibility may help keep the business viable in the long run (e.g. different programming during a recession).
- Keep diversity and inclusivity in mind.
- Rehearsal space for the performing arts.
- Some spaces could be underground.
- Artist spaces are impacted much like commercial spaces for local business that cannot keep up with increased leasing costs
- Educational responsibility – setting up spaces for different people with different ideas.
- Require applicant to meet with neighborhood
- Need structure, but flexibility to meet neighborhood's needs'
- Tampa Florida – Density Bonus for arts
- In Lieu Fund: Group did not support.
- Art in Public Spaces
  - City (Mandy) has research and ways to put a metric on it.
- ULI Tap Report: people wanted space to show and sell art.
- Matt and Mandy can create a menu of performance arts gap areas.
- Mary Wo-han (city employee) can tell us the ideal space needs for dancers.
- Structure incentives to really encourage community benefits (e.g. double incentive for community benefits).
- Be creative: convert garages to mini-studios. Art could be below grade.
- Art can bring in a lot of \$\$ to the community
- Every part of the city should benefit
- Consider amending Appendix J to expand the NoBo district to include an arts district

**Community Benefits Project**  
**What's Up Boulder – Meeting Summary**  
**April 30, 2018**

### Meeting Context

As part of the citywide open house, project staff provided informational posters boards and a prioritization exercise to (i) inform the public about the new project and (ii) consult the public to better understand priorities of community benefits identified in the 2015 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.

### Staff Present

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II

### Key Takeaways

- Many participants showed excitement about potential outcomes of the project. No written or verbal comments questioned whether we should continue on with the project.
- Environmental Quality, Open Space and Parks and Affordable Housing received the greatest interest.
- While economic vitality received the least number of “votes”, some participants felt strongly that a healthy economy is critical in realizing other types of the benefits.

### Voting Exercise

After receiving a brief project summary, participants were given four “Benefit Bucks” to be used in voting among six community benefit categories. Environmental Quality, Open Space and Parks and Affordable Housing were to top “vote getters”.



### Community Benefit “Votes”

#### Environmental Quality (42 Votes)

- *Environmental Protection and Restoration*
- *Net Zero Buildings*

#### Open Space and Parks (33 Votes)

- *Publicly Accessible Common Space*
- *Enhancement of Public Trails*
- *Land or Funding for Parks*

#### Affordable Housing (32 Votes)

- *Low & Middle-income Housing*

#### Arts and Culture (22 Votes)

- *Space for the Arts*

#### Social Needs (19 Votes)

- *Social Services or Critical Needs*
- *Non-profit Space*

#### Economic Vitality (13 Votes)

- *Affordable Commercial Space*
- *Community Meeting Space*
- *Public/Government Uses*

**Community Benefits Project**  
**What's Up Boulder – Meeting Summary**  
**April 30, 2018**

**Comment Cards**

- No Big Buildings. Eco sustainability. Allow the nature to be preserved. Limit growth.
- All new buildings must have architectural significance.
- Keep building under or at 35 feet.
- Consider external impacts of development (like traffic).
- Protect important view corridors.
- The most important community benefit is saving the mountain backdrop.
- Boulder does not need related ADU rules. Boulder housing density does not need to be increased. These things destroy the reason I moved here.
- Senior housing options for the aging Boulder population. Not apartment buildings, but more like new Dakota Flats being building: modern, single story, small complex, near amenities, wat to “age in place”.
- Duration and aesthetics of projects – the long-term is important BUT avoid the enduring ugliness! Support fine architecture in public buildings – in endures – look at the cathedrals in France! Thanks for your service!

**Building Height Code Amendment  
University Hill Commercial Area Management Commission – Meeting Summary  
January 2, 2018**

**Participants**

- Karen Gall, Chair
- Lisa Nelson, Vice Chair
- Dakota Soifer, Commissioner

**Staff Present**

- Molly Winter, Executive Director of Community Vitality
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II
- Sarah Wiebenson, Hill Community Development Coordinator

**Key Takeaways**

- Commissioners agreed that any solution to building height modifications must be tailored to specific areas of the city. On The Hill, commissioners described that while a housing requirement may contribute to housing goals, it will have a substantial negative affect on economic vitality.
- On The Hill, affordable commercial and office space is a higher priority than affordable housing.
- A larger community benefits list should be prioritized and applied to certain zoning districts (some zones may not benefit from certain community benefits).
- Community benefits most applicable to The Hill include underground parking; capital improvement funds; office space; open space is not applicable to commercial projects.

***General Comment: all responses below were generally made by one person, unless noted otherwise.***

**Regarding the criteria and locations for height modifications.**

- All participants agreed that a citywide ordinance (“one size fits all”) given the unique needs among different areas of the city.
- Too many restrictions will stop projects, thus working against our economic vitality goals.
- Examine the economics of any potential change. The planned economic study should be expanded to include different areas to account for differing land costs and rents.
- An approach to height modifications and community benefits should be tailored to neighborhoods.
- City boards and commissions that focus on specific areas (e.g. The Hill, Boulder Junction, downtown) should be able to influence land use code changes and review requests for height modifications. Those boards and commissions could also be instrumental in developing appropriate community benefits for their area.

**Regarding affordable housing.**

- An affordable housing requirement may help with our housing problem, but it would create other issues like less affordable retail space.
- Housing is not a priority on the The Hill – commercial and office space is.
- 14<sup>th</sup> Street failed housing project is a good example of why housing won’t work on The Hill.
- Decreased tax revenue from housing (relative to non-residential space) would be the death nail on The Hill.

**Building Height Code Amendment  
University Hill Commercial Area Management Commission – Meeting Summary  
January 2, 2018**

**Regarding community benefits in general.**

- Having a list of available community benefits will result in less housing, as applicants will likely gravitate to the less expensive or generally easier option.
- More affordable commercial space would work well on The Hill, more so than housing.
- Establish fees, but explore ways for those increased costs to not be passed along to tenants.
- Prioritize a community benefits list – some zones may not benefit from certain community benefits.
- Community benefits most applicable to The Hill: underground parking; capital improvement funds; office space; open space is not applicable to commercial projects.
- Lot size should play a role. Some benefits may not be as appropriate on larger lots.

**Building Height Code Amendment  
Plan Boulder – Meeting Summary  
January 10, 2018**

**Meeting Context**

Plan Boulder invited staff to their monthly meeting to discuss opinions around this topic. This agenda item lasted roughly one hour and covered the same question prompts used in the focus group sessions.

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II

**Key Takeaways**

- Similar to other groups, the issue of building design surfaced as an important issue. Generally, the group prefers building to be stepped back, avoid certain view corridors be less “boxy” than recent projects.
- View corridor protection and access to the sun was brought up several times.
- Some locations, like along 28<sup>th</sup> Street and the Diagonal Plaza, may be appropriate for height modifications, while other areas like Gunbarrel and residential zones need greater input.
- The group seemed to agree that affordable housing is a critical need, though there were mixed opinions about whether units should be required on site or if there should be a cash in-lieu option.
- Regarding community benefits, the group seemed to agree that affordable commercial space and areas accessible to the public should be explored.

**Criteria**

- We should conduct environmental studies (e.g. carbon emissions, wildlife impacts).
- Design standards:
  - Consider how additional height will affect building architecture. 55’ buildings seem less interesting, very “boxy” and can be quite imposing.
  - Design standards are important- perhaps we can achieve more appealing buildings through better review and guidelines.
  - Step in buildings so as to not block the sun and mountains (this helps with shadows too.)
  - Not one big building mass.
  - Some relief in the design to be inviting to the public
  - All roofs should be solar, green, or publicly accessible roof decks
- Think about where we want to preserve views.
- Can’t think of a single reason to go higher for any reason. This discussion presupposes that we’ll go for additional height. Taller buildings for affordable housing would increase stigma that “those people” live in those buildings.
- Mixed affordable housing with market rate units
- Middle income housing is more important than low income units
- Deed affordable on-site units to the city for long-term ownership.
- Carbon emissions need to be offset during construction (e.g., embodied energy cost, recycling of materials)

**Building Height Code Amendment  
Plan Boulder – Meeting Summary  
January 10, 2018**

**Location**

- Along 28<sup>th</sup> Street where you don't block views of the mountains.
- Diagonal plaza
- 55<sup>th</sup> and Central; industrial areas
- Any residential area needs to be part of an area plan
- Places like Gunbarrel needs more community engagement than others.
- Preserve views.
- Building higher will require more parking.
- Area Planning can be a great tool for finding agreeable options.

**Affordable Housing**

- Housing should be required to be built on the site (without a fee in-lieu option).
- We must talk with the tenants of affordable housing for their perspective.
- Be cautious about in-lieu payments
- Perhaps any cash in-lieu payments made through this program could help with individuals down payments.
- Cash in-lieu does bring benefits to the community – don't simply end the option here.
- Sunshade next to taller buildings needs to be addressed.
- Let properties sit undeveloped until the technology is there to have a net zero buildings.
- Ensure projects compensate for carbon emissions, from construction through the life of the building (embodied energy cost).
- All rooftops, regardless of use, should have solar panels, public decks and green space.

**Community Benefits**

- All buildings should be net zero now.
- We should emphasize net energy requirements.
- Any community benefits must be enforceable.
- Open Space as a benefit- emphasize "little o, little m" or it will be confusing. Consider renaming that item to "neighborhood common space".
- It can't be community benefit if it doesn't benefit the entire community (i.e. leave areas open to the public).
- Have plenty of land set aside for parks so that the site doesn't feel so dense.
- Remain focused on affordable housing – other benefits are not nearly as important. Plus, developers will just choose the cheapest option if given the chance.
- Handout suggestion: Put everything from the BVCP policy into the main part of the handout.
- Affordable business space is critical for local businesses (all participants appeared to agree)
- The Institute for Local Self-reliance has a report on affordable commercial space
- Consider equal pay across genders (e.g. Iceland example)

**Boulder Junction Access District Commission**

**February 21, 2018**

***Brief agenda item (15-20 minutes)***

- Generate a map of existing buildings over the height limit.
- Make sure we consider the commercial linkage fee in any economic assessment associated with community benefit
- Public benefit around parking –
  - More density for less parking.
  - Parking & TDM program.
  - Exchange density for a parking max (instead of a minimum)
- Economic analysis is an important component, especially how it would impact the housing market in total. We need to analyze if housing overall become more expensive.



## **PLAN Boulder**

### **Jan 10, 2018**

Plan Boulder invited staff to their monthly meeting to discuss opinions around this topic. This agenda item lasted roughly one hour and covered the same question prompts used in the focus group sessions.

- Similar to other groups, the issue of building design surfaced as an important issue. Generally, the group prefers building to be stepped back, avoid certain view corridors be less “boxy” than recent projects.
- View corridor protection and access to the sun was brought up several times.
- Some locations, like along 28<sup>th</sup> Street and the Diagonal Plaza, may be appropriate for height modifications, while other areas like Gunbarrel and residential zones need greater input.
- The group seemed to agree that affordable housing is a critical need, though there were mixed opinions about whether units should be required on site or if there should be a cash in-lieu option.
- Regarding community benefits, the group seemed to agree that affordable commercial space and areas accessible to the public should be explored.

### **Criteria**

- We should conduct environmental studies (e.g. carbon emissions, wildlife impacts).
- Design standards:
  - Consider how additional height will affect building architecture. 55’ buildings seem less interesting, very “boxy” and can be quite imposing.
  - Design standards are important- perhaps we can achieve more appealing buildings through better review and guidelines.
  - Step in buildings so as to not block the sun and mountains (this helps with shadows too.)
  - Not one big building mass.
  - Some relief in the design to be inviting to the public
  - All roofs should be solar, green, or publicly accessible roof decks
- Think about where we want to preserve views.
- Can’t think of a single reason to go higher for any reason. This discussion presupposes that we’ll go for additional height. Taller buildings for affordable housing would increase stigma that “those people” live in those buildings.
- Mixed affordable housing with market rate units
- Middle income housing is more important than low income units
- Deed affordable on-site units to the city for long-term ownership.
- Carbon emissions need to be offset during construction (e.g., embodied energy cost, recycling of materials)

## **Location**

- Along 28<sup>th</sup> Street where you don't block views of the mountains.
- Diagonal plaza
- 55<sup>th</sup> and Central; industrial areas
- Any residential area needs to be part of an area plan
- Places like Gunbarrel needs more community engagement than others.
- Preserve views.
- Building higher will require more parking.
- Area Planning can be a great tool for finding agreeable options.

## **Affordable Housing**

- Housing should be required to be built on the site (without a fee in-lieu option).
- We must talk with the tenants of affordable housing for their perspective.
- Be cautious about in-lieu payments
- Perhaps any cash in-lieu payments made through this program could help with individuals down payments.
- Cash in-lieu does bring benefits to the community – don't simply end the option here.
- Sunshade next to taller buildings needs to be addressed.
- Let properties sit undeveloped until the technology is there to have a net zero buildings.
- Ensure projects compensate for carbon emissions, from construction through the life of the building (embodied energy cost).
- All rooftops, regardless of use, should have solar panels, public decks and green space.

## **Community Benefits**

- All buildings should be net zero now.
- We should emphasize net energy requirements.
- Any community benefits must be enforceable.
- Open Space as a benefit- emphasize "little o, little m" or it will be confusing. Consider renaming that item to "neighborhood common space".
- It can't be community benefit if it doesn't benefit the entire community (i.e. leave areas open to the public).
- Have plenty of land set aside for parks so that the site doesn't feel so dense.
- Remain focused on affordable housing – other benefits are not nearly as important. Plus, developers will just choose the cheapest option if given the chance.
- Handout suggestion: Put everything from the BVCP policy into the main part of the handout.
- Affordable business space is critical for local businesses (all participants appeared to agree)
- The Institute for Local Self-reliance has a report on affordable commercial space
- Consider equal pay across genders (e.g. Iceland example)

**Joint Meeting of Downtown Management Commission (DMV), Downtown Boulder Business Improvement District (BID) and Downtown Boulder Partnership (DBP boards of directors**

**February 8, 2018**

**Comments from commissioners and board members:**

Will Frischkorn (Cured) – Create a DBP comment board for communications?

Peter (T/ACO) – Enforcement of approved community benefit in perpetuity? E.g. One Boulder Plaza ice rink now gone

Brian Coppom (Boulder County Farmers Markets) – Understanding of benefit/economic value of greater height – beyond additional rent for landlord?

Adam Knoff (Unico) – Private developments already advance achievement of city goals - e.g. net zero goals for additional FAR

Adrian Saphir (Saphir Sparr Architects) – What about economic analysis regarding impact of 35' height limitation? Part of community benefit is market affordability.

Richard Foy – it is impossible to get “community benefit” within 35' limit.

Nolan Rosalle – There are seven zoning districts downtown, and downtown is a historical district, subject to Landmarks Board review/approval. Preservation is a community benefit. “Community Benefits” list might need to be different in different areas

Katie (Art Source International) – Parking is important.

Brian Coppom (BCFM) – Should consider the negative outcomes of some current regulations – how to reduce negative social economic outcomes.

Sue Deans (DMC/represents Pedestrian Shops)– Concern re: massive building impacting views.

Sean Maher (DBP)– Pearl West approval included art cinema, a significant community benefit and this benefit is now gone.

Ed Byrne (attorney) – The greatest benefit to height is creation of critical mass – opportunities for mixed uses, walkable neighborhoods with work force housing in appropriate areas

George Karakehian (Art Source International) – Increased commercial linkage fee equals no new buildings and no additions to affordable housing fund.

Jill Grano (City Council) – Don't look at “community benefit” in a vacuum – need to understand all “piled on costs” and tradeoffs.

**Chamber of Commerce Community Affairs Council**  
**February 8, 2018**

City staff visited with the Community Affairs Council for approximately one hour to receive input about the project.

**Key Takeaways**

- An economic analysis is a critical part of this project.
- There is likely not a one-size-fits-all approach to this project given the different and unique areas in Boulder.
- Allow for creativity in the development/design process.
- Talk to people, particularly those around areas likely to redevelopment, to find out where they drive to and what sorts of amenities they would be interested in. Then tailor community benefits in those areas to those needs.
- Keep the community benefits adaptable to changing community needs.

**Notes:**

- Consider if the new regulations will get the city what it needs? Is the city actually going to get more housing as a result? Look to downtown to see how much housing the city has gotten downtown after the FAR bonus.
- Define the outcomes the city hopes to get, and chart a path to get them.
- Expand beyond height. Meet with developers for their perspective.
- Reduced OS and parking requirements. Longmont has a good program for expedited review (all agreed).
- Handout on community benefit should be a choice of 2 or 6 community benefits
- Economic analysis is critical – absent of that is a feel-good exercise.
- Definitions- true goals and need for each. Include that in future meetings.
- Family friendly units – empty nesters could free up their family-oriented housing, though we can't due to cost of living.
- Definitions are very important. We need better public spaces when we say public space (with visual examples).
- Lots of empty nesters living in family homes. When they look at what to buy it's not a great deal.
- Tailor community benefits to different areas of the city for unique needs.

- Magic will be incentivizing redevelopment of centers into complete, mixed use centers. Armory site was an example of a lost opportunity. Think of the end product.
- Not a one size fits all. Caution against having all housing in one area.
- Align criteria with community goals – carbon footprint, transportation, housing. Consider how the use of the serves the community (library, etc.)
- Ask the neighborhood what specifically they would like around a site. Think about how it impacts neighborhood.
- Less about a matrix approach, and don't get so hung up on quantifying everything.
- Regulatory environment produces bad outcomes. Better functioning, better looking. We have so many boxes to fit into that all the creativity is taken away.
- When the city meets with neighborhoods, don't ask what they want, but rather where they drive to every day. "Here's a way to walk to those things".
- Boxy, flat roofs are because of the height limitations. More height can lead to more creative building designs.
- Convert foot limit to stories.
- Development fees will decrease the community benefits.
- Space for the Arts – broaden to include for the community to engage in arts and culture.
- Should be able to have an Art Studio/live space in the RL-1 district.
- Denver is considering community benefits including daycare. There are daycare deserts.
- Agree with daycare comment. Find out where people go in their day-to-day lives. Need to define these terms. Look at support services for any housing for the tenant population.
- Quantify engagement – transportation example was a success.
- Consider Human Service Alliance is an excellent resource.
- Don't have checklists and algorithms. Inputs and outputs.
- Don't make goals or conversation so narrow.

- Have a process to make the ordinance fluid, adaptable when new priorities emerge.

**Chamber of Commerce**  
**East Arapahoe Focus Group**  
**March 14, 2018**

The Boulder Chamber of Commerce coordinated and hosted a focus group session with various stakeholders in the east Arapahoe area.

**Participants**

Andrea Meneghel, Chamber of Commerce  
Ben Molk, Crescent Real Estate  
Cliff Harald, Chamber of Commerce  
Ron Secrist, Boulder Community Hospital  
Karl, Gerken, Ball Aerospace  
Peter Aweida, Westland Development Services

**Key Takeaways:**

- Healthcare and transportation topics are critical community benefit for east Arapahoe.
- Increase predictability. The long development review process leads to unpredictability.
- Establishing incentives will lead to more projects (and thus more community benefits). Having certain community benefits that lead to a staff-level decision would be a big incentive to the applicant.
- Many area tenants are interested in more local amenities. They are currently forced to drive to food, etc.
- The area may benefit from educational institutions.

**Notes:**

- All things are community benefits. The list of benefits should be as long as possible so as not to put developers in a box.
- Critical healthcare services should be added to the list of community benefits.
- We should encourage healthcare services in the east Arapahoe area.
- During their review of the 55<sup>th</sup> and Central project, the Planning Board asked for some multi-family and retail.
- Timing is important with these projects. Given the economy we are repositioning our commercial assets.
- Advancing the city's transportation goals is a community benefit: bike, bus, advanced mobility solutions (Uber pullout bays, etc. identified by the TMP). Additional funding for transportation could also be a community benefit, particularly as other funding sources decrease. Everyone agreed.
- Arts and Culture are underfunded.
- Keep the community benefits list as a high-level list to advance a broader set of goals.
- Increase predictability. The long development review process leads to unpredictability.
- Having certain community benefits that lead to a staff-level decision would be a big incentive to the applicant (all agreed). We could negotiate a community benefits agreement with the concept plan review.

- The ability to quantify community benefits and predictability is important (all agreed)
- Building design is a real wildcard and seems like an odd fit for a community benefits list.
- Should allow professional use in Industrial General district.
- East Arapahoe needs more options for employees (especially food).
- Allow some complementary uses – employees want amenities other than just an office building.
- Scale: consider a “relative scale” for quantifying community benefits rather than a specific number for each benefit.
- The list of community benefits should shift to remain aligned with our evolving community priorities.
- Educational institutions should be added to the Community Benefits list.
- High paying jobs are a community benefit.
- There’s a lesser need for parking, but neighborhoods will generally object to fewer spaces.
- Community Benefits should be geographically pertinent.

#### **Benefits most relevant to the east Arapahoe area**

- There are amenity issues – people are forced to drive to food, etc. Most amenities would significantly decrease area traffic.
- A small grocery store and housing for senior residents.
- Development would be much easier here than in neighborhoods to the west.





## **City of Boulder Planning, Housing and Sustainability Building Height Code Amendment Focus Group Summary – December 2017**

### **Background**

RRC Associates worked with the City of Boulder Planning Housing and Sustainability department to conduct three focus groups with members of the public who reside in the City of Boulder. The participants in the focus groups were recruited randomly from a list of residents who had previously participated in a BVCP Update Community Survey and had indicated on the survey their willingness to participate in additional surveys or focus groups.

The intent of the groups was to gather additional feedback about height modifications in Boulder – criteria, locations, affordable housing benefit, and other topics.

### **Summary**

The focus group sessions followed the same format: an hour and a half discussion centered around three topics. This section summarizes the general findings from the three groups; please see the remaining pages of this report for more detail on each individual focus group.

The groups were intended to give people an opportunity to express their views, and to listen to those opinions. On all of the topics, no consensus was reached, but the participants in the groups provided a wide variety of quality feedback.

### **Question 1: What criteria does the group think is most important when considering taller buildings up to 55 feet?**

All three groups had a variety of input on this question, but some of the common themes were aesthetics, design, affordable housing, public gathering spaces, public access to the rooftops, being near public transit, protecting viewsheds,

### **Question 2: Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?**

Many participants agreed about the importance of protecting views, so taller buildings located in the eastern part of the City were generally seen as okay. Also important was being concentrated along major transit corridors near frequent public transit. Specific locations mentioned included East Pearl

Parkway, Meadows shopping area, Table Mesa shopping area, Williams Village, and East Arapahoe, among others.

**Question 3: Beyond affordable housing, what other community benefits would you like to see from taller buildings?**

The final topic in the focus groups was about other community benefits for future projects, beyond what is required by current zoning. A handout was passed around with a list of possible additional community benefits, and focus group participants were asked to indicate their top 3 to 5 priorities, along with other ideas not listed on the sheet.

The most popular community benefits were Environmental Preservation, New Zero Buildings, Special Social Needs (i.e. hospitals, senior housing, etc.), Space for the Arts, and Affordable Commercial Space. In addition, people wrote down other benefits, including community/public spaces, roof top patios, regional transportation, and mixed-use buildings.

Further examples of additional community benefits that came up in the discussion with the three groups included solar power generation, net zero buildings, high quality building materials, space for non-profits, on-site affordable housing, housing for seniors, mixed use, and services that you can walk to.



**City of Boulder Planning, Housing and Sustainability  
Building Height Code Amendment  
Focus Group #1: Wednesday 12/6/17, 3:30 to 5pm  
1777 Broadway, West Conference Room  
Focus Group Notes**

**Background**

RRC Associates worked with the City of Boulder Planning Housing and Sustainability department to conduct three focus groups with members of the public who reside in the City of Boulder. The participants in the focus groups were recruited randomly from a list of residents who had previously participated in a BVCP Update Community Survey, and had indicated on the survey their willingness to participate in additional surveys or focus groups.

The intent of the groups was to gather additional feedback about height modifications in Boulder – criteria, locations, affordable housing benefit, and other topics.

**Participants**

1. Female, age 55 to 64, 45 years in Boulder, live in Southeast Boulder
2. Female, age 55 to 74, 42 years in Boulder, live in Southeast Boulder
3. Female, age 55 to 64, 6 years in Boulder, live in North Boulder
4. Male, age 55 to 74, 27 years in Boulder, live in Southeast Boulder
5. Male, age 45 to 54, 28 years in Boulder, live in South Boulder
6. Female, age 55 to 64, 9 years in Boulder, live in North Boulder
7. Male, age over 74, 40 years in Boulder, live in North Boulder
8. Male, age 45 to 54, 18 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder
9. Female, age 45 to 54, 3 years in Boulder, live in North Boulder
10. Female, age 55 to 64, 21 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder

Participants in this group were generally older (over 55), in part because the session was during the day on a weekday.

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II
- Dave Belin, RRC Associates

## Introduction

Prior to the focus group, the participants were emailed a document that provided background information about building height modification, including the history of the height limit, the site review process, the 2015 height ordinance, and the current policies regarding building height.

The focus group began with Karl Guiler providing the group an introduction to the topic of height limit and height modification requests. Karl briefly answered some initial questions from group members before Dave Belin started the discussion with the questions below.

The responses below are quotes and paraphrases from the participants in the groups. Each comment was from one individual in the group.

### **Question 1: What criteria does the group think is most important when considering taller buildings up to 55 feet?**

- Setbacks – “not like Boulder Junction, where they are hanging over the railroad tracks”
- Buildings that are not right on the street
- “We don’t need to build canyons here”
- It would be nice if the buildings had green stuff – something for carbon offsets, green buildings. There’s no green in Boulder Junction
- Think for the future, plan to mitigate the air pollution
- Tall buildings “destroy the aesthetic view” Need something that has beauty
- Design is the big thing
- Alliances that are going on behind the scenes – who is benefiting from the taller building? Motivation for why it is being done. Who is doing it and why? “The 29<sup>th</sup> Street thing was a disaster.”
- Design-wise, some buildings are well done. Others are terrible.
- On-site energy generation
- Aesthetics – what is uniquely Boulder? While that is subjective, we could go through the buildings that we have that we like. These buildings are uniquely Boulder. Figure out some criteria to evaluate new buildings. New buildings that have been built in the last 5 to 6 years could have been anywhere. When you go to Aspen, you know you’re in Aspen
- Whatever we put in, there ought to be more public space, more community benefit. Public spaces for people to gather in. We need to provide for the people who are already here.
- Should not allow any height variances downtown – Pearl West building is outrageous – you can’t see the mountains. You need to preserve the views. It’s just not Boulder. That’s awful.
- It turns everything into a wind tunnel, and a river when it rains.
- A lot of this criteria you can quantify, but some of it is subjective. The height issue is objective. Who is going to decide what a building looks like?
- All the buildings we are talking about went through a very rigorous architectural review – sometimes that has good results, often with significant benefits. (local architect)
- At the heart of this issue is that there are fundamental contradictions. Some want an isolated, suburban, static enclave. Another side of Boulder is dynamic, entrepreneurial, business-oriented community. Forces generating people coming to town have changed. Jobs didn’t used to be in

Boulder -- you had to go to Denver. Now the jobs are here, and housing prices have gone up, and we want to be green, so the question is how do we balance desire for a protected enclave and an entrepreneurial business town. (local architect).

- Housing opportunities have been studied by City of Boulder staff. The problem is that there were so many restrictions on the delivery of the units that it became difficult to bring the project to fruition.
- Scale and density – what are successful examples – there are many in Europe
- As a mom of 3 millennials, they don't want to commute. They want to live in mixed use. When I was working, I would have really appreciated that there was child care nearby. Places where people can walk to eat during their lunch hour.
- How many people do you want to pack into Boulder?
- I've got a kid who is renting – he can't afford to buy. It takes a \$200,000 down payment to afford anything.
- Is this primarily commercial stuff? Is it affordable housing?
- Our current affordable housing model is not affordable.
- The model in Aspen is better – you get points for how long you've lived in the area, more points for firefighters and teachers – are we going to increase that?
- How many single family affordable units have been delivered in the past 10 years? Only a handful. Probably less than 50.
- There's a lot of the eastern part of the city that is pretty dysfunctional and in need of redevelopment. An opportunity to create walkable neighborhoods, complete neighborhood approach, with frequent transit so people don't have to drive in from Superior and Louisville
- All the "goodies" (like extra height) are available for big projects, but not for little projects that could be really cool and unique. Should there be a mechanism for taller projects that are small scale, to provide texture and variety.
- Affordable housing in the criteria.
- I don't understand the concept of cash-in-lieu – I'm in favor of affordable housing on site.
- We're talking about building heights. A lot of us wanted ADUs – but you're only allowed so many houses in a geographic area to have ADUs. This should be part of the height restriction discussion. Owner-occupied, strict rules, you could get a lot of housing without densifying.

**Question 2: Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?**

- Williams Village area, including west of 30<sup>th</sup> street. it's near the tall buildings that exist.
- I don't mind taller buildings downtown
- Pet peeve is city requirement to put the building right next to the right-of-way. They city wants buildings right up against of right-of-way. Not right up to the property line.
- 29<sup>th</sup> Street
- Gunbarrel town center
- East Arapahoe – generally the complaints come from neighborhoods.
- East Walnut – there is opportunity there

- East Pearl – those building could go up another 10 feet without impacting anyone. East of 47<sup>th</sup> to 55<sup>th</sup>, you could easily go to 55 feet without impacting anyone.
- Anything east of 28<sup>th</sup> street is ok with me. Nothing west of 28<sup>th</sup> street.
- Canyon between the 29<sup>th</sup> street mall and downtown – lots of residential, fairly dense, pretty unattractive. I don't know if height is the answer, but it would be a good place to incentivize redevelopment. In the long run, those buildings will need to be replaced – what is going to happen there. Hierarchy of streets – that is a major thoroughfare.
- I live car-free, so where are we going to develop pedestrian friendly areas? The whole core should be totally car free.
- Urban food production – where should the buildings NOT be so that we can grow food. We import over 90% of our food here. We're not always going to have access to all that food. Things are changing in California, because of climate change. We must take into account these contingencies. Where is the water going to come from? We don't need sprinkler systems everywhere. We have to plant things that are drought resistant. We aren't thinking forward.
- A car-less area would have to be very, very dense. I'm not sure that is the right answer.
- We need a critical mass to make things walkable. We are going to do some small incremental projects that will have access to height modification.
- South of Valmont, east of 30<sup>th</sup>. Not really blocking anyone's views.
- Downtown is an area where people have mixed opinions. A downtown project is totally different than a project out east – you have to have extremely deep pockets to do a downtown development.

**Question 3: Beyond affordable housing, what other community benefits would you like to see from taller buildings?**

- How will you pay for affordable housing? The bulk comes from cash-in-lieu from projects.
- 30% is extremely reasonable. We have a lot of affordable units in Holiday, we need to include more affordable housing.
- People aren't really clear on the definitions of affordable housing – what is the income, what can you buy, what is cash-in-lieu, how does it work?
- It was a lot easier to include affordable units on site prior to real estate crash of 2009. Condo development dried up, and now it's very difficult to combine market rate and affordable units in the same project. State law prohibits rent control. A permanently affordable rental condo in the same development as market rate is virtually impossible.
- 1/3 of the population is not affordable housing. That seems really high to me. How does that compare to other cities of 100,000 people? I would like to see some ratcheting down on the people abusing the system.
- What is the true need for affordable housing? We should take care of people who work here, live here, not people moving in from out of state. Give credit to people who are committed to being here.
- Cash-in-lieu really bothers me. We should get around it by building mixed use. It segregates people. It's not healthy socially for all of us as a community to segregate people by income.

- We should be thinking about seniors, and the old hospital is an ideal location for housing for seniors.
- People who grow older in a community should be able to stay in that community. Something happens when you lose your old people – and your young people, too.

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**City of Boulder Planning, Housing and Sustainability  
Building Height Code Amendment  
Focus Group #2: Wednesday 12/6/17, 6:30 to 8:00pm  
Park Central Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Focus Group Notes**

**Background**

RRC Associates worked with the City of Boulder Planning Housing and Sustainability department to conduct three focus groups with members of the public who reside in the City of Boulder. The participants in the focus groups were recruited randomly from a list of residents who had previously participated in a BVCP Update Community Survey and had indicated on the survey their willingness to participate in additional surveys or focus groups.

The intent of the groups was to gather additional feedback about height modifications in Boulder – criteria, locations, affordable housing benefit, and other topics.

**Participants**

11. Male, age 40 to 54, 7 years in Boulder, live in East Boulder
12. Male, age 55 to 74, 4 years in Boulder, live in Gunbarrel
13. Female, age 55 to 64, 10 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder – North of Arapahoe
14. Female, age 45 to 54, 30 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder – North of Arapahoe
15. Female, age 45 to 54, 23 years in Boulder, live in East Boulder
16. Female, age 55 to 64, 10 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder – North of Arapahoe
17. Female, age 25 to 34, 1 year in Boulder, live in Southeast Boulder
18. Female, age 40 to 54, 25 years in Boulder, live in Crossroads
19. Female, age 45 to 54, 9 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder – North of Arapahoe
20. Female, age 25 to 34, 9 years in Boulder, live in South Boulder

Participants in this group were generally younger (under 54, including two under 34) and female.

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II
- Dave Belin, RRC Associates



## Introduction

Prior to the focus group, the participants were emailed a document that provided background information about building height modification, including the history of the height limit, the site review process, the 2015 height ordinance, and the current policies regarding building height.

The focus group began with Karl Guiler providing the group an introduction to the topic of height limit and height modification requests. Karl briefly answered some initial questions from group members before Dave Belin started the discussion with the questions below. This group had several questions for Karl and Phil Kleisler about the background material and information, such as examples of 55-foot tall buildings, requirements for height modifications, proportional criteria, underlying area plans, and other questions.

### **Question 1: What criteria does the group think is most important when considering taller buildings up to 55 feet?**

- Viewshed – both when coming into the city and you see lots of green trees, and also when you are in the city. The solution I would propose is adding public rooftop space as one of the criteria. Since these taller buildings are partly taking away the views, provide public access to those views.
- Is there existing protection for neighborhoods that are adjacent to places where 55-foot tall buildings might be allowed?
- The density that comes with it is a concern – the traffic, the people, the ability to walk or bike to places. We need to maintain accessibility and keep it safe. There are parts of the pathways in Boulder that I don't feel comfortable using
- Density is an important thing to me – infrastructure has stayed the same, but as we have more people, what is the community getting for that extra height? What are we getting?
- I work at a non-profit and there are a lot of young folks who work there. If there was more housing in Boulder, then those people would be able to stay in Boulder. I would like to see my colleagues be able to stay in Boulder.
- If we are going up to 4-stories, then it's near transportation – bus stops and bike paths nearby. Having services available nearby – post office, pharmacy, grocery store all within walking distance. Increasing the supply and hopefully lowering the cost.
- Making transit really easy to use. It's easier to drive behind a bus when there is a place for the bus to pull over.
- Boulder to me is not as family friendly – if you have little kids, you can't be putting them on the bus. It's not as easy to live in a dense area as a family. There are different needs for different people.
- What is the right tradeoff – a couple extra minutes to drop your kids off at soccer practice but more people can afford to live in Boulder
- Some people want to commute and have a big house in the suburbs – 2 kids, 2 dogs.
- Is building these big buildings really going to solve the housing problem?
- We struggled to find a two-bedroom place to live in Boulder. That's a market inefficiency because we live in a single-family home that could be going to a family.

- How many people are gumming up the single-family homes? I have a lot of colleagues who live in Boulder – 3 single people living in a home. If we had a diversity of housing supply to fit the right people, then those single-family homes would be available to families, rather than 3 single people.
- The majority of the taller buildings are businesses and hotels, so that's not solving the problem. Mixed, a variety would be better. I'm not a fan of the big tall buildings. That's not why I moved here.
- If some of the big tall buildings, such as hotels, are coming in, they are bringing employees that don't make a wage that they can afford to live in Boulder. So, they have to commute. It's creating an employment center that doesn't pay a Boulder living wage. On the other hand, you have Google employees coming in who can live in Boulder, though they will be driving up the cost of housing.
- In the last 4 or 5 years, there have been several larger apartment buildings that have gone up. What is the demand and supply for such housing? Are the apartments full here?
- In the Peloton, when I moved in I was the youngest person there. Most of the residents were older retired empty nesters.
- I wonder about Google and the demographic of the person who works there. A lot of tech people with high incomes might want to live in Denver, they might be bored of Boulder.
- I prefer a single-family home to rent, detached, under 1,000 SF. I'm not big on shared walls and the sound.
- Do we need more businesses here? There are a lot of vacancies on Pearl Street.
- There is space between single family homes. That makes it feel less dense.
- We lost every bid to a cash offer. When we were told who was buying it, we were always told it was a retired couple. It is important to give older people the housing they want. Boulder should have a mix of housing for people who are young, people who are families, people who are older.
- I care a lot less about the height of the building than who is inside it – nonprofits, people who are middle income, people who are not millionaires. We need housing that is affordable for young people. If you don't have help from your family and you are committed to your community, you have very few options.
- Along with height and density, we will have more people in and out of Boulder working at these places. I would like to make sure the city has the infrastructure to support that, so we don't end up in a degraded state. Ideally, we end up in a better state for it. We need to be able evaluate things as they develop and adapt. One thing we might consider is for taller buildings to levy additional money that they have to pay that goes into city coffers to pay for some infrastructure that would otherwise have to be a bond issue. Maybe elevated bikeways, or water mains, or storm water, or road widths, anything that will have increased wear and tear. Mass transit is key, turning Boulder Junction into a place that is a hub to get people in and out of Boulder efficiently. That would help alleviate some of the affordability issue as well.
- It's a little bit about the height, but it's more about the density. I moved here because it's an amazingly beautiful area and it's a smaller town. I didn't move here to be in a big city, I moved here to be in a smaller town that's close to a big city. I understand that having affordable housing is important. But I think it's not possible to have housing for teachers, firefighters, and a more diverse population. If you want that, go live in Denver. In the last 4 or 5 years, the changes

in traffic and crowding is making me uncomfortable. Everybody can't live in Boulder, because then it won't be Boulder anymore.

- Why the open space was surrounded is to protect what is here, and not to make it grow so big. If we continue the way we are, it's going to become downtown LA surrounded by open space (okay, that's an exaggeration). But why so many people are wanting to move here is that it's a very livable place, small, so we can't keep saying, come in come in, we'll make room for you. It changes the sense of the place. If these tall buildings are inevitable, there should be a limitation on the number of them. The restriction or allowance that it be similar to what is next to it adds to the overbearing-ness of it – I like more space between the tall buildings.
- There was no place for me to work in Boulder, or a place to live, so I moved to Boulder. I lived below my means and saved, and was able to afford something in Boulder during the downturn. I wouldn't be able to afford my place today. But when I hear people complaining, "Oh, I can't afford to live in Boulder," I couldn't afford it for a long time either. I had to wait until my late 30s until I could afford it. I chose to live here, there are great people here, but the main thing is that it's beautiful. When I go back to Denver I think, oh God, I'm so glad I got out when I did because it's so much worse year after year after year – it's insane. I do not want to see that happen here. We bought a vacation property in Vail – the price per square foot was cheaper.
- We rented all over town, finally bought in East Boulder. Coming from East Boulder, I feel like I'm in an oasis out there. It's gotten so dense down here. Please don't touch East Boulder – it's wide open.
- Someone is making money, right? So why are we allowing them to build up?
- Karl: Policies have not changed in Boulder, but the land values have gone up so much that you're seeing more building. The original policy was that Boulder wanted a clear delineation between itself and other communities. The tradeoff is that there will be more development within the boundary instead of building into the open space. In key location, allow some density and housing types. Hopefully get people out of their cars and have more walking and transit.

**Question 2: Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?**

- If there are height modifications, I would be in support of it being housing, and being affordable. Personally, I find it upsetting to have people clean our houses, flip our pancakes, and they can't afford to live here. That shouldn't be the price of admission. It would be nice if we had a community of different people.
- What should we get out of it – we should incentivize transit use. We shouldn't be creating exceptions that create more traffic, but rather less traffic. Places where people can take the bus.
- The buildings should move out east on Pearl Street – out in the area of the auto businesses. It's a place that would spread things out a little bit. East of foothills.
- Boulder has become a very sophisticated, high income enclave surrounded by bushes. There are examples in the country with mass transit – I'm talking about a train – so people can come from east of I-25, south of Denver, Longmont. We don't have good rapid transit into the city. Lousy access for roads in and out of the city. The city and our leaders should really push for an expanded transit system.
- I like the idea of the higher buildings being further out, but not all in a big clump. Not like Paris.

- Question 3: Beyond affordable housing, what other community benefits would you like to see from taller buildings?**

- ~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*



**City of Boulder Planning, Housing and Sustainability  
Building Height Code Amendment  
Focus Group #3: Thursday 12/14/17, 6:30 to 8:00pm  
Park Central Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Focus Group Notes**

**Background**

RRC Associates worked with the City of Boulder Planning Housing and Sustainability department to conduct three focus groups with members of the public who reside in the City of Boulder. The participants in the focus groups were recruited randomly from a list of residents who had previously participated in a BVCP Update Community Survey and had indicated on the survey their willingness to participate in additional surveys or focus groups.

The intent of the groups was to gather additional feedback about height modifications in Boulder – criteria, locations, affordable housing benefit, and other topics.

**Participants**

21. Female, age 55 to 74, 15 years in Boulder, live in Palo Park
22. Female, age 35 to 44, 12 years in Boulder, live in North Boulder
23. Female, age 55 to 64, 36 years in Boulder, live in South Boulder
24. Male, age 25 to 34, 2 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder – North of Arapahoe
25. Female, age 55 to 64, 62 years in Boulder, live in South Boulder
26. Male, age 65 to 74, 6 years in Boulder, live in Central Boulder – North of Arapahoe
27. Female, age 65 to 74, 6 years in Boulder, live in Southeast Boulder
28. Male, age 20 to 39, 36 years in Boulder, live in East Boulder

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II
- Dave Belin, RRC Associates

## Introduction

Prior to the focus group, the participants were emailed a document that provided background information about building height modification, including the history of the height limit, the site review process, the 2015 height ordinance, and the current policies regarding building height.

The focus group began with Karl Guiler providing the group an introduction to the topic of height limit and height modification requests. Karl briefly answered some initial questions from group members before Dave Belin started the discussion with the questions below.

### **Question 1: What criteria does the group think is most important when considering taller buildings up to 55 feet?**

- Does it fit into the neighborhood?
- Higher buildings being built with commercial use on the ground level and office space above it – but we have a lot of vacant office space already – how is that space going to be filled? Is it actually going to be used? In 20 years, will it be sitting empty? I’m not opposed to office space, as long as it is used. I’m a proponent of permanently affordable housing. Making sure that anything that is built is used to its fullest capacity.
- The concept of intensity comes up again over and over. Intensity is great because more people can live in an area, but there doesn’t seem to be any consideration for the services and infrastructure, which we are sorely lacking for our current population base. And, is the neighborhood willing to support intensity, like co-op housing? The density needs to be supported by infrastructure like roads and parking, and the willingness of the established neighborhood supports it.
- I’m not sure that the existing neighborhood needs to be able to say that they support it. I own a house and I have my property that I bought, and that’s where my property rights extend to. I’m not saying that there should be no consideration, but why would you say that you need permission from the neighborhood.
- There is a culture and character of a neighborhood that has developed over time, and a developer might have a different motivation. Variances in the name of housing intensity seems to be the Boulder way.
- The house that’s been in the news to allow 16 people living there. Can you imagine the cars of 16 people? There’s going to be 16 more cars.
- I agree that the development, whether it’s commercial or residential,
- Transportation services, RTD are important. In Berkeley, people are concerned with long shadows cast by buildings is impacting their ability to grow food. The consequences of restricting our sunlight – we need to have that conversation.
- I’m not 100% sure what the criteria should be, but predictability is key so that people can focus on designing a great project. More predictability would allow people to put more energy into good design – architects, developers. Our town benefits if the developer can focus on making a great project that fits with what the city wants?
- I’m skeptical of who these developers are – do they live here?
- Intentional communities where your services are there

- Aesthetics – I work at 29<sup>th</sup> street and I have watched the building at 28<sup>th</sup> and Canyon go up. Everything in Boulder now is designed by committee, using every type of material. There hasn't been a good building in Boulder for 10 years. So, to me, aesthetically, that I have to look at that building every day and it looks awful to me. Who is designing these buildings and where are they from, do they look around Boulder at all, what is already here, what do people have, what does it look like?
- A requirement ought to be to review what the original intent of height restrictions – to preserve the view of the natural beauty for everybody. But now, we can go to 55, and only in certain areas – which is fine, there have to be areas in town where it is allowed – the impact of the height of the building on the views of the community of the Front Range. When you add the caveat that you can bust the zoning by increasing housing to 40% of the space, then you're going against the original intent of the ordinance. If the original intent was sound, then that ought to be sacrosanct.
- One of the things that is interesting about this discussion about height is that one of the main root causes of this is that, years ago, the development of all the beautiful open space, we have created an island. We can't go out. So, we have 3 very bitter pills to swallow – start building in open space, which would be very unpopular. The other would be limiting the amount of people who can move here, which would be very unpopular and very unfair, and then the third is to start going up. That's why we're having this discussion. If there are other ways of dealing with the massively growing population here, I would love to know what they are.
- I've thought about the same thing – you can't go out. I used to live in Sommerville, MA. I compared the density of Sommerville, and if Boulder was the same density as Sommerville, which doesn't have anything over 55 feet, you would have 800,000 people in Boulder. And nobody wants that, right? But there are things in between that would allow people to move here.
- I work for a nonprofit housing developer and affordable housing provider, and you can talk all these theories, but 40% affordable housing in a development – you can't make the numbers work. The whole middle-income housing, we were looking at buying a piece of land and doing 25% affordable housing, and the board decided that it made more sense to do all market rate, and then pay to do affordable housing off site. There are so many restrictions. Infill is not going to deal with the situation. Backyard ADUs, it's a problem that I don't think anyone knows how to solve it.
- I wondered if it would pencil. Someone is going to say, if we just add another floor and go to 65 feet, or another floor and go to 75 feet, then it will pencil. It still doesn't pencil, so why are we even talking about this?
- It's just difficult to build affordable housing in this town. A lot of these local developers have to go through the planning process. We are redeveloping old buildings, on Baseline and 22<sup>nd</sup>, really small apartments, and we wanted to put balconies on them. And the City said, no, we want to preserve the way they look. They wouldn't let us give the residents a small balcony. The planning process is so restrictive, the hoops you have to jump through all the time. So that's why developers build their market rate and pay cash-in-lieu.
- {Discussion around what cash-in-lieu is, examples of developments, and why developers don't build affordable units on site.}

- I would like to know about why developers don't build more on-site – is it that they can't or that they won't? I don't want to be separated, I think it's healthier to have a mix of people.
- Cash-in-lieu can often feel very frustrating, but we can't not have it. The city can encourage a mix of affordable and market rate, but it can't be required.
- There's two things you can't do: you can't create a 60,000-acre ring of open space around the city, and then complain that there's no place to put affordable housing. The second thing that you can't do is legislate that existing neighborhoods have to have affordable housing and tell people that they have to take it into their neighborhood. Some people worked hard and bought a house, and the value of that house has grown so that it is worth a lot more money. I don't feel the need to say we need to socially engineer Boulder. There is diversity from north to south and east to west – not racial necessarily.
- The current green belt plus the height restrictions already is social engineering – it's become a very wealthy city. It's not that by adding affordable housing is social engineering, we've already got it.
- We have this nice community here, but you go out to dinner or go to the grocery store, and there are all these people providing services, and those are the type of people who live in affordable housing.

**Question 2: Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?**

- Boulder Dinner Theater out east
- The eastern edge of Boulder is lined with green space. Put 55-foot buildings in that area.
- East Pearl Parkway – if there's more room available there, that would work
- The industrial spaces should be places where you can ask for a height modification.
- Along Broadway in general is a great place for height modifications – good transit available
- What fits with what's already there – all main roads, where there is a transit corridor with buses, you don't need to worry about parking, so people can live without a car if they want – Arapahoe, Baseline, Broadway, 28<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>.
- The issue with building along major thoroughfares is you get canyons of buildings. Very tall buildings and behind it you have so much less. The neighborhoods are walled in by these tall buildings. I don't want to see Boulder have canyons in the middle of the city.
- Meadows area – we have a very large parking lot, it's never used. We've had some empty spaces, I could see making some height there, it's right on Baseline.
- It comes down to transportation – there are affordable places to live in Longmont or Erie.



**Question 3: Beyond affordable housing, what other community benefits would you like to see from taller buildings?**

- Things change if you add density, but it isn't a zero-sum game. You don't have to see it as people losing something – you are gaining places to walk to, the ability to lose a car.
- I can walk to shopping in South Boulder
- When a developer wants to build up, what is the burden of proof that what is being built is going to be functional for the long term?
- There is going to be more need for senior housing
- When people build buildings, do they have to have a certain number of parking spaces? There's not enough parking at the new orthopedic building.
- 29<sup>th</sup> street at lunch time, it is bumper to bumper parking. There's no parking – this huge mall, and there's nowhere to park. We're supposed to be a bicycling and walking city, and we have such huge transportation problems.
- I don't like the idea of going up and having canyons, but how are people going to get there.
- This city has made a commitment to mass transit. If you did have a section of that out there (east Boulder) that was affordable housing and served by busses, that would be very efficient. It would allow a service worker to live out there, walk to a bus station, take a very clean and affordable bus that runs regularly to get anywhere in this metro area.
- Making the units affordable – not only permanently affordable, but also condos for middle income. One way of doing that is make them smaller.
- Affordable housing is not really affordable.
- Architecture that is inviting to the community. Spaces that would benefit nonprofits, artists, gallery space. Things that make our communities richer.
- Gathering spaces.
- Green space in the city – pocket parks
- Make rooftops accessible for community gatherings – the views are great. The Foundry or the Rio lost their views because other buildings are taller. Some of our greatest views have been blocked out. Make it a public space.
- They can't do anything they want to with the space height wise, width wise. So, you have to keep building costs low. Plainer construction, not the nice finishes that would be required to make it look like it fits.
- Do we have requirements for green materials – that would be important to me.
- There should be solar on buildings. Santa Barbara has that requirement – why don't we have that?
- The folks who worked and bought in, they don't consider that luxury, that's where they live.
- The house I grew up in in Boulder, I had a choice. I could go to Broomfield or Longmont and buy a house, or stay in Boulder and buy a mobile home. My mobile home has appreciated in value, which usually doesn't happen. Who should be included? Who has the opportunity? I work with somebody who moved here from Georgia, making decent money, and he's running food at night to make ends meet. He rents in Goss-Grove. That was a working example of someone who has moved here in the last 4 or 5 years, makes pretty decent money, and still cannot afford Boulder. So that means the conditions to be able to afford to live in Boulder is that you have to make

extravagantly large sums of money. They are going to realize how expensive the cost of housing is in Boulder, and they are going to move.

- Does CU have the same regulations as the City of Boulder? Some of my peers talk about how many students rent houses in Boulder, and what impact that has on other people in Boulder. I know CU is building more housing,
- Phil: we are in the mode of listening, but the fact that everyone came here on a Thursday night to express their views, it means that the future of the community is pretty bright that there are so many people engaged in the process. It's a transparent process, we are listening to everything, we hope to find some common ground.

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**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**November 13, 2017**

**Participants**

- Male, architect
- Male, interested citizen
- Female, interested citizen/design professional
- Male, architect
- Male, Boulder Chamber

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Jay Sugnet, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II

**Key Takeaways**

- There was a general agreement that the root cause of some of the recent angst concerning building height may be more about building design than height modifications. Applicants have an interest in building beautiful buildings, however our code does not necessarily result in better projects. For example, some flexibility around building height would allow for different roof designs, which would result in more appealing buildings.
- The code should encourage the first floor to be human scale, the materials should be high quality and the building should be contextually appropriate with the neighborhood.
- Regarding locations for height modifications, we should begin by analyzing the regional and neighborhood centers and high density residential districts. Some corridors should also be examined: east of downtown (23<sup>rd</sup> Street) to Boulder Junction, Arapahoe east of Folsom, not along north Broadway, and between Iris and Baseline.
- The existing housing requirement (40% of floor area) practically excludes anything except affordable housing projects, thus decreasing the number of units in the long term.
- An in-lieu housing fee option may significantly delay redevelopment, while requiring units on site will present its own set of challenges (e.g. need for a management company).

***General Comment: all responses below were generally made by one person, unless noted otherwise.***

**Discussion Prompt #1:**

***What criteria does the group think is most important when considering where to plan for taller buildings and allow height modification requests up to 55 feet?***

- As more of a process comment, it would be helpful to first understand the types of buildings we're commenting on, then have a discussion about which locations are the most suitable. They, I recommend referring to buildings by story instead of feet. Requirements could be for three-stories with allowances for pitched roofs instead of the arbitrary 35-foot limit.
- Site Review forces applicants to ask for height modifications since the thought is that they should ask for the max since they are already a big project.

## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

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- Too much criteria makes it harder to design a good project. Site review forces a challenging set of criteria into a large project, which then makes any design deficiencies very noticeable.
- Focus groups should be mixed and should have some time reserved for design quality, which seems to be common ground.
- Site Review doesn't provide adequate guidance for building design.
- A distance requirement from single family residential zones may not work because most suitable places would be disqualified.
- More predictability around location of taller buildings would free us up to focus on making those buildings beautiful.
- Regarding design, the first floor should be inviting and at a human scale. Use high quality materials.
- Removing barriers to good design (35-feet for three stories doesn't allow for certain roofs).
- Could apply certain parts of form-based code to projects seeking a height modification.
- The Spruce Street Confections building has nice detailing; contrasted with old Camera Building that doesn't have good design. The round columns at the camera building are not human scale.
- Applicants have a genuine interest in building a beautiful building. However, the 35 feet as a hard line forces a non-appealing building. There needs to be some flexibility to allow architects to build a beautiful building – e.g. roof lines may bring the height from 35 to 37.5 feet, but result of a much more appealing building. Most people may be able to live with a project if the architecture is very high quality. If architecture is more sophisticated, more people will accept taller buildings.
- Zoning doesn't align with intent of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan regarding neighborhood and regional centers.
- Neighborhood centers do not necessarily correlate with where additional height should be allowed.
- People often blame the ugliness of a building on the height modification, not the architecture.
- Should talk more about the good examples of height.
- The surrounding context is critically important.
- The City of Denver did a visual analysis to preserve certain views of the mountains. Perhaps consider such an approach here.
- 35-foot buildings will still block views.
- There are 55-foot tall bad buildings and 35-foot tall bad buildings.
- Good Examples of Height Modifications include:
  - East Pearl/1505 Pearl: Decent 1<sup>st</sup> floor design and overall quality of materials.
  - 1637 Walnut
  - 13th and Pearl
  - 9th & Pearl –No one complained about it.
- Critical Examples of Height Modifications:
  - West Pearl
  - Hyatt & Solana – standing on its own means a bad building looks particularly bad. Building has a long façade along Pearl which is criticized.

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- Ajii building (Pearl & 16th St)- shows that sometimes ugly buildings are OK if they don't destroy the street.

### Discussion Prompt #3:

***Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?***

- The only give story building in Downtown is a parking garage, generally making much of that area irrelevant to this conversation.
- Can't ignore high density residential zones (+1)
- Neighborhood centers map is a good starting place, but you may need to examine each of the individually to ensure compatibility.
- We should examine areas identified in the existing temporary ordinance.
- The corridor between east downtown (23<sup>rd</sup>) and Boulder Junction Downtown may be a nice opportunity to create a wonderful experience between the two areas.
- Some corridors such as Pearl Street; Arapahoe east of Folsom; Not along north Broadway; between Iris and Base line.
- Examine strip mall areas.
- Consider topography in our analysis where topography could minimizes the perception of height (e.g., Taft Drive)
- Look at area around 55<sup>th</sup> & Arapahoe.
- East of Naropa's campus.
- We could learn something from the story of Philadelphia, when city hall was moved downtown. They found the right location and allowed it room to grow.
- Provide some predictability by deciding where we taller buildings go and won't go.

### Discussion Prompt #4:

***The city typically requires 20% of the proposed number of housing units to be designated as affordable. The current height modification ordinance allows requests for additional height for projects that provide at least 40% of the floor area as affordable.***

***What do you think about these housing requirements and what are the most important things to consider when making this decision?***

- Such a high percentage leads to a structural/practical issue. Affordable housing needs infrastructure to support it (i.e. administer the program). The current requirement of 40% means that the project must already be a funded affordable housing project.
- Scenarios:
  - An in-lieu option could add around \$20 per foot of land. The land price would need to deflate to that extra \$20 per foot prior to any project becoming feasible.
  - If units were required to go on site the developer would need a management company (e.g. Thistle). However, organizations like Thistle usually are not interested in smaller projects.
  - Commercial projects are covered through the commercial linkage fee.
- Practically speaking, an affordable housing requirement will disallow projects in certain areas,

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leading to fewer units in the long run.

- Exploring the community benefit of affordable housing first seems backwards. Neighbors of these potential projects are never excited about affordable housing and generally do not feel that affordable housing will benefit them. They are more interested in design quality.
- Some developers are not experienced in housing requirements.
- BHP will usually not consider funding a project unless it has greater than 40 dwelling units.
- In the case of Boulder Junction, we explored building to a 2.5 FAR instead of 2.0 and even that didn't make economic sense.
- Adding a 4th or 5th story means that the entire story will be affordable. Since affordable housing loses money it will not make economic sense.
- Include Middle Income/Moderate Housing (+1).
- While permanently affordable housing is considered a community benefit, many of the general public will not look at it as such. A tax to get more housing makes more sense than requiring it as part of any height review.

**Discussion Prompt #5:**

***The city is planning to examine how other community benefits may be incorporated into our review processes similar to the concept of affordable housing as we discussed today. Take a moment to review the list of community benefits in your handout. Which are the top two items we should be considering next? Why?***

- Remove the land for parks item, as that is too complicated for Site Review and may create funding challenges for the Parks Dept.
- Add special building design requirements.
- Net zero buildings are challenging to do, but should still be encouraged because it gets easier with each project (using that "shared knowledge"). (+1)
- Affordable commercial space (+1)
- Space for the arts, special needs and civic uses all seem similar. Consider a program to describe what we want in particular areas relative to these items.
- Remove the commercial linkage fee.

**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**November 14, 2017**

**Participants**

- Female, interested citizen
- Female, interested citizen

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II
- Lesli Ellis, Comprehensive Planning Manager
- David Belin, RRC Associates

**Key Takeaways**

- Participants agreed that the focus needs to expand beyond just where taller buildings should be located, and think more holistically about a framework for how the building fits into the area. Buildings should contribute to a sense of place, provide solar access, be designed beautifully, offer a range of housing options. Most importantly, it must be built to a human scale. These and other considerations should be part of a “compatibility framework” used in evaluating projects.
- Break up residential blocks with a nice mix of buildings and heights that don’t overwhelm what is already in the location, taking advantage of infill opportunities while also reducing sprawl and vehicle trips.
- Regarding location of height modifications, don’t make everything denser. Rather, plan our centers for quality urban development and allow for some reprieves (via open space) around those areas.
- We should explore a range of housing options that meet the desires of those wishing to move here (but are currently commuters). Participants were critical of the city’s cash in lieu program, but seemed to acknowledge that it may be a viable tool in this case.

***General Comment: all responses below were generally made by one person, unless noted otherwise.***

**Discussion Prompt #1:**

***What criteria does the group think is most important when considering where to plan for taller buildings and allow height modification requests up to 55 feet?***

- Seems like affordable housing is the tail wagging the dog in town. We need to first fix the cash in lieu program. The city should have purchased the Peloton (2008).
- Community character is critical.
- Solar access is important. Buildings shouldn’t overshadow us, whether driving by or walking (e.g. icy streets).
- Before we build to 55-foot cash in lieu requirements need to be fixed.
- Jobs:housing imbalance should be part of our analysis.
- We must protect neighborhood integrity.

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- Boulder Valley Regional Center has an absolute absence of a sense of place. It could be anywhere in the country, which is the opposite of Boulder. Contrast the regional center with West Pearl, which is lively and inviting.
- If you build to 55-feet, it must be beautiful and include real open space – i.e. balconies shouldn't count as open space. (+1)
- Some areas have too many curb cuts (leading to dangerous traffic) and no sense of place. We're going higher but not getting any less car centric. If we do build taller buildings, break up residential blocks similar to Philadelphia-style townhomes (e.g. Steelyards, Iris Hollow).
- More consideration to the character of the surrounding area- how it all works together.
- Develop neighborhoods- not buildings.
- There should be more Steel Yards type developments and not the large boxy, stacked flats type buildings
- Developers aren't thinking about the neighborhoods. The nature of Boulder is community; nature-oriented; we know our neighbors; we are house proud; let's develop in that framework.
- Intersection of 30th and Pearl has awful and dangerous traffic.
- Create a "Compatibility framework" for a real neighborhood.
- Good Examples of Buildings:
  - Iris Hollow
- Critical Examples of Buildings
  - 1440 Pine
  - 28th and 30<sup>th</sup>: It feels like a canyon because buildings aren't broken up.
- Commercial vs. Retail: Rents are too high. Worried about the commercial future of Pearl Street. We need more affordable retail space.
- Vacant retail may lead to housing opportunities. Commercial service is at an impending crisis- for example, even minor home projects are hard to have addressed.
- Neighborhood centers may increase regional traffic (i.e. commuters).
- Boulder lacks a continuum of housing options. We need to encourage multiple types of housing.
- Need to have bus and bike availability.
- Reimagine the scale of our blocks – smaller blocks with alleyways. People would need to use alley for street access..
- Everything's about scale, and we need to focus on human scale. East Village (East Marx between 1st and 2nd). Human scale makes Boulder Boulder.
- Regionalize economic growth to make it possible for small businesses to grow and thrive in places like Lafayette and Louisville. We should share job growth with neighboring municipalities. This would allow them to grow and relieve some of the job pressure on local businesses. We are realizing the unintended consequences of having Boulder be an economic hub.

### Discussion Prompt #3:

***Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?***

- Plan centers for quality urban development and provide some reprieves (open space amenities) between them.
- While not particularly attractive, Boulder Junction is OK but still will lead to more traffic.
- From downtown to East Arapahoe is not very attractive- is an opportunity to examine.



## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

**November 14, 2017**

- Don't make everything denser. Figure out a way to move strip mall businesses in to new development in planned centers. Add more greenspace
- Because of land cost and internet shopping many strip malls will be vacant. Retail strip malls may become obsolete in the next 10-15 years.
- Follow-up email from participant: I sense that at the end of the day, the question is more how do you create a mix of buildings and heights that do not overwhelm what is already in the location, takes account of infill opportunities (such as the Arapahoe/55th area) while also decreasing the sprawl around the infill developments and creating/encouraging public transit/reduced VMT/walkability. (Ex: at Ideal Market area, it would be so unfortunate if the redevelopment of the hospital site prompts rent increases that drive out the coffee shops, dry cleaner, pharmacy, flower shop and other locally businesses that are already there. And indeed, the new development should have rent controlled business space for other services (maybe invite Perry's back to Boulder, If the values are community/neighborhood, human scale, diversity, services and amenities, green space/trees, walkability (within a neighborhood) and transit access (between neighborhoods) (and likely other values), means something other than "let's put big buildings here" - it's really about finding the right mix (and creating the framework for the right mix).

### **Discussion Prompt #4:**

***The city typically requires 20% of the proposed number of housing units to be designated as affordable. The current height modification ordinance allows requests for additional height for projects that provide at least 40% of the floor area as affordable.***

***What do you think about these housing requirements and what are the most important things to consider when making this decision?***

- We need to provide mix of housing that meets the demands of in-commuters who wish to live here.
- We also need to offer options for lower-income qualifying buyers.
- Fix the cash in lieu program.
- However, cash in lieu is a good option to achieve community benefits.
- Boulder needs to work with neighboring communities to share knowledge and costs to address the housing problems of the region. Regionalize the wealth and reduce the strain on Boulder. Boulder can't do it on our own.

### **Discussion Prompt #5:**

***The city is planning to examine how other community benefits may be incorporated into our review processes similar to the concept of affordable housing as we discussed today. Take a moment to review the list of community benefits in your handout. Which are the top two items we should be considering next? Why?***

- Include affordable retail.

## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

**November 14, 2017**

- Space for small businesses for certain types of businesses (locksmith does need it, Google doesn't). Make sure that there's space for more local businesses. (+1)
- Commercial linkage fee should be increased. Shouldn't even be a community benefit.
- Environmental preservation is important.
- Net Zero Buildings.
- Civic Space – city office and meeting spaces could be improved.

**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**December 11, 2017**

**Participants**

- Male, interested citizen with development experience
- Male, neighborhood representative
- Male, neighborhood representative
- Female, neighborhood representative/art advocate
- Female, interested citizen, PLAN Boulder
- Female, neighborhood representative/design professional
- Male, developer

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II

**Key Takeaways**

- Comments around the design, massing and layout of buildings often overrode the issue of the height of a building.
- The Site Review criteria needs to be simplified and made more predictable.
- Subcommunity and area planning may help resolve challenging issues by identifying local solutions.
- Most agreed that the current ordinance identifies the right locations for taller buildings. However, some select areas could also be appropriate if area planning and/or conversations with the surrounding community backs the change.
- Participants agreed that our primary focus should be on affordable housing (when weighed against other community benefits).
- Making affordable housing requirements too onerous will work against obtaining more affordable housing.

***General Comment: all responses below were generally made by one person, unless noted otherwise.***

**Discussion Prompt #1:**

***What criteria does the group think is most important when considering where to plan for taller buildings and allow height modification requests up to 55 feet?***

- “Our future requires creative planning.”
- The criteria for density is too uncertain. The Site Review process throws everything imaginable into the pot, then certain things are picked to achieve what is ultimately an undesirable project.
- Height may not be the key issue. The real issue is that projects provide nothing for the average person. We may receive some affordable housing, but the person on the street gets nothing – no public spaces, art, etc. The average person only experiences the negative impacts like traffic or blocked views. We should think hard about how the average person experiences the project. When asked, a number of participants did not agree with this statement.
- Urban design should not hinge on the extra story or two, as it would be so small of scale that it would be irrelevant. The Site Review criteria doesn’t lead to good urban design and it is not

## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

**December 11, 2017**

understood by the public. This height modification project is really a temporary fix. The location is important, but the bigger issue is the larger problem of the Site Review criteria. The criteria need to be simplified and made more predictable.

- Subcommunity/neighborhood planning may help with some of that by sorting out local solutions followed up by code changes that match the plan
- Design is very subjective. The idea that it's all about height is ridiculous- design is critical.
- Not all buildings need to be great but some need to be. There are too many ugly buildings.
- Regarding locations for height modification requests, the current ordinance is correct, with possibly the addition of some industrial areas. Housing should be the priority for community benefit. A long list of benefits will be an invitation to game the system. An affordable housing requirement is less discretionary and straight forward.
- Regarding locations for height modification requests, the current ordinance is correct.
- A lot of the decision-making is focused on Central Boulder (e.g. there are no council members from Martin Acres). The participant previously studied and identified a list of retail types that are not available in South Boulder. We need a focus on neighborhood-serving retail. Yes we have an affordable housing crisis, but I also see an impending affordable retail crisis. If we have a climate goal of reduced vehicle miles traveled, we should just require what we need within a three-story building.
- Affordable retail space availability is a problem.
- We need to create an experience – transit needs to be more enjoyable and neighborhoods should have their own identity and be inviting and unique. Help people stay and shop. Subcommunity planning may help achieve this. Also, try to get the average person behind a development – not just a moratorium.
- Density is key- we need the density to have amenities (one person disagreed). I tried a neighborhood-serving space at Wonderland Hill but “there weren't enough rooftops”.
- The last election was a repudiation of density in neighborhoods. Neighborhood planning could help with this by finding localized solutions with local support. The idea of more density being forced upon all neighborhoods won't work. If people like the suburban neighborhood feel, let them have it.
- Affordable housing is priority. Others commented that it needs the sense of place and connection to keep people out of cars.
- We need to counterbalance the argument against density/rooftops found in planning books with reality. A neighborhood study showed 30,000+ people were within walking distance from Baseline Zero. The existing businesses already thrive, so why do we need to double the density to achieve a rooftop quota? The area can already support retail.
- There's a fine line between making a development not profitable.

### **Discussion Prompt #2:**

***Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?***

- Would be helpful to have a viewshed analysis. Other parcels beyond the neighborhood centers may be appropriate, depending on the view impacts.
- By a show of hands, five of the seven participants agreed that the current ordinance should remain in place.

## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

**December 11, 2017**

- Additional height should only be allowed in areas where it is agreed to through neighborhood/area planning
- Comment: think about E. Arapahoe. Another commented that those neighbors need to be part of those decisions.
- Expand the current ordinance in North Boulder to include the entire arts district.
- You need each community to back any changes – get them to articulate what their values are (all participants seemed to agree).
- Must work for the developer and the community.
- Focus on neighborhood plans- written by neighborhoods (e.g. Madison, WI has 40+ neighborhood plans).
- Table Mesa shopping center- the site is already constrained.
  - Another participant replied that any changes to Table Mesa would need to involve nearby neighbors. Increasing rents are pushing out tenants.
  - Regulations that are too onerous would make a project not pencil out. The current 40% threshold may be too high if no projects are coming in. Making the requirement too onerous will work against obtaining more affordable housing.
  - No cash in-lieu option – try to get the affordable housing units on site and pay attention to keeping the economics positive for the applicant.
  - Density could still be achieved in one or two stories.
- The participants briefly discussed the pros and cons of how we measure building height.
- Perhaps the city should purchase land and build more housing.
- The Pollard site works because it's not near a neighborhood.
- No more surface parking, which given land value is probably the only thing feasible anyway.
- Buildings should be more human scale with more consistent facades.
- Example of good building: Boulderado (beautiful), Google building (several participants agreed), Broadway & Canyon (some disagreed), CU buildings because ("it feels like Boulder").

### **Discussion Prompt #3:**

***The city typically requires 20% of the proposed number of housing units to be designated as affordable. The current height modification ordinance allows requests for additional height for projects that provide at least 40% of the floor area as affordable.***

***What do you think about these housing requirements and what are the most important things to consider when making this decision?***

- Participants combined this question with the discussion above.

### **Discussion Prompt #4:**

***The city is planning to examine how other community benefits may be incorporated into our review processes similar to the concept of affordable housing as we discussed today. Take a moment to review the list of community benefits in your handout. Which are the top two items we should be considering next? Why?***

**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**December 11, 2017**

| <b>Community Benefit</b>                             | <b>Comments</b>                                              | <b>“Votes”</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Affordable Commercial Space                          |                                                              | 4              |
| Space for the Arts                                   | Should be a standard requirement.                            | 3              |
| Land for Parks                                       | Should be a standard requirement.                            |                |
| Open Space                                           | Attractive, Functional.<br>Should be a standard requirement. | 2              |
| Environmental Protection                             | Should be a standard requirement.                            | 1              |
| Net Zero Buildings                                   | Should be a standard requirement.                            |                |
| Civic/Government Uses                                |                                                              |                |
| Special Needs (i.e. hospitals, senior housing, etc.) |                                                              | 2              |

**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**December 15, 2017**

**Participants**

- Male, Boulder Chamber
- Male, Developer
- Male, Planning Consultant
- Male, Commercial Property Owner
- Male, Commercial/Industrial Property Owner

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II

**Key Takeaways**

- Create incentives that the market will respond to and take away some of the regulatory barriers stopping projects. Make density for affordable units not count to the density calculation (everyone agreed).
- While there was a preference to return to the allowances for height modifications in all parts of the city, there was consensus that height modifications should be permitted in transit rich areas, multi-modal corridors, areas in the eastern part of the city, including the BVRC and industrial areas.

***General Comment: all responses below were generally made by one person, unless noted otherwise.***

**Discussion Prompt #1:**

***What criteria does the group think is most important when considering where to plan for taller buildings and allow height modification requests up to 55 feet?***

- The method of calculating the height measurement is very challenging. No one seems satisfied with how height is calculated. Natural grade needs to be better defined. Poor code provisions frustrate applicants and the community. Doesn't necessarily drive good outcomes.
- Need a definitive statement in the code about how we calculate natural grade.
- Civic Pad Rooftop deck: More clarity are appurtenances – In this case it was considered another floor/story. It's a community asset but not allowed and it doesn't seem to make sense.
- Can we allow elevator overruns or roof access?
- Explore what latitude we have without changing the charter.
- The code needs to be a bit more grounded in reality. For instance, a current airport annexation application is considered next to a residential area, even though its in the county...
- 100% affordable requirement (or generally a very high requirement) will not pencil out.
- "We don't have an affordable housing crisis, we have a housing diversity crisis."
- Middle income housing is in short supply.
- Most criticism is about the boxiness of buildings and architectural qualities.
- Examples of important buildings that are inhibited by the moratorium:
  - Ball Aerospace
- Consider criteria about economic benefits
- Providing housing is a community benefit by itself.

## Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group

December 15, 2017

- We need multi-family housing. Per capita, we've built much less than other communities.
- Encourage more housing by adjusting the code for more residential/multifamily
- Code discourages good design.
- People providing market rate housing shouldn't have to jump through so many hoops. It's so much easier to build SFD in the code. Incentivize MFD.

### Discussion Prompt #2:

***Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?***

- Eliminate height restrictions and go back to the citywide requests. The current process with board review and CC call up already works.
- Start at Folsom or 28<sup>th</sup> street, going east.
- Encourage people to convert property to mixed use or residential through incentives (density bonus, etc.)
- We're creating more regulations when we're trying to get more housing.
- We need use-appropriate housing options.
- We have the tools to regulate this as is. Don't shoot ourselves in the foot by overregulating.
- We're afraid of losing some control in the future, even though we have criteria. A blanket moratorium creates more barriers.
- Policy makers need an education about how affordable housing actually works, particularly about how projects are financing.
- Capital providers are siloed in terms of what they will provide- they generally won't fund three uses in a single building. Projects would generally need to have a separate building for affordable housing. You also need scale (e.g. at least 40 units).
- Map suggestions: Reverse it by showing city limits more clearly. Show the areas where it is not allowed. Cover everything 30<sup>th</sup> street west.
- Consider areas in east part of the city.
- Transit rich locations and light industrial areas.
- Continuing ordinance shoots ourselves in the foot. We won't have the density to make projects work. Go back to citywide.
- Limiting height will also lead to more expensive commercial space- businesses will need to move away.
- Flatirons industrial park: could relax standards here.
- Community leaders need to understand that our code hasn't adapted to new technologies.
- There are a lot of bites at the apple.
- No low-income people are clamoring for more regulations.
- Consider areas it should not apply: Gunbarrel, TVAP II, transit corridors, flatirons business park,. Some of these areas are self-mitigating for impacts.
- Boulder junction – is a highly calibrated plan that this ordinance could mess with that.
- We missed lots of opportunities for more housing.
- Consider every industrial zone – no limitations. 40', coupled with the 25' measurement, is very limiting.
- The current ordinance has plenty of opportunities to say no.
- More height can lead to benefits.



**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**December 15, 2017**

- Limiting height is not good planning and will ultimately lead in fewer housing/community benefits.
- Include The Village, Arapahoe village, all of the BVRC, Diagonal Plaza
- Consider texture and identity, not just a bunch of tall buildings.
- Consider brownfield development – cleaning up the site would also be a great benefit.

**Discussion Prompt #3:**

***The city typically requires 20% of the proposed number of housing units to be designated as affordable. The current height modification ordinance allows requests for additional height for projects that provide at least 40% of the floor area as affordable.***

***What do you think about these housing requirements and what are the most important things to consider when making this decision?***

- What stopping these projects from moving forward.
  - Reconsider net vs. gross FAR. Affordable housing should have all the benefits of gross calculations.
  - Consider parking minimums
  - Open Space minimums
  - Process timeframe – even going from 2 to 1 year.
- BR-1 zone is a suburban typology with its open space requirements – not geared towards housing
- Don't have the inclusionary housing units count in the density calculation as an incentive.
- Expand housing variety, not just affordable.
- Make density for affordable units not count to the density calculation (everyone agreed)
- Make sure there's amenities available for the residents of the development.
- Open space requirement is too suburban of a requirement.

**Discussion Prompt #4:**

***The city is planning to examine how other community benefits may be incorporated into our review processes similar to the concept of affordable housing as we discussed today. Take a moment to review the list of community benefits in your handout. Which are the top two items we should be considering next? Why?***

- LEAD commissioning
- Electric car charging
- Should provide a menu of options (like Austin)
- Architectural texture
- Something that creates a mobility center that's allows people to use more transit.
- Just people next to a transit center should allow for more height, not just money out of the applicants' pocket.
- Facilities that are critical to the community.
- Research and scientific value.
- Projects that include environmental clean up
- Gondola construction.

**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
**December 18, 2017**

**Participants**

- Male, Construction Industry
- Male, Commercial Property Owner
- Male, Commercial Property Owner
- Female, Designer/Project Manager
- Male, Designer/Planning Board member

**Staff Present**

- Karl Guiler, Senior Planner
- Phil Kleisler, Planner II

**Key Takeaways**

- The geographical, mapped-based approach to this project isn't appropriate – it should be performance based.
- Allowing some room to build taller will relieve pressures elsewhere on a site to allow community amenities like public art.
- Give architects the room to design beautiful buildings with varying roof designs.
- Increased fees and more restrictions only makes products more expensive for the consumer- whether that's a home buyer or retail tenant. Developers keep the same profit margin. In fact, some property owners profit from increased fees because their existing land becomes more valuable.
- All participants agreed that topographically challenged sites must be considered.
- Ground the Land Use Code in finance. Consider the challenges of financing mixed use buildings and the constraints presented by the current ordinance.

***General Comment: all responses below were generally made by one person, unless noted otherwise.***

**Discussion Prompt #1:**

***What criteria does the group think is most important when considering where to plan for taller buildings and allow height modification requests up to 55 feet?***

- Consider highest and best use of the site. There are companies, like Ball Aerospace, that define Boulder and not letting them even ask for a height modification seems ill advised.
- The Transit Village seems like a place where we can naturally have taller buildings. We'll never please everyone – e.g. Transit Village perfectly matches the public process but there are still people that don't like it.
- Don't limit it to specific areas because there are others where it may make sense to build higher (e.g. doesn't block views, etc.)
- A mapped-based approach, like the current ordinance, seems very haphazard.
- Go beyond affordable housing and clearly state what are we trying to accomplish.
- If height continues to be this restrictive we'll never see another pitched roof in our lifetime.
- Consider sites with non-opposing views and that have opportunities for flood mitigation. For example, what if an owner received an additional height allowance for removing structures from the floodplains.

## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

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- Would rather not see islands of areas. That seems like spot zoning.
- Geographically looking at this doesn't make sense at all.
- Some modifications shouldn't need to be asked, like residential decks.
- Consider topographically-challenged site (all participants agreed)
- Consider the highest and best use and design.
- Revisit definition of height to make it more about the public realm (e.g. street frontage).
- Varying of roof forms should be written into the code.
- Go back to the previous code language permitting height modifications anywhere.
- Problem with the 2015 and 2016 city surveys – the language was biased.
- Hospital buildings need 55' because of unique needs (like generators, etc.) Keeping affordable medical care affordable is a huge community benefit.
- Any housing, regardless if it's affordable, is a community benefit.
- Underground parking requirement wouldn't work. Above ground parking can be repurposed in the future.
- Codes need to allow some profitability with sites in order from them to redevelop.
- Call the landowners of the neighborhood and regional centers to ask what it would take to redevelop their sites.
- Adjacency to transit system is important.
- Having to process a special ordinance with a site review (to allow 55') would be very political.
- We could lose Ball Aerospace if we limit their building height.
- The JCC building turned out well and received a height modification.
- Eads/Golden Bluffs isn't a good design.
- It's less about height and more about the character and feel.
- More review processes don't lead to a better building. "Architects can't be architects in Boulder" – they're micromanaged.
- Washington Village is an example of poor design.
- Allow for innovative architecture – we're too scared to innovate. Allow for building over easements like in other places. The Commons building is a good example.
- Be clear about what really matters – tell the architects and developers that. Then don't micromanage them.
- Only owners of small pieces of land can afford to redevelop here. Allow height modifications for smaller projects. This would also lead to be more locally development projects, as the larger (greater than five acres) sites need backing from places like New York City and San Francisco.
- Some buildings may be nicer a little set back from the street.
- "Is our highest community priority being able to see the mountains in that 30 seconds of driving past a building?"
- Make the building frontage textured and wonderful.
- Are we pushing buildings too close to the road?
- Envision this more as a garden city.
- Park County has a nice rotating public art system. If we don't like it, we'll never get rid of it.
- Going higher could free up space for public art, greenspace and civic uses. Shorter buildings results in them being more spread out over a site, which limits room for other amenities.
- Can we join Douglas County public art program?

## **Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**

**December 18, 2017**

- There's a lot of fear about "destroying Boulder", which leads us to not be innovative.
- We should reach out to neighborhood center owners to see what would work on the site.
- We need innovation in roof lines.
  - Good roofs: Christy Sports.
  - We should encourage solar, green, cantilever, curved...
  - We should assemble a list of cool roof types (look for funky).
- Technical Issue: We are currently preventing people from doing solar PV roofs on carports.
- Neighborhood support- what if it had 100% neighborhood support for a height modification?
- Diagonal Crossing is an important case study – 55 feet should be permitted there.
- Reach out to Ball Aerospace about the project.
- We want to allow a refreshing of buildings – we get a better new product (e.g. energy, design, etc.) – and a height modification ban stops this.

### **Discussion Prompt #2:**

***Based on that criteria, where specifically do you feel that taller buildings would be most appropriate?***

- Colorado to Iris along 28<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Group seemed to agree that a corridor approach is preferable.
- Consider Diagonal Plaza and allow 55' - Council wants to redevelop this.
- Don't pursue geographical restrictions- It should be performance based.

### **Discussion Prompt #3:**

***The city typically requires 20% of the proposed number of housing units to be designated as affordable. The current height modification ordinance allows requests for additional height for projects that provide at least 40% of the floor area as affordable.***

***What do you think about these housing requirements and what are the most important things to consider when making this decision?***

- We shouldn't have the 40% floor area for affordable housing requirement.
- This seems like extortion.
- If it's truly a community value we should tax ourselves. We're just making someone else pay for this. Another agreed, and commented that this is basically taxing new residents (because increased costs are carried onto the buyers).
- Housing and height are too separate things – maybe if it's a housing building. Not medical, industrial, etc.
- Commercial is already being penalized by the impact fees.
- Increased costs will make everything more expensive – and will be passed along to tenants and everyone else in the community.
- Several group participants own small business and commented that they are not hiring or moving to a larger space because of rents. It really impacts people's personal and professional life. It makes people work in Denver and then commute.
- More requirements and fees puts more money in developer's pockets – their land gets more valuable.

## Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group

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- Every time we manipulate a market the cost of living goes up and the development sees larger profits.
- We need more housing, not only affordable, to be a complete community.
- Please talk to small businesses about their experiences.
- Only one project has used the current housing requirement for height modifications – it's not working. Housing in a mixed-use development just doesn't work.
- The 40% floor area requirement for affordable housing doesn't work, even when site development is maxed out.
- Ownership in mixed use projects makes financing a challenge, even for mortgages after the building is built.
- Fix construction defects law.
- I can't think of a single mixed-use building with affordable housing. It needs to be owned by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.
- The housing requirement could possibly work if it was a separate building, especially if the land is less expensive.
- Ground the code in finance.
- We should develop a pro forma for the 28<sup>th</sup> St corridor.
- Locals aren't building here anymore. This leads to outside firms building here, which isn't our goal.
- Mixed-use buildings would need to be condos, but those aren't going to be built given the construction defects law. Lakewood established some local protections.

### Discussion Prompt #4:

***The city is planning to examine how other community benefits may be incorporated into our review processes similar to the concept of affordable housing as we discussed today. Take a moment to review the list of community benefits in your handout. Which are the top two items we should be considering next? Why?***

| Community Benefit                                                                                                  | Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Affordable Commercial Space                                                                                        | Affordable commercial space – is an oxymoron. Doesn't exist in Boulder. Should say "subsidized" affordable space.<br><br>Has been done in Denver, but it hasn't been proven. It leads to the other space being more expensive. |
| Space for the Arts                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Land for Parks                                                                                                     | "Support" for parks instead of "land for parks".<br>Maintain and enhance what we have.                                                                                                                                         |
| Civic/Government Uses                                                                                              | Civic uses are important.<br>78% of land is owned by the gov. (200 sq miles of city/county open space)                                                                                                                         |
| <b>New:</b><br>Retain economic assets.<br>Allow existing taller buildings to be rebuilt because they'll be better. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**Building Height Code Amendment – Focus Group**  
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Historic preservation.

Consider environmental preservation (going taller to preserve land).

Anything that mitigates floodplain issues (e.g. getting buildings out of the floodplain).

In many cases, height is a community benefit.

JCC/Civic/Churches

Public Art Space

- Programming
- Funding
- Like Douglas County
- Rotating Art

Bigger setbacks with art.

Innovation in rooflines

- Solar
- Green
- Slanted
- Pitched
- Cantilever
- Curved
- Pitched

### **Meeting with Twin Peaks neighbors 1.19.2018**

- Gunbarrel residents are considered by other Boulderites as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens / Gunbarrel is the step child of Boulder
- Concern about the larger size of the Gunbarrel Center area where height modifications are possible compared to other geographic areas within Appendix J
- Perception that in order to protect the views of those in Boulder proper or west of Broadway, development should be focused in Gunbarrel area
- Why didn't Gunbarrel Center provide an amphitheater like the plan said it would?
- Plans need to have teeth and be implemented / plans should be enforceable like ordinances
- Community benefit should be determined by the neighborhood and how it benefits the neighborhood where it is built / Community benefit must benefit those in the surrounding neighborhoods and not impact views
- Traffic and parking impacts need to be factored into any code changes
- Traffic dynamics need to be updated and not be based on outdated information – especially along Lookout and 63<sup>rd</sup> where it is already become hazardous
- There are very few places to recreate in Gunbarrel
- Need more publicly accessible open spaces / the golf course is not public
- Some industrial sites may be opportunity sites for more development
- There needs to be better transit options in Gunbarrel
- We need to limit growth in Boulder....we can't subways to get everyone around like in other cities