



**Future of Recreation Centers**

**Window 1 - Engagement Summary**

**Overview**

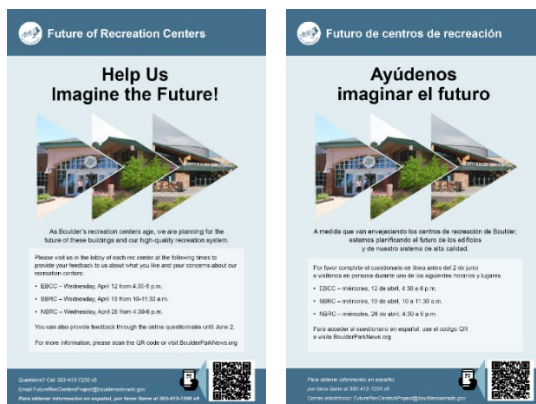
Staff launched the first engagement for the Future of Recreation Centers from April - June 2023 to align with preliminary project steps discussed by council during their May 25 study session.

As the first step of engagement in this project, staff aimed to inform and consult community members during this window as defined in [the City of Boulder Engagement Strategic Framework](#). The communications informed community members about the project and engagement methods consulted them about their broader priorities for the system of recreation centers. As scope, timeline and funding is developed, future engagement will focus on more specifics.

**Communication Methods**

- BPR Eblast (~23,320 people)– March 29, April 19, and May 17
- Emails to existing SBRC list (182 people) – March 31
- Week of March 27 Webpage Launched (3,147 visits to this webpage, with 2,532 unique visits and one visit in Spanish since launch)
- Week of April 6 - Posters hung in each center
- Week of May 1 - Posters updated at each center
- Email to project group (122 people signed up so far) – April 10, April 14, June 15, July TBD
- Social Media (Twitter [7,720 followers], Facebook [6,100 followers], Instagram [4,900 followers]) - March 31, April 10, April 17, April 24, May 23, May 30
- Next Door posts [City of Boulder account has 59,000 members]– April 27, May 8, May 24
- We are BPR! Staff newsletter – April 7, April 21
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – February 24, June 26, July 24
- City Council Study Session – May 25

Picture 1: Future of Recreation Centers Poster advertising online and in-person questionnaire





## Engagement Method: Questionnaire

Given the early stage of this project or projects, staff asked broad, open-ended questions through a community questionnaire. This allowed community members to share their current likes, current dislikes, future hopes and concerns without any pre-defined categories or priorities from staff.

Community members responded to the following four questions in-person and online over the course of 2 months:

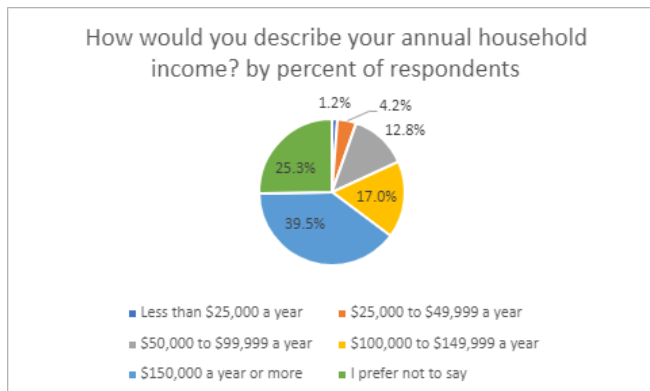
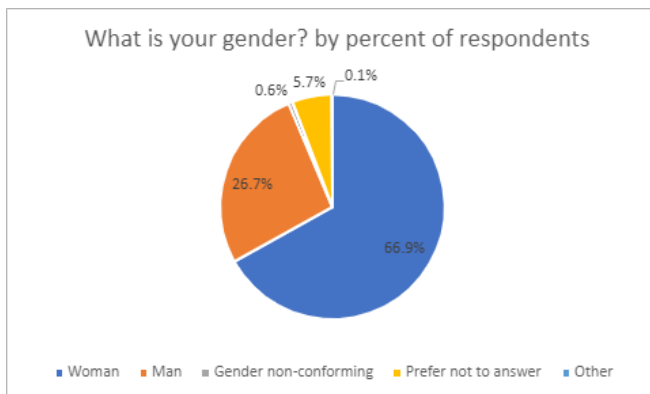
1. What do you like most about the current Boulder recreation centers?
2. What is your biggest concern about the current Boulder recreation centers?
3. What are you most excited about for the future of Boulder’s recreation centers?
4. What is your biggest concern about the future of Boulder’s recreation centers?

## Online Responses

An online questionnaire was available on the project website from April 6 to June 2, 2023. Over 1,270 community members responded to this online option. All answers were anonymous. The questionnaire was available in Spanish, but only English responses were received.

Based on the city-standard optional demographic questions, demographics of respondents were:

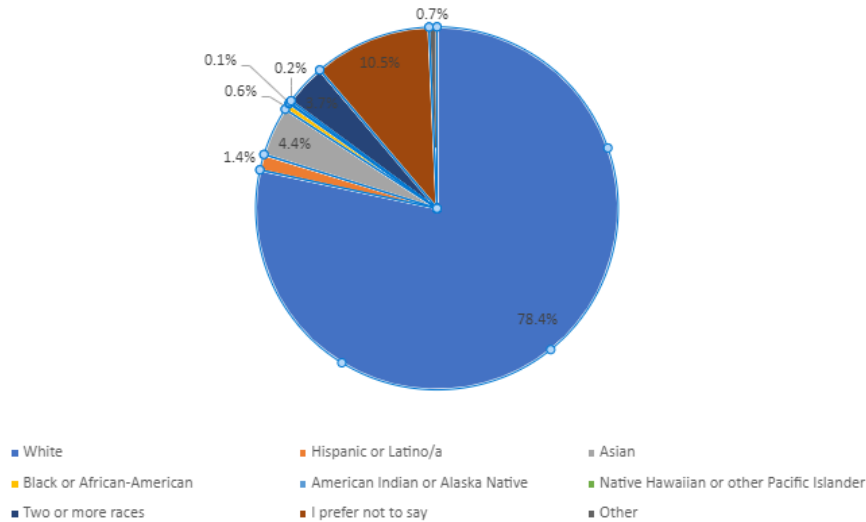
Figures 1-4:



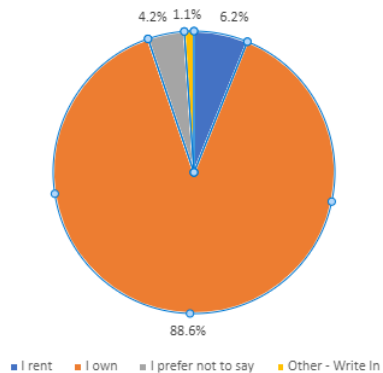


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What race or ethnicity do you identify with most? by percent of respondents



Do you rent or own your home? by percent of respondents



### *In-person Responses*

In addition to the online opportunity, staff hosted three in-person sessions, one at each of the centers. These were intended to be informal opportunities for community members to ask questions and provide feedback while staff provided basic information and listened to community input.

At each session staff shared basic information about the Future of Recreation Centers project from the website, signed interested community members up for project emails and collected responses to the questionnaire through post-it notes on large posters.

While these sessions were publicized, staff also approached community members in the lobby who may have been coming to use the center for their normal workout and were not aware of the sessions ahead of time. Overall, staff talked to approximately 100 community members during the three sessions.

Demographic information was not collected at in-person sessions.



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- **EBCC:** On Wednesday, April 12 from 4:30 – 6:00 p.m., staff held in-person session in the lobby.
  - Staff talked to approximately 50 people community members during this session.
  - This time was chosen given the generally high drop-in usage of the center at this time as well as use of the pool by swim team groups.
  - While many of the categories echoed those heard in the online survey, there was a high interest in the warm water pool, children’s pool amenities and lap lane availability.
- **SBRC:** An in-person session was hosted on Wednesday, April 19 from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. in the lobby.
  - About 30 people attended and provided feedback.
  - This time was chosen based on higher usage of the center at this time by drop-in pickleball play, adult exercise class and Fairview student during off-periods. Additionally, the inclusion of a morning time, was meant to capture demographics that may not have been able to attend the other afternoon. Staff received feedback that other interest residents close to SBRC were unable to attend in the morning and that residents were most likely to attend the in-person session closest to them rather than travel to other centers.
  - Staff heard a lot of passion for the South facility and community. Community members shared concern that SBRC would close and that current attendance numbers at South don’t reflect the potential of the center, especially to serve the school kids, young kids and seniors in the nearby areas.
- **NBRC:** The final in-person session was hosted on Wednesday, April 26 from 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. in the lobby.
  - About 20 community members talked with staff.
  - This time was chosen based on generally high drop-in usage of the center at this time and gymnastics program timing. Staff was surprised with lower drop-in traffic than usual for this day and time.
  - Participants indicated an overall satisfaction with many of the amenities at NBRC, especially the gymnastics programming. Several south boulder residents attended the NBRC session to discuss concerns about SBRC.



**Help Us Imagine the Future!**  
¡Ayúdenos imaginar el futuro!

As Boulder’s recreation centers age, we are planning for the future of these buildings and our recreation system.

- Participate in person today or complete the online questionnaire by June 2
- Scan the QR code or visit [BoulderParksRecreation.org](http://BoulderParksRecreation.org)

A medida que van envejeciendo los centros de recreación en Boulder, estamos planeando el futuro de las edificaciones y de nuestro sistema de recreación.

- Participe en persona hoy o complete el cuestionario en línea antes del 2 de junio
- Use el código QR o visite [BoulderParksRecreation.org](http://BoulderParksRecreation.org)

As facilities age, their recreation services, and users, they become more expensive to maintain.

The City of Boulder Facilities and Fees Department (F&F) is now exploring innovative financial solutions to address the building needs.

The success of the financial exploration in 2023 will determine the next steps and bring for future renovations in 2024 and beyond.

Disponible en español en [BoulderParksRecreation.org](http://BoulderParksRecreation.org)  
 Scan the QR code or visit [BoulderParksRecreation.org](http://BoulderParksRecreation.org)  
 Para obtener información en español, nos puede llamar al 303-441-7200 ext. 3000

Picture 2: Community members respond to the questionnaire in person at NBRC.

Picture 3: Future of Recreation Centers introductory board displayed at in-person sessions



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### Analysis

#### *Methodology*

To analyze the open-ended responses, staff used a standard practice of qualitative coding. This practice, also known as [thematic analysis](#), involves identifying categories and assigning them to each response.

A group of 4 staff and 2 interns developed categories based on the top items mentioned in 150 randomly selected answers. These key categories were then refined and used to code the remaining answers as defined in the following way:

#### **15 categories emerged (in alphabetical order)**

- **Access:** Availability of the centers in terms of hours, disability access, and inclusivity
- **Community:** Gathering space for friends, neighbors and other community members. A welcoming and friendly space.
- **EBCC:** Related to the East Boulder Community Center.
- **Environment:** Comments for and against sustainability, environmental-friendly policies and the carbon-footprint of recreation centers.
- **Facilities and Equipment:** Amenities and equipment that are part of the recreation center buildings.
  - Includes Pools, Courts, Gymnastics Gym, Weightrooms, Locker Rooms, etc.
- **Locations:** The proximity of a center or variety of locations of the centers
- **NBRC:** Related to North Boulder Recreation Center.
- **None:** This was reserved for folks that mentioned they would do not like any part of the recreation centers, had no concerns or no ideas to share for the future.
- **Programming and Services:** This includes drop-in classes, registered opportunities, and events for patrons of all ages.
- **SBRC:** Related to South Boulder Recreation Center.
- **Staff:** Comments about individual staff or overall staffing.
- **Seniors:** Programming and access for seniors specifically, including mentions of the senior centers.
- **Safety:** Both positive feelings of safety at the rec center and safety concerns.
- **Youth and Families:** Programming, access and amenities for youth and families including teens and young children.

For example, one community member wrote about their hopes for the future of the recreation centers (question 3): “Newer and modern facilities and more classes available.” This response is categorized as both facility and programming related. Additional examples and combinations of themes are included below.

Staff and interns then coded the total 5,245 responses from both online and in-person questionnaires. Most responses included more than one category, so staff coded for the top 4 categories in each as applicable.



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While staff removed identical duplicate answers in 3 cases, more than one answer from an email address was accepted when categories were different. Since this was not designed to be a statistically valid survey, staff wanted to gather as much information from the community as possible, even when information was provided through several responses.

### *Computer Generated Coding*

IT data staff wrote code to analyze the responses to provide additional insight. The number of responses was on the small side for the amount of data typically analyzed which may have led to less accurate results. Additionally, the computer analysis may have missed other subtleties like “South” and “SBRC” referring to the same facility.

In alphabetical order the themes found via automated analysis were:

- Access
- Closures and future outlook
- Community
- Courts
- Equipment
- Family access
- Future availability
- Opening and availability
- Pools
- Upgrades

The categories identified by the computer did closely reflect those found by manual methods. For example, the response “[I like] Swimming pools with children areas. Gymnastics. Free weight training room” was coded by the computer as “Equipment” while the manual category assigned was “Facilities and Equipment”.

Due to the limitations of computer analysis in this case and the similarity to categories found manually, staff used the manual coding results in preparing the final engagement summary analysis.

### **Results by Category**

#### *Overall frequency*

Respondents mentioned the physical facilities (features of the buildings, permanent equipment, etc.) most out of the identified categories. Greater detail about the types of facilities and amenities that were mentioned most is included below.

The second most-mentioned category was South Boulder Recreation Center (SBRC). Staff heard that several additional posts on Next Door and elsewhere were made by SBRC neighbors regarding the

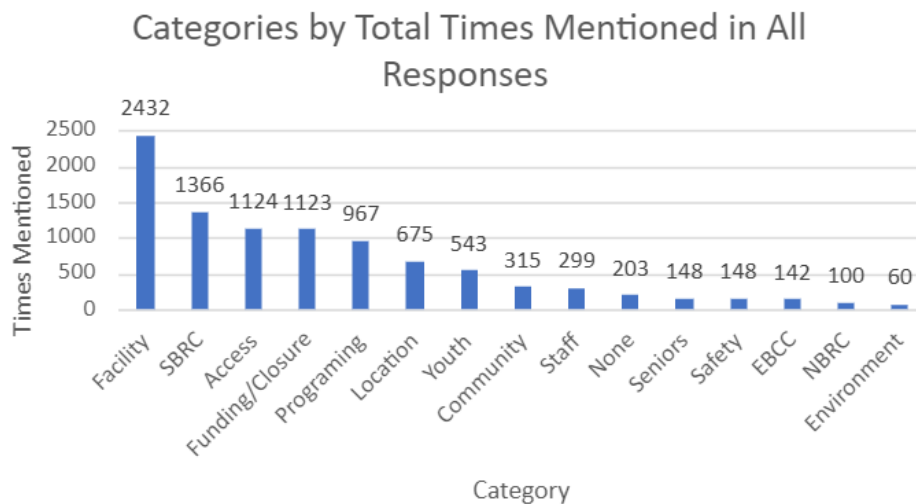


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questionnaire and fears of closure. In addition to the recent trouble with the pool and other parts of the building that have made this facility stand-out from the other two, the additional community-led communication may have increased the response rate in this neighborhood for this questionnaire.

The following chart details the most mentioned categories over all responses. These rankings can be broken out by question. Though the top themes remain consistent. Facilities is the most mentioned topic for all questions except for the fourth question regarding future concerns in which closure and lack of funding was highest.

Figure 5:



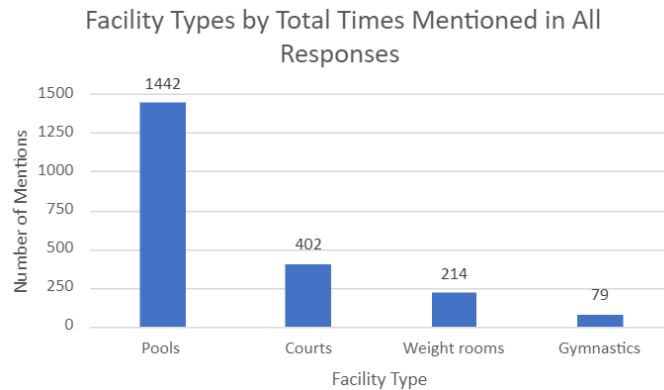
### Category details

#### Facilities

- Many community members shared an overall satisfaction with the amenities offered and appreciation of having a variety of amenities
- A primary concern shared is that the buildings need or would benefit from updates.
- Facilities in neighboring communities are more modern and/or offer more amenities.
- The most common facility types or amenities mentioned were pools, courts, weight rooms, and gymnastics (see Figure X below)
- For aquatics, responses mirror previous information gathered in both the 2015 Aquatics Feasibility Study and [the 2022 Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#).
  - Lap lane availability in terms of total hours and crowding during current peak hours was a primary concern.
  - Community members shared that they valued kids swimming, youth swim teams, swimming lessons, family pool time and aquatic features designed for youth - both those existing and hopes for expanded and modernized future facilities and services.
  - Warm water wellness and other wellness amenities such as saunas and steam rooms are also valued and desired by community members.



Figure 6:



*[I like the...] "Weight room at East. Gymnastics at North. Dance classes at South. They are not as nice as Lafayette, Louisville, or Arvada."*

*"They need to be refurbished. They are out of date and weight rooms and machine areas are small and cramped. Bathrooms and locker rooms need to be updated. Pools are also out of date."*

*"[My biggest concern is] More people needing pool space and not nearly enough pool space being available."*

### **SBRC**

- Residents largely valued the proximity of SBRC to their homes and the ability to access a recreation center by a short walk or bike.
- The condition of the building has caused frustration and concern that funding is not being allocated for needed renovation. The primary concern was that SBRC will close as elaborated in the funding and closure category below.
- The community feel and the function of the space as a community gathering space was strongly valued.
- Community members shared a desire for more youth and family programming, especially due to neighboring schools.
- Appreciation of senior services and desire for their expansion was also mentioned.

*"I appreciate SBRC's proximity to the busy and densely populated south Boulder series of neighborhoods. I appreciate the thoughtful and attentive staff. I appreciate that students use the facility after school."*

*"We LOVE the south boulder Rec centre. Please do not close it! My son plays basketball there in the winter. There is no other place for him to play with his friends indoors. The community needs this space."*

*"SBRC has seemingly been ignored and it shows."*





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### Access

- Community members described the centers as affordable.
- Several community members shared concern that prices may increase, therefore becoming unaffordable.
- The limited hours, especially following the pandemic, pose challenges and cause frustration.

*"They are reasonably priced and there are so many great things to do there!"*

*"[I am concerned about] The horrible hours. They never seem to be open when I want them to be."*

### Programming

- Community members appreciate the variety and quality of classes offered.
- Expansion of the number of classes offered and range of times they are offered were some of the most desired programming changes.
- Many respondents shared that they would like to see an increase in programs for youth as well as for seniors.
- Community members shared that a SBRC lacks programming which contributes to lower usage of the center.

*"The variety of evening walk-in classes. TRX, Bollywood Fitness, Zumba and Yoga are my favorites"*

*"I would actually like more drop in classes offered at later times (after a typical work day.) Some people may think the gyms are too crowded but I enjoy seeing so many people trying to be healthy & stay fit."*

### Locations

- Community members value the proximity of locations to their house.
  - This is especially prevalent in, although not limited to, those who mentioned SBRC specifically.
- Respondents appreciate having different facilities in different parts of town and the variety that 3 facilities offer.

*"I like the locations - NBRC is easily accessible by bus, which makes it a fun outing for me and my 1st grader. I live near Table Mesa and Broadway, so both EBRC and SBRC are very close by."*



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### Youth

- Community members shared appreciation for a variety of youth programming and equipment for youth, especially the pools at EBCC and NBRC.
- There is desire for more amenities for families, young children and teens across the system.
- Respondents who mentioned SBRC, often included that the center lacks amenities for youth and has the potential to serve a large number of youth and families if services were expanded.

*“Would love to see a space for teens—skate park, volleyball, hang out space that can be accessed for free”*

*“I'm concerned that there are not enough things for youth to do at the rec centers (north is the exception). Rec centers should be a place for kids to hang out and have safe, structured activities (and free play) to keep them out of trouble.”*

### Community

- Many respondents value the “community feel” of the recreation centers where all are welcome instead of a corporate or competitive gym atmosphere
- Many comments focused on the importance of having a space that serves as a community hub where people can meet each other and run into each other.

*“[I am concerned with] Ensuring they remain- as community anchors, for the good of the community”*

### Staff

- Community members shared many great comments with praise and appreciation about front desk staff, instructors and other staff.
- Respondents also shared frustration and concern about the management and staffing levels, especially lifeguards and concern that they are not being paid enough to attract staff.

*“The staff are always helpful and the facilities are generally clean.”*

*“[I am concerned] That facilities fall into disrepair or staffing shortages lead to fewer classes, open swim hours, etc.”*



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### None

- This was reserved for folks that mentioned they did not like any part of the recreation centers, had no concerns or no ideas to share for the future.
- The majority of responses in this category came from folks who had no dislikes of the current facilities or no concerns about the future.
- Some shared feeling that they did not have enough information about the project scope to share what they were most excited or concerned about for the future centers.

*"I am not sure what is being proposed."*

*"I like the way it is."*

*"Right now I am not excited about the future of any of the rec centers."*

### Seniors

- Community members appreciated the senior programs and senior centers.
- Many seniors mentioned that they appreciated discounted senior pricing through Silver Sneakers and other similar programs.
- Some expressed concern about a lack of senior programming or changes in the Senior Center at EBCC.

*"East Boulder is very user friendly with a terrific senior area."*

*"Many elderly people in Boulder use the East Rec Center for close proximity with the Senior Center. Often people use the facilities of both and without the rec center it will make life much more difficult. There are many other reasons like the warm pool and instructors to keep us safe."*

### Safety

- Community members shared that they felt that the recreation centers are safe places for youth and all community members.
- Some respondents are concerned that safety, especially at NBRC, has decreased due to presence of people experiencing homelessness and unwanted behaviors (drugs, conflicts in the lobby, etc.)

*"I'm concerned that there are not enough things for youth to do at the rec centers (north is the exception). Rec centers should be a place for kids to hang out and have safe, structured activities (and free play) to keep them out of trouble."*

*"[I am concerned about] transients using drugs on the property and safety of my child and employees"*



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### EBCC

- Community members expressed overall satisfaction with their experience of using EBCC though many shared the concern that the facility needed upgrading.
- Consistent with the full system, pools and aquatics were a much-mentioned category that people valued highly.

*“EBCC opened when I was 12, and the leisure pool plus slide was the coolest thing ever. It's held up well for 30 years, but it's old and North, Scott Carpenter, Lafayette, and Louisville all have better play options for kids. I'd be excited to see a renovated East leisure pool.”*

### NBRC

- Many community members expressed overall satisfaction with their experience of using NBRC though they shared the concern that facilities need upgrading.
- Respondents were grateful for the gymnastics programming, staff and facilities.
- As mentioned above, several respondents shared safety concerns.

*“The North Boulder Rec workout room is too small and has been.”*

*“[I like the] Kids pool and gymnastics at North”*

### Environment

- Several respondents appreciate modernizing buildings to make them more environmentally friendly
- A handful of comments shared concern that moving a closing a center would increase emissions related to more driving or concern that environmental elements might be the only criteria considered to the detriment of community benefits provided by the centers.

*“With 3 centers you can bike to them from most locations around the city. Climate change is the no.1 threat to society, so making a car free community possible is critical.”*