

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

"The outdoors is for all and it is more empowering when we create opportunities and support one another's voices, welcoming each other into our respective stories."

-José Gonzales, Founder of Latino Outdoors

INTRODUCTION

Time and again, Boulder residents have come together to support their natural lands through tax measures, volunteerism, planning processes, and so much more. This kind of meaningful, inclusive engagement is essential for future protection and enjoyment of our lands. Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) Department is committed to welcoming and involving all members our community, including youth, Spanish speakers, people experiencing disabilities, and other underserved populations.

As a pilot project for the City of Boulder's Engagement Strategic Framework, the process to develop the OSMP Master Plan was designed to help community members collaborate in an informed and predictable way.

To develop and evaluate the approach to engagement, city staff has worked with an OSMP Master Plan Process Committee. Made up of two members of City Council (Aaron Brockett and Mary Young), as well as two members of the Open Space Board of Trustees (Curt Brown and Tom Isaacson), the committee guided staff on creating and implementing an inclusive, transparent process for both community and staff engagement.

This appendix summarizes that two-year process, which began in August 2017 with the development of a project management plan (PMP). Council approved the PMP in January 2018, and the full engagement and planning process began soon thereafter.

A FOUNDATION OF INFORMATION

The Master Plan process launched in January 2018 with the release of the [System Overview report](#). This report and the strategic plans, reports, and scientific papers that have guided OSMP over the years act as a foundation for understanding our system and its legacy. This foundation of information grounds the Master Plan work in decades of OSMP research.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

Guided by the Process Committee, the OSMP Master Plan process sought to invite all people, regardless of their differences, to work together and create a rich, diverse environment of involvement, respect, community and connection. This approach to inclusive engagement - cultivating broader community support and greater credibility - is a cornerstone of the Master Plan approach. Inclusive engagement makes for a better Master Plan because the challenges facing our lands are complex. Strong strategies for the future require input from as many perspectives as possible.

To create an inclusive process, OSMP staff collaborated with partners on outreach efforts called micro-engagements. These in-person methods reached people where they were - trailheads, libraries, housing communities, or conferences - rather than expecting them to come to us. This shift has allowed the department to think more critically about reaching a broader cross-section of our community, building deeper understandings of all who contribute to the stewardship and enjoyment of OSMP land.

Throughout the engagement process, OSMP staff enhanced existing partnerships and created new relationships with audiences of diverse backgrounds. Staff reached out to Spanish speakers, people experiencing disabilities, and youth to gather feedback. These efforts included engagements with more than 1,250 youth, 40 people experiencing disabilities, and 140 people from the Latinx community. We developed and worked with our partners to host inclusive events that anticipated and overcame barriers to participation.

With guidance from the Process Committee, we have:

- Engaged members of the public where they typically go, in addition to inviting them to traditional community workshops;
- Fostered relationships with underrepresented groups;

- Partnered with Growing Up Boulder (GUB) and the Youth Opportunities Advisory Board (YOAB) to engage with youth;
- Partnered with El Centro AMISTAD to engage with Spanish speakers and the Latinx community;
- Coordinated with several organizations to engage with people experiencing disabilities; and
- Made translation services and assistive devices available at workshops.

HOW WE LISTENED

Thousands of individuals were intentionally and thoughtfully heard through five distinct engagement windows (Figure A.1) to help build clear, collective agreements about the future of OSMP. In total:

- Members of the public submitted more than 10,000 comments;
- OSMP staff hosted seven community events and two drop-in listening sessions with a combined total of more than 900 attendees;
- Staff engaged over 1,400 people who are not typically heard from during engagement processes, including members of the Latinx community, people experiencing disabilities and youth; and
- More than 1,300 individuals completed and returned a mailed statistically valid survey in spring 2019.

In January 2018, the **First Engagement Window** kicked off with an open house followed by a celebratory event that sought to engage all ages and aspects of the community around their values and the future of OSMP. This engagement window included creative feedback opportunities, including a community art project. Local musicians Jeff and Paige performed at this event, entertaining children and parents alike ([What We've Heard, 2019](#)). Micro-engagements also kicked-off in the First Engagement Window. These engagements focused on engaging underrepresented groups through partnerships and channels they are already involved in. We concentrated on listening to community values, hopes, and concerns for the future of open space. Draft focus areas and values emerged from this community input, answering the question "What is it time to focus on now?"

Confirmation of these high-level focus areas occurred in the **Second Engagement Window** through an online questionnaire. City Council then approved these five focus areas in July 2018.

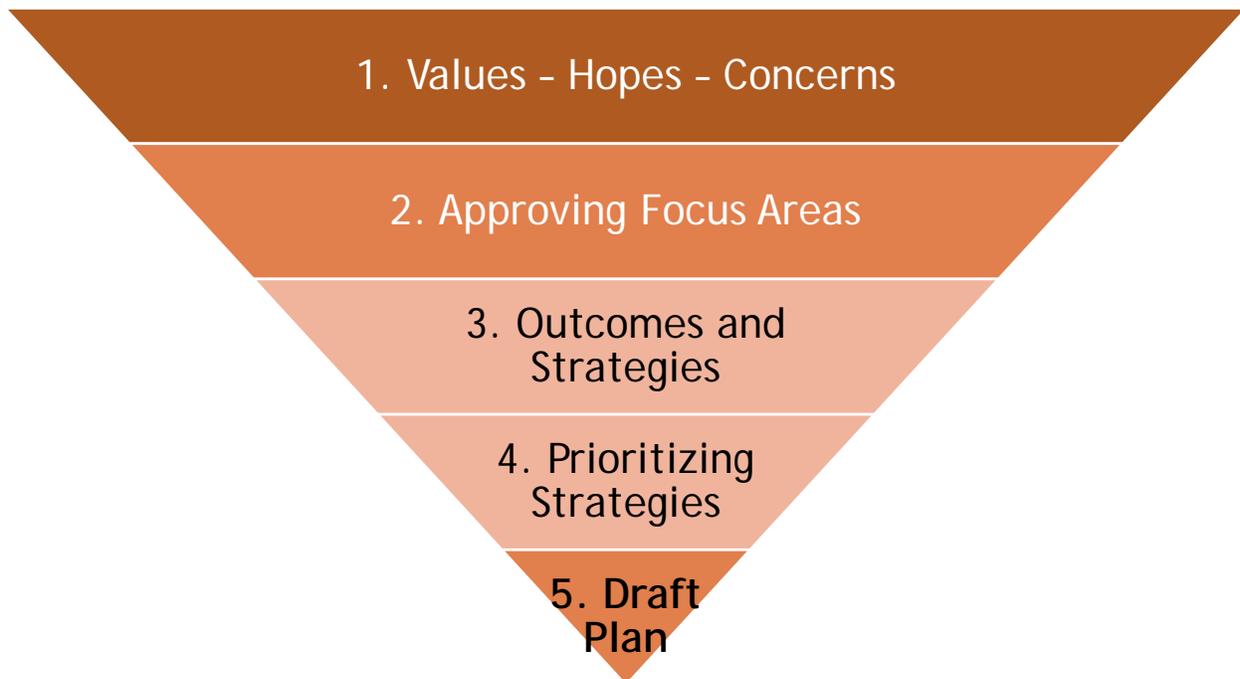


Figure A.1 Engaging the community through five distinct engagement windows.

OSMP staff conducted a series of three public workshops in an iterative process that sought input from staff, stakeholders, and the community during the **Third Engagement Window**. We shared focus area research and trends at these meetings to support brainstorming around preliminary outcomes and strategies for four of the five focus areas. Online questionnaires also reached those not able to attend these workshops. A series of study sessions with OSBT guided refinements to these outcomes and strategies. The fifth focus area covers financial sustainability and was included in the subsequent engagement window.

After more than a year's worth of consensus-building, the **Fourth Engagement Window** focused on funding and prioritization across the first four focus areas. During this window, the community provided valuable input and guidance on which strategies the department should prioritize over the next decade. For the first time, all outcomes and strategies for the first four focus areas were shared together to support prioritization, along with draft outcomes and strategies to advance financial sustainability. Through a public workshop and micro-engagements, community members helped prioritize how their tax dollars for OSMP will be spent over the next

decade. A statistically valid survey was mailed to 6,000 households in the Boulder area and a companion version of the survey was also available online for the general public.

With the goal of gaining City Council approval of the final OSMP Master Plan in September 2019, the purpose of the **Fifth Engagement Window** was to gather community feedback on the draft Master Plan. This feedback helped staff understand how well community concerns and aspirations have been reflected in the draft plan and what refinements were needed prior to its finalization and approval. Opportunities to share feedback included an online comment form, drop-in listening sessions with staff, and public comment at the June 12th OSBT meeting.

WHAT WE HEARD

Through all five engagement windows, the longstanding community values of enjoying and protecting nature rang loudly through the thousands of public comments received. Love for the land, often passed down through generations, has created a strong and lasting heritage of environmental stewardship, outdoor recreation, and working landscapes. This legacy has united community members, staff, OSBT and Council around a shared set of open space values that are inherent in both the City Charter and the OSMP Master Plan. Full analyses of the input received during each of the five engagement windows can be found in the [relevant engagement summary reports](#). Below are some of the themes that emerged from each of the engagement windows.

Feedback from about 2,000 people around community values, hopes and concerns, gathered during the **First Engagement Window** confirmed that Boulder's open space City Charter purposes are still extremely relevant today. When asked why OSMP is important via a questionnaire the top three items identified as topics of interest by respondents were "connections with nature, visitor facilities and enjoyment, and natural resources." From this and similar feedback received through micro-engagements, public events, and online opportunities, five focus areas and supporting value statements emerged that reflect the individual and collective strength of those original City Charter purposes.

A total of more than 450 responses to an online questionnaire during the **Second Engagement Window** demonstrated overall support for the focus areas. Sixty percent of questionnaire respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the five focus areas were the right management themes to guide OSMP, with an additional 25 percent reporting neutrality. Respondents were also asked to evaluate each focus area according to how important it is for the future of OSMP. These results

demonstrated even stronger support for each focus area, with each of them perceived to be fairly important, important or very important.

During the **Third Engagement Window** community members submitted more than 2,650 written responses through online and print questionnaires, social media and emails, and on sticky notes at a series of community workshops. The goal of this engagement window was to gather community feedback on the preliminary outcomes and strategies developed to support four of the focus areas based on previous community and staff feedback, existing OSMP policies, and best practices in open space land management. Financial Sustainability, the fifth focus area, was included in the subsequent engagement window. The following themes emerged as important from public feedback according to each of the four focus areas:

FOCUS AREA	THEMES
Ecosystem Health and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of open space and wildlife • Wildlife and species introduction • Fire • Education • Volunteers • Impacts to the natural environment from visitor use
Agriculture Today and Tomorrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local food systems • Habitat preservation and ecological integration • Water rights, in-stream flows, and irrigation • Partnerships • Resilient future • Education
Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of visitor experiences, including bike connections and dog-walking opportunities • Sustainable trails and facilities • Trail maintenance • Increasing visitation • Connections with nature • Inclusion
Community Connection, Education and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill-building • Education • Volunteers • Inclusion • Partnerships • Youth • Indigenous populations • Historic preservation

In the **Fourth Engagement Window**, community members helped prioritize the strategies for the first four focus areas and refine outcomes and strategies for the final focus area, Financial Sustainability. Over 4,000 community residents informed draft funding priorities and budget targets through input provided via a public workshop, a statistically valid survey, an online open participation survey, and micro-engagements.

Across all focus areas, the community generally emphasized the need to take care of what we have, placing less emphasis on new acquisitions or trails. Input has also confirmed the primary importance of ecosystem health and resilience, as well as community values supporting recreation and connections with open space.

In both community surveys, at a community workshop, and through in-person micro-engagements staff asked community members the following question:

City staff must consider competing priorities to develop a budget for OSMP management. What if it were up to you? With \$5 increments being the smallest amount you might use, if you had \$100 to spend, how would you allocate those funds across the 10 management activities below?

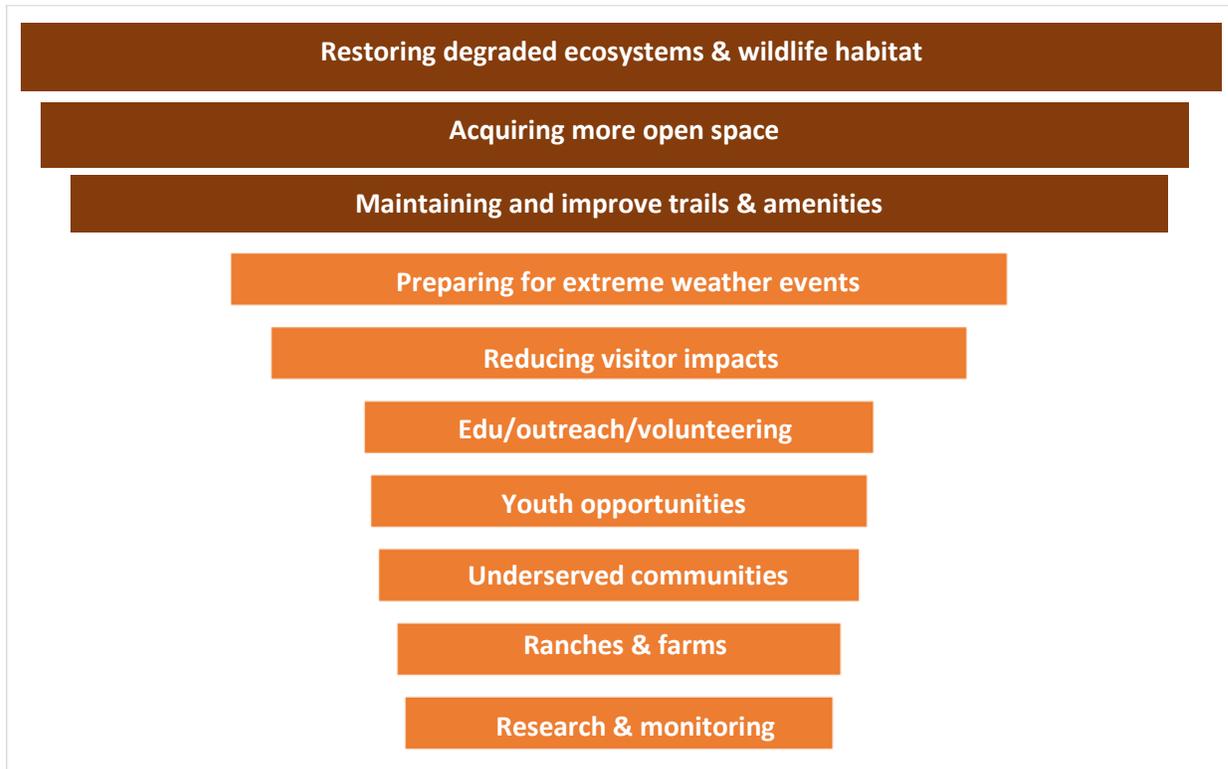
Those management activities and the results are presented below in two formats:

- 1) Table A.1 compares the average allocation of funds for each activity.
- 2) Figure A.2 illustrates relative importance of each activity using findings from the statistically valid survey only.

For both, the top three activities are shown in color to demonstrate both the variety and similarity of findings across engagement platforms.

	COMMUNITY WORKSHOP	ALL MICRO-ENGAGEMENTS	STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY	OPEN PARTICIPATION SURVEY
Restoring degraded ecosystems and wildlife habitat.	\$17.20	\$15.91	\$16.43	\$15.34
Maintaining and improving trails and visitor amenities.	\$15.00	\$9.77	\$15.67	\$18.73
Providing education, outreach and volunteer programs.	\$4.50	\$9.03	\$7.04	\$6.57
Engaging underserved communities, including the Latinx community and those experiencing disabilities.	\$9.10	\$10.70	\$6.65	\$5.03
Reducing visitor impacts to the natural environment in light of increased visitation trends.	\$12.30	\$8.84	\$9.61	\$10.79
Developing youth opportunities to spend more time in nature.	\$6.50	\$8.26	\$6.87	\$5.96
Maintaining and improving the condition of OSMP ranches and farms.	\$11.40	\$6.39	\$6.14	\$5.92
Acquiring more open space.	\$8.90	\$7.57	\$15.01	\$17.33
Researching and monitoring open space resources and trends.	\$7.80	\$7.54	\$5.92	\$5.38
Preparing for extreme weather events like flooding, fire and drought.	\$7.20	\$10.43	\$10.72	\$9.04

Table A.1: Average Allocation by Engagement Platform with Top Three in Orange for each Engagement Platform (2019 OSMP Master Plan Survey)



*Figure A.2: Relative Importance of Management Activities
with Top Three in Rust-Colored Boxes
(2019 OSMP Master Plan Survey)*

In total, community members consistently ranked the following two activities highly:

- restoring degraded ecosystems and wildlife habitat; and
- maintaining and improving trails and visitor amenities.

These findings are consistent with the level of importance residents assigned **Ecosystem Health and Resilience** and **Responsible Recreation, Stewardship and Enjoyment** respectively.

In addition, the following activities also emerged as important to residents:

- acquiring more open space;
- preparing for extreme weather events;
- engaging underserved communities, including the Latinx community and those experiencing disabilities; and
- reducing visitor impacts to the natural environment in light of increased visitation trends.

Source: 2019 OSMP Master Plan Survey

The survey also asked questions about certain topics in several ways to help staff and decision makers understand more depth and nuance in residents' preferences. For example, while residents ranked acquisitions third most important in the \$100 question, another question asked residents to help staff balance needs related to both conservation of existing lands and acquisition of new ones (Figure A.3). In this case, residents placed more emphasis on improving ecosystem health on existing lands over acquiring new lands. Together, these findings suggest that it is important to both continue our acquisition program and to emphasize the care and maintenance of all lands we own and acquire.

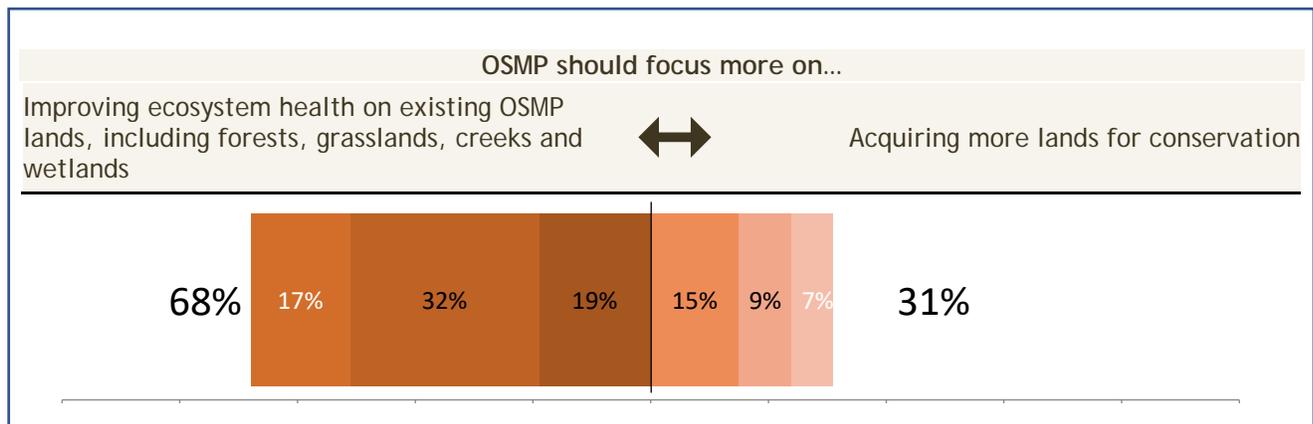


Figure A.3: Resident Preferences on Balancing Conservation of Existing Lands with Acquiring New Ones to Conserve (2019 OSMP Master Plan Survey)

The purpose of the **Fifth Engagement Window** was to gather feedback on the Draft Master Plan. Input from approximately 110 individuals or organizations was submitted via an online comment form, community listening sessions, emails to staff, OSBT and Council, social media, and public comment at the June 12th OSBT meeting. This feedback confirmed consistent themes heard throughout the process and validated the ways in which they had been addressed in the draft plan.

Themes included:

- Gratitude for an inclusive engagement process;
- Suggestions to adjust overall structure or outline;
- Suggestions to pull through or reference data and graphics from [System Overview Report](#) and other sources; and
- Suggestions to refine priorities.

These suggestions informed the development of the Final Master Plan.