2015 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan: Community Survey and Focus Groups
Summary Report

December 3, 2015

Prepared for:

City of Boulder
Boulder County

Prepared by:

RRC Associates
4770 Baseline Road, Ste. 360
Boulder, CO 80303
303/449-6558
www.rrcassociates.com

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes key findings from a “random sample” community opinion survey, an identical (but analyzed and reported separately) “open link” community survey open to all community members, and series of resident focus groups. This community input is intended to help guide and inform the 2015 update of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP), along with other community input being gathered via other means as part of the Plan update process.

The surveys and focus groups addressed a variety of topic areas that are important focus areas for the BVCP update, including community values, livability and growth management, design, neighborhoods, and related issues.

This report focuses primarily on the results of the “random sample” survey (given its more rigorous methodology) and focus groups. Following is an overview of these two study elements, including the methodology employed for each.

Additionally, the final chapter of this report provides a brief overview of the “open link” survey results, which have been kept strictly separate from the results of the random sample survey.

Random Sample Survey

As implied by its name, the “random sample” survey was conducted among a random sample of Boulder Valley residents, using a blend of mailback and online survey techniques.

A total of 6,000 survey invitations were mailed to a random sample of Boulder Valley households in September 2015, including households located in the City of Boulder and in unincorporated Area II and III. All households in the Boulder Valley were intended to be included in the sample frame, regardless of voter registration status, housing tenure, or other characteristics. Residents of the CU residence halls (zip code 80310) were excluded from the sample frame based on the City’s past experience of very low survey response rates, as well as past administrative challenges in getting accurate dorm resident lists.

Among this group of 6,000 households, a random sample of 2,000 households were sent a mailback survey with postage-paid return envelope, and were also provided with the option to complete the survey online instead via a password-protected survey site. The remaining 4,000 households were sent a postcard inviting them to take the survey online, using the same password-protected approach. The password requirement ensured that only one survey could be completed per household.

To ensure a random sample among residents of the household, recipients were asked to select the adult 18 years of age or older whose birthday most recently passed to take the survey. The survey instructions also included a note advising Spanish speakers to seek the assistance of an English-speaking household member or friend to help them complete the survey.

To help encourage awareness and response to the survey, “robocalls” announcing the survey were made to survey recipients for whom phone numbers were available (approximately 37 percent of the sample). Additionally, the City of Boulder issued press releases on September 22 and October 26 announcing and promoting the survey. Information about the survey was also included in multiple Boulder Planning weekly e-mails (over 5000 subscribers), promoted on Channel 8, and promoted through social media. Finally, a reminder postcard was sent to all nonrespondents in mid October, encouraging response and providing directions for completing the survey online. Survey responses were received through November 9, 2015.

Out of 6,000 survey invitations mailed, 426 were returned as undeliverable, while 5,574 were presumed delivered. A total of 937 surveys were completed in full or part, including 301 completed using paper forms and 636 completed online. The net response rate (after excluding undeliverable surveys) was 16.8 percent. The 95 percent confidence interval (or margin of error) for the results is approximately +/-3.2 percentage points.

The raw survey data were weighted to match the demographic profile of the adult household population in the Boulder Valley by age, housing tenure (own vs. rent), and residence in the City versus unincorporated county (Area II/III), based on 2010 Decennial Census and 2009-14 American Community Survey data. The objective of the weighting was to ensure that the results are representative of the Boulder Valley population on key demographic characteristics. A summary of selected respondent demographic characteristics before and after survey weighting, as compared to the Boulder Valley population profile, is included at the end of the chapter summarizing the random sample survey results. Only weighted results are summarized in this report, unless noted otherwise.

The survey questions were grouped by topic area, including familiarity with the Plan, community values, community livability and growth management, neighborhoods, additional comments/suggestions regarding the Plan, and respondent demographics (for grouping purposes). Many of the survey questions were introduced with extensive background information, given the complex and sometimes technical nature of the issues being evaluated. A copy of the mailback survey questionnaire and cover letter is included in the Appendix for reference.

In several sections of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments about survey topics. The open-ended questions were frequently asked as a follow-up to a closed-ended question, intended to elicit more detailed input related to the issue at hand, while other open-ended questions were stand-alone questions. Altogether, this comment feedback provides a valuable complement to the quantitative results from the close-ended questions; the comments provide rich context, nuance, detail and explanation. Approximately 250 pages of diverse, often lengthy and thoughtful comments were received from the random sample survey; this summary report attempts to illustrate some of the themes and flavor of some of the more general comment questions, but the reader is encouraged to read the comments in full to get a more complete sense of the richness and diversity of the feedback.

Key overall findings from the random sample survey are summarized in the body of this report. In addition, the Appendices to this report include the following additional materials regarding the random sample survey:

- A copy of the survey questionnaire and cover letter.
- Graphical crosstabulations of several questions by selected demographic and opinion groups.
- Graphical comparisons of the weighted “random sample” and weighted “open link” survey results.
- Tabular summaries of the “random sample” and “open link” survey results (both weighted and unweighted for each survey).
- Verbatim comment responses to the open-ended questions.

Focus Groups

As a complement to the community opinion surveys, six focus groups were conducted among residents of the Boulder Valley between November 6 and November 13, 2015. The focus group participants were recruited from respondents to the random sample and open link surveys who shared their email address in order to participate in follow-up BVCP focus groups and surveys. The focus group participants were randomly selected, subject to ensuring a demographic mix across each focus group and subject to availability to participate across the respective scheduled days and times. The focus groups occurred on four different days, and across an array of afternoon and evening times. All focus groups were conducted in downtown Boulder, including the Main Library, the City of Boulder Planning Department fourth floor conference room, the Municipal Building, and in the “Hub” conference room at Broadway and Walnut.

The focus groups were designed to gather more in-depth input on selected topics addressed in the survey, including the general direction of the community, jobs and housing growth, mixed use development, building height, development requirements/benefits from development, and other topics that are being addressed as part of the BVCP update.

Key findings from the focus groups are summarized in a section of this report, while notes from the six individual focus groups and the focus group discussion guide are included in the Appendix.

RESULTS OF THE RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEY

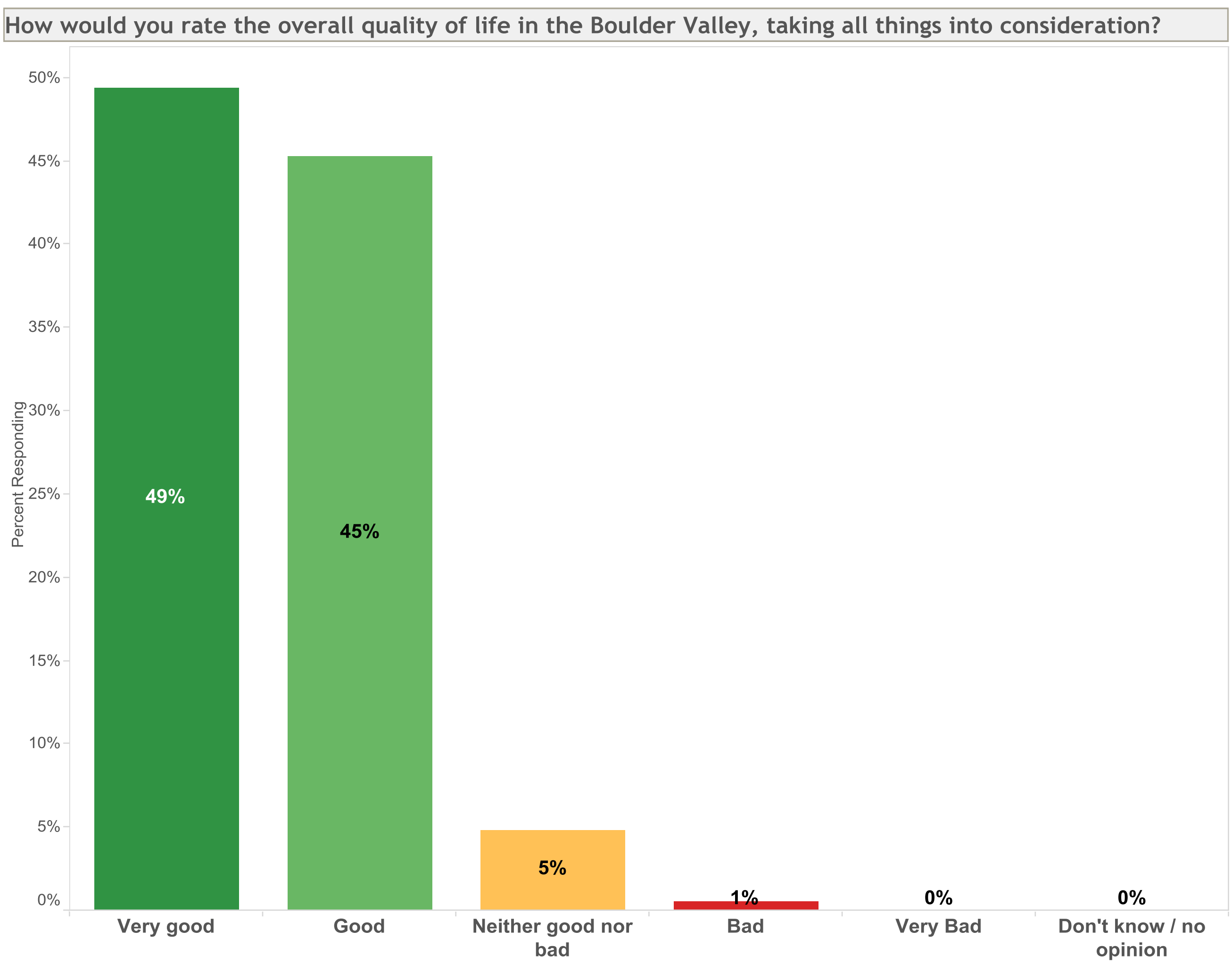
This section of the report summarizes key findings from the weighted results of the random sample survey.

Quality of Life and Awareness of the BVCP

This section provides a brief summary of respondents' opinions about the overall quality of life in the Boulder Valley, and their familiarity with the Comprehensive Plan and awareness of the discussions about the update now taking place.

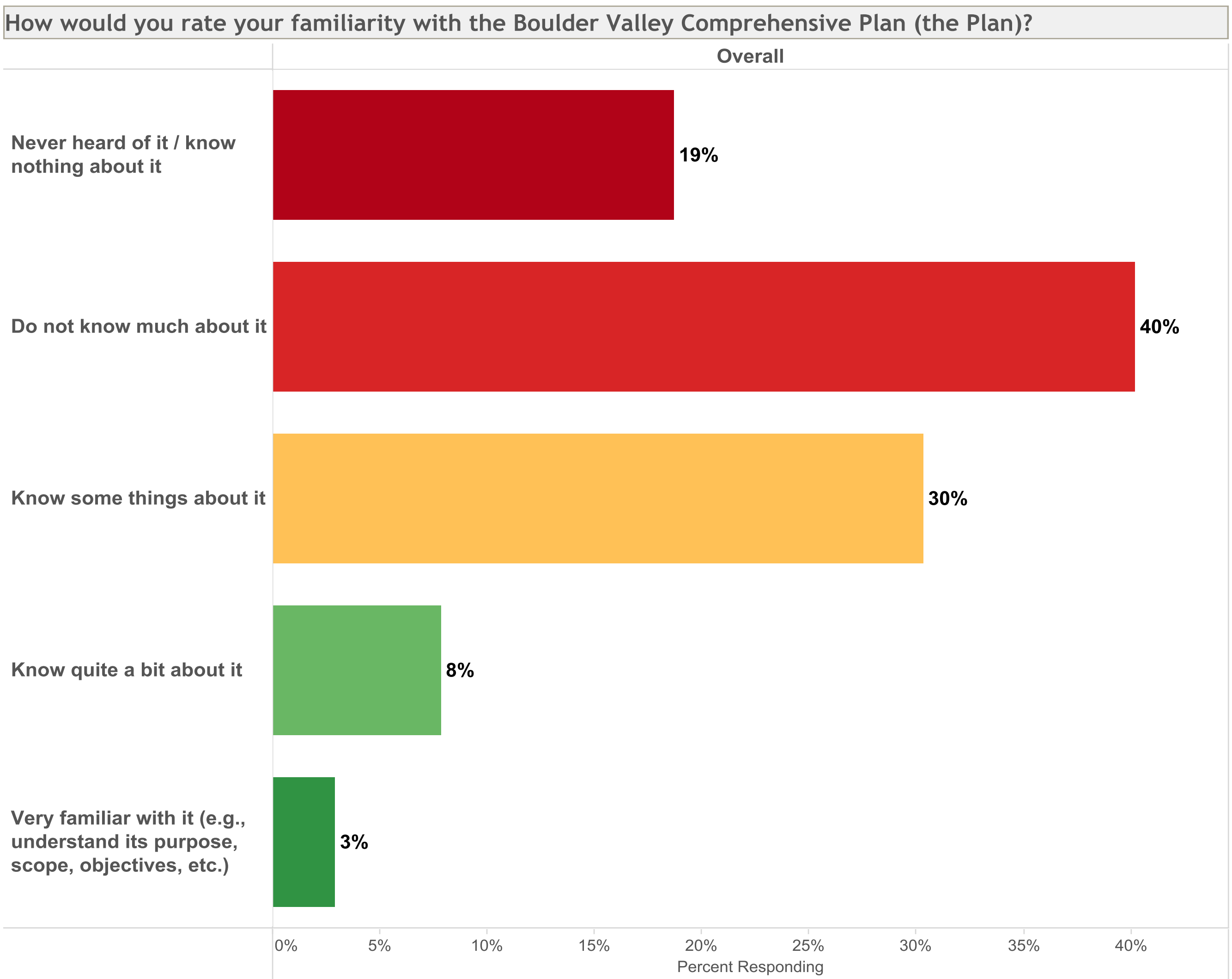
- Overall quality of life in the Boulder Valley. Respondents answered very positively, with 94 percent indicating the quality of life in the Boulder Valley is either "very good" (49 percent) or "good" (45 percent), and small shares indicating it is "neither good nor bad" (5 percent) or "bad" (1 percent).

Figure 1: Overall Quality of Life in the Boulder Valley



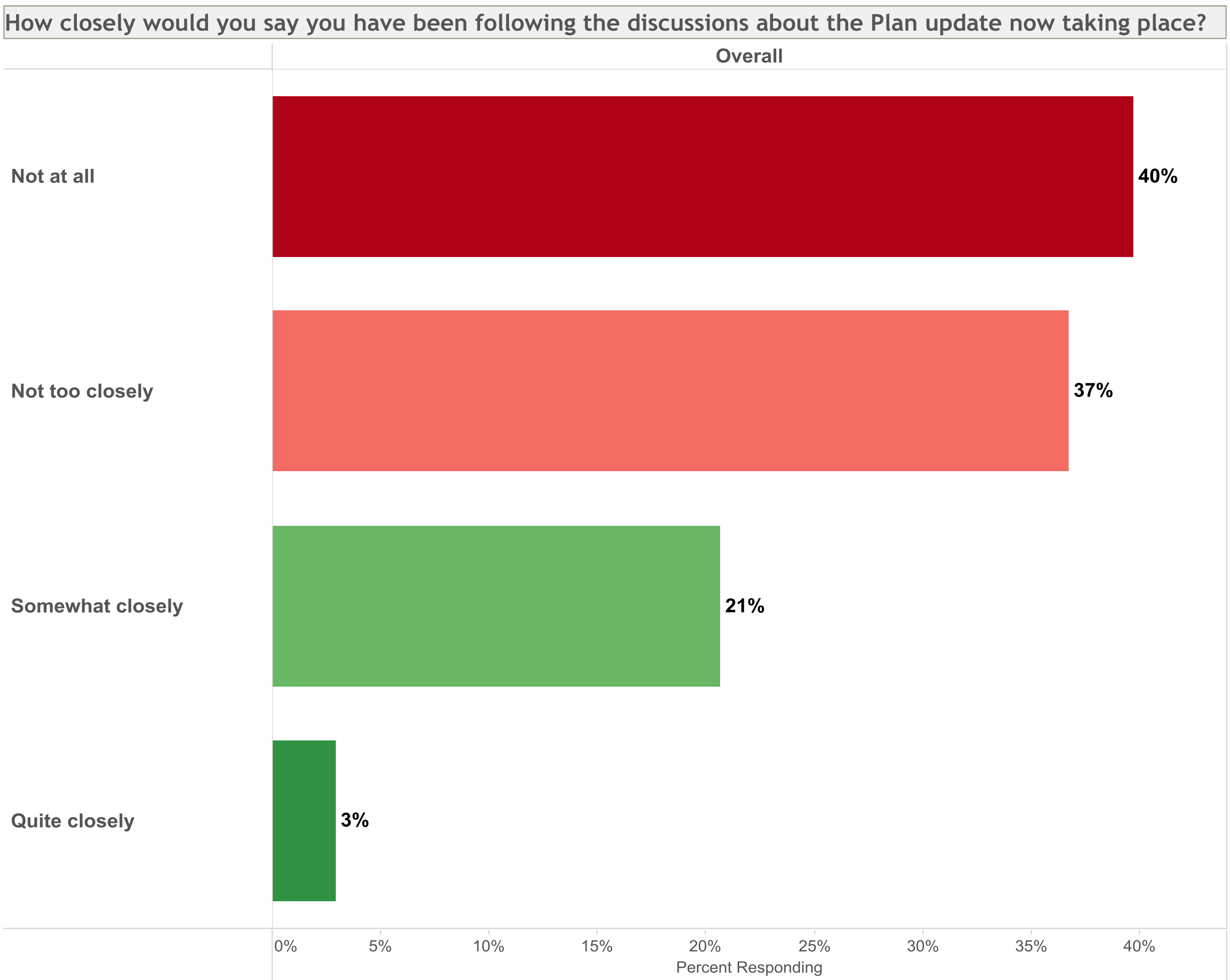
- Familiarity with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan. Most respondents have a low level of familiarity with the Comprehensive Plan, with almost six in ten (59 percent) saying that they have "never heard of it/know nothing about it" (19 percent) or "do not know much about it" (40 percent). An additional 30 percent said that they "know some things about it," while 11 percent indicated they are quite knowledgeable ("know quite a bit about it" – 8 percent, or "very familiar with it" – 3 percent).

Figure 2: Familiarity with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan



- How closely have you been following discussions about the Plan update? Consistent with their lack of familiarity with the Plan, roughly three in four respondents (77 percent) indicated that they are "not at all" (40 percent) or "not too closely" (37 percent) following discussions about the Plan update. A little over one in five (21 percent) are following the conversation "somewhat closely," and 3 percent are following it "quite closely."

Figure 3: How closely have you followed discussions about the Plan update?

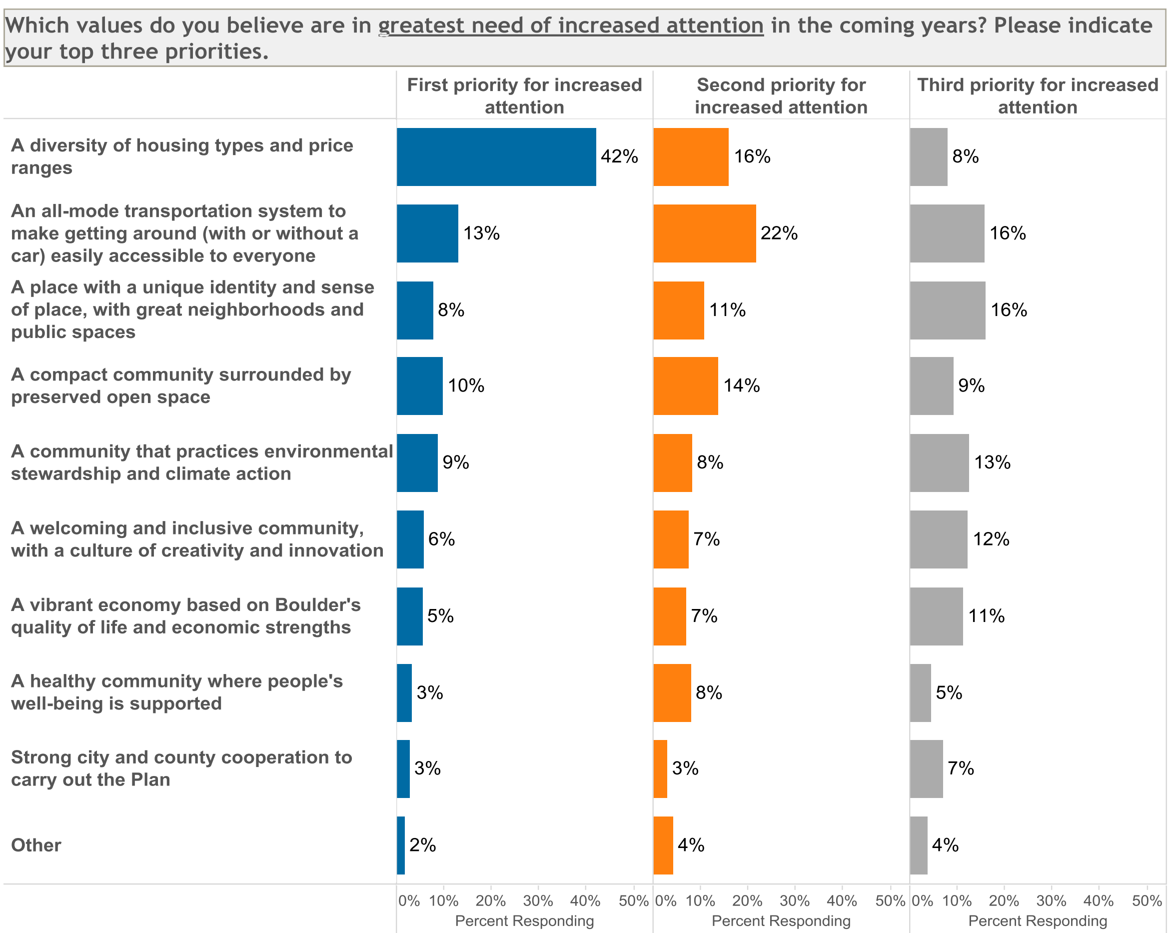


Community Values

The second section of the survey focused on community values. The survey listed nine community values that are currently identified in the Plan, and asked respondents to identify additional values that should be emphasized, values that are no longer important or in need of clarification/modification, and values that are in greatest need of increased attention. Key findings from these questions are detailed in this section of the report.

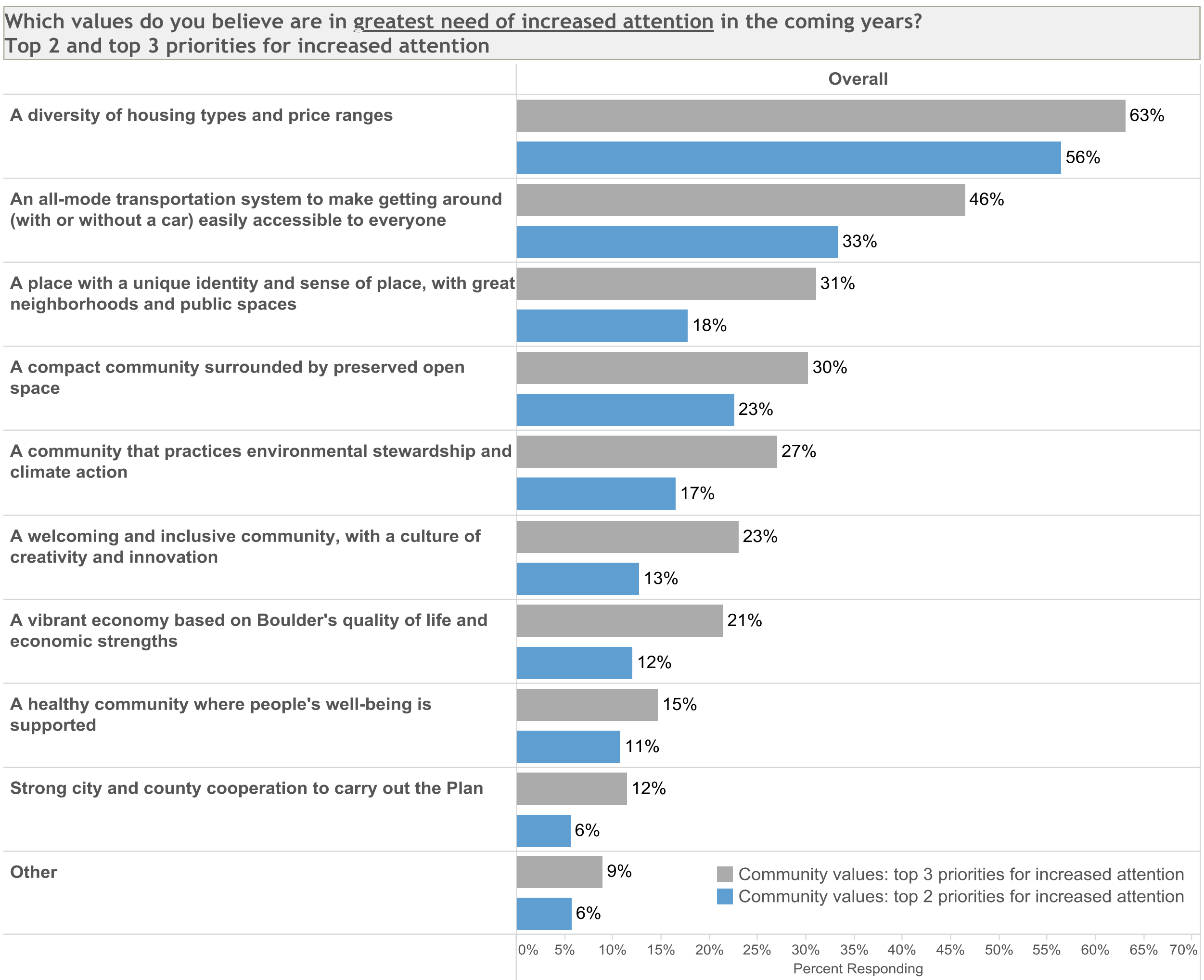
- Top three community values in greatest need of increased attention. Respondents were asked to select the first, second, and third priority community values in greatest need of increased attention from a list of nine community values currently in the Comprehensive Plan. Figure 4 below illustrates the share of respondents selecting each community value as their first, second, and third priority. A diversity of housing types and price ranges stands out as the leading top priority (42 percent), followed by an all-mode transportation system (13 percent), a compact community surrounded by preserved open space (10 percent), environmental stewardship and climate action (9 percent), and a unique identity and sense of place (8 percent).

Figure 4: Top Three Community Values in Greatest Need of Increased Attention



- Top two and top three community values in greatest need of increased attention. Using results from the same question, Figure 5 below depicts the share of respondents choosing each community value as their first or second priority, as well as their first, second, or third priority. Again, a diversity of housing types and price ranges topped the list for both the top two (56 percent) and top three (63 percent) priorities, followed by an all-mode transportation system (46 percent selected this as one of their top three priorities) and a place with a unique identity and sense of place (31 percent).

Figure 5: Top Two & Top Three Community Values in Greatest Need of Increased Attention



- Are any additional values not included in the list which you think should be emphasized by the Plan? In response to this open-ended question, 401 respondents (43 percent) provided suggestions for additional values (and/or elaboration of existing values). While the comments were highly diverse and nuanced, and can be classified in many ways, the following table gives a rough sense of the more common topics addressed in the comments, recognizing that alternate groupings are possible. The most prevalent themes involved issues of diversity (particularly socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural diversity), transportation (e.g. congestion, transit, biking, etc.), and governance (e.g. responsiveness to community, communication, public input), each of which was cited by approximately 9 – 10 percent of commenters.

Table 1
Are any additional values not included in the list which you think should be emphasized by the Plan?
Approximate percentages of commenters and all survey respondents

	Percent of commenters (n=401)	Percent of all survey respondents (n=937)
Diversity	9.8%	4.2%
Transportation	9.8%	4.2%
Governance	9.3%	3.9%
Limit Growth	7.8%	3.3%
Housing	7.5%	3.2%
Education	5.3%	2.2%
Safety	4.3%	1.8%
Community Character	3.8%	1.6%
Environment	3.3%	1.4%
Economy	2.8%	1.2%
Infrastructure & Services	2.5%	1.1%
Arts	2.5%	1.1%
Human Services	2.3%	1.0%
Aging	2.3%	1.0%
Inclusiveness	2.3%	1.0%
Taking action on the plan	2.3%	1.0%
Recreation	2.0%	0.9%
Wildlife	2.0%	0.9%
Height	2.0%	0.9%
Open Space	2.0%	0.9%
Common Sense	1.8%	0.7%
University	1.8%	0.7%
Homelessness	1.8%	0.7%
Children	1.5%	0.6%
Taxes	1.5%	0.6%
Multigenerational	1.3%	0.5%
Broadband	1.3%	0.5%
History	1.3%	0.5%

For additional illustration of the flavor of the feedback, Table 2 below provides a random sample of 10 comments from among the 401 comments received. A full listing of all comments is included in the Appendix.

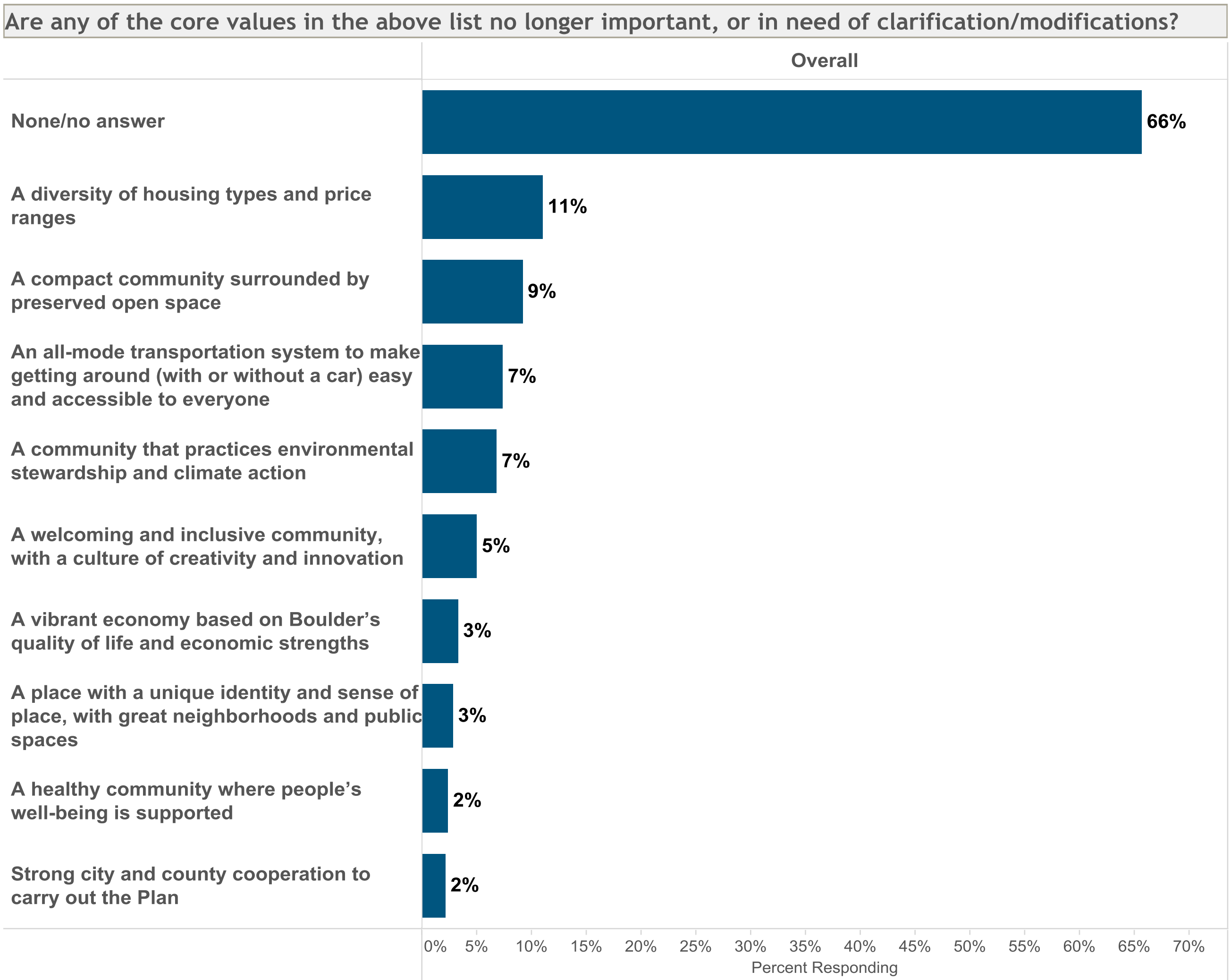
Table 2
Are any additional values not included in the list which you think should be emphasized by the Plan?
Random sample of 10 comments from the 401 comments received – for illustration

- *"1. Strong attendance at NEIGHBORHOOD schools; excellent education; excellent teachers; beautiful, well-supported schools and grounds. 2. Socio-economic diversity. 3. Promote urban density to preserve the environment and beauty of our area open spaces, and to encourage use of alternative (non-car) transportation."*
- *"A compassionate community that takes care of its vulnerable residents"*
- *"Affordable and convenient transportation system"*
- *"Consideration of why people moved here initially. Hometown feel. Open and not cramped. Family/people oriented--not corporate based overcrowding."*
- *"Greater economic and ethnic diversity within Boulder"*
- *"Infrastructure! Roads, bridges, sewers, water pipes."*
- *"No"*
- *"Not just preservation of open spaces and natural lands but of the native species (plant and animal) via sound management practices including limiting recreation in certain areas. Also, the city and county need to work better together... critical wildlife areas in the plan should receive more attention."*
- *"Rights of nature, including plants, wildlife and domestic animals."*
- *"There should be separate 'values' that cover RTD plans and services, working with school districts to support PK-12 education, Boulder Valley long term flood control and area wildfire resources for rapid response."*

- <u>Are any of the core values no longer important, or in need of clarification or modification?</u> Approximately one-third of respondents (34 percent) identified values that were no longer important or in need of clarification/modification. The value most identified as in need of clarification/modification was "a diversity of housing types and price ranges," cited by 11.0 percent of survey respondents. A wide variety of explanatory comments were made with regards to this value, with the largest share focusing on the importance of increasing housing attainable to low and middle income groups. Others expressed concerns about government involvement in the housing market, or that some other community values were incompatible with maintaining the affordability of housing, or that maintaining a diversity of housing types and price ranges was unrealistic given market forces and the land use context in Boulder, among other opinions.

  Following housing, the next most commonly cited values that are no longer important or in need of clarification were "a compact community surrounded by preserved open space" (9.2 percent) and "an all mode transportation system" (7.4 percent), while a smaller 2.1 – 6.8 percent cited other values.

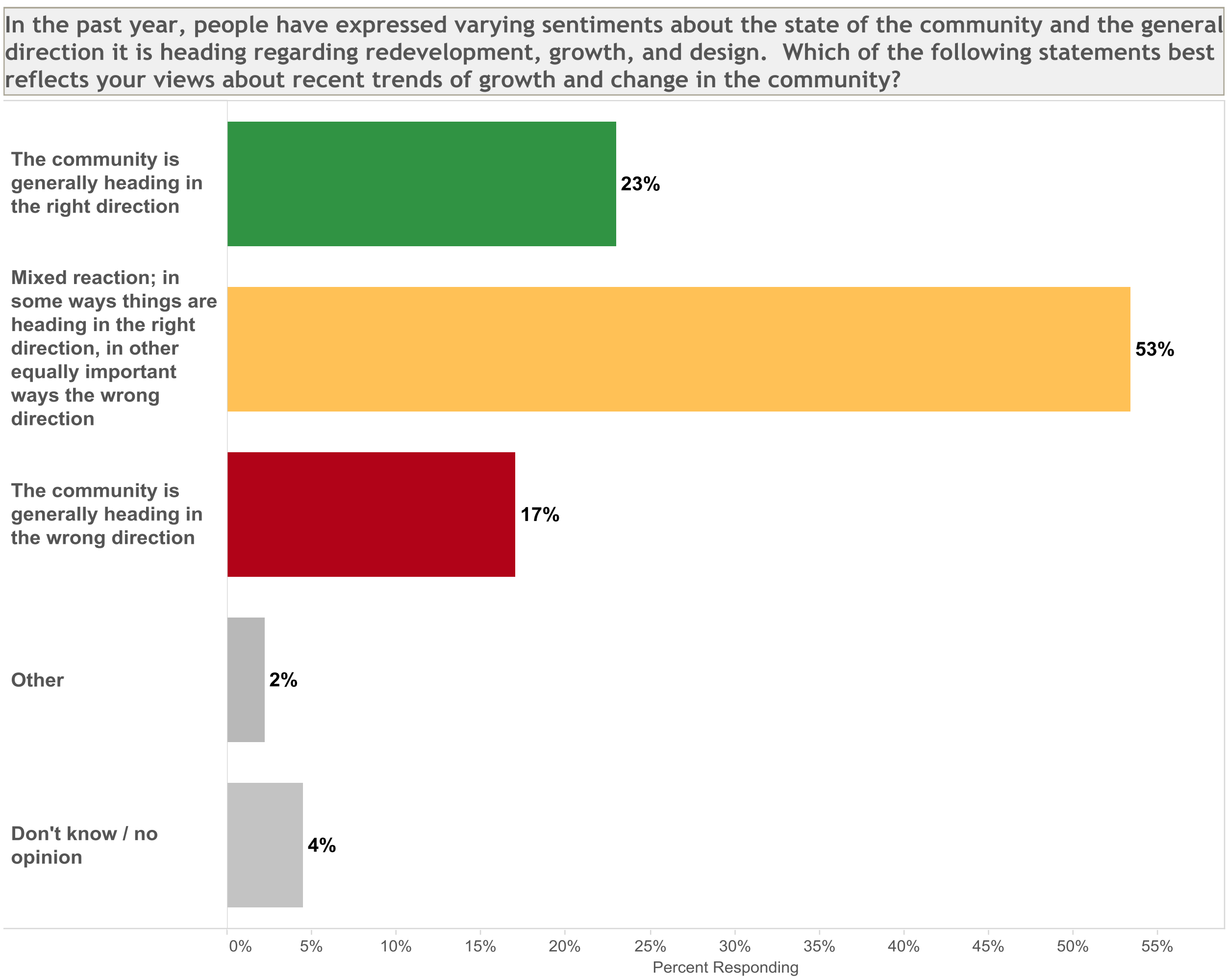
Figure 6: Are any of the core values no longer important, or in need of clarification or modification?



Perceptions of Recent Growth and Change in the Community

- Perception of recent growth and change in the community. Respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding the general direction the community is heading in terms of redevelopment, growth and design. Results indicate that slightly more residents think that the community is generally heading in the right direction (23 percent) than in the wrong direction (17 percent). Most expressed a mixed reaction (53 percent), indicating that in some ways things are headed in the right direction but in other equally important ways the wrong direction. An additional 2 percent expressed other opinions, while 4 percent didn't know or had no opinion.

Figure 7: Perception of Recent Growth and Change in the Community



In a followup question, respondents were asked if they had any comments on their response. A total of 503 comment responses were received. Following is a summary of some of the themes and flavor of the comments, grouped by response to the "right/wrong" direction question.

- Comments by respondents who feel that the community is "generally headed in the right direction": While a diversity of opinions were expressed by those who feel the community is headed in the right direction, in broad terms, the comments tended to show support of additional growth, support of more jobs and more businesses, and excitement about new developments in town. This mirrors crosstabulation results (shown in the Appendix) which show that persons who feel that Boulder is headed in the right direction are generally more supportive of additional growth than those who feel that Boulder is headed in the wrong direction.

  On the other hand, many of those who feel that Boulder is headed in the right direction nonetheless express concern that Boulder might become too exclusive and less racially and economically diverse if some things don't change.

  Following is a random sample of comments, for illustration (with the complete listing in the Appendix).

Table 3
Perceptions of recent growth and change in the community:
Random sample of comments of those who feel "the community is generally heading in the right direction"

- *"All appears good except "right-sizing." Folsom is bad enough but Iris will be a disaster as it is the only east-west route on the north."*
- *"I am proud to be a Boulderite. I would like more cycling options for transportation--safer commutes, access for mountain bike recreation. I would like more buy-in from my employer on environmental stewardship. I would like more health programs--similar to what the city offers to its employees."*
- *"I think some smart growth is good. By that I mean sort of 'new urban'--housing near transit centers and shopping, so neighborhoods can develop and you don't need a car to do everything. I have lived here 35 years and I agree the traffic is getting annoying, but I don't think that should mean no growth. I don't want Boulder to just become wealthier and older with little opportunity for younger people and families to move here, and no opportunity for people at the lower end of the economic spectrum to live here."*
- *"My family and I are humbled and very grateful to be in Boulder, CO. It is the greatest city on earth in my opinion!"*
- *"Value mixed use, 10 minute neighborhoods, compact development, alternate modes"*
- *"We need to move forward. There are definitely areas of town (like Boulder Junction or the core student area of The Hill - between Broadway and 9th and College and University) that can handle more dense development and population and potentially even taller buildings. Let's focus on these relatively few areas that can support Boulder's growth and work to stabilize the existing family neighborhoods."*

- Comments by respondents who feel that the community is "generally headed in the wrong direction": The feedback from those who feel Boulder is generally headed in the wrong direction tended to center on too much growth, too much traffic, too many people, the lack of racial and economic diversity, and new developments that do not fit the character of Boulder.

  One interesting pattern in the comments for this question was that those who think Boulder is generally headed in the wrong direction were 2.7 times more likely to provide a follow-up comment on their choice than those who think Boulder is generally headed in the right direction. Additionally, the "wrong direction" comments tended to be lengthier and cite more specifics than did the "right direction" comments, suggesting very strongly held views by persons with this opinion.

Table 4
Perceptions of recent growth and change in the community:
Random sample of comments of those who feel "the community is generally heading in the wrong direction"

- *"As a long-time Boulder County resident, I cannot recall a bigger rush toward growth. In fact, it was quite the opposite as quality of life was defined by an appreciation of 'space', not just 'open' space. Just because Boulder is surrounded by open space does not mean we cram as many people into town as possible. Why the rush to add population and its inherent downsides?"*
- *"Feels like a lot of recent building and growth that was not well planned for in terms of infrastructure"*
- *"It seems that the developers' agenda dominates. All change does NOT have to be 'growth.'"*

- *"The accelerating pace of housing cost will limit the diversity of housing choice which will, in turn, limit how welcoming and diverse we can be"*
- *"The number of large, ugly new buildings is just so sad. The variances for height, setbacks, etc. have changed the character of this town in irreversible and negative ways. There appears to be no badly designed and ill-conceived building and no variance to the building codes that would not get approved. It is not common sense to think that adding more people, jobs, and cars to this city will yield anything positive. I am in favor of a building moratorium, and for replacing most of the folks on the city council and various planning and advisory boards that have had a role in approving the rampant building, and transportation changes (deleting the car lanes on Folsom). The city council should focus on running the city, and drop the municipal utility idea. They have lost repeatedly in the courts, have 'borrowed' 4 million dollars from the general fund with no guarantee it will be paid back, and we are no closer to reduce carbon emissions. This is no longer the great town that it once was and those in charge seem to be following ideals (such as the stated goal of 30% of all trips in the city will be made by bike) without any sense of real life or reality."*
- *"Too much growth without the proper infrastructure"*

- Comments by respondents who have a "mixed reaction" about recent trends of growth and change: As noted previously, a little over half of respondents indicated a mixed reaction, with some things headed in the right direction and other equally important things headed in the wrong direction. These commenters tended to cite a combination of the themes noted above, including too much growth, but also the need for more housing for people who want to live in Boulder. The emphasis in many of these comments was in support of balanced growth, while maintaining the community feel and the surrounding open space.

Table 5
Perceptions of recent growth and change in the community:
Random sample of comments by those who have a "Mixed reaction; in some ways things are heading in the right direction, in other equally important ways the wrong direction"

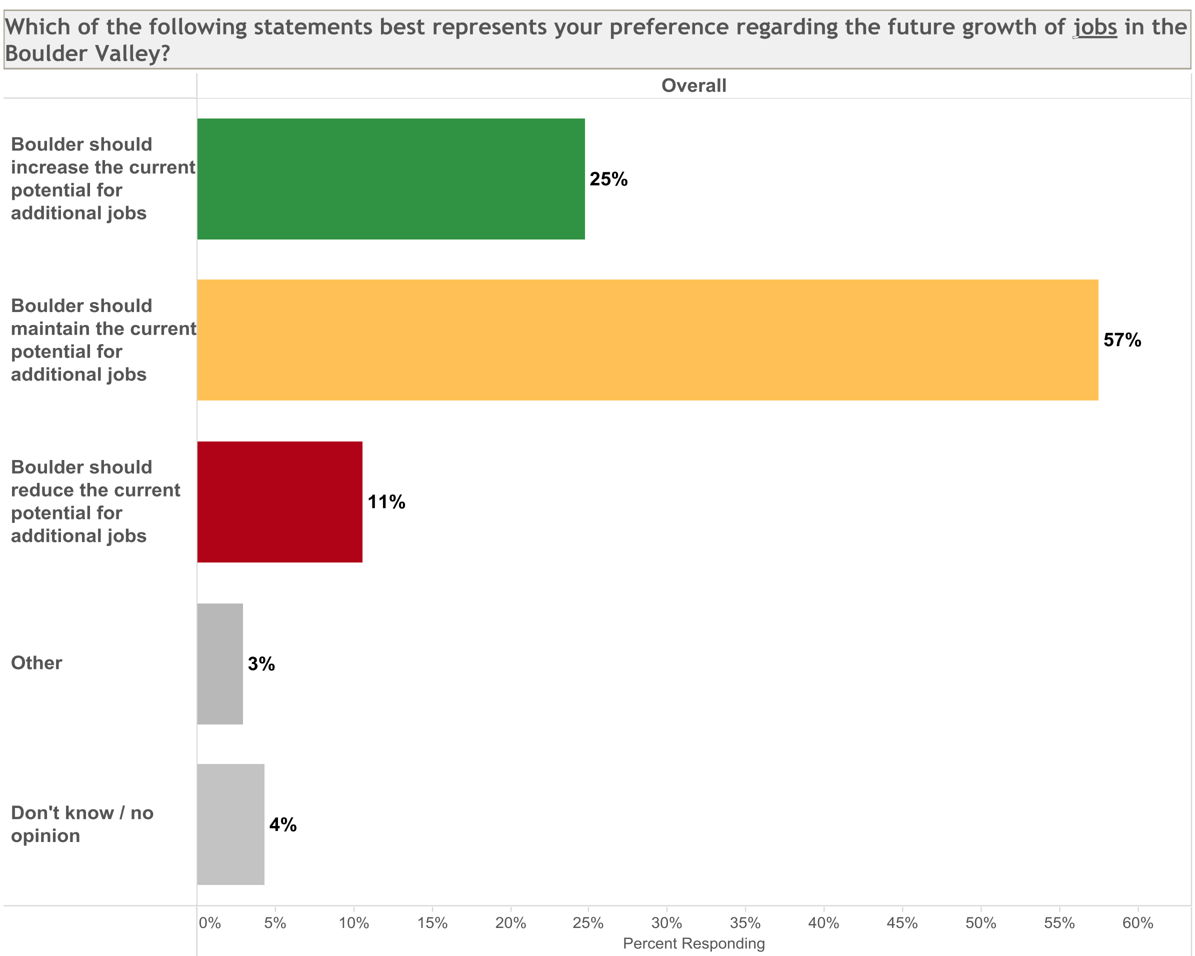
- *"A lot of building going on that seems to diverge from Boulders sense of community. But on the other hand open space, etc. is still being protected. Focus should be on more affordable housing for people who work in Boulder."*
- *"Difficult to say where things are going as there are so many developments that will bring many changes that we may not be able to anticipate to the city. For example, incoming car traffic to and out of the city has changed a lot, and where is this going?"*
- *"I generally like the design of developments that have happened in recent years (in North Boulder, around the 29th St Mall, and to a lesser extent, in the industrial zones on the eastern half of the city), and I especially like the added amenities like the Valmont Bike Park. I'm less of a fan of the construction noise, traffic disruptions, and sidewalk closures of the Pearl St/downtown-area redevelopments, as these are in my neighborhood and negatively affect my life at least during their current phases, which seem to be never-ending. (I may have a chance later in the survey to comment on this next topic, but if not, I'll say it now: I really hope we get a municipal utility to provide 100% renewable/clean energy for our city.)"*
- *"It seems to me that there is a diminishing preservation of the three values I would prioritize."*
- *"Strong economy, rising property values and great parks. More crowded, more panhandling, less safe."*
- *"Too many McMansions. The houses along the foothills are dwarfing the neighborhoods that had such character. They are using the entire yard to build onto the present houses. I would like to see the trend of smaller homes"*

Community Livability and Growth Management

A series of questions asked respondents to identify their priorities and preferences related to future growth in Boulder, including job growth, housing growth, locations of future development, and design of development. The survey presented introductory language about current plan policies, including projections for housing and job growth, in advance of the various questions about those topics. This section summarizes the findings from these questions.

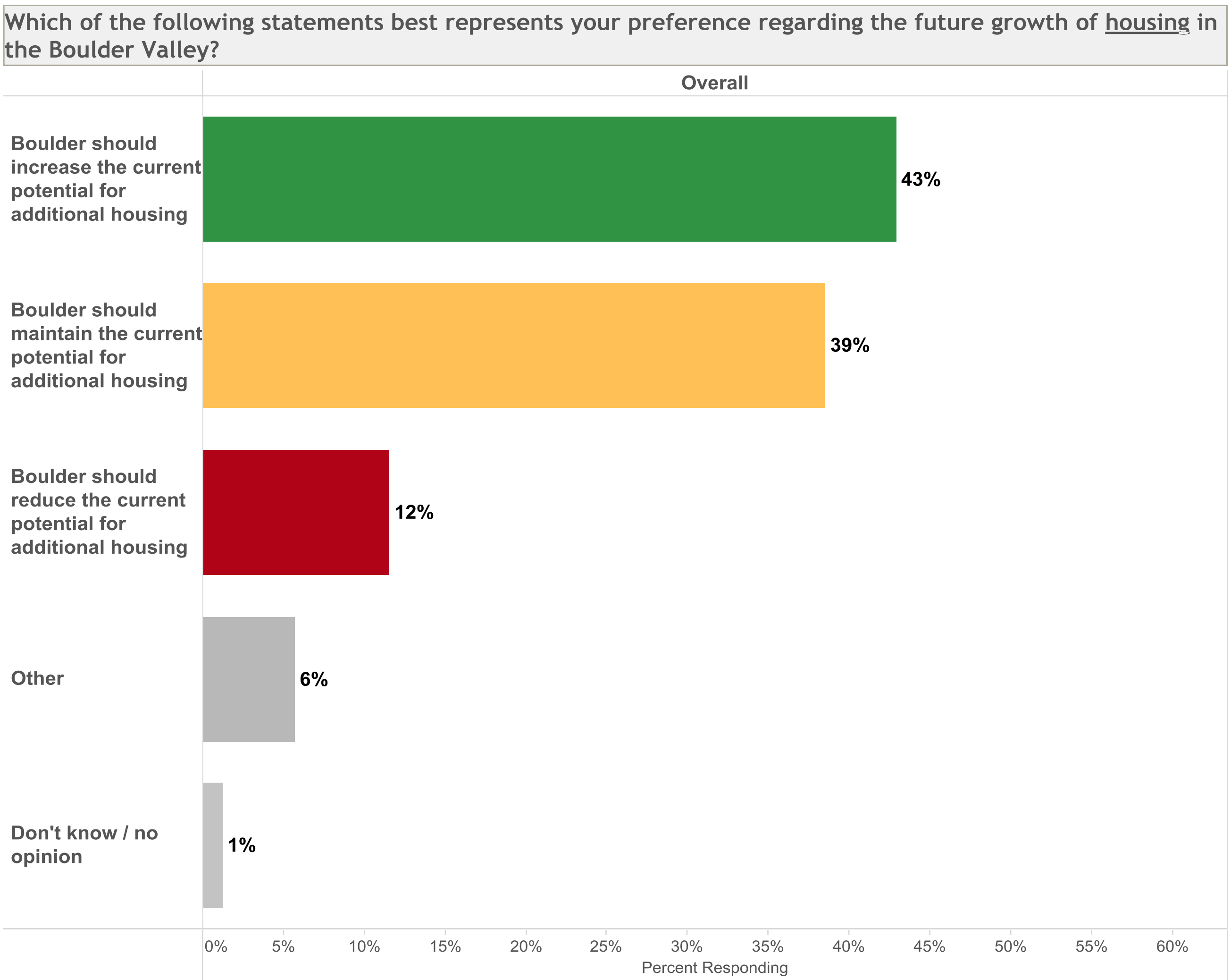
- Preference for future growth of jobs in the Boulder Valley: Over half of respondents (57 percent) said the Boulder Valley should maintain its current potential for additional jobs. Among the remainder, somewhat more respondents think Boulder should increase the current potential for jobs (25 percent) than reduce the current potential for jobs (11 percent). (Note: The question included an extensive introduction describing current levels of jobs, population and housing units in the Boulder Valley, as well as projections for each through 2040.)

Figure 8: Preference for Future Growth of Jobs in the Boulder Valley



- Preference for future growth of housing in the Boulder Valley: This question was asked in parallel to the jobs growth question above, and was introduced with the same background information. In response, most respondents think Boulder should increase (43 percent) or maintain (39 percent) the current potential for additional housing, while a more modest share would prefer to reduce the potential for additional housing (12 percent).

Figure 9: Preference for Future Growth of Housing in the Boulder Valley



As documented more fully in the Appendix cross-tabulations, opinions regarding the future growth of jobs and housing show a significant degree of correlation with each other. Among those who want to increase the potential for additional *jobs*, fully 60 percent also want to increase the potential for additional *housing*, while 35 percent to maintain and 3 percent want to reduce the current potential for additional housing.

Conversely, among those who want to <u>reduce the potential for additional jobs</u>, only 20 percent want to increase the potential for additional housing, while 34 percent want to maintain and 45 percent want to reduce the potential for additional housing.

Similarly, among those who want to <u>increase the potential for additional *housing*</u>, 34 percent want to increase the potential for additional *jobs*, while 56 percent want to maintain and 5 percent want to decrease the potential for additional jobs. Conversely, among those among those who want to <u>reduce the potential for additional housing</u>, only 6 percent want to increase the potential for additional jobs, while 46 percent want to maintain and 41 percent want to reduce the potential for additional jobs.

In short, persons who tend to be more favorable towards the growth of jobs also tend to be more favorable towards the growth of housing, and vice versa. Conversely, persons who tend to be more opposed to the growth of jobs also tend to be more opposed to the growth of housing, and vice versa. At the same time, large shares of respondents support maintaining current potentials for job and housing growth.

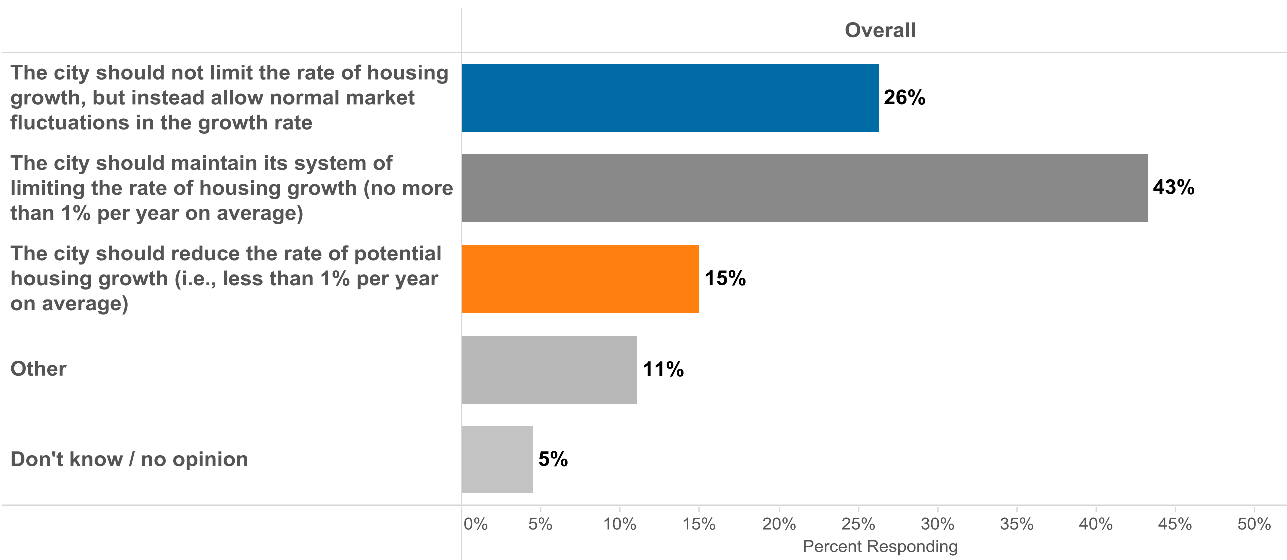
- Opinions on the rate of housing growth: About four in ten think the City of Boulder should maintain its current system of limiting the rate of housing growth (43 percent), while a quarter say the City should not limit the rate of housing growth (26 percent). An additional 15 percent prefer restricting the rate housing growth further (to less than 1% per year on average), while 16 percent don't know or have other opinions.

Figure 10: Opinions on the Rate of Housing Growth

Following is the full text of the survey question:

"Rate of housing unit growth: The average annual rate of housing unit growth within the City of Boulder over the past five years has been approximately 0.8% (i.e., approximately 350 units per year). The intent of Boulder's Residential Growth Management System is to limit housing permits to an average growth rate of 1% per year (with selected exemptions such as for permanently affordable housing and in mixed use projects). All new housing must meet land use regulations and standards.

"Some people think the current system artificially limits housing potential and results in higher housing prices. Others think that the rate of new housing growth under current regulations is appropriate, or should be limited further. Which of the following best reflects your view?"



As might be expected, opinions regarding the rate of housing growth are correlated with opinions regarding the preferred amount of housing growth in the future, with those supporting a greater amount of housing in the future also tending to favor looser restrictions on the rate of housing growth, and those preferring a smaller number of housing units favoring tighter restrictions on the rate of housing growth. Specifically, persons who want to *increase* the potential for future additional housing units (as discussed previously and illustrated in Figure 9) are comparatively likely to feel that the city should *not* limit the rate of housing growth (45 percent). By contrast, persons who want to *reduce* the future amount housing growth largely feel that the city should reduce the *rate* of housing growth to less than 1 percent per year (79 percent). These results are also shown more fully in the crosstabulation graphs in the Appendix.

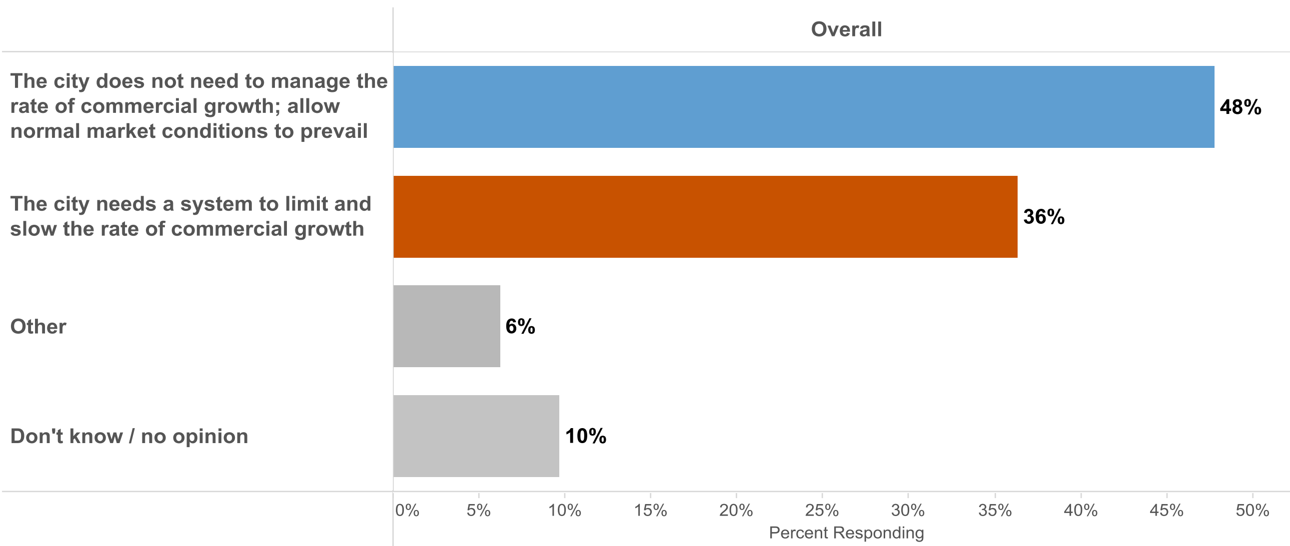
- Opinions on the rate of commercial growth: Almost half feel that Boulder does not need to limit the rate of commercial growth (48 percent), while a little over one-third (36 percent) believe that Boulder needs a system to limit and slow the rate of commercial growth. An additional 16 percent don't know or have a different opinion.

Figure 11: Opinions on Rate of Commercial Growth

Following is the full text of the survey question:

"Rate of new commercial growth: The city does not manage the rate of commercial growth (i.e., non-residential uses including retail, office, industrial and educational); however, all new commercial development must meet standards and regulations. In 2015, City Council approved a linkage fee so that new commercial development helps pay for the construction of permanently affordable housing units related to the new employees that are generated. Over the past 20 years, the pace of commercial and industrial building and jobs has fluctuated, including the "great recession" when little building occurred and unemployment increased, as well as a period of higher growth in the past few years.

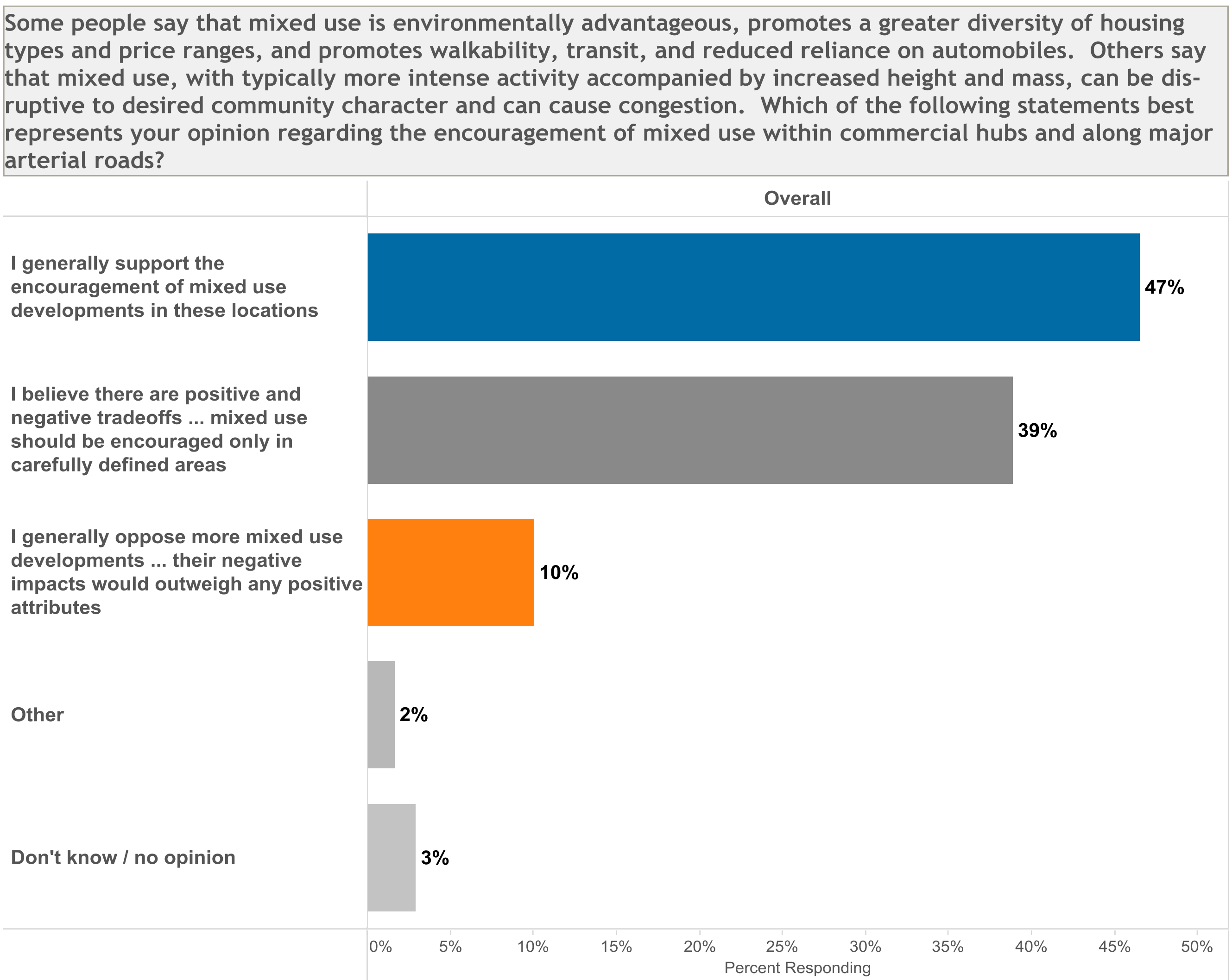
"Some people think the current rate of commercial/jobs growth is having negative impacts on quality of life, while others think the commercial development is sustaining Boulder's economic vitality and adding benefits. Which of the following best reflects your view about the rate of commercial growth?"



Again, opinions regarding the rate of commercial growth are correlated with opinions regarding the preferred amount of job growth in the future, with those supporting a greater number of jobs also tending to favor no restrictions on the rate of growth, and those preferring a smaller number of jobs also favoring restrictions on the rate of growth. Specifically, persons who want to *increase* the potential for future jobs (as discussed previously and illustrated in Figure 8) are comparatively likely to feel that the city does not need to manage the rate of commercial growth (72 percent). By contrast, persons who want to *reduce* the future amount job growth largely feel that the city needs a system to slow the rate of commercial growth (78 percent). These results are also shown more completely in the crosstabulation graphs in the Appendix.

- Opinions on mixed use development: Almost half of respondents (47 percent) support the encouragement of mixed use developments within commercial hubs and along major arterial roads, while 39 percent say there are both positive and negative tradeoffs and feel that mixed use should be encouraged only in carefully defined areas of Boulder. One in ten respondents (10 percent) said they generally oppose more mixed use developments.

Figure 12: Opinions on Mixed Use Development



In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if they had any comments on their response. A total of 250 comment responses were received. Following is a summary of some of the themes and flavor of the comments, grouped by opinion regarding mixed use.

- Comments by respondents who "generally support the encouragement of mixed use": Those supporting mixed use generally cited the need for more housing, for more square footage for businesses in Boulder, the environmental benefits, the ability to walk to more places, and the transit benefits of mixed use.

  Following is a random sample of comments, for illustration (with the complete listing in the Appendix).

Table 6
Opinions regarding mixed use:
Random sample of comments of those who "generally support the encouragement of mixed use"

- *"A review of housing density and mixed use development are necessary to become more inclusive (for workforce traveling into Boulder) and sustainable. Public transportation needs to be kept affordable. Reduce commuters to Boulder to maintain clean air and reduce pollution. Higher population density makes public transport automatically more efficient and affordable."*
- *"I don't support mixed use development that adds more luxury condos. We need more affordable housing."*
- *"I wouldn't want to see much more mixed use beyond the areas identified above, but I think development of those areas is good and adds to the vibrancy and dynamism of Boulder."*
- *"Mixed use increases the opportunity for people to develop a sense of neighborhood. The fact that you always have to get in a car to get anywhere means that people become isolated. Mixed use can relieve the problem of congestion."*
- *"New urbanism. It's necessary if Boulder is to maintain open space and a compact community. It satisfies environmental concern if developed correctly and not construed by the whim of the developer/marketplace. By this, I mean every mixed use area should have available the necessary services, banking, dry cleaner, a market or two, a café that doesn't start with an 'S', to reduce the need to travel for these so-called necessities."*
- *"Up the incentives for developers who add more affordable units"*

- Comments by respondents who "generally oppose more mixed use developments": The themes related to the comments from those opposed to mixed use tended to include the feeling of crowding, congestion, and more traffic that mixed use causes, along with the negative aesthetics ("eyesore" and "ugly") associated with mixed use.

  Following is a random sample of comments, for illustration.

Table 7
Opinions regarding mixed use:
Random sample of comments of those who "generally oppose more mixed use developments"

- *"Allowing dense development such as at Boulder Junction is too much. Adding mixed use makes it even more crowded feeling. Allowing building almost to curbs makes one feel you're in canyons and views are blocked."*
- *"I accept that there are positive and negative tradeoffs, but since the city cannot get the "formula" right, I oppose mixed-use. The amount of congestion grows every day."*
- *"I'm not against growth and change, but the 30th and Pearl area, and others like it in such an already congested area, is a good example of what I hate to see happening in Boulder!"*
- *"Mixed use seems to bring more congestion and parking issues. It seems good in theory, but the compacted areas and lack of parking are problems. I am not a fan of most of the architectural facades which don't evoke in me the Colorado mountain feel."*
- *"Specifically I view the commercial growth as the main driver for more housing growth; and not affordable housing at that. The city should actively *dis*courage new commercial growth in order for the markets to stabilize such that boulder is a city with limited scope and not one where we grow until nature is a park or two set aside in the middle of the city."*
- *"We need more stringent growth restrictions in the city for both residential and commercial growth. Outside of Boulder in Boulder County regular limited growth would be OK."*

- Comments by respondents who "believe there are positive and negative tradeoffs…": Those who indicated they think there are tradeoffs associated with mixed use tended to mention the need to keep such developments balanced, to provide housing that is affordable, to focus on corridors that are already higher density, to maintain height restrictions, and to fit the overall needs of the neighborhood and the community.

  Following is a random sample of comments, for illustration.

Table 8
Opinions regarding mixed use:
Random sample of comments of those who "believe there are positive and negative tradeoffs…""

- *"Be careful where development is approved. I'm opposed to blocking mountain views and cramming people in with high density housing being built in single family neighborhoods. I think Boulder Junction and the Steelyards were good area choices but not all areas can support that kind of change and would be very disruptive if development occurs. CU is certainly important for our town but maybe they need to alter their enrollment or become more involved with creative housing options. Plus, the problem with homeowners renting to CU students is they are horrible renters who do not know how to care for a house and be respectful to neighbors. This topic needs to be addressed in regards to housing concerns."*
- *"How big do we want Boulder to grow? This is something the citizens as a whole must decide - and then we can determine how to direct development to meet the needs of the community to reach that goal. If we do not want a lot more population, then we probably do not want a lot of developmental growth in either jobs, commercial, or residential assets."*
- *"I think mixed use should be approached carefully. If we really want a mix of tenants, then there needs to be real life design. To bring a family into a development there would need to be good storage for bikes and green spaces for young kids amongst many really well planned designs. I find the steel yards almost too dense. My dentist moved there recently and the parking is kind of a pain. I realize we want to discourage people from driving as much, but the parking in these dense developments should be balanced enough that people aren't turned away from the businesses."*
- *"Mixed use doesn't promote reduced reliance on autos. Many residents of those multimillion$ units outside of Boulder thereby can afford the price tag."*
- *"Seems unwise and artificial to prohibit mixed-use entirely. But it would hopefully be limited to areas that have, or are likely to have a mixed-use 'feel', and not become more than a modest share of overall development."*
- *"We need to manage the growth of housing costs and city/county tax burdens that will evolve Boulder into a Vail/Aspen exclusive community"*

- Locations that should be emphasized for planning for redevelopment and future mixed use concentrated activity. Diagonal Plaza (50 percent) and 55th and Arapahoe (46 percent) were the top two locations selected when respondents were prompted to identify locations that should be emphasized for planning for redevelopment and future mixed use. Other locations with somewhat lesser support include the Table Mesa Center (37 percent); Gunbarrel town center (36 percent); north of Arapahoe between 30th and 38th (34 percent); Basemar, North Boulder/North Broadway, and Boulder Junction (each 32 percent); and 29th Street Center and 28th/30th corridor, and the Meadows Community Center (each 31 percent). More modest shares identified the University Hill commercial area and downtown Boulder (23 percent each). A numbered reference map was provided as part of the question for reference (shown in Figure 14 to follow).

Figure 13: Locations that Should Be Emphasized for Planning for Redevelopment and Future Mixed Use Concentrated Activity

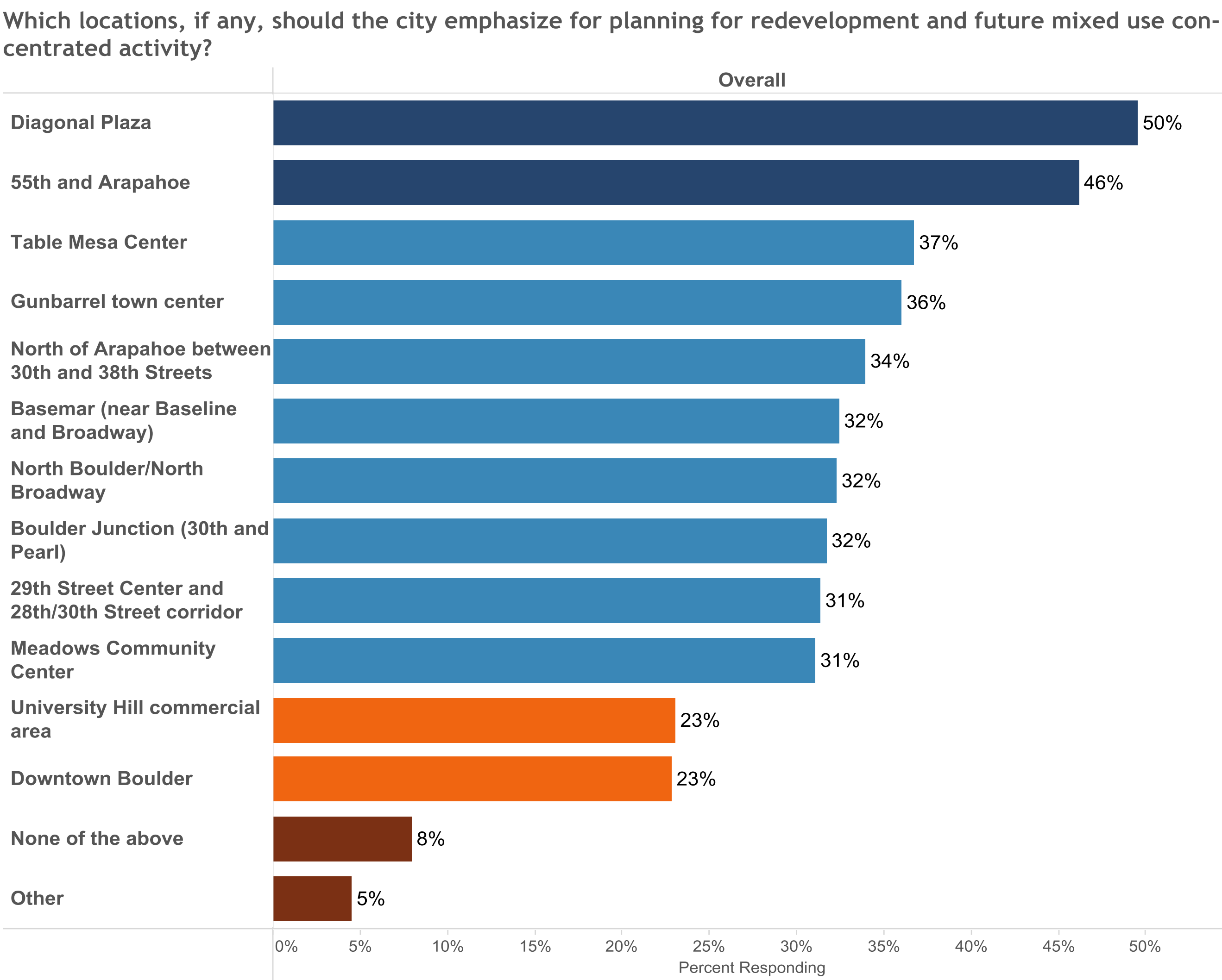
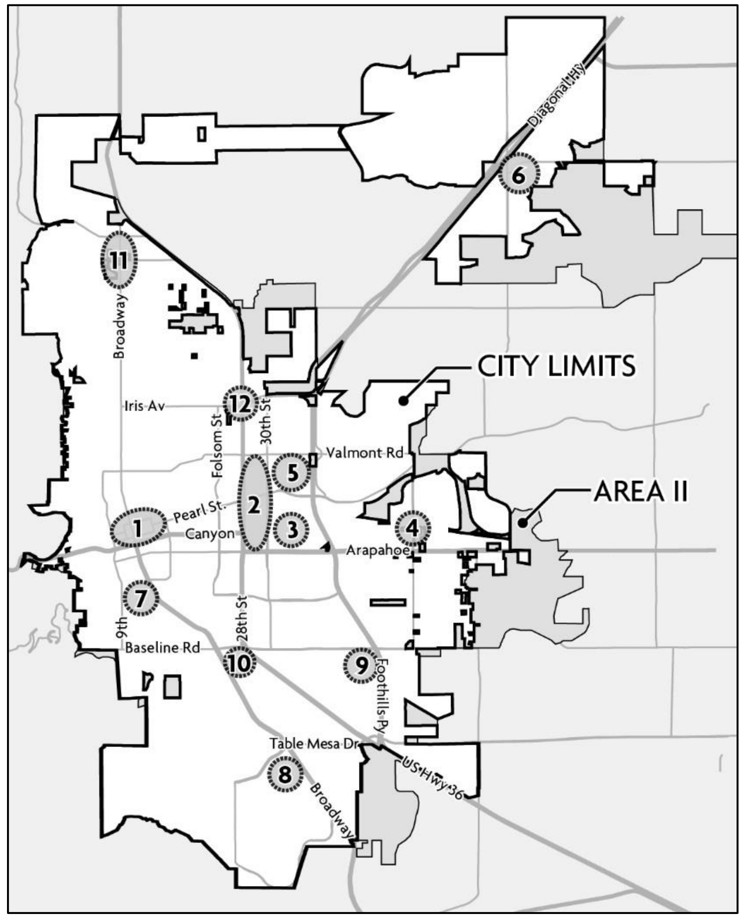


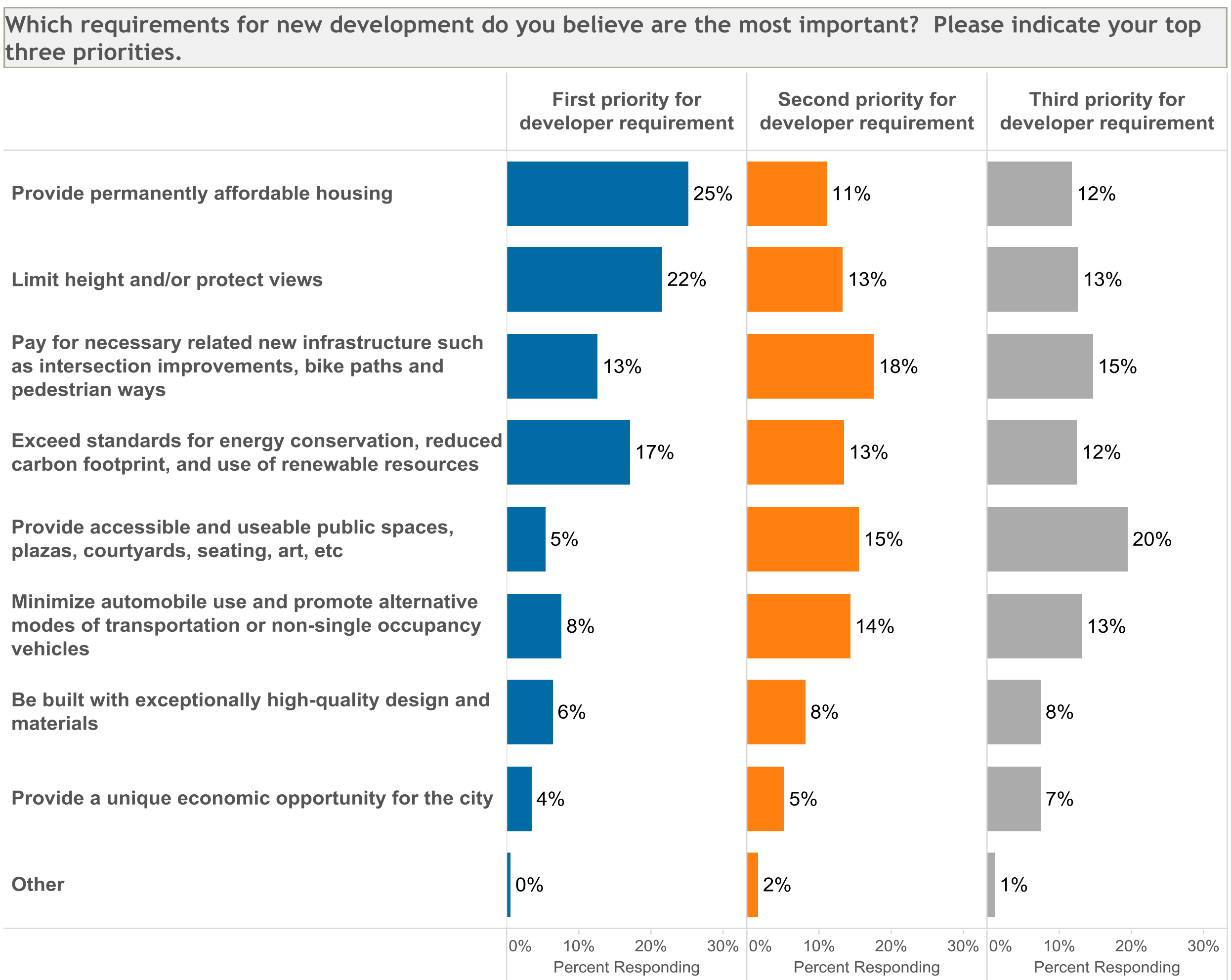
Figure 14: Survey Reference Map: Locations that Should Be Emphasized for Planning for Redevelopment and Future Mixed Use Concentrated Activity

01) Downtown Boulder
02) 29th Street Center and 28th/30th Street corridor
03) North of Arapahoe between 30th and 38th Streets
04) 55th and Arapahoe
05) Boulder Junction (30th and Pearl)
06) Gunbarrel town center
07) University Hill commercial area
08) Table Mesa Center
09) Meadows Community Center
10) Basemar (near Baseline and Broadway)
11) North Boulder/North Broadway
12) Diagonal Plaza
13) Other: ________________________________
14) None of the above



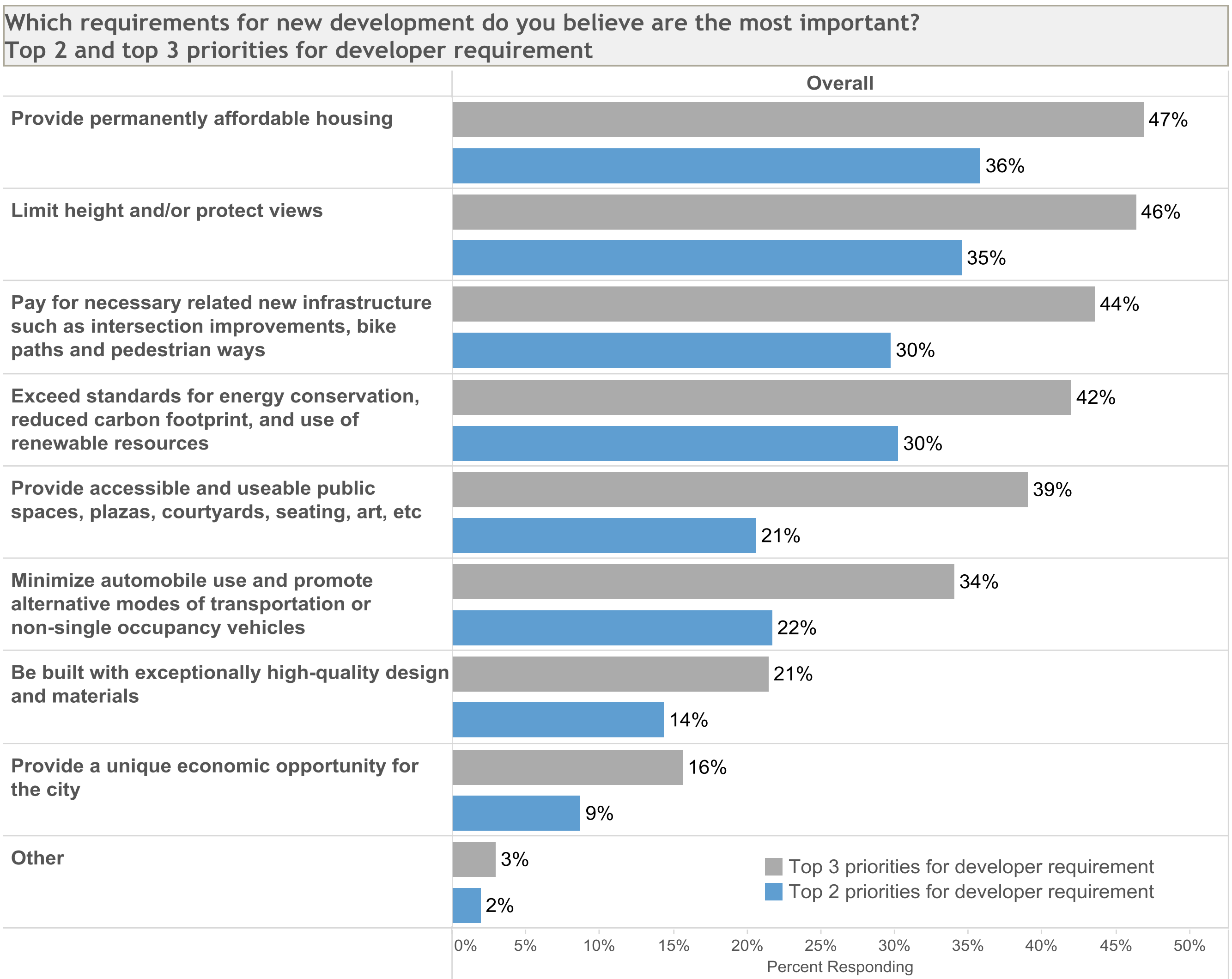
- Top three requirements for new development. Respondents identified the first, second, and third most important priorities that should be required for new development, from among a list of eight different types of community benefit (with the ability to write in "other" responses as well). Figure 15 below depicts the share of respondents identifying each requirement as their first, second, and third priority. As shown, providing permanently affordable housing was most likely to be selected as the top priority (25 percent). Following were limiting height and/or protecting views (22 percent); exceeding standards for energy conservation, reducing carbon footprint, and using renewable resources (17 percent); and paying for necessary new infrastructure such as intersection improvements, bike paths, and pedestrian ways (13 percent).

Figure 15: First, Second and Third Most Important Requirements for New Development



- Top two and top three requirements for new development. Figure 16 below displays the same results as the shares of respondents selecting their top two and top three priorities. Providing permanently affordable housing again tops the list (47 percent including this as one of their top three priorities, 36 percent as one of their top two), followed by limiting height and/or protecting views (46 percent selected this as one of their top three priorities); paying for necessary new infrastructure (44 percent); and exceeding standards for energy conservation, reducing carbon footprint, and using renewable resources (42 percent).

Figure 16: Top Two & Top Three Most Important Requirements for New Development



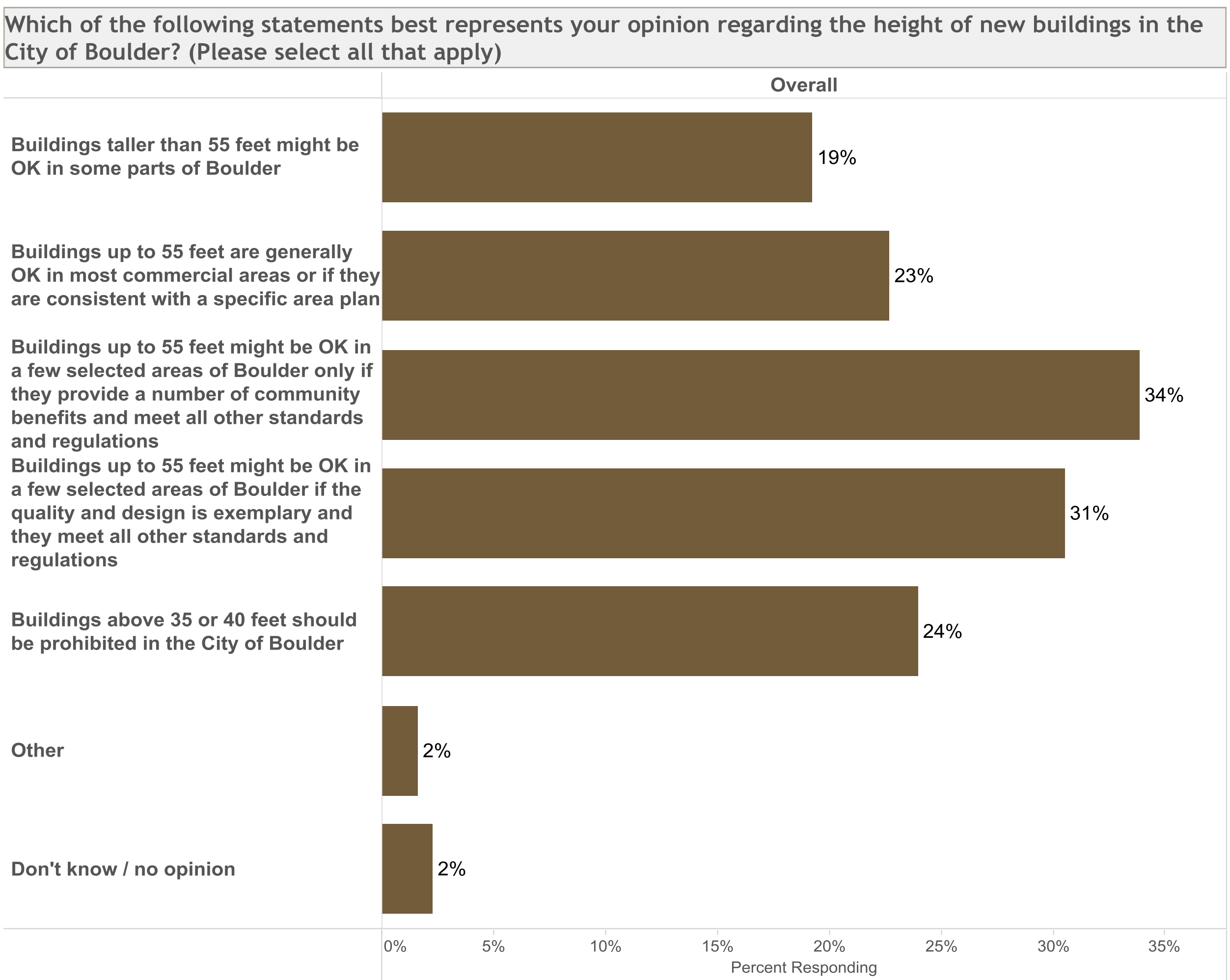
- What additional examples of "community benefit" [from development] not listed above do you believe are important? In an open-ended question following up on the development requirements question outlined above, respondents were asked what additional examples of "community benefit" are important. A total of 195 comment responses were received. A wide variety of subjects were addressed, in many cases elaborating on the themes of housing affordability, traffic, and concerns about growth, as well as touching on other issues such as serving the adjoining neighborhood, and providing art, parks or other amenities. Following is a random sample of comments, for illustration (with the complete listing in the Appendix).

Table 9
Random sample of comments: What additional examples of "community benefit" [from development] not listed above do you believe are important?

- *"Bridge the gap between permanently affordable housing and the astronomically expensive single family housing that currently exists. There is very little owner-occupied housing available in Boulder that is not part of a subsidy program and less than $800,000.00."*
- *"Continued purchase and development of parks and open space"*
- *"Excellent urban planning is a must."*
- *"I value parks and quiet spaces more than high-density housing or businesses"*
- *"Looks good on paper, but not in reality. Boulder needs to take a pause. Boulder Junction is ugly and our downtown is now the playground of millionaires and law firms, and select developers."*
- *"Not impact neighborhoods already established in Boulder."*
- *"Promote more social engagement/collaboration among the community as well as helping people become more resilient both personally and community wide"*
- *"Reduce smog and traffic. Have you noticed the brown cloud over the city? (I haven't seen it since the late 1980s, but it's back!) The city seems to be at cross purposes. If you want growth, you can't expect low use of cars, low traffic and smog. You have created the traffic and pollution you are trying to stop. Growth is not possible in a city with preserved open space and limited land."*
- *"There are numbers of large homes occupied by one person that could be used by multiple individuals in community. This regulation needs to change."*
- *"Yes, provide neighborhoods serving retail adjacent to neighborhoods particularly in South Boulder so neighborhood residents can walk and drive less."*

- Opinion regarding height of new buildings. The survey questionnaire presented background on the current approach to height regulations in various parts of the city, prior to asking respondents their opinions of building height. Generally, respondents support buildings up to 55 feet in height, either in most commercial areas (23 percent) or in a few selected areas of Boulder assuming they provide a number of community benefits (34 percent) and/or if the quality and design is exemplary and they meet all other standards (31 percent). Meanwhile, at other ends of the spectrum, 19 percent indicated that buildings taller than 55 feet might be acceptable in some parts of Boulder, while 24 percent said that buildings taller than 35 or 40 feet should be prohibited in Boulder.

Figure 17: Opinion Regarding Height of New Buildings



In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if they had any comments on their response. A total of 205 comment responses were received. In general, those in support of taller buildings in Boulder, typically with some limitations, tended to feel that the current height limit has negative impacts on the availability of housing in the City. Many respondents supportive of higher buildings also felt that tall buildings would have to avoid blocking views and have good design, and that they would provide some variation to the roof lines in town.

Among those opposed to taller buildings, the most common theme from the comments was that taller buildings block views. Other common themes were that taller buildings would change the character of Boulder, contribute to crowding, and generate traffic.

Following are random samples of comments, grouped by opinion regarding height, for illustration.

Table 10
Random sample of comments regarding building height, grouped by response category:
"Buildings taller than 55 feet might be OK in some parts of Boulder."

- *"55 foot or taller buildings can be appropriate for housing, but careful consideration as to where these buildings are needs to be made so as to not block residential views to their east. For example, 30th/Pearl would have been a great area for taller buildings because no homes, and mostly industrial properties are to the east - areas that can handle blocked views."*
- *"If we're unwilling to expand OUT we must give some thought to UP - done well"*
- *"Taller buildings may be accepted, even desired, by residents of certain parts of the City. Taller buildings can allow for greater diversity of roof lines, including towers, pitched roofs, and other features that are currently unavailable to developers. Taller buildings can also make more efficient use of limited land near transit, helping to achieve transportation, housing and climate goals. Boulder Junction would be a place to consider taller buildings."*
- *"We need density to accommodate housing otherwise Boulder will become a playground for the affluent only (it's nearly there already). With tightly-controlled development zones, little available land, and height limits, something has to give. It seems reasonable that some parts of Boulder would necessarily have buildings taller than 55 feet."*

"Buildings up to 55 feet are generally OK in most commercial areas of Boulder or if they are consistent with a specific area plan."

- *"As mentioned earlier, this should be allowed on a case-by-case basis if there isn't impact to the neighbors."*
- *"I'm not personally bothered by high rises in Boulder, but I don't think they really fit with the character of the city, and they block views."*
- *"There are many other factors that go into designing neighborhoods with building that are at least 55 feet tall. We also need to take into consideration the width of the streets and sidewalks. We need to look at tree lawns and the density of trees and benches. We need to look at the street level architectural elements that make a tall building feel proportional and inviting. All together these create amazing place to live, work and meet."*
- *"To avoid building out, we're going to have to build up at least somewhat"*

"Buildings up to 55 feet might be OK in a few selected areas of Boulder only if they provide a number of community benefits listed in Question 13 above and meet all other standards and regulations."

- *"A tall building here and there might work fine. It doesn't really block views. But developments like Boulder Junction or the current one downtown are inescapable."*
- *"Do not skimp on parking! Parking is horrible in some of these newest developments. The developers got away with not putting enough parking spots in several newer developments and now I avoid them like the plague."*
- *"I think that although preserving our views and our small town city skyline is important, some openness to building up is a way to relieve some of the pressure that our open space programs (which is also value) has placed on us."*
- *"View and solar corridors are important in Boulder so buildings up to 55' must meet all criteria in order to be considered."*

"Buildings up to 55 feet might be OK in a few selected areas of Boulder if the quality and design of the buildings and public spaces is exemplary and they meet all other standards and regulations."

- *"55' should not be permitted in downtown, 29th/28th-30th, north of Arapahoe between 30th-38th, or Boulder Junction. These areas are overcrowded and traffic is increasing each year. The Folsom experiment has not "forced" people onto bikes."*
- *"Boulder is such a unique city, that in order to maintain its quaintness, the quality of construction should be the first priority, but without sacrificing its character."*
- *"Many areas would accommodate 55 feet buildings without blocking views for large numbers of people and help create additional housing."*
- *"Very few areas in downtown and only if other residents' views are protected (i.e.: to the west of parking space or parks)"*

"Buildings above 35 or 40 feet should be prohibited in the City of Boulder."

- *"1. Case by case basis. 2. Okay for BCH to have what they need, providing they fix the existing parking problem at the same time. (if not before). 3. I don't know enough about where 55' is allowed now, other than what I can see on Walnut St. It should not be allowed all over town. 4. I'm most concerned about the negative impact it has on the public and the neighboring land owners. (congestion, lack of parking for the public, lack of views, etc.)"*
- *"Before building tall and dense, we need to improve public transit"*
- *"Increase height when it provides more affordable housing than required"*
- *"The higher the residential/commercial density of the area, the shorter the buildings should be. To have BCH at Foothills & Arapahoe doesn't significantly disrupt views, traffic, etc. In downtown Boulder, this isn't true. Boulder is losing a trace of its small town feel. At least some of that needs to be preserved."*

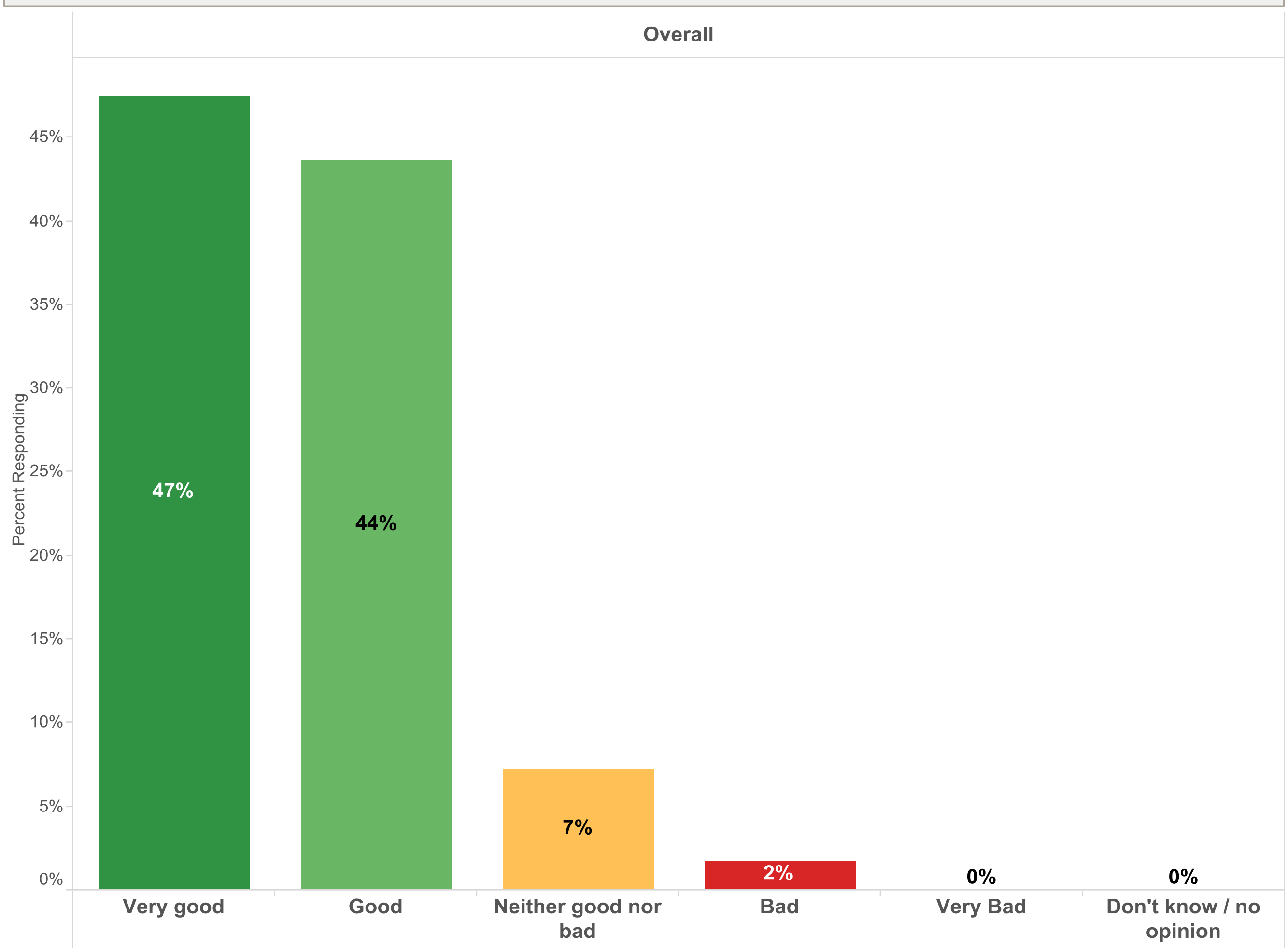
Neighborhoods

One section of the survey was devoted to neighborhood issues, including topics such as quality of life in respondents' neighborhood, most- and least-liked aspects of the neighborhood, and priorities for future neighborhood programs. Overall results from these questions are summarized in turn below. Additionally, it should be noted that the survey asked where respondents live (by sub-community and neighborhood), and analysis of the statistical results and comments is feasible and anticipated at those more localized levels.

- Overall quality of life in your neighborhood. Figure 18 below illustrates the overall quality of life that respondents experience in their neighborhood. The vast majority of respondents feel the quality of life is "very good" (47 percent) or "good" (44 percent), with seven percent saying it is "neither good nor bad," and only 2 percent indicating that it is "bad".

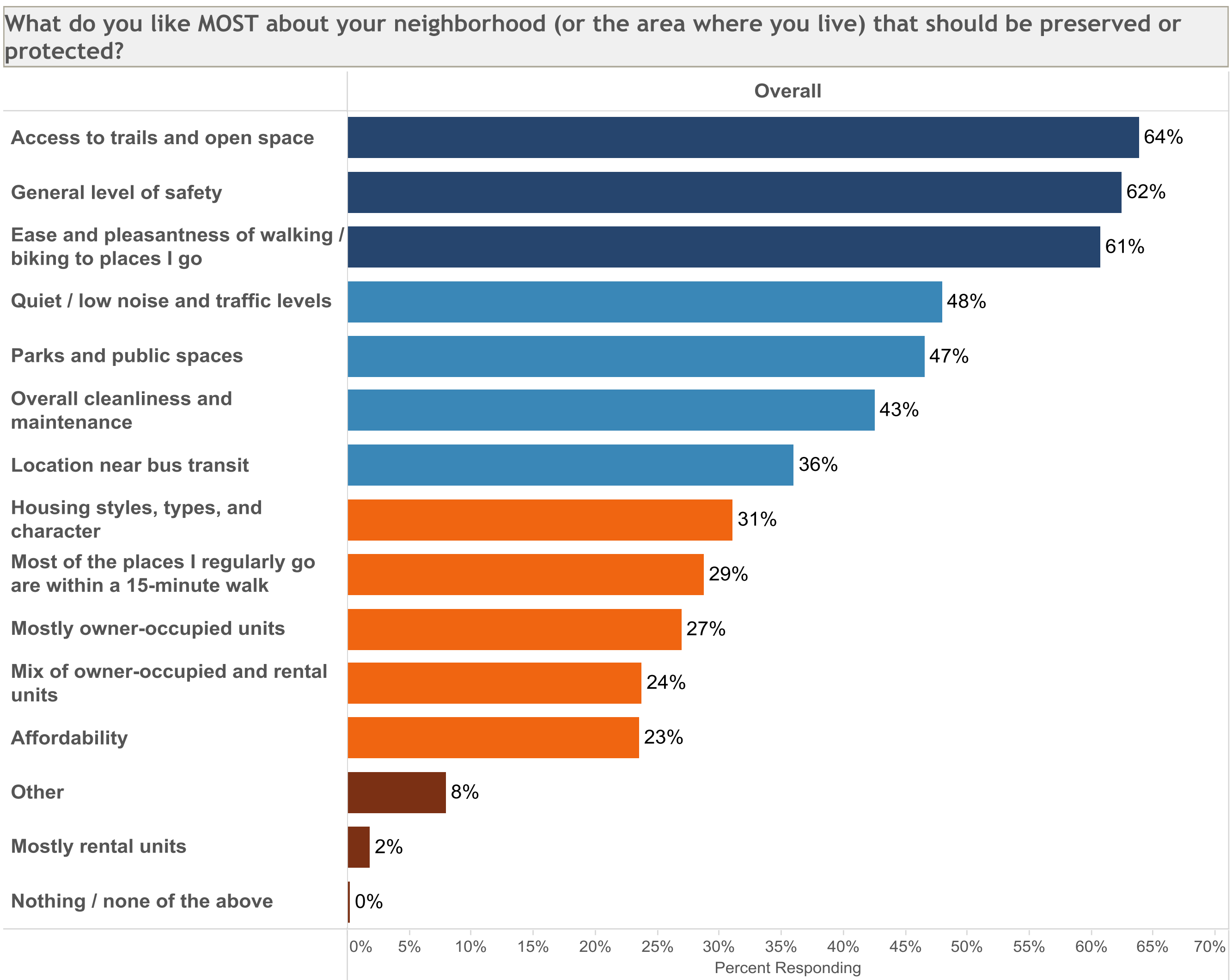
Figure 18: Overall Quality of Life in Your Neighborhood

How would you rate the overall quality of life in your neighborhood (or where you live), taking all things into consideration?



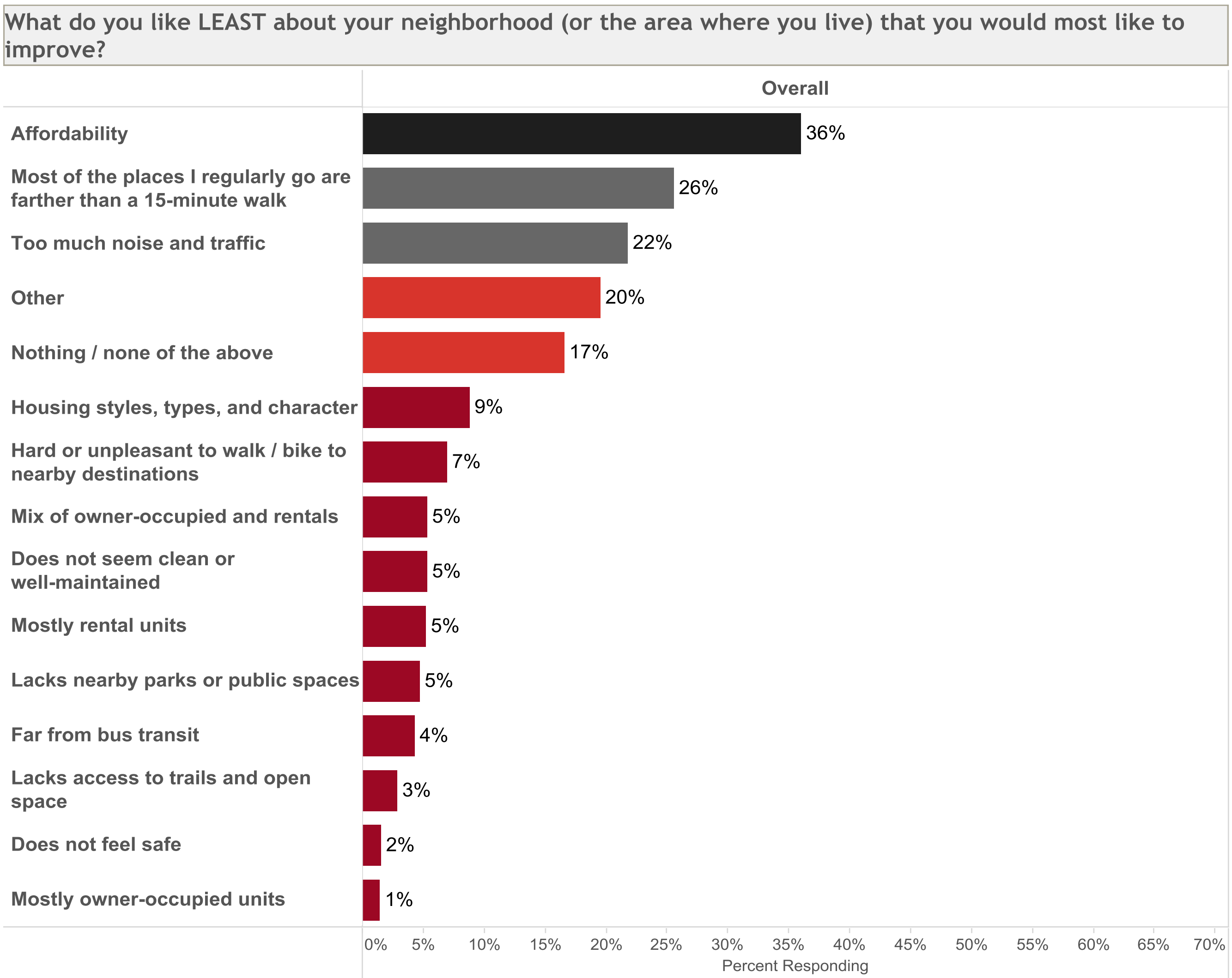
- What do you like most about your neighborhood? Residents like many things about their neighborhood, most commonly the access to trails and open space (64 percent), the general level of safety (62 percent), and the ease and pleasantness of walking/biking to places I go (61 percent). Following were quiet/low noise and traffic levels (48 percent), parks and public spaces (47 percent), overall cleanliness and maintenance (43 percent), and a location near bus transit (36 percent). Respondents selected an average of 5.0 items that they like best about their neighborhood.

Figure 19: What do you like most about your neighborhood?



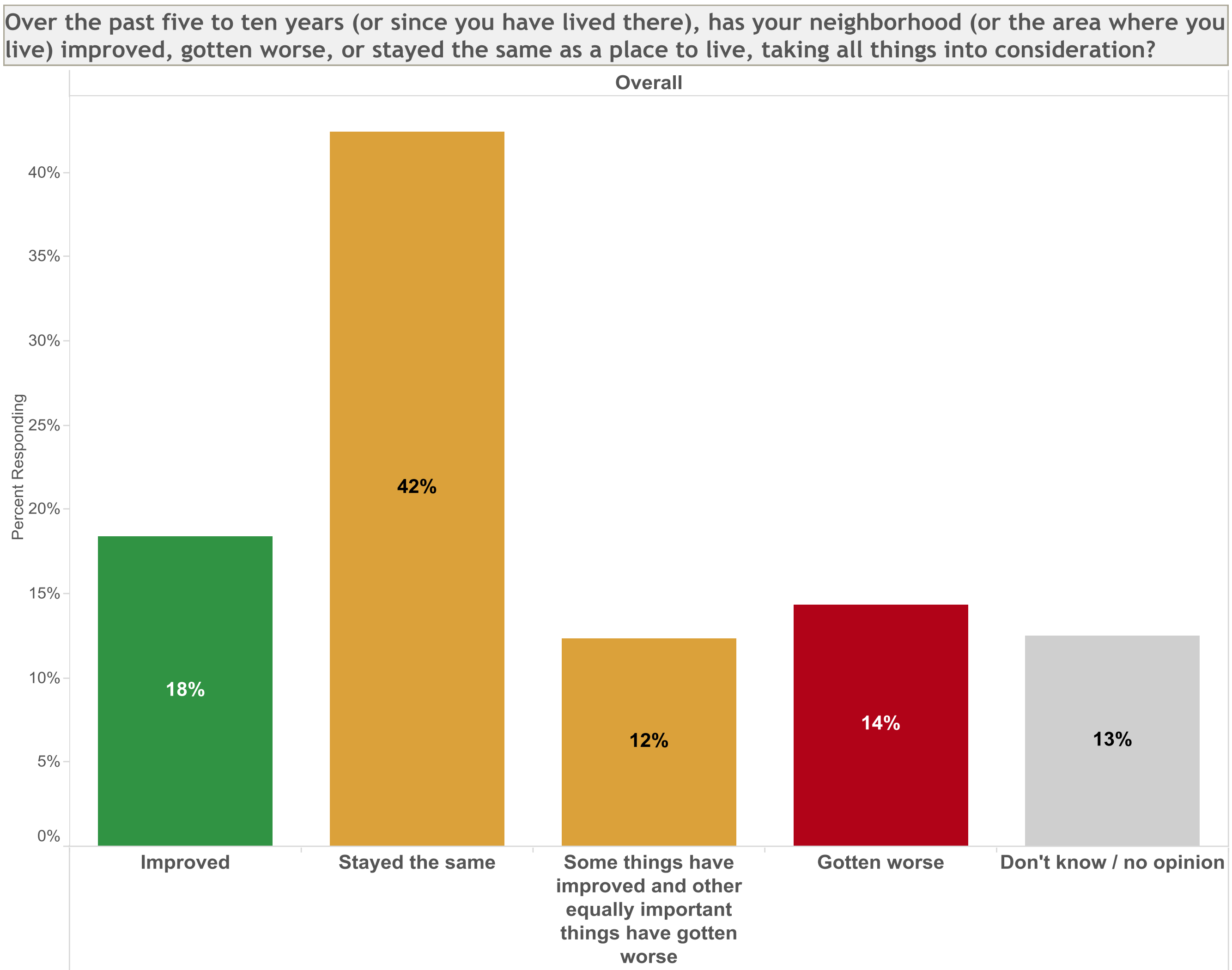
- What do you like least about your neighborhood? Residents generally only dislike a few things about their neighborhood. Top least-liked aspects include affordability (36 percent), that most of the places I regularly go are farther than a fifteen-minute walk (26 percent), and too much noise and traffic (21 percent). Respondents selected an average of 1.5 things they disliked about their neighborhood, indicating that there are typically more satisfactory aspects than unsatisfactory aspects present in Boulder neighborhoods.

Figure 20: What do you like least about your neighborhood?



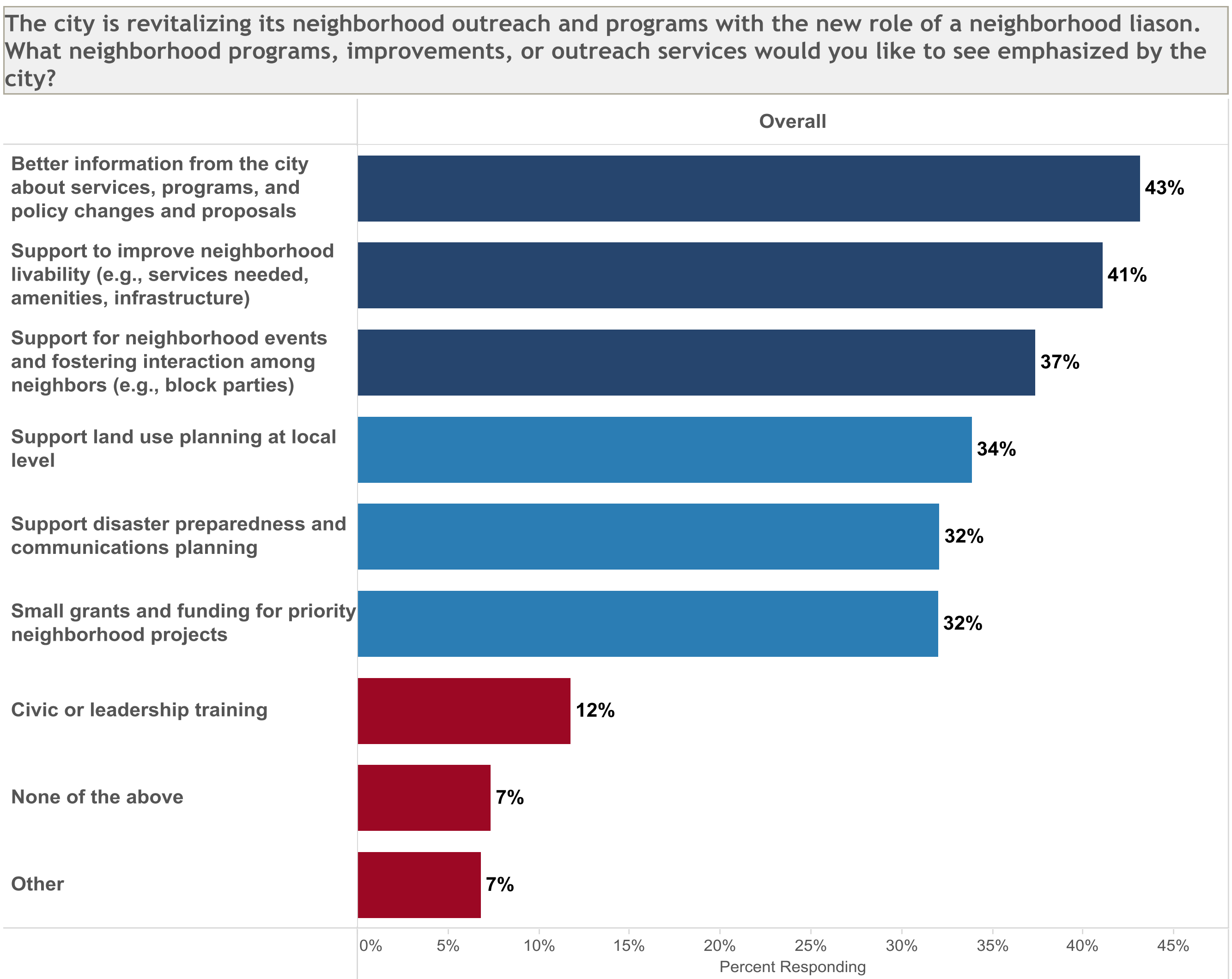
- Perception of neighborhood change over past five to ten years. Modest shares of respondents felt things have improved (18 percent) or gotten worse (14 percent) in their neighborhood over the past five to ten years. A larger share felt that things have stayed the same (42 percent), while 12 percent said some things have improved but other equally important things have gotten worse, and 13 percent didn't know/had no opinion.

Figure 21: Perception of Neighborhood Change Over Past Five to Ten Years



- Neighborhood programs. After a brief explanation that the City is intending to revitalize its neighborhood outreach programs, respondents were asked what neighborhood programs, improvements, or outreach services they would like to see. The top service requested was better information from the City about services, programs, and policy changes and proposals (43 percent), followed by support to improve neighborhood livability (41 percent), and support for neighborhood events and fostering interaction among neighbors (37 percent).

Figure 22: Neighborhood Programs



Additional Comments or Suggestions Regarding the Plan

The final opinion question on the survey asked if respondents had any additional comments or suggestions to offer regarding the Plan. A total of 373 comments were received, many of which were comparatively lengthy and detailed. Respondents most commonly took this question as an opportunity to state or re-emphasize concerns that the Plan should address. Many themes apparent in other survey results were reiterated, including concerns regarding housing affordability, transportation, growth and change, neighborhoods, open space, and so on. Following is a random sample of the comments for illustration, with the complete listing including in the Appendix.

Table 11
Random sample of comments: "Do you have any additional comments or suggestions that you would like to offer regarding the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan?"

- *"Boulder is an amazing city, but it did not become one of the most desirable places to live because of urban development. High rises and expensive condos are not part of this city's true heart and character. Instead, they are a careless, money making scheme that only benefits developers and needs to be stopped."*
- *"Eliminate retro-fitted traffic circles and right-sizing for bike/car separation. They are more of a safety hazard than a benefit."*
- *"I am saddened by the direction development in the city has taken the last few years, as detailed in my previous comments. I am considering moving to Louisville or Lafayette or somewhere else to have that smaller-city feel I used to love in Boulder. The loss of unique mom and pop shops in downtown Boulder and East Pearl, the extreme affluence and lack of diversity in economic status of the individuals, and the addition of the Google campus right in the heart of Central Boulder (why aren't they out in a commercial office park district?), given the knowledge of how Google has affected communities like Venice Beach in CA (where my artist brother has been displaced), make me feel a loss for the city I've loved for over 20 years."*
- *"I hope you make the right decisions and keep Boulder appealing. It used to be a city where one had a sense of community. I see it now as a city of wealthy people interested in their own well-being. I think this Plan is too little, too late. We can no longer afford to live here and after 40 years are sadly leaving. I grieve for the lost opportunity, but grateful for the time spent here."*
- *"I would love to see more options for start-up businesses in regards to gatherings. Renting facilities for a start-up is challenging. CoWorking spaces help and gatherings is challenging. Would love to see a grant application to cover some of these expenses so new start-ups are connected more without the huge expense of the Chamber, CoWorking Spaces, restaurants and hotels meeting rooms."*

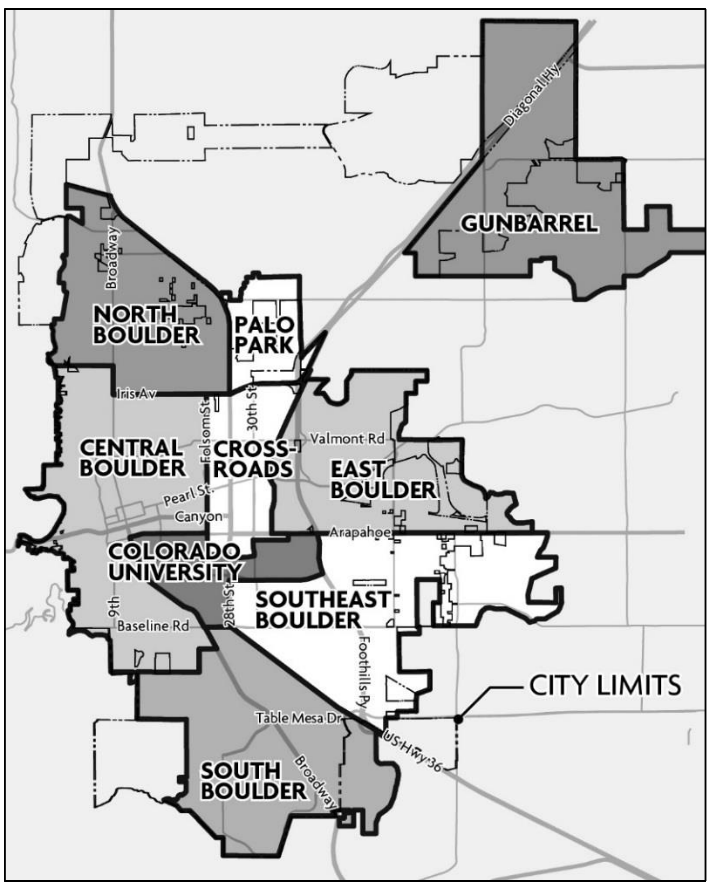
- *"Make more effort to support walking in transportation planning make more effort to support development of beautiful and pleasing design elements to buildings. Most new development like Boulder Junction is monolithic and ugly providing an extreme lack of interest. Do not let those projects become the face of Boulder tomorrow."*
- *"Planning should be conscious of expansion into designated flood plans - i.e. land should not be developed that would negatively impact existing neighborhoods without extensive study and a comprehensive and effective flood mitigation plan."*
- *"Thank you for conducting the survey. The planning process should prioritize citizen input rather than commercial or developer pressure."*
- *"The majority of the houses in my neighborhood are vintage 1960's and need to be remodeled as the original owners change (turnover). Most people recognize that houses are expensive in Boulder but they chose to live in an old house in need of updating instead of paying the same amount to live in a brand new 5,000SF house further east and having to commute and not have access to open space, live in a vibrant community, etc. Remodeling of single family houses within these neighborhoods should be ENCOURAGED not discouraged. My 1960's house has minimal insulation, what is wrong with remodeling it and improving its energy consumption needless to say having something that is better to look at that is more aesthetically appealing for the neighborhood? Love the idea of surrounding this beautiful city with open space and the fact that it is recognized that preservation of that open space is a key requirement is fantastic. Infill development and replacement of old dilapidated buildings is a good thing as we move through time. It is a wealthy area and there is no reason the real estate development should not reflect that investment. Not every building is going to look the same or be made with marble floors."*
- *"When I moved to Boulder 15 years ago I thought I had found my Utopia: a beautiful, liberal city with a small town feel and plenty of access to the outdoors. Over the last 5 years specifically, I have noticed a significant change in the friendliness, personal responsibility and generally relaxed lifestyle I fell in love with. I foresee Boulder moving, on its current trajectory, toward a culture of extreme wealth, excessive work hours, and general overall levels of stress, much like San Francisco has become. I still love Boulder, but am hoping this trajectory levels out soon, or even diminishes."*

Respondent Demographics

This section of the report summarizes the demographic characteristics of respondents to the random sample, invitation-only survey. As noted in the Methodology section, the raw survey data were weighted to match the demographic profile of the household population in the Boulder Valley by age, housing tenure (own vs. rent), and residence in the City versus unincorporated county (Area II/III), based on 2010 Decennial Census and 2009-14 American Community Survey data. A description of weighted demographic profile is provided below, followed by graphical illustrations of the results.

- Place of residence (city/county): The majority of respondents live in the City of Boulder (85 percent), with a minority residing outside the city limits in unincorporated Boulder County (15 percent).

- Subcommunity: One-quarter of respondents live in Central Boulder (25 percent), 15 percent live in South Boulder, 14 percent in Southeast Boulder, 13 percent in Gunbarrel, and 12 percent in North Boulder. Smaller shares of respondents reside in Crossroads (7 percent), University of Colorado (4 percent), East Boulder (4 percent), Palo Park (3 percent), and other areas/rural (3 percent). The map that was included in the survey accompanying this question is shown below.



- Years living in the Boulder Valley. Respondents had lived in the Boulder Valley for a diverse range of time, from less than a year to 85 years. The average length of residency was 17 years, with a median of 12 years.

- Household size. The average household size was 2.3 persons, with 25 percent living in one-person households, 45 percent in two-person households, 16 percent in three-person households, 12 percent in four person households, and 3 percent in five or more person households.

- Household composition. Twenty-five percent of respondents have children 18 and under living in their household (including 20 percent with children age 12 or younger and 8 percent with teenagers age 13 to 18). Nineteen percent indicated the presence of adult(s) aged 65 or older at home, and 6 percent of households include someone with a long-term disability.

- Employment status. Four out of five survey respondents (79 percent) are employed, while 21 percent are not employed. Among those who are employed, most work in Boulder (82 percent), with 18 percent working in array of other communities. Fully 55 percent of those employed work at home at least some of the time (including 37 percent who work partly at home and partly at their employer's location, 4 percent who always work at home instead of their employer's location, and 14 percent who run a business out of their home), while only 41 percent never work at home.

- University/college students. Eight percent of survey respondents are students at CU, 1 percent are university/college students elsewhere, and 91 percent are not university/college students. Note that students living in the CU residence halls were intentionally omitted from the survey sample.

- Type of residence. Almost half of respondents live in a single family home (48 percent), while most of the others live in a condo/townhome (26 percent) or an apartment (including 17 percent in an apartment complex, and 3 percent in an apartment in a single-family home). Small shares live in a mobile home (1 percent), group quarters (1 percent), or other living accommodations (3 percent).

- Housing tenure. A little more than half of respondents own their residence (53 percent), and a little less than half are renters (46 percent).

- Age. Half of respondents are aged between 20 and 39, 22 percent are aged 40 to 54, 21 percent are aged 55 to 74, and 6 percent are over 74.

- Annual household income before taxes. More than three-quarters of households indicated a household income level of $150,000 or less: 24 percent earning less than $50,000, 29 percent in the $50,000 to $99,999 range, and 25 percent in the $100,000 to

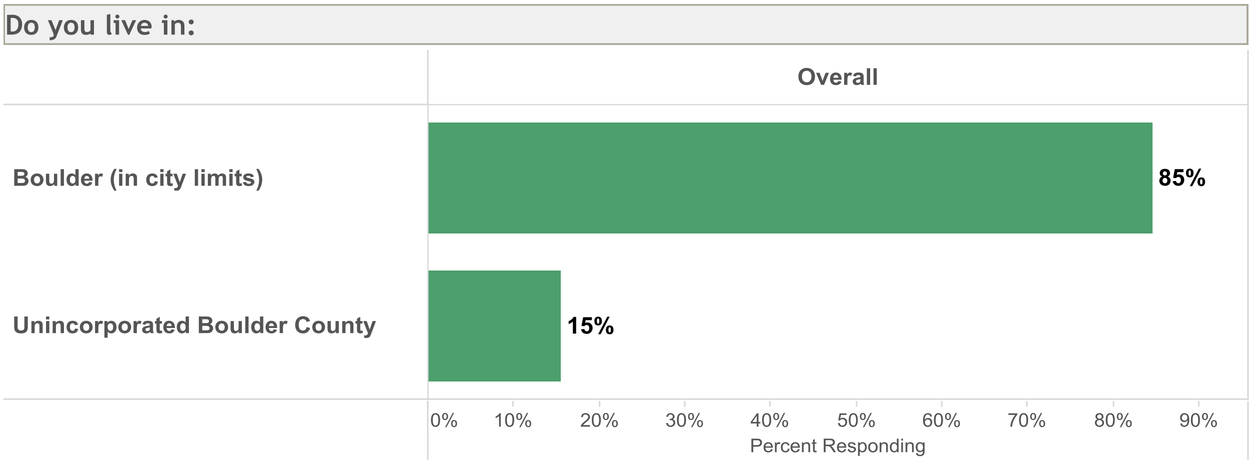
$149,999 range. Additionally, 12 percent earn $150,000 to $199,999 annually, with 4 percent in the $200,000 to $299,999 range and 7 percent earning $250,000 or more.

- Race. The majority of survey respondents are white (95 percent), with 3 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 2 percent American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, 1 percent Black or African American, and 1 percent other.

- Hispanic origin. Three percent of respondents are of Chicano/Chicana/Mexican-American, Latino/Latina, or Hispanic origin.

- Gender. Finally, the gender distribution is 51 percent female, 49 percent male.

Figure 23: Place of Residence



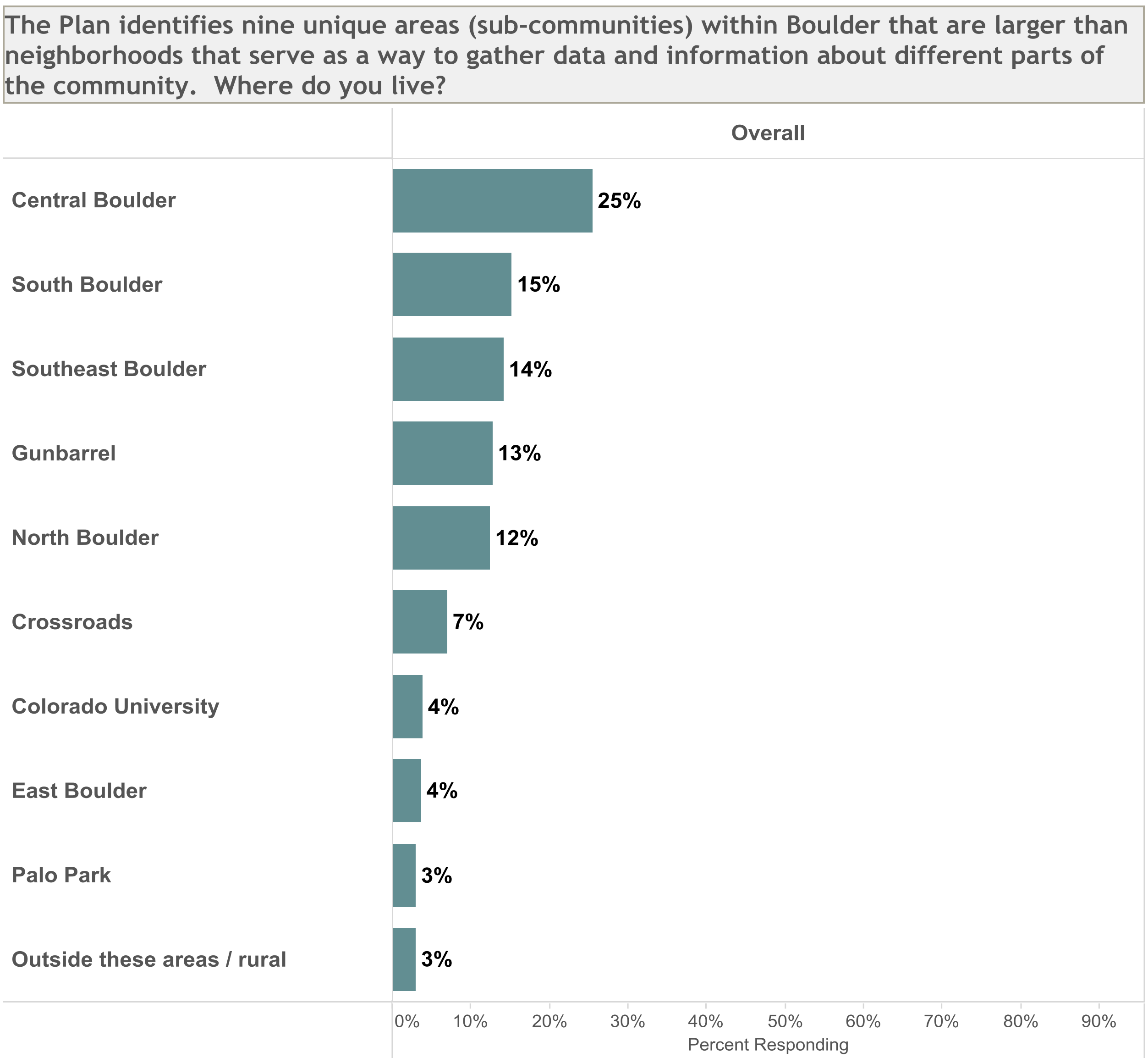
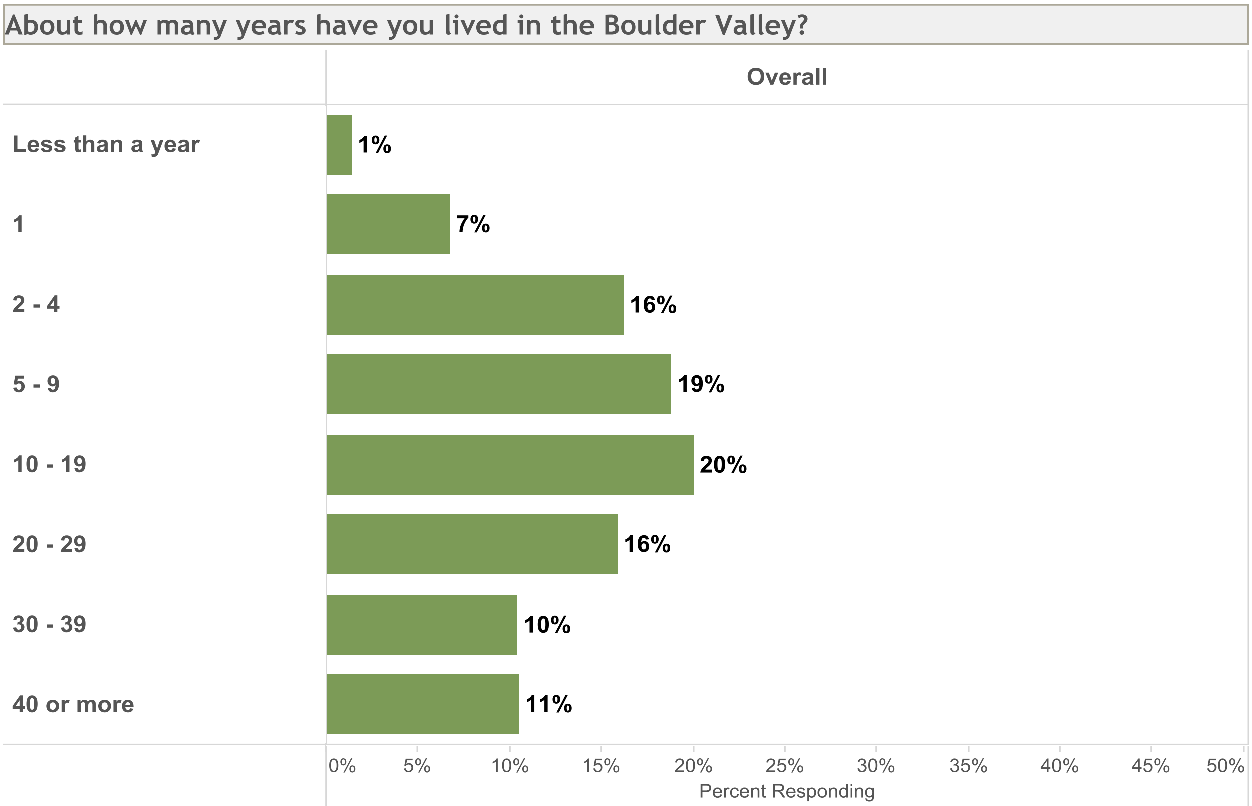


Figure 24: Length of Residence and People in Household



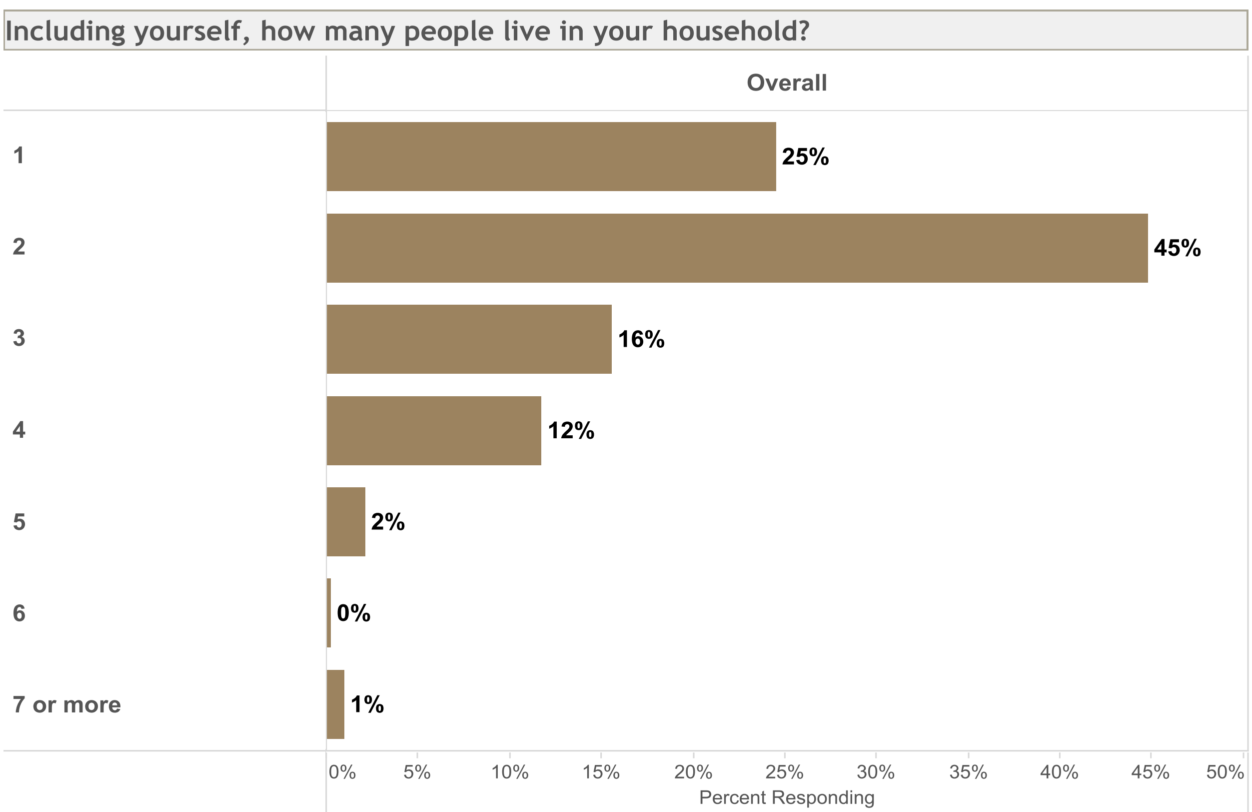


Figure 25: Employment Characteristics and Student Status

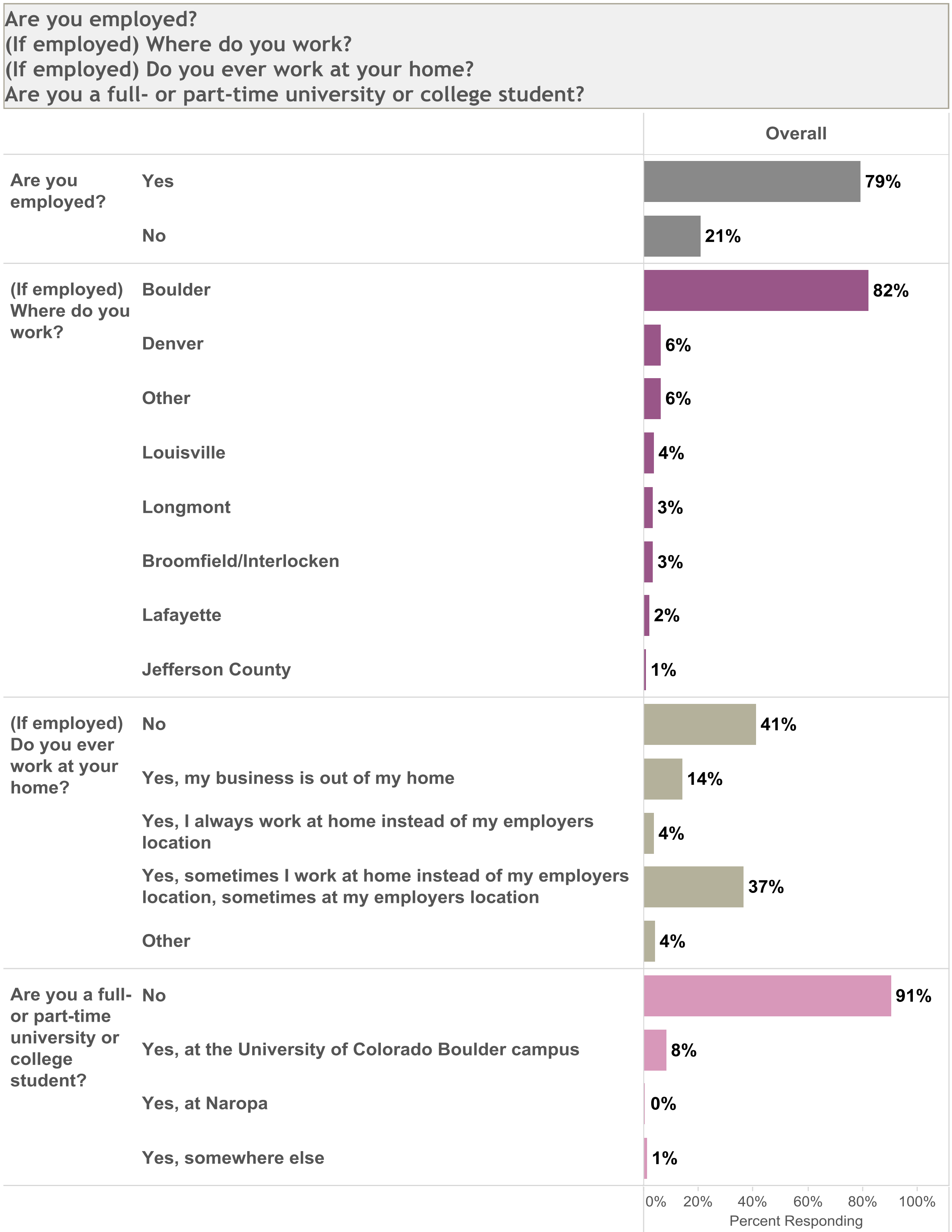
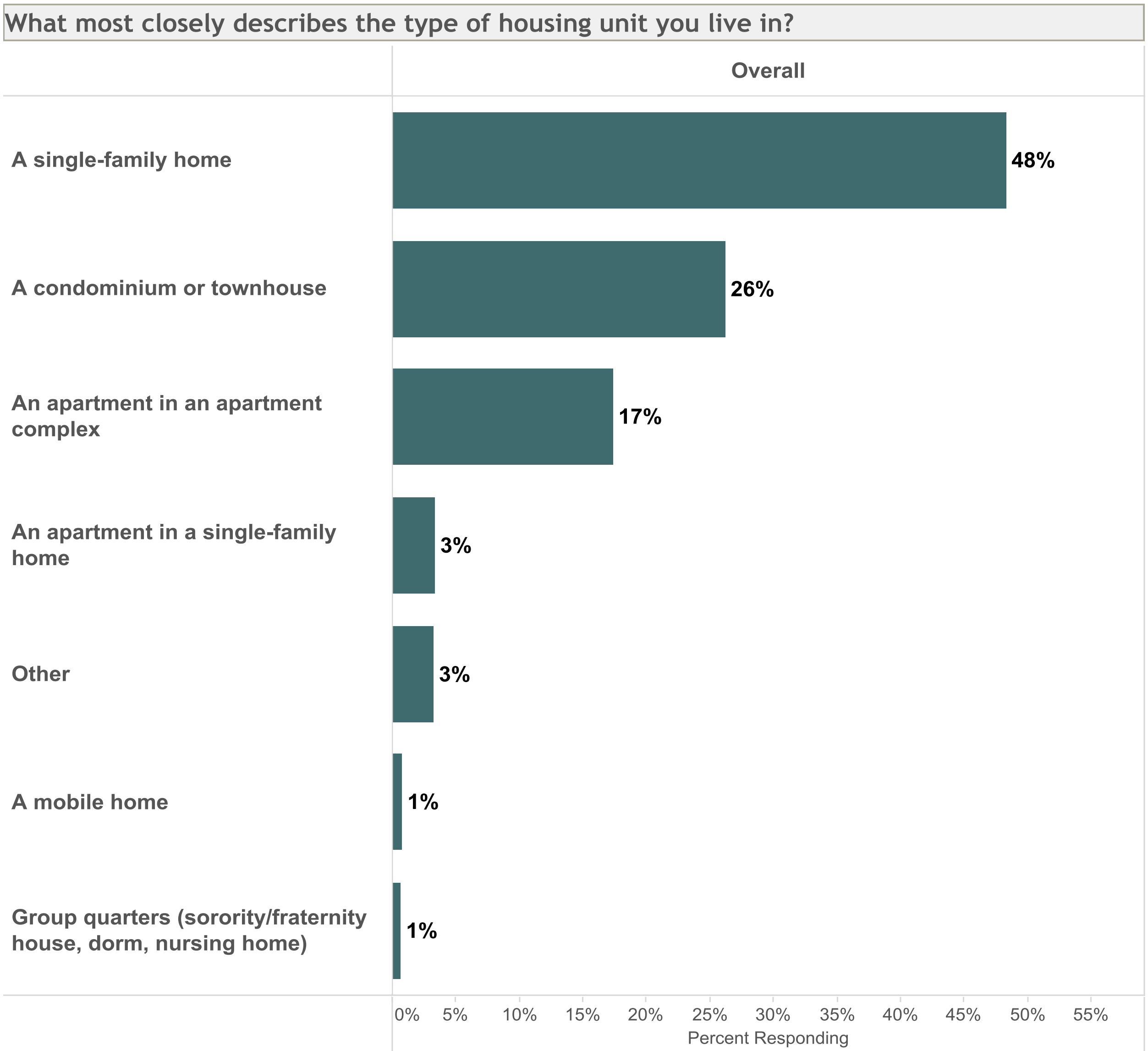


Figure 26: Housing Characteristics



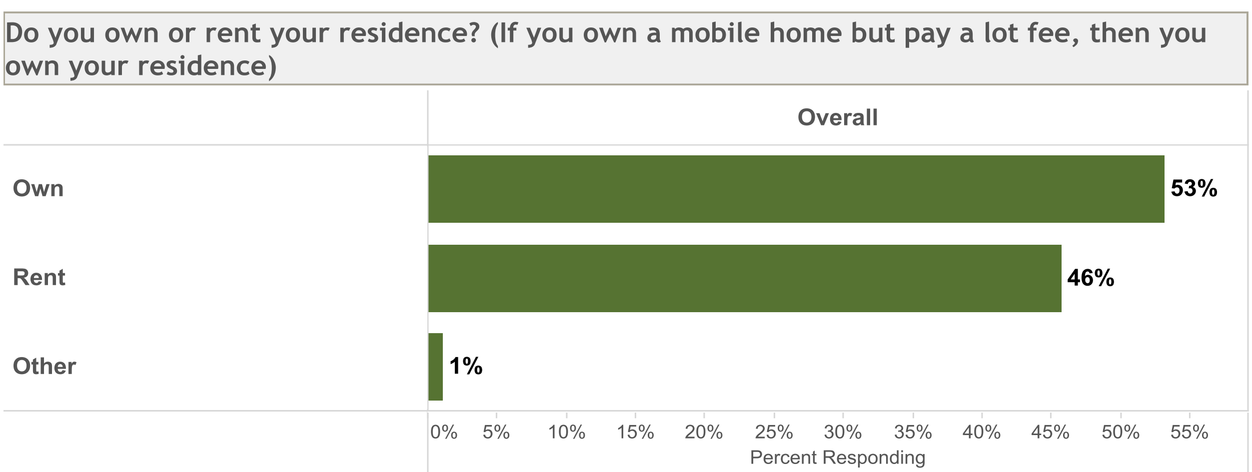


Figure 27: Demographic Characteristics

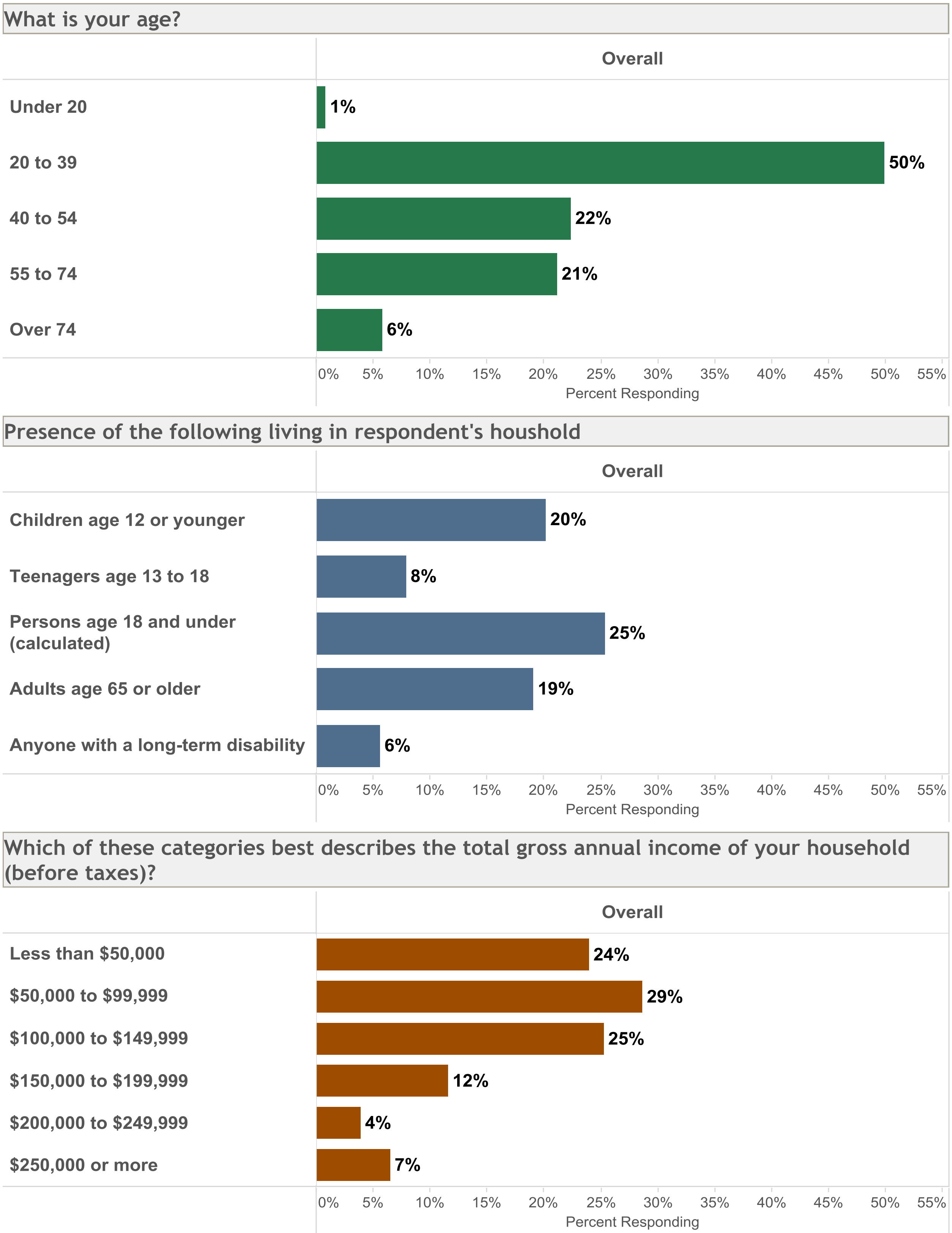
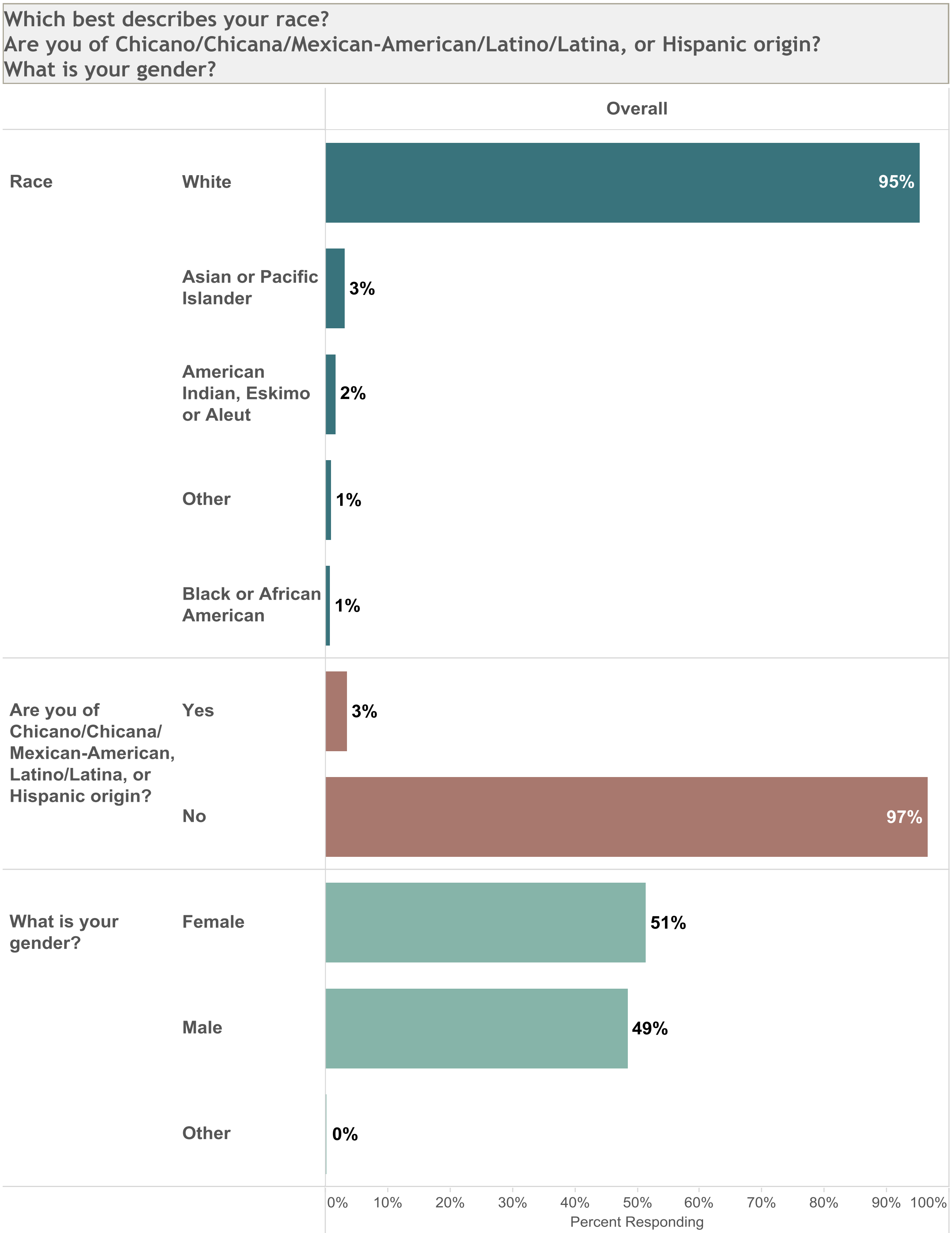


Figure 28: Demographic Characteristics



Respondent Demographics Before and After Survey Weighting

As described in the methodology, the raw survey data were weighted to match the demographic profile of the adult household population in the Boulder Valley by age, housing tenure (own vs. rent), and residence in the City versus unincorporated county (Area II/III), based on 2010 Decennial Census and 2009-14 American Community Survey data. The objective of the weighting was to ensure that the results are representative of the Boulder Valley population on key demographic characteristics. A summary of selected respondent demographic characteristics before and after survey weighting, as compared to the Boulder Valley population profile, is included below. Only weighted results are summarized in this report, unless noted otherwise.

Table 12
Respondent Demographics (Weighted and Unweighted), Compared to Boulder Valley Population

AGE (adult population)	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
18 - 39	52%	51%	16%
40 - 54	22%	22%	30%
55 - 74	21%	21%	45%
75+	5%	6%	10%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
HOUSING TENURE	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
Owner-occupied households	53%	53%	86%
Renter-occupied households	47%	46%	13%
Other	n/a	1%	1%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
INCORPORATED VS. UNINCORPORATED	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
City of Boulder	84%	85%	83%
Unincorporated area of Boulder County	16%	15%	17%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
SUBCOMMUNITY (Households)	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
Central Boulder	26%	25%	22%
Colorado University	4%	4%	2%
Crossroads	7%	7%	3%
East Boulder	3%	4%	4%
Gunbarrel	10%	13%	11%
North Boulder	11%	12%	16%
Palo Park	3%	3%	3%
South Boulder	14%	15%	19%
Southeast Boulder	18%	14%	15%
Area III	4%	3%	4%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Introduction and Methodology

This section of the report summarizes the methodology and results of a series of six, 90-minute focus groups that were conducted with Boulder Valley residents by RRC Associates, as a follow-up to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) survey effort. The primary objective of the groups was to probe selected subjects addressed in the survey in greater depth. A total of 51 residents participated in the focus groups, including 24 men and 27 women. The focus groups occurred across four different weekdays during the Friday, November 6 – Friday, November 13 timeframe, at various times in the afternoon and evening. Table 13 below summarizes the dates, times, locations, and number of participants in the six focus groups.

Table 13
BVCP Focus Groups: Dates, Times, Locations and Participant Count

FG #	Date	Time	Location	Number of Participants
1	Fri. Nov. 6	1:30 - 3pm	Boulder Public Library Main Branch, Flatirons Room	9
2	Tue. Nov. 10	5:30 - 7pm	401 Park Central Building, 4th Floor Conference Room	9
3	Tue. Nov. 10	7:30 - 9pm	401 Park Central Building, 4th Floor Conference Room	9
4	Thu. Nov. 12	3:30 - 5pm	Boulder Public Library Main Branch, Flatirons Room	8
5	Thu. Nov. 12	7:30 - 9pm	Impact Hub Boulder, 1877 Broadway #101	8
6	Fri. Nov. 13	1:30 - 3pm	Boulder Municipal Building, West Conference Room	8

All of the focus group participants had completed the BVCP “random sample survey” or “open link survey” conducted in September - November 2015, and had provided their email address at the end of the survey in order to volunteer to be contacted for additional surveys or focus groups on the Plan. Fully 711 respondents across the two surveys, or approximately 60 percent of survey respondents, provided their email for follow-up research, suggesting a significant level of interest.

A random sample of these respondents was contacted via email and asked if they were available and interested in participating in a focus group at one of several potential times. From among interested and available respondents, a smaller group of participants was randomly selected based on desire and availability to participate; additionally, some steps were taken to try to ensure participant balance. Specifically, an effort was made to insure that the participants in each focus group reflected a mix of ages, areas of residency in the City of Boulder and Boulder Valley, owners and renters, newer residents and long-time residents, and those feeling the general direction of growth and development in Boulder is either headed in the right direction, the wrong direction, or a mixed reaction (both right and wrong).
While the discussion topics varied slightly across the groups depending upon the flow of the discussion and in order to cover the range of topics of interest, in general, the groups followed

a consistent sequence of questions from the moderator, based on a Discussion Guide (included as a report attachment). As more fully documented in the Discussion Guide, the focus groups centered on the following set of topics:

- Aspects of the community which are headed in the right / wrong direction
- Housing affordability and housing growth
- Job growth
- Mixed use and higher density development
- Building height and design
- Other topics participants felt should be addressed in the Plan update

All the focus groups were conducted by Dave Belin, an experienced moderator and member of the RRC staff. A large map of the Boulder Valley was displayed in the room for introduction and reference purposes as needed. The groups were audio recorded and a note taker was present at each group. A written summary of notes of the discussion of each group has been provided under separate cover.

Summary of Major Themes and Findings

A summary of selected findings from the groups follows, presented in no particular order or hierarchy. Many of these themes are consistent with the quantitative and qualitative feedback gathered in the surveys.

- Sentiments Regarding Overall Growth and Change. Focus Group participants were mostly okay with growth and change in the Boulder Valley, but prefer it to be gradual, to fit into the existing neighborhood context, to maintain the character of Boulder, and to provide benefit to the community – themes generally suggestive of moderation and balance. Participants were often careful to note that the details of development are important and need to be carefully planned out and thought through, with regards to location, density, architecture/aesthetics/design, fitting into the fabric of the community, and related issues.

- Mixed Use Development. Mixed use development is seen as generally positive, as long as it fits into a neighborhood and provides elements of good design – for example, trees, parks, pedestrian friendliness, and human scale features were frequently mentioned as important considerations. Participants indicated that they are willing to accept (or are supportive of) mixed use in the right locations – along transportation corridors and along other areas identified for higher density, but generally not in single family neighborhoods.

- Good Examples of Mixed Use Development. The Holiday neighborhood and Uptown Broadway were frequently cited as good examples of mixed use development – with a variety of housing styles and affordability levels, density without feeling too cramped, a vibrant retail and community scene, walkability, parks, and integration with the surrounding neighborhood.

- Additional Locations for Mixed Use. East Boulder, particularly around the 55th/Arapahoe area, was frequently cited as a location in the city that would be appropriate for mixed use and higher density development. Other areas noted for potential mixed use include Basemar, Diagonal Plaza, 28th Street between Pearl and Iris, Table Mesa, and the Meadows. These areas were generally consistent with those most identified in the Random Sample and Open Link surveys. Some participants noted that existing shopping centers in some of these areas are dated and could be redeveloped as mixed use, with retail/commercial on the ground floor and residential on upper floors.

- Height Limit. Participants generally support the existing height limits, and feel that providing more housing and commercial space can be achieved through redevelopment and mixed use, and not through additional height (or relatedly, that additional height should only be considered after existing redevelopment opportunities are exhausted). Concerns about additional height focused especially on views of the mountains and community character (urban feel, wind tunnel effects, shade, etc.) – e.g. the height limit "is what makes Boulder Boulder." Some were okay with varying the height from time to time to provide more diversity and interest, rather than rows of buildings all the same height. No one indicated that they want to see skyscrapers in Boulder, although some were potentially supportive of buildings above 55 feet, particularly if they helped provide affordable housing. Due to view impacts, respondents generally thought that higher buildings would best be accommodated where they don't block the westward views of existing residents (e.g. generally more in industrial areas on the east side of town). Some respondents also suggested that public access to rooftops of tall buildings might help make them more acceptable.

- Building Design and Aesthetics. The idea of the relationship between height and good design came up in many of the sessions. Some participants made the point that one of the problems with the larger new buildings is with their appearance and siting, with too little open or landscaped areas around them, too little setback, too much uniformity in height, repetitive/uninteresting/"boxy" facades or designs, and/or blocking views. Building design and aesthetics were sometimes criticized as being "ugly" or not fitting into the neighborhood and/or character of Boulder.

- Affordable Housing. The cost of housing was probably the most common and highest-priority concern of focus group participants – out of concern for their own or their kids' future housing options and ability to live/stay in Boulder, and out of concern for

Boulder's socioeconomic diversity and character. Many participants felt that housing diversity (types and price points) can be enhanced through some creative adjustments – e.g. increasing the occupancy limit (focusing on the problems that might be caused, not just the number of people), allowing (or easing the review process for) accessory dwelling units, splitting lots, co-op housing, more density (duplexes and condos), mixed use, protecting mobile home parks, and potentially limiting house sizes, among others. There is general support for the affordable housing programs in Boulder, with some feeling that there could be some improvements.

- Desirability of Boulder. There was some sentiment expressed in multiple groups around the idea that there will always be more people who want to live in Boulder than can afford to live in Boulder, and that it's okay for people to work in Boulder but not live in Boulder. Some expressed the viewpoint that building more housing will not bring down the price of housing – "you can't build your way out of it", and "there won't be a starter house built in Boulder ever again."
- Diversity. While not specifically queried in the focus group discussion, a desire exists for more diversity of the population in Boulder. Some people mentioned that there was once more diversity (10 plus years ago) and they regret that it has been eroded. Some of the participants with children explained their concerns for raising children in a community that lacks diversity.
- Inclusiveness. Related to the topic of diversity described above, some suggested that Boulder shouldn't focus too much on one segment of the population, but rather consider the wide spectrum of those who live in Boulder, including elderly, those on fixed incomes, those who drive cars, those with families, etc.
- Jobs. Participants frequently noted connections between job growth and traffic congestion / transportation needs, and sometimes suggested mitigating commuting impacts by having employers provide Ecopasses, have flexible or staggered work hours, and/or encourage telecommuting. Several participants brought up connections between job growth and the cost of housing. However, participants were also generally positive about the strength of Boulder's economy, and several mentioned that Boulder as an employment center is a good problem to have.
- Transportation. Transportation came up numerous times, though it was not specifically asked about during the discussion. Better transportation for those who work in Boulder but don't live in Boulder, better transportation within Boulder, suggestions for a free bus system like in the mountain towns (or a community-wide Ecopass), enhanced performance of the RTD system, and creative transportation systems (using Lyft-like technology) all came up as transportation improvement ideas/suggestions. The bike path system was also frequently identified as a very positive aspect of Boulder.

- Balance. Several participants felt that the Comp Plan should recognize that development patterns and regulations do not need to be the same across all parts of Boulder – that the Plan should be sensitive to the larger community's needs but we don't need all types of housing or all types of mixed use everywhere. The Plan should be smart and creative about what needs to go where and keep the overall balance in mind.

- CU Involvement. Some noted that CU needs to be a part of the Comp Plan because of students' impacts on the cost of rental housing, as well as impacts on community services around the university area. "The university is projected to continue to grow, and they need to take some responsibility for their impacts," was one comment from a focus group participant.

- Communication. The idea of improving communications by the City government came up in a number of different ways. Better communication from the City and more opportunities to provide input on the Comp Plan-type issues was mentioned. Many of the groups expressed appreciation for being asked to take the survey and being invited to the focus group.

- Specific Concerns from Residents that live Outside the City of Boulder. Several of the respondents from Gunbarrel mentioned concerns with new buildings going in, density in "open fields" and a lack of attention to good design.

OVERVIEW OF THE OPEN LINK SURVEY

Introduction and Methodology

As a complement to the random sample survey, an identical "open link" survey was made available online for anyone in the community to complete, without a password requirement. While most of the emphasis in this report has been placed on the random sample survey results (given the random sample survey's more statistically valid methodological approach and larger sample size), the results of the open link survey are also important and of interest and value. The responses (including comments) of the open-link respondents are in many ways as rich and thoughtful as the responses to the random sample survey, and reflect the opinions of a large group of respondents who care enough about the community to participate in the survey.

The "open link" survey was announced in an October 26 City press release, and information about the survey was also included in multiple Boulder Planning weekly e-mails (over 5000 subscribers), promoted on Channel 8, and promoted through social media. The survey was intended to invite and gather input from anyone in the community not selected to take the random sample survey, and thus ensure that the full breadth of the community had an opportunity to share their opinions.

A total of 459 respondents completed the survey, and an additional 277 respondents answered a smaller number of the survey questions. The 95 percent confidence interval (or margin of error) for a sample of 459 is approximately +/-4.6 percentage points.

The results of the open link survey, like the random sample survey, were weighted on the basis of age, housing tenure, and residence in the City versus unincorporated county (Area II/III), in order to enhance the demographic representativeness of the results.

The results of the open link survey have been kept strictly separate from the random sample survey for reporting purposes, given the distinctly different sampling approaches for the two surveys.

This chapter contains a brief overview of key similarities and differences in the results of the open link and random sample survey. In addition, the Appendix contains the following additional detail regarding the open link survey results:

- Graphical comparisons of the weighted "open link" and weighted "random sample" survey results.
- Tabular comparisons of the open link and random sample results (both weighted an unweighted for each survey).
- Verbatim comment responses to the open link survey.

Selected Key Findings from Open Link Survey

Overall, perhaps the most notable finding regarding the open link results is that they exhibit a high degree of statistical similarity to the random sample results. To the extent there are differences in the results of the two surveys, they are most commonly moderate in size – differing in degrees rather than in kind. Following are some of the key findings, highlighting similarities and differences in the open link results relative to the random sample survey results.

- Familiarity with the Plan and update process: The largest statistical differences between the open link and random sample results concern familiarity with the Plan and with discussions regarding the Plan update process. Open link respondents tend to be more familiar with the Plan on both fronts. Specifically, open link respondents are more likely than random sample respondents to know “some things” or “quite a bit” about the Plan, or are “very familiar with it” (60 percent open link vs. 41 percent random sample). Conversely, open link respondents are less likely to have “never heard of it” or “not know much about it” (40 percent open link vs. 59 percent random sample).

  Likely relatedly, open link respondents are more likely than random sample respondents to be following discussions about the Plan update “somewhat closely” or “very closely” (40 percent open link vs. 24 percent random sample), and are less likely to be following the discussions “not at all” or “not too closely” (60 percent vs. 76 percent).

  These differences in familiarity are perhaps to be expected, given that the open link respondents are a self-selected group, and were likely motivated to participate by virtue of greater interest/awareness and perhaps strongly held opinions.

- Quality of life. Open link respondents give slightly lower ratings than random sample respondents for quality of life in Boulder Valley, and are also slightly more likely to say neighborhood has gotten worse over past 5-10 years. At the same time, the overall feedback remains quite positive from the open link respondents, with 93 percent saying the overall quality of life in the Boulder Valley is good or very good (versus 95 percent for the random sample).

- Community values. The two survey groups had largely similar opinions regarding community values that should be priorities, led by a diversity of housing types and price ranges (57 percent open link, 63 percent random sample), and followed by an all-mode transportation system (48 percent open link, 56 percent random sample), a place with unique identity and sense of place (30-31 percent respectively), a compact community surrounded by preserved open space (30 percent each), and various other values.

- General direction of the community. On balance, open link respondents are slightly less likely than random sample respondents to have favorable views the direction the community is going with regards to growth and change. Specifically, open link respondents are somewhat more likely to think the community is going in the wrong direction than right direction (22 percent wrong vs. 19 percent right, as compared to 17 percent wrong and 23 percent right for the random sample).

- Jobs and housing growth. Open link respondents are somewhat more likely than random sample respondents to want to reduce job growth and housing growth. Specifically, 21 percent of open link respondents prefer to reduce the potential for future job growth in the Boulder Valley (versus 11 percent of the random sample). An additional 45 percent of open link respondents want to maintain the potential for future job growth (vs. 57 percent of the random sample). Similar shares of both survey groups want to increase the potential for future job growth (24 - 25 percent).

  Similarly, 18 percent prefer to reduce the potential for housing growth (versus 12 percent of the random sample), while 27 percent want to maintain the potential for housing growth (vs. 39 percent of the random sample). Similar shares want to increase the potential for future housing growth (43 – 45 percent).

- Rate of housing unit growth. On balance, open link respondents are somewhat more likely to prefer looser restrictions on the rate of housing unit growth. Open link respondents are somewhat more likely to say the city should not limit the rate of housing unit growth (36 percent vs. 26 percent random sample), and are somewhat less likely to say the city should maintain its current system of limiting the rate of growth (34 percent vs. 43 percent random sample).

- Rate of commercial growth. The two survey groups had highly similar opinions, with generally similar shares of each group saying the city does not need to manage the rate of commercial growth (44 percent open link, 48 percent random sample), and that the city needs a system to limit and slow the rate of commercial growth (39 percent and 36 percent respectively).

- Mixed use. The largest share of both survey groups generally support the encouragement of mixed use (50 percent open link, 47 percent random sample), and generally similar shares say there are tradeoffs (35 percent and 39 percent respectively) or oppose mixed use (11 percent and 10 percent respectively).

- Locations for future concentrated activity. On balance, open link respondents tend to be supportive of future mixed use and concentrated activity in somewhat more locations than random sample respondents, selecting an average of 4.2 of the twelve locations listed (as compared to 3.8 among random sample respondents).

- Priorities for developer requirements. Both groups include the following developer requirements among their top three priorities: providing permanently affordable housing (45 percent open link, 47 percent random sample), paying for necessary related new infrastructure (45 percent and 44 percent respectively), and limiting height/protecting views (43 percent and 46 percent). Open link respondents were somewhat more likely to select minimizing automobile use and promoting alternative modes of transportation as one of their top three developer requirements (43 percent vs. 34 percent random sample).

- Building height. Open link respondents were somewhat more likely to say that buildings higher than 55 feet might be OK in some parts of Boulder (32 percent vs. 19 percent).

- Neighborhood likes and dislikes. Most- and least-linked aspects of neighborhoods were highly similar between the two groups.

- Neighborhood programs. In aggregate, open link respondents are somewhat more likely to support selected neighborhood programs, particularly support to improve neighborhood livability and support for land use planning at the local level. Open link respondents selected an average of 2.3 of the seven listed neighborhood programs for increased emphasis by the city, as compared to 2.1 programs among the random sample of respondents.

- Demographics. Reflecting the open nature of the survey, a small share of open link respondents lived in Boulder County cities other than the City of Boulder (5 percent) or outside of Boulder County (3 percent), about six in ten of whom lived in Boulder at one time. Open link respondents were also somewhat more likely than random sample respondents to be employed (84 percent vs. 79 percent), to live in a multi-person household (84 percent vs. 75 percent), to have an annual household income of $100,000+ (56 percent vs. 47 percent), and to be female (56 percent vs. 51 percent).

Respondent Demographics Before and After Survey Weighting

As described in the methodology, the raw survey data were weighted to match the demographic profile of the adult household population in the Boulder Valley by age, housing tenure (own vs. rent), and residence in the City versus unincorporated county (Area II/III), based on 2010 Decennial Census and 2009-14 American Community Survey data. The objective of the weighting was to ensure that the results are representative of the Boulder Valley population on key demographic characteristics. A summary of selected open link respondent demographic characteristics before and after survey weighting, as compared to the Boulder Valley population profile, is included below. Only weighted results are summarized in this report, unless noted otherwise.

Table 14
Open Link Respondent Demographics (Weighted and Unweighted), Compared to Boulder Valley Population

AGE (adult population)	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
18 - 39	52%	49%	23%
40 - 54	22%	26%	36%
55 - 74	21%	21%	38%
75+	5%	5%	3%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
HOUSING TENURE	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
Owner-occupied households	53%	55%	82%
Renter-occupied households	47%	45%	17%
Other	n/a	1%	1%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
INCORPORATED VS. UNINCORPORATED	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
City of Boulder	84%	78%	71%
Unincorporated area of Boulder County	16%	15%	21%
Other Boulder County city or outside Boulder Co.	n/a	8%	8%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
SUBCOMMUNITY (if in Boulder Valley)	**Population target**	**Weighted results**	**Unweighted results**
Central Boulder	26%	27%	25%
Colorado University	4%	5%	3%
Crossroads	7%	2%	3%
East Boulder	3%	2%	2%
Gunbarrel	10%	16%	21%
North Boulder	11%	17%	20%
Palo Park	3%	1%	2%
South Boulder	14%	14%	11%
Southeast Boulder	18%	14%	10%
Area III	4%	2%	3%
Total	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*