

**Central Boulder Listening Session**  
**November 9, 2015**  
**Meeting Summary and Discussion Notes**



The purpose of the local community “listening sessions” is to invite community members to share concerns, questions, and ideas related to the update of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) as well as city (and county) services and programs. Sessions have been scheduled for six locations around the community and include an open house with a variety of information on a range of city programs and projects from many departments. These are followed by a short BVCP presentation with round table discussions following. Demographic information from the meetings is included below.

In the **round table discussions**, people were asked to suggest key topics for longer group discussion. The longer discussion topics selected are listed below in bold with summary notes.



**Suggested topics for discussion in the Central Boulder meeting:** Affordable and Workforce Housing, Transportation, Cost of Living, Density, Environment, Aging Population, Occupancy Limits, ADUs, Density, Council Representation, Growth, CU Growth, Design, Neighborhood Protection, Short-term Rentals, BCH Broadway, Parking, Neighborhood Livability, Traffic, Energy, Climate, Resilience, RGMS, Youth Participation, Lighting, Pearl Street

Topic	Summary Notes Central Boulder
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	
Occupancy Limits	Change to allow 1 person per bedroom (unrelated adults). Quick and easy solution to this problem.
ADUs	Should be encouraged. Will decrease costs. Good option as people age.
Density	Allow more at the edge of neighborhoods and along major streets. An issue is that much of Boulder's high density development is high end and not affordable. Why is the local pushback to consolidating lots and building a larger multi-family structure? Related to zoning.

Density	<p>People are "smarting" about Boulder Junction - feels like a canyon and not enough active ground floors. At the same time, the units are nice and residents like them. Lots of good transportation options. Not all of Boulder needs to be this way, but options in some areas helps address the housing problem. Different neighborhoods can have different things. Space used for parking could be utilized - put it underground and have people pay for it.</p>
AH Funds	<p>With Google and similar companies, should be a way to leverage more \$ for affordable housing. Density bonuses and other tools should also be considered. Increased taxes.</p>
Aging population	<p>ADUs, condos, townhouses are good options as people age. BCH site an option for mixed housing types and age restricted residential. Walkable places allow people to age in place.</p>
Housing Options	<p>Reality in Boulder is people can't afford a single family house with a dog, etc. and people of all ages will need to be in other housing types.</p>
Livability	<p>Is a consistent theme at most Boulder meetings along with aging, transportation and other issues. Many people are nostalgic for the way things were 50 years ago but we live in a different world now and things can't be exactly as they were: mixed use, density, range of housing options alongside preserving neighborhood core. We are headed down the path of becoming like Aspen, where workers are priced out. Every neighborhood needs to take some more density somewhere to address this issue. Design can help make density look more appealing and help a 4-plex fit in with single family homes.</p>
Environment	<p>Large homes are not environmentally friendly and use a lot of resources.</p>
Property Values	<p>Many people say that affordable housing lowers property values and increases crime. But the alternative is a city without people. Affordable housing in Boulder is occupied by workers.</p>
	

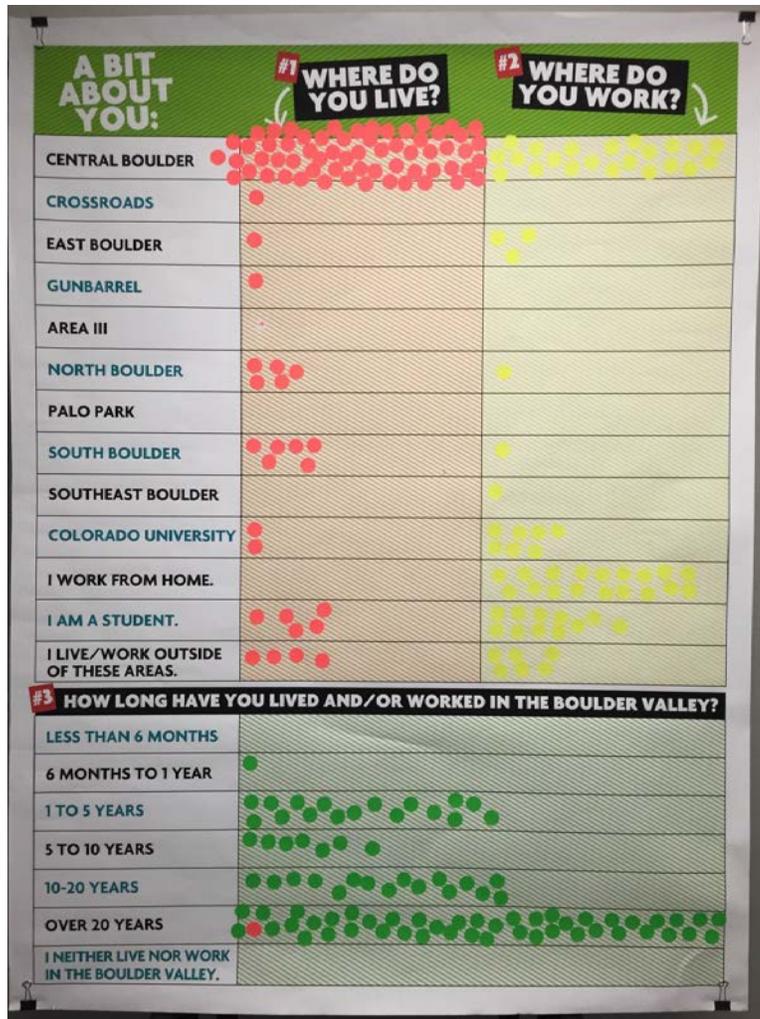
Growth & Transportation / Parking Issues	
Central Area	There are diverse neighborhoods in Central Boulder. It would be great to allow for that in the process. May need to treat the area differently.
Density	It is hard to talk about and understand. Visualization would help. What is density?
ADUs	Goss Grove has a lot - made cheaply. Need better codes and design issues. Rentals and students increase noise. Not as bad as on the Hill. Parking permit pass. Higher density.
Mistakes	Reducing parking requirement for homes. Forces parking on the street. Folsom is a good example of people not ready to give up vehicles. This colors other issues - need to solve parking and transportation.
Right-sizing	Engineering assumptions were erroneous. AMPS recommendations to reduce parking will be a mistake. Need better information - realistic estimates about bikes and street use. E.g. Table Mesa (erroneous info).
Realistic Modeling	Car use associated with development even in downtown with a family - still need to drive a lot. Does the model stop at a commute for part of the day; to avoid unintended consequences address for different times. Bikes on sidewalks = terrifying to some in neighborhoods. Seniors have a hard time.
Short- term rental regulations	Balancing needs in situation with competing values. How to satisfy multiple needs within neighborhoods? Craft changes in a way that doesn't completely change the neighborhood. What is the tipping point with unintended consequences? Thoughtfulness is needed about nuanced change - for some change without too much. Do it in a way that's equitable.
Input	Collect input in slightly different ways - e.g. email, great ideas.
Future	Think about millennials and not just the past. The number with cars is very low. E.g. car share. Can't pave to avoid car congestion. Auto = traffic.
Modeling	Important data suggests that higher density = less driving. Think about cultural changes and technology changes, like self-driving vehicles.
Diversity	Celebrate in the city and neighborhoods that are unique and came up at different times. Empower citizens. Not one size fits all. City can find mechanism to empower people, neighborhoods to act on their own behalf and express local community, plans.
Student (older) perspective	Did projects in Goss Grove (re: homes and garage space) tested parking aspect. Single occupancy vehicles 20:1 on East Arapahoe (thus); 8:1 vs. Sat. More initiatives re: regional SOV.
Regional Transportation	Address people coming in from outside. Work with RTD and other employers e.g. Google. Push hard for regional transportation between communities and future will look different.
Current BVCP	Under the current plan there will be increases in commuters. 60% of workers come in. The ratio can't get worse - it could get worse. We need "feet on ground" re: transportation.

Summary of Group	Range of perspectives but common ground about how we preserve. Need good data as we consider growth or changes. One size does not fit all. Neighborhoods vary. There is interdependence. Think about the future. Be realistic about transportation.
<b>Transportation</b>	
Bus Service	Bus service that has future toward trolley bus i.e. Ft. Collins; Broadway, Pearl, Crossroads, frequent and easy on and off - no schedule.
Regional Bus Service	Free regional bus service with more parking.
Eco-Pass	Survey on eco-pass follow-up. Cost is a barrier to individuals and companies.
Bus Service	Increase bus service from satellite hubs. Increase frequency. Increase easy transfers.
Transit Viability	Kids - dentist, dance, after school projects, public transportation is unlikely; open enrollment. (Senior contributes to carpooling).
RTD	Boulder separate from RTD because the amount of time to get around. It does not serve Boulder specifically. (But it would be difficult to disconnect from system).
Multi-Modal	Increase biking, peds, sidewalks
Transit Options	Tourist bus line that goes to the top spots. Buy a card. Method of payment (not exchange \$) convenient payment.
Options	Neighborhood electric vehicles (1-4 peeps). With dedicated lanes ~ 2-4 mile. E.g. Phoenix and Florida. SHARED.
TOD	Transit oriented development include high quality service. Size-appropriate vehicles.
Bikes	Living lab - increase, breadth. Incentivize biking and electric cycles.
<b>Density</b>	
Height & Density	Without enough density - exporting density to surrounding areas. We don't have sufficient density here. Prove aspect of sustainability. CU campus has high buildings and is a wonderful environment. Variety of buildings in a campus. When you go taller - past 55 ft. - provide articulation. If you go higher - you have to maintain level at sustainability and affordability.
Views	Flatirons - views. We should build east of campus.
Height	11 story building - Presbyterian Manor - no one complains. Don't do 8-9 story buildings everywhere. Established neighborhoods inappropriate for high rise buildings. Does Boulder have places where you can build 35 ft? 55 ft? It's all about where and what places? What are design criteria? Must be planned. Design and location - balance at these things.
Hill	Opportunity by the Hill. Could be mixed housing not just students. Campus employees: students 13th & 11th/10th College to University (to Alfalfas) Could be easily developed.
Growth Rate	What about Danish plan - 1% limit to growth rate? City services can only support a certain amount of services at a given time.

		
28th Street	When you come into 28th Street, new buildings part of Outlook Hotel. Cannot develop without res surrounding it.	
Lot Sizes	Height isn't just the issue. Code is largely legacy from 1981. Prior to that time 3500 sf. Was size of LR lot in Boulder. Today residential lot is 7000 sf. Need a bigger lot to build low density, incentivizing wealthy couples to live in 5000 sf. Houses.	
Mixed Density	Land use and zoning issue. Need to have density mixed use areas. Need to incentivize developers to smaller homes, shared lots.	
Accessory Units	Second homes - unused 6 mo of year. Subdividing would create more opportunities for other families, artists, plumbers, students - wish they could live there. ADUs, OAU's granny flats - very restrictive currently. Ability to but kitchenette and rent it out nearly impossible.	
Housing	Two things we can't screw up: open space, sunshine, robust economy. How do we create more housing?	
Legal ADUs	I don't want to be cheating with my ADU - I want to be compliant.	
Parking	Big house - divided into 4 carriage houses. What about parking?	
Zoning	Last 1.5 years - Whittier had 4-8 plexes - just down-zoned those neighborhoods. Results in hodge podge - but not in terms of heights - like 5 stories next door.	
Change	The city must change zoning and allow growth. We have to say where and how.	
Redevelopment	Restrictive redevelopment of Daily Camera building. We end up with undesirable building. We need to let good designers do things.	
Change	Things change - need to start thinking about 40 years from now.	
Remodel	Neighbors aim to complain when built a 2nd story on his house. When I act like that - I feel a sense of selfishness. No one wants change	
Form-Based Code	Will adoption of form-based code help design elements built into code? Form-based code is too prescriptive. Wouldn't have any Haertling buildings with FBC.	
Code Issues	Boulder's code almost impossible to do anything here. Boulder is anti-development. Our code and land use rules impact the people most vulnerable.	
Impact Fees	Impact fees of 2G North was \$33,000 part of what has happened. Process - don't let designers design.	

Development	Developers want to maximize what they can get - leads to bulky structures.
Civic Area	Plan for farmers market will kill farmers market. Civic area Plan - not good for farmers market.
<b>Climate &amp; Energy</b>	
Comp Plan	We should have a major thing about climate in the comp plan. Should be woven in.
Commitment	A lot of interest and commitment. Cap tax passed with 70%.
Innovation	E-town sustainability Conference - moment of pride for us. Energy innovators. People should be more aware that the world is watching Boulder.
Solar	Road blocks put up by PVC concerning solar gardens. Xcel creating road blocks after road block.
Solar	Currently \$2.90 per watt for installation is the break even number. We can produce energy cheaper with solar than with coal with no incentives if Boulder "Got off its butt". People can't afford solar because new homes have so much square footage and the city is allowing builders to build houses that cover more of the lot than is legal.
Solar	Contractors point of view: there shouldn't be solar. Maybe our energy code isn't strong enough. Maybe municipalization can get us to net zero homes?
Youth	Youth-led community engagement about climate. Use culture to start inviting people to author the future they want.
Climate Change	Climate change is the story of our time. Can we tell a new story in time? Have the kids drive us.
Tools	Tools that we can get to activate people cheaply. NCAR tools, etc. Permission to play comes when children are involved. Children bring joy.
Costs	1.75 per watt install cost. Projected to go to \$1 per watt in the future. Today battery storage costs 18 cents per Kwtt.
Comp Plan	We need a whole section in comp plan dedicated to changes to our energy plan / policy / use / engagement.
Redevelopment	If developers are going to scrape, they should need to make it net zero.
Net-Zero Living	We need to reduce the amount of energy we are using. Highlight co-benefits of net-zero living.
Solar	Solar is here. We need to reduce energy usage creatively. We need to engage through culture and young people about climate. This should all be included and fully described in the comp plan.
<b>Neighborhood Protection</b>	
Density	Density is hard to comprehend and talk about - It's different to everyone.
Many Perspectives	Desire for historic preservation. How do we have that kind of conversation to begin to solve this underlying theme? We need to listen to all perspectives of the problem; instead of just voting on it.

Space & control	I want control of my environment and to do what I want with my property. I want control of my investment and to protect my investment throughout the years. I didn't buy into this higher density back then.
Control of my property	Control of my quality of life; safety, neighborhood; my govt on a local level is responsible for my own interest.
Neighborhood interaction	Safety, mutual respect for neighbors. Good communication between neighbors; knowing your neighbors.
Affordable housing	Affordable housing is only nice in theory. It adds density and traffic trips.
Density	Stop trying to change pre-existing neighborhoods. New density should not expand from within neighborhoods. New density should be developed starting from the outside.
Change	A city should continue to grow or remain stagnant. Don't take away from what is unique from old neighborhoods to accomplish new development goals.
Flexibility	New planning mechanisms need more flexibility from the code. Boulder is too rule-based in our zoning code. Wants to look into form based code. Create a feeling or character in different parts of town. We need more site specific flexibility. E.g. ADUs. Creating density that's more fine-grained instead of spot development. Affordability is not gained by our current methods.
Neighborhood Protection	Political lock up is tied to a lot of these planning-related questions because we get stuck finding solutions. We need to create growth in a way that meshes well in the surrounding area.
CU	Needs more housing since a lot of the growth is related to them. Hold CU accountable. The university is an attractive nuisance. They do not take care of the people they are bringing into town.
Density and Traffic	You cannot increase density without creating more traffic.
Affordability	Land use drives housing costs. We will never catch up to affordability. (SF as an example)
Infrastructure	We need to address real infrastructure issues that are more focused on the residents living in the area.
Housing	Rezone industrial to residential and mixed use.
Enforcement	We do not trust the city to enforce their own laws. Form-based code is a tool that architects and planners can abuse.
Protection	I want to protect my investment, I work really hard for my investment and some people should earn their right to be here.
Rezoning	Zoning commercial to mixed use; enforcing existing regulation.
Development	Let development pay its way.
Neighborhood Protection	Reliability, keep things the same. We want more consistent decisions and planning.
Views	No high-rise buildings - protect the views.
Livability	Livability and site access and property access. Livability is safety, lighting and control over negative influences of the neighborhood (broken bottles, college parties, too dark).



### Comments from Written Comment Sheets

Do you have any ideas, concerns or questions about the area where you live or work? Let us know! If your comments regard specific areas of town, please indicate that clearly.

- The last mediator spoke that MOST people want high density – that’s not true. No one is opposed to being Aspen – it’s a great place. We do not want to become San Fran or Austin. Maybe City Council can make decisions on what the people want and not their agenda.
- 1. Protecting living quality in sub-neighborhoods that are defined by smaller lot sizes. Protecting existing residential zoning. 2. Balancing transportation funding to benefit vehicular traffic since majority of movement around city is in cars. 3. Impact of Chautauqua users on adjoining neighborhoods. 4. City enforcing occupancy limits.
- CO2 Debt – Reduce CO2 repay CO2 debt with renewable – Demolition – CO2 cost with new construction. Too much scraping off. Architects need to make solar a priority on all new construction. Increasing or improving LEED standards. More net-zero energy homes. Resource

good – home improvement shows sending wrong message with sledge hammers destroying kitchens, rather than removing fixtures. Developers maximizing sq. ft. lot size.

- 1. More support for historic preservation by changing land use to allow ADU and OAU if house is land marked. 2. Energy conservation and renewal production should be available for neighborhood districts. 3. We need neighborhood or area plans. 4. Drivers are distracted by texting and calling. Outlaw this!
- The affordable housing program has a fatal flaw. It traps people financially due to the extreme resale restrictions. If people don't leave the units, the unit effectively is lost to the program and the system becomes inefficient.
- I own a 6 bedroom house and live there. It's crazy that I can't rent out all the rooms. I can only have 2 other people living there.
- Affordable housing + more diverse: Encourage: higher occupancies (1 person per bedroom); ADUs in lower-density neighborhoods; apartments for workforce, including micros; group houses for seniors; collectives and co-housing; more diversity / density of housing types in lower density neighborhoods – e.g. duplexes, quads, townhouses; more options for millennials and seniors (aging in place) – flats, cottages; greater density new transit corridors and services (grocery stores, etc.); better design for affordable housing and density – good architecture!
- Change the focus of the affordable housing discussion: make the economics of market rate reasonably affordable housing work. City-built affordable housing alone will never be sufficient to close the gap.
- Change the charter regarding how we measure height. The current rules virtually prohibit pitched roofs & therefore traditional architectural design. I believe much of the objection to new buildings is because none have the charm associated with traditional style buildings. The current codes all but require that every new building is crowned with an ugly giant mechanical unit instead of a lovely pitched roof.
- 1. Free bus to go to most popular steps. Needs to be frequent. 2. 300 & 301 – educate and communicate with citizens, make developers more responsible for density impact. 3. Boulder bus shuttle will be the biggest impact on affordability and energy consumption.
- Address neighborhood identity with spot zoning. Neighborhood grocery (small markets) would create much more walkable neighborhoods, decrease vehicle travel, & allow accessibility. This is a serious concern for college students since many have cars simply for grocery. Also, as a per an prevalent Boulder concern, CU students believe increased occupancy rather than increased zoning would preserve neighborhood identity & historic structures while increasing affordability.
- My concerns are that most recent projects involve sidewalk to sidewalk 3+ story block sized buildings which have no grace and greatly impact Boulder's view space. All future projects should be required to not negatively impact our view space. The BCH property in particular now allows wonderful sightlines to the mountains behind. Whatever goes in here should respect the views, the neighborhood + N. Boulder Park.
- I am concerned about the redevelopment of the Boulder Community Hospital site and hope that it will not receive height & setback exemptions. Please don't let the buildings blot out the foothills skyline & please don't approve sidewalk to sidewalk buildings with no green space.

There seems to be a misconception, post elections, that 300 & 301 went down because we are in favor of tall + super-dense buildings in Boulder. I and many people I know who voted against 300 & 301 are NOT in favor of those things. We simply did not want to codify NIMBYism + thought the laws were badly written & would have unintended consequences.

## Comments from the Online Survey

### **Do you have any ideas, concerns or questions about the area where you live or work? Let us know! (If your comments regard specific areas of town, please indicate this clearly.)**

Council appears to be using growth as their vehicle to solve the city's problems. Growth is already destroying some of the character of Boulder. Significant changes in density of existing low density neighborhoods will only degrade them.

We live in RL-1 in Central Boulder. We would like to be able to put an alley house on our 4,000 sq. ft. lot. I think people across town should be able to do this. As can be seen in the RMX zone in Whitter (which starts at the alley behind us), this can result in a pleasing increase in density. We live in a 1,650 sq. ft very narrow house. So we could really use the extra space for visiting guests, for a studio or for long term rental.

Will the Boulder Urban Renewal Authority advocate for and lead strategic redevelopment at the BCH Broadway site? How will the City partner with neighborhoods and developers to redevelop the BCH site? What is the schedule for redevelopment at BCH? Will the City advocate for a new iconic arts center in Downtown Boulder?

I'm concerned about what will become of the old Boulder Hospital site. I also have some concerns about the parcel of land on the western side of Broadway between Hawthorn and Iris, immediately in front of Foothills Elementary. I'm not opposed to density, but the current review process leads to the reapplication of the same architecture over and over again. Consider revised height limits that would accommodate more variety and creativity. Perhaps some kind of cap and trade model? You already have one major player in town (CU) that doesn't have to abide by any of these restrictions.

1. Fiscal Accountability of City Council. They waste money on "interesting projects". e.g. Folsom disaster, high salary of muni consultant. 2. Lack of adherence to rules by bicyclists, e.g. speeding through stop signs and endangering pedestrians, riding on sidewalks next to a bike lane. 3. Lack of adherence to Pearl Street Mall rules, e.g. dogs and smoking on Mall. 4. Type of business on Pearl Street Mall not appropriate, e.g. bank replacing a cafe, expensive chain stores replacing local stores. 5. No time limit for parking on 20th Street.

Hello, Having had a chance to digest the Comp Plan listening session, I would like to offer the following feedback: General Feedback:

- Appreciate the charts and maps and (direction to) current stats provided.
- Appreciate all the staff that was there to listen.
- Would have liked more specific information on exactly what kinds of changes might get made to the Comp Plan based on community input.
  - Examples of current language/sections of the Plan that were added or changed in the past would have been helpful.
  - The breakout sessions, while interesting and respectfully led, didn't really focus on Comp Plan level changes. In hindsight, I wish we had been more strongly guided to talk about how the Comp Plan might be specifically revised as a guiding document.
- "Central Boulder" is too big of an area geographically and population-wise. Suggest it be broken into 3 sections going forward: Downtown area, north of downtown and south of downtown. Personal Opinions (not clear exactly how they fit into Comp Plan updating):
- Comp Plan should address widespread concerns about pace and scale of development. Many people concerned about current development voted against 300 and 301 because they were told the Comp

Plan and City Council were better avenues to address these concerns. When you add these people to the people who voted for the initiatives, there is a huge part of the population concerned with the current trajectory. Please find ways to address these concerns.

- Pollinator friendly landscaping and space requirements should be listed as part of sustainability goals (if not already). Large massed buildings with substantial concrete as well as the call to change FAR ratios to reduce open/green space – these both reduce pollinator friendly landscaping. This needs to be part of analysis of sustainability.
- Though the city may be pleased with turnout to the Comp Plan meeting – it is still incredibly low percent of residents relative to population. Most residents aren't going to attend or tune into these general sessions, and will only get involved when there is a very specific issue for them to respond to – if they are notified. o Comp Plan should require a substantially broader notification range for major redevelopment projects as well as proposed zoning changes. Area residents should receive postcards that provide 1) general description of the proposed change, 2) city council and planning board email addresses for feedback, and 3 the webpage address for meetings and other specifics on the project. Or perhaps there could be inserts in with utility bills...
- Comp Plan should encourage on-site affordable housing for new housing developments so all our new affordable housing isn't in housing "ghettos". New affordable housing should focus on non-market rate housing, as that is the only way to ensure long-term rates that will truly be affordable. Affordable housing is different from, though overlapping with, housing options.
- Planning exemptions need clearer guidelines about what constitutes public good and what penalties will be levied if final outcomes don't actually align with original agreements.
- Questionable data is being used for decision making. For example, does the city actually believe the Lucky's shopping center and the Whole Foods shopping center have too many parking spaces? If any of you frequent these shopping centers with regularity then you know the parking lots are usually quite crowded and even stressful to use because of their heavy usage. This type of "doesn't mesh with reality" data undermines the public's trust in the city.
- We should renew the Danish Plan type growth limits to give the city more time to absorb and respond to growth. • Transportation and parking plans need to be realistic about traveling habits, especially during bad weather and for those with time constraints. Plans should also recognize that life cycle stage impacts desirability and feasibility of traveling via alternative transportation.
- Let's take the projected demographic shifts expected in the coming years (the aging of the county...) into consideration. An aging population may be very open to using an enhanced public transportation around town if they don't have to wait outside for more than a few minutes. Sandra Snyder

Mixed use redevelopment of the Basemar shopping center. Avoid more student rentals of houses south of Baseline.

Maintaining historic character while allowing for change. Keeping housing options as affordable as possible.