

**CITY OF BOULDER
LANDMARKS BOARD**

MEETING DATE: August 1, 2018

AGENDA TITLE:

Update on Planning for the Civic Area East Bookend

REQUESTING STAFF:

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OBJECTIVE:

Update Landmarks Board on the status of the planning for the Civic Area East Bookend

PURPOSE

City staff is currently conducting a planning and community engagement process for the Civic Area East Bookend. The Civic Area Master Plan describes the East Bookend as a hub for food and innovation and “*a mixed-use block that incorporates a variety of uses in existing building and future new developments. Desired uses include civic functions integrated vertically and/or horizontally with private uses such as a center for innovation, incubator offices, residential/hotel and commercial uses.*” Over the past few months, city staff and the consulting teams have been testing various site design options, working to assess opportunities and constraints available to meet the overall vision for the area.

City staff seeks to update the Landmarks Board on the East Bookend planning process and get feedback on the project scope to help inform the August 14th City Council Study Session. This work will inform near-term redevelopment planning for the city and community partners in the East Bookend. It is anticipated that this planning process will clarify choices and confirm priorities to be documented in an update to the Civic Area Master Plan.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The [2015 Civic Area Master Plan](#) identified a wide range of potential uses for the East Bookend. Other potential uses for the East Bookend have been suggested through subsequent planning for the Phase I ‘Park at the Core’ improvements and assessment of a Public Market Hall.

Initial analysis illustrates several factors that influence the ability to include a wide range of future uses on the site. Foremost among these factors is the constrained size of the East Bookend. As work progresses to more fully understand the policy choices and spatial implications, it will be helpful to further prioritize the range of potential uses for future development or partnership on city-owned properties. Since all the proposed uses will not fit within the East Bookend, strategic choices must be made about the priorities for the East Bookend area.

The next stage of planning will be accomplished through 1) narrowing the range of potential uses for the city-owned portions of the East Bookend 2) performing a test-fit analysis of the refined set of uses on the city-owned portions of the East Bookend, and 3) analyzing the appropriateness of the existing zoning in the East Bookend to accommodate other private uses envisioned for the future. Staff seeks to confirm the prioritized uses for the East Bookend before moving into the next phase of analysis.

Questions for Landmarks Board

- 1) Does the Landmarks Board have concerns with the recommended approach to explore options with and without the Atrium building?
- 2) What are the key issues for historic preservation that we should consider in the East Bookend?

BACKGROUND

East Bookend Planning

The Boulder Civic Area includes 27 acres of land located between Canyon Boulevard, Arapahoe Avenue, 9th Street, and 14th Street. The East Bookend is the eastern portion of the Civic Area, located between Canyon Boulevard, Broadway, Arapahoe Avenue, and 14th Street. The Boulder Civic Area has a long history of previous planning that will help guide the current planning process for the East Bookend.

The most recent [Civic Area Master Plan](#) was completed in 2015 and includes guiding principles that provide the foundation for more detailed planning. Extensive community engagement shaped these guiding principles and overall vision for the Civic Area Master Plan. City staff used these Civic Area guiding principles to develop a refined set of guiding principles and goals

specifically for the East Bookend. The guiding principles and goals will be used to evaluate how various options achieve the vision for these areas and meet community objectives.

Guiding Principles for the East Bookend:

1. Civic Heart of Community Activity
2. Outdoor Culture & Nature
3. Historic Preservation
4. Sustainable & Viable
5. Life & Property Safety
6. Connected & Accessible

Goals for the East Bookend:

- A. Create an inclusive destination for residents and visitors to interact with each other and with government in a place that blends “natural” and “built” environments.
- B. Create opportunities for natural beauty, ecological function, recreation, food, innovation, art and culture.
- C. Integrate the area’s history and landmarks into the site design and celebrate its cultural and historic assets.
- D. Implement a comprehensive multi-modal access and parking strategy that provides connections to, from and within the area.
- E. Create welcoming and transparent civic buildings and spaces that foster public discourse and inspire community engagement.
- F. Integrate environmentally sustainable strategies and flood safety regulations into the layout and function of the public realm and built environment.
- G. Create a plan that balances city and community needs with physical, economic and financial feasibility to ensure responsible use of community resources.

Additional background on the previous planning and implementation that has occurred for in the Boulder Civic Area is provided in Appendix A.

As a first step in the current planning process for the East Bookend, city staff developed an [East Bookend Existing Conditions Report](#). This report was sent to the Planning Board and City Council in February 2018 as part of an [Information Packet](#) that provided more detail about the planning process, planning assumptions, and outstanding questions that need to be answered as part of the planning process for the East Bookend.

Since that time, city staff has retained a team of consultants to assist with the planning processes and technical planning work. This consultant team includes Civitas, Inc. as the prime urban design consultant with subconsultants for transportation (Fox, Tuttle, Hernandez), economics (P.U.M.A.), financing (Starboard Realty), flood and stormwater (Wilson & Co.), and architecture

(Coburn). The city has also selected P2 Solutions to assist with developing and conducting community engagement events. This same consultant team is also working with city staff on the Alpine-Balsam area plan.

Downtown Boulder Station Planning

The [East Bookend Existing Conditions Report](#) discussed a potential expansion of the East Bookend planning boundary to include a portion of the block between 14th to 15th Streets. This potential expansion was proposed due to the planning being done on this block for a potential future Downtown Boulder Station. For a number of reasons – including the varying implementation time horizons - staff has decided to maintain the original East Bookend planning boundary, as illustrated in Figure 1, and to maintain the Downtown Boulder Station study as a separate but related project.

The East Bookend and the Downtown Boulder Station planning efforts will be coordinated to ensure that the decisions made for each project are compatible and respond to the overall goals for the area. This aligns with the approach that coordinates other multi-modal transportation projects including Canyon Complete Streets, the underpass at 13th and Arapahoe, and the White Rock Ditch multi-use path with the East Bookend planning.

Figure 1: East Bookend and Downtown Boulder Station Planning Boundaries



ANALYSIS FOR THE EAST BOOKEND

Prioritized List of Potential Uses for the East Bookend

The 2015 Civic Area Master Plan outlines a vision for the East Bookend as a mixed-use block that incorporates a variety of uses in new and existing buildings to foster food, art, culture, and civic engagement as well as identified 14th Street as a transit street. The current planning aims to identify a preferred balance in the type, mix, and scale of uses that will help provide activity and interest throughout the day and night, all week long, and all year.

The list of potential uses for the East Bookend have been identified through several public engagement and planning processes including:

- 1) The Civic Area Master Plan process (2011-2015)
- 2) The Civic Area Phase I 'Park at the Core' planning (2015-2016)
- 3) Feasibility analysis for the Civic Area Market Hall (2016-2017)

These plans and studies acknowledged that there are more desired uses for the East Bookend than can physically fit, and that prioritization would need to happen in the next planning effort. Recent analysis confirms that there are limited options to build even a few of the highest priority uses on the city-owned property.

Staff has developed an initial prioritization of potential uses by categories (detailed below) based on goals of the Civic Area Master Plan, community input from prior planning, city priorities, and market feasibility analysis. Moving forward, the range of options presented to the community and decision-makers will consider these priorities. These options will reflect the physical, market, and financial realities of the site.

The prioritized list of uses for the East Bookend can be divided into the following categories:

- 1) **Retained Uses.** This category includes existing buildings and uses that will be retained in all design alternatives presented throughout the area plan process.
 - a. Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA)
 - b. Dushanbe Teahouse
 - c. Farmers Market
 - d. Bandshell Structure
 - e. Central Park
- 2) **Highest Priority Uses.** This category includes future uses for the East Bookend that will be included in all the design alternatives.

- a. **Limited BMoCA expansion:** The Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA) is located in the historic City Storage and Transfer Building in the East Bookend. The building is owned by the city and has been leased to BMoCA since the 1970s. In 2017, the museum prepared an Expansion & Feasibility Study Report, which identifies the expansion of the museum’s current location as the most desirable for its programmatic needs. This report identified two alternatives for future expansion: a limited expansion (southward from the existing building) that includes an additional 6,800 square feet (for a total of 16,800 square feet), and a larger expansion (eastward from the existing building) to accommodate 15,000 square feet of new facility (for a total of 25,000 square feet). The exterior public space identified in both options included 4,500 square feet.

The Civic Area Master Plan reinforces the vision for art and culture in the East Bookend. The City Council included funding for BMoCA capital renovations in the 2017 renewal of the Community, Culture and Safety Tax, acknowledging that the vision for further expansion should be explored through the East Bookend Area Plan process. Limited expansion will be considered high priority and the process will include exploring feasibility for a larger expansion as well.

- b. **Farmers Market Access:** Boulder County Farmers Markets (BCFM or Farmers’ Market) is a nonprofit organization that has been operating the seasonal outdoor market on 13th Street since the mid-1980s. It is a major attraction for both residents and visitors to the City of Boulder and operates on Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays from April to November. The City recognizes that the Farmers’ Market is a major attraction and desires that it will continue to operate in the Civic Area while exploring how to better provide dropoff/pick-up access for customers, easier access for vendors, and closer and more accessible parking.
- c. **Structured Parking:** Goals of the Civic Area Master Plan include replacement of surface lots with structured parking and providing parking for adequate and convenient access to existing and future uses, balanced with Transportation Demand Management (TDM). In addition, approximately 200 of the existing parking spots located in the East Bookend are part of Central Area General Improvement District (CAGID) and will need to be replaced in the near-term to ensure demands of the district are aligned with the parking supply. However, it is important to develop solutions that also address future needs that consider technological advancements and the changing needs for mobility, access, and parking demand. Since the use may only be needed short- or medium-term, it should be designed to transition to another use in the long-term.

- d. **Civic Buildings and Spaces:** The Civic Area Master Plan identifies the Civic Area as the ‘primary location for city management and government’. Including civic facilities in the East Bookend Area Plan provides an opportunity to consolidate city facilities, resulting in improved customer experience, cost savings, improved energy efficiency of city buildings, and removal of existing city facilities from the high hazard flood zone in accordance with the Civic Area Master Plan.

In addition, the first phase of the City Facilities Assessment was completed in 2017 to achieve a vision and guiding principles for future city facilities. The report envisioned the Civic Area East Bookend as a place for civic engagement and community discourse with multi-use meeting spaces that can host City Council, public and private community events, visitor orientation, and a municipal courtroom. At the February 2017 Study Session, City Council was supportive of the recommendation to relocate such functions as Council Chambers, City Manager’s Office and the City Attorney’s Office to a new building in the East Bookend to create a more inviting environment for community participation. While none of these civic uses are funded, they will remain a prioritized potential use in the East Bookend.

3) Other Priority Uses. This category includes potential future uses for the East Bookend that will be assessed for spatial and financial feasibility and presented as choices.

- a. **Public Market Hall:** One of the potential uses identified in the Civic Area Master Plan is a year-round public market hall that would complement the existing Boulder County Farmers’ Market, provide an indoor space to advance local foods, and activate the East Bookend beyond the current Farmers’ Market times.

In April 2016, the city, with consultant support, completed a [Market Hall Feasibility Analysis](#) to identify programmatic, spatial, financial, and managerial needs of a potential market hall in the East Bookend. The analysis identified that viable options for a future market hall would range from 20,000-30,000 square feet.

As a part of the market hall feasibility analysis, a [re-use study on the Atrium building](#) was also completed to determine the cost and feasibility associated with converting the Atrium building into an interim indoor market hall. This interim market hall would only provide about 6,000 square feet of space for the public market hall, and would eventually need to be expanded to accommodate the full 20,000-30,000 square feet. The analysis found that the interim improvements for the Atrium would require bringing the building into compliance with current building, flood, and energy code standards ranging from \$1-3 million. The study found that it would be difficult to

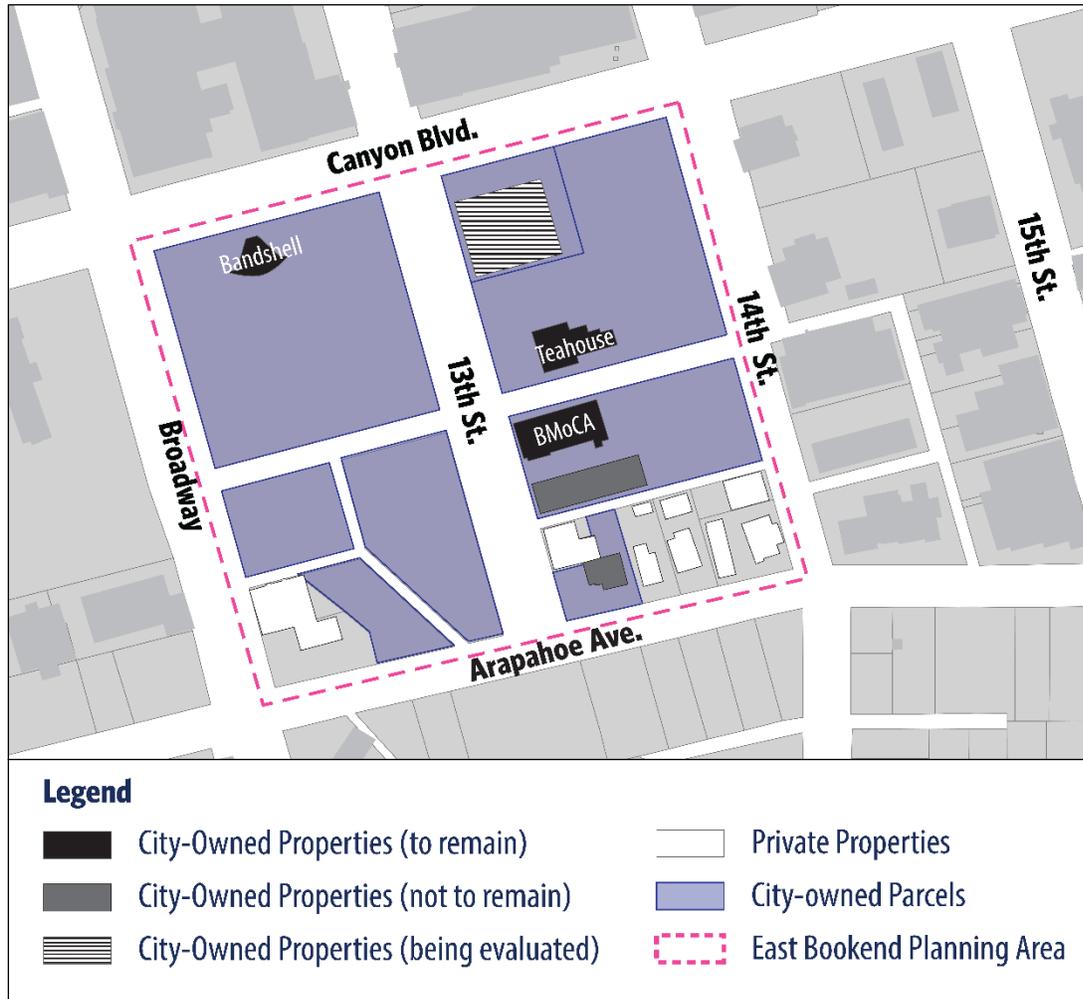
justify these costs unless the interim period was more than 5 years or the improvements were part of the long-term plans for the East Bookend.

- b. **Larger BMoCA Expansion:** As described above, in 2017, the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA) prepared an Expansion & Feasibility Study Report, which identifies two alternatives for future expansion. The larger expansion to accommodate 15,000 square feet of new facility (for a total of 25,000 square feet) includes additional space for community and educational functions. BMoCA has indicated willingness to explore options where this type of space is provided as a shared amenity, whether in the BMoCA building or located in a separate building within the East Bookend (such as civic facilities).
 - c. **Expanded Space for Farmers Market:** As part of the Phase I 'Park at the Core' planning, the farmers market identified a desire to increase and improve the space available for farmers market booths. This East Bookend area plan will continue to analyze this need and consider options that provide additional space for the farmers market, most likely as part of Central Park.
 - d. **Event/Meeting Space:** this use would likely be incorporated into future buildings including the civic facilities or market hall and could also be incorporated into other future buildings at a smaller scale.
 - e. **Innovation Center:** this use could be a space that accommodates multiple community needs for gathering space or private incubator space. This could be incorporated into the site at a small scale, either as part of the city facilities, or as a portion of another building on the site.
 - f. **Small Cafes/Restaurants/Retail:** this could include eating and drinking establishments or small retail that could be integrated into the site as peripheral uses that generate activity and offer places for people to gather, shop, meet, and dine. These uses could be incorporated into any future buildings on the site at a small scale.
- 4) **Low priority uses.** This category includes future uses for the East Bookend that will not be considered for development on the city-owned land based on spatial, market, and financial feasibility.
- a. **Residential:** Based on the goals of the Civic Area Master Plan, the East Bookend is envisioned as space for civic engagement, art, culture, food and innovation. As a result, there are many other uses that achieve this goal and will be considered during

the area plan process. In addition, the amount of housing that could be provided on city-owned parcels in the East Bookend would be minimal.

- b. **Office (private):** the economic analysis completed for the East Bookend identified there is a large amount of vacant office space located in and around the downtown area, therefore this is not a need for additional office spaces in the East Bookend. This is referring to private, not civic, office space.
- c. **Persian Gardens:** Development of additional gardens to complement the plaza area around the Teahouse was suggested as an amenity for the area. Given the need for multi-use functional plaza space throughout the East Bookend, this singular, specialized use is not recommended to meet the wider needs.

Figure 2: East Bookend Properties



PLANNING PROGRESS IN 2018

Community Engagement

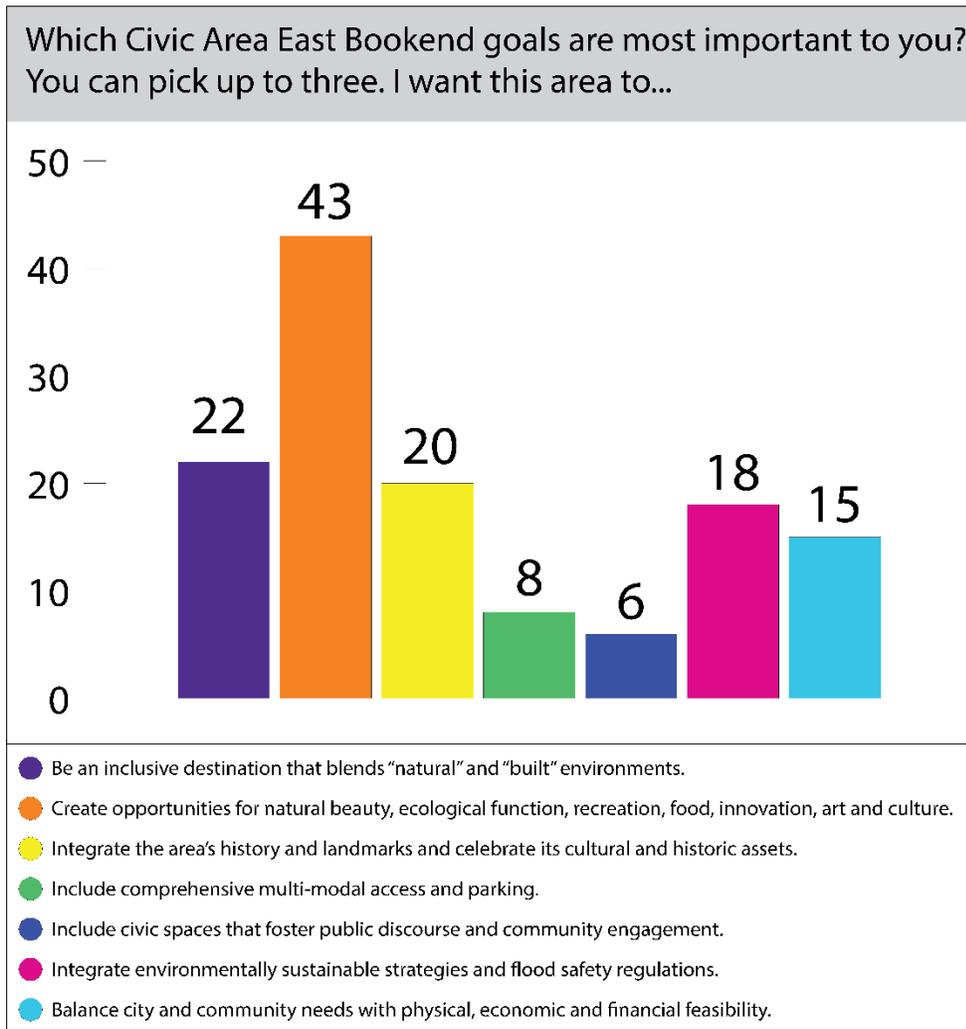
The engagement plan for the East Bookend planning process commits to regular and meaningful community engagement throughout the planning process including both digital and face-to-face methods. In addition to engaging the general public, city staff has and will continue doing targeted outreach with key stakeholders including historic preservation groups, BMoCA, Boulder County Farmers Market, downtown groups, and private property owners as they are directly impacted by potential changes in the East Bookend.

Since January, public engagement and communication efforts for the East Bookend have included:

- 1) Meetings with private property owners: In January, city staff sent letters to all private property owners within the East Bookend and invited them to meet with city staff to learn more about the project. City staff was able to meet with a majority of property owners in person to discuss the project and address questions or concerns the owners may have had.
- 2) Planning process kickoff event: the city hosted an area plan kickoff event at the library in May to provide interested members of the public more information about plans for both Alpine-Balsam and the East Bookend. The event included informational boards with dot exercises to help rank the project goals. There was also a presentation provided by city staff that included interactive exercises that allowed residents to use their phones to participate.
- 3) Hosting pop-up events and attending city-wide events: City staff provided information about the project at events including What's Up Boulder event, Phase I grand opening of the Civic Area park, Neighborhood Liaison Office Hours throughout the community, Farmers Market, and other events at city parks. These were intended to spread information about the project, invite people to sign-up to receive the planning newsletter, stay involved with the project, and share their views on the goals of the project.
- 4) Collecting feedback on Be Heard Boulder: a survey was posted on be heard boulder to collect feedback on which project goals people felt were most important (see responses below). The survey also asked about outstanding questions people had – this will help inform and add to the project FAQ posted on the project website.
- 5) Meetings with stakeholder groups: City staff has met with various groups including BMoCA, historic preservation groups, downtown groups, and the Boulder County Farmers Market to provide project updates and discuss key topics for that group.

Figure 2 displays the feedback that has been collected to-date on which goals the public values most. This information was collected from both in-person events and online at Be Heard Boulder.

Figure 3: Community Feedback on East Bookend Goals



Scope of Work and Initial Analysis

As part of the initial analysis, the staff and consultant teams have started testing various site design options on the city-owned land in the East Bookend. There are several factors that affect the range of choices that can be considered for this site including:

- 1) Flood Zones: The entire East Bookend area is located within the 100-year floodplain. This means that all new buildings and any existing buildings undergoing significant renovations will require floodproofing or need to be elevated at least two feet above the 100-year water surface elevation.
- 2) Parking: The existing surface parking located in the East Bookend is part of the Central Area General Improvement District (CAGID) and will need to be replaced, at least in the near-term, to continue to provide parking for CAGID users. Due to the area's location within the 100-year floodplain, underground structured parking is not being considered

based on city policies and safety concerns. As a result, the options for structured parking that accommodates the CAGID spaces in addition to spaces to serve new uses are extremely limited, space intensive, and costly.

- 3) **Historic Resources:** The East Bookend encompasses one of the oldest parts of Boulder with two properties currently landmarked and another eight properties that are potentially eligible for landmark designation. Determining how the new buildings fit into the existing fabric of the East Book End will be critical in the planning process.

Based on what has been learned from initial site design and given the limited amount of space under city ownership, a key issue remains: the ability to explore options that include a range of desired uses depends on which potential uses are prioritized in each option and the approach with existing buildings.

East Bookend Properties Over 50 Years Old

The City of Boulder is currently conducting a historic survey of twelve non-designated properties in the East Bookend that are over 50 years old. The objective of this survey project is to document the history of the non-designated buildings over 50 years old and provide an assessment of the eligibility of the buildings for local landmark designation. The majority of the properties were surveyed in the late 1990s; one was surveyed in 2000.

This information will help inform the planning process by identifying potentially historic properties and informing future potential for redevelopment. It is anticipated that the survey forms will be available on the project website mid-August.

Atrium Building

The Atrium building occupies a prominent site on the East Bookend at the corner of 13th Street and Canyon Boulevard. The Rustic Modernist-designed Atrium Building was built in 1968 after designs by mid-century Boulder architect Hobart D. Wagener. The Atrium is currently used by as offices for city staff from a variety of departments.

On April 7, 2015, Historic Boulder, Inc. (HBI) submitted a landmark designation application for the property. However, HBI and the city agreed to put the landmark application on hold while the future uses in the East Bookend are explored.

The next phase in the East Bookend planning process will include a test-fit analysis of the preferred set of uses for the East Bookend. As part of this analysis, city staff recommends exploring a range of options including preservation, adaptive reuse, and demolition of the Atrium. By providing a range of options, the analysis can help facilitate conversations with the

community, boards, and council on the potential tradeoffs to be considered for each of the redevelopment options.

QUESTION FOR LANDMARKS BOARD:

- 1) Does the Landmarks Board have concerns with the recommended approach to explore options with and without the Atrium building?

NEXT STEPS

Following the Planning Board discussion (Aug. 2) and City Council study session (Aug. 14), city staff will continue to assess the programmatic uses and spatial considerations to fully illustrate choices for future redevelopment in the East Bookend. City staff will work with the community and stakeholders to gather feedback on these choices and options. With this refined information, staff will seek confirmation of near-term priorities and planning for the city-owned properties in the East Bookend to inform an update to the Civic Area Master Plan and future planning with community partners.

QUESTION FOR LANDMARKS BOARD:

- 1) What are the key issues for historic preservation that we should consider in the East Bookend? (Review the key considerations identified for historic resources in the [East Bookend Existing Conditions Report](#).)

APPENDIX A

East Bookend Planning History

In June 2015, City Council adopted the Civic Area Master Plan, which defines the overall vision for the area located between Canyon Boulevard, Arapahoe Avenue, 9th Street, and 14th Street. Boulder’s Civic Area is envisioned as the heart of Boulder with nature at its core, flanked by bookends of civic, cultural, and commercial buildings that are alive with activity, collaboration, and innovation at the east and west. Implementation of the Civic Area Master Plan is expected to take place over the next 10 to 20 years and is divided into three phases: 1) Park at the Core 2) East Bookend and 3) West Bookend.

Figure 4: Civic Area Master Plan Implementation Phases



The first phase of Civic Area implementation proceeded thanks to passage of the November 2014 Community, Culture and Safety tax. The city worked with the community to create a site plan for the Phase I ‘Park at the Core’ improvements and used the \$8.7 million in funds from the CCS tax to implement these improvements. Construction of Phase I began in November 2016 and completed in November 2017.

Phase 2 for the Civic Area Master Plan implementation will focus on creating more refined plan for the East Bookend – a two block portion of the Civic Area bounded by Arapahoe Avenue, Canyon Boulevard, Broadway and 14th/15th Street and envisioned as a mixed-use block that incorporates a variety of uses. Because the Civic Area Master Plan identified more potential future uses than there is space available in the East Bookend, the planning process will help narrow these options to refine the community’s preferred vision for the East Bookend and determine what is feasible in this area.