

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

## Executive Summary

The City of Boulder completed a series of outreach efforts with various segments of the Boulder community regarding climate change and potential paths of action in 2015 and 2016. The community engagement had three goals: 1) provide useful and relevant climate change and climate action-related information to the community; 2) gather community perspectives around climate change and climate action; and 3) grow the foundation of community leadership and commitment around climate action.

The various mechanisms for community engagement taking place during this period included:

- **29 Community Presentations** by City staff
- **655 Surveys**, including an abbreviated Spanish version presented at community meetings
- **15 Community Dialogues** consisting of 90-minute facilitated conversations
- **4 Focus groups**, entailing completed four 90-minute group discussions

The community engagement mechanisms revealed that strong alignment across the community exists on climate change, priority solutions, and preferable actions. Key findings include:

- **Climate change is occurring.** The vast majority (94 percent) of Boulder residents and workers surveyed believe that climate change is happening.
- **Concern for personal well-being and that of others is a primary motivator:** Concern for their own well-being and others, as well as that of future generations, are the primary values motivating actions on climate change.
- **Preferred action steps are clear:** Those who participated demonstrated strong agreement that the top solutions needed in the community are: 1) greater renewable energy; 2) increased public transportation and biking/walking options (that equitably benefit both the Latino and low-income populations) and; 3) new land use policies that reduce in-commuting and promote low-GHG transportation.
- **Action is already happening:** Nearly 91 percent of Boulder residents and workers surveyed already are taking action on climate change and other groups reported taking action as well.
- **Additional financial incentives and information can facilitate further action:** With greater financial incentives and information (particularly that are accessible to both the Latino population and the low-income population), Boulder residents and workers are prepared to take more action to address climate change.
- **Preferred measures to evaluate progress are generally consistent:** The Boulder community most commonly cited the following measures as the ones they would know: 1) Increased amount of energy coming from clean energy sources; 2) overall community emission reduction goals; 3) emission reductions per capita; and 4) increased percentage of renewable energy generated in our community.

## I. Introduction

In 2015 and 2016, the City of Boulder conducted a series of outreach efforts with different segments of the Boulder community regarding climate change and potential paths of action. The goals of the engagement were three-fold: 1) provide useful and relevant climate change and climate action-related information to the community; 1) gather community perspectives around climate change and climate action; and 3) grow the foundation of community leadership and commitment around climate action.

In order to gauge beliefs and ideas of a broad range of the community, the city pursued several outreach mechanisms.

**Community Presentations:** The city staff gave 29 60-minute presentations to community groups. These groups were selected based on an effort to reach as many different community constituencies as possible. These presentations informed Boulder residents and workers on three main topics. First, they described the potential impact of climate change on Boulder. Second, they outlined the city's programs for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Third, they provided an overview of the key elements of a draft Climate Commitment strategy document, outlining the city's proposed actions regarding climate change. The presentations typically included 30-45 minutes of question and answer, as well as 15-30 minutes of an open discussion. A list of the presentations can be found in Attachment A.

**Online Survey:** A 23-question survey was distributed through social media, water bills, outreach newsletters and city presentations. The goal of the survey was to elicit information on Boulder residents' and workers' beliefs, values, personal actions and motivations related to climate change. In addition, the survey sought feedback on the specific ways that the city could support existing and future climate actions, as well as on the most relevant measures of success towards the city's climate goals. The survey generated 655 responses from Boulder residents and workers.<sup>1</sup> To ensure input from the Latino population, an abbreviated Spanish version was conducted in-person Spanish at a Cumbre de Compañeras event. The survey was shortened to 5 questions to ensure completion within the timeframe of the meeting. The survey questions and results can be found in Attachment B.

**Facilitated Community Dialogues:** The city worked with facilitators Kate Hamilton and Sarah Thomas to design, organize and implement 15 community dialogues with different segments of the Boulder community.<sup>2</sup> The goal of these 90-minute facilitated conversations was to elicit information from participants about their views about the causes of climate change, priority solutions, personal actions they have taken or could take, possible group actions and preferences in how to measure progress. The

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<sup>1</sup> It was beyond the scope of this project to complete a statistically valid survey. However, the city did its best to distribute the survey widely to broad segments of the Boulder population.

<sup>2</sup> These groups included: 1) University of Colorado (CU) students; 2) CU graduate students; 3) CU faculty; 4) CU graduate climate researchers; 5) members of the planning community, including members of PLAN-Boulder, Open Boulder, and Better Boulder; 6) CU faculty climate researchers; 7) Mapleton Hill/Newlands residents; 8) A "World Cafe" dialogue targeting [Spanish speakers in Woodlands, Red Oak and Mapleton mobile home communities]; 9) Members of the First United Methodist Church Boulder; 10) Members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder; 11) Sierra Club Members; 12) Members of the Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance, 13) Boulder High School Environmental Group Students, 14) Boulder Rotary Club, and 15) Members of the Jewish Faith Community organized by Hazon.

conversations included constructions of visual “maps” of participants’ ideas, as well as an anonymous survey on the preferred measures of success the participants think the city should use to gauge progress toward climate goals. Summaries of the community dialogue discussions can be found in Attachment C.

**Focus Groups:** A Boulder-based public relations firm, Vermilion, completed four 90-minute focus group discussions to gain insight into community perspectives on climate change and to gain input about the best ways for the city to share information about climate and climate action. A summary of the focus group conversations can be found in Attachment D.

## II. Findings

This section outlines the key findings from the outreach mechanisms. These findings pertain to six major areas: 1) values and beliefs about climate change; 2) existing community actions to address climate change; 3) priority future actions to address climate change; 4) perceived local benefits from taking climate action; 5) preferred assistance to reduce barriers to climate action; and 6) progress indicators Boulder residents and workers believe would help them know the community is making progress towards its climate goals.

**Values and Beliefs:** The vast majority (95 percent) of those who participated in the city’s survey believe that climate change is happening (see Figure 1). Among participants, the following ranked as the primary motivations for taking action on climate change (see also Table 1 below):

- 1) Future health and well-being of self and others (58 percent);
- 2) Concern for future generations (55 percent); and
- 3) Being a good steward (53 percent)

**Existing Community Actions to Address Climate Change:** Boulder residents and workers are taking significant actions related to climate change. Nearly 91 percent of survey respondents, for instance, self-report that they are taking actions to reduce their climate impact. The top actions identified include activities in (see also Figures 2-4 below):

- **Energy:** improving energy efficiency in homes and offices (89 percent), and less GHG-intensive transportation options (76 percent)
- **Resources:** recycling (96 percent), composting (72 percent), and buying used goods (68 percent)
- **Ecosystems:** planting trees or creating gardens (57 percent) and political engagement (30 percent)

**Priority Future Actions to Address Climate Change:** Boulder residents and workers identified priority future actions to address climate change.

- Community members ranked the top three actions the *Boulder community* (defined as individuals, groups, institutions) should take as: 1) installing more renewable energy (for example, solar, wind) in homes and offices (65 percent); 2) reducing energy use through behavior changes (56 percent); and 3) using public transportation, biking and walking (53 percent) (see also Table 2).
- Community members also identified the top three actions the *city government* should take to help the community address climate change: 1) adopt renewable energy options (47 percent); 2) create policies that facilitate or incentivize energy use reductions (37 percent); and 3) change land use

planning to encourage use of public transportation and walking (26 percent) (see also Table 3 below).

**Local Benefits from Taking Climate Action: Many Boulder residents and workers see additional local benefits accruing from the Boulder community pursuing these possible solutions.** When asked about the additional local benefits that would result from community action on climate change, survey respondents “strongly agreed” on the following:

- 1) A better life for children and grandchildren (63 percent);
- 2) Protection of local plant and animal species (57 percent);
- 3) Improved public health (54 percent);
- 4) Better quality of life as a resident (50 percent); and
- 5) Jobs and benefits to the local economy (43 percent).

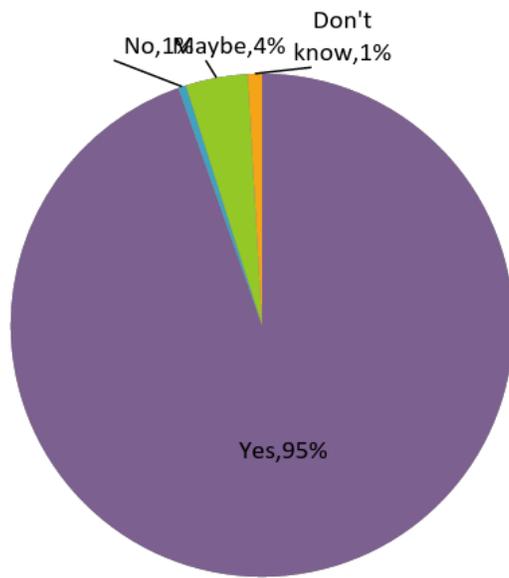
**Preferred Assistance to Reduce Barriers to Climate Action: Residents and workers are prepared to take more actions around climate change with assistance.** In particular, survey respondents noted that the following would facilitate greater actions (see also Figure 5 below):

- Financial assistance or options to install energy efficiency and renewable energy measures (63 percent);
- Information about ways to reduce climate impacts of goods and services (53 percent) particularly in ways that are accessible to and provide tangible benefits for Latino and low-income populations; and
- Financial options to improve resource efficiency and productivity (54 percent)

These findings are consistent with the impediments residents and workers face. The most significant barrier to action is financial, followed by lack of information and technical assistance.

**Preferred Progress Indicators: The Vermilion focus groups’ findings show that it is important for Boulder residents and workers to see that the community is making progress towards its climate goals.** Survey respondents identified the following as the most useful measures for gauging the community’s progress towards its goals over the next five years (in order of priority):

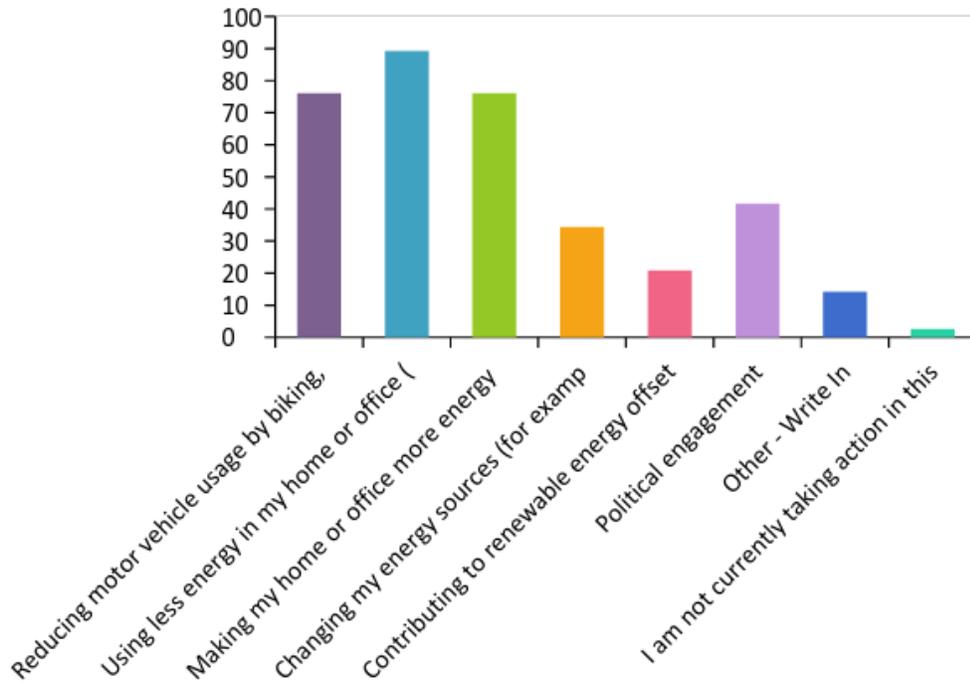
- 1) Increased amount of energy coming from clean energy sources (e.g., wind, solar)
- 2) Overall community emission reduction goals
- 3) Emission reduce goals per capita
- 4) Increased percentage of energy generated in our community
- 5) Reduced water use



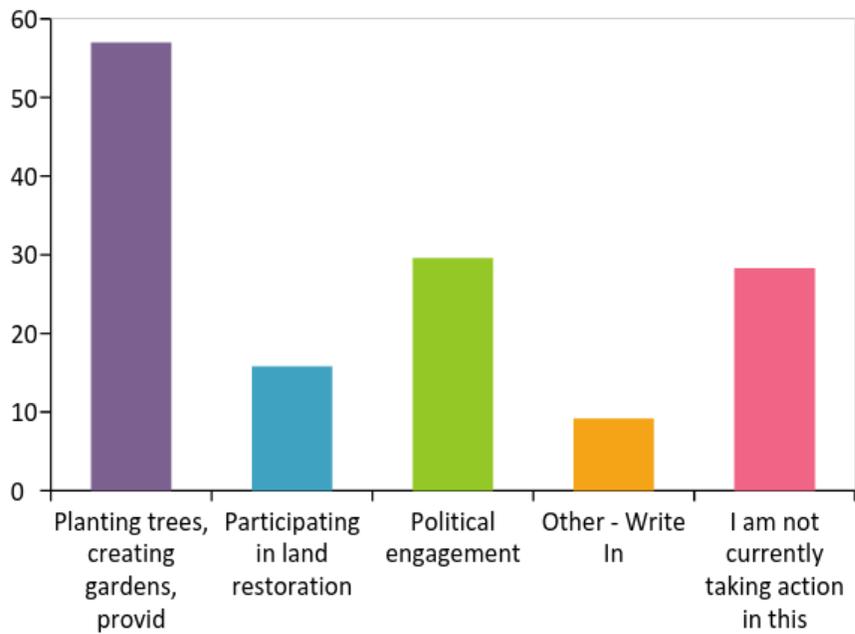
**Figure 1. Beliefs on Climate Change**

**Table 1. Motivations for Reducing Climate Impact**

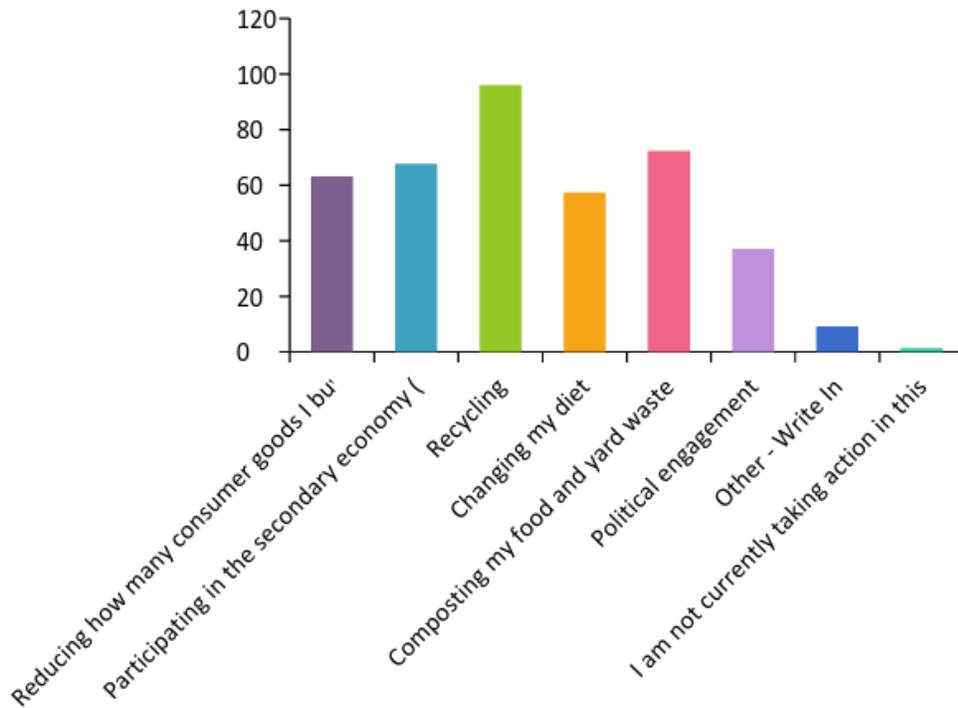
Motivations	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Financial considerations (for example, lowering energy costs)	22%	38%	29%	8%	3%
Energy independence and security	22%	36%	32%	8%	3%
Concerns about future health and well-being of myself or others	58%	29%	9%	3%	2%
A desire to help future generations	55%	30%	11%	2%	3%
The influence of friends or family	10%	21%	35%	25%	10%
The advice of scientists and world leaders	32%	40%	20%	6%	3%
The desire to be a good steward	53%	35%	8%	2%	2%



**Figure 2. Current Community Actions Pertaining to Energy**



**Figure 3. Current Community Actions Pertaining to Ecosystems**



**Figure 4. Current Community Actions Pertaining to Resources**

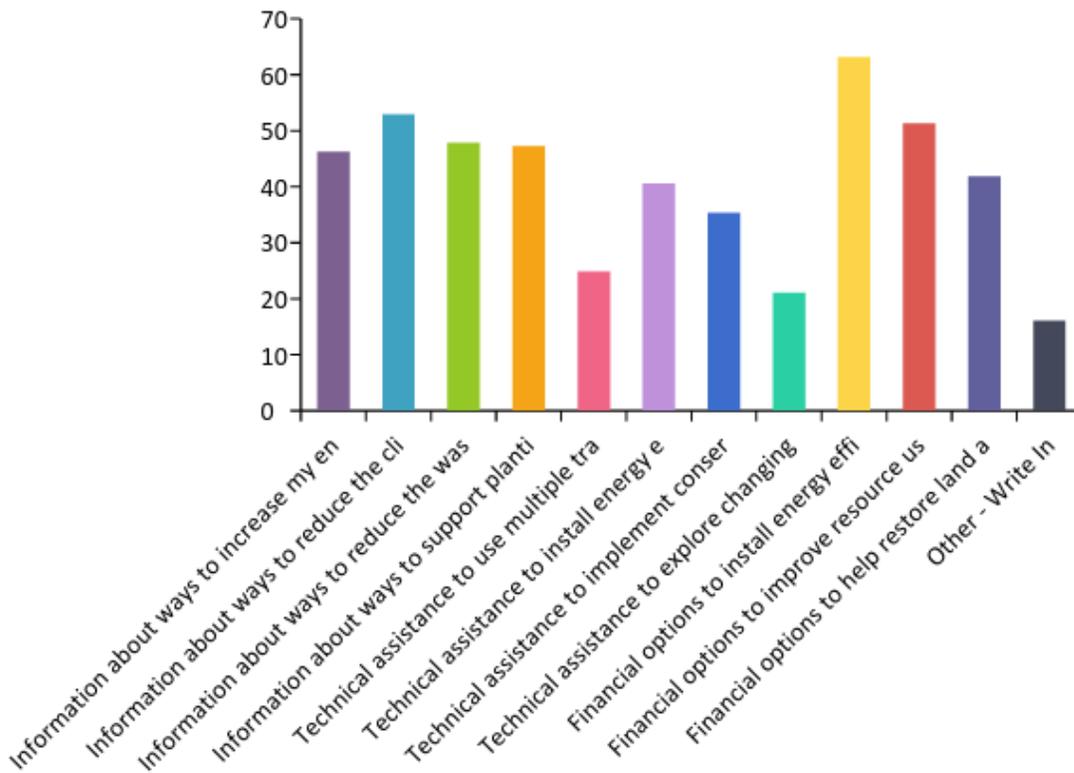
**Table 2. Priority Future Actions the *Community* Should Take**

Overall Rank	Item	Score
1	Installing more renewable energy (for example, solar, wind, etc.) in homes, offices, and transportation	1,614
2	Reducing energy use through behavior changes	1,329
3	Using public transportation, biking, and walking	1,149
4	Replacing gas and diesel vehicles with electric vehicles or other clean energy powered alternatives	941
5	Maintain landscapes that support healthy plants, wildlife, and ecosystems	753
6	Using gardening, landscaping or agricultural practices that protect and enhance the ability of the land to sequester carbon out of the atmosphere	669
7	Replacing natural gas using appliances	243

**Table 3. Priority Future Actions the *City Government* Should Take**

Overall Rank	Item	Score
1	Help the community adopt renewable energy options (for example, solar, wind, etc.) for homes, offices, and transportation	635

2	Create policies that facilitate or incentivize emissions reductions (for example, energy efficiency ordinances)	520
3	Change land use planning to encourage use of public transportation and walking	348
4	Improve alternative forms of transportation	337
5	Maintain healthy ecosystems and natural areas	255
6	Reduce waste	221
7	Provide more information to citizens on ways to reduce energy use through behavior changes	209
8	Improve resource conservation and efficiency	168
9	Increase infrastructure for electric vehicles	146
10	Enhance carbon sequestration	121



**Figure 5. Preferred Assistance to Reduce Barriers to Climate Action**

### III. Additional Insights

While strong alignment emerged from the different outreach mechanisms, some additional insights surfaced from the mechanisms. These insights are presented below.

#### A. Both Latino and Lower Income Communities Findings

**Both the Latino and lower income segments of Boulder show similar priorities in terms of priority future actions, but they put a greater emphasis on equitable transportation options and better options for in-commuting.** In particular, conversations with the Latino and affordable housing populations revealed:

- Ensuring free Eco Passes and bike access for affordable housing and low-income residents can help to reduce GHGs while also providing important incentives to less-resourced communities within Boulder.
- Residential neighborhoods should eliminate restrictions on green activities, such as outside drying of clothing. (See text box on Just Transitions.)
- In-commuting also emerged as a theme within these parts of the community, with many articulating that the city can and should do more to promote affordable housing to reduce in-commuting and should work directly with surrounding communities on strategies to reduce GHGs from transportation from commuting.

#### B. Community Dialogue Findings

**Community dialogue participants also agreed with the survey findings on the priority future actions to address climate change. However, they placed greater emphasis on needed changes in local land use, as well as shifts in broader social, cultural and economic norms.** As with survey respondents, participants in the community dialogues emphasized renewable energy, energy efficiency and carbon taxes as critical solutions. They also emphasized greater public transportation and biking options. The participants included additional thoughts pertaining to:

#### Just Transitions

Growing out of the city's outreach and engagement, a number of city leaders, residents and organizations emphasized the importance of including social equity and diversity as core objectives in the development of climate and clean energy programs and strategies. These conversations resulted in the formation of the Just Transition Collaborative (JTC). The JTC provided extensive feedback to the city on approaches to integrating equity and diversity into the city's efforts. These included three major goals and associated objectives:

##### **Goal 1: Build Community Capabilities and Leadership**

Recognize and celebrate low carbon lifestyle leadership among lower income and ethnic communities

##### **Goal 2: Promote Equity in Energy and Resource Costs and Ownership**

##### **Goal 3: Generate Socially Just Economic and Employment Opportunities**

The city has developed a draft of these goals for inclusion in the final draft of the community Climate Commitment

- A diversity of opinion on the role of land use policies, with some advocating for denser development to improve greater walkability and reduced reliance on cars; others emphasizing the role of open space in climate change buffering.
- A common theme was the importance of affordable housing as a means to reducing in-commuting to Boulder and reducing GHGs.
- Community dialogue participants raised the need to address “human systems:” social, economic, political, and cultural norms that cause GHG. In particular, they cited the need to increase civic participation and democratic control to address climate change, as well as increasing awareness across the entire community.

Groups organized for the community dialogues also outlined possible actions to take as groups, based on their role in the community, their knowledge and their networks. These conversations were preliminary, but reflect ideas about the many roles groups can take.

- **Climate researchers** focused on actions related to awareness and behavior: coordinating outreach, managing the transition to renewable energy (i.e., the “least regret solution,” working on science research across disciplines, educating younger people, engaging the CU administration regarding CU infrastructure, shifting the research financing agenda, and collaborating with the CU administration for making the “business” case for renewable energy transitions.
- **CU faculty** identified a range of actions related to awareness, behavior, assets, and policies: creating integrated statements across efforts and disciplines, advancing a faculty statement on climate change and action, connecting CU expertise to city-community challenges, developing CU solar capacity, promoting a joint partnership outside of CU to bring faculty capacities to the community, advocating for housing to reduce in-commuting, and pursuing research & development grants with the community.
- **CU graduate students** emphasized collective actions targeting awareness and assets: galvanizing undergraduates, talking with (and protesting against) the CU administration on climate related efforts including CU infrastructure, conducting outreach to raise awareness, and working with CU to divest its investments from fossil fuels.
- **The Planning community**, including Better Boulder, Open Boulder and PLAN-Boulder, outlined potential actions pertaining to awareness and policies: advancing a constructive conversation among the distinct groups to identify shared goals, engaging in aligned communication and policy advocacy on shared climate goals, educating the community on the co-benefits of climate policy and municipalization, helping the city to develop measurements for success.
- **CU Undergraduate students** discussed ways of continuing to educate and change behavior in the dorms, lobbying for increased use of renewable energy in university facilities along with educating friends and family.
- **Rotary members** shared on efforts installing solar panels, using less electricity, and increasing awareness in their community. They also discussed a project they are supporting which employs adults on the autism spectrum to refurbish computers, and in turn reduces electronic waste and resource consumption.
- **Boulder High School’s Environmental Club** members brainstormed on a variety of next steps to the Climate Dialogue, including using available funding to buy power strips, installing solar

panels on the high school, and launching a fundraiser by selling recycled wrapping paper and/or hand sewn reusable gift bags.

- **Residents of the Newlands/Mapleton Hill** neighborhoods discussed ways of reducing their impacts in their homes including composting, buying renewable energy in bulk and increasing efficiency in homes.
- **Boulder Mountainbike Alliance** focused on how connecting with nature can lead to more activation around conservation issues, including climate change. One of the group's missions is increasing access to trails, which the group emphasized is a way to reduce driving. Attendees also connected their passion for properly caring for open space, and ecosystem conservation.
- **Members of the First United Methodist Church**, in particular represented by the Resonance Women's Chorus, emphasized means of increasing awareness. As a group they have met regularly to discuss climate change actions and put on a concert focused on climate change. The group further discussed educating themselves and their peers, ways of being more vocal about the commitments they've made personally and encouraging others. They also brainstormed around ride sharing to rehearsals and putting programs on recycled paper.
- **Members of the Jewish Faith** community meeting included individuals active in several different Jewish community groups including Hazon and Tur Ha'aretz (an interfaith CSA). As far as collective action, the group discussed the importance of educating youth, connecting religious teachings with climate action, decreasing GHG impact of buildings, understanding how financial investments support fossil fuel versus greener innovations, supporting the interfaith CSA, as well as influencing policy makers.

Community dialogue participants also ranked top progress indicators for measuring change. The top ranked measures included, in order of rank:

- (1) Increased amount of energy coming from clean energy sources (e.g., wind, solar)
- (2) Overall community emission reduction goals
- (3) Emission reductions per person (per capita)
- (4) Increased number of buses and access to public transportation
- (5) Reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) throughout the community.

### C. Focus Group Findings

In the summer of 2016, the City of Boulder contracted with Vermilion, a local public relations firm, to conduct four focus groups. These focus groups were in addition to the Community Dialogues. The goal of the discussions was to gain greater understanding of individuals' perspectives and priorities regarding climate change and to contribute to the city's engagement strategy. The groups ranged from highly activated around climate change to those skeptical about the ability to effect climate change or the desires of others to do so. The responses across all four groups provided some unexpected insights.

- There is substantial concern that affluence is changing the makeup of the community, changing its character from a place that is innovative, revolutionary and values-driven, to a place that is lifestyle driven.
- Wealth gives people the freedom to indulge in ways that are contrary to corrective action and lead to putting personal interests above community.

- There's a lack of will to do what is required—while most focus group participants said they were willing to do their part, it wouldn't matter because others aren't as committed.
- Participants felt their own choices were limited by financial or systemic pressures so they would not be able to achieve what was needed—while those who aren't limited aren't acting.
- There was not a strong confidence that reducing emissions locally would have any influence over climate change.
- There is a concern that climate action would take away focus and resources from other pressing local issues such as community infrastructure.

Participants did offer specific recommendations for how to address these challenges. These include:

- **Speaking to opportunity** – Emphasize opportunity over austerity and restriction
- **Acknowledging community divisions**—Allow differences to be recognized and included in exploring solutions
- **Emphasizing equity**—Prioritize improving circumstances for all parts of the community
- **Highlight concrete actions with positive outcomes**—Show the practical value of climate action to improve local conditions
- **Address other community concerns**—Demonstrate how climate action addresses other community priorities
- **Make it bigger than Boulder**—Don't just brag about Boulder, show how we can be of service to the larger world
- **Connect to our higher intention**—There remains a strong desire to be good stewards for future generations