



Guidelines for Community Engagement

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Introduction

- **Why:** Make community engagement and the resulting decision-making process transparent. Identify issues and concerns to be addressed by gauging community level of support for ideas. Ensure participation is meaningful to all who contribute.
- **What:** Establish a system that will measure community support on ideas or direction for the plan.
- **How:** Define guidelines for soliciting ideas and making decisions based on input, clarify the roles for different participants, and provide tools to measure the level of community consensus.

The plan for the Civic Area will take some time to develop—with anticipated completion in mid-2013. The project will start by compiling a wide range of visionary ideas. The ideas will be narrowed and refined as the project progresses, based on physical constraints, criteria, and level of community and council support. The criteria and other decision tools will be developed through a collaborative and transparent format. Ultimately, City Council will make final decisions about the plan and its components.

Guidelines for Advancing Ideas

- To start, all ideas are valid.
- The community, staff, and decision-makers all contribute ideas
- Staff will provide information on constraints and/or opportunities (the reality check) around any given idea.
- At each step, the community will be invited to review ideas, add new ones, respond to analysis, and help shape the plan's direction.
- The community will help prioritize ideas through communicating their level of support for ideas.
- Staff will objectively analyze ideas with consideration of constraints, costs, and tradeoffs.
- Staff will keep a record of all ideas submitted and advance to decision-makers those with majority community support (i.e., community priorities).
- City Council will direct the course of the plan based on analytic data and community priorities.

Roles

City Staff:

- provide fact-based information about the area, its history, and physical issues
- help develop project assumptions and criteria
- help frame the questions to lead to meaningful discussion among stakeholders and the community
- keep the community's vision and values at the forefront

- provide innovative ideas
- provide objective analysis of ideas and options, including fiscal, social, and environmental costs and benefits to frame project trade-offs
- act as conveners, allowing all members of the community opportunity to be involved
- facilitate difficult conversations around controversial topics
- commit to transparency and collaboration
- keep a record of all ideas and advance to decision-makers those with high levels of community support.

The Community, Including Stakeholders:

- participate during each step of the process to help narrow the range of possible solutions
- provide innovative ideas
- give feedback on ideas generated by other members of the community
- give input on materials generated by staff (e.g., draft criteria)
- respect ideas and seek ways to find common solutions that are seen as “win-win” for the Boulder community

Boards and Commissions:

- provide innovative ideas
- give feedback on ideas generated by others from a perspective consistent with the board’s or commission’s mission (e.g., Library Commission will focus on library issues).
- give input on materials generated by staff (e.g., draft criteria)
- respect ideas and seek ways to find common solutions that are optimal for the community, with multiple co-benefits

City Council:

- review ideas being generated by the community; provide additional innovative ideas
- provide feedback to help guide the process and plan development
- make final decision after weighing all ideas and analysis

Consensus Continuum for Weighing Level of Support for Ideas

When the community begins to weigh and assess ideas, it will become important to gauge level of support – Does an idea have strong support? Is it acceptable, but needs refining? Or, do a lot of people have serious reservations or would oppose it? This will help the narrowing process.

(The following type of scale or continuum could be adapted within surveys, through finger voting, using key pad polling, or online tools.)

- 0 = I am opposed to this idea – I would try to prevent it from being advanced
- 1 = I have serious reservations about this idea – I will not support it
- 2 = I am lukewarm about the idea – My concerns may be resolvable
- 3 = This idea is acceptable – I can support it
- 4 = I love this idea – I will support it wholeheartedly