



November 7, 2014

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

This plan will guide the Housing Boulder community engagement process to be an open, balanced, and fair process that gives residents, workers, and other interested parties convenient and meaningful opportunities to inform the process.

Visit www.HousingBoulder.net for more information and to sign up for email updates.

About the Project

Housing Boulder will inform the development of a comprehensive housing strategy that defines community priorities for creating and preserving diverse, affordable housing choices. The city is developing a housing policy framework and implementation toolkit that will focus on the following goals:

1. **Strengthen Our Current Commitments** – Reach or exceed Boulder’s goals to serve very-low, low- and moderate-income households, including people with disabilities, special needs and the homeless.
2. **Maintain the Middle** – Prevent further loss of Boulder’s economic middle by preserving existing housing and providing greater variety of housing choices for middle-income families and for Boulder’s workforce.
3. **Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood** – Facilitate the creation of a variety of housing options in every part of the city, including existing single-family neighborhoods.
4. **Create 15-minute Neighborhoods** – Foster mixed-income, mixed-use, highly walkable neighborhoods in amenity rich locations (e.g., close to transit, parks, open space and trails, employment, retail services, etc.).
5. **Strengthen Partnerships** – Strengthen current partnerships and explore creative new public-private-partnerships to address our community’s housing challenges (e.g., University of Colorado, private developers, financing entities, affordable housing providers, etc.)

Addressing Boulder’s affordability challenges will take a creative mix of policies, tools and resources to make progress on multiple fronts. The planning process will engage the Boulder community in exploring different ideas to create high-quality, highly livable places that are accessible to people of different incomes and abilities and that enhance the community as a whole. Input from the community will be used to develop a draft strategy to enable City Council to make informed decisions for short-, medium- and long-term actions. ***The strategy will NOT adopt any specific proposals, but will identify priorities that will need to be incorporated into the city’s work plan.***

Foundation for Outreach

This community engagement strategy builds upon work that was completed over the past two years and the interest this issue has generated in the community in the past few months. In 2013, Council recognized that the city’s housing challenges require more than minor adjustments to current programs. Council held a series of study sessions to better understand the housing market. A study completed in 2013 analyzed both rental and homeownership, with a particular focus on housing opportunities for workers and low- and middle-income residents (see the [Boulder Housing Market Analysis](#)). More than 3,000 Boulder residents and workers completed a [Boulder Housing Choice](#)

[Survey and Analysis](#) in early 2014, providing data on housing preferences and needs. On May 27, 2014, City Council held a study session to review the planning process, project goals, and short-term actions. Council formally endorsed the project goals on Sept. 2, 2014 and directed staff to craft a community engagement process that is more inclusive and representative of Boulder.

How will Housing Boulder be inclusive and representative of Boulder?

The community engagement approach is designed to engage all perspectives and to reach people who may not typically participate in city planning processes. There are different ways to participate, both in person and virtually, so people can choose the method that works best for them. Large public events like the *Why Housing Matters!* community symposium and *Rapid Ideas and Insights Forum* will be fast-paced and dynamic, engaging participants in sharing their ideas. Housing Boulder will go out into the community via storefront workshops and invite community members to convene their own meetings using downloadable meeting toolkits. Small working groups of 10 to 12 diverse community members will provide an effective forum for highly interactive dialogue about the goals and ideas to achieve them.

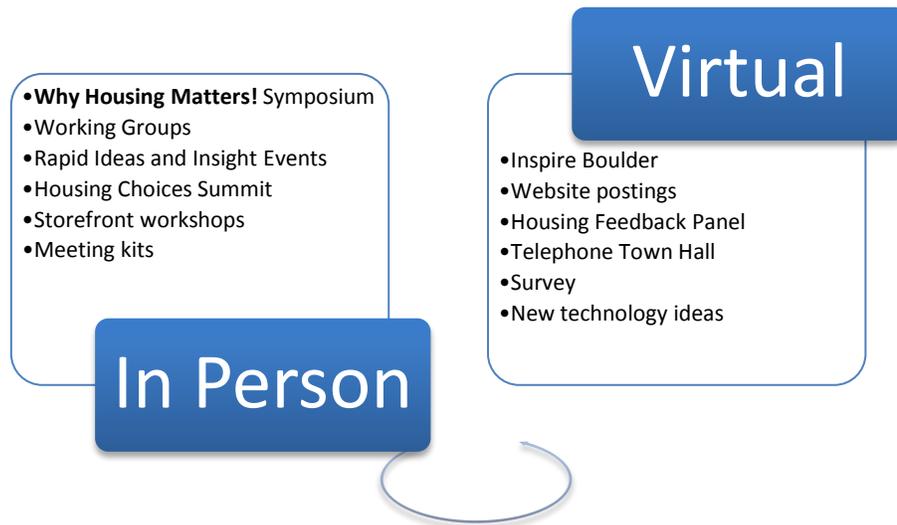
As the strategy is taking form, a large sample of Boulder will be invited to weigh in on priorities. Finally, the community engagement process will be refined in response to input from City Council, working group members and the community.

The approach is designed to ask the Boulder community four consecutive questions:

1. Why does housing matter in Boulder?
2. How can we make Boulder more affordable and inclusive?
3. Which ideas will work best?
4. How should we get to work?

The four steps in the community engagement process focus on these core questions. In each step, the city will encourage public engagement through virtual and traditional tools, integrated with more focused, in-person dialogue at various events and among smaller working groups. The process is designed to be both engaging and meaningful, and to extend the reach of engagement to involve members of the community that may not have participated in city planning processes in the past.

The following chart lists the different in-person and virtual activities that are described in more detail below in the draft process for Housing Boulder. These activities will be refined based on input from community members as the project progresses.



Process objectives

- Foster an informed and constructive two-way civic dialogue on housing choices and implications for Boulder.
- Ignite the community’s creativity to generate new ideas and convey them through multimedia.
- Reach broadly into the community to connect with community members who may not typically participate in planning projects.
- Be respectful of participants’ time by providing different ways to engage and offering information in a concise way so that it can be easily accessed and understood.
- Be efficient with city resources by focusing on the most effective methods for meaningful engagement .
- Engage the full diversity of perspectives in the Boulder community.
- Provide an ongoing record of citizen input, questions and responses, and a mechanism to make this information available to the public.
- Explore the implications of housing choices on related issues like community design and equity to determine community issues and concerns to address in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan and related planning efforts.

Draft Process

STEP 1 – Why Housing Matters (January – February 2015)

CORE QUESTION: Why does housing matter in Boulder?

Opening Symposium: Why Housing Matters!

The opening community symposium will explore Boulder’s housing policies and goals. The symposium will likely begin with videos and one or more speakers to frame the discussions by setting the context for housing issues in the city and offering ideas to stimulate creative thinking about future opportunities. Participants will engage in paired interviews to share how housing choices have benefited them, the strengths they see in Boulder’s past approach to housing, and what they find most promising in the ideas for the future. In facilitated small group discussions, they will then explore Boulder’s vision and values for housing and share ideas and insights on the different housing goals.

Inspire Boulder Questions

Videos and other informational materials presented at the symposium will also be posted online. Community members will have the opportunity to provide input on the goals via Inspire Boulder.

Launch Working Groups

Working groups of 10 to 12 people will review and evaluate potential policies and tools specific to each goal:

- Strengthen Our Current Commitments
- Maintain the Middle
- Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood
- Strengthen Partnerships
- Enable Aging in Place

Based on feedback from the community, staff proposed on September 2 to City Council that the “15-minute neighborhoods” goal be more appropriately addressed as part of the 2015 update of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.

Each group will start meeting in January 2015 and will meet 3 to 5 times. Working group meetings will be open to the public and community members will be able to submit ideas for working group consideration online and through other methods prior to each meeting.

A “Housing Boulder 101” webinar is scheduled for 12 to 1 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 20, to review the current housing situation, draft toolkit, and community engagement process. This Web-based orientation will help working group and community members prepare for the community symposium and first working group meetings in January 2015.

Working Group Meeting 1 – January 2015

Overview of ground rules, process and current policies; review input from the opening symposium and Inspire Boulder; discuss what they learned at the *Why Housing Matters!* symposium; and review

input on housing goals. The working groups will also provide input on community outreach for the second phase of the process, helping to refine the questions for the Ignite events and online polling.

STEP 2 – Ideas for Action (February – March 2015)

CORE QUESTION: How can we make Boulder more inclusive and affordable?

This step in the process focuses on generating many different ideas for achieving Boulder’s housing goals. The intent is to make the process fun and different to attract a broad array of community members and to stimulate and capitalize on the wisdom and creativity that already exists in Boulder. Community members will also vote on the best ideas and share their reasons for their choices.

Rapid Ideas and Insights Forum

This event will be an open invitation for the people of Boulder to share their ideas for housing policies and programs to improve the Boulder community. Each presenter will have five minutes to respond to the core questions:

- What is your idea for better housing in Boulder?
- How will your idea help us achieve our housing goals?

Presenters will be invited to use different methods to convey their ideas, from video to theatre to engaging speeches, with or without a PowerPoint presentation. The design builds upon the successful Ignite events held at the Boulder Theater (Boulder still holds the world record for Ignite participants) where the theme is “Enlighten us, but make it quick!” At the end of the evening, participants will pick their favorite ideas using keypad polling. The event will be videotaped and posted online.

Inspire Boulder

The *Rapid Ideas and Insights Forum* will continue online as participants on Inspire Boulder view the presentations, vote on the ideas, and share new ideas.

Step 3 – Priorities for Action (March - April 2015)

Core Question: Which ideas will work best?

This step determines the best ideas for each goal area.

Working Group Meeting 2

Each working group will develop a list of screening criteria for picking the best ideas and then review all the ideas generated for their respective goal area.

Inspire Boulder

Other community members will weigh in on the screening criteria online through Inspire Boulder.

Working Group Meeting 3

After reviewing comments about the screening criteria and possibly refining them, each working group will develop their top list of ideas to achieve their goal and document briefly why each idea is

considered “best in class” for Boulder. Working group members will also weigh in on outreach strategies to get feedback on the best ideas list from a broad array of community members.

Council Meeting

City Council will hold a study session and public hearing in April 2015 to receive an update on the process and provide additional guidance on developing the Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

Step 4 – Strategy and Implementation (May 2015)

Core Question: How should we get to work?

Once the best ideas for each goal area are identified, it will be important to re-engage a broad array of community members to respond to these priorities and provide input on the overall strategy. Several different ways of engaging large numbers or a representative sample of the Boulder community are presented below.

Methods for Obtaining Community Feedback on the Best Ideas by Goal Area

- **Online Housing Feedback Panel:** Community members will sign up and provide demographic information. They will be sent a packet with the best ideas and the overall process and then respond to a questionnaire online. Results will be evaluated for all respondents as well as a representative sample of the community. Housing panelists may be convened in person to deliberate on the best ideas and overall housing strategy.
- **Telephone Town Hall:** This hour-long call would go out to all residents to invite them to listen in to hear about the best ideas by goal area, ask questions and respond to polls on their preferences. Other interested community members - workers, business owners, agency representatives, etc. - will be able to call in to participate.
- **Survey:** A statistical survey of the community would provide representative results on the priorities.
- **Meeting Kits:** Organizations and individuals will be able to convene a self-managed meeting by inviting participants and downloading a meeting kit. Conveners will be able to select the goals of interest and direct participants to a link to a questionnaire to provide their individual input. Staff will use a targeted approach to provide the meeting kits to the neighborhood and community organizations that are most likely to utilize the kits and disseminate the information to their networks.
- **Storefront workshops:** The Housing Boulder team will visit coffee shops and other community gathering places around town to discuss the priorities with community members.

Closing Symposium: Housing Choices

The purpose of the closing symposium is to bring working group and community members together to explore the implications of housing choices for Boulder and related issues like design, equity and other topics to be addressed in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan.

Online Conversation

Key ideas from the closing symposium will be posted online for open comment.

Pilot Project Kits

Neighborhoods will be invited to complete pilot project applications. They will receive information on the different tools in the Housing Toolkit and meet to prepare their case for adopting one or more strategies in their community.

Council Acceptance of Strategy and Direction on Early Implementation

City Council will hold a public hearing on the Comprehensive Housing Strategy in spring 2015. Following the hearing, council will provide direction for short-, medium- and long-term actions and identify its 2015 work plan priorities related to affordable housing.

Community Engagement Tools and Techniques

- **City Council and Planning Board** – Briefings and study sessions will occur at key project milestones where council direction is critical to moving the process forward. Prior to council meetings, staff will meet with Planning Board to ensure the board’s feedback is part of the council discussion. Project staff will brief elected officials, city staff, and other agencies at other points as needed or as requested.
- **City Staff** – Housing Boulder project team members will meet with the various staff at key milestones in the project to ensure coordination and common understanding of the process and issues. Staff includes: Housing, Community Planning and Sustainability, Planning and Development Services, Human Services, Transportation, Economic Vitality, Master Plan Coordination Committee, Communications, and LEAD.
- **Public Meetings at Key Milestones** – Throughout the planning process, project staff anticipates hosting public meetings at key project milestones. Because the public meetings will have different types of information to communicate and different levels of input required, the public meeting formats will vary. Formats may include workshops, open houses, presentations, and discussion groups. The format for each public meeting has not yet been identified. As noted above, the goal is to make the public meetings interactive, whenever possible and appropriate. To help ensure equal access to city programs, services and activities, the City of Boulder will reasonably modify policies/procedures and provide auxiliary aids/services to persons with disabilities. Staff may also provide translators and/or materials in other languages.
- **City Boards** – In addition to the Planning Board, staff will involve other city boards, where possible. City staff will strive to hold joint board meetings when possible and coordinate discussions with other planning efforts (Transportation Master Plan, Envision East Arapahoe, Access Management and Parking Strategy, North Boulder Subcommunity Plan Update). The other boards include: Landmarks, Human Rights, Transportation Advisory Board, and Boulder Development Advisory Board.
- **Ongoing Outreach to Stakeholders** – Project staff will offer to meet or communicate regularly with stakeholder groups in an effort to provide information and solicit input on the planning process. Staff will provide updates in business and community newsletters and bulletins at appropriate project milestones and meet with individual stakeholders, as requested.
- **Working Groups** – The working group meetings will be noticed and open to the public. To facilitate public participation, each meeting will end with an open comment period to allow anyone to address the group. Additionally, the working groups will have a method that will allow anyone to submit ideas or comments that will contribute to the discussion.

At the end of the working group process, each group will prepare a summary of the key issues and identify the most promising tools to address each specific area. The most promising tools would be considered through a community prioritization exercise in early 2015.

- **Self-directed meetings (meeting kits)** – This technique allows advocacy groups, organizations, or groups of neighbors to hold a meeting to discuss a housing issue at a time and venue of their choosing without having to rely on city staff support. All the materials are prepared in advance and available to provide focused input on any topic.
- **Housing Feedback Panel** – Also known as deliberative dialogue, people sign up and provide demographic information so Boulder can see what a representative sample thinks. Participants receive information on a topic (i.e. goals, tools) and are invited to submit their own ideas. This panel could be involved in any phase and will give insights into what a representative group thinks. Another option is to invite them to gather in person for the Deliberative Dialogue process.
- **Ignite events** - Events where people bring their ideas in five slides and the audience votes on the most popular ideas. Another variation is an ideas competition.
- **Website** – The City of Boulder is hosting a project website with timely information about upcoming events and previous efforts related to the Comprehensive Housing Strategy. The site includes an overview of the project, a meeting calendar, project updates, technical project documents, and summaries of public input at the key milestones.
- **Inspire Boulder** – Staff is using this online tool to gather input on key issues. This is an interactive online tool that reaches some community members that do not normally participate in traditional planning processes.
- **Social Media** – Communications posts to social media to keep stakeholders interested and engaged.
- **Inside Boulder News** – Short news programs featuring city events and projects.
- **Inside Boulder** – Focused community news program featuring two stories about city events and projects.
- **Email Notifications** - On the city website and at public meetings, interested stakeholders have the opportunity to sign up for electronic email notification on project meetings, updates, media releases, and newsletters.
- **Meeting Notices** – Notice of all meetings will be posted on the website and emailed to interested stakeholders.
- **Press Releases** – Press releases will be circulated to the city’s media lists in advance of all public forums and as needed at key milestones.
- **Utility Bill Inserts** – Inserts may be used to reach a broader audience and encourage participation in either formal outreach meetings or online engagement tools.
- **Community Meetings and Events** – As requested, project staff will participate in neighborhood meetings, business meetings, and community events.