



Alpine-Balsam

What We Heard – Draft

ALPINE-BALSAM PLANNING PROCESSES (JANUARY 2017 – AUGUST 2019)

Starting with the Vision Plan and continuing into the Area Plan, staff has sought to engage the community about the Alpine-Balsam opportunity in a variety of ways and venues. This area plan has citywide impact and the goal has been to reach a broad audience.

The Alpine Balsam Planning Process has progressed as follows:

- Vision Plan – January through April 2017
- Area Plan – May 2018 through September 2019
 - Phase 1 – Build Awareness - March through August 2018
 - Phase 2 – Present Site Scenarios - September through October 2018
 - Phase 3 – Area Plan Workshops - January through February 2019
 - Phase 4 – Area Plan Option - July through August 2019

VISION PLAN

An in-depth community engagement process informed the vision plan process. This included an open house, four “pop-up” events out, an online questionnaire, and a community design workshop attended by over 100 people. Altogether, **over 600 people** provided input, and thousands of written comments were submitted. This input shaped the Vision, Guiding Principles, Strategies and Performance Measures – and gave the city a solid foundation upon which to start an area plan process.

Events included:

- Open Houses
- Pop-up Events
- Online Questionnaire
- Community design workshop 100+ attendees
- **Over 600 contacts and thousands of written comments**

Key takeaways:

- Strong support emerged for a mixed-use development that will support a vital, multi-generational, community-oriented place.

The [full report on the Vision Plan](#) is available on the Alpine-Balsam website.

AREA PLAN

From May 2018 through August 2019, community engagement for the Alpine-Balsam Area Plan included several phases. Throughout the process, purposes of engagement included raising awareness about the project, getting feedback on goals, sharing draft site scenarios to get feedback on key policy choices, learning about preferences for the Alpine-Balsam area around land use, character, access and mobility, and getting feedback on options and area plan components.

Events for the entire Area Plan process included:

- 10+ Kickoff events
- Pop-ups
- Neighborhood office hours
- Focus group for under-represented groups
- Information sessions
- Meetings with property-owners and nearby residents
- Online questionnaires
- Community meeting with presentation, guided scenario walk, key-pad polling
- Small group workshops
- Open Houses
- Walking Tours
- Public Hearings
- **Hundreds of people participating in-person in each phase and hundreds of written comments**

Phase 1 – Build Awareness (March – August 2018)

The goal in this phase was to update the community about the project and seek input about how the city should rank seven priorities associated with this opportunity. Staff hosted 10 events during this time, including a kick-off event, pop-ups, neighborhood office hours, a focus group, and an information session. Attendance totaled over 200 participants. In addition, the city utilized its online engagement platform to gather feedback from those who could not attend in-person opportunities. More than 670 individuals visited the project's online site, and 100 completed the prioritization survey. **Total participants: ~300.**

Key takeaways:

- As the city plans for redevelopment, Boulder should consider not only today's needs but also future trends and needs.
- Any new uses are likely to have anticipated and unforeseen impacts. Residents said it is important to consider how people will travel to and from the area, for example, and what level and types of parking will be necessary. Community members were also interested about steps that could be taken to reduce flood impacts.
- Some community members would like to see the city leverage this site to its maximum potential in terms of addressing affordable housing issues and showcasing the potential to build a diverse and inviting community. They encouraged the city to be "bold" in its planning.
- At the same time, there is concern about how development might affect the existing area. Some residents expressed strong opinions about density, building height and design, as well as a fear that redevelopment in this neighborhood could resemble growth in other parts of town. Boulder

Junction came up more than once in conversations, typically from individuals who are critical of the design and scale of buildings there. They encouraged the city to carefully consider impacts and unintended consequences of decisions.

- Many indicated they want the city to preserve the views of the Flatirons, and community members repeatedly identified the North Boulder Park as a neighborhood asset.
- Individuals who do not already live in the neighborhood are interested in opportunities that could exist for more affordable housing options for specific populations, like older Boulder residents.
- The concepts of efficient and consolidated civic spaces and welcoming community/public life space seemed to resonate.

The [full report on Phase 1](#) is available on the Alpine-Balsam website.

Phase 2 – Present Site Scenarios (September – October 2018)

The goal in this phase was to share draft site scenarios and get feedback on key policy choices. Engagement opportunities included a community workshop, advisory board workshop, and an online poll on tradeoffs for those who could not attend the workshop. **Total participants: ~120.**

Key takeaways:

- **Housing** was reaffirmed as a desired use for the site and people acknowledged the need to consolidate civic facilities at Alpine-Balsam. Some people were supportive of considering higher intensity housing because it would help achieve a significant amount of housing, while others thought that level of intensity would be extremely out of character for the area. Many felt that housing should include a variety of unit types, sizes, populations and affordability.
- Many expressed support for at least ‘moderate’ level of **civic uses** to meet space needs. The civic campus scenario generated some positive reactions from people concerned with more people living in the area, (but supportive of day-time population that would help the nearby businesses), however they did not favor the high intensity. Regarding co-locating with Boulder County at Alpine-Balsam, some expressed concern that it would overcomplicate the project while others thought some level of county facilities on the site may be worth pursuing in order to incentivize housing and mixed-use redevelopment at the Iris complex.
- On **mix of uses**, some people urged that there be some additional retail than what has been proposed, primarily to activate the ground level and provide additional local opportunities and nighttime activation.
- Most participants understood and were supportive of the ‘Boulder District Level’ approach to **access and parking** as described and illustrated in the scenarios. There was limited support for building parking structures or having a lot of surface parking, but people indicated the need for strong transportation demand management (TDM) to offer choices to residents and in order to prevent spillover parking the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Many people expressed support for including a variety of **building heights and types** as well as the mixed intensity scenarios. People were generally open to having taller buildings along Broadway with development scaling down on the western half of the site. There were mixed feelings about allowing up to 55 feet buildings across the entire site. Some thought it could be

done well and would help achieve the goals of the site, while for others allowing buildings to be developed at or above 55' was a non-starter.

The [full report on the community workshop](#) is available on the Alpine-Balsam website.

Phase 3 – Area Plan Workshops (January – February 2019)

This phase of engagement focused on learning about preferences for future opportunities and planning in the area that surrounds the former hospital site. Questions focused on land use goals, character, access, and mobility. Staff sought to implement lessons learned from earlier engagement, including hosting events closer to the site and hosting a total of 10 engagement opportunities at different times and days to accommodate participant needs. A mini-workshop format (facilitated small group discussions) allowed participants to have an open dialogue with each other and staff to listen to and document the range of feedback. Maps, dots and trace paper, as well as note-taking, at the workshops facilitated hands-on interaction. Approximately 120 people participated in the workshops. For those who were unable to attend, the city created an online questionnaire that mirrored the workshop format. Almost 350 individuals visited the project's online site during this phase and 60 completed the questionnaire. **Total participants: ~180.**

Key takeaways:

- **Neighborhood Quality of Life is High.** This results from a mix of people; mix of housing; character and safety of residential areas; walkability and access to activity in park and centers, downtown and mountains.
- **Neighborhood Center functions well and is beloved.** Take care in considering changes. People appreciate the current look and feel of the center as well as easy access to a range of retail, commercial and medical uses in the area.
- **Mixed Views on New Housing and Density** Some neighborhood residents have concerns about adding too much housing on the city's site that is "too big" and could negatively impact traffic, parking, services, and visual character. Conversely, others see the area as an ideal location to add density in order to address critical housing needs in an innovative and attractive way.
- **Recreation, Open and Green Spaces** – People LOVE North Boulder Park but as the area changes, other green and open spaces will be important for connections and places to gather. Changes for flood mitigation should be carefully considered.
- **Access and Mobility Hub** - People appreciate the current ability to walk, bike, take transit and drive. There are concerns for more traffic and parking. People suggest improvements for safety, ease of moving through the area with or without a car, and to promote all-mode mobility.
- **Redevelopment on the city site needs to be innovative and thoughtful.** People want redevelopment to fit in, support the neighborhood center, add value and have good public spaces. They want housing that helps meet affordability goals and provides housing that is most needed. They also want open spaces, welcoming places to gather and a little retail along with the city service hub.

The [full report on the series of workshops](#) is available on the Alpine-Balsam website.

Phase 4 – Area Plan Options (June - August 2019)

During this phase of engagement, the purposes of engagement focused on collecting feedback on draft plan components including land use options, connections plan, and access and mobility strategy as well as identify common ground in divergent views in the community in order to inform development of a draft plan. Engagement venues included four open houses (approximately 180 attendees), two walking tours (approximately 50 attendees), an open online feedback form (115 respondents), and a neighborhood information session (approximately 100 attendees). The materials from the in-person events were available online and people who could not participate in person were encouraged to complete a questionnaire on the BeHeardBoulder platform. **Total Participants: ~350**

Key takeaways:

- There was consistent and strong support for any new housing developed in the area to be affordable housing.
- With the exception of those suggesting very limited development, many see the Alpine-Balsam as a great place to add housing due to its proximity to downtown, transit, shops, etc.
- Community members expressed interest in the county locating at Alpine Balsam as long as a greater amount of affordable housing could be achieved at the Iris and Broadway site. Some think Alpine-Balsam is a better location for housing due to closer proximity to downtown, transit, retail, park, etc. than at Iris and Broadway. Others point to Alpine-Balsam as having better transit access for those seeking services and that Iris may be better suited for housing.
- Feedback about land use in the area around the site reflects predominant preference for mixed use that would maintain some commercial uses and emphasize the ability to add housing as well.
- Community members expressed a range of views about appropriate transitions between new development or redevelopment on the site and in the area – some expressing preference for very limited development over 3 stories, others expressing preferences for more urban mixed use development in the area that could be 3-4 stories, expressly to add housing and to add activity in the area.
- There were also a range of views about access and mobility. Many think the Alpine-Balsam area is a great place to apply advanced mobility strategy due to walkability and access to transit. We also heard concern about the impact of new traffic and concern that reduced parking and TDM won't adequately address the need.

The [full report describing engagement on Area Plan Options](#) is available on the project website.