



# Alpine-Balsam

## What We Heard

*Phase 2: September - October 2018*

### Phase 2: Share Site Scenarios

This phase of community engagement aligned with phase 2 of the area planning work. The goal was to share draft site scenarios and get feedback on key policy choices.

We sought to achieve four things during this phase 2 of engagement:

- Communicate what was heard in Phase 1 and how it will inform Phase 2
- Communicate ways to provide feedback on scenarios and analysis
- Share draft site scenarios that illustrate trade-offs that will need to be made related to redevelopment of the city-owned property
- Share initial analysis for review and feedback

Engagement opportunities are described below and included:

- Focus group (Sept. 12, 2018)
- ULI Salon (Sept. 26, 2018)
- Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop (Oct. 25, 2018)
- Community Workshop (Oct. 29, 2018)
- Online Poll on Tradeoffs (Oct. 10 – Nov. 8, 2018)

### Focus group

City staff hosted a focus group of community members from traditionally underrepresented communities to discuss opportunities at Alpine-Balsam and learn how we might best communicate about and structure engagement events to be welcoming and compelling.

Participants in the focus group provided the following feedback on what they would like the city to incorporate into public engagement events:

- Facilitators and speakers that represent the wider community
- Translated materials
- Childcare
- Venue space that is familiar to the community
- Clear communication on what input is being sought and how that input will be used

### ULI Salon

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) hosted a "What's the Prognosis Salon" at the Museum of Boulder from 5pm-8pm. Jim Robertson presented on where the city is in the planning process,

including draft site scenarios. Through ULI's panel of speakers, this salon explored future options for Alpine-Balsam redevelopment. An estimated 75 people were in attendance.

The panel was comprised of three ULI members, who provided best practices from similar experiences in public-private partnerships, hospital site redevelopment, housing, and community engagement, while offering feedback on highest and best uses. Doug Elenowitz, of Trailbreak Partners, compared Alpine-Balsam to the redevelopment of St. Anthony's in the Sloan's Lake neighborhood. This was a private development that included apartments, retail, cinema, affordable housing, adaptive use and green infrastructure. Mark Tompkins of Strae Advisors presented options for public-private partnerships. Shannon Cox Baker of Urban Ventures discussed density at the Alpine-Balsam site and encouraged the city to explore multiple sites around Boulder to achieve its complex program.

## **Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop**

### *Introduction*

City staff designated which boards and commissions should be represented; the boards and commissions chose which members to send. These liaisons were invited to a Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop for Oct. 25, 2018.

- Art Figel, Nikhil Mankekar – Human Relations Commission
- Tila Duhaime, Jennifer Nicoll – Transportation Advisory Board
- Masyn Moyer, Jacques Juilland – Housing Advisory Board
- Erica Joos, Kathleen McCormick – Arts Commission
- Jim Baily, Rory Bilocerkowycz – Design Advisory Board
- Pamela Yugar, Tom Klenow – Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Jerry Shapins – Downtown Management Commission

### *Format*

- Session lasted 2.5 hours
- Presentation, review and explanation of five conceptual scenarios and policy choices
- Discussion, questions, polling
- Feedback about the workshop format

### *Key Themes*

In general, several themes emerged during the focused discussions. The city was encouraged to get “closer” to the Vision Plan, which was viewed as more inspiring, and look to other key city plans, like the Transportation Master Plan, the Community Cultural Plan, and the Perceptions Study on Inclusivity and Diversity as guidelines for what the Boulder community wants.

- Mix of Uses:
  - While these scenarios show limited retail, this group advocated for more retail and the possibility of vertical mixed use in at least some buildings, whether they be housing or civic facilities.
  - There appeared to be some concern that ground-floor space in civic facilities would be uninspiring or perhaps wasted as cubicles for staff performing routine daily tasks.

- Access, Mobility and Parking
  - The parking questions also elicited a strong response, with one participant asking why the city is modeling something that does not meet the TMP goals.
  
- Flood Mitigation
  - A brief conversation occurred about the value of communicating the multiple benefits of flood mitigation, given Boulder’s practice of using greenways and detention areas for a variety of desired activities when they are not needed to hold or convey floodwaters.
  - The group reacted to the fact that in the scenarios, the greenway is currently shown to the north, adjacent to more upscale residential. Some suggested it be moved perhaps to the center or a different part of the parcel, to ensure more inclusive enjoyment.
  
- Building Height, Intensity and Scale of Development
  - Many of the participants encouraged the city to be bolder around future uses in its exploration of the Alpine-Balsam site. While poll data was split on height, some clearly wanted the city explore options higher than 55 feet. “People who are afraid of tall buildings are not afraid of tall beautiful cathedrals,” one board member said.
  - There was some conversation about why the city feels it should deconstruct the old hospital; at least one participant wanted to understand more about that and referenced hospitals in other cities that have been converted to micro-housing units.
  
- Boulder County
  - Participants said they understood the potential value of involving county, but at least a few were concerned that would make the project even more complex.

### *Feedback about process and workshop design*

Participants offered good suggestions regarding the workshop design, presentation of the materials and the polling questions that were incorporated into the design for the community workshop.

## **Community Workshop**

A community workshop on Oct. 29, 2018, focused on the trade-offs of emphasizing one priority over another. Approximately 65 people attended. Childcare, Spanish interpretation and Spanish materials were available at the event. The workshop lasted three hours and included:

- 30-minute Open House with background and context posters
- 50-minute presentation by Jim Robertson and Jean Gatza welcoming people to the process, explanation of what an exciting opportunity the redevelopment of the Alpine-Balsam area provides, describing the key trade-offs that must be made, and an overview of the five conceptual scenarios that illustrated how choices in one policy area impact options in other policy areas
- 65-minute “Gallery Walk” through posters about the five scenarios

- 25-minute poll to solicit input in response to the key tradeoffs that must be made at the site (see “Trade-Offs Poll” for additional detail)
- 10-minute closing and thank you to participants.
- Comment forms were available to allow people to provide additional comments.

### *Key Themes*

In general, several themes emerged during the focused discussions.

- Mix of Uses:
  - Overall, participants seemed to understand the trade-offs illustrated in each of the scenarios. Generally, community members were more supportive of the mixes of uses illustrated in the three scenarios that offered a balanced approach.
  - While there was a range of perspectives about how many units, a majority of participants seemed to understand the desire to utilize the Alpine-Balsam site for housing.
  - Individuals responded most positively to concepts that demonstrated a variety of unit types and sizes, consistent with a frequently expressed desire to support affordable options for future residents.
  - Differences became much more pronounced when participants were asked to evaluate higher intensity housing scenarios. Interestingly, negative reactions came both from those who felt the plans did not allow for enough housing and those who were deeply concerned about how an intense level of density would impact the neighborhood.
  - While there was less “buzz” around a desire to consolidate city services, participants were more in favor of the less impactful or moderate civic facilities scenarios than the civic campus concept.
  - Those who are wary of what they believe will be increased use of the area made the point that civic uses would promote more traffic during the day than on nights and weekends. Those who want to increase vibrancy in the area were concerned that civic meeting rooms and offices at the ground level would be less than inspiring and inviting.
  - The possibility of co-locating with Boulder County likewise resulted in mixed responses. Some participants and board members expressed concern that a multi-jurisdictional partnership would over-complicate an already complex project, while others seemed to support continued exploration of some level of county facilities if it would incentivize housing and mixed-use redevelopment at the county-owned Iris complex.
  - Some participants urged the city to include more retail than what was shown in the scenarios, saying it was important to the 15-minute neighborhood concept, would activate what could otherwise be a boring ground level experience and provide opportunities for local gathering and community-building.
- Access, Mobility and Parking
  - While parking has frequently come up as a concern in conversations with nearby residents, there were not a lot of questions about the proposed ‘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 to prevent spillover parking the adjacent neighborhoods.

- There were some murmurs, seemingly in support, for the concept of potentially sharing existing parking facilities, such that daytime users could free up spots for residents returning home in the evenings.
- Some requested additional analysis to further understand the current and projected traffic patterns surrounding the site.
- Several people expressed support for keeping one-way streets north of Balsam.
- Flood Mitigation
  - People were generally supportive of flood detention in North Boulder Park to allow for more development capacity on the Alpine-Balsam site as long as the park remains functional and maintains existing programming.
  - Several participants wanted to know about downstream flood mitigation impacts, and there was general curiosity about Upper Goose Creek Flood Mitigation Planning efforts.
  - Some participants questioned locating the greenway on the northern portion of the site, suggesting the greenway could be used as a design anchor for the entire site, potentially weaving through center. A point was made that this would be a more equitable distribution of what would likely be desirable public space.
- Building Height, Intensity and Scale of Development
  - Group reaction to scenarios that included a variety of building heights and types were generally more positive than those that called for taller buildings across a larger percentage of the site.
  - Of those who were open to taller buildings, many expressed support for having the taller buildings line Broadway with development scaling down on the western half of the site. The “view” was frequently cited as an important asset to preserve in the area.
  - Perspectives were mixed about allowing up to 55 feet buildings across the entire site. Some thought this could be done well and creatively and would help achieve the goals of the site. For others, allowing any, or more than one or two, buildings to be developed at or above 55 feet was a non-starter.
- Future Residents
  - Participants were eager to understand how many additional residents each scenario would support, and how many additional people would be using adjacent facilities and amenities in the neighborhood. There did not seem to be a solid understanding about the amount of traffic and activity the hospital and related medical offices generated when the hospital was at its peak level. The staff team has identified this as potentially useful data for future community conversations.
  - There was also a strong desire for more information about who any potential development would be serving, i.e. who would be living and working here? Seniors? Workforce? Families? Students? City employees?
- Financing
  - Several participants had concerns, or “sticker shock,” when they learned of the preliminary range of cost estimates and questioned the return on investment to redevelop a relatively small part of the city. Others viewed this project as an opportunity that the city cannot pass up regardless of the amount of funding required, indicating this is a long-term community investment.

- The city received a number of requests for more information to compare costs for each scenario.

### *Participant Demographics*

Most of the participants at the phase 2 community workshop were white residents, ranging from their mid-30s to over 65. In the polling exercise, demographic questions were asked, and the vast majority (84 percent) were homeowners. Thirty-nine percent of respondents declined to provide annual household income information, but for those who did, the highest percent (26%) was in \$50,000 to \$99,999; 16 percent chose \$150,000 or more; 11 percent chose \$25,000 to \$49,999; five percent chose \$100,000 to \$149,000; and about one percent chose from less than \$25,000. 82 percent responded that they live in or near the neighborhood now.

More than 517 individuals visited the city's Be Heard Boulder site during this phase of engagement, and 106 completed the trade-off poll. Here is what we know about the respondents:

- While there were participants from all parts of the city, two areas were represented most: Central Boulder – north of Arapahoe (63.2 percent) and North Boulder (18.9 percent).
- 40.4 percent of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54. Another 27.9 percent indicated they were 65 or over, and 26 percent indicated they were between the ages of 55 to 64.
- 92.3 percent indicated they own their home.

Almost a quarter (26.2 percent) of respondents declined to provide annual household income information, but for those who did, the highest percent (28.2) was in \$150,000 or more; 17.5 percent chose \$50,000 to \$99,000; 15.5 percent chose \$100,000 to \$149,000; and 9.7 percent chose from less than \$25,000 to \$49,999.

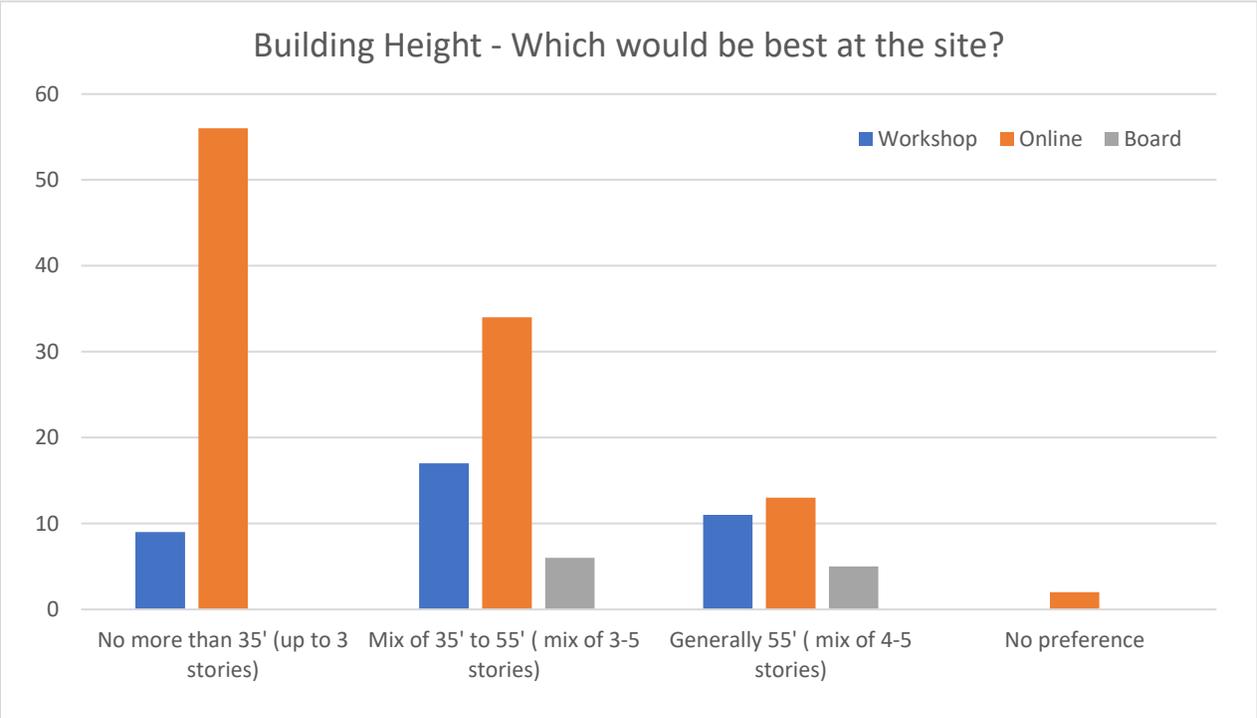
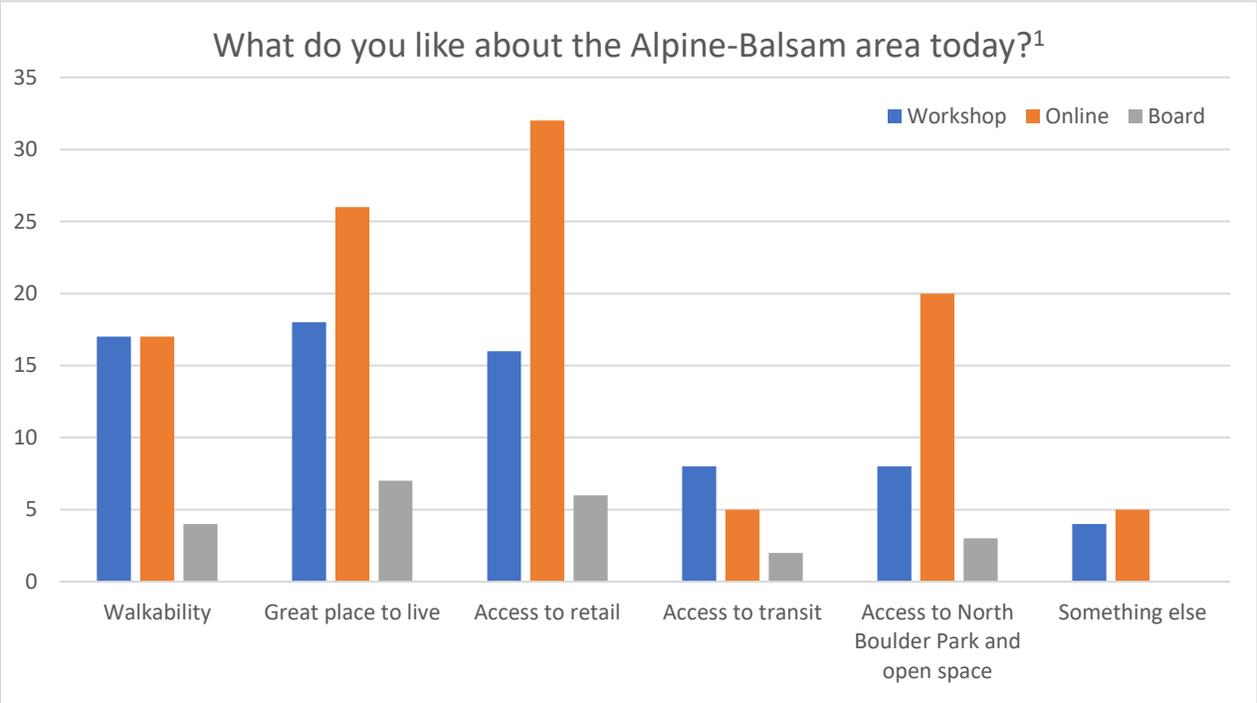
### **In-person and Online Poll on Tradeoffs**

At the Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop and the Community workshop, attendees were invited to weigh in on nine questions regarding key policy issues: building height, building intensity, civic facilities, housing, and flood mitigation. The poll was subsequently offered on the city's online engagement platform, <http://www.beheardboulder.org>

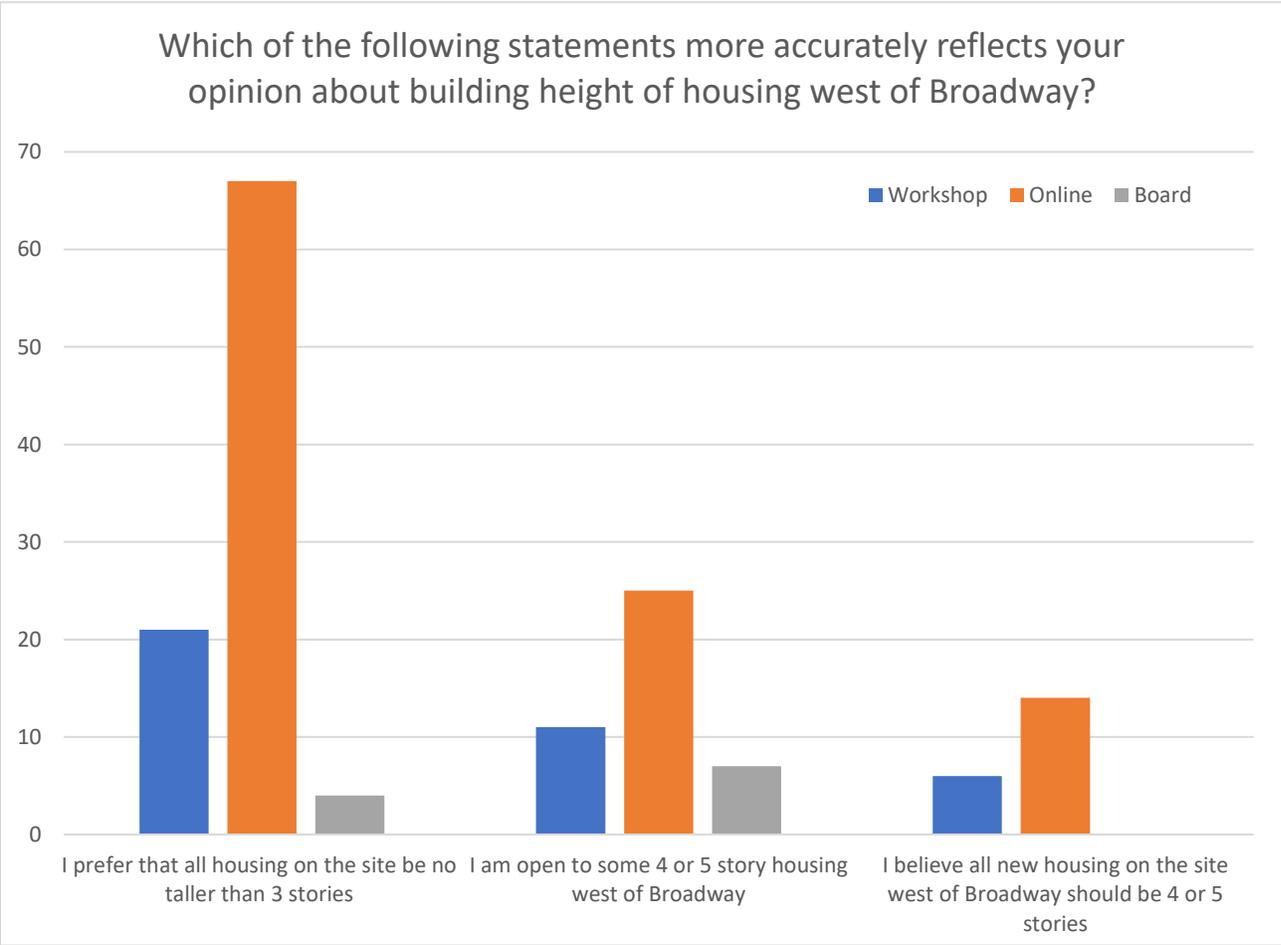
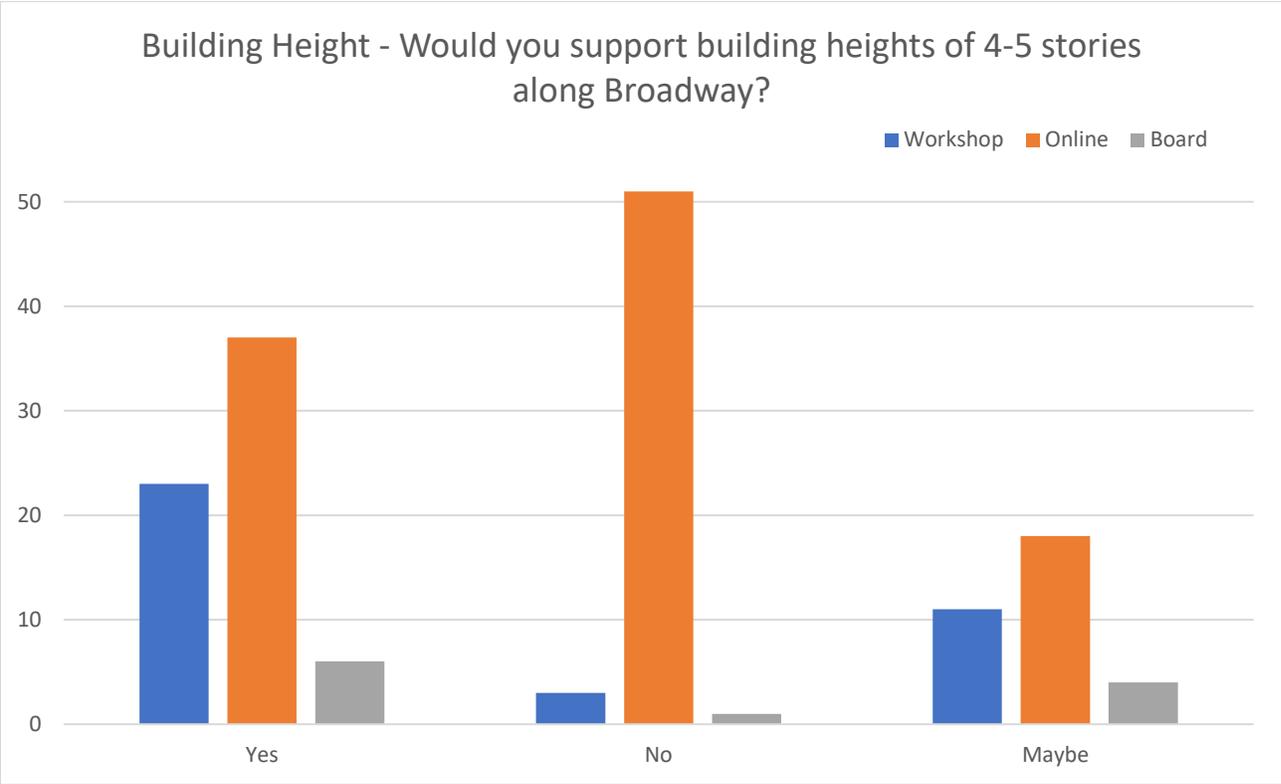


At the Community Workshop, some people left before the polling process began; 39 people participated. For each of these exercises, it should be acknowledged that these are complex issues and do not lend themselves to easy clear-cut choices. People were asked to choose a response that most closely fits their preferences. Deeper understanding of the balance of the trade-offs was part of the in-person events but difficult to capture from the online responses.

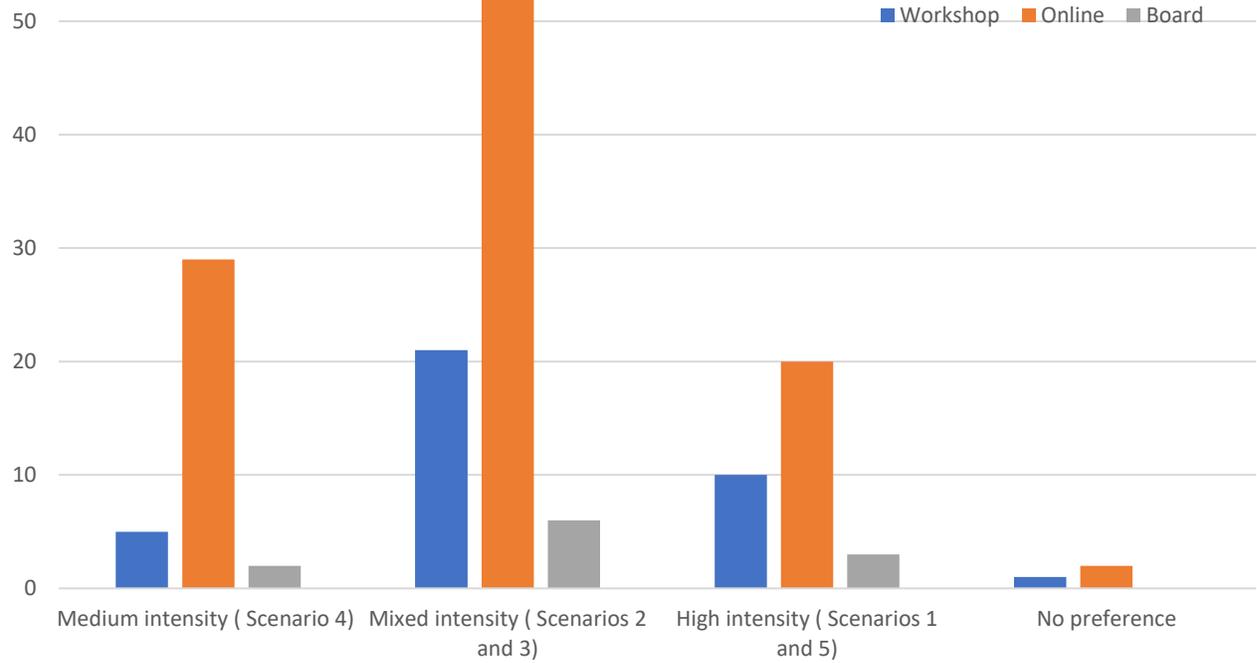
In the summary of responses below, note the number of participants selecting each response (not percentage) is indicated on the left side. Also, several questions were slightly revised in each of the workshops and the online exercise and those responses are shown separately.



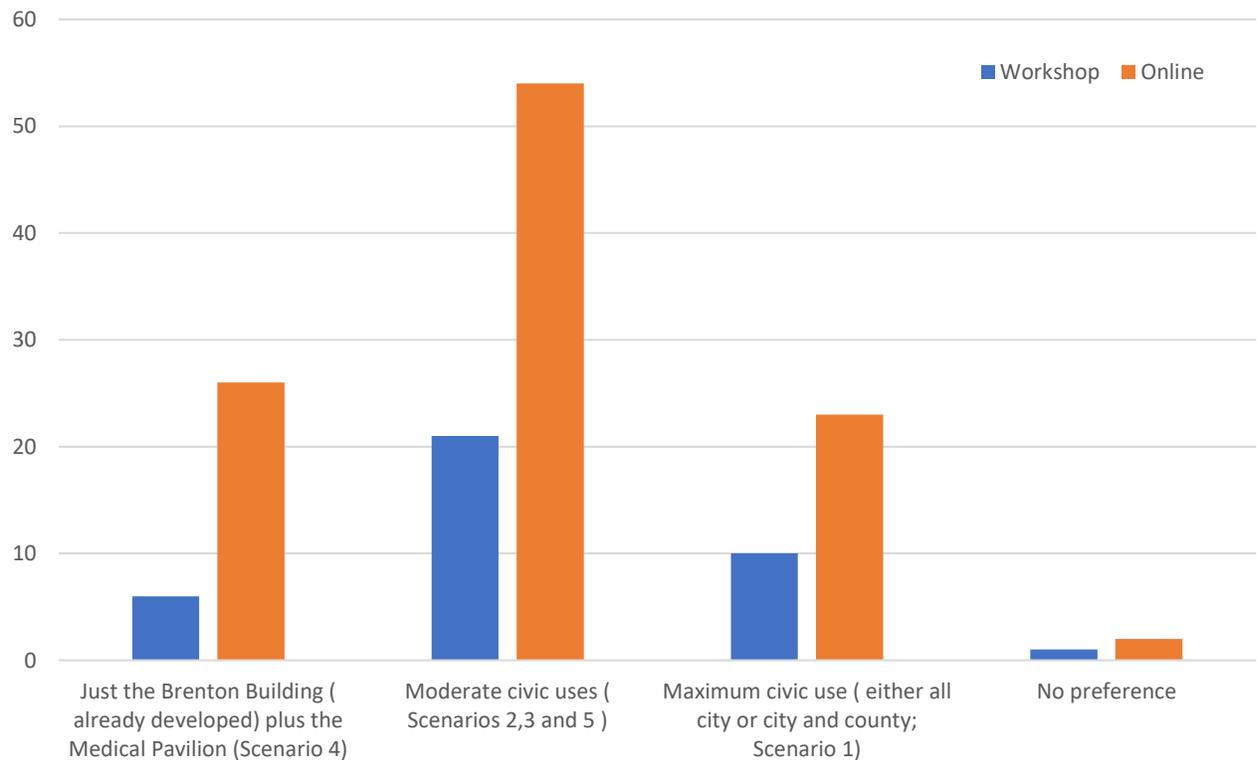
<sup>1</sup> For the Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop and Community Workshop, this question was phrased as "Before we get started on the tough choices, what do you like best about the Alpine-Balsam area today? You may choose up to two responses." The Boards were not offered the "Something else" option

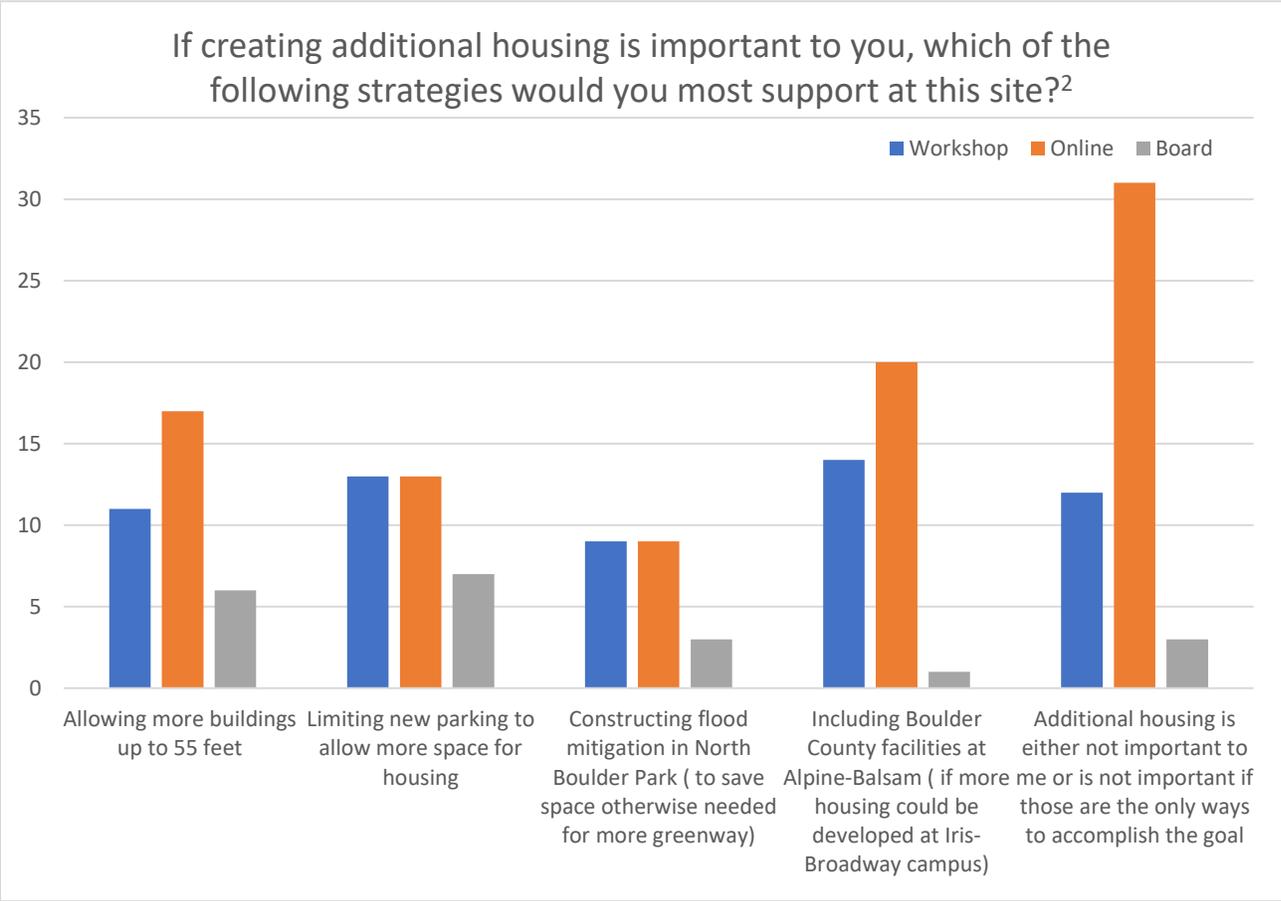
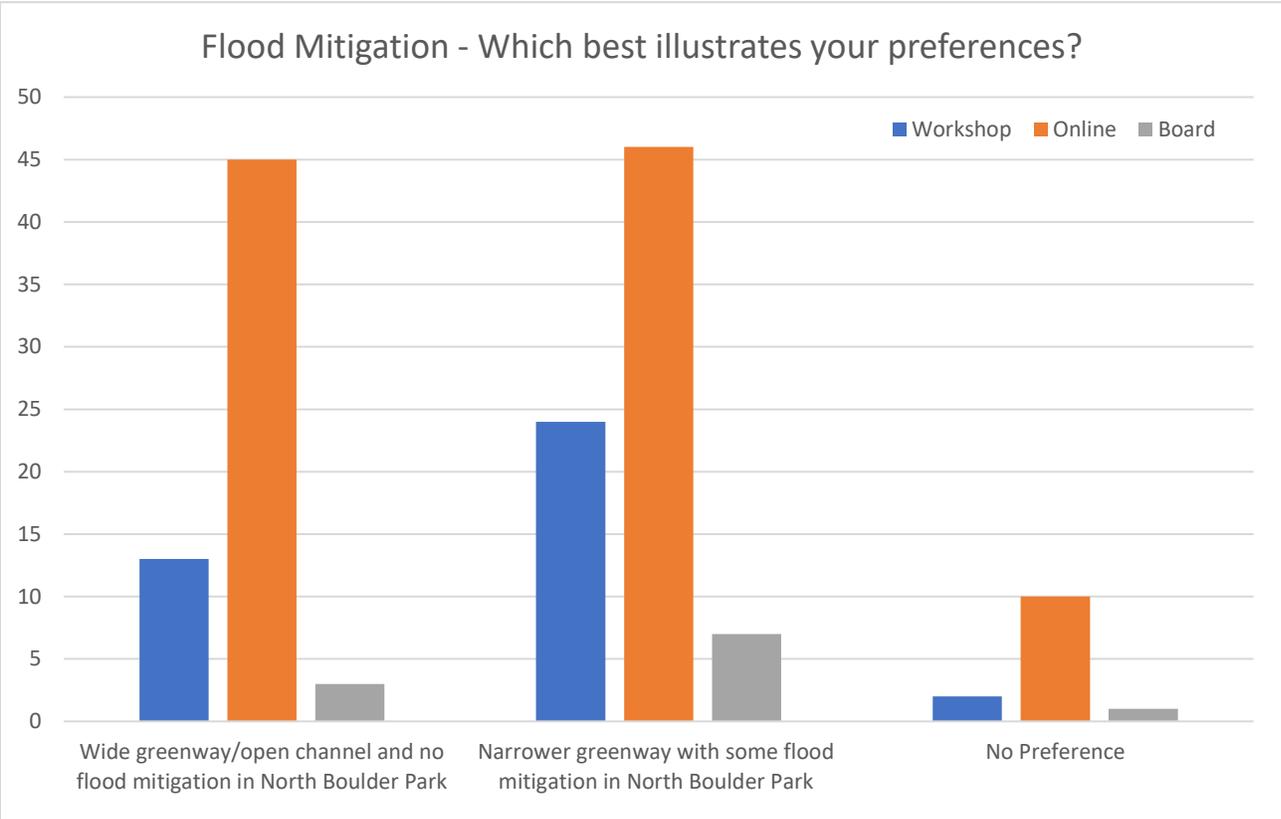


### Built Form/Intensity - Which would be best at this site?



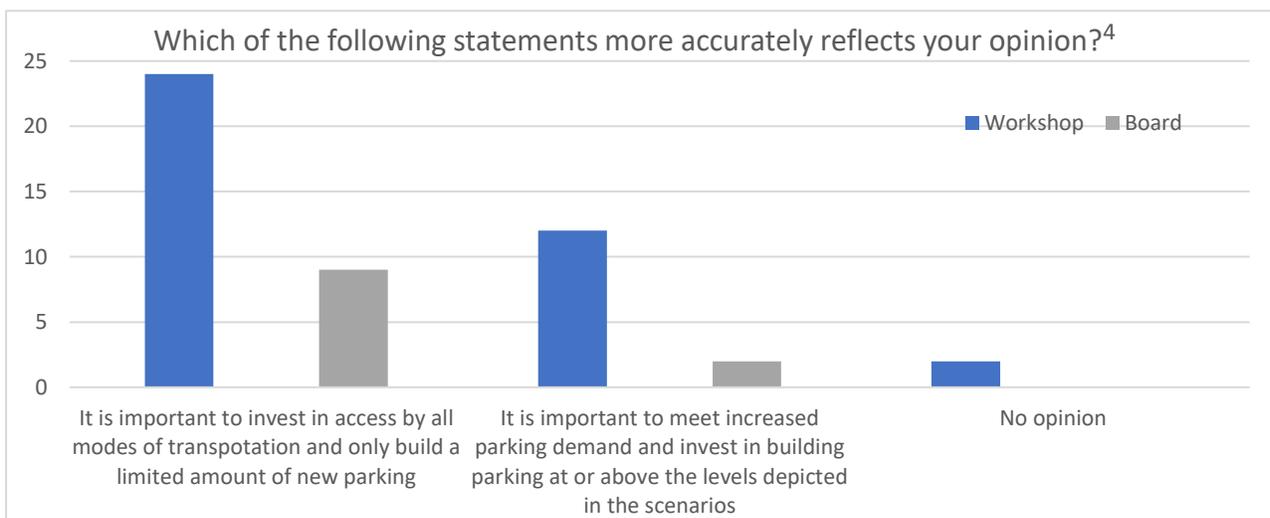
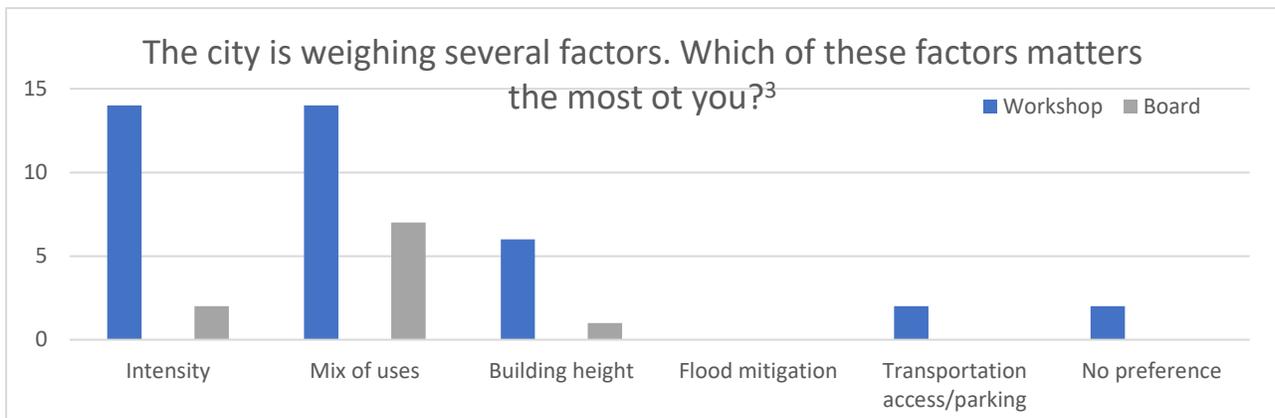
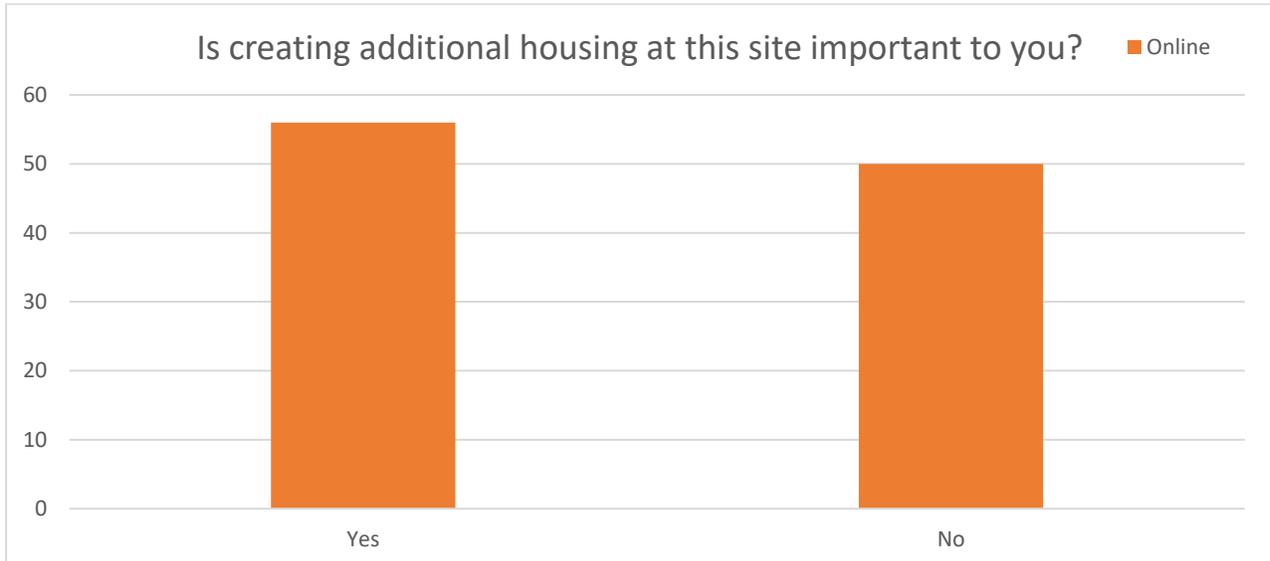
### Understanding both the need to relocate civic facilities and that this choice could impact the amount of housing, which level of civic use do you prefer?





<sup>2</sup> At the Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop, this question was phrased, "If creating additional housing is important to you, which of the following strategies would be most appropriate for the Boulder community? (You may choose up to two responses)." For the first option, it was phrased "allowing taller buildings."

Following the Community Workshop, feedback from participants led to the addition of the following question on housing to the online poll on BeHeard Boulder, and the removal of the last two questions on factors and parking/access.



<sup>3</sup> At the Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop, this question was phrased, "Of the factors the city is weighing, which one is most important to you?"

<sup>4</sup>At the Joint Board Workshop, the first option was phrased, "This area is well located for transit, walking, and biking. It is important to invest in access by all modes of transportation and only build a limited amount of new parking."

## **Next Steps**

In Phase 3 of engagement, the objective is to learn about the community's preferences related to land use goals, access, mobility, and circulation to inform selection from among draft options for the Alpine-Balsam Area. Currently, we are conducting a series of ten small group workshops, including for property-owners within the area plan boundaries, a Spanish-Speaking workshop, and another joint boards and commissions workshop.