

**South Boulder Listening Session**  
**November 31, 2015**  
**Meeting Summary and Discussion Notes**

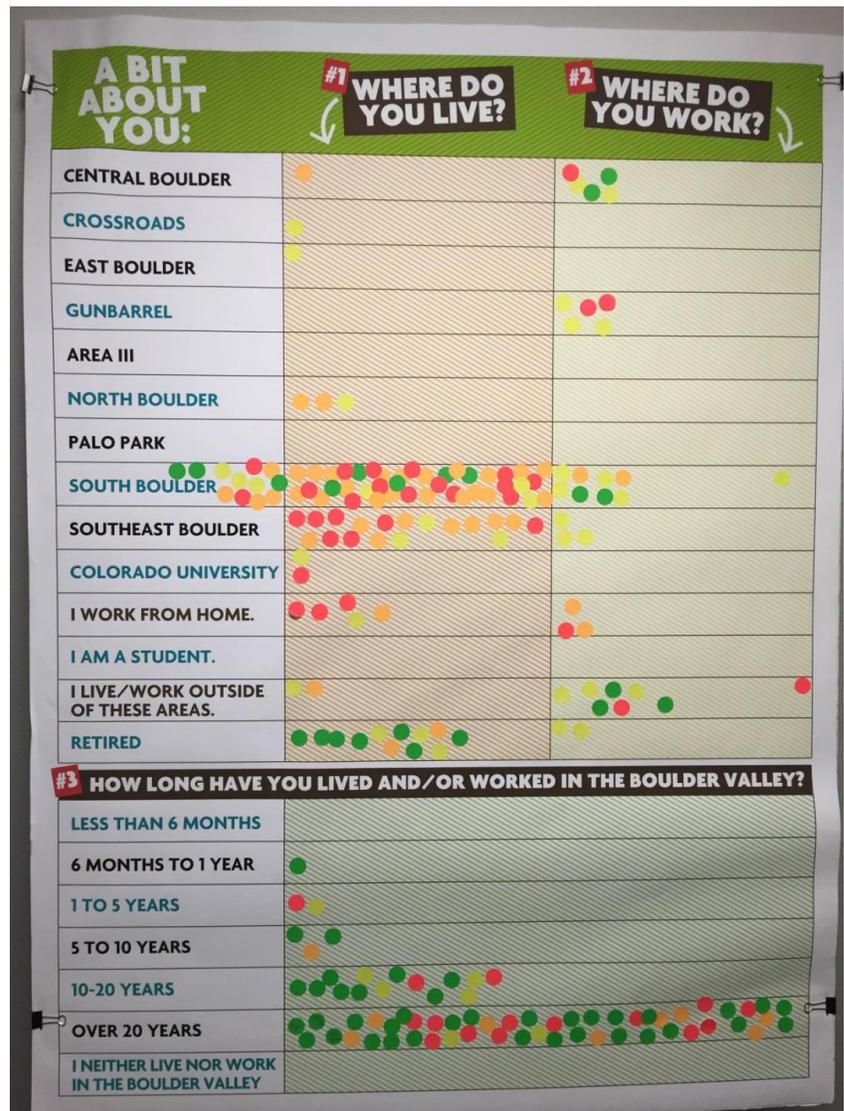


The purpose of the local community “listening sessions” is to invite community members to share concerns, questions, and ideas related to the update of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) as well as city (and county) services and programs. Sessions have been scheduled for six locations around the community and include an open house with a variety of information on a range of city programs and projects from many departments. These are followed by a short BVCP presentation with round table discussions following.

In the **round table discussions**, people were asked to suggest key topics for longer group discussion. The longer discussion topics selected are listed below in bold with summary notes.

**Suggested topics for discussion in the South Boulder meeting:**

Transportation, Access, CU South, Neighborhood Voice, Complete Neighborhood Character, Recreational Impact on Trails, Affordable Housing, Occupancy Limits, Density, Energy / Carbon Goals, Height Limits, Traffic, Neighborhood-Serving Retail, Environmental Issues, Compatible Development, Neighborhood Plans, Aging in Place, Health & Safety, Commercial Development, Growth Control, and Water.



Topic	Summary Notes South Boulder Group Discussions
<b>Densification, Infill, Height Limits</b>	
Occupancy	Legalize roommates. Ordinance - noise, trash, parking
Density's Impact on Transportation	Transportation without car - medium density along Broadway; Crossings/ intersections - impact on transportation with increased density.
Energy	Open Space and height limit = rock and hard place. Energy goals commute, traffic worse with higher density. Tough issue.
Students Occupancy Limit	Surrounded by students - some good, some bad vandalism. Moved to Martin Acres for diversity - age, background. Bought house for space - easier w transient population. Diversity, space = good thing about South Boulder. Number of people not an issue until negative impact - crime, parking.
Affordability	Sustainability, affordability, access. Some density in the right place is a good thing. Access to transit, walkability. Affordability = diversity = valuable. What kind of town do we want to be?
Infill (Neighborhood)	2 story addition converted to rental housing. Against infill. Height of building so close to property. Took away.
Zoning	Zoning changes; CU students over-occupancy - parking / congestion
Traffic	Zoning / development without review process. School traffic get worse each year - car heavy traffic around schools.
Rate of Growth	Catch up w Boulder - no longer slow growth. Where / how do we grow? Traffic / congestion; Lucky's / Walgreens - more congestion
Change with Growth	I have watched Boulder change - got better mid-1990s - increased commercial sf. Down: noise, pollution. Boulder's idea of sustainability = growth. Boulder is at our max - slow down or trash it (\$). Shopping center parking lot FULL. CU South = parking problems. No development needed. Add ADU, little impact (some places only). Subdivide large properties. CC has not listened to South Boulder. Densification of Broadway to multi-family = defeated. Will come up again, no value. Broadway Baseline to Table Mesa works well. Show me what good comes out of density? Affordability is pushing people out. Stop property taxes for 70+ yrs old. Would like to stay. Cost of living going up 3 xs as fast. Would like children to return. Jobs-housing balance - Boulder controlled by developers.
Sustainability	Living within our means - energy, consumption. Sustainable city does not equal single family; transportation - car-oriented culture (cheap gas); Keep views, affordability. Density is good.
Be Kind (Restorative Justice)	Students generalized / we should help them learn to be good neighbors. Legacy - 138 years of students in their city. Restorative Justice - neighbor communication, be Kind. Age divide, close doors; be open-minded. Boulder right now is not sustainable. Jobs in center = commute.
Students	CU should provide housing for students relieve pressure from infill.
CU's Lack of Leadership	Many administrators live in Boulder and don't understand the impact of student housing. Bandwidth issue. Neighborhood relations. CU should not accept high # of students.
Schools	South Hills - schools; city turns blind eye.



Neighborhood Planning / Density	
CU Growth	There is a lot left to happen in campuses in the state. Grand Junction; state system - spread the wealth so pressure isn't all CU, DU. Difficult - CU not as much state funding. CU Boulder - Biggest contributor to increased traffic.
Job Growth	Is something comp plan can direct, doesn't now.
CU South Flood Issues	FEMA - looking at CU South situation, toured SB creek watershed, met with city staff, high hazard potential, challenging situation.
Densification of Broadway to South of town	Proposed years ago - redevelop Broadway to increase density, transit. Houses are 1 level and change to higher would change character, block views, increase traffic. Broadway, wonderful. Can support SKIP. Need enough people - enable public transportation.
Density	Afraid of redevelopment like Depot, Peloton, Like benefits but data shows densification increases costs - understand idea of increased density to support transit.
Accessibility	Martin Acres - few ways in and out / access issues so difficult to add density/ Kept property values reasonable.
South Boulder / Parks	Character - walk to park, play in playground. Concerned for noise, safety, people might not be able to do what they do now. No open space in dense buildings.
Aesthetics	"Ugly" architecture - more than aesthetics - needs services.
Neighborhood Plans	Needed in comp plan - way to have neighborhoods have input on what happens.
Neighborhood Plans	Martin Acres - planning effort and funding - not enough. Put neighborhood plans in comp plan. Recommend section in Plan - some neighborhoods are more organized than other and need a voice in planning.
Parks	Critical to neighborhoods - viability; Keep SF options - not everyone want to live in a high rise.
High Rise Buildings	Don't like the idea of so much high rise.

Affordability	Approval of redevelopment = population increase; works in some places to limit - if take in too many jobs, get too many people.
Density	Not opposed to density; just needs to be in certain places - Preserve areas that have lower building character; keep density downtown. Taper down as move out.
Height	55' limit - keep! Opposed to eliminating limit. Environmental argument - goes higher - doesn't buy it. These are things we voted for - don't change. Height exemptions are based on zoning, but not over 55
Density / Height Balance can be OK	Don't equate density and height. Enforce codes. Coops or other occupancy changes can be ok. Keep quality and neighborhood feeling. Benefits to inter-generational living. On the Hill - needs to be carefully considered.
Occupancy and Behavior	Can be issues with behaviors. High occupancy has impacts on houses. Neighbors - quality of life affected.
Neighborhood Character	Like to see city integrate all goals in planning. Increase density - How does this jive with climate action goals? Carbon emissions goals? There are some contradictory goals with quality of life.
Neighborhood-service Retail	Plan - enforce real neighborhood-serving retail. Need a way to enforce. Options - look at sites - Land use changes; zoning rules; Neighborhood-service retail - good in S. Boulder - Need certain types that create vibrant places in Table Mesa. Have services people need. Great to be walkable. Some drive but short trips.
Neighborhood Groups and Plans	Most neighborhoods don't have organized groups, Martin Acres is organized. Majestic Heights, Table Mesa, need more organization.
<b>CU South / Health, Safety and Flood Issues</b>	
Flood Issues	South Boulder Creek - bad flooding near HWY 36. West Valley overflows area. Senior housing was single largest disaster; people displaced (14 AC); 2 year process to construct the berm a concern - option D. Site should be used for detention behind the berm (water storage). Basements filled up with water, many still pumping from high water table. Flood can happen at any time, co needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Engineering decisions in past 50 years have made flooding worse. Hwy 36 is one of the projects on this list. Most people outside Boulder don't know how bad the flood was in 2013. It was a life and death issue, many lost everything. 3,360 people live in this area (South Boulder) flood plain. Needs to be addressed because redevelopment doesn't happen in a flood zone. Plan was raised in 2012 but wasn't acted on. Need to see progress. People talk about this as a dollars and sense issue, but it's a life or death issue. Changes to 36 will act as a dam and hold more water - could result in a flash flood worse than 2013 because structure not designed to hold that much water.
Health and Safety	Protect the neighborhoods from flooding; First-responders are endangered by having to respond to calls.
Grant and Land Conservation	1st grant written in 1996 to address flood issues and we are now back where we started. Floodplain is the 3rd largest in the front range. Land can be used for conservation and recreation when not flooded. Several efforts, plans for addressing this but there has been no action.

Transportation	If developed, would create traffic impacts. Redevelop plan would dead-end at the site. Site access is an issue; vehicular circulation; needs to be addressed in conjunction with any redevelopment.
Other uses for the property	60% of the CU South property would not be needed for flood mitigation, so need to talk about how it might be used. CU can develop as they wish and don't need to follow city regulations. City provides services to the property. Negotiations will need to be a part of this process. Boulder trade flood mitigation for the right to develop remainder of the property. Some would prefer to see no development on the site.
CU	Understandable why CU would want to develop the property. Would like to see CU acknowledge that flood mitigation is a life or death issue.
Funding	City was blocked from benefiting from a recent grant opportunity for \$1 billion because didn't have a way of spending the money within 2 years. Longmont is participating.
<b>Flood</b>	
Flood Issues	CU gravel pits - South Boulder Creek, \$16M lowered topography - flood plain, original ground. Berm east/west; love study - hundreds of homes downstream retention pond.
CU	CU property is reclassified for flood retention.
Fraser Meadows	Fraser Meadows - retention on west side unable to protect itself.
Speed Up Mitigation	Discouraged to hear 2016 is the start of the process. Need to expedite CU agreement. If there is a flood tomorrow, and people die, city would move quickly to prevent that. Think ahead and expedite resolution of berm before a tragedy happens.
Awareness of Flood Risks	How many people in this room know risks? It is difficult to be in the flood plain and have no one understand. Need people to understand the problem. Facilitate better and more far reaching understanding of flood risks.
Priority	City priority - life and limb demands highest priority. Move quickly. What would move council? Governor - \$1M for projects. Would hate to have to explain why the city didn't move fast enough. The city could be sued - negligence.
Negotiations	Is CU the reason it is being held up? The city and university are talking all the time. What about the state?
Make a Move	Dec. 15 - Joint PB/CC - make a move. 20 years ago; love study; 10 years more detailed mitigation alternatives. How have houses been affected? People didn't know. Taxes down? Having trouble selling. Gilbert White - central Boulder / big picture/ preliminary DELFT plan.
CU Development	This is a complicated issue - planning decisions made a long time ago. Not 1/4 acre should go to anything other than mitigation. Historic flood plain - only use this property for mitigation. "Don't keep playing these games". Use the land for NTS - soaks up CO2; high climate change mitigation potential. Ian McHarg - Design with Nature; work with nature when developing. There are properties that are great for environment / development. CU possibly worst for development. 50 acres that could be developed – re-contoured to maximize.

<b>Neighborhood-Serving Retail</b>	
Neighborhood-Service Retail	S. Boulder cut off - some people going to Louisville because Broadway and 28th are too congested. Land use and zoning should (where appropriate) be more stringent - e.g. Bookstores, auto parts store, music supply, e.g. should allow large scale office uses in neighborhood-service retail zones. For it to work, need the rooftops to support the retail.
Retail Follows Rooftops	Cluster it; not spread out - there is room for redevelopment. More retail respectful of neighborhood character - not N. Boulder (clusters of apts); 1950s, 60's ranch style. Vacancies at TM - good opportunities. How can a neighborhood support retail and make it viable? Local organizers jump start it. Better connections to neighborhood-service retail without a car.
<b>Density / Growth</b>	
No Increased Density	Protect views, character of neighborhood which comes from green lawns, low traffic; but don't want stagnation.
Housing	Building new housing facilities is never enough. Traffic horrible. Boulder Junction isn't enough. Isn't solving the problem.
Affordability	IF you can't afford it, you can't afford it.
Control Height, Zoning, Density	Public input needs to be given more weight. If we limit height, no one can move in. Growth only happens with scrape-offs; special districts i.e. Downtown BID can control some aspects of growth. Neighborhoods could establish their own districts. Don't change zoning or height restrictions and make sure we enforce those rules.
Commercial Space	Don't build more commercial space. Encourages too much in-commuting.
Higher Density for Seniors / or Certain Areas Appropriate	Boulder has quality infrastructure. Density needs to increase if we want good transit. Would help with in-commuting. Senior housing affordability is a concern. It's not healthy if we assume only wealthy seniors can live here.
Transportation	Challenge is outlying areas area are not dense themselves, they're spread out. Density doesn't mean cars / traffic goes away. Some studies include fallacies.
Change	Boulder is going to change. It HAS changed over years. Can't stop what will happen but HOW change happen is important so that we're environmentally sustainable (transportation issues should be solved at the same time.)
No Growth	Town will not stagnate. Downtown is vibrant. High rises are destroying neighborhood character in S. Boulder.
Good examples of Density	There are good examples of density that you couldn't build today. Design solutions can help make density work.
Growth and Affordability	Growth doesn't necessarily make housing more affordable. We're past carrying capacity. We're not unique - Aspen, Crested Butte.
CU South	Get ahead of the curve. Fight development; protect Open space.
Language is important	Homeostasis is a concept in nature. Limiting growth doesn't mean stagnation. No vacancies @ hotel = turn people away. That's ok.

City Council	Influencing CC. How do we influence decision-makers? It's hard to turn the direction even with all the public meetings and hearing and all the opportunities - you have to show up and email them. Citizen input should carry more weight into the process. Helps to organize, show up with t-shirts in neighborhoods.
Space for new people and senior housing	Allow closer connections, safety (snow and ice) is better if everyone's closer - plus that saves room for everyone else if single-family houses are freed up.
CC Meetings	City Council should end meetings at 10 pm. They also need stricter code of ethics to address conflicts of interest. CC members should be elected by districts, not at large.
New Fire House	Could be co-located with library - but that may not be best location. Neighbors would like to be involved.
<b>Transportation</b>	
Transportation	Making sound decisions makes sense. Need to go where we need to go.
Traffic	Daily stress of traveling
Eco-Pass	Equity in program - make barrier lower. Move to community eco-pass; Neighborhood cannot qualify due to students. Cost too much to use eco-pass. Want a pass, would use it a lot. Eco-pass is useless until fix RTD. Free bus system.
Transit	Bus does not work for all areas, needs to work for more people. Empty buses a concern, consider shuttle vans; Free buses - a city in NW has - SKIP not reliable on weekends. Losing bus stops on Broadway.
Traffic Woes	Poor timing of traffic signals. City policy wrong (decrease auto). Reduce traffic, if we could then maybe we would be able to accommodate more housing (affordable).
New Innovations	Look for innovation. Shared cars - have the technology. Boulder is not that big - circulating vans could work. Need to live our values - by using shared cars, in contrast seems all Fairview kids have own cars.
In-commuters Growth	Get people into / out of city (65 K commuters); need to work with surrounding communities. Change the type of development from commercial to residential where appropriate. Assumption that people will live close to job does not happen.
FastTracks	Took our money but no rail. Do not trust RTD. What is relationship of CC to RTD?
Bikes	Support the great bike system. We could all do more walking as well.
Auto	City's goals are totally wrong - fix the traffic. Traffic in S. Boulder is related to schools. Have to get kids to schools some other way.
<b>Middle Class Affordability</b>	
Future	Middle class families are our future. Great schools, parks and rec, OSMP, transportation draw families. But they can't afford to live here! How do you make space for next generation?
Affordability Question	People who work in Boulder can't afford to live here. Not same as subsidized affordable housing. How do we make it affordable while maintaining character?? Question!

Solutions	Possible solutions: * City must open OSMP vault [neighborhoods fight changes in density]. *Increase Density *Tax structures that enable owners to sell below market rate to reap tax benefits. * Rezoning of commercial or industrial of row density residential (small homes / small lots) * Entry-level homes can help bridge gap to build bridge into housing (from subsidized).
Multi-Family	What multi-family options are there between high rises (like 4 plex on 2 house lot). Explain differences to community, between high rises and 4 plex. Apts don't have to suck for families! How do you do high density without traffic? Really address quality and family multi-housing.
Build Out	Two major challenges: Boulder is built out, is desirable to live here. Solution: improve transit in / out of city. Not buses, but light rail. Then folks don't have to live in Boulder. WE could manage infinite parking at every commercial shopping center. We can do bikes better. Point of disagreement – Some say city is built out... Others say NO - lots of space for infill.
Transportation Options	To dramatically change character of Boulder, transportation isn't the answer. Example cities: university towns in other countries. Freiberg, Germany, Groningen, Netherlands
CU South	CU South should be single-family housing
Bus	Bus is expensive!! Not convenient to multiple trips and packages.

### Comments from Written and Online Comment Sheets

**Do you have any ideas, concerns or questions about the area where you live or work? Let us know! If your comments regard specific areas of town, please indicate that clearly.**

- South Boulder, Table Mesa Neighborhood. Many (or all) of the roads in South Boulder are too big. For example, Broadway south of Table Mesa is one lane too wide in each direction. If you consider the frontage roads along Broadway in South Boulder (Baseline to South end of town) the street width is probably almost as wide as most of I70. The comp plan should set a path to getting rid of the frontage roads and reducing Broadway by a lane in each direction and using the land for better buildings and pedestrian paths. Table Mesa west of Broadway could also be shrunk by a lane in each direction. Instead of a huge road we could have a natural, creek side park in the same location and still have plenty of drive lanes to service the neighborhood and NCAR. Lehigh Street should get a Mapleton style tree lawn down the middle. With a bike path. All of the collector (neighborhood streets) have awful attached sidewalks and are too wide. Shrink the drive lanes and fix the sidewalks with tree lawns. The Table Mesa Shopping center is an enormous missed opportunity. Restoring the street grid and redeveloping the shopping center as a true neighborhood center should be the long term objective. Imagine no parking lots, 3 story buildings with restaurants and neighborhood services at the ground floor. There could be a huge open plaza with London Plane trees and outdoor restaurants (imagine the South of France). The views of the flatirons would be amazing. The Broadway bike path is in serious need of attention. The quality of the concrete is poor and the utilization of roadways north of Table Mesa detracts from the experience and safety of the path. A grade separated crossing (underpass) of Table Mesa at Broadway should be a top priority. There are too many driveways into the Table Mesa shopping center along Broadway and there locations are not safe for pedestrians.

- I attended the South Boulder listening session. I want to make additional comments, based on the discussion at my table, above those I made at the session that I didn't have time for. Unfortunately I wasn't able to fill out a comment form at the time. My girlfriend has been a Boulder high school teacher for the last 15 years, and was an Open Space ranger before that. Despite her years of public service, and her frugal lifestyle, she finds herself priced out of Boulder's housing market. Her rent has been rising nearly 10% per year and it is untenable. One worry with those who want to stop growth is that neighborhood characters change. While it's true that, say, tall view-blocking buildings can change a neighborhood, so can neighbors moving away - like my girlfriend, or young families just getting the start in the world. If my neighborhood becomes nothing but upper middle-class to rich people, without the sound of kids playing at the park outside my house or the young couple holding a bbq next door or the artist down the road writing poetry, then the character of my neighborhood has changed, for the worse, without a single construction project. In the end, my neighbors make my neighborhood what it is, not buildings, dense or not. Change the people, and the neighborhood changes. I'm for density, primarily for environmental reasons. Sustainable city studies show that density reduces carbon emissions and can reduce traffic. Promotion of biking and walking increases fitness. Dense cities are vibrant and alive with culture and diversity. I've travelled all over the world, staying in everything from third world to communist to high-end western locales. I support the European model of density. I agree that density similar to say, California, does not work. California, as is most of the US, has a car-centric culture, and that is not compatible with density because of traffic and parking issues. Cars are terrible environmentally, socially, economically, and are awful for our health, not to mention death and injury from accidents! The European density model stresses alternative transportation, from public transit to walking to biking. It is no coincidence that the top 10 bike cities in the world routinely have 8 (or more) European cities. Many of these cities see brutal cold and snow, like we do, and they still function. A close friend of mine lives in Barcelona. She never drives. She walks, bikes or buses to shop, work, visit friends, and to enjoy night life. She has stores in her building and on her block where she can buy groceries. She is one of the most relaxed people I know, as is just about every one of her friends that I met. I saw the same in London, Rome, and smaller and Boulder-sized towns, like Torremolinos in Spain. It's also no coincidence that residence of these cities routinely top polls for high quality of life! For Boulder's future I envision denser living, within our means, and an updated and supportive, non-car centric transportation system. I don't think this is just pie-in-the-sky thinking. With traffic growing, environmental impact growing and worst of all climate change looming, I believe we'll have no choice. The question is "do us transition now, or 100 years from now when we have to? I'd rather build it now. Thanks for listening and allowing public input!
- Please lean on CU to prevent light pollution toward Shanahan Ridge once they develop their South campus. Do not densify the south Broadway corridor south of Table Mesa Drive.
- Want to encourage city and CU to move quickly on negotiating agreement for use of CU so campus lands for S Boulder Creek flood detention. This would minimize the time that those of us in the SBC floodplain remain at risk from significant flooding.
- Those of us in SE Boulder in the 100 yr floodplain require the CU South property to be included in the comp plan. Without this property and the detention they may agree to provide, we may not survive another catastrophic flood in the future. Please keep this area included for further study o we may proceed to a solution on our life-threatening condition.
- School traffic is unchecked (Southern Hills) Gridlock am and pm. What can be improved – schools take responsibility along with the city?

- There needs to be better communication to the public re: these types of meetings. Put in newspaper. Send notice to HOAs. Glad to see compostable items used but where are the compost trash containers?
- We need to make sure that S Boulder Creek mitigation happens as quickly as possible. This is a life and safety issue. It was dumb luck that no lives were lost during the Sept. 2013 Flood.
- Do not allow exemptions to the height limits and make this clear in the updated Comp Plan.
- On the neighborhood fact sheets, please identify where the additional dwellings would be located. The S Boulder fact sheet says 480 more dwellings – where??
- The logic in converting low density to medium density housing along south Broadway is not clear. We need safer ways for walkers and bikers from Majestic Heights to cross to the north side of Table Mesa. The left turn from Table Mesa across traffic onto the ramp leading to US 36/ 28<sup>th</sup> St. is unsafe during peak traffic periods.
- Restorative justice tool for neighborhoods facing opposing desires – density, noise, and parking. Before density address relationships. Post the transit trends with info. It isn't as drastic as bad as folks think. Real estate agents / city / CU and Naropa (rest. Justice).
- No growth is the ONLY way to secure good quality of life. No growth is homeostasis in nature. Boulder politicians, city council, staff are overly influenced by developers and money. We want citizen voices to be heard and honored. We, those who live here, elected you to speak for US not development / investors outside our community.
- The sub-group table on South CU campus was dominated by folks concerned with downstream flooding, an important issue to be sure, but didn't make time for a broader range of issues. And speaks to the crossover / overlap of issues between sub-communities, with are, ultimately, arbitrary.
- The idea that Boulder is “built out” is kind of crazy. We could have 2 to 5 times as many people here and still be very livable. Different but potentially awesome. Look at East Boulder parking lots, hardly used. If we want, this can create more affordability (land trusts, density bonuses) and necessitate a different kind of transportation system. Need to get away from the idea that everyone needs to drive. Some, sure, but not all. Need better family-oriented dense housing.
- We discussed transportation. One theme that we came back to over and over was that bus service doesn't meet the needs of many of us – like if we were provided low cost or no cost bus service. Somehow Boulder needs to require RTD to engage in a conversation with the ridership to find out what would make riding the bus a viable alternative to driving. This is bound to be a long process but it has to begin and be on-going.
- I feel the City Council and developers are bulldozing unwanted growth!! We are built out. Full – no vacancy!