

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Ruth McHeyser; City of Boulder Planning Department

From: Dan Guimond and Matt Prosser; Economic & Planning Systems

Subject: University Hill Preliminary Market Assessment

Date: November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize Economic and Planning Systems' preliminary findings regarding the market potentials for future development in the University Hill area of Boulder, CO. The intent of the summary is to highlight the market opportunities and barriers for potential development including multifamily housing, student housing, retail, and office uses.

*The Economics of Land Use*



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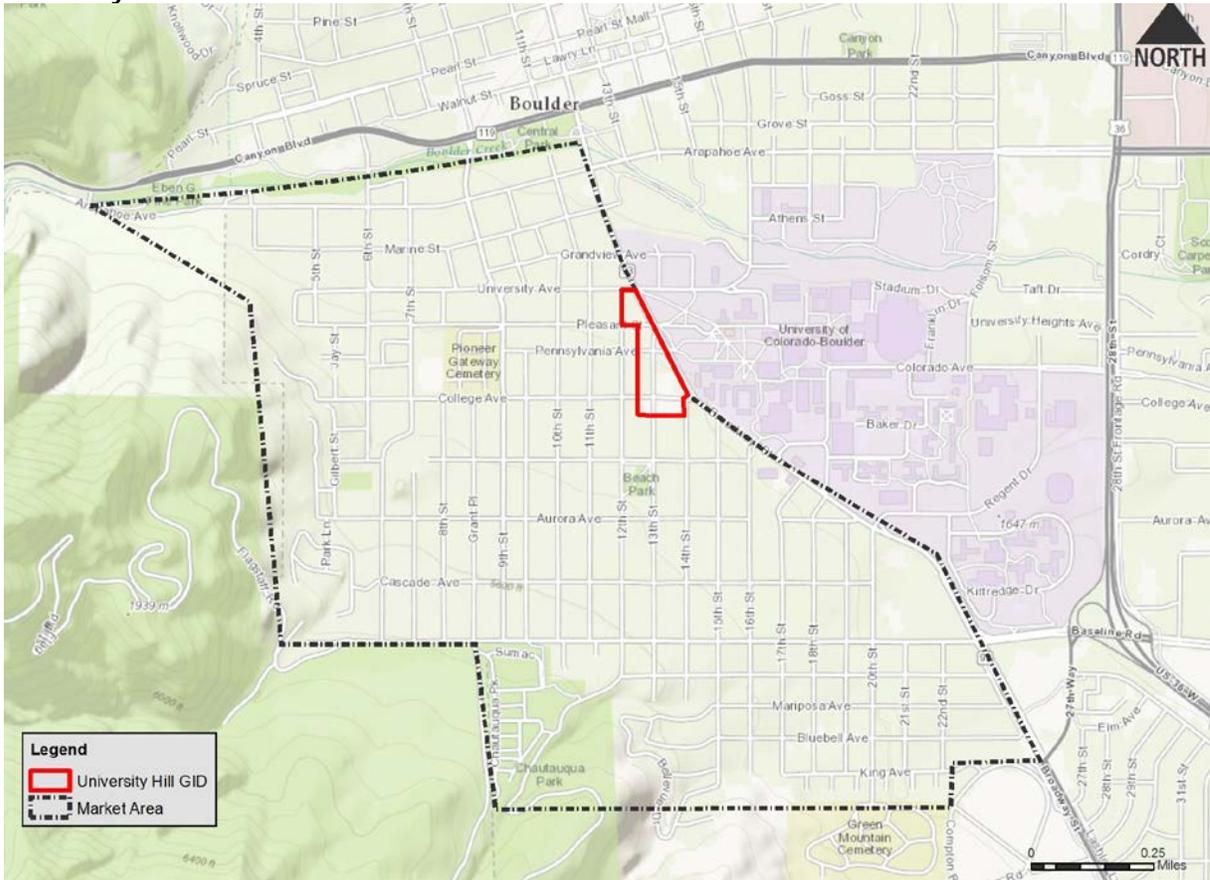
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## Demographic Framework

The socioeconomic characteristics make-up of the University Hill area was evaluated to qualify the split of student and non-student residents. The make-up of the Hill area residents was also analyzed to assess the retail market potentials in the University Hill commercial district. A University Hill Market Area (Market Area) was established and is shown in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1**  
**University Hill Local Market Area**



The population of the Market Area is 11,343 residents in 4,305 households, as shown in **Table 1**. The majority of households (66 percent) in the Market Area are renter occupied, which is expected due to the proximity to the University of Colorado. The average household size in the Market Area is 2.44 for owner occupied units and 2.38 per renter occupied units.

**Table 1**  
**Market Area Population and Households**

	#	%	HH Size
Population	11,343		
Households	4,305		
Housing Units	4,619		
Occupied Housing Units	4,305		
Owner Occupied	1,449	34%	2.44
Renter Occupied	2,856	66%	2.38
Vacant	314	7%	

Source: ESRI; Economic & Planning Systems

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The majority of residents (57 percent) of the Market Area are enrolled in undergraduate or graduate school, as shown in **Table 2**. The number of residents enrolled in undergraduate school is nearly 6,000, which is over half of the market area population and makes up the majority of enrolled students.

**Table 2**  
**Market Area Population Enrolled in School**

Enrolled in School	#
Grade School/Preschool	729
Undergraduate College	5,969
Graduate or Professional College	<u>365</u>
<b>Total in School</b>	<b>7,063</b>
% of Total Population	63%
% of Population in College	57%

Source: ESRI; Economic & Planning Systems

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The average age of residents of the Market Area is 23.5 years old. Fifty percent of the residents are between the age of 20 and 24 years old, as shown in **Table 3**. Twenty-six percent of residents are over the age of 35 years old.

**Table 3**  
**Market Area Residents by Age**

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<b>Residents by Age</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 15	724	7%
15 to 19	1,038	9%
20 to 24	5,501	50%
25 to 34	866	8%
35 and older	2,869	26%

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Source: ESRI; Economic & Planning Systems

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The households in the Market Area have a varied economic status. The average household income of Market Area residents is \$89,489, while the median household income is \$37,461. The average household income by age of householder is shown in **Table 4**, and indicates the widely divergent income levels of residents. Households with head of householders who are between 45 and 64 years old earn on average \$131,017 annually. The college age householders, under the age of 25, have an average annual income of \$17,730.

**Table 4**  
**Market Area Household Income**

	#	
Less than \$15,000	1,114	26%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	521	12%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	378	9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	579	13%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	517	12%
\$75,000 and greater	1,197	28%
Median HH Income	\$37,461	
Average HH Income	\$89,489	
Per Capital Income	\$34,893	
Householder Age under 25	\$17,730	
Householder Age 25 to 44	\$57,560	
Householder Age 45 to 64	\$131,017	
Householder Age over 64	\$58,219	

Source: ESRI; Economic & Planning Systems

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The Market Area, demographically, is therefore split between college students and relatively wealthy residents generally older than 35. These two resident types have significantly different market preferences and demands. The wealth of non-student residents illustrates the high-end demand for housing in the Market Area, specifically single-family households. The current retail mix in the University Hill commercial district illustrates that the commercial uses are oriented to the student residents of the hill. The high incomes and related high spending power of non-student residents should generate demand for higher end retail uses, which are all but non-existent on the Hill.

## Housing Development

The Market Area is evenly split between single-family housing and attached/multifamily housing. Single-family detached housing is the most prevalent with 43 percent of all units. Multifamily units (buildings with 5 plus units) are the second most prevalent with 34 percent of units, as shown in **Table 5**. As shown previously, two-thirds of the households are renter occupied in the market area, which would indicate that there are likely nearly as many single-family rental units as multifamily rental units.

**Table 5**  
**Market Area Housing Units by Type**

Units by Type	#	%
Single Family Detached	1,998	43%
Single Family Attached	195	4%
2 to 4 Units	859	19%
5+ Units	1,567	34%

Source: ESRI; Economic & Planning Systems

H:\143073-Boulder University Hill Economic Analysis\Data\143073-Demo.xlsx\Units by Type

The BBC Housing Market Analysis completed in 2013 found that students occupy 30 percent of the rental units in Boulder. Within the Market Area, students are estimated to occupy about 90 percent of rental units. The BBC study estimated that 21,000 students live in Boulder and approximately 15,000 live in rental housing throughout Boulder in approximately 7,500 units. EPS' estimate of 2,800 to 2,900 student units in the Market Area would therefore account for about 35 to 40 percent of all student rental housing in the City.

The rental market in Boulder is historically one of the tightest markets in Colorado due to the student demand and lack of supply of units in Boulder. The current vacancy rate in Boulder is 3.1 percent according to the Denver Metro Apartment Association Survey of Vacancy and Rents. The Boulder University submarket vacancy rate is 2.3 percent. Boulder rental units also have among the highest average rental rates among submarkets in the Denver metro area. The average rental rate for apartment units in Boulder (excluding the university areas) is \$1,388 and \$1,339 in the Boulder University submarket, as shown in **Table 6**.

**Table 6**  
**City of Boulder Average Apartment Rent by Unit Size**

Submarket	Studio	2 Bed		3 Bed	Other	All
		1 Bed	2 Bath			
City of Boulder - Except University	\$1,183	\$1,132	\$1,198	\$1,801	\$2,137	\$1,388
City of Boulder - University	\$822	\$1,355	\$1,555	\$2,473	\$2,417	\$1,339
Boulder/Broomfield Counties	\$914	\$1,147	\$1,200	\$1,517	\$1,618	\$1,287
Metro Denver	\$893	\$1,006	\$1,078	\$1,370	\$1,592	\$1,145

Source: Metro Denver Assoc. Apartment Survey; Economic & Planning Systems

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The newly constructed rental units built in the University Hill district are student-oriented units. These units are rented by bedroom with separate leases for each renter. The average rental rate for the new units is \$1,000 to \$1,100 per bedroom. These units are typically three or four bedroom units, which equates to \$3,000 per month for a three bedroom unit and \$4,000 per month for a four bedroom unit. These rates are significantly higher than the average for 3 bedroom and larger units in the Boulder-University submarket. A cursory analysis of rental units listed on Craigslist within the Hill area indicated that bedrooms rent for an average of \$1,000 to \$1,300 monthly. The units found vary greatly by size, quality and building configuration.

### Housing Considerations

The assessment of housing conditions in the Market Area indicates the demand for multifamily housing is almost completely for student oriented housing. Units in the Market Area and near the University Hill area rent for higher rates on average than the City as a whole meaning renters pay a premium to be located on the Hill. Multifamily housing is most typically and economically provided within larger 50 units or more buildings. Recent developments in the Hill district have been smaller but have been able to achieve top of the market rental rates. There is likely a limit to the demand of high end, student units. The majority of student housing demand is for lower cost units, which would likely need to part of larger redevelopment projects.

There is a demand for affordable housing throughout Boulder. Rental units that have rental rates below market rate are in high demand despite the location, but are even more attractive in areas near downtown or the campus. Housing restricted to non-students is possible on the Hill but would need to be rented at or below market rate. Market rate or above rental or for-sale products are not likely viable because renters/buyers would prefer options that are located elsewhere in Boulder and can likely find cheaper, higher quality options elsewhere in the City.

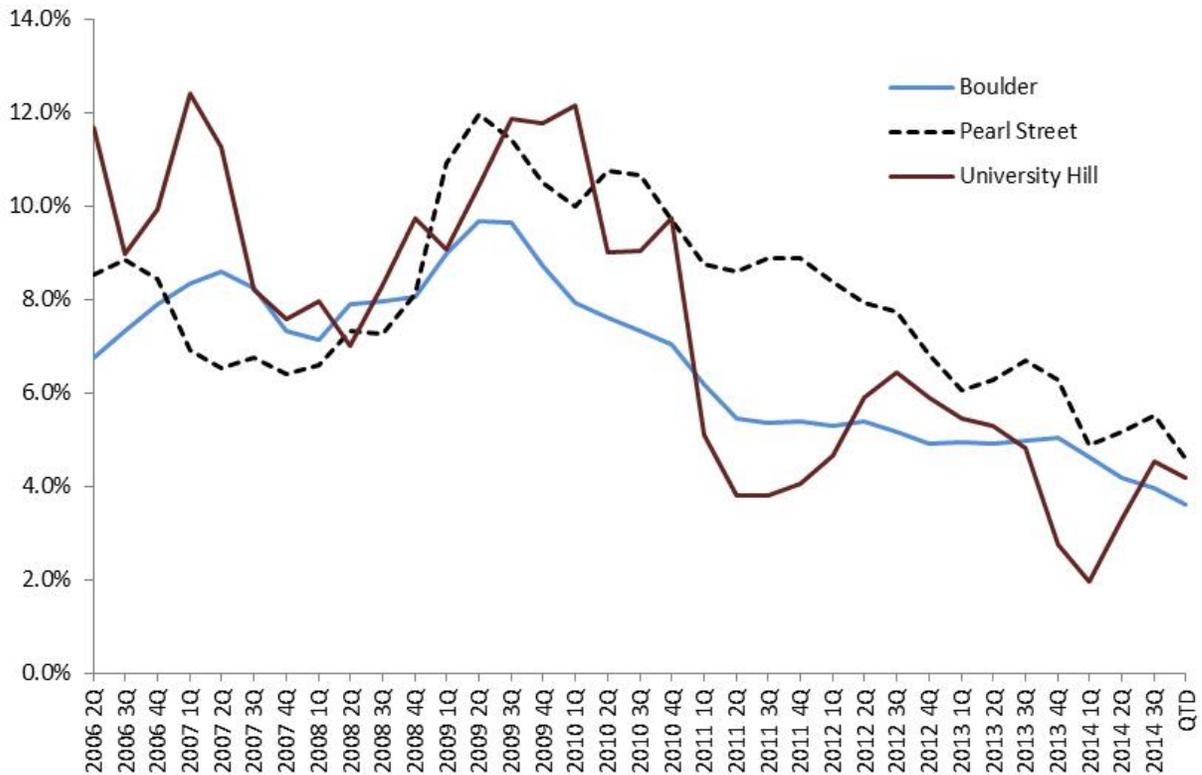
## Retail Development

The University Hill District retail development conditions and potentials are analyzed below with a focus on the demand for retail uses serving the Market Area.

### Boulder Retail Conditions

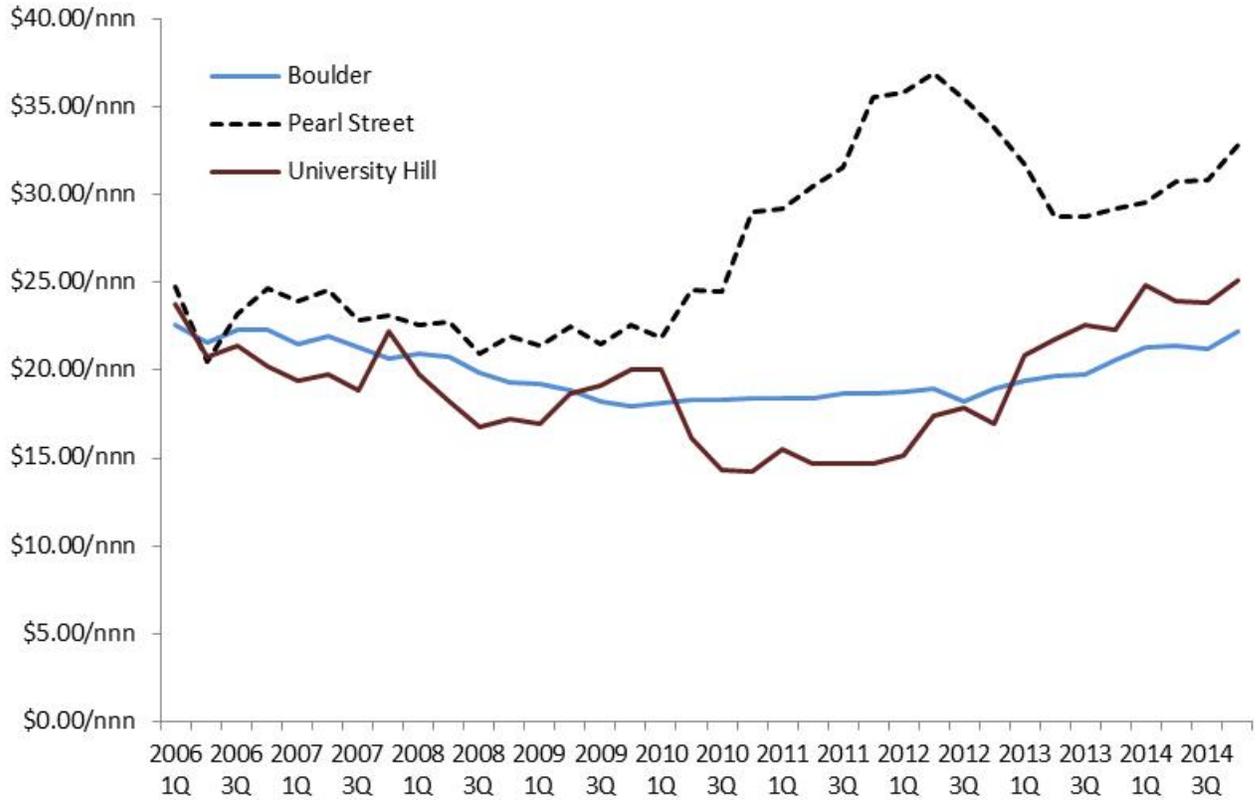
Retail conditions have been improving since the ending of the recession in 2010. Vacancy rates for retail space in Boulder have dropped from 9 percent to under 4 percent from 2009 to 2014, as shown in **Figure 2**. Vacancy rates for retail spaces along Pearl Street (7<sup>th</sup> Street to 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Canyon to Walnut) and the University Hill district were 12 percent in 2009 and higher than the City average. Vacancy rates have decreased in University Hill District to close to the City average currently.

**Figure 2**  
 City of Boulder and University Hill Retail Vacancy Rates



Despite a slightly higher vacancy rate, rental rates for retail spaces along Pearl Street are significantly higher than retail spaces elsewhere in the City of Boulder and on University Hill. Average rental rates for spaces along Pearl Street are over \$30 per square foot (triple net) and approached \$40 per square foot in 2012. The average rental rates for space on University Hill was slightly higher than the City average from 2012 to 2014, and currently stands at about \$25 per square foot, as shown in **Figure 3**.

**Figure 3**  
**City of Boulder and University Hill Retail Rental Rates per Square Foot**



According to CoStar, the inventory of retail space on University Hill is 211,396 square feet as shown in **Table 7**. The retail vacancy rate on the Hill currently is 3.2 percent which is lower than the City average of 3.5 percent. The average rental rates is \$25.10 per square foot, which is higher than the City average but over \$7.00 per square foot lower than the Pearl Street average (\$32.80 per sf) and the average for newly constructed (retail built after 2005) retail space in the City (\$26.96 per sf).

**Table 7**  
**City of Boulder and University Hill Retail Inventory**

Retail Space	Univ. Hill	Pearl Street	Boulder
Inventory	211,396	2,762,264	6,209,974
Vacancy	3.2%	4.5%	3.5%
Average Rental Rate (NNN <sup>1</sup> )			
All Buildings	\$25.10	\$32.80	\$22.26
Built after 2005	---	---	\$26.96

<sup>1</sup> Net of taxes, insurance, and maintenance feeds

Source: CoStar; Economic & Planning Systems

H:\143073-Boulder University Hill Economic Analysis\Data\143073-Office-Retail.xlsx]Summary

Interviews with University Hill property owners and developers were completed to augment the data analysis. The property owners quoted retail rental rates between the low \$20's to low \$30's for their retail spaces. The newer or renovated retail spaces were able to achieve higher rental rates. The presence of newer retail has allowed for owners to achieve higher rates and pulled the average rates for the area higher than the City average. The turnover of retail on the Hill is higher than elsewhere in the City. The frequency of turnover does not appear to be result of building age or condition but rather the retailers/restaurants ability to achieve adequate sales volumes to cover the rental rates.

The lack of non-student oriented retail was acknowledged as a concern by some property owners. Possible reasons given for the lack of non-student oriented retail uses and restaurants included existing perception of the Hill, streetscape and aesthetic of the Hill, and lack of parking.

### **University Hill Market Area Retail Demand**

Retail expenditure potential was estimated for the four market segments that could be attracted to the Hill: Market Area Student and Non-Student residents, CU students and faculty, and Boulder residents.

#### ***University of Colorado Generated Demand***

The demand for retail generated by weekday CU students, faculty and staff was estimated based on the existing campus population and average spending patterns. The current student enrollment at CU is 30,265, as shown in **Table 8**. There are also 4,146 faculty and 3,609 staff persons employed by CU and therefore are part of the daytime campus population.

**Table 8**  
**University of Colorado Boulder Campus Population**

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**CU Boulder Population**

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Student Enrollment	30,265
Freshman Enrollment	5,869
Faculty	4,146
Staff	<u>3,609</u>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>38,020</b>

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Source: University of Colorado Office of Planning, Budget and Analysis

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EPS used average weekly spending data for national office workers from 2013 provided by the International Council of Shopping Centers to estimate demand for retail from the campus. Estimates for weekly office worker spending were used to approximate faculty/staff and student spending. The population of faculty/staff and students was discounted by 25 percent to account for students and employees who are part time and may work/study not on the main campus. The faculty/staff are estimated to generate an annual retail expenditure potential of \$13 million and the students generate an estimated retail expenditure potential of \$55 million, as shown in **Table 9**.

**Table 9**  
**University of Colorado Boulder Campus Retail Expenditure Potential**

	<b>Weekly Spending</b>	<b>Annual Spending <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Faculty/Staff <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Students <sup>3</sup></b>
Population			5,816	24,396
<b>Restaurants</b>	\$26.29	\$973	\$5,657,641	\$23,730,721
<b>Goods and Services</b>				
Drug Stores	\$6.13	\$227	\$1,319,184	\$5,533,257
Grocery	\$15.98	\$591	\$3,438,916	\$14,424,379
Clothing	\$3.25	\$120	\$699,404	\$2,933,619
Shoe	\$2.43	\$90	\$522,939	\$2,193,444
Sporting Goods	\$2.16	\$80	\$464,835	\$1,949,728
Electronics/Phone/Computers	\$4.86	\$180	\$1,045,878	\$4,386,889
Jewelry	\$3.92	\$145	\$843,589	\$3,538,396
Office Supplies	\$7.37	\$273	\$1,586,033	\$6,652,545
Other Goods	\$3.95	\$146	\$850,045	\$3,565,475
Personal Care	\$7.83	\$290	\$1,685,026	\$7,067,765
Personal Services	\$3.16	\$117	\$680,036	\$2,852,380
<b>Goods and Services Total</b>	<b>\$83.55</b>	<b>\$3,091</b>	<b>\$17,980,064</b>	<b>\$75,416,575</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$61.04</b>	<b>\$2,258</b>	<b>\$13,135,884</b>	<b>\$55,097,878</b>

1 - Annual is estimated as 29 weeks to reflect school schedule

2 - Discounted 25 percent to reflect part time workers and persons employed off main campus

3 - Does not include Freshman who have a prepaid meal plan. Discounted 25 percent to reflect students studying part-time or abroad

Source: ICSC; Economic & Planning Systems

H:\143073-Boulder University Hill Economic Analysis\Models\143073-TPI Model 11-18.xlsx\Campus Population Spending

### **University Hill Retail Expenditure Potential**

The expenditure potential for retail and restaurants on the Hill is comprised of four consumer groups the Market Area residents (students and non-students), CU Campus students or employees, and the City of Boulder. The estimated student population in the Market Area is 6,334 people, who reside in 2,866 households. Using the median household income for the market area of \$37,000 the total personal income for this group is estimated by multiplying households by average household income. The average Colorado household spends 20 percent of their income on retail goods at neighborhood and community oriented retail centers and shops within three store categories; convenience goods, other shopper's goods and eating and drinking. The total personal income is multiplied by 20 percent to estimate retail expenditure potential for this group, which is \$22 million.

The permanent population in the Market area is estimated to be 5,009 people in 1,439 households. The average household income for householders over 25 years old is estimated to be \$107,000. The estimated retail expenditure potential is \$31 million, as shown in **Table 10**.

As shown previously, the estimated retail expenditure potential from the CU Campus is \$68 million including spending potential from staff, faculty and students. Lastly, EPS estimates the Hill area captures approximately \$10 million in sales from Boulder residents who are not students and do not live in the Market Area.

**Table 10**  
**University Hill Retail Expenditure Potential**

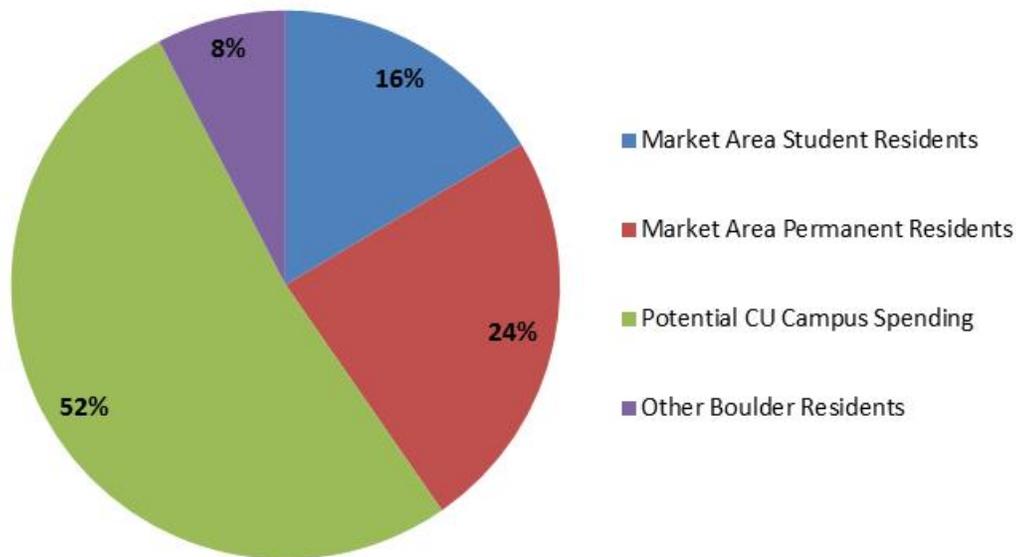
Group	TPI / Exp. Potential
<b>Market Area Student Residents</b>	
Estimated Population	6,334
Estimated Households	2,866
Estimated HH Income	<u>\$37,000</u>
<b>Student Total Personal Income</b>	<b>\$106,044,344</b>
<b>Retail Expenditures (20%)</b>	<b>\$21,587,250</b>
<b>Market Area Permanent Residents</b>	
Estimated Population	5,009
Estimated Households	1,439
Estimated HH Income	<u>\$107,000</u>
<b>Non-Student Total Personal Income</b>	<b>\$153,966,222</b>
<b>Retail Expenditures (20%)</b>	<b>\$31,342,618</b>
<b>Potential CU Campus Spending</b>	
Faculty	\$13,135,884
Students	<u>\$55,097,878</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$68,233,762</b>
<b>Estimated Capture from Boulder Residents</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>

Source: ESRI; Economic & Planning Systems

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The percent of retail expenditure by each consumer group is shown in **Figure 4**. The retail expenditure potential from daily visitors to the campus, both students and staff, constitutes half the retail demand. The Market Area student residents are an estimated 18 percent. Combined nearly 70 percent of the potential retail demand on the Hill is from students or campus workers.

**Figure 4**  
**University Hill Retail Expenditure Potential by Consumer Group**



The estimated retail expenditure potential was translated into demand for retail space within the three major retail categories present on the Hill, convenience goods, other shopper's goods (retail goods non including general merchandise), and eating and drinking. Based on average household and office workers expenditure patterns in each retail category, the estimated demand for retail space generated by each group was estimated to further illustrate the demand from each group.

The demand from Campus weekday users accounts for 65 percent of the retail space demand, with demand for 280,000 square feet. The demand from Market Area permanent residents is 83,000 square feet, as shown in **Table 11**. This estimated demand is the total retail demand generated within store categories that could potentially located on the Hill and also does not account for existing retail on the Hill or elsewhere in Boulder and Colorado. The Hill competes with Pearl Street Mall, 29<sup>th</sup> Street and Flatirons Mall for retail sales in many of these categories. These three areas are major retail destinations with major retail anchors and attractions.

**Table 11**  
**University Hill Retail Supportable Space**

Store Type	Per Sq. Ft.	MA Students	MA Non-Students	Campus Demand	Boulder Demand	Total Demand
<b>Convenience Goods</b>						
Supermarkets and Other Food Stores	\$400	16,577	24,068	44,658	0	85,302
Convenience Stores	\$400	2,386	3,464	11,039	0	16,889
Beer, Wine, & Liquor Stores	\$300	3,216	4,669	0	0	7,884
Health and Personal Care	\$400	<u>4,454</u>	<u>6,467</u>	<u>21,882</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>32,804</u>
<b>Total Convenience Goods</b>		<b>26,632</b>	<b>38,668</b>	<b>77,579</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>142,879</b>
<b>Other Shopper's Goods</b>						
Clothing & Accessories	\$350	3,460	5,023	18,141	0	26,624
Furniture & Home Furnishings	\$250	3,266	4,742	0	0	8,009
Electronics & Appliances	\$500	1,419	2,060	10,866	0	14,344
Sporting Goods, Hobby, & Music Stores	\$350	2,078	3,016	6,899	0	11,993
Miscellaneous Retail	\$250	<u>2,961</u>	<u>4,299</u>	<u>82,274</u>	<u>1,372</u>	<u>90,905</u>
<b>Total Other Shopper's Goods</b>		<b>13,183</b>	<b>19,141</b>	<b>118,179</b>	<b>1,372</b>	<b>151,875</b>
<b>Eating and Drinking</b>	<b>\$350</b>	<b>17,090</b>	<b>24,814</b>	<b>83,967</b>	<b>7,917</b>	<b>133,788</b>
<b>Total Retail Goods</b>		<b>56,906</b>	<b>82,622</b>	<b>279,725</b>	<b>9,288</b>	<b>428,542</b>

Source: Economic & Planning Systems

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## Retail Development Considerations

The demand analysis for retail on the Hill illustrates that students constitute the majority of demand for retail. The student orientation also complicated by the seasonal nature of demand for students, with the Hill business struggling through periods when students are not on campus, especially the summer. The potential demand from Market Area residents that are non-students is a major component but not sizeable enough to drive the retail demand on the Hill. This group could generate demand for a modest commercial district embedded in the neighborhood but the sheer size and market power of the student population has driven the Hill to be predominately student oriented.

There a limited demand for non-student oriented retail or restaurants, but these retailers may not be able to overcome the stigma of the Hill as a student area and the rental rates that other retailers are able to pay. Parking is another barrier to non-student oriented retail. The majority of shoppers access the district on foot from surrounding housing and the campus. The district is not well suited for a larger number of customers to come in cars from outside the Market Area. While the UHGID does provide two lots with rates and hours that accommodate retail, the parking that supports the Hill is limited to a small number of on-street spaces, a small number of private spaces, the CU owned lot at 13<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania, and the two UHGID lots. The UHGID lots are both difficult to access and are not visible from Broadway, 13<sup>th</sup> Street, or College Avenue.

The Hill also lacks in attractions or "go to"/destination retailers or restaurants that are attractive to outsiders. In its past, the Hill had a collection of theatres and entertainment venues, including Tulagi's, the Flatirons Theatre, and the Fox Theatre, which drove visitation from throughout Boulder and even the region. The Fox Theatre is the only remaining entertainment venue.

Visitors to Boulder, game day CU fans, and campus visitors are not attracted to the Hill businesses with the exception of perhaps The Sink. These visitors are more often attracted to Pearl Street or elsewhere in Boulder.

To increase demand for non-student oriented retail the City can explore ways to grow the market potential from groups that are not students and address ways to make the area more easy to access and attractive. The two potential approaches are to increase the number of non-student households or increase the number of non-student visitors to the Hill. There does not appear to be ample buildable land in the Market Area to generate enough non-student households to significantly impact demand. The other approach is to generate demand from visitors. This approach could include attracting an employment base, increase the quality of retail offerings, increasing access and parking, increasing visitation to the campus, and/or increasing visitation to the Hill to the existing destinations (i.e. Fox Theatre) or a potential new attraction or anchor use.

## Office Development

### Office Trends and Conditions

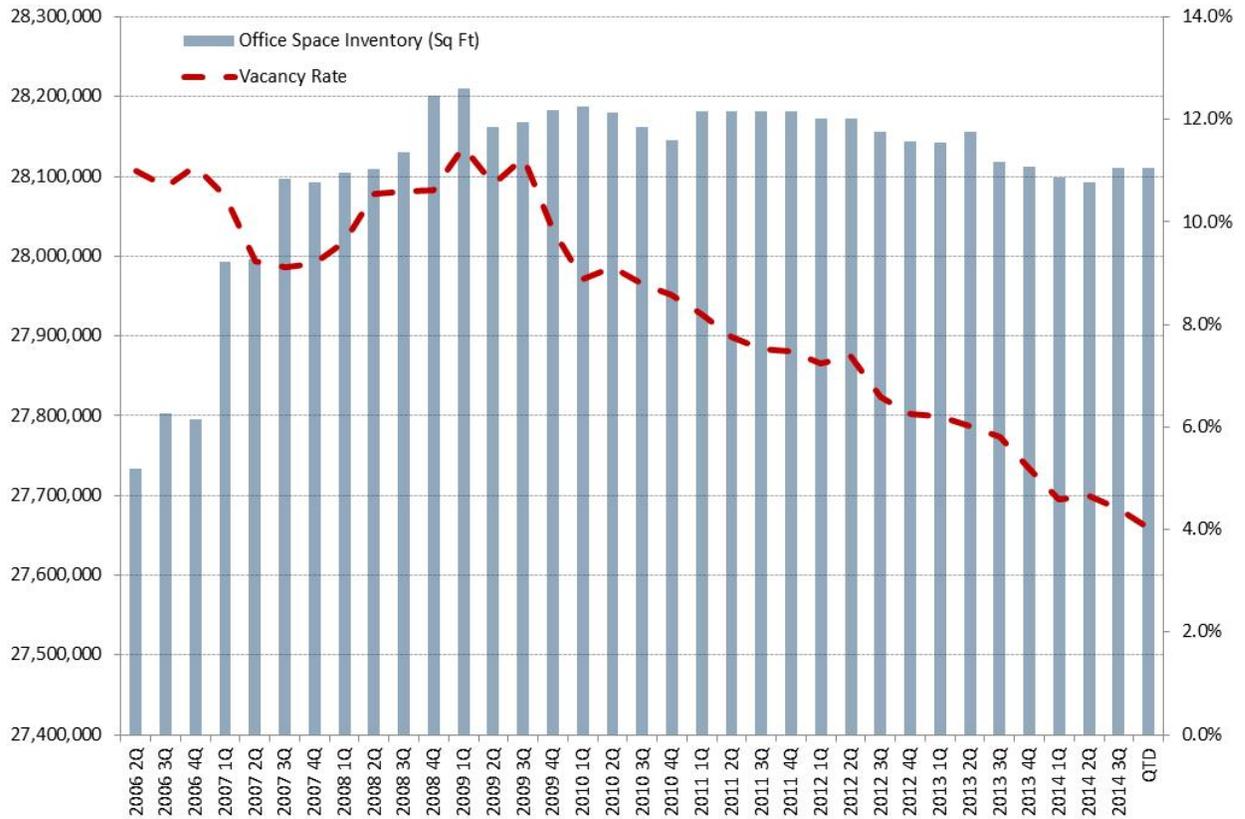
**Figures 5 and 6** below summarize office inventory, vacancy and rent trends in the City from 2004/2006 to 2014. The office space inventory in Boulder decreased from 2009 to 2014. There has been approximately 31,000 square feet per year of new Class A and Class B office space built in Boulder over the last decade. No true Class A office space has been completed in Boulder since 2008, and only 60,200 was built in the last decade. Similarly, only 36,000 square feet of Class B office space has been built since 2008.

One broker interviewed stressed the need not only for additional Class A office space in Boulder, but more specifically for large floor plate options. Such options might help retain some of the Boulder start-up companies that are being pushed out of the City to Interlocken or other metro Denver locations that can offer larger contiguous spaces.

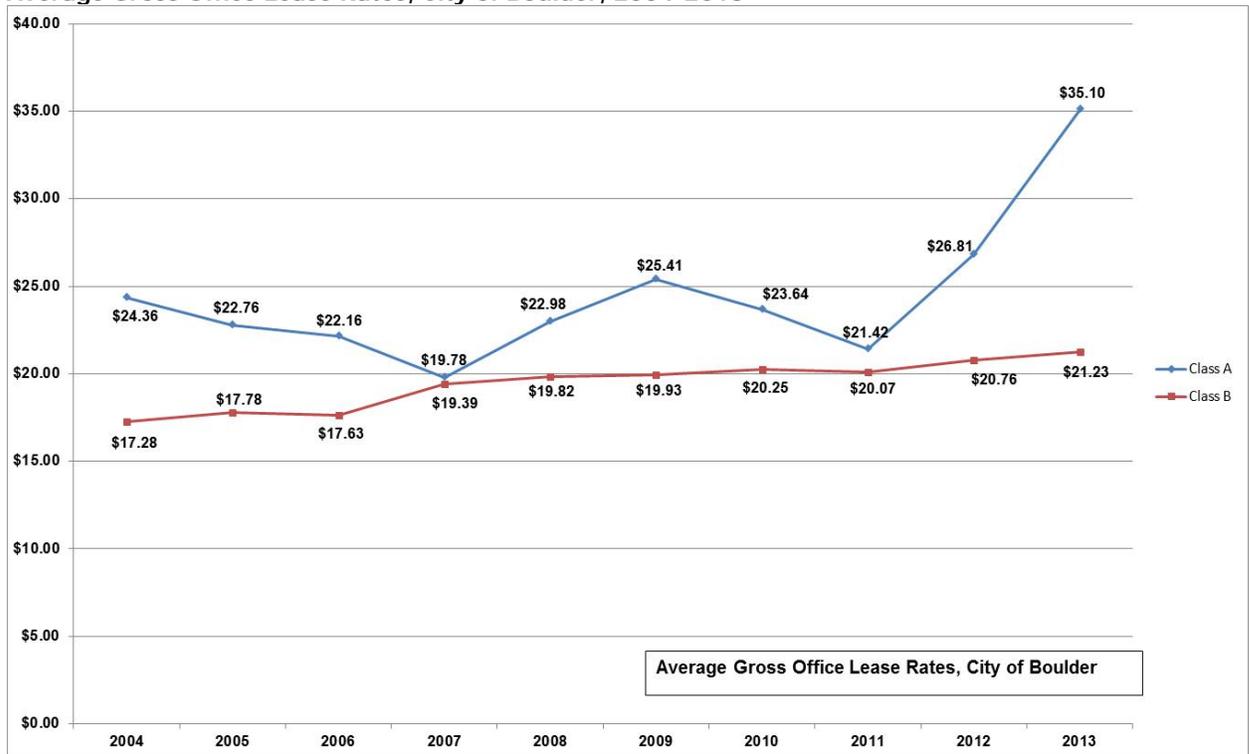
The average vacancy rate for office space has fallen from above 10 percent in 2009 to 4 percent in 2014, as shown **Figure 5**. Class A office space is essentially 100 percent occupied as of 2013 and occupancy rates have increased approximately 10 percent over the last 5 years. The current market benchmark of 100 percent occupancy is unusual for any market and is well above the equilibrium threshold. Class B occupancy rates have increased 16 percent over the last 10 years.

The average lease rate for office space in Boulder is \$23.59 per square foot (full service rent). Class A lease rates have increased \$15.32 from the bottom of the cycle in 2007, an increase of 77 percent. The average for Class A office was \$36.10 at the end of 2013, as shown in **Figure 6**. One broker interviewed even noted a \$5 per square foot increase in Class A office space in Downtown Boulder between mid-December, 2013 and late January, 2014. This recent spike in Class A lease rates shows the effects of "100%" occupancy.

**Figure 5**  
**Boulder Office Space Inventory and Vacancy Rate, 2006 to 2014**

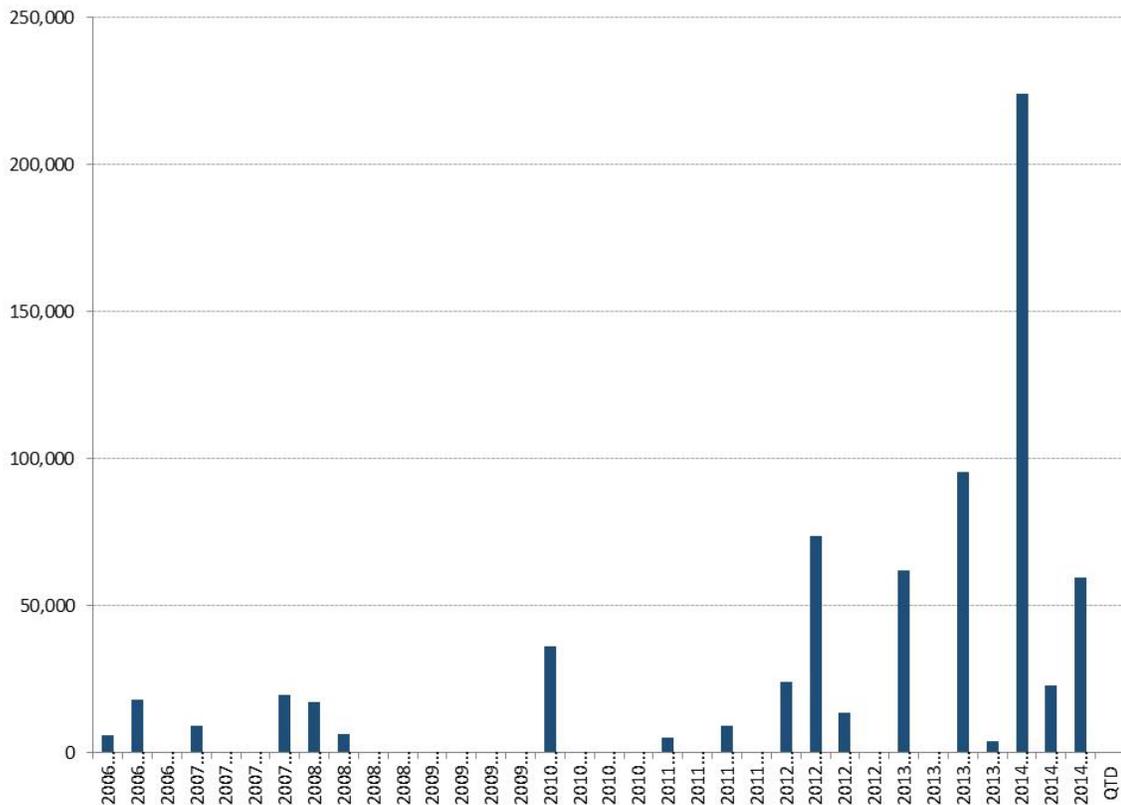


**Figure 6**  
**Average Gross Office Lease Rates, City of Boulder, 2004-2013**



**Figure 7** shows the square feet of office space built by quarter from 2006 to 2014. There was a limited amount of new office space built from 2006 to 2010. However, in the past two years the office space development in Boulder has increased significantly, with new office space brought to market in 10 of the past 12 quarters including over 200,000 square feet in first quarter 2014.

**Figure 7**  
**New Office Space Built in Boulder by Quarter, 2006-2014**



EPS analyzed office square footage along Pearl Street and the Hill to compare to the City of Boulder averages, which is shown in **Table 12**. There is 28 million square feet of office space in Boulder, with 2.1 million along Pearl Street. Both areas have a vacancy rate of 4 percent. The downtown/Pearl Street area is the most attractive office location in Boulder and office space in this area achieves the highest rental rates. The average rent for office space in Boulder is \$23.59 per square foot (full service or gross) while the average for Pearl Street is \$33.51 per square foot. New office space (space built after 2005) rents for an average \$27.54 per square foot. There were two spaces listed for lease on the Hill within the CoStar inventory, a small, 1,500 square foot space in the Buchanan’s Coffee Pub building and third floor office space in the Hilltop Building at 13<sup>th</sup> Street and College Ave. The average listed lease rate for the two spaces was \$21.00 per square foot.

**Table 12**  
**Boulder Office Space by Subarea, 2014**

Office Space	Univ. Hill	Pearl Street	Boulder
Inventory	---	2,055,922	28,110,661
Vacancy	---	4.1%	4.0%
Average Rental Rate (Full Service)			
All Buildings	\$21.00	\$33.51	\$23.59
Built after 2005	---	---	\$27.54

Source: CoStar; Economic & Planning Systems

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A review of significant office projects proposed in the Boulder development “pipeline” indicates a potential for approximately 560,000 square feet if all projects were completed (**Table 12**).

The proposed Baseline Zero and the Eleventh and Pearl redevelopment under construction at the former Daily Camera building will, together, add significant supply (320,000 square feet) to the market. The list of projects in **Table 13** illustrates an interesting divergence in office development in Boulder and nationally – large floor plate office needs in contrast with the emerging trend for “micro” office spaces and more innovative and collaborative office environments. The Daily Camera project may succeed at both ends of that spectrum with the ability to offer larger spaces, as well as housing the second Colorado outpost of Galvanize, a collaborative workspace and community. The office space at Spark is proposed to be accommodated among several smaller buildings, and the proposed The James development is included in this list not because it would add significant inventory to the Boulder market, but because it responds to the increasing demand for smaller/“micro” office spaces and collaborative work environments.

**Table 13**  
**Proposed Office Development Projects, City of Boulder**

Project Name	Location	Approximate # Sq. Ft.
1738 Pearl Street - addition		16,655
The James	1750 14th Street	8,517 Office & 1,570 Micro-Offices
909 Walnut	909 Walnut	8,900
Spark	Old Sutherland's Site	207,168
Baseline Zero	2700 Baseline Road	180,000
<u>Eleventh &amp; Pearl</u>	<u>Former Daily Camera Building</u>	<u>140,000</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>562,810</b>

Source: Economic & Planning Systems

Note: Eleventh & Pearl Office space is an estimate out of the total 180,000 square feet

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## Office Broker Interviews

EPS interviewed office real estate brokers active in Boulder to assess the trends in office space in Boulder and to try and get an understanding of the office potentials on the Hill. The information and the data points shared in these interviews is summarized below.

Generally, the office market in Boulder is concentrated in three locations: Downtown/Pearl Street, Central Boulder, and East Boulder. The average rental rates decrease and vacancy rates increase farther east. The market for office space is fairly diversified among different businesses types including; technology companies, start up businesses in all industries, bio-technology and "clean" technology firms, the outdoor recreation industry and natural foods companies. The majority of office development is resultant of either growth of small, start up companies, or acquisition of existing Boulder companies by larger outside firms, both of which also lead to natural growth of professional services firms (i.e., lawyers, accountants). The minimum office rents need to support new office construction was estimated to be in the mid-twenty dollars per square foot range and higher.

Downtown/Pearl Street has the desired amenities for many companies including the place making and worker amenities along with a high concentration of employment, professional environment, and adequate parking within a mixture of private and public structured parking lots. However, there is limited amount of office space in the area and it is largely smaller spaces. As companies grow and expand in employment, the area and Boulder is often unable to retain employers who seek large buildings and floor plates in offices spaces in eastern Boulder or outside of the City.

The brokers interviewed all expressed that the Hill was not a good multitenant office location and generally did not think trying to attract office uses was viable. There is currently only a handful of office uses on the Hill, which are primarily campus/student oriented with few exceptions. Several factors were cited as barriers to office users being attracted to the Hill including; lack of a professional environment, lack of parking, lack of access, difficulty and traffic accessing the Hill, the perception of the area as only a student area and a lack of interest from employers in the area.

Despite current perceptions, some brokers identified the potential for Niche Office Space for smaller businesses needing small or flexible spaces of less than 3,000 square feet. Creative, start-up, computer oriented, and technology firms may seek out the Hill if space is less expensive than the Pearl Street area and if their business had a nexus or benefited from locating next to campus. Incubation space was cited as potential uses, but lower rents are needed to make it attractive to new firms. In general, to attract office users to the Hill both an attractive rental price and some sort of incentive/motivating factor is needed. Co-working or shared office space type configurations may work well to support the incubation nature of potential office users. This type of development would need to be of high quality, highly attractive, and have associated professional amenities.

A market anchor or destination was cited as a way to potential change the culture and dynamic of the Hill enough to attract some office spaces. A hotel was cited as a potential use that could be developed in concert with office space to help catalyze the market. The brokers interviewed did not think that a stand-alone office building could be developed and that any development with office space needed to be done in connection to another driving use such as a hotel or destination retail/restaurant.

## Future Market and Development Considerations

The future market potentials on the Hill can be accommodated by two types of development; redevelopment of existing buildings or rehabilitation or expansion of existing buildings. There are major barriers to both types of development.

Redevelopment of existing uses and businesses requires in most cases the purchase of an existing income producing asset whether it be a retail space, rental housing, or parking. The price for land or development sites on the Hill is generally higher than \$200 per square foot due to the relatively high rental rates even the lowest quality retail space can capture on the Hill. To support new development on these sites, the use or at least one of the uses needs to be able to achieve rental or sale prices that are higher than market averages and demand a premium. The only two uses that have shown to achieve higher than average market rates are student housing and student housing with first level retail. Retail space is limited to only street fronting, ground floor space and is not viable on basement or second story locations. Office spaces on the Hill currently are rented for less than City averages and new space would need to be priced low enough to generate demand. Market rate rental or for-sale housing that is not student housing lacks demand from the market and rates are likely more attractive in other areas of Boulder.

The rehabilitation or expansion of existing buildings also has barriers that are driven by the market for uses on the Hill. An increase in the quality of retail spaces on the Hill could generate demand for non-student oriented retailers, which could be achieved within existing buildings. However, existing rental rates for retail provide little incentive for owners to invest significantly into buildings, especially since the price premium gained from new space is not substantial. Many of the existing buildings have second floor residential units. The conversion of these spaces to office uses would be difficult because office uses likely cannot support rental rates high enough to pay for renovation costs or increase revenue for the owner. The building owners interviewed cited many functional and structural issues that become a problem once expansion is considered. The requirement to bring buildings to current building codes, and provide access needs and ADA amenities are needed and costly. Many of the buildings lack adequate parking currently, which would be exacerbated if they expanded without parking. Like redevelopment, the expansion of buildings needs new uses that can demand a price premium to support costs.

Further examination is needed to understand the feasibility of redevelopment and rehabilitation/expansion. This analysis will help identify the financing gaps present and help show potential approaches the City could take to incent or require change. This analysis needs definition and alignment with the City's planning process, but potential development forms to be tested should include:

- Expansion of existing buildings with office and housing, both student and workforce oriented, uses.
- Redevelopment projects with a mixture of either retail and office uses or retail and housing uses.
- Rehabilitation existing buildings to create better quality and functioning retail spaces.

Other issues need to be examined to determine the costs and feasibility addressing barriers. These issues include the role of parking and identification and feasibility of anchor/destination uses.

Lastly, the impact of potential land use and development policies need to be analyzed in context of the development scenarios tested to understand the pros and cons of each approach. These

policies should include incentives provided by the City, requirements or restrictions on uses, and alternative financing approaches and sources. The ultimate goal is identify potential actions the City should take to get the current condition of the Hill to better reflect the City's vision for the Hill.