

# **North Boulder Subcommunity Plan Update Community Feedback Summary**

- August 15, 2013 Planning Board Summary
- Community Outreach and Feedback Summary –March/April 2013
- June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comments
- North Boulder Alliance Comments – April and July 2013

# August 15, 2013 Planning Board Summary

## CITY OF BOULDER PLANNING BOARD STUDY SESSION MINUTES

August 15, 2013

1777 Broadway, Council Chambers

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### PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Aaron Brockett, Vice-Chair  
Bryan Bowen  
Crystal Gray  
John Putnam  
Sam Weaver

### PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Leonard May  
Mary Young, Chair

### STAFF PRESENT:

Susan Richstone, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services  
Susan Meissner, Administrative Assistant III  
Jeff Hirt, Planner II

Vice-Chair **A. Brockett** called the Study Session to order at 5:32 p.m.

### Staff Presentation

**S. Richstone** introduced the item.

**J. Hirt** presented the item to the board.

### Public Participation

1. **Annette Coleman, 4593 Broadway, C-108** (pooled time with Diane Stum), spoke in favor of public art in North Boulder.
2. **Sally A. Eckert, 1620 Lee Hill Rd**, spoke in favor of public art in North Boulder.
3. **Jim Leach, 1680 Yellow Pine Ave**, felt that North Broadway needs more placemaking through people, character and art despite the barriers that Broadway presents due to traffic volumes and speed. He requested flexibility in zoning and transportation.
4. **Gail Promboin, 944 Yellow Pine**, thanked city staff for their work. She saw this as an opportunity for the community to encourage the right kind of development. She wanted better connectivity and a better mixture of housing price points.
5. **Bill Hussey, 4860 4<sup>th</sup> Street**, encouraged the city to create great streets and a meaningful community engagement process. He encouraged the city to expand the visioning process to account for how much has changed since the original plan was adopted in 1995. He also noted that many North Boulder residents feel disenfranchised by recent development that has occurred

without community input. He would like the North Boulder community to share in the decision making process for this plan update. He also noted that the North Boulder Alliance is committed to working with the city on this plan update.

6. **Tony Merlo, 1031 Terrace Circle**, discussed hurdles to investment in North Boulder such as zoning, flooding, and a perception that the homeless population has nowhere to go during the day after release from the shelter.
7. **Amy Tremper, 1529 Easy Rider Lane**, suggested rezoning the armory to allow it to become an arts center.

## Board Questions

**B. Bowen** noted that there are many ongoing planning initiatives that will affect North Boulder. It is important that they happen in an integrated way and that everyone knows the timelines for each.

Staff is working to organize joint workshops to consolidate and coordinate efforts.

**S. Weaver** encouraged staff to collect metrics now to inform this plan update while other efforts are being developed in other parts of the city. The transportation and placemaking issues are very important in this area. There should be an intelligent way to allocate the work and use it as a starting point for the other areas. The city's Sustainable Streets and Centers and Transportation Master Plan will dovetail into the placemaking in North Boulder.

**A. Brockett** suggested evaluating what kinds of streetscape improvements and connections would be appropriate to include in this plan.

**J. Putnam** thought it was helpful that staff is coordinating efforts across departments. The city should be more visual in the ways that work is being planned and addressed. This would make it more transparent and easily understandable. Information should include maps and links to show how projects fit together and to aid in decision making.

**B. Bowen** suggested that staff provide a clear graphic showing the plan and what has happened to date. He thought it would be important to extend the project boundary down to Sumac. There are some residential properties in that area that could be rezoned to accomplish the plan's objectives.

**A. Brockett** also encouraged the idea of extending the study area south to Sumac. The vacant properties could provide good transitions to the neighborhoods and have good development potential.

Staff noted that many issues will be on the table. Much of it will be informed by the market study.

**B. Bowen** thought that it would be good to focus on a few items with this plan update. The village center is an important issue as well as the rezoning of some properties. Changes in land use and zoning are important.

Staff noted that zoning and land use will be addressed in the plan update as it relates to the study area.

**C. Gray** encouraged staff to host a workshop focusing on placemaking.

**B. Bowen** thought this project would account for creativity and the arts. We should understand what makes a creative space. Holiday is currently not a great place for artists. City approval processes could be faster and easier and North Boulder could be a good eco district. 13<sup>th</sup> Street is not contiguous. It will likely go from Violet Avenue to the Armory eventually. This area is already developed with mixed use

and some connectivity. Perhaps the section from Violet Avenue to the Armory could be a neighborhood corridor as opposed to Broadway.

**A. Brockett** was excited that this project is being undertaken. He thought Annette Coleman (Nobo Arts District) had a lot of good ideas and would like to encourage placemaking along N. Broadway. Putting in public art, streetscape improvements, attractive crosswalks, and other creative details will make this a unique place. Holiday ended up having a high density of artists likely due to more affordable rents and an eclectic feel. The city should look into ways to change zoning to allow studios that are outside of the standard model. Micro studios, etc. could be developed by modifying zoning requirements. We should remove zoning barriers to these different kinds of uses. Broaden neighborhood commercial space zoning to make some properties in the target area more developable. A parking district would help redevelopment. The city should reevaluate the idea that the village center needs to be in the designated area with this process. The city should also look at the whole corridor as a center. He asked that neighborhood meetings be held in the neighborhood.

**C. Gray** addressed some of Bill Hussey's (North Boulder Alliance) comments about visioning and a meaningful community engagement processes. She thought staff was on a good track and asked that his comments be considered as well.

**B. Bowen** agreed with **A. Brockett** that staff should choose community venues for public meetings in North Boulder to include people who might not normally be engaged. We should build awareness in the neighborhood beyond the city website. Advertise through flyers in the neighborhood, etc.

**J. Putnam** suggested that staff post questions on the signs with a QR code to better engage the public. Community engagement and the market study are very important. Perspectives from these two elements of the project will be important prior to making any changes or proposals. He thought the arts district was exciting and there are a lot of good ideas, but we need to get a better idea of the types of artists and needs. There are many different artists and processes. What makes this a different arts district from other areas of town? How does this work within the ecosystem of arts within town?

**B. Bowen** thought there could be value to expanding "Arts District" to "Arts and Design District".

**S. Weaver** thought this was a great start. He agreed with starting with the market study and community input as a good foundation. There are many competing interests here. Smaller spaces will attract more affordable housing and that conflicts with some neighbors' concerns about the overconcentration of affordable housing. He liked the funkiness of the neighborhood and wanted to nurture the arts district. That could be a big part of the placemaking. He loved the idea of temporary installations, eclectic street signs, etc. This could be distinct and vibrant part of town. He supported the concept of preserving the uniqueness of this area. He recommended shifting the study area south to Sumac. He also noted that this project should be integrated with parallel initiatives.

**A. Brockett** suggested that several projects be identified as possible contenders for capital improvement funds with this process.

**C. Gray** also supported moving the boundary south to Sumac.

**J. Putnam** agreed with extending to Sumac but did not want to dilute the efforts at the center. The board unanimously agreed to move the boundary south to Sumac.

# Community Outreach and Feedback Summary – March/April 2013

Staff has reached out to numerous community members to obtain feedback that has informed the project scope and schedule. The detailed results from community member interviews during March and April of 2013 are included below. In addition, the detailed results from the Planning Board and community member review of the June 6 Planning Board memo are included below. Please note that the Summary of June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comments Section also summarizes these comments along with staff responses.

## **Residents/Neighborhood Groups**

### **General / Planning Process**

- Agrees that we should take a targeted approach to the update
- The North Boulder community would support good planning with this process
- Good planning could also draw more businesses to North Boulder
- The far north and west side of Broadway have the most potential to focus on
- The North Boulder Alliance has about 1,000 members. Their membership stretches from about Lucky's Market to US 36 on both sides of Broadway, but their primary focus is north of Violet Avenue
- Would like to see which major items from the original plan were implemented, and what development activity has occurred
- This process should be more of a conversation between the community and the city
- The area is well served by parks and open space
- Should start the public process at a time when more people are in town
- Everyone outside of this North Broadway area (i.e., south of Violet Avenue) seems to be doing fine and likes things the way they are
- There are not many things that have changed that necessitate an update to the plan - just need to more fully realize the vision and follow through
- Not enough attention paid to constraints in the original plan
- Holiday and the areas with larger lot and larger homes are established and should not be revisited with this process
- North Boulder Alliance Vision for North Boulder:
  - Broadway connects neighborhoods east/west, rather than divides them
  - Retain neighborhood character by requiring new development to be context sensitive
  - Attract businesses with a variety of retail and commercial services
  - Retain a distinct identity and function as northern gateway
- Keep residents well informed and give opportunities to provide input that affects the outcome
- Examine how and why development has occurred since the original plan
- Ideally would complete this update process before any new development is approved

### **Economic Vitality**

- Should consider the economic development component of the plan update (see below)
- Need to look at the economic impacts of anything we propose - it is important to understand this because nothing will happen unless it is economically feasible.
- The small lots on the west side of Broadway make it hard to assemble and redevelop (boulder does not have redevelopment authority to do this)
- There is no imminent development on the west side of Broadway where many of the industrial uses are – they seem to be working and serving a community need

## **Housing**

- Like the diversity of housing in the area
- Need to keep building new housing that is characterized by smaller lots and walkable communities - that will then support more redevelopment along Broadway and other places in North Boulder
- The city's new comprehensive housing strategy may have implications for North Boulder
- There is an overconcentration of special needs/affordable housing in North Boulder
- Three affordable housing projects sprung the neighborhood into action, asking the question - why are we concentrating these uses in North Boulder, and how are we letting developers transfer their affordable housing requirement to North Boulder? The three projects include: 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Yarmouth Avenue, NE; Broadway and Yarmouth Avenue, NE (why do we have 100% residential and affordable on such a key corner); and the Lee Hill/Boulder Housing Partners Project in North Boulder. The whole process for these three was very non-transparent.
- Supports mixed income but has some concerns about overconcentration
- Do not allow the continued concentration of shelters, permanent supported housing, affordable housing, and social services – the area has a disproportionate amount already

## **Arts**

- An arts district is a good idea to build off of the eclectic nature of North Boulder
- There is the opportunity to celebrate North Boulder as the most eclectic part of town
- One way to support the arts district is to brand the corridor with streetscape, signage, building design standards
- Support an arts district in North Boulder with an arts-oriented anchor that is dedicated where the Armory now sits
- The Armory site could become a vibrant, multi-use space where art plays an integral part.
- Some examples of good arts oriented projects include:
  - The Short North arts district in Columbus, OH – it is a good example of how economically advantageous an arts district can be
  - Gallery/artist loft space created in an historic hotel in Fergus Falls, MN
  - An "arts campus" from old Tannery buildings in Santa Cruz, CA
  - A 1920's office building in Michigan City, Indiana will soon be home to artist lofts, classroom, studio and commercial space
  - In Loveland, CO the old Feed and Grain is becoming artists' live/work space, creative business, community space, and an outdoor plaza.

## **Transportation/Connectivity**

- Lack of connectivity is an issue – when this area developed it was more of a suburban, cul-de-sac model
- The north/south connections are especially lacking
- North Broadway needs attention – there may have been some ideas in the 95' plan to address this we could revisit
- Getting across Broadway on foot to any new village center will be problematic
- A traffic light at Yarmouth Avenue would help
- There are still a lot of dead ends and missing links with roads and multi use paths
- The SKIP ends at the homeless shelter – it would get much better ridership if it extended north (for proximity and not feeling comfortable sharing station with homeless shelter)
- Locate a new transit center away from the homeless shelter to get more use
- Speed limits are too high on North Broadway for it to be pedestrian oriented
- The lack of parking in North Boulder has already become an issue as we grow (which we want to happen)
- Residents on the west side of Broadway and up Lee Hill drive here to North Broadway. Those who live in Holiday walk everywhere
- The intersections along Broadway are dangerous and need to be addressed.

- The traffic coming and going due to people who work here but don't live here will only be a bigger issue
- Would like to see more roundabouts or trees and benches along Broadway
- Want to see the Gateway addressed. It only needs landscaping per the plan and we don't even have that
- Would like to see signage as well welcoming people to Boulder
- Create an integrated network of streets
- Use street and pedestrian connections to tie the neighborhoods together
- Transportation improvements should address the traffic impacts of new development on the existing transportation systems

#### **Groceries/Food**

- The neighborhood wants a grocery store
- Like idea for a small scale grocery store
- Like idea of some type of North Boulder farmers market

#### **Land Uses and Zoning**

- The use review process for redevelopment on the west side of Broadway is onerous and costly.
- Even in industrially zoned areas many office uses are not allowed
- Not happy that Violet Crossing and Westview developments have minimal retail space
- Would like to see more contiguous redevelopment
- North Boulder needs land uses that are destinations (Amante and bike shops to some extent now, but need more)
- Some type of entertainment venue could be oriented around music (e.g., how Lyons uses music to draw people)
- North Boulder has a lot of interesting land uses, but they are scattered
- The issue isn't just zoning – e.g., you can't just expect to change the zoning and for development to happen – we need to be more creative and incentivize the right things so they really happen
- Should look at zoning along Broadway between Violet Avenue and Quince Avenue – that area could accommodate more density
- Need to understand what has worked and not worked (and why) with commercial and retail development on the Broadway corridor north of Lee Hill
- Need to understand the advantages and disadvantages of current zoning and potential zoning changes on the corridor
- Need to understand the residential concentration and economic mix that will support viable commercial and cultural development on the Broadway corridor
- The village center concept feels ½ done with west side of Broadway being missing piece. Sees two obstacles to redeveloping rest of this area: the market area is limited (i.e., if you draw a 2 mile radius much of it is open space) and the land use patterns that created North Boulder make it difficult to have an urban, walkable place
- Take a closer look at the zoning and what is allowed – would like more flexibility for the right kind of development
- The MU-1 zoning category may be too restrictive for the market
- The area needs an anchor – a grocery store, a brewpub, or some type of movie theater/brewpub to generate activity and draw people
- Supports some type of live/work spaces on west side of North Broadway
- Interested in a Library and how the plan can benefit North Boulder businesses.
- Do not want to see huge box stores so I like the current zoning

### **Developers, Nonresidential Property Owners, Business Owners**

#### **Land Use and Development**

- The density in Holiday is actually more than the plan calls for in that area

- The assumption for 95,000 square feet of office in the armory area does not make sense anymore
- Some of the commercial space as part of uptown/Holiday took 10 years to lease up
- The area needs some type of anchor before much more retail/nonresidential will be supported
- The village center concept should not just be on four corners – why not extend it north into the armory site?
- The armory site is currently zoned MU-1, which is more restrictive than BMS (MU-1 has restrictions on nonresidential square footage); the intent of the MU-1 district is more for residential with small scale neighborhood-serving retail and other nonresidential
- Concern about affecting the viability of the village center area building out by allowing any more nonresidential and extending the BMS zoning north to the armory site. However, the BMS zoning will not allow for an anchor.
- The market is really different in North Boulder – prices, demand, etc. don't necessarily align with concepts in the plan yet
- Many of the properties will not redevelop because of the zoning
- If there was a way to reduce fees for annexation and then modify the zoning it might work for county enclaves in North Boulder
- Only allowing live/work units in North Boulder is problematic – the city doesn't need it that much
- Income producing light industrial space provides no incentive to redevelop
- North Boulder will never be a “hot item” for commercial because it is on the edge of town
- Would like to see some type of study to evaluate what is really needed in the area – the conditions have changed since 1995 and there may need to be a different land use mix
- The city should be more open to development that may not be consistent with the plan but is responsive to the areas current needs – that would spur more redevelopment
- The development on the west side of Broadway is an eye sore and should redevelop. However, it could price out artists and other unique users. Ideally we would improve the aesthetics but keep it affordable for unique users like this.

#### **Activity in Area**

- Would like to see more pedestrian activity
- The area needs to be more inviting for pedestrians
- Would like to see more retail in the area

#### **Artists Community**

- The NoBo Art District in itself should be promoted as an attraction

#### **Homeless Issue**

- Concern with the homeless population in the area. Routinely see activities disruptive to businesses as a result
- The homeless population is too concentrated in North Boulder.
- Some of the homeless in the area can be aggressive.

#### **Transportation and Parking**

- Parking is of concern. Most people drive to North Boulder now. Having minimal parking is great for the locals that want to live in a walkable community, but not great for businesses who rely on customers finding parking spaces (especially for businesses that directly front on Broadway)
- From an urban design standpoint, minimal parking is good (parking in rear, reduced), but for retailers is it not good
- Could make the southeast corner of Broadway and US 36 a Park N' Ride

### **Nonprofits**

#### **General**

- Should revisit the vision in the plan. Conditions and attitudes about the area have changed (e.g., the rural character may not be as important now as it was in 1995)

### **Zoning and Land Use**

- Should be more flexibility to go outside of zoning code for new interesting projects
- Density bonuses could work
- Could adopt some type of overlay where developers don't have to build affordable housing (if we really want the west side of Broadway to redevelop)
- The zoning code has limited allowances for efficiency units (very small apartments) with minimum square footages – if there was more flexibility for these we may be able to get more density and affordable units
- Keep in mind affordable commercial space

### **Affordable Housing**

- There used to be large scale, multifamily developments in Boulder – hence, it was easier to provide the required 20% affordable housing on site. Now, sites are smaller so developers and the city have to get creative.
- The affordable housing will even out in the rest of the city relative to the disproportionate amount in North Boulder now.
- Research shows that affordable housing can have a positive impact on neighborhoods when there is the right balance of land uses – this includes having a good mix of housing, but also daily services nearby (e.g. grocery store)

### **Economic Vitality**

- Any plan strategies should be backed up by a market study so they are grounded in economic realities
- A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district could be a tool if we really want this area to redevelop (or some type of district to help with financing for flood issues, affordable housing, etc.)

### **Transportation**

- The plan falsely assumes that Broadway's capacity is fine. With significant redevelopment, it may not be.

### **Library**

- The library site may have water/flood and parking issues
- The library recently did a survey of North Boulder residents regarding community needs

### **Arts District**

- The arts group wants to apply to the state for an arts district designation (a state creative district)
  - The state has a tiered process, where the applicant has to get local government approval (via a resolution or similar) before they can apply
  - With this, the first step is getting council to approve a resolution recognizing the North Boulder Arts District
  - The general process is 1) submit a proposal to the arts commission for a recommendation, 2) city council accepts, 3) apply to the state for designation and funds, and as part of that process set up their own organization with sustainable funding, etc.
- The state sees these districts also as economic engines – could the city as well?

## **Other**

### **Commercial and Neighborhood Issues**

- Lack of change in the commercial areas in last several years is a concern– would really like to see a true neighborhood center

- North Boulder needs to be more of a self-sustaining neighborhood – need day-to-day conveniences like a pharmacy, groceries, etc.
- The small format retail has struggled more so with Uptown than Holiday. Holiday is fully leased, maybe as a function of better design.
- The village center concept in the original plan should remain and not become a strip
- There is no incentive for property owners on the west side of Broadway (between Violet Avenue and Yellow Pine Avenue) to develop
- Focus the plan update on areas of change (north of Violet Avenue)
- A market study of the village center area would inform this process
- Look at the subcommunity as a whole- Table Mesa has a neighborhood/commercial center and so should North Boulder.
- Armory Site (southeast corner of Lee Hill Drive and Broadway)
  - The area needs cultural amenities
  - Naropa consolidating their campuses there would be supported
  - Single-family detached housing would be okay; high density mixed use is over saturated in Boulder
  - Should have heart, occupied 24/7
  - Should be the glue of the community, cohesive, and the entry into the city.

#### **Parking, Transportation, and Infrastructure**

- Consider allowing height to compensate for flood mitigation cost
- Explore new approaches to parking. A parking district where users share may be a good solution to avoid seas of asphalt, keep the area pedestrian oriented, and provide adequate parking for retailers/restaurants
- New restaurants on North Broadway can be challenging because there is not enough parking along and near North Broadway
- Garages may not be a solution because they primarily get used for car storage. They benefit some of the residents/offices.
- Would like to see a bus line running along US 36 to the commercial areas along 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> Streets. This would get good ridership as an underserved route.
- Would support roundabouts at Yarmouth Avenue and Violet Avenue
- Some bicycle connections have been made since the original plan
- North Boulder is the northern gateway to Boulder, it should be welcoming. It is very confusing and dangerous as it is
- Connections needed on west side (pedestrian/bike) to the mobile home parks

#### **Land Use Mix**

- Any type of large format retail that could be an anchor is difficult to do with the current zoning along North Broadway
- The whole area north of Violet Street could be one neighborhood center. It doesn't have to be just concentrated in the village center area.
- The MU-1 zone restricts uses to those that are neighborhood serving, but there could be opportunities to expand uses that draw from outside the neighborhood (the North Boulder residents would also benefit from it)
- There is a good mix of tenants right now along the North Broadway commercial area
- Some of the storage units in North Boulder may redevelop soon
- Some area along the west side of Broadway may support a small grocery, but developers may not invest in a grocery store unless there is high-traffic infrastructure to support it (4 lane intersection).
- The existing grocery options need to be better advertised – there is a mexican grocer, a gas station, and some small shops

**Arts District**

- Arts district may be a good idea if it can integrate with what is already in North Boulder
- Some related businesses may include welding, studio space, live/work, or small coffee shops
- Smaller mixed use commercial is acceptable
- Supports commercial on the east side of the site, but commercial shouldn't extend past Yellow Pine.
- Some existing retail along 28th Street is underused

**Affordable Housing**

- Keeping the area around 40% (near what Holiday is) affordable housing units is a good mix.
- Less concerned than others about overconcentration of affordable housing. However, if we start getting into 60%-70% affordable housing units for the area that might be too high

## June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comments

The feedback staff received from the March and April community interviews informed a North Boulder Subcommunity Plan update memo to Planning Board on June 6, 2013. The purpose of that memo was to introduce the Planning Board to the project and solicit feedback. Staff also sent this memo directly to community members for review and comment. Both groups reviewed and commented on the June 6 memo. Staff has also summarized these comments and provided responses below.

### **Comment: Keep It Geographically Focused**

The plan update should not reopen the entire original North Boulder Subcommunity Plan. Staff should focus the effort on the Village Center and Yarmouth North areas.

**Response:** This is consistent with the direction provided by City Council in the 2013 Work Plan.

### **Comment: Broaden the Scope Within the Focused Geographic Area**

The scope should be broadened within the North Broadway geographic focus area to include several other issues, including:

- Transportation and Parking - The transportation network along Broadway may be a barrier towards realization of the Village Center and Yarmouth North concepts. Broadway is not very walkable, and east west connections across Broadway are problematic due to traffic speeds and street widths. Similarly, parking issues present a challenge to balance business needs with the 1995 Plan's vision for a pedestrian scale environment.
- Housing - The overconcentration of affordable and special needs housing in North Boulder, particularly north of Violet Avenue, continues to be a concern. Similarly, the number and types of surrounding housing also relates to the success of the Village Center and Yarmouth North areas.
- Cultural Facilities - Land uses like an arts district and library can contribute to the success of the Village Center and Yarmouth North areas.

**Response:** Staff will be assessing all of the key barriers and opportunities towards realizing the 1995 Plan's vision for the Village Center and Yarmouth North areas. A market study (see **Attachment 3**) will inform what some of these key barriers are. However, the plan update will not address any topics that do not directly relate to these geographic areas.

### **Comment: Citywide Initiatives May Not Adequately Address North Boulder-Specific Issues and Community Involvement**

While there are several citywide efforts to address issues like housing (Comprehensive Housing Strategy) and transportation (Transportation Master Plan) noted in the June 6 Planning Board memo, the North Boulder-specific issues may not get adequately addressed in these broader initiatives. The North Boulder Subcommunity Plan should be the implementation mechanism for the recommendations that come out of these efforts.

The North Boulder Subcommunity Plan update is potentially the most effective process for community feedback on issues around housing, transportation, arts, and the library.

**Response:** Both the Comprehensive Housing Strategy and the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) are citywide efforts that will have opportunities for community feedback and geographically specific implementation items. Both processes are in early stages so it is too soon to tell if there will be any recommendations to integrate into the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan. In order to keep this plan update focused and efficient (and in accordance with the 2013 Work Plan), staff will only focus on issues that

relate to the Village Center and Yarmouth North areas, and coordinating with the Comprehensive Housing Strategy and Transportation Master Plan only as they relate to these geographic areas.

Staff is also working with housing and transportation staff to develop more user-friendly communications portals for North Boulder specific issues that may or may not be part of this plan update. This will include joint TMP and North Boulder Subcommunity Plan outreach later in 2013 (see Proposed Update Process and Timeline), and a North Boulder city staff point person to assist community members with addressing their concerns and directing them to the appropriate channels.

## **Specific Comments on June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo**

### June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comment 1 (Planning Board Member)

I think the focus on the commercial North Broadway corridor makes a lot of sense. It keeps the scope of the update manageable while addressing the most important issues that the subcommunity faces. However, I think the scope needs to be broadened somewhat from what is proposed in the memo we received. Issues around parking, transportation and housing are central to the success of the commercial area and should be included in the sub-community plan revision.

For example, high traffic speeds along North Broadway along with the lack of crossing opportunities and the absence of a traffic light at Yarmouth and Broadway make it very difficult to realize the walkable, pedestrian friendly vision for the commercial area. The commercial viability of the area could increase dramatically if the two sides of Broadway were better linked and the roadway noise and danger were reduced. The TMP will be looking at issues across the entire city, and the specific needs of the North Broadway area will be easily lost in the larger process. Similarly with parking -- there are great opportunities to increase development feasibility for the west side of Broadway by creating a parking district and/or some kind of parking sharing. Again, the larger parking process wouldn't have the same focus on the needs of the North Broadway area.

Regarding housing, I agree that this is not the place to evaluate the larger issue of the ratio of affordable housing in the region north of Violet. However, how much housing is allowed or encouraged by the zoning is an important factor for the corridor development, and that needs to factor into the discussion.

Finally, an important reason to widen the scope is to make the process viable for neighborhood representatives. It's unreasonable to expect people to advocate for the neighborhood through as many as six separate processes: the sub-community revision, the TMP, the parking strategy, the comprehensive housing strategy, the library commission and the arts district designation. To the extent that we can centralize the process while keeping the focus on the North Broadway commercial corridor, it makes it feasible for residents to stay involved and engaged.

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### June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comment 2 (Planning Board Member Comment)

In general, I agree that connectivity and multi-modal issues are best addressed in the Transportation Master Plan (TMP). It is an actual plan. I think, however, that because the Housing and Parking are strategies and not plans, the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan (NBSP) update should address housing and parking as it would be the place to implement whatever strategies are developed in the corresponding strategy document.

Specific comments on the 6/6/ memo:

- What constitutes "overconcentration"? Does quantitative criteria exist to define such a condition? Without such definitions, how can we make that call? What are the impacts of overconcentration? Are they negative?
- The subcommunity plan should address the specific issues related to housing, while the housing strategy creates the overarching policies and objectives. Therefore, the housing issues related to this area should be addressed in this document.
- The NBSP should be the implementation tool of these strategies therefore, parking should be addressed as guided by the strategies.
- The TMP is actually a plan and agree that multi-modal and connectivity are addressed more appropriately in that document.
- Shouldn't the NBSP implement strategies defined by the Comprehensive Housing Strategy?
- Does this preclude the planned library? If so, any update to the NBSP should reflect this.
- However, as North Boulder is built out, a library comparable to Reynolds or Meadows would be more appropriate. The incubator station should be treated as a stop gap measure.

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### June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comment 3 (Public Comment)

We appreciate that the City's commitment is not to reopen the Subcommunity plan in its entirety. We agree with limiting the focus. We just want to be sure that the critical elements of the original plan that are not working from our perspective get addressed. We agree with your approach in the following respects:

- Focus on that portion of North Boulder from Violet north to the City limits at Broadway and 36. (We would have the focus start just south of the Broadway Violet intersection, using the Didomenico Art house installation as the southern anchor. An analysis of the commercial viability of the North Broadway corridor would then include its three central intersections: Broadway/Violet; Broadway/Yarmouth and Broadway/Lee Hill.)
- Focus on the commercial/retail viability of this portion of the North Broadway Corridor. We have requested and support a market study that comprehensively examines what is working and not working about commercial development on this corridor. We would like to understand much better than we do the zoning, market, environmental, annexation, property ownership issues and their contribution to this corridor's commercial/retail stagnation. We would also like to understand how/whether the creation of a flourishing Art District in North Boulder, building on our existing artist community, can support commercial/retail development here.

We want to be sure, however, that any tailored reopening of the plan actually focuses on the factors that, from our perspective, are critical to the commercial and retail viability of Broadway North of Violet. Those are primarily transportation, housing and cultural issues.

#### **Transportation and circulation**

We and the North Boulder Alliance both believe that resolution of the transportation and circulation issues inhibiting must be integrated into any update of the Subcommunity Plan. While transportation issues are critical to any planning effort, this proposed update of the plan, after all centers on a transportation artery: Broadway. Many aspects of the current transportation and circulation inhibit the connection between the east and west sides of Broadway and are unsafe. Necessary improvements include:

- Pedestrian and bike friendly improvements: Slow traffic, two lanes, traffic circles
- Motorist friendly improvements: Yarmouth signal, Lee Hill turning lane, adequate parking
- Integrated network of streets improving circulation and providing routes other than Broadway both for everyday use and for emergency access
- Streetscape improvements to Broadway that make it more attractive and comfortable for neighbors and visitors to patronize North Boulder businesses.

**Housing**

We and the North Boulder Alliance have stressed repeatedly the importance of constraining the concentration of affordable housing in North Boulder even as we recognize the necessity of increasing housing units in our community to support the commercial/retail growth we desire. We don't think it is merely an issue of fairness. We are convinced that the commercial/retail viability of our community depends on attracting residents who have the means to support local restaurants and retail.

**Cultural amenities**

The two cultural amenities we believe are critical to the commercial/retail viability of this portion of the North Broadway corridor are the creation and support of a North Boulder Art District and the fulfillment of the original Subcommunity plan's original commitment to a North Boulder Branch Library.

**NoBo Art District**

We know plans are underway for designation of a North Boulder Art District. We urge that the Subcommunity plan update be coordinated with this designation because we have become increasingly convinced that a thriving art scene in North Boulder can play a critical role in overcoming the economic stagnation we are experiencing. As it has done in so many other communities, a variety of artistic activity can draw neighbors and visitors, enhancing local businesses and events.

**Branch Library**

We believe the City's and Boulder Housing Partners' commitment to a library station at WestView will help anchor the Broadway/Yarmouth intersection and enhance its commercial viability. Our primary concern, however, remains the City's lack of follow through on the full service branch for which the site was acquired many years ago.

**North Armory Site**

We are concerned that the timing of your project will limit the options available to the current option holders on the Armory site. The size, location and major Broadway frontage of this site make it one of the most important remaining parcels in the North Broadway corridor for enhancing the corridor's commercial and retail viability.

In our April 16th note and vision submission to you, we tried briefly to set out the potential elements of a new vision for a viable North Broadway corridor. We took a deliberately brainstorming approach to reflect the diversity of opinion that we know exists in our North Boulder community while at the same time providing a focus on the issues we thought most important. We did not see our note and vision submission included in their entirety in your June 6 Information Item. We would appreciate your including them, as well as this note, in the submission you make to the Planning Board for its August 15th study session. If you would prefer a more focused submission, we're glad to oblige.

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**June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comment 4 (Public Comment)**

After reviewing your attachment further I realized that the North Boulder Sub-Community Plan is not intending to address the housing issue. I am a bit confused by the list of what the Plan will address and what it will not. The 'will not address' list is much longer and it seems that many of the concerns we have expressed over the past three months to you are being exempted from the Plan. Why document our concerns if they are not going to be addressed?

Isn't there already a NoBo Business Corridor Plan for the Village Center that is separate from the SubCommunity Plan? It seems short-sighted to not include residential in the Sub-Community Plan? The word

community is comprehensive. I am not sure I am understanding the goal of the revisit to the Plan if it does not include all areas of concern.

If the subject of our over-concentration of affordable housing and social services is to be included in the New Comprehensive Housing Strategy for Boulder, then please address these concerns there. I see that both your name and Lesli's are on the staff list for that document. Although reading through the report on the study session it is clear from the market study that North Boulder is going to be hit even harder due to the amount of developable space. The market study does not go near the topic of concentration, which is a huge oversight. This small community will continue to carry the load of affordable housing for Boulder, thus segregating populations within the city by economics. This is a sure formula for slumming and it is not what the BVSD called for. It is the exact opposite of the dispersal called for in the BVSD. Dispersal is not addressed in depth in the New Comprehensive Housing Strategy study session report.

I believe that the North Boulder SubCommunity Plan needs to address our local community's particular issues and protect our future development, not just along the commercial corridor. The infrastructure of housing will or will not support the business model, depending on the success of the residential community development. The infrastructure of transportation and parking will or will not support the business model, depending on the success of the residential community development. Community facilities and an art district directly impact the success of the commercial corridor.

Please excuse me if I am misunderstanding the scope of the Plan, or lack thereof. It looks like the new plan is only taking into consideration the topics addressed by the old plan. How can we ignore the many changes that have occurred in our community since the first plan was drafted? If we are going to put the time and effort into rethinking this, why not make it as effective as possible?

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#### June 6, 2013 Planning Board Memo Comment 5 (Public Comment)

Thank you for the update: it seems to comprehensively report the various opinions and concerns you have collected on the future development of North Boulder.

One thing caught my eye: the comment that HHS is not concerned about the concentration of affordable housing and social services in Boulder north of Violet Street if it continues to hover around 40%. I am attaching a special report generated by/for her department in November 2010. I hope that you will read it carefully as it expresses concern at that early date that the community is well out of balance with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan. It states, in fact, that the concentration was already well above 40% then. Not included in the count is the 100% affordable Westview apartments, 1175 Lee Hill, 820 Lee Hill, Violet Crossing, the Blue Spruce auto development, Rosewood, the Armory, and whatever else might be developed on the west side of Broadway north of Violet. HHS knows perfectly well that with the completion of these projects the percentage will be in the mid to high 50% range, perhaps over 60%.

HHS was concerned enough in 2010 to order a special study. Now they use casual language and loose statistics to suggest there is no problem. I have presented this document repeatedly in the past to City Council, City Manager, Planning, etc. It is important to understand the full history and momentum of affordable housing in North Boulder. Our Housing and Human Services Department has not been candid with the public or city officials. They continue to ignore their own report of an imbalance in the city's goal of 10% affordable housing dispersed throughout the city of Boulder.

I recommend that Planning order from the Housing and Human Services Department an updated and accurate report on the current and projected percentages of affordable housing in Boulder north of Violet. This is

essential to developing a plan for North Boulder that meets the expectations of the BVSD and addresses the concerns of the community. The department needs to be accountable for the situation of imbalance they have created. If I sound bitter and frustrated it is because we continually run up against this HHS "wall of denial" in our efforts to improve the future of our community.

The word 'moratorium' has been brought up by both citizens and several city council members to no avail. Perhaps it is the North Boulder Sub-community Plan that needs to propose this concept. Calling for an exemption from the 20% affordable requirement for any future development (development that has not to date been issued permit) in the area of Boulder North of Violet between city boundaries west and east.

Please let me know if that is something the citizens of North Boulder could collect and document support for and that you could include in the NBSCP.

# North Boulder Alliance Comments – April and July 2013

## North Boulder Alliance Comments – April 15, 2013

### Vision for North Boulder

- Broadway connects the neighborhoods to its east and west, rather than divides them, as is currently the case.
- Neighborhoods retain their individual character by requiring new development and redevelopment to be in harmony with the adjacent areas.
- The North Broadway corridor attracts business owners to provide a variety of retail and commercial services.
- The North Broadway corridor has a distinct and coherent visual identity appropriate to its function as Boulder's northern gateway.

### North Boulder Subcommunity Plan

- Residents of North Boulder need to be well-informed about the process for updating the plan and need multiple opportunities (of varying degrees of intensity) to provide input that actually affects the outcome.
- The update process should examine how and why development since its adoption has deviated from the plan in so many ways and make appropriate policy changes that will address the adverse consequences of those deviations from plan. In particular, the heavy presence of the homeless population has an adverse impact on adjacent neighborhoods, local businesses, pedestrians, and bus ridership.
- The update process should be completed before any significant development/redevelopment projects that are not already approved are allowed to move forward.

### Transportation and Circulation

- A North Boulder transportation plan creates an integrated network of streets that improves circulation and provides alternate routes, both for everyday use and for emergency access and/or evacuation.
- Street and pedestrian connections across Broadway "tie" the neighborhoods together.
- Transportation improvements address the dramatic increase in traffic resulting from recent and new development, especially the more high-density infill developments and redevelopments that are planned. These include upgrading signals at Broadway and Lee Hill, making street connections across Broadway from the residential developments on both sides, making pedestrian movement across Broadway safer and more inviting, adding shelters to bus stops to make them more user-friendly, and filling in missing links in bicycle lanes and multi-use paths.
- A new transit center located away from the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless helps to increase ridership and improve transit users' perception of safety.
- Streetscape improvements to Broadway will make it more attractive and comfortable for neighbors and visitors to patronize North Broadway businesses. Additional parking will help those businesses attract customers, both from North Boulder and outside.

### Neighborhoods

- The concentration of shelters, permanent supported housing, affordable housing, and social services that has taken place since the adoption of the subcommunity plan should not be allowed to continue. The area north of Violet now has 50% or more affordable housing, in contrast to the citywide goal of 10%. New development should provide no more affordable housing than is required under Boulder's inclusionary housing ordinance or should use the cash-in-lieu option to build affordable units in under-served neighborhoods. Social service agencies should be encouraged to locate or grow in other parts of Boulder so that they may serve the broader community without having a disproportionate impact on North Boulder.
- North Boulder has a variety of neighborhoods, each of which addresses its residents' needs and preferences in an effective way. This variety has contributed to the diversity of North Boulder's population with respect to age, family structure, and income.

- The individual character of these neighborhoods should be respected and protected; infill development should be in harmony with respect to density, home type, and design. Adjacent redevelopment should be designed to provide effective transitions, not harsh contrasts.

### **Business and Retail**

- North Broadway should become a hub for a wide range of businesses that serve both the neighborhood market and that of Boulder as a whole.
- North Broadway's existing low-cost commercial and industrial space on the west side is important for nurturing artists, small business start-ups, and niche businesses. However, streetscape and signage improvements can integrate these businesses into a more coherent North Broadway business district on both sides of the street.
- The North Broadway commercial corridor should be managed as a business center, with efforts to analyze the market for various businesses, recruit business owners, and manage design and parking issues.
- The business components of developments on parcels such as the Armory will be especially critical to the future of North Broadway's economic health. Development of the Armory site should include businesses that attract both daytime and night-time patrons from beyond the neighborhood.

### **Community Facilities and Amenities**

- The village center proposed in the 1995 subcommunity plan should be developed as a focal point that provides a sense of community to the diverse neighborhoods of North Boulder. It would be an excellent location for facilities such as meeting spaces, a police substation, or a library branch (see below).
- The subcommunity plan envisioned a library branch in North Boulder. We are still waiting. We understand that financial limitations make a full branch difficult to build in the near term; there are lower-cost options that could at least provide some service to the growing population of library patrons in North Boulder

# NORTH BOULDER ALLIANCE

*Preserving the integrity of our community as it grows.*

P.O. Box 2063, Boulder, CO 80306

(303) 444-5757

July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013

Dear Jeff,

The North Boulder Alliance (NBA) would like to offer comments on the proposed scope of the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan (NBSP) update. The planning staff recommended to the Planning Board that the NBSP update focus exclusively on the viability of the North Broadway commercial area -- by focusing on barriers to and opportunities for realization of the 1995 Plan's vision for a village center. Unfortunately, we believe you will find that the principal barriers are issues excluded from the scope, as are the most promising opportunities to achieve the vision for North Broadway and the village center that were embodied in the 1995 plan. We also have concerns about the plans for community engagement and would like to recommend ways to make this a robust and productive partnership.

***Vision for North Boulder:*** The staff document acknowledges that it has received input from some residents, businesses, and taxpayers in North Boulder, but fails to recommend a visioning process that would engage the community in a meaningful way to shape a vision that will have broad public support and will thus be more likely to influence future development.

***Recommendation: Hold professionally facilitated, in-depth visioning meetings in North Boulder.***

***Assessment of Today's North Boulder Relative to the 1995 Plan:*** We question if the staff has really examined the ways in which North Boulder's development has diverged from the 1995 plan. As a small example, referring to WestView as a mixed-use development is gratuitous at best and misleading at worst. Labeling Dakota Ridge North as Wonderland Hills shows a similar lack of familiarity with North Boulder as it exists today.

The staff memo states that "the [1995] plan calls for a Village Center concept on both sides of Broadway at around Yarmouth Avenue. The east side of this area has seen significant redevelopment, but the west side has not. These redevelopment areas have been largely consistent with the plan's goals for vertical mixed use and pedestrian-oriented design."

The above statement is inaccurate in that the northeast corner of Yarmouth and Broadway (the center of the Village Center) commonly known as WestView in no way meets the vertical mixed use/pedestrian-oriented design requirement. In fact, it is 100% affordable rental housing. This raises the question of whether the city really knows whether the plan has been followed at all. We therefore request that the assessment process verify what's really there now.

***Recommendation: Provide a comprehensive assessment of the ways the 1995 NBSP did meet and did not meet its targeted goals.***

***Barriers to a Viable North Broadway Business Corridor/Village Center:*** The growing concentration of social services, shelters, subsidized housing, and vagrants north of Violet has serious implications for the market for businesses on North Broadway, yet these issues are to be excluded from the scope of the NBSP

update. Street connectivity, traffic flow, and parking are and will continue to be critical factors in the accessibility of North Broadway businesses to their local customers, but they are not included in the scope. Similarly, community facilities that serve as a magnet for potential customers (and vagrants) are also excluded from the plan update.

The scoping document also does not acknowledge that a principal barrier to the success of the plan is the city's desire to locate more affordable housing here due to lower land values. This trend could be considered a market reality that must be acknowledged and addressed. The document correctly acknowledges that affordable housing is overly represented in north Boulder compared to other parts of the city but it does not address the reason for this, which, if not addressed, will continue to serve as a barrier to the realization of the plan.

***Recommendation: Explain in detail the barriers that inhibit healthy, thriving business development in North Boulder.***

***Opportunities for a More Viable Business Environment:*** The staff also proposes to exclude two of the more promising opportunities for adding vitality and identity to the business corridor – capital investments in streetscape and signage and the nascent arts district.

By excluding so many of the critical barriers and opportunities for achieving the kind of thriving business district envisioned in the 1995 plan from consideration in the current update, we fear the effort will be doomed to result in recommendations to address the very issues that will not be addressed in the update. Aside from wasting resources in a futile effort, the City and the community risk losing our last opportunity to influence development in a way that realizes the vision of the 1995 plan (which is still supported by so many North Boulder residents, businesses, and taxpayers).

***Recommendation: Incorporate into the 2014 NBSP update clearly defined steps to reverse the barriers into opportunities for business growth in NB.***

***Community Engagement:*** Given recent history in the City's relationship with North Boulder residents, business owners, and taxpayers, it is especially important that the public engagement process be robust and citizen-friendly. Holding public meetings or Planning Board study sessions in prime vacation time would not send the message that the City welcomes citizen engagement. Holding public meetings downtown, rather than in North Boulder, de-emphasizes and dilutes the special importance of these issues to North Boulder neighborhoods. We urge the City to take the time and make the effort to do this right.

***Recommendation: Hold a series of formally scheduled meetings in North Boulder to encourage maximum resident participation and buy-in of the NBSP update process.***

NBA appreciates the opportunity to participate in the NBSP update but believes these issues important to North Boulder residents must be addressed within the City's update process.

Sincerely,

The North Boulder Alliance

cc: Lesli Ellis