

# TOPICAL REPORT: TRENDS

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## Purpose of This Report

This Topical Report represents subject-specific research findings that will ultimately inform the content of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The information contained in this report does not necessarily constitute the final narrative that will be presented in the plan. After the findings of this report are reviewed and deemed to be accurate and sufficiently comprehensive, they will be fully synthesized with research from other topical areas as part of the Needs Assessment process. The final content of the Master Plan may reflect significant portions of this report but will not consist entirely of it. Table 1 depicts the progress of research and planning for this topical area.

**Table 1: Topical Area Research Progress**

Development Phase	Notes
✓ Research methodology approved	
✓ Preliminary research and analysis complete	
✓ Data gaps identified and remaining research assigned	
✓ All data obtained	
✓ Preliminary community plan integration review	
✓ Preliminary department leadership review	
✓ Technical (TAG) review	
✓ Board (PRAB) review	
✓ Department leadership review	Approved by KK (11/13)
<input type="checkbox"/> Topical Report research and analysis complete	
<input type="checkbox"/> Synthesis for needs assessment and community plan integration	

## Introduction

The most effective planning documents draw upon a combination of best practices in strategy development as well as highly contextual information about the planning area. Examining the key issues and evolving trends of a community provides a critical backdrop to other research findings and helps compose an accurate, comprehensive depiction of planning needs. This paper will explore the key issues and trends relevant to parks and recreation in Boulder, setting the stage to develop meaningful strategic recommendations.

In general, the recent major update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan points to three primary areas in which Boulder has experienced change in the last several years. First, demographic trends have begun to present challenges to city leaders as the population grows older, poverty rates increase, and households change structure. These trends result in an additional demand for social services and require new approaches to providing livable neighborhoods.

Second, the importance of environmental sustainability has been driven by continued increases in local energy demand and emerging awareness of climate change. The community has strengthened policies on energy efficiency and environmental protection in areas such as waste management, utilities, transportation, land use, and social services.

Third, the economic vitality of the community has faced challenges recently. While the national economic downturn affected Boulder, a number of other factors did as well. Neighboring communities grew in terms of retail development and job creation in greater proportion than Boulder. In general, this has presented local leaders and business owners more complex and difficult questions about Boulder's financial and economic condition, including how to create financially sustainable policies and frameworks to drive the community's economy.

To respond to these challenges, many of the recent and ongoing planning efforts in Boulder focus on sustainability, particularly social equity, environmental health, and economic vitality. There has also been a complementary emphasis on community design and urban form. Many of the specific issues and trends uncovered to date as a part of the parks and recreation planning process reflect these concepts, such as constituent demography, facility management processes, recreation program provision, connecting the population with outdoor and recreation resources, enhancing public health, and organizational capacity. These issues merit discussion, which this topical report aims to provide in order to offer additional context for the master-planning process.

### Key Demographic Facts and Social Trends

Boulder is the seat of Boulder County, Colorado, part of the Boulder-Longmont Metropolitan Statistical Area. The city has approximately 100,000 residents, or about one-third of the 296,000 total individuals living in Boulder County. This section of the topical report summarizes information from the U.S. Census Bureau and synthesizes it with findings from other documents provided by various agencies and organizations:

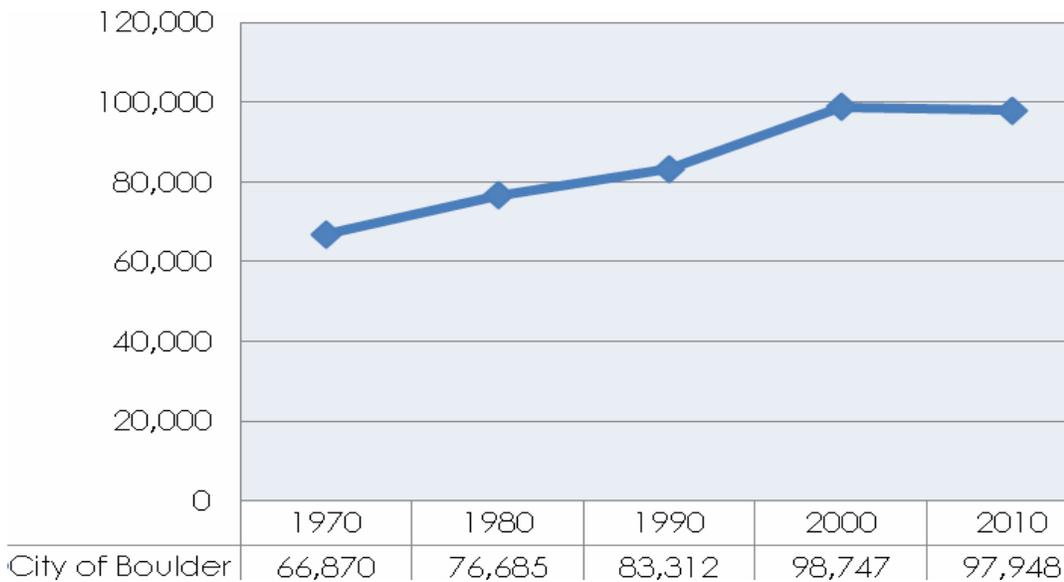
- Boulder Economic Council, *Demographic Profile*, December 2011
- Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, *2010 BVCP Key Trends Report*
- City of Boulder, Department of Community Planning & Sustainability, *Highlights from the 2010 U.S. Census*, December 2011
- City of Boulder, Department of Community Planning & Sustainability, *Existing and Projected Jobs, Housing, and Population*, October 2012
- The Community Foundation, Boulder County Civic Forum, *TRENDS*, 2011

A preface to any analysis of the demographic nature of Boulder must recognize the significant influence of the University of Colorado (CU) on the city. According to the university, about 21,600 students live in Boulder, including those in residence halls, during the academic year. This equates to 71% of the CU-Boulder student body, and because they are considered by the Census Bureau to be residents, students total about 22% of the total population of Boulder. As evidenced in the summaries below, the effect of CU is reflected in the city's demography, particularly in terms of age, income, education, and housing.

### *Population*

Reports of both the historical and projected population for the City of Boulder can vary depending upon the source of information used for analysis. On several occasions in past years, the City of Boulder has questioned the findings of the U.S. Census Bureau, claiming an undercount of both people and housing units. In 2000, the City formally challenged the results of that year’s decennial census. The Colorado State Demographer concurred with Boulder’s challenge, estimating that Boulder actually had about 4,500 additional residents and 2,000 more households than reported by the Census Bureau. The City again challenged the results of the 2010 Census, claiming primarily that group quarter populations had been undercounted by several hundred individuals. As in 2000, this challenge was also supported by the State Demographer. In December 2011, the Boulder Economic Council (BEC) synthesized the best available information from both the U.S. Census Bureau and the City of Boulder and presented results that are depicted in Figure 1. Between 1970 and 2000, the city’s population increased an average of 1.6% per year, from 66,870 to 98,747. Between 2000 and 2010, the population remained about the same, representing the lowest rate of growth in a generation.

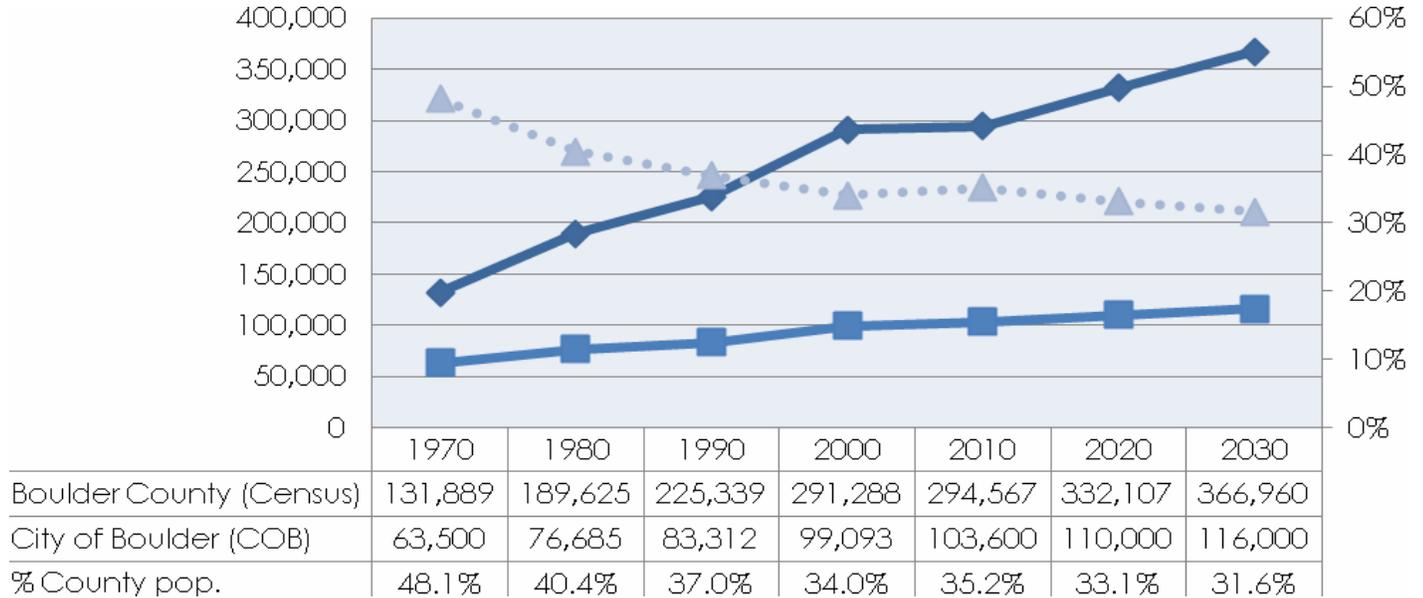
**Figure 1: BEC Boulder Population Estimates, 1970-2010**



Population forecasts for the community are limited by the fact that the U.S. Census Bureau does not make projections lower than the county level. Given these circumstances, the City of Boulder has developed its own population projection to inform planning initiatives. Their analysis finds that the population of the city is increasing, and will continue to increase, at a rate of about 1% per year. Figure 2 illustrates past estimates and future projections of population by the City of Boulder (COB) and the U.S. Census (Census). Between 1970 and 2000, Boulder County grew at a rate of about 4% per year, but from 2000 to 2010, that rate slowed to less than 1%. However, the county growth rate is expected to increase again between now and 2030 at a noticeably higher pace than that of the City of Boulder. As a result, the percentage of the county’s population living in the City of Boulder will continue to decrease, with more growth likely to occur in neighboring Longmont. The Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan, which represents the second-most-populated community in Boulder

County, projects that Longmont will meet or surpass the population of Boulder between the years 2025 and 2035.

Figure 2: Boulder City and County Population, 1970-2030



*Race*

Deriving estimates and projections of the general population is complex, and doing so based upon race is no more straightforward. Of the multiple sources consulted for this topical report, some break down the population by ethnicity, others by race. According to the Colorado State Demography Office,

Race and ethnicity are considered separate and distinct identities, with Hispanic or Latino origin asked as separate questions. Thus, in addition to their race or races, all respondents are categorized by membership in one of two ethnicities, which are "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino."

Using 2010 American Community Survey data, the Boulder Economic Council presents the race and ethnicity of the city as displayed in Table 1. The BEC specifies "race" as race alone, or in combination with one or more other races. As such, each geography will total more than 100%.

Table 2: Race Distribution, 2010

	White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Other	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
<b>City of Boulder</b>	90.4%	2.5%	1.8%	6.4%	3.2%	10.4%
<b>Boulder County</b>	89.9%	1.6%	1.3%	5.2%	5.3%	13.4%
<b>Colorado</b>	86.4%	4.9%	2.2%	3.8%	6.6%	20.8%
<b>United States</b>	76.4%	13.6%	1.6%	5.6%	5.7%	16.4%

Projections for changes to the composition of the population by race are not calculated for counties or municipalities; however, the Colorado State Demography Office developed a statewide forecast in October 2011. Figure 3 presents ethnic groups' share of the Colorado population through 2030. Populations of Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian remain relatively stable in proportion to all other races. The share of individuals of Hispanic origin grows noticeably, outpacing the growth of all other races, including White/non-Hispanic. The same trend may not unfold in the same way in Boulder, but the nationwide trend of a burgeoning Hispanic population is undeniable, and will very likely have an effect on the city.

#### *Age Distribution*

According to the data reported by the U.S. Census in the 2010 American Community Survey and the Boulder Economic Council, Boulder exhibits characteristics of a community with a major university. The city has a median age of 28.8 years, compared to the national median of 37.2 years. Looking specifically at the adult population, one-third is between the ages of 18 and 24. Nationally, 13% of the population is within that age range (see Figure 4).

Over time, age distribution is expected to shift to reflect a larger proportion of older adults. Generally, all segments of the population in terms of age will continue to grow, but not as quickly as those later in life. The Colorado State Demography Office offers age-based population projections for each county. Data for Boulder County is presented in Figure 5. Unfortunately, the State Demographer does not offer data specific to municipalities. Trends show that the segment of adults aged 50-69 and 70 and older will experience notable growth in the next decades. The population of individuals 70 and older especially will grow, predictably at an increasing rate.

Figure 3: Race Distribution, 2000-2030

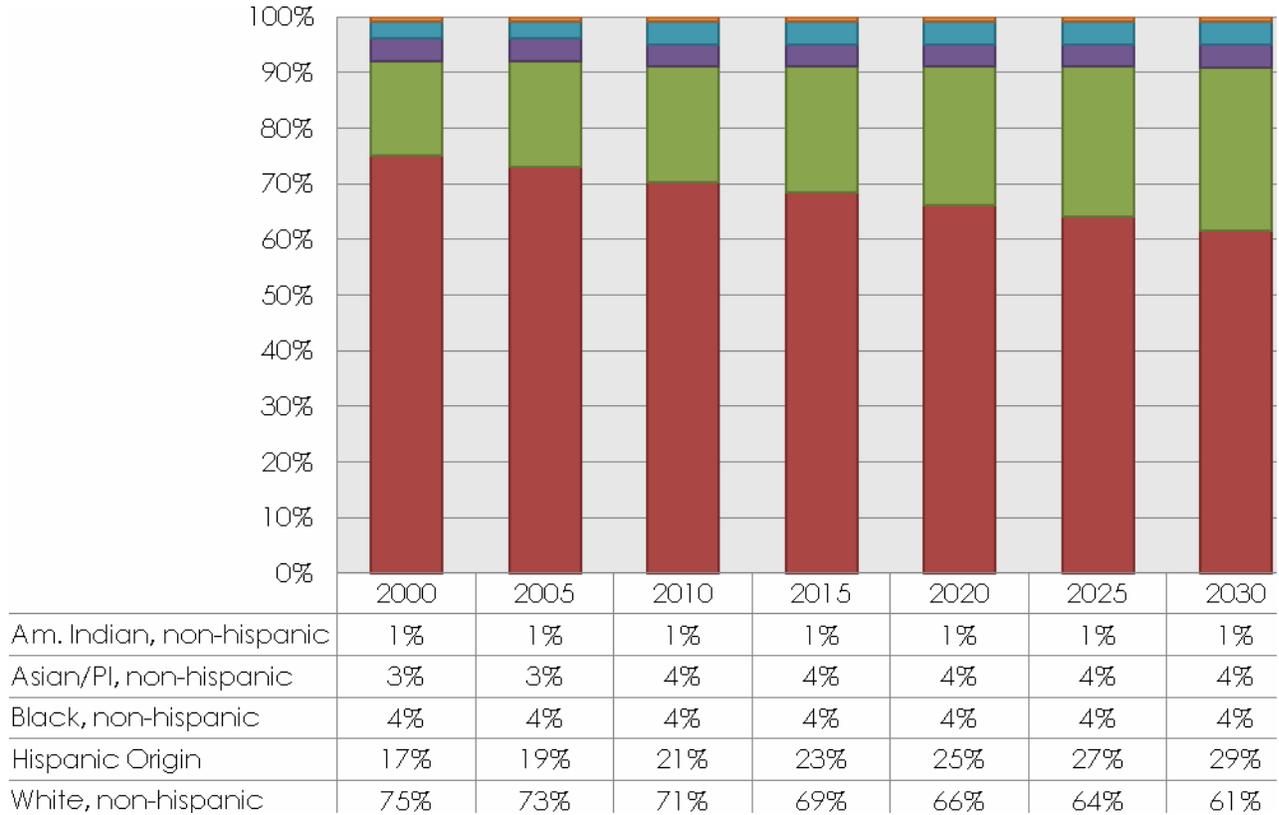


Figure 4: Age Distribution of Adults, 2010

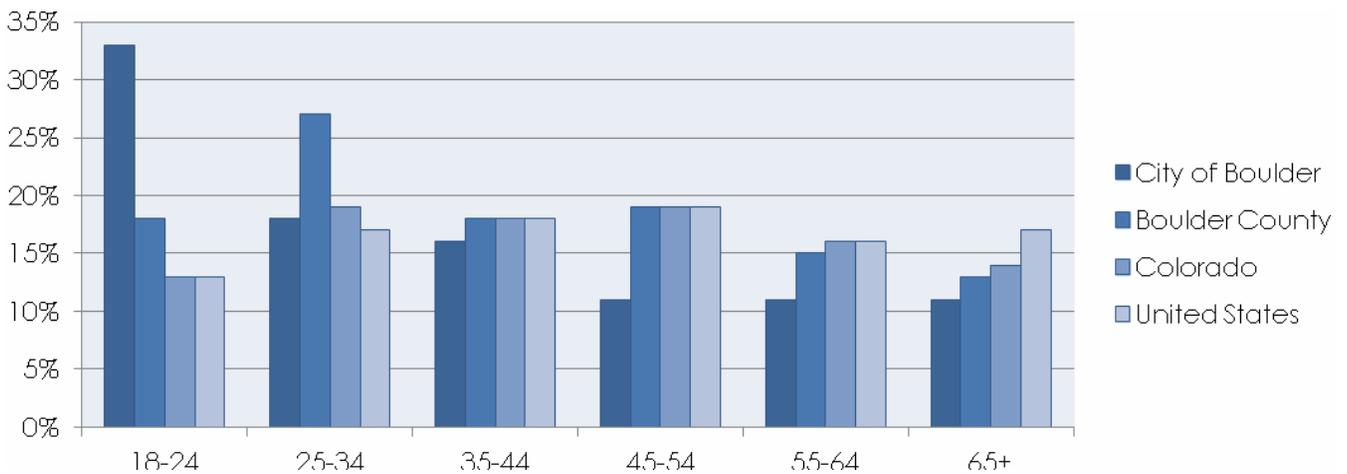
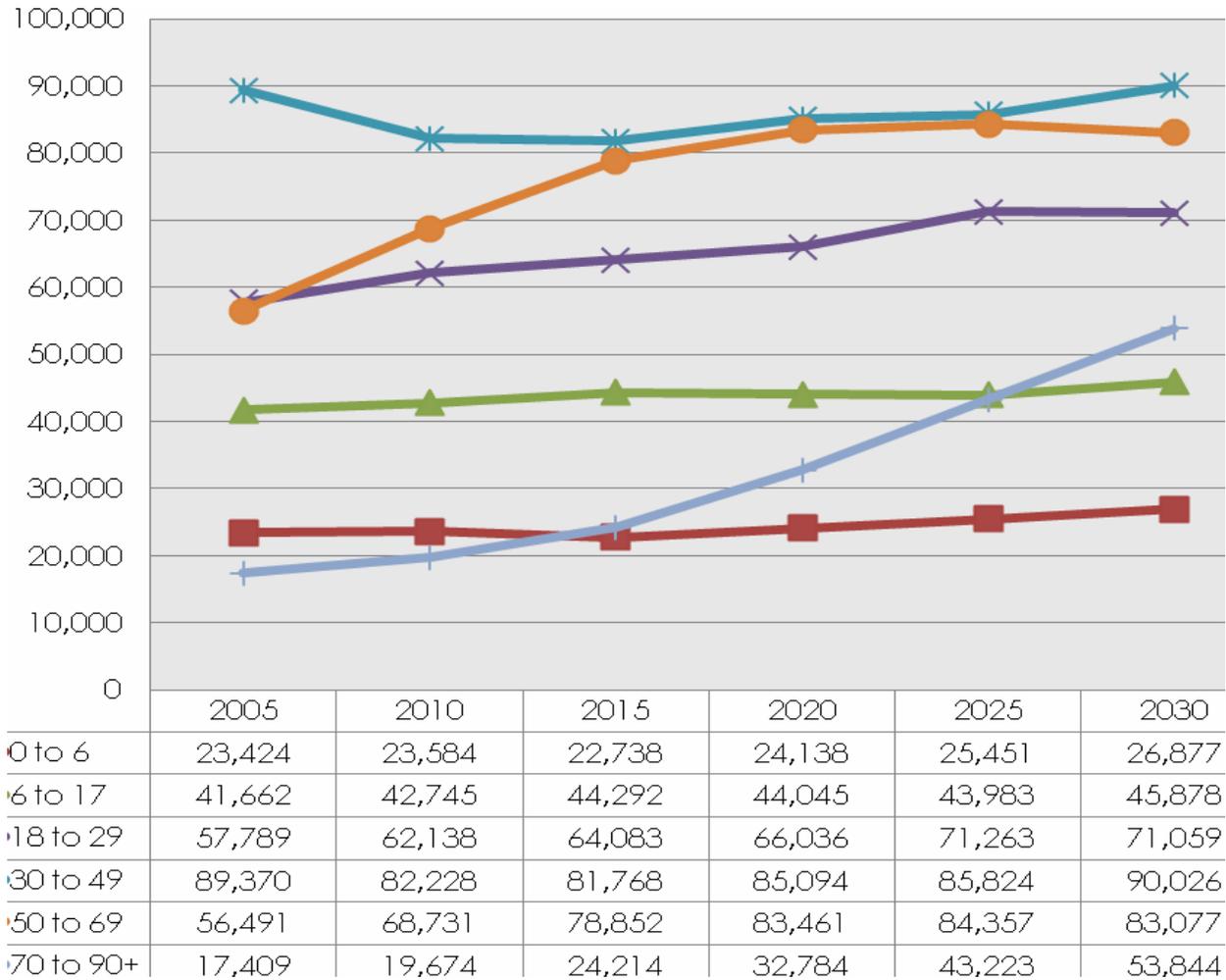


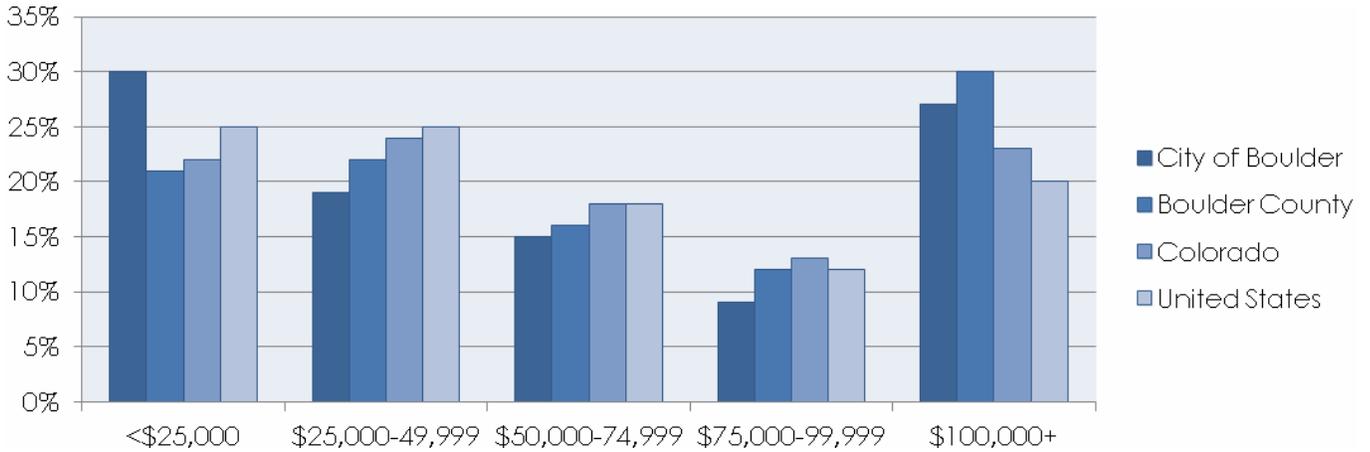
Figure 5: Population Estimates by Age, Boulder County, 2005-2030



*Income*

When the City of Boulder’s household income is analyzed, the presence of CU is again seen in the relatively high proportion of earnings less than \$25,000 per year. Figure 6 represents data collected by the 2010 American Community Survey and the Boulder Economic Council. Note how the city is reflected at the other extreme, with a relatively high proportion of households earning over \$100,000.

Figure 6: Household Income Distribution, 2010



Household income accounts for the earnings of all residents of a household. Residents need not be related, and households may consist of only one individual. To provide an alternative perspective that adjusts for the presence of the university, the distribution of family income, rather than household income, should be analyzed (see Figure 6). Family income considers only those households that have two or more individuals related through blood, marriage, or adoption. Nearly half of all families in Boulder have a combined income of over \$100,000, whereas about 25% of families nationwide earn that amount.

Figure 7: Family Income Distribution, 2010

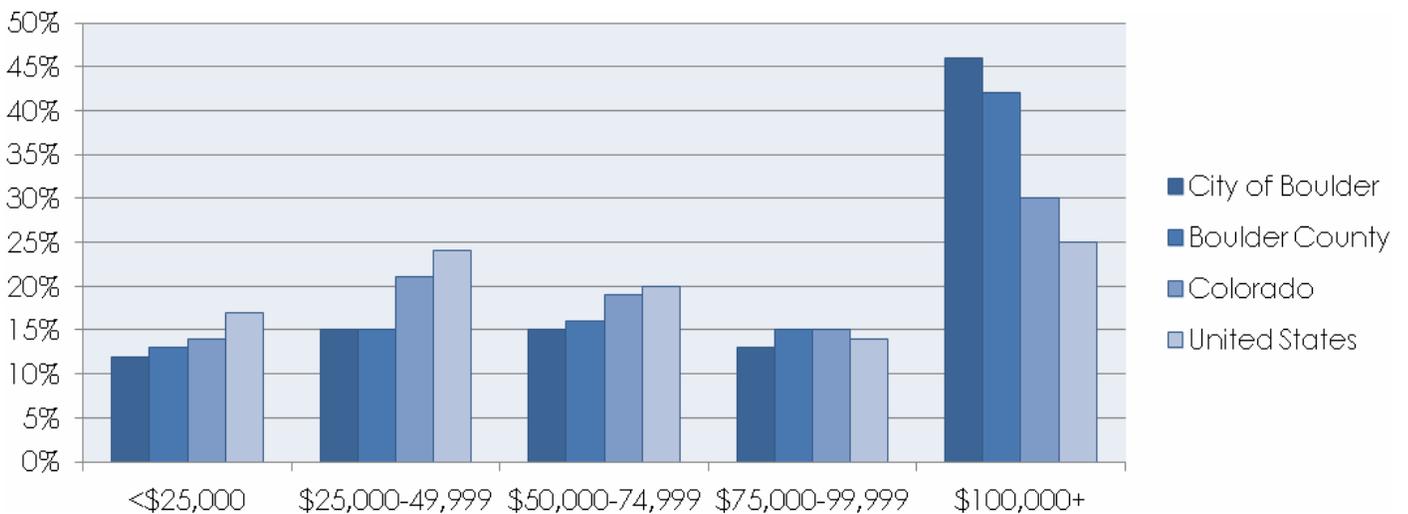
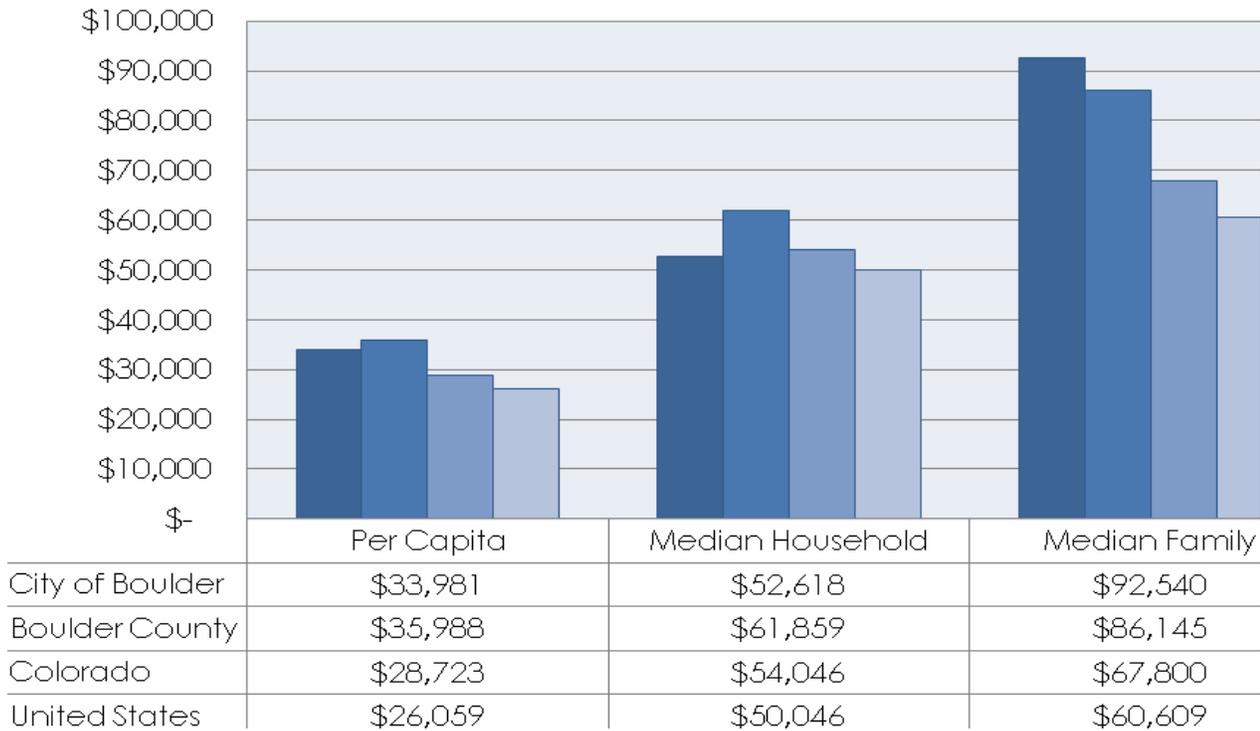


Figure 8 contains a summary of median income in 2010 for households, families, and individuals. The City of Boulder’s median household income is less than the county’s and the state’s, but the median family income is noticeably higher than that of the county, state, and nation.

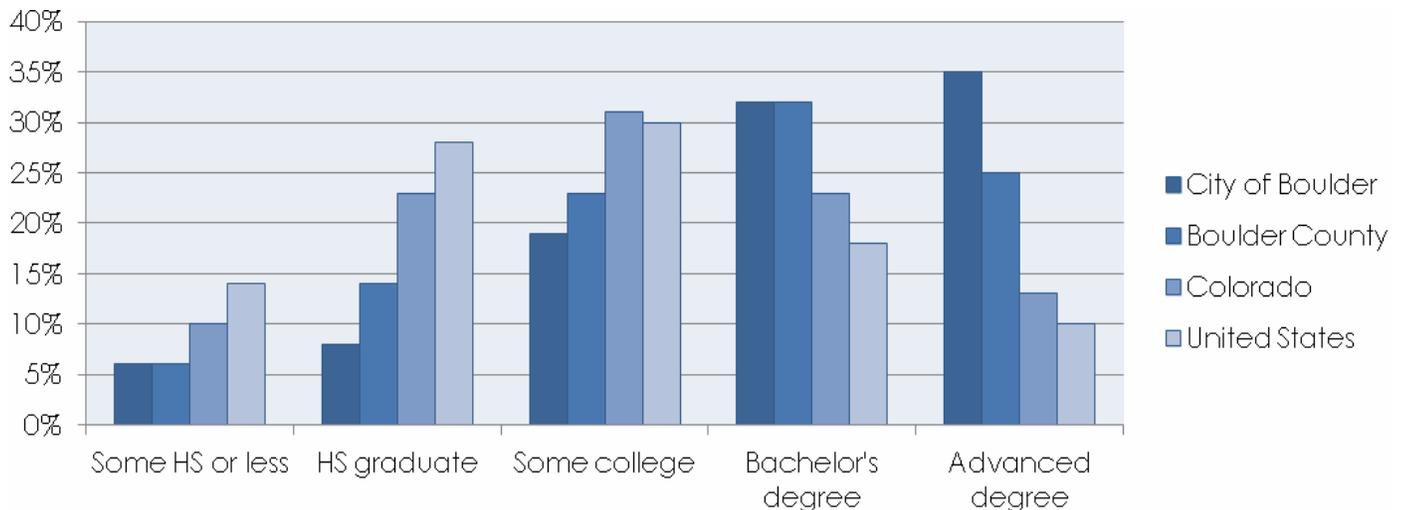
Figure 8: Annual Income Comparison, 2010



*Education*

According to the Boulder Economic Council, the Boulder-Longmont Metropolitan Statistical Area has the nation's highest percentage of residents (age 25 or older) with a bachelor's degree or higher according to 2010 data. In the City of Boulder specifically, the number is 67%, which is over twice the national average (see Figure 9). Across the United States, approximately one in 10 individuals has an advanced degree. In the City of Boulder, that number is approximately one in three.

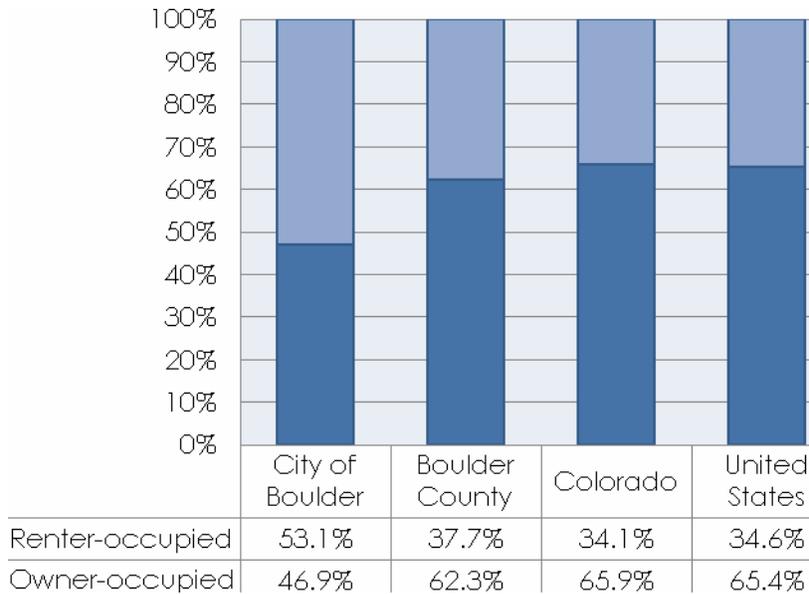
Figure 9: Educational Attainment of Adults, 2010



### Housing

The 2010 American Community Survey reports that most homes in Boulder are occupied by renters as opposed to owners, a certain effect of CU. This differs with trends across Boulder County, the State of Colorado, and the United States (see Figure 10). Moreover, housing costs are generally higher in Boulder compared to elsewhere. The amount of median monthly gross rent was \$1,082 versus \$855 nationally. The median value of owner-occupied homes in Boulder was \$529,300, compared to a national median value of \$179,900.

**Figure 10: Housing Occupancy Type, 2010**



In their analysis of data from the 2010 Decennial Census, the City of Boulder Department of Community Planning & Sustainability observed that the number of individuals per household in Boulder has decreased almost continuously since 1970. Since that time, Boulder has been below the national, state, and county averages for people per household. In 2000, the national average was 2.59 individuals per household; Boulder was 2.20. At the time of the 2010 Census, the national average was 2.58, and Boulder was 2.16. The neighborhoods of North Boulder, Williams Village, East Boulder, and Central Boulder added more new households than any other part of the city.

### Key Public Health Trends

Other issues related to public health bear relevance to the provision of parks and recreation in Boulder, especially in terms of social and environmental sustainability. Residents of Colorado are more active than many other people in the country. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 53.9% of Coloradans get the recommended amount of physical activity, compared to only 48.1% of the national population. However, many Coloradans, particularly today's youth, are increasingly sedentary. As a result, childhood obesity rates (14.2% in 2009 – an increase of 4.3% from 2007) are a cause for attention among park and recreation professionals. Childhood obesity saw an increase of 4.3% from 2007 to 2009. Like

much of the U.S., Colorado is experiencing declining youth participation in outdoor recreation activities.

Currently, there is an increasing prevalence of “nature deficit disorder” (a term coined by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*). Nature deficit disorder refers to the phenomenon of many of today’s youth not experiencing the social, mental, and physical benefits of being outside and recreating. Young adults become significantly less active as they enter adulthood, from about the ages of 17 to 22. Interestingly, there is an opportunity to combat an increasing youth obesity rate and nature deficit disorder by facilitating opportunities for outdoor recreation activities. According to the 2012 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report, produced by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA), individuals (ages 6+) are planning to spend 20.7% more money for outdoor recreation activities in 2012 than what was spent in 2011.

### Analysis

The City of Boulder is experiencing increased childhood obesity and inactivity rates, minority population growth, and changing lifestyle patterns. In order to address these issues, the City of Boulder must continue to adapt to change and combat growing social concerns. Health and wellness have become a nationwide concern, and, as a result, some recreation activities are growing in popularity. For example, fitness classes and related activities are the most popular physical activities across the nation (SGMA, 2012). As populations continue to grow, recreation facilities that offer multiple uses and serve larger areas/populations are becoming more common out of necessity.

With changing demographics and usage trends, there are several identified needs:

- Greater community connections, including providing opportunities for multi-generational plans and connections.
- Increased recognition and consideration of Boulder as a community that values specialized and physically elite recreation activities more than typical communities do.
- Changes in programs and facilities to accommodate aging populations and single-parent/dual-working-parent households.
- Changes in programs and facilities to accommodate growing minority populations.
- Greater collaboration with other agencies, organizations, and individuals (e.g., Colorado University, YMCA, BVSD, private health clubs, etc.).
- Shared recreation opportunities that level the widening economic disparity between those living under and over the poverty line.
- Addressing changing user populations and wants/desires (e.g., growing ethnic groups, age disparity, etc.).
- Addressing social epidemics with growing recreation trends (e.g., inactive youth, obesity rates, nature deficit disorder, desire/willingness to pay for outdoor recreation, etc.).
- Facility management with an increased emphasis on environmental stewardship.

## Discussion

According to the 2011 City of Boulder Community Survey, both sense of community and overall quality of life in Boulder have increased since 2001. Residents reported that urban traveling (i.e., bike and pedestrian facilities such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and paths) is a highly important feature of their community. Also, residents reported a high connectivity rate (i.e., internet-based functions) and desire for technology. There is a strong sense of community in Boulder that may seem incompatible with a need for connectivity, but these findings and research into social media communities suggest that the two overlap and create a different sense of community for younger and more social-media-savvy residents.

The City of Boulder is in a challenging stage of community development. Residents desire community connectedness through technology, urban pathways, and engagement opportunities; at the same time, they call for sustainable resource management. Boulder must continue to address a changing and growing population that will increasingly desire different recreation opportunities. To that end, a comprehensive and intentional management strategy that proactively addresses social, economic, and environmental trends will provide a foundation on which the city can build.