



**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: February 1, 2024

AGENDA TITLE

All Things Downtown: Coordination of city projects and engagement for ongoing and future projects in the downtown area

PRESENTER(S)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the next five years, city staff will be working with the community, relevant city boards and City Council on a series of projects, many of which will result in a change to the built environment, in Boulder's downtown. This study session is intended to provide council with an overview of city-led efforts in the downtown area and describe the cross-departmental approach to communications and community engagement. As many of these projects are in the pre-planning phase, staff seeks council's guidance on areas of interest to be addressed during community engagement processes in order to inform the planning, design and implementation/installation of these important investments in the downtown.

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

1. Does council have any questions for staff about coordination efforts for downtown projects?
2. What does council hope to learn from community members during these project efforts? What feedback would be most meaningful to inform any future decisions you might be asked to make?

BACKGROUND

Boulder's downtown serves the community as a place to live, work and play with access to a myriad of recreational opportunities, events, retail and dining for many community members. It is also an important economic engine for the city where many visitors experience much that Boulder has to offer. There are currently 10 work plan items that city staff teams will implement over approximately the next five years. To provide council with some context on the evolution of the city's downtown, below is a brief summary of downtown's history and management.

Recent Planning History

The vision for downtown to be a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented district that maintains its historic character has been consistent since the first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1977. In 1986, the Downtown Urban Design Plan provided guidance to integrate new development and redevelopment projects into the historic fabric of the area. In 1996, a group of local stakeholders formed a group called the Downtown Alliance and developed a *Proposal for the Downtown Central Business District*, recommending zoning updates that would accommodate additional residential usage and improve livability in the area. Much of that proposal is still reflected in downtown's zoning structure, as well as in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, today.

The most recent update of the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) was adopted in 2018. This document provides a basis for understanding, discussing and assessing the design quality of proposed preservation, renovation and new construction projects located within

the boundaries of the Downtown Historic District, the Non-Historic Area, and the Interface Area (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Downtown Urban Design Guidelines Map

In the past five years, the community has been engaged in a number of projects that affect downtown. In 2019, council reviewed a [Citywide Retail Study](#) which identified how the city might better support small businesses and maintain a competitive advantage as a retail destination.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the city implemented temporary vehicular closures to increase outdoor dining and create more enjoyable, safe, public spaces. In fall of 2022, the pandemic-related street closures for vehicles ended; however, council directed staff to develop options for expanding access to public space downtown. This effort resulted in the [Boulder Social Streets](#) project, which worked with the Downtown Boulder Partnership to host a series of events on 13th Street between Canyon Avenue and Arapahoe Avenue over the summer months of 2023.

In 2022, the Downtown Boulder Partnership developed a Downtown Vision Plan. The city and community provided input on the plan, which resulted in a 5-year vision for improvements to public spaces, programming, and education, intended to “Grow Downtown Boulder’s reach, community and success.” While this is not a city plan, the Downtown Vision Plan captures valuable input and provides recommendations that will be considered in downtown projects.

Also in 2022, the city adopted an update to the [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#), which used a new method in equity mapping to help identify and prioritize needs across the city's parks and recreation system. A concentration of medium to highest priority needs is present in the downtown area.

Finally, in 2023, the city finalized a Curbside Management Guidebook to help incorporate new, creative ways of using curbside space besides traditional on-street parking uses. It specifically examines curbside space in the city's four General Improvement Districts, including downtown. The goal was to help meet community needs today and improve placemaking, opportunities for outdoor dining, safety, vitality and the movement of people and goods.

Downtown Governance

There are a number of city boards and commissions with an interest and role to play in city planning efforts that impact Boulder's downtown. These are:

- Downtown Management Commission for input on projects that impact the Central Area General Improvement District (CAGID).
- Downtown Boulder Business Improvement District for coordination with businesses in the Business Improvement District (BID), including maintenance, communications and marketing.
- Design Advisory Board for input on urban design for new buildings or changes to existing buildings.
- Landmarks Board for review of any landmark alterations.

Other city boards that will be consulted during the downtown projects work include:

- Arts Commission to provide direction on public art and refinement of strategies related to arts.
- Human Relations Commission for input on fostering inclusiveness in proposed programs and designs.
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for input on site planning and park activation
- Planning Board for approval of any land use changes
- Transportation Advisory Board for input on transportation connections and improvements
- Water Resources Advisory Board for input on creek improvements and any proposed flood mitigation.

Key Themes

There are a number of issues that have consistently risen in community conversations over recent years and through previous planning efforts. The following key themes and

any tradeoffs will need to be further explored, balanced and addressed as downtown projects move forward:

(a) Small and local businesses are essential to downtown's character and fabric

Recent engagement reinforces community members' desire to maintain a unique local character. A crucial aspect of this identity is the variety of businesses in the downtown area, especially small and local ones. Numerous smaller businesses serve as vital hubs for social connection, such as bookstores, cafes, breweries, and art experiences. Several downtown businesses have also expressed the desire to have a greater voice in any changes that might affect them. There is a general willingness by downtown businesses to collaborate with the city in shaping placemaking initiatives. Some businesses have requested that the city prioritize regular maintenance and landscaping over more significant changes.

(b) Addressing safety is vital to the future of downtown

Issues of safety and perceptions of safety in the downtown area have emerged as an almost universal theme in recent community engagement efforts. Companion factors related to homelessness, unsanctioned camping, poverty, addiction, and mental health have reverberated in cities across the country. While no one project will solve the systemic issues at play, downtown projects can improve safety in public spaces, foster public spaces where all are welcome and reduce stigma about homelessness.

(a) Downtown functions differently today than it did in 2019.

Like many downtowns across the nation, Downtown Boulder has experienced shifts in daily life in the new-normal of a post-COVID city. Community members have expressed great interest in expanding and improving public spaces, building on the Downtown Streets as Public Space/Boulder Social Streets experiences and outcomes of the Curbside Management project. Additionally, we have seen a shift in travel patterns. The recent [Boulder Valley Employee Survey for Transportation](#) indicates that a higher proportion of commuters are traveling to work in Single-Occupant Vehicles (SOVs), but less frequently, as some have the opportunity to telework during the week. These evolved work-from-home options for employees have also changed downtown's local real estate market; office vacancies, for example, have increased since 2019. As the city continues to observe changes in downtown dynamics and the community further settles into post-COVID life, the downtown projects offer some opportunities to test new ideas in response.

(b) The community is seeking more spaces for social connection and inclusion

About three-quarters of respondents to the [2023 Community Survey](#) gave high marks to the vibrancy of the downtown and shopping opportunities. The response to this was rated much higher than other local Front Range benchmarks; however, this indicator was rated less positively in 2023 than in 2018, so the community's perspective is changing. One of the community characteristics for which ratings have notably declined include "Public places where people want to spend time." As downtown offers some of the city's greatest opportunities to experience free, public places for spending time, it's an important characteristic to consider when working through the community's changing perception

about downtown. Through the West Pearl Street closure and the Boulder Social Streets project, many community members have expressed a desire for more affordable and inclusive spaces for community gatherings. A desire for places and community-led programming that will foster opportunities to socialize and have casual encounters have consistently been described as a desire through recent community engagement. Feedback from various projects indicates a need to ensure that reimagined public spaces are accessible and welcoming for people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

(c) Addressing affordability and equity downtown

In various forums, people of color and/or of lower incomes have consistently shared that the services and goods available in the downtown area are out of reach. During engagement around the Downtown Vision Plan update, specifically, some community members reported being made to feel unwelcome in restaurants and shops. These experiences, together with the lack of affordable options, contribute to some residents of Boulder feeling out of place in the downtown area, despite this being a central part of our city. Some suggestions that have been put forth are mechanisms to promote BIPOC businesses and artists downtown, smaller and more affordable retail or maker spaces, improved language access when promoting programming, and anti-bias training for service workers.

Moving Forward

The city contributes a significant amount of attention and effort to the planning, programming and operation of downtown to support the community's commitment to a safe, healthy, livable, accessible, sustainable, responsibly governed and economically vital place as outlined in Boulder's [Sustainability, Equity and Resilience Framework](#). As the community takes on another concentration of important projects in the downtown area, during a key moment in the city's history and over a period of time where city staff will be working with community members on a major update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, the community is presented with a great opportunity to develop a holistic understanding of downtown as a place and plan for its health and vibrancy into the future. City leadership have developed a cross-departmental team that will be working through these projects together and creating opportunities to conduct the community engagement that is crucial to defining the vision for downtown's future. Work over the next five years will have a lasting impact on important systems and destinations in Boulder's downtown and set the stage for a new age of vitality and social inclusion.

ANALYSIS

Downtown Projects is a cross-departmental coordination effort designed to effectively communicate with the public, provide streamlined and meaningful engagement events and opportunities, and ensure that project sequencing related to planning, design and implementation makes efficient use of city resources. City leadership and staff have

developed a plan and resources to coordinate efforts on projects in the downtown area with the following goals:

- (1) Align project processes and outcomes with the objectives of the city's Sustainability, Equity and Resilience (SER) Framework.
- (2) Coordinate downtown communications and engagement efforts to provide community members with the best information and opportunities to meaningfully participate in projects, both individually and holistically.
- (3) Build upon community direction and expertise collected in past planning for downtown to help guide its future.
- (4) Use city resources efficiently to appropriately sequence the planning, design and construction/installation of downtown improvements.

The Downtown Projects include the following city work plan items to be taken on over approximately the next five years. While understanding the details of any one project is not the intent of this study session, an overview of each supports the larger conversation about Downtown Projects coordination.

1. Civic Area Phase 2

The Civic Area Phase 2 project includes the next phase of planning and design to implement the [2015 Civic Area Plan](#). Planning for the overall site, including Central Park, the Civic Area “bookends” and the Andrews Arboretum connection to University Hill begins in 2024. Council received an update on the scope and schedule for this project in December 2023. The first community engagement window is scheduled to launch in February 2024. Community input collected will be shared with community members, boards and council and will inform the future of the built environment in Civic Area as well as other ongoing and future planned downtown projects.

2. Proposed Civic Area Historic District

A historic district application was submitted by three historic preservation organizations in May 2023. The Landmarks Board reviewed the application and voted to initiate the designation process on July 12, 2023. The proposed boundary included in the application extends from the west side of the Penfield Tate II Municipal Building (1777 Broadway) to 14th Street, and from Canyon Boulevard to Arapahoe Avenue. Local historic district designation recognizes an area that is architecturally, historically or environmentally significant to Boulder's history. The Historic Preservation team has been seeking community feedback and collaborating with staff across the city to evaluate the potential and impact of designation. Council will consider designation of the district at a public hearing in April 2024.

3. Downtown Boulder Station Improvements

Downtown Boulder Station, at 14th Street and Walnut, is one of the city's busiest transit stations, with significant demand for access to regional transit routes. An implementation project resulting from the Downtown Boulder Station Study, this project will increase transit service capacity at the station and improve route efficiency and the transit rider experience. Improvements include:

- Redesign of 14th Street between Arapahoe Avenue and Canyon Boulevard to provide five additional bus gates
- Adding on-street bus stop and layover space, wider sidewalks, information kiosks, signage, wayfinding and landscape treatment
- Accessibility improvements to meet Americans with Disability Act (ADA) design guidelines.

Incorporating these improvements into planning for access and mobility of other downtown projects will be a key consideration for downtown projects. Construction of these improvements will take place in 2024.

4. *Boulder Social Streets*

Formerly known as the Downtown Streets as Public Space project, [Boulder Social Streets](#) (BSS) represents the next phase of work intended to address community interest and council’s prioritization of street transformation in Boulder. The March 2023 [Action Plan](#) led to a series of events on 13th Street, operated by the Downtown Boulder Partnership, over the summer of 2023. As the program evolves, collaboration with other ongoing projects in the downtown area may offer options for applying the lessons learned from previously completed work and study of downtown spaces. Council will receive additional information about the findings for Boulder Social Streets in the upcoming months.

5. *CAGID Alternatives Analysis and Capital Planning*

The Central Area General Improvement District (CAGID) and the city’s Department of Community Vitality are responsible for parking operations and related services in the downtown area. The city team will be working with community members and the Downtown Management Commission to evaluate options for programs such as the Affordable Commercial Pilot and capital investments, including a utility undergrounding effort, among others in this project kicking off in 2024.

6. *Pearl Street Revitalization*

Completed in 2022, the [Historic Places Plan](#) (HiPP) serves as a guide for the Parks and Recreation Department (BPR) in stewarding the 12 culturally relevant and historically designated resources managed by BPR. The plan includes a needs assessment and identifies priorities to improve or repair physical features of one such asset, the Pearl Street Mall. Scheduled to launch in 2025, the city will work with community members, boards and council to consider and install such improvements and repairs.

7. *Downtown Mobility Study*

The Downtown Mobility Study, scheduled to launch in 2025, is one of the upcoming projects to support the city’s [Core Arterial Network](#) and [Vision Zero Boulder](#) efforts. The study will evaluate the connected system of protected bicycle lanes, intersection enhancements, pedestrian facilities, and transit facility upgrades that will help reduce the potential for severe crashes and make it more comfortable and convenient for people to get where they need to go along Boulder’s main corridors. Mobility improvements will be considered and evaluated through all downtown projects as the network of access and mobility is considered paramount to the success of downtown.

8. *Boulder Creek and River Trail Plan*

The Boulder Creek Management Plan has two phases. A first, to be implemented in Q2 2024, will foster safe water-based recreation opportunities along the creek corridor through improved signage and visitor communication protocols and education. A larger planning effort will begin in 2025 that will consider recreation access and management of natural resource along the creek including: evaluating new access opportunities and improvements to existing recreation amenities along the creek trail, exploring service delivery models for recreation activities, improving stream health and management of natural resources, and identifying projects, phasing and potential funding sources to implement the plan.

9. *Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (Major Update)*

As the city's guiding resource for shaping the built and natural environment in the Boulder Valley, a major update to the [Comprehensive Plan](#) could impact how the future of downtown evolves. Scheduled to launch with a community engagement process in 2025, the BVCP update team will work closely with downtown project teams to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies influencing downtown and, with the community, consider potential updates to the plan.

10. *Deconstruction of Park Central and New Britain buildings*

As described in the [Facilities Master Plan](#), the Park Central and New Britain buildings, located in the Civic Area, have reached the end of useful life and will not be repurposed. The deconstruction of these facilities will be carefully planned and coordinated with design and construction of the Civic Area Phase 2 improvements as well as any planned mobility network changes that may come out of the Downtown Mobility Study.

As these projects move forward, other important local plans will influence the outcomes of these efforts, including but not limited to:

[Downtown Vision Plan](#)

[Transportation Plan](#)

[Parks and Recreation Plan](#)

[Reimagining Policing Plan](#)

[Central Broadway Corridor Design Framework](#)

[Comprehensive Flood and Stormwater Plan](#)

[Community Cultural Plan](#)

[Historic Preservation Plan](#)

The opportunity to implement much of the city's planning efforts through a collaborative process among staff, community members, decision-makers and the private sector presents great opportunity for true community building in the city's downtown.

The table below summarizes the ongoing and planned work plan items described above:

	Project Name	Lead Department	Estimated Start	Status
1	Civic Area Phase 2	Parks & Recreation (BPR)	2024	Ongoing
2	Civic Area Historic District Application	Planning & Development Services (P&DS)	2023	Ongoing
3	Downtown Boulder Station Improvements	Transportation & Mobility	2023	Ongoing
4	Boulder Social Streets	Transportation and Mobility	2023	Ongoing
5	CAGID Alternatives Analysis and Capital Planning	Community Vitality	2024	Ongoing
6	Pearl Street Revitalization	BPR	2025	Not yet started
7	CAN - Downtown Mobility Study	Transportation & Mobility	2025	Not yet started
8	Boulder Creek and River Trail Plan	BPR	2024	Planning Phase
9	Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (Major Update)	P&DS	2025	Not yet started
10	Deconstruction of Park Central and New Britain buildings	Facilities & Asset Management (FAM)	2028	Not yet started

Coordinating Communications and Engagement

The various project teams are enthusiastic about the potential for community collaboration on downtown projects. To ensure that communication about projects in the downtown is consistent and to avoid over-burdening community members with calls for engagement, the Downtown Projects team has developed the following strategies:

1. Easy-to-Follow Online Navigation

The team has established a [Downtown Projects website](#), where community members can learn about downtown and explore the details of individual ongoing projects. This site serves as a “hub” for all ongoing downtown projects and will be regularly updated with the latest information.

2. Downtown Newsletter

Many city departments offer community members an opportunity to sign up for project and department news. To leverage existing audiences and channels, stakeholders will have an option to sign up for the department newsletters related to each project, which will provide updates on downtown projects and identify opportunities for project

participation. Each department under the Downtown Projects umbrella will include Downtown Project updates, including those from other departments.

3. Cross-Pollinated “Events”

Engagement events and opportunities that support projects in the downtown area will strive to incorporate community questions and issues that have the potential to impact multiple downtown projects. Project teams are sharing collected feedback on an internal “Feedback Hub” and cross-collaborating on themes and take-aways. For a summary of recently completed engagement that will be used to advance future projects, see **Attachment B**.

4. Downtown Community Connectors

Two skilled and trusted Community Connectors have been selected through a citywide recruitment and interview process to co-design and help implement engagement across the 10 downtown projects. Staff will collaborate with connectors to reach out to and incorporate traditionally under-represented voices into the downtown projects and processes. Connectors will receive a stipend for their commitment, time and expertise.

5. Internal Business Rhythm

While all city projects require some level of cross-departmental collaboration, the volume and pace of work in the downtown area over the next few years has led the city to establish a business rhythm of regular check-in and communication to ensure that project work is in alignment and that communication about project progress is communicated clearly and transparently to the community-at-large. The coordination effort is led out of P&DS under direction of an Executive Team of directors from P&DS, BPR, Community Vitality, Transportation & Mobility and Communications and Engagement with participation of the City Manager’s Office.

NEXT STEPS

Council will continue to be engaged on ongoing and future projects in the downtown area. City staff is coordinating a streamlined communications and engagement process that will allow community members to participate in multiple downtown projects through online and in-person opportunities.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Map of Downtown Projects
- B. Downtown Engagement Summary
- C. Previous Plans Memo



Summary of Past Engagement

Downtown Area (2022-2023)

| Overview

This document compiles and summarizes community feedback received on six policies or projects in the Downtown area from 2022 to 2023. The engagement was led by either City of Boulder or Downtown Boulder Partnership (DBP). Table 1 is a list of the projects. Summaries are provided in the subsequent pages.

Table 1 – Projects with Downtown related community engagement (2022-2023)

Engagement window	Project name and engagement highlights
Jan-Feb 2022	Outdoor Dining Pilot questionnaire (online and in person) <i>Focused on the broad Downtown community (property and business owners, workers, residents, visitors)</i>
April-May 2022	Future of the West End (Street Closure) – Feedback Form <i>Focused on the downtown business community</i>
Aug-Sept 2022	Emails to City Council about West Pearl reopening to vehicles <i>About 350 emails to Council were collected and reviewed by staff (no demographic information available)</i>
2022	Curbside Management Included a stakeholder committee (Access Allies), focus groups, on-site observations, consultations with stakeholder groups (including Community Connectors-in-Residence), an online questionnaire and pop-up events.
2022-2023	Preparation of Downtown 5-Year Vision – multiple engagement touchpoints Included online questionnaire to the broad community, focus groups, intercept events, community connector in residence consultation, and consultation with DBP's Community Advisory Board
Feb-Sept 2023	Boulder Social Streets Engagement window No. 1 included an online questionnaire for the broader community and consultations with business owners to develop a pilot program Engagement window No. 2 included several methods to evaluate the summer pop-ups and provide feedback on the future of a potential program, including in person and online questionnaires, in-situ interviews, public chalkboard, observations, an experiential evaluation group and Experiments in Public Art.

1.0 Outdoor Dining Pilot

| Engagement Highlights

Leads	City of Boulder and Downtown Boulder Partnership
Engagement objectives	<p>Feedback was sought to inform an outdoor dining pilot in downtown Boulder. The pilot program would tentatively start after the April 30, 2022 expiration of the temporary outdoor dining expansion program. It was created by city emergency order to help offset indoor capacity limits related to the pandemic.</p> <p>The questionnaire aimed to understand perceptions of how the existing temporary program impacted the vibrancy of downtown, individual businesses and other impacts related to living, working, or visiting downtown.</p> <p>The questionnaire also explored the following related to a potential expanded outdoor dining program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived benefits, concerns, and support - Factors to be considered and prioritized - Restaurant interest in participating in a pilot and factors that might affect willingness to participate
Engagement methods	Questionnaire (in-person and online)
Date	Jan-Feb 2022
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 836 responses • This was not a city-wide questionnaire. It focused on those visiting, living, working or owning a business downtown. • Composition of business owner respondents –women (34%), minority (8%) or veteran (4%) owned businesses.
Key takeaways	<p>Most respondents provided positive feedback about the city’s temporary outdoor dining expansion, but there were several participants who expressed concerns about several aspects of the current program at that time. Concerns were largely about (a) ensuring access for people of all abilities and (b) how area residents and businesses might be impacted.</p> <p>There was substantial interest in participating in the pilot program, especially among participants in the city’s current program at that time, and willingness to pay a fee to lease the public right-of-way for outdoor dining areas and the use of parklet infrastructure. Some restaurants were willing to pay an annual fee of \$50/square foot, but more respondents expressed interest in participating at a cost of \$35/square foot.</p> <p>Some key findings about the current program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. More than 80% of residents, workers, and visitors reported the program had a “very positive” impact on downtown vibrancy while 61% of restaurants and 71% of other businesses indicated the impact was “very positive”.

- b. 76% of visitors, 66% of workers, 64% of residents, 55% of downtown restaurants and 52% of other businesses reported a “significant improvement” of their downtown experience.
- c. 63% of restaurants and 38% of other businesses indicated the impact on their business was “very positive” while only 10% of businesses reported a negative impact from the current expanded outdoor dining program.

The survey included a concept for a Downtown Outdoor Dining Pilot Program with parklets, comprised of panels and platforms with a consistent design throughout the downtown area to define outdoor dining areas and provide a barrier between diners and vehicle or pedestrian traffic, that would be in place from May 1 to October 31 2022 and removed for storage between November 1 2022 and April 30 2023 and made available to restaurants that would pay a fee to lease the portion of public right-of-way used for their outdoor dining space.

- Potential components of the program considered most important to respondents included:
 - a. Providing equitable access to parklets for people of varied abilities
 - b. Prohibiting structures that limit visibility or access to nearby businesses
 - c. Prohibiting amplified sound from 10 p.m. to 11 a.m. daily in parklet areas
 - d. Allowing parklets in curbside parking spaces
 - e. Providing information about nearby parking locations
 - f. Funding to offset a portion of parklet costs for participating restaurants

Restaurants were much more likely than other survey participants to consider funding to offset parklet costs to be the most important program component.

- 60% of restaurants participating in the current temporary expanded outdoor dining program were “very likely” to sign up for the new pilot program compared to 22% of non-participating restaurants.
- Factors most frequently mentioned that would make restaurants more likely to participate in the program included (a) city subsidizing the cost of the pilot program, (b) allowing the use of other outdoor dining infrastructure that met city requirements and (c) DBP would own the parklets and take care of installation, maintenance, and storage.
- The factor most frequently mentioned as making restaurants less likely to participate was an annual fee for using the public right-of-way for outdoor dining.

While the questionnaire did not include questions about the temporary street closure on West Pearl, many participants provided their opinions related to this temporary closure. Some highlights by stakeholder group are provided below.

Restaurants

- a. Want only a seasonal closure (April-Nov)
- b. Want streets to open up to cars again – it is better for business and no longer needed

- c. Restaurants should be able to design their own parklets so they are more creative and unique
- d. High interest in a permanent program

Other Businesses

- a. Need loading zone back
- b. Tents are ugly
- c. Need to think through long-term aspects like emergency access, ROW for building maintenance, guidelines on set up/lighting/signage
- d. Parking is more difficult for clients with parklets taking up parking spaces (especially for businesses that don't depend on walk ups)
- e. Permanent outdoor dining adds to the vibrancy and walkability
- f. Dining and outdoor space is more useful to the community than parking spaces and the street
- g. Feels more open and safe without cars
- h. Welcome a more permanent outdoor setup on Pearl St between 9th and 11th and also along Walnut
- i. Lack of access for takeout food impacts revenue
- j. Outdoor dining is a driver for retail – it brings more people to shop
- k. Encourages more community and interaction
- l. Overall the outdoor dining has 'saved' Downtown

Residents

- a. Intensifies stress and difficulty of living near Pearl
- b. Nice not to have cars
- c. Parking has increased on residential streets as a result
- d. Eye sore
- e. Should be allowed to move around with alcohol (use new open container in shared spaces state law)
- f. Could consider more green space with seated areas instead of expanding bricks – bricks are sterile but discourage loitering
- g. Locals avoid the bricks on the weekends when it's "full of tourists"
- h. No dogs and bikes should be allowed
- i. Brings sales tax to the city
- j. Need safe areas for children without cars
- k. Has inspired people to drive less and walk to downtown more (good for health)

Workers

- a. Experiences are both positive and negative
- b. Attracts homeless
- c. Worried about cost burden to restaurants – parklets should be subsidized
- d. Propane heaters are not environmentally-friendly
- e. Some spaces are dirty and not well maintained
- f. Allow artistic flare on parklet design – avoid uniformity, it is sterile

Other businesses

- a. Good for restaurants, bad for retail

- b. Increases business for retail (and restaurants) when done properly and doesn't look like a yard sale
- c. There could be exciting art installations
- d. Let's see more environmentally-friendly electric options for heating, cooling, air purification for enclosed spaces
- e. Long term issues – litter and congestion
- f. It's fun!
- g. Focus on summer months only, but do it well
- h. Love the modern, hip vibe
- i. Pop up fairs promote local artists
- j. Helped us experience an alternate way of using street space to facilitate human activities and interactions
- k. Should not be permanent if it's impacting negatively on businesses
- l. Outdoor dining keeps people downtown for more time – they tend to walk more and creates 'café' culture
- m. No car pollution
- n. More vibrant to see people outside
- o. More social interaction
- p. If permanent, offer more programming
- q. Ensure sidewalk is clear of tables and chairs
- r. Try shared seating space with QR codes for ordering from different nearby restaurants

2. Future of the West End (street closure)

| Engagement Highlights

Lead	Downtown Boulder Partnership
Engagement objectives	To gauge downtown business support after the emergency order for the COVID-19 pandemic for prolonging the closure of West Pearl to vehicles for outdoor dining
Engagement methods	An email with a link to a Google Form
Date	April-May 2022
Participants	<p>Downtown business community - those located within the business improvement district (BID) and current DBP members (the two lists overlap but some DBP members are located outside of the BID)</p> <p>177 responses (47% business owners, 21% employees, 11% property owner, 19% general manager, 9% resident)</p>
Key takeaways	<p>West End restaurants do not support a permanent year-round closure of West Pearl; but the West End retail businesses and the broader downtown business community have expressed significantly more support for a permanent year-round vehicular closure.</p> <p>All participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% favor a permanent year-round vehicular closure • 31% favor a permanent reopening (back to pre-covid) • Seasonal closure and hybrid model were not as popular of choices <p>West End businesses only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37% favor a permanent year-round vehicular closure • 43% favor a permanent reopening (back to pre-covid) <p>West End restaurants only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0% favor a permanent year-round closure • 64% favor a permanent reopening (back to pre-covid) • 12% favor a seasonal closure • 16% favor the hybrid model

3. Emails to City Council – West Pearl

| Highlights

Lead	not applicable
Engagement objectives	not applicable
Engagement methods	not applicable <i>there was no specific solicitation of feedback; emails were sent directly by some community members to City Council members</i>
Date	August-Sept 2022
Participants	~350 community members (no demographic information is available)
Key takeaways	<p>Major reasons provided <i>in favor of keeping West Pearl closed</i> to vehicular traffic or ideas to enhance the experience included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor dining is important for at risk or immunocompromised people • Love the European feel • Very disappointed/shocked that we would return to a pre-COVID norm – make it permanent • Love the walkable and vibrant vibe • We should encourage alternatives to vehicles • Improving human health, safety, and happiness, increasing economic vitality, and reducing emissions • Kid-friendly • COVID cautious • Great gathering space • Feel more welcome and comfortable without cars • Keep Boulder fun and vibrant • Should look more globally at how to deprioritize cars throughout city spaces • Want people-based urban planning • Disappointed that a few business interests take precedent over community's quality of life/community's preferences/voices • Made people try new restaurants and come downtown more often • West Pearl was a locals' hangout – while the 'bricks' (the Pearl St. Mall) has become a place mainly for tourists • If permanent is not possible, perhaps narrow the street to one-way only, with diagonal parking (as on Walnut) on only one side would allow for wider sidewalks, a more pedestrian feel and continued expanded outdoor dining. • Need to think more creatively about how we can continue to reduce vehicles in our public spaces • Great to have a child friendly, car-free urban space to play in • Need to be bold and think big

- Space to congregate is important
- Keep closed to cars but improve accessibility for people living with disabilities
- Add planters, benches
- Invest in more infrastructure to make it a place where people can hang out – seating, playground features, art displays, water fountain, etc
- Need more art and fun
- Need more local businesses, less chains/franchises

Major reasons provided *in favor of returning to pre-COVID norms* and opening West Pearl to vehicular traffic included:

- Want parking spaces back
- Important to listen to what the businesses want (i.e. those who pay rent)
- Parking spaces here makes downtown more accessible to people living with mobility limitations; handicap spaces should never be blocked off
- Need to better think about the needs of aging adults
- Doesn't look classy
- Impacts negatively on flow of traffic; pushes more traffic to surrounding residential areas; it creates safety issues and creates traffic hazards on 9th where Spruce/Pine have no stoplight
- Interferes with HOP bus route
 - Businesses sign long-term leases based on access and traffic patterns and changes impact on their revenue

4. Curbside Management Project

| Engagement Highlights

Lead	City of Boulder (led by Transportation & Mobility)
Engagement objectives	The objective was to gather input on how Boulder uses public curb space city-wide; challenges faced; and identify opportunities to improve safety, sustainability, mode shift, economic vitality and livability. The input was used to develop specific recommendations for Downtown, the Hill, and Boulder Junction.
Engagement methods	Focus group meetings, on-site observations, stakeholder consultations, pop-up events and an online questionnaire
Date	2022 (several engagement windows)
Participants	<p>Focus groups – comprised of business owners, property owners and Chamber of Commerce; delivery/freight providers; and transportation service providers</p> <p>Stakeholder consultations – Community Cycles; Community Connectors-in-Residence; Center for People with Disability (CPWD); University of Colorado Boulder Masters of the Environment (MENV) course; Commission meetings for each of the General Improvement Districts—UHCAMC, DMC, and BJAD</p> <p>Access Allies group – a representative group of stakeholders formed for this project to help develop recommendations and reviewing draft guidelines</p> <p>Broad community – questionnaire (267 respondents), pop-up events</p>
Key takeaways	<p>Themes from focus groups and consultations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and efficiency concerns associated with pick-up and drop-off of Transportation Network Companies • High demand for electric vehicle charging stations • Parking availability and intuitiveness is important, while balancing the desire to use the curb to promote mode shift goals • The success of street closures fluctuates with seasons and hinge on effective design • Design the curb to improve business activity • Consider the unique needs of freight vehicles when planning loading zones • Improve access to the curb for transit vehicles • The curb should evolve to reflect changes in technologies and travel preferences • Curb space should be dedicated to people biking rather than vehicles <p>From the questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving is still the most often selected mode to travel within and into the three GIDs. • The questionnaire revealed that respondents would like to see less “private vehicle parking” in all three GIDs. In total, respondents answered that in all three GIDs they

want to see curb uses allocated to enhancing the pedestrian, bicycle, and scooter experience.

- The curb uses with the highest average response are all pedestrian oriented, are "bike and scooter parking," "safer crossings," and "food trucks." The questionnaire shows a preference towards curb uses that serve pedestrians before parking and loading zones.

5. Downtown 5-Year Vision Plan

| Engagement Highlights

Lead	Downtown Boulder Partnership
Engagement objectives	To gather input for the development of a 5-year vision leading up to the Pearl St. Mall's 5-year anniversary
Engagement methods	Online questionnaire, pop-ups, focus groups, stakeholder consultations
Date	Mainly in 2022
Participants	<p>Broad community, DBP's Community Advisory Board, Community Connectors-in-Residence and other stakeholder consultations</p> <p>Focus groups comprised of downtown employees; arts & events planners; CU Boulder staff, faculty and students; regional Boulder residents</p>
Key takeaways	<p>Be Heard Boulder – recurring themes from the general feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public safety concerns regarding the unhoused population were prominent • Strong interest in supporting and promoting local businesses • Promote diversity, culture and inclusion • Need for affordable food and retail options • Desire for updated and increased number of public restrooms • In favor of increasing public gathering space • Ensure efficient transportation options • Request to plant native plants <p>Be Heard Boulder – responses to question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best thing about Downtown Boulder is: Mobility (#1), Programming (#2), Character (#3), Sustainability (#4) and Safety (#5) <p>Feedback from Community Connectors-in-Residence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more affordable shops and experiences downtown • need for partnering with diverse organizations for programming • need for effective communication channels and language access to promote events and opportunities • bias of downtown workers leads to people of color feeling unwelcome (and a bias training for downtown workers would be welcome) • innovative methods for gathering input are appreciated • importance of meaningful consultation – early enough in the process and with skilled facilitation. <p>Feedback from Focus Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of suggestions provided for these priority areas: increasing the ease of downtown connectivity with other parts of the city; increasing diversity and

inclusion; more opportunities for the creative arts; and improving mobility and accessibility for people of all ages and those living with disabilities.

Feedback from other outreach

- Desire for a pedestrian-friendly streetscape on the east end
- Support micro-retail and other creative retail opportunities
- Increase affordable food and retail options
- Support a permanent farmer's market
- Activate alleys, dead facades and parking lot edges
- Facilitate public art that is interactive, rotating, functional and playful
- Update the public restrooms
- Improve multi-use paths
- Install a gondola
- Improve 13th street pedestrian infrastructure
- Plant edible landscapes and incorporate urban farming
- Plant water-wise and pollinator landscapes
- Increase shade and tree canopy

6. Boulder Social Streets

formerly called Downtown Streets as Public Space

| Engagement Highlights

Lead	City of Boulder (multi-department effort)
Engagement objectives	<p>The objectives were to gather input primarily for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - designing a summer pilot (engagement window 1); - evaluating the summer pilot of 8 pop-up events on 13th Street (engagement window 2). - informing a future program or future policies about streets for public spaces (engagement window 2). - exploring with West Pearl businesses and property owners any opportunities for temporary closure of West Pearl (engagement window 2)
Engagement methods	Questionnaires for attendees of each summer pop-up event (available in person and online); facilitated interviews and other activities for pop-up attendees; online questionnaires; focus groups; stakeholder consultations (Community Cycles, Farmers Market, Chambers, Community Connectors-in-Residence), consultations with West Pearl businesses and property owners; Experiments in Public Art
Date	Engagement window No. 1 – Jan-March 2023 Engagement window No. 2 – June to Sept 2023
Participants	Broad community (several touchpoints) Downtown businesses and property owners Experiential evaluation group (~10 participants)
Key takeaways	<p>Online questionnaire – engagement window 1 (1,799 responses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 86.6% of respondents said that the temporary change on West Pearl <i>significantly increased or increased</i> the overall appeal of the West Pearl area - main reasons people do not go downtown: safety concerns; lack of affordable restaurants and retail; difficulty with mobility, access, parking and public health concerns - top choices for how the city should prioritize community interests for downtown spaces: 1/ provide additional enjoyable public spaces for gathering and outdoor dining/entertainment/leisure; 2/ Use curbs for non-vehicular purposes; 3/ Maximize access for all people regardless of ability and mode. <p>Takeaways from the experiential evaluation group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boulder is open space rich and community gathering space poor. - Amenities and programming help people to linger longer. - Activations need to be community driven for success. - The city should act as a facilitator and not as an event planner. - The city needs to help improve the role and experience of 13th St as a North-South Connector through downtown during non-event times.

- Future pop-ups do not necessarily need to be on West Pearl or 13th. Let's expand our horizons to other potential spots.

Takeaways from [in-situ engagement](#) at the pop-ups:

- About 44% of attendees chose 'type of event' as the top reason to come to the pop-ups; followed by "time with community, family and friends" (other choices were food, music and location of event)
- Top choice for improving Boulder's streets were pavement to plaza (40%) followed by festival streets (29%) (other choices were parklets and social sidewalks)

Takeaways from listening sessions with [9 West Pearl property and business owners](#):

- They reported minimal to no direct benefit from previous events and street closures.
- There is a desire for the city to focus on improvements on West Pearl St, such as tree maintenance, bike parking and snow removal over investments in events or street closures.
- The reduction in the downtown workforce has resulted in major challenges for property owners and restaurants. Temporary closures or events cannot make up for this lack of business.
- Participants expressed willingness to engage in conversations about future events or temporary activations, provided the aim is centered on celebrating West Pearl's unique and "special vibes", rather than hosting events for the sake of activation.

Takeaways shared by the artist from interactions with the public [during the Experiments in Public Art](#):

- The biggest takeaways were around the future direction of Boulder. The ultimate vision would be to sustain a town square vibe that held and hosted events, large scale art, as well as a safe place for community to gather and be amongst each other.
- People shared a desire for more parklets and pop-up art experiences.
- Art (both visual and performing) seems to be something that the community desires more of, and exploring how it's used to design and enhance public spaces.
- Making the permitting process more accessible to artists and community members was mentioned several times.
- Many people wanted more accessible opportunities for kids. Others rallied for more multi-generational events.
- The community continues to desire more seating, restrooms, and facilities that work for all ages.
- While parking was an important factor in the initial report, not many people focused on that when dreaming up the future of Boulder.
- The largest concern lies in the unhooded population and how people often do not feel safe in Boulder's central park.

- The other factor that came up, is a concern that the City is not considering the needs of the residents, and would rather design public space for tourists.
- The residents really expressed how they would like the entire process of collaborating with the city to be a smoother and easier process.
- One of the largest takeaways from talking with the community was the deep sense of BELONGING that most people desire. While the city can hold events and create more spaces, the real question is “how do we create belonging inside of community”.

*Full project engagement reports are available upon request

Downtown Projects

Previous Plans Memo

DRAFT January 2024

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City of Boulder
 Planning & Development Services
 Comprehensive Planning
 Questions: Contact Rebecca Hieb, Planning & Zoning Specialist

Executive Summary

Purpose of Memo

This memo serves as a resource for city staff team members working on planning and design projects in the downtown area. The memo summarizes previously completed plans for sites throughout downtown and highlights how each plan might influence future work in the heart of the city.

Key Themes from Previous Plans

Make Canyon Boulevard a Complete Street : Multiple plans identify opportunities to enhance Canyon Boulevard as a complete street to improve the Downtown. Canyon serves as a major arterial connection for transit service, pedestrian access, and distinct nodes along its frontage and is addressed across multiple plans to reduce its presence as a barrier, enhance the pedestrian experience, and improve the quality of transit facilities.

Install Physical Improvements to Enhance Community Vitality: Multiple Downtown Plans call for “placemaking” and identify opportunities for projects and programming to improve downtown culture and community. Public art, events and programming, cohesive greenspace, and community spaces are various implementation tools identified by previous planning efforts to achieve enhanced community vitality and create a thriving and culturally diverse downtown.

Address Broader Connectivity: while individual plans address smaller, specific geographic locations, a broader conversation about area-wide identity, connectivity, large scale visioning for the future of Downtown is laid-out in individual plans. Overlapping projects present an opportunity to unify Downtown beyond their geographic boundaries.

Conflicting Recommendations

Historic designations in the Civic Area: Since the completion of the Civic Area Master Plan, preservation efforts have been successful in landmarking the Atrium building on the 13th street block of the Civic Area’s East Bookend, and redevelopment or deconstruction, as originally listed as options within the Civic Area Master Plan, can no longer be considered. Similarly, the Bandshell will remain in its existing location and will not be relocated, as described in the Civic Area Master Plan.

Flood: most up to date FEMA floodplain maps identify structures which have been added/removed from floodplain designations and will require reconsideration of development options listed in plans. Downtown has a significant amount of flood risk and property within High Hazard, Conveyance, 100-year, and 500-year floodplains and requires development consideration and thoughtful planning.

Parking: There is current misalignment of TDM, Transportation Master Plan, and parking demand requirements. Parking is addressed across multiple plans, but the city may have the opportunity to consolidate parking and reduce surface lot coverage.

Gaps in Previous Planning Efforts

Implementing the City of Boulder’s Sustainability, Equity and Resilience (SER) Framework: In 2022, the city updated the Sustainability and Resilience Framework to be more directional on the city’s approach to Equity. This framework is intended to guide all policies, programs and projects in the city. A key feature of this update includes the following purpose of the framework: *“Ensuring that the root causes of inequities are eliminated through city policies, practices, programs and financial decisions.”* This will

require that future projects identify if, where and how inequities exist in relation to their site or project work, what the root causes of those inequities are and offer solutions to eliminate those inequities. An analysis of inequity in the Downtown area will be a key study needed to support project teams moving forward in this arena.

Downtown Plans and Studies

A Proposal for the Downtown Central Business District

Date | September 1997, incorporated into City Land Use Regulations

Organization | Downtown Alliance

Purpose | The purpose of the Downtown Alliance was to bring together various interest groups within Downtown and guide future development to support stakeholders and maintain downtown's livability and quality. This report served to identify guidelines for future development and quality of downtown.

Proposal Scope | This report was presented to City Council with community support and site testing analysis to support the implementation of updates to local policy, governance and regulation. The report was accepted by City Council and zoning recommendations were incorporated into the rezoning of downtown in the same year.

Summary | This proposal outlines strategies for maintaining the scale, reinforcing pedestrian qualities, preserving and maintaining historic quality, and preserving the unique quality of different areas downtown. It includes policy changes, actions items, and an implementation strategy.

How it affects Downtown | This document established key criteria for design and development of downtown beginning in 1997. It remains a part of the city's land use regulations and continues to shape the urban context downtown.

Significant Recommendations |

- Revise existing design guidelines to represent the unique qualities and vision of each downtown zone
- Establish distinct zoning categories to reflect individual qualities of downtown zones
- Include public projects in design review process
- Establish and administer streetscape guidelines
- Encourage residential development, lessen residential parking requirements, ensure development aligns with design guidelines
- Establish a Downtown Vitality Index to monitor indicators including economic, transportation, utilities, and public perceptions
- Maintain and expand transportation infrastructure and ensure a balance of all modes of travel
- Address the needs of surrounding neighborhoods in terms of transportation impacts

Key Considerations |

Should we evaluate and inventory how downtown has or has not met the expectations laid out in this proposal?

What guidelines are outdated and should be updated?

Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

Date | Revised March 2018

Organization | City of Boulder

Purpose | "...provide a basis for understanding, discussing, and assessing the design quality of proposed preservation, renovation, and new construction projects located within the boundaries of the Downtown Historic District, Non-Historic Area, and the Interface Area"

Plan scope | Guidelines are anticipated for use by both public and private entities to preserve and enhance form, scale, and visual character of Downtown. Guidelines are administered by City reviewing bodies and boards.

Summary | The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines address specific areas of downtown: Downtown Historic District, Non-historic District Area, and The Neighborhood Interface Area, as well as specific design topics of parking, signs, and streetscapes. It provides several principal guidelines for each area and design element. A design checklist is offered to ensure development in the area meets the design criteria established in the guidelines.

Guidelines support ten strategies outlines in the *1992 Downtown Illustrative Plan*

- Assure long term economic vitality of downtown
- Establish pedestrian district
- Provide improved links between downtown boulder and civic park
- Locate and build additional public places in downtown
- Design and construct streetscape improvements throughout downtown
- Maintain the historic character of downtown
- Expand the role of the arts
- Encourage residential uses adjacent to and in downtown
- Provide better access to the downtown for alternative transportation methods
- Parking

How it affects Downtown | Future development and redevelopment must adhere to the *Downtown Urban Design Guidelines*. The guidelines preserve and enhance the character of downtown and ensure cohesive quality of development.

Significant Recommendations |

- Downtown Historic District: this area contains the city's greatest concentration of historic commercial buildings and economic success of downtown relies on maintaining its character and quality so preservation and restoration must be priorities
- Non-Historic Area: presents unique opportunity for mixed use and a focus on pedestrian experience
- Interface Area: vital link between Downtown and neighborhoods, so special consideration in design to strengthen and enhance this link
- Parking area: evaluate impact on traffic, streets, and urban design as well as pedestrian experience
- Streetscape: multi-modal access, safety, and ease of use

Key Considerations | Key Considerations are topics that will help guide the planning process.

- Do these guidelines need to be updated or amended?
- Will future projects meet design criteria?

Downtown Boulder Vision Plan

Date | 2022

Organization | Downtown Boulder Partnership

Vision | “Grow Downtown Boulder’s reach, community, and success”

Purpose | “The Downtown Boulder Vision Plan builds upon existing partnerships and plans and was developed for the community and by the community through months of meaningful engagement”

Plan scope | Provides strategic direction and helps inform priorities for Downtown identified by community engagement efforts. Useful as a resource for the Downtown Boulder Partnership (DBP), the City of Boulder and other partners. DBP relies on the City and other public and private partners to accomplish goals and objectives of the Vision Plan.

Summary | This Vision Plan was driven by community engagement and outreach. The plan focuses on reimagining the I300 Block, activating the I400 Block, and facilitating co-created programming across Downtown as well as fostering connections, improving infrastructure, and placemaking.

How it affects Downtown | Connections between distinct areas in Downtown are lacking. The Downtown Boulder Vision Plan reimagines ways to foster connections with improvements to the I300 and I400 Blocks as well as infrastructure enhancements, greenway development, a focus on art, and the pedestrian experience.

Significant Recommendations |

- Reimagine the I300 block of Pearl Street
- Better activate I400 block of Pearl Street
- Enhance human-centric streetscapes
- Activate surface parking lots & alleys
- Promote affordable food and retail options
- Sub-district identity, placemaking, and branding
- Enhance connections across Canyon Boulevard
- Multi-Use path improvements connecting to CU Boulder
- Resident focused events and planning
- Additional pedestrian and bike facilities
- Enhance public art

Downtown Boulder Strategic Plan

Date | January 2021

Author | Progressive Urban Management Associates, Inc. (P.U.M.A)

Contracted by the Downtown Boulder Foundation

Summary |

The Downtown Boulder Foundation (DBF) was formed in 2017 to support the civic and cultural strength of downtown. In 2020, they commissioned P.U.M.A., a national planning consultancy with expertise in downtown and urban district planning and organizational development, to produce a plan that would guide the evolution of the foundation and support the civic and cultural strength of downtown.

Three areas of focus are highlighted within the plan: cultural experiences, community connection, and downtown of the future. The objectives of each focus area respectively are: encouraging cultural experiences in Downtown Boulder, connecting with and building bridges to the broader Boulder community, and to be involved in planning for the future of downtown Boulder. The overall mission is to “engage visitors and locals alike through arts, cultural, innovation and inclusive, community-driven experiences in Downtown Boulder.”

Recommendations |

Cultural Experiences

- Re-think events beyond Covid-19: decide which events to prioritize re-starting, evaluate new event opportunities, identify and allocate seed funding for new events
- Use art to activate public spaces
- Showcase local talent

Community Connection

- Consider diverse voices and perspectives
- Engage students and young professionals in community building
- Encourage diverse businesses and ownership downtown

Downtown of the Future

- Support future planning studies: develop an implementation strategy for priority plans
- Engage the community in thinking about the future

Site-Specific Plans and Studies

Master Plan for Boulder's Civic Area

Date | Originally Adopted by City Council in 1992. Revisions and an update adopted in June 2015

Organization | City of Boulder

Vision | Create a “lively and distinct destination that reflects our community values, where people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and incomes feel welcome to recreate, socialize, deliberate, learn, and access city services”

Plan scope | The plan provides a conceptual vision for the future of the civic area and is intended to guide decision making and site design and encourage coordinated planning and proposals consistent with its guiding principles. It is intended for use by public, businesses, property owners, city officials and staff to guide decision making for private development, public facilities and services in the area.

Summary | The *Master Plan for Boulder's Civic Area* serves as a roadmap for Civic Area transformation to reflect the community's shared values and diversity. The plan preserves area highlights including Dushanbe Teahouse, the Boulder Public Library, the Farmers Market and others, as well as views of the Flatirons and access to Boulder Creek. Additionally, it identifies future facilities and spaces in coordination with the existing amenities which will continue to foster a sense of place in the heart of Boulder. This plan helps ensure redevelopment in the area is consistent with the City's vision and ensures public improvements will be in place to support new development.

Civic Park and Central Park make up half of the Civic Area's 27 acre footprint. The plan's “Park at the Core” concept reflects Boulder Creek's prominence as a defining feature and reflects a vision for the parks to act as a ‘ribbon’ to weave existing and future facilities and greenspace. The Civic Area will become a link to surrounding destinations. It will be bookended by spaces for cultural activity, arts, food, and innovation.

How it affects Downtown | This is the guiding document for the Civic Area within Boulder's downtown. The plan offers a framework for creating a sense of place in the heart of Boulder. The Civic Area serves as a destination and should foster a connection to the rest of downtown in order to enhance the areas vitality, economic success, diversity, and 365 24/7 activation.

Significant Recommendations

The vision for the Civic Area includes three main components:

1. A park at the core. The proposal describes a variety of park spaces, play areas, art, mobile food and programmed activities in green space along Boulder Creek. The green space is expanded to Arapahoe Avenue, removing existing buildings (Park Central, New Britain) and parking lots, which are currently located in the High Hazard Flood Zone. This vision approximately doubles the area's useable pervious surface to manage and mitigate storm water and urban heat island effects.
2. The East End: Food and Innovation. This vision incorporates mixed uses which will expand retail and innovation in the East End and ensure activity day and night.

3. The West End: Arts and Culture. Redevelopment in the West End will enhance cultural programming and outdoor performance venues to activate the area. Promote a mixing of private and public development to generate day and nighttime vitality.

Key Considerations | Key Considerations are topics that will help guide the planning process.

- What has changed since the adoption of this master plan that will impact future design, construction and/or redevelopment of the civic area?

Boulder Civic Area East Bookend Existing Conditions Report

Date | February 2018

Organization | City of Boulder

Purpose | “This document provides a comprehensive overview of the prior planning, research, and analysis that has been done within the Civic Area East Bookend to give a clear depiction of the existing conditions on the site.”

Plan scope | This document will serve as the basis for future planning processes for the East Bookend. It is advisory and informational in nature. It is not a regulatory document, but rather an evaluation of the successes of previous regulatory plans and development.

Summary | The East Bookend Existing Conditions Report provides a clear inventory and understanding of the current conditions of the East Bookend located within the Civic Area of downtown. It contains Area-wide, Parcel-specific, and Nearby-Area analysis. It outlines potential uses for new and existing buildings as well as provides context for existing infrastructure. It serves future planning processes by identifying the constraints and resources of the East Bookend.

How it affects Downtown | The East Bookend is planned to serve the Civic Area as the food and innovation hub bookending the eastern portion of greenspace in Downtown Boulder from 13th Street to 14th Street between Canyon Boulevard and Arapahoe Avenue. It encompasses many longstanding City favorites including the Boulder Farmer’s Market and the Dushanbe Teahouse, and it offers an opportunity to incorporate a variety of future uses. The inventory and analysis in this document will help guide future decisions about city-owned spaces, development and redevelopment of the East Bookend as a path for arriving at the Civic Area vision.

Significant Recommendations |

- Rezoning: may be required if the desired land uses do not align with current zoning
- Flood zones: all properties within the East Bookend are in the 100-year floodplain and must adhere to development requirements, some areas are additionally located within High Hazard Zones and conveyance zones. In the most restrictive locations of the East Bookend, there is a 5’ flood proofing requirement.
 - AO3 flood zone: This zone’s Base Flood Elevation (BFE) has not been determined and instead an average depth of flooding is provided. An AO3 has an average depth 2.5 and 3.5 feet. Regulations define the flood protection elevation to include 2 feet of freeboard, so in the AO3 area the flood protection elevation is five feet above the highest adjacent grade structure.
 - Parcel specific flood regulations:
 - Atrium Building: Most recent December 2017 FEMA adopted floodplain mapping removed the Atrium from the HHZ and it is not in the conveyance zone. It is within the 100-year flood plain
 - 13th/14th Block: the developable area in this block is impacted mostly by the 100-year floodplain regulations. The street corridors are HHZ.
 - Public safety:

- Public safety must be considered but does not prohibit activation of areas in the floodplain or HHZ.
- Parking: below grade parking will not be considered. Consider amount, location, and demand for parking within City's sustainability goals
 - New parking lots are not permitted where flood depths would exceed 18in.
- City facilities: Civic Area is envisioned as a place for civic engagement so incorporating uses such multi-use meeting spaces, event space, and or a municipal court room will help achieve the vision
- Historic: landmark properties exist, and there are additional properties with the potential to be designated. Historic preservation will require review and integration with future development
- Access and connections: consider all modes of transportation. Consider Central Broadway Corridor Design Framework connection between CU, Downtown, and Alpine-Balsam. Reduce barrier-effect of major thoroughfares. 13th Street as a shared, closed, or event street.
- Pedestrian experience: prioritize the pedestrian. Establish hierarchy in path types. Include amenities.
- Parcel specific: existing parcels offer unique constraints and opportunities and should be addressed individually per report

Key Considerations | Key Considerations are topics that will help guide the planning process.

What changes have been made since this inventory was completed?

Parking needs assessment, how much/where/limits on parking?

What landmarks have been designated since the report's publishing?

How will development within the Civic Area align with FAM and future plans for Alpine-Balsam?

Central Broadway Corridor Design Framework

Date | Accepted June 6, 2017 by City Council (not a regulatory document)

Organization | City of Boulder

Purpose | “The Central Broadway Corridor Design Framework articulates a shared understanding of the existing and potential future interrelationships between five key activity centers along the central stretch of Broadway”

Plan scope | The Framework is advisory in nature. It serves to complement and strengthen the BVCP as a tool to translate the City’s values to specific nodes within the city. The Corridor Design Framework catalogs background information, analysis of current conditions, research of best practices, and prior planning efforts.

Summary | The *Central Broadway Corridor Design Framework* identifies opportunities along the Broadway corridor to fill gaps, address challenges, and strengthen existing assets within the identified five key nodes: University Hill/CU, Civic Area, Downtown, Alpine-Balsam Site, and Boulder County site at Broadway and Iris. It ensures that decision making at a broader scale considers the interrelationships of the nodes while identifying opportunities for redevelopment and area planning at a smaller scale. It expresses an opportunity to expand the multi-modal transportation network along Broadway with a series of integrated and connected districts. The Framework provides guidance for the city planning efforts and initiatives along the corridor.

How it affects Downtown |

The Corridor Design Framework serves as a tool to foster relationships between nodes across Downtown. These relationships are key to the vitality of Downtown to maintain the individual character of each node while establishing synergies at a broader scale.

Significant Recommendations |

- Improve connections and strengthen synergies between the Civic Area, Downtown, and University Hill/CU
- Upgrade streetscapes, intersection improvements, and wayfinding to enhance existing transit system infrastructure and other pedestrian amenities
- Canyon Complete Street project implementation to remove Canyon as a barrier
- Integrate components of “Sustainable Urban Form” from the BVCP which include
 - Compact- design with compact density pattern
 - Connected- integrate multi-modal system
 - Complete- easy access to daily needs without car dependency
 - Green, attractive, and distinct- enrich public realm

Key Considerations | Key Considerations are topics that will help guide the planning process.

What gaps have been filled by development/redevelopment along the corridor? What gaps still exist?

What new opportunities are there along the corridor?

Is there a future where we consider a single concept design for Broadway, as a signature and unifying roadway in Boulder?

Andrews Arboretum Promenade Study

Date | Q1 2018 (not a regulatory document)

Organization | City of Boulder

Purpose | "...intended to provide an initial analysis of objectives, existing conditions and conceptual design alternatives for the Andrews Arboretum Promenade area."

Study scope | The Andrews Arboretum Promenade Study is intended to provide city staff with recommendations on feasibility of future Promenade area projects, provide analysis for future decision making, and insight on the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the University of Colorado.

Summary | The October 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of Colorado and the City of Boulder established the City's obligation to design and construct a pedestrian and bike connection, Andrews Arboretum Promenade, and make other transportation improvements to increase and improve connectivity between the future development of the University of Colorado Hotel and Conference Center and Boulder's Civic Area and Downtown.

The *Andrews Arboretum Promenade Study* assessed whether the City should reaffirm its commitment to improve connectivity and identifies conflicts and constraints due to the complex nature of topographical changes, future needs for multiple transportation facilities, existing historic character, and future development along the Arboretum. Staff proposed conceptual design alternatives to meet the need for improved multi-modal connections. Options are not mutually exclusive and allow for phased approach and flexibility to build upon each other:

- Option A: basic improvements including multi-modal and safety features
- Option B: expanded improvements including historic railroad right of way and ADA features
- Option C: comprehensive improvements including enhanced way-finding and CUHCC-related features

How it affects Downtown | The study area is situated between the University of Colorado, the future University of Colorado Hotel and Conference Center (CUHCC), Boulder High School and the Civic Area. The Andrews Arboretum Promenade is included in the City's obligation to the University of Colorado established in the October 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to construct an arboretum. Given the concurrent redevelopment efforts at CUHCC and Downtown, there is increased need and opportunities to improve connections between central nodes and CU. This project area represents some of those improvements and will define future planning and development in Downtown.

Significant Recommendations |

- Study finds that improving connections between proposed CUHCC, CU, and Civic Area is complementary and necessary with ongoing planning efforts
- Developing sufficient connections from the CUHCC to Downtown Boulder will require a series of unanticipated improvements to streetscapes and public right of ways to achieve the intent and purpose of the promenade project beyond a direct path tracing existing infrastructure

City Department Plans and Other Citywide Studies

Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

Date | August 2022 adopted by City Council, builds upon 2014 BPR Master Plan

Organization | City of Boulder

Vision | “BPR envisions a community where every member’s health and well-being is founded on unparalleled parks, facilities, and programs”

Purpose | “The 2022 Master Plan serves as a guidebook to help the BPR staff provide parks and recreations services that meet the needs of the Boulder Community”

Plan scope | The BPR Master provides guidance for parks and recreation services that meet the needs of the community. It is a roadmap for management of parks and recreation systems, informing capital investment, programming, operation, and maintenance for the department.

Summary | The Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2022) acts as a roadmap for management of parks and recreation system of the City, informing capital investment, programming, and priorities. It outlines 6 key themes which guide goals and initiatives for the future:

1. Community health and wellness: increased physical and mental health for community
2. Financial stability: future planning efforts and system function is dependent on financial stability
3. Taking care of what we have: a continued focus on maintaining existing system and upgrading as necessary. Quality over quantity mentality.
4. Building community and relationships: focus on building community and relationships that promote diversity and accessibility
5. Youth engagement and activity: engage youth in parks and recreation
6. Organizational readiness: face changes and challenges and continue to support community

Current conditions are inventoried, and a strategic plan illustrates a framework for BPR with polices, goals, and initiatives.

How it affects Downtown | Downtown Boulder exists in BDP’s Central Boulder subcommunity service area encompassing 83.63 acres of parkland. Open space preservation and great public spaces are core values of the BVCP and the BPR Master Plan builds on those values. Future planning of Downtown Boulder must be consistent with those values and support development of parks, programming, and facilities.

Significant Recommendations |

- Community health and wellness:
 - Identify opportunities to improve programming and reduce barriers to access
 - Ensure BPR services and assets support the total physical, mental, and social well-being of the community

- Taking care of what we have:
 - Provide well-maintained and multi-use parks and recreation facilities
 - Budget for operation, maintenance and replacement of existing assets
 - Implement ecosystem facility improvements that support the city's climate commitments
- Community relationships:
 - Build a stronger parks and recreation system through meaningful connections with community.
- Youth engagement:
 - enhance physical and mental health of teens
 - Utilize community partnerships to expand recreational opportunities for youth
 - Integrate more passive and active recreation opportunities for youth

Key Considerations | Key Considerations are topics that will help guide the planning process.

How can the Downtown Strategy improve parkland access, equity, quality, and condition?

What opportunities exist for collaborations and partnerships?

Comprehensive Flood and Stormwater Master Plan

Date | September 2022 adopted by City Council, updates previous 2004 Comprehensive Flood and Stormwater Utility Master Plan

Organization | Stormwater and Flood Management Utility City of Boulder

Purpose | "...improve the management of stormwater and drainageways to help protect people, places, property and ecosystems in a way that builds resilience and is consistent with community values."

Plan Scope | Volume I is written for a general audience consistent with other city master plans. Volume II contains more detailed systems and regulation information for an audience familiar with flood and stormwater systems. Together, this master plan provides policy and regulations, system management information, and recommendations as well as a framework for implementation of programs and projects related to flood and stormwater.

Summary | This Master Plan provides the policy framework for implementing programs and projects in the City of Boulder's Stormwater and Flood Management Utility (Utility). The Utility was established in 1973 to protect public health, safety, and welfare of the community from flood and stormwater damage. The plan adheres to the following key outcomes which reflect community and Utility values: prioritize projects to do the greatest good first, provide services equitably, make infrastructure resilient to climate change, prepare for extreme, inform the community, and maintain the system.

How it affects Downtown | The majority of downtown Boulder lies within city floodplains. Portions exist in High Hazard Zones (HHZ), Conveyance Zones, the 100-year Floodplain, and or the 500-year Floodplain. Floods pose an extreme risk to health and human safety, property, and environment in downtown Boulder.

Significant Recommendations |

- Increase the number of green infrastructure facilities on capital projects which incorporate runoff control components
- Provide a comprehensive and integrated stormwater drainage system for existing and future developments
- Adaptive risk management should be used to achieve climate resilience of infrastructure
- Incorporate more stringent stormwater quality design and construction requirements for city projects
- Emphasize the use of nature-based solutions for flood mitigations to protect people and property in a way that preserves or restores the ecological functions of creek and riparian corridors

Key Considerations |

How can capital funded city projects be progressive in flood mitigation design to set a standard and example for future development in the city within Downtown?

Transportation Master Plan

Date | 2019 adopted by City Council, updates the 2014 TMP

Organization | City of Boulder

Vision | “create a safe, accessible, and sustainable multi-modal transportation system connecting people with each other and where they want to go”

Purpose | The Transportation Master Plan provides the policy framework for mobility and access in Boulder Valley.

Plan Scope | This master plan is regulatory and serves as the guiding policy document for City of Boulder’s transportation system.

Summary | Boulder’s *Transportation Master Plan* identifies policies and priorities to provide safe, shared, sustainable and equitable transportation to the community. It aims to accomplish two overarching goals for Boulder Valley: provide mobility and access safely and conveniently and preserve Boulder’s high quality of living by designing for people and minimizing auto congestion, air pollution, and noise. The City’s multimodal transportation system strives to meet these goals defined in the plan: be safe, be equitable, be reliable, provide travel choices and support clean air and our climate commitment. It provides a community framework for meeting those transportation and mobility goals and identifies overall improvements to the transportation system necessary for achieving them.

How it affects Downtown | Access and mobility to, from, and within Downtown promotes its economic vitality and contributes to its vibrancy and diversity.

Significant Recommendations |

- Provide mobility options by expanding transit and supporting mixed land uses
- Prioritize pedestrians through pedestrian-focused programs and completing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan to make sidewalks accessible for everyone
- Manage the demand on the transportation system, maintain infrastructure, promote efficiency, advance TDM and parking management strategies
- Identify areas that lack comfort and safety for purposed improvements and implementation of pedestrian plan
- Parking reform, curb management, and reallocation of public right of way are needed to support sustainable travel choices
- Encourage diverse, mixed use neighborhood development which allows more trips to be completed without private vehicle dependency

Key Considerations |

How can we improve our public infrastructure to ensure ADA accessibility and access for everyone?

How can Canyon Boulevard and Broadway be reduced as barriers?

How can Downtown continue to improve its access management program as an example for the rest of the city?

Community Cultural Plan

Date | November 2015 adopted by City Council

Organization | City of Boulder

Vision | “together, we will craft Boulder’s social, physical, and cultural environment to include creativity as an essential ingredient for wellbeing, prosperity, and joy of everyone in the community”

Purpose | The intent of the Community Cultural Plan is to describe ways in which public art, economic tools, services for practicing artists, and support of cultural organizations, neighborhoods, and diverse communities all intersect with social resiliency, environmental sustainability, and economic prosperity to achieve a thriving city.

Plan Scope | The Community Cultural Plan serves as a municipal work plan and strategy document.

Summary | The Community Cultural plan aims to support cultural vitality, creative identity, and vibrant environment within the city of Boulder. It offers tools and outlines capacity of the Office of Arts + Culture to support organizations, businesses, and individuals in achieving the plans vision.

How it affects Downtown | Downtown and the Civic Area are areas of opportunity to expand and enhance arts and culture in the city. As the heart of Boulder, Downtown is Boulder’s primary cultural destination. The West Bookend of the Civic Area is specifically designated within the Civic Area Master Plan as an arts and cultural anchor for the city. Continuing to aim planning efforts at amplifying existing arts and culture programming and supporting expansion of creativity in the public realm within the West Bookend and the rest of Downtown will foster a supportive environment for artists and creative professionals and add vibrancy, diversity, and economic vitality to Downtown.

Significant Recommendations |

- Support cultural organizations
- Create and enhance venues
- Reinvent public art program
- Enhance the vitality of the creative economy
- Emphasize culture in neighborhoods and communities
- Advance civic dialogue, awareness, and participation
- Engage youth

Key Considerations |

What programs, venues, events, and other arts and cultural elements can be incorporated into the public realm or civic space to enhance the Cultural Plan’s goals and vision?

Citywide Retail Strategy Update

Date | April 7, 2020 City Council Agenda Item

Organization | City of Boulder

Purpose | Provide a long-term approach to enhancing and sustaining the vitality of the Boulder retail base.

Scope | This strategic plan was a part of a Citywide Retail Project initiated in 2018 corresponding to retail goals of the BVCP and to expand upon the 2018 Downtown Retail/Vibrancy Study. City Council developed primary objectives to pursue retail-related goals.

Summary | The City of Boulder, in response to multiple factors such as slowing growth in retail sales tax revenues, retail-related comprehensive plan goals, and retail-related recommendations out of the 2018 Downtown Retail/Vibrancy Study, authorized and funded a Citywide Retail Project with three phases. A citywide retail study, development of a strategy, and the implementation of that strategy.

City Council's primary objectives upon review of the citywide retail study were to:

- Address retailer challenges.
- Respond to unmet shopper needs.
- Continue to monitor Boulder's retail base performance.

The City conducted broad outreach as a part of the strategy development. Resulting recommendations from the analysis of this outreach were as follows:

- Improve small business experience with permitting and licensing.
- Reduce small business costs.
- Streamline online support for small business.
- Expand geographic access to retail.
- Expand access to affordability/inclusive retail.
- Ongoing monitoring.

How it affects Downtown | Retail is vital to the success of Boulder's Downtown. Retailers in the City are facing challenges and there are existing unmet shopper needs addressed through this strategic plan.

Significant Recommendations |

- Enhance the viability of small and independent retails by:
 - Supporting existing city programs that promote the creation of permanently affordable commercial space and tenant relocation assistance to retain small independent retailers
 - Maintain and enhance programs to reduce small business operating costs
 - Remove or reduce regulatory barriers to "right-sizing" retail to promote private creation of affordable commercial spaces
 - Conduct economic impact studies
- Streamline online support for small businesses by:
 - Creation of a "one-stop-shop" online portal for small businesses and retail employers

- Expand geographic access to retail by:
 - Establish a process for expanding walkable access to retail
- Expand access to affordable/inclusive retail by:
 - Promote a tenant recruitment program to bring affordable/inclusive retailers to Boulder
- Continue to monitor performance of city's retail base

Key Considerations |

- What gaps exist (including additional education and outreach) that need to be addressed?
- Are additional resources and/or funding needed to address the gaps?