



INFORMATION ITEM MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager
Mark Woulf, Assistant City Manager
Alison Rhodes, Director of Parks and Recreation
Brad Mueller, Director of Planning and Development Services
Natalie Stiffler, Director of Transportation and Mobility
Joanna Crean, Director of Facilities and Fleet
Cris Jones, Director of Community Vitality
Joe Taddeucci, Director of Utilities
Mark Davison, Planning Senior Manager
Shihomi Kuriyagawa, Senior Landscape Architect
Kristofer Johnson, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Kathleen King, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Gerrit Slatter, Civil Engineering Senior Manager
Kristine Edwards, Community Vitality Operations and Maintenance Senior Manager
Chris Douglass, Utilities Engineering Senior Manager
Michele Crane, Facilities and Fleet Deputy Director

Date: August 1, 2024

Subject: Civic Area Phase 2: Engagement Window 1 Feedback Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the beginning of the 2023, Boulder Parks and Recreation launched the scoping phase for the Civic Area Phase 2 Project and confirmed the project process, scope and priorities in a [December 14th Study Session](#) with City Council last year. In 2024, staff and the design team have been working in the Planning and Analysis Phase to gather technical data and community feedback. This phase includes the first two windows of community engagement expected to run through the end of 2024. The intent of this item is to provide City Council with an update on the process and results of Engagement Window 1: Park Perceptions and Future Activation, as well an overview of next steps for Engagement Window 2: What We Heard: Vision and Values.

FISCAL IMPACT

The next phase of planning and design for the Civic Area will include the completion of site analysis, a market and feasibility study, design, and windows of engagement for the key project milestones. Current approved funding for the project in 2023 is budgeted at \$500,000, funded from the Community Culture, Resilience and Safety (CCRS) tax.

The design for Civic Area Phase 2 will encompass a large area including the full arboretum connection, but implementation will be restricted to current funding. Cost estimating will be provided at multiple milestones throughout the design process to identify the final scope of construction for Civic Area for Phase 2 improvements based upon available funding. BPR, Transportation, Utilities, Facilities, and Community Vitality will be working in concert with the city's Finance team to finalize the budget for the Civic Area Phase 2 effort as well as projected costs for the full buildout of the entire 2015 Civic Area Plan scope.

BACKGROUND

Current Planning Analysis Phase

The Civic Area Phase 2 project launched in February 2024. City of Boulder (COB) staff led the first phase of community engagement, while the design team conducted technical analysis with help from the cross-departmental COB core team. This initial work aimed to understand how the Boulder community currently uses the space and how they want to use it in the future. The analysis reviewed existing policies and identified opportunities and constraints for new park infrastructure and space activation. The project will focus on incorporating the seven guiding principles from the 2015 plan and lessons from the Phase 1 improvements completed in 2018. After the Council Study Session on December 14th, it was decided to prioritize communitywide benefits by overlaying additional priorities on top of the existing seven guiding principles:

- Elevate equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility during the engagement process to make sure all community groups feel heard. Ensure community members feel welcome and feel a sense of belonging when they visit the Civic Area after Phase 2 project improvements.
- Prioritize the SER framework, climate initiative policy, and equity policy to elevate Boulder's goals for a resilient, sustainable, and viable future.
- Prioritize access to and through the Civic Area for people experiencing disabilities, pedestrians, and other alternative transit users to create an accessible Heart of Boulder.
- Demonstrate how guiding plans and policies will inform the project as it moves towards a final design to ensure accountability of the city's vision, values, and goals.
- Ensure a clear engagement process by outlining outreach, roles, input, and decision-making for all stakeholders, partners, and community-based organizations. This will help make the engagement process fair and inclusive.
- Create a process to define acceptable social behaviors that reflect the community's shared goals for a safe Civic Area. This will help ensure the space is welcoming, safe, and inclusive for everyone.

After Council denied the motion to create a historic district within part of the Civic Area in April 2024, interest from Council for telling the stories and histories of previous inhabitants was highlighted. The project team will follow Council's suggestion to share the history of the people who previously lived and settled along Boulder Creek, aligning with the guiding principle “Celebration of History and Assets.”

In response to the focus areas mentioned by the council above, the Civic Area Phase 2 team has taken steps to incorporate these measures:

- Using the SER Framework, the team focused on diversity and inclusion during Window 1 and will evaluate the success of this process. The Equity Instrument will be used to make decisions for planning Window 2 to ensure any voices missed during the previous window are included in the opportunity to give input. This approach is detailed in the Engagement Window 1 Analysis Summary below.
- The 7 guiding principles from the Civic Area Plan and the SER framework will guide the schematic design (design that includes more detail, scaled drawings and material information), the operations plan, and the space activation plan for programming and stewardship of the park after construction and ribbon cutting for the space. Incorporating the SER model along with the 2015 Civic Area Plan throughout the entire lifecycle of the project will help create a sustainable, equitable, and resilient space long after the park improvements are completed.
- “Enhanced Access and Connections” is a guiding principle prioritized to create a universally accessible Civic Area. This principle will be thoroughly studied to ensure that the area is inclusive and navigable for everyone. The project team is gathering feedback from individuals with disabilities and the wider community to evaluate barriers to park access, preferences for alternative transportation, and design enhancements that promote inclusive activities, social connections, and community gatherings.
- The core team is tracking all plans and policies that will affect this area, and a summary of these policies and review processes is documented in the site analysis report. This report will provide the framework for designing and activating the space.
- The engagement process outlined in this memorandum highlights the community feedback received by the core team. This feedback will be a key component in shaping the design of Phase 2 improvements, alongside policy considerations and technical assessments.
- The [CoExistence Model](#) developed by SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, a nonprofit public policy organization) will guide engagement surrounding the sharing of public spaces. After the collection of community feedback, the team heard that safety is a top priority for the Boulder community. The CoExistence Model will help create guidance for park policies while balancing a welcoming space for all.
- Cultural inclusion and celebrating diversity were also highlighted as important themes in community feedback. These priorities will be integrated into Phase 2, offering an opportunity not only to honor the stories of past residents but also to celebrate the current diversity of Boulder.

In addition to the efforts, this project has involved extensive collaboration among multiple city departments. Parks and Recreation, Planning & Development Services, Community Vitality, Facilities and Fleet, Transportation & Mobility, Police Department, Housing and Human Services, Climate Initiatives, and Utilities have come together to support the project. This collaboration has enhanced the team's understanding of improvement opportunities, aligned with the city's goals and initiatives, and ensured compliance with critical policies, codes, and safety guidelines. This city-wide collaboration has been key in shaping the vision for the next phase of design which will focus on sustainable design principles, providing equitable amenities and programming opportunities for the community, and identifying resilient investment strategies within the public realm.

Previous Planning Context

The summary of the planning process for Boulder's Downtown Civic Area can be found [in this link](#) from the December 14th City Council Study Session. The background information in this packet highlights the process which led to the City Council approved [2015 Civic Area Park Plan](#) and the Phase 1 park improvements completed in 2018 as well as the Civic Area Phase 2 process for schematic design (for Civic Park, Central Park, Farmer's Market, 13th Street, Arboretum Path, and East and West Bookends as key spaces to be envisioned in the future). Later in the process and depending upon available funding, some aspects will move forward for construction. \$18M is currently in the adopted 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan to fund design and construction from the Community Culture, Safety and Resilience tax. For updated Civic Area Phase 2 information on project process and engagement please see the [project webpage](#). Previous PRAB and City Council Engagement for this project includes:

- [Civic Area Kickoff – /23 \(page 25\)](#)
- [Historic District – 6/26/23 \(page 29\)](#)
- [July Update – 7/24/23 \(page 45\)](#)
- [Site Tour Event – 8/28/23 \(page 17\)](#)
- [City Council Civic Area Phase 2 Study Session](#)
- [City Council Rejection of Motion to Adopt Civic Area Historic District](#)

ENGAGEMENT WINDOW 1 ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Between February and May of 2024, City of Boulder staff, in collaboration with Downtown Community Connectors, co-designed and implemented 13 engagement events to gain feedback from the community. The engagement process was guided by the 7 principles of the Civic Area Park Plan, the Sustainability, Equity and Resiliency Framework (SER), the Engagement Strategic Framework, and Equity-centered Engagement.

Central Questions posed to the community include:

- What do you envision doing in the Civic Area?
- What are your top values and guiding principles that will help inform the Civic Area Phase 2 project?
- What are your top concerns for the Civic Area and future design?
- How would you like to connect to the Civic Area through the Arboretum?

Overview of Engagement Events:

- Spanish Speaking Focus Group*
- Equity Focus Group*

- Mapleton HOA (Manufactured Housing Community)*
- Roll and Stroll (People Experiencing Disabilities)*
- Online Questionnaire (Spanish translation provided and demographic information collected)*
- Bridge House (Unhoused Population)*
- Boulder High Art Honors Society*
- Community Organization Meeting (Stakeholders)
- Family Concert and Community Feedback Public Event
- Library Mural Pop-up
- CU Environmental Design Students
- Age Well Centers Mural Pop-up

** Representation of historically excluded groups*

The Focus on Equity in Civic Area's Phase 2 Engagement Process:

The SER Framework guided the engagement process under the Healthy and Socially Thriving goal to gain diverse representation for gathering feedback and for the design and co-creation of the Civic Area. This equity-centered engagement process was the product of close collaboration between City of Boulder Staff, Downtown Community Connectors, and design consultants.

The process included:

- Intentional Focus Groups Formed to Elevate:
 - Racial equity discussions, space activation and place making
 - Universal Design (design and layout of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people) and programming feedback with disability equity discussions
 - Youth engagement series on youth space activation and place making
 - Conversations with low-income populations and the unhoused
 - Intergenerational feedback from older adults, college students, teens, and families
- Wide-Reaching Methods of Engagement, Including:
 - Focus group meetings
 - Pop-up idea murals
 - Design proposals from CU Boulder students
 - Boulder High School's Civic Area Art Gallery
 - Family and community feedback concert
 - Online questionnaire
- Engagement Data, Analysis, and Outcomes that:
 - Elevated voices of historically excluded communities, especially a need to create a welcoming, inclusive, safe, and connected urban heart
 - Fostered community support for the next phase of design
 - Highlighted top priorities for the Civic Area, according to community members

Data from this Window 1 will be analyzed to determine if the outreach and inclusion of historically excluded groups was successful. The Equity Instrument will be used to evaluate this feedback and lessons learned will guide the design of engagement Window 2. This engagement window will provide further opportunities for community groups to give input, creating a more inclusive and equitable engagement

process. During Window 2 the team will share out what we heard from the community in Window 1 and ask for confirmation of these findings, plus additional feedback. These two windows will capture a wide range of feedback from across the community before the design process begins (design starting in spring of 2025, see Diagram 6: Project Schedule below).

Overview of Window 1 Engagement Findings:

- A large number of public comments were collected and analyzed and from these comments, 50 themes emerged under the 7 Guiding Principles (see Figure A)

Figure A: Guiding Principles and Emerging Themes from 1318 Community Comments

Life & Property Safety	Place for Community Activity & Arts	Civic Heart of Boulder	Outdoor Culture & Nature	Celebration of History & Assets	Enhanced Access & Connections	Sustainable & Viable Future
Unsocial Behavior/Illegal Activity	Civic/Resource Services	Welcoming/ Inclusivity/ Multicultural	Open Space/Green Space	Integration of Inclusive History	Commute	Nature/Climate Education
Flood Plain Safety	Cultural Events	Equity	Trees	Historic Structures	Connection	Native Planting/ Habitat
Safety/Safe Environment	Arts & Music Events	Unified Space	Boulder Creek	Historic Education/ Programs	Universal Access	Stewardship
Regulatory & Safety Signage	Festivals	Distinct Identity	Views	Interpretive Signage	Parking	Water Conservation/ Quality
Safe Access	Science or Educational Programming	Center/Hub	Connection to Nature		Wayfinding	Longevity
Humanitarian Concern	Entertainment Amenities		Gardening/ Agriculture		Alternative Transit	Climate Change Resilience
	Community Space Infrastructure					Economic Viability
	General Amenities					
	Farmer's Market					
	Multi-Generational Activities					
	Community Partnerships					
	Food/Dining/Picnicking					
	Community Led Programming					
	Community Recreation/Play					
	Art					

- After analyzing the comments, the 7 Guiding Principles were placed in order of importance, shown in Figure B below. The figure shows data from the Boulder community as well as a separate column for historically excluded groups.

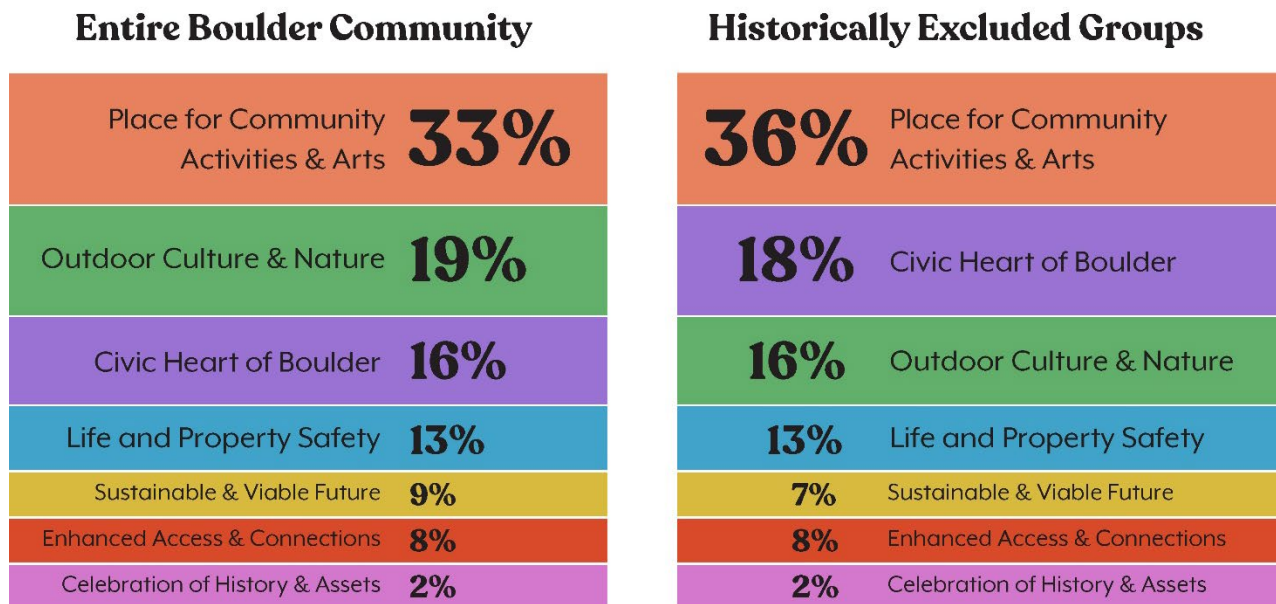


Figure B: Key Findings of Guiding Principles

- Figure C shows the top themes that emerged within the community's three most important principles. A full list of Themes can be seen in Figure A above.

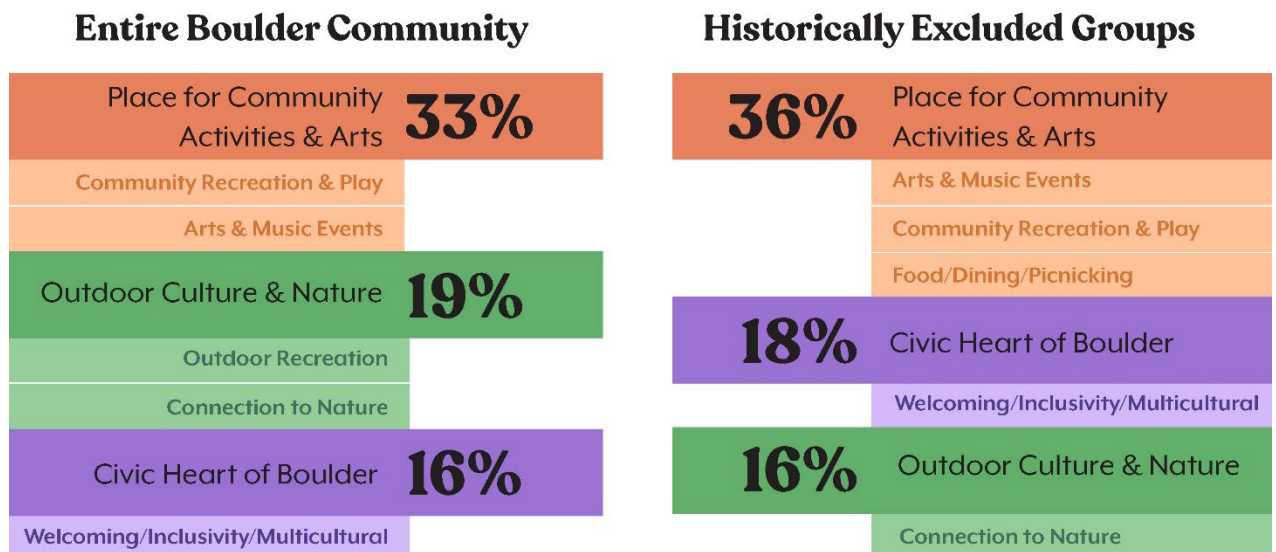


Figure C: Key Findings of Top Themes

Summary of Top 3 Principles:

The Boulder community prioritized three top principles in their feedback for Civic Area Phase 2. Here is a summary of public comments and priorities surrounding these principles:

- **Place for Community Activity and Arts: Diverse Activation Will Bring Us Together**
 - **Family and Child-Friendly Areas:** Prioritize safe and family-oriented activities including water play, nature play, crafts, learning stations, shaded picnic areas, affordable dining, and winter programming. Enhance amenities like public restrooms, trash/recycling bins, clean-up operations, and shaded seating for family gatherings. Picnicking and food gathering opportunities are of special interest to historically excluded groups.
 - **Community and Cultural Events:** Include diverse programming such as Latinx food festivals, salsa music, concerts, talent shows, movie nights, street painting festivals, and, especially, an expanded Farmer's Market. Design the space to encourage community recreation activities such as dance, yoga, pickup games, lawn games, ice skating, or community runs/walks.
 - **Public Art and Interactive Spaces:** Enhance park appeal with mural walls, sculpture gardens, graffiti/sticker walls, and affordable spaces for local artists. Dedicated spaces for teens to gather are of special interest to historically excluded groups.
- **Outdoor Culture and Nature: Recreation and Connection to the Natural World**
 - **Enhancing Green Spaces:** Increase green areas, trees, flowers, and natural elements. Promote relaxation activities like forest bathing, hammocking, and nature walks. Plant trees for shade, create gardens, and enhance creek access while ensuring cleanliness and safety. A general connection to nature is a higher priority than outdoor recreation for historically excluded groups.
 - **Promoting Outdoor Activities and Recreation:** Develop infrastructure for outdoor activities, especially in relation to Boulder Creek. Recreation including yoga, rock climbing, kayaking, tubing, bike races, cross-country skiing, zip lines, and sledding hills are desired by the community. Create nature play areas for children and spaces for relaxation.
 - **Community Gardens and Edible Landscapes:** Encourage gardening and sustainable food practices with fruit-bearing trees, food forests, community-supported agriculture, and pollinator habitats. Integrate education and environmental programs.
- **Civic Heart of Boulder: Equity, Inclusivity, and Multicultural Unification in Downtown**
 - **Inclusivity, Cultural Representation, and Co-creation:** Reflect Boulder's diversity through markets, events, and food festivals, creating a multicultural heart of the city. Support activation for smaller gatherings with park staff, integrate historical and cultural storytelling, and ensure an equitable engagement process for park creation. Foster a strong sense of belonging and welcoming in the space. This theme is more highly prioritized for historically excluded groups.
 - **Accessibility and Affordability:** Ensure low-cost permits and rents for market spaces, establish an easy-to-use reservation permit system for park spaces, allow extended use windows for park shelters, include low-cost parking and dining options. Prioritize economic accessibility for students and low-income families. Prioritize universal design and sensory experiences for people experiencing disability.
- **Community Feedback on Safety in the Civic Area:**
 - Community members made many comments about unsocial behaviors and illegal activities in the Civic Area, and they expressed frustration around not feeling safe enough

to use that space in its current state. The community would feel safer using the space if it were activated and programmed year-round, and if it included security personnel, nighttime lighting, and diligent cleanup of hazardous materials. While expressing frustration, the community also expressed a humanitarian concern and sadness for people experiencing homelessness living in the area. Historically excluded groups expressed a higher concern for humanitarian issues in the area.

Graphic Analysis of Engagement Results:

Shown below are a series of diagrams which graphically communicate findings from the Engagement Window 1 including feedback from historically underrepresented communities, how people feel in the civic space, and examples of notable comments from the community that reflect key findings described above.

- **Diagram 1: Racial Equity** – The graphic displays an analysis of feedback from the Spanish-First event, equity focus group, and online questionnaire where demographic data was collected for historically excluded groups.



Diagram 1: Racial Equity

- **Diagram 2: Disability Equity** – The graphic shows an analysis of feedback from the Roll and Stroll event and other focus group meetings where people experiencing disability participated.

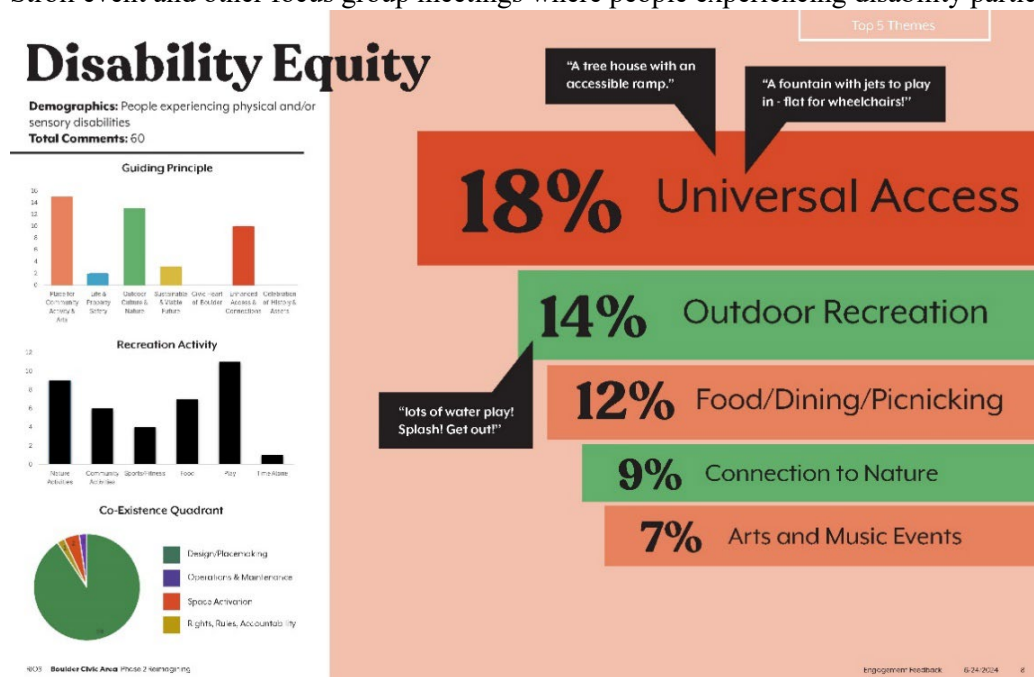


Diagram 2: Disability Equity

- **Diagram 3: Youth Equity** - The graphic displays an analysis of youth feedback from the family concert and Boulder High School focus group.

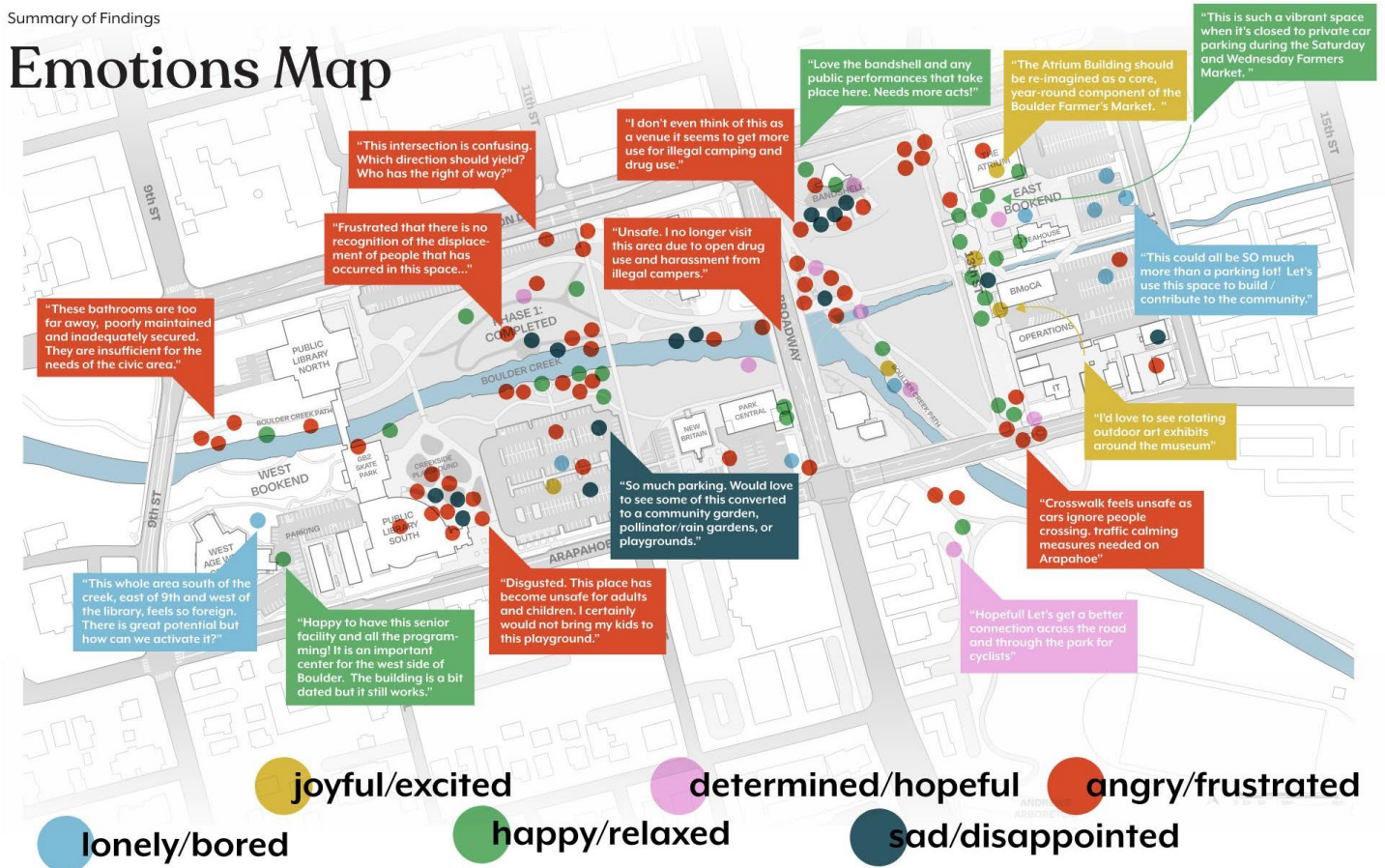


Diagram 3: Youth Equity

- **Diagram 4: Emotions Map** – The diagram marks where people experience different emotions in Civic Area and give feedback about these feelings. The data was collected from an interactive online map on the City’s Be Heard Boulder engagement platform.

Summary of Findings

Emotions Map



RIOS Boulder Civic Area Phase 2 Reimagining

Engagement Feedback 6/24/2024 20

Diagram 4: Emotions Map

- **Diagram 5: Notable Thoughts** – The graphic shows comments from across the community which represent some of the key priorities discovered during Engagement Window 1.

Summary of Findings

Notable Thoughts



Diagram 5: Notable Thoughts

NEXT STEPS

The below outlines the next steps in design, engagement and City Council touchpoints for the project. Refer to Diagram 6 for the full project schedule running through 2027.

- August 2024:
 - COB and Design Team to finalize the site analysis and move into visioning and values studies under Planning Analysis Task 1, this task will incorporate all feedback, technical analysis and policy requirements to create an overall vision for the next phase of design
- Q3: Engagement Window 2:
 - Share out Window 1 findings to the community and confirm what we heard
 - Plan for programming and space activation
 - Discuss park perceptions and acceptable park behaviors

- Launch engagement events in late August through early October
- Q1 2025:
 - Schematic Design Options
- Q3 2025:
 - City Council Touch Point for Schematic Design Options
 - Potential City Council Touch Point for Land Use Recommendations for the Civic Area if needed on the East Bookend

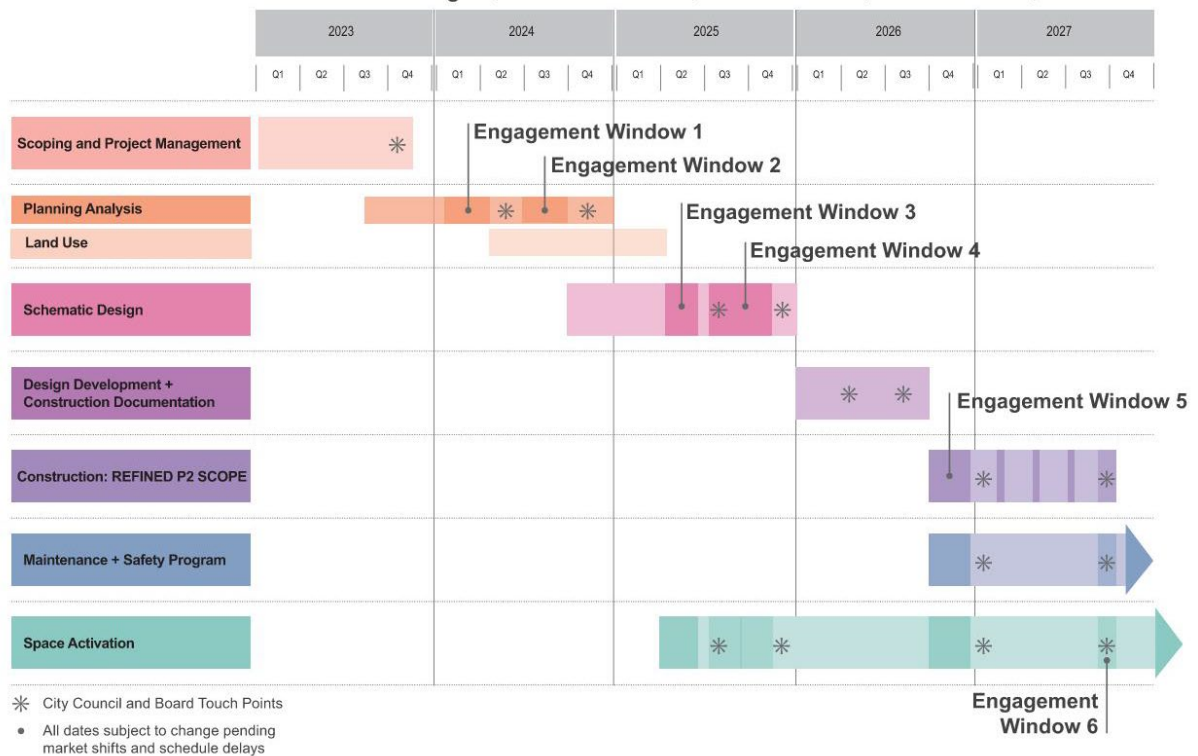


Diagram 6: Project Schedule

ATTACHMENTS

A. High resolution diagrams from the Engagement Summary

Key Findings of Guiding Principles

Entire Boulder Community

Place for Community Activities & Arts **33%**

Outdoor Culture & Nature **19%**

Civic Heart of Boulder **16%**

Life and Property Safety **13%**

Sustainable & Viable Future **9%**

Enhanced Access & Connections **8%**

Celebration of History & Assets **2%**

Historically Excluded Groups

36% Place for Community Activities & Arts

18% Civic Heart of Boulder

16% Outdoor Culture & Nature

13% Life and Property Safety

7% Sustainable & Viable Future

8% Enhanced Access & Connections

2% Celebration of History & Assets

Key Findings of Top Themes

Entire Boulder Community

Place for Community Activities & Arts **33%**

Community Recreation & Play

Arts & Music Events

Outdoor Culture & Nature **19%**

Outdoor Recreation

Connection to Nature

Civic Heart of Boulder **16%**

Welcoming/Inclusivity/Multicultural

Historically Excluded Groups

36% Place for Community Activities & Arts

Arts & Music Events

Community Recreation & Play

Food/Dining/Picnicking

18% Civic Heart of Boulder

Welcoming/Inclusivity/Multicultural

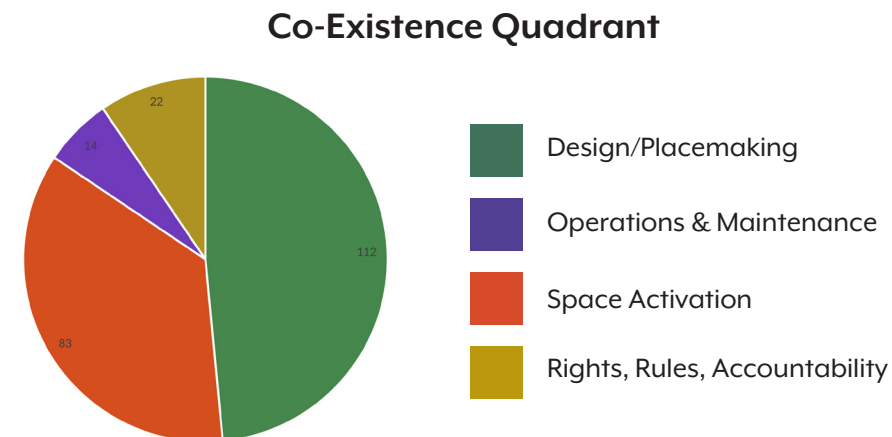
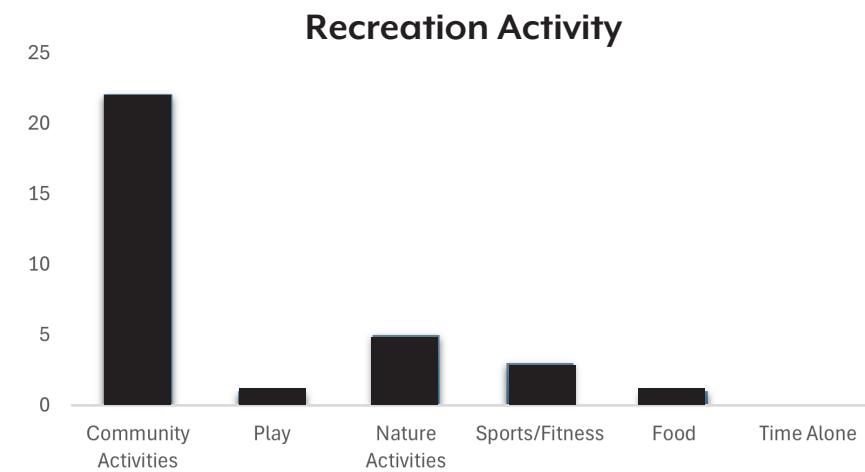
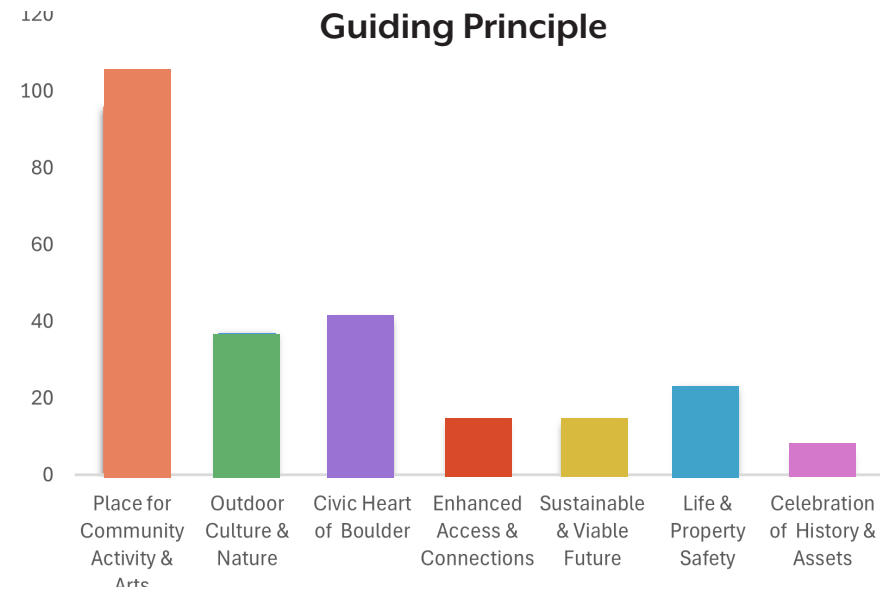
16% Outdoor Culture & Nature

Connection to Nature

Racial Equity

Demographics: Equity Focus Group, Spanish-First Meeting and Online Questionnaire

Total Comments: 231



Information Item C: Civic Area Phase 2 Engagement Window 1 Feedback Summary

“I would like to see a splash pad for children with trees”

“que pongan un chapoteadero para niños con árboles”

“An ice rink for skating”

“Un anillo de hielo para patinar.”

9%

Community Recreation/Play

7%

Welcoming/Inclusivity/Multicultural

7%

Equity

“Diversity exists. We don’t need to create it we need to bring it forward, embrace the diversity that is”

7%

Arts & Music Events

6%

Food/Dining/ Picnicking

“areas with tables and chairs to share food with children, friends, and family”

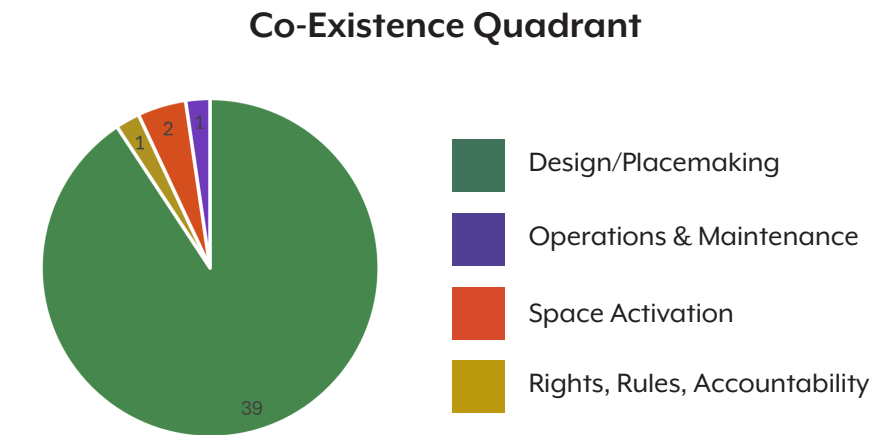
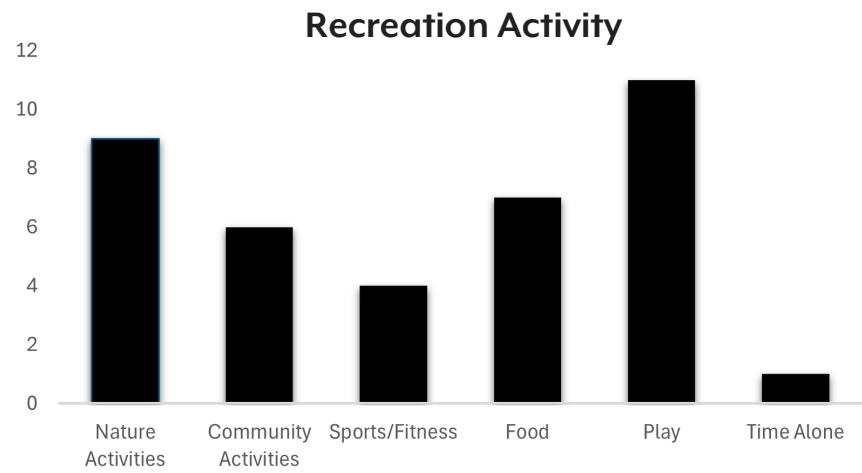
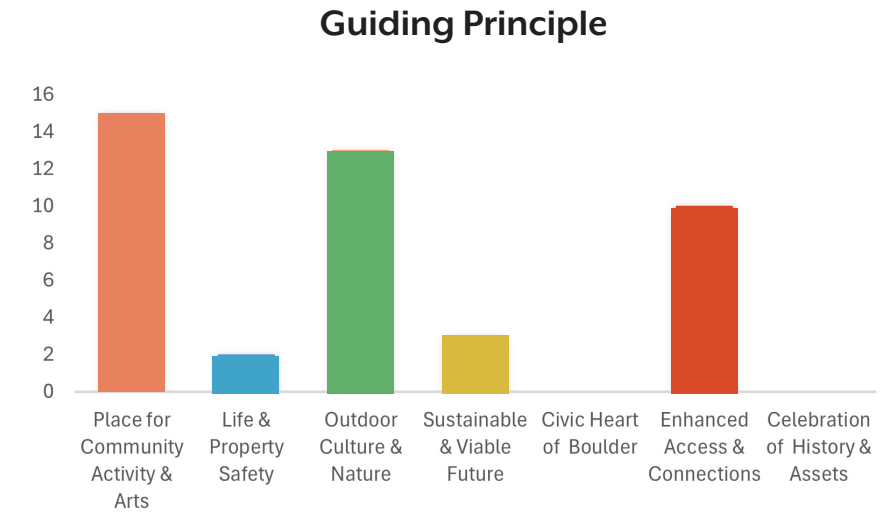
“areas con mesas y sillas para poder compartir una comida con hijo, amigos, familia”

16

Disability Equity

Demographics: People experiencing physical and/or sensory disabilities

Total Comments: 60



“A tree house with an accessible ramp.”

“A fountain with jets to play in - flat for wheelchairs!”

18%

Universal Access

14%

Outdoor Recreation

12%

Food/Dining/Picnicking

9%

Connection to Nature

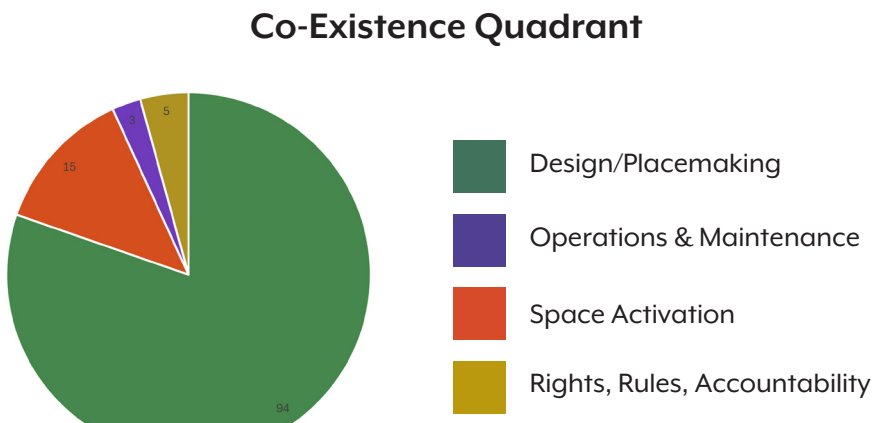
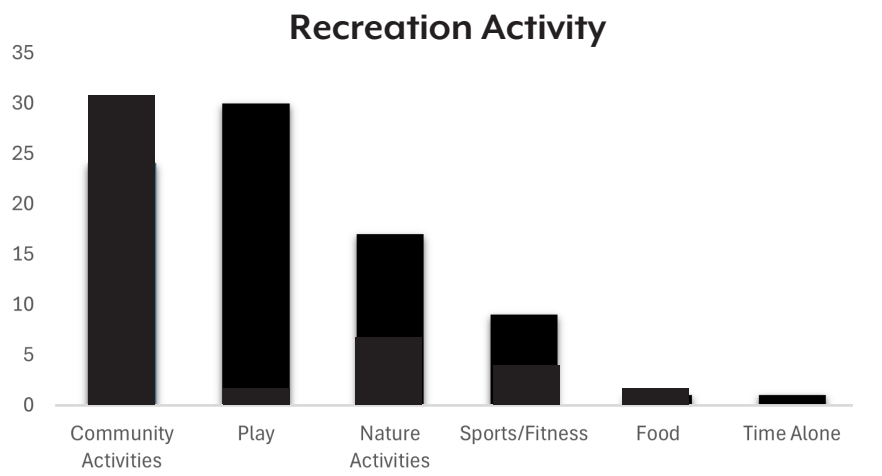
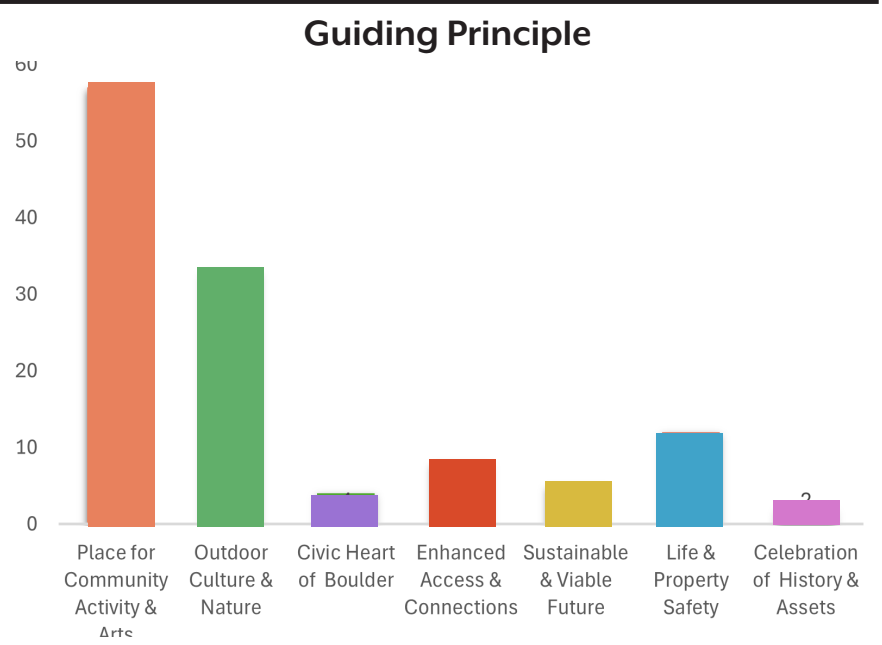
7%

Arts and Music Events

“lots of water play! Splash! Get out!”

Youth Equity

Demographics: Boulder High School, public
feedback event with youth
Total Comments: 124



Information Item C: Civic Area Phase 2 Engagement Window 1 Feedback Summary

“bring back the ice rink!”



25% Community Recreation/Play

“coffee shop and hangout space”

10% Connection to Nature

8% Outdoor Recreation

7% Art

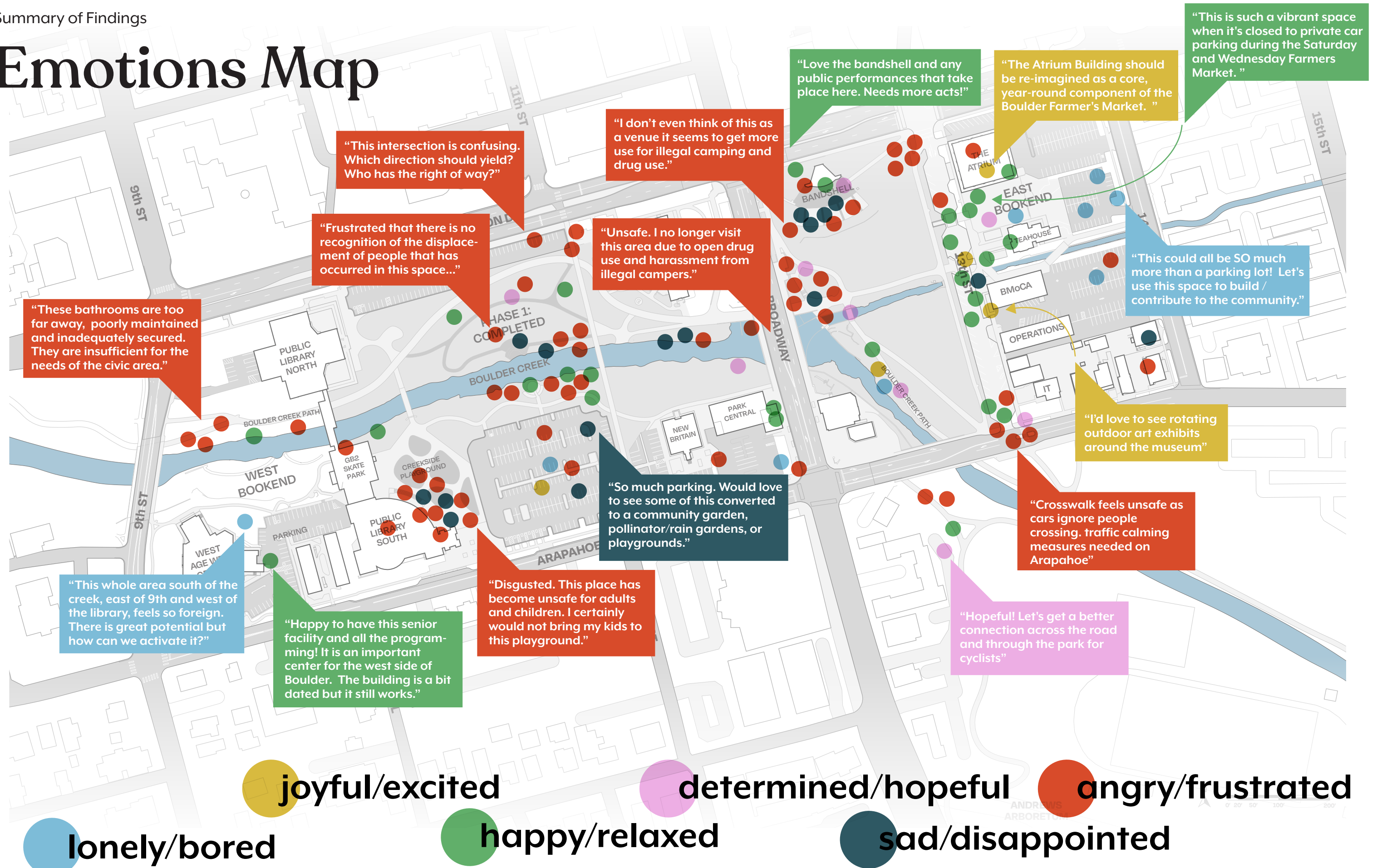
“not enough public art”

5% Trees



Summary of Findings

Emotions Map



Summary of Findings

Notable Thoughts

"I loved it when there was a skating rink next to Dushanbe; I would like to see something like that return."

Online

"Treehouses!!!"

Open House

"Create a 'third place' for high schoolers: home, school, and this third place"

Equity Group

"...anything where my wife and kids can actually feel safe being in Boulder alone."

Online

"Create a Civic Cultural Campus, a singular place that people of all cultures can go if they want to host an event or find each other"

Equity Group

"Civic Area is a 'hidden heart' - if you don't know the park is there, there's a hard shell to break through, if you try to visit coming from Pearl it's an opaque sense of arrival"

Community Organizations

"Events with several hundred people make me feel safe."

Roll & Stroll Group

"Beer Garden!"

Open House

"I'm concerned that the park may not reflect the history of this place. There should be information about all prior usages starting with early inhabitants."

Open House

"People of all ages want to play - think about full-sized swings, little surprises everywhere"

Community Organizations

"Paths need to accommodate different types/speeds of travelers - think about young people learning to ride, a person in a wheelchair, etc. - how can we separate and protect?"

Community Organizations

"Fairy Garden!"

Open House

Schedule, Engagement, and Budget

