Boulder asking for help in developing Civic Area ideas

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The city is asking for more help in developing ideas to rejuvenate the Boulder Civic Area, in the next few years and in the long term.

Wednesday’s Civic Area open house will focus on more concrete ideas than previous community meetings, including how flood risk might shape what eventually goes there, said city spokesman Michael Banuelos.

"It's about the details," he said.

While many of the ideas that end up in the final plan will take 15 to 20 years to see fruition, he said, the city is also looking for ideas that can be implemented in the next two to four years.

City Council members have said that creating a Civic Area Master Plan to guide development in the area between Ninth and 17th streets, between Canyon Boulevard and Arapahoe Avenue, is a top priority.

If you go

What: Growing Up Boulder youth Civic Area showcase

When: 6:15 to 7 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Boulder High School cafeteria, 1604 Arapahoe Ave.

More info: growingupboulder.org

If you go

What: Boulder Civic Area open house

When: 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Boulder High School cafeteria, 1604 Arapahoe Ave.

More info: BoulderCivicArea.com
The open house will start with a brief project overview, project assumptions, area resources and site opportunities and constraints. Next up are interactive stations on near-term ideas, the floodplain and the site's capacity for buildings, parks and outdoor spaces.

Before the city's open house, students from four Boulder schools -- Boulder High School, Casey Middle School, New Vista High School and the Boulder Journey School -- will present their ideas for the space. The students developed the ideas with the help of Growing Up Boulder, a child and youth-friendly initiative.

Mara Mintzer, coordinator of Growing Up Boulder, said students researched Boulder's history, took photos of features in other places that they like and interviewed parents about the best features in other places around the world.

She said themes common to all the groups include a desire for interactive art so they can be part of creating it, along with a desire for more public art in general.

Students also want play spaces, including a feature where they can play with water. Another common theme was safety, including requests for better lighting -- several noted they don't feel safe using the bike paths there at night -- and a discomfort with the large homeless population in the area.

Feedback from Wednesday's meeting will be used in an ideas competition among top design professionals. A design brief for the competition will be available Monday, and final proposals are due Jan. 11.

The city held a series of public meetings through the summer and early fall, and the City Council in November adopted a set of "guiding principles" for the planning process as it moves forward.

Those principles include establishing the area as the "civic heart" of Boulder, in contrast to the commercial activity on Pearl Street, with the open space around Boulder Creek as the "green spine" of the area.
The city wants to make the area safer and more vibrant, redesign Canyon as a true boulevard and encourage cultural institutions there. Some ideas have included a science museum, performing arts complex or indoor, year-round farmers market.

On Dec. 18, the Boulder City Council plans to discuss a structural analysis of the city's buildings in the high-hazard flood zone, the city's long-term space needs and the upcoming ideas competition.

To provide feedback without attending Wednesday's meeting, go to inspireboulder.com.