

North Boulder Subcommunity Plan Update 2013-2014: A sample of child, youth and parent perspectives

For the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan Update, Growing Up Boulder used a variety of methods to ask young people and their parents, “*What do you like or not like about North Broadway? What are the key opportunities for that area?*”

While the information collected is not part of a scientific study, we believe the views shared here still represent meaningful input into the Update, and they include an important subset of the community that is often not represented at public meetings or in more traditional forms of outreach.

Community Engagement methods employed include:

- Drawing sessions with elementary and middle school children at the public meeting on October 30, 2013 (n=3 elementary school children, n=1 middle school student)
- Questions for parents of young children via Boulder Rock’n Moms Yahoo Group post on November 7, 2013 (n=24)
- Questions for high school student acquaintances via email on November 7, 2013 (n=4)
- “City-on-a-wall” activity and individual drawings with Foothill Elementary School 1st grade class on May 5, 2014 (n=24)

Answers varied significantly by age group. Below is a summary of the most frequently requested design elements, in descending order of importance.

Group	Ideas/Design elements
Elementary School children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fields, trees and flowers • Zoo or space for animals • Toy store
Youth (middle school + high school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased safety at the Front Range/Broadway bus stop • Safer paths to walk and ride bikes in North Boulder
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor play space • Water features (pool and/or splash pad) • Inexpensive restaurants • General store • Shade on playgrounds

The rest of this document provides the detailed information collected from children, youth and families.

Design elements	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Parents of children
n=56	27	1	4	24
Businesses				
Ice cream/frozen yogurt	2		2	
Inexpensive restaurant			1	6
healthy drive through				1
"Fun" store like Apple Store			1	
Toy store	5		1	
Artisan shop			1	
museum	1			
mall	1			
general/small grocery store	2			6
Candy store	4		1	
Book store		1		
winding pedestrian shopping areas				5
Clothing store			1	
Recreation				
zoo and/or space for animals	11			
water features (pool and/or splash pad)	2		1	8
playground	2		1	
indoor play area	1	1	1	14
teen hangout				3
skate park				2
library--regular-sized				5
improve Holiday playground				5
outdoor community space				1
shade on playgrounds				6
interactive trail				1
movie theater			1	
fields, trees and flowers	17	1	1	2
Transportation			1	
Safer paths to walk and bike (Dakota Ridge to Broadway scary)	2		3	2
Ecopass			1	
Increased safety at Front Range/Broadway stop			4	3
More walkable destinations				3
Safety				
Increased safety in Dakota Ridge			2	2

Complete responses

During the October 2013 North Boulder Subcommunity Meeting, facilitators worked with several elementary school and middle school students to collect their ideas for the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan. The instructions were:

1. Draw a picture of North Broadway which answers these questions:
 - a. (All ages) What do you see yourself doing in the main North Boulder downtown area? What would it look like, smell like, feel like? With whom would you be doing it? How would you get there? (Bus, bike, scooter, walk, car, roller skates, skateboard?)
 - b. (First grade and older) Would the North Broadway area be a corridor (one straight line of stores down Broadway) or more of a town center (spread out to side streets perpendicular to Broadway and on Broadway)?

These are the children's responses:

Elementary School Child (n=3)

- Recreational spaces
 - A place to play hide and seek and tag
 - Field
 - Play on tree trunks
 - A pool in our neighborhood (Dakota Ridge) or nearby (three kids requested this)
 - Park designed with giant candy corn sculptures (giant candyland playground)
 - toys outside, both big and little
 - zoo
- Businesses
 - toy store
 - Candy store
- Transportation
 - Better places to bike and walk; too scary to bike from home in Dakota Ridge down Broadway to shops there

Middle School Youth (n=1)

- Business
 - Bookstore
- Transportation
 - Bike path
- Recreational spaces
 - Park with a field

- More trees

High School Youth (n=4)

Mara Mintzer, Dakota Ridge neighborhood resident, sent the following email to high school students she knew within the neighborhood:

I am working with the City of Boulder to update their plans for how North Boulder/North Broadway (the area near and across from Proto's and Spruce Confections) should develop. I want to make sure the voices of teens are heard in this plan. If you have a few minutes, could you please send me your answers to the following questions, and I'll pass your ideas along to the City:

What do you like or not like about North Broadway? What would make it more teen-friendly?

Your answers might include ideas for new businesses, places to hang out, things to do, or ways to get around. You might also think about how the National Guard Armory could redevelop.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer these questions. Your answers will help shape the future of your town! Also, feel free to share these questions with your friends living in North Boulder.

These are their responses:

- It would be really cool to have a safe bike route from Dakota ridge to Proto's area. Also, the location of the bus stop can sometimes be scary due to the characters that hang around there, and is such a bummer if you want to go into town via RTD by yourself (with out friends/ parents). Making that environment more secure feeling. I think if some popular business came to attract more people, there would be others around and teens would feel safer. I'll pass this along to some of my other North Boulder friends!
- A small business for local artists would be cool. Just a place where people can sell things they have made (art, toys, jewelry etc.).
- More ice cream or frozen yogurt shops—a place like Sweet Cow, where the ice cream is good and you can hang out on the astroturf lawn; also would be good to be able to hold an event there
- Less professional/adult places and more new and fun places, like the Apple Store

- The homeless shelter: it feels very uncomfortable to be near there at the bus stop, but additional businesses would make the area feel safer. I think it makes sense that homeless people share our community, but I don't want our community to be dominated by them to the point that I don't feel safe. I think they should treat Boulder with the same respect that other citizens have (i.e. don't talk too loudly or rudely on the bus or in the library). I don't feel safe taking the bus in the night or the early morning. The city should have an Ecopass for everyone so that more people take the bus and it feels more populated. I would also feel better if there were more police around and/or if there were a police person that the whole neighborhood knows.
- In the Dakota Ridge neighborhood: I walk my dog early in the morning (5:45 am) and sometimes late at night, and I don't feel safe. I saw a guy peeing in the bushes on 5th Street, I have seen people tagging the neighborhood, and I have seen people sleeping on the benches.
- The strip club is a real problem! Turn that area into an RTD hub.

Parent perspective (n=24)

On 11/7/2013, Mara Mintzer posted the following question to "Boulder Rock'n Moms Yahoo Group," a group utilized by a large number of parents (usually of small children) in the Boulder area:

North Boulder families: What do you like or not like about North Broadway? What are the key opportunities for that area? What actions can the City take in the new flood context?

The City of Boulder is updating the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan, and they are looking for feedback from North Boulder residents about how the area of North Broadway (near, around and across from Proto's) should continue to develop over the next 20 years. I want to make sure the voices of families and children are heard in this process. Please send me your ideas and the ideas of your children (no idea is too ridiculous) so that I can send them along to the City. I work for Growing Up Boulder (www.growingupboulder.org), in case you are wondering why I am asking these questions! Thank you in advance for your time.

Twenty-four parents responded:

- There have been many voices to have some sort of water feature in north boulder and i completely agree. Although, I would take it a bit further than a splash pad... Boulder is lacking in quality outdoor aquatics! We have lived in a number of communities and this is the first where there isn't a great outdoor

pool! We need a 50 meter/yard swimming pool, diving well, baby pool, and kid water play area. Please help bring this to north boulder!! I have seen other communities combine it with a skating rink and that would be great for skating and hockey... but please help with the pool!

We would also love to see a play area for young kids. This town does a great job with fitness for adults and older kids, but there is hardly anything for young kids and practically nothing for toddlers and babies. A Gymboree or Peekadoodle would be amazing!

More restaurants, please!! I know it may never happen but how about a healthy drive through? :) A Starbucks! We are always driving out of this community because there just aren't enough options. Believe me, if there were - we would be there bc it;s no fun to drive an hour round trip with little ones for food in the evening!

I would love an arboretum or a botanic garden. The Chicago Botanic Garden is located in a suburb of Chicago so maybe we could have something like that here :) They had amazing train garden in the summer and moved it inside for the winter months (holiday theme). Kids loved it and it was amazing!!

- There need to be more teen hangouts. It would be great to have a skate park for teens in North Boulder. Scott Carpenter park is too crowded, with BMX bikes and skateboarders competing for space. Many of the skater kids hang out at Installation, a skating shop next to Whole Foods. The owner, Raoul, lets kids hang out there because they have nowhere else to go.
- A pool complex! With a splash pad play area, a kiddy pool and a big pool, and hot tub. Either public or private pool and tennis club.
- Indoor play space, with an indoor playground for crummy days. Look at Peekadoodle or Urban Recess as models. Both in San Francisco.
- I think relocating the Bus Stop strip club would be a great idea in a neighborhood where single family home prices are fetching upwards of 650k. I would assume that plan is in the works but know in general its better not to assume anything. Just my 2c. :)
- Yes! A huge splash pad in North Boulder Park. Another Lucky's grocer (sorry to whomever owns Lucky's; unless, they want a new project;) where the ROTC lot is (didn't it sell?).

A pavilion at the community garden to block sunlight

BURY the POWER-LINES ON GRAPE!!!

- I would love to see a library branch in north boulder.

- I think an indoor play space for the winter would be great and more storefronts, restaurants, shops would be great.
- I REALLY want to encourage folks to RESPOND TO THIS! In Boulder, suggestions from the community are often taken very seriously and actually implemented.

My five-year-old's preschool class at Boulder Journey School, recently partnered with Growing Up Boulder on submitting ideas to revamp the Boulder Civic Area (around bandshell/Library/Dushanbe Teahouse/Boulder Creek). Not only did the City Council and designers listen to the kids and take their ideas seriously, the winning bid for the design consists mostly of ideas that came FROM THE KIDS! How cool is that?! When Boulder has an amazing, functional, family-friendly Civic Area to enjoy, you'll have a bunch of five-year-olds (among others) to thank :).

A library would be great. And I second the indoor play space, retail storefronts, more cafés & restaurants. I'd love to see it all laid out in an interesting way, though. Like a winding pedestrian shopping area that one enters into, rather than just straight rows of shops along Broadway, would be cool. I'd love to hear other folk's ideas.

- Me too - an indoor play space (so lacking in Boulder) would be GREAT! There are so many families up here. And yes, more storefronts and placing for us to wander and visit during the day.

I live in the Holiday neighborhood and think the big playground/park that was built down the street from Protos is terrible. It has no slides or swings or great climbing structures. It doesn't really make sense - Holiday is so community oriented and has so many families - but b/c the playground is pretty useless, no families with kids congregate there. I think it would make a HUGE difference to upgrade the park so people could have a place for kiddos of all ages to come and be with each other.

- My husband would like to see: at least one crosswalk and some kind of interactive trail for kids.

Also, a playground with a splash pad or water play of some kind. There's so little shade up north because all the trees are so young. It's hot up there!

- So ladies my husband and I are considering opening an indoor playspace and would love to get feedback from people as to the type of things they are looking for. I have a concept but would love more input.

Are people looking for a place to drop kids and come back or a fun place to hang while their kids play? Any input appreciated.

- It is so true- I don't understand that playground at all! We've visited it a couple of times when we stopped to check out the little library right there and my kids were done after about 2 minutes. They were more interested in running around the large grassy area.
- For the indoor playspace, this is a great model. I've been to the one in Oakland, CA several times and loved it.
<http://www.tumbleandteacafe.com/>
- Good for you (and hopefully us) Sydney!

There used to be a place in N. Boulder called Playgrounds - from what I understand, it was a profitable business, but the people who started it had to move back east for family reasons and no bought it from the.

Me personally, I love to hang with other parents and I am not comfortable dropping my kiddos off somewhere - so I am looking for a nice space that serves tea/snacks/etc - has lots of places for mommas and papas to chat and lots of safe, soft toys for kiddos to play on (think play - the new grandrabbits place), but with wifi, tea, food and tables for parents that don't have to supervise their kids 100% of the time. On that note, I'd also put out some really strong rules about kiddos who do need supervision and have parents that don't provide it, impacting everyone else, but that's another story.

I would be happy to share more about playgrounds and/or other ideas (in my pre-children life, I was a pretty sharp marketing/business chick)...

Good luck and so glad you are considering something!
Kim

- I had a similar idea a while back, but I wasn't prepared to raise funds, do a biz plan, etc., back then. When I visit my parents in Holland, MI, I take my daughter to Deanna's Playhouse, and I based my idea on it: <http://lifeservicessystem.org/deannasplayhouse/index.html>

While Deanna's is a Christian-based, non profit combination play space and Parenting Place with wonderful parenting support and resources, I wanted to create just the play space. But now that Parenting Place is closed, perhaps this is an opportunity for you to pick up where they left off and provide similar services as well as a play space.

Deanna's is huge, and is sponsored by local businesses with a \$5 per person entry fee, keeping it accessible to lower income families. There are different activities and areas for babies and kids up to age 5, including an art room,

music room and dress-up/stage. I think the liability of drop-off places is pretty big, and you would have to have highly trained employees, but it sure is convenient for parents. Deanna's is not drop-off, and in fact, they encouraged parents to play with their kids and not sit on the sidelines. You would have to decide if you want to keep the price low to allow economic diversity, or if you want it to be a premium destination. I would love for a play place to have a breadth of activities from non-electronic media to creativity zones to indoor play structures. Birthday parties too!

- My husband and I were just talking about this because we were in Westminster at JumpCity. There isn't a lot of indoor options for kids in Boulder. You have to go to the burbs. I looked into this once as business to possibly open. The challenge was the amount of space needed and the CRAZY prices here for leasing a building like that. The math just did not add up. Especially having to account for the slower summer months. I'm wondering if a space like that could get a bit of a price break? But, if offered some parenting services, maybe some grants would help.

I think it would be awesome to have some sort of play place that was indoor and outdoor. If we are throwing out our ultimate wish list. I would love to have a super awesome indoor and outdoor pool. North Boulder Rec is pretty good, but it would be great to have something like that Indoor, but than an awesome outdoor pool for the summer. Something with fountains, slides, etc.

But, something like that at our end of town would bring people from other parts of Boulder to our hood to eat, drink, shop, etc.

Does anyone know if there is going to be any type of community meeting or anything to discuss?

- Mara- I love that you posted this question here, you know I have an opinion :)
 1. An outdoor pool. Please. There are plenty of people from the South in the N. Boulder hoods and we just want our dang neighborhood pool like we had when when we grew up. A modern one like at Colorado Athletic Club. Not a horrible 1970's pool. Not directly in Dakota Ridge but close too it :)
 2. Indoor play space- would love to have a Little Monkey business somewhere, just not sure if I want in N. Boulder. I don't want N. Boulder to become big box-ish or chain store-ish. Commercial but like W. or E. Pearl.
 3. Walkable. N. Boulder destinations need to be walkable and connected by walking paths.

4. Something that encapsulates outdoor living, but not necessarily another playground. An amphitheater and park like Chastain Park in Atlanta.
 5. Trees. Plant lots and lots of trees. Again a Southern thing.
 6. More restaurants and small cafes.
 7. Less industrial feel. Something to balance all the auto shops and storage units and U-haul establishments. Happy to co-exist but they are an industrial eye sore in my opinion. Not to make it too Stepford but I do in fact like that Connecticut towns require business and storefronts to adhere to a certain aesthetic for signage, building facades, etc. N. Boulder is the place to do that if Boulder ever did.
- I agree with a lot of what has already been said but would like to throw in my support for the following:
 - improvement of Holiday Park with better play structures;
 - an outdoor pool or at least a splash pad/fountain/water play area for kids (maybe at Foothills Community Park?);
 - an indoor play area would also be great (there used to be a place in Denver called The Village that had an indoor play area with an attached cafe that served food, coffee, wine and beer, etc.; it also held music, art, and other classes for kids and cooking classes for adults. Parents had to stay with their kids but I think a place where you could drop your kids off would also be great);
 - grocery store;
 - more retail, including restaurants. A family-friendly burger-beer place would be awesome (something like Southern Sun up here!);
 - library branch (more than what is going in at Yarmouth and Broadway).

Thanks for seeking input!

- Hi Sydney -

That's great you are considering opening a play space in N. Boulder. I had some feedback from indoor play spaces that I have had bad experiences at to try to know what parents AREN'T looking for:

1. Parents that don't supervise their children, who are on their electronic devices and oblivious to everything else going on around them. I would almost say you should have a no-electronic device rule at the door.
2. Parents that have a kid that is too sick to go to daycare, or who has been

sent home from daycare and bring their visibly sick kid (mucus running down their face, coughing, etc.) to the play space. The play space needs to be vigilant about cleaning.

3. Playspaces that have dangerous or not maintained pieces. I went to bouncetown one time in Longmont and one of the bounce castles was not inflated enough, and no employees or parents were supervising the kids, and one kid managed to push a stick up tube, down inside the bounce castle and then got himself stuck face down in the hole and almost suffocated before I had to go get his parents/store employees to get him out.

4. The JCC has a very simple tumbling room with lots of padded shapes that you can re-arrange and climb over which i really like.

Hope this helps!

- My husband and I feel we need:
 - More shade at all the parks, especially over the play structures
 - Water features, such as a pool and splash pad (most other Boulder neighborhood have this as part of their HOA or in the form of a public pool within easy walking/biking distance)
 - A fun, kid-friendly playground in Holiday
 - A safe bike-route on or near North Broadway (not safe for kids or cautious adults right now)
 - Indoor play space—both for little kids and another for bigger kids
 - Increased safety at the bus stop in front of the homeless shelter
 - More family-friendly restaurants—similar to Proto's (but we get sick of pizza every week and Proto's can be expensive)

FOOTHILLS ELEMENTARY: CHILD INPUT FOR NORTH-BOULDER SUB-COMMUNITY PLAN

Sample: 24 6-7 year-old children in grade 1 class at Foothills Elementary, Boulder, CO. (Note: This was a small convenience sample).

I. The City on the Wall

Method

- This activity was based on Stanley King's method *The City on the Wall* (<http://youthmanual.blogspot.com/p/city-on-wall.html>)
- The facilitator drew an 'original wild landscape,' and a person (you) arriving in a canoe, then asked the question: "What do you see, feel and smell here?" Next, the first house was built, then some friends' houses, and finally the glue factory, which children asked to be placed further away.
- Next, children were asked to draw on this landscape what they would like to see in their city (results in section a. below). This took place in groups of six. During this process the other three groups were asked where they currently like to go, and what activities they like to do in their actual city (results in section b. below).
- A discussion followed, where children were asked the following questions: "What do you see, or smell now?" "What do you like that would make you want to live here?" "Why would you not want to live here?" (Results in section c. below).
- In the final section of this activity children were asked: "What is the most important thing you would like to see in your city?" (Results below in section d.).

Results

- a) City on the Wall drawing (see Figure 1.). This drawing has numerous buildings, some parks, trees and play-structures, and is quite crowded and chaotic (which is generally the result of this activity). The children did not include any mode of transport other than walking (i.e. there were no depictions of cars, bikes or roads).

Figure 1. City on the Wall drawing



b) Answers to the question “Where do you like to go/what do you like to do in your city” fell under three general categories: City-based retail activities, city-based indoor/outdoor activities, and nature-based outdoor activities (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Children’s Favoured Activities

City-based Retail	City-based Indoor/Outdoor Activities	Nature-based Outdoor Activities
Ice Cream	Swimming Pool	Boulder Reservoir
Toy Store	Football	Hike
Museum	School	Kayak
Mall	Roller-coaster	Camping
	Gymnastics	Summer Camps
	Swing on bars	Fishing
	Tag	Boulder creek – walk dog
	Sand Box	
	Play cops and robbers	
	Play hide and seek	
	Play with friends in park	
	Carnival	

c) Discussion of The City on the Wall image: Children’s answers to the four questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Children’s perception of their ‘City on the Wall’

What do you smell?	What do you see?	Why would you live here?	Why would you not live here?
Smoke	Happiness	Like trees	Too crowded
Bagels	Crowded		Too polluted
Garbage	Lots of trees		Small place with lots in it
Ice Cream	Glue factory nicely		Hard to find your way

separated	with all the houses
Homes, spread out	
Big difference from when it started – now it is a lot more polluted	

d) Table 3 shows the important things children said they would like to see in their city. The responses were divided into three major categories: Built structure, Nature/Environment, Other.

Table 3. Children’s choices of important things in a city

Built Structure	Nature/Environment	Other
Pickle store	Nature	Peaceful song
Ice Cream Store	Crystal Cave	Skydiving off roofs
Animal Shelter	Hills	
Zoo*	Zoo*	
Mall	Waterfall	
American Girl Doll Store	Nature and green to be pretty	
Bakery	Park	
Big outdoor pool	Woods to be alone, with only birds around you	
Children’s Library **	No pollution	

* Response included in two categories

** Teacher’s response

II. Drawing Activity

Methods

The second activity was an extension of the first, asking children to create individual drawings of what they would like to see in their ideal city.

Results

The majority of children depicted **their homes** (n = 16) or **themselves** (n = 13) surrounded by **nature** (19). Most common forms of nature were the combination of green fields, trees and flowers (14). Many children also drew rivers and mountains, some included forests, one a green roof, one a vegetable garden, and one a crystal or diamond cave.

Two other major themes emerged with the analysis of the drawings: **Built structures**, other than one’s home, were highly prevalent. These structures were most commonly a friend’s house (4), or a store. Stores would be the following: candy

store (2), general store (2), a toy store, rock store, bakery, and a pickle store. Other buildings included a homeless shelter, two animal shelters, dog-houses, a zoo, the White House, and a factory. Outdoor built structures were two playgrounds, two football fields, a pool, and a soccer field. **Animals** were also commonly depicted (in 10 drawings), mainly showing companion animals such as dogs, but birds or fish were also present, and in one case a ladybug, and one a monkey.

A large portion of children who drew themselves and other people, had the person pictured in an outdoor environment, about half the time participating in an **outdoor activity** (12 drawings). Only two children drew a person inside a building (one in own home, one in toy store). Most common outdoor activities were walking, riding a bike and riding in a boat. Other activities were hiking, paddle-boarding, climbing, walking a dog, swimming, playing in a garden or playground, sky-diving, and climbing a tree.

Less than half the children (n=9) included modes of **transportation** in their pictures. The major form of transportation depicted was walking, followed by riding a bike. Although roads or path were drawn in many cases, only two children drew cars, and neither put themselves in the vehicle. Public transportation was not depicted in any of the drawings.

About half of the children (n = 12) also used words, sentences or phrases to describe their ideas and recommendations. Listed below are the children's relevant quotes:

"Trees, nature."

"Zoo animals."

"I love biking!"

"I want to live in the mountains and get food from nature! I'll visit the animal shelter every day! I'll lay on the warm grass and listen and look at the birds!"

"I love my Mama. I love an love an love!"

"No polluted air."

"Make airplanes, make boats."

"Peaceful cabin in the woods."

"Not polluted air."

"I love to bike and swim and a peaceful song."

"I love the hot."