

# PERCEPTIONS OF RESILIENCE



Interim Report - April 27, 2015

## Exploring young people's ideas of resilience in Boulder

In 2014, the City of Boulder was selected to participate in the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative. The project aims to support cities that have experienced natural disasters in exploring and developing strategies around sudden and long-term issues, such as flood, wildfire, disease outbreak, and drought. As a first step in this process, the City seeks to understand people's perceptions of resilience in Boulder. In collaboration with the City's resilience staff and the Youth Services Initiative (YSI), Growing Up Boulder (GUB) worked with youth to develop their own meanings of resilience through art by considering the Rockefeller definition of resilience: "the capacity to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks [people] experience."

To our knowledge, Boulder is the only member of the Rockefeller network to engage youth in their processes. This pilot was meant to explore ideas of resilience and to test methods that might yield meaningful conversations and useful information. Additional work with children and youth will continue in the fall of 2015.

The work included two groups of participants from the Youth Services Initiative, a program of Boulder's Parks and Recreation Department that serves youth from Boulder's public housing sites, as follows:

- Approximately 25 middle and high school students
- Approximately 10 elementary students from the Kalmia housing site

Growing Up Boulder used a variety of methods to facilitate conversation, including a resilience "question ball," drawing, and mural making with elementary school students, and drawing, photovoice, a nested ecologies activity, and art boxes with middle and high school students.

---

### Elementary School Student Themes

#### Not resilient

School and home  
Guns and dying  
Bullies  
Dangers, such as falling from trees

#### Resilient

Home, family and pets  
Nature, parks, hiking  
Ice cream, fresh fruits  
Activities, such as art, music, sports and holidays

### Middle and High School Student Themes

#### Not resilient

Money and the expense of living here (bottom left)  
Housing  
Negative global issues as portrayed on the news  
Cultural exclusion

#### Resilient

Supportive benefits of nature  
Friends, family, and pets  
Skateboarding (bottom middle)  
Love (bottom right)



# Elementary School Students

## Methods and Results



Answering resilience ball questions



Painting the mural



Happy/Resilient - Nature, Sports, Home, Music, Art



Unhappy/Not resilient - Bullies, Death, Guns, School

The resilience ball activity asked children to name happy or sad colors (to be used in the mural), places in Boulder that make them feel safe, places they go when they feel unsafe or uncertain, things that make them feel life is good, or things that make them feel that life is hard. The drawing activity included initial responses to these questions and further development of ideas. The mural pulled all these ideas together. In general, elementary children had more ideas about things that promote happiness and resilience, although they displayed some important social issues that do not.

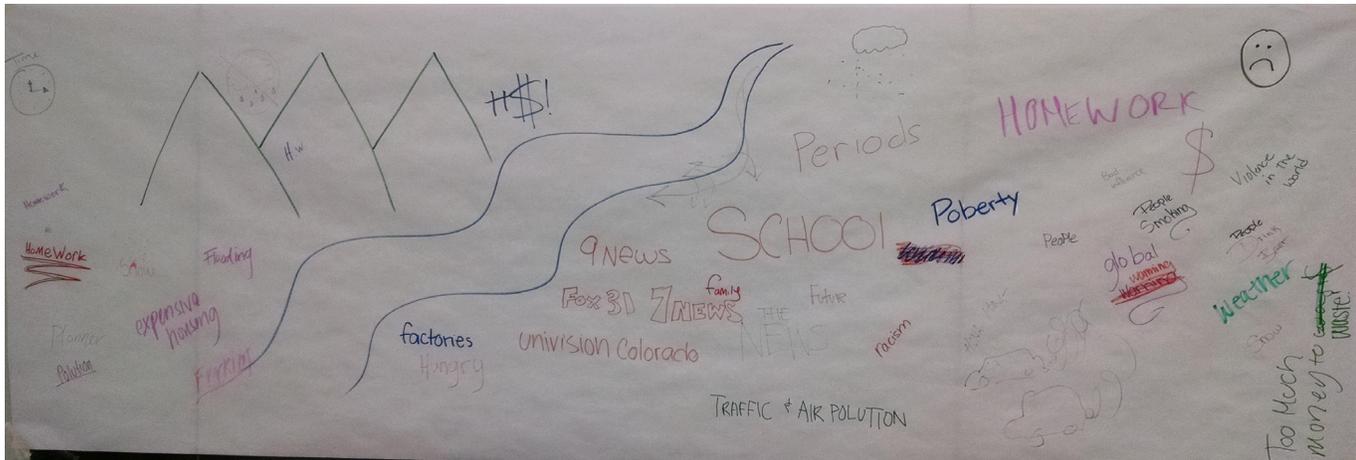


Completed Mural, with ideas that promote resilience (left) and ideas that do not promote resilience (right)

# Middle & High School Students

## Methods and Results

Middle and high school students began their exploration of resilience with a drawing activity to identify things and/or places that make them feel resilient/happy or not resilient/sad. Participants worked with a professional photographer to take pictures at home and at their program sites. Youth were encouraged to combine images, words, and colors on their boxes and posters. For the nested ecology activity, youth marked a physical diagram with happy, neutral or sad faces to show the degree they felt supported and resilient in their homes, schools, neighborhoods and city.



Drawings of Things that Support Resilience and Happiness (top) and Things that Do Not Support Resilience (bottom)

**Not Resilient / Unhappy:** time, homework, snow/rain/weather, flooding, expensive housing, fracking, planner, pollution, factories, hungry, money, news, family, school, periods, future, traffic, racism, poverty, people, bad influences, global warming, people smoking, violence in the world, people drinking beer, too much money to waste.

**Resilient / Happy:** flowers, family, snow, friendly people, outdoors, vacation, people, food, summer, movies, Starbucks, babies, hiking, lounging, pets, pools, Foothills Park, Boulder Creek Path, homework, sun, natural culture, cat, love, open space, nature, mountains, sisters, church, "me time", park, trails, music, friends, brothers, working out, being alone, exercise, fruit, Valmont Bike Park, singing, rest, skiing, sports, soccer, video games, chips.

To see a complete photo gallery, visit the GUB website at [www.growingupboulder.org](http://www.growingupboulder.org). For more information please contact GUB coordinator [Tori Derr](mailto:Tori.Derr@colorado.edu), [victoria.derr@colorado.edu](mailto:victoria.derr@colorado.edu) or [Mara Mintzer](mailto:Mara.Mintzer@colorado.edu), [mara.mintzer@colorado.edu](mailto:mara.mintzer@colorado.edu). Special thanks to GUB coordinator [Tori Derr](mailto:Tori.Derr@colorado.edu); GUB staff and interns [Erica Fine](mailto:Erica.Fine@colorado.edu) and [Emily Tarantini](mailto:Emily.Tarantini@colorado.edu); YSI staff [Jen Fitzpatrick](mailto:Jen.Fitzpatrick@colorado.edu), [Brad Lautenschlager](mailto:Brad.Lautenschlager@colorado.edu), and [Corina Garcia](mailto:Corina.Garcia@colorado.edu); Photographer [Rebecca Stumpf](mailto:Rebecca.Stumpf@colorado.edu), and Chief Resilience Officer, [Greg Guibert](mailto:Greg.Guibert@colorado.edu).

# Middle & High School Students

## Results

Many students took pictures of their favorite activities, including skateboarding or enjoying time with friends. Other pictures revealed an appreciation for nature and relaxation shown in images of sunsets, horses, and pets.



*"I chose brotherhood, because my friends and family would always have my back no matter what. Boulder has many struggles, but the community has always been there."*

*-Middle School Student*



The image of the lock prompted a conversation about feelings of cultural exclusion. While the intention of the young artist was to represent the security that brotherhood provides him, others in the group thought it reflected feelings of exclusion that they experience in the city because of language and ethnicity.

The nested ecology activity revealed that youth feel most resilient at home or in the city and less resilient in their neighborhoods or at school as shown in the table and image below.



*Nested ecology results*

*Nested ecology activity*

	City	Neighborhood	School	Home
😊	9	6	5	9
😐	2	5	7	2
☹️		2	4	

Ideas came together in meaningful ways in students' final boxes and boards. On the spray painted backgrounds, images and words combined to tell stories about the power of nature and community and the influence of money on the quality of their lives.



*"Nature makes me feel relaxed and free from the world.."*

*- Middle School Student*



*"Which is more important? Money or nature?"*

*- Middle School Student*

