# Summary of Fairview High School Teen Parents’ Letters to Boulder City Council

**May 2010**

Description of the project:

A group of teen mothers, who attend Fairview High School in Boulder, CO, worked with Growing Up Boulder adults and their teachers to discuss and record their views of what they like about growing up in Boulder and what they would like to change. During the spring of 2010, the girls brainstormed ideas, synthesized the ideas into letters to city council, and subsequently met with city council members to discuss their questions and suggestions. The girls ranged in age from 13-19, and their children range in age from newborn to age three. Several of the girls are still pregnant. What follows is a summary of major themes addressed in the girls’ letters to city council.

Summary of teen parent letters to city council:

One of the most common requests from the teen parents is to modify the housing program within Boulder. Presently, one must be eighteen or older in order to apply for public housing. This poses a challenge for many of the teen families, who wish to live independently but do not have the financial means to do so. Furthermore, teens stated that the waiting time to access low-income housing can be up to three years. After becoming pregnant, some teen mothers are no longer welcome at home, and they need safe housing for themselves and their children immediately. These young women also believe that an improved housing system would help alleviate the homeless problem in Boulder. Not only is homelessness a problem for the people without housing themselves, but the teen moms and their children report feeling intimidated by the people living on the streets.

Despite the fact these teenagers have the added responsibility of being parents, they are still teenagers at heart. They share many of the same interests as their peers and most expressed the desire to go out at night. Many teens go to Denver to dance at one of the city’s underage nightclubs; they make the long drive to Denver because Boulder lacks nightlife activities for teens. By constructing youth-friendly clubs and places to hang out at night, Boulder would be taking necessary steps towards keeping teens safe. Once teens have age-appropriate evening entertainment options, they could be themselves without the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

The Fairview teens expressed a desire for more after school and summer programs to keep them away from harmful influences, to provide learning opportunities, and to provide fun social environments. Child care is an obstacle for these young women, as their school-based child care ends when the traditional school day ends. They feel that an increase in the number of available after-school programs would be beneficial to all youth.

Many of the teen parents requested an indoor mall within the City of Boulder. They assert that the 29th Street Mall is too much like Pearl Street Mall, as both target older age-

groups and are outdoors. Outside malls are not ideal in rainy weather or during cold winter months. With an indoor mall, teens could have a year-round shopping and hang- out destination. A few of the teen parents even mentioned that the creation of a new indoor mall would provide Boulder with more jobs and allow the City to collect more sales tax.

Although Boulder has many great parks, the teens complained that they are spread out and can become over-crowded during peak hours. By constructing more parks within Boulder, healthy green spaces would be more accessible to teen parents who do not have independent transportation. Furthermore, a few teen parents requested that Boulder hold more summer festivities and fairs. “Not only are they fun events for people of all ages”, said the young mother, but “they provide a safe environment to experience activities that are not available year-round.”

Through this project, teen mothers acknowledged Boulder’s many wonderful amenities, but they also highlighted areas for improvement and change.