Growing Up Boulder's Report on University Hill's 11th Street Corridor Design

Summary of Findings, Fall 2017

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Overview

Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is a child and youth-friendly city initiative established in 2009 as a formal partnership between the City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District, and University of Colorado. GUB is a program of the University of Colorado's Community Engagement Design and Research (CEDaR) Center, which is housed in the Environmental Design Program. GUB aims to make Boulder an exemplary child and youth-friendly city by empowering Boulder's young people with opportunities for inclusion, influence, and deliberation on local issues that affects their lives.

In early 2014, the Boulder City Council identified improving the quality of life on University Hill neighborhood in Boulder as a priority. The City Council's vision for University Hill includes business and residential diversity, arts, multimodal access, health and safety, stakeholder partnerships, and code enforcement.

In the Fall of 2017, GUB began engaging children's voice in the visioning process for the City of Boulder's University Hill Redevelopment project. Growing Up Boulder decided to investigate the 11th Street corridor, a secondary intermediary between Pearl Street and the Hill that runs parallel to Broadway. The area along this corridor that the students focused on is between Arapahoe and College Avenue and a popular route of travel from the Civic area to the Hill.

For ten weeks of the 2017 fall semester, Growing Up Boulder staff, undergraduate GUB interns, and CU undergraduate mentors from Jota Samper's class worked with a 4th grade class from Flatirons Elementary to gather youth perspective on improving the 11th street corridor. The collaboration was multigenerational in that it also included senior residents from Presbyterian Manor. Other CU groups involved in the University Hill Redevelopment project included ENVD 3144: History and Theory of ENVD class, ENVD 3152: Introduction to Computer Graphics Application, and ENVD 5346 Special Topics: Environmental Design. Each CU group had a different focus.

The GUB program, through a collaboration with Ms. Spear's 4th grade class and city partners, developed a complete plan for the redevelopment of the 11th street corridor with the aim of creating a safe, fun, artistic, environmentally friendly, and memorable space for all. The students designed an oversized map of the corridor that showcased their group ideas, then presented their ideas to city and community members at the conclusion of their study.

"My favorite part of working with GUB was helping the community and the city."
--Flatirons 4th grader

By the Numbers

- 24 Flatirons Elementary 4th grade students
- 1 Flatirons teacher
- 2 GUB staff
- 2 GUB-CU undergraduate interns
- 7 Presbyterian Manor thought partners
- 7 CU undergraduate volunteers
- 16 City Experts
- 13.25 classroom hours

Project Description

One of the goals for revitalizing the Hill area is to improve the ways that residents of Boulder move between the downtown and Civic area and the Hill. The hope is to reduce the strain on the Broadway channel for transit between these two spaces and support all modes of transportation in doing so. During Fall 2017, Growing Up Boulder asked 24 Flatirons Elementary School students to share their ideas about a new, more welcoming design for the 11th Street corridor.

11th Street Goals

The goals of this project were to make the existing 11th Street corridor more fun and attractive, safe and comfortable, better for the environment, and memorable for residents and visitors alike.

Key Terms

Creative Placemaking: An evolving idea that stresses arts, culture and creativity in community-based design in a way that builds character and improves the quality of a place. This concept was incorporated into the curriculum to inspire the students to create an engaging community intervention that would benefit all users in the space.

Civil Discourse: An intentional conversation that is held amongst group members in order to share new ideas and bring about better understanding of a topic. Growing Up Boulder used this method to help students see other points of view, breakdown individual student's ideas, and create like-minded project groups based on shared interests. In these groups the students worked together to develop and refine design solutions for the 11th Street corridor.

Deliberative Democracy:

Photograph by Erika Chavarria

Deliberative refers to intention and democracy refers to everyone having a voice in the outcome of the project. During the map making session, everyone sat down beside the map with the goal of fitting all of their project ideas together onto the map. Each group had an equal say in the placement of their work and everyone had an opportunity to voice their opinion about where ideas fit along the corridor and why.

Precedent Research

The word precedent was introduced during the first research session. Students quickly learned that looking at and studying examples of existing corridors with artistic and family-friendly qualities was a very good way of building their own background knowledge and an effective strategy for starting to generate ideas that would be successful on the 11th Street corridor. Students received a worksheet that guided them in finding precedents that aligned with their budding ideas.

Partners

This project was a great example of an intergenerational study. Members of Presbyterian Manor Senior Center, who live at one end of the 11th Street corridor, volunteered to work with the students on their ideas. It was a fantastic opportunity for the students to work with and learn from residents who use that area regularly. At the same time, the Presbyterian Manor “thought partners” were thrilled about the students’ passion and quality of design ideas during the project. Positive relationships bloomed.

Project Timeline

The following table outlines the schedule for the sessions.

Class 1- October 4th, 2017: Introduction

Ms. Spear’s 4th grade students completed a survey related to their pre-existing knowledge about city projects and the extent to which they feel they are included in city planning decisions. An introductory powerpoint presentation about GUB and the redevelopment project along the 11th St. corridor was then presented. After, the 4th graders participated in a City as Play activity with Presbyterian manor volunteers.

Photo taken by Erika Chavarria

Class 2- October 11th, 2017: Site Analysis

Student groups walked to six site locations along the 11th Street corridor. Students spent time observing the environment, reflected on their site, and discussed what they liked, didn't like, and brainstormed possible solutions. They returned to the classroom to make posters of their sites. Each group shared their findings with the rest of the class.

Photo taken by Brianna Lamb

Class 3- October 18th, 2017: Research

4th graders began precedent research for the Hill Redevelopment project. Students used Chromebooks to search the web for examples of corridors that were fun and attractive, safe and comfortable, environmentally friendly, and memorable.

Photo taken by Erika Chavarria

Class 4- October 20th, 2017: Research

Word collages were shown to remind the students of the major themes from their research. Afterwards, Lauren and Mandy, from the City Office of Arts and Culture, engaged the students with a Public Art clicker activity. Each student was given a clicker, shown an image, and asked to respond with a simple "good" or "bad" to show if they liked the idea or not. After the presentation, students filled out a form to indicate which picture was most memorable or offered the most connection to them. They then continued to conduct research using Chromebooks.

Class 5- October 25th, 2017: Like-minded Group Creation

Students wrote their design ideas for the 11th street corridor onto sticky notes and placed them on the whiteboard under one of the following categories: arts and culture, safety and comfort, better for the environment, and fun and attractive. Afterwards, students with similar ideas were grouped together to begin the next step in collaborative project planning.

Class 6- November 8th, 2017: Experts Visit

Photo taken by Erika Chavarria

After city experts introduced themselves, they spent ten minutes with each student group. Students explained their design ideas and asked questions of the experts to refine their designs. Experts gave constructive feedback. A CU student volunteer documented the feedback for each group.

Class 7- November 15th, 2017: Revision

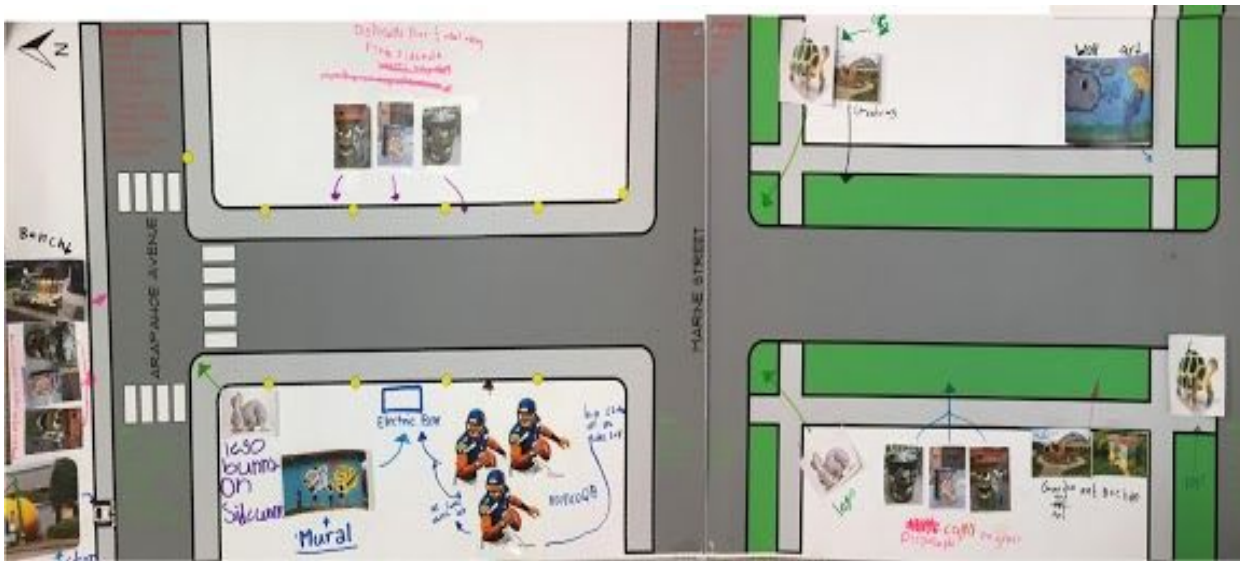
Students revised their 11th street corridor projects using group-specific condensed notes from the experts. They then made decisions about what expert feedback to incorporate into their project. Next, students answered detailed questions concerning materiality, maintenance, and project size. Students were asked to gather photos and create visual and written representations of their ideas for the next session.

Class 8- November 29th, 2017: Map Making

Using a deliberative democracy process, students placed their final design recommendations onto a large, shared map (approximately 12 feet x 4 feet). Through compromise and problem-solving, students placed their design photos onto the map, then prepared note cards for upcoming presentations.

Photos taken by Erika Chavarria

Section of Final Map displaying Student Projects



Class 9- December 4th, 2017: Presentation Preparation

This session was a dress rehearsal for their final presentation. Notecards were finalized, presentation orders were set, and each group had a chance to run through their ideas in front of the class.

Class 10- December 6th, 2017: Final Share Out

Photo taken by Erika Chavarria

Each of the student groups had an opportunity to present their ideas to a group of city experts, designers, school officials, and community members. Students presented about their ideas' inspirations, size, materiality, location, maintenance, and interactivity. The students received positive and constructive feedback along with suggestions for next steps or further development of their ideas.

Student Design Recommendations

Colorful Disposable Bins

This group was strongly motivated by the large amounts trash observed on their site visit. They wanted to prevent people from littering in a fun and creative way. The design of proposed bins will be bear-proof and weatherproof so they can withstand all conditions. They wish to install a series of 3 cans on every other block so people can

dispose of trash, recycle and compost. The artistic designs endeavor to inspire people to maintain cleaner streets.

1

2

3

More Nature

This group focused upon the lack of nature in certain spots along 11th street. They believe that planting more trees is better for the environment. They wish to incorporate gardens and xeriscaping with artistic sculptures along 11th Street to add culture and beauty to the space. They also want to create an interactive tree with designs and artwork inside and outside so people can spend time being a part of nature.

4

5

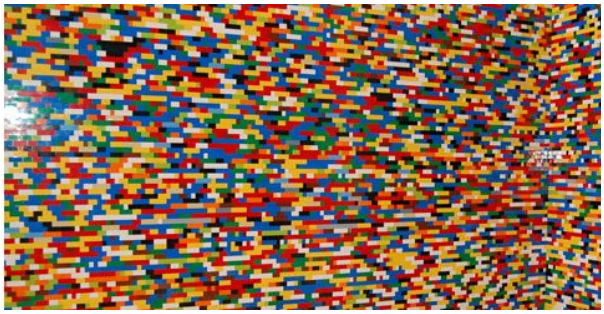
Wayfinding and Interactive Sidewalk Art

This group began seeking entertainment as they walked through the space. Sidewalk art presents fun photo opportunities for people passing through and is a great way to share important landmarks with people. The can would also be multifunctional and serve as directional signs towards the Hill, Library, Civic Area, etc. The group explored a multitude of media for these pieces, such as chalk, paint and more.

6 7

Lego Art

This group saw 11th Street as a canvas with incredible potential. They were impassioned by Lego, and incorporated it into their design. They proposed to build 5’ x 9’ lego walls and a few different lego sculptures to add beautiful landmarks to the space. Their goal was to make 11th street more fun and attractive.



8 9

Creative Benches

This group noticed that the 11th Street corridor lacked places to sit. If people are going to walk this corridor, there should be places for people to rest or congregate. They wanted to design fun benches for everyone to enjoy the space together!

10 11 12

Soccer Goal Bus Stop

This group came together over their love of soccer. They want to create a series of 2 soccer goal bus stops across the street from one another (on College Ave.). They want

to have 2 bronze statues for each stop; one being a striker shooting at the opposite goal and the other being a keeper stretching across the net making a diving save. People will sit on top of the outstretched goalie to wait for the bus and use an interactive touch-screen to entertain themselves and find bus information as they wait.

13 14

Bus Stops and Murals

This group was drawn to dynamic, eye-popping, memorable structures and features to attract people to the space. They decided on imaginative bus stops to promote bus transportation by making the stops safe and entertaining. They incorporated murals which could work as backdrops for photos and a skate ramp for entertainment as people wait for the bus.

15 16 17

“I was impressed by how wonderfully self-assured the kids were and knowledgeable, engaged, and excited.”
--Marda Kirn, EcoArts Connection and GUB visiting expert

“The students did a fantastic job. I was impressed by what I gleaned about the whole 8 week curriculum. I loved that it included an intergenerational component with residents from Presbyterian Manor. I am happy to participate in events like this again. I left feeling proud to be a member of a community that values children's voices!”
--Clare Stocker, University of Denver Professor and GUB visiting expert

Summary of Findings

Student Contributions

The children saw the 11th Street corridor as a space with great potential for improvement. Students developed projects based on their personal interests, while also negotiating a shared vision with classmates. Common themes in student proposals include:

- **Beautification of Space** through the use of artwork, murals, vegetation, landscaping, wayfinding signs, and memorable landmarks.
- **Interactive Activities and Art** that will bring more people to the space, create a sense of place, and foster community.
- **Safety for Children and Families** through pedestrian walkways, better signage, places for playing and resting, and reduction of vehicular traffic, making it a more inclusive place for all.
- **Environmental Consciousness** in design by being mindful of natural elements that already exist on site and by increasing vegetation and landscaping
- **Pedestrian-friendly Spaces** that value people over cars through a multi-use path, repaired sidewalks, more spaces for sitting, and less vehicular traffic.

"My favorite part of working with GUB was when I got to share my ideas with some super important people."
--Flatirons 4th grader

Children's Likes	Children's Dislikes	Children's Solutions
• People to interact with • Shaded areas when it's hot and sunny • Lots of room to play or build something • Animals: birds, squirrels, dogs • Colors from trees, plants, and houses • Peace and quiet	• It felt unsafe to cross street • Few benches or places to sit • Bus stops are boring • Lots of trash laying around • Nothing fun to do or see • Grass is dying • Unlandscaped areas are unappealing • Mailboxes, fences, and walls are unattractive	• Bike paths • Crosswalks • Fun and artistic benches • Colorful and interactive bus stops • Artistic trash cans on every block • Art: sculptures, murals, sidewalk chalk • More plants, flowers, bushes, and grass • Painted fences

Thought Partner Contributions

Presbyterian Manor thought partners were integral in this multi-week experience. Because they live on the 11th Street corridor, our seniors contributed to students' conversations from their (different) perspective. Seniors skillfully supported the students in developing student-driven projects. When

Growing Up Boulder asked the thought partners the same questions the students were asked (what do you like/dislike about the corridor and what are some solutions?), the thought partners' answers reflected many shared values as the students. Generally, seniors liked the ideas of wide sidewalks, crosswalks, a view of the mountains, and more landscaping. However, they had different dislikes and identified additional problems related to their unique experience of living on the Hill (see table below). Overall, the thought partners cherished working with the students to develop kid-friendly projects that ultimately benefit people of all ages.

"My favorite part of working with the students was [spending time] with the children and feeling younger...we really engaged in being their age again and seeing that our needs and interests were so similar... and it was fantastic."
--Margarita Delgado, Presbyterian Manor Resident

Seniors' Likes	Senior's Dislikes/Problems	Seniors' Solutions

• The connection from Civic area to the city and library
• New trash cans
• Natural elements in landscaping: plants, trees, flowers, shrubs, hedges, grass, mulch.
• Repaired sidewalks
• Crosswalks
• View of mountains
• Newish streetlamps
	• Noise is overwhelming
	  ○ Businesses (summer rooftop patio)
	  ○ Walking traffic (11:00pm and 2:00 am)
	• Destruction of property
	• Trash thrown on lawn/ corridor
	• There's nothing to do or see (not kid friendly)
	• Too many cars
	• Alfalfa's landscape has lot of weeds
	  ○ No plants
	• Loss of a bus stop on Arapahoe
		• Metal sculptures
		• Code enforcement
		• More policing
		• 15ft walking/ pedestrian path
		• 1-way (½ cars)
		• lighting - sparkle
		• Contact businesses to partner with
		• Partner with schools
		• Artsy trash cans on every block

Reflections

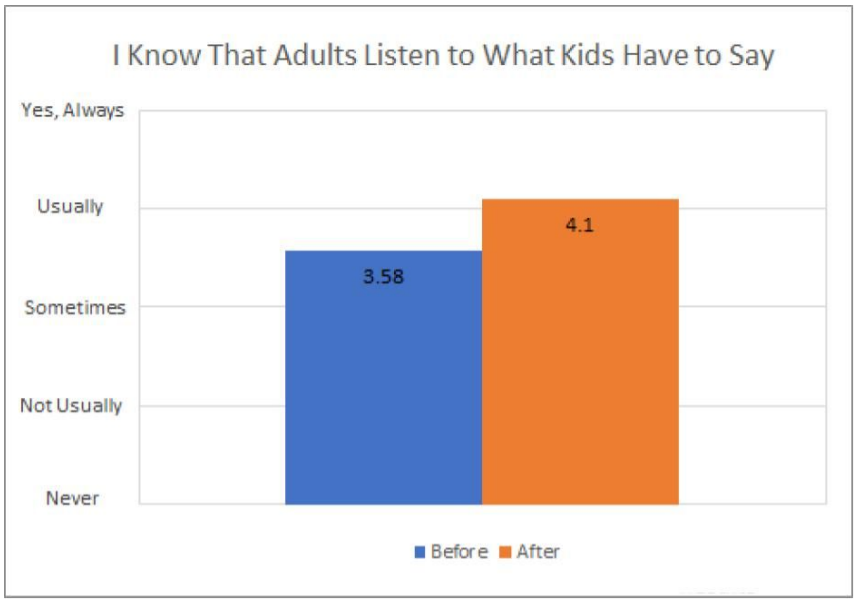
Engaging children is an important part of public participation as children are active members of the community. Community sessions with relevant and current projects like ours play a key role in helping students understand dynamics of city decision-making in addition to contributing valuable ideas to the city from key users.

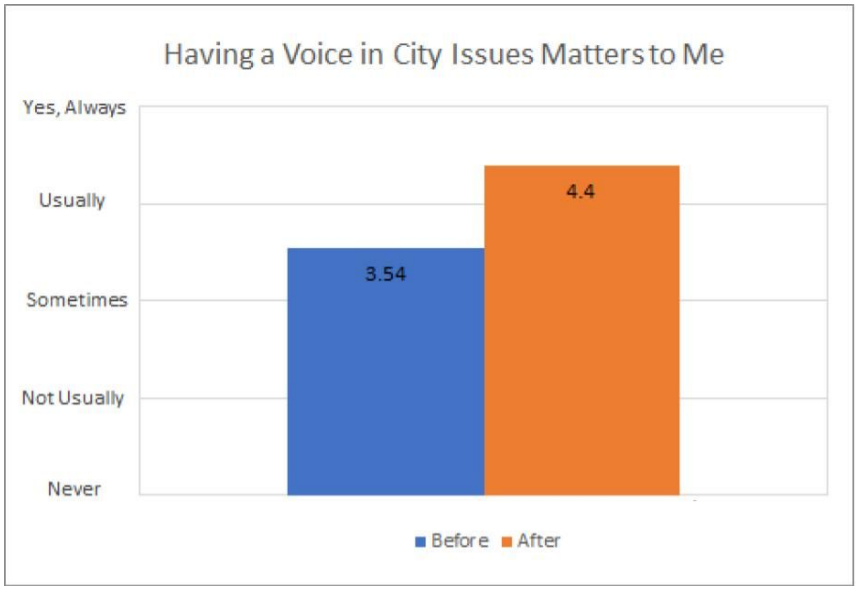
Before and after our sessions, students participated in pre- and post-surveys about their perceptions of city issues and the role of children in the community. Students showed a positive shift after being involved in the GUB sessions; however, it is interesting to note that a significant proportion of students felt that their voices mattered and that adults listen to what kids think *even before* GUB started working with them. This finding contrasts with many of GUB's other projects, in which the majority of young people routinely feel they do not have a voice in their community before the GUB intervention. We hypothesize that the difference in self-efficacy around civic engagement is due to

the relatively high socioeconomic status of the Flatirons students compared with most other student groups with whom GUB works, which are comprised of students from mixed or lower socioeconomic statuses.

Students' understanding of the role that the 11th Street corridor plays in their community increased greatly, as did their general attitudes towards child involvement in city decisions. Students were very positive about sharing their ideas, especially for stated community goals. The students especially felt that they had a voice in city issues that matter to them and that child involvement was important.

"My favorite part of working with GUB was making my ideas come true."
--Flatirons 4th grader





Conclusion

Flatirons Elementary children feel strongly about safety, nature, beautification, fun, and family-friendly spaces. Across the board, the students desired outlets of creativity as motivation to visit the 11th Street corridor. While each group of children's project addressed different values and interests, all projects used interactivity to accomplish their goals. For example, artistically-themed trash bins encourage cleanliness, interactive murals and signs help users navigate the corridor, and artistic benches made from recycled materials provide safe and comfortable places for sitting by a diverse set of users.

Growing Up Boulder's 10-week, multigenerational engagement with groups from Flatirons Elementary, Presbyterian Manor, and the CU Environmental Design Program proved to be an extremely beneficial and rewarding learning structure. Participants aged 9 through 82 worked together, debated, compromised and ultimately, developed group design ideas for the corridor. While extremely time-intensive, GUB staff observed that through this model, participants came to know and deeply respect one another. We believe that the process of three age groups collaborating on one goal led to rich and meaningful project results.

"From start to finish, working with Growing Up Boulder helped students become engaged community members, stakeholders, in their city. It is my hope and belief that this entire process will lead to students growing into engaged, civil-minded members of their community, city, country and world. Thank you, to Growing Up Boulder for your time, efforts, creativity, and passion!"

--Cheryl Spear, Flatirons Elementary 4th Grade Teacher

Partners and Appreciation

This project was the result of a truly collaborative process. Several institutional partners made this possible including City of Boulder's Hill Community Development Initiative, Flatirons Elementary School, Presbyterian Manor, and the University of Colorado Boulder. GUB would like to especially thank the partners who directly gave time and energy to make this engagement possible, and especially to the students of Cheryl Spears' 4th grade class for sharing their wonderful ideas:

- Flatirons Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District
    - Scott Boesel, Principal
    - Katie Bell - Literacy Specialist, BVSD
    - Jennifer Garfield - Director of Science, BVSD

    - Roy Holloway - Director of Humanities, BVSD
    - Cheryl Spear, 4th grade teacher
    - Jackie Weber - Director of Mathematics, BVSD
- Growing Up Boulder Staff/Team
    - Erika Chavarria, ENVD Undergraduate GUB Intern
    - Jason Green, ENVD Undergraduate GUB Intern
    - Cathy Hill, GUB, Education Coordinator
    - Ann Moss, Landscape Architect / Urban Planner
    - Aria Dellepiane, GUB, Program Associate
    - Mara Mintzer, GUB, Program Director
- City Experts
    - Allison Bailey - YOAB Coordinator
    - Patrick Bohin - Assistant City Forester, City of Boulder
    - Aileen Carrigan - Bespoke Transit, Principal and Founder
    - Matt Chasansky - Manager, Office of Arts and Culture
    - Louise Chawla - CU Professor Emerita
    - Lauren Click - Grants Coordinator, Office of Arts and Culture
    - Marda Kirn - EcoArts Connection Director
    - Jerry Shapins, Landscape Architect / Urban Planner
    - Jennifer Shelby - CU Graduate Student
    - Clare Stocker - DU Psychology Professor
    - Mandy Vink - Public Art Coordinator
    - Willem van Vliet - CU Professor Emeritus
    - Sarah Wiebenson - Hill Community Development Coordinator
- Presbyterian Manor Thought Partners
    - Margarita Delgado
    - Ann Mescall
    - Leslee Barker
    - Jackie Hawley
    - Jackie Louise
    - Shirley Laumaur
    - Harriet Jeckell
    - Clara Hawley
- University of Colorado Students
    - ENVD Undergraduate Volunteers
        - Brianna Lamb
        - Cale Wagner
        - Carley Cordrey
        - Emelia Steinmetz
        - Emily Sherman
        - Genna Bartingale

        - Sarah Hutchinson
- University of Colorado CEDaR team
    - Brian Muller, CEDaR Faculty Director and Professor
    - Carson Byerhof, CEDaR intern
    - Leyla Wahedi, CEDaR intern
    - Susan Glairon, CEDaR Communications Specialist
    - Ben Harden, CEDaR Program Associate

Appendices

Photo Sources

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