Youth Voices Shape Boulder's Future 2025

A Summary of Growing Up Boulder's BVCP Engagement with Teens

In August 2025, Boulder teens stepped into the role of community planners, sharing ideas that will help guide the **Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP)** — the roadmap for how Boulder will grow, move, and care for our people and environment in the years ahead. The August 19th youth engagement was part of an engagement organized through YOUNIFY citywide and held at various in-person locations but connected over Zoom.

Growing Up Boulder hosted one of the city's **community conversations** at the Boulder Public Library, engaging **17 high school and middle school students** over pizza and big questions about housing, climate hazards, and local business vitality. The evening was co-facilitated by a teen and an adult. Youth said they appreciated "**collaborating with others to solve problems**" and having "**meaningful conversations about complex topics**."

What Youth Valued

Students loved contributing solutions that matter:

> “I loved talking with my peers about interesting topics such as hazards, real estate, and some of the largest issues in Boulder.”

> “Everyone was participating and open to ideas. We were able to build off of each other while not tearing anyone down.”

> “How well it was run and being able to share all my opinions.”

Many shared that they left feeling more connected to their city — and more confident in their ability to influence it:

> “I should become a bigger part of the Boulder community and speak out more for change…after the first meeting I felt inspired because it showed me that I *do* have the ability to make a change in my community.”

What Youth Want Boulder to Focus On

Youth raised thoughtful priorities for the BVCP team:

Housing

- Keep people safe from wildfires and floods
- Fill empty homes and storefronts before building new ones
- Support affordable housing for agricultural and essential workers

> "The priority should be…protecting existing housing and infrastructure in high-risk areas…"
> "Lower the number of unoccupied houses and apartments."

Local Economy

- Help small businesses thrive
- Spotlight local shops weekly to boost community support

> "Local businesses help create a rich community…support struggling local businesses."

Transportation

- More transit options connecting county and city
- Better parking access for residents and youth

> "I live in Heatherwood and there's no bus to get into Boulder…outside of school hours, it is impossible."

Safety & Climate Resilience

- Improve community education for fire/flood emergencies

> "It was hard to know what to do during the Marshall Fire…we should educate communities more on how to handle situations like that."

Homelessness

- More humane support and housing solutions

> “I would love to see more housing and shelter available.”

Youth Participation Matters

Most teens reported feeling heard — and appreciated being invited into the process:

> “The group really valued having our input which was nice.”

These insights highlight what we already know: **young people care deeply about Boulder’s future** — and they understand the complexities around housing, hazards, community identity, and economic sustainability.

Looking Ahead

Growing Up Boulder will continue partnering with the City of Boulder, Boulder County, and YOUnify to ensure that youth voices remain central in BVCP planning and implementation. Their ideas — and their lived experience — can help Boulder become a more inclusive, safe, and connected place for everyone.