



Parks & Open Space

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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, June 22, 2023

Location: Boulder County Courthouse
1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

TO:	Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee
FROM/PRESENTER:	Heidi Wagner, Resource Planning Manager
AGENDA ITEM:	East Boulder Creek Site Plan: Public Engagement Update
ACTION REQUESTED:	Information Only

Introduction

Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) started the planning process for the East Boulder Creek (EBC) site in November of 2022. EBC represents the first opportunity to incorporate [CRISP](#) objectives within a management plan process and the public engagement strategy. Public Engagement for the first phase of the process has concluded, and the department is currently accepting feedback during the second phase of the process until July 31, 2023. The draft management plan will be released in the Fall of 2023, and the community will have the opportunity to comment on the draft prior to adoption. Following a staff presentation on the approach and first phase feedback, staff will welcome questions and discussion from POSAC about public engagement for the process.

Background:

BCPOS places a high value in the involvement and engagement of our community to shape site management planning. Our focus has been the implementation of [CRISP](#) objectives to increase engagement and participation with the Latinx community. The planning team collaborated internally with Education & Outreach, Rangers, and the Public Information and Engagement team to create phase one community engagement tactics based on the CRISP objectives of: 1) Understand the Latinx community, 2) Develop Partnerships, 3) Targeted Communications to Specific Latinx audiences, 4) Transcreate messages; 5) Gather Latinx community feedback.

The first phase of community engagement included a website, an introduction video (1.2K views), 42 personalized emails to priority stakeholder groups, three partnership meetings, e-news outreach, social media postings, postcard mailings to neighbors, flyers, and presentations to POSAC and BOCC. All materials were transcreated into Spanish. Efforts resulted a record 1,041 survey responses.

Despite the record response, there is more work to be done in phase two to obtain more feedback from our Latinx community. In response, Parks is adding two new feedback methods for phase two. New feedback options will include 1) A visual, bulletin-board style survey that allows respondents to draw, write, or dot pictures of features or concepts they like. 2) An interview style form that can be used by staff to record verbal comments received during outreach events. Feedback from these methods, along with a new survey, will be

collected in a summary report that will guide Parks in inclusive and equitable decision-making.

To encourage community feedback in the next phase of the process, staff is planning two on-site open houses (one conducted entirely in Spanish), tabling at four community festivals, three farmer's markets, and multiple trailhead tables. Additional follow-up from the Spanish-speakers open house will be conducted with Latinx partners.

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Next Steps

After phase II engagement has concluded, staff will incorporate the community's feedback into the draft management plan. The community will have an opportunity to comment on the draft and changes will be incorporated prior to presenting the draft to POSAC for their recommendation to the Board. The EBC Management Plan is scheduled to be heard at POSAC in November 2023 and the Board in December 2023.

POSAC Action Requested

Information item. Staff is looking forward to the committee's feedback on the public engagement process as well as any questions concerning the process or the site.

Attachments:

1. East Boulder Creek Site Management Plan: Phase I Community Engagement Results



East Boulder Creek Site Management Plan

Community Survey 1 Results



Boulder County
Parks & Open Space

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Complete survey responses can be found in Appendix I: Survey 1 Responses.

Executive Summary

On Nov. 17, 2022, Boulder County Parks & Open Space released its first community survey to prepare a management plan for the East Boulder Creek Site. The objective of the survey was to define the public's priorities for conservation and community access, and collect any feedback on the future of the site. The survey got 1,041 responses.

The 1,377-acre site consists of five open spaces with a dozen ponds and five miles of perennial stream along Boulder Creek and Coal Creek. This site contains a wide variety of habitats, including wetlands and riparian ecosystems, and is currently maintained by agricultural tenants and Parks & Open Space resource management staff.

Survey participants said their **top conservation values** for the site were conserving wildlife habitat, protecting land from development, preserving ponds and flowing water, and protecting native trees, wildflowers, and grasses. Most survey participants said the **top visitor experiences** they'd seek out are the opportunity for exercise, finding respite and quiet reflection, and easy access to water.

The top themes survey participants identified for a name for the site were influenced by natural features of the open space or by Indigenous and Native American history. Some people were also in favor of keeping the current name — Boulder Creek/East Boulder Creek.

Survey participants also left some additional feedback. Of that feedback, four major themes emerged: conservation of the land, recreational opportunities, collaboration with tribal and Indigenous groups, and safety and use concerns for the space.

Conservation of the land and wildlife was a popular sentiment. Recreational opportunities, as the largest category, displayed three major sub-themes — creation of accessible multi-use trail systems, easy water access, and equestrian access. Survey participants also advocated for tribal involvement in land management and future planning. They raised concerns about private property access, traffic considerations, and any material hazards like contaminated water sources.

Background of East Boulder Creek Survey

Boulder County Parks & Open Space is preparing a management plan for the East Boulder Creek Site. Public input will help shape the future of the site. The objective of the survey was to define the public's priorities for conservation and community access.

About East Boulder Creek Site

The site shares a border with Weld County at East County Line Road, and is also bordered by State Highway 52 on the north, US 287 toward the west, and Jasper and Kenosha Roads on the south.

The Town of Erie lies just to the south, Niwot several miles to the northwest, and Longmont about five miles to the north.

This 1,377-acre site consists of five open space properties with a dozen ponds and five miles of perennial stream along Boulder Creek and Coal Creek.

This part of the Boulder Valley has been important to the region because of its streamside riparian habitats, its irrigated farmlands, and its aggregate resources. While some industries have impacted the site, the agricultural community and the open space tenants continue to steward this rural landscape. The area has been, and remains, a site for oil and gas operations. The county finished the reclamation of the last and most recent gravel operation and will continue to revegetate the site.

Due to the extent of past aggregate mining, the site provides ongoing opportunities for restoration. For example, the county partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fully restore a one-mile segment of the Boulder Creek floodplain east of US 287 several years ago. They broadened the channel to build resilience into the landscape and offer a larger riparian habitat footprint.

The site also supports significant wildlife habitats and wetlands. Due to its relatively level topography and position on the western Great Plains, this site offers expansive views of the Front Range mountains and the Indian Peaks area. This site presents a variety of passive recreation options and a continued restoration opportunity.

Survey Method

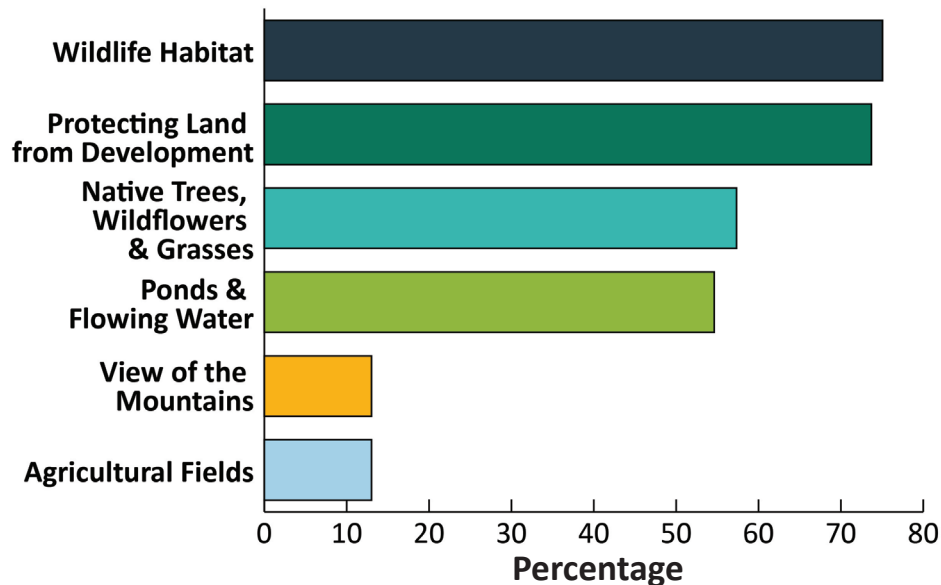
To get public feedback, Boulder County Parks & Open Space released online survey questions on their project web page boco.org/EastBoulderCreek on Nov. 17, 2022. To raise awareness of the survey release, the Boulder County team promoted it through trailhead posters, public meetings, a postcard mailing to neighbors, email notifications, press releases, and social media posts. The team presented the project and survey at the Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee public meeting on Nov. 17, 2022, attended stakeholder meetings, sent three emails to over 5,200 recipients, and posted notifications on Facebook and Twitter throughout the survey period to drive traffic to the survey. The survey closed on Feb. 28, 2023, with 1,041 responses.



Question 1

Answered: 1,038
Skipped: 3

What are the conservation values you would prioritize at the East Boulder Creek site? Select your top three.



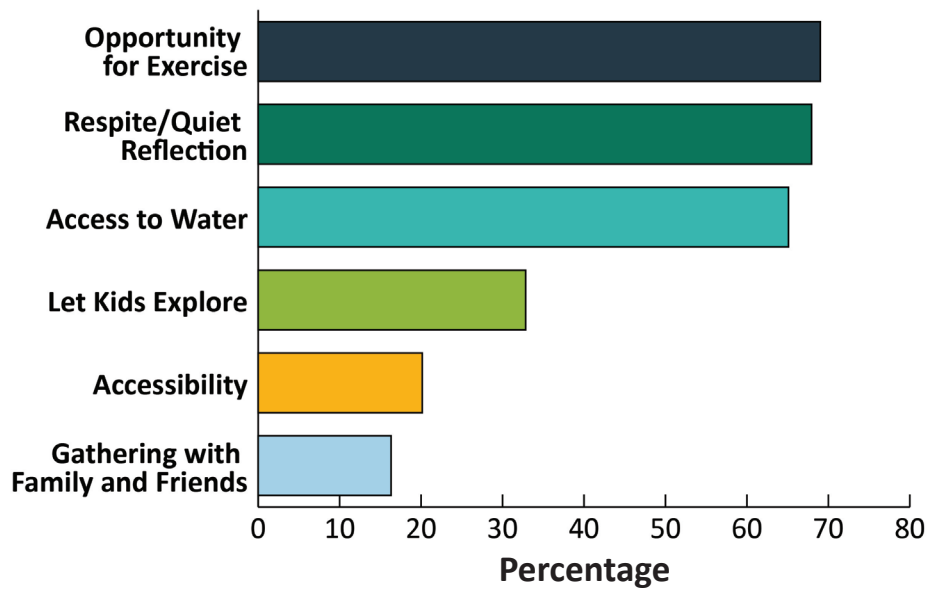
Answer Choices	Responses	
Wildlife habitat	75.05%	779
Protecting land from development	73.70%	765
Native trees, wildflowers, & grasses	57.32%	595
Ponds & flowing water	54.62%	567
View of the mountains	13.01%	135
Agricultural fields	13.01%	135
Total Respondents: 1,038		



Question 2

Answered: 1,023
Skipped: 18

What kind of visitor experiences would you prioritize at the East Boulder Creek site? Select your top three.

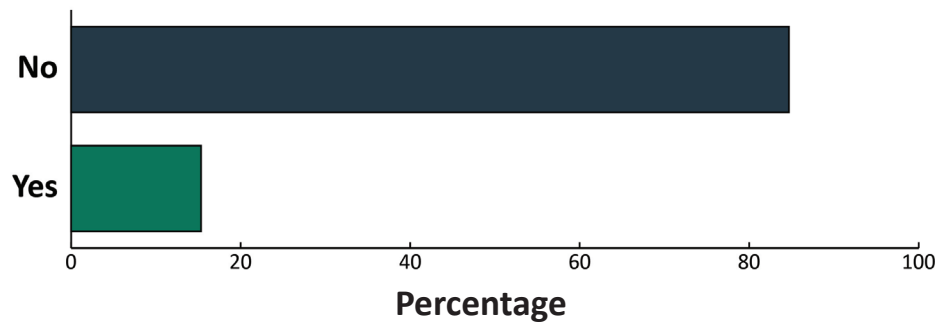


Answer Choices	Responses	
Opportunity for exercise	69.01%	706
Respite/quiet reflection	67.94%	695
Access to water	65.10%	666
Let kids explore	32.84%	336
Accessibility	20.14%	206
Gathering with family & friends	16.32%	167
Total Respondents: 1,023		

Question 3

Answered: 1,012
Skipped: 29

Do you have a suggestion for what this site should be named?



Answer Choices	Responses	
No	84.68%	857
Yes	15.32%	155
Total Respondents: 1,012		

Question 4

Answered: 146
Skipped: 895

What would you name this site? Please keep your ideas appropriate and three words or less.

Themes	Percentage of Responses	Examples
Names influenced by natural features of the open space	27%	• Confluence Conservation Area/Reclamation Park • Eagle Valley/Harrier Park/Heron Open Space/Raptors Landing/Redtail Recreation • Front Range Vista/East Panorama Parkway • Northeast Riparian Parkway
Names influenced by Indigenous and Native American History	24.3%	• Names chosen by local Arapaho representatives • Cheyenne Arapaho Creek • Little Raven Park
Boulder Creek/East Boulder Creek	24.3%	• Boulder Creek Open Space • Boulder Creek Conservatory • East Boulder Creek Open Space • East Boulder Ponds
Names with Historical Significance to the area	13.5%	• Boulder Valley Farm • Canino Ranch • Jarosa Ranch Open Space • Kenosha Farms/Kenosha Open Space/Kenosha Ponds
Miscellaneous Names	10.8%	• Espacio de gratitude • Possibilities Park • Talley Preserve

Question 5

Answered: 142
Skipped: 899

Why do you feel this would be a good name for the site?

Names Influenced by Natural Features

The most popular theme, at 27% of responses, was names drawn from natural features of the open space, with a strong sentiment of conservation seen in many of the responses.

Names suggested, including Confluence Conservation Area, Reclamation Park, and Front Range Vista, often drew inspiration from the existing features of the open space or present a conservation need. The space boasts streams, ponds, and panoramic views of the Front Range.

Respondents also focused on wild flora and fauna they encounter and enjoy in and around the open space. Many expressed a desire to raise awareness of these species to educate and protect wild lands where these species reside. Some key species mentioned included eagles, falcons, herons, and harriers.

Names Influenced by Indigenous and Native American History

24.3% of respondents requested a name honoring the presence and history of Indigenous and Native American groups in the area. Suggestions like Cheyenne Arapaho Creek and Little Raven Park recognize both the present and historical tribal authority of the region and historically prominent leaders of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes.

A lot of these responses suggested consulting with local tribal authorities or experts on Indigenous history and language for a name in the language of tribes that reside(ed) in the area or the original name of the area in the native language of local Indigenous groups.

Boulder Creek/East Boulder Creek

24.3% of respondents suggested variations of Boulder Creek or East Boulder Creek as the name for the site. Suggestions included Boulder Creek Open Space, Boulder Creek Conservatory, East Boulder Creek Open Space, and East Boulder Ponds. Respondents who suggested these names preferred the descriptive simplicity and said East Boulder Creek is what the area is commonly called because of the primary watercourse.

Names with Historical Significance to the Area

Names related to historical significance and property rights of the area got 13.5% of responses. Suggestions included Boulder Valley Farm and Canino Ranch. Respondents identified Boulder Valley Farm, Wheeler Ranch, Jarosa Ranch, and Canino Ranch as historical owners of segments of the open space, and said they wanted to honor the history of the property.

Multiple respondents suggested variations of Kenosha Ponds or Kenosha Open Space. Respondents said the land was previously referred to as Kenosha ponds, and the space is close to Kenosha Road on the south, lending a natural association.

Miscellaneous Names

10.8% of respondents suggested unique names for the space. Some responses expressed a desire for the space to represent positive ideals, such as gratitude, serenity, or optimism. Some respondents also suggested naming the space after prominent local figures.

Question 6

Answered: 642
Skipped: 399

Is there any other feedback you would like us to consider?

Four major themes emerged from all the responses: conservation of the land, recreational opportunities, collaboration with tribal and Indigenous groups, and safety and use concerns for the space.

Conservation of the Land

96 respondents to the survey said conservation of the area was a primary concern. Survey participants who said conservation was a need generally opposed development of the area in any significant manner, including:

- No construction of homes or commercial property;
- The inclusion of wilderness areas or wildlife sanctuaries with no public access;
- No established campsites or camping access.

Respondents emphasized preservation of native flora and fauna, particularly preserving riparian areas and native grasses, along with activity areas for activities like birding and night sky viewing. Multiple respondents promoted very limited or no public access to the site to preserve wildlife habitats and breeding grounds for eagles, herons, and falcons. Some respondents said they want to maintain agricultural and pastoral usage of the land to support the community and promote land stewardship.

Survey participants were divided on the extractive industries on the site. They expressed concerns about fracking and other forms of oil and gas extraction. Some respondents believed this was an acceptable use for the open space.

Recreational Opportunities

159 respondents identified recreational opportunities as a key consideration for the space. Residents said they wanted a mixed-use open space to take advantage of the water access and acreage.

Three recreational themes emerged:

- Multi-use trails;
- Equestrian access;
- Water access.

Multi-use Trails

Respondents were enthusiastic about the addition of multi-use trails, with 84 responses requesting them. Respondents wanted a diverse array of trail systems and connections to existing trails. Among the requests was access to the BART and Erie trail systems, and connections to existing open spaces, like White Rocks or Teller Farms.

Survey responses identified accessibility as an important factor to trail considerations, like the addition of trails of varying lengths, access to restroom facilities, bench installments, and accessible parking. Multiple respondents also wanted soft surface trails to mitigate impact and keep a more natural feel.

The majority of responses discussing the trail system wanted the trails for walking and hiking. Respondents were in favor of allowing bike and mountain bike access for trails, but were divided on allowing e-bikes, or motorized bikes. There were conflicting opinions about on-leash and off-leash dog access. Proponents said the open space is a dog-friendly area but detractors said dogs will disturb wilderness areas and wildlife nesting.

Equestrian Access

60 out of the 159 recreation-related responses were about horses. In addition to requesting horse access on trails, respondents wanted increased accessibility for people using the space for horse-related activity. They wanted to limit bike access on horse-friendly trails, have parking lots that are accessible to horse trailers with angled spots for trailer access, and installment of hitching posts and rocks to be used as mounting blocks.

Water Access

15 responses concerned public access to ponds, streams, and other water recreation. Respondents wanted open catch-and-release fishing access. They also wanted stocked ponds with fish species that are both sport-fishing and environmentally friendly.

Survey respondents also requested paddleboarding, kayaking, and canoeing access. Respondents were divided on boating access, including access to the confluence of the St. Vrain. Some respondents requested no motorized boats, or only the addition of boats small enough to be carried personally.

Collaboration with Tribal and Indigenous Groups

17 survey respondents said they wanted tribal partnership for the East Boulder Creek site. Respondents suggested the involvement of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes to respect the historical presence of the tribal and Indigenous peoples, including consulting with tribal authorities for land use and management.

Respondents also suggested incorporating Indigenous involvement into the infrastructure of the open space. Survey respondents said they wanted to see gathering areas for local tribal authorities and signage in local Native languages and English to explain the historical context of the land.

Safety and Use Concerns

34 respondents expressed safety or use concerns of the site. Some expressed concerns about ensuring there were limited public access boundaries near private property and highways to maintain privacy for property owners and increase public safety. Traffic considerations were also raised, and participants suggested noise barriers along the highway and nearby access roads.

Survey participants also expressed concerns about water quality and public health hazards. They said these issues could come from water sources upstream, pollution from domestic animals like dogs or horses, and any preexisting hazards related to oil and gas extraction on the site.

Miscellaneous

34 survey responses weren't captured within the larger themes. These responses range in subject, including the addition of youth-friendly or educational opportunities, including interactive playgrounds or obstacle courses. Several responses requested signage explaining native plants, wildlife, and historical contexts of the surrounding region, along with accessible maps of the area showing the site, existing trails, and other open spaces.

Other responses wanted increased infrastructure. Suggestions ranged from disc golf and golf courses, to farms, community gardens, or recreation centers. Some participants said they'd like to see revision of the streams and ponds to be more natural looking and provide more shoreline access.

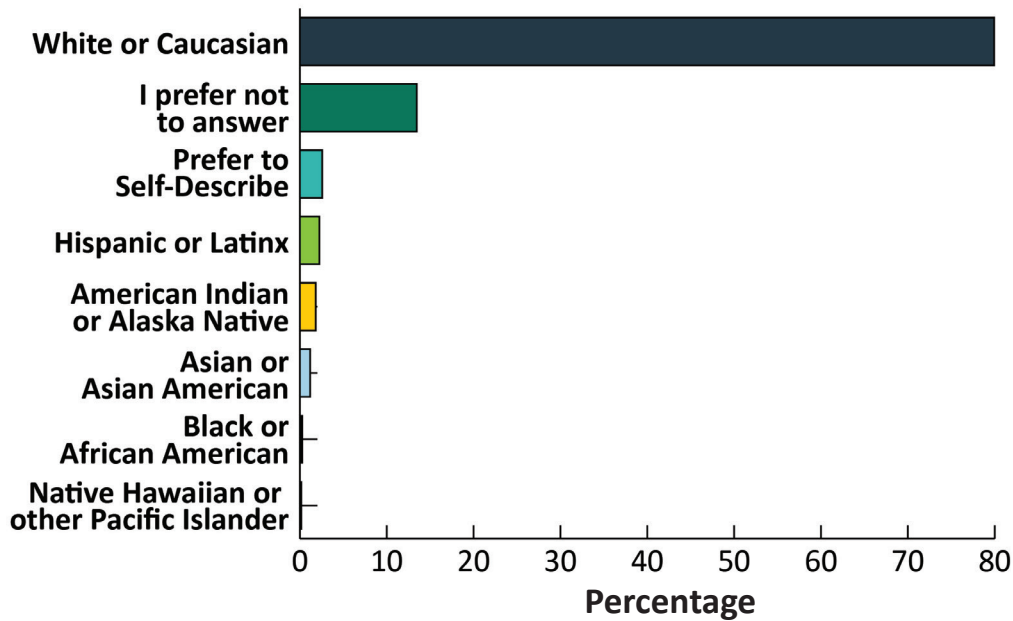
Some responses requested more information about the project on the website, including additional photographs, videos, and publicly accessible plans.

Question 7

Answered: 937

Skipped: 104

Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity?

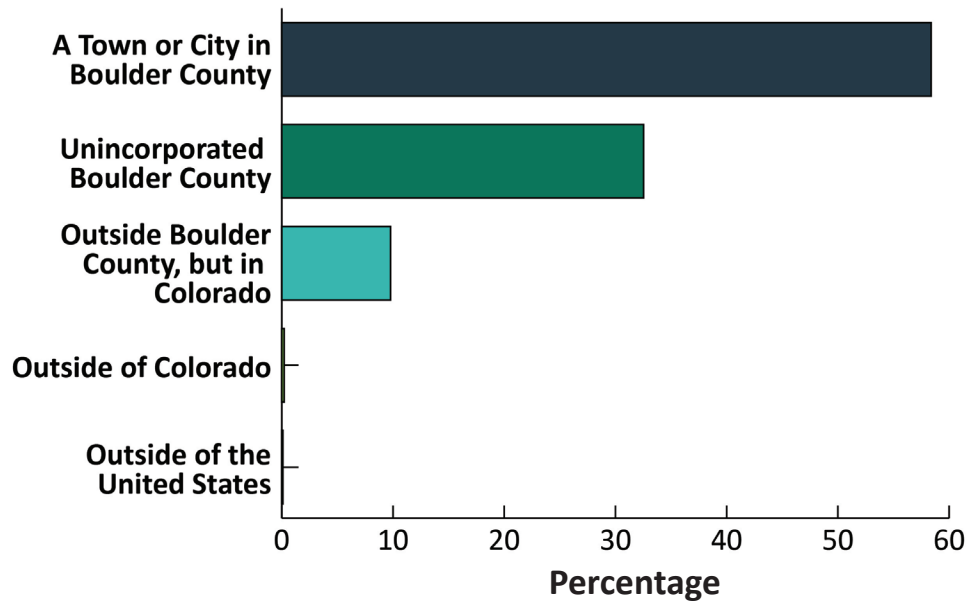


Answer Choices	Responses	
White or Caucasian	79.94%	749
I prefer not to answer	13.45%	126
I prefer to self-describe (please specify)	2.56%	24
Hispanic or Latinx	2.24%	21
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.81%	17
Asian or Asian American	1.17%	11
Black or African American	0.32%	3
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.21%	2
Total Respondents: 937		

Question 8

Answered: 961
Skipped: 80

Where do you live?



Answer Choices	Responses	
A town or city in Boulder County	58.38%	561
Unincorporated Boulder County	31.53%	303
Outside Boulder County, but in Colorado	9.78%	94
Outside of Colorado	0.21%	2
Outside of United States	0.10%	1
Total Respondents: 961		