



## INFORMATION PACKET MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

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Date: February 8, 2018

**Subject: Civic Area East Bookend Existing Conditions Report and Area Planning Process Update**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2017, the city completed Phase I “Park at the Core” improvements in the Boulder Civic Area and is now moving into the next phase of planning and community engagement which will focus on creating an area plan for the East Bookend, an area bounded by Arapahoe Avenue, Canyon Boulevard, Broadway and 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Streets (see Figure 2 on p. 4). This East Bookend area planning process will take place through 2018 and into 2019. It will analyze and narrow down the potential uses that have been identified for the East Bookend to provide a preferred option for the future redevelopment of the area. The area planning process will be informed by community input, previous planning efforts, and detailed analysis of the site and its potential future uses.

As a first step in the planning process, city staff has created the Civic Area East Bookend Existing Conditions Report (**Attachment A**) to provide a comprehensive inventory and clear understanding of the existing status of the Civic Area East Bookend, while also documenting the prior planning, research, and analysis that has been done within the area. This report will serve as a foundation for the planning process by identifying key considerations that need to be addressed throughout the planning and implementation processes.

City staff is providing a **draft** of the Existing Conditions Report (**Attachment A**) to City Council for review as we continue to refine the report. This Information Packet (IP) provides: (1) a high-level overview of the East Bookend area planning process, and (2) a summary of the assumptions, policy-level decisions, and site design considerations that were identified in the

Existing Conditions Report and will be considered throughout the area planning process (summarized here and explained in more detail on p. 5-7 of this memo):

1. Recommended Assumptions for the Area Planning Process

- Several historic and potentially historic buildings and structures, including the Bandshell structure, Teahouse, and Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA), will remain in their current location
- Underground Parking will not be considered in the area

2. Policy-Level Decisions for the Area Planning Process

- Based on changing needs and additional planning since the 2015 Master Plan was adopted, the list of potential uses for the East Bookend has changed somewhat from that original vision.
- Due to the city's purchase of the Alpine-Balsam site and potential for city facilities on that site, the role and amount of future city facilities in the East Bookend has decreased from what was identified in the 2015 Master Plan.
- Several historic and potentially historic buildings and structures, including the area around the bandshell (not the bandshell structure) and the Atrium building will be analyzed to consider a range of future options, including preservation of facilities.

3. Site Design Considerations for the Area Planning Process

- Many site design elements including, but not limited to, path alignment, transportation options, programming, and Central Park design will be informed by community, board, and council input throughout the process.

## **CIVIC AREA EAST BOOKEND AREA PLANNING PROCESS**

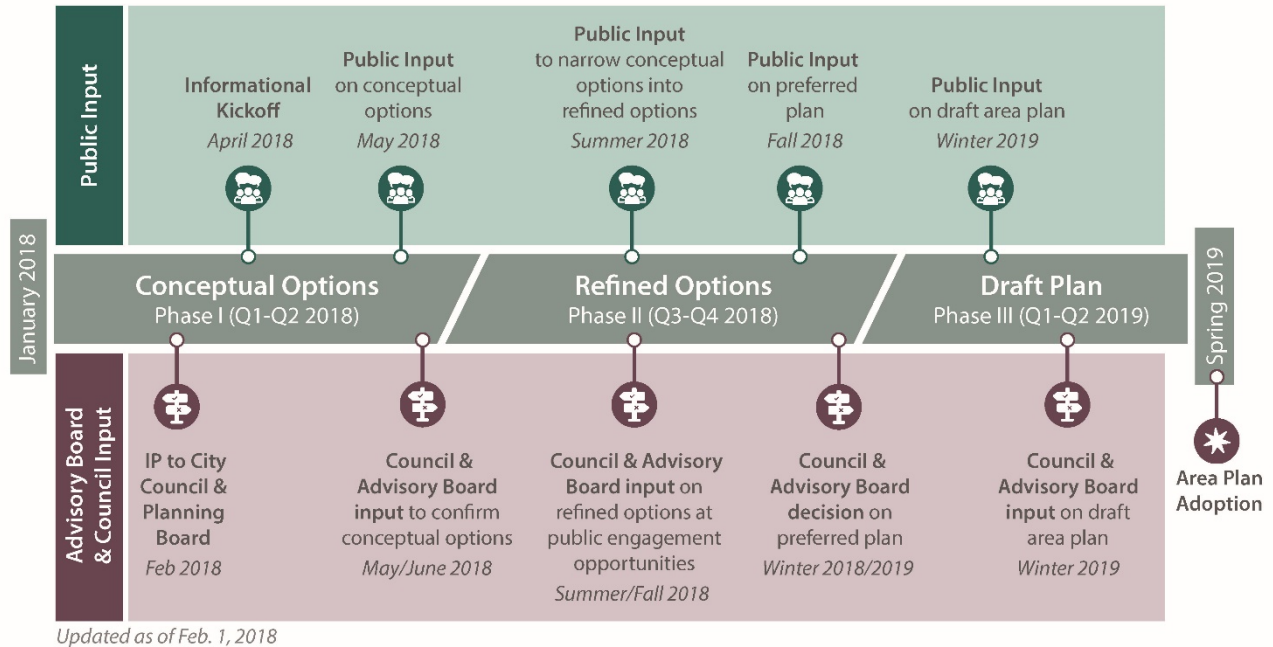
The [Boulder Civic Area Master Plan](#), adopted in June 2015, defines the overall concept and vision for the 27 acres of land located between Canyon Boulevard, Arapahoe Avenue, 9th Street, and 14th Street, and establishes criteria and guidelines for specific improvements in the area. The Master Plan describes a future where the Civic Area will be the heart of Boulder with nature at its core, flanked by bookends of civic, cultural, and commercial buildings that are alive with activity, collaboration, and innovation. The first phase of implementation, known as "Park at the Core", began in 2016 and was completed in November 2017 thanks to the passage of the November 2014 Community, Culture and Safety tax that allocated \$8.7 million to the Phase I improvements.

The next phase for the Civic Area will focus on creating an area plan for the East Bookend – a two block portion of the Civic Area bounded by Arapahoe Avenue, Canyon Boulevard, Broadway and 14th Street envisioned as a mixed-use block that incorporates a variety of uses. Because the Civic Area Master Plan identified more potential future uses than there is space available in the East Bookend, the area planning process will help narrow these options to create the community's preferred vision for the East Bookend. Previously identified desired uses include civic functions integrated vertically and/or horizontally with private uses such as a center for innovation, incubator offices, spaces for arts and culture, a market hall, and commercial uses. The area plan for the East Bookend will strive to respect the existing resources on the site, while also working to achieve the guiding principles of the Civic Area Master Plan through a careful mix of uses and design.

## Project Timeline

The East Bookend area planning process will take place through 2018 and a portion of 2019. It will be informed by community input, previous planning efforts, and detailed analysis of the site. Each phase of the planning process will include engagement opportunities for the community, advisory boards, and City Council. An overview of the project timeline, including input opportunities, can be seen in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Project Timeline**



The area planning process will begin with a discussion on conceptual options, which includes a range of potential uses and associated trade-offs with each use. Through a series of public workshops, these conceptual options will be analyzed and narrowed down to 1-2 refined options, and will continue to be refined into one preferred plan for the area. This preferred plan will be created using feedback from the community, advisory boards, and City Council.

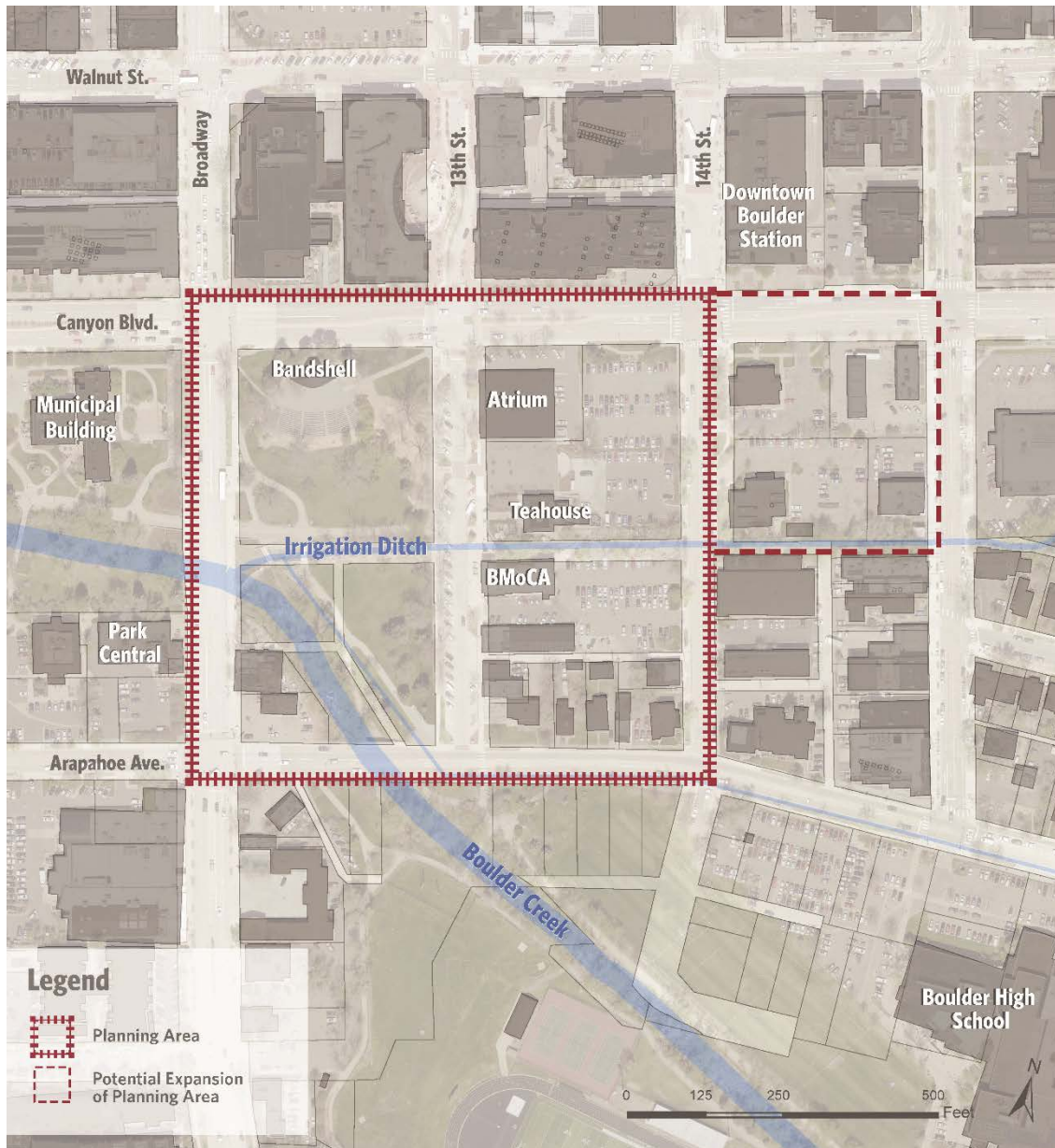
The planning work is being coordinated closely with the Alpine-Balsam area planning process and city facilities planning, while also considering surrounding projects including Canyon Complete Streets, the Arapahoe and 13th underpass, and the Downtown Boulder Station Study. Staff is continuing to refine the public engagement and communications plan to consider alignment, synergies, and efficiencies with the project timeline for the Alpine-Balsam area plan, while also looking for unique ways to involve community members who are primarily or exclusively interested in the Civic Area project.

## Planning Area

The East Bookend planning area includes a two-block portion of the Civic Area bounded by Arapahoe Avenue, Canyon Boulevard, Broadway and 14th Street as seen in Figure 2 below. It is important to note that planning for the Downtown Boulder Station is taking place on the block between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets. As a result, the planning area may be enlarged to reflect the ongoing transit station planning work (as shown in the “Potential Expansion of Planning Area” in the Figure below). The city is reaching out to property owners in the potential expansion area and previously discussed this project with Transportation Advisory Board and City Council, as noted in the Heads Up on February 1, 2018.

Although the East Bookend planning process will focus on the planning area identified in Figure 2, the surrounding areas will be considered and analyzed throughout the planning process to create a preferred plan that responds not only to conditions on the site, but within the surrounding context.

**Figure 2: East Bookend Planning Area**



## Next Steps

In the coming month, staff will be finalizing the Existing Conditions Report and scoping the project with a consultant team. Following completion of these steps, staff will begin working to identify future options or “key choices” for the site, and will gather community feedback at an event in May 2018. Following this public input event, staff will present these key choices and community feedback to Planning Board in May and to City Council at a study session in June. After June 2018, the implementation strategy (e.g., funding, regulatory changes, partnerships) will be discussed in more detail.

## **CIVIC AREA EAST BOOKEND EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT**

As a first step in the East Bookend area planning process, city staff created the Civic Area East Bookend Existing Conditions Report (**Attachment A**). The report catalogues previous planning efforts, analysis, and research that has taken place within the East Bookend to provide a clear understanding of the area's existing status and key considerations for the planning process. The site has many existing resources and constraints including several landmark properties, private properties, and certain portions located in the high hazard flood zone, all of which will have an impact on the future development of the area.

The topics discussed within the Existing Conditions Report are divided into three categories:

1. Area-wide topics: issues that apply to the entire site, such as flood zones, historic preservation, and zoning.
2. Parcel-specific topics: an in-depth look at each existing parcel/use within the East Bookend including the Atrium, Teahouse, BMoCA, Bandshell, and Central Park.
3. Nearby-area topics: projects that are not specifically part of this planning process, but due to their proximity, will be taken into consideration throughout the area planning process, such as the Arapahoe underpass and Canyon Complete Streets projects.

Each topic includes an introduction, background, and key considerations section. Key considerations are topics that will help guide the planning process and identify issues to be answered as part of the planning and/or implementation process. The questions posed within the key considerations range from policy-level decisions to site planning decisions (informed by community input with final approval by Planning Board and City Council).

The information below identifies planning assumptions, policy-level decisions, and design considerations that will also be considered as part of the area planning process over the next few months. The recommended assumptions and policy-level decisions will need to be confirmed and/or resolved to ensure the planning process can move forward. Site design considerations, however, will be continually discussed throughout the planning process.

### **Recommended Assumptions for the Area Planning Process**

The East Bookend has a long history of planning and analysis that has occurred in the area. This work, reflected in the Existing Conditions Report (**Attachment A**), has provided a basis for the following recommended assumptions to be used as part of the area planning process for the East Bookend:

#### *1. Historic and Potentially Historic Buildings and Structures*

- Bandshell: The bandshell structure is currently landmarked. It will remain in place in Central Park, and relocation or demolition of the structure will not be considered during the planning process.
- Teahouse: This building currently has a pending landmark application. The teahouse will be landmarked following completion of remediation efforts on the site which are expected to take place through the year 2020. The building will remain in its place in the Civic Area East Bookend.
- Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA): This building is currently landmarked and being leased from the city by BMoCA for its use as a museum. The building will remain in its current location in the Civic Area. However, expansion of the existing BMoCA facilities will be considered as a potential option during the planning process.



## 2. *No Underground Parking*

Due to the area's location within the 100-year floodplain and associated safety concerns with providing underground facilities and groundwater conditions, staff is recommending that underground parking not be considered during the planning process.

## **Policy-Level Decisions for the Area Planning Process**

The following information identifies some of the policy-level topics to be considered by the community, Planning Board, and City Council as part of the area planning process. Some of these decisions will be need to be decided on by June 2018 as part of the conversation about 'key choices', and others may continue to develop past June as the planning team works with the community on a preferred plan.

### 1. *Mix of Potential Uses and Activities for the East Bookend (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Street blocks)*

The 2015 Civic Area Master Plan identified a range of potential uses for the East Bookend on the available portions of the site, or potentially within existing buildings, that would help to achieve the goals of providing a vibrant area that is focused on food, innovation, arts, and culture. The following potential uses, originally identified in the Civic Area Master Plan (2015), are still being considered in the next stage of the planning process. Each of these potential uses are described in more detail in Section B of the Existing Conditions Report.

- Public Market Hall
- Expansion of BMOCA
- City Services & Civic Functions
- Structured Parking
- Event & Meeting Space
- Small Cafes or Restaurants
- Mixed-Use (Residential + Commercial)
- Retail
- Innovation Center

Several potential new uses, not identified in the 2015 Master Plan, have been identified based upon changing needs, ongoing planning, and additional community input. These new potential uses to be explored include:

- Expansion and/or relocation of the Downtown Boulder Station that provides expanded transit options and an opportunity to transform the area into a transit-oriented mixed-use development similar to Denver's Union Station
- Persian gardens around the Teahouse
- Covered structure on 13th Street: this concept was proposed by the Boulder County Farmer's Market to increase the functionality of the space in all weather conditions.

Several uses that were identified in the Civic Area Master Plan (2015) that are no longer being considered as part of the area planning process include:

- Performing Art Facility is not being considered, but a well-equipped flexible venue that could host large events as well as performances may be a possibility.
- Hotel is no longer needed in the Civic Area due to two new hotels planned nearby.

### 2. *Role & Amount of City Facilities*

The 2015 Civic Area Master Plan states that the East Bookend will include a range of city facilities. However, since 2015, the city purchased the Alpine-Balsam site and anticipates using a portion of it for city facilities. Therefore, the role and amount of future city facilities in the East Bookend has decreased from what was identified in the 2015 Master Plan. The



Click on link here: [Attachment A](#)