- Perspectives on whether the city should spend money on communication and engagement differ; at the same time, this is a significant decision and resources are necessary to achieve the goals set out in this plan.

Commitments and Guiding Principles

The city is re-committing to core values and will be:

- Inclusive and Equitable: Ensure communication and engagement encourage participation from all types of stakeholders, including those who often don't take part in local government. Respect and welcome different perspectives.

- Transparent: Commit to sharing information in a timely manner. Provide enough context to tell the whole story. If the city cannot release sensitive details, for example, about legal strategy, it will say why. Clarify when the city's statements are backed by verified facts and when the city is presenting a view of what's possible, but not guaranteed.

- Substantive: Supply details about how a local utility would operate to help voters make an informed choice in 2020.

- Accessible: Present varied opportunities to participate, online and in-person. Make information clear. Appreciate that community members have limited time and use that time efficiently.

- Community-centered: Recognize that this will be a community decision. Seek to find common ground through constructive dialogue.

Goals

Prior to the 2020 vote, successful communication and engagement will:

- Ensure voters have access to timely, clear and relevant city information to help them make an informed 2020 "go/no-go" decision.

- Encourage diverse participation in shaping the potential local electric utility and voicing a final opinion through the "go/no-go" vote.

- Cultivate the public's recognition of its role as decision makers in 2020 and as customers of a potential community-owned local electric utility.

- Balance sharing information about the vision with opportunities to learn about key details as they become available.

- Support the community's understanding of the relationship between the creation of a local electric utility and the city's broader climate and energy goals and efforts.

- Facilitate opportunities for shared learning and community dialogue about energy issues and strategies, including municipalization.

Audiences and Stakeholders

The city must communicate and engage with a variety of audiences and stakeholders for the duration of this plan. One way to encourage broad participation is to categorize impacted individuals into

demographic groups, such as homeowners, students, renters, small business owners, large business owners, under-represented groups, etc. and then evaluate their preferred ways of receiving information and getting involved. The city has followed this traditional approach throughout this project and will continue to be guided by these learnings.

In this next phase, the city will also be mindful that people in Boulder also hold a variety of positions about whether the city should create a local electric utility, regardless of their demographic category. These include individuals who:

- Strongly support the creation of a local electric utility

- Strongly oppose the creation of a local electric utility

- Have not yet made up their minds about the development of a local electric utility, and want to discuss other options

- Have not yet made up their minds about the development of a local electric utility, and are weary of the discussion and are inclined to disengage based on that frustration

The city will use a multi-dimensional approach with community members. Categorizing individuals by their demographic and opinion group will help the city best leverage limited resources. While the city will attempt to reach all audiences, it will prioritize those who the city believes have not already formulated a strong opinion on this issue and who may need additional information to make an informed decision.

Messaging Platform
This plan includes a platform that describes the broad areas of messaging that will be used during the project and how these areas connect to related elements of city work. The full platform, with examples, is provided in **Attachment C**.

Key Messaging
More generally, messaging will support communication goals by providing key messaging in the following core areas:

- Vision – *We are working towards a community vision of an energy system that is clean, local, reliable and secure, providing value to all.*

- Background – *This community-driven project is consistent with Boulder's long-standing commitment to the environment and its legacy of local decision-making about key community resources.*

- Project Details – *To support transparency and a well-informed community in advance of the 2020 vote, the city commits to regularly sharing project information in multiple formats.*

- Cost – *The development of a local electric utility is a significant undertaking. The city recognizes that the community should understand what the city has spent to date, the costs associated with standing up an electric utility, as well as the costs of operating the utility into the future.*

- Utility function (and user experience) – *Community-owned electric utilities provide the same key services as investor- and cooperative--owned utilities.*

- Local utility benefits – *Local electric utilities can make choices that can result in a variety of additional services and benefits to their communities.*

- Alternatives – *Operating as a local electric utility is not the only path the city has considered, and it is open to other ideas on how to reach our goals.*

- Acknowledging unknowns – *This is a complex and largely unprecedented effort, and the outcomes are not certain.*

- Benefits of this work – *Regardless of whether the community approves a local utility, Boulder's investment in this work has been worthwhile.*

- The community's role – *Whether we continue down this path is up to you, and there are ways to learn more and participate now.*

Strategy
Key Engagement Strategies

- Focus city engagement resources and efforts in three areas of need, as identified by the Energy Future Communication and Engagement Working Group:

  1. Opportunities for community members who wish to help shape the practices and priorities of a local electric utility

  2. Opportunities that allow the community to learn about the city's climate goals and the emergence of a local electric utility as a key energy strategy while creating a safe, welcoming environment to discuss other ideas and strategies

  3. Opportunities that encourage the participation of audiences that may be reluctant to engage in this topic or in local government decision-making, more generally

- Follow best practices and shared learning associated with the city's Engagement Strategic Framework; these include clearly identifying when the city is informing, consulting, involving or collaborating with the public and explaining how community input is being used.

- Leverage partnerships with local and regional engagement and dialogue experts, community connectors and organizations that regularly work with traditionally under-represented groups in Boulder.

Key Communication Strategies

- Create and disseminate timely, accurate and useful information about the potential of a local electric utility, as well as opportunities to engage with the city and others about this topic.

- Leverage the city's various communication platforms (website, social media, Channel 8 programming, direct mailings, electronic and print newsletters) in a coordinated and holistic way that maximizes the strength of each platform, reaches a larger and more diverse audience, and amplifies city messaging.

- Utilize video, animated graphics and visual storytelling techniques, whenever possible, to ensure information is captivating, digestible and memorable.

- Cultivate positive media relationships to increase likelihood of timely and accurate news coverage; strategically leverage opportunities to engage in commentary and opinion forums in ways that model and support constructive dialogue

- Recognize the role of council members and other community influencers, including residents and business representatives, in sharing information and perspectives on this topic; cultivate or maintain positive relationships with these community members and encourage access to up-to-date and reliable information.

What the city will do

A variety of activities will support the plan's broader strategies and goals. Some of these activities are consistent with the kind of ongoing communication support typical of any large city projects. Others are unique to this initiative. Staff will build a more comprehensive editorial calendar to support its work; this section highlights some of the activities, divided into four phases of work:

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PHASES			
Phase 1	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**
Launch	Community Awareness/Activation	Voter Preparation	Post-election
Now through October 2018	*November 2018 Through April 2020*	*May 2020 through August 2020*	*November 2020 through December 2020*

Ongoing Tasks and Support

Focus: Use the city's routine communication channels to maintain frequent project visibility and provide multiple avenues for the public to stay in touch with the project. These channels include:

- Community newsletter: The city sends a print newsletter to all city addresses every four months. Given this broad audience, staff will use this channel to share updates and messages that must reach the whole community by including local electric utility development articles in each edition. *Quarterly.*

- Council meetings: According to the current schedule, the local electric utility development team plans to present before council during a meeting or study session several times between now and 2020, with the first session scheduled for Dec. 11, 2018. These are also opportunities to share updates and messaging with the broader community. *As needed.*

- Email newsletter: The Climate and Energy email newsletter reaches an audience of almost 1,500. Because subscribers self-select, content can be tailored to those with some knowledge of the city's climate and energy work. *Twice per month.*

- Existing Boulder 8 programming: The city will leverage Boulder 8 resources, such as Inside Boulder, Inside Boulder News and advertising blocs to share timely messages with the audiences of Boulder's local access channel. *As videos are produced and newsworthy events happen.*

- Infographics: The use of infographics to break down complex topics will be a key tactic the city will use to make its communication more visual. *As needed and at least four per year.*

- Local media/news releases: Much of the Boulder community relies on local media like the Daily Camera, Boulder Weekly and KGNU for news about the city. When the city has newsworthy stories and content to share, staff will create news releases so that media may pick up these stories. Project team members will also pitch stories to national publications and respond to inquiries from these media outlets when appropriate. *As needed.*

- Social media: The city has a variety of social media tools available, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor accounts. Paired with medium-specific messaging, these are high-leverage accounts. *Posts weekly.*

- Video library: Whenever possible, events will be recorded by the city's video services team. On-demand viewing of the presentations, as well as slides and other communication materials will be readily available on the project website. *Quarterly.*

- Web content: As the city achieves key project milestones and learns important information, we will leverage the website to host this information in addition to providing historic and background information. *As needed.*

Launch Phase (through October 2018)

Focus: Develop and deliver materials that reintroduce the project and invite the community to re-engage with the development of a local electric utility and other energy-focused work.

Key deliverables: Updated website, launch toolkit (including engagement guide and invitation video)

- Update look and feel: The city will finalize a distinctive look and feel for materials related to the local electric utility development project during this new phase of work. *September 2018*

- Redesign of project home page: The city will refresh the project homepage to incorporate the new messaging, emphasize opportunities to engage with the project, and to show the connection to the broader energy and climate work happening at the city. *September 2018.*

- Engagement Guide: The city will publish and distribute a visually appealing and informative engagement guide that invites the public to learn more and participate; a digital version of this guide will be prominently displayed on the city's website and shared through social media. *September 2018.*

- Invitation to engage: The city will advertise the engagement guide online and learn more about this project, via a postcard sent to all Boulder addresses or via the quarterly community newsletter, depending on timing. *October 2018.*

- Invitation video: The city will also create a video invitation to engage that will be shared via social media, newsletters and Boulder 8. *November 2018.*

Community Activation Phase (November 2018 to April 2020)

Focus: Provide the community with a program of meaningful engagement opportunities as well as an increasingly clear vision about project outcomes and utility functions.

Key deliverables: Periodic engagements events, public project updates, activation of project on the Be Heard Boulder page, inclusive engagement planning through community connectors approach.

- Be Heard Boulder: The city will leverage its web-based engagement platform to create an online community forum and replicate feedback opportunities provided at in-person events.

- Community Connectors: The city will utilize the city's Community Connectors pilot program to involve members of underrepresented groups in planning and implementing successful outreach and engagement during this timeframe. *Beginning in 2019.*

- Information booths and popsicle pop-ups: The city will leverage information booths at other city-sponsored events such as the Boulder County Farmers' Market, What's Up Boulder Open Houses, park concerts and other applicable events. The city may also elect to set up booths and industry or career fairs. During summer months, the project team will hand out free popsicles to encourage individuals to stop and engage. *As opportunities arise.*

- Let's Talk sessions: The city will coordinate and support a series of community dialogues to discuss goals, the emergence of creating a local electric utility as the city's preferred strategy to achieve the goals, and other approaches and ideas that the city and/or community could explore (likely to be developed and facilitated with contracted engagement professionals). *Kicking off in December 2018.*

- Live podcast recording: The city is exploring the potential to host a live podcast recording for an established program to discuss topics such as the potential benefits of a local electric utility, stories from other community-owned utilities, community ownership, etc. *Timing TBD.*

- Monthly energy blog on city newsroom: The city's online newsroom provides an opportunity to share blog-style posts that are easy to share via social media and email newsletters. Topics may include legislative efforts, updates from the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, solar updates, etc. *Once per month, based on calendar.*

- Neighborhood Services Office Hours: Staff will partner with the city's Neighborhood Services Liaison to provide material for and/or participate in periodic pop-up events at local coffee shops and similar locations through the community. *Approximately once per neighborhood location.*

- Project team office hours: Though resource-intensive, one of the best ways to communicate with the community and answer their questions directly and in person. Starting in 2019, local electric utility staff will hold open office hours at a set and predictable time once a month and will invite community members to stop by to talk about the project, provide feedback, clarify questions and build relationships with the city. Can also be by appointment. *Monthly.*

- Public presentations: The city commits to holding public updates and presentations at least once every four months. These meetings will include project updates and may incorporate engagement and feedback opportunities in addition to information sharing. *Quarterly.*

- **Refreshing project sub-webpages:** The city's website is the centerpiece for nearly all communication. Staff supporting the electric utility development project will work closely with the Climate + Sustainability team to design new project home pages, update and clarify web copy, develop visual content for the web and improve navigation through connected pages. *Now through December 2018.*

- **Shape Your Utility sessions:** In conjunction with quarterly updates or as separate one-offs, this facilitated series will give community members an opportunity to engage on specific utility-related topics, such as the creation of a Customer Bill of Rights and customer service principles, governance, ideas for programs and services, equity, grid modernization, undergrounding, vegetation management, residential solar, community resilience and opportunities for innovation. *Quarterly, beginning in late 2018 or early 2019.*

- **Small group and neighborhood meetings:** The city will connect with established community groups, such as the Rotary Club, Boulder Chamber, Co-Op communities, advocacy groups, book clubs, and offer to provide personalized project information sessions at existing group meetings. *Monthly reminders of this opportunity via the newsletter and social media; meetings as requested.*

- **Social hours:** The city will host two social hours during this timeframe with activities and features designed to attract younger community members who are interested in talking with one another in a casual, fun setting about issues related to energy and the potential creation of a local electric utility. These could be held as standalone engagement opportunities or be folded into the Let's Talk series. *Twice.*

- **Speaker series:** The city will sponsor three to four educational opportunities featuring experts in related fields such as renewable energy, technology, local electric utilities and effective public participation around energy issues. These events will be planned during the launch phase and advertised in advance. *Three or for times before April 2020.*

- **Tech Team Meetings:** The city meets each month with the Decarbonization Tech Team, an unofficial advisory group. Typical meeting topics include project updates, industry news and report outs from the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. *Monthly*

- **Working groups:** In the past, the city's local electric utility development team has used working groups to assist in key components of the project. For example, the communication and engagement team created a working group to create a foundation for the communication and engagement plan. The team has not yet determined what, if any, working groups will be started in the next phase of the project, but it is a tactic the city may choose to utilize. *As needed.*

Voter Preparation Phase: May to August 2020

Focus: Prepare voters for making a choice, recognizing that some community members may be less inclined to engage until it is clear a ballot question is coming up. This city's role will be to develop toolkits and other resources that present information to individuals with varying degrees of familiarity with the project, as well as myriad learning and participation styles.

Key deliverables: Information Guide and Community Project Report, Final Customer Bill of Rights

- Utility operation video(s): Following the "Shape Your Utility Sessions" and other engagement opportunities, the city will have significant public feedback to incorporate into its utility operation plans. A short video, or series of short videos, will address several common questions related to utility operation, such as "what programs and services the utility will provide," "how the city utility will recover after a natural disaster," and "what will happen to my rooftop solar that is currently under contract with Xcel." *February to April 2020.*

- Public forum: Revolving Conversation: During this phase, the city will host a leaderless Revolving Conversation. The city will invite the public to weigh in on the costs and benefits of creating a local electric utility using a format where individuals who choose to speak can, and audience members who choose not to speak can observe. This meeting will be recorded and made available for on-demand viewing. *April 2020.*

- Information guide/report to the community: After the city completes its analysis of the estimated cost to create a local electric utility and finishes its engagement of the public, it will publish and distribute key findings. A recording of the Revolving Conversation will also be promoted in the information guide to demonstrate that there are a variety of viewpoints about this project in the community. *May 2020.*

- Call to action to review materials: The final communication push prior to the 2020 vote will be to invite the public to review all the material created by the city, remind the community that the choice is theirs and encourage the public to vote. The city will transmit this call to action via all applicable city channels, including the community newsletter, and possibly a mailing to all city addresses. *August 2020.*

Post-election Phase: Beginning November 2020

Focus: Seek to understand, learn from and report the relative effectiveness of the city's communication and engagement activities in support of the project.

Key deliverables: Post-election communication and engagement debrief report, evaluation, next steps

- Communitywide questionnaire: Because a significant focus of current project communication and engagement work is to prepare the community to make an informed 2020 "go/no go" vote, it's likely that some effort will be made to query members of the public about the relative success of the various strategies outlined in the plan. This questionnaire(s) will likely be developed within existing city online resources, and distributed through current channels, such as Nextdoor, the community newsletter, etc.

- Communication and Engagement debrief: After the 2020 vote, the project team will spend time reviewing communication and engagement from the perspective of understanding what approaches were successful and unsuccessful to understand how future work can be improved. This debrief process will include city staff and incorporate community feedback.

- Evaluation report: The team will create a final communication and engagement report that describes the effectiveness of the city's process, resources, activities, and outcomes. Much of this work will be based on the developing evaluation metrics described below.

Budget

All funds for communication and engagement related to the development of a local electric utility come from the portion of the Utility Occupation Tax designated to fund the project. Staff has budgeted a total of $210,000 to support the activities envisioned during this period of communication and engagement, roughly broken into the following allocations per year:

- Remainder of 2018: $50,000 (+$30,000 contingency)
- 2019: $80,000
- 2020: $80,000

The city anticipates the following approximate breakdown for expenditures:

- Advertising (Digital and Print): $10,000
- Childcare at events for participants: $3,000
- Distribution of materials: $35,000
- Facilitation/session design/support: $50,000
- Food: $7,000
- Meeting space rentals: $5,000
- Miscellaneous consultant and contingency spending: $56,000
- Print materials: $20,000
- Speakers' fees: $10,000
- Translation and interpretation: $4,000
- Video/graphics support: $40,000

Staff Resources

To support the execution of this strategy, participation by all project team members will be essential; however, three lead staff members will guide the effort: Ben Irwin and Emily Sandoval (Communication), and Sarah Huntley (Engagement).

Evaluation Metrics

The success of the city's communication and engagement efforts will be continually evaluated to identify opportunities to adjust the approach as needed. The plan will also be evaluated after the 2020 vote. As described below, the measures for success are linked to the plan goals. Some metrics support all the goals. For example, the following indicators will be essential to overall success:

- On-time delivery of deliverables: This metric addresses actual staff work and includes items like meeting deliverable deadlines (100% on-time), providing timely updates to the plan, etc.

- Increased reach: Although this metric will help staff understand the extent to which the best and broadest set of audiences are reached. Staff will look at items like geographic diversity of participants (based on self-identification, whenever possible), as well as search and website analytics.

- Positive interactions: Staff will continually monitor how people react to the city's communication and engagement activities by looking at metrics, like did people open the e-

newsletter (open rate), visit the website when asked (click-through rate, site visits), spend time with online content (visit duration), etc. Staff will also document qualitative feedback received about individuals' experiences.

- Impact: The city strives to impact individuals who are considering this project. Key metrics may include percentage of community who voted (compared to previous votes), aggregate analysis of online and in-person project dialogue (positive/negative tone, diversity of thought, etc.). *Impact is not the same as election outcome, and the city will not consider election outcome when it evaluates its communication and engagement efforts*.

In addition, the following additional evaluation methods and measures will support specific plan goals. This initial set of criteria that may be enhanced over time.

Goal: Ensure voters have access to timely, clear and relevant city information to help them make an informed 2020 "go/no-go" decision.	
Evaluation Activity	**Measure**
After-event questionnaires	Percentage of people who feel presented information is clear and helpful

Goal: Encourage diverse participation in shaping the potential local electric utility and voicing a final opinion through the "go/no-go" vote.	
Evaluation Activity	**Measure**
Outreach and engagement events	Documenting efforts to connect with hard-to-reach audiences and stakeholders
Engagement assessments and reports of participation	Reported demographics of participants
Pre- or post-campaign surveys/questionnaire or some other instrument/method	An increase in percentage of people who have not typically participated and high level of satisfaction with city efforts to include them

Goal: Cultivate the public's recognition of its role as decision makers in 2020 and as customers of a potential local electric utility.	
Evaluation Activity	**Measure**
Online forum on Be Heard Boulder	Qualitative analysis of dialogue on the platform
After-event questionnaires	Qualitative answers about participants' role

| *Goal: Balance sharing information about the vision with opportunities to learn about key details as they become available.*	
Evaluation Activity	**Measure**
Seek input and feedback from community, council and working groups	Qualitative responses to questions about balance; percentage of respondents who perceive the city's approach as balanced

Goal: Support the community's understanding of the relationship between the creation of a local electric utility and the city's broader climate and energy goals and efforts.	
Evaluation Activity	**Measure**
Pre- or post-campaign surveys/questionnaire or some other instrument/method	Percentage of respondents who demonstrate awareness of the city's energy goals and programs

Goal: Facilitate opportunities for shared learning and community dialogue about energy issues and strategies, including municipalization.	
Evaluation Activity	**Measure**
Organizing engagement events	Documenting participation in events

Attachment B

Local Power | The Project in Context

The development of a local utility is a significant component of the city's energy strategy. The following figure illustrates how much of the work supported by the Local Power communication and engagement plan contributes to the city's Climate Commitment and seeks to clarify the broader context the city intends when it refers to Boulder's Energy Future.
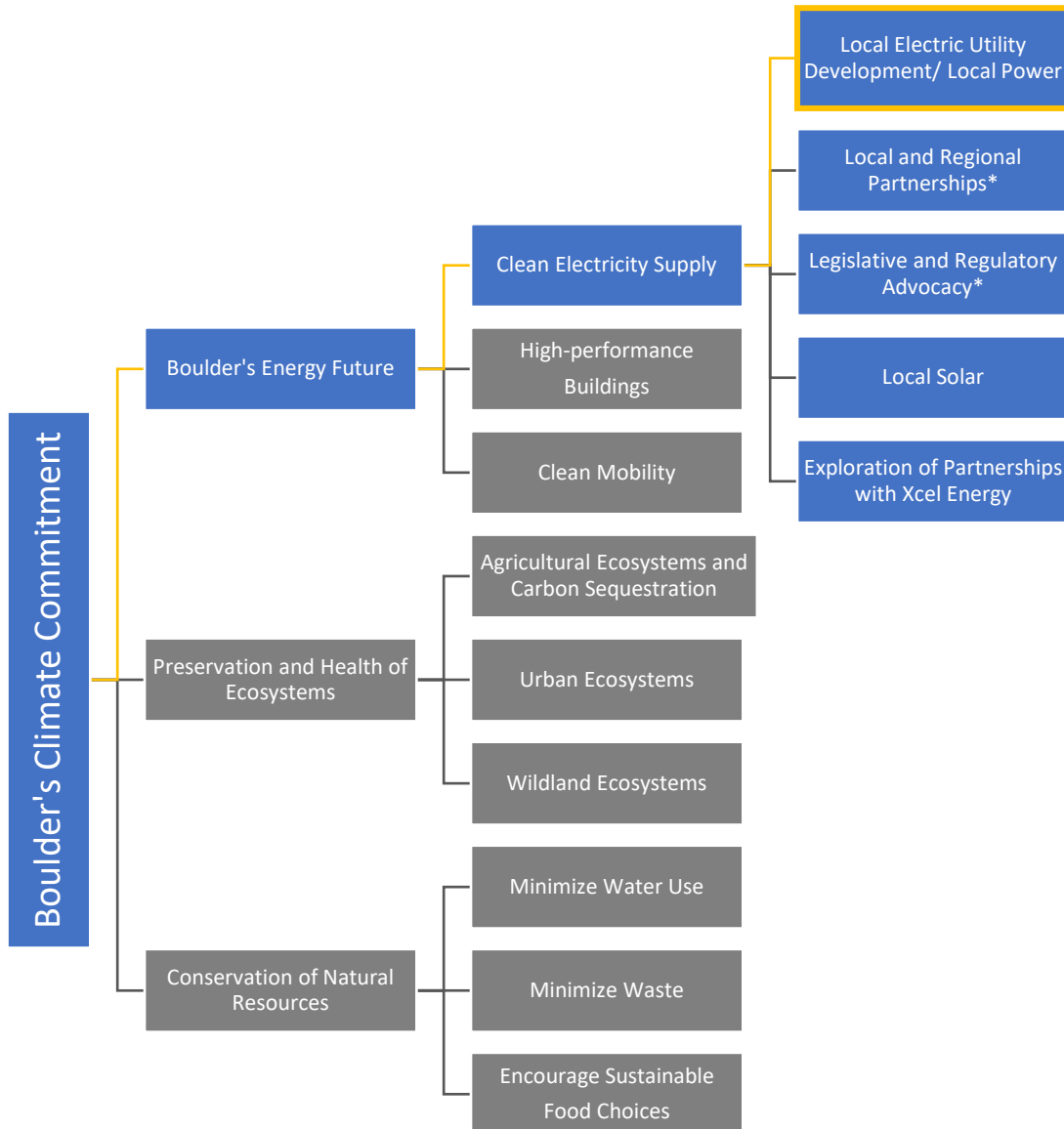
*The city's efforts in these categories extend beyond energy and electricity.

Attachment C

Local Power | Messaging Platform

Background

This document provides a framework for telling a consistent and compelling story about the City of Boulder's continued efforts to develop a local electric utility, as well as the choice that voters will face in 2020. A project of this complexity requires numerous messaging elements, and the messages can be expected to evolve over time. This document begins by articulating an overarching approach and vision and then suggests potential primary and secondary messages to support that vision.

The primary messages directly support communication and engagement goals outlined in the communication and engagement plan.

Approach

The city will create and share messages that are:

- Personal and Welcoming – The city will strive to get beyond technical details by embracing the perspectives of community members and potential utility customers. Messages will help explain how a local electric utility would impact individuals' lives.

- Visual – The city understands that graphics are invaluable in explaining complex topics. Information will be presented in both narrative and visual ways whenever possible.

- Written in Plain Language – The city will reduce jargon and use basic, commonly understood words and phrases to present complex information. The city will respect the community's limited time and attention by prioritizing key takeaways, while ensuring that supporting details are available to community members who want them.

Key Messages

Key messaging will support the following core areas:

Vision – *We are working towards a community vision of an energy system that is clean, local, reliable and secure, providing value to all.*

Using this message, the city seeks to describe a unifying vision for why the city is developing a local electric utility. The vision statement is based on established energy goals that support the city's Climate Commitment. It is important to note that some of these energy goals go beyond Boulder's quest for cleaner sources of energy, and it is important that the full range of perceived benefits be explained.

Background – *This community-driven project is consistent with Boulder's long-standing commitment to the environment and its legacy of local decision-making about key community resources.*

Project history as a core message component allows the team to better explain the roots of the project. It reinforces both the vision for the project as well as the goal of balancing the vision with key project implementation details. Furthermore, project history messaging reinforces the relationship between the creation of a local electric utility and broader goals and efforts.

Project Details – *The city commits to regularly sharing project information in multiple formats to support transparency and a well-informed community in advance of the 2020 vote.*

This message area supports staff efforts to share information about the local utility project, including timeline, project staff members and points of contact, ways the project integrates with other city work, important updates and discoveries.

Cost – *The development of a local electric utility is a significant undertaking. The city recognizes that the community should understand what the city has spent to date, the costs associated with standing up an electric utility, as well as the costs of operating the utility into the future.*

The community has expressed the need for more information about several project components, and while many of these needs are addressed in other message areas, cost is a significant component that will require specific attention between now and a 2020 vote.

Utility function (and user experience) – *Local electric utilities provide the same key services as investor- and cooperative-owned utilities.*

A key informational need from the community is understanding how the utility will actually work. The need ranges from determining generally whether the city can administer a utility to specific questions about how the user experience will change, or not, when someone's service changes from Xcel to a city-run utility. This may be the messaging area that is updated most frequently as the project team continually examines the customer experience, and related work planning to fill gaps on knowledge, and communication develops materials to convey this information to the community.

Local utility benefits – *Local electric utilities can make choices that can result in a variety of additional services and benefits to their communities.*

The community wants to know more than how the utility will operate and understand that their fundamental services will not change. Ultimately, the voters will want to know what services and programs a potential switch to a local electric utility will provide that is above and beyond what they experience now. This message area will provide staff with a vehicle for describing these benefits, which will likely range from individual service options to broader community-wide benefits.

Alternatives – *Operating as a local electric utility is not the only path the city has considered, and it is open to other ideas on how to reach our goals.*

The community also wants more information about alternative strategies the city has considered or is pursuing to meet climate and energy goals. This area provides space for staff to talk about other climate initiatives, share what has been learned and encourage the community to explore other strategies for reaching community goals.

Acknowledging unknowns – *This is a complex and largely unprecedented effort, and the outcomes are not certain.*

Communication and engagement activities must be executed with humility and transparency, acknowledging the aspects of the project about which staff does not have certainty. This area provides opportunities for messaging to describe details that are not certain or that have not been solidified yet, as well as the process(es) for clarifying information, when possible.

Benefits of this work – *Regardless of whether the community approves a local utility, Boulder's investment in this work has been worthwhile.*

Regardless of the outcome of local utility development, the result of the 2020 "go/no go" vote or the other aspects of the project, the work has provided value locally, regionally and beyond. This messaging area provides opportunities for the city to highlight this value and to position project outcomes not as wins or losses, but rather as important steps along the community's path to a clean energy supply.

The community's role – *Whether we continue down this path is up to you. There are ways to learn more and participate now.*

This message area allows the city to reinforce the community's role in supporting climate action, reinvesting in the project over time, and making the final decision about whether to move forward with a local electric utility as part of the 2020 vote.

Supporting Messaging

Supporting messages will fill in the narrative created by the key messages. This list will likely grow as the project progresses, and many supporting messages will have evidence, or proof points, attached to them as resources to help drive home specific points, when needed. Here are some examples:

> Vision – *We are working towards a community vision of an energy system that is clean, local, reliable and secure, providing value to all.*

- Together, we are working to become a community that no longer relies upon harmful fossil fuels to survive and thrive.

- We are building a new and different energy economy that meets the needs and expectations of our diverse community. We will have more control over our energy supply. We will be able to keep extra revenue in Boulder instead of sending it off to shareholders, and we will collectively shape innovative programs that meet individual and community needs.

- We deserve affordable electricity and affordable technological solutions.

- We will assure an energy supply that is stable, resilient and safe, protecting our families, businesses and community against threats.

Background – *This community-driven project is consistent with Boulder's long-standing commitment to the environment and its legacy of local decision-making about key community resources.*

- Community activists were the first to suggest analyzing the creation of a local electric utility as a way to achieve emissions reductions.

- Voters have repeatedly supported funding and programs to address climate change.

- If this project continues to earn the support of voters in 2020, it will have generational implications, a lot like other big decisions this community has made in the past, from preserving our open space to securing our water supply.

- *The development of a local electric utility is one key strategy to achieving the community's climate commitment goals, along with many other efforts in the areas of energy, natural resources, and ecosystem.*

Project Details – *To support transparency and a well-informed community in advance of the 2020 vote, the city commits to regularly sharing project information in multiple formats.*

- NOTE: Specific supporting messages will be added as they are developed; however, the evidence of this point will be reflected mostly through the creation and dissemination of valuable information.

Cost – *The development of a local electric utility is a significant undertaking. The city recognizes that the community should understand what the city has spent to date, the costs associated with standing up an electric utility, as well as the costs of operating the utility into the future.*

- Cost analyses should show, whenever possible, both the costs to the community, as well as a breakdown of costs to individuals on their electricity bills.

- The city is seeking to refine cost estimates in each of these areas and will share this information widely prior to the final vote.

- Exploring the creation of a local electric utility represents a significant investment, and the city is committed to full transparency about funding and spending.

- City staff work collaboratively to help ensure that critical parts of the city organization are involved in the project and that project funding is used as efficiently as possible.

- The work that will be undertaken between now and 2020 will provide clarity about many of the cost questions the community has raised since the project started.

Utility function (and user experience) – *Local electric utilities provide the same key services as privately-owned utilities.*

- Local, public-owned utilities, like those in Fort Collins and Longmont, provide reliable and affordable electricity to their customers.

- A Boulder utility will provide the same level of service you have now, such as providing highly-trained professionals to operate the utility, setting reasonable and comparable rates based on financial goals and sustainability, and having a plan to respond to emergencies and outages.

Local utility benefits – *Local electric utilities can make choices that can result in a variety of additional services and benefits to their communities.*

- Colorado law is clear. If Boulder owns its electric utility, it could make policies and create programs that are different from what our current laws and regulations allow.

- A Boulder utility can pilot new and important technology, like battery storage and electric vehicles, which contribute to community resilience.

- It can offer you opportunities to share input in some utility decisions.

- A Boulder utility will be able to control the rates it charges and re-invest excess revenue into improving our community's energy system.

- Perhaps most importantly, the utility would be based in Boulder. Your service needs, concerns and ideas would be addressed here.

Alternatives – *Operating as a local electric utility is not the only path the city has considered, and it is open to other ideas on how to reach our goals.*

- While Boulder has focused on developing a local electric utility as an important strategy to meet our energy goals, it has never relied on just one approach.

- Over the past several years, Boulder and city taxpayers have invested valuable resources to strengthening energy codes, begin climate-friendly transportation initiatives, work with local and regional partners to advocate for regulatory changes, and many other initiatives.

- The city also continues to pursue new ways of doing business and achieving the community's goals with Xcel Energy. These conversations, however, depend upon the openness of Xcel Energy to engage with the city and explore new ways of doing business. The city cannot force Xcel Energy to come to the table. The current focus of collaboration is around a series of agreements that regulators are requiring to support the city in moving forward with its effort to develop a local electric utility.

- Meeting our goals is what's most important to us. We welcome your ideas on how we can get there pursuing other options.

Acknowledging unknowns – *This is a complex and largely unprecedented effort, and the outcomes are not certain.*

- This has been a lengthy undertaking that has required a significant investment of resources.

- The city is still learning key pieces of information that will be critical to the community deciding how to proceed.

- Since this effort began, Boulder's current electricity provider, Xcel Energy, has made strides in adding renewables. Although we do not always agree in the approach the company is taking to meet this goal, we support this transition. We are open to finding new ways of doing business with Xcel to meet all our energy goals.

- Not everyone agrees this is the best path to achieving our goals.

Benefits of this work – *Regardless of whether the community approves a local utility, Boulder's investment in this work has been worthwhile.*

- Together, we've learned much about the opportunities and limitations of our electric system and the current policies and regulations that govern it. This has helped us not only in exploring our community's options but also in contributing to regional, national and international coalitions and partnerships.

- Other communities frequently consult with Boulder about our work as they grapple with similar issues related to the changing energy landscape.

The community's role – *Whether we continue down this path is up to you and there are ways to learn more and participate now.*

- As a community, you will make the decision about whether to proceed with development of a local electric utility. This is a big deal, and you have the power (and responsibility) to decide.

- The city is committed to supporting your participation and knowledge about this topic.

- A variety of public meetings and engagement events are planned for you to receive regular updates about the project and to share your thoughts on aspects of the local utility development and alternatives.

- The city offers many ways to stay informed about the project, including regular website updates, frequent email newsletters, videos and infographics, and more.