

Community Connectors-in-Residence Mid-Year Update – February 2024

Mid-year Update Purpose

This Community Connectors-in-Residence (CC-in-R) mid-year update to City of Boulder City Council is designed to elevate the experiences and voices of historically excluded communities – as heard through ongoing dialogue and as summarized by themes of community strengths and community issues – for use in city decision-making. This mid-year update includes:

- 2024 City Budget Cycle – Community Engagement and Presentation to City Council
- Racial Equity Instrument Step Review and Feedback
- 'Celebrating Community: Culture, Wellness, and Connection'
- 'Building Power & Raising Voices' Session
- 'One Community Summit' Presentation
- Community Outreach



CC-in-Rs and staff – July 2023

We welcome City Council's feedback on this update and encourage you to share any thoughts through this [feedback form](#). Previous CC-in-R updates, including the most recent update in May 2023, may be found on the [CC-in-R webpage](#).

Community Connectors-in-Residence

Community Connectors-in-Residence (CC-in-R) elevate the voices and build the power of historically excluded communities by reducing barriers to community engagement, advancing racial equity, and surfacing the ideas, concerns, and dreams of community members. CC-in-Rs earn a stipend, based on four hours per week, for their commitment, time, and expertise.



The CC-in-R program specifically aligns with meaningful and inclusive engagement practices as outlined in the city's Engagement Strategic Framework as well as strategies included in the city's Racial Equity Plan: 4.1 - improve access to decision-makers; 4.3 - focus on high-quality community engagement; and 4.5 address language, cultural, and engagement access barriers.

Each bicultural CC-in-R serves as a trusted voice and works closely with a community they are already a natural leader within. This may be geographic or cultural, and throughout 2023 has included community members who identify as Latine/o/a, Nepali, Black or African American, Indigenous, older adult, CU student, adults living with disabilities, residents of manufactured home communities, multi-generational households, immigrants, and economically disadvantaged.

2024 City Budget Cycle Community Engagement

Throughout March and April 2023, Community Connectors-in-Residence (CC-in-Rs), in partnership with city staff, engaged historically excluded communities to hear their priorities for the city's 2024 budget (please see [May 2023 CC-in-R Update to Council](#) for full details).

Based on community input from previous dialogue and from three budget education and engagement sessions in March and April, CC-in-Rs shared that top community priorities included the following [Sustainability, Equity, and Resilience \(SER\) Framework](#) Objectives:

- Provide a variety of housing types with a full range of affordability
- Support economic opportunity regardless of race, gender, ability, or socioeconomic status
- Support the City of Boulder in advancing racial equity



CC-in-Rs presented these priorities and community input to Department Directors on May 8 and to City Council on Sept. 14.

CC-in-Rs present to City Council – Sept 2023



As the 2024 city budget cycle progressed, staff learned of department directors who did not consider submitting specific proposals because they did not align with top community priorities, as shared by CC-in-Rs. In addition, staff heard from members of the Executive Budget Team who articulated that when the team was at an impasse in funding specific items, they looked to the CC-in-R community priorities to guide their decision-making.



Budget Update & Public Hearing Training – Sept 2023

Community Connectors-in-Residence also hosted a Budget Update & Public Hearing Training on Sept. 28, designed to keep community updated as the budget process moved forward as well as to share what to expect while participating in a public hearing. Participants included 50% households with income under \$50,000/year and 91% community members of color (Latinx, Nepali, Black or African American, Indigenous).

Community Connectors-in-Residence
City of Boulder 2024 Budget Cycle Community Engagement

Community Update

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City Council approved the city's 2024 budget on October 19 and many of the investments included align with identified community priorities. For example:

- Affordable Housing Development at Western City Campus at Alpine-Balsam site - \$18.3 million to support the development of the city's largest affordable housing project to-date, with 144 new affordable units at the Western City Campus site at Alpine-Balsam in north central Boulder.
- Community Grants to support Community Members with Health Disparities - Health Equity Fund - \$415,000 increase for Health Equity Fund community grant funding to support Boulder community members experiencing health disparities.

Budget Education & Engagement Session Participants



To see a full list of investments that align with identified community priorities, please visit: bit.ly/46RQvZh

Thank you to community members who shared their experiences and priorities for themselves and their families - we appreciate your participation in your city government!

CC-in-Rs shared an update on the budget process and hosted a Public Hearing training for community members on September 28.

At the first reading of the 2024 budget, during a City Council meeting in October 2023, 73% of signed-up public hearing speakers were connected to CC-in-Rs.

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CC-in-Rs shared a multilingual update with community and invited them to see a full list of investments that align with identified community priorities at <http://bit.ly/46RQvZh>.



Racial Equity Instrument Step Review and Feedback

CC-in-Rs and staff facilitate a [Racial Equity Instrument Step Review & Feedback](#) process, to focus CC-in-R feedback on city projects from a racial equity framework, to increase staff use of the city's Racial Equity Instrument throughout projects, and to share a clear pathway for staff to hear feedback that centers the lived experiences of historically excluded communities. Discussions with CC-in-Rs assist staff project teams in identifying gaps and concerns they should be addressing. This valuable feedback supplements more inclusive and accessible city practices, helps guide decision-making processes, and aligns with the city's [Racial Equity Plan](#). Since May 2023, CC-in-Rs reviewed, met with staff for 30-45 minutes, and shared feedback on the following city projects:

- Business Equity Focus Groups
- Civic Area Historic District
- Chronic Nuisance Ordinance
- Community Broadband
- Community Connector Participation Process
- Crisis Response Intervention Team (CIRT)
- Parks & Recreation Fee Policies
- Snow & Ice Removal Team
- Streetlight Acquisition
- Walkable Neighborhoods
- What's Up Boulder

Civic Area Historic District Tour



CC-in-Rs tour the city's Civic Area – Sept 2023

In September 2023, CC-in-Rs joined staff and representatives from applicant organization Historic Boulder to tour the city's Civic Area and learn more about a proposed Historic District, including Central Park and five city-owned buildings that are already designated as historic landmarks: the Penfield Tate II Municipal Building, the Glen Huntington Bandshell, the



Midland Savings & Loan – Atrium Building, the Dushanbe Teahouse and the City Storage Building.

Themes from CC-in-R feedback on this Historic District included a concern that this sacred land, the history of indigenous people, their connection to this land, and peoples' stories would not be adequately covered in the historical narrative of this area; an encouragement for this designation to contribute to community wellness and preserve this land for future generations; a recommendation to include more community voices of color in the historical narrative; and an appreciation for efforts already underway to work with community in documenting history of this area.

Several recommendations from CC-in-R feedback were also included in the city's [Downtown Boulder Civic Area StoryMap](#).

'Celebrating Community – Culture, Wellness, and Connection'

CC-in-Rs created a vision for a community celebration, which they designed and coordinated for participants of 'Building Power & Raising Voices' sessions as well as for their communities. The focus was on celebrating cultures within Boulder, educating community members about how to engage with city government, building relationships, and sharing wellness activities and resources. CC-in-Rs were grateful to receive funding from the Community Foundation Boulder County to support this civic engagement work.



CC-in-Rs with council members and staff – July 2023

Community Connector Ja'mal Gilmore hosted this event outside of his Four Corners Hair Boutique, and throughout the afternoon, community members participated in AcuDetox through Natural Highs and art activities with Luna Cultura. Music was shared by Selasee & the FaFa Family, MusicCO Organization, and DJ Musa Starseed. Community members also enjoyed Navajo tacos, Soul Food, and Puerto Rican and Nepali food from several local providers.



Each participant received multilingual information on city and community resources as well as details about how to share their voice with the City of Boulder – to give input on a city decision, to share perspective with elected officials, or to reach out for support with an issue. Additionally, 37 community members shared their contact information to learn more about opportunities to engage with the city.

The collage consists of four informational cards, each with a City of Boulder logo and a QR code. The cards are arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left card is titled 'Community Connectors-in-Residence' and provides a link to the city's website. The top-right card is titled 'Wellness Resources & Sharing Your Voice with the City of Boulder' and lists various services like 'Wellness Resources', 'Mental Health Partners', and 'Seeking Support'. The bottom-left card is titled 'Recursos de bienestar & Compartiendo su voz con la Ciudad de Boulder' and lists services like 'Recursos de bienestar', 'Compartiendo su voz', and 'Buscando apoyo'. The bottom-right card is titled 'कल्याण स्रोतहरू र बोल्डर शहर संग आफ्नो आवाज साझा' and lists services like 'कल्याण स्रोतहरू', 'सम्मिलन स्रोतहरू', and 'सम्मिलन स्रोतहरू'.

During this community celebration, nearly 200 Indigenous, Black, Nepali, Latino, multiracial, and white community members came together to celebrate, dance, learn, and connect. We heard from participants who expressed appreciation for the city bringing community together in such a truly multicultural space. This celebration also aligned with the city's Racial Equity Plan, specifically in "seeking opportunities to support and promote the value of diversity and multiculturalism."

Reflecting on the celebration, participants and Community Connectors shared:

- "Having celebrations like this helps removing the 'otherness' and making stronger connections."
- "It felt so welcoming."
- "The vibe was uplifting, happy, and joyful."



- This was “an opportunity to share with community members.”
- The celebration was a “representation of such a diverse community.”
- “I was so touched and excited about seeing so many people who are part of my community. I feel more connected.”

‘Building Power & Raising Voices’ Update

CC-in-Rs continue to build capacity to participate in local government among historically excluded community members without lived experience in that space. To address this, CC-in-Rs continue to identify barriers to community engagement opportunities. In addition, they remain committed to facilitating their co-designed, two-hour ‘Building Power & Raising Voices’ session for community members.



These sessions aim to increase a sense of belonging and trust in city government; build the power and skills of historically excluded communities to share their voices and shape decisions and policy about their community and the common good; increase understanding and education of local government and how to navigate systems; and lift up aspirations, engagement barriers, or issues that communities are experiencing.

In the summer of 2023, CC-in-Rs facilitated one ‘Building Power & Raising Voices’ session:

- Four Corners Hair Boutique





'Building Power & Raising Voices' session – July 2023

Themes from this session include community strengths: community and people of Boulder, some city services, and alternative transportation infrastructure. Several challenges were also identified: bullying in schools, racial disparities, traffic, and people no longer able to afford living in Boulder. Please see the appendix for full notes from this session.

Spotlights on City Services

CC-in-Rs have learned about and shared dozens of city services, city/county/community partner resources, and community happenings with their networks. Staff routinely join CC-in-R Gatherings to share details about services or programs, which have recently included:

- BPD response in situations of domestic violence
- Elevate Boulder guaranteed income pilot program
- Middle Income Down Payment Assistance pilot program
- Ranked Choice Voting

'One Community Summit' Presentation

In October 2023, Community Connectors and staff presented a bilingual session, "Centering equity in city decision-making, emergency response, and trust-building," at the [Jefferson County 'One Community Summit.'](#) The summit is designed for local governments to "learn how to better serve our increasingly diverse communities." Community Connectors were invited to present a session that shared how the city's Community Connector model has built trust in city government, shared essential resources with community, and centered the lived experience of historically excluded communities in city decision-making.



Summit coordinators shared that they “already got feedback from people about how inspired to action they are, that you were their favorite, and that having a presentation in Spanish helped to heal parts of them they didn’t know needed healing. We also had several [session participants] share that they never appreciated the barriers of needing interpretation until your session!”

Community Outreach

CC-in-Rs tabled at several community events to share information about city services and resources, details about CC-in-R programming, and avenues for community members to connect with city government in addressing issues or questions. Tabling opportunities this past fall included:

- [El Centro AMISTAD Cumbre Compañeras](#) – “The goal of the Cumbre Compañeras is to raise awareness about social justice and equity, develop leadership skills, and increase resilience in our community. This leads to better educational, employment and health access opportunities for women and their families and, consequently, improve the lifestyle of our entire community.”
- [What’s Up Boulder](#) – “This event brings together all city departments to engage in dialogue with you about a variety of plans and projects, family-friendly activities, and opportunities to chat with council members.”



CC-in-Rs tabling and sharing resources at
Cumbre Compañeras – July 2023



CC-in-Rs tabling and sharing resources at
What’s Up Boulder – Sept 2023



Looking Ahead

Moving further into 2024, Community Connectors-in-Residence will continue to:

- Keep City Council updated on community strengths and community issues, especially ahead of the April 2024 Council Retreat
- Identify opportunities to welcome individual council members to meet with CC-in-Rs to learn more about this team and their work
- Leverage additional General Fund program funding allocated at council's request by recommending and participating in Community Connector Mental Health & Well-being sessions
- Include historically excluded communities in 2025 city budget cycle engagement opportunities
- Co-facilitate 'Building Power & Raising Voices' sessions and explore expanding training offerings
- Review and share feedback with city staff on Racial Equity Instrument steps
- Engage in ongoing dialogue with community members

Questions

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or to learn more!

- Ryan Hanschen, Community Engagement Manager, hanschenr@bouldercolorado.gov
- Ana Silvia Avendaño-Curiel, Equity Policy Advisor, avendano-curiela@bouldercolorado.gov



Appendix

- 'Building Power & Raising Voices' session – Community Strengths and Community Issues

'Building Power & Raising Voices' Session Notes

Community Strengths and Community Issues

Four Corners Hair Boutique

July 2023

In your experience, what's working well within Boulder?

- Offering resources for community engagement
- City communications are being heard and reciprocated
- Walkable neighborhoods
- City services
- Affordable housing, more than many other cities
- Alternative transportation, bike, infrastructure
- Flood mitigation
- Love time in outdoors, greenbelt, environmental leadership
- During quarantine, privileged and blessed to live here with so much nature
- Housing code protecting tenants
- More outreach to diverse and underrepresented communities more in recent years
- Resources for small businesses
- Protecting manufactured home communities by keeping zoning
- Boulder housing density
- Signage for future events, alt routes, transportation

In your experience, what's NOT working well within Boulder?

- Bullying in schools x2
- More bus routes to schools
- Unsheltered community members
- Gun violence
- See a lot of classism, a level of social responsibility to that, upper class elite has responsibility to help other live here, a lot of performative inclusion
- Negative impacts for communities of color, bullying in school, less support for businesses of color, Boulder not taking care of people, don't feel supported by the community, fly under the radar to survive and get by
- City programs are really out there in front compared to other cities, city model for green issues, more work ahead, model for other cities
- Traffic, timeliness in fixing roads
- Taxes
- Density – increase in traffic, parking
- Communication with city staff and city events – more marketing and social media presence
- Reparations with people that have been "pushed out"



What may be included in your ideal community?

- More intergenerational engagement
- Conflict resolution venues
- Equity
- Strong communication channels
- Wider resource education

