

Iris Avenue Core Arterial Network (CAN) Transportation and Mobility Project Report

A Collaboration between Boulder Housing Partners' Iris Hawthorn Home Community, Youth Service Initiative's Glen Willow Home Community, City of Boulder, and Growing Up Boulder



Written by: Growing Up Boulder October 2023

"I avoid Iris Avenue and use the neighborhoods instead where I'm safe (from car traffic)."

-YSI participant/Glen Willow resident

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Project Overview

About Growing Up Boulder

Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is a nonprofit program based in Boulder, CO. It launched in the spring of 2009 as a partnership between the University of Colorado, the City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District, State Senator Dorothy Rupert, local nonprofits and businesses, and children and youth from ages 0-18. GUB's vision is to cultivate vibrant communities where all young people thrive. GUB's mission centers young people's rights, voices and agency to advance equitable and sustainable communities for all. Since its inception, GUB has engaged more than 8,000 young people on more than 100 projects. Growing Up Boulder and the City of Boulder are partnering with UNICEF USA to work towards formal recognition of Boulder as a <u>Child Friendly City</u>. See GUB's <u>website</u> for more details.

About City of Boulder's Transportation and Mobility Department

Boulder's Transportation and Mobility department's vision is to "create a safe, accessible, and sustainable multimodal transportation system connecting people with each other and where they want to go. Our transportation system will be safe, equitable, reliable, provide travel choices, and support clean air and our climate commitment." Visit their <u>website</u> to learn more.

Iris Avenue CAN Project: Phase 1

In May, 2023, <u>Growing Up Boulder</u> (GUB) began collaborating with City of Boulder Transportation staff to learn about the goals and engagement plans for the first phase of the Iris Avenue CAN Project. In September, GUB staff partnered with two Boulder Housing Partners' home communities: the Iris Hawthorn Home Community and the Glen Willow Home Community. Youth engagement goals were to 1) ask children, youth (and their caregivers/other adults, if present) how they travel along Iris Avenue between Broadway and 28th Street and 2) what their experiences have been like. Growing Up Boulder facilitated two September engagements: the first was embedded in a "block party" at Iris Hawthorn home community and the second was a PhotoVoice engagement using red and green frames along Iris Avenue with Glen Willow home community children and youth. This report provides a description and highlights findings of each engagement, and summarizes common themes across both engagements. The transportation department will take these findings and fold them into other phase 1 community engagement efforts which will then inform phase 2 of the project. The next section, courtesy of the Transportation and Mobility Department's website¹, provides background and additional context for the Iris Avenue CAN Project:

CAN Definition

The Core Arterial Network (CAN) is the connected system of protected bicycle lanes, intersection enhancements, pedestrian facilities, and transit facility upgrades that will help reduce the potential for severe crashes and make it more comfortable and convenient for people to get where they need to go along Boulder's main corridors.

Background

In January 2022, Boulder City Council, in partnership with the Transportation Advisory Board, prioritized work on the "Core Arterial Network" (CAN). Iris Avenue is one of 3 CAN Priority Corridors. CAN corridors, or arterial streets, are areas with some of the highest crashes and safety concerns within the city. Arterial streets make up only 17% of streets within the city but are where 67% of total crashes resulting in severe injury or fatality occur. The city selected the three CAN Priority Corridors because they complete key connectivity gaps in the city's overall network. The other two Priority Corridors are Baseline Road (30th Street to Foothills Parkway) and Folsom Street (Pine Street to Colorado Avenue).

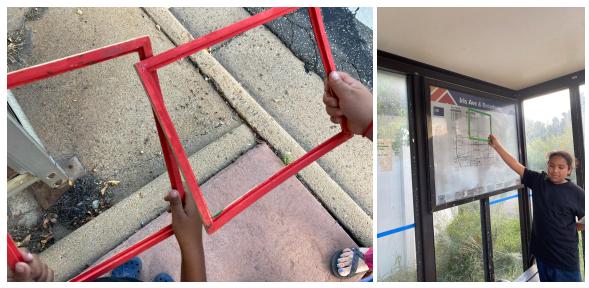
Description and Project Goals

The Iris Avenue project will implement a series of transportation improvements to make Iris Avenue between Broadway and 28th Street safer, more connected, and more comfortable. Iris Avenue has been identified through plans, studies, and data as a key corridor in this part of the city that needs safer, more comfortable, and connected travel, no matter how someone chooses to move. Through careful planning and smart construction, Iris Avenue will allow people driving, walking, biking, and accessing the bus more options to get where they are going as safely and conveniently as possible. Throughout 2023, the project focuses on listening to the community and collecting transportation data. Design will not begin until early 2024, after community input and data are collected. Construction will not begin until mid-2024 at the earliest. Better infrastructure along Iris Avenue will relieve traffic congestion, increase mobility and opportunity, and make our city more alive, inclusive, and livable.

By the Numbers (both engagements)

- 16 Children and youth, ages 5-18
- 6 Caregivers
- 2 Adult community members
- 2 Youth Services Initiative (YSI) staff
- 4 Growing Up Boulder staff

¹ https://bouldercolorado.gov/projects/iris-avenue-transportation-improvements-project



Young people use red frames to express that the bus stop on the north side of Iris/Broadway is located too close to the road and a green frame to show that they like the schedule at the Iris & Broadway bus stop. Photos by Alma Garcia



Young people express how they use Iris Avenue; a youth points out how they use transportation connecting Iris Avenue while using Growing Up Boulder's Child Friendly City Map. Photos by Maddie Frank

Summary of Findings

Children and youth (and caregivers at the Iris Hawthorne site and YSI staff in the case of the Glen Willow site) view Iris Avenue between Broadway and 28th Street as a major west-east street that requires improvements to meet the City's project goals of making it safe, comfortable, and connected. Overall, young people and their caregivers/staff feel that Iris Avenue is car-dominated and not friendly to children, youth, and non-car users. Safety is the greatest concern. The four main categories regarding safety were identified as speed, pedestrian crossing, (not enough) space, and maintenance. GUB collected resident data on current modes

of travel on the corridor and asked people about their experiences using the road, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

How do you travel along Iris Avenue?

Children and young people from the Iris Hawthorne and Glen Willow Home Communities reported traveling most often along Iris Avenue by car or bike. They equally traveled by scooter/skateboard, walking, and by (YSI program) van. Traveling by bus was the least often used mode of transportation.

	Engagements 1 +2: Iris Hawthorne and Glen Willow Communities					
Bike	Bike Scooter/ Walk Car Bus Van					
14	5	5	16	3	5	

What have your experiences been like on Iris Avenue?

Engagements 1 + 2: Iris Hawthorne and Glen Willow Home Communities				
Somewhat positive Somewhat positive Somewhat negative Neutral Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive Image: Somewhat positive<				
8	2	1	7	1

Most Salient Findings

Young people at both home communities shared many personal experiences using Iris Avenue from Broadway to 28th Street. There were more than twice as many statements shared across both engagement groups that were about things not going well as compared to things going well. In general, people felt that Iris Avenue works well for cars, but not for pedestrians or bikers. The table below summarizes the most frequently mentioned statements related to things that are and are not working well along the Iris Avenue corridor. For the cumulative data, data fell into five categories: Iris Avenue Infrastructure, Other Infrastructure, Signage and Wayfinding, Nature, and Connection/General. Some statements could have been categorized into more

than one category (for example, comments about pedestrian crossings could have been a part of Iris Avenue Infrastructure and Connection).

The primary theme that weaves through all the negative/somewhat negative experience data is related to not feeling safe or comfortable while using the Iris Avenue Corridor–as a driver, passenger, walker, biker, and scooter/skateboarder. Residents report speeding cars, excessive noise, concerns while crossing Iris Avenue and while navigating Iris Avenue sidewalks as a biker, walker, scooter, or skateboarder. Residents point to outdated bus stop facilities and needs for repair and maintenance (ie. overgrown bushes along sidewalks and Iris Avenue paving needs and sidewalk repair) to name a few.

A real time example of the safety concerns using the pedestrian crosswalk occurred during the Glen Willow/YSI group engagement as they were attempting to cross Iris Avenue at 15th Street as a group of eight. Despite there being 3 adults guiding 5 children/youth, and even with the GUB staff members' hand up (and waving) to get the attention of an oncoming car, the driver did not stop for us to cross. We were in the crosswalk well before the driver, and still he did not yield.

"Cars don't stop for you when you are crossing...and we don't jaywalk or anything!" —Iris Hawthorn residents "There are parts of the sidewalk that if you are on your bike and had to veer, even a little, you would be in the road with the cars."

-Iris Hawthorn resident

Personal Experiences Table

In this table, we used 5 categories to describe the personal experiences of Iris Hawthorn and Glen Willow residents (Iris Avenue Infrastructure, Other Infrastructure, Signage & Wayfinding, Nature, Connection/General).

Categories	Things that are working well	Things that are <u>not</u> working well
Iris Avenue Road Infrastructure (space, flow, speed, pedestrian crossings)	 The traffic flows okay The road is wide for the cars Traffic light cameras that control cars from going too fast 	 Cars drive too fast on Iris Iris Avenue is too car- dominated Iris Avenue is not pedestrians/bike-friendly Drag racing at night is loud Iris Avenue is noisy

Categories	Things that are working well	Things that are <u>not</u> working well
		 Cars don't always stop for us at the pedestrian crossing/crossing feels unsafe with children Iris Avenue's asphalt is cracked and full of patches. It needs repaving.
Other Infrastructure (sidewalks, bike lanes, bus stops, lighting, and other amenities along Iris Ave)	 Some wide sidewalks Fire hydrants Covered bus stops 	 Need more light on the street and in the park at night The bike lane needs to be expanded to feel safe riding in it The large tree on 16th and Iris is dangerous. You can't see! Bus stops are old and need updating (benches are wobbly, maps are faded, north side bus stop is too close to the road, etc) Biking is a challenge The sidewalk along Iris Avenue doesn't feel safe to stroller, bike, walk, scooter, or skateboard because of cars-sometimes the sidewalk curves and pedestrians are really close to passing cars Sidewalks are too narrow Cracked and uneven sidewalks are cracked and uneven are a safety issue Hedges, bushes, and trees need maintenance Litter along Iris Avenue Make drainage ditches safe

Categories	Things that are working well	Things that are <u>not</u> working well
Signage & Wayfinding	 Signs are helpful for road, bike lane, and sidewalk users 	
Nature	 Trees, bushes, and mountain views while using sidewalks 	
Connection/ General	 Close to things I like to do Like the area that I live in 	 Need a traffic light on 15th/16th & Iris Need a traffic light or crossing for pedestrians and bikes Cars turn too fast off of Iris Avenue going onto side roads Need easier access to safely get to and from Pine View Park and Melody Park from my house Using neighborhoods to navigate instead of walking along Iris to be more safe

There are resident quote highlights in the appendix.

GUB's Engagement Partners & Engagement Approaches

The next section introduces GUB and its partners. Content is courtesy of each organizations' website:

About Boulder Housing Partners

<u>Boulder Housing Partners (BHP)</u> strives "to make living in Boulder welcoming and affordable for people from a diverse range of backgrounds, regardless of income. Housing Partners strives to make living in Boulder welcoming and affordable for people from a diverse range of backgrounds, regardless of income...Boulder residents have access to over 1350 affordable

apartment homes, over 100 market-rate apartments and over 1300 rental assistance vouchers." $^{\scriptscriptstyle 2}$

<u>Iris Hawthorn Home Community</u> is "a group of single-family rental homes, bordered by Iris & Hawthorn Avenues and Broadway & 16th Street, for families participating in *Bringing School Home*. Residents can enjoy the playground and common outdoor areas that are within walking distance to bike trails, the community gardens and the North Boulder Recreation Center."³





Boulder's Parks and Recreation <u>Youth Services</u> <u>Initiative's</u> mission is to "inspire youth and families from underrepresented communities to make healthy, caring and responsible choices through recreation, health and well-being opportunities as well as life skill development." Their programs include: Getting Fit, Healthy Together, Summer Learning, Mentor Program, and Recreation on Wheels.⁵ <u>Glen Willow Home Community</u> sits at the west end of Pearl Street and is home to 34 apartments and townhomes ranging from studios to four-bedrooms. Renovated in 2020, it is within walking distance to the Pearl Street Mall, Settler's Park and nearby RTD bus lines. Residents can enjoy Glen Willow's community center, playground, and community gardens.⁴



Iris Hawthorn Home Community Engagement

"I like that I can walk to swings, friends, slide and the rock wall on the playground."

-Iris Hawthorn resident

² https://boulderhousing.org/about/

³ https://boulderhousing.org/properties/iris-hawthorn/

⁴ https://boulderhousing.org/properties/glen-willow/

⁵ https://bouldercolorado.gov/services/youth-and-family-servicesyouth-services-initiative-ysi

"The large tree on 16th and Iris is dangerous. You can't see! My father in-law was in a collision due to the big tree. He called the city, but they said they were not going to do anything."

-Iris Hawthorn resident

By the Numbers

- 4 Children (ages 5-11)
- 7 Youth (ages 12-18)
- 6 Caregivers
- 2 Adults
- 3 Growing Up Boulder staff

Description

On Thursday, September 21, 2023, three GUB staff members attended the Iris Hawthorn Boulder Housing Partners Block Party, and spoke with caregivers and their children and youth using a large map of Iris Avenue. GUB staff invited residents to look at the map and share their experiences. It was explained that their input would inform the city's plans for making Iris Avenue more safe, comfortable, and connected. Community members were also invited to write their answers on flipchart paper about how they travel along Iris Avenue and what their experiences have been on Iris. Given the nature of the event was to bring people together (ie. the community was eating and children were playing), residents were not interested in leaving the group activities to go for the planned Iris Avenue walk to use the red and green picture frames (PhotoVoice). GUB staff shifted their engagement approach and instead chatted with youth and invited youth and families to come make their comments on and around the map. One challenge in this less structured, more organic setting, was that precise quantitative data was more difficult to gather. However, given that residents live adjacent to Iris Avenue, the overall approach was quite successful. GUB staff was able to gather a lot of rich qualitative data that directly addressed people's experiences using Iris Avenue.

Engagement Data

This section highlights the data collected for how residents travel along Iris Avenue, What their experiences are like, and specific statements regarding things that are and are not working well along Iris.

Engagement 1: Iris Hawthorne Home Community					
Bike Scooter/ Walk Car Bus Skateboard					
11	4	2	11	1	

How do you travel along Iris Avenue?

What have your experiences been like on Iris Avenue?

Engagement 1: Iris Hawthorne Home Community				
PositiveSomewhat positiveNeutralSomewhat negativeNegativeImage: Description of the sector of				Negative
7	0	3	0	0

In the Iris Hawthorn community we noticed a discrepancy between how people answered questions on the map versus how they marked the paper with the faces. There were 7 positive responses and 3 neutral, yet upon speaking with people their comments tended to be more negative than positive. We noticed that it tended to be younger children who marked the faces. It is possible they did not fully understand the paper or were reluctant to mark negative in such a public way.

In the individual home community engagements, safety was THE key concern. Four categories related to safety emerged: speed, crossing, space, and maintenance.

Things that are working well:

Children statements:

- It seems the traffic flows okay
- It is wide for the cars and I like that there are cameras on the traffic lights to control the cars from going too fast
- There's a lot of space and there isn't ever traffic
- Adult statements:
 - I like the area
 - I like that I can walk to swings, friends, slide and the rockwall on the playground (but bad words on the playground and the park at IRIS/Hawthorne is too small)

Things that are not working well:

SPEED

- Cars drive too fast (7 residents–adults and children/youth)
- At night, people drag race loud cars (4 residents-adults and children/youth)
- The loud drag racing (cars and motorcycles) wakes up my infant every night (1 adult resident)
- People turn left off Iris onto 16th way too fast.

CROSSING SAFETY

- Cars don't stop for when you are crossing ("and we don't jay walk or anything!")
- Need some kind of traffic light or crossing for pedestrians and bikes
- Need a light on 16th (5 residents)
- Broadway and Iris is terrifying in the morning. The "No turn on red" sign is not visible enough, people don't see it. We need better signage. I have almost been hit several times in the crosswalk.
- Crossing to the left or the right is complicated due to the traffic
- The large tree on 16th and Iris is dangerous. You can't see! (6 residents)
 - My father in-law was in a collision due to the big tree. He called the city, but they said they were not going to do anything.
- Biking is a challenge.
- Crossing feels unsafe with young children.
- Need easier access to safely get to and from Pine View Park and Melody park from my house.
- The sidewalk doesn't feel safe with a stroller.
- There is no crosswalk on 16th St.
- The southeast corner of 15th and Iris needs better bike crossing
- It is hard to come out onto Iris Avenue from 16th (resident who lives at 3374 16th).

SPACE

- There is not enough space in the bike lane A (6 residents). It's scary.
- The sidewalks are so narrow. I would walk if there were more space.
- Please don't make it fewer lanes like what happened on Folsom (3 residents)
 - Many people coming in from Longmont, Niwot
 - What if there was a flood or a fire?
- Broadway and Iris is not bike-friendly. You have to ride on the sidewalk.
- There are places where the sidewalk curves and you are near the cars.
- There are parts of the sidewalk that if you are on your bike and had to veer, even a little, you would be in the road with the cars.

MISC. SAFETY (MAINTENANCE)

- There was a loose manhole cover and my dad got mad because he thought we'd get a flat tire, and it felt really unsafe.
- Need more light on the street and in the park at night
- It is dark and people who don't have homes say things to us
- I skate and scooter to school at Boulder High and the sidewalk curves and also because the trees and bushes are not cut, I have to duck.

Glen Willow Home Community & Youth Services Initiative Program Participants

By the Numbers

- 4 children (ages 6-11)
- 1 youth (age 12)
- 2 adult staff members
- 1 GUB staff

"It's nice to have a covered bus stop when it's raining or snowing out." —YSI participant/Glen Willow resident



YSI youth and GUB staff begin a PhotoVoice activity on Iris Avenue

Description

On Thursday, September 28, 2023, one GUB staff member met YSI staff and Glen Willow residents at Iris Fields. GUB staff introduced the Iris Avenue Project using a large map of Iris Avenue and explained that their input would inform the city's plans for making Iris Avenue more safe, comfortable, and connected. Then, GUB staff asked children and youth how they traveled on Iris and recorded this information on flipchart paper. Afterwards, residents looked at the map and shared their experiences. The <u>PhotoVoice</u> activity was introduced next and the whole group walked along Iris Avenue indicating what things they felt were and were not working well. Our walking route included using the sidewalks on the north and south sides of Iris Avenue and the pedestrian crosswalks at Iris/15th Street and Broadway/Iris Avenue between 5:15-6:00 pm. Traffic was heavy at this time.

Engagement Data

This section highlights the data collected for how residents travel along Iris Avenue, what their experiences are like, and specific statements regarding things that are and are not working well along Iris.

Engagement 2: Glenwillow Home Community (Youth Services Initiative)					
Bike Scooter/ Walk Car Bus Van					
3	0	3	5	2	5

How do you travel along Iris Avenue?

What have your experiences been like on Iris Avenue?

Engagement 2: Glenwillow Home Community (Youth Services Initiative)				
Positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral	Somewhat negative	Negative
1	2	1	2	1

In the individual home community engagements, safety was THE key concern. Four categories related to safety emerged: speed, crossing, space, and maintenance.

Things that are working well:

- We like wide sidewalks so we can walk with our friends and family
- I like the trees and nature along the sidewalks
- Signs are helpful for bikers and cars
- Readable bus map on the south side of Iris Avenue (near Broadway and Iris)
- Nice to have a covered bus stop when it's raining or snowing out
- Nice to have a fire hydrant close by for fire safety
- Pedestrian crosswalk at 15th is good so that we don't have to walk all the way to the Iris and Broadway intersection

Things that are not working well:

SPEED

- Cars drive too fast
- Iris Avenue is really noisy!

CROSSING SAFETY

- Cars don't stop for when you are using the pedestrian crosswalk
- Broadway and Iris is a really busy intersection and it's scary!
- The sidewalk along Iris Avenue doesn't feel safe to bike, walk, scooter, or skateboard.
- The sidewalks are cracked and uneven and we trip or fall and lose our balance
- I avoid Iris Avenue and walk in the neighborhoods where it's safe

SPACE

- There's not enough space in the bike lane. It's scary riding next to cars who are driving fast.
- The wider sidewalks are great because you can walk with friends and family. The narrow sidewalks need to be widened.

- Iris Avenue is not bike-friendly.
- In some places, the sidewalk is too close to the road. I feel like I might get hurt if I make a wrong move.
- Bus stops need updating-the material that the benches are made out of are hot in the summer and cold in the winter. One of the benches on the south side bus stop (near Iris and Broadway) is really wobbly and moves sideways when you sit on it.
- One of the framed maps on the south side bus stop is so faded that you can't even read it.
- The bus stop on the north side of Iris (near Broadway and Iris) is built too close to the road. You have to be really careful when you go in there that a car or a bicyclist aren't coming when you are going in; so you don't get hit.
- Iris Avenue is too car dominated and not friendly.

MISC. SAFETY (MAINTENANCE)

- There are prickly bushes along the south side of Iris that scratch you when you go by. They need to be trimmed back.
- Iris Avenue's asphalt is cracked and full of patches. It needs repaving.
- The area in and around the drainage ditch needs safety upgrading, especially around the drain. There's trash in it, and you could fall down into it.
- Pick up litter in and around the road and sidewalks.

GUB Staff Engagement Reflections

A few reflections to share:

- 1. The word comfort or comfortable was never used to describe Iris Avenue. GUB staff speculated that this was because safety comes before comfort in residents' minds.
- 2. GUB staff feel that children and youth participating in future phases of the Iris Avenue CAN project could benefit from learning about what is being implemented in other parts of the country or world to see how youth voices can inform the creation of safe, comfortable, and connected spaces. This knowledge can be eye opening to young people and could deepen their thinking about their local context.
- 3. In terms of process for the block party event, we had planned to mirror the steps taken at the Glen Willow engagement. However, GUB staff realized the premise and structure of the two events were quite different and that the community at the block party wanted to stay together and not branch off and go on walks along Iris Avenue. Thus, we pivoted our approach in the moment and used the large map of Iris Avenue as a focal point of our discussion, inviting people to come look at the map and comment and write. Additionally, GUB staff approached youth in a more conversational, informal way and were able to engage effectively.
- 4. We have noticed that community members may not always be familiar with participatory approaches and that we need to be sure to explain more thoroughly how their input will

inform city decisions. One idea is to provide examples of how community/youth input has shaped policy/practices in the past.

Conclusion

In conclusion, children, youth, and their caregivers find that Iris Avenue works well for cars, but it does not work well for pedestrians and people riding bicycles (skaters, scooters, strollers).

"Broadway and Iris is terrifying in the morning. The "No turn on red" sign is not visible enough; people don't see it. We need better signage. I have almost been hit several times in the crosswalk".

-Iris Hawthorn resident

As engagement partners eagerly chatted with GUB staff about their experiences along Iris Avenue, safety was the primary concern. GUB staff observed that residents cared deeply about their neighborhoods and appeared happy to learn about future improvements to the corridor.

Partners and Appreciation

GUB would like to thank our partners, Boulder Housing Partners, Youth Services Initiative, and the City of Boulder for their collaboration on this project. We send our heartfelt thanks to the children, youth and caregivers/staff who shared their experiences and opinions about Iris Avenue CAN with us.

- Boulder Housing Partners
 - Claudia Perez-Rogerio, Resident Services Coordinator
 - Karin Stayton, Director of Resident Services
- Growing Up Boulder Staff/Team
 - Maddie Frank, Development and Operations Coordinator
 - Cathy Hill, Education Director
 - Mara Mintzer, Executive Director
 - Nicole Sager, Educational Consultant
- Transportation and Mobility Department
 - Ericka Amador, Senior Transportation Planner
 - Melanie Sloan, Principal Project Manager
- Youth Services Initiative (Boulder Parks and Recreation Program)
 - Alma Garcia, Recreation Coordinator
 - Grey Esposito-Krier, YSI staff member

Appendix

- 1. PhotoVoice Photos from Glen Willow/YSI Engagement
- Sample Quotes from Residents
 Iris Avenue Engagement Plan