

### Background:

Boulder, Colorado is known for its high quality of life, progressive land use planning, open space preservation, and a strong environmental ethic. The City houses a highly educated population and holds a diverse economic base that has experienced significant growth in recent years and is projected to increase by another 10% in the next 25 years. Home prices in Boulder are also high and climbing, with a 31.3% increase in median single-family homes between 2015 and 2017. Nearly two-thirds of Boulder's renter households are cost burdened. Escalating economic trends and plummeting housing affordability leads to growing income inequality and difficulty retaining workers in some sectors. In addition to these resilience challenges are the physical threats of wildfires and the highest flash flood risk in Colorado.

In this context, the Ponderosa Mobile Home Park site, a Boulder County enclave to the city, faces a confluence of resilience challenges, including those noted above and others unique to the people and place. Many of Ponderosa's diverse households, nearly half of which are Latino, and many of which are families with children, elderly, and mobility challenged members have lived in the Boulder area for decades. Most of the older mobile homes in this community are located in the 100- year floodplain, with a small share in the 500-year floodplain. Though facing high flood risk, the residents are in housing that is substantially more affordable than the majority of Boulder. As the city faces a significant housing affordability challenge, the city seeks to maintain diversity in ethnic backgrounds, incomes, and household compositions, which makes the Ponderosa site particularly important.

In August 2017, the city purchased Ponderosa and is now planning infrastructure improvements, annexation of the site into the city, and is working with residents to identify affordable, energy-efficient home replacement options. The goal is to avoid displacement while transforming the community into a model for developing a resilient, affordable and carbon neutral community. As part of this exploration, Rebuild by Design worked with the City of Boulder and Trestle Strategy Group to create a resident-centered, community design process that included a day long workshop on December 4, 2017.



ABOVE: One of the houses within the Ponderosa Mobile Home Park community



ABOVE: Subject-matter experts and residents getting read to embark on a tour of the Ponderosa Community to kickoff the workshop

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## Research:

As Ponderosa and the city contemplated new infrastructure for the mobile home park, many questions about land ownership and innovative infrastructure and housing options emerged. In order to help the city address some of these questions as well as think larger about the possibilities for Ponderosa, Rebuild helped the city pick a consultant to deeply engage the community and created a day-long workshop to bring outside experts and community members together for holistically envisioning a more resilient and sustainable Ponderosa that maintains affordability. As part of the workshop, we helped the city determine the right experts and participants for the needed discussions and brainstorming. Ultimately, we organized the workshop around exploring three key areas:

- 1) Land ownership options and their potential impact on housing affordability
- 2) Infrastructure and housing innovation to explore during the design stage
- 3) Social challenges and assets of the existing mobile home community and broader Boulder community for generating additional capacity and useful resources.

The composition of approximately 60 participants ranged from expertise in city planning, design and sustainability to housing affordability and social services. Approximately 20 residents also attended throughout the course of the day. The outcomes of this workshop were captured in Rebuild's report "[Path to Resilient Mobile & Manufactured Homes.](#)" On the infrastructure side, ideas emerged around amphibious design, pervious areas and water features on the site as well as community Wi-Fi and a community resilience center. Identifying the best ways to utilize indoor and outdoor space to build social capital and leverage existing community assets were explored. Also, knowledge gaps and needed next steps around land ownership models were identified. This information is being utilized and incorporated as the city enters the design phase with Trestle Strategy Group.

## Design:

As the City of Boulder and the Ponderosa community continue to explore the various opportunities for the mobile home park, there were outcomes that can be applied to mobile home park redevelopment that increase resilience and sustainability. Eight key interventions emerged (4 listed<sup>1</sup>) as highlights for innovation and resilience value that should be considered when envisioning and creating a resilient and sustainable mobile home park in Boulder or in any community within Colorado or the U.S.



ABOVE: A Ponderosa residents speaking during one of the breakout sessions.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to space limitations, this document only lists 4 of the 8 interventions. To see all 8, check out the full report — "[Path to Resilient Mobile & Manufactured Homes.](#)"

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- 1. Lower Monthly Cost Burdens:** Low rent is not the only opportunity for lower costs within mobile home park communities. By harnessing the principles of the sharing economy, mobile home communities can lower costs and create greater access to resources through community-wide Wi-Fi, car and tool sharing and potentially community solar.
- 2. Build Physical and Social Resilience into a Community Center:** If built with resilience in mind, a community center can serve as a safe gathering space and communication center in times of flooding or outside hazards by being built in a safe location (e.g. outside potential hazards and floodplains) and equipped with community resources, battery backup and solar.
- 3. Stormwater Detention & Flood Mitigation:** One of the vulnerabilities of mobile home parks is the potential for residing in a floodplain. In order to address this susceptibility, communities should consider various mitigation options such as rain gardens, bioswales, water retention ponds and rain barrels (individual and community style).
- 4. Resilience & Cultural Liaisons/Ambassadors:** Mobile home communities are often made up of a diverse demographic from different cultural and economic backgrounds. There is also a stigma of “outsider status” attached to mobile home residents. Creating ambassadors or coordinators whose responsibility is to better connect the residents to health and social services via a nonprofit will help provide resources to the community and better connect them with the city.

## Impact:

Rebuild’s collaboration with the city helped them move forward on decision-making around Ponderosa’s annexation and infrastructure needs. Rebuild’s process helped generate a creative and more comprehensive approach to addressing Ponderosa’s challenges. The workshop built trust with the residents and brought in additional resources and expertise. The city wants to potentially use this model for other city challenges.



ABOVE: A resident and subject matter expert conversing around housing and infrastructure

## About Rebuild by Design:

*Rebuild by Design convenes a mix of sectors - including government, business, nonprofit, and community organizations - to gain a better understanding of how overlapping environmental and human-made vulnerabilities leave cities and regions at risk. Our process entails true public private partnerships where entities or institutions are needed to establish a meaningful resilience coalition to understand the specific needs in a city, and design evidence-based solutions for the community you are working with. This collaboration remains at the heart of an iterative creative process to address the intersection of physical social, and ecological resilience to drive lasting change.*

*If you would like more information about Rebuild by Design email [info@rebuildbydesign.org](mailto:info@rebuildbydesign.org).*