



East Boulder Creek Site Management Plan

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# Community Survey 2 Results



**Boulder County**  
Parks & Open Space

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### Executive Summary

On May 25, 2023, Boulder County Parks & Open Space released its second community survey to develop a management plan for the East Boulder Creek site. The objective of the survey was to define the public's priorities for conservation and community access, and collect any feedback on the future of the site. The survey received 446 online responses to the survey and 543 individual responses from in-person events.

The 1,377-acre site consists of five open spaces with a dozen ponds and five miles of perennial stream along Boulder Creek and Coal Creek. This site contains a wide variety of habitats, including wetlands and riparian ecosystems, and it's been in use as an agricultural resource.

Survey participants indicated a high level of support for closing certain areas to protect critical wildlife habitat and agricultural operations. 60% of respondents strongly agreed with the potential closures.

When asked for additional comments related to the closure of the site, respondents who agreed with the closures identified conservation of the riparian area and the native wildlife as their primary concerns. Respondents who felt negatively about the closures commented that the loss of public access to natural areas was not desirable. Respondents who felt neutral about the closures expressed that they would like to receive more information and that agricultural closures and conservation closures are separate issues.

When asked about outdoor experiences, the desired recreational activities identified by respondents included hiking, appreciating wildlife, walking, biking, and water activities.

When asked what features should be integrated into the site's name, the majority of survey respondents chose East Boulder Creek. Heron, Coyote, and Coal Creek were other names suggested.

Survey participants also left additional feedback that generally fell along the lines of the responses to previous questions. Participants remained primarily concerned with environmental conservation, recreation, and access issues. Other topics included the naming of the site, ideas on public engagement in the proposed space, and future infrastructure and planning.

### About East Boulder Creek Site

The East Boulder Creek site is 1,377 acres. The site consists of five open spaces with a dozen ponds and five miles of perennial stream along Boulder Creek and Coal Creek. The site shares borders with Weld County, the Town of Erie, and is near Niwot and Longmont, and is bordered by State Highway 52 and US 287.

This part of the Boulder Valley has been important to the region because of its streamside riparian habitats, irrigated farmlands, and aggregate resources. While extractive industries have impacted the site, the agricultural community and the open space tenants continue to steward this rural landscape. The area has been, and remains, a site for oil and gas operations. The county finished the reclamation of the last and most recent gravel operation and will continue to revegetate the site. The site continues to provide ongoing opportunities for restoration due to the extent of past aggregate mining.

The site also supports significant wildlife habitats and wetlands. Due to its topography and position on the western Great Plains, this site offers expansive views of the Front Range mountains and the Indian Peaks area. This site presents a variety of passive recreation options and opportunities for conservation.

### Survey Method

Boulder County Parks & Open Space released the online survey on the project's web page [boco.org/EastBoulderCreek](https://boco.org/EastBoulderCreek) on May 25, 2023. The online survey closed on July 31, 2023, with 446 responses. To raise awareness of the survey release, the Boulder County team promoted the survey through trailhead posters, public meetings, a postcard mailing to neighbors, email notifications, press releases, and social media posts.

During this stage of engagement, Boulder County also received two pieces of feedback and recommendations from the Boulder County Audubon Society and Boulder County Nature Association, who provided email comments on the survey and project directly to staff. These recommendations focused on prioritizing the protection, restoration, and enhancement of wildlife and habitats as well as determining how and where human access will be allowed at the East Boulder Creek site.

In addition, the Boulder County team presented the project and paper versions of the survey at two open houses, one engagement session at the Longmont Youth Center, and at three Longmont farmers markets.

The two open houses took place on June 8 and June 15, 2023. Moderators at the event recorded 71 verbal visitor interactions on June 8 and 116 verbal visitor interactions on June 15. In addition, the moderators gave participants stickers and requested they record their answers to the survey questions on a poster.

At the engagement session for the Longmont Youth Center, Boulder County staff received eight pieces of feedback on Question 1, and 11 pieces of feedback on Question 5.

The three farmers markets took place on May 27, June 17, and July 22, 2023. The moderators reported 188 interactions on May 27 and 145 interactions on July 22. Moderators didn't report quantities of interactions on June 17. These interactions were not part of in-person surveys.

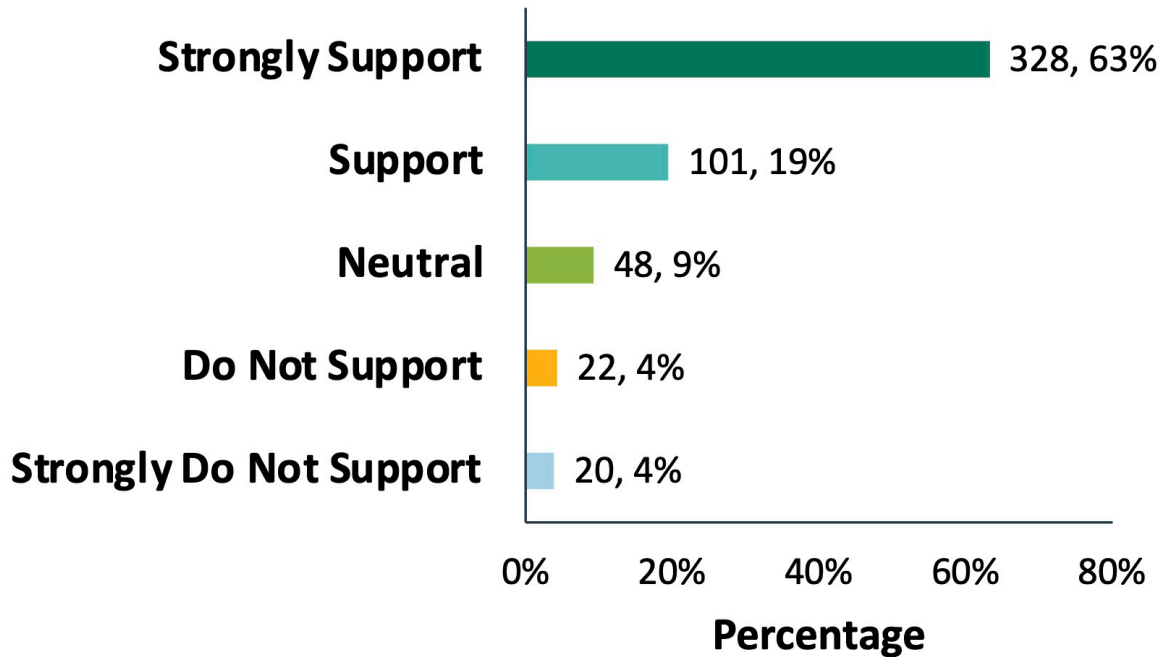
Open survey responses commonly included multiple themes within one response. Therefore, listed percentages do not equal 100%.



# Question 1

Total Responses: 519  
Total Skipped: 0

Indicate your level of support for closing certain areas to protect critical wildlife habitat and agricultural operations.



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Support	63%	328
Support	19%	101
Neutral	9%	48
Do Not Support	4%	22
Strongly Do Not Support	4%	20
Total Respondents: 519		



## Question 2

Total Responses: 231  
Total Skipped: 279

### **Please tell us any other comments related to the conservation of the site.**

When asked for feedback related to the conservation of the site, the majority of respondents identified preservation as a high priority. Other significant themes included respondents' opinions on appropriate public access to the site, feedback on agriculture, site management and education, desired amenities, and feedback on the survey question itself. Nine responses to the question were unrelated to the subject matter.

### **Environmental Integrity and Conservation**

45% of respondents identified conservation as the most important priority, including a strong commitment to protecting wildlife and habitats. Those responses emphasized the need to prioritize conservation efforts and limit human activities that could harm local ecosystems.

Eight respondents stressed the need to control invasive species, such as New Zealand mud snails, to preserve native plants, insects, and wildlife. 6% of respondents also raised the preservation of the riparian corridor as a priority for the space.

### **Public Access**

21% of respondents expressed opinions related to public access. Overall, those respondents agreed about limiting public access to certain areas, especially those designated as critical wildlife habitat. 11% of respondents emphasized the importance of providing recreational opportunities while maintaining conservation. Those respondents suggested careful planning to ensure that human activities are compatible with wildlife protection.

Five respondents expressed concerns about the potential impact of increased use, traffic, and pollution in the area. Some of those respondents raised concerns over dog impacts on conservation, such as off-leash dogs disturbing wildlife and leaving waste behind. Those respondents advocated for stricter regulations on dogs in conservation areas.

### **Agricultural Use**

10% of respondents mentioned agriculture in their feedback. Seven respondents expressed support for agricultural practices if they were to be conducted sustainably, organically, and without pesticides, 16 respondents reported they would not support closures of the space if they were related to agriculture. Respondents expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts of agricultural operations on the environment.



### Management of Site

5% of respondents said they thought it was important to consult with wildlife biologists and other experts in the planning and management of conservation areas, including BCPOS resource staff such as wildlife biologists and plant ecologists. Five respondents within this theme expressed hope that Indigenous authorities will be involved in guiding and utilizing the open space.

### Recreational Amenities

14% of responses suggested recreational amenities such as trails, horse riding, bird blinds, and wildlife viewing areas. Respondents also mention specific activities like tubing, fishing, and canoeing.

### Survey Feedback

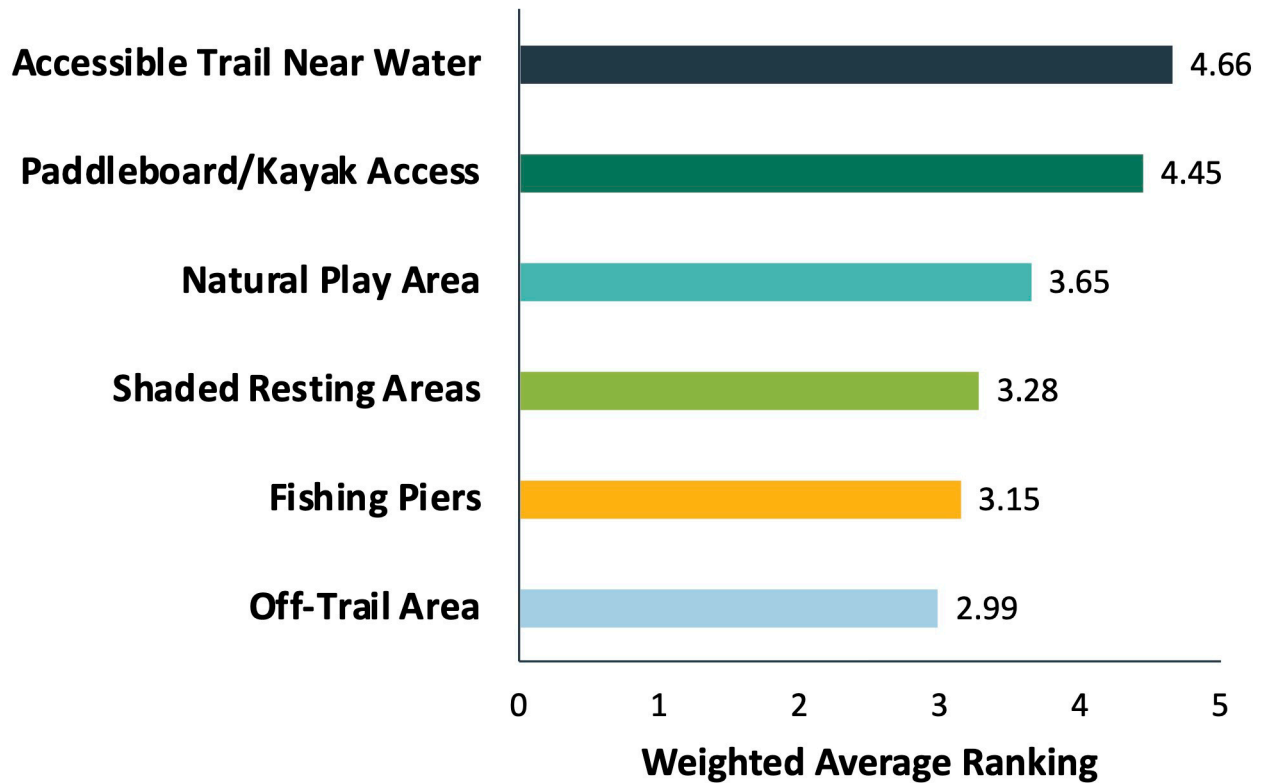
Six responses to Question 2 concerned the survey itself. These were as follows:

- You need to define what you consider as critical. I do not consider Prairie Dogs as wildlife or critical.
- What areas would you conserve? This is way too little info to actually make an informed decision. Why would you close them? What habitat is there?
- Need more information on how the county scores and determines “Critical Wildlife Habitat.”
- It depends which areas for what type of conservation and how that will affect access through the site.
- I am neutral until more information is provided about how much area will be set aside.
- How are agricultural operations part of a question about protecting critical habitat? I am not against agriculture, but it is a perplexing question.

## Question 3: Online Survey

Total Responses: 446  
Total Skipped: 0

Rank the following features in order of importance.



*In the survey, online participants were requested to prioritize each activity by assigning a numerical ranking. Here, respondents were instructed to assign a ranking between 1 and 6, with 1 signifying highest priority and 6 signifying lowest priority.*

*The above graph represents the weighted averages of the responses, with 0 signifying lowest priority and 5 signifying highest priority.*

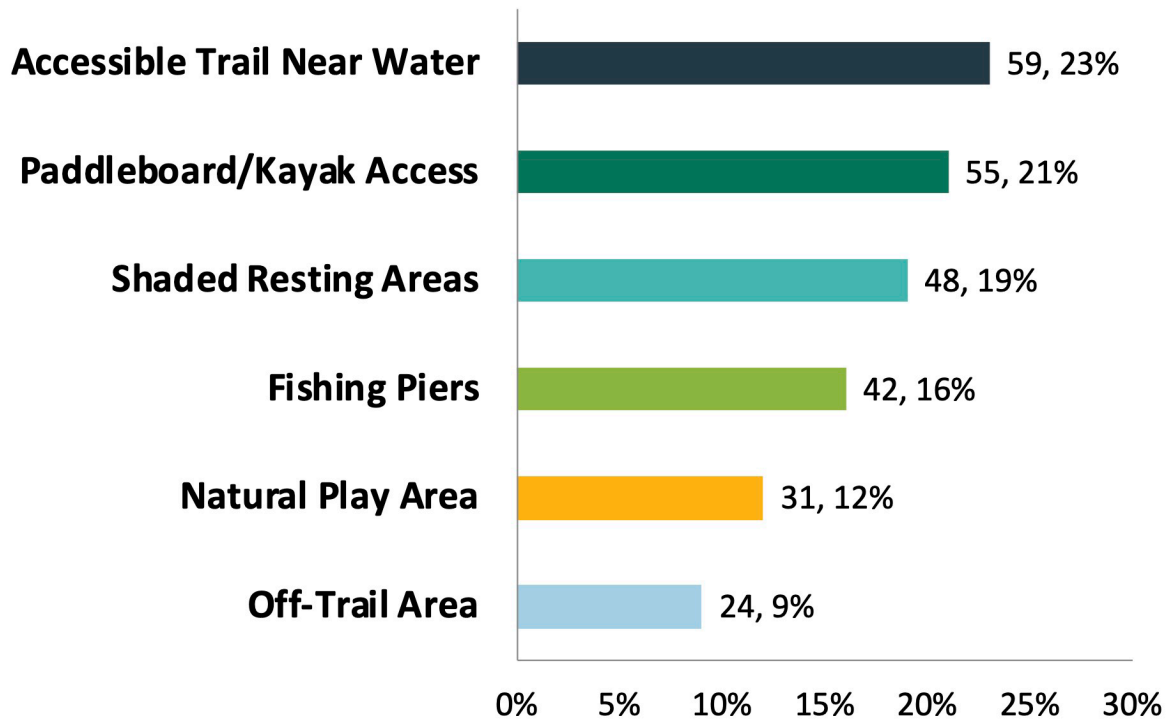


## Question 3: In-Person Survey

Total Responses: 259  
Total Skipped: 0

Place your three dots next to the top features that you would like to see at EBC.

Cumulative Responses from the Community Events



*In-person participants were given multiple stickers to denote which activities they preferred. These stickers were not ranked by priority.*

## Question 4

Total Responses: 198  
Total Skipped: 292

### Please share any other comments related to outdoor experiences and recreation.

Eight major themes emerged from the 198 responses to Question 4: environmental integrity and conservation; recreational activities and preferences; infrastructure, development, and amenities; and accessibility, connectivity, and traffic. 7% of comments were unrelated to the question.

### Recreational Activities and Preferences

40% of responses to the survey concerned recreational activities. As a whole, survey takers identified hiking, biking, and trail walking as desired recreational activities for the site. However, a few respondents expressed attitudes against development related to recreation or added amenities. 13 people wanted to ban all bikes or restrict them to certain areas, and 11 respondents were in favor of bikes, biking trails, or e-bikes, including multiple respondents who wanted bike paths that connect to other Boulder County trails.

17 respondents were pro water access, including fishing, boating, accessible wading areas, and paddleboarding. However, 11 respondents stated that they supported strictly limiting or banning water access altogether in interest of conservation of the open space. They specified their concerns as conservation of native grasses, riparian habitats, and wild bird nesting sites.

### Environmental Integrity and Conservation

26% of respondents to this question wanted to prioritize conservation and environmental integrity over recreation and development.

Respondents who were concerned with environmental impact stated that recreation options should be limited. These respondents were concerned with the conservation of native grasses, riparian habitats, and wild bird nesting sites. These respondents were focused on the preservation of habitats and natural resources of the open space, especially near the water.

### Infrastructure, Development, and Amenities

17% of survey takers who answered Question 4 favor development with the least impact on the site, listing places for wildlife viewing or nature enjoyment as a preferred form of infrastructure. Generally, respondents were focused on what the impact of adding more amenities may be on the wildlife and habitats in the area.

Survey takers were split on the inclusion of play areas. 11 respondents advocated for a more natural play area, and 10 respondents were generally against the development of play areas or placed low priority on it.

### **Accessibility, Connectivity, and Traffic**

16% of comments about outdoor experiences and recreation were focused on accessibility and traffic concerns. Several survey takers said they'd want any new trails to be connected to existing Boulder County trail systems. These respondents pointed out that connections to other trail systems could lower car use and have a positive impact on traffic in the surrounding area.

### **Pet Policy and Management**

7% of survey takers who answered Question 4 weighed in on pet policy.

Sentiments about dogs were mixed among respondents. There was a 50/50 split among survey takers regarding the inclusion of dogs, with some mentioning a strict leash policy is preferred and others advocating for an off-leash dog area with access to water.

### **Safety, Management, and Maintenance**

6% of comments related to safety and maintenance.

Six respondents were concerned about safety in the area, particularly with surrounding roads and visibility. Four respondents said they were concerned about dangers posed by bicyclists and the degradation of natural areas from human access.

### **Peace, Tranquility, and User Experience**

5% of feedback related to the peace and tranquility of the site. Two survey takers said they thought the space didn't need anything else and one respondent advocated for a meditation area.

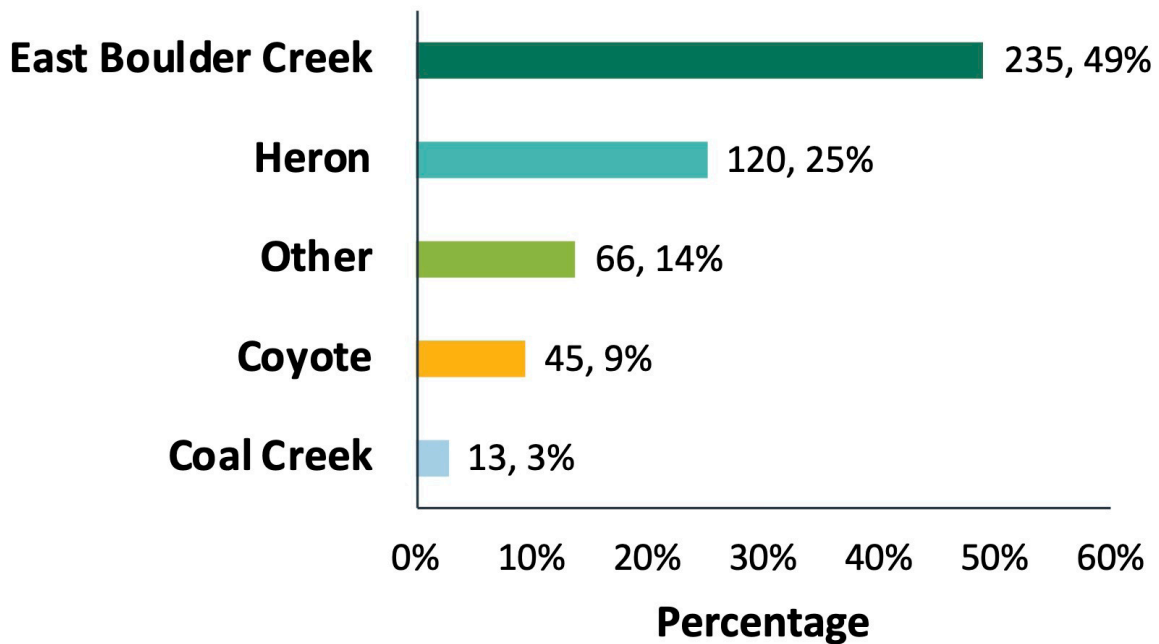
### **Education, Awareness, and Interpretation**

3% of comments said they'd like to see more educational signs or activities on the site.

## Question 5

Total Responses: 479  
Total Skipped: 24

What feature should be used in the future site name?



The examples provided below are alternative names proposed during the public engagement period.

- Jerosa Ranch Open Space
- Prairie Grove
- Great Blue Heron
- Meadowlark
- Mountain View Park

## Question 6

Total Responses: 158  
Total Skipped: 288

### Is there any other feedback you would like us to consider?

Within Question 6, several major themes emerged. Overall, participants were primarily concerned with environmental conservation, recreation, and access issues. Respondents had additional feedback on the naming of the site, ideas on public engagement in the proposed space, and future infrastructure and planning. Four comments were focused on the survey itself and 11 responses, or 10%, were unrelated to the site.

### Environmental Integrity and Conservation

32% of respondents to Question 6 discussed the importance of conservation, or called for general limitations on human impacts. Specific feedback concerned the conservation of certain species, including coyotes, herons, and prairie dogs. Other suggestions include using evidence-based approaches to manage the space, like utilizing wildlife surveys, the expertise of ecologists and biologists, and referencing the 1998 Lower Boulder Creek and Coal Creek Open Space Master Plan.

### Recreation and Access

28% of responses to Question 6 concerned recreational activities or access. Roughly 10 respondents requested different forms of recreation on the site, including birding, fishing, and equestrian access. Multiple respondents raised water access as a key issue at the site. Four respondents were in favor of open water access and including fishing and water recreation, and Six respondents specified they believed water and fishing access would negatively impact wildlife and ecosystems.

Several respondents also raised awareness of potential accessibility issues of the site and trails, and requested that management of the site take disability into account during design.

Survey takers were divided over multi-use trails, with multiple respondents expressing concerns over the impact of equestrian activities, e-bikes, and bike trails.

Two respondents wanted specialized programs like a “nature detective” initiative.

### Site Planning and Infrastructure

18% of the comments for this question provided input on infrastructure and planning for the site. These include requests for access points to the site, trails, and paths for recreational activities. Multiple respondents said that connecting any new trails to the existing network of trails in Boulder County was important to them. Other respondents requested amenities like public restrooms, water, and accessible parking lots.

Nine respondents to Question 6 said they wanted connections to other trail networks, walking trails, and infrastructure like boardwalks. Four respondents emphasized the need for diverse access to the site, including access in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act, or designated fishing and equestrian areas with parking and water.

### **Name Suggestions of Site**

9% of responses were about the future name of the site. Multiple respondents expressed concerns with the name Coal Creek, stating the name may confuse visitors because other locations in Boulder have the same name. Other survey takers said they wanted the site to be named after natural features or resident animals like herons or coyotes. Several respondents also requested exercising cultural sensitivity when naming the site, including involving local indigenous expertise and choosing names that represent diversity.

### **Public Engagement**

2% of responses requested the involvement of Arapaho tribal members and other local indigenous representatives in the management of the site. Some suggestions for this include signs written in Arapaho and providing historical context to how the land was previously used.

### **Survey Feedback**

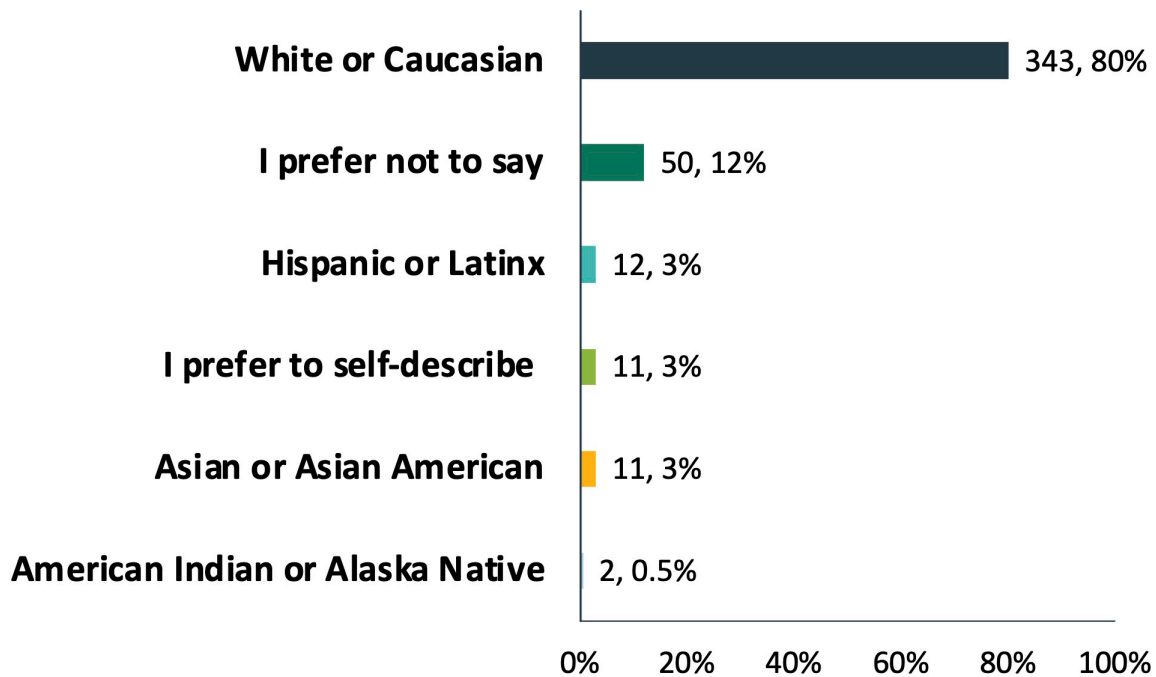
Four responses to Question 6 concerned the survey itself. These were as follows:

- “Your resident question is missing Weld County-town of Erie.”
- “Is this survey available in Spanish? Please make sure that people who speak Spanish as their first language/primary language can access this too.”
- “I was not clear on what an ‘off-trail area’ meant.”
- “I had issues with rankings as only two choices were available for picking- as a result my order of importance does not reflect my wishes.”

## Question 7

Total Responses: 429  
Total Skipped: 17

Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity?



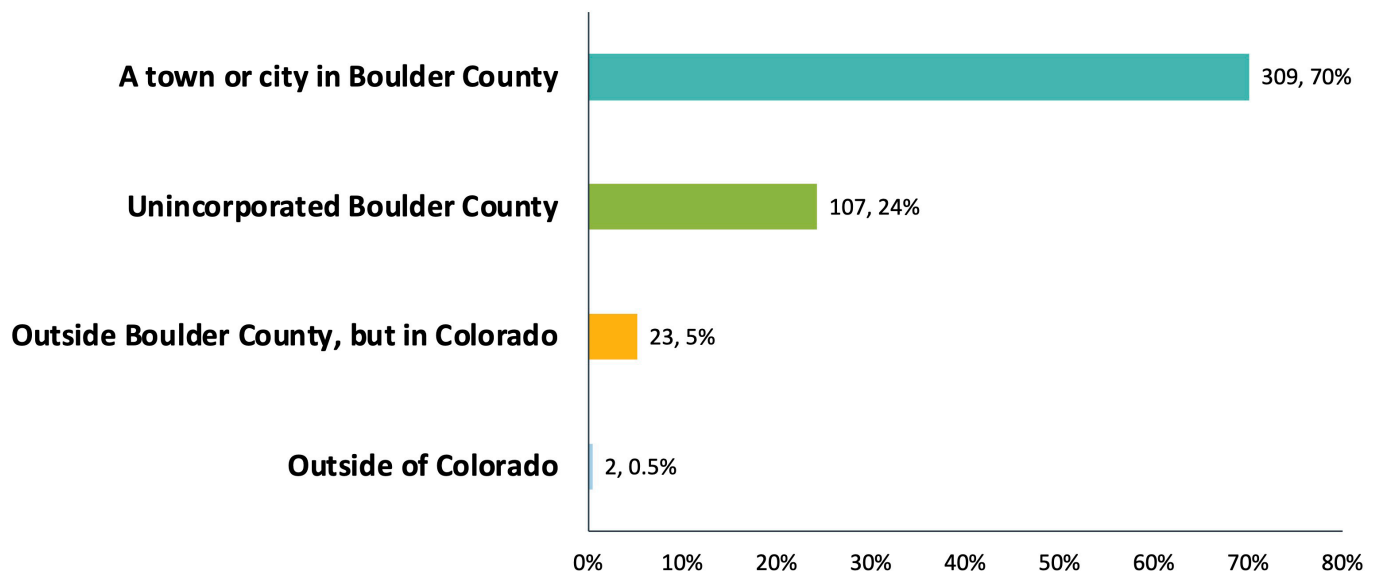
Answer Choices	Responses	
White or Caucasian	80%	343
I prefer not to answer	12%	50
Hispanic or Latinx	3%	12
Asian or Asian American	3%	11
I prefer to self describe	3%	11
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.5%	2
Total Respondents: 429		



## Question 8

Total Responses: 441  
Total Skipped: 5

Where do you live?



Answer Choices	Responses	
A town or city in Boulder County	70%	309
Unincorporated Boulder County	24%	107
Outside Boulder County, but in Colorado	5%	23
Outside of Colorado	0.5%	2
Total Respondents: 441		