

# Hughes Civic Assembly Community Engagement Summary

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# Executive Summary

This report is for the Information Committee (IC) for the Hughes Civic Assembly. It summarizes all community engagement data, but includes a more detailed summary to the question *“What community members, groups, or organizations should the Assembly hear from?”*

Instead of quantifying responses, this report is meant to identify the breadth and diversity of perspectives that exist in the community. Trends are identified, but measures of how many participants supported each trend are not. Findings are listed in alphabetical order, not based on popularity or frequency of responses.

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## Survey Summary

This analysis examines 1,126 survey responses regarding the future use of the former Hughes Stadium site in Fort Collins, Colorado. The survey was conducted from January to early March 2025.

Team members utilized OpenAI’s ChatGPT to perform a thematic analysis categorized responses into major themes, identifying key priorities and concerns, supported by representative quotes.

## Community Guide Summary

The data was collected during conversations hosted by 22 Community Guides. The resulting dataset includes 242 surveys and a notes document written by a Guide during a conversation with 25 individuals from the Native Community. Each comment was thematically coded by a team of researchers at the CPD. At least two coders completed an initial, grounded analysis of every response, working to identify the primary themes as they were expressed by respondents. A second round of coding was used to synthesize themes across the data. Members of the research team created memos for each primary theme, working to define the theme and identify relevant uses, benefits, concerns, and information needs. A final round of coding was conducted based on those values and proposals.

## Key Questions Asked:

- What principles should guide decisions on how to use the land?
- What types of development or activities would most benefit the community?
- What potential issues should be considered when planning the site’s future?
- What organizations or stakeholders should be involved in decision-making?
- If you could share one key point with decision-makers, what would it be?

# Community Members, Groups, & Organizations

## What organizations or stakeholders should be involved in decision-making?

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### Survey Summary

- **Arts & Cultural Organizations**

This suggests there may be interest in incorporating arts and cultural programming into the site's development.

**Common Sentiments:**

- *Input from the local arts council could help ensure that cultural spaces are considered in the site's future use.*

- **Business & Economic Development Groups**

Respondents noted that business organizations such as local chambers of commerce should be consulted.

**Common Sentiments**

- *Visit Fort Collins and local businesses should be engaged to explore economic benefits.*
- *Economic development groups should weigh in on how this site can contribute to the region's growth.*
- *Outdoor recreation businesses would have a perspective on how land use impacts local tourism.*
- *Need input from businesses that rely on public spaces to ensure a sustainable economic balance.*

- **Community Advocacy & Nonprofits**

Respondents mentioned local nonprofits and advocacy groups as important voices in shaping the site's future.

**Common Sentiments:**

- *It's important for the Civic Assembly to hear from groups that advocate for community-led projects.*
- *Organizations that work on public access and equity should have a voice in this decision.*
- *Neighborhood associations should be included to ensure local community needs are met.*
- *Need voices from groups that specialize in youth and community engagement.*

- **Educational Institutions**

Responses referenced Colorado State University (CSU) and other schools as key stakeholders, particularly for research, recreation, and student engagement.

**Common Sentiments:**

- *Colorado State University should have input, especially in sustainability and conservation efforts.*

- *CSU's cycling team and outdoor programs could contribute valuable insights on trail design and recreation.*
  - *School districts should be consulted to ensure this space can serve as an educational and community resource.*
- **Environmental Groups**

Respondents highlighted the importance of conservation organizations in ensuring that land use decisions prioritize environmental sustainability.

**Common Sentiments:**

  - *PATHS and/or the Fort Collins Natural Areas Department for guidance on preservation.*
  - *Environmental advocates like the Sierra Club and Nature Conservancy should be part of this discussion.*
  - *Local sustainability groups like Trees, Water & People should help shape this effort.*
  - *Wildlife conservation groups should have a role in protecting this critical habitat.*
- **Indigenous Groups**

Respondents advocated for engagement with Indigenous communities to honor the land's historical and cultural significance.

**Common Sentiments:**

  - *We should definitely include the Native American community in these discussions.*
  - *The site has historical significance, and local tribal councils should have a voice.*
  - *Indigenous-led environmental groups can provide insight into how to best steward this land.*
  - *This land has a history that should be honored through collaboration with Indigenous leaders.*
- **Local Government**

Responses indicated that City Council, Planning Departments, and County Government should play a role in guiding decision-making.

**Common Sentiments:**

  - *The city government and municipal planning teams should help ensure community input is implemented properly.*
  - *Fort Collins Natural Areas and Parks Department must be consulted to ensure responsible development.*
  - *The County Planning Commission should be involved to align with regional land-use priorities.*
  - *Elected officials must ensure transparency in decision-making regarding the Hughes site.*
- **Public Health Organizations**

Respondents suggested that public health professionals should be involved, emphasizing the potential wellness benefits of green space and outdoor recreation.

#### **Common Sentiments:**

- *Involve public health experts to design spaces that promote mental and physical well-being."*
- *A wellness-focused approach to this site could make it a model for active living.*

- **Recreational & Sports Groups**

These groups were recommended, particularly bike and trail organizations, reflecting community interest in outdoor recreation.

#### **Groups who can offer information:**

- *SendTown Bike Club, Overland Mountain Bike Club, and the Fort Collins Cycling community should be involved.*
- *We need to hear from local hiking and trail groups who understand sustainable outdoor recreation.*
- *Trail users and mountain bikers should be consulted to ensure multi-use accessibility.*
- *Local outdoor groups like Friends of Lory State Park can offer insights on responsible land use.*

#### **Community Guide Summary**

- Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Pawnee, Shoshone, Lakota, and Ute Peoples
- Audubon Society
- Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Colorado State University faculty
- CSU and high school cross-country running and Nordic ski teams
- CSU Native American Cultural Center
- Environmental Learning Center
- Fort Collins Bike Park Collective
- Fort Collins Discovery Museum
- Fort Collins Hiking Club
- Fort Collins Nordic
- Fort Collins Recreation Department
- Fort Collins Running Club
- Gardens at Spring Creek
- Local Artists
- Local farmers
- Local Indigenous community members and spiritual leaders
- Local Park Rangers
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Northern Colorado Wildlife Center

- Overland Mountain Bike Association
- PATHS (Planning Action to Transform Hughes Sustainably)
- Poudre Canyon Sierra Club
- Residents living near the site
- Send Town Bike Club
- The Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program
- TiyoSPAye Winyan Maka
- Tribal representatives
- Wolfpack (Kids bike club)

# Values

What principles should guide decisions on how to use the land?

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## **Survey Summary**

- Community and Accessibility Values
- Preservation-Oriented Values
- Recreation and Activity-Driven Values

## **Community Guide Summary**

- Accessibility
- Access to Nature
- Affordability & Economic Impact
- Community
- Education
- Environmental Sustainability
- Health
- Inclusion
- Native Rights
- Preservation
- Safety

## **Tensions and Overlaps**

While these clusters represent distinct priorities, there is notable overlap and tension between them. Many respondents support a balance between conservation and recreation, advocating for a low-impact, multi-use approach that integrates trails and gathering areas while maintaining ecological integrity. However, more recreation-heavy proposals sometimes conflict with the strict conservation perspective that seeks to minimize human disturbance.

# Suggested Uses for the Hughes Site

What types of development or activities would most benefit the community?

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## **Survey Summary:**

- **Community & Event Gathering Spaces:** Respondents suggested using the site for public gatherings, cultural events, or an amphitheater-style venue.
- **Conservation & Wildlife Preservation:** Respondents emphasized keeping the Hughes site as a natural area, either as an undeveloped open space or a protected wildlife habitat.

- **Dedicated Bike Park & Trail Network:** Responses called for a bike park or an expansion of bike trails. The emphasis was on mountain biking, BMX tracks, and trail riding, reflecting the popularity of cycling in the region.
- **Educational & Research Facilities:** Responses referenced CSU and other educational institutions as potential partners in research, conservation, or recreation management.
- **Indigenous-Led Stewardship & Cultural Preservation:** Respondents suggested that the Hughes site should be formally recognized for its Indigenous history and potentially returned to tribal stewardship.
- **Recreational & Outdoor Activity Hub:** Responses suggested transforming the Hughes site into a public park or outdoor recreation area.

#### **Community Guide Summary:**

- **Bike Park:** Residents who support a bike park hope to create a space that will provide opportunities for bike recreation and skill development.
- **Environmental & Agricultural Sustainability:** Participants who support uses focused on environmental and agricultural sustainability highlight the pressing needs posed by climate change and a desire to use the site to boost the city's long-term sustainability.
- **Indigenous Stewardship:** Community members who supported Indigenous stewardship demonstrated a desire for Native communities to have a say in how the land is managed and used, a space for Native communities to practice ceremonies or public events, and a return of the land to its natural state.
- **Mixed-Use:** Conversation participants often discussed ways that individual proposals might be combined with their preferred usage, but some specifically proposed the site should be a mixed-use space, suggesting that it could be used simultaneously for outdoor recreation, ecological preservation, and community education.
- **Natural Space:** Participants who supported natural space centered options that would help to preserve nature and wildlife and allow low-impact use, though they differed on their preferred levels of development for the site.
- **Trails:** Across the data, many conversation participants advocate for the addition of trails to the site.
- **Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Conversation participants advocated that the site, or a portion of it, be used for wildlife habitat, rescue, and rehabilitation.

## **Community Concerns**

**What potential issues should be considered when planning the site's future?**

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*\* The survey analysis summarized general concerns that appeared in the data, whereas the Community Guide analysis noticed the specific concerns for each suggested use of the Hughes Site.*



### **Survey Summary:**

- **Crime & Safety:** Respondents raised concerns about safety, security, and the potential for vandalism or crime if the site were developed without proper oversight.
- **Environmental Impact:** Respondents expressed concern that development — whether for recreation, housing, or other uses — could negatively impact the local ecosystem, wildlife habitats, and the surrounding natural landscape.
- **Equity & Accessibility:** Responses highlighted concerns about ensuring that whatever is built on the site is accessible to all members of the community, including low-income residents and those with disabilities.
- **Noise Pollution:** Concerns about excessive noise from recreational facilities or large public gatherings were commonly raised.
- **Opposition to Housing Development:** Respondents specifically voiced opposition to using the site for housing, arguing that it was not an appropriate location or that it would lead to overdevelopment.
- **Overuse & Traffic:** Concerns were raised about potential overcrowding, increased traffic, and insufficient infrastructure to support an influx of visitors.
- **Water Usage & Sustainability:** Responses expressed concern about the environmental sustainability of potential developments, particularly regarding water use.

### **Community Guide Summary:**

- **Bike Park:** Some participants expressed concerns about the infrastructure required for a substantial bike park and suggested that it would require high-impact development that was inconsistent with the intent of the ballot measure.
- **Environmental & Agricultural Sustainability:** Participants who support uses focused on environmental and agricultural sustainability highlight the pressing needs posed by climate change and a desire to use the site to boost the city's long-term sustainability.
- **Indigenous Stewardship:** Some participants expressed concerns about the space being designated for a single use rather than being accessible to the wider community.
- **Mixed-Use:** Some residents are concerned that breaking the land up into smaller pieces will be disruptive to other purposes, such as the establishment of natural areas or wildlife habitats.
- **Natural Space:** Some residents worry that the site is not suitable for the public as is and that returning it to natural space that can be accessed and used by the community would require significant cost to rid the area of invasive species and construction debris.
- **Trails:** Some residents expressed concerns about high-impact trails that might interfere with ecological restoration or wildlife habitat.

- **Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Residents at times expressed concerns about placing permanent buildings and extensive infrastructure at the site through the addition of a Wildlife Campus or permanent buildings.