



Community Conversations

Communications with Residents

Report issued August 2017

Background

- In spring 2017, the Town conducted a quantitative survey of residents and businesses.
- Over 450 survey participants agreed to participate in a follow-up online community.
- The community ran for six weeks and covered these topics:
 - Value of Services / Property Taxes
 - Growth / Managing Growth
 - Sense of Community / Small Town Character
 - Parks Department / Development at Rueter-Hess Reservoir
 - The Town's Water Supply
- Residents were asked to participate in 1-2 activities per week.

Reporting Notes

- Themes introduced in this report are gathered from discussions with residents of Castle Rock.
- Items noted are opinions only; themes and quotations in the report are not meant to convey facts. Rather, they are meant to convey opinions and beliefs as expressed by the residents.
- Text displayed in all italics represents direct quotes from community members. These quotes were selected as representative examples of common themes seen while discussing the specific subject.

Focus Area 1

Value of Services

Quality and Value of Services: Summary

The 2017 Community Survey revealed some disparity between the quality of services and the value of services. The first Focus Area was designed to explore this.

- Overall, focus group participants generally think that Castle Rock offers high-quality services.
 - Snow removal and traffic congestion management were mentioned as lower quality services.
- However, some participants believe that taxes and cost of living are going up, but they are not seeing a correlating improvement in services.
- Some participants said they would like to see more transparency on how their money is being spent.

Quality and Value of Services

- While most participants agree that the Town is doing a good job of providing services, there are a few areas for improvement.
 - The most commonly mentioned improvement regards providing more information about how money is being spent.

I have noticed on the other hand that my taxes have consistently gone up without me getting any more "service". It doesn't make sense to me that my taxes need to go up as more and more people move into the area. Shouldn't taxes stay about the same or go down with more people paying into the pot? So from a "value of services provided" standpoint the reason it has gone down is because we're paying more yet getting the same service.

I think that increasing transparency isn't a bad idea, but it may not move the needle on increasing the satisfaction on the perceived value of services for tax dollars paid in my opinion. I agree with some of the other sentiments; that I feel like I am paying more in taxes but not really seeing an increase or advancement in the services that I value most.

I think the quality versus value perception has a lot to do with the overall perception of the state of the economy. While quality of life is likely perceived by many to be high in an relatively affluent town like Castle Rock, the cost of living has steadily increased overall for many people. So it's somewhat intuitive to feel as though you're not receiving sufficient value when the costs begin to outweigh the perceived reward in general within our economy. So this notion is probably reflected on the town of Castle Rock as well, where people are enjoying and are mostly satisfied with the overall quality, only it's difficult to assign significant value to those services when everything incrementally becomes more expensive, whether those be goods or services from the town, or from the retailers and merchants within it.

Quality and Value of Services, continued

 Participants generally agree that fire and police are the most highly valued services. Less visible services were seen as lower in value.

In my opinion, high-value services benefit the most people and help keep the town running – e.g., fire, police, emergency services, water, sewer, road maintenance, etc. But those can be "dull." It's things like parks, rec centers, special events, etc., that really add the "pizzazz" to a town.

As Town management, I think the need is to ensure value (costs v benefits, bang for your buck, however you put it) is present for basic needs first then move onto examination of the value of desired programs like parks/open space, retail, restaurants, community events, etc.

I think the police and fire services are awesome. (high value) I've never lived anywhere where I see them everywhere I go. I think the snow plowing (high value) could be improved as there are many times the plows never hit our neighborhood. I think the community events (movie in the street, etc.) are a medium value (nice to have) but we enjoy them. I think the lowest value is the administration but it's also more behind the scenes.

Quality and Value of Services, continued

 Nearly all participants were not aware of the town's property tax calculator. Exploring this information resulted in a positive change in their perception of value.

1) Did not know this tool existed, 2) Knowing how much of my property tax goes to the town, this does impact my thoughts on the value received and it's definitely more favorable and, 3) The breakdown of where our money goes through the tool was easy to read, perhaps if you breakdown in a simple chart how much goes to fire, police, parks, rec, etc. it would help all know how our tax dollars were being used, or maybe this already exists?

I've never seen that before and am actually stunned at the distribution and how little the town receives...I would honestly evaluate a request from the town for an increase differently having seen/known this information.

 While generally positive, some expressed shock at the "metro district" taxes.

Thank you for the link to the tool. It's crazy that we're pumping so much money into the "metro districts" and less into schools.

The town should do more to protect homeowners from Metro District taxes. A couple ideas are--cap the mills, require builders to disclose the metro district tax on a form that buyers actually read, etc.

Focus Area 2

Growth

Growth: Summary

The 2017 Community Survey showed that growth-related issues continue to be the biggest challenges facing the town. Yet, residents rated "managing" growth as the lowest out of the town's eight priorities. The second Focus Area was designed to explore this.

- Despite a lower quantitative rating in the community survey, focus group participants generally agree that managing growth should be a top priority.
 - The participants believe it is important that infrastructure keeps up with growth.
- Some participants who have not seen a plan for growth said they would like to.
- The biggest fear with growth is losing community character; concerns also exist about inadequate infrastructure.

Growth as a Priority

- Participants said they see managing growth as a top priority.
 - In response to why growth was ranked relatively low, participants said they thought
 it is because most people want to see it stopped, or that it is taking the Town in the
 wrong direction.

I think that people put managing growth as a bottom priority because they want the growth to stop.

I don't think they want it to be managed as much as they want it to be stopped.

I do believe that "Managing Growth" is essential to taking the town in the right direction. However, I believe that the way growth is actually happening is taking the town in the wrong direction, in terms of quality of life:

too much traffic, perpetual construction, etc.

For me, managing the growth is important but I didn't feel the city was "managing it very well". In my opinion, there needs to be a balance between trying to attract so many businesses with tax breaks and keeping the residents happy.

Planning for Growth

- Most participants said they have <u>not</u> seen the Town's plans for growth.
 - Those who have seen a plan are happier with the growth.

I have seen both the town's plans, and the plans for Castle Rock Development company (The Meadows).

I looked at them before I bought, and I follow their revisions. From what I've seen, development has been proceeding very much in line with those plans. I can't tell you how many people I've heard scream "uncontrolled growth" only to find out that they never looked at either the town's plans, nor the developer's plans before buying/building.

I have seen the plan, and I also know that more is not always better when it comes to information. Sometimes it's better to get it in pieces rather than one huge bite to swallow...I wanted to live in a small town like the one I grew up in...but this is what I have discovered. Without growth you die, if a community stays small with the attitude of we don't want anymore people, then growth and financial growth (–) along with greater benefits to that community (–) will go somewhere else and the town dies. I want better opportunities for my children, so they don't have to move away!

I wish I would have seen the plan before buying. Our realtor had said Castle Rock was a great choice because they were only going to be developing more commercially and not residential. I guess shame on us for not looking further into it ourselves and trusting her word. I just really loved the feel of Castle Rock as it currently stood. I feel that if we are only 42% developed then we probably won't stay here for long. We moved here for a smaller town feel and for open space. We loved the beauty, charm, and small town community feel of Castle Rock.

Focus Area 3

Community Character

Community Character: Summary

Having strong community character is important to the Town, and the 2017 Community Survey showed that residents' ratings for community character have been decreasing. This focus area was to explore ways for the Town to strengthen this attribute.

- Most participants said they fear that Castle Rock is losing its community character with growth.
- Participants think that through events and maintaining open space, Castle Rock can maintain its character and have a sense of community.
 - Overwhelmingly, participants liked the idea of "hyper-local" events such as a neighborhood block party but think the Town needs to take an active role in organizing.

Small Town Character

- Most participants said they moved to Castle Rock for its small-town feel.
 - Participants fear that with growth, the Town will lose that character.

My family came from a small town (Buena Vista) 5 years ago. As each year passes, Castle Rock loses the "small town feel". We originally selected this area to live in because it was smaller and had that feel until development became the #1 priority. Growth has started to get way out of control.

And planning has be(en) reactionary instead of proactive.

Small town means small town. That is what everyone is moving here for. Our new neighbors are actually very disappointed to hear that more development will be taking our small town away from all of us.

Some participants think it is possible to maintain a small town feel and have growth.

I believe that "small town character" is not synonymous with "small town population". If you're going to try to restrict growth believing that it will somehow instill a stronger sense of small town character, I think you'll fail to achieve your goal. With appropriate emphasis on safety, open space/activities, and availability of goods/services, I think the town can maintain the characteristics of small town character regardless of population.

I grew up in a town of less than 800 people, and small town feel is downtown events, genuine customer service, and business support of the kids and schools in town.

Sense of Community

- Some focus group members believe the sense of community in Castle Rock is declining.
 - They think that having events and maintaining open space are important to preserving community character.

I think it has declined, but naturally because of population increase. More open space or preserving it is so important so we aren't feeling that everywhere we turn is another neighborhood of house on top of each other. Our downtown events are our favorite things as a family, and keeping them fun, low key and meaningful, without vendor overload could be helpful.

I think the rapid growth of Castle Rock is hurting its sense of community. More events and additional open spaces might help people feel like they have a lot of things to do in their town, and would help the newer residents have more opportunity to mingle with existing ones.

 Many participants are in strong support of "hyper-local" events such as neighborhood block parties, but think the Town needs to take an active role.

Our neighborhood could really use something like this [Greely Block Party Guide]. Nobody comes out and talks anymore.

What a great idea! We enjoy so many of our neighbors (that talk and go out of their house). The way I see the Town may be able to help is just advertising it and sign-up site. We should be able to pull together and pitch in food, games, etc. where not much money would be needed from the town.

Focus Area 4

Parks and Recreation

Parks: Summary

During the 2017 Community Survey, residents were asked if residents preferred development of neighborhood or regional parks. This focus area asked residents to go more in-depth on parks priorities.

- Participants think that both neighborhood and regional parks are important.
 - Many said they would like to see more interconnectivity between the park systems.

Priorities of the Parks Department

- Participants believe that both neighborhood and regional parks are vital to the community.
 - However, there was a slight preference for neighborhood parks.

I like having both. I think having the regional parks allows those close by to connect within their neighborhoods but the Mac and festival bring together the entire community.

There's a purpose for each. The regional park provides the venue for community events and more involved activities, but the neighborhood parks provide a place for baseball games and picnics.

I preferred neighborhood parks. It is in those neighborhood parks where community can be truly formed. That is where you meet neighbors and can really connect with people who live around you.

 Many participants would like to see greater connectivity between parks via a trail system.

My request would be further connecting these various parks with more trails (specifically from Plum Creek to Crystal Valley!) so a family could, in theory, ride bikes from home, to the MAC, to a neighborhood park or downtown.

Focus Area 5

Development at Rueter-Hess Reservoir

Rueter-Hess Reservoir: Summary

Development of the Rueter-Hess Reservoir was ranked as a top choice for parks and rec development during the 2017 Community Survey. However, the survey did not explain that the main purpose of the reservoir is water storage and that all development must be "passive and serene." This focus area was split into two parts:

First: Residents were asked what types of development the would like to see.

- Participants said they would like to see more activities added to the reservoir.
 - Camping, hiking, and kayaking were frequently mentioned.

Second: The primary purpose of the reservoir was explained, and residents were asked if and how this knowledge changed their thoughts.

- After learning the purpose of the reservoir, some community members no longer thought developing the reservoir should be the top priority compared to other Parks and Recreation needs.
 - They believe that resources should be used to preserve open space and add trail systems.

Developing the Rueter-Hess Reservoir

- While some people want amenities like boat launches, etc., many like the idea of trails, camping, picnic areas, etc.
 - Restricting motorized boats appeared to be a pretty popular idea.

Picnic/campgrounds, kayak and/or Stand Up Paddleboard rentals/lessons would be awesome!

Paved trails around the lake would be great, along with campgrounds and picnic areas.

Love the idea of Paddleboard rentals/lessons!

I would like to see no power boats. Fishing, camping, and swimming areas with human-powered water craft only.

Rueter-Hess Reservoir as a Top Priority

- After learning the purpose of the reservoir, most community members no longer thought that developing the reservoir should be the top priority as indicated by the 2017 Community Survey.
 - Instead, those participants said they believe the Parks Department should focus on acquiring open space.

Now knowing the purpose of the Reservoir, I don't think this should be a priority for Parks and Rec, especially because thinking about the use for drinking water, I'm not crazy about all kinds of people being out there in the water, even if the use is limited and somewhat controlled.

I would not support any development of the reservoir if its primary purpose is drinking water.

A better use of town funds would be to buy private land and dedicate it as permanent open space.

 Even after leaning the purpose of the reservoir, many community members still supported the idea of walking trails around the reservoir.

I think a paved trail system around the lake would garner the same high usage seen at other reservoirs (e.g., Cherry Creek) and be within the scope of purpose of the reservoir.

I think a paved trail system around would still be a nice thing to enjoy without changing the integrity of the water.

Focus Area 6

The Town's Water Plan

Long-Term Water: Summary

The 2017 Community Survey showed that one-third of residents do not know enough about the town's water plan to make an informed decision regarding the adequacy of the plan. The purpose of this focus area was to understand what residents do know about the water plan and explore ways to better inform them.

- Participants' consensus was that residents are uninterested in Castle Rock's water plan.
 - Many members did not understand how the water issues impacted them specifically.
- Many participants think the Town needs to do a better job communicating the water plan, especially to younger residents.
- Some community members liked the idea of alternative water conservation efforts, like xeriscaping.
- Many community members blamed growth and development for the water problems.

Long-Term Water Supply

- Participants said they believe that residents are uninterested in the Town's water plan and that better public outreach is needed.
 - Participants believe the water plan is not personally relevant.

Just the topic, "water plan", is enough to make many people shut off. In addition, to many people, if not most, the towns water plan is, "water every three days". So the core reason people don't know about the plan is that it isn't personal and urgent to them. There are many sources of information about the plan, but little reason for residents to investigate it.

"Water Plan" does turn people off. I can attest that I know nothing about the towns water plan other than we can water every three days. I think that it would be beneficial to reach out to the younger families and technically savvy groups that are around today to get information out in other facets than just mailers....those are always thrown away and never seen (at least in my house).

My suggestion...build a more basic, picture oriented description of the water system, the plan and how it is influenced by politics. Maybe it's available online, or maybe in the water bills. I figure if an 6th grader can figure it out, you're on the right path...although I may have to have mine explain it to me!

Long-Term Water Supply, continued

Many participants were in support of alternative water conservation efforts.

The town should exercise what power it can to override the [HOA] covenants that mandate front lawns, in order to allow alternate landscaping that would be equally attractive.

We had long heard that Douglas County had water problems, so when our new Castle Rock home was built, we vowed to landscape in a Xeriscaping fashion; this we accomplished.

As individual citizens, we have a responsibility to conserve.

 Some participants blame new developments for water issues and think water conservation efforts are unfair.

Seeing that we are getting letters from CRGov asking us to cut back even more (they won't say this is because of all the new development is depleting the water source "in record amounts"). I only see the new water source being for new developments. So...we are not tapping that water source for years, while new development is once again, asking its current residents to sacrifice in the name of development.

It's a bit hypocritical for the Town to raise concerns about long-term water conservation with existing residents, against the backdrop of runaway residential and commercial development going on.

Conclusions

Conclusions: Central Themes

- Focus group participants are satisfied with the quality of services being offered, but some think that the value of services is going down and would like more transparency in how their tax dollars are being spent.
- Growth remains a top concern among those focus group participants who believe Castle Rock is losing its community character; many would like to see more events and additional open space to preserve a sense of community.
- Parks and open space are important to participants, some of whom would like to see more trail systems connecting parks.
 - Because its primary purpose is water storage, many community members think developing the Rueter-Hess Reservoir is a lower priority than other areas for recreational investment.
- Participants believe the town needs to improve how it communicates its water plan, especially to younger residents.



Appendix I

Activity Details

Focus Area 1: Value of Services

Overall Objective(s)

Understand the disparity on how residents feel regarding the quality of services vs. the value of services for tax dollar paid.

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary	
Start: 06/20/2017	Blog (private)	Have the participants introduce themselves.	
Start: 06/20/2017	Discussion	[SHOW RESULTS FROM REPORT: Quality of Services and Value of Services questions.] In the survey, we had asked two questions related to services provided by the Town. The first question was: "How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the Town of Castle Rock". The second question was: "Thinking about services and facilities in Castle Rock, do you feel you are getting your money's worth for your tax dollar or not?" The charts below show the results for these two questions. As you can see, quality of services is fairly high and has remained so between 2015 and 2017. However, value of services is lower, and ratings have decreased when compared to 2015. This was an interesting finding, and we wanted to dig into this a bit and ask why. The first thing we wanted to explore is the difference between Quality and Value. When	
		thinking about Town Services, what is the difference between providing high-quality services and offering good value of services for tax dollar paid? Why do you think that Quality is fairly high and steady while Value has decreased?	
Start: 06/22/2017	Discussion	Now, to delve in a little bit more can you provide some specific examples of services that offer high <u>value</u> and others that offer low <u>value</u> . What, specifically, makes these services high vs. low value for tax dollar paid? For those that you consider low value, what could the Town do to improve this?	

Figure 5: Overall Quality of Services Provided by Castle Rock

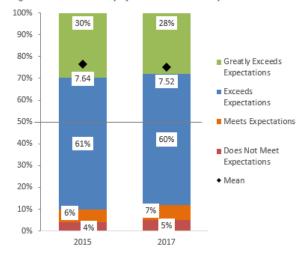
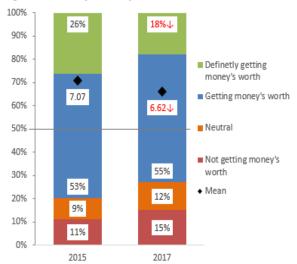


Figure 11: Value of Services for Tax Dollars Paid



Focus Area 1: Value of Services (2)

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary
Start: 06/26/2017	Discussion	This is an unplanned activity! While reading responses to the Quality vs. Value topic, we noticed several of you discussing the "ambiguity" regarding tax dollars and where they go. Well, we can answer that question! The owner of a home valued at \$300,000 only pays the Town around \$35-40 in property taxes for the entire year.
		You don't have to take my word for it, you can find this information on your own.
		Go to http://crgov.com/propertytax , then search for your address. (You can also access this by going to CRgov.com, clicking "Transparency" then "Property Tax Calculator.") The resulting page will provide a break out of your property taxes, showing how much goes to which entity. I have three questions:
		-Did you know that this tool existed? What do you think it, did you find it interesting?
		-Now that you know how much of your property tax goes to the Town, does this impact your thoughts on the value received for the tax dollar paid?
		-What could the Town do to be more transparent regarding the collection and use of your tax dollars?

Focus Area 2: Growth as a Concern vs. Priority

Overall Objective(s)

Understand how residents experience growth in Castle Rock and why they rated "Managing growth" as the lowest priority in the 2017 survey.

Pursuing economic Managing growt development

growth		west priority in the 2017 survey.	ure 13: Town Priorities
Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary	7.95 7.84 7.37 7.29
Start: 06/26/2017	Discussion	During the survey we asked you the following question: "The Town's 2017 Budget identifies eight key priorities. For each priority shown, please indicate if you believe that it will lead the Town in the right or wrong direction — Managing Growth". The results of the survey showed that Managing Growth received the lowest score — in terms of leading the Town in the right direction — out of the eight key priorities. We found this odd, given that Growth was the top issue facing the Town. Given that Growth is such a large issue facing the Town, we were curious as to why Managing Growth received such a low score. Would you help enlighten us as to what you were thinking when answering these questions?	6.89
Start: 06/29/2017	Discussion	For all intents and purposes, Castle Rock is only 42 percent developed. As of 2017, there were just over 19,000 households, excluding apartments, in Castle Rock. According to land entitlement laws, that number is expected to expand to over 45,000 households over the next few decades. I noticed that several of you expressed beliefs that the Town is experiencing "uncontrolled growth" and that the Town is being reactive rather than being proactive. This led to discussions as to the existence and adequacy of the Town's plan for managing growth. Have you seen a plan? If you have, what do you think	

of it? Does it provide enough information? If you have not seen a plan, what

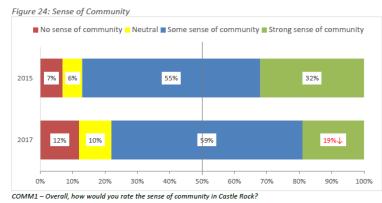
type of information would you like the plan to include?

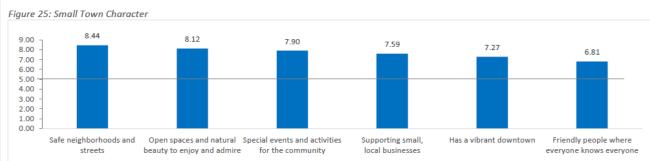
Focus Area 3: Community Character

Overall Objective(s)

 Ask for ideas on how to retain / improve Castle Rock's community character as the Town continues to grow.

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	De Activity Summary	
Start: 07/10/2017	Discussion	[SHOW RESULTS FROM SENSE OF COMMUNITY] Residents and Town leaders are in agreement that it is important for the Town to maintain a strong sense of community and small-town character as the Town grows. The recent survey results shown indicate that residents' sense of community has been decreasing when compared to 2015. Do you believe this is the case? Why is that? What can the Town do to maintain a strong sense of community? Would the acquisition of additional open spaces or more community events help? Would something else do a better job? Please provide specific examples of things you think would improve the sense of community.	
Start: 07/13/2017	Discussion	[SHOW RESULTS FROM SMALL TOWN CHARACTER] Another item discussed in the 2017 survey was attributes that help the Town maintain its "small town character." The survey results are presented below, but we want to give you the opportunity to discuss the concept of "small town character" freely. What does "small town character" mean to you, personally? What things can the Town focus on to maintain the small-town feel?	





COMM3 - For each of the following statements please indicate how well you feel it describes small town character

Focus Area 3: Community Character

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary	
Start: 07/17/2017	Discussion	While discussing Small Town Character and Sense of Community many of you mentioned the continuation of special events and preservation of open spaces. These are two things that the Town sees as priorities and is continuing to improve upon so we wanted to ask something a bit "out there" and to see what interesting ideas you may have. Putting aside open spaces and special events for a few moments, what are some ways that the Town can maintain or improve on the sense of community? What can Castle Rock do to differentiate itself from other Front Range Communities?	
Start: 07/19/2017		There was an interesting theme tossed about last week. What occurred to us was this concept of smaller, more regular activities that are more focused on neighborhoods. We are curiouswhat is preventing YOU from hosting a block party or forming a neighborhood sports team?	
	Discussion	Is there something the Town could do to help?	
		The City of Greeley has a How to Throw a Neighborhood Block Party guide	
		Would this be useful? Would you use it?	

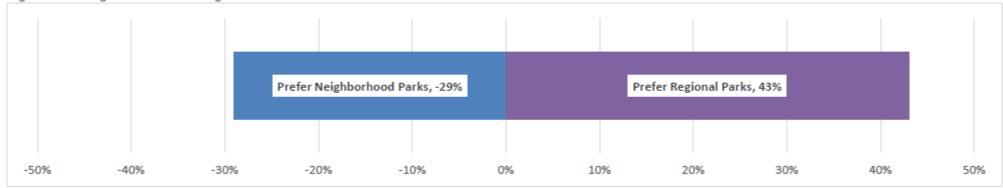
Focus Area 4: Priorities for the Parks Department

Overall Objective(s)

Understand why people prefer regional vs neighborhood parks

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary		
Start: 07/17/2017	Discussion	[SHOW RESULTS FROM PREFERRED TYPES OF PARKS] The survey revealed that residents prefer the development of regional parks such as Philip S. Miller Park over walkable neighborhood parks such as Bison or Matney parks. On which side of the issue did you land? Why?		





PARK10 – The Town is responsible for two types of parks, neighborhood parks such as Bison or Matney Park, and regional parks such as Philip S. Miller Park. Which of the two types of parks should the Town prioritize over the next several years? Base: All Residents – EXCLUDES "Neutral / No preference" responses.

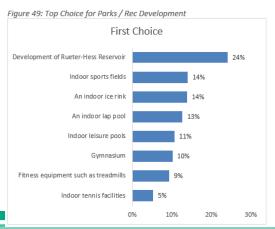
Focus Area 5: Development at Rueter-Hess

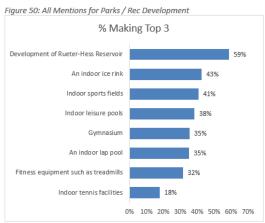
Reservoir

Overall Objective(s)

- Explain the purpose and limitations of Rueter-Hess Reservoir
- Understand expectations on developing the reservoir

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary
Start: 07/24/2017	Discussion	[DO NOT EXPLAIN LIMITATIONS – THIS SHOULD BE UNBIASED] Development of Rueter-Hess Reservoir was listed as the number one priority for the parks and recreation department. What types of development did you have in mind?
Start: 07/27/2017	Discussion	The primary purpose of Rueter-Hess Reservoir is to store drinking water. As such, any development must be, "passive and serene." This means that motorized watercraft will not be allowed. Additionally, privately owned water vessels will not be allowed; visitors will need to rent vessels provided at the watershed. This is to protect the Town's source of drinking water. Knowing this information, do you still think that development of Rueter-Hess Reservoir should be a top priority for the Town's Parks and Recreation Department? Why / why not? How do your thoughts regarding the TYPE of development change?





Focus Area 6: The Town's Water Plan

Overall Objective(s)

- Understand what residents know about the Town's long-term water issues and plans
- Figure out best ways to inform residents regarding the Town's water issues and plans

Start/Stop Date	Activity Type	Activity Summary
Start: 07/31/2017		In 2015 and 2017, the Town asked residents to describe their feelings regarding long-term water issues in Castle Rock. In both surveys, one-third of residents said they do not know enough about the issue to make an informed decision. Why do you think that is?
	Discussion	What do you know about the Town's long-term water issues? What do you know about the Town's plan's to address ongoing water needs?
		Finally, what could the Town do to inform you about the current problems and solutions being worked on?

