



TO: Denver City Council Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Chris Herndon, Chair
FROM: Lilly Djanians, CPD Planning Services
DATE: March 23, 2022
RE: Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment

Community Planning and Development is pleased to submit the Planning Board draft of the Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment for your final consideration and approval as a supplement to Comprehensive Plan 2040.

The Denver Planning Board and City Council unanimously approved the current 2019 adopted Far Northeast Area Plan in May and June of 2019 respectively. That plan set a holistic vision and recommendations for each Far Northeast neighborhood and will continue to provide guidance and support for years to come. However, a plan amendment was necessary for a greenfield site at the northeast corner of the DIA neighborhood to accommodate market demands in the area that have evolved since the Plan's adoption. The boundary of the amendment was identified by the Large Development Review framework, and are Argonne St to the west, Himalaya St to the east, 72nd Ave to the north, and High Point Blvd to the south.

This memorandum describes the contents of the proposed plan amendment and documents the process to develop it based on the three criteria for small area plan adoption established in Comprehensive Plan 2040:

1. An inclusive community process was used to develop the plan amendment.
2. The plan amendment is consistent with the vision, goals, and strategies of Comprehensive Plan 2040.
3. The plan amendment demonstrates a long-term view.

The memo concludes with the staff recommendation to the Denver Planning Board.

1. Inclusive Community Process

The Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment is based on a robust six-month public engagement process, as described below:

- **Steering Committee-** The Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment was guided and informed by a reconvened 5-person Steering Committee made up of members from the previous 20-person Steering Committee that guided development of the original plan. The smaller reconvened committee was identified with the aid of the City Council president and member Stacie Gilmore (District 11). Participants represented neighborhood and community organizations, non-profits, businesses, and property owners. The Committee met twice during the 6-month planning process. Members provided feedback and input that shaped recommendations and language that is proposed to be added to the 2019 adopted plan by this proposed amendment.
- **Public Meetings-** The planning team held two virtual public meetings, with an average attendance of 30 people. The feedback provided by the community was incorporated as additional recommendations.

- **Communications and Additional Outreach-** Promotion of the Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment process and advertisement of meetings, surveys, and draft plans was conducted by CPD Communications.
 - Outreach methods included email distribution, media releases, website information, social media, the Neighborhood Planning Initiative newsletter, and additional outreach through City Council offices.
 - Project information, agendas, meeting materials, draft content, and announcements were posted to www.denvergov.org/FarNortheastPlan
 - An executive summary of the plan, website content, meeting materials, and all Steering Committee presentations and meeting summaries were translated into Spanish.

Finding: The Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment was developed through an inclusive public process.

2. Plan Consistency

Small area plans must be consistent with Comprehensive Plan 2040. Because it is a key supplement to the comprehensive plan and provides specific guidance for the Neighborhood Planning Initiative, a consistency analysis is also provided for Blueprint Denver, below.

Comprehensive Plan 2040

The Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment remains consistent with the originally met goals and strategies found in Comprehensive Plan 2040. Additionally, the amendment makes the plan consistent with several additional Comprehensive Plan goals and recommendations, including diversifying the area economy, providing employment opportunities for young residents and advancing climate-appropriate vegetation on private property. This new plan guidance has been highlighted in [cyan text](#).

EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE, AND INCLUSIVE

Goal 1: Ensure all Denver residents have safe, convenient, and affordable access to basic services and a variety of amenities.

- A. Increase development of housing units close to transit and mixed-use developments.
- B. Implement a high-quality, affordable and accessible multi-modal transportation system.
- C. Improve equitable access to resources that improve quality of life, including cultural and natural amenities, health care, education, parks, recreation, nutritious food and the arts.
- D. Improve equitable access to city resources and city meetings through proactive and transparent communications, easy-to-access information and materials available in more than one language.

Goal 2: Build housing as a continuum to serve residents across a range of incomes, ages and needs.

- A. Create a greater mix of housing options in every neighborhood for all individuals and families.

Goal 3: Develop housing that is affordable to residents of all income levels.

- D. Develop and promote programs to help individuals and families, especially those most vulnerable to displacement, access affordable housing

Goal 4: Preserve existing affordable housing.

- A. Expand existing tools, such as tax relief programs, to preserve the long-term affordability of housing throughout Denver.

Goal 5: Reduce the involuntary displacement of residents and businesses.

- A. Advance a comprehensive approach to mitigating involuntary displacement that includes expanding economic mobility, creating new affordable housing and preserving existing affordability.
- B. Stabilize residents and businesses at risk of displacement through programs and policies that help them to stay in their existing community

Goal 6: Integrate equity considerations into city policies, processes and plans.

- A. Adopt strategies to ensure that city plans and processes, including budget decisions, incorporate equity.
- B. Track the information and measure the data needed to understand disparities and to evaluate the equity impacts of public programs and projects.

STRONG AND AUTHENTIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Goal 1: Create a city of complete neighborhoods.

- A. Build a network of well-connected, vibrant, mixed-use centers and corridors.
- B. Ensure neighborhoods offer a mix of housing types and services for a diverse population.
- C. Ensure neighborhoods are safe, accessible and well-connected for all modes.
- D. Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and offers opportunities for increased amenities.

Goal 2: Enhance Denver's neighborhoods through high-quality urban design.

- A. Create people-oriented places that embrace community character with thoughtful transitions, aspirational design and an engaging public realm.
- B. Use urban design to contribute to economic viability, public health, safety, environmental well-being, neighborhood culture, and quality of life.

Goal 4: Ensure every neighborhood is strong and vibrant

- A. Grow and support neighborhood-serving businesses
- C. Make city-led catalytic investments in neighborhoods to advance community goals

Goal 6: Empower Denverites to be involved and collaborative in city government.

- A. Continue to strengthen trust and communication between the city and all neighborhoods.
- C. Provide proactive communication and transparency about city policies, public safety, processes and plans.
- C. Improve the engagement and representation of all Denverites, including communities of color, in neighborhood groups and city processes.

Goal 7: Leverage the arts and support creative placemaking to strengthen the community.

- B. Embrace existing communities and their cultural assets.

Goal 8: Conduct intentional, equitable and measurable neighborhood planning.

- A. Create diverse and inclusive opportunities for communities to participate in planning.
- B. Ensure all neighborhoods have a future vision that is both community-driven and long-term.
- C. Ensure neighborhood plan recommendations are consistent with the local vision and with this comprehensive plan.

Goal 9: Ensure all neighborhoods are safe.

- A. Encourage design and new development to improve public health and safety.

CONNECTED, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE PLACES

Goal 2: Provide a safe transportation system that serves all users.

- A. Implement the city's Vision Zero Action Plan to achieve zero traffic-related deaths and serious injuries by 2030.
- C. Create a transportation system to serve all ages and physical abilities.

Goal 4: Create an equitable and connected multimodal network that improves access to opportunity and services.

- A. Ensure focused transportation investments—on streets as well as neighborhood trails—in areas with populations more dependent on walking, rolling and transit.
- B. Use the multimodal network to connect vulnerable populations to employment, education, parks and health services.

Goal 5: Ensure the development of a frequent, high-quality and reliable transit network.

- A. Promote a citywide network of frequent transit service—including buses— that is reliable, safe and accessible to users of all ages and abilities.
- B. Implement Denver Moves: Transit, including the frequent transit network and transit capital investment corridors.

Goal 6: Build and maintain safe bicycle and pedestrian networks.

- A. Create a citywide network for bicycling, walking and rolling that is safe and accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- B. Implement the bicycle network, including facilities easy to use, recommended in Denver Moves: Bicycles.
- C. Implement the complete network of pedestrian infrastructure recommended in Denver Moves: Pedestrians & Trails.

Goal 8: Strengthen multimodal connections in mixed-use centers and focus growth near transit.

- A. Improve multimodal connections within and between mixed-use centers including downtown, Denver International Airport and major urban centers.
- B. Promote transit-oriented development and encourage higher density development, including affordable housing, near transit to support ridership.

ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE AND VIBRANT

Goal 1: Grow a strong, diversified economy.

- A. Improve economic mobility through workforce training, career development, quality education and wealth creation.
- C. Support business development and grow the talent necessary to compete in the global economy

GOAL 2 Grow a strong, diversified economy.

- A. Broaden the tax base with a focus on fiscal activity that is resilient to changes over time.
- B. Facilitate the growth of a diverse business sector that serves as the foundation for a global, innovative economy
- D. Ensure a broad range of jobs to align with the skills and interests of local residents

Goal 4: Ensure Denver has a productive, educated, competitive and knowledgeable workforce.

- A. Develop a highly trained local workforce with the skills and knowledge to effectively compete for a diverse range of local jobs.
- B. Provide training and programs to connect Denverites to high quality jobs at a range of skill levels.

- C. Encourage businesses to work with local workforce training and education organizations to better prepare residents for job and career opportunities.

Goal 5: Strengthen Denver as a global city that will be competitive in the economy of today and tomorrow.

- C. Promote Denver International Airport as the gateway between Denver and world.

GOAL 6 Enable Denver's youth to access quality education and compete in the global economy.

- A. Create partnerships between employers and educators to directly connect students to entrepreneurs and business leaders

ENVIRONMENTALLY RESILIENT

Goal 2: Prepare for and adapt to climate change.

- A. Prepare for the impacts of climate change including increased temperatures, loss of tree canopy, infrastructure damage, increased frequency of extreme weather events and reduced snowpack and earlier snow melt.
- B. Plan for climate change through collaboration, innovation and special attention to the city's most vulnerable populations, who are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Goal 4: Integrate stormwater into the built environment by using green infrastructure to improve water quality and reduce runoff.

- B. Restore and enhance waterways so they serve as community amenities
- D. Encourage low-impact development that reduces impervious surfaces and positively impacts community health by using trees, low-water landscaping and green infrastructure.

Goal 6: Protect and expand Denver's green infrastructure network.

- A. Recognize parks, public space, trees and plants as vital elements of green infrastructure and ensure that the provision of these elements keeps pace with Denver's growth.
- B. Connect parks, open spaces, trails, river corridors, parkways and street trees into an integrated green infrastructure network.
- C. Maintain and expand the citywide tree canopy.
- D. Preserve and enhance the city's system of parkland and adapt park landscapes to be more climate and heat resistant.

Goal 8: Clean our soils, conserve land and grow responsibly.

- B. Encourage mixed-use communities where residents can live, work and play in their own neighborhoods.
- C. Focus growth by transit stations and along high- and medium-capacity transit corridors.

Healthy and Active

Goal 1: Create and enhance environments that support physical activity and healthy living.

- A. Recognize parks, recreation and the urban forest as vital components of a complete community.
- B. Promote walking, rolling and biking through the development of a safe and interconnected multimodal network.
- C. Design safe public spaces and recreational areas to serve people of all ages and backgrounds.

Goal 2: Provide high-quality parks, recreation facilities and programs that serve all Denver residents.

- A. Ensure equitable access to parks and recreation amenities for all residents.

- C. Expand the supply of parks, recreational facilities and programs relative to Denver’s population growth.

Goal 3: Incorporate health analysis into relevant city policies, processes and planning.

- A. Expand efforts to recruit and retain fresh-food retailers in low-income and underserved areas.
- B. Expand community food production and sharing.
- C. Build community-driven food resources.

Goal 5: Incorporate health analysis into relevant city policies, processes and planning.

- A. Integrate health impacts and considerations into relevant city programs and projects.
- B. Work across multiple city departments and partners to address health impacts.

Denver and the Region

Goal 1: Be a regional leader in smart growth.

- A. Demonstrate the benefits of compact, mixed-use development for the region.

Goal 2: Embrace Denver’s role as the center of regional growth.

- A. Direct significant growth to regional centers and community centers and corridors with strong transit connections.

Goal 3: Lead the advancement and promotion of regional collaboration.

- A. Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) on key topics including growth, equity, transportation, housing, arts, culture, open space preservation, waste management, homelessness and aging.
- B. Coordinate with RTD, DRCOG and local jurisdictions to lead investments in multimodal regional connections, including transit corridors.

Goal 4: Capitalize on Denver’s role as a transportation hub and enhance connections to the region and beyond.

- A. Leverage the regional investment in RTD’s FasTracks program to develop a network of Transit-Oriented centers at rail stations.
- C. Promote Denver International Airport as a vibrant, well-connected economic center and leverage its national and international connections to strengthen the regional economy.

Blueprint Denver

Blueprint Denver Section 3.1 (Plan in Action- Implementation) identifies NPI area plans as “the greatest opportunity for covering all of Denver with small area plans that provide more specific guidance than Blueprint Denver”. The section describes how NPI area plans update and refine Blueprint Denver and establishes the following minimum content for NPI plans:

- A detailed vision for the future of the area that aligns with the comprehensive plan vision and the vision of Blueprint Denver.
- Strategies for achieving the vision, including recommendations for land use, built form, mobility and quality-of-life infrastructure.
- An implementation section identifying strategies by type, responsible entities, timelines, and any metrics for tracking plan progress over time.
- A summary of intended updates to Blueprint Denver.

The Far Northeast Area Plan contains content specifically addressing each of the minimum standards listed above. Additionally, the Far Northeast Area Plan is consistent with the following policies and strategies found in Blueprint Denver:

LAND USE AND BUILT FORM

General Recommendations- Land Use and Built Form

Policy 1: Promote and anticipate planned growth in major centers and corridors and key residential areas connected by rail service and transit priority streets.

- A. Use zoning and land use regulations to encourage higher-density, mixed-use development in transit-rich areas including:
- Regional centers and community centers
 - Community corridors where medium- and high-capacity transit corridors are planned
 - High and medium-high residential areas in the downtown and urban center contexts.

Policy 3: Ensure the Denver Zoning Code continues to respond to the needs of the city, while remaining modern and flexible.

- A. Rezone properties from the Former Chapter 59 zoning code so that the entire city is covered by the DZC, including continuing to incentivize owners to come out of the old code.

Policy 4: Ensure equitable planning processes and include underrepresented residents in plans and plan implementation.

- A. Include multilingual engagement in all public outreach.
- D. Integrate equity and environmental justice considerations into plans and identify methods to measure and reduce inequities as part of the planning process

Policy 9: Promote coordinated development on large infill sites to ensure new development integrates with its surroundings.

- B. Use large development review, or similar tools, to coordinate infrastructure and open space on large infill sites while minimizing and mitigating negative impacts on surrounding communities.
- C. Implement regulatory tools to set clear and predictable requirements for large redevelopments to provide benefits to the community such as affordable housing and open space.

HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS- LAND USE AND BUILT FORM

Policy 8: Capture 80 percent of new housing growth in regional centers, community centers and corridors, high-intensity residential areas, greenfield residential areas, innovation flex districts and university campus districts.

- C. Ensure land use regulations, small area plans and major transit investments support desired growth areas
- D. Advance housing affordability recommendations from this plan and Housing an Inclusive Denver to ensure new units include units affordable to a range of income levels.

Economic Recommendations- Land Use and Built Form

Policy 2: Improve equitable access to employment areas throughout the city to ensure all residents can connect to employment opportunities.

- A. Invest in high- and medium-capacity transit corridors to connect all Denver residents to the city's regional, community centers and community corridors.
- B. Promote and incentivize the development of affordable and family-friendly housing, as well as a full range of job opportunities, in and near regional centers, community centers and community corridors

D. Align workforce training, career development and education programs with job opportunities in regional centers and create programs to connect workers with employers in regional centers.

Policy 3: Preserve high-value manufacturing areas and allow low-value manufacturing areas to transition to higher intensity uses.

A. Preserve the high-value manufacturing districts mapped as "manufacturing preservation areas" in Chapter 5. To help preserve these areas, residential uses should be prohibited in the heavy production and value manufacturing districts. Residential uses are appropriate in the innovation/flex districts.

B. Through small-area planning, examine value manufacturing and heavy production districts that are considered highly valuable but are under a high threat of redevelopment to determine if potential uses outweigh the value of preserving industrial uses.

D. Within innovation/flex districts, enable housing and other uses to complement manufacturing. Promote urban, pedestrian-friendly building forms that are appropriate for vibrant, mixed-use districts

Policy 7: Protect and promote Denver International Airport as the primary economic engine for the state of Colorado

A. Ensure Denver International Airport retains its ability to add additional runways and aviation facilities.

B. Encourage further commercial development near the airport and protect DEN's ability to grow and thrive for generations to come.

C. Maintain existing zoning regulations that limit the type and location of residential uses allowed north of 56th Avenue as needed. If any new or existing regulatory tools need consideration, a city-led process with community input should occur.

DESIGN QUALITY AND PRESERVATION- LAND USE AND BUILT FORM

Policy 2: Ensure residential neighborhoods retain their unique character as infill development occurs.

B. Use conservation overlays in areas where the key goal is to conserve distinctive features in order to enhance and retain existing character. Although these overlays can be area-specific, they can also be used for multiple areas of the city where common conservation outcomes are desired.

C. Use design overlays as targeted tools in developing or redeveloping areas that have a specific design vision, ideally one articulated through a planning process. Although these overlays tend to be specific to a particular area — such as a river corridor or newly developing neighborhood — it is also appropriate to create design overlays for multiple areas where common design outcomes are desired.

D. For residential places, revise the zoning code to create more contextual bulk and scale requirements for primary and accessory structures. This may include stricter bulk planes, limitations on height, changes to setback requirements, changes to maximum lot coverage, changes to transparency features and/or entry feature requirements. These changes should vary by neighborhood context to better reflect the built character. In creating new zoning standards, consideration should be given to light, air, privacy, engagement of the public realm and human-scaled design.

Policy 3. Create exceptional design outcomes in key centers and corridors

C. Create a system of design tools, including standards and guidelines, that are scalable and repeatable to enable baseline design requirements that can be applied to a range of contexts and locations and be modified with a smaller subset of locally-applicable features.

- E. Revise the zoning code to provide standards for new mixed-use development that better responds to the surrounding context. Standards to examine for improvement include build-to ranges, transparency minimums, lot coverage, and entry features.
- F. Implement additional zoning tools to create appropriate transitions between places, especially for areas where centers and corridors are close to residential places. This may include standards related to height, massing and uses.

Policy 5. Create design outcomes in suburban and urban edge contexts that promote active, pedestrian-friendly places.

- A. Revise large build-to and setback ranges currently allowed in mixed use/commercial zone districts in the suburban and urban edge contexts. Although these contexts should have some flexibility beyond the more urban contexts, building placement in mixed-use areas should still provide an active, pedestrian-friendly environment that is accessible through all modes of transportation.
- B. Revise zoning code to provide better site design requirements for pedestrians, particularly internal circulation within large, multi-building developments

Policy 7. Improve requirements for landscaping, with a focus on climate-appropriate vegetation, for private property.

- B. Study and implement revisions to landscaping standards to improve neighborhood character, support compatibility, and to advance environmental goals.
- D. Promote new development that integrates trees, vines, planters or other live plants into the building design and their outdoor spaces to soften architecture, frame spaces, minimize bulk and avoid harsh edges.

MOBILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy 1. Encourage mode-shift — more trips by walking and rolling, biking and transit — through efficient land use and infrastructure improvements.

- A. Implement the bicycle, pedestrian and transit networks in Denver Moves plans.
- D. Increase the number of services and amenities that are available by walking, rolling and biking by integrating more local centers and corridors into residential areas, especially for areas that score low in Access to Opportunity.
- E. Promote mixed-use development in all centers and corridors.

Policy 3. On all streets, prioritize people walking and rolling over other modes of transportation

- A. Ensure safe pedestrian crossings, especially along the High Injury Network identified by Vision Zero.

Policy 8. Connect centers and corridors across the city through a variety of modal choices.

- A. Implement the sidewalk network in Denver Moves: Pedestrians & Trails
- B. Implement the bicycle network in Denver Moves: Bicycles.
- C. Update the bicycle network from the Denver Moves: Bicycles plan to ensure low-stress bicycle connections to centers and corridors.
- E. Implement the Transit Capital Investment Corridors in Denver Moves: Transit.

Policy 9. Improve safety on Denver's streets and collaborate with city departments on safety programs when developing small area plans.

- A. Build streets that are safe for everybody and implement the Vision Zero Action Plan to achieve zero traffic related fatalities by 2030.
- B. Advance the goals of the Vision Zero Action Plan in the Neighborhood Planning Initiative (NPI).
- C. Collaborate with Neighborhood Traffic Management Program in NPI.

- D. Support the safe routes to school program.

Quality of Life Infrastructure Recommendations

Policy 1. Expand tools and regulations to ensure high-quality parks and outdoor public spaces keep pace with Denver's growth.

- A. Explore a variety of methods to provide permanent, sustainable funding options for park, trail and recreation needs. This could include working with city agencies to seek increased participation from new development to help meet increased demand for park and recreations services and facilities.
- B. Evaluate the need to increase requirements and/or create incentives for publicly accessible outdoor space for mid- and large-scale developments in centers, corridors and districts.

Policy 2. Protect and expand Denver's tree canopy on both public and private property.

- B. Support a robust street tree canopy by prioritizing trees in right-of-way design.

Policy 3. Minimize flooding and effectively manage stormwater as part of a larger integrated ecological system.

- D. Encourage adaptable, multi-functional stormwater facilities to support redevelopment and provide neighborhood recreational amenities.
- E. Provide room for our waterways, where feasible, to help restore natural functionality that has been impaired due to increased urbanization and channelization.

Policy 5. Ensure attractive streets and outdoor spaces in all centers and corridors, giving priority to pedestrian spaces and amenities.

- A. Encourage street design that minimizes impervious surfaces and look for opportunities to re-purpose parts of the street to enhance the pedestrian realm.
- F. Prioritize pedestrian relationships in design such as building orientation, vehicular access points and public wayfinding.

Policy 8. Develop tools to improve access to healthy foods to support community health outcomes.

- B. During small area planning, identify opportunities to expand healthy, culturally-relevant food access and programming. In areas with limited food access, community gardens, greenhouses, edible landscaping and mobile produce markets are tools that can be calibrated to develop culturally relevant recommendations.
- C. Explore ways to increase use of public spaces for non-permanent fresh food retail, including farmers markets and mobile vending.
- D. Support recreation centers, schools and libraries as hubs for a healthy community and identify opportunities for them to provide spaces for community gardens, fresh food retail and health education.
- E. Analyze areas with a saturation of unhealthy food uses and develop regulatory tools to address impacts, particularly on vulnerable populations.
- F. Incentivize and support efforts to recruit and retain grocery stores in centers and corridors, with focus on areas of low food access.

Policy 10. Work with public and private partners to improve access to shops, restaurants, entertainment, services and a variety of daily needs for all Denver residents.

- A. Prioritize street and trail improvements and connections leading to and through existing and future centers and corridors.
- C. Promote development that compatibly integrates and includes daily needs such as child care centers, grocery stores and community-serving retail.

Finding: The Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment is consistent with Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver.

3. Long-Term View

The Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment builds upon the adopted 2019 Area Plan for maintaining the character and development patterns in established residential neighborhoods and light industrial areas, while directing a majority of growth to new centers and corridors in areas that are currently undeveloped. This vision will take many years to achieve.

Finding: The Far Northeast Area Plan has an appropriate long-term perspective.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the findings that the Far Northeast Area Plan Amendment used an inclusive public process, is consistent with Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver, and takes a long-term view, staff recommends approval with the condition that the document be edited for clarity and correctness.