



**TO:** Denver City Council  
**FROM:** Courtland Hyser, CPD Planning Services  
**DATE:** March 23, 2023  
**RE:** West Area Plan

Community Planning and Development is pleased to submit the draft West Area Plan for your consideration and adoption as a supplement to Comprehensive Plan 2040. The Denver Planning Board unanimously approved the plan with a 9-0 vote after holding a required public hearing on February 15, 2023. There were 12 speakers at the Planning Board public hearing.

This memorandum documents the plan contents and process based on the three criteria established in Comprehensive Plan 2040:

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

The memo concludes with the staff recommendation to the Denver City Council to adopt the West Area Plan as a supplement to Comprehensive Plan 2040.

## 1. Inclusive Community Process

The West Area Plan is based on a robust public engagement process that kicked off in September of 2019 and lasted approximately three and a half years. In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the planning process by limiting the ability of people to congregate in-person. These restrictions persisted in some form for much of the rest of the planning process. This had the effect of both slowing down the planning process and forcing a pivot to online/virtual methods for holding meetings and collecting public input. The main components of the community process for the West Area Plan are summarized below:

- **Steering Committee-** The West Area Plan was guided and informed by a Steering Committee with input from City Council members Amanda Sandoval (District 1), Jaime Torres (District 3), and Jolon Clark (District 7). Participants represented neighborhood and community organizations, non-profits, businesses, major property owners, and long-time residents. The Committee met approximately monthly for 36 meetings over the three and a half year planning process. Members helped develop the plan's guiding principles and recommendations, reviewed and refined the plan content, and served as liaisons to the West community. In addition to the 36 steering committee meetings, a smaller working group/subcommittee convened 8 times during the summer of 2022 to review the draft plan in detail and discuss edits and refinements.
  - At their February 1, 2023 meeting, the Steering Committee decided to endorse the plan by providing a letter of support. That letter is included as an attachment to this staff report.

•**Community Workshops, Online Events and Surveys-** The planning team held various events throughout the three and a half year planning process. These events took the form of in-person public workshops, online webinars, and self-directed online surveys and review opportunities.

- **October 5, 2019-** Kickoff Meeting (in-person) at Newlon Elementary School
- **October-November, 2019-** Kickoff Online Survey
- **January 14, 2020-** Community Workshop and Housing Resource Fair (in-person) at Lake Middle School
- **June-August 2020-** Options and Alternatives Online Open House and Survey
- **October 7, 2020-** West Area Plan Webinar: Understanding Displacement in West Denver
- **June-August, 2021-** Draft Policies Online Open House and Survey
- **October 20-30, 2021-** Virtual Information Sessions
- **May-August, 2022-** Public Review and Commenting on Plan Draft #1
- **November 12, 2022-** Community Workshop (in-person) at Barnum Elementary School
- **November 2022-January 2023-** Public Review and Commenting on Plan Draft #2

•**Neighborhood Meetings and Events-** Listed below are (1) meetings hosted by West Area neighborhood groups and organizations, or other City of Denver departments or teams that West Area Plan team members attended, (2) community events at which the plan had a booth/table or was part of a larger booth or table representing the City of Denver, and (3) stakeholder conversations convened or hosted by West Area organizations.

- 9/11/2019 - Valverde Elementary Parent Teacher Leadership Team
- 10/8/2019 - WeCAN RNO Meeting
- 10/23/2019 - West Colfax BID Cloverleaf Community Meeting
- 11/12/2019 - Barnum RNO Meeting
- 11/12/2019 - Commander Advisory Board Meeting District 4 PD
- 11/13/2019 - Sloan's Lake Citizen Group Meeting
- 11/13/2019 - Community Meeting at Congregation Zera Avraham
- 11/22/2019 - Presentation to Seniors at Casa de Rosal
- 12/14/2019 - West Area Plan "Community Conversations" Existing Conditions Digital Survey
- 12/17/2019 - Westridge Community Meeting
- 1/25/2020 - Far East Center Chinese New Year Celebration
- 2/13/2020 - Work Session #1 Housing and Land Use

- 3/3/2020 – Mobility Work Session
- 3/5/2020 - West Mobility/NTMP Work Session
- 3/31/2020 - Food/Food Systems Work Session
- 7/30/2020 - Recommendations Workshop (North and South of 6th)
- 8/4/2020 - Sun Valley RNO Presentation on NPI West
- 8/13/2020 - Recommendations Workshop (North and South of 6th)
- 8/27/2020 - Stadium Development Master Plan Meeting
- 9/21/2020 - WDCLC Quarterly Meeting Update
- 10/7/2020 - CPD West Area Plan Understanding Displacement Panel
- 6/26/2021 - Valverde Neighborhood Park Clean up and Storytelling Event
- 7/24/2021 - Valverde Movement Project: Youth Activities Pop-Up
- 7/31/2021 – Co-Op at 1st Ave Farmer’s Market Event & Resource Fair
- 8/7/2021 - Valverde Movement Project "Getting Around" (aka Mobility) Pop-Up
- 8/24/2021 - Athmar Park Neighborhood Association Meeting
- 8/25/2021 - Villa Park Neighborhood Association Meeting
- 8/28/2021 - Villa Park Movie Night
- 8/30/2021 - Congregation Zera Abraham
- 9/7/2021 - Sun Valley Coalition Meeting
- 9/10/2021 - Sun Valley Farmers Market Block Party
- 10/16/2021 - Valverde Neighborhood Association
- 11/9/2021 - West Colfax Association of Neighbors
- 2/2/2022 - Denver Planning Board information item
- 3/3/2022 - Historic and Cultural Preservation Walking Tour with Council District 1
- 3/9/2022 - Valverde Neighborhood Association
- 4/23/2022 - Joseph Martinez Park Cleanup in Villa Park
- 9/1/22 – West Area CAG Public Meeting
- 10/26/22 – Villa Park RNO Meeting
- 11/03/22 – West Area Community Advisory Group
- 11/10/22 – Valverde Elementary PTLT
- 11/28/22 – Denver Public Schools
- 12/06/22 – Sun Valley RNO Meeting
- 12/09/22 – Valverde RNO Meeting

- 12/13/22 – Barnum RNO Meeting
  - 1/26/23 -- Latino Cultural Arts Center Meeting
- **Office Hours-** CPD staff held numerous office hour sessions at key points in the planning process to answer questions and take feedback from the community.
- **July-September, 2020-** Ten (10) virtual office hour sessions held in support of the options and alternatives survey
  - **May-June, 2021-** Twelve (12) virtual office hour sessions held in support of public review draft #1
  - **November-December, 2022-** Eight (8) virtual office hour sessions and five (5) in-person office hour sessions held in support of public review draft #2.
- **Project Newsletters-** West Area Plan newsletters were released alongside various milestones in the planning process to draw attention to events, surveys, and other plan-related opportunities.
- 7/18/19: Welcome to the West Area Plan newsletter!
  - 9/16/19: Join us for the plan kickoff!
  - 10/2/19: REMINDER: Join us for the plan kickoff!
  - 10/17/19: (SURVEY) Don't forget to weigh in by October 31!
  - 10/24/19: One week left to take kickoff survey!
  - 12/6/19: Mark your calendars--Marque sus calendarios
  - 1/2/20: Start making the most of 2020 at our housing resource fair!
  - 3/3/20: (Survey) Tell us how you get around!
  - 4/2/20: Stay connected to West Area Plan online
  - 6/25/20: Tell us what you think!
  - 7/10/20: Jumped into the virtual open house yet? Take our surveys today!
  - 7/29/20: Meet with planners!
  - 8/18/20: LAST CHANCE: Participate in the open house!
  - 9/23/20: Calling all young people!
  - 9/28/20: Let's talk about displacement!
  - 10/12/20: Missed the webinar on displacement? Watch it now.
  - 5/13/21: Draft recommendations are here!
  - 5/19/21: REMINDER: Watch this week's steering committee meeting
  - 6/20/21: DON'T FORGET: Take our survey!

- 10/14/21: Learn about ADUs
  - 3/14/22: Draft plan coming soon!
  - 10/27/22: The draft West Area Plan is here!
  - 11/9/22: Saturday: Come talk about the draft plan!
  - 12/2/22: You can still comment on the draft plan!
- **Communications-** Promotion of the West Area process and advertisement of meetings, surveys and draft material was conducted by CPD Communications.
- Outreach methods included email distribution, media releases, website information, social media, and additional outreach through City Council offices.
    - Email- 1,337 subscribers; 24 emails sent
    - Twitter- 5,641 followers; 24 posts
    - Nextdoor- 7,809 users in plan area; 19 posts
  - The West Area Plan earned four news stories by local media including the *Denver North Star* and *Denverite*.
  - Bilingual flyers were distributed throughout the West area, including libraries, recreation centers, schools, apartment buildings and community-serving businesses to promote engagement opportunities.
  - Project information, agendas, meeting materials, draft content, and announcements were posted to [www.denvergov.org/WestPlan](http://www.denvergov.org/WestPlan)
  - Interpretation services and childcare were provided at all in-person community workshops.
  - Electronic communication, web materials and online activities were compatible with smart phones, ADA accessible and available for auto-translation.
  - Printed copies of materials and language translation were made available to any resident who requested it.

***Finding: The West Area Plan 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**

Comprehensive Plan 2040 includes many goals divided across six vision elements. The West Area Plan addresses these same topics and provides additional detail and guidance specific to the West area. The West Area Plan is consistent with the following goals and strategies found in Comprehensive Plan 2040:

#### **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.
- B. Ensure city policies and regulations encourage every neighborhood to provide a complete range of housing options.
- C. Foster communities of opportunity by aligning housing strategies and investments to improve economic mobility and access to transit and services.

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

- B. Use land use regulations to enable and encourage the private development of affordable, missing middle and mixed-income housing, especially where close to transit.
- 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.
- B. Create additional tools, including community land trusts and regulatory incentives, to preserve existing affordable housing.
- C. Incentivize the reuse of existing smaller and affordable homes.

**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.

**Goal 7: Make neighborhoods accessible to people of all ages and abilities.**

- B. Prioritize infrastructure improvements that allow for residents of all abilities to access and live in any neighborhood.

**Goal 8: Increase housing options for Denver's most vulnerable populations.**

- C. Ensure that city regulations enable a range of flexible housing options to meet the needs of those experiencing or transitioning out of homelessness.

**Goal 9: Improve equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.**

- B. Promote and encourage use of the Denver Public Library system, community centers, schools, and other resources that provide opportunities for lifelong learning.

**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.**

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

**Goal 3: Preserve the authenticity of Denver's neighborhoods and celebrate our history, architecture and culture.**

- C. Ensure city policies and regulations support historic preservation and eliminate barriers in city processes to help all neighborhoods preserve what matters most.
- E. Support the stewardship and reuse of existing buildings, including city properties.

**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.
- B. 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.
- D. Build the capacity of underrepresented citizens and provide resources to increase their involvement in decision-making.

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

- B. Embrace existing communities and their cultural assets.
- D. Use city-owned facilities to expand arts and cultural programming.

**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.
- C. Actively involve communities in strategies to promote safety.

**Connected, Safe and Accessible Places**

**Goal 1: Deliver a multimodal network that encourages more trips by walking, rolling, biking and transit.**

- A. Prioritize transportation projects that will advance Denver's mode share goals.
- B. Adopt policies that require Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs for developments to maximize use of alternative modes and reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips on Denver's streets.

**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 3: Maximize the public right-of-way to create great places.**

- C. Protect, enhance and expand Denver’s legacy pathways: its historic parkways, boulevards, greenways and trails.

**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.

**Goal 9: Advance innovative curb lane management and parking policies.**

- A. Promote strategies to balance demand for the curb lane (where vehicles park and load) that responds to the land uses on that street.
- B. Promote on-street parking management strategies that maximize use of the curb lane and are tailored to the context and needs of specific areas at different times of day.
- C. Balance the demand for on- and off-street parking with other community goals including affordability and sustainability.

**Economically Diverse and Vibrant**

**Goal 1: Ensure economic mobility and improve access to opportunity.**

- 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.**

- 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 3: Sustain and grow Denver’s local neighborhood businesses.**



- A. Promote small, locally-owned businesses and restaurants that reflect the unique character of Denver.

**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.

**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.**

- 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 7: Improve solid waste diversion and conserve raw materials.**

- C. Prioritize the reuse of existing buildings and explore incentives to reuse or salvage materials from demolished structures.

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

- A. Promote infill development where infrastructure and services are already in place.
- 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: Ensure access to affordable, nutritious culturally-diverse food in all neighborhoods.**

- 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 4: Increase access to health services for all.**

- A. Improve collaboration between health organizations, schools, faith-based organizations and other community organizations to promote preventive care and improve access to health services.

**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.**

- B. Coordinate with RTD, DRCOG and local jurisdictions to lead investments in multimodal regional connections, including transit corridors.

**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 West Area Plan contains content specifically addressing each of the minimum standards listed above. Additionally, the West 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 2: Incentivize or require efficient development of land, especially in transit-rich areas.***

- A. In regional centers, urban center community centers and urban center community corridors, study and implement requirements or incentives for density. An example of a tool to implement this could include establishing minimum building heights.
- B. In transit-rich areas, including downtown, revise the zoning code to limit auto-oriented commercial uses that do not contribute positively to activating the public realm, such as mini-storage, drive-throughs and car washes. This may also apply to other desired mixed-use areas of the city, such as transit priority streets.
- C. Allow increased density in exchange for desired outcomes, such as affordable housing, especially in transit-rich areas.
- E. In historic areas, balance efficiency with preservation through strategies that encourage the reuse of structures.

***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 2: Diversify housing options by exploring opportunities to integrate missing middle housing into low and low-medium residential areas.***

- A. Integrate missing middle housing into low and low-medium residential areas, especially those that score low in Housing Diversity. This should be implemented through holistic revisions to the zoning code at a citywide scale, with a focus on discouraging demolition and encouraging affordability.

***Policy 3: Incentivize preservation and reuse of existing smaller and affordable homes.***

- A. Implement zoning tools to incentivize the preservation of smaller, more affordable housing options. An example would be to allow the owner of an existing house to add an additional unit or accessory dwelling unit if the original structure is preserved.

***Policy 6: Increase development of affordable housing and mixed-income housing, particularly in areas near transit, services and amenities.***

- A. Incentivize affordable housing through zoning, especially in regional centers, community centers and community corridors adjacent to transit. This could include a process—informed by community input—to create citywide height bonuses in the zoning code, where additional height is allowed in exchange for income restricted units. Incentives for affordable housing are

particularly important for areas that score high in Vulnerability to Displacement and score low in Housing Diversity.

***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.***

- A. Align high-density residential areas near regional centers to support housing growth near major job centers with access to transit priority streets.
- 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 1: Capture 90 percent of job growth in regional centers, community centers and corridors, certain districts and high-intensity residential areas in downtown and urban center contexts. Of the 90 percent job growth, focus 30 percent downtown.***

- B. Promote the development and redevelopment of regional centers, including downtown, to meet the land use and transportation needs of targeted industries. This means encouraging regional centers to have strong connections to transportation options, especially passenger rail and transit priority streets, and fostering the mix of uses needed to attract businesses with a wide variety of jobs.

***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 4: Promote creative industries, maker spaces, artists and small businesses as vital components of Denver's innovation economy.***

- C. Develop programs and identify potential incentives to maintain existing spaces, reduce rent costs and other business costs and help create new spaces for hand crafted manufacturing, maker spaces, artists and other small, locally-owned businesses, especially in areas that score high for Vulnerability to Displacement.

***Policy 5: Support organizations and districts within the city's centers and corridors to aid in attraction and retention of employment and commerce.***

- D. Partner with organizations that are actively supporting economic opportunity across Denver.

***Policy 6: Ensure Denver and its neighborhoods have a vibrant and authentic retail and hospitality marketplace meeting the full range of experiences and goods demanded by residents and visitors.***

- A. Support locally-owned businesses—new and old—to expand and evolve to meet the changing needs of residents and visitors. Support could include assisting businesses, especially in the most underserved or distressed neighborhoods, with regulatory processes, education, training, helping with marketing or increasing access to capital.

Design Quality and Preservation- Land Use and Built Form

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

- A. Continue the city's commitment to existing historic districts and landmarks and use historic designation to preserve the character of an individual structure or district or where there is historic, architectural, cultural, and/or geographic significance.
- 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.
- F. Promote the use of pattern books to identify character defining features and/or desired design outcomes for an area. Pattern books can be developed during neighborhood planning and used to inform regulatory tools including, but not limited to, conservation overlays and design overlays. Discover Denver, the citywide building survey, can contribute valuable data on character defining features to be incorporated into pattern books.
- H. In the general urban low-medium residential places, study and implement tools to preserve the characteristic mix of uses and forms, with single and two-unit uses mixed within higher density residential.
- I. Promote incentives to preserve the reuse of historic buildings and the unique historic features of Denver's neighborhoods.

***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.
- H. Use urban quality evaluation and metrics, often developed through small area planning and assessments, to help define design problems and to help identify possible solutions.
- K. Identify important mixed-use historic structures and encourage their continued use or adaptive reuse.

***Policy 4: Ensure an active and pedestrian friendly environment that provides a true mixed-use character in centers and corridors.***

- A. Require strong street-level active use standards for local centers and corridors. This may include a prohibition on residential units for a portion of the street level building. Given the intent of

these small-scale places to provide services embedded in the neighborhood, it is important for them to provide more than residential uses.

- B. Study and implement stronger street-level active use requirement for community and regional centers and community corridors. Tools could include regulations on floor-to-floor heights for the first story to facilitate conversion to commercial uses and reconsideration of appropriate street-level uses.

***Policy 6: Incentivize the preservation of structures and features that contribute to the established character of an area, even if they are not designated as landmarks or historic districts.***

- A. Integrate historic resources surveys, like Discover Denver, that identify and provide data on buildings into land use planning and regulations.
- C. Create new regulations to encourage the reuse of existing buildings. This could include requirements to salvage or reuse building materials after a structure is demolished or allowing flexibility in uses or density when an existing structure is reused and maintained.

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

- 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 2: Align the impacts of private development with transportation infrastructure and promote development that creates walkable, transit-friendly communities.***

- A. Adopt policies that require Transportation Demand Management programs for developments to maximize use of alternative modes and reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips on Denver's streets.

***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.
- F. Explore options to assist property owners when improvements required by redevelopment, such as sidewalks, is cost-prohibitive.

***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.
- F. Create slow zones in priority areas such as school zones, major park zones and areas with a high concentration of seniors.

### **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.***

- A. Prioritize trees in green infrastructure facilities to improve urban tree canopy.
- B. Support a robust street tree canopy by prioritizing trees in right-of-way design.
- D. Strengthen standards to protect trees and explore requirements and/or incentives to mitigate tree loss during redevelopment on both public and private property to help achieve Denver's tree canopy goal.

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

- B. Include a floodplain analysis and considerations in all plans and proactively seek to protect communities from future flood risk.
- 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.
- C. Identify public safety improvements to streets, including appropriate levels of lighting.
- F. Prioritize pedestrian relationships in design such as building orientation, vehicular access points and public wayfinding.

#### ***Policy 6: Preserve and rehabilitate Denver's designated parkways and boulevards.***

- A. Consider updating the Parkway and Boulevards Design Guidelines to improve the integration of parkway requirements with other street standards. This could include how to integrate a complete sidewalk network into our parkways.

#### ***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.
- 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.
- D. Support safe and equitable access to daily needs including public restrooms and water bottle filling stations.

***Finding: The West Area Plan is consistent with Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver.***

### **3. Long-Term View**

The West Area Plan establishes a community vision for the year 2040 of a thriving, culturally rich, safe, and connected part of our city. The West area is envisioned to have a mix of housing options that appeal to all types of residents at varying stages of life at all income levels. There are bustling commercial areas, and ample job and employment opportunities. In this future the West area is an example of sustainable design and responsible development, where parks and publicly accessible open spaces are within a 10-minute walk every resident. The interconnected network of trails, public spaces, bikeways, and natural areas have reduced air and water pollution, and the urban forest tree canopy contributes to the comfort and overall quality of life for everyone. This vision reflects the long-term aspirations of the community and has an associated implementation strategy that will take many years to achieve.

***Finding: The West Area Plan has an appropriate long-term perspective.***

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the findings that the West Area Plan used an inclusive public process, is consistent with Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver, and takes a long-term view, staff recommends **adoption of the West Area Plan as a supplement to Comprehensive Plan 2040.**

### **Attachments:**

1. Steering Committee Letter of Endorsement
2. West Area Plan



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# LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR WEST AREA PLAN

Date: February 6, 2023  
To: City and County of Denver's Department of Community Planning & Development, Planning Board, and City Council  
From: Steering Committee Members of the West Area Plan  
Re: Support for the West Area Plan

As members of the West Area Plan Steering Committee, we write today to express our strong support for the West Area Plan (WAP) submitted by the City and County of Denver's Community Planning and Development (CPD) Department. We find that the WAP's integrated set of planning recommendations powerfully and holistically advance the six key elements of Denver's Comprehensive Plan 2040 through context-appropriate strategies co-created with those who live, work, play, and learn in West's diverse neighborhoods.

We stand behind:

1. The inclusive, equitable planning process that generated the "big ideas" of the West Area Plan,
2. The long-range, community-driven, visionary aspirations of this plan and its big ideas for equitable development that repairs harm and regenerates well-being, and
3. the alignment of this plan with Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver's goals and priorities – particularly the strong commitment to equitable development.

As committee members from each of the neighborhoods in this plan - Barnum (East & West), Sun Valley, Valverde, Villa Park, and West Colfax - we represent diverse perspectives and voices through our ongoing leadership roles in West Area organizations and community networks. Since 2019, we have engaged in rich, challenging conversations convened and supported by CPD staff to develop a community-wide vision for equitable development in our neighborhoods. Together, as a labor of neighborly love, we have participated in over 36 Steering Committee meetings during a global pandemic which disproportionately burdened many of our communities, especially the Valverde neighborhood. We wish to thank the dedicated and innovative team of city planners at CPD for investing their time, energy, and professional expertise in leading the ***inclusive, equitable, and deeply collaborative engagement process*** that generated the forward-thinking "***big ideas***" and ***context-appropriate recommendations*** of the WAP.

The commitment to equitable development is particularly important to us, given that Denver's past land use policies, infrastructure investments, and redlining legacies have disproportionately burdened West Area neighborhoods, resulting in significant disparities in health, wealth, and ecological vitality, as well as vulnerability to gentrification and climate change. As such, the policies and strategies we are supporting in this plan – particularly the careful attention to strategic location of density and height increases – all intentionally support equity outcomes prioritized by the neighborhoods and ensure a context-appropriate plan for managing local growth.

Beyond this brief letter of support, a subset of the WAP Steering Committee (including leaders from each WAP neighborhood) has developed an addendum to highlight landmark achievements and "big ideas" of the plan and provide further explanation for the logic and process behind some of the WAP's key recommendations for repairing harm and regenerating wellbeing over the next 20 years.

As a Steering Committee, we continue to be deeply committed to an inclusive, equitable, democratic process. We humbly acknowledge that neither we nor city staff have all the answers, and we all have blind spots. We are grateful to have participated in rich, challenging conversations in a culture characterized by curiosity, compassion, courage, and creativity. We trust that there are more to come and look forward to engaging with diverse players to move this vision forward, through the processes of plan adoption and implementation ahead of us.

Sincerely,

Chala Mohr (Barnum), Jeanne Granville (Sun Valley), Evon Lopez and MoMcanna (Valverde), Jaime Aguilar and Kathy Sandoval (Villa Park), Heidi Newhart and Elizabeth Walsh (West Colfax)

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# ADDENDUM OF SUPPORT FOR WEST AREA PLAN

Date: February 6, 2023  
To: City and County of Denver's Department of Community Planning & Development, Planning Board, and City Council  
From: West Area Plan Steering Committee Members, with representation from Barnum (Chala Mohr), Valverde (Evon Lopez), Sun Valley (Jeanne Granville), Villa Park (Jaime Aguilar, Kathy Sandoval), and West Colfax (Heidi Newhart, Elizabeth Walsh)  
Re: Support for the West Area Plan's innovative approach to equitable neighborhood development

As members of the West Area Plan Steering Committee's Quality of Life Working Group, we write today to express our strong support for the West Area Plan submitted by the City and County of Denver's Community Planning and Development (CPD) Department. As committee members from each of the neighborhoods in this plan - Barnum (East & West), Sun Valley, Valverde, Villa Park, and West Colfax - we represent diverse perspectives and voices through our ongoing leadership roles in West Area organizations and community networks. Since 2019, we have engaged in rich, challenging conversations convened by CPD staff to develop a community-wide vision for equitable development in our neighborhoods. We stand behind (1) the alignment of this plan with Comprehensive Plan 2040's priorities, (2) the long-range, community-driven, visionary aspirations of this plan and its big ideas for equitable development that repairs harm and regenerates well-being, and (3) the inclusive, equitable planning process that generated this innovative plan. This extended letter of support includes three parts:

- I. **Acknowledgement of Land, Leadership, and Denver's Vision for Equitable Development.** We begin with acknowledgement of First Nations who've cared for the places we call home well before the founding of Denver as a city. We continue by acknowledging the diverse leaders of the City and County of Denver (CCD) – CCD staff, Planning Board volunteers, and elected leaders – who work to advance the broad vision for equitable development established in 2019 with adoption of Comprehensive Plan 2040 and reinforced by updates to other citywide plans like Blueprint Denver. We particularly thank our CPD city planners for their extraordinary leadership in advancing Comprehensive Plan 2040 through the Neighborhood Planning Initiative via an inclusive, responsive, equity-centered, community-engaged, multi-sector, collaborative planning process to develop the West Area Plan, even in the face of a global pandemic.
- II. **Beyond Bouncing Back - Big Ideas for Springing Forward.** We offer reflections on opportunities for equitable development brought to light by an apocalyptic period of disruptive change. The global pandemic and events of 2020 forced us to slow down, while revealing underlying systemic structures driving long-existing health disparities. We cannot afford to bounce back to business as usual. The West Area Plan offers a platform for *springing forward* through a holistic approach to equitable neighborhood development that puts quality of life first, working to repair harm while regenerating social and ecological vitality.
- III. **Adoption Is A Beginning.** We offer reflections on opportunities for collaborative planning that the West Area Plan opens, and the need to sustain inclusive, equity-centered engagement throughout its implementation. As Eugene Howard often reminded us, completion of the West Area Plan does not mark an end; it marks a beginning. Without ongoing civic engagement and collaborative action, business as usual will persist and continue to generate inequitable outcomes.

In summary, we find that the WAP's integrated set of planning recommendations powerfully and holistically advance the six key elements of Denver's Comprehensive Plan 2040 through context-appropriate strategies co-created with those who live, work, play, and learn in West's diverse neighborhoods.

## I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LAND, LEADER, & DENVER'S VISION FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

We begin with an expression of thanks and honor for Elders past, present, and future, and those who have tended to the wellbeing of people, land, water and our more-than-human kin in our bioregion throughout generations. In keeping with CCD's practice of land acknowledgement initiated in 2020, we acknowledge that the land on which we reside is the traditional territory of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Peoples. More specific to our neighborhoods, we acknowledge that on 8th Avenue, just west of the La Alma-Lincoln Park neighborhood, the Camp Weld Historic Marker serves as a reminder that in 1864, U.S. Army officials convened peace-seeking Cheyenne and Arapaho Chiefs for the Camp Weld Council, which ultimately precipitated the genocidal acts committed in the Sand Creek Massacre November 29, 1864. We also recognize that government, academic and cultural institutions were founded upon and continue to enact exclusions and erasures of Indigenous Peoples. We thank Council President Jaime Torres for originally introducing the practice of land acknowledgement in City Council proceedings, and for all our leaders who actively work to disrupt this legacy of violence and collaborate with Indigenous leaders to repair harm and plan for the wellbeing of present and future generations.

In that spirit, thank you, all - CCD Staff, Planning Board, City Council - for your efforts to advance an equitable, inclusive, diverse, affordable, healthy and active city made up of strong, authentic, complete, well-connected neighborhoods that are economically vibrant and environmentally resilient in the face of climate change, in accordance with the six key elements of Denver's Comprehensive Plan 2040.

We appreciate that other city-wide plans (including Blueprint Denver, Game Plan for a Healthy City, Denver Food Action Plan, and Denver Moves) were also updated in 2019 to reflect Comprehensive Plan 2040's commitment to **equitable development**, defined as **"an approach to meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities, while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant."** We appreciate that the voter-approved Climate Protection Fund (CPF) and the Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency (CASR) established in 2020 to implement CPF share this commitment to equity, with more than 50% of funds dedicated to communities in Denver most harmed by climate change impacts.

This commitment to equitable development is particularly important to us, given that Denver's past land use policies, infrastructure investments, and redlining legacies have disproportionately burdened West Area neighborhoods, resulting in significant disparities in health, wealth, and ecological vitality, as well as vulnerability to gentrification and climate change. The Neighborhood Equity & Stabilization (NEST) division formally recognizes four of our neighborhoods as NEST neighborhoods due to the vulnerability of families and small businesses to underinvestment and displacement related to gentrification. Moreover, given that past inequities shape the West Area differently from other neighborhood areas, and that our individual neighborhoods each have our own needs and aspirations, we appreciate that our City chooses to advance equity, a distinct concept from equality:

"Equality means treating every person the same. Equity means giving everyone access to opportunities for what they need. Equity acknowledges that treating each person or place exactly the same may not result in fair opportunities to succeed."

When applied to the Neighborhood Planning Initiative, this commitment to equitable development translates into a responsibility of City staff to work *in partnership* with those who live, learn, play, work, and worship in historically marginalized neighborhoods to develop context-appropriate plans to redress past harm and advance community-identified aspirations, in alignment with the overarching comprehensive plan. Thus, neighborhood plans must be completed through a process that is not only inclusive, but also *equitable*, by "engaging community members who are most directly affected by inequity." Simply put, cookie-cutter planning might be *equal*, but it's not equitable. Authentic neighborhood plans must reflect the core values, concerns, strengths, and priorities of its community

members in ways that align with the city’s stated priorities for equity, economic diversity, and environmental resiliency. Of course, this is all much easier said than done - especially when a global pandemic strikes soon after a planning process begins in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by health disparities.

Considering these daunting challenges, we wish to express special thanks to the dedicated staff of CCD’s department of Community Planning & Development, who have worked tirelessly to advance our City’s comprehensive vision through development of the West Area Plan, while advancing the particular, contextual aspirations and needs of the West Area’s diverse neighborhoods through an inclusive, equity-centered planning process. We particularly thank Eugene Howard and Val Herrera for championing this deeply collaborative, cross-departmental, equity-centered, community-engaged, intentionally adaptive process through a period of unprecedented disruption including a global pandemic and heightened awareness of systemic racial inequities and threats posed by climate change. Moreover, we offer our deep appreciation to Courtland Hyster, Fernando Abbud, and Chelsea Bennouna for their resilience in completing this plan with integrity following disruptions from staff changes. During a planning period characterized by exceptional disruption and collective trauma, these and other city staff succeeded in hosting countless community conversations in a responsive and compassionate manner that cultivated our collective capacity to delve deeply into vexing challenges and co-create innovative strategies to repair harm, regenerate wellbeing, and cultivate resilience.

## II. BEYOND BOUNCING BACK - BIG IDEAS FOR SPRINGING FORWARD

Through the course of nearly three years, 36 meetings, and a global pandemic, we recognize with 2020 vision that that bouncing back is unacceptable. As we ‘ve moved through this deeply collaborative process, we have consistently asked, “how can we spring forward, together”?

### CO-CREATING A NEW NPI TEMPLATE FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

In effect, we have collaborated with CPD to reformat their outdated neighborhood planning template, which was designed 15 years ago when the City was desperate to attract development. Comprehensive Plan 2040 aims to equitably respond to the threats of gentrification and climate change; our neighborhood plans must follow suit. The West Area Plan took more time during a global pandemic that had us all rethink business as usual, and this process has resulted in a restructured plan that can serve as a new template that will better resonate with residents/voters of all neighborhoods across the city as we contend with threats posed by gentrification and climate change. This approach to equitable neighborhood development forwards the 6 elements of Comprehensive Plan 2040. We are pleased that this landmark plan and potential template includes the following:

- Inclusion of a **“Planning for Equity ”** section at the front of the plan, immediately following an engaging **“West Area History”** section that together set a foundation for the WAP’s strong focus on equity. Planning for equity requires that we address threats of involuntary displacement. It also includes naming harm resulting from past public policies and development decisions, while also centering community strengths, and identifying opportunities to advance health equity, environmental justice, and ecological vitality.
- Putting **“Quality of Life” front and center**, both by moving this section of the plan from last to first, and by integrating the principles, priorities and major tenets of this section throughout all sections, with a robust set of recommendations to support future context-appropriate actions and adaptations. Planning for equitable development that enhances quality of life without triggering displacement requires a holistic approach that defies linear thinking. The cross-references throughout this plan help readers understand how the different sections relate to each other and work together to advance quality of life well into the future, in the face of threats posed by gentrification and climate change alike.

- Inclusion of a **new subsection on Water** within the Quality of Life section in recognition that water is the basis of life and cannot be considered as an afterthought in the planning process. Water is particularly important for our West Area neighborhoods, as we have a disproportionate amount of hazards tied to the South Platte River and its legacy of industrial development. Water is also a unifying element that moves through all of our neighborhoods from Sloan/s Lake south and the gulches west to east culminating in our shared access to the South Platte.
- Emphasis of the “Economy and Housing” section on **anti-displacement strategies for residents and businesses and affordable housing** that go beyond expanding affordable rental units to supporting affordable homeownership strategies to build intergenerational health and wealth. We draw attention to (1) West Denver Renaissance Collaborative’s (WDRC’s) strategies (including the West Denver Single Family Plus program, ADU Pilot program, Stay-in-Place programs, community land trusts, and land banking programs). We also draw attention to a plan innovation that was only just made possible by the new Expanding Housing Affordability (EHA) ordinance: inclusion of maps that reveal where affordable housing can be increased through density bonuses. West Area neighbors have generally only wanted greater density if it would be used as a strategy to mitigate - rather than accelerate - gentrification.
- **Inclusive Equitable Process** - the West Area Plan included significant innovations in inclusive, equitable civic engagement. This planning template showcases innovation in strategies and integration.
- **Integrated planning as a growth strategy for equitable development and climate resilience.** Although written plans are by nature linear in format, integrated planning for equitable neighborhoods requires integration of housing, mobility, food and other systems across plan sections. The cross-referencing in this plan is a helpful feature.

#### CONTEXT-APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

In keeping with Comprehensive Plan 2040, equitable development is at the heart of this plan; all planning is expected to be conducted through an equity lens. Equity isn’t the same as equality. Therefore: cookie-cutter planning off of Blueprint Denver is inequitable, and therefore unacceptable. Here, we highlight some of the ways the West Area Plan includes context-appropriate strategies to repair harm and regenerate well-being, including (A) Density increases in the right places, under the right conditions, for the sake of equitable development without displacement, (B) Repair and regenerate wellbeing in historically marginalized neighborhoods, and (C) Green Zones for economic and industrial development in Valverde and Sun Valley.

#### *(A) DENSITY INCREASES: IN THE RIGHT PLACES, FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT.*

We are confident that this plan is in keeping with Comprehensive Plan 2040’s growth strategy, both regarding net increases in dwelling units and advancing equitable development. West Area neighbors want increased access to healthy food, mobility options, and affordable housing, in complete, healthy neighborhoods where development happens without displacement and we are free from the many costs of auto-dependent neighborhoods. We understand that this is possible through equitable, transit- oriented development, where we can minimize our transportation trips and costs by having co-located businesses & services (like grocery stores) near our homes, along complete streets. We understand that well-designed density increases can amplify access to food, mobility, and housing options. If local businesses are going to make it, they need certain thresholds of foot traffic and patrons; if these patrons are going to walk or bike there, our neighborhoods need to meet a certain threshold of residents per acre to make that happen. That said, as experience in West Colfax over the past decade reflects, we also know that density increases on their own do not support equitable development, even when those increases are made adjacent

to transit stations.<sup>1</sup> We highlight some of these strategies included in the West Area Plan to increase density in ways that support *equitable development*.

1. **Widespread adoption of zoning allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** throughout West Area Neighborhoods, as a strategy to increase density in ways that support neighborhood character and address threats of displacement. We know that, in other cities, simply allowing ADUs as a permitted use has sometimes accelerated gentrification pressure by fueling speculative development. However, Denver's strategically developed policy that limits ADU's to owner-occupied lots, coupled with WDRC's integrated set of strategies (e.g., Single Family Plus program, ADU Pilot program, Stay-in-Place programs, community land trusts, and land banking programs) coupled with strong community engagement (both through Community Connectors and WDRC Community Leaders Committee) help ensure that existing homeowners who wish to stay in the neighborhood have options to do so.
2. **Integration of density increases in key nodes (e.g. Vitality Zones) and transit corridors (e.g. Resiliency Corridors) in a way to support equitable, transit-oriented development** with promise for increasing ease of connection to housing, mobility, work, food, and recreation options. Highlights include:
  - The highest density node in the heightmap is the **Denver Housing Authority Sun Valley Redevelopment Effort** [www.sunvalleyredevelopment.com](http://www.sunvalleyredevelopment.com), which is known for its integrated approach to equitable, transit-oriented development, enabled by the CHOICE Neighborhoods program. Here, density increases enable inclusion of expanded housing options, food options (including a small grocery store, community gardens, and a food incubator), with repaired connection to the South Platte River through new park design, as well as increased auto-independent mobility options including the transit hub at Decatur Station and pilots of e-bike libraries. Importantly, *this equitable development project centered on health and well-being goals from the beginning through implementation*, with incorporation of the Sun Valley Healthy Living Assessment completed by Mithun, which measures health outcomes to support intentional adaptation and integrity of the project. Yes, DHA SV Redevelopment effort includes different types of affordable housing, and this housing promises to be more affordable through reduced costs in health and travel. Yes, it promises to be an example of reparative and regenerative development with minimal displacement, and it also comes with its challenges. Most of the park access is tied to the river, and some neighbors are concerned that the massive height increases without integrated pocket park planning creates an experience of being cramped into the valley. Initially the West Area Plan added significantly more density allowance to an already dense place, but through deliberation, we redistributed some of these increases elsewhere.
  - **Westridge Homes Redevelopment** (<https://www.westridgeredevelopment.com/>) builds on lessons learned from Denver Housing Authority's Sun Valley Redevelopment Effort, with an emphasis on a community-guided design and development process aligned with the Healthy Living Initiative and its

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<sup>1</sup> West Colfax neighbors approved significant up-zoning in the last neighborhood plan with the intention of increasing vibrant transit-oriented development with the W-Line. Ridership of the W-line is low; even before the pandemic, neighbors report that intra-neighborhood traffic has gotten worse. Most of the new housing density appears to have targeted young urban professionals who are unlikely to live there long (maybe until they have kids), gentrification has accelerated, and our schools are closing. Maybe these density increases helped address Denver's overall housing crises by accommodating new employees coming to Denver but taking this hit for Denver has contributed to displacement in our neighborhoods. Yes, there are new amenities and local businesses on West Colfax Ave, but still no grocery stores. During the pandemic, ridership on the W-line dropped even lower, during which time, there weren't eyes on the train or the gulch surrounding it, with an increase in illicit activity and violence on and off trains. Transit adjacent development with density increases just isn't enough.

performance-based approach to equitable development. Westridge Homes are adjacent to Knox Station on the W-Line, as well as Paco Sanchez park and the hike-bike trail along the gulch. Even with density increases in this area and the surrounding neighborhood, development of a grocery store in this food desert has been found to be infeasible because of limits imposed by topography and road infrastructure.

- **Equitable Transit-Oriented Corridors** are another area where the WAP targets density increases, especially to be developed with plans for Bus Rapid Transit along Federal and Colfax in keeping with Denver’s Vision Zero planning initiative. Currently, one of our neighborhoods liabilities has been the traffic threats posed to pedestrians, cyclists, and car drivers alike by the highways that run through our neighborhoods, often serving to disconnect more than connect us to each other. On the one hand, it seems crazy to increase housing density along corridors that are currently unsafe for pedestrians. On the other hand, we believe that the only way to return these streets to our neighbors is if we can redesign these corridors in ways that expand our housing, food, and mobility options and support a thriving local economy with neighborhood-supporting uses through integrated design of transportation, housing, and green infrastructures.
- **Local Business Districts in Barnum** along Alameda and at 1st at Knox are another use of strategic density increases. Barnum is our lowest density neighborhood. This has challenged local economic development. Strategic density increases are intended to support a more walkable neighborhood with local jobs and amenities and strengthened connections to surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Increased density to achieve affordable housing** - West Area neighbors have been generally clear that we are interested in density increases as an anti-displacement and affordable housing strategy. This plan's inclusion of maps that reveal density bonuses available through the Expanding Housing Affordability (EHA) are very important for our neighborhoods; they are a way to communicate to future developers about what we want to see.

*(B) REPAIR AND REGENERATE WELLBEING IN HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED NEIGHBORHOODS.*

Comprehensive Plan 2040’s call for equitable development recognizes that it is not enough to name past inequities; we must work to redress past harm and creatively plan for neighborhoods where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and grow into their full potential. This is particularly important in the West Area, given that four of our neighborhoods - Sun Valley, Valverde, Villa Park, and West Colfax are recognized as NEST neighborhoods based on their history of marginalization through redlining and their vulnerability to displacement by gentrification today. The Office of Climate Action Sustainability & Resilience also recognizes these neighborhoods as particularly vulnerable to climate change, related to their history of industrial land use, highway construction, and environmental injustices, including pollution (air, water, soil), low tree canopy, flooding, and traffic fatalities and injuries. Although Barnum is not recognized as a NEST neighborhood, it has also experienced economic disinvestment over the past decades. The core intention of this plan is to repair harm and regenerate well-being through integrated approaches to equitable development. From the beginning of the planning process, neighbors across all neighborhoods have prioritized expanding access to healthy food, mobility, and housing options to help support community-rooted health and wealth without displacement. We highlight some of WAP’s big ideas for this below.

- **Integrate anti-displacement measures and resources** for local residents and businesses, recognizing that past redlined neighborhoods are the most vulnerable to gentrification. This involves ongoing collaboration with WDRC and NEST and our local RNOs and business districts.
- **Reconnect neighborhoods** through integrated green infrastructure and mobility infrastructure networks that support flourishing communities, waterways, and larger ecosystems. Although major highways move

through our neighborhoods, we are also connected by our waterways - the South Platte River, Weir Gulch, Lakewood Gulch, and Dry Creeks - and the trails along them. Greenway and river restoration are core strategies for reconnection. The West Area Plan aims to expand our opportunities to move and connect what we need to thrive through healthy, active, low-cost, low-carbon pathways. Key strategies include:

- Working with River Sisters to fulfill a vision of the “**Turquoise Necklace**,” reconnecting people through our gulches and river systems, through the integration of Indigenous planning practices in our governance of land and water, and honoring the long, enduring legacies of leadership of “Indigenous, Mexican, and Chicano peoples throughout our beloved city’s history, sharing and celebrating these cultural connections widely.”
- Cultivating a **thriving trail network** expanding access to food and nature, learning from the successes of the Via Verde network in Westwood, and exploring opportunities to integrate **edible landscaping and food forestry** in public land surrounding our waterways in partnership with Denver Urban Gardens. A thriving trail network also depends on WAP’s strategies to compassionately address needs of the unhoused who increasingly inhabit our riparian areas. Adding lightning and cultivating these areas as intentional park spaces is important to support safety, dignity, belonging and collective wellbeing in these areas.
- **Investing in major crossings**, including the possibility of a 6th avenue cap and cover park to connect Barnum Park and Sam Sandos Park/Barnum Park North together, and other strategies to overcome barriers posted by highways dividing our neighborhoods.
- **Intentional care and restoration of our waterways** in partnership with key players and plans. The [Corps of Engineers](#) funding around riparian improvements along the South Platte and through the West NPI neighborhoods is a transformative project that is aligned with the City’s [Water Resiliency Program](#) and the [Denver One Water](#) plan that supports equity and resiliency as outlined in community goals around the Plan. This project could be further complemented with NPI goals around re-connecting with the S. Platte through recreational, mobility, and other transformative projects in the works along the S. Platte and woven through our neighborhoods along our gulches and green spaces with the expansion of Lakewood Gulch from Wolff to Sheridan Blvd by continuing the regional walkway into Lakewood and equitable redevelopment of the commercial strip at 8th and Sheridan. This intentional care and restoration could also be of great benefit to climate action and resiliency goal around future disruption events, by creating space for people and water, we can create spaces to handle not only large water events, but also periods of drought.
- **Creative solutions to food access through integrated design.** The plan builds on extensive visioning and strategizing through the Sun Valley Food Access Collaborative and the Food in Communities Program to address the food access needs consistently prioritized by neighbors from the beginning of the planning process. The Quality of Life section includes diverse potential strategies to develop Complete Food Environments, which are significantly lacking across all of our neighborhoods.
- **Transforming liabilities into assets** (asset-based community development strategies), such as investing in projects like Sun Valley Rising, which has been transforming an overhead highway viaduct into a bonafide market, connecting food, mobility, and local businesses. Asset-based community development transforms liabilities into assets; a highway that had been a burden is becoming a site of creative community development. Similarly, we tend to think of stormwater as a burden, but through the proposed partnership



with Denver Urban Gardens, stormwater management can transform flood risks into healthy food through food forestry - especially in publicly owned land like West-Val-Bar-Wood Park in Valverde. Another example is the potential of re-envisioning the Clover Leaf at Federal and Colfax as a LDR (Large Development Review) plan with 29 acres within a drainage basin currently owned by the people of the State of Colorado (CDOT). This area has great potential for rethinking restorative and regenerative planning around mobility, resiliency, and water within a high capacity transportation center - an integrated approach that could allow for transportation to drive the major components of the Quality of Life section, while linking to other large projects tied to the Colfax Viaduct multi mobility plans, Stadium District Master Plan, Federal and W. Colfax BRT, and Sun Valley Rising.

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Repairing harm and regenerating wellbeing also requires us to re-think our approaches to industrial and economic development and the relationships of these use to the land, water, and residential neighborhoods in which they are situated. We recognize that the City of Denver has been losing spaces reserved for industrial and manufacturing uses, especially as the RiNO district shifted from industrial use to an arts and cultural district. As a result, there is increasing pressure on Valverde and Sun Valley to house industrial activity on behalf of the larger city. Unfortunately, to date, although Valverde is an industrial center, most of the economic benefits from this use are enjoyed by people who do not *live* in Valverde; residents are left with high levels of traffic associated with these industries - not only commuters, but also semi-trucks. We do not want to see Valverde forced to once again take the hit for the City; we *do* want future industrial development to be conducted in a way that allows residents of Valverde to walk to life-sustaining, “green” jobs in industries that are meeting environmental performance targets. The West Area Plan reflects this intention. We are encouraged by opportunities for partnership with CASR to advance their zero waste and circular economy goals, and we recommend exploring possibilities for performance zoning that would enable a diverse mix of mutually beneficial residential and industrial land uses.

The West Area Plan’s proposed density increases include a large area in Valverde adjacent to the industrial zone and immediately south of West-Val-Bar-Wood Park (also bordering the industrial area). Owned by the City of Denver, this area houses Columbine Homes, managed by Denver Housing Authority. DHA anticipates that Columbine Homes will be redeveloped in the future with greater housing density. On the one hand, increasing density in this site would appear to be a hazardous choice, given the potential to increase risks posted by industrial traffic. On the other hand, we trust that DHA’s track record for integrated design with Sun Valley Redevelopment Effort helps ensure that redevelopment occurs in a way that will improve safe connections between the residential area to the industrial area, the South Platte River, and the newly opened Youth Empowerment Center. We trust that redevelopment here would use density increases to justify investments in other necessary infrastructure, such as a recreation center, library, and grocery store, all of which have been desired by the neighborhood for decades. With an integrated, community-guided approach to equitable development, redevelopment of Columbine Homes could be a catalytic project that results in a thriving community where residents can enjoy a short walk to meaningful work, access to South Platte river and its trails, and Bus Rapid Transit along Federal.

**EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT: ENGAGING TENSION, MOVING BEYOND FALSE SOLUTIONS**

In reviewing the innovations in equitable planning reviewed above - both innovations for NPI’s template, and context-appropriate strategies for West Area Neighborhoods - it is important to acknowledge that they emerged through an inclusive and equitable public process guided by CPD Staff that engaged diverse neighbors with differing perspectives, needs, and aspirations. Barnum, Sun Valley, Valverde, Villa Park, and West Colfax are distinct neighborhoods with differing demographics and unique challenges - lumping these neighborhoods together was an essential efficiency measure by the city to update all of Denver’s neighborhood plans, but it also posed very real

challenges. Indeed, designing and implementing an inclusive, equitable process is easier said than done, especially in a period of extraordinary, traumatic disruption and the most polarized environment of the past century in America.

### ***What makes for an inclusive, equitable public process?***

According to Comprehensive Plan 2040, an *equitable* process is one where all may “fully participate in and influence public decision-making in order to achieve equitable outcomes.”

What, then, does “full participation” look like? Industry standard has been the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and their “Spectrum of Public Participation” [see <https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars>]. IAP2 recognizes the importance of integrating many levels of participation into a public process, including a spectrum - inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. In this context, a robust, equitable public participation plan must do more than merely *inform* the public, *consult* them (collecting input), or even *involve* them in some two-way conversations. These are all necessary aspects of equitable engagement, yet insufficient. *Full participation* implies that city officials also *collaborate* with community members, ***looking to community leaders for advice and innovation and incorporating this as much as possible into decisions***. We recognize that this level of engagement is traditionally uncommon in city planning, where planning professionals are generally expected to interpret public input and design the content of plans themselves. We also recognized that not all community members are willing or able to participate at this level of engagement, especially as volunteers. This is where intentionally convened Steering Committees are important, especially when they are composed of diverse community leaders who are actively engaged in community organizations and social networks.

As WAP Steering Committee members who care deeply about inclusive, equitable, democratic processes of engagement, we commend CPD for integrating all these levels into the West Area Planning process. We also thank Valerie Herrera and Eugene Howard for the collaborative approach they took working *across city departments*. They created integrative, multi-disciplinary, multi-departmental, and multi-sectoral learning environments where local knowledge and expert knowledge could be integrated to develop innovative, context-appropriate solutions. The wicked problems of complex environments require engagement of people with diverse vantage points and leverage points to address. This kind of systems thinking is challenging. It’s time-intensive. It also requires a lot of mental and emotional energy, and the combined faculties of open minds, hearts, and wills. It is uncomfortable, and vulnerable. Often exhausting. We find it’s also rewarding, and essential if we are to spring forward instead of bouncing back.

As Steering Committee members, we’ve learned a lot from listening - to each other, subject matter experts, and our diverse community members - and leaning into our growth edges. In the process, we’ve expanded our capacity to (1) distinguish, expose, and oppose “false solutions” (i.e. solutions that often look good on the surface, but tend to perpetuate systemic harm), while (2) identifying, appreciating, creating and integrating strategies that heal our neighborhoods and make us whole, repairing harm and regenerating wellbeing. In the summer of 2022, a subset of our Steering Committee volunteered to do a deep dive exploration of how equity and quality of life priorities could be woven throughout the West Area Plan, which resulted in significant clarification and restructuring. This Working Group also generated a conversation guide to support others in exploring solutions to vexing problems like gentrification and climate change in ways that could expand mobility, housing, and food options. [This guide acknowledges that silver bullet solutions simply do not exist, while also offering a diverse set of helpful tools, questions, and considerations.](#) The guide was designed to support powerful conversations that help us spring forward to reparative, regenerative development, rather than bouncing back to business as usual. As a conversation guide, it does not offer prescriptive or dogmatic recommendations. Rather, in naming tensions, raising questions, and identifying a variety of tools, it invites readers to expand our focus, both with long-term thinking (7 generations

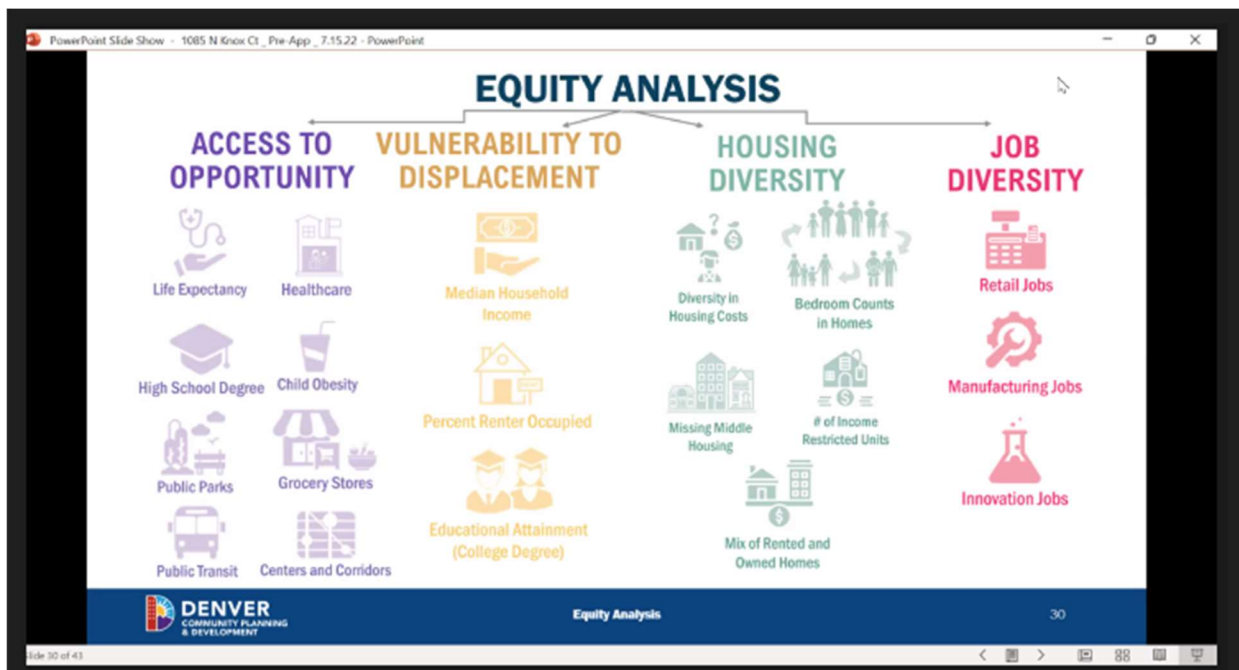
before and after us) and with our eyes on the prize and the horizon of possibilities to pursue the solutions we really need; the ones that make us whole, through repair and regeneration.

Of course, we would be remiss not to emphasize again that the success of this process is an outcome of the capacity of the two extraordinary planners who led us through the process, who were, in turn, supported by the growing commitment to equitable development held by CPD, mandated by Comprehensive Plan 2040, and supported by capacity building opportunities offered by the Mayor's Office of Social Equity and Innovation. Eugene Howard and Valerie Herrera came to the table with a great deal of subject-matter expertise related to equity planning. They both understood the history of policies that contribute to intersectional oppression in our cities, and strategies to disrupt those patterns to advance equitable outcomes. They both showed up on day one ready and willing to connect authentically, professionally, and respectfully with our diverse community members. In addition to being planners of color, they also embodied compassion, courage, and curiosity that complemented their professional expertise. They cultivated a trusting and trustworthy environment around them. They showed up to the community engagement events we organized and hosted, including the extensive engagement activities hosted by the Valverde Neighborhood Association as part of the Valverde Movement Project. By showing up to events that our diverse community organizations were hosting, we all helped diversify participation in the planning process, beyond the usual suspects, including youth and historically marginalized people.

### III. ADOPTION IS THE BEGINNING

We know that neither an equitable process nor a compelling vision of equitable development can, alone, generate equitable outcomes. Adoption of the West Area Plan moves the process of equitable engagement from an envisioning phase into implementation. Implementation of this plan will need to build upon the strength of equitable engagement processes developed through this process, with ongoing application of an **equity analysis** in all rezoning decisions and policy development, as well as ongoing investment by the city in **civic infrastructure** as well.

We hope that our Registered Neighborhood Organizations and our elected leaders will continue to work with city staff to sharpen our collective equity analysis. CPD shared the following chart as a template to consider when reviewing rezoning proposals and we find it to be a helpful tool for consideration.



In addition to institutionalizing equity analysis, civic infrastructure and ongoing inclusive, equitable engagement is essential for holding future development accountable to priorities set forth in WAP and Comprehensive Plan 2040. When it comes to equitable engagement, industry standards set by IAP2 also suggest that the deepest level of civic engagement is to **empower** communities, by putting final decision-making power into the hands of the public, with the promise “we will implement what you decide.” The public process for NPI implementation begins after adoption of the plan, as stakeholders use plan guidance to implement context-appropriate, specific solutions.

We see exciting opportunities on the horizon for engagement through the implementation process:

1. The West Denver Renaissance Collaborative (WDRC) will likely continue to be a valuable forum through which neighborhood leaders can continue engaging across neighborhood-boundaries in West Denver. This is especially likely given WDRC’s recent focus on investing in community organizing capacity-building, and its ongoing success in implementing anti-displacement strategies. Most of the Steering Committee members are active participants in this space as well.
2. We also anticipate that bringing Participatory Budgeting to West Denver would put implementation power into the hands of those most directly affected by barriers to mobility, food, and housing, through a well-designed public process.

As Steering Committee members who share a deep commitment to inclusive, equitable, democratic engagement, we struggle with awareness that there has been little opportunity for rich, meaningful public dialogue and deliberation about the second draft of the West Area Plan, which reflects the accumulated feedback from the public participation process. This plan was publicly released at the end of October, followed by one large public in-person meeting/workshop in November before the onset of holidays and a deep winter season characterized by slowing down and a more inward focus. We are well-aware that the most effective plans are those in which diverse residents experience being vested in them because they recognize the plans advance their aspirations and priority needs. In an ideal world, most of us on the Steering Committee would like to give our diverse neighbors additional opportunities to dive deeply into dialogue with one another about the plan; we all are deeply grateful for having had the opportunity to dive deep together, leaning into conflict and discomfort to explore the root causes of wicked problems facing our neighborhoods, and we wish to extend this opportunity to everyone. Yet, we also know that this plan has been richly shaped all along the way, and its adoption ultimately serves as an invitation to continue the conversation and work together to implement solutions that support collective community-rooted health and wealth instead of triggering displacement. We trust the CPD staff’s professional expertise in discernment of the public review process.

We believe in the potential of this plan to help our city build back better, together. As a Steering Committee with diverse voices and differences of experience and opinion, we’ve leaned into the discomfort of difficult conversations about wicked problems. We have trusted that by uniting in our diversity, the solutions will emerge around us as we move forward together in alignment with the broad, bold vision articulated by the West Area Plan. We invite you to join us in this journey of curious, compassionate, courageous co-creation for the sake of a common home where we all get to be alive, well, and free.