

# Loretto Heights

## Small Area Plan

City Council Draft September 16, 2019



**DENVER**  
COMMUNITY PLANNING  
& DEVELOPMENT



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan is the result of extensive work and collaboration among a range of stakeholders, community and business leaders, elected officials, and members of the public who care deeply about the future of southwest Denver. In particular, the following are recognized for their contributions to this effort:

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THE HONORABLE  
*Kevin Flynn*  
COUNCILMAN DISTRICT 2

Dear Community,

I am very pleased to endorse the Loretto Heights Area Plan, a community-driven document that is the culmination of more than two years of grassroots organizing and engagement – all triggered by a most unexpected event.

In November 2016, nearly three years ago, Colorado Heights University announced it was closing and offering for sale the historic Loretto Heights campus. The commanding hilltop site is the most recognizable location in southwest Denver, while its signature Loretto Academy building with soaring red sandstone bell tower has been a visible landmark from all around Denver since 1891. With no clear path forward even for basic maintenance and upkeep of the historic buildings and 70-plus acres of grounds, the people of southwest Denver as well as many in the broader community who can claim a connection to the campus were rightly apprehensive about the possibility of losing this irreplaceable jewel.

In response, my council office quickly organized a community-based stakeholder group to bring together neighborhood leaders, college alumni and the Sisters of Loretto, the order that operated the campus through 1988. The vision that emerged from that effort served as the framework for this, the first land use plan ever pursued in southwest Denver. After a developer bought the campus one year ago, we proposed a pause in any site planning until the community could come together and arrive at a broad consensus on what southwest Denver wanted to see. It turned anxiety over potential loss into excitement for a lively, welcoming addition to our part of town where new neighbors of all means and cultures could prosper, the community could gather together with them, the campus buildings could be restored and re-used, and the rich legacy of the Spirit of Loretto could be preserved.

One hundred percent of this plan's content originated in the community. More than 1,300 individuals participated, and more than 2,300 public comments were woven into the plan, a remarkable level of involvement for such a small area plan, but indicative of the strong desire in the community for a remarkable place. I am grateful to every one of them. In the end, we achieved agreement from the public ranging from 85 percent to 97 percent for the land use, mobility and quality of life recommendations. As a result, I am honored to bring this plan to you.

Kevin Flynn  
Council Member, District 2







THE HONORABLE  
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I want to extend my sincere thanks to the Loretto Heights Steering Committee, Denver Community Planning and Development, Westside Investment Partners, and most importantly, all of the residents who participated in the Loretto Heights Area Plan. I would also thank our neighboring cities of Sheridan and Englewood as well as community partners such as Denver Public Schools (DPS), Regional Transportation District (RTD) and Historic Denver for all of their contributions to this planning effort.

Not only am I the Denver City Council representative directly to the east of Loretto Heights, my mother moved to Denver to go to school at Loretto Heights and is a Loretto graduate. I cannot say thank you enough for the dedication of our community to participate in 10 steering committee meetings, four community meetings including one all-Spanish language meeting, two online surveys with 2,300 total points of feedback.

Through the collaborative efforts of various community organizations and community members a plan that includes parks and public spaces with an eye toward historic preservation emerged. The Loretto Heights Area Plan also uses an equity lens to drive this vision for the future of this site. The surrounding communities have taken pride in the opportunity to shape future development on this land through community input and discussion.

The Loretto Heights Area Plan will help set the tone for the new development of the area while respecting and preserving the rich history of the site. I look forward to seeing this community vision become reality, and once again, thank you to everyone who participated and helped this truly be the community's vision for the future of Loretto Heights.

Thank you.

Jolon Clark  
 Council Member, District 7



# CHAPTER SUMMARY

# 1

## OVERVIEW

This section introduces the plan area, describes the planning process and presents the community's overall vision for the plan area.

# 2

## LAND USE & BUILT FORM

This section addresses topics related to growth, development, urban design, economics, historic preservation and affordable housing.

# 3

## MOBILITY

This section addresses the mobility network in the Loretto Heights plan area and is organized by transportation mode.

# 4

## QUALITY-OF-LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE

This section addresses topics that contribute to the quality of life for all residents and visitors in the plan area. Topics include health, food access, parks and recreation and environmental quality.

# 5

## IMPLEMENTATION

This section identifies implementation priorities, responsibilities and phasing for plan recommendations.


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW</b>	9	Overview
1.1 Introduction	11	
1.2 Plan Area	12	
1.3 Plan Process	16	
1.4 How to Use the Plan	22	
1.5 Loretto Heights Vision	24	
1.6 Planning for an Equitable Loretto Heights	26	
1.7 Complete Neighborhood	32	
<b>CHAPTER 2: LAND USE AND BUILT FORM</b>	35	LU
2.1 Future Neighborhood Contexts and Future Places	37	
2.2 Building Intensity and Quality Design	42	
2.3 Historic Preservation	46	
2.4 Economy and Affordable Housing	49	
<b>CHAPTER 3: MOBILITY</b>	57	MOB
3.1 Street Types	59	
3.2 Future Streets	60	
3.3 Complete Networks	61	
<b>CHAPTER 4: QUALITY-OF-LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	71	QOL
4.1 Healthy and Active Living	73	
4.2 Parks, Recreation and Open Space	74	
4.3 Green Infrastructure	76	
<b>CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION</b>	83	IMP
5.1 Realizing the Vision	84	
5.2 Collaboration	85	
5.3 Types of Implementation Activities	85	









# Chapter 1

# OVERVIEW

## In this chapter:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Plan Area
- 1.3 Plan Process
- 1.4 How to Use the Plan
- 1.5 Loretto Heights Vision
- 1.6 Planning for an Equitable Loretto Heights
- 1.7 Complete Neighborhood





*"I love the tower and being able to see it from a distance. It is a marker."*

*- Community Member*

Photo: Circa 1945



## 1.1 Introduction

The history of the Loretto Heights campus is integral to the evolution of southwest Denver as one of its earliest developed sites. Since 1891, the Administration Building, with its soaring and enduring bell tower, has served as a familiar and constant landmark. The campus sits on one of the highest points in the city and enjoys a commanding view of the Rocky Mountains and Denver skyline. Over its more than 125-year history, the campus has been a significant feature of the Denver metropolitan area.

The hilltop property was purchased by the Sisters of Loretto in 1888 to be the site of a new Catholic boarding school for elementary and high school girls. The Loretto Heights Academy opened in 1891 and Loretto Heights College in 1918. Both institutions were dedicated to the education of women. In 1941, the Academy closed due to declining enrollment, but the College remained robust. It admitted its first male students in 1970. By 1988, declining enrollment also forced the College to close its doors and thus end over a century of legacy of the Sisters of Loretto on the prominent hilltop. In 1989, Teikyo University purchased the campus for educational use.

In 2018, Teikyo University sold the Loretto Heights campus to Westside Investment Partners, Inc., presenting a unique opportunity to build on the site's legacy through a sensitive redevelopment that incorporates the vision of the surrounding community. In addition to the iconic and recognizable tower of the Administration Building, a variety of significant structures designed by well-known architects representing a range of

architectural styles from the 1890s to the 1980s populate the site. Throughout this planning process, the community has advocated for the area to become a destination and a gathering place for the entire community of southwest Denver. The community desires to find a balance between preserving the old and embracing the new.

The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan builds on previous work by local leaders and neighborhood groups to create a collective, planned vision for this unique site. Like all neighborhood planning processes, this small area plan is informed by the *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver*, the city's land use and transportation plan. The guiding language in these citywide documents and other citywide plans like the *Game Plan for a Healthy City* and *Housing an Inclusive Denver*, provide direction for all of Denver. While there is citywide guidance and direction, southwest Denver has no small area plan, and therefore no current policy guidance in place that reflects the community's vision for the area. The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan is a community-driven public process which gives the public an opportunity to have input in the future of this treasured campus and the communities surrounding it. The plan provides specific policy recommendations based on community input that will help guide future redevelopment and the anticipated impacts that development will have on the adjacent neighborhoods.

Throughout the public input process, community members made it clear that the issues they most

want to see addressed in the plan are historic preservation, mobility options, parks, recreation and public spaces, and the threat of gentrification. Community members also expressed a desire to see all new development held to a high standard. This means appropriate development should encompass high-quality design and construction materials, distinctive architecture, and be human-scaled. In response to these identified priorities, and in keeping with the vision elements identified in the *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040*, the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan goals and recommendations are organized around the elements of a complete neighborhood. Three interrelated elements form the foundation of a complete neighborhood: land use and built form, mobility, and quality-of-life infrastructure. A truly inclusive city is composed of complete neighborhoods and great places accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability or income.

An additional element informs every part of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan: Equity. Equity means everyone, regardless of who they are or where they are from, can thrive. *Blueprint Denver* includes three equity concepts that inform this plan: Improving Access to Opportunity, Reducing Vulnerability to Displacement, and Expanding Housing and Jobs Diversity. These concepts are interlinked with all the elements of a complete neighborhood. During plan implementation, equity-based recommendations and strategies should be given priority to ensure that the redevelopment of the campus helps Denver achieve its vision for inclusive, complete neighborhoods.



# 1.2 Plan Area

## Regional Context

The plan area is in southwest Denver, home to several regional assets such as Marston Lake, Fort Logan National Cemetery and the Denver Sports Center. The area is also home to additional natural features, including the South Platte River, Harvey Park, and Bear Valley Park. The city of Sheridan is located south and the city of Englewood is located southeast of the plan area. Both jurisdictions are within Arapahoe County, allowing for the opportunity to collaborate on multi-jurisdictional planning efforts.

There are roughly 55,000 residents in 22,500 housing units in southwest Denver. The area's development has been influenced over the years by several different factors. Between 1943 and 1973 the City and County of Denver annexed thousands of acres within Arapahoe and Jefferson counties, which helped contribute to the creation of what is now southwest Denver. Annexation is thus integral to understanding the history of this area as the lines between jurisdictions are blurred, further complicating the sense of place and the relationship of its citizens to the City and County of Denver. Furthermore, investment and construction of major thoroughfares including Federal Boulevard and Highway 285 (Hampden Avenue) also contributed to the growth of this area by providing a high degree of regional accessibility.

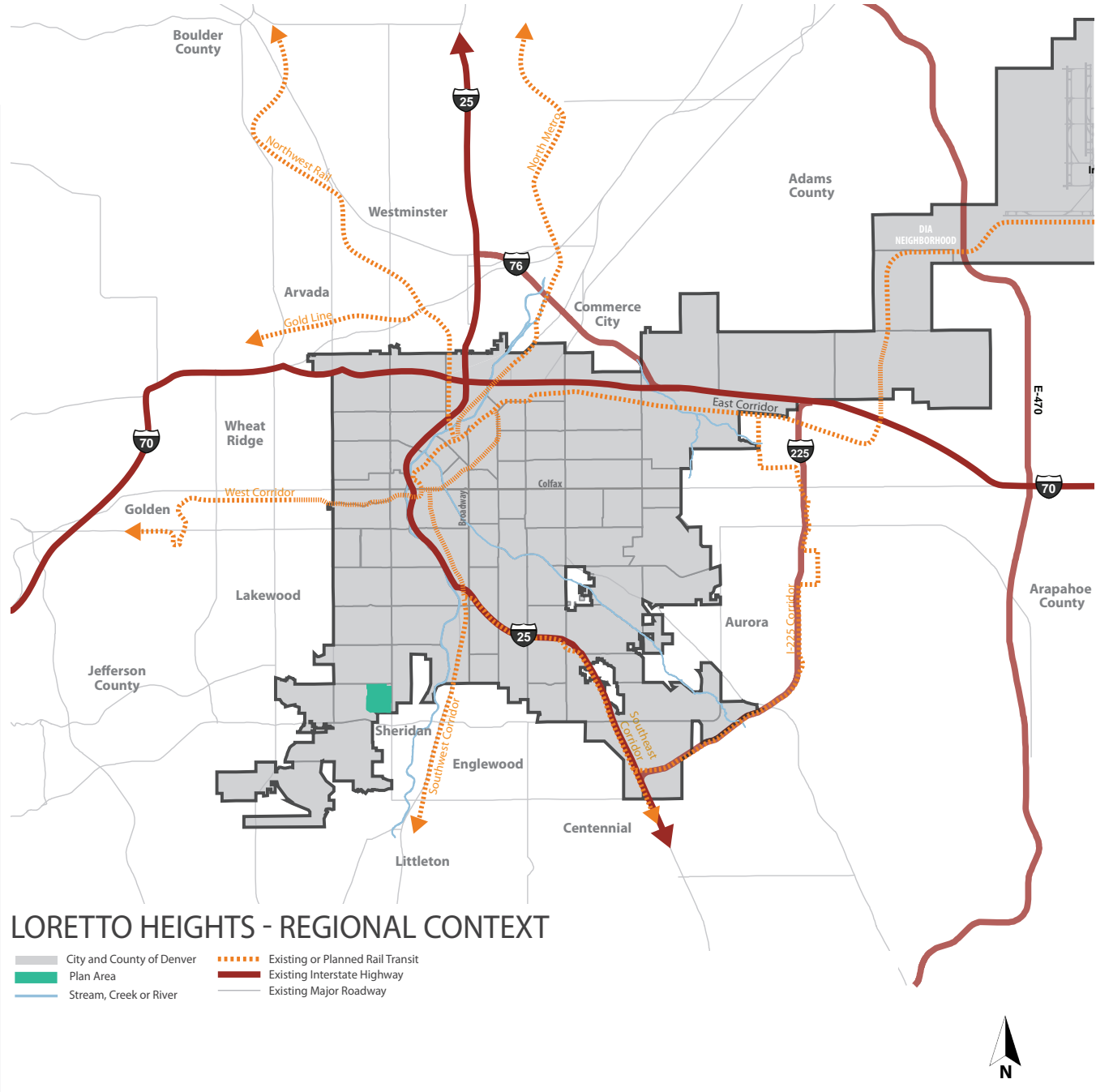


Figure 1.1: Regional Context

## Neighborhood Context

The Loretto Heights campus is in the Harvey Park South neighborhood of southwest Denver. This neighborhood is directly adjacent to the Harvey Park neighborhood to the north, College View–South Platte neighborhood to the east, Bear Valley neighborhood to the West and the city of Sheridan (Arapahoe County) to the south.

Most residences are in the suburban context, generally found in areas located along the edges of the City and County of Denver. This context is predominately low-density, single-unit residential with mixed-use corridors along major roads and larger centers at key intersections. It is representative of the Post-World War II development of the area and is supported by compatible uses of a complete neighborhood such as schools, parks and commercial and retail uses.

The Harvey Park South neighborhood is characterized by architecture primarily from the 1950s. Ranch style houses make up most of the housing styles within the plan area with some modestly sized Minimal Traditional style houses located north of the plan area (see image 1 in Figure 1.3). There are several corner lots with single-unit houses angled to the corner that lend a unique character to the neighborhood. The Federal Boulevard corridor contains a mix of commercial, multi-unit residential and single-unit houses spanning several eras of development from the 1940s to present day. The small portion of the College View–South Platte neighborhood within the plan area includes commercial and multi-unit residential along Federal Boulevard that transitions

into smaller-scaled, multi-unit and single-unit residential as one moves farther east. The single-unit residential of the College View–South Platte neighborhood represents an earlier mix of architectural styles primarily from the 1930s and 1940s. South of the campus and adjacent to the city of Sheridan is multi-unit residential from the 1960s to present.

Future redevelopment and investment in the plan area presents a unique opportunity for the area to develop into a vibrant, mixed-use destination that connects to and supports the surrounding southwest Denver community, while remaining a unique community attraction that honors the historic character and legacy of the former educational campus.



Figure 1.2: Plan Area



### Plan Area Boundary

The area of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan is considered to be most directly influenced by the redevelopment of the 72-acre Loretto Heights campus. It includes parts of the Harvey Park South and College View–South Platte neighborhoods and is located within Denver City Council District 2 and 7. The plan area boundary was selected based on the following four factors:

**1** Yale Avenue defines the northern boundary because it captures the surrounding character of single-unit homes in the northern portion of the Harvey Park South neighborhood.



Example of Minimal Traditional Style Housing

**2** Lowell Boulevard defines the western boundary because it captures Loretto Heights Park and the surrounding character of single-unit homes.



Example of Housing in Dartmouth Heights Development

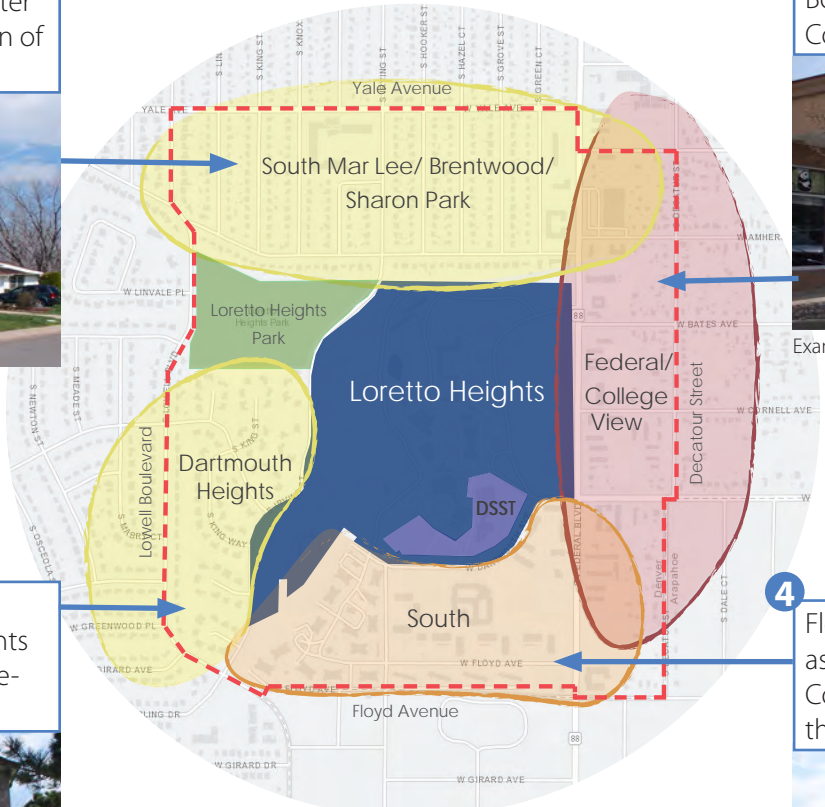


Figure 1.3: Plan Area Boundary

**3** Decatur Street defines the eastern boundary to include the commercial uses along Federal Boulevard and the residential uses of the College View–South Platte neighborhood.



Example of Commercial Development on Federal Boulevard

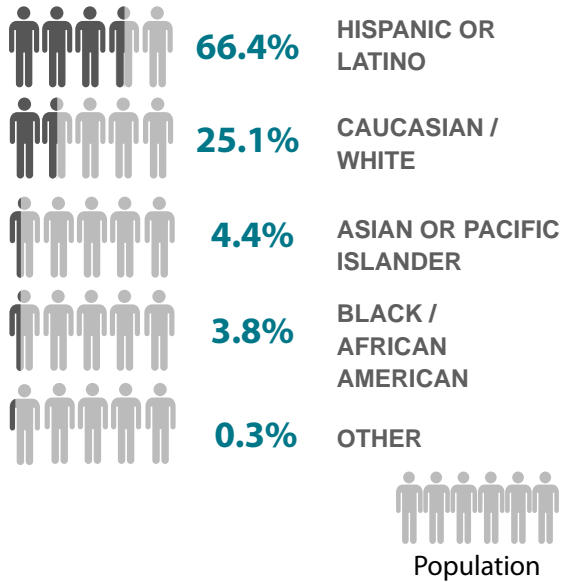
**4** Floyd Avenue defines the southern boundary as it is the line between Denver and Arapahoe County. The multi-unit residential character to the south is also captured within the boundary.



Example of Multi-unit Housing on Federal Boulevard

## Race and Ethnicity

in Harvey Park, Harvey Park South and College View-South Platte



Harvey Park Neighborhood	12,760
Harvey Park South Neighborhood	8,870
College View-South Platte Neighborhood	7,925
Loretto Heights Plan Area	4,494

Denver 649,654

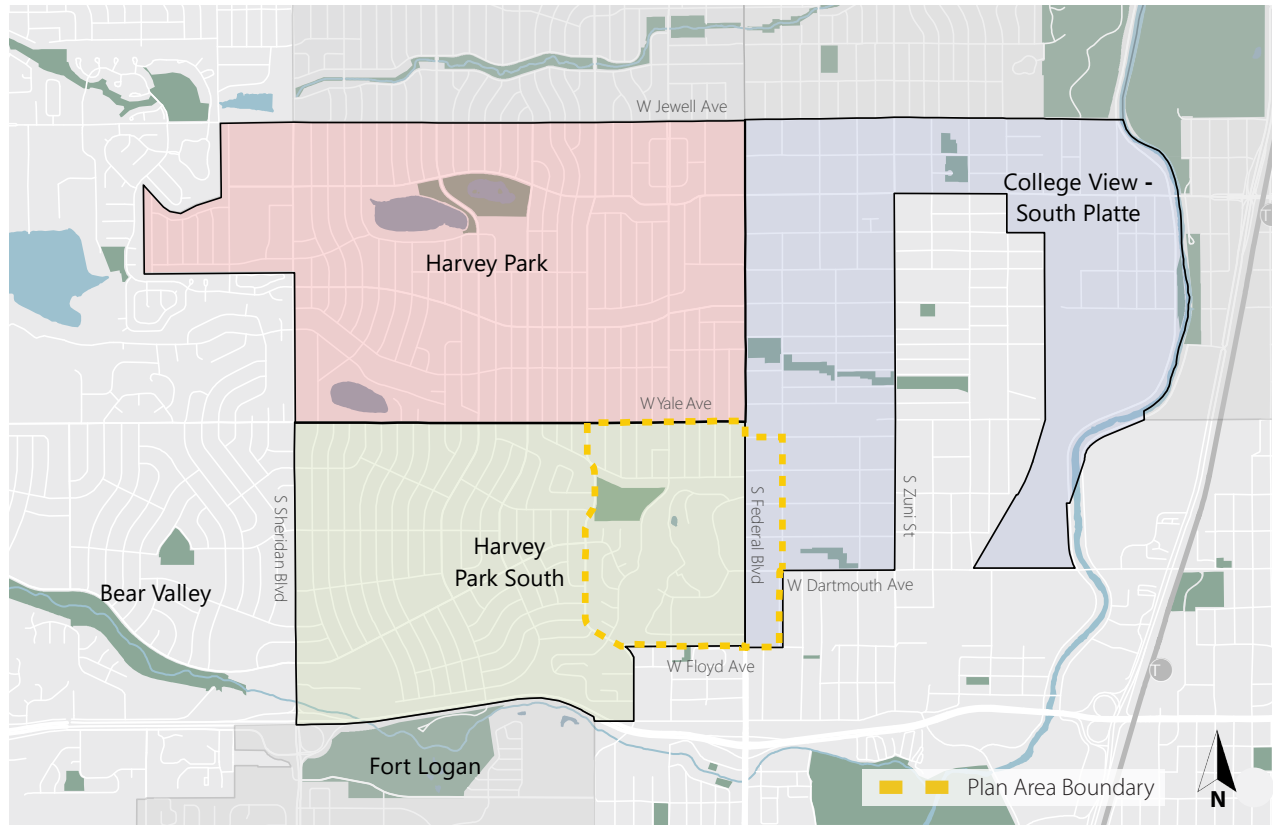
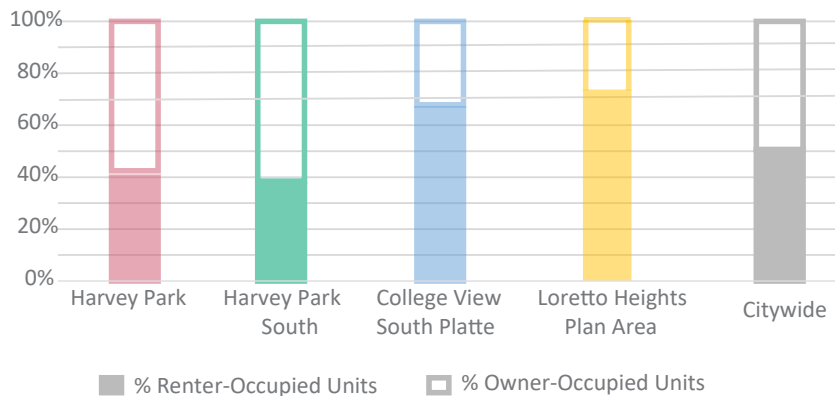
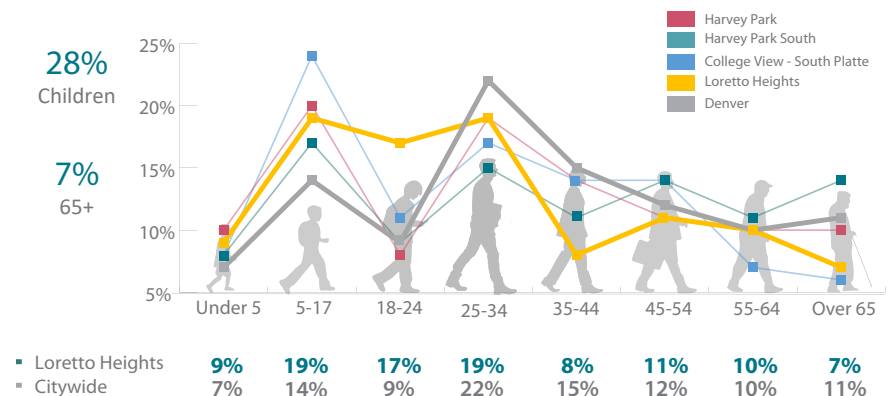


Figure 1.4: Neighborhood Context

## Renter/Owner Occupied



## Age Distribution



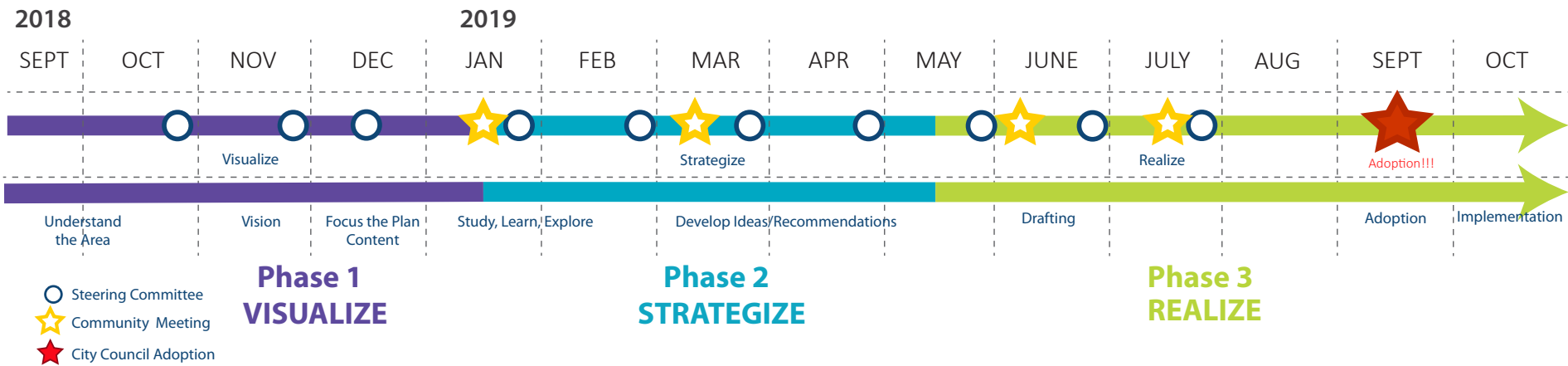
# 1.3 Plan Process

## Background

The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan describes the community’s vision for the next 20 years and will help inform community priorities and public investment during that time. The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan was prepared over a 12-month period that spanned three planning phases: Visualize, Strategize, and Realize.

The planning process included extensive engagement of residents, business owners, property owners, government agencies, nonprofits, and others who expressed interest in participating. There were a variety of public engagement and outreach efforts, with participation from over 1,300 members of the community.

## Project Schedule



Phase 1 focused on studying the area’s existing conditions to identify issues for the plan to address. Additionally, stakeholders built consensus around a future development vision for the area.

Phase 2 focused on the creation of high-level recommendations that will guide future development and achieve the overall vision identified in Phase 1.

Phase 3 focused on the development and refinement of the recommendations and strategies that provide specific guidance for the plan area and inform future implementation.

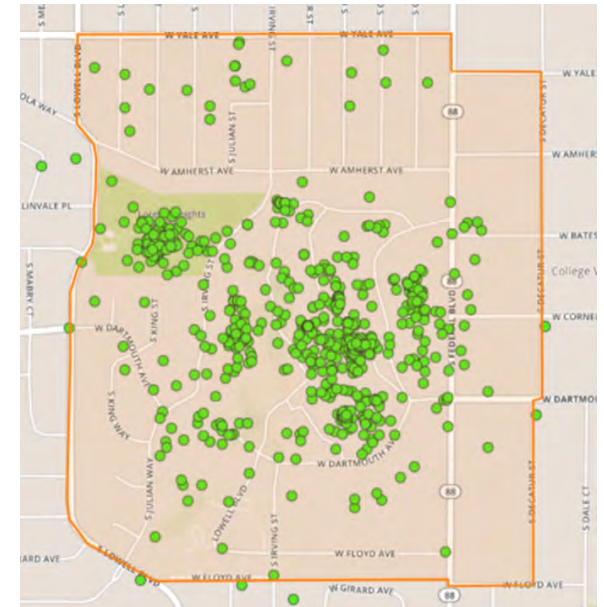


## Steering Committee

The planning process was guided and informed by a steering committee comprised of community members and area leaders representing a variety of diverse organizations and constituencies. The steering committee served as the policy advisory group and was instrumental in guiding the development of the vision, recommendations and strategies that are included in this plan. Ten steering committee meetings were held over a 12-month period. All meetings were open to the public and held in the Library on the Loretto Heights campus or at the All Saints Church Hall. Steering committee members were instrumental in generating community interest and participation throughout the community engagement process.

## Online Surveys

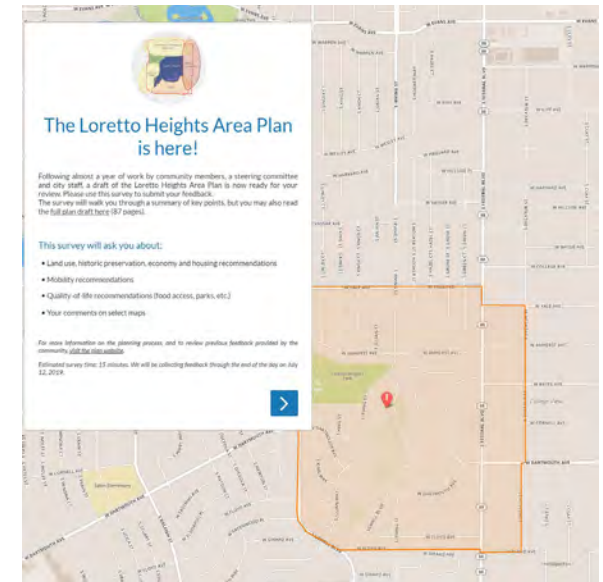
Online surveys were created for those who were unable to attend the community meetings, providing them an opportunity to participate in the planning process. The first survey was created to replicate the first public meeting to ensure that the feedback received online could be evaluated alongside the feedback received in person. The second online survey provided an opportunity for the community to submit their feedback on the draft of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan. Paper versions of the surveys were also available. Over 750 community members participated in both of the online surveys and provided 2,300 individual comments.



Spatial Representation of "Community Assets" According to First Survey (January 2019)



Steering Committee Meeting #7



Second Survey Asking for Feedback on the Draft Plan (June 2019)

## Community Meetings

Community meetings were held at key points throughout the planning process in order to solicit input and guidance from the public. These meetings provided background information regarding the plan area and the planning process, new information about the plan, and a variety of creative ways to gather feedback from the community.

### Community Meeting #1

The first community meeting in January of 2019 served as a kick-off meeting and an opportunity for the public to learn about the planning process and the intent of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan. City staff and steering committee members volunteered at the meeting, which was attended by 230 community members. The community provided feedback on several different topics and weighed in on the assets, challenges, and hopes and opportunities of the plan area. Community members helped prioritize elements of a complete neighborhood and reviewed the six vision statements developed by the steering committee.



Community Meeting #1

### Community Meeting #2 - All-Spanish Language

In March of 2019, city staff organized an all-Spanish language community meeting. City staff organized the meeting to mimic the agenda of the January community meeting, however, the meeting was designed more as a community gathering complete with breakfast and a variety of interactive children's activities. Meeting attendees provided feedback on a variety of different topics through four open-house stations. City staff and various steering committee members volunteered at this meeting, which was attended by 30 community members.



All-Spanish Language Community Meeting #2

### Community Meeting #3

The third community meeting in June of 2019, served as an opportunity for the public to explore options and provide feedback on the proposed and existing mobility network, the open space network, neighborhood character and proposed benefits to the community in the plan area. City staff and various steering committee members volunteered at this meeting, which was attended by 100 community members.

### Community Meeting #4

The final community meeting held in July of 2019 was an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the public draft of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan. Community members also provided feedback on final plan concepts, recommendations and strategies. City staff and various steering committee members volunteered at this meeting, which was attended by 75 community members.



Community Meeting #3



## Evaluating Community Feedback





A variety of feedback was received throughout the planning process, which consisted of responses to targeted questions and thousands of community comments. After every steering committee meeting, community meeting and public engagement event, the project team compiled all the feedback for further evaluation. This evaluation included identifying common themes and understanding areas of consensus, conflict, and concern. The content found in the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan has been informed and guided by this data collection process.




Steering Committee Meeting #6

**LORETTO HEIGHTS "ACADEMY"**  
Attendee Report Card

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECTS:	GRADE
 History	
 Geography	
 Visual Arts	
 Composition	

Winter Semester 2019 

Community Meeting #1 Report Card



Community Meeting #1

## May Bonfils Stanton Theater Feasibility Study

The community identified the May Bonfils Stanton Theater, a 1,000-seat proscenium style theater, as a treasured asset to be revitalized as a performing arts center. In 2019, Keen Independent Research conducted a feasibility study of retaining the theater as a fully functioning cultural facility. It analyzed the existing capacity and demand for performing arts venues, identified market gaps, and forecasted future venue demands. That baseline information led to a report that details performing arts and non-performing arts uses for the space that could support operational sustainability; identifies building improvements required for venue operations; provides revenue and cost structure recommendations to maximize cost-effectiveness for community performing arts organizations and other uses; and recommends potential ownership and governance structures to create a sustainable theater operation. The team facilitated three community workshops to obtain input regarding the theater's feasibility, potential improvements, and governance structure.





# STORY OF THE SITE

1876 Colorado attains statehood

1888 Sisters of Loretto founded

1911-1912 of Loretto purchase land for Loretto Heights Academy

1918 Rectory constructed

1941 Loretto Academy

1950 Amphitheater constructed

1951 Landscape architect S.R. DeBoer develops campus master plan

1955

1957 Marian Hall and Swimming Pool constructed

1958 Walsh Hall, Library and Theater constructed

1962

1967 Independent board of trustees

1968 Sister Patricia Jean Manion becomes president and first nun to appear in secular dress

1970

1976

1988

1991

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# 1.4 How to Use the Plan

## Levels of Plan Guidance

Small area plans provide a level of analysis, detail, and guidance on issues affecting local areas that citywide plans cannot. The plans typically focus on neighborhoods, station areas, corridors and other geographic areas. They engage neighborhood stakeholders in identifying a future vision for the area and provide recommendations and strategies for achieving that vision. These recommendations help ensure neighborhoods grow as envisioned by the small area plan. The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan represents the land use, mobility and quality-of-life infrastructure vision for the Loretto Heights plan area.

As an adopted small area plan, the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan works within the framework created by *Blueprint Denver* and refines *Blueprint Denver*'s recommendations for this area. The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan advances the vision of citywide plans while providing specific recommendations, strategies and implementation actions for the Loretto Heights plan area. Any updates to citywide plans should incorporate recommendations for this plan.



## Intent of Loretto Heights Small Area Plan

This plan establishes a long-range vision and guiding principles for future development in the plan area and redevelopment of the Loretto Heights campus. Public agencies and private entities will use this plan for many purposes and actions that will affect the form and function of the plan area. The recommendations identified in this plan provide direction to guide day-to-day decision-making. They are intended to be flexible to accommodate opportunities that arise and adapt and respond to new challenges over the coming years.

As with the *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* and its supplements, the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan's recommendations provide guidance. This plan does not rezone any property, nor does it designate any property for local or national historic designation. Future implementation actions such as map amendments (rezoning) or text amendments, historic designations, capital improvements and other public-private partnerships will require specific actions on the part of the city, property owners and various stakeholders.

## Comprehensive Plan 2040 Vision Elements

The *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* identifies six vision elements that serve as the basis of the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040. These vision elements articulate a sustainable, comprehensive vision for the city, and are linked to a set of broad, long-term goals. Each recommendation and strategy within this plan contributes to achieving one or more of the elements of the vision.



In 2040, Denver is an equitable, inclusive community with a high quality of life for all residents, regardless of income level, race, ethnicity, gender, ability or age.



In 2040, Denver's neighborhoods are complete, unique and reflective of our diverse history



In 2040, Denver is connected by safe, high-quality, multimodal transportation options.



In 2040, Denver is a global city with a robust economy that reflects the diversity of our community.



In 2040, Denver is a thriving, sustainable city connected to nature and resilient to climate change.



In 2040, Denver is a city of safe, accessible and healthy communities.



## 1.5 Loretto Heights Vision

### Loretto Heights Vision Statements

The foundation of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan is expressed in the form of the *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* six vision elements. The steering committee refined the ideas and concepts within each element based on relevancy to the Loretto Heights plan area. The broader community provided feedback on multiple drafts of the vision statements and reaffirmed the ideas and concepts through various exercises during the first community meeting. The result is a series of statements within each element that is consistent with the citywide vision, while at the same time defining what each element means specifically for the Loretto Heights plan area.



#### Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive

In 2040, residents, employees, and visitors find unique public gathering spaces among a dynamic and diverse mix of uses that cater to a variety of socio-economic levels. The area is a regional destination for the community and provides a collective identity for southwest Denver. A range of housing types provides opportunities for residents of all income levels to live, work, and play while minimizing impacts of gentrification and rising housing costs. All residents have the option to stay and grow in the area over their lifetime with housing that fits their budget and needs. The redevelopment and revitalization of Loretto Heights encourages further investment and redevelopment along Federal Boulevard to be more feasible and attractive, transitioning into a distinctive, enhanced corridor that will become a source of pride for the Denver Metropolitan Area.



#### Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods

In 2040, Loretto Heights is one of the most authentic and recognizable places in Denver and serves as a vibrant, local gathering space for residents and visitors alike. Its rich history is honored through the preservation and re-use of historic buildings and sensitive infill that reflects more than a century of diverse architectural styles. Enhancement of the grounds and open space maintains sweeping views of Denver and the Rocky Mountains. Cultural amenities reflect the diversity of the surrounding neighborhoods and respect the sacred and historical integrity of the former campus.



#### Connected, Safe and Accessible Places

In 2040, residents, employees, and visitors enjoy walking, biking, and using other forms of transportation on well-maintained streets which equitably serve the surrounding neighborhoods. All residents and visitors, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities, have safe and convenient options to get to work, shop, play or visit a park in the area. As a pedestrian, it is easy to navigate through the site because of a comprehensive and complete pedestrian network with sidewalks and crossings that are safe and accessible. The community is served by bicycle infrastructure that is accessible for all riding levels. Reliable, frequent, and affordable transit connects the area, and well-maintained transit stops are easy to access and provide a comfortable place to wait.



View Looking Southwest Towards the Rocky Mountains



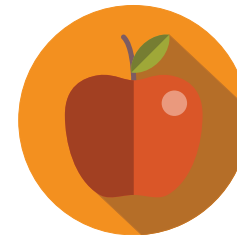
### Economically Diverse and Vibrant

In 2040, the community benefits from its strong, thriving economy. Federal Boulevard and the other corridors and mixed-use centers in the area are welcoming to all with diverse, multicultural and locally-owned businesses that complement the surrounding residential neighborhoods and showcase the area’s diverse culture. The community cultivates opportunities for residents and workers by supporting and encouraging new development and the retention of businesses, employment, education, and training options. A vibrant local arts and culture community has transitioned the area into a regional destination, enhancing the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors, as well as strengthening the local businesses in the area.



### Environmentally Resilient

In 2040, the community has a healthy and robust natural ecosystem. An enhanced open space network of mature trees, trails, parkways, and natural plazas is thoughtfully woven into the neighborhood and takes advantage of the unique topography of the area. Seamlessly integrated green storm water infrastructure provides beautification through abundant vegetation while improving the water quality of neighboring creeks and rivers. The community guides growth and development in a responsible and sustainable way to protect and enhance the natural environment for future generations.



### Healthy and Active

In 2040, an equitable allocation of community assets has increased opportunity for people who face barriers to good health and an active lifestyle. All households have safe, walkable and bikeable access to an array of diverse, affordable and healthy food, including grocery stores, community gardens, and restaurants. Residents can safely access well-maintained parks, trails and open space networks with a mix of amenities and recreational activities where everyone feels safe and welcome. There is a strong sense of community; neighbors know one another, public spaces are vibrant and active, and residents enjoy improved health and access to opportunity.



# 1.6 Planning for an Equitable Loretto Heights

While all the vision statements are essential to the future success of the Loretto Heights plan area, equity is an overarching concept to help ensure opportunity for everyone in the community. Equity is when everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, can thrive. Where there is equity, a person's identity does not determine their outcome. As a city, we advance equity by serving individuals, families and communities in a manner that reduces or eliminates persistent institutional biases and barriers based on race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation, age and other factors.

This equity concept is especially important for the Loretto Heights plan area since it has not seen significant investment in decades and contains a diverse mix of residents from many different backgrounds. Three equity indexes should be considered when guiding policies and investments that will result from this plan to ensure the benefits of growth and change are equitably shared by everyone in the Loretto Heights plan area: Access to Opportunity, Vulnerability to Displacement, and Housing and Jobs Diversity. This plan recognizes the lack of current residents within the Loretto Heights campus and, therefore, the following equity measurements are taken from the Harvey Park, Harvey Park South and College View-South Platte neighborhoods.

Refer to Appendix C in *Blueprint Denver* for a more detailed methodology and for individual maps of each measurement and indicator.



## Improving Access to Opportunity

Access to opportunity reflects the goal for all neighborhoods to be complete with equitable access to a high quality-of-life. It is based on the vision for every Denver resident—regardless of income, race, ethnicity, age or ability—to live in a complete neighborhood of their choice with basic services and amenities. This includes equitable access to quality education.

Areas with low access to opportunity lack key components of a complete neighborhood and often exhibit low quality-of-life outcomes—including life expectancy, educational attainment and income level—compared to the city as a whole. Unfortunately, many areas with low access to opportunity are also areas where the majority of residents are minorities. This pattern illustrates the need to improve equity across neighborhoods and to remove barriers to opportunity that negatively impact many communities of color.

### Improving Access to Opportunity in the Plan Area

Of the nine indicators used to create this measure, the plan area scores lower than the citywide average in six categories. Key indicators where the score could be improved include: socio-economic, access to healthcare, childhood obesity, death rate and access to high frequency transit and centers at all scales (local, community and regional).

The following recommendations address prioritizing access to opportunity through Land Use and Built Form, Mobility and Quality-of-Life Infrastructure:

- Recommendation 09 in Land Use and Built Form
- Recommendation 01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09 in Mobility
- Recommendation 02, 03, 04 in Quality-of-Life Infrastructure

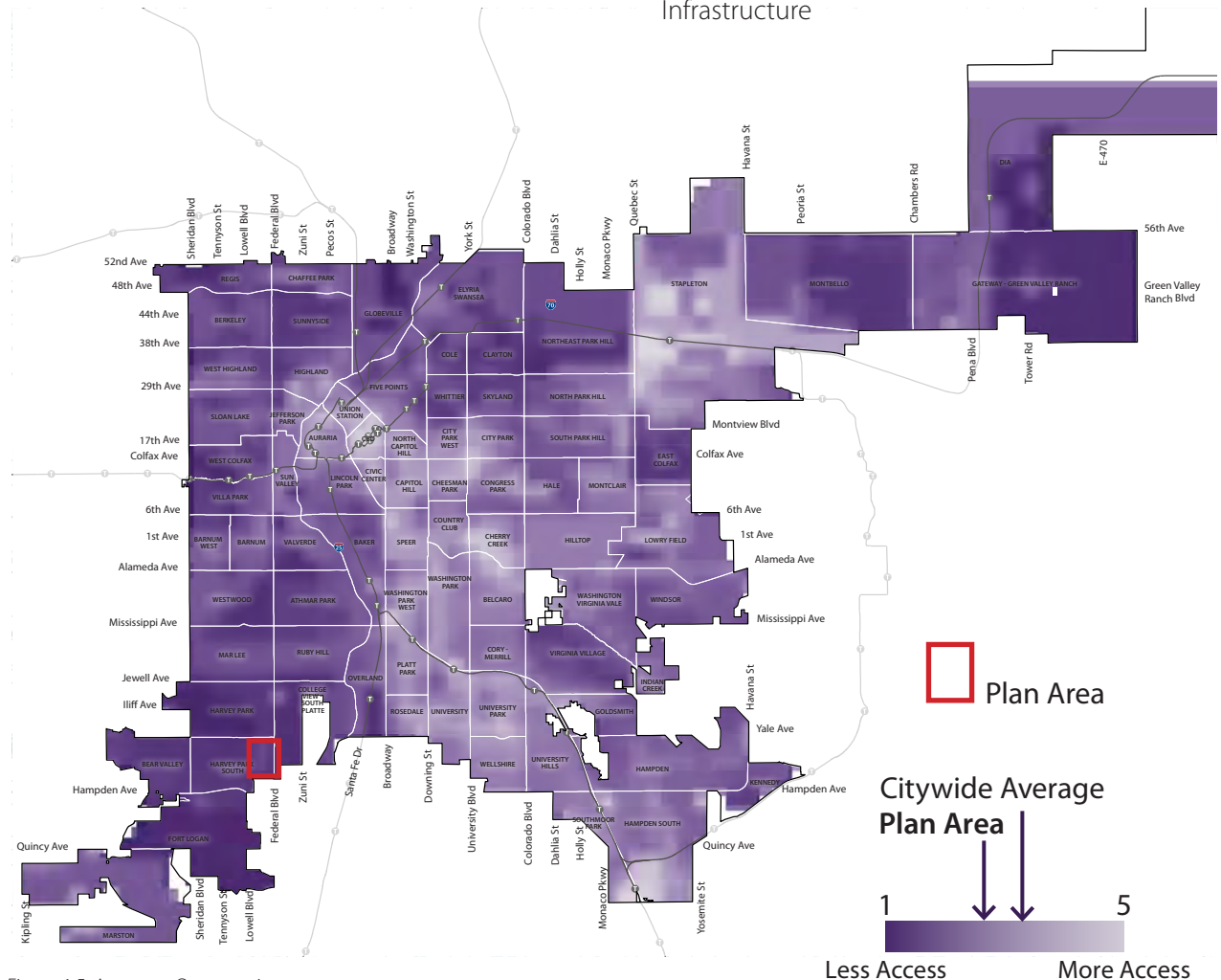


Figure 1.5: Access to Opportunity

### Reducing Vulnerability to Displacement

Growth within the City and County of Denver brings a variety of change. One is the changing demographics of the city and its neighborhoods. This includes historically underrepresented areas where dramatic swings in income, racial and ethnic composition have occurred in just the last decade. With these changes comes increasing concern around the gentrification of neighborhoods. The term "gentrification" captures a complex group of neighborhood dynamics that occur when an area experiences new investment and an influx of higher-income residents. Involuntary displacement, which occurs when residents or businesses can no longer afford to stay in an area due to increasing property values and rents, is a negative impact of gentrification. Mitigating involuntary displacement is necessary to allow current residents and businesses to remain in the neighborhood and provide equitable access to the benefits of economic growth for all residents and business owners.

### Reducing Vulnerability in the Plan Area

According to a metric based on income, tenure (owners vs. renters) and education, the plan area is more vulnerable to displacement than the citywide average. While western portions of the study area have higher incomes and education rates, the College View-South Platte neighborhood will be most vulnerable to displacement when development of the former campus occurs. Special attention should be paid to all cost-burdened households in the vicinity to effectively mitigate against involuntary displacement. Households

that spend more than 30% of their household income on utilities and housing are considered "cost-burdened" and may have difficulty addressing other needs such as food, clothing, medicine, transportation or childcare costs.

The following recommendations address reducing vulnerability to displacement through Land Use and Built Form:

- Recommendation 01, 08, 10, 11 and 12 in Land Use and Built Form

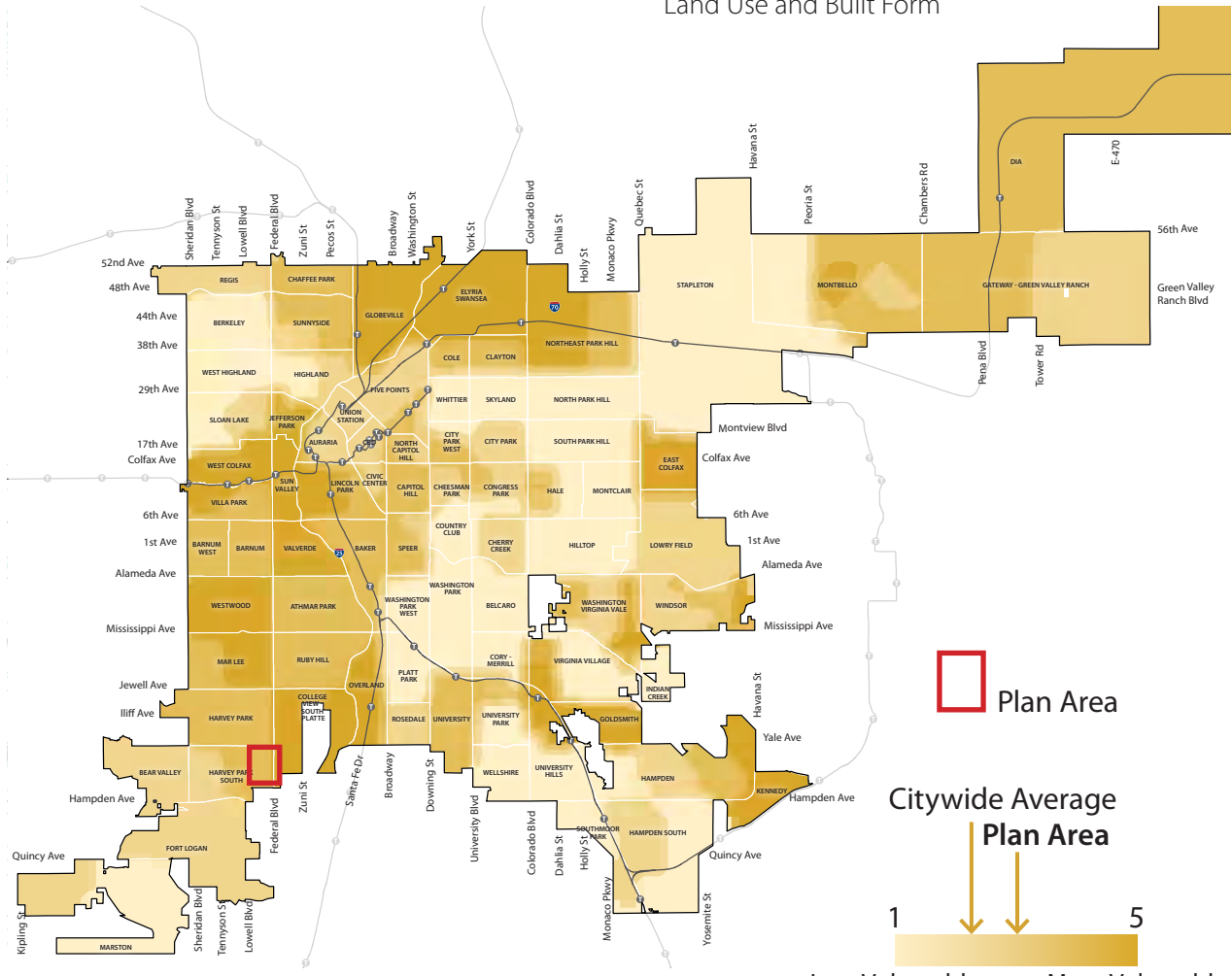


Figure 1.6: Vulnerability to Displacement

### Expanding and Measuring Housing Diversity

Housing diversity captures the community's vision for a complete neighborhood with equitable access to quality housing options and choices that accommodate households of different ages, sizes and incomes. A diverse range of housing options—including a mix of rental and for-sale options—is key to encouraging complete neighborhoods where families and households of all types and incomes can choose to live. Housing diversity includes single-unit homes that are already found in many Denver neighborhoods, as well as units of different types and sizes that complement the existing single-unit pattern of an area. The vision is for every Denver neighborhood to offer affordable housing options.

### Expanding and Measuring Housing Diversity in the Plan Area

Of the five indicators used to calculate this metric, the plan area scored lower than the citywide average in only one category and has more housing diversity than the citywide average. When considering middle-density housing, meaning housing containing 2-19 units such as duplexes, rowhomes, and smaller multi-unit developments, the study area and surrounding neighborhoods offer little to none of these important housing options.

As the desirability of the Loretto Heights plan area rises, providing a range of housing options will be crucial to advancing the goal of maintaining and increasing racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. The historic campus provides a unique opportunity to help meet this need through adaptive re-use of existing buildings that are well-suited for use as affordable housing.

The following recommendations address increasing housing diversity:

- Recommendation 01, 02, 11 and 12 in Land Use and Built Form

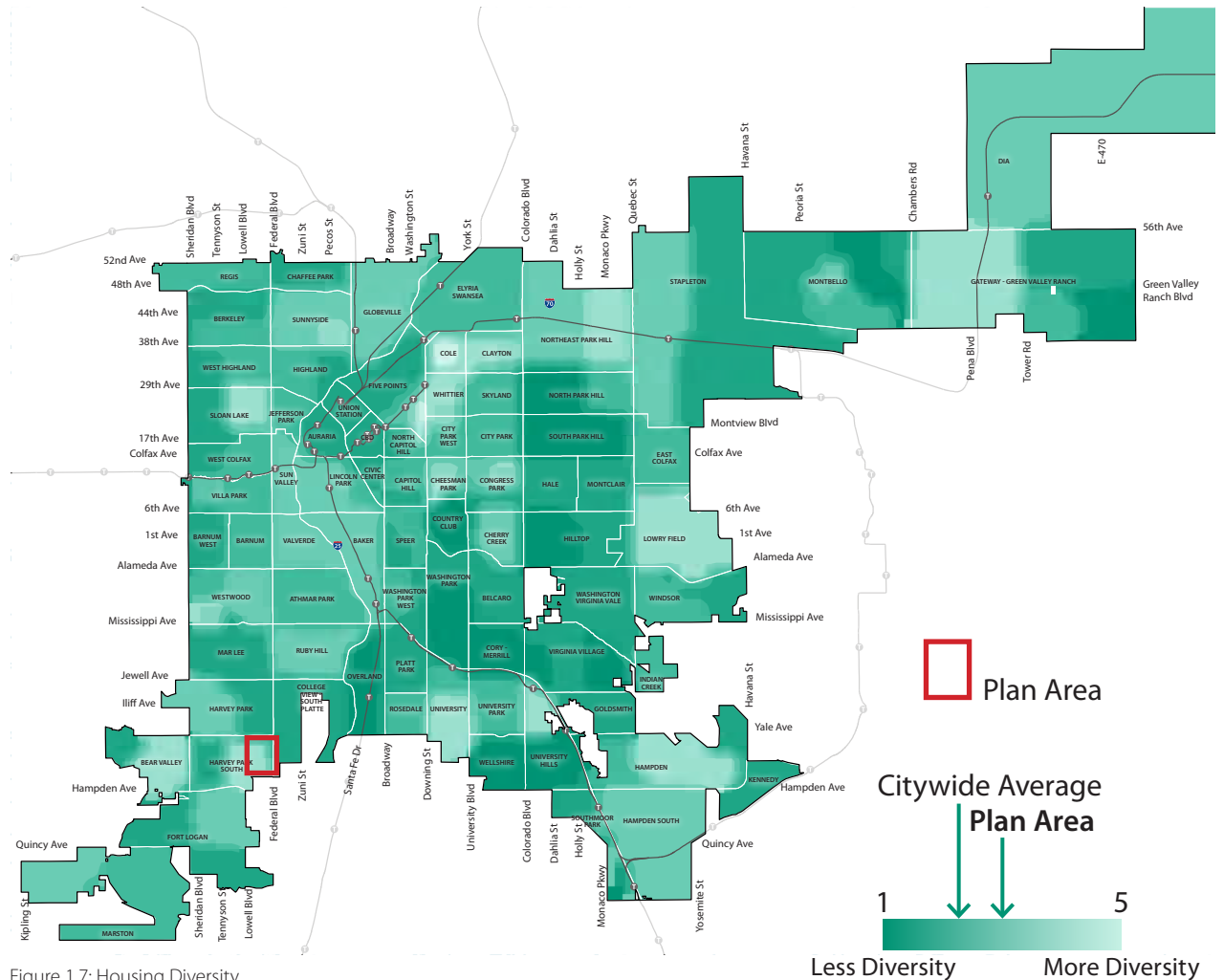


Figure 1.7: Housing Diversity

### Expanding and Measuring Job Diversity

Job diversity captures the community's vision for a city of complete neighborhoods with equitable access to quality employment options.

Access to a range of quality jobs enables people of different incomes and education levels to find employment and wealth-building opportunities.

### Expanding and Measuring Job Diversity in the Plan Area

As this measurement examines the diversity of employment in census block groups based on job density (amount of jobs) and industry diversity (types of jobs), the plan area underperforms in both categories. The majority of census block groups in the study area contain less than 100 jobs and are not included in the analysis of job types. The types in the area are predominately retail with some manufacturing in the College View–South Platte neighborhood east of Federal Boulevard. While it is natural for some parts of the city to contain a more prevalent job type, patterns of predominate job types can inform policies and strategies to increase job diversity. As the Loretto Heights campus is envisioned as an active, mixed-use destination, residents in the area should have greater access to a range of well-paying, quality employment options.

The following recommendation address increasing job diversity:

- Recommendation 09 in Land Use and Built Form

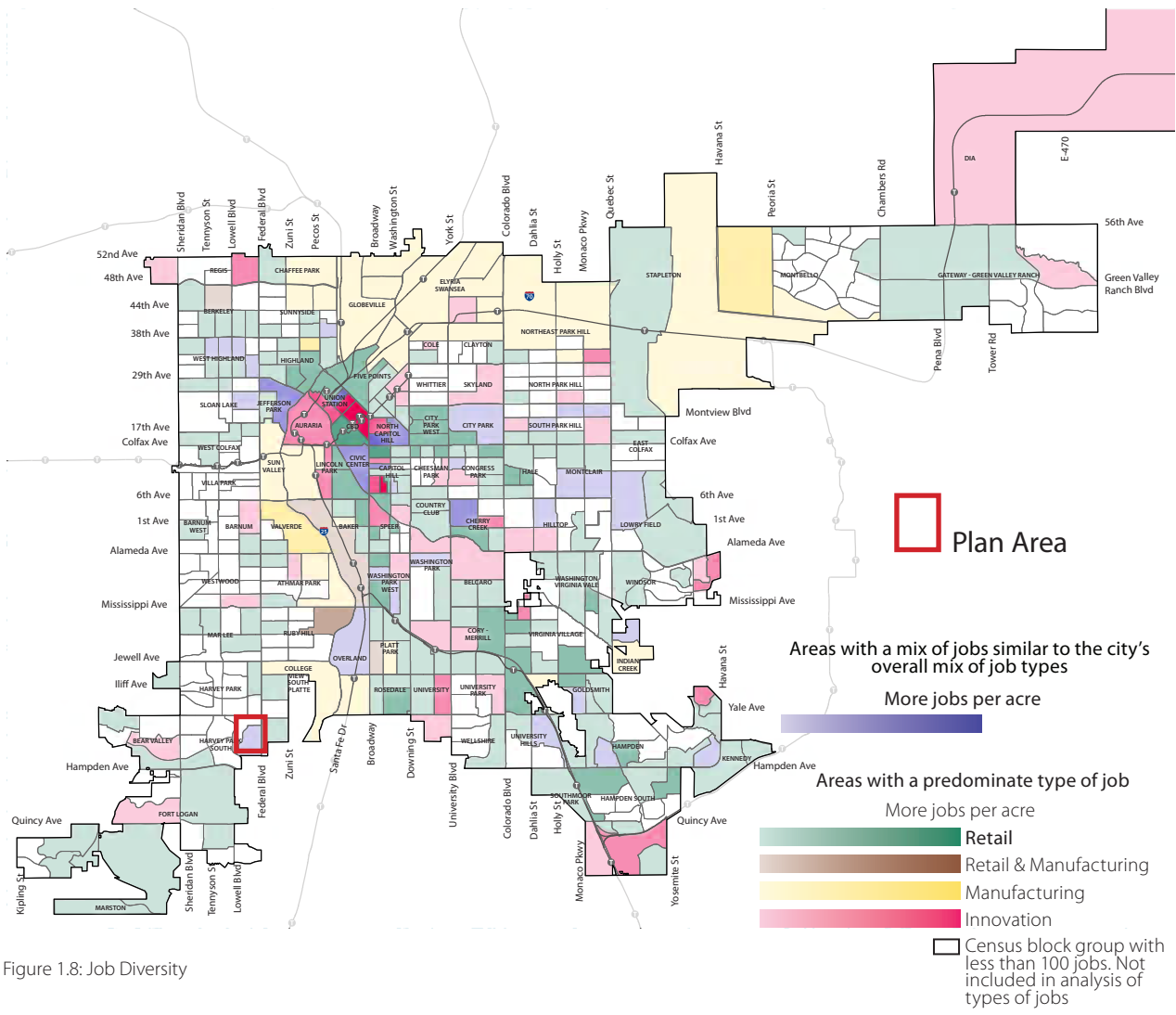


Figure 1.8: Job Diversity



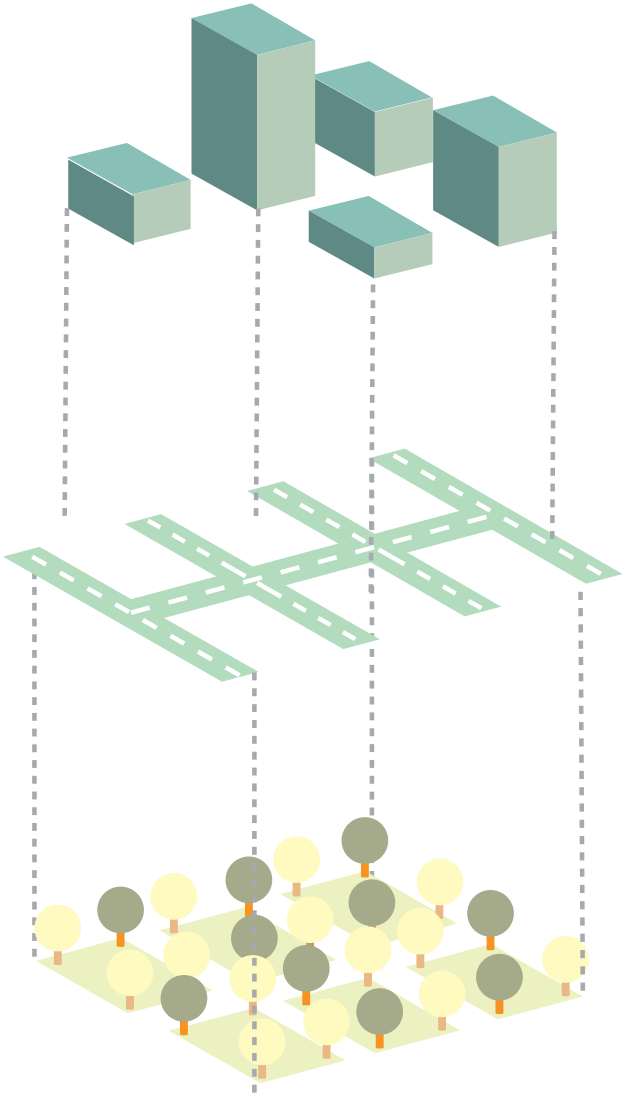


# 1.7 Complete Neighborhood

The vision and goals found in *Blueprint Denver* are realized through the planning and implementation of complete neighborhoods connected by a complete multimodal transportation network. Complete neighborhoods are accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability, or income. The completeness of each neighborhood is defined by its distinct and authentic history, culture and character, as well as its access to a variety of housing types, services, green spaces and employment opportunities. Three interrelated elements form the foundation of a complete neighborhood: land use and built form, mobility, and quality-of-life infrastructure. Everything that makes a neighborhood complete— diverse housing options, great urban design, historic character, street trees, parks and open spaces, walkable streets and convenient services—falls within these three elements.

### Elements of a Complete Neighborhood

- **Land Use and Built Form** - Elements contributing to the character and quality of places including block pattern, scale, the relationship between buildings and the street, and the mix and intensity of uses.
- **Mobility** - The multimodal transportation elements to connect people to the places where they live, work and play.
- **Quality-of-Life Infrastructure** - The parks, open spaces, trees, plants, natural features, recreation opportunities and healthy food options and dynamic civic and social spaces that contribute to our quality-of- life.



## ELEMENTS OF A COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD



### Land Use & Built Form

Enhance the character and quality of neighborhoods



### Mobility

Connect people to the neighborhood places where they live, work, and play



### Quality-of-Life Infrastructure

Provide neighborhoods with parks, trees, natural features, recreation opportunities, and civic and social spaces



## Plan Goals

## Plan Recommendations

**DIVERSIFY**  
uses and experiences

**BUILD**  
quality places

- LU - 01 Promote a diverse mix of land uses
- LU - 02 Promote and anticipate growth in areas adjacent to transit priority streets
- LU - 03 Encourage coordinated development to ensure appropriate benefits to the community are provided
- LU - 04 Encourage high-quality public realm design that contributes to the neighborhood character and sense of place
- LU - 05 Promote a variety of building heights and intensities
- LU - 06 Promote high-quality, human scale design

- LU - 07 Preserve and re-use historic structures and features on the Loretto Heights campus
- LU - 08 Identify and preserve the historic character of neighborhoods surrounding the redevelopment area
- LU - 09 Promote a full range of employment options
- LU - 10 Minimize involuntary displacement and gentrification
- LU - 11 Encourage and incentivize more affordable housing development
- LU - 12 Integrate affordable housing throughout the plan area to accommodate households of different ages, sizes and incomes

**CONNECT**  
neighborhoods

- MOB - 01 Build a complete street network
- MOB - 02 Enhance the existing street network
- MOB - 03 Promote street network safety
- MOB - 04 Increase access to multi-use trails, pathways and parks and open space
- MOB - 05 Create a complete pedestrian network

- MOB - 06 Create a complete bikeable network
- MOB - 07 Enrich the public transit experience
- MOB - 08 Increase the use of shared mobility options
- MOB - 09 Improve resident access to transit

**GROW**  
access to public space

**ENHANCE**  
the public realm

- QOL - 01 Increase fresh food access, availability and affordability
- QOL - 02 Connect existing open space, parks, trails and recreational assets
- QOL - 03 Create new community gathering spaces to accommodate a variety of activities for residents and visitors
- QOL - 04 Provide a variety of amenities that contribute to a sense of place, and enhance active and passive uses

- QOL - 05 Encourage higher quality design of parks and public spaces
- QOL - 06 Strengthen and expand the tree canopy
- QOL - 07 Design and implement natural and engineered green infrastructure systems







## Chapter 2

# LAND USE AND BUILT FORM

### In this chapter:

- 2.1 Future Neighborhood Contexts and Future Places
- 2.2 Building Intensity and Quality Design
- 2.3 Historic Preservation
- 2.4 Economy and Affordable Housing



# LAND USE & BUILT FORM

## GOALS:

Create a vibrant neighborhood destination that provides a range of housing and employment options as well as a diverse mix of uses and experiences for residents and visitors. The plan's key recommendations include the preservation of the campus' historic character and the promotion of high-quality development that reinforces a comfortable, human-scale pedestrian experience.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

When combined with a variety of market-rate and affordable housing options, a mix of uses that provides for a variety of every day needs in a pedestrian-friendly environment allows people to live, work, and play and creates a vibrant and inclusive environment. Supporting walkable, mixed-use development is an important part of Denver's ongoing social, environmental and economic vitality and it is equally important that new development help retain the authenticity of the campus and create an attractive, comfortable neighborhood.



## Challenges and Opportunities

During the planning process, a variety of land use challenges and opportunities were identified by the community. While the opportunities greatly outnumber challenges, it is important to understand the barriers and constraints of the plan area as it redevelops to ensure it is compatible with the existing historic character and surrounding neighborhoods. The low-density development patterns to the north and west of the campus and lack of east-west connections make it difficult or impractical to walk, bike or take transit. Additionally, the topography and steep grades, especially to the west, make the area more prone to automobile dependence.

## Community Feedback

- Redevelopment of the campus with a mix of land uses will improve access, make the area safer for other modes of transportation and create an identity for southwest Denver.
- Lack of access and safe connections between the site and to the neighborhoods.
- Concerns that new development will overshadow the existing buildings or lead to their demolition and that the historic character of the campus will be lost.
- Concerns of involuntary displacement and gentrification due to campus redevelopment that will result in higher housing costs in adjacent neighborhoods.

- Preserving the Cemetery, Administration Building and Chapel should be prioritized. The community is also interested in maintaining the Pool and May Bonfils Stanton Theater as a performing arts center. They also support the preservation and adaptive use of Pancratia Hall, Machebeuf Hall and the Library.
- A wide range of housing options, unit types and affordability should be included on the campus to attract a diverse group of households from different backgrounds and income levels.
- The need for local, neighborhood-serving businesses and retail options was repeated throughout the planning process. Often, residents are forced to shop in nearby commercial areas like Bear Valley Shopping Center and River Point in Sheridan, further accentuating the need for a personal vehicle.
- Any future development should be integrated with the topography and take advantage of mountain views while maintaining the Ruby Hill Park View Plane and restricting maximum heights of new campus development to below the height of the Administration Building roofline.

## 2.1 Future Neighborhood Contexts and Future Places

The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan refines *Blueprint Denver's* guidance on neighborhood contexts and future places within the plan area and updates the future places map. It also provides guidance on building heights. This may be greater or less than the ranges identified by *Blueprint Denver's* place descriptions.

As the vision for the plan area is realized through the planning and implementation of complete neighborhoods, it is important to understand the key elements of neighborhood context and future places and their role in the overall framework. Simply put, neighborhood contexts are made up of places and street types that are made up of the elements of a complete neighborhood. This context-based approach sets guidelines for character-compatible development by explaining the varied expectations and aspirations for the plan area.

*"The most successful urban areas are those that have many intersections of the old and new, giving us the best of both."*

*-Community Member*

### Future Neighborhood Contexts

Denver's neighborhoods typically reflect the era in which they were built. Neighborhood contexts help us understand the differences in the built environment across the city. Many built environment features, including the mix of uses, density, scale of buildings, architectural styles, lot sizes, block pattern, parking and types of green space vary by neighborhood largely due to the preferred transportation options available at the time of development. *Blueprint Denver* establishes seven neighborhood contexts (Suburban, Urban Edge, Urban, General Urban, Urban Center, Downtown, and Districts).

There are three future neighborhood contexts mapped in the Loretto Heights plan area: Suburban, Urban and District. Similar to the larger southwest Denver area, the majority of the plan area is within the Suburban neighborhood context. Areas along Federal Boulevard and northeast of the District are envisioned as Urban context. Portions of the campus parcel and all of Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) are within the District context.

### Future Places

Future places describe the desired character of an area. They work to promote complete neighborhoods for residents living within or near each of them. These places vary in scale and intensity depending on the neighborhood context location.

The community expressed concern with the potential loss of existing historic character on the Loretto Heights campus. The Future Places categories of the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan should aspire to maintain the existing character reflective of the historic campus while also establishing new, complementary places. There are four basic categories of future places designated for the plan area: Centers, Corridors, Residential Areas and District.

The following pages provide detail on these Future Places and why they were selected. Chapter 5 of *Blueprint Denver* provides even greater detail on the descriptions of each.

### Future Neighborhood Contexts

**Suburban**

The suburban context is significantly influenced by the needs of the automobile although there are both walkable and bikeable areas with some access to transit. Homes in the suburban context are largely single-unit but can also include smaller lot sizes, higher intensity residential such as multi-unit structures and apartment buildings. Commercial development is typically located along main corridors and in centers bordering residential areas.

**Urban**

The urban context is walkable, with a lower reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, due to a predictable street grid, bike infrastructure and the availability of transit. Homes in this context vary from multi-unit developments to compact single-unit homes. Mixed-use buildings are sited in a pedestrian-friendly manner near the street. Parking is generally located behind buildings or on-street.

**Districts**

Districts are contexts with a specially designed purpose. Although they have a strong primary purpose, these places can also be mixed-use and offer a diverse range of amenities and complementary services to support the district's primary function. Block patterns, building height, orientation, urban design and mobility connections in this context can vary based on specific use. Many districts provide large scale public open space and community gathering areas.

Figure 2.1: Neighborhood Contexts





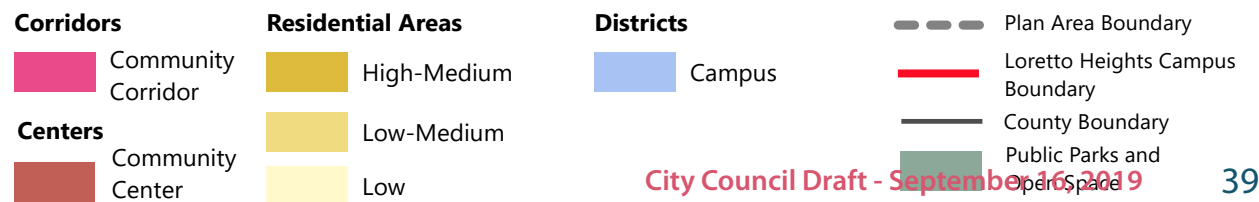
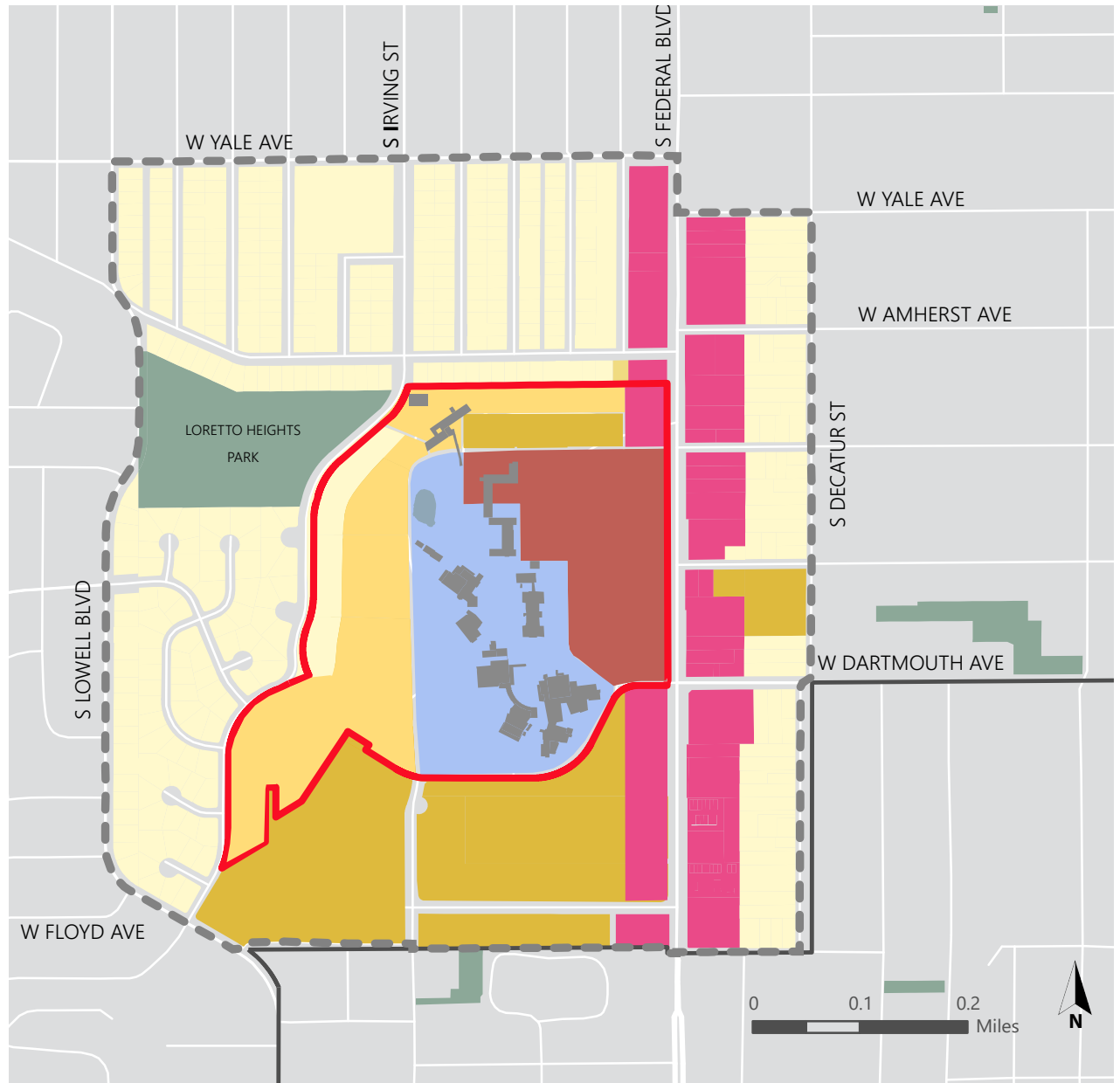
## Future Places

**Centers:** The community expressed a desire for the creation of a strong commercial core within the redevelopment of the Loretto Heights campus. In fact, the number one hope and opportunity comment (25% of comments) in the land use category centered around the creation of a community destination for residents and visitors alike, with a variety of mixed-use, commercial and retail activity.

**Corridors:** The community identified the transformation of Federal Boulevard from a dangerous, automobile-dominated state highway to a safe and vibrant community corridor. As safety improvements are made along the corridor and the Loretto Heights campus redevelops, Federal Boulevard should become a larger target for investment and revitalization.

**Residential Areas:** The community consistently recognized the need for a variety of housing options within the redevelopment of the Loretto Heights campus but advocated for residential development to be properly scaled with the surrounding context and of high quality design. Along the western and northern border of the Loretto Heights campus, there is a strong desire to keep like-for-like when it comes to residential character. That is to say that the community encourages single-unit homes adjacent to single-unit homes with a transition to higher intensity the closer you get to the core of the campus. To the south of the Loretto Heights campus the community supports maintaining the higher intensity of residential uses – high medium – which has already been established.

Figure 2.2: Future Places



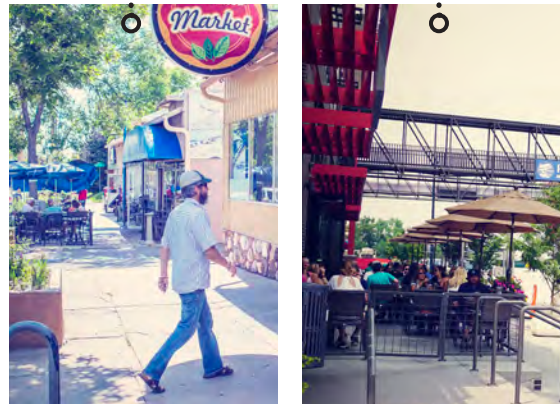
**Campus:** Part of the future place designation within the plan area is campus. Although the campus will no longer serve a specifically designed purpose, the preservation of existing buildings, integration of open space and thoughtfully designed infill development will help maintain and further promote the vision for a unique campus feel. Within this designation, buildings vary greatly in size and form, but multi-story, single and mixed-use buildings are typical. Supporting retail, commercial and residential uses occur and, when adjacent to lower intensity development, the campus should transition gradually to respect the surrounding neighborhood.

**Parks and Open Space:** These areas are city-owned parks and spaces that are a vital component of quality-of-life infrastructure. Not including regional parks, Denver’s park and open space system includes 250 parks and open spaces across all neighborhood contexts and future places.



Centers are mixed-use places of different scales. They are typically oriented around a shared space or set of spaces. People often go to centers to engage in social activities and entertainment, such as shopping, dining and cultural events. Some centers are well-connected to the local neighborhood and supported by neighborhood residents; other centers are larger, attracting people from a wide geographic area, and may require residents to take a bus, train or a car to visit them.

**COMMUNITY**

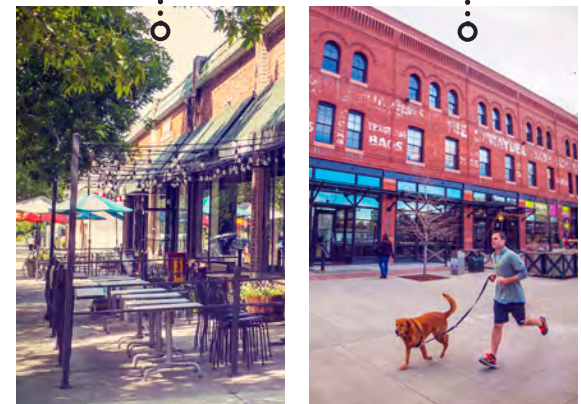


- Mix of office, commercial and residential uses
- Strong degree of urbanism with continuous building frontages



Corridors are mixed-use places of different scales oriented along a street. They provide spaces for people to engage in social activities and entertainment, such as shopping and dining. Corridors are often embedded in neighborhoods and serve nearby residents.

**COMMUNITY**



- Mix of office, commercial and residential uses
- Distinct linear orientation of buildings along Federal Boulevard



## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Residential areas are places where the predominate use is residential. They are supported by a variety of embedded uses needed for a complete neighborhood including schools, recreation and nodes of commercial and retail uses. They occur at three scales: low, low-medium and high-medium. Some residential areas in this plan differ slightly from Blueprint Denver with low residential areas characterized by single-unit uses only and low-medium residential areas including duplexes.

### LOW



- Single-unit homes
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Mix of attached and detached garage forms

### LOW-MEDIUM



- Mix of low to mid-scale residential options including single and two- unit uses and rowhomes

### HIGH-MEDIUM



- Mix of medium-scale multi-unit residential types
- Can accommodate compatible commercial/retail uses



## DISTRICTS

Districts are places with a specifically designed purpose, such as educational campuses or industrial areas. Although they have a strong primary purpose, these places also contain a mix of uses and offer a diverse range of amenities and complementary services to support the district's primary function.

### CAMPUS

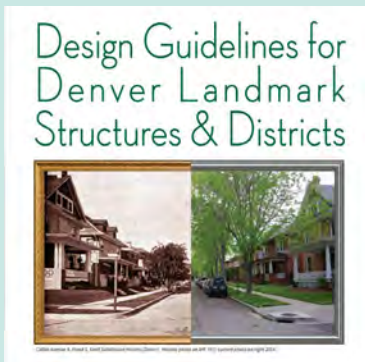




## Design Standards and Guidelines

Design standards and guidelines supplement adopted zoning requirements by supporting context-sensitive review of individual projects on a case-by-case basis. Design review of proposed projects is usually conducted by city staff or an appointed design advisory board. Any structures and/or historic districts on the Loretto Heights campus locally designated for preservation will be subject to adopted *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts*.

Newly-adopted design standards and guidelines are one potential tool to ensure that new buildings in the Campus Core incorporate high-quality, human-scale design that complements adjacent historic buildings. Note that multiple sets of design standards and guidelines should not apply to a single property. Recommendations LU-05 and LU-06 include design standards and guidelines as a potential implementation tool for the plan area.



## 2.2 Building Intensity and Quality Design

To reinforce a comfortable, human-scale pedestrian experience it is fundamental to promote high-quality development that creates diverse neighborhood places and experiences through a variety of building intensities. Building intensity considers the overall height and mass of buildings, including open spaces and spacing between buildings. Allowing for increased building intensity in this plan must be balanced with a variety of building heights and massing that respect the existing architectural character and development patterns of the historic campus and surrounding neighborhoods.

Likewise, prescribing high-quality urban design, landscape, and architectural principles that inform building aesthetic, longevity and durability of the built environment will create an attractive, comfortable neighborhood where people want to live, work and play. Regulatory tools to promote a variety of building intensity and high-quality design may include zoning, design standards and guidelines, development agreements or other tools that require or incentivize desired development outcomes.

*"The view of the area surrounding the campus is spectacular. It should be preserved and celebrated."*

*-Community Member*

### Urban Design

Urban design is a vital component of the planning process. It is the art of making authentic places that thoughtfully integrate streets, public spaces and private property. Urban design is more comprehensive than just the design of buildings. Urban design structures the patterns of movement and urban form, the relationships between the natural environment and the buildings within it and between people and the places they inhabit. The process of urban design is intended to bring order, clarity and harmony to the public realm of an area, and to establish a framework and process to facilitate successful development while promoting an enduring and compatible design that responds to an evolving community.

While a variety of components contribute to placemaking, it is the identity associated with a place that makes it memorable, pleasant and meaningful. Within the Loretto Heights plan area, there is already a strong sense of place connected with the enduring presence of the historic campus. Any redevelopment of the campus needs to retain this identity while incorporating new urban design elements that will contribute to even more dynamic placemaking. For example, activated streets framed by development, with well-designed building facades that are compatible with existing historic character, promote civic pride and tend to have a greater sense of place than those streets that lack transparency or active uses for the pedestrian.

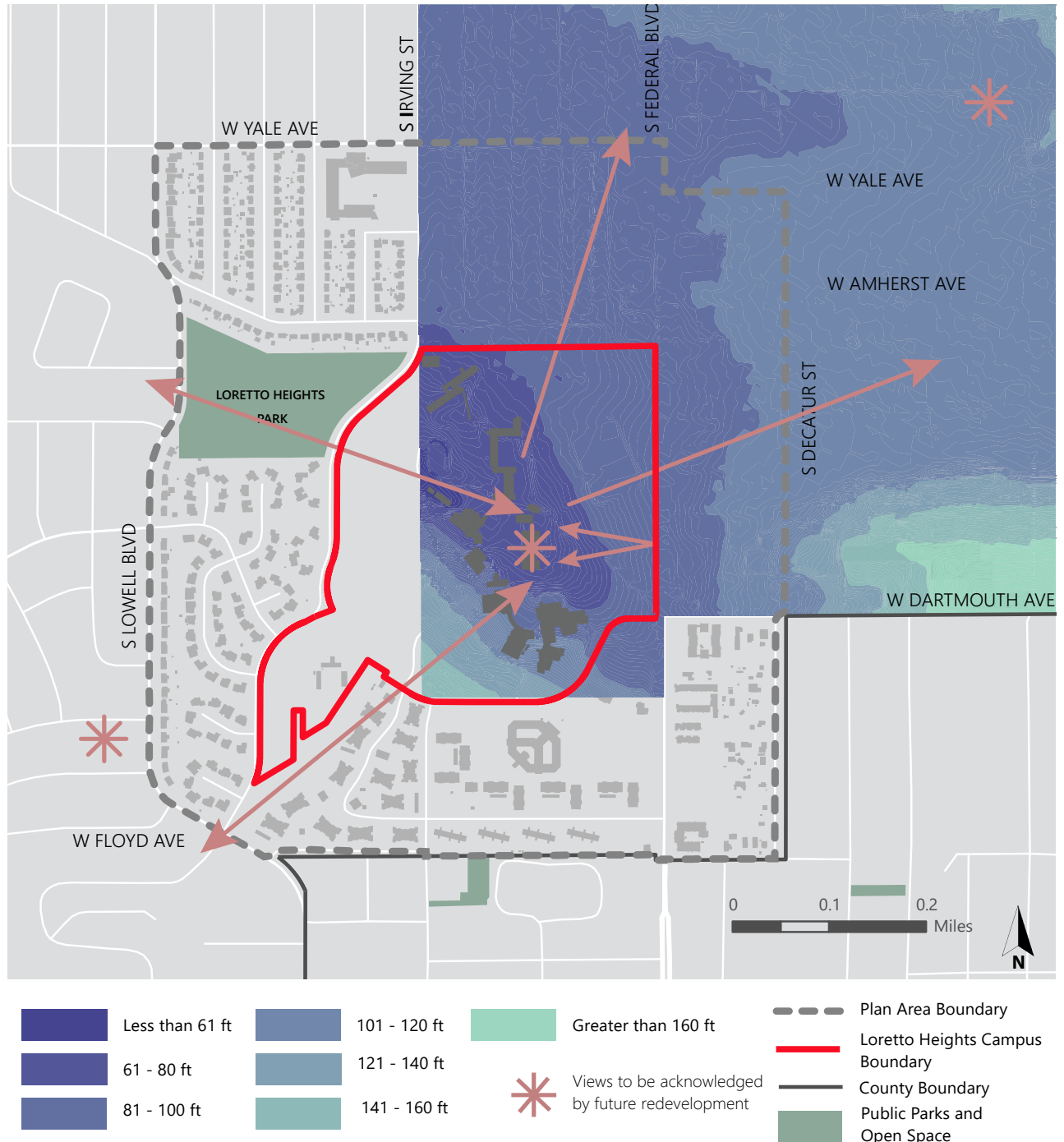
### View Plane and Viewshed

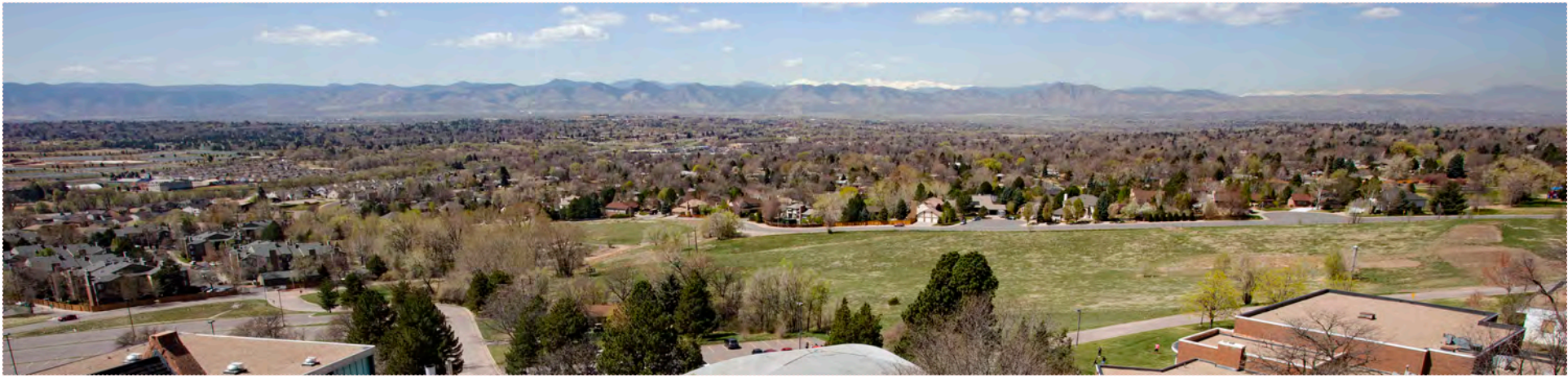
The Ruby Hill Park View Plane, enacted in 1969, begins at an origin point in Ruby Hill Park and stretches west to Irving Street. The View Plane guides the building heights that can be achieved with the campus redevelopment. Denver’s view planes preserve and protect views from various parks and public places by limiting building height. The Ruby Hill Park View Plane provides clear limits on building height for the historic Campus Core (the area identified in Figure 2.2. as “Campus”) and the northeast section of the plan area.

Per the View Plane, maximum allowable building heights range from roughly 50 feet to 155 feet. The View Plane establishes a height ceiling that supersedes the maximum allowable building heights identified in Figure 2.5. Future building intensity and design in areas both within and outside of the view plane should complement existing character and context through regulation of elements like building massing, scale and spacing.

One of the defining characteristics of the Loretto Heights campus is the visual prominence of the Administration Building tower and the sweeping views of Denver and the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. As redevelopment occurs on the campus, it will be important to maintain viewsheds to and from it. Historically, there was a grand view of the Administration Building from Federal Boulevard and the community finds this viewshed to be one of the most important attributes to preserve. The Administration Building tower, at 160 feet, pierces the View Plane and will remain the tallest structure in the plan area.

Figure 2.3: Maximum building heights as per the Ruby Hill Park View Plane





View Looking Southwest Towards the Rocky Mountains

### Maximum Allowable Building Heights

The maximum allowable building heights map (Figure 2.5) directs appropriate development intensity in the plan area. The Ruby Hill Park View Plane, community input, existing building heights, zoning allowances, site topography and development patterns inform the maximum heights. When combined with design requirements related to, for example, massing, spacing, and façade articulation, new building intensity can be compatible with existing distinctive materials,

features, spaces and settings of the Loretto Heights campus and surrounding neighborhoods.

The proposed maximum building heights fall within ranges prescribed by Blueprint Denver for each of the proposed future place types. The building heights respond to the campus future place types by allowing for a gradual transition of higher intensity development in the core of the plan area to lower intensity moving towards the residential

neighborhoods. Not every portion of the eight-story maximum area indicated in Figure 2.5 allows for buildings to reach that level of intensity. The view plane provides the guiding control over the location of any building over five stories and the downward sloping topography of the site to the west restricts its placement. Design requirements will further restrict the number and placement of any building over five stories on the site to a single location and a limited footprint to protect the view of the Administration Building.

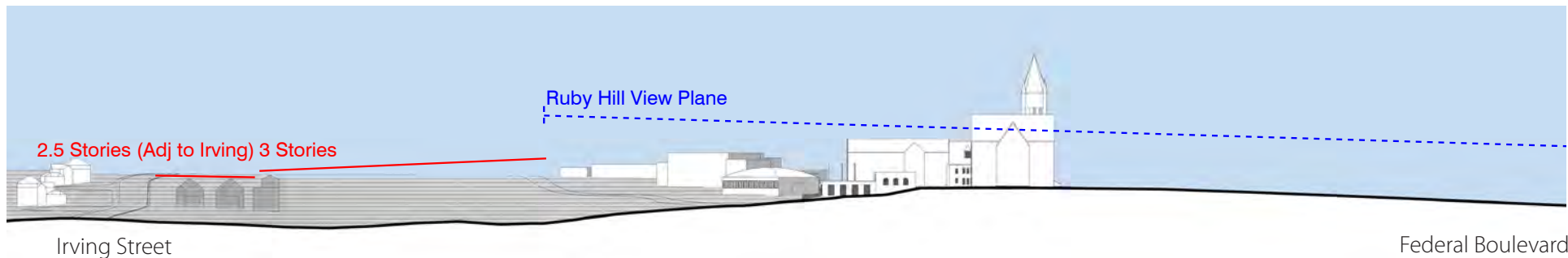


Figure 2.4: East/west cross-section of Loretto Heights campus, showing building heights and Ruby Hill Park View Plane



### Maximum Allowable Building Heights Map

Community feedback emphasized protection of the visually prominent Administration Building tower. At roughly 160 feet tall, the tower is well above the Ruby Hill Park View Plane height restriction of approximately 73 feet at its location. In the Denver Zoning Code, five stories allows for up to 70 feet in height for building forms in the Urban and Suburban neighborhood contexts. That means that a newly constructed five-story building near the Administration Building would be below the roofline height of the H-shaped portion of the building.

New buildings and the continued use or re-use of existing buildings on the campus should respect both the design integrity of existing buildings and the historic development pattern. Zoning regulations, design standards and guidelines, and/or development agreements and other tools should ensure new development complements the existing character and context of the plan area.

*"The Administration Building is iconic. I hope that whatever is built around it complements the structure."*  
 -Community Member

Figure 2.5: Maximum Allowable Building Heights



- 2.5 Stories
  - 3 Stories
  - 5 Stories
  - 8 Stories\*
  - 12 Stories
- Plan Area Boundary
  - Loretto Heights Campus Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Public Parks and Open Space

\* The eight story maximum area is limited by the view plane, meaning some areas won't actually reach the eight story maximum.

## 2.3 Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is the identification, protection, activation and celebration of the diverse historic fabric that makes our neighborhoods authentic and desirable places to live and visit. The historic buildings, sites and objects that are woven into this fabric help provide a strong sense of place and community identity. Continued use and re-use of historic places, along with compatibly designed new development, contributes to vibrant communities, healthy local economies and sustainable design.

The Loretto Heights campus is endowed with historic buildings commissioned by the Sisters of Loretto over a period of more than 100 years to serve the educational needs of the Loretto Heights Academy and College. They represent a variety of architectural styles ranging from 19th-Century Richardsonian Romanesque to Mid-Century Modernism, designed by several prominent local architects and intentionally placed on a hilltop with commanding views of the Rocky Mountains and downtown Denver. Honoring the history of the campus and preserving and re-using the historic resources that define it is an integral piece of the community's vision.

The Administration Building and Chapel, designed by Frank E. Edbrooke, resonate most deeply with the community. The Administration Building's iconic tower is a place marker, seen for great distances in all directions. People also strongly connect with the Cemetery, Pancratia Hall and Theater, and to a lesser degree with the Library, Pool and Machebeuf Hall. Figure 2.6 shows the eight priority historic resources

identified by the community. These should be the focus of historic preservation treatment in the implementation phase.

In 1891, when the Sisters of Loretto opened the Academy, little development dotted the natural landscape in the area besides the U.S. Army's Fort Logan. Development of neighborhoods surrounding the campus largely occurred post-World War II, introducing common Mid-Century architectural forms like Minimal Traditional and Ranch. Since that era, the neighborhoods and campus experienced minimal change and look much the same as their original and major phases of development. Balancing compatible new development with this existing historic character is key to building a vibrant, inclusive community.

There are many tools that can be employed to achieve historic preservation in the small area plan, including historic designation, preservation easements, historic covenants and other design regulations like site design standards and guidelines. These should be used as short-term, transitional and/or long-term mechanisms to protect and promote continued use and re-use of the priority historic resources. For example, historic covenants could be placed on buildings to prevent their demolition and promote compatible design alterations until such time that they are locally designated. Roughly four percent of the buildings in the City and County of Denver are designated Denver Landmarks or are in Denver Landmark Districts, and southwest Denver is nearly absent of any such historic designations. It is important that

the diverse heritage of Denver is recognized to ensure that our city's whole story is shared. Implementing some or all of the historic preservation tools for building use and re-use in the small area plan will promote enduring and compatible design. It will also respond to an evolving community while embracing the historic fabric and cultural heritage of the Loretto Heights campus. The campus is truly one-of-a-kind and offers immense opportunity to embrace its authenticity through new uses of the historic buildings and site in the campus redevelopment.



Top to bottom: Theater and Administration Building



Figure 2.6: Aerial Map of Historic Resources





## Inventory of Historic Resources and Survey Report

The City and County of Denver commissioned Square Moon Consultants, LLC to research and evaluate the history and built environment of the Loretto Heights Academy and College between 1891 and 1988 to inform this small area plan. The resulting report, completed in March 2019, details the inspiring story of the school's founding by the Sisters of Loretto and their pursuit of educational excellence for women. It describes a campus that evolved over the years with architectural and landscape designs by Frank E. Edbrooke, Harry Edbrooke, John Monroe, Musick & Musick and S.R. DeBoer. In addition to the Richardsonian Romanesque-style Administration Building with its iconic bell tower, the campus contains one of the most intact collections of Mid-Century Modern institutional buildings in Denver, including the locally beloved May Bonfils Stanton Theater.

The report evaluates the significance and integrity of 15 historic structures and features on the campus and provides guidance on the eligibility of each for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and Denver Landmark designation. The evaluation indicates that 10 of the structures and features are individually eligible for designation in the National Register of Historic Places and 11 historic resources are individually eligible for Denver Landmark designation. The report also offers options for designating a collection of structures and features as a historic district, noting that a district

designation is an ideal approach given the shared history of all campus historic resources.

Visual aspects and physical details that contribute to the property's significance, known as character-defining features, are also identified in the report. Character-defining features contribute to understanding the historic character of a place, a term referenced throughout this small area plan to help ensure that new development is compatible with existing development. Key character-defining features identified in the report include architectural details of the individual historic structures (building shape, materials, craftsmanship, decorative details and interior spaces); variety of architectural styles and resource ages; spacing of structures and features; prominent hilltop location that affords expansive views to downtown Denver and the Rocky Mountains; concentration of structures and features in the center of the campus with a quad at the core; and landscape features like the ditch and retention pond.

Beyond the potential for historic designation, which is one implementation tool to achieve historic preservation goals, the report provides baseline information to make informed decisions on the future of the historic resources in the campus redevelopment. The report should be used as a guide in the implementation of the historic preservation recommendations.



Top to bottom: Pool, Cemetery and Chapel

## 2.4 Economy and Affordable Housing

Denver is fortunate to have a strong economy that plays a contributing role in the global market. However, there are still neighborhoods in need of new businesses and improved economic opportunity, like those within the Loretto Heights plan area. As Denver becomes even more creative and innovative in building the next generation economy, it is imperative that all neighborhoods have access to high-quality jobs, education and affordable housing that supports strong connections between economic growth, equity and healthy communities.



Pancratia Hall

### Jobs and Education

Access to jobs and a quality education is key to achieving *Blueprint Denver's* vision which calls for a more inclusive city where all residents have equitable access to a quality education, jobs and services which are not vulnerable to displacement, and an increasing number in the diversity and quantity of available jobs. A successful local economy exists when there is an adequate framework of financial resources and opportunities to enable households to thrive and when there is a strong presence of employment opportunity. Similarly, schools are a civic asset and an important part of the social infrastructure of a neighborhood. Neighborhood schools like Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST): College View Middle and High Schools and Gust Elementary School and nearby College View Elementary School help foster neighborhood cohesion and civic pride.

As southwest Denver continues to grow, the Loretto Heights plan area should contribute to providing employment and training opportunities. A range of employment types is critical to attracting local talent and providing a broad spectrum of goods and services. A steady and consistent flow of labor and capital across neighborhood boundaries expands employment options for local residents.

### Community-Serving Retail

A strong, authentic and diverse community-serving retail environment is one that serves a range of demographics and income levels. This environment provides neighborhood residents with convenient access to daily goods and services and attracts visitors who are seeking a unique shopping, dining or entertaining experience. *Blueprint Denver* acknowledges the need to 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.

Throughout the planning process, the community emphasized that a strong local economy needs community-serving commercial uses. When small businesses thrive, they can invest back into their businesses, employees and the community. With this growth, businesses are able to expand their goods and services, making an even larger selection available closer to home. According to the community, there is a need and a desire for a larger selection and greater variety of businesses and restaurants in the Loretto Heights plan area. Having more options to shop, dine and play offers a unique experience and can create an emotional connection to the area.

## Housing an Inclusive Denver

In early 2018, the City and County of Denver adopted *Housing an Inclusive Denver*, a five-year housing plan to guide housing policy, strategy and investment priorities. The housing plan has four key goals:

1. Create affordable housing in vulnerable areas and areas of opportunity
2. Preserve affordability and housing quality
3. Promote equitable and accessible housing options
4. Stabilize residents at risk of involuntary displacement

*Blueprint Denver* advanced the housing plan's policies and strategies by incorporating land use strategies that expanded affordable and mixed-income housing options throughout the city. It also has specific recommendations to advance the four key goals, including many strategies related to preserving affordability and mitigating involuntary displacement.



### Affordable Housing

A diverse range of housing options, including different prices, sizes, types and a mix of rental and for-sale is key to encouraging complete neighborhoods where families and households of all types and incomes can choose to live. Housing diversity includes the single-unit homes that are already found in many Denver neighborhoods like Harvey Park, Harvey Park South and College View–South Platte, as well as units of different types and sizes that can complement an existing single-unit pattern. The vision in *Blueprint Denver* is for every neighborhood to offer affordable housing options in a variety of unit types and sizes.

Affordability does not just refer to subsidized housing and options for people at extremely low-income levels. It also affects an increasingly wide spectrum of Denver's workforce such as teachers, service professionals and medical care specialists who consistently struggle to find affordable housing. The most common measure of affordability assesses the "burden" housing costs put on a household. If a household pays more than 30% of their gross income in rent or mortgage payment, taxes, and basic utilities, they are considered to be "cost-burdened." The higher the cost burden, the greater the need for affordable housing. Cost burden is important because it also indicates how well a household can manage other expenses and how much disposable income they have to contribute to the economy.

Access to safe, affordable housing has never been more important in Denver. Today, 100,000 more people live in Denver than in 2010, and this growth is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Home prices and rents have risen dramatically making housing increasingly unaffordable to many.

Existing housing in the study area consists largely of single-unit and multi-unit residential dwellings generally with more than 20 units per building. Residents of the Loretto Heights plan area have expressed worry over involuntary displacement and gentrification that could result from the redevelopment of the former campus. Long-term residents also fear affordability will diminish as the community grows increasingly more popular with young families and first-time home buyers. This fear, coupled with the community's desire to have the option to age-in-place, accentuates the need for a variety of housing options. Adaptive re-use of existing campus buildings as affordable housing, such as Pancreatia Hall, can help meet this need.



# Recommendations

## LU - 01 Promote a diverse mix of land uses

- A Explore partnership opportunities that promote civic and community land uses that support the surrounding community such as community centers and multi-generational care centers
- B Explore opportunities to incentivize grocery stores, medical services, childcare and other land uses that serve local residents, especially families
- C Encourage the development of a variety of housing types attainable to a diverse demographic
- D Promote an active, livable neighborhood that enhances the community draw and unique identity of southwest Denver by providing a wide mix of office, commercial and residential uses
  - i Encourage a strong sense of urban design and activity with continuous building frontages that define the public realm
  - ii Enhance the existing identity of the campus through new development that is compatible with the historic character



## LU - 02 Promote and anticipate growth in areas adjacent to transit priority streets

- A Encourage higher-density, mixed-use development along Federal Boulevard
- B Support transit-oriented development through land use regulations in close conjunction with transit investments

## LU - 03 Coordinate larger-scale development to promote connections with existing neighborhoods and provision of appropriate benefits to the community

- A Use large development review (LDR), development agreement(s) and/or other tools to provide open space, affordable housing, per recommendation LU-12, and infrastructure while minimizing and mitigating negative impacts of new development on surrounding residential areas
- B Integrate development with existing street and block patterns where possible and provide connections from existing, surrounding neighborhoods to new and existing open spaces in the redevelopment area

*"I would love to see a walkable mixed-use type of layout with housing, retail and restaurants, we could be a destination for not just residents of this neighborhood, but a draw for surrounding areas such as Denver, Englewood and Lakewood."*

*-Community Member*

## Recommendations

### LU - 04 Encourage high-quality public realm design that contributes to neighborhood character and sense of place

- A Create engaging, pedestrian-oriented streets through attractive building facades, street trees, landscaping, lighting and street furnishings
- B Promote new development within centers and along corridors to create an active street frontage by:
  - i Providing street-facing buildings with high levels of transparency within centers and along corridors
  - ii Providing street-level, pedestrian-oriented uses
  - iii Providing direct pedestrian access from sidewalks to building entrances
  - iv Provide enhanced setbacks and open space that relate to interior uses, such as space for cafe seating or retail spillover
- C Create a variety of public spaces for recreational and social interaction such as plazas, pocket parks, playgrounds and community gardens
- D Encourage building massing, height and design that appropriately reflect the human scale, street width, and historic development patterns, especially within centers, campuses, and along corridors
- E Enhance placemaking by providing additional decorative elements such as paving, public art, and unique, high-quality signage
- F Prioritize key intersections to promote active uses, human-scaled design and a safe pedestrian environment
- G Discourage surface parking
  - i Use landscaping to screen any primary street facing surface parking to minimize visibility of cars from the street
  - ii Explore options to relocate or consolidate parking into structures that are positioned away from major pedestrian and bike facilities
  - iii Encourage wrap ground floor parking along key streets, centers and corridors

### LU - 05 Promote a variety of building heights and intensities

- A Limit building heights consistent with the Maximum Allowable Building Heights Map and maintain the visual prominence of the Administration Building by preserving the Ruby Hill Park View Plane. See Figure 2.5
- B Leverage increases in allowed building height or intensity to further promote provision of appropriate benefits to the community such as affordable housing, open space and infrastructure. See LU-3 for more information on provision of appropriate community benefits
- C Apply zoning regulations or other regulatory tools to provide a height transition between areas with single-unit houses and future redevelopment with higher-intensity mixed-use buildings, especially along the western and northern edges of the redevelopment site
- D Apply zoning regulations, design standards and guidelines or other regulatory tools to ensure that the height and mass of larger new buildings in the Campus Core are compatible with existing historic and lower scale buildings. Tools should:
  - i Protect and frame key views as identified in the plan
  - ii Promote human scale massing for buildings over five stories in height, where allowed
  - iii Promote compatible mass and scale relationships between new buildings and adjacent historic buildings (including all priority historic resources identified in Figure 2.6) or existing lower-scale development

*"I hope that any redevelopment will remain in character with the surrounding residential area."*

*-Community Member*

# Recommendations

## LU - 06 Promote high-quality, human-scale design

- A Apply zoning regulations or other regulatory tools to promote high-quality human scale design throughout the plan area
- B Apply zoning regulations or other regulatory tools to ensure that the facades of new buildings facing existing residential neighborhoods (such as the west-facing facades of new buildings along Irving Street/Julian Street, particularly if front doors do not face the street) incorporate high quality, human scale design to promote a compatible interface between existing and new development. Such tools could address:
  - i Façade articulation
  - ii Façade materials
  - iii Transparency
  - iv Balcony locations
- C Apply zoning regulations, design standards and guidelines or other regulatory tools to ensure that new buildings in the Campus Core incorporate high-quality, human-scale design that complements adjacent historic buildings (including all priority historic resources identified in Figure 2.6). Such tools could address:
  - i Façade articulation
  - ii Façade materials
  - iii Architectural details
  - iv Building massing



Original entrance to the Loretto Heights campus

## LU - 07 Preserve and re-use historic structures and features on the Loretto Heights campus

- A Utilize historic preservation tools such as historic designation, preservation easements and historic covenants as short-term, transitional and/or long-term protection measures for the preservation and re-use of historic structures and features
  - i Designate as a Denver Landmark the iconic and locally beloved Administration Building & Chapel
  - ii Provide long-term protection to the Cemetery and encourage a funding mechanism for its long-term maintenance
  - iii Provide long-term protection to Pancratia Hall with local historic designation or a preservation easement
  - iv Evaluate long-term protection of all other historic structures and features on the campus, with emphasis on priority resources identified by the community: May Bonfils Stanton Theater & Library, Pool and Machebeuf Hall
  - v Historic designation should be applied to individual structures, historic district(s) or a combination thereof. For example, this could include a historic district encompassing the Administration Building & Chapel and Pancratia Hall with an individual designation of the Theater & Library
- B Determine viable use/re-use options for historic structures and features
  - i Use the Keen Independent Research market feasibility study of the May Bonfils Stanton Theater to help determine its viability for continued use as a performing arts venue
  - ii Assess re-use viability for all historic structures and features on the campus, with emphasis on priority resources identified by the community: Administration Building & Chapel, Pancratia Hall, Theater (if continued use as a theater is not justified), Library, Pool and Machebeuf Hall
  - iii Consider application of historic preservation tools in any use/re-use feasibility assessment to enable incentives like state and federal rehabilitation tax credits



## Recommendations

### LU - 08 Identify and preserve the historic character of existing neighborhoods surrounding the redevelopment area

- A Complete neighborhood building surveys, possibly as part of the citywide building survey Discover Denver, to identify historically and architecturally significant structures and areas
- B Apply historic preservation tools like historic district designation and conservation overlay districts to regulate design changes in areas of significance
- C Promote use of state rehabilitation tax credits for historically designated properties to assist homeowners with property maintenance and rehabilitation that contributes to neighborhood character preservation

### LU - 09 Promote a full range of employment options

- A Expand the allowance for creative industries and small businesses
- B Encourage a variety of different types of spaces for different types of businesses in the plan area
- C Identify incentives to reduce rent and business costs to help create new spaces for small neighborhood-serving businesses
- D Support business development-oriented organizations that are geared towards creating economic opportunity across Denver
- E Actively foster a relationship with Denver Economic Development & Opportunity to align citywide goals and initiatives with the needs of the local community
- F Promote workforce development programs, such as construction workforce apprenticeship programs.
- G Encourage quality educational opportunities for all residents
- H Identify barriers contributing to lower educational attainment
- I Provide support to under-served and under-represented communities via regulatory processes, early childhood education, training, marketing assistance or increasing access to capital

### LU - 10 Minimize involuntary displacement and gentrification

- A Promote programs that help stabilize residents in the Loretto Heights plan area as identified in *Housing an Inclusive Denver*
  - i Leverage and promote citywide efforts to expand rent, mortgage and utility assistance programs that provide emergency funding to low-income households, single-parent families, fixed-income seniors and persons with disabilities
  - ii Connect individuals and families vulnerable to displacement with the city's program for tax relief
  - iii Increase the number of income-restricted rental and for-sale units in the planning area
  - iv Work with landlords, property owners and developers to renew expiring deed-restricted units through financial incentives, maintenance assistance grants and other financial programs

### LU - 11 Encourage and incentivize more affordable housing development

- A Encourage incentives for new affordable housing, especially along high-transit corridors like Federal Boulevard, consistent with citywide approaches
- B Support housing development funds, grant programs, public-private partnerships and other financial tools to acquire land for affordable housing development
  - i Prioritize sites near centers and transit corridors
  - ii Prioritize mixed-use, mixed-income projects to incorporate services and amenities for low/moderate income households
- C Explore mechanisms to ensure housing created is available to nearby residents

**LU - 12 Integrate affordable housing throughout the plan area to accommodate households of different ages, sizes, and incomes**

- A Ensure provision of affordable housing units within the plan area, especially in the redevelopment area. Affordable housing should be:
  - i Affordable to households earning very low, low, and moderate incomes, consistent with adopted city policy
  - ii Dispersed throughout the plan area, including within buildings containing market-rate housing units
  - iii Sized to accommodate a variety of households from studios to three or more bedrooms
  - iv Of similar types (condos, apartments, townhouses, etc.) to market-rate housing units built within the plan area
  - v Dedicated as affordable for a period of time consistent with or greater than adopted city policy
- B Explore options to adaptively re-use existing buildings and structures, such as Pankratia Hall, for affordable housing. See LU-07 B for more information on the adaptive re-use of existing buildings and structures
- C Encourage the preservation and re-use of existing smaller and affordable homes in the plan area
- D Ensure that both affordable and market-rate family-appropriate housing units are located to provide safe access to educational facilities, parks and other recreational opportunities, transit, and fresh food



Example of Recently completed mixed-income housing in Denver

*"My biggest hope for the site is that it can be a development that brings great amenities while protecting the affordability of the area and builds a space that truly serves the needs and is inclusive of diverse racial/ethnic and socio-economic communities around it."*

*-Community Member*



# 3





# Chapter 3

## MOBILITY

### In this chapter:

- 3.1 Street Types
- 3.2 Future Streets
- 3.3 Complete Networks



# MOBILITY

## GOALS:

The street network should prioritize high-quality, multimodal transportation options that safely and efficiently move people, and encourage a shift from driving to other travel modes such as walking or rolling, biking, and transit.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

Citizens should be given a variety of choices to satisfy their mobility needs and this plan will help facilitate the creation of a multi-modal, inviting, and accessible mobility network. It should prioritize active transportation, creates safer streets for all users, encourages non-automobile travel, promotes physical activity, and fosters a sense of community.



## Challenges and Opportunities

The existing suburban context of the Loretto Heights plan area contains many variations in development patterns and mobility options. This context consists of large areas of low-density residential in the surrounding Harvey Park South and College View–South Platte neighborhoods, with mixed-use corridors along major roads like Federal Boulevard. These suburban development patterns have created conditions where residents and visitors are more dependent on vehicles. In fact, data shows that 79% of residents in the plan area commute alone when it comes to daily travel habits, which is slightly higher than the Denver average of 76%. Although this context is more auto-oriented than others, there should still be quality multimodal connectivity. Residents of this context should be able to walk and bike to neighborhood destinations safely. However, sidewalk condition analysis reveals that some sidewalks in the plan area are narrow (25%), in disrepair, or missing altogether (20%). Residents, especially those with children, seniors and persons with disability report discomfort walking to destinations because of these conditions.

Residents have reported that the existing bike infrastructure feels uncomfortable and presents many challenges because of the lack of protection and close proximity to the flow of traffic. These safety and comfort concerns have led to conflicts between bicyclists and motorists and a reluctance to bike within the plan area. These networks are often incomplete and lack connections to many of the desired community destinations.

## Community Feedback

- Concerns with the lack of safe pedestrian sidewalks and street crossings, especially along Federal Boulevard, Yale Avenue, Irving Street and at the Dartmouth Avenue and Federal Boulevard intersection.
- Concerns that impacts from new development will increase congestion and speeding in the plan area.
- Frequent transit services along Federal Boulevard, Yale Avenue and Dartmouth Avenue are vital to increase connectivity between the plan area and jurisdictions of Sheridan and Englewood.
- Comprehensive and complete multimodal connections to the surrounding community and to public transit are vital. This includes providing easy walking and biking access to existing trail and recreation corridors like Bear Creek Trail and the South Platte River Trail.
- Residents said they felt the campus was “closed off” to the community and indicated a desire for improved access. However, residents oppose direct cut-through connection with the east-west Dartmouth Avenue connection providing direct street access from Federal Boulevard to South Irving Street.

## 3.1 Street Types

The City and County of Denver uses the functional street classification system established by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration. Functional street classifications describe the purpose and character of the street network. Designations convey if streets have been designed to move traffic at certain speeds, provide access to property with some level of frequency and predictability, and are linked to surrounding land uses. Standard street function categories classify roads into three groups: local, collector and arterial.

**Local streets** primarily serve residential areas. These streets provide the shortest trips, at the lowest speeds with the lowest volume of traffic with the lowest degree of through travel. They provide the highest degree of property access and have the least number of travel lanes.

**Collector streets** serve medium distance trips with moderate speeds, moving a moderate volume of traffic with medium distance trips. There are a moderate number of access points along this designation of street and connections with other routes through a moderate number of travel lanes.

**Arterial streets** serve the longest types of trips at the highest speeds. Arterials move the maximum number of vehicles over the longest distances. There are few access points and additional lanes to move large traffic volumes at faster speeds.

*Blueprint Denver* developed a typology for describing streets by their adjacent land use and character in addition to the already established functional class. Added to local, collector and arterial streets are the categories of residential, commercial, and mixed-use. Each of these street subcategories can be paired with local, collector or arterial designations to characterize the nature and function of the complete street network. The existing street type network in the plan area is composed of local streets and collector streets that primarily serve residential areas. Local streets feed traffic to collector streets. Arterial streets link individual neighborhoods to the rest of Denver.

**Residential streets** connect individual neighborhoods to schools, parks, local retail centers and other similar uses. Posted travel speeds are low to prioritize safety for the area residents.

**Mixed-use streets** are a future street type desired by residents in the Loretto Heights plan area. The vision is that mixed-use streets will be introduced alongside future mixed-use development.

**Shared Streets** are an approach to street design where pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles share street space at all times, or at regularly scheduled times for special events. These streets typically feature little to no formal distinction between spaces dedicated to these modes and are most appropriate where vehicle volumes and speeds are expected to be sufficiently reduced.



Blueprint Denver Residential Local Street



Blueprint Denver Residential Collector



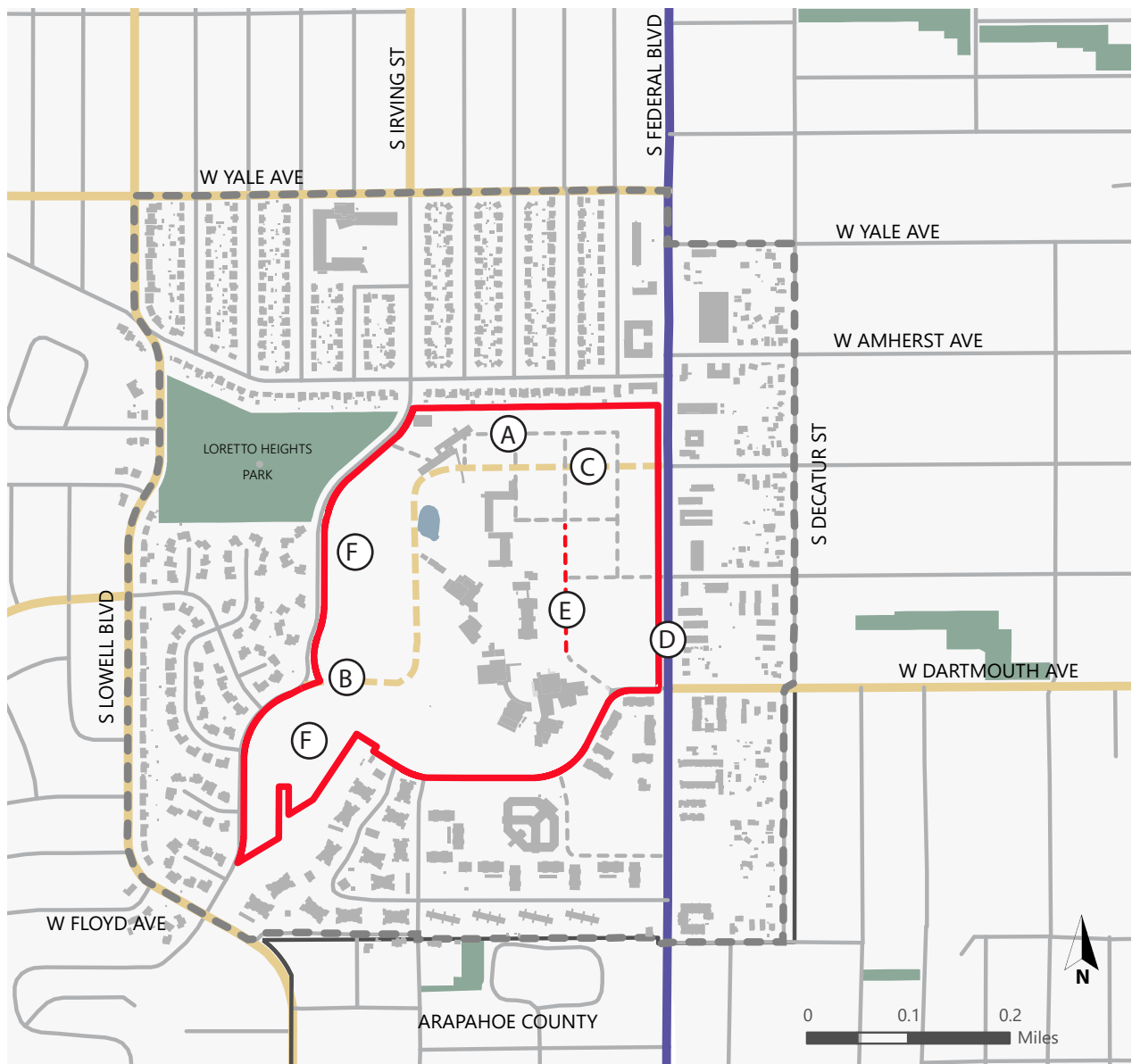
Blueprint Denver Mixed-unit Collector/Arterial



### 3.2 Future Streets

The proposed future streets found in figure 3.1 are based upon the proposed future Land Use Place Types in Chapter 2. These connections are considered essential to improving connectivity within the plan area. The intent behind the street layout is to fully realize the vision for a complete street network within the Loretto Heights plan area. Where streets do not yet exist, this plan outlines a system of street recommendations that will work together to provide a comprehensive transportation system that supports future growth, development, and economic vitality that aligns with the vision developed by the community. The complete street network presented in this plan is meant to demonstrate an aspirational level of multimodal connectivity. Denver Public Works is the authority on all public right-of-way development and will make final decisions on all roadway planning, engineering, and design determined by future travel demand studies and analysis. After the adoption of *Blueprint Denver* Public Works is making significant changes to street design standards and guidelines to encourage the movement of people and not cars.

Figure 3.1: Future Street Network



Existing Mixed-Use Arterial	Potential Residential Collector	Plan Area Boundary
Existing Residential Collector	Potential Local or Undesignated	Loretto Heights Campus Boundary
Existing Local or Undesignated	Potential Shared Street	County Boundary
		Public Parks and Open Space

*This map is conceptual and is one potential scenario to implement the plan recommendations.*

- (A) Residential Local Street
- (B) Residential Collector Street
- (C) Mixed-Use Collector Street
- (D) Mixed-Use Arterial Street
- (E) Shared Street
- (F) Residential Access

### 3.3 Complete Networks

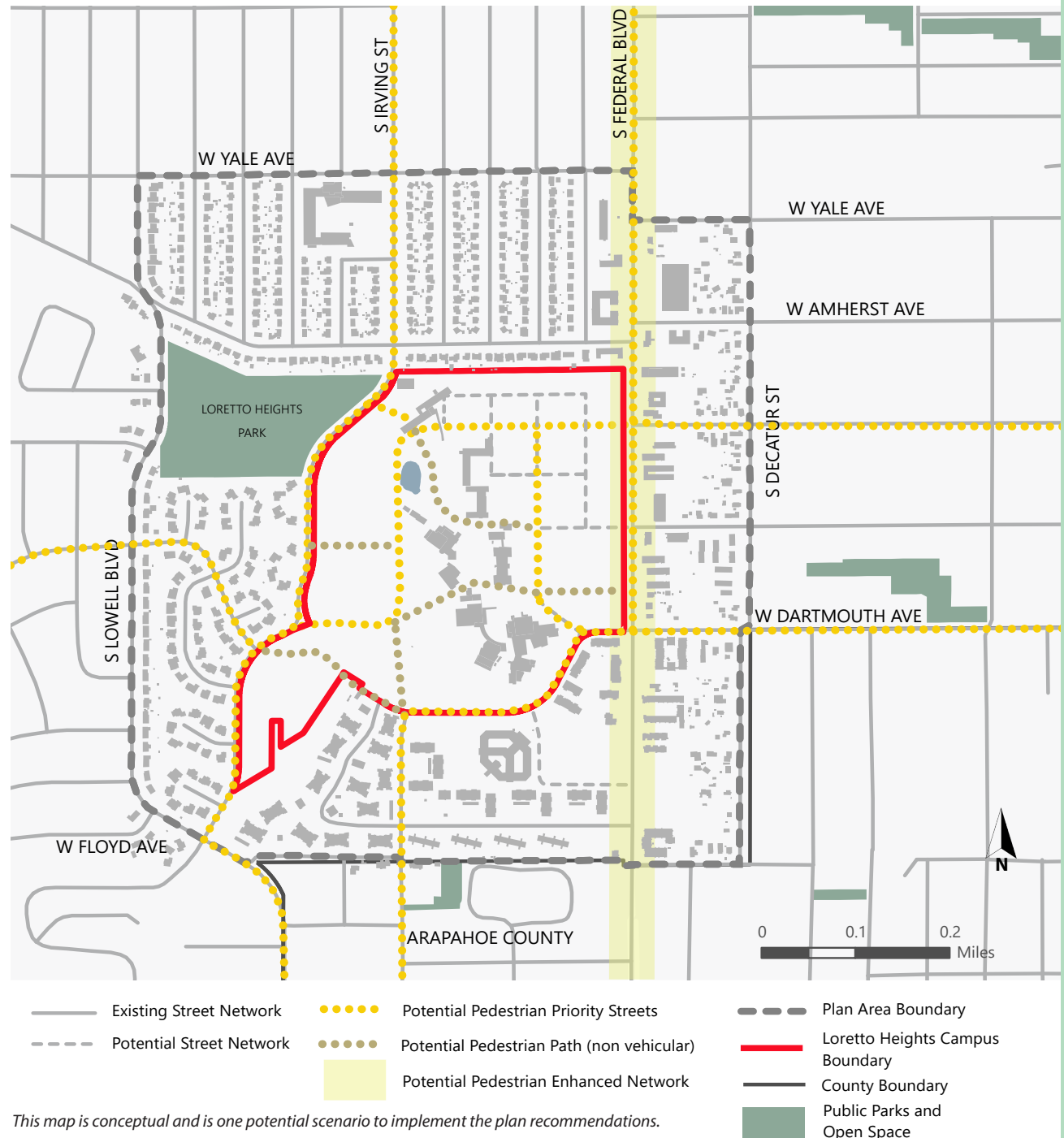
A high-quality and efficient multimodal transportation system is made up of several networks, each of which serves a transportation mode that moves people and goods. Identifying modal priority streets indicates where investment will occur to support people walking or rolling, biking or taking transit. These modal priorities, paired with street function classifications and land use place types, contribute to the development of complete streets for complete neighborhoods

#### Pedestrian Priority Streets

Pedestrians are at the heart of the transportation system and are the priority in the design of all streets. This includes providing a safe crossing environment, adequate and complete sidewalk space and good walking conditions. Pedestrian priority streets are areas where the surrounding land uses offer opportunities to enhance the pedestrian environment to create walkable, vibrant public places. This includes creating a wider pedestrian realm (the combined tree lawn or amenity zone and sidewalk), requiring slower vehicle speeds and prioritizing people walking and rolling over other modes in both the design and operation of the street. Pedestrian enhanced features include:

- A. Safety Features (crosswalks, medians, etc.)
- B. Amenities (public art, benches, etc.)
- C. Lighting
- D. Green Infrastructure (street trees, planters, water quality, etc.)
- E. Wider Sidewalks

Figure 3.2: Pedestrian Network



*This map is conceptual and is one potential scenario to implement the plan recommendations.*

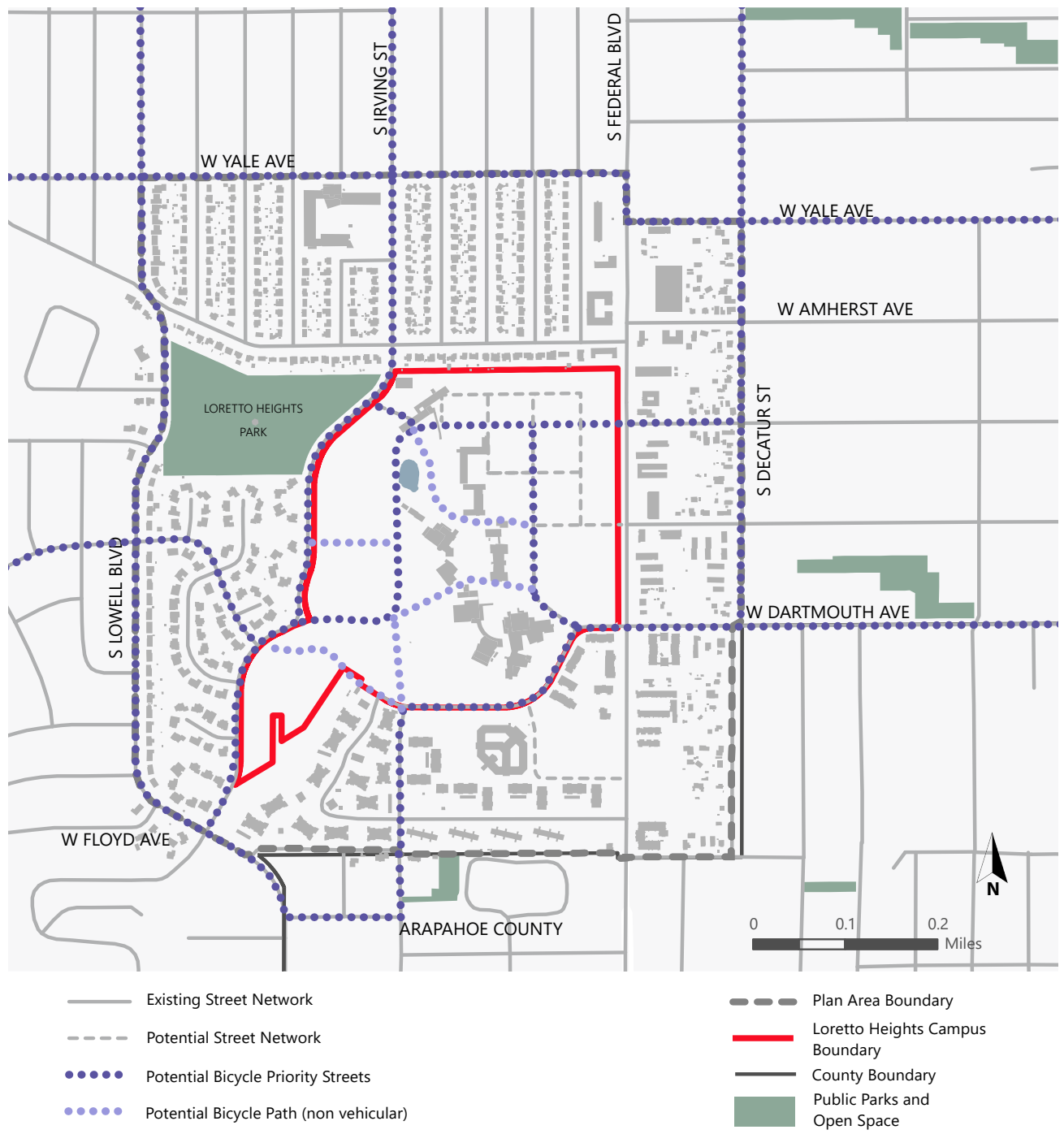


### Bicycle Priority Streets

Bicycle priority streets highlight safety, comfort, convenience and ease of use for people who wish to travel by bike. On bicycle priority streets, design and operation prioritizes people riding bicycles over other modes. Bicycle priority streets utilize the high and moderate ease-of-use bicycle facilities identified in the 2011 *Denver Moves: Bicycles* plan. Ease-of-use refers to the level of comfort experienced by the user of the bikeway. This includes bikeways where bicyclists are separated from moving traffic by a physical or natural barrier and busy intersections are designed to easily and safely be crossed on a bicycle. These facilities encourage biking by increasing the level of comfort for those who may not otherwise choose to ride a bicycle on a city street. Bikeway designations in Denver are typically selected based on a street's width, number of travel lanes, vehicle volume and speed. The following highlights features of bicycle priority streets:

- A. Protected Bike Lanes
- B. Intersection Treatments
- C. Signage
- D. Bike Signals / Detection

Figure 3.3: Bicycle Network



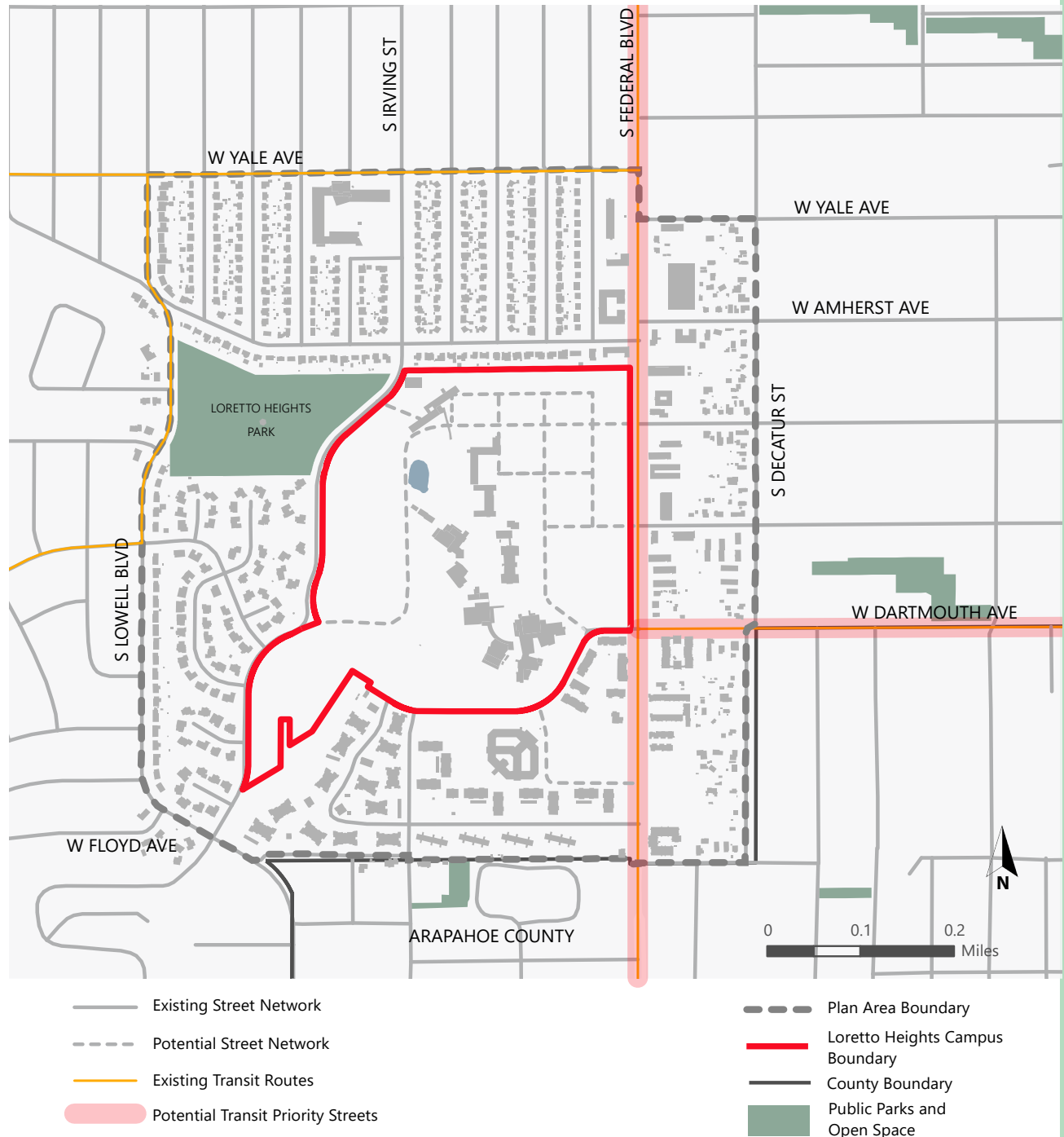
This map is conceptual and is one potential scenario to implement the plan recommendations.

### Transit Priority Streets

*Blueprint Denver's* growth strategy is founded on rapid, reliable and high-quality transit connecting Denver's centers and corridors to people, jobs, services and housing. Transit priority streets are those where transit is prioritized over other modes when making decisions about how to design or operate the right-of-way. Transit priority streets allow transit to be rapid and reliable with special attention to accessible, safe and enhanced transit stops. By prioritizing the design or operation of a street to benefit transit, it will help transit reach its potential to move more people rapidly and reliably. The following highlights some example features of transit priority streets:

- A. Operational - Operational improvements, such as transit signal priority to prioritize transit at traffic signals, reduces travel time and improves reliability
- B. High Capacity Vehicles - Vehicles such as rail or rapid bus have the ability to increase the person throughput of a corridor.
- C. Dedicated Bus Lanes - Transit runs in exclusive lanes or in dedicated guide-ways (such as rail). This helps transit to move the most amount of people reliably and efficiently.
- D. Enhanced Bus Stops / Bus Stations - Stops with shelters that protect riders from the elements, real-time transit information and off-board ticket stations are some of the amenities that will be expected on transit priority streets.

Figure 3.4: Transit Network



*This map is conceptual and is one potential scenario to implement the plan recommendations.*



## Recommendations

### MOB - 01 Build a complete street network as shown in Figure 3.1

- A Build new north/south and east/west connections and implement traffic calming and deterrence measures across the plan area with the goal of maintaining the residential character of existing local streets in residential areas
- B Due to the community's concerns about through traffic and negative impacts traffic could have on the neighborhood, this plan recommends prevention of an unobstructed vehicular connection that directly links Dartmouth Avenue from Federal Boulevard to South Irving Street
- C Given the unique topography and steep grades along the western portion of the Loretto Heights campus, future streets should work with the topography to the extent possible in order to create walkable and accessible streets and sidewalks to reduce automobile dependence in the plan area
- D Encourage new street connection extending south from the Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) campus towards the existing service road north of Floyd Avenue as depicted in Figure 3.1 as a way to relieve DSST traffic congestion along Dartmouth Avenue
- E Encourage new streets across the plan area to have enhanced or wider pedestrian walkways and amenity zones with additional street trees, lighting, green infrastructure, or landscape
- F Incorporate a variety of street types
  - i New and existing streets should be aligned with the street types identified in Figure 3.1
    - 1. Work with property owners and Denver Public Works to implement elements that achieve the vision for the identified street types
  - ii Use the city's current guides and standards and the most recent and innovative approaches for street design
    - 1. Denver Public Works approval is needed if a non-standard proposed street cross-section is desired and for updates to city standards and policies

- that will allow the implementation of new and innovative street designs
- 2. Explore options for street types that test alternative street designs which explore going above and beyond city standards to calm traffic and prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists by incorporating elements such as, but not limited to: curb-less streets, different varieties of paving and permeable paving, raised intersections, medians, and alternative locations and design of streetscape amenities
- iii Reduce potential conflicts between pedestrians
  - 1. Encourage outdoor seating zones with adequate space for pedestrians and streetscaping, especially in areas with high pedestrian volumes
  - 2. Create spaces along streets that provide pedestrian refuge, are flexible spaces, and provide opportunities for events
- iv Explore the construction of shared streets or festival streets located within the Loretto Heights campus
  - 1. Streets can be designed to be closed for special events but also function for every day vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle travel
  - 2. Streets should allow for close integration with and respect for historic character of the former campus and development that transitions into open and passive community gathering areas

*"In general, being a pedestrian/cyclist anywhere near Loretto Heights is a scary endeavor. As a resident, I would appreciate much more attention be paid to people that aren't in cars. I don't want to have to worry about being able to get somewhere safely without driving."*

*- Community Member*

## MOB - 02 Enhance the existing street network

- A Update existing streets to improve their functionality, connectivity and safety
  - i Transition Federal Boulevard from an auto-dominated state highway to a safe and vibrant community corridor using guidance from the *Federal Boulevard Corridor Plan*
  - ii Implement safety, aesthetic improvements, and traffic calming measures such as medians and crosswalks along Federal Boulevard, South Irving Street, South Julian Street, Dartmouth Avenue, and Amherst Avenue to improve the pedestrian experience, encourage pedestrian activity and bolster pedestrian safety along these streets
  - iii As redevelopment occurs, explore and implement any necessary street improvements, operational enhancements, and traffic calming measures along South Irving Street south of the Loretto Heights campus to help mitigate traffic impacts and improve the connectivity of the area
- B Update existing intersections to increase safety and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists
  - i Prioritize implementing recommendations to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries along Federal Boulevard, as listed in the Denver Vision Zero Action Plan, by collaborating with Denver Public Works to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety at the Federal Boulevard and Dartmouth Avenue intersection
  - ii Collaborate with Denver Public Schools and Denver Public Works to prevent vehicle stacking on Dartmouth Avenue east towards Federal Boulevard intersection
  - iii Partner with CDOT and the City of Sheridan to study and implement intersection improvements at South Knox Court and US Highway 285 to allow for better pedestrian and bicycle safety and comfort in accessing the regional trail system from the plan area

## MOB - 03 Promote street network safety

- A Collaborate with local law enforcement to enforce posted speed limits in the plan area
- B Provide traffic calming measures within the plan area, and more specifically on Dartmouth from Irving to Lowell, Amherst from Federal to Lowell, and Irving/Julian from Amherst to Lowell.
- C Study traffic impacts new development may have in the plan area



W. Dartmouth Avenue and S. Federal Boulevard Intersection



## Recommendations

### MOB - 04 Increase access to multi-use trails, pathways and parks and open space

- A Prioritize creating seamless pedestrian and bicycle connections to Loretto Heights Park
  - i Explore methods for traffic calming such as painted crosswalks, medians, High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) signal along South Irving Street to reduce the speed of vehicles and increase pedestrian safety
  - ii Connect any new sidewalk system in the redevelopment to the existing sidewalks found in Loretto Heights Park and add additional sidewalks as necessary. All sidewalks should be ADA accessible and include curb ramps
- B Update and improve connections to the regional trail system and transit
  - i Partner with the City of Englewood and the City of Sheridan to prioritize sidewalk improvements along West Dartmouth Avenue extending east to the Englewood Light Rail Station
  - ii Provide additional multi-use trails or sidewalk access extending southwest through the former Loretto Heights campus to improve access to the Bear Creek Trail and South Platte River Trail



### MOB - 05 Create a complete pedestrian network

- A Prioritize the construction of missing sidewalks and increase the width of sidewalks less than four feet in the plan area, with emphasis on connections to schools, community gathering spaces, transit stops and employment centers
  - i Work with Denver's Sidewalk Gap Program to determine implementation and funding
  - ii Prioritize walking access to all transit stops regardless of level of service
  - iii Encourage new sidewalks to include tree lawns
- B Create a robust street tree canopy by using best practices for tree planting and maintenance
- C Incorporate green infrastructure and streetscape amenities on all streets such as: attractive landscaping, planters, restaurant seating, benches, public art, and trash/recycling receptacles
- D Create block sizes that are walkable
- E Provide pedestrian facilities on all streets and ensure safe pedestrian access for people walking or rolling
  - i Implement enhanced pedestrian facilities on those streets identified as pedestrian enhanced in *Blueprint Denver*, including along Federal Boulevard



# Recommendations

## MOB - 06 Create a complete bikeable network

- A Update *Denver Moves* to reflect the bicycle connections shown in Figure 3.3
- B Update and provide connections to existing bicycle infrastructure outside of the plan area
- C Incorporate bicycle amenities throughout the plan area including bicycle racks placed appropriately along streets and in public spaces
- D Explore the following bike corridor improvements
  - i Implement enhanced bicycle facilities on those streets identified as bicycle priority in Blueprint Denver, including Lowell Boulevard, Yale Avenue, Dartmouth Avenue, Irving Street, and Decatur Street
  - ii Implement enhanced bicycle facilities on any proposed collector street on the Loretto Heights campus as identified in Figure 3.3.
  - iii Extend a shared use path connection along West Dartmouth Avenue through the plan area
- E Extend a bike connection between the Loretto Heights campus and Loretto Heights Park
  - i Explore options for a bicycle trail along the existing irrigation ditch, linking Loretto Heights Park and Loretto Heights campus

*“As long as the development focuses on walkability, biking, and green space it will be great!”*

*-Community Member*





## Recommendations

### MOB - 07 Enrich the public transit experience

- A Implement the *Denver Moves Transit Plan* recommendations for a “High-Capacity Transit Corridor” along Federal Boulevard
- B Study and implement the strategies and recommendations identified in the *Federal Boulevard Corridor Plan* along Federal Boulevard including transit stop locations and enhancements and corridor improvements such as median and crosswalk installation
- C Maintain and support enhancements to existing local bus service and coverage in the plan area
  - i Partner with the Regional Transportation District (“RTD”) to establish new bus routes and/or update existing bus routes as needed to provide better service across the plan area
  - ii As the redevelopment takes place, explore options to provide more frequent service along west Dartmouth Avenue east to the Englewood Light Rail Station
- D Improve bus stop amenities in the plan area
  - i Partner with RTD to include bus shelters, benches, trash receptacles and schedule information at every bus stop
  - ii Include elements such as landscaping, trees, public art, wayfinding and sustainable materials and promote ongoing maintenance of these features
  - iii ADA accessibility improvements should be included at all bus stops and along routes that lead to transit corridors

*“Last mile gap is huge in this area!”*

*-Community Member*

### MOB - 08 Increase the use of shared mobility options

- A Encourage the use of shared mobility options such as electric scooters, electric bikes, bike shares, etc.
- B Support efforts to improve last-mile connections, including ridesharing and carsharing programs, short distance shuttle service, private shuttles, and wayfinding signage
- C Adapt to changing technology that influences mobility usage and demand by incorporating alternative transit energy sources such as EV charging stations

### MOB - 09 Improve resident access to transit

- A Conduct neighborhood outreach to provide new transit option updates, and to collect information related to potential transit route demand and access needs
- B Work with RTD to explore possible reduced fare programs based on income and potential group rate options







## Vision Zero

In 2016, the City and County of Denver announced its commitment to Vision Zero, an initiative to eliminate all traffic-related deaths and serious injuries on Denver's roadways by 2030. This transportation philosophy recognizes that no other goal is acceptable, and that everyone has the right to safely travel on our streets no matter where they are going and how they choose to get there. Five goals guide the plan:

1. Enhance City Processes and Collaboration
2. Build Safe Streets for Everyone
3. Create Safe Speeds
4. Promote a Culture of Safety
5. Improve Data and Transparency

An element of Vision Zero particularly relevant to the Loretto Heights plan area is the measurement of the High Injury Network (HIN). Federal Boulevard is classified as a HIN corridor, meaning it has one of the highest numbers of fatal and injury crash incidents compared to other corridors in the city. Collectively, HIN corridors comprise only 5% of streets in Denver but 50% of traffic deaths.

Similarly, much of the Loretto Heights plan area falls into Vision Zero's label of a "Community of Concern." These areas allow for higher traffic speeds and are in closer proximity to schools, concentrated elderly populations, and populations with no vehicle ownership. In short, populations that are more reliant on the safety of public infrastructure. Bicyclists, pedestrians, children, elderly, and the disabled are disproportionately vulnerable to unsafe traffic conditions. Residents of low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are injured and killed by traffic violence at higher rates than residents of other communities. The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan mobility recommendations help implement the goals of Vision Zero to improve safe streets.









## Chapter 4

# QUALITY-OF-LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE

### In this chapter:

4.1 Healthy and Active Living

4.2 Parks, Recreation and Open Space

4.3 Green Infrastructure



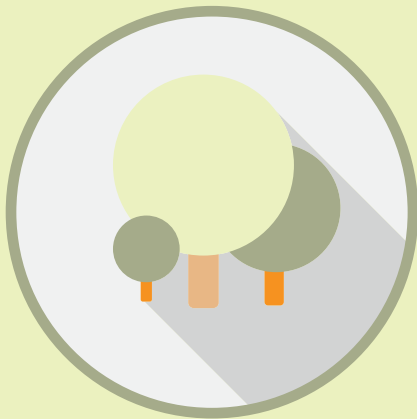
# QUALITY-OF-LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE

## GOALS:

Future development in the plan area should ensure that everyone – regardless of age or ability – has access to parks, outdoor spaces, recreation amenities, healthy food options and outdoor gathering spaces. Growth and development in the plan area should be done in a responsible and sustainable manner which fosters a diverse and livable neighborhood that cultivates southwest Denver’s culture and identity.

## WHY IT’S IMPORTANT:

Well-designed neighborhoods can improve health, while environments that lack amenities and services to support healthy lifestyles can contribute to a variety of chronic diseases. Air and water quality, as well as other climate impacts, such as increases in flooding and surface temperature, can have lasting social, political and economic consequence.



## Challenges and Opportunities

Quality-of-Life refers to the places, trees, plants, parks and outdoor spaces that stitch together our communities and contribute to the health, comfort, environmental resilience and social connectedness of an area. During the planning process, a variety of quality-of-life challenges and opportunities were identified by the community, and much of this feedback centered around having improved access to these opportunities. An equitable community or society is one where all people have fair opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives. However, certain populations and communities have historically faced barriers and inequities and continue to experience added obstacles to maintain healthy lifestyles.



## Community Feedback

- Access to healthy and fresh food is difficult, especially for those lacking access to a personal vehicle.
- There is a strong desire to have a variety of community gathering spaces in the plan area.
- The regional trail system is seen as an asset; however, connections to these recreational opportunities, like Bear Creek Trail and South Platte River Trail are often challenging or lacking altogether.
- Access to the Loretto Heights Park is limited and needs improvement. Many believe that the park could also benefit from added amenities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.
- Desire for improved pedestrian comfort along major corridors like Federal Boulevard.
- Having an abundant tree canopy is important and coincides with concerns about the growing number of impervious surfaces.

*“It would be nice if we could have a fresh produce market. Fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and seafood, and other small grocery items.”*

*-Community Member*

## 4.1 Healthy and Active Living

Living within walking distance of fresh, healthy food and outdoor recreation opportunities are key elements of the built environment that impact an individual's overall health. Well-designed neighborhoods can improve health, while neighborhoods that lack amenities and services to support healthy lifestyles can contribute to chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. A neighborhood's infrastructure plays a vital role in how physically active a person is. Parks, trails, and open spaces provide opportunities for increased physical activity, as do bike trails and pedestrian facilities that connect people to transit infrastructure, services, amenities and destinations. These facilities should be designed in a way that makes it safe for residents to access them.

Physical activity and the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors are key factors in maintaining good health. The existing land use and mobility infrastructure in the plan area plays a substantial role in shaping the physical activity of area residents and visitors alike. While the regional connectivity of the area has served area residents well, the plan area possesses barriers to a healthy and active lifestyle. When considering mobility, one of the most common concerns of survey respondents was that access to the campus was difficult and that it felt separated from the rest of the community. In addition, the suburban development pattern of the plan area – wider, curvilinear streets with larger residential and commercial lots – creates challenging environments for walking and biking. As a result, the percentage of households within a quarter mile walk of a full-service grocery store

and a quality park or open space in the plan area is less than the citywide goal of at least 45% of households.

Access to healthy food options is also a key factor in maintaining good health. According to *Denver's Food Vision (2017)*, food is considered the “great connector” not only connecting us to our cultures and past, but also connecting us to the land where food is grown and the people and businesses who transport, prepare, sell and share food. Unfortunately, far too many people have limited or unequal access to healthy food options,

and that includes those living within the plan area. In addition to lacking a full-service grocery store within walking distance, residents also voiced frustration about a lack of healthy restaurant options. Accessing healthy, culturally relevant and affordable food isn't only about making environmental changes in a community, such as building more grocery stores and restaurants, but it is also about creating the policies and systems needed to address the root causes that contribute to inequitable access to food.





## 4.2 Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Denver's urban parks, trails, parkways, historic sites, urban forest, and other recreational areas are vital ingredients in the future of Denver. As Denver continues to grow, so does the demand for parks and recreational programs and activities, especially in areas where access to these amenities is currently inadequate today. Providing and preserving open space and community gathering spaces can have a lasting impact on the ability of residents to live an every day healthy lifestyle. Improving access to public open space has the potential to increase levels of physical activity, and to have mental health benefits and reduce healthcare and other costs. In addition, there are environmental benefits of urban parks and open space. A network of parks and open spaces that include natural lands and other green areas is critical to providing healthy environments for humans, wildlife and plants.

The Loretto Heights plan area contains a variety of designated parkland, natural areas, and open space networks. The Loretto Heights campus was traditionally designed with a collection of impressive buildings set amongst a rural landscape with a quad at its core. Two master site plans, one designed by S.R. DeBoer and one by Musick and Musick, were never fully implemented, but both expressed the compatible nature of a core building collection surrounded by passive open space. Many in the adjoining neighborhoods enjoy these open spaces and acknowledge that they help preserve the expansive views of Denver and the Rocky Mountains. The community is concerned that the future redevelopment will eliminate much of these open spaces. The number one concern of survey respondents in the parks and recreation category is the loss of open space areas.

Although Loretto Heights Park has consistently been identified as an asset to the community, there is an undeniable need for better connectivity between the park, new mobility networks and the off-street trail systems. Survey respondents would also like to see added amenities within the park to equitably serve the neighborhood. The community also expressed a desire to have new areas to gather on the Loretto Heights campus, in the form of natural and open areas, smaller parks, plaza space or turf areas. These new community gathering spaces should be integrated into the existing parks and recreation system and should positively impact and contribute to the larger open space network.



Loretto Heights Park

## Proposed Parks and Open Space

The proposed parks and open space network represents a collective vision to strengthen the Loretto Heights community by creating an interconnected network of green spaces throughout the plan area through the use of recreation areas, parks, trails, public squares, and community gathering spaces. By targeting these areas, this network will help to create new, safe and healthy spaces. This network will provide residents and visitors better access to site amenities, while also providing a new recreational and non-vehicular transportation network. The green network presented in this plan is meant to demonstrate an aspirational level of parks and open space connectivity.



*"I would like to see green space that could be a gathering place for the surrounding neighborhoods. A walking trail or bicycle path, a playground and places for people to sit and visit or read."*

- Community Member

Figure 4.1: Future Parks and Open Space



This map is conceptual and is one potential scenario to implement the plan recommendations.



### 4.3 Green Infrastructure

Denver’s growth accentuates the need for protecting and expanding the tree canopy, as well as enhancing green infrastructure technology and finding new ways to utilize drought tolerant measures in the face of climate change. Green infrastructure is defined as natural or built systems that use roots, soils or vegetation and natural processes to capture and treat stormwater runoff. The Loretto Heights campus has an existing ditch and retention pond that can help meet green infrastructure needs.

The benefits of green infrastructure are often difficult to pinpoint to a specific field since they provide benefits across several disciplines. For instance, a green infrastructure facility can provide things such as: environmental, economic and quality-of-life benefits to the community by helping improve water and air quality, reduce flood risks and heat island effect, absorb local carbon emissions, improve mental wellbeing, reduce stress, lower traffic speeds, and improve property values.



#### Pervious Surfaces

Throughout Denver’s development history, the city’s permeable surfaces have been replaced with impervious surfaces. Impervious surfaces, such as asphalt or concrete, can have many lasting negative effects, including the absorption of the sun’s energy causing increases in the surface temperature. In addition, high concentrations of impervious surfaces prohibit stormwater from permeating into the ground, resulting in more stormwater runoff and, in some cases, increased flooding throughout urban neighborhoods. Much of this runoff contains harmful pollutants and chemicals which discharge directly into our urban waterways, significantly reducing the water quality throughout the city.

Many residents within the plan area expressed concern of the potential impact of future development contributing to an increase in impervious surfaces. Residents expressed the desire for future development to address stormwater drainage and increase water quality. The Loretto Heights plan area’s impervious surface coverage of 41% is below the Denver average of 48%. This impervious coverage is concentrated primarily along the Federal Boulevard corridor, which includes multiple retail and commercial outlets served by a large quantity of surface parking.

The plan area is located within the West Harvard Gulch and Bear Creek stormwater basins, both of which have been identified as priority basins meaning there is a greater need for water quality improvements and green infrastructure investments. The scorecard methodology is detailed in Denver Public Works’ *Green Infrastructure Implementation Strategy*.



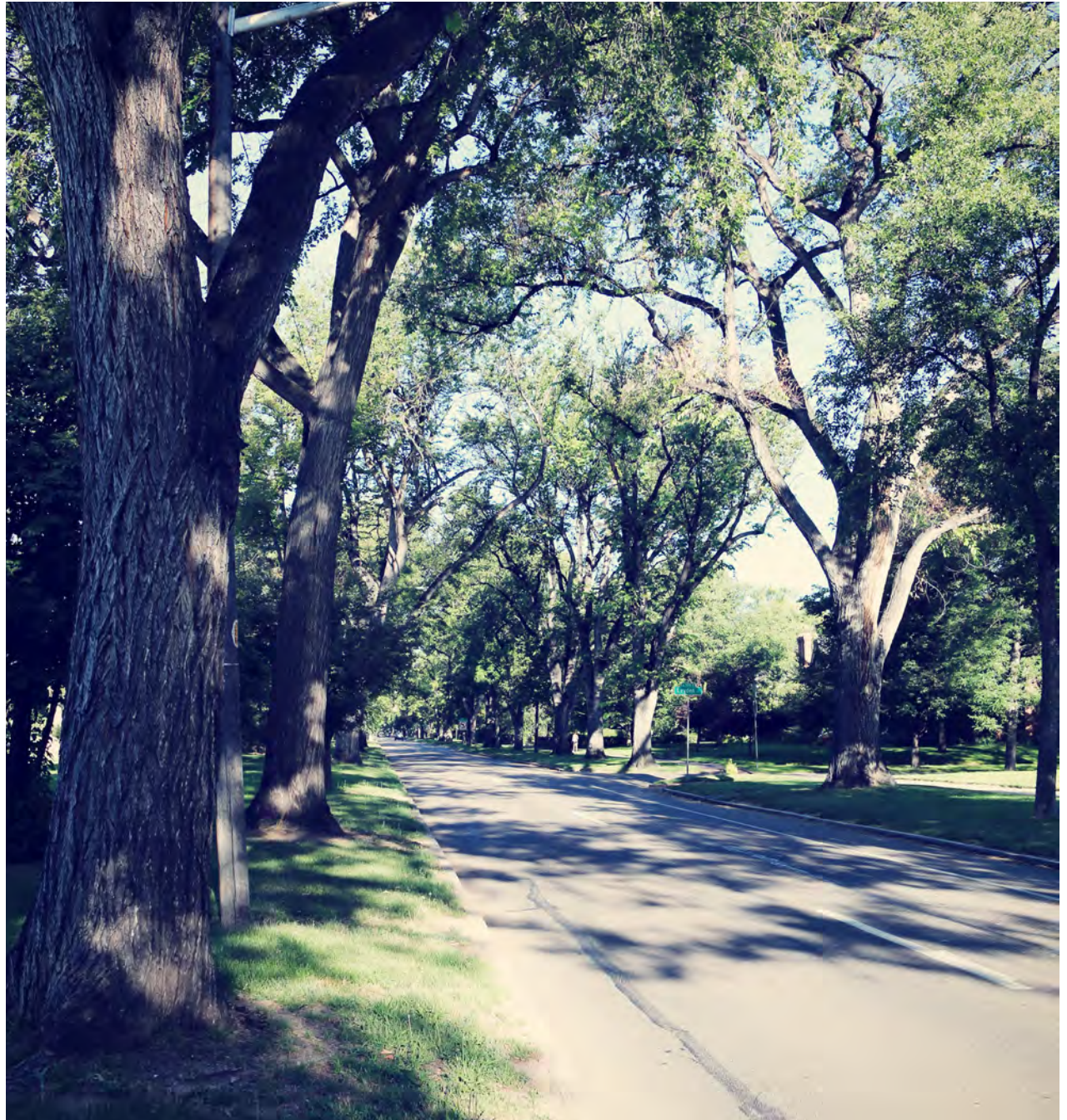
Examples of Green Infrastructure



## Tree Canopy

The environmental and health benefits of a strong tree canopy are profound. Trees produce oxygen, prevent soil erosion, and reduce the overall concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Access to trees, green spaces, and parks promotes greater physical activity and social interaction, and reduces stress, while improving the quality-of-life in cities and towns.

The topic of trees was the third most popular comment in the parks and recreation category of the first online survey. The tree canopy within the plan area is 15% and is slightly higher than the Denver average of 13%. Trees are concentrated within the campus, especially parallel to the existing irrigation ditch running northwest to southeast through the site. There is also a concentrated tree canopy throughout the open space corridor extending from the center of the campus southwest to Lowell Boulevard. Tree canopy coverage is also very strong along many residential streets in the Dartmouth Heights, Sharon Park/South Mar Lee and parts of the College View – South Platte Neighborhoods. However, there are no street trees along some of the major streets, including South Irving Street, Amherst Avenue and the Federal Boulevard corridor. There are also large areas with minimal tree coverage on the campus and south of the campus near the Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) and within the existing adjacent multi-unit dwellings to the south. This areas, where development patterns include larger building footprints and more surface parking lots tend to have minimal tree canopy coverage.





## Recommendations

### QOL - 01 Increase fresh food access, availability and affordability

- A Encourage a healthier community food environment
  - i Explore opportunities for a new grocery store in the plan area
  - ii Encourage small food stores and full-service grocery stores to sell expanded healthy food options
  - iii Encourage space for community gardens and farmers' markets
  - iv Use zoning, licensing, or other regulatory tools to limit the concentration of fast food retailers in the plan area, specifically along Federal Boulevard
  - v Work with restaurants to offer healthier food and beverage options
  - vi Increase community demand for healthy food options through education and outreach programs about healthy eating, how to shop for healthy options, and cooking nutritious, culturally relevant meals
    1. Use the voter-approved sales tax, "Healthy Food for Denver Kids" program as a new funding source for healthy food services in the plan area
    2. Promote healthy food retail options through multilingual marketing tools including newsletters, community maps and signage
- B Provide a variety of transportation options to access fresh food in the Loretto Heights plan area
  - i Work with the RTD to ensure frequent and reliable bus routes to full-service grocery stores and other healthy food retail outlets inside and outside of the plan area
  - ii Expand safe and direct pedestrian and bike access to food retail by increasing neighborhood connectivity of sidewalks and paths
  - iii Promote mobile markets and food delivery options to improve food access

- C Support food recovery and reducing wasted food
  - i Educate the public about reducing the amount of food that is wasted in homes, restaurants and other food retail and commercial outlets
  - ii Re-distribute grocery retail and restaurant overstock to food pantries and other community based-organizations in the plan area
  - iii Promote and expand the city's residential and commercial composting program



Example of Farmer's Market

## Recommendations

### **QOL - 02 Connect existing open space, parks, trails and recreational assets**

- A Improve the connection between Loretto Heights Park and the Loretto Heights campus
  - i Encourage the development of multiple green networks across the plan area as shown in Figure 4.1. A green network is a series of open spaces, green infrastructure, plazas, and/or pocket parks that are connected by multimodal infrastructure prioritizing the movement of pedestrians and bicyclists to these space
  - ii Explore options for a pedestrian and bicycle path along the existing irrigation ditch that runs northwest to southeast into the redevelopment site
- B Connect the redevelopment of the former Loretto Heights campus with the existing regional trail system
  - i Build a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle trail network extending southwest through the redevelopment to connect to the existing Bear Creek Trail and South Platte River trail systems
  - ii Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements along Dartmouth Avenue (west and east of campus)
  - iii Collaborate with the South Platte Working Group (Arapahoe County) on east-west connections to the South Platte River

### **QOL - 03 Create new community gathering spaces to accommodate a variety of activities for residents and visitors**

- A Encourage new public spaces that are dispersed throughout the plan area
  - i Locate community gathering spaces in appropriate locations to accommodate residents living within a 5-10-minute walking distance
  - ii Preserve the prominence of the Administration Building from Federal Boulevard by incorporating a publicly accessible open area or promenade

- iii Maintain the character and functionality of the quad by providing a publicly accessible community gathering space
  - iv Explore ways to seamlessly integrate passive open spaces with any future residential uses along South Irving Street
  - v Use open space as a buffer around the Cemetery to respect the sacred character of the cemetery
- B Identify underutilized right-of-way space to provide additional public space
  - C Encourage all privately owned and operated open spaces and facilities to be publicly accessible

### **QOL - 04 Provide a variety of amenities that contribute to a sense of place, and enhance active and passive uses**

- A Enhance Loretto Heights Park with year-round recreational activities and programs that support community needs and desires
  - i Partner with local community organizations and schools like nearby Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) to support education and recreation programs within Loretto Heights Park
- B Provide park amenities that are multi-generational, such as play features that promote play and fitness for all ages and abilities, and seating for adults
  - i Encourage the uses of sustainable materials that contribute to the usability and enjoyment of those spaces
- C Encourage a signage and wayfinding plan to be developed to provide meaningful and attractive tools to help users effectively navigate the Loretto Heights plan area, surrounding neighborhoods, and the regional trail network

### **QOL - 05 Encourage higher quality design of parks and public spaces**

- A Require a maintenance plan to be implemented for public spaces that have higher levels of use and need specialized maintenance



## Recommendations

### QOL - 06 Strengthen and expand the tree canopy

- A Provide enough trees to exceed Denver Parks and Recreation's goal of 20% tree canopy coverage in every neighborhood as identified in *Game Plan for a Healthy City*
  - i Encourage the revitalization of the tree canopy by replacing diseased trees and planting new indigenous species
  - ii Prioritize the planting of street trees within the public right-of-way to improve the pedestrian experience, especially along Federal Boulevard, South Irving Street, Dartmouth Avenue, and Amherst Avenue
  - iii Develop educational programming and partnerships within the community to increase understanding around maintenance and care of the tree canopy



### QOL - 07 Design and implement natural and engineered green infrastructure systems

- A Encourage a network of large-scale and site-scale green infrastructure within public and privately-owned spaces that mitigates the impacts caused by impervious surfaces, including the existing ditch and retention pond on the campus
  - i Prioritize using sustainable green infrastructure systems that protect, restore, or mimic the natural water cycle, improve water quality, and mitigate flooding and storm water runoff volumes
  - ii Create opportunities to implement green infrastructure that provides multiple benefits such as reducing stormwater runoff, improving water quality and mitigating the urban heat island effect
  - iii Explore best practices to ensure green infrastructure components thrive, are functional, and remain effective
- B Improve water quality in the West Harvard Gulch and Bear Creek Stormwater Basins by incorporating green infrastructure systems that treat all storm water runoff prior to the introduction into these larger systems of waterways
- C Use best practices to ensure storm drainage design, installation, maintenance, and management incorporates strategies and design solutions identified in Denver's *Ultra Urban Green Infrastructure Guide*
  - i Incorporate new technologies and practices in the plan area, such as streetside stormwater planters, bumpout stormwater planters and storm inlet filtration devices, as they are approved by the city
- D Work with other city departments to establish regulations to minimize impervious surfaces and utilize materials and techniques that allow for natural water absorption and flow
- E As a result of the redevelopment of the former Loretto Heights campus, the new street layout should accommodate both stormwater and wastewater needs



View of Administration Building from the East

*"Let's be a premiere example of environmentally friendly development."*

*-Community Member*

## Ultra-Urban Green Infrastructure Guidelines

The City and County of Denver is making green infrastructure a fundamental part of the city's long-term stormwater management strategy by looking at ways to incorporate large-scale green infrastructure with small or site-scale green infrastructure. On a large scale, green infrastructure refers to a network of parks, open spaces, drainageways, and floodplains which help mitigate the impacts caused by impervious (hard) surfaces. Site-scale green infrastructure refers to smaller, engineered, structural practices which mimic larger natural systems and use vegetation, soils, and roots to slow and filter stormwater runoff.

Site-scale green infrastructure best management practices (BMPs) are the focus of Denver's new *Ultra-Urban Green Infrastructure Guidelines*. Detailed fact sheets for streetside stormwater planters, bumpout stormwater planters, green gutters, green alleys, and tree pit/ tree trenches are included within the guidelines. Each practice within the Ultra-Urban Green Infrastructure Guidelines has been chosen for its suitability in Denver's dense, urban environment and for use in the right-of-way and on private redevelopment and infill sites like the Loretto Heights campus. Benefits of green infrastructure, regardless of scale, include improved water quality as well as better air quality, reduced flooding risks, urban heat island effect mitigation, reduced energy demands, climate change resiliency, and enhanced community livability.









# Chapter 5

# IMPLEMENTATION

In this chapter:

- 5.1 Realizing the Vision
- 5.2 Collaboration
- 5.3 Types of Implementation Activities



# IMPLEMENTATION

## Goal

To prioritize the recommendations and strategies included in the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan and develop an achievable path towards implementation through a variety of strategies, including leveraging private development investment and thoughtful collaboration between multiple city agencies and the private sector.

## Why It's Important

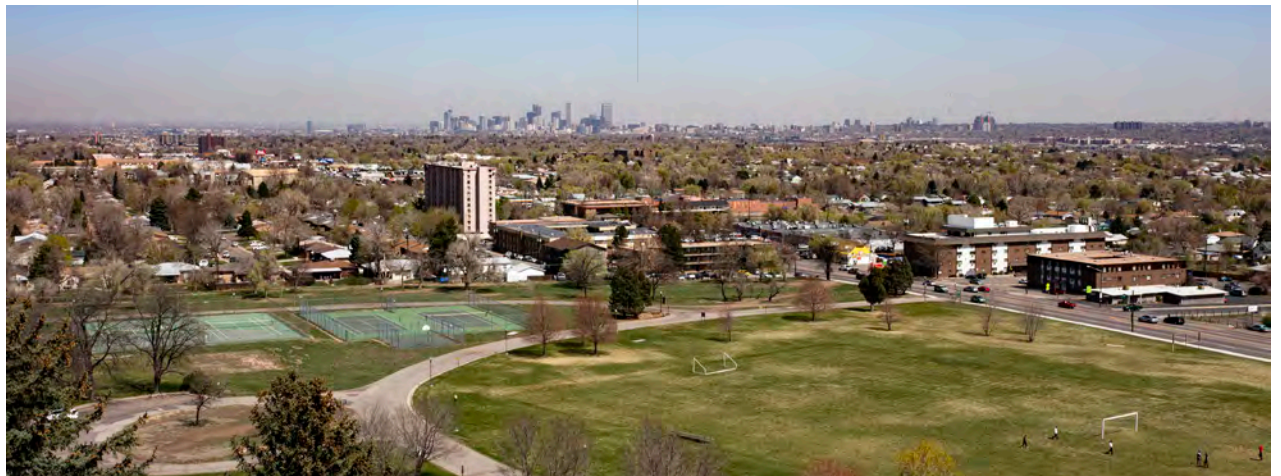
Implementation is the process of turning the recommendations and strategies in the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan into reality. Providing clear, measurable and achievable steps to implementation is important to ensure that the community's vision and goals for the plan area are realized. Implementation is most successful when it is guided by a living, flexible document and if there is ongoing evaluation of the progress being made. The approaches that follow in this implementation chapter are intended to set forth a clear path towards implementation while allowing for flexibility to respond to unforeseen opportunities, obstacles, market forces and public policies that would contribute to future development patterns within the plan area.

## 5.1 Realizing the Vision

The Loretto Heights Small Area Plan sets forth a vision for the future of the plan area with recommendations aimed at achieving that vision. Small area plan implementation can take place in a short amount of time or over many years and is the result of large and small actions by both the public and private sectors. The recommendations found throughout are intended to provide direction for future actions on the part of the city and other public entities, private sector developers, non-profits, and community and neighborhood groups. These key stakeholders must be strong partners for any implementation to be successful.

As a policy document, this plan directs updates to zoning and other regulatory tools that will help shape the area. It also informs future conversations about infrastructure investment. New zoning and other regulations applied to the plan area will be required to be consistent with this plan.

Many of the plan goals, recommendations, and strategies are interconnected and complex and rely in large part on development activity by the private sector. Additional area studies, such as traffic studies to support public infrastructure and right-of-way dedication, will need to be initiated by the developer well in advance to support the implementation process. Given the size of the Loretto Heights redevelopment area, the plan's vision will likely be implemented through large scale, phased development over the course of many years. Therefore, adopting comprehensive development agreements between the developer and the city will be a critical component to ensure that new development contributes to achieving the comprehensive and holistic community vision envisioned by the plan.



View Looking Northeast towards Downtown Denver

## 5.2 Collaboration

Achieving the collective vision for the plan area will take collaborative, sustained effort among all stakeholders to tackle the initiatives in the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan and chart the course for successful implementation. The City of Denver and its various agencies and departments all share the primary responsibility for plan implementation. To facilitate this coordinated effort and sustained commitment, it is critical that these entities form a strong partnership to champion redevelopment efforts and continue to collaborate with area stakeholders toward the success envisioned in the Plan. It will also be critical to work closely with local neighborhood representatives and community groups to ensure that the benefits to the community described throughout this plan, including support for local businesses, re-use of existing historic assets, and community-oriented and cultural uses, are given priority during the implementation process.

The community has played an important role in shaping the recommendations and strategies of this plan and they should be an integral part of its implementation through additional outreach, meetings, and engagement. Many recommendations and strategies within this plan require the community, the city and other organizations to continue to work together to identify priorities for future projects, investments, regulatory tools, and policies.

## 5.3 Types of Implementation Activities

*Blueprint Denver* identifies three types of implementation actions: Regulations, Investments, and Partnerships. These actions are generally public-sector actions intended to create a positive environment that enables actions by other groups, such as property owners, developers, neighborhood organizations or homeowners. While public actions can help set the stage, in most cases it is private actions (such as constructing new buildings and homes, opening new businesses and attracting new residents) that are the most critical elements to achieving a plan's vision. Each of the three implementation action types is described in detail, with specific implementation priorities provided in each category.

### Regulatory and Policy Strategies

Regulatory and policy strategies change city codes or regulations to affect desired outcomes. Typical examples include historic designation, Denver Zoning Code text and map amendments, Department of Public Works requirements for infrastructure improvements associated with development projects, and Parks and Recreation requirements regarding open space and plantings. The following pages contain a summary of regulatory implementation priorities for the Loretto Heights plan area with references to the plan elements they help to achieve





## Public Investment Strategies

Public investment strategies involve public funding of public infrastructure. Examples include street reconstruction, bike lane installation, new transit lines, park improvements and new or expanded recreation centers. The City and County of Denver leads the design, construction, and funding of these projects and may use a variety of public funding sources such as the annual Capital Improvements Program, bond funds, or state or federal grant programs. In some cases, this plan identifies public transportation projects as studies because the impacts of a particular improvement on the transportation system are so complex that the broader system must be examined to determine feasible options to meet the intent. Extensive study and analysis may also be needed to meet eligibility criteria to apply for federal funding.

The following pages contain a summary of public investment implementation priorities for the Loretto Heights plan area with references to the major plan elements they help to achieve. Partnership strategies represent the most diverse category of implementation activities. Public-private partnership activity has expanded greatly in recent years and has gone well beyond its roots of public subsidies for private development projects. Increasingly, public-private partnerships are being used to fund infrastructure projects.



## Recommendations

### Regulatory and Policy Strategies

- IMP - 01** Designate historic structures and features on the Loretto Heights campus to ensure their protection and incentivize their continued use and re-use in new development
- A Locally designate the Administration Building & Chapel
  - B Evaluate local and federal historic designation of all eligible structures and features as identified in the 2019 Loretto Heights Academy and College Inventory of Historic Resources and Survey Report
- IMP - 02** Apply zoning or other regulatory tools to promote a high mix of uses, including those consistent with the Suburban Neighborhood Context, Urban Neighborhood Context, Community Corridor and Community Center Place Type guidance contained in Blueprint Denver



Loretto Heights Theater

## Recommendations

- IMP - 03 Apply zoning and/or other regulatory tools that support the plan's recommendation to achieve a variety of building heights and intensities throughout the plan area
- IMP - 04 Apply regulatory or other tools to achieve benefits to the community described in the plan, including a diverse mix of housing types, forms, and sizes for people of all incomes, ages, and abilities and support for local businesses
- IMP - 05 Complete a subdivision or Infrastructure Master Plan process for the Loretto Heights campus area that includes street cross-sections, street corridor hierarchies, and primary and side street classifications in accordance with plan recommendations. These combined elements outline the on-site and off-site infrastructure and open space requirements as well as any other required traffic measures associated with developing the property in the future. Any supporting supplemental engineering studies will include conceptual design and layout of transportation, water, wastewater, stormwater and open space.
- IMP - 06 Apply zoning, design standards and guidelines, development agreements or other regulatory tools to achieve human-scale building forms and streetscapes that are compatible with existing historic character envisioned by the plan

## Public Investment Strategies

- IMP - 07 Pursue opportunities for future analysis and partnering to leverage public investments for major infrastructure and facility improvements to implement the strategies and recommendations of this plan
- IMP - 08 Establish new pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from abutting neighborhoods and within the plan area, consistent with this plan's recommendations and in accordance with *DenverMoves* plans
- IMP - 09 As development occurs, work with DHA and Denver Economic Development and Opportunity to create opportunities for the provision of on-site affordable housing at a variety of income levels
- IMP - 10 Encourage the use of state and federal rehabilitation tax credits to support preservation and re-use of historic assets
- IMP - 11 Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks and Recreation to implement the strategies and recommendations identified in the Federal Boulevard Corridor Plan (2017) along Federal Boulevard, a designated parkway
- IMP - 12 Work with the Department of Parks and Recreation on investing in equitable access to Loretto Heights Park and future supported private-sector open spaces to and from surrounding neighborhoods
- IMP - 13 Work with the Department of Parks and Recreation to ensure all residents within the plan area are within a ten-minute walk to a neighborhood park
- IMP - 14 Work with the Department of Parks and Recreation to improve Loretto Heights Park by leveraging community input to establish priorities for park programs, amenities, and activities. Encourage privately-owned open spaces to incorporate programs, amenities, and activities that are complementary to the Loretto Heights Park



## Partnership Strategies

Public-private partnerships come in many forms. They require an investment from the city, property owners, private developers or a combination thereof. Common examples include tax increment financing (TIF), New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC), State and Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits and Special Districts (such as a Metropolitan District or a Business Improvement District). The public sector can help to reduce risks by implementing many of the strategies described in the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan, such as:

1. A clear vision for the redevelopment of the area
2. Streamlined and clear decision-making that supports that vision
3. Public investments in infrastructure
4. Flexible entitlements that allow the developer to respond to changes in market conditions



Library

Given that a large portion of the redevelopment site is owned by one owner, many of the plan recommendations will rely on some form of partnership between the city and the private owner. In some cases, partnerships may include additional parties such as community groups, non-profits, and developers/leaseholders to implement the following priorities:

- Partner with Historic Denver, Inc. to implement appropriate protection mechanisms for the historic resources identified in the plan, such as preservation easements
- Partner with the City and County of Denver and Historic Denver, Inc. to complete neighborhood building surveys via Discover Denver



Machebeuf Hall

- Partner with Denver Digs Trees to increase tree canopy in parks, public right-of-ways and private properties
- Partner with Denver Economic Development and Opportunity to incorporate Mixed-Income and affordable housing development
- Partner with the Department of Public Works to implement Stormwater and Water Quality Improvements
- Explore partnerships to retain the former pool for an added community asset
- Partner with Denver's Sidewalk Gap Program to determine implementation and funding of sidewalk improvements
- Improve the access to healthy food, grocery stores, retail goods and services including implementation of the "Healthy Food for Denver Kids" program
- Development indoor/outdoor gathering spaces for community meetings, church services and other activities
- Partner with the Cities of Sheridan and Englewood and Arapahoe County to study and implement transit, bike, and pedestrian improvements to W. Dartmouth Avenue and crossing improvements at US-285 and Knox Court



View of Administration Building and Machebeuf Hall from the West



