

Date: November 27, 2023

To: City and County of Denver's Department of Community Planning & Development,
Planning Board, and City Council

From: Steering Committee Members of the Near Northwest Area Plan

Re: Support for the Near Northwest Area Plan

As members of the Near Northwest Area Plan Steering Committee, we write today to express our strong support for the Near Northwest Area Plan (NNW) submitted by the City and County of Denver's Community Planning and Development (CPD) Department. We represent the Chaffee Park, Sunnyside, Highland, and Jefferson Park neighborhoods. We are a diverse group of residents, business owners, nonprofits, and neighborhood associations.

We are so grateful that we were chosen to be among the earliest participants in the Neighborhood Planning Initiative (NPI). As you know, the NPI is a long-term commitment by the city to ensure every neighborhood in Denver can enjoy the benefits of planning and the implementation of community recommendations and investments priority.

Denver's Northside has a rich history, reflecting the diversity of the city. You couldn't find four more distinct neighborhoods in Denver to work together on one plan. Parts of each neighborhood date from Denver's earliest years but also have elements that reflect modern trends. Each is a blend of classes and ethnic groups leading to diverse hopes, needs, and sometimes fears on the part of the residents. This process has cut across these ethnic and class lines to allow for a broad swath of our residents to participate, and to have their voices heard.

Often, we found common ground on topics like mobility, safety, and affordability. Other times, all we had in common was geography because we share a boundary like Federal Boulevard. But we were all united in the effort to improve our communities. The process included extensive public engagement that brought together residents, local organizations, business owners, city planners and staff from relevant agencies and departments who shared their perspectives knowledge and expertise on crafting the plan.

This planning process started in July 2021 and concluded in November 2023. We participated in regular monthly meetings for more than two years, as well as regular ad hoc meetings for specific topics that required more discussion. We attended community events to share with and to hear from our neighbors. We helped get the word out through our distribution lists and social media, helping to serve as liaisons to the Near Northwest community.

The make-up of the committee has changed over that period, as some early members dropped off for other obligations, but others were eager to take their place. But we all share one thing in common, we deeply care about our neighborhoods and want the best outcome.

CPD staff has been amazing throughout this process! They occasionally moderated spirited conversations. And they were always willing to lend an ear or spend a few minutes (or hours!) entertaining sidebar discussions with the group.

We wholeheartedly support the NNW Area Plan which covers four broad topics: Land Use and Built Form, Housing and Economy, Mobility, and Quality of Life Infrastructure. Each of these categories provides detailed recommendations for the improvement of various aspect of the neighborhoods based on community need and input. The overarching goals included:

Support wealth-building and access to housing
Support health and well-being
Improve multi-modal options and safety
Grow businesses and jobs
Nurture great places
Honor the heritage and culture in our neighborhoods

There is much to enjoy in the entire plan, but we'd call your attention to a few neighborhood-specific recommendations. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but we thought it would be fun to share a few of our favorite highlights for each neighborhood.

Chaffee Park

Focus Area: New Walkable Town Square at 48th & Pecos
Preserve Existing Industrial
Increase access to healthy and affordable food

Sunnyside

Focus Area: Northeast Sunnyside
Expansion Aztlan Rec Center
Support to expand affordable housing capacity on the Quigg Newton site
Walkable Mixed-Use centers
Streetcar nodes (41st and Tejon)

Highland

Focus Area: Viking Park and Speer Boulevard
Streetcar nodes (32nd at Zuni and Clay and elsewhere)
Celebrate the history and culture
Stabilize residents at risk of involuntary displacement
Further study potentially historic areas

Jefferson Park

Focus Area: Diamond Hill and Water Street

Improve the current park and add new park space

Improve connectivity across I-25 and Speer Boulevard

Transformative Project: New pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-25

We look forward to moving this vision forward, through the processes of plan adoption and implementation ahead of us.

Sincerely,

Nita Gonzales, Linda Jo and Emily Weiss (Chaffee Park)

Ramon C. Bargas, Esteban Gomez and Garrett W. Philips (Sunnyside)

Tim Boers, Rebecca Hunt, Adela Pena and Lorenzo J. Ramirez (Highland)

Lexi MacArthur (Highland and Bienvenidos Foodbank)

Ashton Altieri and Mike Blake (Jefferson Park)

Renee Martinez-Stone (Denver Housing Authority)