

Access to Goods and Services

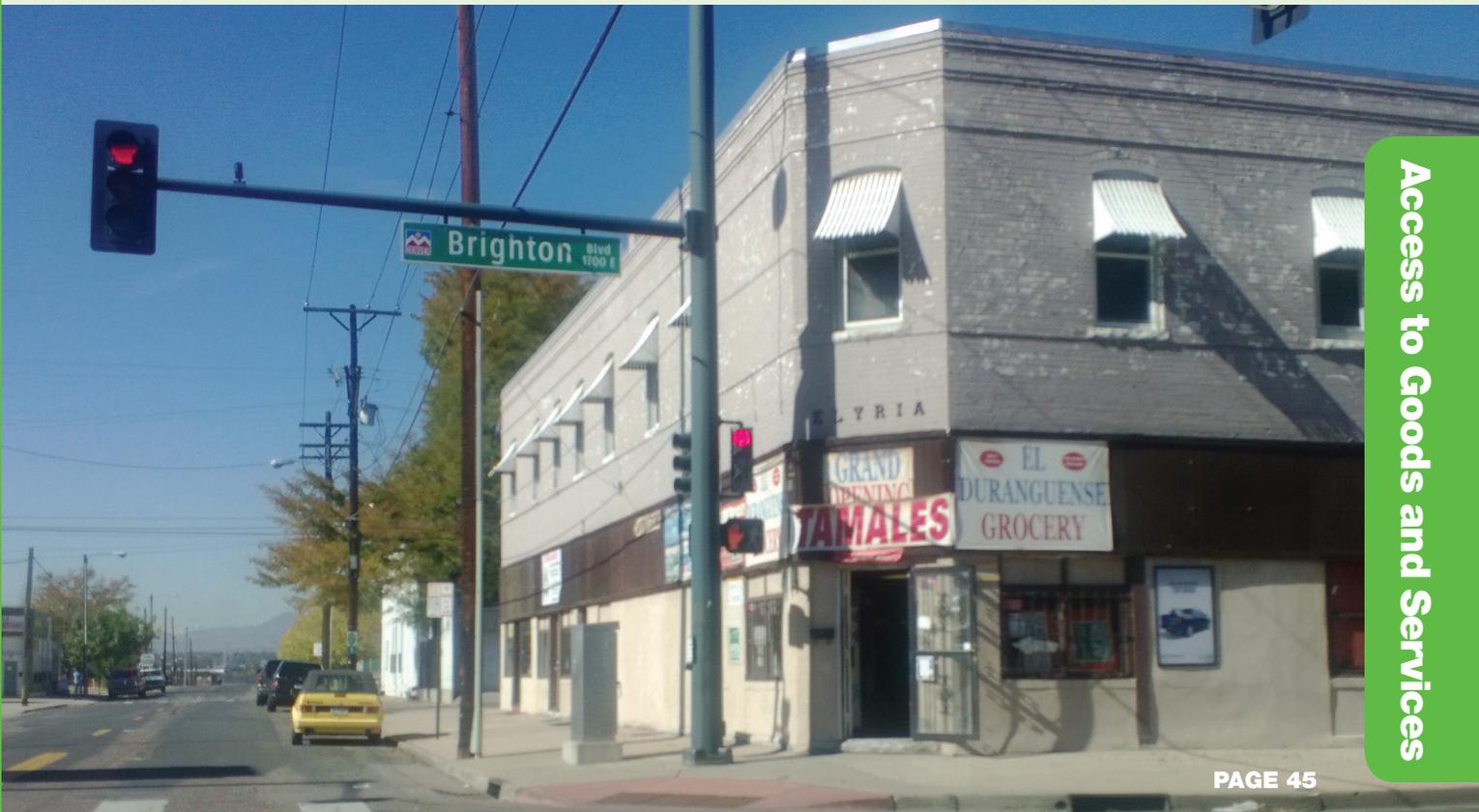
Summary of Key Findings

Local goods and services such as grocery stores, banks, pharmacies, health care, child care, and community centers, churches, schools and parks are important to meet residents' daily needs. Physical barriers in Globeville and Elyria Swansea including railroads, highways and industrial operations pose challenges for getting around. Perhaps due to these barriers, there are few retail stores and businesses. Residents must travel outside of the neighborhood for daily needs, which increases driving, decreases walking, and results in fewer social interactions and “eyes on the street.” Key findings include:

- Globeville and Elyria Swansea residents must travel further – in some cases twice as far as the average Denver resident – to reach a grocery store.
- Over half of respondents in one survey said, “I worry every day about being able to get affordable, healthy food for myself or my family.”
- It takes time and money to leave the neighborhoods in order to access basic daily needs such as shopping, errands, and appointments. Relying on public transit to do so takes even more time and money, resources which are in short supply for many residents.
- While recreation facilities in both neighborhoods exceed the City’s minimum formula of providing 75% of basic amenities, residents report concerns about safety, amenities, and programming that meets their needs, particularly for youth.

How the Neighborhood Plans Can Improve Access to Goods and Services

The Neighborhood Plans can help improve the food environment, without which it is likely that residents of Globeville and Elyria Swansea will continue to experience higher than average rates of poor health. Increasing the number of neighborhood goods and services through mixed-use development and easy access for all with “Complete Streets” will likely increase local trips and promote physical activity in the neighborhood, as well as social interaction and “eyes on the street.” The ability of residents and workers to walk, bike, or use transit to shop, work, recreate and gather as a community can result in improved health.



Access to Goods and Services in Globeville and Elyria Swansea Today

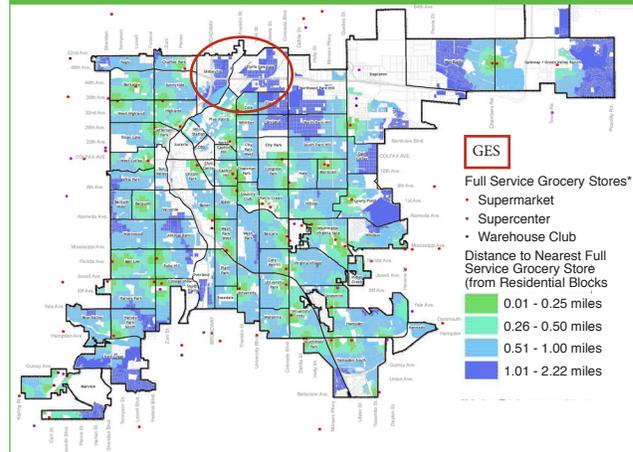
Goods and services such as grocery stores, banks, pharmacies, retail stores, health care and child care are important to meet residents' daily needs. Civic resources such as churches, schools, libraries, and parks and recreation are equally critical. Physical barriers including railroads, highways and large industrial operations have posed challenges for getting around in Globeville and Elyria Swansea for many years. These barriers impact residents' ability to access local stores and businesses by the additional time and distance required to get around easily. Also, perhaps due to these physical barriers, there are a limited number of retail stores and neighborhood service businesses in the community. Residents must travel out of the area to other neighborhoods for their everyday needs, which is time consuming, expensive and even more challenging for those who do not own vehicles and must rely on public transit or carpooling.

Healthy Foods

Residents have consistently identified the lack of a full service grocery store as one of the most critical service gaps in this community of over 10,000 people. In addition, there are 14 convenience or corner stores in this small community, including three 7-Elevens. Corner stores rarely offer fresh produce, whole grains, or staples, but offer an abundance of processed foods high in sugar, salt and fat.

The average distance that residents in the City of Denver travel to reach the closest full service grocery store is just under one mile. Elyria Swansea and Globeville residents must travel farther – in some cases twice as far as the average Denver resident – to reach a grocery store (*Figure 23*).¹

FIGURE 23:
Distance to Nearest Full Service Grocery Store map (miles)



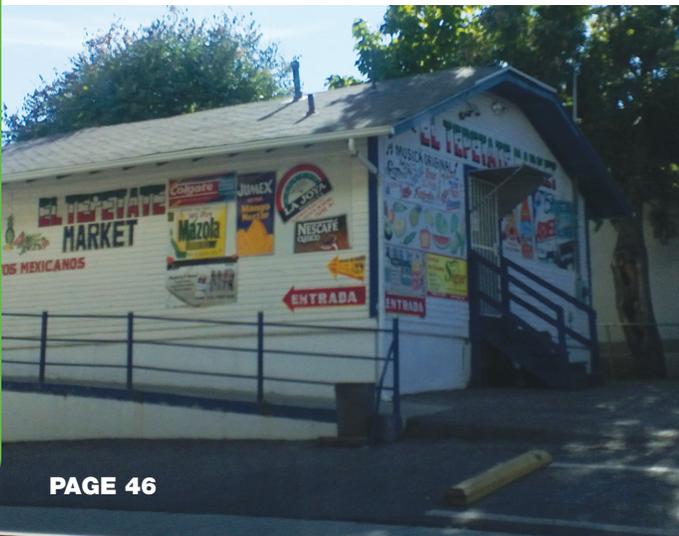
*Note: Data current as of August 2012, with selected stores updated as of January 2014. Some stores may have opened or closed since original data was collected in August 2012.

SOURCE: Denver Office of Economic Development 2014

To get to a grocery store residents without a personal vehicle may need to rely on public transportation, which can be infrequent, may not stop close to the store, and fares can be expensive if family members want to travel together to shop. Globeville and Elyria Swansea residents have lower average incomes than Denver residents overall, and lower vehicle ownership, factors that increase the barriers to obtaining healthy food.

In addition to the lack of grocery stores and transportation hurdles, **food insecurity**² – or limited access to food due to lack of money – is more prevalent in these neighborhoods than other parts of the state. In one survey, 34% of residents reported that they “sometimes or always could not afford to eat a balanced meal,”³ compared with about 16% of residents statewide (and nationwide) who faced financial challenges to put food on the table in 2012.⁴ A high number of residents are eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)⁵ benefits, but are not enrolled for reasons that may include concern about legal resident status. This further limits residents’ access to healthy and nutritious foods.

In addition to full-service grocery stores, other sources of healthy food can include farmers’ markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture (CSA), a co-op model. However, these are seasonal and do not provide a year-round source of nutritious, affordable food. The GrowHaus, a



nonprofit greenhouse located in Elyria Swansea, has a small retail market and sells CSA boxes. Residents note that this is a much appreciated amenity in the neighborhood, and an important part of a healthy food system, but a local grocery store would offer full time access to a complete range of nutritious, affordable foods.

The GrowHaus is a non-profit indoor farm, marketplace and educational center located in Elyria Swansea. It serves as a hub for urban agriculture, education, and job training. The GrowHaus sells a limited amount of produce to the public through retail sales (priced on a sliding scale) and weekly produce boxes.



In recent surveys by local community organizations, residents described the challenges posed by the lack of a grocery store in the neighborhood and their desire for healthy food options:⁶

- More than three-quarters said there are not stores close to the neighborhood that sell fruits and vegetables.
- More than two out of every five respondents said it is challenging to get fruits and vegetables; for example, “The corner stores do not have a lot of fresh fruits, and the prices are higher. They have a lot of expired foods.”⁷
- Over half of respondents agreed with the statement “I worry EVERY DAY about being able to get affordable, healthy food for myself or my family.”

In addition, representatives of community health organizations in the neighborhood discussed how lack of healthy food impacts residents:⁸

- Citing the public health issues associated with not having access to a grocery store, one respondent noted, “Lack of access to grocery stores is a concern that causes stress for residents. Many use public transportation and the stores are too far away by bus...and they still have all their stuff to carry.”
- Another respondent noted that healthy food isn’t even available for health promotion activities, saying “When we are having a class and trying to get healthy snacks for a class, there is no real place to go...”
- And, “There are more marijuana stores than grocery stores... .”

Neighborhood Services

Residents in Globeville and Elyria Swansea also desire other neighborhood stores and services such as pharmacies, shops, banks, markets, health care facilities, and a neighborhood destination such as a Main Street.⁹ They note that it takes more time and expense to reach shops and services outside their neighborhood, and they often have to accept poor quality substitutes or go without. Residents comment that one of the best aspects of the neighborhood is its convenient, central location; close to downtown and with lots of transportation options. However, more retail shops and services, including “mom and pop stores” would allow residents to stay in their community to shop. This could help to strengthen the local economy, create jobs, support social cohesion, improve safety with more “eyes on the street,” and provide a host of other benefits.

The lack of a full range of goods and services in the neighborhood, combined with connectivity problems with roads, sidewalks and transit, can contribute to health conditions like obesity and cardiovascular disease. It takes time and money to leave Globeville and Elyria Swansea for necessary daily needs, which prevents residents from doing other things that could promote better health, like recreation and physical activity. The constant challenge to access healthy food, medicine, and other basic needs may also lead to chronic stress (*see Mental Wellbeing section*).

“There are more marijuana stores than grocery stores....”

Access to Goods and Services in Globeville and Elyria Swansea Today

continued

Parks and Recreation

There are 97 acres of parkland within 8 parks in Globeville and Elyria Swansea, serving about 10,000 residents. There are four recreation centers within the neighborhoods, and an additional one on the border with the Cole neighborhood to the south. (Figure 24)

Globeville’s central park is Argo Park, which has an outdoor pool and is in the northeast quadrant of the neighborhood where the largest portion of Globeville’s residents live. Other Globeville parks include the twin facilities of Northside Park and Heron Pond/Heller Open Space in the far northeast of the neighborhood. The city-run Stapleton Recreation Center is at 51st Street and Broadway, while the Globeville Recreation Center that is privately run, is in the southeast quadrant close to Garden Place School. Neither recreation center has an indoor pool; locals wish that Stapleton had an indoor pool to complement the outdoor pool at Argo Park.¹⁰

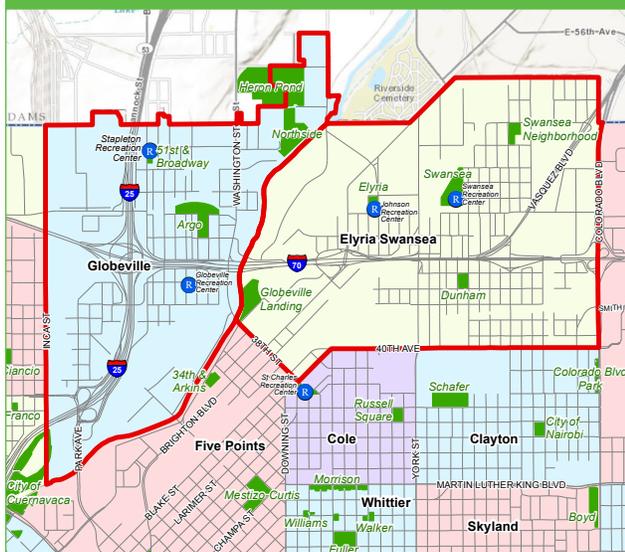
Elyria Swansea is home to four parks including Elyria, Swansea, Swansea Neighborhood, Dunham Lee and Globeville Landing parks. The Johnson Recreation Center at 48th and Race is housed in the Colorado Miners Community Center, and the Swansea Recreation Center has typical indoor exercise and recreation facilities along with an outdoor pool.



Overall, the facilities at Globeville’s and Elyria Swansea’s park and recreation centers were on par with many others in Denver, according to *The Game Plan*, Denver’s Parks Master Plan. When compared to national benchmarks, the neighborhoods have enough softball and baseball fields, they could use more soccer and multi-use fields, and their recreation centers exceed the City’s 75% standard for basic amenities.¹¹

Despite this status, residents in Globeville and Elyria Swansea report mixed opinions about recreation facilities. In Globeville, people like the playgrounds and picnicking in the parks, as well as Argo Park and its pool. But Northside Park is underutilized, partially due to connectivity issues. The park “is hard to get to, hard to find, and is accessed through the adjacent National Guard facility.”¹² Proximity to the South Platte River Greenway doesn’t seem to encourage access by local residents either. Residents want improvements to the local parks and recreational facilities, including restrooms and better maintenance of existing parks. In addition, there are concerns about safety in the parks, especially at night due to maintenance problems, inadequate lighting, and improper use by outsiders.¹³ Residents pointed out the need for recreation centers and other service providers to work together to offer “motivating” programs for kids for physical activity and to act as gathering places for neighbors.

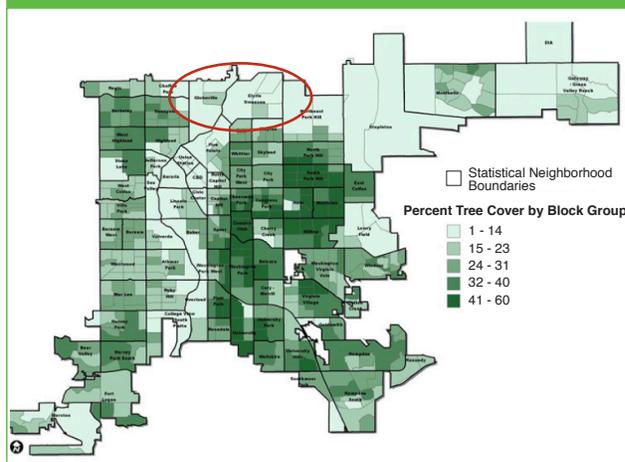
FIGURE 24:
Parks in Globeville and Elyria Swansea



SOURCE: Denver Parks and Recreation 2014

Finally, the scarcity of trees in Globeville and Elyria Swansea might also reduce use of parks and outdoor recreation by local residents and thus lead to lower rates of physical activity. A recent inventory of Denver’s tree cover, or “tree canopy,” shows that the two neighborhoods are among those with the lowest amount of tree cover in Denver (*Figure 25*). This lack of adequate tree cover causes higher local temperatures, or “urban heat islands,” and poorer air quality, two environmental conditions that may cause residents to skip exercising outside on a hot day. The City of Denver’s master plan for parks, *The Game Plan*, recommends vastly increasing the city’s tree canopy from the current 6 percent citywide to 10 percent in commercial areas and 18 percent in residential neighborhoods.¹⁴ According to this goal, Globeville and Elyria Swansea should be among the first neighborhoods in Denver to receive additional tree planting to meet the City’s minimum tree canopy goal in residential areas.

FIGURE 25:
Percent of Tree Cover in Denver Neighborhoods



SOURCE: Denver Parks and Recreation 2014

According to this goal, Globeville and Elyria Swansea should be among the first neighborhoods in Denver to receive additional tree planting to meet the City’s minimum tree canopy goal in residential areas.

How Access to Goods and Services Affects Health

Neighborhoods offering a range of goods and services – including healthy food and a wide range of parks and recreational opportunities – are considered good for health. The more destinations there are nearby, the more likely that people will be able to shop, run errands, and recreate with safety and ease; socialize with neighbors; support their communities and be supported in return. But residents in Globeville and Elyria Swansea do not have easy access to a wide array of goods and services and their health may suffer as a result.

How Access to Healthy Food Affects Health

Food access is having sufficient resources, both economic and physical, to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.¹⁵ Improving access to healthy food has been recognized by national agencies and associations including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Institute of Medicine (IOM), and the American Heart Association (AHA) as a necessary strategy to reduce obesity and improve the public’s health. While not the sole solution to the complexities of the obesity epidemic, access to nutritious and affordable food is an important factor enabling community residents to make easy, healthy choices about their diets.¹⁶

Healthy eating is associated with lower risk for Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, certain cancers, and obesity.¹⁷ More than 75 studies in the past three years have examined the direct health impacts of access to healthy food on diet and on the risk of obesity or overweight, as measured by fruit and vegetable consumption or body mass index (BMI) respectively. Key studies include:

- One study of 70,000 adolescents indicated that greater availability of supermarkets was associated with lower adolescent BMI scores. It also found that a higher number of convenience stores was related to higher BMI among students.
- A 2011 study by Washington State University found lower rates of diabetes, obesity and mortality were associated with more per capita grocery stores.
- A nationally representative sample of low-income households found that easy access to supermarket shopping was associated with increased household use of fruits.¹⁸

How Access to Goods and Services Affects Health

continued

Inequalities in Access to Healthy Food

Many studies have documented how low-income communities and communities of color have less access to healthy food than higher-income and less diverse communities. Not only is finding healthy food challenging, but research has shown that these communities are often surrounded by abundant sources of unhealthy food, such as convenience stores, liquor stores,¹⁹ and – in Colorado now – marijuana dispensaries selling “edibles.” Together, the barriers inhibiting access to fresh foods and the plethora of inexpensive convenience foods can make it more difficult for people living in these communities to eat a healthy diet. The constant challenge to finding healthy food can lead to chronic stress (see *Mental Wellbeing* section).

How Access to Goods and Services Affects Health

To be healthy, neighborhoods need more than just healthy food. Residents need access to a wide range of goods and services in order to meet their daily needs efficiently and cost effectively, without excessive travel outside of the neighborhood.

Mixed-use development – locating a combination of residential, office, commercial, cultural or institutional uses together – allows residents to live, work, play, learn and shop within close proximity. Mixed-use development creates “walkable” neighborhoods and makes people much more likely to walk or use transit to run errands, go shopping, or go to lunch than does spread-out, automobile-oriented single-use development. Destinations located within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of each other are most likely to promote walking. Researchers have found that even a base minimum of physical activity can help combat obesity.²⁰ Studies show that:

- 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended physical activity levels; among those without safe places to walk just 27% met the recommendation.
- Residents are 65% more likely to walk in a neighborhood with sidewalks.

- People in walkable neighborhoods did about 35–45 more minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week and were substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than similar people living in low-walkable neighborhoods.²¹

Residents are 65% more likely to walk in a neighborhood with sidewalks

One way to improve physical access is by building complete streets. A **complete street** is intentionally designed to enable bicyclists, motorists, trucks, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities to safely move along and across a street. Complete streets include sidewalks and destinations to walk to, such as shops, businesses, and neighborhood goods and services. Complete streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work (Figure 26).

FIGURE 26:
A “Complete Street”



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Complete streets in Globeville and Elyria Swansea could enable more physical activity and reduce the associated health conditions of obesity, overweight, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

How Access to Parks and Recreation Affects Health

The overall health benefits of access to and use of parks and recreation for physical activity are well known in research literature. Physical activity reduces obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Physical activity in a park or recreation facility also builds social cohesion, allows for the enjoyment of a natural landscape, and can benefit mental health as well.²²

As mentioned previously, an adequate tree canopy in parks and recreation areas can provide shade and cooler local temperatures, creating a more inviting climate for prolonged physical activity.

Prediction: How the Neighborhood Plans Can Improve Access to Goods and Services

It is likely that residents of Globeville and Elyria Swansea will continue to experience higher than average rates of poor health in the current food environment. Even if other factors improve (such as increased education about cooking and eating healthy foods), the availability of healthy food is a necessary element to improve health. Lack of access to healthy food also results in chronic stress and worry of figuring out how to get to a grocery store in another community. These mental health impacts would not be expected to improve until healthy, affordable foods are available in the neighborhood.

Development of a wider array of retail shops and services within the neighborhood could also positively impact residents' health by promoting more walking, decreasing automobile use, and creating a vibrant pedestrian environment with more "eyes on the street."

Better maintenance, improved safety and more programming and classes in parks and recreation centers could increase recreational usage within Globeville and Elyria Swansea, particularly by children. This in turn could increase residents' physical activity levels and contribute to reductions in obesity, cardiovascular disease, and stress.



Recommendations to Improve Access to Goods and Services

Health Recommendations that Can Be Addressed by the Globeville and Elyria Swansea Neighborhood Plans

1. Promote mixed use development to support a variety of commercial and retail businesses and services throughout the community and around new rail stations. (See Section 8, Recommendation 18.A)
2. Connect streets as prioritized in the Globeville and Elyria Swansea Neighborhood Plans' "Street Grid Connectivity Map." (See Section 8, Recommendation 3.A)
3. Implement "Complete Streets" including sidewalks for all new and redesigned streets, to provide safe and convenient access for all users. (See Section 8, Recommendation 13.A)
4. Increase the urban tree canopy to create an inviting environment for outdoor physical activity. (See Section 8, Recommendation 20.A)
5. Incentivize development of retail goods and services, including a grocery store. (See Section 8, Recommendation 10.A)
6. Promote new sources of healthy foods within the redeveloped National Western Center, such as grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens. (See Section 8, Recommendation 16.A)
7. Implement a "healthy corner store retail program," similar to the in Philadelphia model, to add healthy foods to the existing convenience and corner stores. (See Section 8, Recommendation 17.A)
8. Develop a flexible market space that can support a variety of neighborhood goods and services and culturally relevant activities. (See Section 8, Recommendation 19.A)
9. Improve connectivity to parks, trails and recreation, especially to the South Platte River trails and parks. (See Section 8, Recommendation 9.A)

References & Endnotes

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