Community Think Tank — Meeting #3
August 8, 2017
5:30-8:00 p.m.
University of Denver
Anderson Academic Commons - Special Event Room
2150 E. Evans Ave.

Meeting Summary

Meeting Agenda
- Registration, Dinner/Refreshments and Introductions
- Denveright Plan Updates and Discussion
- An Inclusive City: Addressing equity issues across the city
- Priorities on citywide improvements to pedestrian and trail facilities
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

Welcome & Introductions
Andy Mountain, Think Tank co-facilitator, welcomed meeting attendees, reviewed the evening’s agenda and recapped the role and commitments of Think Tank members. The 19 members in attendance provided brief introductions, the neighborhood they live in and the number of meetings they have attended to-date.

Referencing Mayor Hancock’s 2017 State of the City address, Mountain asked Think Tank members to keep in mind the challenges the city has faced and how it has grown and evolved. Quoting Hancock he said, "We must ensure that future change conforms to our values as a city and a community."

Denveright Update
Mountain then turned the meeting over to Caryn Champine, Director of Planning Services for the City and County of Denver, to provide an update on the status of the overall Denveright effort. Champine too mentioned the Mayor’s address and how he spoke of Denveright and the effort to preserve our city’s values while planning for the future.

Champine summarized the community outreach efforts, stating that the city has seen more engagement through Denveright than any other citywide planning effort in the last 20 or more years. In the last year, the team has attended 70 community workshops and street team events and conducted eight online surveys with more than 7,500 responses. They have also setup kiosks around the city allowing people to sign up for newsletters and find out more about the project. Champine estimated over 10,000 people have been reached through these efforts.

Champine then discussed the draft vision elements across all plans and how they are relevant in conversations within each plan as they progress. They are:

- Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive
- Economically Diverse and Vibrant
• Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods
• Well Connected, Safe and Accessible Places
• Healthy and Active
• Environmentally Resilient

Referencing the “Four Plans Working Together” handout, Champine outlined how all the plans can work together to transform the city by way of parks and trails access, street-facing development, transit stops, streetscape and more.

Co-Chair Update
Andy Mountain then welcomed Think Tank Co-Chairs Kim Gallman and Amelia Myers to share their experience from the Blueprint Denver Task Force meeting in March where they participated in the early stages of the “Growing a Better Denver” game. They explained how the neighborhood context prioritization exercise that the Think Tank developed in February was incorporated to help inform the Task Force’s discussions on growth. Myers noted that the Task Force studied models of other cities such as Chicago, Portland and Boulder to consider the trade-offs in how a city chooses to grow or not to grow.

Blueprint Update
David Gaspers, project manager for Blueprint Denver, provided a brief overview of the plan’s schedule and reviewed the results of the “Growing a Better Denver” game and the community input received. There were approximately 800 online responses and over 20 game boards analyzed. More than 50 percent of game participants played out a high growth scenario while embracing multiple growth strategies. He noted that transit and urban centers (downtown) were areas of high interest. Gaspers also presented five case study scenarios for the year 2040 that each assume different intensities of development, transit investment and populations. He explained the next step is to further evaluate growth scenarios and discuss preferences with the community.

Parks and Recreation Game Plan Update
Mark Tabor, project manager for the Parks and Recreation Game Plan, encouraged attendees to visit the Game Plan website and view the existing conditions report and draft goals and objectives. He said the importance of health, a high quality of life and enhanced urban environmental quality continue to emerge as priorities in this update of the original 2003 plan. He said the plan is looking at how the system is going to expand and change over time and how they will redefine parks as key parts of infrastructure for the city, in conjunction with the other Denveright plans. He ended with a review of the plan’s schedule to finish developing its goals and report, along with its next community engagement effort in November.

Denver Moves: Pedestrians and Trails Update
Charlie Alexander, consultant project manager for Denver Moves: Pedestrians and Trails, told attendees they are moving towards a draft plan. He said the initial step in this process was focused on understanding the community’s vision and goals. Below are some key priorities that have emerged:

• Health
• Equity
• Safety
• Accessibility and connectivity
Alexander said the plan is now focused on how well the trail system is achieving the above goals and is in the process of developing standards and typologies to complete the city’s pedestrian and trails network. He said that they need to decide how to prioritize the city’s investments in these areas.

Alexander ended by providing attendees with upcoming community meeting dates in August and September throughout Denver.

**Denver Moves: Transit Update**

Kristina Evanoff, project manager for Denver Moves: Transit, delivered a high-level overview on the State of the System report that sets the baseline understanding for Denver’s transit system. She encouraged attendees to read the executive summary, which explains how the system operates and its use. She noted 75% of survey respondents say they approve of the plan’s goals listed below:

- Enhance: Make it more appealing to take transit
- Simplify: Make transit easier to use
- Connect: Connect people and places to transit
- Thrive: Improve community health and access to opportunity
- Sustain: Support a transit system in Denver that will be successful over the long term

Evanoff also stated one of the mayor’s Mobility Action Plan goals is to increase transit mobility from the current 6 percent to 15 percent. She then provided an overview of outreach where over 900 participants have indicated the following priorities:

- Higher frequency and enhanced bus service
- More fare pass programs
- More high capacity transit service
- Earlier/later/more weekend service
- More amenities at stops and stations

Evanoff then explained the “Build Your Own Transit System” survey where respondents prioritized their transit preferences. She noted respondents want more direct, frequent, and reliable service that includes more rail and more high frequency bus.

She finished by reviewing the plan’s schedule to release the “Build Your Own Transit System” survey summary in August. She noted the importance of linking land use to transit due to growth in corridors and mentioned the plan team will be conducting a brief corridor survey in the fall. The goal, she said, is to create a frequent transit network and to get residents and commuters to use its lines.

**Q & A**

The project team took a few moments to answer questions from attendees:

- **Does the Game Plan involve expanding and purchasing more parkland?** Mark Tabor said that first, the Game Plan needs to establish reasonable standards of what kind of parks they want in what type of neighborhoods. He said some underserved communities are where parks are growing the fastest and while the city doesn’t have a consistent approach to development in park amenities, they are working to enhance what exists.
• **What is the relationship between RTD and the city in terms of transit responsibilities and funding?** Kristina Evanoff clarified that RTD owns and operates the transit system, but stressed to the group RTD has been at the table from the beginning of this process to explore ways the city and RTD can partner and improve collaboration on new transit investments to meet the specific needs of Denver residents.

• **How will the city handle competing outcomes and recommendations among the four plans?** Caryn Champine explained that the four plan project teams meet regularly with executive management to coordinate priorities and overarching plan direction.

• **How will the city prioritize neighborhood improvements?** David Gaspers explained that city’s neighborhoods have been grouped into 19 areas and they have already begun work on area plans for the first six. The remaining 13 areas would be completed over the next 10-12 years. He said, in this phased approach, Blueprint sets standards for neighborhoods to tweak as they identify values, visions and goals for their own plans.

**Breakout Discussions**

Think Tank members were divided into groups to discuss two topics: “Blueprint for an Inclusive City” and themes for pedestrians and trails prioritization. Each group covered both topics.

**Blueprint Discussions:**

Members were asked to provide input on what being an inclusive city means to them, as well as feedback on goals and strategies to manage Denver’s growth, specifically through housing and design. The following is a summary of Think Tank member comments.

**Inclusive City:**

• **Right thing to do** – The city should prioritize what is the right thing to do regardless of cost or profit.

• **Equitable** – More density and housing can make the city more equitable. Share resources like open space. Help prevent displacement and provide more housing options.

• **Regional approach** – Our limited land area and needing to take a more regional approach.

• **Diversity** – Keep a place for everyone, whether that means people who have lived here forever or those who want to stay in their neighborhood. Intentionally build communities, be culturally inclusive.

• **Economically stable** – We must remain economically stable as we grow and change.

**Housing:**

• **Affordability** – There needs to be many varied solutions. Density and quality are key. Housing should be “attainable”. Suggestions included parking maximums and bringing back exemption for small lots to help with affordability.

• **ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)** – They make sense in some areas; opening up a neighborhood to people who don’t otherwise live there, generates income for the owner, and is an opportunity for family members to live together. More than just ADUs and tiny homes – consider allowing urban houses with 2-6 units in single family areas.

• **Zoning/Density** – Innovate on the code to allow for more density. Focus density around transit corridors.
• **Incentives** – Create incentives to help existing residents stay in their homes and bonuses for developers to bring more density.
• **Developer Fees** – Dedicated fees to fund shared/public amenities should be required as part of new developments.
• **Employee Housing** – Offer housing for employees, similar to mountain towns.

**Design:**
• **Design Review/Standards** – The debate over who defines “good design” can inherently cause exclusivity rather than inclusivity. Consider modeling after Atlanta where new homes are required to match the existing community character, e.g. Inman Park. There needs to be clean, predictable and attractive design standards. Although, too much design review adds administrative costs for the city. Evolve mixed-use and include the community in the design process to create buy-in. Embrace diversity in design.
• **Character** – Concerns about “boxes” next to older homes, an issue that cuts across all neighborhoods, not just historic ones. They can diminish the texture of our neighborhoods.
• **Streetscape** – The streetscape is an opportunity zone for design. There is underutilized space on arterials like Alameda and Federal that could benefit from improved design. Streetscape design should be thematically compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

**Pedestrians and Trails Discussions:**
Members were asked to consider the pros and cons of various ways of prioritizing where the city should focus its improvements to pedestrian and trail facilities. They were then asked to identify their top three themes:

**Pedestrians:**
1. Safety – Improvements should be prioritize in areas where the greatest safety risks exists
2. Fill in missing sidewalks before improving those that are inadequate or inaccessible
3. Focus new sidewalk investments around key destinations that serve daily needs such schools, health centers, parks, grocery shopping

**Trails:**
1. Safety – Improvements should be prioritized in areas where the greatest safety risks (including safety where pedestrians and cyclists share spaces) exist
2. New investments should connect with and continue other trails/sidewalks/amenities
3. Create commuter trails that connect to employment centers*
4. Walking/biking enhancements*
5. Wayfinding and quality lighting citywide*

* tied for third

**Next Steps**
Mountain closed the meeting and thanked members for attending. He mentioned the final Think Tank Meeting will be late 2017/early 2018. He encouraged Think Tank members to attend and help promote the next round of public meetings happening in August and September. He also stated that the project team will reach out to Think Tank members who have been unable to participate in past meetings and encouraged attendees to do the same.
### Think Tank Member Attendees

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<tr>
<td>Nicole Bush</td>
<td>Bernadette Kelly</td>
<td>John Joseph (JJ) Niemann</td>
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<td>Will Chan</td>
<td>Gosia Kung</td>
<td>Kent Simpson</td>
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<td>Stuart Coles</td>
<td>Cynthia Leibman</td>
<td>Terrance (Terry) Ware</td>
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<td>Arthur (Tee) Cowperthwaite</td>
<td>Sam May</td>
<td>Lisa Warren</td>
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<td>Elin Franzen Curry</td>
<td>Amelia Myers</td>
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<td>Kim Gallman</td>
<td>Sam Nelson</td>
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