

East Central Area Plan



Public Review Draft 1 Feedback Summary:

- 5-month review period from 11/9/19 to 4/12/20
- 2,444 individual comments received
- Most comments focused on small changes and clarification
- 76 substantive changes were made
- Major substantive changes to the plan based on community input:
 - Added additional recommendations for transitions between mixed-use and residential areas
 - Clarified recommendations around missing middle housing and preservation
 - Added recommendations to further affordable housing goals
 - Added mobility safety improvements in multiple locations
 - Improved recommendations for historic parkways

Feedback by Topic:



Land Use & Built Form

- Common themes of comments:
 - Concerns about impacts of taller buildings on surrounding residential areas and certainty of community benefits
 - Concerns about impacts of additional missing middle housing options in neighborhoods
 - Concerns that proposed additional missing middle housing options are insufficient to address housing shortage and more need to be allowed. Support for preserving neighborhood character but concern it will cause prices to rise more
- Substantive changes:
 - Updated Strategy L1.B to include additional compatibility for taller buildings next to adjacent residential areas
 - In Policy L3, added coordination with residential transitions in Policy L8 and added outreach to underrepresented communities
 - In Policy L5, clarified definition of missing middle housing, identified additional East Central issues to address, clarified how policy applies to single-unit places, and added support to rezone neighborhoods to allow ADUs prior to citywide implementation
 - Updated Policy L6 to include facilitation of adaptive reuse of historic structures and preservation of large single-unit structures
 - Added sidebars illustrating examples of good transitions and missing middle housing
 - Updated Policy C-L1 to include parking evaluation for small lot development
 - Added Strategy C-L4.G regarding impacts of signs on surrounding residential areas.



Economy & Housing

- Common themes of comments:

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- Mix of support and concerns regarding expanding diversity of housing types
- Support for increasing homeownership opportunities
- Support for expanding tools to support small and local businesses
- Substantive changes:
 - Added reference to maintaining character in sign recommendation E4.B
 - Clarified fee waivers or deferrals should be available to new and existing small businesses in recommendation E4.E
 - Clarified small business technical assistance is to be made available to English as a second language businesses in recommendation E5.B
 - Added home rehabilitation assistance to Strategy E8.A
 - Added Strategy E8.E regarding access to programs to help residents stay in their homes
 - Added Strategies E9.A.3 and E9.A.4 regarding working with non-profit partners and exploring a no net loss policy
 - Added Strategy E9.D regarding connecting landlords with tenant assistance and rehabilitation programs
 - Added homes to Strategy E9.B.1
 - Added Strategy E10.F.2 regarding housing affordable to very low-income households
 - Expanded Strategy E10.F.3 to include multi-generational living, aging in place, residents with disabilities, and residents needing supportive services
 - Added Strategies E10.H and E10.I regarding improving health outcomes
 - Added Strategy E11.B.2 and E11.B.5 regarding tools to encourage homeownership
 - Added financial and technical assistance to Strategy E11.D.4.
 - Added Strategy E11.F regarding housing for residents with disabilities
 - Modified Strategy E11.E. See Policy L5 for additional policy guidance
 - Added Strategy E13.F regarding alternative housing models



Mobility

- Common themes of comments:
 - Concerns about impacts of recommended safety improvements
 - Support for more traffic calming
 - Support for more bikeways, but questions about impacts
- Substantive changes:
 - Added clarifying language that recommendations in this plan will require additional analysis, including traffic studies, before significant improvements are installed.
 - Added intersection improvement priority at 23rd/Gaylord, 11th/Grant, 11th/Clarkson, 11th/Washington, 10th/Sherman, 10th/Downing, 10th/Corona, 8th/Sherman, 7th/Sherman, & Montview/Colorado based on feedback
 - Added N/S transformative street on Downing/Corona based on feedback

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- Updated M1.I.2.a and M1.K.2.a to include study of long-term improvement of mid-block signals
- Added sidebar to detail transportation-related responses to COVID-19 and the 2020 Stay at Home order.
- Added sub-strategy M3.G to study connection of 16th Ave facilities, in coordination with East High School.
- Added Corona and Downing Streets to Speed and Reliability Transit corridors.
- Added sub-strategy M8.A.6 to include public restrooms in rider amenities
- Added area-wide strategy M9.A to explore the feasibility of limiting speeds and disallowing turns on reds
- Added language about proposed BRT station changes to be considered in next phase of study and design



Quality of Life Infrastructure

- Common themes of comments:
 - Support for contemporary parkways and more green space along streets
 - Desire for more and better programming in existing parks
 - Strong support for more trees, and desire to ensure they survive
 - Support for better street lighting and other safety improvements
- Substantive changes:
 - Updated Q1 recommendation based on feedback about maintaining historic integrity and cultural heritage of historic parkways.
 - Updated maps to include City Park Esplanade as a “green street” opportunity based on public input.
 - Added strategy Q17.E - Partner with BIDs, RTD, and other organizations to construct and maintain public restrooms at appropriate locations, including mobility hubs (see Policy M8).
 - Congress Park Neighborhood - Added language to COP-Q3 recommendation about mitigating negative impacts of Colo. Blvd. and activating any new park with attractive and inviting features.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- How were comments reviewed and changes to the draft plan made?
 - Staff reviewed every comment made and provided a response to each, which can be found here. For comments that suggested a change to the plan that was consistent with the plan vision and adopted citywide policy, the change was made and noted in the revised document. When comments conflicted or if additional direction was needed, the East Central steering committee provided guidance. Meeting notes from committee meetings are available on the plan webpage.
- What is the remaining planning process?
 - The second public review draft will be open for comments until July 1. During that time, staff will conduct virtual office hours with members of the

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community. If you would like to speak with a planner about the draft plan, you may sign up [here](#). Staff will also distribute flyers in the area, as well as promote participation through email and social media.

- After commenting on the second review draft closes, staff will again review all comments and make changes to the plan as necessary. The revised draft plan will then be presented to the steering committee for their endorsement. Following steering committee endorsement, the plan will have a public hearing before Planning Board, which will make a recommendation to City Council on whether to adopt the plan. City Council will then hold a public hearing and vote on whether to adopt the plan, likely in late summer or early fall.
- Should the planning process be put on hold because of COVID-19?
 - Now is not the time to stop our work. More than ever, we need plans and policies that promote equity, support the health of our residents and our planet, keep communities connected to the services they need and help address the short- and long-term economic challenges the city and its residents will be facing in the wake of the pandemic. Several of the priority policy recommendations in the East Central draft plan, such as assistance to small locally owned businesses, preventing involuntary displacement of low-income residents, enhanced social services for residents experiencing homelessness, access to quality jobs and job training, a strong healthcare sector and affordable housing for hospital employees are now even more important.
- Do the plan recommendations need to change because of COVID-19?
 - The East Central Area Plan is a long-term (20-year) vision covering a variety of topics. The recommendations are flexible to accommodate changes in the city over that timeframe, and the broader goals remain applicable:
 - Quality-of-life amenities and housing options for all people
 - Complete sidewalks, street crossings, trails, and transportation networks
 - Parks or open space within a 10-minute walk of each neighborhood
 - More access to opportunity, from schools to healthcare to healthy food choices to recreation centers, parks, and libraries that offer innovative programming and great facilities that promote participation and better health outcomes – particularly in underserved neighborhoods
- Will the street closures because of COVID-19 be made permanent?
 - The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is using this time to evaluate these changes to the street network, which will help inform how the plan recommendations are implemented. Decisions have not been made on how long the current closures will remain in place.
- Will COVID-19 impact the implementation of the plan?
 - Some aspects of implementing the plan rely on the city's budget, which may continue to see impacts from COVID-19. However, over the 20-year life of the plan, current budget issues will have less impact on the implementation of the

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plan. In addition, many plan recommendations can be accomplished through partnerships or existing or alternative funding sources.

- Why does the plan recommend increasing density?
 - Blueprint Denver, the citywide land use and transportation plan, adopted in 2019, includes a growth strategy for all of Denver. To strategically direct the projected additional 189,000 residents and 136,000 jobs Denver expects to gain by 2040, the plan recommends focusing growth in centers and corridors (mixed use areas) with access to quality public transit, but acknowledges that every neighborhood will need to accept some growth.
 - East Central has a shortage of 3,100 affordable housing units today, while 11,000 households are cost burdened. Over the next 10 years, agreements on 46% of existing income-restricted housing units will expire and could become unaffordable. What we've heard from many members of the East Central community is a desire for their neighborhoods to offer a range of housing options in support of a diverse community, where residents have an opportunity to live in their neighborhoods long-term. Additional housing must be provided to meet these goals, along with all the other tools the plan recommends to address the affordable housing shortage.
- How will community benefits be determined?
 - The East Central Area Plan would require community benefits be provided for any property that wishes to exceed its currently allowed maximum height, up to the maximum heights indicated on the map on page 33 of the plan. The priority community benefits are described in Policy L3 on page 32 of the plan, but the details, including things such as the specific number of affordable housing units or the amount of open space, are not specified. Specific details such as these are determined through regulatory processes and usually occur after a plan recommendation has been adopted. Regulatory processes, such as rezonings or zoning text amendments, conduct additional, more detailed analyses and provide opportunities for community input and require a decision by City Council for changes to take effect.
- How does this plan relate to the Colfax Bus Rapid Transit project?
 - The East Central Area Plan is being closely coordinated with Colfax Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), but they are separate projects and at different stages of approval. The Colfax BRT was approved by voters and received \$55 million in funding as part of 2017's general obligation bond election. The City intends to leverage the \$55M in funding, along with funds from other available sources, to secure additional grant funds to achieve the full vision for the East Colfax BRT. Large scale, federally-funded projects generally follow five major phases: preliminary project development/conceptual design, environmental evaluation and clearance, design, Right-of-Way acquisition, and construction.
 - The East Colfax BRT is currently set to initiate the environmental evaluation and clearance phase. Based on typical timelines for large scale, federally-funded

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projects, we estimate it will take 5-8 years from the start of the environmental assessment until construction completion.

- Colfax Avenue has the highest bus ridership of any corridor in region. The 15/15L routes combined see seven million annual boardings — over 22,000 per weekday — and weekday ridership is projected to increase to over 50,000 in 2035. The East Central Area Plan provides an opportunity to plan for the long-term future of the area, ensuring that the community benefits both from its existing transit access and the improvements planned with BRT. To learn more about Colfax BRT, please visit www.colfaxbrt.org.