WHAT’S THE VISION FOR HOUSING IN EAST?

EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE AND INCLUSIVE

In 2040, the East area is home to households of all incomes and sizes, including families, seniors, recent immigrants, and young professionals. Multi-unit and mixed-use buildings along Colfax Avenue and major corridors provide convenient, affordable, and high-quality housing, where many residents work just a short walk or bus ride away. Several of Colfax’s motels have been transformed into innovative housing models and new buildings have been developed around them, providing housing options and daily amenities and services, including shops, restaurants, social activities, job training, language services, and health care. East takes pride in its diverse community, where recent immigrants are welcomed, neighbors support one another, and everyone has access to high-quality housing and the services they need to succeed. As a result, fewer people are experiencing homelessness, residents do not worry about displacement due to increasing costs or major life changes, and the community is safe and stable. East’s residential neighborhoods remain the backbone of the community, with a housing stock that respects the historic character and provides a range of housing options, such as a post-WWII cottage for a growing family looking to buy their first home, a carriage house rented by a young professional who works at a nearby hospital, a four-plex in a large, historic home shared by a group of aging friends looking to downsize, or a small apartment building just off Colfax that provides supportive housing. All residents have the option to stay and grow in the area over their lifetime with housing that fits their budget and needs.
**Income-Restricted Housing**
Income-restricted housing is housing that has a covenant that requires rents to be affordable for residents. The requirements are typically tied to specific Area Median Income levels, and many income-restricted units involve a subsidy to help maintain lower rents. There are approximately 800 existing income restricted units in the East Area. See Policy H2 & H3 (Photo: Phoenix on the Fax, Income-Restricted Housing, South Park Hill, Denver)

**Live work**
Live work provides a combination of residential occupancy and commercial activity located within the same unit. In a live-work unit, the commercial activity is a primary use in combination with a primary residential occupancy use, and the commercial occupancy shall not be considered a “Home Occupation” or other accessory use. Live-work units reduce commuting, often provide more affordable office space than stand-alone office space, and can play an important role in the incubation cycle for small businesses. See Policy H4 (Photo: Live work units, Denver)

**Co-housing**
Co-housing is an intentional community of private homes clustered around shared space. Shared spaces and amenities may include community kitchens, dining areas, laundry, parks, and recreational spaces. Co-housing provides opportunities for community-focused living environments that increase connection; for gently boosting density in neighborhoods since amenities such as yard space is often shared; and for giving seniors a viable option to age in their community. See Policy H4 (Photo: Aria Cohousing, Denver)

**Family-friendly housing**
Family-friendly housing is designed to serve households of more than one generation, usually including children. This includes housing units with more than one bedroom and amenities such as daycares and playgrounds that serve a variety of ages. See Policy H4 (Photo: Mariposa, Denver)

**Preservation of Existing Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing**
Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) refers to affordable housing that operates without subsidy or covenant requirements. A majority of affordable housing falls into this category, and NOAH is an important housing option for low-income families or individuals who do not qualify for subsidized housing. See Policy H2 (Photo: NOAH, East Colfax, Denver)

**Cooperative housing**
Cooperative housing is housing that is owned or rented by members who intentionally and equitably share resources, governance, rights, and responsibilities. Cooperative housing can help expand access to housing for all, and increases opportunities for home ownership and wealth building for middle-income earners living in increasingly expensive areas. See Policy H2 & H4 (Photo: Chrysalis Cooperative, Boulder)
## Campus employee/student housing
Multi-unit buildings can be dedicated to housing employees and/or students at hospitals and colleges. The housing is often owned or subsidized by the institution, and is located either on or adjacent to campus. Saint Joseph Hospital in City Park West is currently converting the historic Tammen Hall on its campus to income-restricted senior housing, an example of how large institutions can utilize their capital and property holdings to help address housing affordability challenges. See Policy H3 (Photo: Tammen Hall, St. Joseph Hospital, City Park West, Denver)

## Supportive housing
Supportive housing combines quality, affordable housing with supportive services to help people experiencing homelessness achieve stability. On-site 24/7 staff and services may include clinical case managers, psychiatrists, nurses, clinical supervisors, and therapists. Supportive housing has been shown to effectively reintegrate homeless families and individuals into the community by addressing their basic needs for housing and providing ongoing support. See Policy H4 (Photo: Sanderson Apartments, Denver)

## Senior housing
Senior housing is housing that is suitable for the needs of an aging population, ranging from independent living to 24/7 assisted care. There is a stronger emphasis on safety, accessibility, adaptability, and longevity than many conventional housing choices. See Policy H4 (Photo: City Park West, Denver)

## Missing middle housing
“Missing middle” refers to housing types that fall between high-density and single-unit houses, including duplexes, fourplexes, row homes. They are designed to be compatible with single-unit homes in size and scale, and units can be divided horizontally or vertically. Missing middle also captures units that are attainable to middle-income households. See Policy H4 (Photo: Highlands Garden Village, Denver)

## Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
An ADU is a second unit located on the same zone lot as a primary single unit use. An ADU may be either “attached” (e.g. a basement unit) or “detached” (e.g. a unit over the garage or a smaller house in the backyard). These units provide sensitive ways to integrate affordable living into established neighborhoods; they allow empty nesters to age in place by moving into a smaller unit and renting their home; or they accommodate households that want to live in the neighborhood but cannot afford a larger home. See Policy H4 (Photo: ADU, Denver)
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

When asked what they are concerned about for the future, declining affordability and increased risk of displacement were significant concerns raised by East residents. In targeted outreach to vulnerable and underrepresented populations, community members indicated a general need for more affordable housing for low income residents that is safe, secure, and well-maintained. There was also a desire for more accessible housing for people with disabilities and larger units that would support more multi-generational households with children. Lastly, these participants would welcome opportunities that help long-time renters become homeowners.

“...good housing options for...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Professionals</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Residents</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled Residents</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Responses (941)
Source: 2017 East Kick Off Survey

What are your top 3 Priorities for advancing housing affordability?

1. Encouraging more accessory dwelling units 20%
2. Repurposing hotels for more affordable housing 13%
3. Creating more affordable housing near transit 10%

Percent of Responses (268)
Source: February and March Community Workshops

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WHAT IS IT?

The most common measure of housing 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” and have a housing need. The higher the cost burden, the greater the need. Stretching income on housing leaves residents with less to spend on other needs, such as health care, child care, transportation and groceries. Affordable housing often refers to income-restricted housing that is required by covenant to keep costs affordable, but there are a number of additional strategies that can help to ensure a household’s costs are reasonable and do not put them at risk for displacement.

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 working people in the city. Denver and East’s workforce includes people in critically important occupations that struggle to find affordable housing given annual incomes that are below current medians.

Many occupations pay wages less than Denver’s median income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>$43,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency &amp; medical techs &amp; paramedics</td>
<td>$46,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus drivers</td>
<td>$39,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home health aides</td>
<td>$27,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Denver Area Median Income (for Single-Person Household)</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City and County of Denver 2019; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018 wage estimates
**WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN EAST?**

**SIGNIFICANT HOUSING NEED**

- **4,700 COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS**
  - 1/3 of East’s households pay more than 30% of their income towards housing costs
  - Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

- **1,400 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS NEEDED**
  - East is short 1,400 units renting at less than $500 per month for low-income households in the area

- **240 MOTEL ROOMS**
  - Many motels provide short-term housing for vulnerable residents
  - Source: Fax Partnership and Root Policy Research

**DISPARITIES BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOODS**

- **HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES**
  - South Park Hill: 81% vs. East Colfax: 37%
  - Percent of households; Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

- **SINGLE-UNIT HOMES**
  - South Park Hill: 81% vs. Hale: 40%
  - Percent of units; Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

- **OVERCROWDED UNITS**
  - East Colfax: 12% vs. All other neighborhoods: <2%
  - Percent of units; Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**PROJECTED HOUSEHOLD GROWTH BY 2040**

- **15,900-20,700 (2040)**
  - Approximate number of existing households (2017) and projected households (2040) in the East Area

**INCOME-RESTRICTED UNITS**

- **574 (Units that are required to be affordable to tenants)**
  - South Park Hill: 105, Hale: 127, Montclair: <10, East Colfax: 574
  - Number of units; Source: City and County of Denver 2017
7,300 Households (46% of East’s households) Live in Areas Vulnerable to Displacement in East Colfax and Hale
RECOMMENDATIONS

H1

Stabilize residents at risk of involuntary displacement.

East’s strengthening housing market is becoming increasingly costly for residents. Within the area, 47% of renters and 20% of homeowners are cost-burdened. Across all neighborhoods, with the exception of South Park Hill, there are more cost-burdened renters today than in 2000, with the largest increase in East Colfax. Additionally, the area is currently short 1,400 units renting for the area’s lowest income households (units that rent for $500/month or less). Further, renters who want to buy will have trouble finding an affordable home in the East Area until they earn more than $50,000. 4,569 renter households live in areas of Hale and East Colfax that are considered particularly vulnerable to displacement. Consistent with the goals of Comprehensive Plan 2040, this Plan recommends targeting resources to serve residents, both renters and homeowners, who are at risk of involuntary displacement. (Source: City and County of Denver, U.S. Census, and Root Policy Research)

A. Connect residents with programs to help them stay in their homes, including temporary rental and utility assistance, property tax rebates, homeowner preservation initiatives, ownership programs, eviction legal defense, financial empowerment training, and energy and accessibility assistance.

B. Build community capacity and leadership to ensure long-term, equitable engagement in areas vulnerable to displacement, such as through leadership courses and training.

C. Support citywide efforts to explore a preference policy that would give preference in income-restricted units to existing residents that have been or are at risk of being displaced.

D. Integrate resources and strategies to mitigate involuntary displacement of residents with the implementation of major City investments and projects, including regulatory changes, legislative rezonings, and transportation infrastructure improvements. Strategies include incentives or requirements for affordable housing and targeted engagement to connect vulnerable residents with resources.

E. Work with partners to implement a directed-housing support program to increase utilization of public housing programs (including City, State and nonprofit programs), increase home-ownership and implementation of housing land trust programs

F. Conduct outreach to understand the needs of older adults and explore additional assistance options to mitigate their involuntary displacement.

1. A reverse mortgage program administered through a local community development financial institution, coupled with home improvement grants for seniors aging in place who need equity to manage expenses, is an example of a program to evaluate for local interest.

G. Provide targeted marketing and other assistance to temporary motel residents to help them find more permanent and supportive housing with integrated services, consistent with Fair Housing regulations.

H2

Preserve existing affordability and housing quality.

East has 808 existing subsidized units among its neighborhoods, with 71% of these located in the East Colfax neighborhood. In total, subsidized units in East account for just 3.7% of the 21,613 units in the City of Denver. While the area is already short 1,400 units renting for $500/month or less for the area’s lowest income households, this number is at risk of increasing if non-subsidized rentals that are currently naturally-affordable aren’t preserved. (Source: City and County of Denver, U.S. Census, and Root Policy Research)

A. Extend affordability covenants for existing income-restricted properties through strategies such as extending notice requirements, working with potential purchasers to extend affordability commitments, and enhancing support for tenants.

B. Preserve the affordability of naturally occurring affordable housing, particularly in areas vulnerable to displacement and close to transit, through new tools such as:

1. An incentive program for small landlords that provides rehabilitation of small multi-unit properties and single unit homes in exchange for affordability commitments.

2. Partnering with existing cooperatives to assist tenants in aging, small multi-unit developments acquire and transform the units into cooperative housing (Encouraging cooperatives also requires reducing barriers to shared living. See Policy H4.F).

C. Connect residents and building owners with programs that assist with upgrades to older homes to improve accessibility and energy efficiency.
Create new affordable housing with access to transit and amenities.

While the prior two policies focus on stabilizing residents and preserving affordability, there is also a need to create new affordable housing in the area, as demonstrated by the significant shortage in units available for low-income households. At the East community workshops, participants’ #3 priority for advancing housing affordability was to encourage more affordable apartment buildings near transit. In accordance with Blueprint Denver and Housing an Inclusive Denver, a majority of new affordable housing should be located near transit corridors, to give residents convenient access to jobs, education, services, and amenities.

A. Support acquisition of land by the City and/or its partners, such as Denver Housing Authority (DHA) and land trust entities, for future development of affordable housing, particularly in Corridors, Centers, as well as High, High-Medium and Low-Medium Residential Areas.

B. Ensure that the value of increased development potential is shared with the community through the provision of affordable housing.
   
   POLICY UNDER DISCUSSION (SEE SURVEY QUESTIONS)

C. Promote the use of financial tools, including but not limited to Low Income Housing Tax Credits, the Affordable Housing Fund, and Tax Increment Financing, to help fund affordable housing development.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**H4**  
Expand diversity of housing types and affordability to support households of different sizes, ages, and incomes in all neighborhoods.

Consistent with Blueprint Denver, the East Area Plan aims to provide housing choice throughout East by diversifying housing options. The area’s housing types should reflect the diverse population that lives here, and should include quality options for vulnerable populations, aging in place, non-traditional living arrangements, and large and multi-generational families in all neighborhoods. The neighborhood chapters of the area plan will provide existing conditions and recommendations for individual neighborhoods.

When East community members were asked about housing options in the area, a majority felt that the East neighborhoods have good options for families and young professionals, but not for seniors, low-income residents, and residents with disabilities, illustrating the need to expand diversity of housing types. When asked for big ideas to improve the East Area, one of the most frequent responses was to rehab Colfax’s motels into higher-quality affordable housing. Right now, these motels serve as a form of transitional housing. Most are clustered in the East Colfax neighborhood. While difficult to determine the number of individuals living in motels, it is estimated that 240 units are operating as transitional housing (Source: Fax Partnership and Root Policy Research).

A. Develop more permanent and supportive housing, combining low-barrier affordable housing, health care, and other supportive services to help create stability for vulnerable residents.

B. Encourage the repurposing or redevelopment of motels along Colfax Avenue into permanent, supportive, or transitional housing.

C. Encourage the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in residential areas (See Blueprint Denver Policies LU-H 04 and LU-H 05). In coordination with citywide efforts to implement this policy, considerations for East include:

1. Incorporating strategies to advance affordability and wealth-building for low- and moderate-income homeowners, such as through technical assistance and reducing barriers in permitting and construction. An example of this is a program that provides interested homeowners orientation site visits and basic assessments.

2. Exploring an adaptation of the WDSF+ ADU pilot program (see sidebar) that provides technical assistance and financial incentives to help existing homeowners build ADUs. An East ADU pilot program should offer forgivable loans or grants in exchange for a long-term affordability commitment, pre-approved prototype designs (with universal design features), and streamlined access to lenders and builders. Non-profit partnerships should be leveraged in creation and administration of the program.

3. Limitations or special requirements for flood-prone areas


5. Allowing ADUs as accessory to more than only single-unit homes.

6. Until a citywide ADU approach is complete, it may be appropriate to consider a neighborhood-wide rezoning that is consistent with the strategies in this Policy H4.C.

**STRATEGIES**

A. **Develop more permanent and supportive housing**, combining low-barrier affordable housing, health care, and other supportive services to help create stability for vulnerable residents.

B. **Encourage the repurposing or redevelopment of motels along Colfax Avenue into permanent, supportive, or transitional housing.**

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6. **Until a citywide ADU approach is complete, it may be appropriate to consider a neighborhood-wide rezoning that is consistent with the strategies in this Policy H4.C.**

**BACKGROUND**

**WDSF+ ADU Handbook**

A Guide to Detached ADU & Tandem House Development

**Case Study:**

West Denver Single Family Plus (WDSF+) ADU Pilot Program

In late 2018, the West Denver Renaissance Collaborative, in partnership with the City, launched a forgivable loan pilot program to finance ADUs in nine west Denver neighborhoods. The program provides moderate and low-income qualified homeowners (those earning up to 120% of the area median income) with development, financing, and construction resources to develop a detached ADU. Additionally, some homeowners may be eligible for a forgivable loan of up to $25,000 to cover costs of building an ADU. ADUs created through the program are designated as affordable housing for 25 years, to be occupied or rented at a rate no higher than the 80% area median income maximum rent. As part of the program, Denver Community Planning and Development is working to streamline permitting for prototype ADU designs offered by WDRC. Habitat for Humanity has also been brought on board to build an estimated 40 homes during the two-year pilot period.

Photo Source: West Denver Renaissance Collaborative
Expand diversity of housing types and affordability to support households of different sizes, ages, and incomes in all neighborhoods. (cont. from prior page)

D. Integrate missing middle housing types into low and low medium residential areas, with a focus on discouraging demolition and encouraging affordability (See Blueprint Denver Policy LU-H 02).

POLICY UNDER DISCUSSION (SEE SURVEY QUESTIONS)

E. Encourage more family-friendly development, including larger unit sizes and family-supportive amenities (see Blueprint Denver Policy LU-H 07).

F. Expand housing options for non-traditional households, aging-in-place, co-housing, cooperatives, and group living.

1. Support citywide efforts to revise city regulations to respond to the demands of Denver’s unique and modern housing needs (see Blueprint Denver Policy LU-H 01).

2. Make it easier for households to age within their neighborhoods through models such as senior/assisted living, home-sharing, and co-housing (See Sunshine Home Care case study in side bar).

3. In addition to reducing zoning barriers, explore tools to encourage more cooperative living where residents can reduce costs through shared living or ownership.

4. Encourage sub-let of extra rooms in large homes, by communicating opportunities through neighborhood organizations.

G. Increase access to homeownership for low- and moderate-income renters by implementing citywide programs and working with partners to create new pilot programs.

1. Encourage the creation of ownership options that are affordable to moderate-income residents amongst the diverse range of housing types being promoted in strategies C-F above.

2. Encourage community land trusts.

3. Support existing and explore new programs intended to help make homeownership more attainable for residents of income-restricted rental housing.

4. Help residents prepare to become homeowners by offering targeted homebuyer counseling courses that integrate financial coaching and education with down payment assistance.

H. Partner with area hospitals, Denver Public Schools, and other major employers to create and/or fund affordable workforce housing.

I. Expand live-work opportunities in a manner that is compatible with surrounding neighborhood character to reduce housing costs for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Case Study:
Sunshine Home Share Colorado

Sunshine Home Care Colorado is a non-profit organization that was established in 2015 with the mission of promoting aging in place through a safe, care-managed, home-sharing model. It offers the dual benefit of generating income, assistance, and companionship for older adults (55 and over), while accessing untapped affordable housing for home seekers. Sunshine, staffed by geriatric care managers, provides an in-depth screen and matching program that includes an application, reference check, interview, trial period, and formalized Match Agreement.

Photo Source: Sunshine Home Share
SOCIAL SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS

H5

Improve the existing social service system through collaboration, co-location and coordination between providers, and between providers and city agencies.

There are currently hundreds of providers and volunteers working across the city to address the issue of homelessness. Ensuring the strength and resiliency of the system means building stronger partnerships between existing services providers across the board, and doing so can help reduce duplication, inefficiency, and increase accountability to meet shared goals.

A. Identify existing homelessness prevention and rapid-rehousing resources in the community and bring in additional partners for more local collaboration.
B. Identify existing drug and alcohol rehabilitation resources and promote collaboration.
C. Support workforce training and education programs that connect workers to employers.
D. Explore models that promote co-location of services (i.e. Dahlia campus for mental health and well-being and the Rose Andom Center).

H6

Promote innovative service delivery models, and expand pool of service provider partners — to address gaps in existing social service system.

Homelessness is a multi-faceted issue requiring many-sided solutions. Coordinated, efficient, and creative work across system care will be required in order to effectively meet the needs of those at-risk-of and who are experiencing homelessness. The strategies below aim to encourage innovative solutions and models that integrate homeless service provisions into other mainstream services to address existing gaps in the system.

A. Conduct gap analysis with homeless service partners, school and early childhood partners, and human services partners.
B. Create models to address gaps in services such as navigation centers, hygiene centers, rest, and resource centers, etc. (collectively referred to as Community Resource Centers).
C. Increase funding for substance treatment services (including training & implementation of cross-sector teams to address needs of people experiencing homelessness, school children, immigrants or refugees, or other special populations).
D. Increase funding for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing resources in the community.
E. Invest in new partnerships for service provision, including mini-grants to fund innovative work from local community partners.

Case Study: Rose Andom Center

The Rose Andom Center is a place for domestic violence victims to find the safety, support, and services needed to rebuild their lives by facilitating access to services and staff of community organizations and city agencies in a single, safe location.
RECOMMENDATIONS

H7

Build access to, awareness of, and support for social services for residents in East.

Successfully addressing the issue of homelessness requires the commitment and sustained advocacy of all partners involved, from city agencies, to service providers and especially local communities. The strategies below aim to strengthen the social service system by proactively engaging residents around the issues related to homelessness to increase knowledge of available resources.

A. Encourage stronger relationships between service providers and their neighbors through strategies such as:

1. Assisting service providers with the creation of “good neighbor agreements” if desired.
   a. Explore the development of a “toolkit” to engage and build support within the community.
   b. Staff a dedicated community organizer and collaborate with existing community organizers to serve as liaisons between the broader community and service providers.

2. Encouraging collaboration on events and volunteer opportunities between service providers and neighborhood organizations.

B. Integrate supportive services with housing and connect private landlords to existing social services in their neighborhood.

H8

Expand a system of services and community partnerships with local and citywide organizations and businesses to help address barriers specific to the immigrant and refugee community in East Colfax, including workforce development, vocational training and skills recertification, English language education services, citizenship and naturalization services.

The immigrant and refugee communities face specific challenges in accessing the necessary social services needed to thrive. These may include legal or cultural hurdles with needs ranging from education, to housing, to employment. The strategies below aim to continue the great work of existing providers, while promoting and encouraging innovative solution to existing and emerging needs.

A. Conduct gap analysis of immigrant and refugee services and needs within the East Colfax community.

B. Strengthen support for existing immigrant and refugee service providers.

C. Build, support and encourage stronger relationships between immigrant and refugee service providers and affordable housing providers (both income-restricted properties and managers of NOAHs).

D. Continue supporting models that promote the co-location of services where the immigrant and refugee community live, work and play.

Case Study:
Denver Public Library Peer Navigators

Administered by the Denver Human Services and the Colorado Mental Wellness Network, this “peer navigators” program allows library customers experiencing poverty and homelessness to navigate the social service system in Denver through one-on-one and peer-led discussion groups. Connections to services include resources such as housing, mental health, and/or substance abuse services.
WHAT’S THE VISION FOR EAST’S LOCAL ECONOMY?

ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE AND VIBRANT

In 2040, the entire community within the East area benefits from and supports its strong, self-sustaining economy. People enjoy spending time on Colfax Avenue, Colorado Boulevard, and in the other neighborhood mixed-use destinations which are full of locally-owned, multicultural businesses that showcase the area’s diverse community and provide residents convenient places to shop for their daily needs or go for an evening of dinner and entertainment. Many employees of the businesses also live in the area and some have gone on to open and grow their own businesses through training, support services, and partnerships with local institutions like Johnson and Wales University. The mix of old and new buildings along East’s mixed-use corridors has allowed long-standing small businesses to remain alongside new businesses that have been drawn to the area. A new multi-cultural community center brings neighbors from different walks of life together, provides a range of services, and helps new arrivals integrate into the community. Every resident has access to quality education at all levels, from early childhood to adult classes and training, ensuring a strong foundation for children and access for adults to quality jobs in the area, in downtown Denver, and in Aurora, and building community wealth so everyone has equal opportunity to prosper in the East area.
ECONOMY OPPORTUNITIES

Community-serving retail
Retail and services that serve the day-to-day needs of nearby residents and workers, including everything from grocery stores and restaurants, to personal care businesses such as salons, and professional services such as banks. The community has prioritized preserving and enhancing community-serving, locally-owned retail throughout the planning process — something that is reflected in the vision and recommendations in the Economy section. See Policy E3. (Photo: Ace, Montclair, Denver)

Co-working
The use of an office or other working environment by people who are self-employed or working for different employers, typically so as to share equipment, ideas, and knowledge. The community has established a vision where innovative businesses have resources and flexibility to start and grow in East. More and more, co-working spaces provide an important jumping off point for startups and entrepreneurs. See Policy E6. (Photo: co-work space, Denver)

Flex/innovation space
Manufacturing places that serve the purpose of craft/maker space, technology, design and manufacturing. Flex and innovation spaces have multiple benefits — they support creative industries, provide opportunities for economic development, and take the burden off retail by providing other ways to activate streets and spaces. See Policy E6. (Photo: Art Gym, Montclair, Denver)

Community resource center
A diverse range of service centers for people experiencing homelessness, ranging from hygiene centers that provide a place to use the restroom, shower, or do laundry, to navigation centers that offer case management, housing navigation, health services, and more. Nationally, these types of centers have been proven to help their guests end their experience of homelessness. See Policy H5. (Photo: Division Circle Navigation Center, San Francisco)

Small business incubator/support center
Organizations that offer small businesses and entrepreneurs shared work space, mentoring, business development training, funding support, and shared equipment. These centers often focus on a specific type of industry or people with similar cultural backgrounds. Mi Casa Resource Center is a successful example in West Denver that primarily serves people of color, low-income, and females. In 2018, over $60 million in revenue was generated by businesses served by the Center. See Policy E4. (Photo: Mi Casa Resource Center, Denver)

Community learning center
Non-profit organizations that offer free services to help families increase their financial stability and academic success. Services and classes often include literacy classes, parenting workshops, computer skills training, financial coaching, along with others. These centers are directly focused on helping East achieve its vision of being an area where everyone can receive an excellent education, from daycare and early childhood education to adult education and job training. See Policy E7. (Photo: Denver Public Schools, Family and Community Engagement Center)

International District
A formalized, bounded area that has a rich collection of immigrant- and refugee owned businesses and residents, and is intentional about celebrating and enhancing its diversity of people, businesses, food, and events. As real estate pressures move further east along Colfax, the community has made it clear it wants to protect and enhance its concentration of Latin American and Ethiopian businesses that are critical to the East Colfax neighborhood’s identity. See Policy E4. (Photo: International businesses, East Colfax)
COMMUNITY-SERVING RETAIL

WHAT IS IT?

A strong retail environment is diverse and unique and an essential component of a complete neighborhood. It will serve a variety of people, provide neighborhood residents with convenient access to daily goods and services, and attract people from near and far who are seeking unique shopping, dining, or entertaining experiences. As used below, the term "retail" includes not just stores, but also restaurants and bars, personal care businesses such as salons and tattoo shops, and professional services such as banks and copy shops.

While retail nationally is being disrupted and challenged by e-commerce, the majority of retail sales still occur in a physical store and retailers are adapting with success, especially in urban environments such as the East Area. Small, independently owned retail that offers a unique experience and an emotional connection with the consumer has proven successful. However, as demand for urban environments increases, real estate prices threaten to displace the small independent retail that initially made these places attractive to so many.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN EAST?

East’s retail environment is predominately locally owned and offers a wide variety of goods and services. The centerpiece of the East Area’s retail environment is the Colfax Corridor. The East Area includes anchors – such as King Soopers, Safeway, Marczyk’s Fine Foods, City Floral Garden Center, Denver True Value, and Ace on the Fax – that fulfill critical daily or weekly needs of area residents.

Other areas of retail include the Mayfair Town Center, Colorado Boulevard (including the 9CO development that was under construction at the time of this planning process), and a variety of small, neighborhood retail nodes, such as those at Oneida and 23rd, and Syracuse and 11th.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**E1**

**Ensure the permitting process is customer-friendly and provides support for existing and new small businesses in the area.**

Small business and commercial property owners in East identified challenges they face when trying to open and grow their business or improve their property. The time it takes to work through code and permitting processes is lengthy and can quickly become costly. Some of these processes, such as change-of-use, are complicated. Other processes and requirements, such as sign regulations, are overly restrictive.

A. Ease change of use requirements for small businesses and property owners to contain the costs of public realm improvements to be more proportional to private investment, and to help incentivize the preservation of existing buildings. (See Land Use recommendations for additional detail.)

B. Revise signage requirements for businesses, particularly those along Colfax to ensure businesses have the ability to advertise to all forms of passing traffic. Areas of focus should be allowing certain forms of blade signage, neon signage that has been instrumental to the character of east Colfax, and energy efficient options. (See Land Use recommendations for additional detail.)

C. Continually improve the city’s online Toolkit for Startups and Small Businesses based on user feedback from small businesses.

D. Continue to expand the number of applications available for submittal and review online to reduce trips to the City permitting counter and expedite the process.

E. Assess the feasibility of application fee waivers or deferrals to support new businesses and other small business owners.

F. Develop a handbook for adaptive reuse projects to promote predictability and reduce variations in case-by-case decisions.

*See the Land Use section for other recommendations that impact the regulatory process (i.e., parking minimum reliefs, density bonuses, other code changes).*

**E2**

**Work in tandem with the Colfax-Mayfair BID, the Fax Partnership, and other relevant organizations to provide technical assistance to existing small independent businesses to help them succeed and prevent involuntary displacement.**

In East, real estate trends point to a healthy retail environment. Retail vacancy rates have been dropping steadily since 2006 and currently sit at 4.5%. Lease rates have been rising since 2011 and at last measure were nearly identical to citywide averages. While this creates a vibrant retail environment for customers and property owners, it also creates a larger risk of displacement for independent businesses that operate with small profit margins.

A. Work with the Colfax-Mayfair BID, the Fax Partnership, and other relevant organizations to help attract customers to individual businesses, and to help locally-owned businesses locate and remain in the districts and provide living wages and benefits to staff such as transit passes.

B. Ensure all small business technical assistance is provided for English-as-a-second-language business owners.

C. Offer matchmaking services to connect small independent businesses with landlords. Provide relocation assistance to displaced small businesses to help them remain as close to their prior location as possible.

D. Develop and maintain lists of pre-qualified tenant leads that can be provided to property owners and leasing professionals as alternatives to large national brands, while also making a case to developers and landlords for a broader and more strategic approach to retail tenanting.

E. Encourage the BID, Partnership, and other relevant organizations to provide technical assistance with succession or transition planning, lease negotiations, and other technical challenges faced by small business owners.

F. Offer these services at a convenient location within the area, such as the new Community Center (see Quality of Life recommendations).
RECOMMENDATIONS

E3

Broaden the range of financial incentives for small independent businesses and landlords to strengthen the area’s tenant mix and help prevent displacement.

East’s local independent retailers are highly valued by neighborhood residents, and financial stability is key to helping small businesses thrive. With rapidly changing real estate conditions, sometimes technical and regulatory assistance is not enough to prevent displacement. Financial incentives are suggested to help strengthen businesses and the ability of property owners to accommodate them.

A. Assist small businesses in buying their building or condo space, by utilizing programs such as the Small Business Administration’s 504 Loan Program and mobilizing community development organizations (such as Community Development Corporations (CDCs)) to acquire commercial property.

B. Offer new forms of financial support for upgrading or expanding retail space, storefront improvements, business signage upgrades, and unexpected repairs and building rehab. Support can come in varied forms including fee waivers or deferral, low-interest loans, or small grants.

C. Offer financial incentives to landlords that are willing to sign long-term leases with small businesses. (See profile of San Francisco’s Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund.)

D. Incentivize new projects that offer smaller retail spaces and/or provide below-market commercial space with incentives such as density bonuses, low-interest financing, and direct subsidies.

Case Study:
San Francisco’s Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund

In San Francisco, where intense development pressures threaten the livelihoods of longtime small businesses and “community touchstones” across the fabric of the city, residents in 2015 approved Proposition J authorizing the creation of a “Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund”, which, established by the City in 2016, includes rent subsidies of $4.50 per sq. ft. (capped at $22,500 per year) as an incentive to landlords willing to sign leases of ten years or more with tenants already on its Legacy Business Registry. To qualify for the Registry, a business must have been in operation for at least 30 years (20 years if in immediate danger of displacement), contribute to the history or identity of its neighborhood and commit to maintaining the physical features or traditions which define it. In the first year, the Fund awarded $34,000 in such Rent Stabilization Grants to property owners for this purpose.

Photo Source: Roxie Theater

Example of community-serving retail on Ivanhoe Street in South Park Hill
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**E4**

*Support and develop new initiatives and community-minded ownership models that have a goal of maintaining the East Area’s variety of local and culturally-significant businesses.***

Colfax, as the central retail corridor, features a number of ethnic-oriented businesses in the East Area. The East Colfax neighborhood has the strongest collection of these businesses – a majority of which are Latin American and Ethiopian/Eritrean – and the community values their continued presence highly.

For these businesses and others, community-minded ownership models can offer multiple benefits. They can help preserve and retain small independent businesses by insulating these businesses from rising rents and other market forces that may create displacement. They build upon the sense of ownership that East Area residents feel for their neighboring local businesses. Lastly, community-minded ownership could also help in the Colfax corridor’s evolution from an old highway to a neighborhood-serving main street.

**A.** Create an International District along East Colfax, east of Quebec Street, that would celebrate the area’s diversity of people, businesses, food, and events. Elements of the International District should include the following:
1. Recruit an International District Steering Committee comprised of property and business owners, civic and cultural organizations, the East Colfax RNO and nearby residents, and other partners including the Fax Partnership. The Steering Committee will help to design and implement the International District concept.
2. Develop a marketing and branding strategy for the District, including a wayfinding and signage package to reinforce the District’s identity.
3. Evaluate regulatory changes that could help welcome and accommodate businesses that serve the diverse cultures of East Colfax.
4. Evaluate how key neighborhood amenities, i.e. the new Community Center (see Quality of Life recommendations) or fresh food market, fit into the District concept.
5. Encourage business and property ownership opportunities for existing local businesses to prevent displacement.

**B.** Help local community groups to assume ownership of small businesses through a variety of ownership models that could include cooperatives, CDCs, and innovative crowdsourcing models. *(See profile of United Kingdom’s More Than A Pub program.)*

**C.** Build the capacity of the Colfax-Mayfair BID, the Fax Partnership, and other relevant organizations through techniques such as technical assistance, direct funding, and organizational growth, including encouraging the Fax Partnership to evolve into a multifaceted Community Development Corporation (CDC).

**D.** Provide support for existing and/or new BIDs, CDCs, Community Land Trusts, and/or commercial real estate investment cooperatives purchasing buildings or master-leasing ground floors as below-market space for small businesses or non-profits.

**E.** Work with property owners, the Colfax-Mayfair BID, the Fax Partnership, and other relevant organizations to develop small business incubators and/or accelerators to test market new neighborhood serving retail and services. Successful incubator tenants should then be encouraged to move to permanent storefront locations within East with matchmaking assistance from the Colfax-Mayfair BID and Fax Partnership. Explore incorporating space for this in the new Community Center (see Quality of Life recommendations).

**F.** Provide cultural competency training for city staff for improved service provision to the culturally diverse business population.

**Case Study:**

**United Kingdom’s “More Than A Pub” Program**

In the United Kingdom, the traditional pub has long served as the “Third Place” for small rural towns, large inner city neighborhoods and everywhere in between. For a variety of reasons, however, their numbers have been dwindling in recent decades. With the “More Than A Pub” program that it launched in 2016, the central government, under the auspices of its “Community Pubs Minister”, offers various forms of financial and technical assistance – grants and loans as well as workshops, peer site-visits and advice phone lines -- to community organizations that want to assume ownership of these important local institutions and keep them in business. In just its first year, the initiative played a role in the preservation of fifty pubs.

*Photo Source: Plunkett Foundation*
RECOMMENDATIONS

**E5**

Create a multi-faceted BRT construction mitigation program for small businesses along the Colfax corridor to help them thrive during the period of construction.

While the BRT will create an improved Colfax corridor, it will require significant construction that will potentially disrupt businesses near future stops. A range of strategies are recommended to help mitigate this disruption and ensure businesses have an opportunity to thrive once BRT is complete.

**STRATEGIES**

A. For the BRT construction period, dedicate a City staff position that assists small business owners within the BRT impact area to carry out the mitigation initiatives listed as strategies B-H below.

B. Expand and adapt the Business Impact Opportunity (BIO) Fund to the Colfax corridor.
   1. Offer grants to small businesses to make up portions of a documented revenue gap experienced during construction months. (See profile of Los Angeles's Business Interruption Fund.)
   2. Make funds available for extra marketing and special events during periods of construction.
   3. Identify funding sources to increase the budget for the fund, including the general fund, bond funds, and federal resources, such as FTA, CDBG, and EDA grants.

C. Encourage station-by-station construction patterns that minimize the disruption to businesses around individual BRT station areas. Coordinate construction scheduling to account for seasonality, time of day, loading/unloading, and other concerns, acknowledging that this may differ by station area depending on the makeup of businesses.

D. Create temporary wayfinding and signage on 13th, 14th, and 17th Avenues to account for lack of visibility and connection along Colfax during construction.

E. Evaluate and implement innovative ways to maintain pedestrian connectivity and access (across Colfax and crossing streets) during road closures.

F. Encourage BRT construction contractors to hire local subcontractors, use local services from within the East Area during the planning and construction periods, and encourage construction employees to patronize Colfax businesses.

G. Partner with Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) in the area to offer transit passes for corridor employees (Eco-Passes) to help mitigate BRT construction impacts and free up parking spaces for customers. (TMA details provided in the following Policy.)

H. Ensure the public art projects required by the Denver Public Art program enhance the pedestrian environment and contribute to the unique character of Colfax.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Help businesses prepare for a future BRT multimodal retail environment that is more neighborhood oriented and pedestrian friendly.

With the introduction of BRT, the Colfax corridor will evolve from an auto-oriented thoroughfare into a neighborhood-serving, multimodal main street. Businesses prepared for this improvement will reap the benefits of a more appealing retail environment and an expanded customer base.

A. Evaluate the best option for the Colfax corridor to join an existing regional Transportation Management Association (TMA) to encourage a variety of transportation modes in the East Area. The TMA will help implement strategies B-G below. (See Mobility Policy recommendations for additional detail.)

B. Work with the Colfax-Mayfair BID, Fax Partnership, and TMAs to offer Transportation Demand Management (TDM) services and training that help businesses and could include:
   1. Online ordering and delivery services
   2. Online sales via a business website
   3. Large-item delivery services, for goods such as home décor and gardening supplies

C. Work with the Colfax-Mayfair BID, Fax Partnership, neighborhoods, and TMAs to find solutions for parking and loading challenges.
   1. Encourage shared parking arrangements for neighboring businesses. Greatest opportunities may exist for businesses with different hours and ones with large existing lots such as grocery stores.
   2. Ensure residential parking permit programs do not negatively impact neighborhood businesses.
   3. Formally allow use of alleys for business loading/unloading.

D. Ensure pedestrian safety enhancements are incorporated into BRT implementation. Priority improvements should include:
   1. Enhanced crosswalks at lighted intersections
   2. Pedestrian crossings at median gaps
   3. Pedestrian-scale lighting
   4. Improved sidewalks, landscaping, and street furniture
   5. Street trees, where appropriate

E. Conduct outreach to large employers to promote employee carpool, rideshare, and teleworking programs.

F. Offer transit passes for corridor employees (Eco-Passes) to help kickstart BRT, support citywide TDM goals, and free up parking spaces for customers.

G. Provide technical assistance for small independent businesses to attract more customers from the surrounding neighborhoods through marketing and other tools.

4. Work with businesses to schedule merchandise deliveries during off-peak hours.

Case Study: Los Angeles Metro’s Business Interruption Fund

Since 2014, LA Metro – the region’s transportation authority – has operated a Business Interruption Fund (BIF) that provides financial assistance to small “mom and pop” businesses located along transit rail corridors that are impacted by major construction. Grants are offered to cover certain fixed operating expenses. Metro has designated $10 million annually to be used for implementation of the BIF. Qualifying small businesses are eligible to receive a grant of up to $50,000 annually based on demonstrated revenue loss. The BIF grant can be used to cover fixed operating expenses such as rent/mortgage, utilities, insurance, and payroll. LA Metro operates the BIF in collaboration with a local Small Business Development Center (SBDC). In total, the BIF has awarded more than $19 million to 340 businesses.
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Participants in workshops and surveys supported the jobs and education recommendations:

63% of participants support partnering with the healthcare sector to drive economic development in the area.

76% of participants support improving the environment for small professional offices in the area.

WHAT IS IT?
Access to jobs and education is key to achieving Blueprint Denver's vision for a more inclusive city where all residents have equitable access to a quality education, jobs and services, they are not vulnerable to displacement, and have more types of job opportunities.

Education and training are critical to ensure the East area can accommodate forecasted jobs growth and residents have access to higher wage jobs. Educating the future workforce by supporting neighborhood Denver Public Schools (DPS) and providing job training for growing sectors in partnership with DPS, the local medical establishments, and others will help ensure that area residents benefit from future jobs.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN EAST?

10,000 TOTAL JOBS

Rose Medical Center is currently the major employment center in the area, followed by the Mayfair Town Center, and Johnson and Wales University. The 9th and Colorado redevelopment will bring future residents and employees to the area.

890 SMALL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES BUSINESSES

Many professional offices are integrated into residential areas throughout East.

PROJECTED GROWTH IN TOP 2 EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Forecasted point to an additional 3,000 jobs in East by 2040. The largest current employment sectors (healthcare are professional services) will see a significant portion of that growth.

Source: Infogroup, Emsi, City of Denver, Arland
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**E7**

Bolster the healthcare and wellness sector as the foundation for economic growth in the East Area.

The area around the Rose Medical Center and National Jewish is slated for growth. The major medical facilities within the area have a variety of concerns relating to future development and facilities, the availability of nearby services, the need for training, and affordable housing for their workforce. While the location of the medical facilities in an existing mixed use urban neighborhood is an asset, managing the relationship between the neighborhoods and the hospitals should be an ongoing effort.

A. Convene a working group of National Jewish Health, Rose Medical Center, the Uptown district facilities, Denver Health, and appropriate City staff.
   1. Explore a new staff position, potentially co-funded with the hospitals, to convene and lead the working group, with the goal of addressing issues identified in Strategy B below.

B. Through the working group, address common issues, such as:
   1. Future growth and facility needs, and potential locations for medical offices and service providers.
   2. Partnering with nonprofit housing providers and others to develop workforce housing for staff.
   3. Access to an appropriate labor force and workforce training programs at Denver Public Schools, University of Colorado Denver, the City of Denver, and other resources.
   4. Access to and provision of area commercial services.
   5. Connectivity to area amenities including transit, parks, and services.
   6. Creation of gateways for the district.
   7. Measures that can be undertaken in order to promote healthy eating and active living among employees and surrounding neighborhoods.

C. Work with the VA and Rose Medical Center on long-term plans for the VA hospital site at 9th Ave. and Clermont St.

D. Work with National Jewish Health on its long-term plans for its remaining undeveloped properties in and adjacent to the East Area (on both sides of Colorado Boulevard) to ensure development integrates well with the community and advances the vision for the area.

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**HOSPITALS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Hospitals have many assets such as financial resources, land, and expertise, that make them valuable in community development efforts. Nationally, hospitals are gradually getting more involved in a range of community development strategies, including efforts to advance healthy and affordable housing options. Efforts include locating health clinics in public housing, building and operating supportive housing, designing programs that provide in-home care and treatment, amongst others. A majority of efforts to date have focused on financing affordable and workforce housing development.

According to research conducted by the Urban Institute, the top 5 investment strategies used by hospitals that have invested in affordable housing development are:

1. **Utilize real estate holdings** to support creation of affordable housing
2. **Allocate funds to financial intermediaries**, including Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and other investment managers, that aggregate and deploy funds to multiple affordable housing projects
3. **Make direct equity investments** in affordable housing development projects
4. **Designate a portion of investable reserves** for affordable housing development
5. **Provide secured or unsecured direct loans** to affordable housing developers

Sources: Research to Action Lab, Urban Institute; Center for Community Investment; Change Lab Solutions
Strengthen the professional services market by promoting the development of small office space.

Future development on Colfax will likely be unable to support retail on the street level on every parcel, but accommodating small professional offices at the ground floor levels (as well as in the more common, upper levels) can help activate the street. These businesses bring in new employees that help keep the corridor active during the workday and support neighborhood retail and restaurants.

There has been little recent office development in the East Area. As office space in neighborhoods like RiNo and Cherry Creek is built out, and as BRT helps move residents and employees more easily through the Colfax corridor, office space development accommodating a range of professional services (such as law firms or architectural offices) becomes a growing opportunity.

A. Coordinate with the Colfax-Mayfair BID and Fax Partnership on work plans to provide services that help property owners to better leverage existing real estate along Colfax for small professional services.

1. Provide matchmaking services between displaced or growing small businesses, property owners and landlords.
2. With area developers, identify and market appropriate buildings as locations for small professional services. Inventory available office spaces and identify missing space types.
3. Reach out to co-working space managers/developers to identify and develop co-working spaces to help incubate small businesses and provide a gathering space for entrepreneurs.
4. Include non-profit service providers as potential beneficiaries of these efforts and ensure programs take their specific needs into account.

B. Where retail or restaurants might be difficult to accommodate and/or in areas outside of anticipated retail nodes near BRT stations, encourage and allow ground floor activation (beyond retail and restaurant uses) with office uses, services, or industrial/flex spaces.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**JOBS AND EDUCATION**

**E9**

**POLICY**

**STRATEGIES**

**BACKGROUND**

**Partner with Denver Public Schools and major area employers/projects in connecting East Area residents to job opportunities.**

There are areas of poverty in the East Area, such as the East Colfax neighborhood, which has a poverty rate of 42% and an unemployment rate (11.6%) twice the City average. Denver’s growth has resulted in low unemployment (less than 5% in 2019) and a general labor shortage, illustrating the disconnect between area residents and high-quality jobs in the city. The health care field – the largest sector in the East Area – has been hit particularly hard by the labor shortage and its growing need for workers.

A. Through the medical facilities working group (discussed in Policy E1), identify training needs and potential partnerships with DPS and other higher education institutions such as Johnson and Wales University to help provide the training.
   1. Identify potential facilities to house the training, including any underused DPS facilities in the area or the new Community Center (see Quality of Life recommendations).
   2. Develop public-private partnerships for training with local non-profits.

B. Work with DPS in identifying US Department of Education, foundation, and other grant opportunities to help identify other areas of support needed by neighborhood schools in order to support a student throughout his/her educational path.

C. Connect area job seekers to BRT construction opportunities (See Policy E5).

**E10**

**Encourage more child care offerings in the East Colfax neighborhood.**

The East Colfax neighborhood has a shortage of places for children at licensed child care centers, with 4.13 children under the age of 5 living in the neighborhood for each child care place. This is above the average for the East area and the city as a whole. A lack of child care places in the neighborhood forces parents to travel to take their children to child care centers outside the neighborhood or rely on unlicensed child care.

A. Consider providing space in the new Community Center (see Quality of Life recommendations) for a child care center.

B. Encourage partnerships between community organizations and institutions, such as Johnson and Wales University, to provide more child care centers.

C. Examine city regulatory requirements to determine if there are barriers discouraging the creation of more child care places in East Colfax and remove unnecessary barriers.

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Rose Medical Center is the largest employer in the area.

Hospitals are currently challenged by labor shortages and the need for more job training.