EAST AREA PLAN
DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS: QUALITY OF LIFE
OCTOBER 2019
WHAT’S THE COMMUNITY’S VISION FOR A HEALTHY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESILIENT EAST?

The community developed a vision for what environmentally resilient and what healthy and active mean for the plan area.

ENVIRONMENTALLY RESILIENT

In 2040, the East area has a healthy and robust natural ecosystem. Lush landscaping and an extensive tree canopy provide cool and shaded public spaces that encourage residents to engage with their community. An enhanced open space network of smaller parks, parkways, community gardens and plazas is thoughtfully woven into the neighborhood. Seamlessly integrated green infrastructure provides beautification through abundant vegetation while improving the water quality of surrounding creeks and rivers and protecting neighborhoods from localized flooding. The East area has experienced a significant reduction in the total amount of impervious surface and, therefore, benefits from less heat absorption and cooler surface temperatures. A proliferation of environmentally-friendly buildings and partnerships with major employers to produce local energy has lowered energy costs for residents throughout the neighborhoods and which has resulted in a smaller carbon footprint for the area.

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE

In 2040, an equitable allocation of resources has increased opportunity for people who faced the greatest barriers to good health. As a result, all East area residents have access to the services and tools they need to thrive. All households have safe, walkable access to an array of diverse, affordable and healthy food, including small grocery and specialty stores, co-ops, community gardens, and restaurants. The East area has a wide range of physically and financially accessible healthcare, including Rose Medical Center, supportive services such as addiction treatment and mental health care, hospital care, small clinics, and pharmacies. Residents can safely walk to well-maintained parks and open spaces, ranging from regional parks to pocket parks and greenways, with a mix of amenities and activities where everyone feels safe and welcome. East has a strong sense of community; neighbors know one another, and crime is rare because public spaces are vibrant and active. Store fronts, streets, sidewalks, and parks are clean, and there is minimal air, water, soil, and noise pollution. As a result, health outcomes such as obesity and life expectancy have improved, and residents enjoy improved health and access to opportunity.

MOBILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE

This chapter will discuss the importance of physical access to elements of a complete neighborhood that support health such as parks, grocery options, recreation centers, and healthcare. While providing these amenities and services is essential, the ability to access them without a car is also critical. Additionally, the quality of transportation infrastructure impacts physical activity, which is a key factor in maintaining good health. Providing a complete, safe, and comfortable transportation network improves connections to key amenities, increases physical activity, and improves safety. The design and function of streets also can provide green infrastructure, including trees and water quality improvement. The transportation network is a key factor in a community’s access to health and green infrastructure, and recommendations specific to transportation are in Section 2: Mobility.

THE TOP 5 AMENITIES MOST IMPORTANT TO ME ARE...

When asked to choose the top three amenities in East that are most important to the survey respondent, grocery shopping and dining ranked the highest by a large margin.

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RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

HISTORIC PARKWAY TRAIL

The robust parkway system in East has the potential to provide improved bicycle and pedestrian connections while at the same time preserving the historic character of these streets. See Q1.

CONTEMPORARY PARKWAY

A system of contemporary parkways can complement the transportation network and the historic parkways. Rethinking the right-of-way in certain streets can improve bicycle and pedestrian connections while also providing integrated stormwater infrastructure, drought-tolerant landscaping, high-efficiency lighting, and varied paving systems. See Q2.

NEW COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

A community center with a strong recreation and cultural component can uniquely serve a community’s needs. Additionally, the community identified a need for more parks and open space. See Q3.

(Photo: community park in Stapleton, Denver).

SHARED OPEN SPACE

Green or open space owned by an institution or organization such as a school or a hospital can be open to the surrounding community for their use. Institutions like schools can open their schoolyards to the surrounding community during the evenings, weekends, and summers and increase the availability of open spaces within the neighborhood. See Q3.

(Photo: San Francisco Schoolyard Project)

ENHANCED OPEN SPACE

Increased activation of existing parks through new amenities or improved maintenance can make these assets more useful to the community. See Q4.

(Photo: Verbana Park, Denver).
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

“What do you like most about the East Area?”

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<tr>
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Source: 2018 East Key Findings Survey

NEED MORE PARKS OF A VARIETY OF SIZES AND USES

Especially in South Park Hill, near Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations, at the Mayfair Town Center, and along Colfax. Residents would like to see dog parks, community gardens, better lighting, bike parking, restrooms, a swimming pool, and educational programs.

SAFETY CONCERNS

A deterrent to many residents who would like to use the existing parks.

SHARED GREEN SPACES

Community members selected as the #3 priority to make the East area more resilient.

In terms of exploring different ideas to increase parks and open space and to better connect to existing spaces, the majority of participants wanted to explore:

1. re-thinking parkways to provide safe and convenient pedestrian/bike connections, while retaining their historic character
2. re-thinking street public right-of-way for parks/open space/vegetation
3. converting existing vacant lots or underutilized parking lots into future park space

RECOMMENDATIONS

Q1

Leverage the historic parkways to connect existing open space, parks and recreational assets.

The East area hosts a robust parkway system that may play a key role in connecting people to open space, parks, and recreational assets. During the community outreach process, the majority of participants agreed that re-thinking historic parkways could provide better pedestrian and bicycle connections while still preserving the historic character. Better access to nature, parks, recreation facilities, and other community amenities is good for mental and physical health.

A. Incorporate formal pedestrian and bicycle improvements along the existing historic parkways to create a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle network throughout the area. Parkways to be considered for concept design of an enhanced pedestrian and bicycle environment and improved street crossings include:
   • 6th Avenue Parkway (Colorado Boulevard to Lowry)
   • 17th Avenue Parkway (Colorado Boulevard to Monaco Parkway)
   • Monaco Parkway (6th Avenue to 23rd Avenue)

B. Update the Design Guidelines for Denver’s Historic Parkways and Boulevards as needed.
   • Continue coordination with the City and County of Denver’s Landmark Preservation, Historic Denver and Parks and Recreation Department in the development of the pedestrian and bicycle enhancements to the historic parkways, including identifying elements of current regulations that are inconsistent with community input and the vision for parkways, and identify next steps to implement necessary changes.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q2

POLICY

BACKGROUND

STRATEGIES

Develop new Contemporary Parkways that connect the community to open space, parks, and recreational assets, as well as serve multiple community functions.

Parkways add character to a community, but parkway designs may also underutilize public right-of-way. Community members supported the idea of rethinking right-of-way in streets to include space for green space and vegetation, and one strategy of Denver’s Game Plan for a Healthy City is to consider contemporary standards for parkways throughout the city. Elements of contemporary standards include the integration of stormwater infrastructure, native or drought-tolerant landscaping, high-efficiency lighting, varied paving systems, and bicycle and transit connections.

A. Build Contemporary Parkways that are geared toward increased mobility options and park-like conditions to complement the Historic Parkway system.
   - Contemporary Parkways should reassign portions of the public right-of-way to the function of bike, pedestrian or transit mobility, diverse green infrastructure including tree canopy, native or adapted drought-tolerant vegetation and stormwater management and improved lighting.
   - Contemporary Parkways should range in size and role within the transportation network, and design standards should enable bicycle and pedestrian movement, stormwater management and infiltration, and the showcase of an appropriate vegetation. Projects can range from a multi-faceted redesign of existing arterial right-of-way to the reallocation of right-of-way for tree-lined, shared local streets.
   - Consider the following roadways for further study as Contemporary Parkways:
     - 17th Avenue (Monaco Parkway to Westerly Creek). This Contemporary Parkway could extend the character of the existing 17th Avenue Parkway while improving the connection to the Westerly Creek System.
     - Syracuse Street (Stapleton GreenWay Park to Crescent Park). This Contemporary Parkway could act as a north-south connection in the East Colfax neighborhood by connecting two parks.
     - Colorado Boulevard (from 6th Avenue to 23rd Avenue). Building on the legacy of this roadway as a Boulevard, improving the tree canopy and landscaping along this segment could enhance the original intent of Colorado Boulevard.
     - 12th Avenue (Colorado to Westerly Creek, potentially connecting to similar improvements to Downtown). This Contemporary Parkway could serve as an east-west continual connection between downtown and the Westerly Creek System while serving many neighborhoods in between.
     - 22nd Avenue (City Park to Syracuse Street). The intent of this Contemporary Parkway is to serve as a connection between City Park, Fred Thomas Park, and the commercial nodes at Kearny Street and Oneida Streets. Safe crossings of major roads and a safe, comfortable, and shaded environment could make this Contemporary Parkways the link between all these neighborhood nodes.
     - Hale Parkway. Previous design work on Hale Parkway developed a greenway concept for stormwater management and water quality improvement, open space and recreational assets and increased bike and pedestrian facilities the length of the parkway.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q3

Create new community open space, parks and recreation facilities.

The East Colfax neighborhood noted the need for a community center with a strong recreational and cultural component that can uniquely serve the community’s needs. Physical and financial accessibility are important elements to consider in the design of a community center. Additionally, community members prioritized “shared green spaces” as a step toward resilience. Residents also identified a need for more parks and open space, such as dog parks and community gardens. Preferred locations were in near Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stops, at the Mayfair Town Center, and along Colfax Avenue. The majority of community input was in support of converting vacant or underutilized lots into future park space and of developing shared green space agreements.

A. Create a community center in the East Colfax neighborhood that serves several needs, such as providing a gathering space, recreation center, education and training, evening programs, non-profit space, or food access. Community members identified Colfax Avenue in East Colfax, the post office next to Verbena park, and 11th Avenue and Syracuse Street as three preferred locations.

B. Create additional community parks. Prioritize future locations that align with the City’s Game Plan for a Healthy City priority areas for new parks and areas prone to flooding according to the City’s Storm Drainage Master Plan or the best available data from the Department of Public Works. Potential future locations include:
   • Park space at Mayfair Town Center, which would also enhance a central location within community and addresses local flood concerns
   • South Park Hill, close to Colfax Avenue, which would create community space in alignment with BRT corridor and addresses local flood concerns

C. Incentivize and/or require new developments, especially near Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations and along community corridors, to include publicly accessible outdoor spaces in exchange for height. Establish standards and guidelines that ensure public accessibility, design, and features that respond to the community context.

D. Strengthen partnerships with private property owners, and develop future intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) with schools, institutions and hospitals to create shared open spaces within the community. Potential locations include the following:
   • VA Hospital
   • Rose Medical Center
   • Park Hill Elementary School
   • Palmer Elementary School
   • Odyssey School of Denver
   • Denver School of the Arts
   • Montview Community Preschool
   • Johnson & Wales University
   • St James School
   • Montclair School of Academics and Enrichment
   • Ashley Elementary School

Case Study:
School Playgrounds Program, New York City

Since 1996, the City of New York has partnered with the Trust for Public Land to design and implement 200 playgrounds in New York City public schools. These playgrounds are equipped with green infrastructure to manage stormwater and improve air and water quality. This partnership added more than 160 acres of additional playground space, which benefits the nearly 4 million residents who live within a 10-minute walk of one of these sites.

Photo Source: NYC Parks
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q4

Policy

Enhance existing community open space, parks and recreation facilities

East area community members would like to see increased activation of existing parks; safety concerns are a deterrent to many residents who would like to use the existing parks. Preferred improvements include better maintenance and additional amenities at existing facilities such as dog parks, community gardens, a pool, enhanced lighting, bike parking, restrooms, and educational programs.

A. Increase leisure opportunities within passive linear park space to encourage more park visitors.

B. Encourage higher utilization of existing open space and parks by increasing local, active programming, amenities and maintenance. Community members identified the following parks as a priority:

- Montclair Park
- Verbena Park
- New Freedom Park and Community Garden
- Lindsley Park
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY & CLIMATE RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE TYPOLOGIES

Green Infrastructure
- **Green Streets** (methodology of Implementation Strategy)
- **Green Alleys** (alleys within 50’ from storm drain)
- **Green Roofs** (Follow Green Buildings Ordinance regarding buildings of 25,000 sq feet or larger. Most likely to occur within Civic, Campus, Community Center, Regional Center, Community Corridor, and High Residential Areas Future Place Types.)

**Private Property Practices** (anywhere within low and low-medium residential future place types)

**Detention Priority Areas.** Anywhere within flood prone areas
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY & CLIMATE RESILENCY TYPOLOgies

GREEN STREETS
Roadways that integrate stormwater management and water quality treatments. Elements include engineered systems such as stormwater planters and permeable paving, as well as natural tree lawns and tree canopy. Green streets can work in conjunction with streets that prioritize multimodal mobility by providing a more comfortable environment. Brighton Boulevard is a local example of a green street working in conjunction with a bicycle facility. (Photo: Brighton Boulevard in Denver). Map criteria: see Green Infrastructure Implementation Strategy

GREEN ALLEYS
Alleys with increased pervious surface coverage and vegetation to aid in infiltration and water quality treatment. As a result of the increased vegetation and pervious surfaces, these alleys become comfortable places for pedestrians to walk turning into key multimodal mobility corridors. A local example is the Westwood Via Verde which includes enhanced alleys and green infrastructure as part of its network that will connect existing and potential new spaces. (Photo: Green Alley in Detroit). Map criteria: alleys within 50’ of a storm drain

GREEN ROOFS
Building roofs that are covered or contain vegetation. Green roofs serve several purposes, such as absorbing stormwater, providing insulation, creating habitat and reducing urban heat island effect by reducing the coverage of surfaces like concrete which absorb sunlight and therefore increase surface temperatures. (Photo: Community College of Denver building green roof. Source: Green Roofs of Colorado). Map criteria: building 25,000 sf or larger as specified in the Green Buildings Ordinance. Most likely to occur within the following Future Place Types: Civic, Campus, Community Center, Regional Center, Community Corridor, and High Residential Areas.

PRIVATE PROPERTY PRACTICES
Small interventions in private property by themselves will not have a significant impact in reducing the stormwater flooding in the area. However, the cumulative effects of small interventions such as rain gardens, rain barrels, and permeable pavers in areas like driveways, can improve infiltration and water quality treatment of stormwater and provide multiple benefits to the community. Map criteria: anywhere within low and low-medium residential future place types.

STORMWATER DETENTION/PARKS
Parks provide important stormwater management benefits. If properly designed, open space can be used to capture stormwater during intense rain events while providing recreational and social uses during dry times.

Woodbriar Park in Greeley Colorado (shown in photo) is another example of a neighborhood park redesigned to allow for stormwater detention during intense rain events. Map criteria: Anywhere within flood prone areas.
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

East area community members are increasingly more conscious of the climate resilience challenges and the relationship between their quality of life and the quality of the environmental factors within their communities. Community members continuously expressed their interests, concerns, and ideas through online surveys, community workshops, and outreach events.

The top priorities to make the East Central area more resilient include:

1. healthy tree canopy and tree lawn
2. bringing nature back
3. shared green spaces
4. native vegetation
5. multi-purpose areas

Several storms during recent years have highlighted flooding concerns within parts of the East area. Residents from East area neighborhoods experience recurring flooding during summer rain events. Residents in this area have reported flooding causing property damage to homes and cars and expressed their concerns and ideas for improvement during the recent Upper Montclair Stormwater Systems Study.

Community members expressed their interest in implementing policies and incentives for new development in flood prone areas to better accommodate the flood waters and implement green infrastructure systems and materials with multiple community benefits, such as permeable pavers, bulb-outs, and bioswales.

Community members mentioned flood protection and green infrastructure improvements should be focused around the Mayfair Town Center, the missing sections of Westerly Creek, parts of Colfax Avenue and 16th Avenue, 7th Avenue and Jersey Street, and the alleys near the New Freedom Park.

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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN STREETS AND ALLEYS FOR WATER QUALITY CAPTURE
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q7

Increase the pervious surface coverage through the design and implementation of green infrastructure systems to increase environmental performance (infiltration, evaporation, evapotranspiration, carbon sequestration, shade, and urban heat).

The East area’s impervious surface coverage is higher than the city average. This disparity is linked to historical development patterns in which permeable surfaces are replaced with roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and rooftops, and unless reversed these patterns can negatively impact quality-of-life for East area community members by increasing stormwater runoff, reducing rainfall absorption, and increasing surface temperature.

A. Explore opportunities to convert existing impervious surface within public right-of-way to pervious surface through the addition of street trees, tree lawn or bulb-outs, trails, parkland or native vegetation.
   • Coordinate with the design of future Contemporary Parkways.
   • Integrate with BRT design along Colfax Avenue and redesign of public right-of-way streetscape and remnant parcels to improve infiltration and reduce runoff.

B. Develop design guidelines for a contemporary tree lawn.
   • Improve infiltration and reduce runoff through removal of impervious areas between curb and sidewalk.
   • Coordinate implementation through Public Works roadway, stormwater and sanitary projects within the right-of-way.
   • Increase the requirements for pervious acreage, water conservation in landscaping and inclusion of natural vegetation for redevelopment and new development.
   • Work with private property owners, the Colfax BIDs, and other neighborhood organizations to transition underutilized paved lots to pervious surfaces.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage sustainable water management practices including stormwater management, flood protection, water quality, and water use.

Community members are interested in policies and incentives that support stormwater management and flood protection in areas of new development. Green infrastructure is a useful design tool that supports several community goals related to water quality and use, access to green and open space, and environmental resilience.

A. Implement a system of green streets and green alleys to increase the water quality treatment of stormwater, prioritizing streets based on the City’s Green Infrastructure Implementation Strategy.
   • Prioritize the implementation of green streets that offer safer street crossings and coincide with priority bicycle corridors and connections to key neighborhood destinations like schools, grocery stores, parks, churches, and community centers.

B. Support the continued study and design of the Hale Parkway concept to develop a greenway for stormwater management and water quality improvement, open space and recreational assets and increased bike and pedestrian facilities the length of the parkway.

C. Encourage the use of Denver-appropriate vegetation that is drought-tolerant and uses a minimal amount of water within the right-of-way.

D. Restore the health of the waterways like Westerly Creek by increasing the treatment of stormwater upstream and improving street cleaning in contributing streets.
HEALTHY FOOD OPPORTUNITIES

FARMERS MARKET
A seasonal food market where farmers and vendors sell fruit, vegetables, and other products in an indoor or outdoor setting. See Q10.

(Photo: City Park Farmers Market, Denver)

HEALTHY RESTAURANTS
Restaurants or grab-and-go vendors that specialize in meals that are both quick and healthy. Some models also provide affordable fast-casual meals to communities with limited food access. See Q12.

(Photo: Superfruit Republic, Stapleton, Denver)

GROCERY STORE
A retail establishment that sells healthy, culturally appropriate food ingredients including fresh fruits & vegetables, dry groceries, and meat/poultry/seafood. See Q11.

(Photo: Choice Market, Broadway, Denver)

COMMUNITY GARDEN
Public or private land used by community members to grow and cultivate fruit and vegetables. Gardens range from shared plots on private or public land, or auxiliary uses for an organization like schools and religious institutions. Stakeholders have identified “growing more food on public and private land” as a top priority. See Q13.

(Photo: New Freedom Park Community Center, Denver)
RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve the physical connections to grocery stores and other locations with healthy food options.

Providing pedestrian, bike, and transit routes to grocery stores that are universally accessible, well-marked, safe, and convenient is an important component to food access. East area stakeholders identified improved bike, pedestrian, and transit access to food as a top priority for a complete food environment. During the “Food in Communities” outreach meeting for East Colfax and Northwest Aurora residents, limited transportation to stores and food pantries was identified as one of the biggest barriers to accessing fresh food.

A. Work with Denver Public Works to:
   • Install missing sidewalks and make crosswalk safety upgrades near food providers, prioritizing improvements in a quarter-mile radius of major grocery stores and other key fresh food sellers such as food banks and Healthy Corner Store Initiative participating stores. (See Mobility).
   • Provide of adequate biking, walking, and transit infrastructure around and near grocery stores, food pantries, and community gardens. (See Mobility)

B. Work with RTD and East Colfax neighborhood groups to ensure adequate bus frequency and connections from the East Colfax neighborhood to full-service grocery stores and food pantries to the north, east, and south of the neighborhood.

Develop a seasonal farmers market in the East Colfax neighborhood.

The second priority for a complete food environment for East Area residents was more places to procure fresh, local produce within the community, including a farmer’s market. This idea especially resonated with residents in the East Colfax neighborhood.

A. Work with neighborhood groups to facilitate the development of a seasonal or year-round farmer’s market.
   • Identify City-owned property suitable for an outdoor farmer’s market in the short term. Preferred locations would include good visibility, convenient access, and adequate outdoor space, such as the former commercial property located at East Colfax and Valentina Street or school parking lots.
   • Convene non-profit organizations that host farmer’s markets in other areas of the City such as Colorado Fresh Markets and Mo’ Betta Green MarketPlace with neighborhood organizations such as the Fax Partnership and the East Colfax Neighborhood Association to discuss the viability of a farmer’s market in the East Colfax neighborhood.
   • Connect organizations to funding sources, including the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program and the local foundations interested in food access such as the Colorado Health Foundation.
   • Consider City support for a farmer’s markets start-up costs through a sponsorship or small grant.

BACKGROUND POLICY

STRATEGIES (STRATEGIES IN BOLD)

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

PUBLIC MEETING PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO VOTE ON THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS NEEDED FOR TO MAKE THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD A MORE COMPLETE FOOD ENVIRONMENT. THE TOP RESPONSES WERE:

1. IMPROVED BIKE, PEDESTRIAN AND TRANSIT ACCESS TO FOOD
2. FARMERS MARKETS AND/OR FARM STANDS
3. FULL-SERVICE GROCERY STORE

A Public online survey conducted between 2018 and 2019, which received more than 1,000 responses, asked what neighborhood amenities are important (either that already exist or that the community would like to see in the future). The top two responses were:

1. GROCERY SHOPPING
2. DINING

These topics align with community input received in targeted outreach and other community food forums including an April 2019 “Food in Communities” meeting conducted by DDPHE and the Tri-County Health Department. During this outreach meeting for East Colfax and Northwest Aurora residents, the biggest barriers preventing fresh food access were:

1. LIMITED TRANSPORTATION TO STORES AND FOOD PANTRIES
2. LIMITED SELECTION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOODS
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q11

Recruit an affordable, healthy grocery retailer to serve East Colfax residents.

In an online survey with over 1,000 respondents, a grocery store was listed as the most important neighborhood amenity. The neighborhood does not currently have a full-service grocery store and has limited access to healthy food. The third highest priority for a complete food environment in the East Colfax neighborhood is to recruit a grocery store.

A. Use incentives to attract a grocery store in the East Colfax neighborhood.
   • Leverage existing programs, like the Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) and the Denver Economic Development & Opportunity (DEDO) office recruitment efforts, to help attract an affordable grocery retailer.
   • Consider funding for traditional for-profit models as well as non-profit enterprises such as Baltimore’s DMG Foods and Denver’s Grow Haus, described in the profile on Affordable Grocery Retail Models.
   • Pursue solutions to provide fast-track permitting, increased translation/interpretation services and fee/fine waivers for grocery stores located in underserved areas.
   • See Land Use recommendations related to new development incentives for community-serving retail.

**Case Study:**
Healthy Restaurant Incentives: Shape Up Somerville, Massachusetts

*Shape Up Somerville recognizes and promotes healthy restaurants throughout the city. Shape Up “approved” meals at participating restaurants are considered healthy because they contain lean proteins, heart-healthy fats, whole grains, and items that are not deep fried. Participating restaurants receive free publicity, and often are preferred caterers for city events/meetings. Approved meals are reviewed by a certified nutritionist. The program periodically does a promotion highlighting immigrant-run restaurants.*
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q12

Expand healthy meal options available in the East area.

On average, households spend approximately half of their food budget on prepared foods, and East area stakeholders expressed desire for additional healthy, fast-casual restaurant options. During the “Food in Communities” outreach meeting for East Colfax and Northwest Aurora residents, one of the biggest barriers preventing fresh food access was the limited selection of culturally relevant foods. In an online survey with over 1,000 respondents, dining was listed as the second most important neighborhood amenity. Access to healthy prepared foods is an important part of a complete food environment, and East area residents expressed a desire to retain and expand food businesses (including grocery markets and restaurants) that offer a diverse array of culturally-relevant foods.

A. Recruit healthy, fast-casual restaurants to East area commercial corridors and nodes.
   • Coordinate with Denver Department of Economic Development & Opportunity (DEDO), Colfax Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and the proposed International District to recruit new healthy, fast casual restaurants.

B. Develop a shared commissary kitchen facility or a shared commercial kitchen, that provides affordable space to incubate new food businesses.
   • Work with the proposed East Colfax Community Development Corporation (See Economy) and/or area business improvement districts (BIDs) to:
     1. Identify a location, funding, and an operator for a commissary kitchen.
     2. Develop a “health track” that provides additional support for food businesses that create healthy, affordable ready-to-eat meals such as mentorship, assistance with permitting and licensing, connections to local markets/stores, assistance locating affordable rental space, and start-up cost support.
   • Consider co-location with the proposed community center in East Colfax or the nearby commercial kitchen El Alba in west Aurora.

C. Incentivize existing restaurants to offer healthier options.
   • Work with local organizations like the Fax Partnership or the proposed International District to incentivize restaurants to offer healthier options. Consider expanding on the work done by the Rethink Your Drink project lead by Denver Department of Public Health and Environment and the American Heart Association and Colorado Smart Meal Program to pilot an incentive program that could include free publicity, consultations with trained dieticians and chefs, and free nutrition analysis of menu items. (See profile of Somerville’s Shape Up program).

Q13

Support food growing and production included in community amenities.

East area stakeholders identified food grown in public spaces as an important priority. Members of the public were generally enthusiastic about encouraging more household food production on private yards. The East area has some new successful community gardens, such as the one located at New Freedom Park in East Colfax. In contrast, Montclair does not have any community gardens, but it does have a handful of small parks where community gardens could be integrated.

A. Work with Denver Urban Gardens to provide funding and identify locations to develop new community gardens in the East area, such as at existing community centers with available open space including parks, schools, hospitals, and religious institutions.
   • Assess community support for new gardens in the existing parks and open spaces in Montclair.

B. Seek out partnerships with institutions that might have available land to dedicate to community gardens.
   • Through the proposed Hospital Working Group (see Economy, encourage hospital campuses to dedicate portions of their properties to community food gardens, including Johnson & Wales campus in South Park Hill.

C. Determine feasibility for an indoor food growing facility in the East Colfax neighborhood, possibly in conjunction with the proposed East Colfax Community Development Corporation. Consider Denver’s Grow Haus as a model.

D. Analyze the barriers and constraints to food growing on public and private properties throughout the East area, such as land use, zoning, permitting, maintenance, or building regulations.

E. Support neighborhood-driven initiatives that facilitate the development of backyard gardens.
   • Connect interested organizations with funding and technical assistance to launch “yard sharing” food production initiatives. (See the profile on ReVision Backyard Garden Initiative).
**Case Study:**
Affordable Grocery on Wheels: Any Street Grocery, Denver

Any Street Grocery is a bus-turned-market that sells healthy, affordable food basics in some of Denver’s underserved neighborhoods. The non-profit enterprise initially launched in 2018 with a limited schedule, making weekly stops at community facilities like recreation centers. To cover costs, Any Street Grocery also visits citywide events like Taste of Colorado where they can charge a higher premium for products. To make an affordable, mobile grocery operational and successful, substantial grant funding and community partnerships are crucial.

**Case Study:**
Aria Denver’s “Agrihood”, Denver

Aria Denver is a recently developed mixed-income community at Federal Boulevard and 52nd Avenue that prominently features food production and wellness. The community has a one-acre farm, designated residential plots, and an 1,800 square foot greenhouse. These amenities provide food growing spaces for all residents, while also encouraging intergenerational social interaction and physical activity. Through a partnership with nearby Regis University, Aria Denver offers gardening and nutrition classes for residents, and job-training for low-income youth.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**BACKGROUND POLICY STRATEGIES**

**Q14**

**Support innovative community food access projects.**

Non-traditional grocery models can increase access to fresh, healthy foods, particularly for populations that may not otherwise have access to fresh food. Additionally, affordable housing developers and institutions like schools and hospitals are increasingly incorporating amenities related to food access.

**A.** Work with developers and investors to incorporate food access in new developments.
- Consider incentives such as density/height bonuses (see Height Incentive Overlay areas in Land Use) or subsidies for housing developments that incorporate food growing, production, or other food access amenities. (See profile on Aria Denver’s “Agrihood”).
- Leverage funds such as CHFA’s Healthy Housing Loan Program and/or Denver Housing Authority’s Healthy Living Initiative to incorporate food access and programming (e.g. pop-up food pantries; nutrition or cooking classes) into affordable housing developments.
- Prioritize funding or incentives for projects that offer additional community benefits, such as community ownership structures or local hiring opportunities.

**B.** Support innovative grocery models (see profile on Any Street Grocery), particularly in areas of limited healthy food access.
- Provide business assistance, including increased translation/interpretation services, streamlined permitting, and connections to resources and grant funding.

**C.** Increase demand for and knowledge about healthy food through food skills programs in East area schools, community centers, and retailers in alignment with existing and proposed citywide programs.
- Seek partnerships with Denver Public Schools, hospitals, community organizations, food banks, food access programs, and even local restaurants, to pool together resources deploy more workshops and education programs for area households.
Support initiatives that address food insecurity.

Food insecurity, or lacking consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life, affects households in the East area. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is intended to help stretch food budgets to purchase healthy food. However, only 43 percent of East area who qualify for SNAP are enrolled. Food rescue organizations are a strong asset in the East area but could offer more and better food with additional technical assistance.

A. Implement recommendations from Closing the SNAP Gap in Denver report to increase enrollment in SNAP for those who are eligible.

B. Expand the capacity, efficiency, and public awareness of area food banks and food rescue networks, in alignment with citywide efforts.
   - Work with schools, business districts, hospitals, and other community organizations such as East Colfax’s Counterpath to promote existing emergency food access sites to make them more publicly known and universally accessible, such as the locations at schools, religious institutions senior centers, and Denver Urban Garden facilities.
   - Strengthen the capacity of local food pantries through additional funding, purchasing power, and efficiencies such as shared refrigeration and storage infrastructure.
   - Promote on-site food growing at food pantries to supplement fresh produce inventory. (See profile on Metro Caring Freight Train Garden)
   - Support food pantries that continue to explore innovative methods of connecting hungry families with emergency food, beyond brick-and-mortar pantries, such as mobile food distribution and pantries that are committed to expanding hours of operations and fresh food and ready to eat complete meal options.
   - Implement recommendations from the 2018 Strengthening Denver’s Food Rescue Ecosystem report to increase the amount of food rescued and provided to East area residents in need.

Case Study:
Metro Caring’s “Frieght-Train” Garden, Denver

Along with meat and dairy, fresh produce is one of the more difficult items for food banks to supply consistently. Metro Caring, a prominent food bank in City Park West, recently received a donated train car from neighboring Saint Joseph Hospital to pilot an innovative indoor food growing system. The retrofitted 40-foot long freight train car sits in the organization’s parking lot, where it can grow up to 600 plants every week. Food grown in this self-sustaining, soil-free, controlled environment will help supplement fresh produce available for food bank clients.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Q16

Improve and maintain healthy options at existing East area food retailers.

Introducing more healthy and affordable foods in corner and convenience stores can improve access by creating additional healthy food retail locations within established businesses in East neighborhoods. Rising commercial rents may necessitate assistance to help preserve existing food retailers.

A. Encourage and incentivize more corner and convenience stores in the East area to sell a greater variety of healthy food items.
   • Continue to engage with East area convenience stores, through Denver’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative or similar program, to provide incentives, financial support, and technical assistance.
   • Remove barriers faced by smaller stores to carry fresh produce, such as working to launch or fund value chain coordination and small-scale distribution projects and social enterprises that connect agricultural producers and other healthy food suppliers to retailers.
   • Support the expansion of nutrition incentive programs such as Double Up Food Bucks or create a new city-wide incentive program that reaches people unable to access Double Up Food Bucks.

B. Retain existing small food retail businesses, particularly those already selling healthy food, in areas where commercial rents or property costs have become burdensome.
   • Prioritize support for food businesses in East Colfax that demonstrate financial assistance needs.
   • Connect food retail businesses with financial support from city or statewide programs such as the Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F).
   • See Economy section (pg. X) for additional recommendations for small business assistance.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase access to low-cost healthcare in East.

The ability to have adequate healthcare depends on both physical access as well as affordability.

A. Partner with Denver Health to deploy more free or reduced cost mobile clinics, including the Women’s Mobile Clinic, and/or Healthy Communities Outreach Program resources to residents in the East Colfax neighborhood.

B. Increase East area resident awareness and utilization of new and existing public health resources, particularly preventative care services.
   • Work with partners including the Denver Department of Public Health & Environment (DDPHE), Denver Health, and other medical providers to promote free or reduced cost healthcare programs (see Policy H7 in Economy).

C. Integrate preventative healthcare with food access initiatives.
   • Facilitate a pilot project with area hospitals and food access organizations, community centers, healthy corner stores, and future farmers markets to create “one-stop-shops” for health, that integrate healthy eating with preventative healthcare. Elements of the pilot could include: healthy food prescription programs, health screenings, and nutrition or cooking classes all offered within the store or other identified community space. (See profile on the Lankenau Medical Center and the Food Trust partnership in Philadelphia.)

D. Work with Denver Health and other partners to identify the key barriers to accessing first trimester prenatal care, with a focus in the East Colfax neighborhood.

BACKGROUND

POLICY STRATEGIES

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

In Philadelphia, the Food Trust (a food-access advocacy organization) and a local hospital network teamed together to bring healthy food and preventative healthcare to the community.

First, the hospital started a program that encouraged doctors to “prescribe” nutritious food to patients. Eligible participants received “Philly Food Bucks” that were redeemable to buy fruits and vegetables at farmers markets and participating food stores. In addition to their healthy food prescription, patients received nutrition education, as well as information on other community resources. Health screenings at the farmer’s market helped connect vulnerable populations to resources and follow-up care. The “one stop shop” approach brought a new level of convenience, trust, and accessibility to healthcare.


Photo Source: The Food Trust
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Address elevated lead exposure risk, particularly in East Colfax and Montclair.**

Most of the East area is considered at high risk for lead exposure based on housing age, household income, and children under the age of six with the highest risk in Montclair and East Colfax south of Colfax Avenue. Many older homes that have not addressed exposed lead are rental properties where landlords have deferred maintenance. According to the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment, East area’s immigrant and refugee populations may be especially vulnerable to lead exposure.1

**A.** Encourage East area landlords and homeowners to work with DDPHE and DURA to ensure exposed lead in residential buildings is addressed.
   - Utilize DDPHE Lead Exposure Risk Program’s recent HUD funding to provide landlords with financial support to make property improvements that address lead levels.

**B.** Increase opportunities for children to be screened for elevated blood lead levels.
   - Evaluate whether lead screening for children can be coordinated through Denver Health’s Refugee Clinic, or future mobile clinic programs, with a specific focus on neighborhoods and households at risk in the East area.

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**ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**

**BACKGROUND POLICY STRATEGIES**

**Q18**

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   - Evaluate whether lead screening for children can be coordinated through Denver Health’s Refugee Clinic, or future mobile clinic programs, with a specific focus on neighborhoods and households at risk in the East area.
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

WHAT IS IT?

There is a clear link between community safety, well-being and the design of the built environment. Neighborhoods with design elements like accessible, well-lit sidewalks and active, interesting public spaces are environments where people tend to feel safe and socially connected. An area that is perceived as unsafe, due to crime or other factors, may impact residents’ likelihood to participate in outdoor activities, thereby diminishing opportunities for social interaction and physical activities that promote well-being¹. Specifically, fear of crime has been shown to have an adverse impact on well-being and on health behaviors such as physical activity.² Additionally, gentrification and increasing income instability can contribute to health conditions such as toxic stress.

Design of the built environment is one important factor that influences community safety and well-being, and it is the focus of this section. However, a holistic approach to improving safety and well-being must consider additional factors such as generational poverty, limited social capital, and lack of economic mobility. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE), external stressors such as poverty, displacement, and limited social support can affect a person's overall well-being.³ ⁴ ⁵

WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN EAST?

Many of stakeholders’ top priorities for making East area feel safer and more comfortable are related to changes in the built environment, including better lighting, more public art, and more pedestrian activity on sidewalks. Some areas, including commercial corridors, have fewer street trees, limited pedestrian lighting, and underutilized, vacated spaces.

The East area’s crime rate, on average, is higher than the citywide average, particularly near the eastern end of Colfax Avenue in the East Colfax neighborhood.⁶ Crime is concentrated along the Colfax corridor. Violent crimes (including aggravated assault, murder, and robbery) that occurred between 2012 and 2017 tended to cluster along the stretch of Colfax Avenue east of Quebec Street. Non-violent crimes, which are defined to include drug and alcohol offenses, public disorder offenses such as disturbing the peace, loitering, and prostitution, were also more prevalent in this general area. These areas tend to also be lacking elements of the built environment that provide a sense of place and discourage crime.
RECOMMENDATIONS

**Incorporate design elements that activate public spaces and improve safety, particularly in areas that have historically seen higher rates of crime.**

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach for reducing crime through urban and environmental design and the management and use of built environments. CPTED elements include pedestrian lighting, maintenance, plazas and other small public spaces, public art, and street level activation. Participants in public workshops listed activity on the street and public art as their top two priorities in the area. Many law enforcement agencies, including the Denver Police Department, have embraced CPTED as a method to improve both safety and the perception of safety. Several CPTED elements can also foster social interaction and improve a sense of community and well-being, including parks and other public spaces and public art. Reclaiming public space for these uses supports healthier community behaviors, particularly when residents help design a place that is reflective of community culture and pride.

**A.** Provide adequate street lighting, including pedestrian-scale lighting, prioritizing areas designated as Pedestrian Enhanced areas in Blueprint Denver, along the High Injury Network (HIN) designated in Denver’s Vision Zero Action Plan, and in areas that have the most reports of crime.
   - Work with Denver Public Works to prioritize installation and upgrades to pedestrian and street-pedestrian combination light fixtures. These upgrades should be in coordination with other mobility improvements, including those recommended by this plan (See Mobility), including in alleys. (See the City and County of Denver Street Lighting Design Guidelines)
   - Work with local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to identify areas in need of increased base-level services including power-washing, trash removal, and improved streetscaping maintenance.
   - Encourage and fund maintenance or clean-up of derelict private and public properties.
   - Work with the Colfax BIDs and the Harm Reduction Action Center to identify areas where safe needle deposit boxes are needed and supported.

**B.** Conduct targeted litter removal, sidewalk and property clean-up along Colfax Avenue and other key East area commercial nodes.
   - Work with Denver Public Works and the East area BIDs to identify areas in need of increased base-level services including power-washing, trash removal, and improved streetscaping maintenance.
   - Encourage and fund maintenance or clean-up of derelict private and public properties.
   - Work with the Colfax BIDs and the Harm Reduction Action Center to identify areas where safe needle deposit boxes are needed and supported.

**C.** Encourage public art.
   - Work with the Fax Partnership, Colfax Mayfair BID, and other neighborhood groups to:
     - Increase awareness of existing arts-specific funding opportunities, such as the “P.S. You Are Here” grant, which can be used to beautify elements of infrastructure such as utility boxes, bus stops, and dumpsters.
     - Provide “How to Write a Proposal” informational sessions to encourage greater participation in the RFP process for arts-specific funding opportunities.
     - Create activity on sidewalks and public places during evening hours through creative lighting interventions and activities like glow-in-the-dark board games, outdoor film screenings, and night markets.
   - Engage community members in public art projects and gather feedback for priority areas, such as intersections or underutilized lots.

**D.** Encourage street level activation.
   - Review zoning and building code regulations to ensure street level activation in new developments, including street-facing windows, balconies, and porches, and updated regulations as needed (see Land Use).
   - Coordinate with local BIDs to identify funding and incentives to:
     - Encourage façade improvements and outdoor seating for existing buildings and businesses.
     - Install amenities such as benches, informational signage, and trash receptacles, shelter, informational signage, and bicycle parking adjacent to (not within) public sidewalk right-of-way.
     - Create an “Activate Alleys” program that could assist property owners in creating public realms in and around alleyways, such as murals, sculptures, and other imaginative placemaking intervention like artistic street furniture. Prioritize alleyways in or near commercial nodes.
Support community-building initiatives in East area neighborhoods.

As East neighborhoods continue to change, awareness of neighborhood history, sense of place, and social capital can erode and change over time. The physical and social fabric of East area neighborhoods should lend themselves to a culture of neighborliness, engagement, and social interaction. To the extent possible, the City should support civic organizations and informal networks that make people feel connected to their neighbors and to the history of their neighborhood.

A. Support RNOs and other community organizations to offer programming that connects new residents with long-standing community residents.
   - Help neighborhood organizations to fund the development and distribution of materials such as "new resident guides", that include information about the neighborhood’s history.
   - Support creative, low-cost ways to orient residents to a neighborhood, such as periodic neighborhood walks or “meet and greets” with long-standing community members.
     - Examples of City support could include a guidebook on informal neighborhood community-building ideas, small grant funding opportunities, or a social media-based competition to reward neighborhoods for creative, well-attended informal social programming.
   - Encourage East area organizations doing community-building work, such as Street Fraternity, to spearhead these efforts.

B. Encourage more neighborhood-oriented “pop-up” events that take advantage of and activate outdoor public spaces.
   - More broadly promote the Denver Days program to residents, RNOs, and multi-unit property managers.
   - To facilitate more “pop-up” events and temporary placemaking projects in the East area, Public Works should actively seek out Community Streets Program applicants from East area residents and neighborhood groups.

C. Provide meeting and event space within City facilities, such as libraries or recreation centers, for free if being used for a meeting or activity that is specifically community-centered.

Case Study:
Mural Arts Program, Philadelphia

The Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia beautifies blank walls throughout the city with colorful art, and does so by training and recruiting artists from typically marginalized populations. Participants include juvenile delinquents, parolees, and the formerly incarcerated. The end result is that of transforming physical spaces, building community pride and safety, and bringing restorative justice to individuals.

Case Study:
Juxtaposition Arts, Minneapolis

Juxtaposition Arts is a nonprofit that empowers historically marginalized populations by creating pathways for youth interested in the creative workforce. The organization has been hired to produce art around Minneapolis to transform places from bland and unsafe to colorful, safe, and functional. Juxtaposition is known for its colorful murals and tactical urbanism projects that renovate community spaces with creative lighting, seating, and glow-in-the-dark materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Often, new immigrants and refugees bring with them cooking utensils or cosmetics that have elevated lead levels, or they have been exposed to lead in a dwelling in their home country and so their blood lead levels show as high when they are screened upon entry to Denver (DDPHE Lead Exposure Risk Program).


High housing costs make it harder for families to invest in other important areas such as health care, healthy foods, childcare, and transportation, leading to chronic stress. Matsuoka, Martha and Jennifer Lucky. Power, Place, and Public Health: A Review of the Literature on the Health Impacts of Displacement & Promise of Inclusive Community Development. The California Endowment, 2017.


International CPTED Association website, www.cpted.net

City of Denver Police Department District 6, Citizen Advisory Board meeting, March 21, 2019

Strong social connections are vital for mental health: “We need each other to survive and to thrive. Where we live, work, learn, and play determines how we connect with our families, co-workers, friends, and neighbors…” CPDHE’s Equity Action Guide, 2018.