A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

Westwood Neighborhood
Denver, Colorado

May 5–10, 2013

Urban Land Institute

The Colorado Health Foundation™

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About the Urban Land Institute

THE MISSION OF THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both the built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and
- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has nearly 30,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians.

ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
Suite 500 West
Washington, DC 20007-5201

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day or hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

ULI Program Staff

Gayle Berens
Senior Vice President, Education and Advisory Group

Thomas W. Eitler
Vice President, Advisory Services

Annie Finkenbinder Best
Director, Education and Advisory Group

Daniel Lobo
Manager, Awards and Publications

Caroline Dietrich
Logistics Manager, Education and Advisory Group

Kathryn Craig
Associate, Education and Advisory Group

James A. Mulligan
Senior Editor

David James Rose
Managing Editor/Manuscript Editor

Betsy VanBuskirk
Creative Director

John Hall Design Group
Graphic Designer

Craig Chapman
Senior Director, Publishing Operations

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The panel also wishes to thank the Colorado Health Foundation for sponsoring this series of panels regarding designing healthy communities, especially Anne Warhover, Khanh Nguyen, and Hillary Fulton. The panel also thanks Progressive Urban Management Associates for helping prepare the communities for the panel's arrival, providing the background briefing materials, and coordinating so closely with ULI and the host cities for this very important work.

Finally, the panelists acknowledge and thank the more than 80 individuals who were interviewed. Representing city and county agencies, the business community, and the citizenry, these stakeholders provided valuable information and perspectives through their passion and understanding of the issues, greatly aiding the panel in its analysis.

Note to Readers

This publication contains recommendations by the Urban Land Institute Advisory Services panel that convened in Westwood, Colorado, the week of May 5–10, 2013. A complete listing of recommendations has been created to provide a comprehensive report of the Healthy Places: Designing an Active Colorado initiative for the community of Westwood. The Healthy Places initiative was designed to incorporate physical activity into land development and land use. While the Colorado Health Foundation contracted with ULI to conduct a panel process, the complete recommendations do not signify key funding opportunities or commitments of the foundation.

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ULI Panel and Project Staff

Panel Chair

Edward McMahon
Senior Resident Fellow, Chair for Sustainable Development
Urban Land Institute
Washington, D.C.

Panel Members

Kamuron Gurol
Director of Community Development
City of Sammamish
Sammamish, Washington

Deborah Lou
Program Analyst
Active Living Research, University of California
San Diego, California

James A. Moore
Director of International Urban Planning
HDR Inc.
Tampa, Florida

Ralph L. Núñez
President/Design Principal
Design Team Plus LLC
Birmingham, Michigan

James Rojas
Cofounder
Latino Urban Forum
Alhambra, California

David Scheuer
President
The Retrovest Companies
Burlington, Vermont

Elizabeth Shreeve
Principal
SWA Group
Sausalito, California

ULI Project Staff

Annie Finkenbinder Best
Director, Education and Advisory Group

Caroline Dietrich
Logistics Manager, Education and Advisory Group

Background and the Panel's Assignment

TODAY, COMMUNITIES ACROSS the United States are facing obesity and chronic disease rates of epic proportions. Emerging research indicates that built environment and community programming interventions can play a vital role in transforming communities to promote public health and increase active living. In 2012, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) was contacted by the Colorado Health Foundation to provide advice on these public health issues through the Healthy Places: Designing an Active Colorado initiative. The foundation contracted with ULI for a series of three Advisory Services panels representing three different community typologies: urban, suburban, and rural.

Through the Advisory Services program, ULI provided land use, transportation, real estate, architectural, and public health experts for these three assignments, which represent the first time that ULI advisory panels have concentrated specifically on the connection between health and land use. The Colorado Health Foundation wanted a replicable program, so evaluating the three typologies produces a body of work that can be applied to other communities in Colorado.

The foundation received 26 requests from Colorado communities that wanted to participate in this initiative. Through a competitive request-for-proposals process, communities were asked to demonstrate their readiness and ability to engage stakeholders in identifying and addressing improvements to their built environments to encourage active living and to take part in the ULI panel program. Three communities were selected: Arvada, Lamar, and the Westwood neighborhood of Denver.

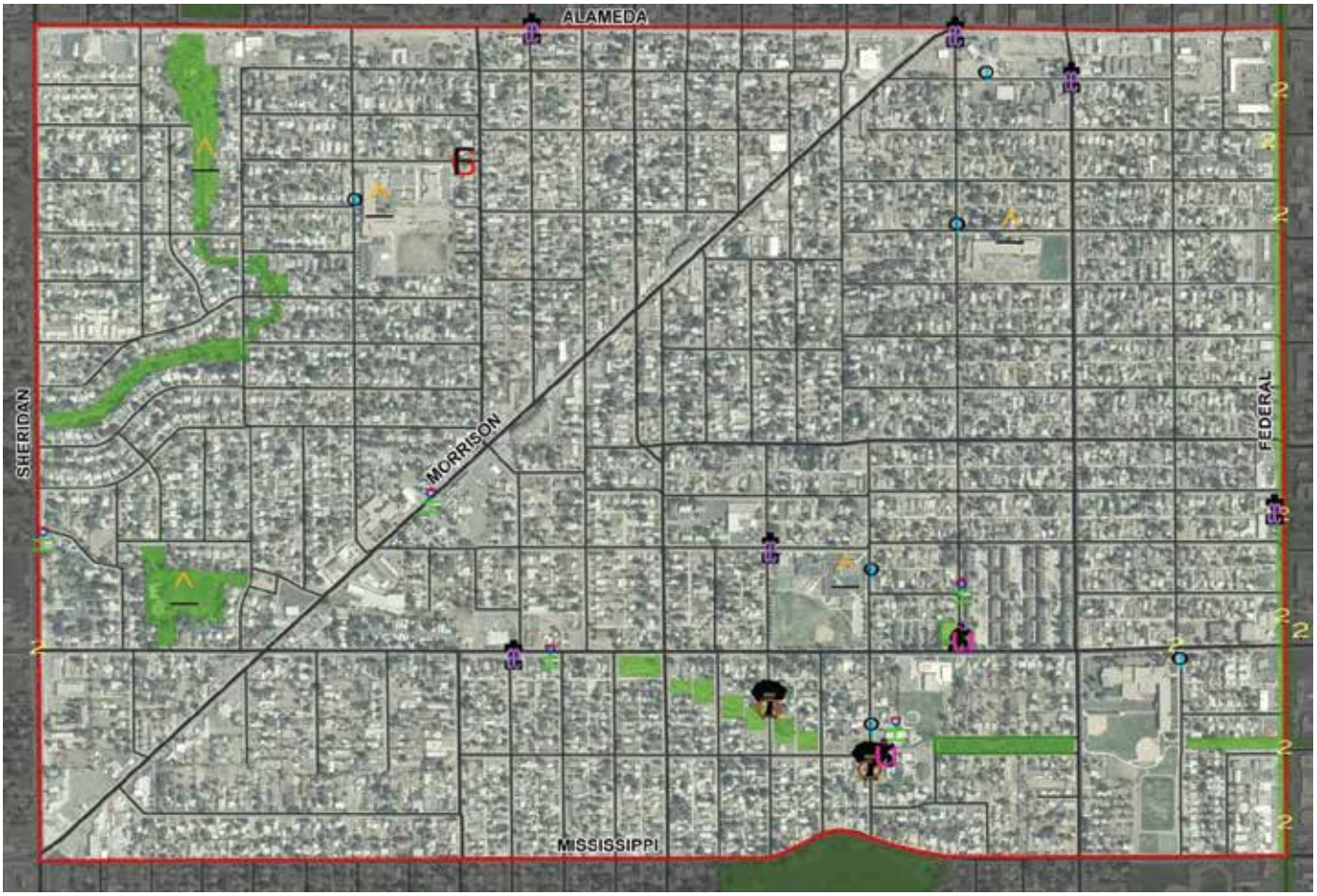
Major Concepts in Designing Healthy Communities

Once part of people's normal lives, physical activity has been designed out of daily living. Desk jobs have, to a large degree, taken the place of manual labor, driving has mostly replaced walking and biking, elevators and escalators have supplanted stair climbing, and televisions and computer games have displaced outdoor recreation, especially among children. The design of buildings and neighborhoods often makes physical activity unnatural, difficult, or dangerous, especially for children and the elderly, those with disabilities, and low-income individuals. Rather than telling people to go to the gym, the Colorado Healthy Places initiative was designed to encourage Colorado communities to create opportunities for building physical activity into citizens' daily routines.

Study Area

The study area that was the subject of this panel is the Westwood neighborhood of Denver. It is a diverse, lower-income neighborhood with approximately 15,500 residents. Westwood, which is generally considered to be bounded by Alameda Avenue on the north, Federal Boulevard on the east, Mississippi Avenue on the south, and

Area map.



An aerial view of the Westwood neighborhood.

Sheridan on the west, is about 1.5 square miles in area. It predominantly comprises single-family homes, with many containing multigenerational families.

Westwood's demographics are notable for a variety of reasons. The percentage of residents under the age of 18 is 36.6 percent—over 15 percent more than Denver as a whole. The average household income is $37,961 per year, which is about $20,000 less than the average for the entire city. Most critical, the neighborhood is over 80 percent Latino and 25 percent do not speak English, giving it a unique cultural identity that can be built upon when the best strategies for promoting healthy living through the built environment are being considered.

The Panel's Assignment

The Piton Foundation rated Westwood as Denver's second-most-vulnerable neighborhood in terms of being prepared to help children thrive. Local community stakeholders have worked to identify the major issues that create obstacles to healthy living in Westwood. These include walkability with a special emphasis on the incomplete sidewalk network and pedestrian safety, bikability, and the lack of community gathering spaces. The panel was charged with considering these concerns with an eye toward the following goals:

- Framing and promoting a strong emphasis on community health issues through this initiative.
- Defining strategies for prioritizing and activating plans, programs, and initiatives with clearly delineated time frames, financing, and organizational strategies.
- Developing benchmarks that can measure behavioral, health, economic, and policy impacts of improvements that arise from this process.
- Inspiring policy makers and residents around "best practices" for achieving greater levels of walking and biking in similar communities.
- Developing communication strategies for community education and peer-to-peer outreach.

Summary of Recommendations

While Westwood faces many challenges and barriers to active living and better health, it also has many assets and strengths. First of all, it has great people who have incredible energy and determination. It has a strong belief in education and learning. It has a distinctive multicultural history and identity. It is a multigenerational neighborhood that values family and children. It has a diverse group of dedicated nonprofit organizations all working to improve the neighborhood in one way or another, including LiveWell Westwood, BuCu West, and Westwood Unidos. Finally, it has a talented and dynamic city council member who has worked tirelessly for the betterment of Westwood and its residents. In short, the neighborhood has great energy and spirit, great people and organizations, and great culture and tradition.

However, it is clear to the ULI panel that Westwood has been ignored and neglected. It is also clear to the panelists that it lacks the facilities and resources that many other Denver neighborhoods have. It is underserved with parks, walking paths, bike trails, sidewalks, and recreation and other facilities. However, what Westwood lacks most is a focus, both physical and programmatic. The panel believes that Westwood needs a targeted and strategic focus to better harness the resources and attention of all the various groups and organizations working independently for the betterment of the neighborhood. The lack of focus means that energy and resources are dispersed among many groups and in many geographically diverse locations.

The panel believes that Morrison Road should be enhanced to become the cultural and physical focus of Westwood, with a community *mercado* and plaza where people can gather for conversation and interaction, where community festivals and events can be held, and where vendors can sell their wares. To make all this work, the city will have to slow down and calm the traffic along Morrison Road. It also will have to encourage art and infuse culture into the built and social environment in a way that authentically represents Westwood's multicultural heritage. In addition, it will have to encourage the relocation of the auto-oriented uses that currently make Morrison Road unappealing for pedestrians and small businesses.

To achieve this vision, Westwood should establish itself as an open and receptive location for painters, sculptors, muralists, and other working artists of Latino and Native American heritage. The neighborhood includes a number of structurally sound but vacant or underused buildings. In some instances, the interiors could become studios for working artists. In other instances, the exterior walls of these buildings could become blank canvases upon which artists can work with the local community to create vibrant and culturally representative murals or business signs. Already a tradition is emerging within the neighborhood for this type of collaboration, and Westwood should seek to build on it. These activities will reinvigorate the appearance of Morrison Road, build a brand for the Westwood neighborhood, and make the street a much better place for walking and biking.

In addition to repurposing Morrison Road, Westwood should focus on building a new recreation and wellness center and attracting a small grocery store to the neighborhood. It should also make better use of its existing facilities by extending their hours; developing multiuse agreements with schools, churches, and nonprofit organizations; and strengthening the park and recreation system by adding new park facilities and making strategic interventions to render existing parks more usable, accessible, and animated.

STEPHANIE WHITEHILL

STEPHANIE WHITEHILL

During the site tour and briefing session, the panelists heard from community stakeholders like Norma Brambila, from Westwood Unidos, and city councilman Paul López.

The panelists, pictured in the lower lefthand corner of the image, toured the Morrison Road corridor and believe that its role as the heart of the neighborhood should be enhanced through strategic interventions.

STEPHANIE WHITEHILL

Economic and Market Overview

THK ASSOCIATES INC. PROVIDED THE PANEL with a market overview of metropolitan Denver. In 2013, metropolitan Denver is a seven-county region that includes more than 2.9 million people in almost 1.2 million households, of which 1.9 million people are employed. Since 1980, metro Denver has grown annually by almost 28,000 jobs per year, which has stimulated annual population growth of nearly 40,000 people in 17,000 households. Over the next ten years, the metro area's economy is projected to grow by an additional 29,000 jobs per year, which will fuel annual population growth to 46,000 people in 18,000 households.

The Westwood neighborhood is part of Denver County and the central submarket of metro Denver. Denver County today has 634,000 people living in 278,000 households. Since 1980, Denver County has captured 10.9 percent of metro Denver's population growth. Since 1980, the Westwood neighborhood has been growing by 164 people in 30 households; and since 1990, annual population growth has been at a rate of 35 people in 29 households. Over the next decade, assuming land is available for redevelopment, Westwood is projected to grow annually by 310 people in 60 households. By 2023, Westwood is expected to have 24,540 people living in 5,255 households.

Office

The Seven-County Denver Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) office market is profiled as nine major submarkets. Westwood is located in the west submarket. As of the fourth quarter of 2012, there were approximately 107 million square feet of office space in the Seven-County Denver CMSA, of which 7,094,005 square feet or 6.6 percent was located within the west submarket. The Westwood neighborhood office market includes a minimal 12,000 square feet, mostly located along the Morrison Road corridor. The majority of office space is composed of converted homes and small buildings.

Since 1970, the Denver CMSA has averaged 3,938,408 square feet of new office space construction per year, of which 422,043 square feet or 10.7 percent has been located within the northwest suburban submarket. In the last five years, the Denver CMSA average office construction has decreased to 977,085 square feet per year, while the northwest suburban submarket average has decreased to 270,559 square feet or 27.7 percent of the total.

Westwood, through the redevelopment of the Morrison Road corridor, should be able to support an additional 4,841 square feet of office space per year over the coming decade. Westwood can expect 53,246 square feet of new office space cumulatively over the next ten years.

Industrial/Flex

The Seven-County Denver CMSA industrial market is characterized as five major industrial submarkets. Westwood is located within the southwest submarket. As of the first quarter of 2013, there were 174,816,595 square feet of industrial space in the entire market, with 17,448,848 square feet within the southwest submarket. The overall Denver CMSA industrial market has a vacancy rate of 6.89 percent, with the southwest submarket at 5.32 percent.

The industrial employment sector in the Denver CMSA is expected to increase from 410,247 jobs in 2013 to 471,761 jobs by 2023, averaging 6,151 new jobs per year over the next decade. Based on an industrial average of 450 square feet of space per person, there will be an average annual demand for 3,340,027 square feet of occupied industrial space over the next decade to accommodate the industrial employment growth. As employment growth will remain steady in 2013, there will be a demand for 2,737,319 square feet of occupied space by year-end.

Given the location of Westwood and the lack of available land, THK Associates has determined that there is no industrial or flex demand currently, and that there likely will be little to no demand over the coming decade.

Retail

The Seven-County Denver CMSA retail market is divided into 12 major submarkets. Westwood is located in the west submarket. As of the first quarter of 2013, there were 88,935,673 square feet of retail space in the entire Denver CMSA, with 8,541,912 square feet or 9.6 percent located within the west submarket. Overall, the current vacancy rate is 8.21 percent in the Denver CMSA retail market, while the west submarket retail vacancy rate stands at 6.68 percent. Westwood has 169,000 square feet of retail space, of which 12,000 square feet are vacant (1.9 percent).

The median gross family income in the Westwood neighborhood is $29,506. Given the nature of business in the area, THK believes there is considerable unreported income within the neighborhood. After accounting for taxes, housing, savings, and other typical household expenditures, $5,416 is left over for retail uses. Westwood is expected to add 60 new households annually over the next decade. At present, the neighborhood can support 227,244 square feet of retail space, which will rise to 257,747 square feet by 2023. It is estimated that the market for retail space in Westwood will grow by 7,485 square feet per year.

Residential

Historically, construction in metro Denver has averaged 11,700 single-family units and 5,450 multifamily units annually since 1980. In the last five years, these numbers have fallen to 4,850 single-family units and 3,470 multi-family units per year.

Over the next decade, construction in the Denver metropolitan area will average 18,480 residential units per annum, of which 10,785 will be detached single-family houses, 2,723 will be townhouses and condominiums, and 4,972 will be apartments.

Westwood has not experienced any residential development since 2004, the year when the low-income Paloma Villa Apartments were developed. At present, there is a proposed project comprising 16 townhouses on the corner of South Utica and Mississippi. No residential development has occurred within a two-mile (3.22 km) radius of the neighborhood since 2011. The last projects to be built out were in Belmar. Belmar and the surrounding area have witnessed the addition of 563 occupied residential units since 2001. If land were available for new residential projects, Westwood should look to bleed into the newly redeveloped Belmar subdivision.

Assuming that land is available, Westwood will experience an annual average demand for 71 units, including 19 single-family units, 22 townhomes and condominiums, and 42 apartment units. Most of the multifamily development is expected—and recommended—to occur at the entrances to the Morrison Road corridor to create anchors for the redevelopment of the corridor as a whole.

Understanding and Designing a Healthy, Active Community

HISTORY INDICATES THAT CHANGES to the built environment can have a tremendous impact on the health of a population. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many cities faced severe epidemics of infectious disease, including tuberculosis, cholera, and yellow fever. These epidemics were effectively mitigated through a variety of changes in public infrastructure and design. For example, aqueducts were built to pipe in fresh water, parks were established to allow for access to fresh air and open space, rail lines offered a reliable mode of transportation that allowed people to commute to work and helped relieve urban overcrowding, and development regulations set minimum standards for what constituted a healthy living environment (e.g., the New York State Tenement House Act of 1901).

Today, communities across the United States are facing obesity and chronic disease rates of epic proportions. Emerging research indicates once again that built-environment interventions can play a role in transforming communities to promote public health. This section provides background on today's health concerns from both national and local perspectives. It also outlines a series of best-practice guidelines for shaping a built environment that supports community health.

Children who are able to engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day will be healthier.

MARK STEVENS

Understanding Today's Obesity and Chronic Illness Epidemic

People who are overweight or obese are at higher risk for many chronic illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and some forms of cancers. Today, approximately two-thirds of U.S. adults and one-third of U.S. youth are obese or overweight, with rates expected to continue to increase dramatically. Since 1980, obesity rates have doubled among U.S. adults and tripled among U.S. children.

The costs of this epidemic are staggering. In 2008, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that medical costs attributable to obesity were approximately $147 billion per year. If trends continue along these lines, by 2030, 86 percent of adults will be overweight or obese, and total attributable health care costs will be $860 billion to $956 billion per year.

Colorado is experiencing even higher obesity rates in its children. In 2004, 28.4 percent of the children in the state were overweight or obese; in 2011, that percentage climbed to 31.4. The childhood obesity rates are even greater among Colorado's ethnic and minority children: 33 percent of Latino children were overweight or obese between 2008 and 2010. These data are important for the Westwood neighborhood, where approximately one-third (32.9 percent) of the population is under 18 years of age.

Benefits of Physical Activity

Physical activity is a critical part of weight control and chronic disease prevention, but research shows that less than half of U.S. adults and youth report meeting recommended levels of physical activity. The U.S. surgeon general calls for adults to have at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity) every week. Children and adolescents

should have at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. However, in Colorado, only 49 percent of Colorado children five to 14 years of age get 60 minutes of physical activity each day (2011 Community Health Survey), and only 29 percent of Colorado adolescents get 60 minutes of physical activity each day (2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey). Clearly, Colorado's children are in need of more physical activity.

The benefits of physical activity extend far beyond weight management, and include the following:

- Lowered risk for cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, and colon and breast cancers;
- Reduced stress levels and improved mental health;
- Improved academic performance in children;
- Stronger bones;
- Improved balance; and
- Increased life expectancy.

Health Disparities

Given these benefits, physical activity is truly the best medicine for promoting health and preventing illness. In line with this, the World Health Organization has called for "health and health equity" to be at the heart of city planning and governance. Communities should strive to create environments that are supportive of healthy lifestyles and maximize opportunities for all residents to get the daily physical activity they need to stay healthy. Although some residents may have the money to join a gym and the time to visit it regularly, the Healthy Places initiative study area has many low-income residents who may not have this luxury. An association often exists between lower economic status and poor health outcomes. Improvements to health-supporting community infrastructure such as pedestrian paths, bikeways, recreational facilities, and accessible, healthy food options can go a long way toward ensuring that all members of the community can live healthier lives.

MARK STOSBERG

Investment in robust bicycle infrastructure will encourage increased physical activity in everyday transportation, exemplified by this combination bus stop/bike rack in Portland, Oregon.

The Westwood study area is home to many low-income residents with high health needs. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the median household income in the Denver-Aurora-Broomfield Metropolitan Statistical Area median is $73,900, but 24 percent of Westwood's residents live in poverty. A large percentage of children (over 87 percent) in the study area qualify for free and reduced-price lunch programs. In addition, Kaiser Permanente released sobering statistics regarding obesity in 2008. Among Kaiser members in Westwood, 41 percent of women and 24 percent of men are overweight or obese, and 38 percent of all patients over the age of 30 are overweight or obese.

Research shows a current trend in communities of focusing on the importance of the built environment when promoting and improving health. In the words of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, "We ought to plan the ideal of our city with an eye to four considerations. The first, as being the most indispensable, is health" (*Politics*, ca. 350 B.C.). In today's trend of concentrating on the connection between built environment and health, communities are offering both deliberate and incidental opportunities for physical activity, with the goal of the healthier choice being the easier choice. Successes in improving health through altering the built environment are seen through Portland, Oregon's extensive bike infrastructure system. Portland's bike system is comprehensive, connected, and user-friendly.

Planning and Design

THE WESTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD sits only a few miles from downtown Denver, the heart of the metropolitan region. Morrison Road was the first route into the city from the south, and visible reminders of the connection between the neighborhood and the city center remain. However, it is primarily auto-oriented, with limited opportunities for safe outdoor walking and other types of recreation.

Physical Characteristics

The panel noted the following defining physical characteristics of the neighborhood.

Morrison Road

Residents consistently identify Morrison Road as the center of the community, yet the roadway's high vehicular speeds and lack of traffic controls also make it a barrier. In addition, Morrison Road's diagonal alignment relative to the neighborhood street grid creates awkward intersections that are unsafe and uncomfortable for pedestrians.

Morrison Road, the primary commercial corridor in Westwood, lacks pedestrian amenities like crosswalks and wide sidewalks that play a role in ensuring the safety of walkers.

The sidewalk network in Westwood is inconsistent in quality and often too narrow for even two pedestrians to walk abreast.

Roads and Sidewalks

These conditions add to Westwood's overall lack of pedestrian features, including narrow or absent sidewalks, a dearth of street trees, and large-scale commercial uses with little relationship to the street frontage. Not surprisingly, Westwood's "walk score" is an underperforming 48 of 100, and the community rates 68 out of 78 neighborhoods measured in Denver. At present, the city is planning paving upgrades to streets and alleys.

Parks

The Westwood neighborhood includes only a nominal amount of formal public open space, including Westwood Park and the recently started Cuatro Vientos Park. Many

STEPHANIE WHITEHILL

Westwood Park does have some recreational facilities, but not nearly enough to meet the needs of the neighborhood.

The forthcoming Cuatro Vientos Park will add capacity to Westwood's public recreational opportunities.

opportunities exist, however, to create a range of formal civic and recreational spaces within the neighborhood.

Weir Gulch runs through the northwestern corner of the neighborhood and represents a unique opportunity to add to the functional open space within the neighborhood, as has been done in adjacent neighborhoods. A new concrete trail along Weir Gulch from Sheridan to Alameda is currently 95 percent complete.

Alleys

Westwood originally developed as an unincorporated community, resulting in some physical conditions that do not meet city standards. For example, many portions of Westwood include alleys that are poorly lit and serve as locations for Dumpsters, attracting "tagging" (graffiti labeling), illegal dumping, and unsanitary conditions. Of the 113 neighborhood alleys, 92 are owned and maintained by the city and 21 are privately owned; some alleys also include sanitary sewer easements. The city is currently engaged in paving all the alleys, regardless of ownership. In general, the alleys exhibit a generally disheveled physical character, which makes them less desirable as places to walk or bike.

Alleys in the Westwood neighborhood are in varying conditions. Some have been paved by the city and are part of a program allowing residents to decorate them. Others, like the one pictured, are in disrepair and often subject to illegal dumping and graffiti.

The pattern of alleys also represents potential for providing much-needed open space. In other communities, alleys are paved and function not only for walking and biking but also as a vibrant form of communal space. Programs have been established to allow residents to decorate the alleys, further enhancing their appearance and creating a greater sense of communal ownership. A 2013 report by two University of Colorado at Denver students, Ryann Anderson and Matthew Lamendola, titled *Report on Neighborhood Alleys: Westwood, Denver, CO*, provides useful information on existing conditions and potential uses for alleys in the Westwood neighborhood.

Walls

The external appearance and physical presence of many buildings could be enhanced by repainting the facades or using them as a base for public murals.

Many walls in Westwood are blank with few windows, making them uninviting to walk past but also prime canvases for vibrant murals that reflect the neighborhood's culture.

The cultural tradition of painting buildings with bright colors is present on some structures in Westwood. This practice should be encouraged as it adds to neighborhood character and enhances the pedestrian environment.

Several buildings in the neighborhood include colorful and unique wall murals. These enhance the sense of identity for both the buildings and the neighborhood. Murals can be used to enhance any vertical surface, including fences. They also help enhance the overall neighborhood character and serve as an opportunity to create a unique and vibrant identity as well as to tell stories, display history, and convey relevant messages to residents and visitors.

Color and Scale

Many cultures have a tradition of painting their buildings with vibrant and eye-catching colors. The Westwood neighborhood has examples of this, and such practices should be encouraged as a way of enhancing the identity of both the individual establishment and the community as a whole.

Along certain parts of Morrison Road, the street section is relatively well defined with multistory buildings adjacent to the sidewalks and across from one another, making a clearly defined urban space. Along most of the corridor, however, buildings are smaller and set back from the street, often at an angle, creating a less desirable condition.

Civic and Commercial Uses

The Westwood neighborhood contains a number of formal spaces where residents and community members can gather for a range of social situations. The development of both public and quasi-public civic spaces should be encouraged throughout the neighborhood.

While the Westwood neighborhood is underserved by neighborhood-scale commercial uses, there are several sections along Morrison Road in which groups of viable shops, stores, and restaurants have established themselves. Expanding these uses with the idea of establishing a "Mercado Westwood" should be explored. These should be supported and additional such entities encouraged.

The Westwood neighborhood also contains a wide variety of active automotive uses. Viable commercial enterprises should be maintained, and encouraged to match the design standards that are starting to emerge along the length of the Morrison Road corridor.

Opportunity Sites

While the vast majority of the neighborhood is built out with viable structures and uses, there are a number of key sites that are ideally poised for redevelopment. These areas are described in more detail in the Implementation and Development Strategies section of this report.

Proposals for Healthy Design

The panel's design proposals for Westwood's built environment focus on fostering a healthy community for all residents by:

- Creating a lively, pedestrian-oriented spine along Morrison Road, with specific recommendations for new cultural and food- and arts-oriented destinations, outdoor gathering areas, pedestrian promenades, and mixed-use development;
- Expanding opportunities for recreational facilities that encourage exercise, active lifestyles, locally grown food, and beneficial use of neighborhood alleyways; and
- Identifying safe and continuous pedestrian and bicycle connections that link schools, parks, homes, and services.

These proposals speak to the factors that have been shown worldwide to promote physical activity in urban environments: a diverse mix of land uses with walkable destinations; convenient proximity to parks, trails, and recreation facilities; access to beauty and nature; and facilities that serve both utilitarian (such as bicycle commuting) and recreational forms of activities. In addition, the proposals described on the pages that follow are intended to build on positive features in the community by targeting facilities

that are most critical to serving Westwood's residents. Proposals are intended to make the best use of current programs and initiatives to "grow from within" and support a framework for increased health and well-being.

Morrison Road Corridor: Transform from "Divider" to "Healthy Community Connector"

Residents consistently identify Morrison Road as the center of the community, yet the roadway's high vehicular speeds and lack of traffic controls also make it a barrier. In addition, Morrison Road's diagonal alignment relative to the neighborhood street grid creates awkward intersections that are unsafe and inhospitable for pedestrians. These conditions add to Westwood's pedestrian-unfriendly features, which include narrow or absent sidewalks, a dearth of street trees, and large-scale commercial uses with little relationship to the street frontage. In line with this, Westwood's "walk score" is an underperforming 48 out of 100, and the community ranks 68 out of 78 neighborhoods measured in Denver.

At the same time, new and continuing uses and activities along Morrison Road have begun to reveal potential for improvement. These uses include new three-story apartment buildings, the BuCu West mixed-use development, murals, civic facilities, and a variety of local, authentic cafés and bakeries. The thoroughfare also offers excellent views southward to the foothills and northward to Denver's downtown.

To address these deficiencies and opportunities, a variety of physical changes should be focused along the length of Morrison Road to transform the street from a barrier into a dynamic and attractive pedestrian spine that encourages movement and fosters a healthy food culture. Key objectives are:

- Redeveloping Morrison Road as a community spine activated with shopping, restaurants, services, businesses, community theater, and urban housing, with comfortable, tree-shaded sidewalks and plazas offering art and music venues, seating, lighting, and murals.

Illustrative diagram of interventions in the Westwood neighborhood proposed by the panel.

JOEL WOLF

Neighborhood gateways, like this sign welcoming visitors and residents to San Diego's Hillcrest neighborhood, reflect a sense of community identity and accessibility.

RICHARD DROUL

Mid-block pedestrian crossings with bump-outs would create safer pedestrian crossings and contribute to traffic calming along Morrison Road.

- Reinventing Morrison Road as a "place to be" rather than continuing to let it serve as a shortcut for those who live outside the community. To do this, traffic-calming features should be introduced along the entire corridor, with traffic controls (e.g., stops or signals) for safe pedestrian crossings at Virginia Avenue and Exposition Avenue and a possible additional stop at Perry Street.
- Concentrating improvements on a pedestrian-friendly core area between the intersection with Kentucky Avenue in the south and the Virginia/Newton intersection in the north.
- Establishing community gateways into Westwood at Alameda Avenue in the north and Mississippi Avenue in the south using entry monuments, larger-scale plantings, and color, vertical elements, and design features that express community identity.
- Prioritizing development of a central node at the intersection of Morrison and Exposition, with a new *mercado*, grocery store, and commercial/residential mixed use.
- Creating a "food hub" node at the Virginia crossing and a "recreation/wellness center" node at the Kentucky crossing.

Streetscape Design. To establish Morrison Road as a healthy community connector, infill or new development must be coupled with design upgrades that define the street edge, attract pedestrians, and reinforce community life. Key design elements include a consistent, continuous street section that favors pedestrians instead of cars, with features to include:

- A narrower vehicular width (see graphic below).
- Wider sidewalks.
- Continuous lighting and planting of shade trees in tree wells.

Proposed street section design for Morrison Road.

This proposal for a central node at the intersection of Morrison Road and Exposition Avenue would take advantage of opportunities offered by sites such as the Thriftway parcel to create a mercado *and other features.*

- Buildings and building entrances oriented to the street.
- Use of awkward intersections to make places for art, murals, music, and performances; this could include some minor street closures, such as at West Custer Place, to create small gathering areas and destinations along the street.
- Use of existing triangular intersections to create small plazas with seating and shade trees.
- Incorporation of murals on building walls to enliven the street and display public art.

Additional design options that may be appropriate, based on more detailed studies and community input, include reduced speed limits, traffic circles, chicanes, bulb-outs, crosswalks, pavement markings, colored pavement, commemorative brass plaques or dance steps installed on sidewalks, and painted footprints and mileage markers. Sidewalk upgrades are especially key; sidewalks should be improved and in some areas even doubled in width, and street trees should be installed to provide shade and enhance aesthetics. These efforts will drastically improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, as well as the perception of safety, and will promote a healthy tradition of "promenading" along Morrison Road.

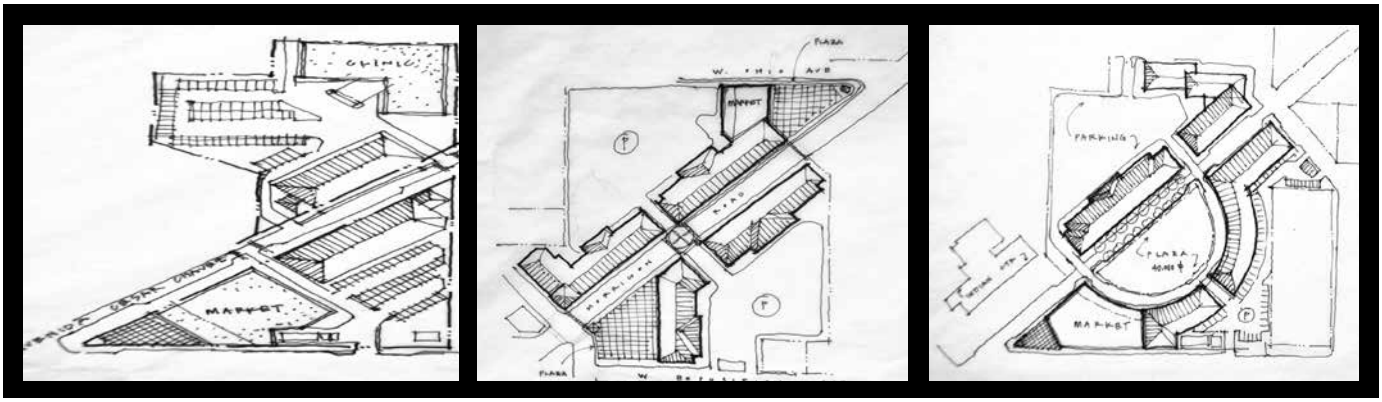
Central Node and Secondary Nodes. Given the central location, current activities, and property configurations at the intersection of Morrison Road and Exposition Avenue, this area should be prioritized as a "central node" that initiates healthy community improvements within Westwood. The multifaceted project could be configured in various ways, as shown, and may be designed to take advantage of available properties such as the Thriftway parcel. Features should include:

- Traffic control for safe crossings (e.g., traffic signal or traffic stop, to prioritize pedestrian crossing);
- New *mercado*, plaza, grocery, and homes located over retail space, or possible clinic or other community services;
- Street closures for major events; and
- Flexible space for food and art markets, street vendors, temporary stalls and installations, and food carts.

Other recommended Morrison Road sites at which to focus healthy community improvements are:

- A new recreation/wellness center on approximately 5.4 acres at Morrison Road and Kentucky Avenue. This would provide indoor and outdoor facilities (see below for more details) and could repurpose existing buildings on Morrison and/or include new buildings.
- A new Westwood food hub, reinforcing current work by Revision, located at Morrison Road and Virginia Avenue, with traffic control for safe pedestrian crossings and food-related facilities such as urban farms and gardens, kitchens, education, and resources.

These sketches propose different urban design concepts for the central node, each incorporating a plaza, a mercado*, features to enhance pedestrian safety and calm traffic, and flexible space for art markets, food carts, and events.*



The map of Westwood on the left shows existing parks and recreational spaces in green. The map on the right shows how far the neighborhood is from meeting the city of Denver's standard of ten acres of park space per 1,000 residents. The green square represents all of Westwood's park acreage consolidated, with the larger dashed square representing the park area needed to meet the municipal standard.

Parks and Recreational Facilities

Recreational industry standards typically require a minimum of ten acres of neighborhood and community park space per 1,000 residents within a community. Given Westwood's population of approximately 15,500 residents, this would mean 155 acres of parkland. Also, the city aims to provide park space within a half mile of all residents.

Westwood's existing park facilities fall far short of achieving this standard. At present, most residents are not within walking distance of active recreation facilities and there are only 18 acres of parkland within the community, yielding a ratio of 1.2 acres per 1,000 residents. Even with the addition of open areas located within utility easements, the ratio of park space to residents is only 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents, as shown below. This contrasts sharply with conditions within many Denver neighborhoods, where park space is available at a ratio of about ten to 15 acres per 1,000 residents. The lack of pedestrian crossings along Morrison Road and Mississippi Avenue further limits access to Westwood Park or Garfield Park to the south.

Additional recreational facilities are located at Westwood's four schools (Knapp Elementary, Castro Elementary, Monroe Elementary, and Kepner Middle School), at the Southwest Improvement Council (SWIC) Community Center, and at the Boys & Girls Club. These facilities are well used and fully subscribed for their respective purposes; in addition, SWIC's limited range of services and hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. during weekdays) makes it inaccessible to many residents, especially schoolchildren. Weir Gulch provides recently built trails that offer connections within the community and to the Platt River to the northeast.

Outside the community, the nearest park facilities include Garfield Lake Park to the south, Huston Lake Park to the east, and Barnum Park and Recreation Center to the north. Access to these off-site recreational sites, however, requires crossing of the major arterials that define the boundaries of the Westwood community.

These factors point to a severe insufficiency of recreational facilities within Westwood. Children are especially vulnerable to problems associated with the lack of adequate park space, including unsafe conditions that discourage active play, walking, and healthy activities; these problems underlie the community's high rates of crime, obesity, and other health issues. The situation calls for both increased amounts of recreational facilities and better use of existing resources, both physical and programmatic, proposals for which are described later in this report.

Interviews with the city's parks and recreation department revealed that it is aware of the relative lack of recreational facilities within Westwood and is interested in identifying possible acquisitions for additional parks. This awareness led to the development of the new park at Alameda and Newton, which is slated to begin construction in September 2013 after considerable input from residents. In addition, while cost-cutting measures are currently resulting in a trend toward larger recreation centers that are farther away, the city may also be studying opportunities for an additional recreation center on the west side of Denver.

Park and Open Space Acreage

Park/open space	Approximate size (acres)	Acres per 1,000 residents
Westwood Park	5.1	
Knox Court Park	0.3	
New Park (Alameda/Newton)	1.5	
Weir Gulch	11.1	
Subtotal	18.0	
Utility easements	6.2	
Total parks + gulch + easement	24.2	1.6

The panel proposes expansions of and upgrades to Westwood Park, including lighting to improve safety, more space, and equipment and programming specifically designed to increase fitness levels.

To augment the existing park facilities in Westwood, this study proposes to:

- Add park acreage by making the best use of vacant and underused parcels as they become available;
- Look for opportunities to expand existing parks and open corridors; and
- Focus on facilities that are likely to be well used by residents, including continuous trails, futsal (a variant of association football that is played on a smaller pitch and mainly played indoors), multipurpose or soccer fields, and a recreation/wellness center that supports indoor and outdoor uses.

Park and recreational facilities are proposed as follows. Additional measures for Morrison Road are discussed separately on previous pages.

Westwood Park Expansion and Improvements

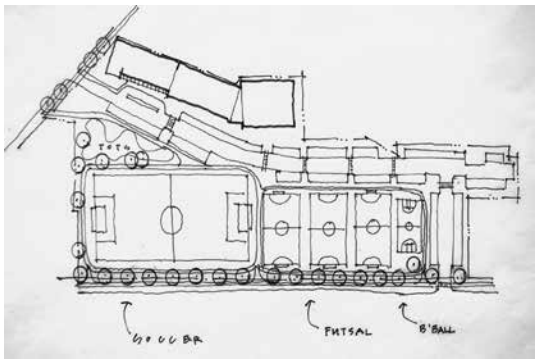
Westwood Park will benefit from expansion and upgrades to make it safer, more visible, and better used. This process should incorporate input from the entire Westwood community and could be spearheaded by LiveWell Westwood or Westwood Unidos in coordination with the city. The focus of this process should be to accomplish:

- Increased frontage along Kentucky to improve safety and visibility;
- Improvements to lighting for safety and evening use (lighting to be designed to not affect neighbors);
- Improvements to trails for surfacing suited to skating;
- Additional trails;
- Increased acreage and upgrades to playgrounds, fields, seating, and other features; and
- Incorporation of "fitness zone" equipment for outdoor cardiovascular exercise, sited within view of children's play areas.

Recreation/Wellness Center and Community Park

As described above, this study proposes a new recreation/wellness center and adjacent active open space at Morrison and Kentucky. This 5.4-acre site is located approximately halfway between Barnum Recreation Center to the north and Harvey Park Recreation Center to the south, making it an appropriate location for the city to construct a new facility on the west side of Denver. In addition, the existing mobile-home park along Kentucky Avenue is proposed for conversion to active community recreational space. The facility could include:

- Indoor recreational space to support popular activities such as futsal/indoor soccer, dance/Zumba, basketball, and weight training. This indoor space could be created through the conversion of existing structures and/or new buildings.
- Outdoor facilities such as multipurpose fields, playground/splash pad, parking, trails, fitness equipment, and seating. The use of artificial turf is recommended to support high levels of active use throughout the year.



The panel's proposed layout for a new recreation/wellness center at the intersection of Morrison and Kentucky includes space that can be programmed flexibly.

- Classrooms for tutoring, education, and meetings.
- Kitchens for nutrition/healthy eating education and events.
- Drop-in clinic for family health care including eye care, dental care, and other key issues as identified by community caregivers and school principals.
- Trail and greenway linkages connecting to Morrison Road, Westwood Park, and destinations to the east.

Weir Gulch

As part of its Flood Hazard Area delineation to be prepared this coming year as part of the Drainage Master Plan, the city anticipates the need for additional acreage along Weir Gulch. To provide expanded park space within Westwood, the panelists recommend that future improvements to urban drainage infrastructure be considered as part of the overall park system, including the following steps:

- Acquisition of acreage along the corridor to allow Weir Gulch to become a "linear park" instead of a steep and narrow corridor;
- Addition of activities along the park including playgrounds/tot lots, "fitness zone" equipment, seating, picnic shelters, and other features;
- Lighting to increase safety and usability; and
- Conversion of the drainage facility from a concrete channel, which attracts tagging and littering, into an earthen drainage with habitat enhancement and planting, similar to that seen in the Lakewood/Dry Gulch area.

Urban Agriculture

The community benefits of urban agriculture are numerous. Beyond the obvious encouragement of healthy eating, community or "civic" agriculture has other benefits, including:

- Enhanced civic engagement through cooperative agricultural labor;
- Enhanced community pride;
- Augmented income through the sale of produce and reduced grocery bills;

Improvements should be made to Weir Gulch to allow it to become a linear park with opportunities for fitness activities and other programming.

- Beautified vacant parcels of land; and
- Economic development promoted through the marketing and sale of raw, semiprocessed, and processed food products, as well as the marketing of local food events and festivals.

Revision, a local nonprofit group based on Morrison Road in Westwood, provides material and instructional support for families and organizations interested in growing food. At present, Revision has 203 backyard gardens in southwest Denver neighborhoods, with the heaviest concentration (approximately 90 gardens) in Westwood, and reports a waiting list of about 50 more families. The majority of homegrown food is consumed by the family and shared with friends, neighbors, and relatives. Revision's co-op, currently under development, will be aggregating some of the surplus this year and selling it on behalf of the families.

Revision reports that Westwood's Hispanic families tend to prefer maintaining gardens in their own backyards rather than as collective community gardens. However, Revision also operates two urban farms within Westwood, including a 0.75-acre farm at Kepner Middle School that is transitioning to an educational farm for the school and surrounding neighborhood. A second farm focused on food production is used by 40 Somali Bantu refugee families who retain about 25 percent of the produce; the rest will be sold through Revision's co-op. To be viable, additional urban farms require at least an acre of vacant land.

Encouraging and expanding these activities supports the vision of a healthy community as well as other community goals—notably, establishing a vibrant neighborhood identity and "brand" identity for ethnic food. A robust promotion of and support for urban agricultural could include the following:

- Expanding the backyard gardening program to include support of all interested residents;
- Coordinating Revision's programs with other groups and resources to enhance outreach, funding, and common marketing and distribution efforts;
- Enhancing farm-to-table activities with neighborhood schools, especially those that engage students in food growing;
- Supporting the development of community-supported agriculture (CSA);
- Creating additional urban farms where sites of one acre or more can be found;
- Developing a "Westwood food hub" in a central location to provide a consolidation of resources, training, distribution, and information exchange for both neighborhood and nearby food producers;
- Developing a community kitchen for the cooking and processing of locally grown foods, such as canning and preparation of jellies, salsas, and meals; and
- Establishing a regular farmers market in a central location (either at Virginia Avenue or at a new central *mercado* at Exposition Avenue) for the sale of homegrown produce and prepared goods, exchange of information, and celebration of Westwood's food culture.

Substantial organizational resources are already engaged in Westwood promoting urban agriculture; these organizations should be supported and enhanced with additional nonprofit funding sources, and urban agriculture should be incorporated into neighborhood-wide efforts focused on both personal health and economic development.

Connectivity and Destinations

Connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists is critical to achieving healthy communities through increased mobility, access to recreational and civic destinations, relief of stress, and enhanced social interaction. Connections serve two basic purposes: utilitarian activities such as shopping and commuting to work or school, and recreational activities such as athletics and sports, children's play, and family strolls and promenades. Both utilitarian and recreational activities benefit from common elements of mixed use, walkability and bikability, discouragement of driving, accommodation of different population groups, and proximity. Recreational activities also benefit strongly

from access to nature and beauty, while utilitarian activities require a strong framework of street connections and adequate urban densities.

To strengthen these elements at Westwood, the panel proposes the following elements.

Continuous Green Connections. Mobility through Westwood is currently impeded by a lack of safe roadway crossings, the limited amount of parkland, insufficient lighting, narrow sidewalks, high vehicular speeds, and insufficient traffic-calming.

A series of neighborhood-wide loops linking parks, retail, and civic and school destinations can improve this situation and encourage healthy modes of travel by foot and bicycle. These links will focus on Morrison Road, Virginia Avenue, Knox Court, Wolff Street, and the east–west utility corridor as the primary loop, with associated upgrades to streets, bikeways, parks, and sidewalks as follows:

- Morrison Road should be redesigned as a pedestrian-friendly corridor with wide, shaded sidewalks and traffic-calming.
- Virginia Avenue and Knox Court should serve as "bicycle boulevards," with bicycles sharing the roadway and appropriate improvements for traffic-calming, street tree planting, sidewalks, signage, and lighting. Knox Court has already been identified as a bicycle boulevard providing a route from Westwood to the light-rail station located in Barnum to the north. While the design of this route is currently under study, the panelists recommend that it include traffic-calming that places a priority on bicyclists and pedestrians; this may include bicycles sharing the vehicular path in a "sharrow." This will allow Knox Court to fill a critical role as a north–south bicycle and pedestrian corridor linking schools, transit, and community services located at SWIC, the Boys & Girls Club, and Kepner Middle School.
- Weir Gulch and Westwood Park as well as Wolff Street should be expanded and improved to provide additional linkages that integrate them into the overall open space framework.
- The areas within the east–west transmission line utility easement can provide locations for active uses that promote physical health. For example, the half-acre parcels between Kentucky Avenue and Mississippi Avenue (near Perry Street) could accommodate a series of tot lots, community gardens, or public art installations connected by a continuous trail linking from the new recreation/wellness center along Morrison Road and the Kepner Middle School to the east.
- Additional north–south and east–west neighborhood streets should be prioritized for streetscape improvements, including street tree planting and sidewalk repair; these include Exposition Avenue, Stuart Street, Perry Street, and Irving Street.
- Streetscape improvements to the arterial roadways that border Westwood (Sheridan, Alameda, Federal, and Mississippi), including consistent street tree planting and narrowed vehicular lanes, will raise the image of the community, bring these corridors up to the standard of other major Denver boulevards, and encourage pedestrian movement to destinations such as shopping facilities or the new city park at Newton Street.

Alley Upgrades. In addition to providing informal circulation routes, Westwood's many backyard alleys offer potential for active recreation in proximity to family living spaces. Given that the parks and recreational projects described above are concentrated in the western areas, the panel proposes that an alley improvement pilot project be initiated within the eastern portion of the Westwood community. This project could then be extended to other portions of the community. Recommended improvements and interventions include the following:

- The conversion from Dumpster-based trash pickup to automated barrel pickup should be expedited, allowing alleys to be free of Dumpsters and associated dumping, tagging, and fire-setting. This could be implemented on a per-truck basis covering approximately 2,500 to 3,000 homes and costing $300,000 for conversion of track collection method. Dumpsters could be consolidated for efficient pickup routes.

STEPHANIE WHITEHILL

Westwood's successful alley improvement program should be expanded upon to include conversion of Dumpster-based trash pickup to automated barrel pickup.

- The paving projects that are underway should be completed.
- The active use of alleys should be encouraged through signage, cleanup programs, and basic landscape and planting upgrades.
- Where alleys are not required for private garage access, the installation of bollards should be considered to restrict vehicles and create safe places for kids to play and circulate. Bollards could be removed for utility access when required.
- The community's growing mural/art program should be built upon by painting fences and creating ground-level art and games such as hopscotch, four square, and mini-dodgeball.

Circulator Shuttle. Denver's light-rail system provides excellent access to work, educational, and other destinations within the urban area. However, the nearest station to Westwood is located in Barnum to the north, approximately 3.2 miles from the intersection of Mississippi Avenue and Morrison Road. This distance is too far for residents to walk or bicycle. Combined with the lack of bus service within Westwood, this situation limits residents' access to public transit.

To address this problem, a nine-mile "circulator" shuttle system should be initiated to loop between Westwood and the Barnum light-rail station. From the station, the circulator would head south on Perry Street and follow the route described in the righthand graphic below to serve civic facilities within Westwood as well the proposed new central node and Morrison Road; it would then return to the light-rail station via Morrison Road and Knox Court.

The map on the left shows the walking route from the intersection of Mississippi and Morrison. The light rail is 3.2 miles away. The panel proposes implementing a circulator shuttle system with the nine-mile route outlined on the right serving many major points, including the light rail.

GOOGLE MAPS

Implementation and Development Strategies

A key theme that emerged from the stakeholder interviews was: "We've done the planning; now we need to follow through!"

ALL OF THE CITIZENS LIVING IN WESTWOOD and the organizations that work there agree that the neighborhood and, more specifically, Morrison Road need help to become a walkable place where families feel comfortable and safe living. All stakeholders—including the neighborhood, the city of Denver, and local institutions—must be involved in the process in order to ensure success. The panel has recommended a series of opportunity sites that could serve as catalysts for revitalization, and provided specific details of both policy and physical interventions.

A Main Street for the Community

If Westwood is to be successful, and local residents healthier, then Morrison Road must be truly transformed. It needs to be designed for people, not cars, so that it can act as a vibrant "main street" to serve the needs of neighborhood residents and businesses. As a key public asset, the street would have a wholly different look, feel, and purpose than that which exist today. Through a variety of physical improvements to reduce speeds, lower accident rates and severity, and diminish commuter traffic, the improved street will elevate the pedestrian experience and raise the potential for community health and well-being. While such changes may result in some diversion of current pass-through traffic to other commuter arterials, this is a major must-do item.

Another important action will be to change the name of Morrison Road to Avenida Cesar Chavez. This name change will highlight the importance of the Latino community and it is consistent with other strategies suggested by the panel outlined later in this document, specifically the creation of a Latino cultural district.

The city has made substantial investments to develop innovative plans to improve health and mobility such as Denver Moves and the LiveWell Colorado partnership. Studies conducted since the mid-1980s have shown the need for transportation improvements to support pedestrians and promote new business. For the Westwood area, the Morrison Road Improvement Plan made recommendations to add bicycle lanes as well as medians and crosswalks at selected locations, and these changes have been partially implemented. Ironically, these improvements may have actually made it easier for Morrison Road to continue to serve as a significant commuter corridor, frustrating the goals for improved walkability and connections. Now, mothers and children must stressfully race across the street and risk injury daily. A redesigned street would prioritize people and culture over cars, and cars would not move as quickly. What is actually needed is "healthy congestion" for this street to serve its highest and best purpose.

Sidewalk features such as dance steps and colored pavement will add to the "Main Street" character of Morrison Road.

JOHN HENDERSON

Creating a Latino cultural district along Morrison Road would enhance Westwood's identity and make it a destination for people across the region.

To address this challenge, a variety of physical changes should be focused along the length of the street between the intersection at Kentucky in the south and the intersection at the West Virginia and Newton in the north. With use of community input, many techniques such as reduced speed limits, new signals, traffic circles, chicanes, bulb-outs, crosswalks, pavement markings, and others should be considered, designed, and built. Sidewalks should be improved and in some areas even doubled in width, and street trees should be installed to provide shade and enhance aesthetics. Techniques like colored pavement to give intersections, medians, or other areas a distinct color and/or pattern; commemorative brass plaques or dance steps installed on sidewalks; or painted footprints and mileage markers will heighten interest in the area. These efforts will result in dramatically improved pedestrian and bicycle safety, safe walking routes for students, and the perception of safety, and will promote a healthy walking lifestyle.

Cars will still be able to enter and exit the neighborhood, but it will be more tempting to park, walk, and shop, and to experience the unique neighborhood vitality of Westwood. In addition to on-street parking, two or three central car parking lots could be developed at key locations in advance of or as a part of new development, especially at the current locations of incompatible businesses. The new *avenida* would be a preferred location for informal gatherings and evening strolls, and could be enlivened by "pop-up" businesses or planned street closings for events.

Westwood residents and businesses also would benefit from transit services, but those have been curtailed or eliminated in recent years. Some bus stops that exist along arterials like Sheridan lack amenities such as seats, weather protection, and transit information. If bus stops are made a friendly and comfortable environment, they can become mini-hubs of community activity by allowing street vendors to sell, drawing in people and potentially boosting ridership. Operational strategies such as street closures should also be considered and implemented to start immediately using existing facilities to create a better sense of place. While allowing for local vehicle access, street closures could be rotated and would encourage walking and visiting among neighbors.

Latino Culture District

Westwood has unique and valuable assets—local culture, great food, and an engaged community wanting to improve the quality of life. Creating a Latino culture district in Westwood will maintain and enhance the cultural fabric while helping local businesses grow and thrive. A district designation would attract new visitors and new businesses and could help transform Westwood into a destination for vibrant arts, great shopping, and delicious food.

Techniques such as street signage that reflects the design character and Latino culture would likely be helpful, and the district could lead a branding study that could help further enhance and showcase Westwood's identity. Leaders can get guidance from the city and perhaps communicate with an existing district that could advise on specific "lessons learned." Another idea is to develop "sister neighborhood" relationships with other Denver neighborhoods to promote Westwood as a destination and increase its sense of inclusion into the Greater Denver region.

Farmers markets are a common feature of such districts and could allow Westwood residents to sell healthful food grown in their gardens. The district will also highlight an existing feature of the Westwood community—*los paleteros*—to thrive in the district with improved rules for better business for small-scale vendors. Culture, food, and arts districts drive business and visitors and increase vibrancy and identity with events such as streetfairs and festivals. A community development corporation (CDC) to serve as a community coordinator for "soft" implementation items will help to coordinate programs and ensure that priorities are met.

Murals on storefronts and walls add character and vibrancy to a neighborhood main street.

Vibrant Color and Images: Murals and Signs

Unlike thoroughfares in other Denver neighborhoods, Westwood's Morrison Road does not currently have chain-type businesses. Instead, small, individually owned *panaderías*, *carnecerías*, mom-and-pop stores, local restaurants, and one-of-a-kind businesses exist today, and more could easily fit in. Signage and wayfinding are key to success for these local businesses, and the use of color and images is especially important. In many cases, the owners of these businesses pay a sign painter to make a distinctive sign. With the forgoing of more expensive and resource-intensive materials such as illuminated plastic, neon, or metal, the medium of choice on Morrison is most often paint, which helps the business owners to express themselves inexpensively. These signs also contribute to community identity and color.

In Mexico, murals and graphics are an important communication tool historically used to educate and lend a strong visual element to the urban form. These strong visual elements become community wayfinding mechanisms. The murals and signage can be of a political, religious, or commercial nature, but they always add a certain kinetic, do-it-yourself type of energy to the place. The panelists encourage the continued use of murals and store signs along Morrison Road to liven up a built environment, especially on blank walls and tall fences. To welcome pedestrians from the adjacent residential streets, any blank walls on commercial buildings should be painted. The odd-shaped angles that intersect with Morrison are an asset in that they provide interesting perspectives from which to enjoy the artwork.

More murals that reflect and depict the culture, history, and vision of Westwood and Latino culture should be painted and maintained through collaborations with local businesses, community members, youth, and professional artists. The mural design process can serve as a tool for community engagement, blight remediation, neighborhood beautification, and demonstration of civic pride.

Land Use, Zoning, and Permitting: "It's All about Context"

Denver has undertaken a number of planning, zoning, and regulatory efforts over many years, and a number of plans have addressed Westwood specifically.

While specific recommendations have been implemented in other Denver neighborhoods, there has not been consistent and complete follow-through in Westwood:

- Change zoning to Main Street (MS) instead of Urban Edge – Mixed Use – Three-Story Maximum (E-MX 3): Kentucky to West Virginia
  - Review allowed uses to ensure *mercado* and arts district types
  - Disallow drive-through uses
  - Increase height limits as incentive
- Review building form standards to allow for varying style to reflect Latino-style facades, etc.
- Review sign code to liberalize standards and allow for mural-type business signage
- Review parking standards, cap or low minimum
- Complete zoning process where left over from 2010
- Review zoning for Capitol City Mobile Home Park (now Urban Edge – Two-Unit [E-TU-C])
- Review zoning code to
  - Encourage small-scale agriculture and food production
  - Allow small-size "apodments" or microhousing if market demand is demonstrated
  - Create infill/affordable dwelling units, especially those that would face alleyways
  - Confirm fence height and transparency requirements
- Consistency finding for comprehensive plan and intent statements in permitting decisions
- City-initiated General Development Plan (GDP)
  - Allows for master site planning and tailored development standards
  - Requires community involvement and is adopted administratively
  - Finds private or nonprofit developer partner(s) for acquisition, site design, and building
  - Incorporates easier rules for "pioneer" developments, allowances for catalyst projects
- Reduce incompatible uses and associated impacts
- Create strategy for legacy noncompatible businesses (larger open-air car repair and junk) that includes relocation and collocation
- Contains strategy for nightclubs to include local music and become neighborhood assets instead of liabilities.

For city plans, policies, and regulations to be fully implemented, designating a lead department to coordinate efforts is needed. The police, parks, planning, and public works departments have each made diligent efforts to engage residents and businesses in city projects, but the panel found that the number of respondents was modest and information was not always shared. This can lead to uncertainty and inconsistency, and will not help lead to positive outcomes. Also, the panel heard that internal decision-making structures and less finger-pointing are needed—especially between the public works and planning departments—so that limited resources and time are used efficiently and effectively.

Communication and Enforcement: Safety, Trash, and Graffiti

The panel heard of the need for improved communication mechanisms between neighborhood residents and city staff and police. Interactions often involve agency response to crime and graffiti—a priority for everyone. As a key element for a healthy neighborhood, the city of Denver should continue and expand its response to "tagging" by improving coordination among the police, public works, and parks departments to identify and rapidly remove new tags. Spots subjected to repeated tagging could even be considered for new murals painted by local artists.

There are also a number of mechanisms that can be used to improve the sense of safety in Westwood, such as community policing with patrol officers on foot or bicycle instead of in vehicles, identifying key locations to improve

street lighting, and neighborhood block watches. Walkers and runners are discouraged and deterred by stray or barking dogs, and sometimes there is no better option than to focus on prompt, fair, and meaningful enforcement to see real change.

As in other areas in Denver, solid waste in Westwood is collected by several methods, including the use of alley Dumpsters, which invite illegal dumping and are often a fire hazard. While real progress can be seen in the pilot areas where modern purple and black plastic bin-type trash and recycling containers are used, the ongoing use of Dumpsters creates and exacerbates a negative perception among residents and visitors. While this situation exists in a number of Denver neighborhoods, it makes sense to designate Westwood as a priority area for full deployment of bin-type trash containers.

Residents want more aggressive action against code violations, and such steps would have direct and indirect health and wellness benefits for residents and businesses alike. For example, unhealthful conditions have persisted in the trailer parks along Morrison Road and should be addressed to improve safety for residents and neighbors. Such efforts may also encourage earlier conversion of sites and buildings that are well past their useful life.

There may be code compliance issues and operational impacts for some current auto repair businesses and nightclubs along Morrison. A proactive effort to address noise and traffic impacts will help improve residents' health and the perception of safety for the neighborhood. If Westwood is to serve the needs of families and be a healthy place in which to raise children, the impacts associated with temporary occupants must be addressed, perhaps through a partnership between municipal agencies and a business improvement district (BID).

Other issues of importance:

- Dedicated funding for parks and open space (citywide issue)
- A return-on-investment study to show how costs pay for themselves
- Health impact assessment in city policy decisions and capital programs
- Microlending to encourage business expansion and recruitment (e.g., a small restaurant)

Opportunity Sites

A successful redevelopment plan for Westwood will require a disciplined community focus and investment strategy. While there are competing community aspirations and needs, it will be critical to deploy initial investments—including public, nonprofit, and private—in a targeted and strategic manner. These investments should be focused within the "core area" of the Morrison Road corridor, building on recent development investments there.

This core area is identified as Morrison Road from the intersection of Kentucky Avenue at the southwest end to West Virginia Avenue at the northeast end. This represents a distance of just under one mile. Recent mixed-use investments are optimally positioned at the midpoint of the corridor. Kentucky and West Virginia avenues represent logical and definable "book ends" to the corridor plan.

This strategy is based on two principles: First, that community redevelopment should start at the neighborhood's already recognized core, where investment will contribute to a community-wide place-making strategy and community identity; and second, that it is critical that each stage of investment occur in a manner that will encourage subsequent phases. To summarize, the way to rebuild the Westwood neighborhood and the corridor is from the "epicenter" outward.

To this end, four opportunity areas have been identified and prioritized. Two of these sites should be programmed for redevelopment; the other two should be programmed for park space.

Area No. 1: Core Area

The first and most critical of these four opportunity areas is the Thriftway site. While complex ownership and environmental considerations complicate its redevelopment,

STEPHANIE WHITEHILL

While the undertaking would be complex, the Thriftway site should be redeveloped for commercial and community uses.

this should be the number-one redevelopment priority, and the site should be programmed for public commercial and community uses. This is among the most visible sites in the corridor, and the successful redevelopment of this site for community-serving uses will serve as a first marker of success in building community resources.

Integral to this acquisition is the two mobile-home parks, under common ownership, that flank Morrison Road between the intersections of West Ohio and West Walsh Place. In several prior studies, these parks were identified as critical to revitalizing the corridor. These properties also have complex redevelopment constraints, primarily due to their tenant population, which is legally and financially vulnerable. Nevertheless, these sites represent significant blight and substandard living conditions at a highly visible and strategically valuable location. That this land use has been allowed to remain is a reflection of immobilized municipal code compliance enforcement, due in part to sensitivity to the vulnerable residents.

It is time for the city and other agencies to intervene in a proactive effort to relocate the tenants and decommission the mobile-home parks. Finally, the car-wash site should be included to give this core area critical mass.

Area No. 2: New Neighborhood Park

A second opportunity area is the mobile-home park at Kentucky Avenue, just east of the intersection with Morrison. This site, while just off Morrison Road, effectively anchors the south end of the corridor; it is a large site, measuring nearly four acres. By virtue of its location, size, and rectilinear configuration, this site represents an ideal opportunity to augment the park and open space assets of the neighborhood. In addition, this acquisition is critical in linking current neighborhood open space into a coherent and functional linear pattern, both to the east paralleling West Kentucky Avenue and to the existing Westwood Park, just west of this site. Finally, by virtue of its size, this site could accommodate a community recreation and wellness center with adjacent outdoor recreation space.

Area No. 3: Additions to Westwood Park

The current Westwood Park suffers from an irregular configuration and limited visibility. It has only 120 feet of frontage on the north side of West Kentucky Avenue. Modest acquisition and enhancement investments could leverage this existing asset into a more functional park. Specifically, the recommendation is, at a minimum, to acquire the property immediately to the east of the park's frontage, which alone would double the frontage, together

with the property to the west, which would bring the total frontage to about 300 feet. A more robust acquisition plan would include three additional properties to the west, which would add a total of 370 feet of south-facing frontage and provide many options for a comprehensive redesign of the park.

While acquisition of these sites is critical to the future success of the park, and has long-term neighborhood value, this program should not require demolition of the homes themselves. It is believed that vacant lots could be found nearby to which these homes could be moved, if the owners so chose.

In summary, the recommendation for land acquisition encompasses a little over ten acres of land, with about 5.5 acres for development of a public plaza as well as commercial and residential space, and five acres for additional park space.

Resources to Be Used

While the Westwood neighborhood is resource-deprived, the larger urban region is not. It is clear that Denver is blessed with a broad array of public, nonprofit, and private funding sources. Several of these organizations have already shown substantial interest in investing in Westwood for a variety of purposes. There needs to be a coherent alignment of these organizations and to the opportunity sites discussed above. Second, an implementation plan that allows for these organizations to effectively collaborate and coordinate investments is needed. Specifically:

- A collaboration of all relevant city agencies and other entities must address a reasonable and humane relocation plan for the three mobile-home sites.
- Public/private partnerships with both private and nonprofit developers should be explored for the redevelopment of mixed use and housing in the core area, including some or all of the mobile-home sites.
- Other nonprofit organizations should be identified to assist with the acquisition of land for the central plaza, the large park on West Kentucky, and the enlargement of Westwood Park.
- There is a clear role for the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, which has indicated both interest in and a capacity for assisting local redevelopment efforts. While tax increment financing may have limited financial benefits, especially in the short term, it needs to be considered in the overall and longer-term development program.
- The neighborhood should establish a Morrison Road business improvement district. This BID should be intended ultimately to run the full length of the corridor from the intersection of West Mississippi and Sheridan Avenue at its southeast terminus to West Alameda at its northeast terminus. The BID could have a central function of operating the public improvements recommended for the Thriftway site.
- Other financial resources include the Denver Foundation and the Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund; they should be approached and brought into the resource mix for both capital and noncapital programs.

Programming

DESPITE ITS MANY CHALLENGES, Westwood does have a number of strengths and resources that can be better harnessed and used to promote physical activity and healthy eating. Programs and events can provide powerful activities that produce several cobenefits in addition to physical health, including community-building, improving safety, and economic development. There are many possible types of events and programs that could benefit Westwood, and the biggest challenge will be to prioritize and determine which ones have the best potential for success.

The panel recommends that the community identify funds to create a position of "community coordinator" who can oversee the planning, organizing, and fundraising for programming and events. There are many existing arts, culture, and health initiatives already in Denver, and this coordinator can work with them to develop partnerships or collaborations to bring programs and activities into Westwood. Also, with so many youth living in the community, there is tremendous potential to identify, train, and mentor youth leaders who can act as neighborhood "champions." These champions can advocate for health, wellness, and overall community improvement.

By focusing on active living and healthy eating, Westwood will join a broader movement across Colorado and throughout the nation. The places where we live, work, learn, and play all affect our health. If the environment is characterized by crime, stray dogs, narrow or broken sidewalks, or a lack of trees and nice scenery, people will not feel safe or comfortable walking in the neighborhood. When there are no markets nearby that sell fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables, it will be difficult to eat well. By improving opportunities for active living and healthy eating, the community can begin remedying the health disparities among Westwood's population.

DANIEL LOBO

Access to healthy food, whether at a farmers market, produce market, or traditional grocery store, is critical to ensuring a community's overall wellness level.

Programs that promote opportunities for walking, biking, and playing, and that enable access to healthy food, will benefit Westwood in many ways. People's individual health ultimately affects a community's overall vitality and well-being. Physical activity can reduce stress and prevent diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Children who are physically active do better in school and have fewer behavioral problems. Opportunities to play sports and to play together can foster positive social behavior and give youth alternatives to joining gangs and other problematic activities. When more people and kids are out walking and playing in the neighborhood, the environment feels safer and more vibrant, and will become less attractive to graffiti, vandalism, and criminal activity.

Having access to healthy food is as important as physical activity in promoting overall health and well-being. Programs and activities such as community gardens, farmers markets, and cooking classes will not only help people eat more healthily, but also foster civic engagement, social interaction, self-reliance, and community pride. Being able to

buy fresh, healthy, and affordable food is a matter of social justice. In the absence of a local market, programs and events can enable residents to either grow or purchase produce in the community.

Schools

As mentioned previously, children and adolescents need to be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day. Kids can achieve a significant amount of this recommended time during the school day. Recess, physical education (P.E.) classes, and walking or biking to and from school all have the potential to get kids moving. Schools can also provide a significant portion of a child's daily recommended nutrition.

The panel recognizes that schools in Westwood are doing the best they can. Some schools have been able to hire new P.E. instructors, hold dance classes and jogging clubs, install fruit/salad bars, and put in gardens. But like many schools across the nation, Westwood's schools face a number of challenges making it difficult for students overall to be active and eat well. For example, although school lunches might be healthy, they are not culturally responsive, leading many children to throw them away. Or parents bring fast food and sodas to their children during the school day. Also, community gardens have suffered from vandalism and a lack of irrigation.

In general, Westwood's schools are functioning over capacity and lack the time, resources, and support required to ensure that all students are sufficiently active or eating healthily.

Recommendations to Increase Active Living and Healthy Eating in Schools

Playworks. Playworks is a nonprofit program that brings trained activity leaders into underresourced schools to teach kids how to play; to develop team, leadership, and other social skills; and to grow physically and emotionally.

Instant Recess. This is a simple and quick way to bring physical activity into the classroom, and it is also appropriate for other settings (e.g., workplaces, professional meetings, religious institutions). Instant recess provides a ten-minute, structured, fun, and low-impact way to get kids or adults moving and can be easily integrated into class time.

Joint (Shared) Use of Schools. Agreements can be developed whereby schools open their grounds after hours for community use.

SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE COALITION

Active transportation to and from school in the form of "bike trains" will raise activity levels of children, and teach them about bicycle safety in a safe environment.

Active Transportation to School. School staff and parents can work together to start "walking school bus" or bike train programs to promote active transportation to school. This will not require a lot of money, but will require dedicated staff and parent volunteers who can lead children from home to school via foot or bicycle. This can be part of a more overarching program that teaches children pedestrian and biking safety skills with a tie-in with healthy, active living.

Family Education Classes. These classes teach childrearing skills to new parents during the first few critical years of a child's physical and mental development. These could take place in an existing community center, or become part of a new community recreation and wellness center.

Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH). This is a coordinated school health program that builds an alliance of parents, teachers, child nutrition personnel, school staff, and community partners to teach children and their families how to be healthy for a lifetime.

Coordinated School Health Program. This model promotes youth well-being through eight interactive components covering nutrition services, health services, health education, physical education, staff wellness, counseling and social services, and family and community involvement. For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated School Health Program.

Healthy Schools Program. This program sets standards for schools, helps them meet those standards, and recognizes and rewards those schools that meet the standards. The program provides individual consultation to schools and school districts to support their efforts to meet goals of the program. It also provides tools and materials on good nutrition, appropriate physical activity for children, and staff wellness. While any school is eligible to apply for the recognition program, the program places special emphasis on reaching schools that have limited resources and serve students of disadvantaged socioeconomic status.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Healthy school lunches are an important part of any program promoting wellness in a community.

Leveraging Existing Facilities and Programs

Westwood youth are in dire need of things to do to keep them busy, active, and out of trouble. A community-wide partnership with local nonprofit groups, churches, businesses, and existing youth-serving organizations can help stretch limited resources to after-school and summer programs. The Boys & Girls Club provides great programming, but it is functioning over capacity. One strategy could involve having Boys & Girls Club programming held off site, at other community places such as school grounds, Weir Gulch, or public streets and alleys.

Also, SWIC is an important community resource with space for Zumba classes and basketball courts. However, only a small portion of residents are using the facility. Programs and activities can encourage more equitable access and use. SWIC needs to revise its policies and practices to enable a more affordable and welcoming atmosphere for Latino residents. Another resource that may be underused is the Denver Indian Center on Morrison Road. It has a basketball court and playground that are open to the public, but the wider community is not aware of this fact. Programming can increase community awareness by connecting the Native American community with the Latino community.

While it is apparent that Westwood does not have sufficient park space, there are some recreation facilities and spaces where children and adults can be active, but these places are being underused. The school grounds

may be open to the public, with additional programing to encourage kids and adults to use them. Weir Gulch could serve as a place for children's nature tours, and selected residential streets could be closed at certain times to create play areas.

Events

Neighborhood events are an effective way to promote a sense of community, and to draw people from all over the Denver region to Westwood to boost the area's profile as a center of Latino culture. Events with a distinct focus on healthy living will further promote Westwood as a vibrant neighborhood. The community should come together in determining what these events should be, but the panel has made a number of recommendations in this section.

Ciclovia

This event is named after a Spanish term—*ciclovia*—meaning "bike parkway," but which has been adopted recently by cities across the world to describe one-day street closure events to foster physical activity and civic pride. The ciclovia event originated in Bogotá, Colombia, as a way to address traffic congestion. Denver has its own ciclovia—the Viva Streets event sponsored by LiveWell Colorado. Westwood could bring a Viva Streets event to Avenida Cesar Chavez to showcase the power of closing a major thoroughfare for pedestrian and bicycle activity. This will create a dynamic, vibrant, colorful sense of place and serve as a citywide attraction.

Street festivals, such as Austin, Texas's Viva Streets event (pictured here), can enhance Westwood's sense of community and promote physical activity.

BIKE TEXAS

Other Events to Consider

The panelists encourage the Westwood community to consider holding the following events:

- Community safety/neighborhood watch (increasing safety will encourage people to walk; more people walking will make the community feel safer)
- Health-focused contests (e.g., like the one depicted in *Biggest Loser*)
- Bike/pedestrian safety events (e.g., bike rodeos)
- Family walking clubs
- Urban nature outings.

The Need for and Creation of Social Space: Mercado Westwood

There is no other venue in Latin American settlements where life is more celebrated than in *la plaza*. The Spanish Laws of the Indies regulated social, political, economic life, and—most important—town planning, which called for a space where the people could go for recreation. Many Westwood residents come from Latin American settlements, where plazas are used heavily for social and cultural activities.

Most American post–World War II residential developments like Westwood do not have squares or plazas. However, the cultural behavior patterns of Westwood's residents lead them to create their own plazas in their frontyards by enclosing them with fences. These fences physically separate the private yard from the public realm of the sidewalk and street. Many of these fences function as structures to lean on while people chat with a neighbor passing by, a place to hang wet laundry, or as low walls against which to sell items and wares.

In addition, by boxing in the frontyard space, fences serve to transform the open, rather undefined suburban American frontyard into something more akin to an urban courtyard. Enclosed frontyards then help transform the street into a plaza. While this new plaza is not the typical one

seen in Latin American or European cities with strong defining street walls, the effect is very much the same, with much social activity occurring in the street, and residents being able to participate in this activity from the comfort and security of their enclosed frontyard. In this way, fences serve as a practical and permeable threshold—not a barrier—between the private yard and the public street, and can end up bringing residents together.

Depending on the practical needs of the owners, the use and design of the frontyard vary from elaborate courtyard gardens with fountains reminiscent of Mexico to their children's playground. The design of the fences can be a simple chain link or elaborate brick and wrought iron. The frontyards reflect Mexican cultural values applied to U.S. suburban form.

Westwood residents are transforming the use of their neighborhood streets where many children play. Among residents, concerns regarding pedestrian/vehicle conflicts are growing. Residential street infrastructure design and policy need to emphasize decreasing traffic speeds, narrowing roadway widths, and reducing traffic volumes through residential areas so children can play safely. One option would be to close a neighborhood street off during the day where children can play safely. In addition, more comprehensive design interventions need to be explored and pursued, such as transforming streets into Dutch-style *woonerfs*, or "living streets." The *woonerf* model effectively eliminates the division between sidewalk and street altogether by making the entire roadspace a single grade. It then incorporates other design elements and structures to significantly reduce the potential speed of motorists driving down these streets. The result is a space for living and not simply driving.

If these programs, policies, and designs are pursued by municipalities and transit agencies, the result can really only be a win-win, as enhancing pedestrian safety through infrastructure can be one way to bring much-needed investment into Latino neighborhoods.

While Westwood frontyards and residential streets serve as social gathering spaces or impromptu plazas, there is an overall need to create a larger permanent gathering space or plaza in the community. The Mercado Westwood will provide a space where residents can gather and socialize comfortably in a landscape reminiscent of Latin America. The plaza can be programmed for many activities such as music, dance, and exercise. In addition, Mercado Westwood can serve as a place for visitors to experience the community through a cultural wonderland of dining, entertainment, and art. Plazas in Latin America are typically surrounded by a church, government buildings, markets, and museums. The Westwood plaza can provide a focus area for development in the community.

Mercado Westwood will be located in the heart of the community and will bring together creative and hard-working entrepreneurs, artists, and musicians as well as cultural traditions. The Westwood area has historically suffered from disinvestment—including a lack of business opportunities, high-quality gathering spaces, high-quality food, and art and cultural opportunities. The *mercado* will represent the local version of the bustling markets that many residents left behind in their home countries. The *mercado* also is an experiment in community revitalization that provides opportunities for local Westwood residents to showcase their creativity to the broader Denver community. The regional foods of Mexico and other Latin American countries will be sold.

The Mission

Build Local Economies. By providing affordable retail opportunities, technical assistance, startup capital, and support, the *mercado* will create business ownership opportunities and offer needed goods and services to residents.

Provide Services. The *mercado* will also provide a drop-by public health center, and an affordable meeting room that will host a wide range of community meetings, events, and classes.

Promote Arts and Culture. The *mercado* will host art exhibits, music and dance performances, spoken-word performances, film showings, and other events that support and showcase local artists, provide high-quality art and cultural opportunities for the community, and impart the unique heritage of the area's residents.

Build Community. The *mercado* will create a warm and welcoming gathering space for everyone from all walks of life. It will provide opportunities for empowerment, and for strengthening existing social ties and creating new ones.

The *mercado* will be adjacent to a plaza that serves as the center of the community. The plaza will feature traditional landscapes and designs of Latin America that attempt to capture the behavior patterns of local residents.

Street Vendors

When used as a venue in which to sell goods, streets serve a vital economic function in Westwood. Through street vending, Westwood residents have ingeniously retrofitted automobile-oriented streets and spaces to suit their economic needs. The result is a daily but temporary transformation of sidewalks and curbs into small hubs of commerce and economic activity. These are spaces that otherwise would remain moribund in the absence of this kind of enterprising and mobile economic activity. The community and city can work with the vendors to create a green cart program where the selling of raw fruits and vegetables such as carrots, bananas, apples, and berries is encouraged.

Other Programs and Activities to Promote Healthy Eating

- Community-based (and school-based) gardens
- Co-ops in which residents can sell produce grown at home
- Green food carts (*palederos*) that sell fresh produce
- Mobile markets
- Ability to use SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) at farmers markets

Conclusion

WESTWOOD NEEDS TO USE its existing assets to distinguish itself from other neighborhoods within the Denver metropolitan area. The panel also believes that Westwood needs a catalytic project that can transform the neighborhood. This project begins by rebranding the neighborhood as a Latino cultural district focused on arts, food, and active living. The center of this district is Morrison Road, which should be transformed from a commuter cut-through street into Westwood's "Main Street."

Experience shows that if a neighborhood is designed around cars, more cars are what it will get. But if a neighborhood is designed around people, more people are what it will get. Having more people also means more economic development, more walking and biking, and more energy and excitement.

Morrison Road—aka Cesar Chavez Boulevard—can be a showcase for Latino art, culture, and small business. If this thoroughfare is made a destination at the heart of Westwood, more people will have reasons to both shop and stroll there. Also, by focusing on transforming Morrison Road into a complete street, rather than a commuter cut-through, it will become easier and safer for schoolchildren and their parents to access parks and other facilities on both sides of this street that now divides the community.

About the Panel

Edward McMahon

Panel Chair
Washington, D.C.

Ed McMahon holds the Charles Fraser Chair on Sustainable Development at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C. He is an attorney, a community planner, a lecturer, and an author. As the senior fellow for sustainable development, McMahon leads ULI's worldwide efforts to conduct research and educational activities on environmentally sensitive development policies and practices.

Before joining the Institute in 2004, McMahon spent 14 years as the vice president and director of land use planning for the Conservation Fund in Arlington County, Virginia. He is also the cofounder and former president of Scenic America, a national nonprofit organization devoted to protecting America's scenic landscapes.

McMahon is the author or coauthor of 15 books and more than 200 articles. His books include the following: *Developing Sustainable Planned Communities*, *Green Infrastructure: Linking Landscapes and Communities*, *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*, and *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania*. He also writes regularly for *Urban Land* magazine, *Planning Commissioners Journal*, and other periodicals. Over the past 20 years, McMahon has drafted numerous local land use plans and ordinances. He has organized successful efforts to acquire and protect urban parkland, wilderness areas, and other conservation properties.

McMahon serves on several boards and commissions, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Maryland, the Governors Institute for Community Design, and the Orton Family Foundation.

McMahon has an MA in urban studies from the University of Alabama and a JD from Georgetown University Law School, where he taught law and public policy from 1976 to 1985.

Kamuron Gurol

Sammamish, Washington

Kamuron Gurol has served as assistant city manager and community development director for the city of Sammamish, Washington, since 2005. Sammamish is a new city (incorporated 1999) that formed to gain greater control over local issues, especially growth and development challenges. Gurol's team has successfully navigated an innovative town center plan (using a hybrid of performance and traditional zoning tools) and a new shoreline master program (using an incentive-based strategy to improve habitat while recognizing property rights) through the rough waters of public comment, planning commission review, state agency approval, and city council adoption. Sammamish also received a 2009 Governor's Smart Community award for its over-the-counter permit approval process.

Prior to that, Gurol worked as a corridor planning manager for the Washington State Department of Transportation Urban Planning Office, where he oversaw corridor improvement plans for several large state highways in the Greater Seattle area. As director of the Kitsap County Department of Community Development, he was responsible for all aspects of community development department (building plan review and inspections, land use permits, long-range planning, and a community development block grant program) serving about 250,000 residents. As manager of the Snohomish County Planning Division, Gurol was responsible for successful policy development for the county comprehensive plan and various subarea plans, for planning policy issues with 20 cities, and for county geographic information system (GIS) and demographic work products. He began his work in public administration, planning, and environmental and natural resources with

King County, where he created a nationally recognized transfer of development rights program.

Gurol holds a bachelor of science degree in geology from the University of Washington and a master of public administration degree from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Deborah Lou

San Diego, California

Deborah Lou is the program analyst with Active Living Research (ALR), a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that uses evidence to fight childhood obesity and create more physically active communities. Lou translates and disseminates research on how the social and built environments affect public health.

Lou engages with organizations across the nation to ensure that research can inform policy and practice to increase opportunities for physical activity, especially among minority and lower-income communities that are at highest risk for obesity.

Lou manages ALR's communication initiatives, including a bimonthly newsletter, social media outreach, and a Dialogue for Health Web Forum series in partnership with the Public Health Institute. She is coauthor of a research synthesis with Dr. Wendell Taylor titled "Do All Children Have Places to Be Active?" This synthesis shows that lower-income people and racial and ethnic minorities often live in communities that discourage active living. She holds a PhD in sociology from the University of California at Santa Barbara.

James A. Moore

Tampa, Florida

James Moore has 25 years of technical and managerial experience and leadership in architecture, community planning, redevelopment consulting, and urban design. Since 2000 he has been with HDR, a global architecture, engineering, and consulting firm, rising to the rank of senior vice president for his management and operational leadership and senior professional associate for his technical expertise and leadership.

Upon joining the company, Moore helped consolidate and expand its emerging planning and urban design practices, and developed initiatives in real estate consulting, transit-oriented design, and sustainability. He led HDR's community planning and urban design business unit for six years, averaging over $12 million per year in net new fees and overseeing up to 100 staff members in a dozen offices. Moore helped initiate HDR's international urban planning practice, leading projects and pursuits in China and the Middle East. Since 2007, he has been a member of HDR's sustainable solutions leadership team, looking to integrate sustainability throughout the company's work.

Moore has played a leading technical and managerial role on many notable HDR projects including the "Destination Midtown" Redevelopment Master Plan and the Downtown Development Plan, both in Omaha, Nebraska; "Pinellas by Design," a unified economic development and physical redevelopment strategy for Pinellas County, Florida; the Citywide Integrated Sustainability Master Plan for Corpus Christi, Texas; and the Beijing International Medical Center, a mixed-use district in China.

Moore has particular expertise in organizing and managing complex urban redevelopment projects; areas of technical expertise include community sustainability, the integration of physical design and economic development, urban redevelopment, real estate development practices, urban design, and leading multistakeholder participatory events. His projects integrate concerns for physical, social, and economic revitalization and involve intense client interaction and community participation. Recently, he has begun to focus on the integration of GIS and other IT tools and techniques into the analysis, planning, and implementation of urban redevelopment projects.

From 1988 to 2000, Moore taught in the School of Architecture and Community Design at the University of South Florida, leaving as a tenured associate professor. In 1999–2000, he served as the interim dean of the school. Moore also led the Florida Center for Community Design and Research for five years, providing design services and

technical assistance to communities and state agencies. He coauthored elements of Florida's statewide transportation policy on the integration of land use and transportation planning, and the role of mobility in developing sustainable communities. Moore has also taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Pennsylvania, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Moore is active nationally with the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), and the American Planning Association (APA). He served on the AIA's Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team Task Force for ten years. A 20-year member of ULI, he is the chair of the ULI Tampa Bay District Council. Moore has also served multiple terms on ULI's Inner-City Council and the Public/Private Partnership Council; also, he is the incoming chair of the Urban Revitalization Council. A member of the team that organized and ran "Reality Check Tampa Bay," he now serves on the board of OneBay, the entity established to help implement the regional vision generated by Reality Check. Moore is on the board of the Florida chapter of the CNU. He lectures and writes regularly on urban redevelopment, community sustainability, urban design, and related topics.

Moore received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, and also holds degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, including an MS in real estate development.

Ralph L. Núñez

Southfield, Michigan

Ralph Núñez is the principal partner of DesignTeam Plus LLC, a multidisciplinary design firm offering architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, and urban planning. Prior to starting DesignTeam Plus, Núñez was associate vice president and director of planning and landscape architecture for PRC Engineering, an international planning, design, and development company. His most significant project while in the Houston office was the Enclave, a $250 million office campus in west Houston.

Núñez has 36 years of experience as a planner and landscape architect, with particular emphasis on project design, management, and development strategies. Projects include master plans and development plans for residential communities, senior living, commercial uses, office research campuses, and recreation facilities. He has been responsible for master-planning more than 210,000 acres, over 100,000 dwelling units, 6.5 million square feet of office research space, and 18 million square feet of commercial projects throughout the United States and internationally.

Núñez has been qualified as an expert witness in planning, landscape architecture, and design. He is often called upon to develop plans resolving difficult and stalled projects before they go to litigation.

His commitment to sustainable design is evidenced by his teaching and professional activities. Núñez has been a guest lecturer and also served as an adjunct professor at Lawrence Technological University for the past 20 years. The Urban Land Institute has had him participate in numerous advisory design panels throughout the country.

James Rojas

Los Angeles, California

James Rojas is an urban planner and an artist. He is one of the few nationally recognized urban planners to examine U.S. Latino cultural influences on urban design. Rojas holds a master of city planning and a master of science in architecture studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His thesis on the Latino built environment has been widely cited.

Rojas founded the Latino Urban Forum (LUF), a volunteer advocacy group dedicated to understanding and improving the built environment of Latino communities in Los Angeles.

Rojas developed a process that improves community participation through engagement, creative thinking, and celebration and that—of greatest importance—raises people's consciousness of the built environment around

them and how it affects their experience of place. He has facilitated more than 250 interactive workshops and created over 50 interactive urban dioramas across the country with thousands of participants. Rojas has collaborated with municipalities, nonprofit entities, health and educational institutions, museums, and galleries to educate the public on urban planning topics ranging from transportation, economic development, and social justice to health and many others.

David Scheuer

Burlington, Vermont

David Scheuer is president of the Retrovest Companies. Scheuer has over 30 years' experience developing several award-winning residential and mixed-use projects. He has worked on urban projects in Vermont; Washington, D.C.; Sacramento, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle. Currently, his firm is developing South Village, a 336-unit conservation-oriented new urbanist mixed-income housing community in South Burlington, Vermont; the Westlake Center, a public/private downtown mixed-use project in Burlington, Vermont; and Harvard Commons, an infill apartment project in downtown Seattle.

Scheuer attended the University of Colorado, where he was a three-time All-American skier. From 1972 to 1978, he was a member of the U.S. Alpine Ski Team. Scheuer did graduate work at the University of Vermont in resource and land economics. He is a former national director of the National Association of Home Builders; a former board member of the Preservation Trust of Vermont and the Fund for Vermont's Third Century; and a founding member of the Congress for the New Urbanism. In 1990, Scheuer was inducted into Lambda Alpha, the National Land Economists Society. He is a former trustee of the U.S. Ski Team Foundation and currently serves on the executive board of the National Town Builders' Association. He also serves on the Urban Land Institute's Public/Private Partnership Council.

Scheuer is regarded as a practitioner of smart growth development. He was appointed by Governor Howard Dean as the private industry member of Vermont's Municipal Land Law Review Commission (2001–2003), and serves as an adviser to Vermont's current governor on land use issues.

Elizabeth Shreeve

Sausalito, California

Elizabeth Shreeve is principal of SWA, an internationally recognized landscape architecture, urban design, and planning firm composed of more than 200 people nurturing a critical dialogue of design and urbanism for cities around the world. Since joining SWA's Sausalito office in 1984, Shreeve has focused her practice on urban infill and revitalization, community and campus master planning, and public outreach and communications. She is involved in mixed-use communities and high-tech projects in China, Ukraine, and California, where she works closely with multidisciplinary teams and public and private clients to translate physical and cultural factors, site programming, and policy into strategies and solutions for physical design.

A strong proponent of education and mentorship, Shreeve has a role that also includes recruiting, training, direction of SWA's summer student program, marketing, and authorship of articles related to urban land use and sustainable design.

Shreeve received her master of landscape architecture in 1983 from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and her undergraduate degree from Harvard College. She serves on the San Francisco District Council Technical Assistance Panel Committee and is a member of the ULI's Sustainable Development Council.

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1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
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