SECTION 1
Introduction

Overview

This document is a first step in helping to identify areas where the Blueprint effort and coordinating Denveright plans can help continue to shape Denver’s future. The document serves as a community profile, identifying Denver’s current vision, as well as assessing its performance and highlighting its assets and areas of opportunity.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The Community Profile is organized into eight sections and is accompanied by an appendix. The sections of the document include:

- **Section 1: Introduction** – Background on the Blueprint Denver effort and the larger Denveright planning initiative;
- **Section 2: Denver Today** – City and County of Denver demographics and neighborhood structure;
- **Section 3: The Competitive Landscape** – Compares U.S. cities as benchmarks to gauge Denver’s progress;
- **Section 4: The Center of a Thriving Region** – Explores Denver’s place in the larger metropolitan area and looks at its evolution over time;
- **Section 5: Built Form and Urban Design** – Indicators and characteristics of Denver’s built form, how that form has changed over time, and what patterns have emerged as a result of various factors;
- **Section 6: Connectivity and Mobility** – How residents, employees and visitors get around in Denver and what infrastructure exists to support those choices;
- **Section 7: Equity and Access within Denver** – Denver’s neighborhoods across a variety of demographic, transportation, park and neighborhood amenity indicators;
- **Section 8: Next Steps** – Next steps in the Blueprint Denver process; and
- **Appendix** – The appendix includes a brief history of Denver, summaries of several relevant plans and studies that were considered in the creation of the Community Profile and that will be used as a foundation moving forward in the planning process, and a sample list of Denver rankings.
SECTION 2

Denver Today

Overview
Denver is a great place to live and work – it boasts an active outdoor lifestyle, proximity to the mountains, phenomenal restaurants, and diverse neighborhoods and cultural experiences. The city is experiencing unprecedented growth. Denver’s population in 2015 was 682,545 (US Census Population Estimates). The resurgence of growth in Denver in the 1990’s spurred the city to update its comprehensive plan and develop the original Blueprint Denver. Denver is now on pace to grow by 150,000 new residents in a ten-year period. This rate of growth in Denver is again spurring the city to reconsider its plan for growth.

KEY OBSERVATIONS
• Denver has grown steadily since its inception in 1858, and has increased in population every decade since with the exception of the 1970s and 80s;
• The population growth through 2020 projected by DRCOG at the time of 2002 Blueprint Denver was for an additional 109,000 residents;
• Since the 2002 Blueprint Denver, the city has grown by 121,000 residents. 65 percent of this population growth (78,000 people) occurred in the last five years (2010 to 2015);
• Denver was the fifth fastest-growing large city (population > 250,000) in the nation in 2014 and the third fastest city in the U.S. from 2005-2014;
• Despite significant population growth, Denver was denser in 1950 than it is today;
• Denver is nearly evenly split between owner-occupied and renter-occupied units but renter households accounted for over 75 percent of the new households since 2000;
• Denver has permitted at least 5,500 housing units annually since 2012, which is 30 percent more annually than from 2000 to 2008;
• Denver is not very racially diverse as the population is predominately white (78%);
• 31 percent of the residents are Hispanic or of Latino origin;
• Denver is a young and educated city with a median age of 34 and 44 percent of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher, and
• Total employment in Denver was approximately 473,000 in 2014, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Industries with significant employment growth since 2002 include: accommodations and food service, professional services, health care, management of companies, and oil and gas.

KEY FINDINGS
• While Denver has had periods of significant growth, the amount of population growth in Denver over the past five years is more than the city has ever experienced in that amount of time and is expected to continue;
• The new housing development since 2010 has shifted to become primarily multifamily as opposed to single family (4:1 ratio). This trend is likely to continue as Denver’s larger areas for single family home development (Green Valley Ranch, Lowry, and Stapleton) are mostly built out;
• Denver’s economy is growing and has become more diverse; and
• Denver’s distinct set of neighborhoods attracts a wide range of residents. The regionally-centered location of the neighborhoods and resurgence of small neighborhood business districts have increased the city’s desirability.
Denver Population Change by Decade, 1880 to 2015

Source: US Census; Colorado Department of Local Affairs
SECTION 3
The Competitive Landscape

Overview
Denver, like many other large cities in the U.S., is experiencing an urban renaissance as more people are choosing to live and work in the primary city of a region. The primary cities in the U.S.’s largest metro areas grew by a faster rate in recent years than their surrounding suburbs, which is the first time this has happened since the 1920s. To understand how Denver compares to its peer cities in the U.S., an analysis of a variety of measures was completed to understand Denver’s strengths and what trends Denver may need to address within the Blueprint Denver. Denver’s comparable U.S. cities include Austin, Minneapolis, Portland, Salt Lake City, and Seattle.

KEY OBSERVATIONS
• The annual rate of population growth in Denver, (2.2%) was higher than the Denver Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (1.9%) from 2005 to 2014;
• Denver was the fifth fastest-growing large city (population > 250,000) in the nation in 2014 and the third fastest city in the U.S. from 2005-2014;
• The distribution of residents by age in Denver is almost identical to the comparison cities;
• Residents’ age 25 to 34 years is the largest age group in all comparison cities and accounts for over 20 percent of residents in all those cities but one, Salt Lake City;
• Denver increased by approximately 60,000 residents’ age 25 to 34 years old, which is over half the total amount of population growth in the city;
• Denver permitted the third most residential units amongst its peer cities with 7,900 units in Denver in 2015;
• Unlike recent population growth, employment growth in the comparable cities, including Denver, has been slower in these cities than their surrounding MSAs;
• Employment in Denver grew at the fifth slowest rate of the six cities;
• The average housing price in the Denver metro area has increased by the highest percent (60%) since 2010 of all cities and their MSAs;
• The average rental rate in Denver has grown by the highest percentage than any of the comparable cities; and
• Despite the large increase in housing costs in Denver, the median home value in Denver is 40 percent lower than it is in Seattle.

KEY FINDINGS
• Denver has very similar attributes to its peer cities as all have seen a recent resurgence in desirability as a place to live, especially for younger people;
• Despite the recent growth in residents in central cities, employment growth is faster in the surrounding suburbs in each city’s MSA. This is true for Denver as the rate of employment growth is slower than the metro area and slower than all but one of the comparison cities. However, employment growth in Denver in the past two to three years has accelerated; and
• Denver was previously relatively low cost compared to some of its peer cities, but the rapid growth in housing costs for both for-sale homes and for-rent homes, faster than all peer cities, has begun to turn Denver into one of the more expensive cities.
## Peer City Population, 2005 to 2014

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<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<th>2014</th>
<th>2005-2014</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td><strong>Cities</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metro Area</td>
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<td><strong>Denver-Aurora, CO Metro Area</strong></td>
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<td>Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA Metro Area*</td>
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<td>Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Are:</td>
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<td>Salt Lake City, UT Metro Area</td>
<td>1,017,572</td>
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Economic & Planning Systems
SECTION 4
The Center of a Thriving Region

Overview
Denver is at the heart of a vibrant and growing region and is part of the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The region has gradually diversified its economy away from a dependence on oil and gas (and the cycle of boom and bust that accompany those industries) and aerospace and military contractors. Today it attracts a wide range of technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and financial services companies. The strong economy, a high quality of life, a friendly business environment, and the area’s natural beauty and amenities have positioned the region as one of the most desirable destinations. Bold investments in the regional transit system and our city’s cultural and arts institutions over the past two decades also create assets that attract skilled workers from around the country.

KEY OBSERVATIONS
• In 2014, the MSA population was 2,754,258 - 21st largest in the U.S.;
• Denver accounts for 24 percent of the population in the MSA;
• From 2007 to 2014, Denver captured a greater share of population growth - over 30 percent;
• Denver is permitting residential units at a greater rate than prior to the recession, 2008 to 2009;
• Denver is also capturing a greater share of housing development, having recently permitted 40-60 percent of the units in the MSA;
• In July, 2016, the MSA’s unemployment rate was lower than the national average - 3.4 percent compared to 5.1;
• Denver accounts for 35 percent of employment in the MSA, however has only captured 23 percent employment growth since 2002. More recently from 2012 to 2015, Denver captured a greater share of metro area employment growth - 44 percent of new jobs in that period;
• Downtown Denver, the South I-25 Corridor, and the Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus in Aurora have captured half the employment growth in the past 10 years;
• Average rental rates for office, retail and industrial space are growing faster than the Denver MSA, but Denver is capturing a smaller share of new development; and
• Industrial average rental rates since 2013 have increased by 50 percent as marijuana-related operations have increased demand for industrial spaces.

KEY FINDINGS
• The high desirability of Denver is driving significant housing development, resulting in capturing a greater share of the housing development in the region. Much of the growth has been within multifamily residential units as single family home production is down throughout the metro area. The lack of housing production and employment growth outpacing housing production has increased housing prices;
• Despite the increase in housing development, employment growth and non-residential development in Denver is occurring at a slower pace than the MSA. However, growing rental rates and higher employment rates in Denver in the past few years indicate that there is a growing demand for employment and employment spaces; and
• The Denver metro area economic geography is dominated by three main areas: Downtown Denver, the South I-25 Corridor, and the Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus.
**City of Denver and Denver MSA Population Change, 2002 to 2014**

Source: Department of Local Affairs; Economic & Planning Systems

**City of Denver and Denver MSA Permitted Residential Units, 2002 to 2014**

Source: Denver County Assessor; U.S. Census Bureau; Economic & Planning Systems
SECTION 5
Built Form and Urban Design

Overview
The 2000 Comprehensive Plan stated that “Denver desires to pro-actively determine the type, quality and amount of development it wishes to foster, and develop a decisive set of policies and programs to achieve its land use” and transportation goals. Denver has become one of the most attractive cities in the country because of the quality of life it provides for most of its residents and relatively good access to a variety of amenities. The quality of the built and natural environments has helped elevate Denver across a myriad of rankings and measures, but growth has had both positive and negative impacts on the design of our city.

KEY OBSERVATIONS
• Building footprints are largest in the Central Business District (CBD) and in industrial areas along I-25 and I-70;
• Close-in neighborhoods like Five Points, North Capitol Hill, Capitol Hill, Civic Center and Auraria have more impervious surfaces than the CBD and Union Station neighborhoods;
• A new form-based code was adopted in 2010 and significantly changed how zoning is approached for the majority of the City and County of Denver;
• The 2010 zoning code is organized by several Neighborhood Contexts derived from existing and desired characteristics of Denver’s neighborhoods;
• The citywide tree canopy has grown significantly from 2006 (10.4% tree canopy coverage) to 2013 (19.7% coverage), but some neighborhoods have little coverage;
• The acres of park and green space per resident has been decreasing with the northern half of the city having the lowest amount;
• Larger mixed use centers (i.e., CBD and Cherry Creek) tend to have large amounts of occupied restaurant and retail space that activate ground floors while some neighborhoods have access to commercial corridors varying dramatically in connectivity and walkability;
• More than 10 percent of parcels have been improved in 20 neighborhoods that have seen the most dramatic changes, including DIA and Stapleton, Jefferson Park and Lowery Field and Gateway-Green Valley Ranch and City Park; and
• The majority of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities are located along or near existing highway and freight rail corridors.

KEY FINDINGS
• In addition to basic street and block layout, neighborhood context areas vary dramatically in terms of building size, impervious surfaces and tree canopy;
• Denver’s urban amenities are largely concentrated in and around the CBD, with small walkable pockets in close-in neighborhoods;
• The amount of parks and open spaces is not keeping pace with population growth; and
• Many neighborhoods lack a park, commercial node, transit station or other walkable destination.
Denver’s highway, rail and air infrastructure and supporting services has a significant influence on building scale, block patterns and overall development patterns.

*Source: City and County of Denver; 2014*
SECTION 6
Connectivity and Mobility

Overview
The 2002 Blueprint Denver provided a foundation for street planning and design to support multimodal travel. The City’s 2008 Strategic Transportation Plan shifted the city’s transportation paradigm to increase street capacity via multimodal travel options as opposed to widening streets. Since 2002, the Denver region has invested significantly in some areas of the transportation system, particularly in rail transit. The City has also implemented a variety of on-street bikeways. Despite these investments, mode share within Denver has changed very little since 2000. Portions of the city lack easy-to-use bikeways, frequent transit and comfortable walkways. Shared mobility, including car share, bike share and ride hailing services, is impacting travel patterns in the city and will have future implications for transportation planning.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

• About 80 percent of all trips and commute trips in Denver are made by driving;
• About 14 percent of all trips in Denver are made by walking and in many neighborhoods the walk mode share is 25 percent or more;
• Intersection density is high across the city, but low density areas exist in certain neighborhoods and around the existing rail corridors;
• Transit ridership region-wide has increased by about 30 percent since 2002, with about 75 percent of ridership growth occurring on the rail network;
• About 68 percent of households in Denver are within a ¼-mile of a transit stop, but only 17 percent are within a ¼-mile of a high-frequency transit stop (10-minute frequencies or less during peak periods) and only 3 percent are within a ¼-mile of a rail stop;
• 23 percent of all streets in Denver have no sidewalks;
• Since 2010 the city has doubled the mileage of on-street bike facilities and the percent of households within a ¼-mile of a “high ease-of-use” bike facility has increased from 49 percent to 54 percent;
• Within Denver, per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has declined by 6 percent since 2005; however, because of population growth total VMT has increased by 3 percent; and
• Auto ownership in Denver has increased from 1.44 vehicles per household in 2000 to 1.55 in 2014.

KEY FINDINGS

• Despite high intersection density across much of the city, many of the rail stations in Denver are located in areas with the low intersection density, creating challenges for walk, bike and bus transit accessibility;
• Despite a 30 percent increase in transit service and the addition of 23 rail stations in Denver since 2002, the resident transit commute mode share in Denver remains about the same as it was in 2000;
• Denver has doubled the miles of bike facilities since 2010 and has seen a doubling of the bike commute mode share since 2000; and
• The emergence and rapid growth of ride sharing companies, bike share and ride hailing services in Denver since 2009 are beginning to impact travel patterns, including transit use, parking demand, VMT and car ownership among others.
Over 3/4 of trips are made by driving; a high percent of trips in and around Downtown are made by walking and transit; higher bike mode shares exist just east of Broadway and just north of East Colfax.
SECTION 7
Equity and Access within Denver

Overview
Through early community outreach and the first two Blueprint Denver Task Force meetings, equity and access across Denver have been highlighted as important topics to consider in throughout Blueprint Denver. In particular, Task Force members have suggested that there are growing disparities across Denver’s neighborhoods. This section of the Community Profile is intended to provide a snapshot of neighborhoods in three distinct categories, including population and housing; transportation; and parks and neighborhood amenities.

KEY OBSERVATIONS
- Denver’s largest neighborhoods in terms of number of residents – Gateway-Green Valley Ranch (37,546 residents) and Montbello (32,688 residents) – are also among the largest in terms of number of households and among the highest average persons per household;
- Neighborhoods with the lowest and highest population density include DIA, Auraria, Stapleton and Globeville and Cheesman Park, North Capitol Hill and Capitol Hill, respectively;
- Median household income by neighborhood ranges from $11,036 (Sun Valley) to $134,276 (Belcaro) with an average of nearly $58,000 per household;
- The combined cost of housing and transportation across all Denver neighborhoods is as low as 38 percent (Capitol Hill) and as high as 53 percent (Hilltop);
- Denver neighborhoods vary greatly when compared via Walk Score (6 to 92), Bike Score (33 to 97) and Transit Score (24 to 83);
- With the exception of DIA, all neighborhoods have at least 11 percent of households located with ¼-mile of a transit station or stop;
- Neighborhoods vary significantly when comparing park acreage per 1,000 residents (0.0 acres to 170.1 acres per 1,000 residents) and percent of tree canopy coverage (0% to 36%); and
- Educational attainment ranges from a low of 3 percent (Sun Valley) to a high of 50 percent (City Park).

KEY FINDINGS
- While many neighborhoods with high combined costs for housing and transportation (H+T) also have high average household income, several neighborhoods with low average household incomes have relatively high H+T costs (e.g., Globeville has a median household income of just over $25,000 and a combined H+T cost of 42 percent of household income);
- Households in neighborhoods with great Walk, Bike and Transit Scores (many walkable destinations, access to bike infrastructure and access to a number of frequent service transit routes) tend to have fewer cars; and
- Neighborhoods with higher median household income and higher levels of educational attainment tend to have a higher number/level of amenities.
Neighborhoods with the greatest proportion of new development, redevelopment, additions, and expansions include DIA, Gateway-Green Valley Ranch, Stapleton and Lowry; new development has also concentrated west of Colorado Boulevard and in and adjacent to Downtown.
The Blueprint Denver team is focusing its attention to the future of the community. The community is being engaged in a variety of activities to ascertain the vision and values that will guide growth over the next 25 years. The vision, values and a set of guiding principles will be parlayed into big picture strategies for maintaining community character while accommodating projected growth.

Planning Process

**SUMMER 2016**
PHASE 1: KICK-OFF
- Key Outreach:
  - Task Force Meetings 1 & 2
  - Stakeholder Interviews
  - Focus Groups
  - Website
  - Online Surveys 1 & 2
  - Intercept Events

- Major Deliverables:
  - Refined Work Plan
  - Base Mapping

**FALL 2016 - WINTER 2017**
PHASE 2: ANALYSIS AND GOAL SETTING
- Key Outreach:
  - Task Force Meetings 3, 4 & 5
  - Pop-Up Events w/ Plan Van
  - Focus Groups
  - Visioning Workshops
  - Online Survey 3
  - Think Tank Meetings

- Major Deliverables:
  - Community Profile
  - 2002 Blueprint Denver Diagnostic
  - Industrial Lands Study
  - Vision, Values and Guiding Principles
  - Growth Scenarios and Evaluation

**SPRING 2017 - FALL 2017**
PHASE 3: RECOMMENDATIONS, DRAFT MAPS AND DRAFT TEXT
- Key Outreach:
  - Task Force Meetings 6, 7, 8 & 9
  - Focus Groups
  - Community Workshop #2
  - Online Survey 4
  - Intercept and Pop-Up Events
  - Community Open House
  - Think Tank Meetings

- Major Deliverables:
  - Preferred Growth Scenario
  - Updated Areas of Stability and Areas of Change Tool/s
  - Place Types
  - Street Typologies
  - Performance Measures/Indicators
  - Implementation Strategy

**WINTER 2018**
PHASE 4: DOCUMENTATION AND ADOPTION
- Key Outreach:
  - Task Force Meeting 10 (& 11)
  - Stakeholder Interviews
  - Focus Groups
  - Planning Commission and City Council Briefings and Hearings
  - Think Tank Meetings

- Major Deliverables:
  - Administrative Draft Plan
  - Draft Plan Report and ePlan
  - Final Plan Report and ePlan
  - Online Dashboard
Sources

Section 2
- U.S. Census Bureau
- US Census 2014 ACS 1-Year Estimates
- Bureau of Labor and Statistics
- Economic & Planning Systems
- City and County of Denver
- Denver County Assessor
- Denver Zoning Code, 2010
- University of Minnesota-Minnesota Population Center NHGIS
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Section 3
- U.S. Census Bureau
- LEHD
- Economic & Planning Systems
- Census Location Affordability Index
- Freddie Mac
- Zillow

Section 4
- Department of Local Affairs
- Economic & Planning Systems
- Denver County Assessor
- U.S. Census Bureau
- Bureau of Labor and Statistics
- CoStar

Section 5
- City and County of Denver
- Historic Denver, Inc.
- Denver Community Renewal Program
- Denver Parks and Recreation
- Regional Transportation District

Section 6
- DRCOG Front Range Travel Counts, 2009-2010
- U.S. Census
- American Community Survey
- City and County of Denver
- 2016 GTFS
- DRCOG Focus Model
- Regional Transportation District
- Fehr and Peers
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Texas Transportation Institute
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics
- American Community Survey, 2014
- Intrix Link Speed Data (Average of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday during October 2015)

Section 7
- ESRI
- MIG
- Fehr & Peers