

## Blueprint Task Force Meeting #11

6.22.17

### MEETING SUMMARY

On June 22, 2017, the eleventh meeting of the Blueprint Denver Task Force was convened at the Independence Pass Conference Room at the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) office building. The purpose of the ninth eleventh Task Force meeting was to continue the Task Force Discussion Series and engage the Task Force members in a meaningful discussion pertaining to both Urban Design and Shifting Demographics.

To begin the meeting, Joel Noble addressed the Task Force to speak about the importance of Urban Design as Denver continues to grow at a rapid pace. Following this introduction to the topic, Joel Noble outlined the meeting agenda and introduced each panelist to present on the topic of Urban Design. This was followed by a facilitated discussion. To begin the second half of the meeting, Kimball Crangle addressed the Task Force to consider how demographic changes around the city are impacting both the public and private realms. She introduced each panelist speaking on this shifting demographic issue. A facilitated discussion followed the speakers' presentations.

The full agenda for the meeting is included on page 7 of this summary and the meeting presentations are posted online at:

<http://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denverright/land-use-transportation.html>

## Urban Design

### **Panelist #1:**

Jason Whitlock is a Principal City Planner in Urban Design for the City and County of Denver. Jason presented to the Task Force a summary of how urban design shapes cities.

He stressed that urban design is about creating moments and experiences. Memorable places provide unique experiences and have the ability to change people's lives. He challenged the Task Force to remember their "Stop and think" moment; what made them passionate about being on this task force? Was it zoning and regulation or was it about the moments and experiences created by the city? Our experiences are the connection between people and places, between movement and the built form, and between nature and the urban form. We come at this through a sense of complete neighborhoods, local multi-stop/ multi-use destinations, and key transitional and flexible areas of incremental change.

### **Panelist #2:**

Chris Shears is a Principal at the architecture and planning firm Shear Adkins + Rockmore. The firm specializes in the design of urban projects based upon proven planning, urban design and architectural principles.

Chris's presentation focused on design excellence and how the design review process for the private realm can be successful in a city. His rules for design integrity are that buildings should fit seamlessly into the neighborhood, buildings should have endurance and lasting quality, and buildings should contribute to the public realm. He then discussed the role of Design Review Boards in the development process and examples of how other cities such as Seattle, Portland, Vancouver and Boulder run their Design Review. Overall, he identified 6 important characteristics for a successful Design Review process:

- Design guidelines that make sense and are flexible but predictable
- A qualified board, every member with design background
- Adequate and competent staff who can do the reviews that support the board
- Good process with clear submittal requirements and a predictable timeline
- Understanding clients and good architects who strive to do good projects
- Frequent training for Board members

### **Panelist #3**

Nore' Winter, Principal and Owner of the planning and urban design firm Winter & Company, is an urban design and planning consultant with more than thirty years' experience nationwide. He focuses on design strategies that promote the distinctive characteristics of individual communities and neighborhoods while enhancing economic vitality, sustainability and heritage conservation.

Nore' presented on how Design Guidelines for the public realm promote design excellence for a livable city. He discussed the different types of guidelines for the public realm:

prescriptive standards, design procedures, performance-oriented characteristics, and character-oriented guidelines. He also reviewed strategies for developing public realm design guidelines, which include knowing who the audience is, how the guidelines will be used, how broad the context is, and how they will relate to private sector guidelines. Developing a series of Public Realm typologies tied to a matrix of design features enables a flexible tool that can be adjustable. The typology can be adjusted to fit the vision of a neighborhood with the needs of a retail core to express that local experience we love and sense of place.

### Facilitated Discussion

- How can Denver create enforceable public realm standards?
  - We will need a high level policy direction to compel agencies to work together and add “teeth” to guidelines.
- How does the scale of expected growth change some aspects of Urban Design?
  - We need to concentrate density in a way that the pieces fit well together. This also increases the importance of good public spaces.
  - Responsive transition areas connecting areas of growth to the surrounding neighborhoods are very important. Design review and flexible street typologies could assist in creating cohesion, allow for time to re-envision places, and establish a sense of place in changing urban environments.
- Who gets to make decisions about the quality of development?
  - Many times, quality is higher in areas where land prices are higher due to market demands. To combat inequality, projects need to accommodate a representative cross section of residents.
- To the example of “lifestyle centers,” how do you build a main street from scratch in a neighborhood like Far Northeast?
  - The Transition zones are key to create a connected and cohesive environment, see comments noted previously.
  - In the existing city fabrics establishing or strengthening local centers or a “lifestyle center” connects local neighborhood environment to the uses it needs with flexible mobility options.
- How to build in flexibility to design standards?
  - Use broad intent statements to communicate overarching design principles.
  - Build-in the ability to evaluate the intent over time which should be reviewed every few years, and adjusted to fit changing conditions.
- Who are the key stakeholders for successful implementation of projects?
  - It starts with quality developers, architects and city staff. The best way to get a successful project is to have a sincere, cooperative effort that is apolitical.
- Many times, neighborhoods that are upset about density are actually upset about design. How can we foster incremental growth and how does it impact the public realm?
  - It’s intensity of building, not density, that scares people. Buffers like transition zones and, or with, design review can be used to address the scale, material, and nature of the form.

- How to get better design outcomes around utility substations?
  - There needs to be internal culture shift at utility companies to allow for better integration into built fabric. Special Districts could be noted to assist in the cultural shift or require better integrated design.
- Is it possible to plan for growth and potential decline simultaneously?
  - Designing buildings that can adapt to other uses are key for resilience.

## Housing and Demographic Shifts

### Panelist #1:

Renee Martinez-Stone is the Director of the West Denver Renaissance Collaborative (WDRC). The mission of the WDRC is to foster equitable revitalization in West Denver, advance the livelihood of existing residents, leverage local partners and community leaders, and help neighborhoods to preserve and amplify their existing multicultural character.

Renee discussed how the WDRC strives to use inclusive elements and tools to advocate for equity in planning. When neighborhoods experience dramatic demographic shifts, especially in those areas that are historically underserved populations, there needs to be focus on making sure those people are able to stay in their neighborhoods. Shifting the culture around planning is important and there should be no “decide, announce, defend” planning.

### Panelist #2:

Brad Calvert is the Regional Planning and Development Director for the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). Brad’s work with DRCOG includes working with the older adult population in the Denver region.

Brad spoke about the needs of the senior population in Denver specifically and how that population largely stay in their community as they age. The DRCOG Area Agency on Aging has programs to assist seniors facing displacement. He also spoke about the need for our communities to accommodate this population aging in place instead of having to go to assisted living or nursing home facilities, which are often a more drastic step then necessary and very expensive.

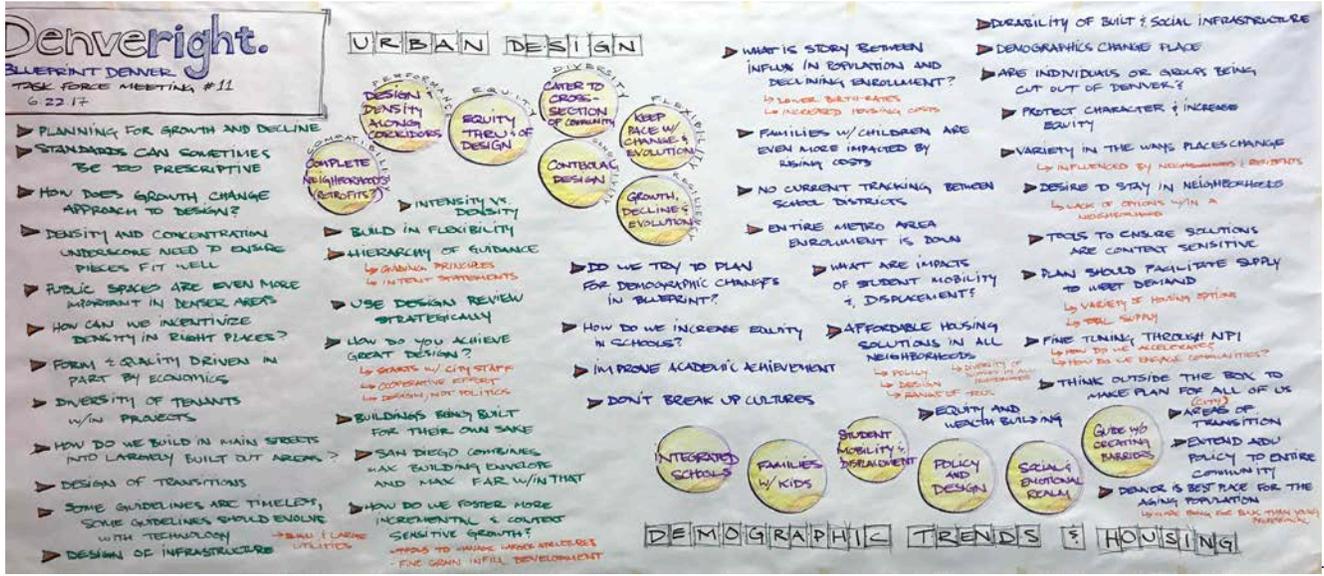
### Panelist #3

Sara Baris is the Senior Manager of Planning & Analysis at Denver Public Schools and Dustin Kress is the Manager of Bond and Mill Levies at Denver Public Schools.

Sara and Dustin presented how the shifting demographics of neighborhoods is affecting the Denver Public School system. DPS has seen enrollment decreasing, and the district has seen the demographics of their schools shifting with the increase. In response, DPS has the Strengthening Neighborhoods initiative kicking off to protect students and improve outcomes. Their research has shown that high-quality, integrated schools offer the best path for greater life outcomes.

## Facilitated Discussion

- Do we try to account for demographic changes in Blueprint Denver? Do we try to steer it?
- How do we increase equity in schools without sending kids to schools outside their communities?
  - Improve academic achievement without breaking up cultures
- How does the trend of declining enrollment line up with increased growth in Denver?
  - Lower birth rates, higher housing costs. When people have school aged children, they tend to move elsewhere because of a lack of affordable housing that accommodates families.
- How does the presence of families affect the character of a place? ~~Is~~Is there an opportunity to protect neighborhood character while still promoting equity across communities?
- Older adults want to stay in their neighborhood, but it may be in something other than the house they're currently in. Those transitional options don't always exist where they want to live. There are not many options for incremental change within their existing neighborhood, so they stay in their house that no longer fits their needs but could fit another new resident's needs.
- Concern about using Blueprint Denver to micro-manage change. The plan must create maximum possibility for housing availability, but we cannot control market demand. How to accommodate housing in a way that isn't too restrictive? Fine tuning as part of the Neighborhood Planning Initiative process is key.
- ADU policy for entire city – allows more aging in place and increase diversity of housing.



**TASK FORCE MEETING #9 ATTENDEES:**

Task Force: Joel Noble, Co-Chair, Kimball Crangle, Co-Chair, Angelle Foucher, Andrew Abrams, Andrew Sense, Annie Levinsky, Caitlin Quander, Chris Hinds, Councilman Christopher Herndon, Heather Noyes, Jeff Walker, Jerry Tinianow, Jeff Walker, Jesse Adkins, John Desmond, John Hayden, Margie Valdez, Norma Brambila, Parry Burnap, Paul Aldretti, Stuart Tucker Lundy, Trini Rodriguez

Staff/Consultants: David Gaspers, Sarah Showalter, Brandon Shaver, Mallory Bettag, Steven Chester, Sara White, Courtney Levingston, Jay Renkens, Evelyn Baker, Gretchen Armijo, Andy Rutz

Public: Matt Zitzmann, Melissa Sotelo

<b>Date:</b> 06/22/2017	<b>Time:</b> 1:00pm – 4:00pm	<b>Location:</b> DRCOG Independence Pass Conference Room, 1290 Broadway
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Item	Topic	Presenter	Duration
1.	Welcome & Review Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purpose of Focused Topics Meeting: Urban Design &amp; Placemaking and Demographic Trends and Housing Types</li> </ul>	Joel Noble, Kimball Crangle	5 min 1:00pm – 1:05pm
2.	Urban Design in Denver- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking about the role of Blueprint.</li> </ul>	Joel Noble	5 min 1:05-1:10
3.	<b>Citywide urban design vision</b> Sense of Place and making great spaces.	Jason Whitlock	15 min 1:15pm-1:30pm
4.	<b>Urban Design in Blueprint, the Vertical form.</b> Denver’s “Building Design Crisis” and design moving forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How Urban Design could/should be positioned to anticipate trends in development to either encourage/mitigate against them</li> <li>Value of Review Boards, Standards &amp; Guidelines and Urban Design Staff expertise to help applicants navigate design review</li> </ul>	Chris Shears	15 minutes 1:30pm-1:45pm
5.	<b>Urban Design in Blueprint, the Street experience.</b> Urban Design in the ROW and Public Realm. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streetscape and Public Realm planning stimulates good private sector development.</li> <li>This happens at the interface between Policy and Neighborhood Plans/Corridor Plans</li> <li>Used well they help create vision, Express sense of Place.</li> <li>Can help span and connect the Citywide goals to the specific design specs and manuals.</li> <li>We understand there can be Typologies (as seen in Complete Streets manuals) of street and public space approaches.</li> </ul>	Nore’ Winter	15 minutes 1:45pm-2:00pm

6.	Urban Design integration into Blueprint Q&A	Joel, Jason, Chris, Nore'	30 min 2:00pm-2:30pm
7.	Demographic Trends and Housing Types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview</li> </ul>	Kimball Crangle	5 min 2:30-2:35
8.	Guest Speaker #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of changing demographics on Denver</li> </ul>	Renee Martinez-Stone, West Denver Renaissance	15 min 2:35pm-2:50pm
9.	Guest Speaker #2 Brad Calvert, DRCOG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How growth and change is impacting the senior population</li> </ul>	Brad Calvert, DRCOG	15 min 2:50pm-3:05pm
10.	Guest Speaker #3 Sara Baris and Dustin Kress, Denver Public Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How growth and change is impacting the youth population</li> </ul>	Sara Baris and Dustin Kress, Denver Public Schools	10 min 3:05pm-3:20pm
9.	Facilitated Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What should Blueprint's role in guiding these types of changes be?</i></li> </ul>	Kimball Crangle	30 min 3:20pm-3:50pm
9.	Public Comment & Wrap up		10 min 3:50pm-4:00pm