

West Area Plan West Plan Small Working Group Meeting #8



Date and Time: July 27, 2022 at 4 pm

Location: Zoom

Attendees

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS (PRESENT)

Chala Mohr
Kathy Sandoval
Sean Brady
Jeanne Granville
Evon Lopez
Jonathan Pira

ELECTED OFFICIALS/COUNCIL DISTRICT AIDES

Jamie Torres
Katie Heideman, Council Aide, District 3

COMMUNITY PLANNING PROJECT TEAM

Valerie Herrera
Chelsea Bennouna
Eugene Howard
Fernando Abbud

Meeting Summary

Main Takeaways:

INTRO

- I would like to see our own guiding principles that we created together in the introduction, not the blueprint Denver guiding principles

QoL

- The ecological systems thinking component is not addressed in this summary yet
- We need to highlight the use of lighting, signage for community safety, and design and art for community sense of place
- EPA and environmental justice mapping should be in the environmental resilience section
- We need to look at which neighborhoods have the highest and lowest areas of park spaces, as well as how that ties to green zones and complete streets, and that should be called out more, in particular the green space gaps
- It would be helpful for each of the sections to have a subsection on how that section contributes to QoL
- Connect the dots of QoL throughout the plan – for example say in the mobility section – look for these dimensions of our housing and economy plan to see related recommendations for mobility that are essential for mobility justice
- Idea to highlight in the recommendations itself with a green asterisk or something when a recommendation relates to Quality of Life

LAND USE

- We need to capture the performance/green zoning recommendation and how it could work with Denver's form-based zoning
- We need community impact reports and equity analyses

MOBILITY

- Include safe connections:
 - On Bryant between SV and Valverde
 - What about creating a bridge from Valverde to Baker and Barnum?
 - Crossings from Valverde to Barnum and Athmar park

HOUSING + ECONOMY

- CLTs need to be explicitly listed
- Highlight the idea and desire for MIXED INCOME housing instead of just low income subsidized housing
- Include information about the challenge of how the West relates to policies City-wide to deal with the issue of affordable housing

- The housing section must lead with the need for housing diversity of all kinds, THEN point to where missing middle has been defined- it is very confusing as a general reader to prioritize missing middle
- Speak more to the climate connection – can we disincentivize tear-downs, and maybe have a policy that if you tear down you are held to a different standard
- Recommend policies around performance-based metrics, this would enable us to tie to when development is coming in, and then we could hold developers accountable
- Highlight our recent success with neighborhood-wide ADU rezoning
- In Economy, highlight green jobs more
- We need more mixed-use corridors – 8th and Sheridan for example

NEIGHBORHOODS

- Projects that have been identified must be carried through into the neighborhood sections - we need to see how all of these elements are highlighted in each neighborhood section
- We must improve the numbering system that is bewildering in its current state - If they are not meant to connect across scale, use A, B, C instead of 1, 2, 3 at the neighborhood scale

CLARITY OF TERMS

- Embed links throughout the document that brings us to specific explanations in the glossary, like “regional center”
- Plan should define what it means when we say "green space".- in many places in the plan, I think "public space" would be a better term to use than "green space".
- Use more pictures, call out boxes, etc. to explain things like what missing middle is
- Consider changing the name “transformative projects” - Do they really meet that definition?

OVERALL PLAN

- In the August steering committee it feels like it would be efficient to make recommendations around what we are actually changing and provide updates about what has already been changed
- Maps need clear legends and accompanying narratives
- If we can't put something in the plan, park that content somewhere so it doesn't get lost
- Make the table of contents dynamically navigable

NOTES

Kathy:

- The missing link is to set the stage for that QoL is the guiding principles that all of the other components are spokes from
- I think this can be done with the narrative for historical narrative a bit, the guiding principles around equity, healthy, vibrancy, and resiliency, and then really tell that narrative how land use, mobility, economics should be viewed through the lens of quality of life
- I would like to see our own guiding principles that we created together in the introduction, not the blueprint Denver guiding principles

Evon:

- We have to remember that there are families that still live in these neighborhoods that have suffered through crisis after crisis, and I want that voice in this message
- We need gentrification and density, but we don't want to lose the people's voice who have lived here for generations
- There have been so many broken promises and so much neglect

Kathy:

- We don't have to buy into the City's expectation
- This is our West Area Plan, and its going to be different than the City's
- We don't have to go down the same path, and it should look different, lets not assume that we are going to take the city's blueprint Denver and run with it bc I don't think it applies to this neighborhood
- The ecological systems thinking component is not addressed here yet
- Val explains that we received Heidi and Elizabeth's feedback in email and all of that will get filtered into our spreadsheet, and we will do a more full share out with the steering committee next month

Kathy:

- There is a lot to unpack with partner agencies, and we really want to see some of that
- Funding, resources, other information that makes the recommendation and implementation real
- So this needs to be unpacked more
- The equity and justice maps also need to be included here
- And the environmental justice map I included here

Jamie Torres:

- The bullet about partners – is that to make sure their content is up to date?

Val:

- Yes, its that, and also to add new content that might be relevant

- For example, CASR's needs assessments
- Brad Patterson's tree planting initiative
- Food forest initiative
- Bernice is a woman we are working with on energy use
- Those are just some examples of the new content that will make its way in which will tie to the new concepts folks here want to see

Jamie:

- Yes, and for that, this may not get fully fleshed out bc this is a plan that will last 20 years
- But this section will be important for me as I talk to other agencies, but its ok if its not fully fleshed out

Evon:

- Please forgive me, but where is a nod to water, scale of permanence on this slide?
- Certainly adding the down payment assistance for red-lined nghds, Transportation funding for racial equity and looking at highway caps and nghd connections.
- We need to highlight the use of lighting, signage for community safety, and design and art for community sense of place

Kathy:

- EPA and environmental justice mapping should be in environmental resilience
- We need to look at which neighborhoods have the highest and lowest areas of park spaces, as well as how that ties to green zones and complete streets, and that should be called out more, in particular about the green space gaps along the existing trails and enhancements

Evon:

- What about creating a bridge from Valverde to Baker and Barnum?
- We talked about it a while back but never saw anything about that

Jamie Torres:

- Yes, that should be included in the plan somewhere, maybe in mobility
- Crossings from Valverde to barnum and athmar park
- What that does for me is that I make sure it is flagged for DOTI and public works studies

Jeanne:

- safe connection on bryant between SV and Valvrde

Val:

- Might want to include or revisit language about the ADU project across West, including into Athmar

Elizabeth:

- My hope for this meeting is to get clear for what our plan is for what is necessary to have revised, with the aim of getting the plan out to the public in a strategic way that builds on our momentum
- I am eager to hear what CPDs thoughts are after having engaged in these convos, especially about the systems approach that centers equity and vitality approach
- What changes will be made to reflect these conversations?
- What are the next steps?
- Where we are right now is so much stronger than at the start of these 8 meetings, and I am grateful for making that possible
- But I don't know where we are on the concrete changes that will be made to the plan

Eugene:

- Last week we discussed that we were going through all the material
- This week we agreed to review our understandings and get some consensus on the material we understand from you before going to the larger steering committee
- THEN we will figure out how we are going to tackle all of the information that has been provided to us
- Then we need to get some confirmation from the larger steering committee before we go forward with changes we need consensus from the entire steering committee
- In August we will discuss the outcomes from this process, and then will really look at how and what it will take to get a second draft for your and everyone's review

Elizabeth:

- It is good to know that that is what the process is
- In the arc, there was a lot of support at our last large steering committee meeting to move forward with the QoL area
- BC there was alignment, and everyone was invited to participate in this SWG, I think that that process is going to move swiftly if we come to the steering committee with that the collective recommendations are for the changes, as well as an update on the status of some of the low hanging fruit changes like clarity and reorganization
- If its possible, I think the steering committee would benefit from hearing what the proposed changes are, and they can give feedback if they have a problem with it
- It feels like it would be efficient to make recommendations around what we are actually changing and provide updates about what has already been changed

Kathy:

- I want to echo what Elizabeth has been saying

- QoL needs to be the hub in which this plan has been embedded from and let the other spokes come from QOL
- To me that needs to be a narrative and an introductory text that really elevates this section
- If QoL is not the major component that the other sections come from, then we have not created consensus between the city and the neighborhoods
- For me the focus of the West Area Plan needs to create the baseline of the importance of the Quality of Life as the hub in which the other spokes connect to such as mobility, land use and economy.

Jonathan:

- We need to capture the performance/green zoning that we are not discussing this as a layer for our CURRENT zoning, but as a suggested ALTERNATIVE zoning system
- Can we use these tools as a substitute for existing tools?
- **Jeanne:**
- On the opportunity maps, there are terms like “regional centers” etc, we need to have some kind of glossary
- I just want to make sure the glossary you mentioned somewhere else will also apply to these land use terms
- Val confirms we have a glossary, but we are open to suggested edits to the glossary

Jeanne:

- Where it really came up for me was on the map that has density and height allowances and Blueprint future places
- I do think the whole glossary is too much to put in the plan, but it would be good to know, like, what characterizes a regional center? Can we embed the glossary link in places like that throughout the document

Elizabeth:

- Thank you, Jonathan - and I think form-based zoning (which is currently used by City of Denver) would work really well together with performance zoning, which I don't believe has been used before, but is one of the tools advanced in the "green zoning" recommendations Kathy forwarded from the APA.

Kathy:

- Jonathan, I don't see the principles of performance based or green zoning as an either/or scenario. It doesn't need to be binary since different nghd situations may vary and require different tools and I would hope the city will be open to the nuances.

Jonathan:

- Agreed Elizabeth - I realized I also used the wrong term when speaking - I meant we're using both form-based and use-based, instead of having completed a transition to form-based

Elizabeth:

- To what Jeanne is talking about right now, there's been a pattern where the maps have been difficult to interpret because they don't have legends that explain what's happening in the map. **Maps tell stories, and when maps have clear legends and accompanying narratives, it really helps us understand the complexity of our contexts with ease.** Stories and maps help us navigate. The glossary link would be helpful.

Jonathan:

- Yep, Kathy, I wasn't intending to imply that green+performance can't work together. But frankly, performance+green+form+use-based won't work. The philosophies work in contrast to each other

Kathy:

- **We also need community impact reports and equity analysis so that when it comes to the planning board they know what we are talking about**
- We need a lot of thought in how those tools can be used in being able to use as rezoning and development unfolds
- **We need to see what impact a CLT or other ways of having public and private investment in communities needs to be explicitly listed**
- Then certainly the impacts of involuntary displacement that we have been seeing already, and what that does as we upzone

Elizabeth:

- how does form-based conflict with performance zoning in philosophy? Both of these seem to be about creating flexibility for developers to achieve general consistent outcomes. Both seem to be akin to "targeted universalism" as an equity approach - where we focus on universal outcomes, with different design strategies to get there.

Evon:

- Thank you Council Woman Torres for your comment on connections to other neighborhoods. Valverde is playing catch up, and sorry if I keep stating we do not have a library, grocery store (food dessert), a pool nor a restroom facility in West Bar-Val Wood park (larger park in Valverde), Does it make sense to note these things were mentioned, as while not everything will be included in the plan we will not lose sight of the importance of these items for future planning. Pretty please?

Evon:

- **If we cant put something in the plan, can we make sure the content gets parked somewhere so It might be included in another plan?**
- So later on if funding becomes available, we don't lose sight of the things we did mention but we cant do anything about right now

Katie:

- I know councilwoman Torres volunteered to take responsibility for some of the things that can't live or are not appropriate for the west plan
- This way they can be neighborhood priorities but not in the plan, I realize we would have to publicly post this, but maybe the plan can make reference to this

Eugene:

- We can certainly think of ways to capture community desires that maybe aren't appropriate in a land use plan
- Perhaps we can identify some content champions, for example if smtg is under the purview of DEDO or NEST so we can find a home for them
- It will be an ongoing effort to make sure we don't lose that detail

Elizabeth:

- And a big thank you to Councilwoman Torres for bringing up the Participatory Budgeting meeting this weekend - I remember for a long while our Steering Committee members talked about a desire for Participatory Budgeting to be part of our implementation policy recommendations to support equitable and regenerative infrastructure investments.

Val:

- In addition to that, one of the things the West team is doing is that we are putting each of these comments into different buckets, like what are easy revisions, what are more complex that need partner agency collaboration, what doesn't fit in the plan etc.

Kathy:

- We really need to see how those folks are part of QoL
- QoL is saying we are concerned about displacement, and then we need to see how others relate to this so we know we are addressing this QoL issue through this land use spoke and that it is being carried forward
- How does this tie back to why we were looking at QoL as being so important

Jonathan:

- This mobility summary feels good, and I know our specific recommendations are captured in the more detailed notes

Kathy:

- How does this Mobility section tie to QoL?
- I don't see clarity
- I guess those bold ideas about highway caps and parkways . . . again, QoL things need to come to life in the mobility section

- We need to flag, green space, urban heat islands, impact of highways on health and welfare, traffic calming – these threads need to be highlighted as QoL topics in mobility

Elizabeth:

- Directly adding on to what Kathy said – these points hit mobility as mobility stands along
- It would be helpful for each of the sections to have a subsection on how that section contributes to QoL
- What if at the beginning of each section we had a vignette about how a family's experience of vitality looks bc these recommendations are in place and how it contributes to quality of life
- A lot of what Kathy named is what I am thinking – how do we highlight those threads?
- You cant have complete streets without green infrastructure planning, housing investments, mobility infrastructure is paired with good plans for housing diversity, then you get mobility justice
- It would be cool to say in the mobility section – look for these dimensions of our housing and economy plan to see related recommendations for mobility that are essential for mobility justice – just CONNECT THE DOTS so people can build the system thinking capacity and for a given site see how these elements come together

Chelsea:

Reflecting back the ideas of how to integrate quality of life

- Idea to highlight in the recommendations itself with a green asterisk or something when a recommendation relates to Quality of Life
- Narratives at beginning or end of section
- Maps that color code how recommendations overlap

Evon:

- Does anyone have an update on the widening of I-25, as this will impact the pollution in SV and Valverde? And should it be noted?

Jonathan:

- We also want to highlight the idea and desire for MIXED INCOME housing instead of just low income subsidized housing

Elizabeth:

- thanks for calling that out Jonathan

Kathy:

- The challenge of how the West relates to policies City-wide to deal with the issue of affordable housing

- We need to involve all neighborhoods across the city instead of having segregation of housing just in West
- This is a big part of the story – of what it has even been like for people who want to buy a home
- How do we retain naturally occurring affordable housing?
- **But, this is not a neighborhood issue, it is a CITY issue – would like to see that reflected**
- Like with EHA – where are those 10 unit buildings going to end up, and how does that tie to the city overall?
- We need to encourage more incentives to move out of segregation

Val:

- Yes, and I could see us beefing up the introduction to include this information

Elizabeth:

- **Housing: What we REALLY want for equity and vitality in housing is a diversity of housing options - diversity of ownership options, diversity of building forms for different types of households and their needs (including differently abled at different points in ones life)... Missing middle is part of that, but the focus on MM is confusing.**
- The naming of MM is strange, the plan should simply highlight that we need housing diversity for people of diverse incomes, demographics, housing that meets diversity of needs, including physical needs, intergenerational, different price points, ownership types - and putting MM in context of that as part of the solution
- **Lead with WE WANT MORE DIVERSITY, THEN point to where missing middle has been defined , but it is very confusing as a general reader to prioritize missing middle**
- It makes people think we are missing middle income housing, and that's not what MM is doing
- **Also want to speak to the climate connection – can we disincentivize tear-downs, and maybe have a policy that if you tear down you are held to a different standard.** No idea if this policy is possible, but even if there is some recycling of materials, there is a huge loss of energy with tear downs, and they contribute to more speculative development, then we are having climate and gentrification exacerbated

Val:

- We are re-looking at LU 5 and LU 6 , the MM content already included, as well as the expansion and preservation component that is labeled on the map and clarifying that in the draft

Chala:

- **I want to echo what Elizabeth is talking about and seeing if it can be tied to performance-based metrics, which I see as different from performance zoning**

- If we had policies around performance-based metrics, it would be able to tie to when development was coming in, and then we could hold developers accountable – even in industrial areas, if there was a performance metric tied to providing green jobs, that might help us get closer to the piece we are looking for to tie the story of QoL into different pieces of the plan

Kathy:

- We just went through a neighborhood wide rezoning to allow ADU- This should be elevated to highlight this progress of stabilization of housing and intergenerational wealth in these neighborhoods
- When you look at the cost of redevelopment, and the energy, and the materials, and the cost of scraping – we haven't touched on this as much as we should

Evon:

- To Elizabeth's point. Perhaps developers can do what is predominately done in Europe. They reuse, repurpose, recycle most everything when a building is torn down. Probably b/c of all the marble their buildings are made of? 😊
- Curious what local hiring requirements means

Eugene:

- There is an opportunity to encourage employers to look to the local talent pool
- That also helps with QoL, especially if locals don't have to drive to work, etc.

Elizabeth:

- We've talked a lot about policies that could incentivize green jobs - jobs in an equitable, regenerative economy where the work performed contributes to development that supports social and ecological vitality and equity.

Kathy:

- Housing options that can be explored in the industrial areas of Sun Valley and Valverde to connect the neighborhoods instead of having two neighborhood context in Valverde/Sun Valley (residential/industrial)
- In Economy, highlight green jobs
- We also need more mixed use corridors – 8th and Sheridan for example, how can that be improved if we provide more local businesses and services, and also enhance the gulch area there

Jonathan:

- I will have to leave in a minute, and I don't think we'll get to the "Clarity of Terms" slide, so would like to add a request that the plan defines what it means when it says "green space". In many cases, I think people interpret that as truly just the color green, which

isn't always the best solution for targets like tree growth. In many places in the plan, I think "public space" would be a better term to use than "green space".

Elizabeth:

- Good point, Jonathan - thank you!!! That's one of the things we talk about in the 10 pager about "false solutions" too
- Before redlining people were able to walk to jobs, but they were toxic jobs
- It would be great to have jobs that are regenerative and healthy, and that people can walk to

Kathy:

- I am feeling that we didn't really dig into the neighborhood piece
- That is something we need to look at more
- But the big thing that resonates with me is that the projects that have been identified are carried through into the neighborhood sections
- We need to see how all of these elements are highlighted in each neighborhood section
- A guiding principle of vibrancy and QOL come together – that these neighborhoods are able to be in a better position than they are now, and that thread needs to be seen – otherwise it's a disservice to the neighborhood section

Elizabeth:

- Agreed with Kathy - we didn't really get to the individual neighborhoods.

Val:

- Also, we recall that we can have more 1-1 sessions to discuss individual neighborhoods
- But rest assured we have neighborhood section feedback in the spreadsheet
- And the work will also be to comb through the general recommendations and make sure relevant content is tied to each neighborhood where relevant

Elizabeth:

- I agree with everything Kathy said
- And I appreciate Val that we did say we could have separate smaller conversations about neighborhoods
- It has been really amazing to have this group of people actively participating in this group so that each of us understands our own context, but also so we each understand how the larger context of West affects each neighborhood
- I understand the logic of having the neighborhood section for readers- but we REALLY need to improve the numbering system that is bewildering in its current state
- One way to make it easy would be to be able to see how a rec for mobility, for example, might be applied or affect the local scale, and have those neighborhood numbers aligned so you can find your place in the whole
- This way people can go to their neighborhood section but connect the dots

- If there is a general rec that has a neighborhood specific rec, give it a name that shows
- Like, if mobility rec 6 relates to barnum, have it under M6 in the barnum section maybe?
- The more the numbers can guide you to how it relates to the general recommendation, the easier it will be to understand how the parts fit together

Kathy:

- I will provide in more details the threads I see in our QoL and the spokes of land use, mobility, economy as it ties into the neighborhood framework.
- There may be multiple recommendations that tie to a specific night goals instead of one stand alone policy. It is hard to understand on how policy —>background —>strategies.
- To continue to tie the threads together.
- to clarify on my comment above without zoom correction, not night but neighborhood.

Evon:

- THANK you for calling out and removing "Frankie Park." As soon, fingers 🖐️, toes, and eyeballs crossed it will be named "Ulibarri" aka new village and what we are trying to build in Valverde.

Chala:

- I agree with Elizabeth on trying to understand the policy within different sections that pull through into the neighborhoods
- As I was going through each portion throughout our 8 weeks I was making notes for how it was in the main part of the plan and if I saw it pull through into the barnum section
- Should I try to put that into writing and send it?
- For example, M14 was also connected to M16, and I know it might be a refinement

Eugene:

- I would say at this point I don't see value in you spending your time doing that, unless you want to
- The area wide recommendations you find in the main part of the draft, those are the recs that apply across the whole draft
- In the neighborhood chapters we try to highlight neighborhood specific things, and it wasn't our initial intent to connect them
- But if that was something important, we can look at how we might be able to connect and show how an area rec might be playing out in a neighborhood and maybe we can use the umbering system to do that
- I also have to remind us that we have to think about the org across all 19 plans so that planners, DOTI, everyone in the City also understands how to navigate through the document
- That doesn't mean we cant take this feedback and look at ways to make that better
- So I have to share that we have to keep in mind that it is not a one-off document

Elizabeth:

- If they are not meant to connect across scale, I used use A, B, C instead of 1, 2, 3 at the neighborhood scale

Sean:

- Hey Evon, not sure if your question about I-25 was answered. I-25 expansion is cancelled for now. <https://coloradosun.com/2022/05/16/i-25-no-expansion-central-denver/>

Elizabeth:

- Thanks so much everyone - I need to rejoin the family dinner. I will watch out for the recording for the rest. I appreciate you all so much.
And think that what Eugene just said is helpful so we are thinking about how this plan sets precedents for other plans.

Kathy:

- We need to clarify in implementation what short- medium- long-term means – how many years on average?

Val:

- I believe short is 1-5
- Mid is 5-10
- Long is past 10
- We can check

Evon:

- Can we make so the table of contents is dynamic navigation to the neighborhood section we want

Kathy:

- The info that would be helpful to residents is HOW DO YOU GET THERE like, with missing middle, how we get there is probably a zoning change
- So lets explain how different initiatives evolve would be a clarifying way to use this document – the devil is in the details

Evon:

- Can we use more pictures, call out boxes, etc. to explain things like what missing middle is
- There are other ways than having to go to the glossary

Kathy:

- I am still confused about transformative projects
- Do they really meet that definition?
- It sounds good, but there might be another way to look at it

Val:

- I wonder, is there criteria that a transformative project meets?
- SO there is definitely room to unpack this more

Kathy's feedback to overall plan slide:

- We need to elevate the QoL section as an orientation to the ENTIRE PLAN