



**neighborhood**  
PLANNING INITIATIVE

JANUARY 2, 2024

# NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING INITIATIVE STRATEGIC PLAN



**DENVER**  
COMMUNITY PLANNING  
& DEVELOPMENT

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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# 1.1 WHAT IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING INITIATIVE?

The Neighborhood Planning Initiative (NPI) is a program to cover 100 percent of the city with area plans. Under NPI, area planning occurs according to a consistent, streamlined process common to all plans. The multi-year work program is set on a rolling basis and determined by the planning need of each area. Planning need is assessed periodically using a data-driven process that is described on pages 10 and 11. Once 100 percent coverage of the city is achieved, NPI will continue by cycling back through and updating the completed plans for each area.

# 1.2 PROGRAM SO FAR

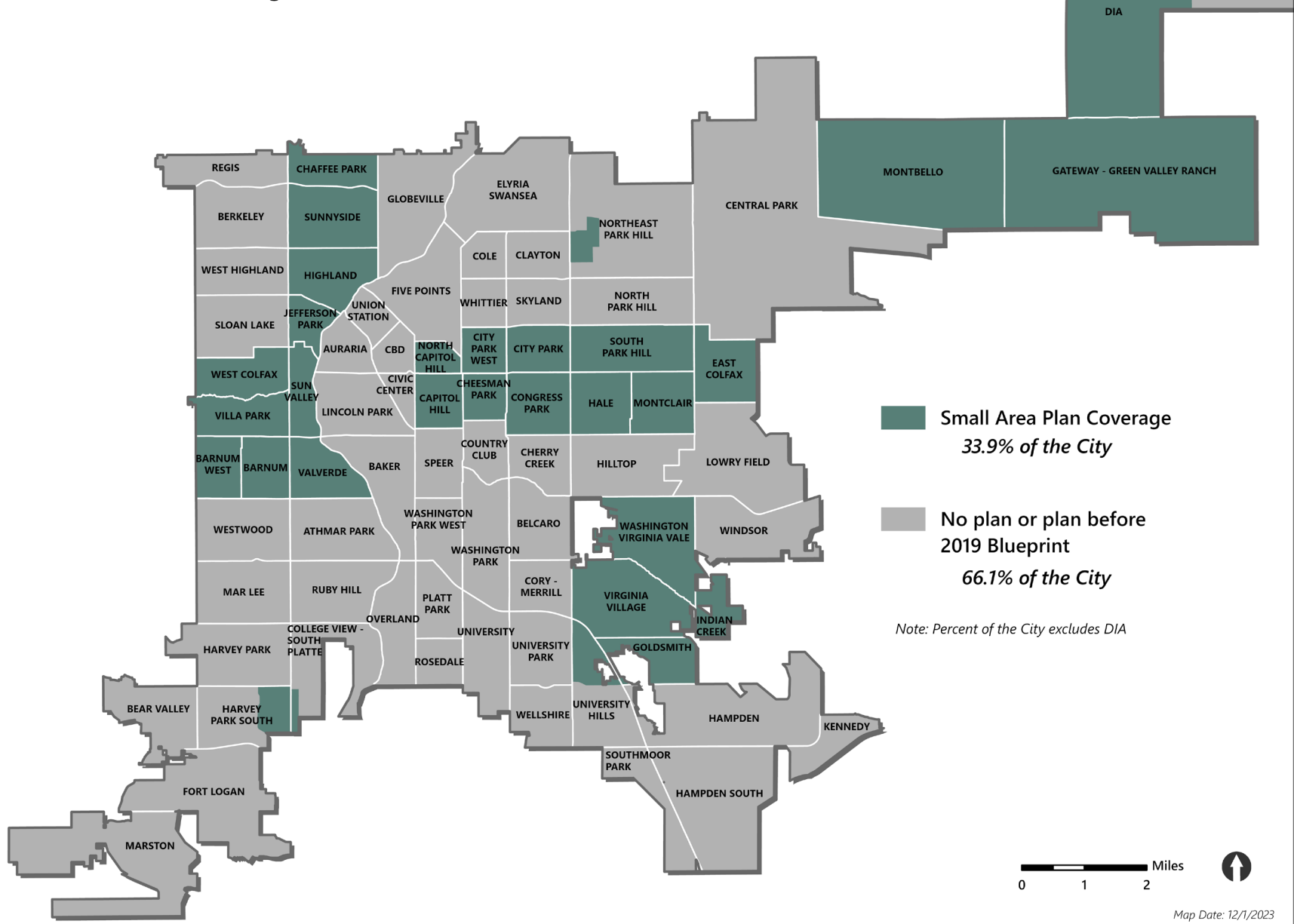
Denver created the NPI program in 2016 to provide neighborhood plans equitably and efficiently for all of Denver. The first round of plans (Far Northeast, East, and East Central) were launched in 2017. To date, five NPI plans have been completed, covering approximately 30 percent of the city, with a sixth (Near Northwest) scheduled for adoption in early 2024. The successful completion of these six plans is reflective of Denver’s extensive efforts to seek input from Denverites, especially from underserved communities. However, Community Planning and Development originally envisioned completing NPI plans in 18-24 months. It has taken Denver longer to complete the first six NPI plans than originally anticipated.

# 1.3 EVALUATION AND UPDATED STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2023, following the completion of the *West* and *Near Southeast* plans, a program evaluation was launched to update the program goals and improve the planning process and outcomes. The evaluation involved an analysis of what has worked well thus far, interviews with a broad range of stakeholders, and examination of best practices from peer cities. The outcome of the evaluation is documented in this revised NPI Strategic Plan.



### Small Area Plan Coverage (2023)





**Preventing Residential Development, Affordable Housing, and Wealth Building**

Ensure a comprehensive approach to affordable housing, including the development of new affordable housing units, the preservation of existing affordable housing, and the provision of supportive services to low-income residents.

Provide financial support to affordable housing developers and homeowners through grants, loans, and technical assistance.

Ensure a fair distribution of affordable housing units across the city, with a focus on areas with high concentrations of low-income residents.

Support the development of affordable housing in areas with high potential for economic growth and job creation.

Ensure the availability of affordable housing for all income levels, including the very low-income and homeless populations.

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**Preventing Residential Displacement and Wealth Building Draft K**

**History and Culture**

Understand the history and culture of the neighborhood and how it has shaped the community's identity and values.

Identify and preserve historic landmarks and buildings that are important to the neighborhood's heritage.

Support the development of new housing that is sensitive to the neighborhood's history and culture.

Encourage the use of traditional building materials and construction techniques to maintain the neighborhood's character.

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**Residential Design and Compatibility**

Ensure that new residential development is compatible with the existing residential fabric of the neighborhood.

Support the development of housing that is of high quality and meets the needs of the neighborhood's residents.

Encourage the use of traditional building materials and construction techniques to maintain the neighborhood's character.

Support the development of new housing that is sensitive to the neighborhood's history and culture.

Encourage the use of traditional building materials and construction techniques to maintain the neighborhood's character.

**Do you agree with the HISTORY & CULTURE and RESIDENTIAL DESIGN COMPONENTS of recommendations?**

Please fill in the appropriate box for your response.

**Pros**

**Cons**

**Station District 1**

**Universal Commercial Use Land**

**How We Want**

Station District 1 is a vibrant and diverse neighborhood with a rich history and culture. We want to ensure that the neighborhood's character is preserved while allowing for the development of new housing and commercial uses that meet the needs of the community.

We are seeking your input on the proposed changes to the Station District 1 Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, specifically the new Universal Commercial Use Land designation.

**How We Want**

We want to ensure that the neighborhood's character is preserved while allowing for the development of new housing and commercial uses that meet the needs of the community.

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**Station District 1 Universal Commercial Use Land**

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# 2.0 CORE VALUES

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# VALUES FOR THE NPI PROGRAM

The NPI planning process has three core values: intentional, equitable, and measurable. These values are the foundation of NPI and guided the development of the strategic plan. These core values will remain constant and continue into the future as area plans are developed over the coming years.



## 2.1 INTENTIONAL PROCESS

The planning process will be clear and participants will know what to expect.

### ADDRESS RELEVANT TOPICS

The planning process will build on *Blueprint Denver* to target issues most relevant for the community, and that can be effectively addressed through neighborhood recommendations.

### INNOVATE

NPI will develop customized, unique, and creative recommendations for each planning area.

### ADVANCE CITYWIDE GUIDANCE

The NPI planning process will rely on citywide plans like *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver* in the first phase of the planning process to develop the draft vision and recommendations.

### GET PLANS ADOPTED QUICKLY

NPI will have a streamlined four-phase planning process to complete plans in approximately 18 months.



## 2.2 EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

The planning process will treat neighborhoods fairly and promote balanced, equitable outcomes.

### MAKE PLANS EASY TO USE

Plans will be clear about the desired outcomes for the plan areas and use plain language in the plan document.

### RESPOND TO INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITY NEEDS

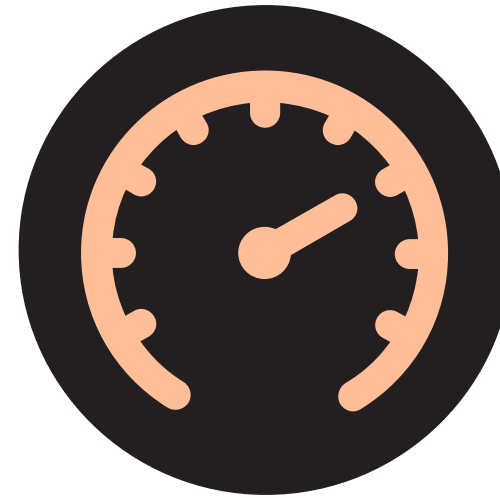
Plans will incorporate equitable engagement tools such as community navigators, advisory committees, and focus groups to identify community-specific needs.

### PROMOTE EQUITY

Plans will use saturation engagement to increase community awareness of the planning effort taking place in their neighborhood and ensure equitable outcomes. Saturation engagement involves using a broad range of outreach and communication tools to increase engagement during the first planning phase.

### INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT ENGAGEMENT

Information and engagement processes will be transparent and available. Draft materials will be created throughout the process. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to inform content as it is developed. Area plan phasing will provide the community with advanced notice of upcoming planning efforts.



## 2.3 MEASURABLE GOALS

The planning process will make use of data to inform decisions and track implementation progress.

### IMPLEMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The planning process will produce an implementation plan appendix that will include more detailed priorities and next steps to advance the plan recommendations.

### TRACK AND REPORT PROGRESS

NPI will use metrics established in *Blueprint Denver* to facilitate tracking, transparency, and reporting of plan recommendations with the community.

### PLAN IN AREAS WITH GREATEST NEED

NPI will use indicators of planning need to help determine future planning phases.

### CONTINUE PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE 100% COVERAGE

Completing and implementing plans will help provide consistent policy foundation for the entire city.



# 3.0 STRATEGY AND APPROACH

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## 3.1 SEQUENCING

### 3.1.1 Consideration for Neighborhood Groupings

Denver's 78 neighborhood statistical areas have been grouped together into 19 NPI planning areas. The purpose of grouping neighborhoods together is to increase the geographic coverage of each NPI plan and reduce the total number of plans required to achieve 100 percent coverage of the city. These groupings were first defined in 2016 with the creation of the NPI program, and some boundary adjustments have been made over time. Future adjustments may also be needed as the program moves forward. There are many different ways to group neighborhoods together, and different advantages/disadvantages associated with each approach. The NPI groupings were created after carefully considering the following elements:

- Shared histories, issues, and aspirations
- Built environment and natural features
- Planning need
- Character, context, and development patterns
- Major destinations (institutions, amenities, shopping districts)
- Common infrastructure (major roads, drainage)
- Geographic size and population
- Councilmember and public input
- Avoid splitting neighborhood statistical areas and/or census tracts into different groupings to maintain the ability to track data and trends over time.

### 3.1.2 Indicators of Planning Need

To help inform the timing and phasing of NPI plans, the city uses a system of data-based indicators of planning need. These indicators help to establish which neighborhoods within the city have greater need for a plan, relative to other neighborhoods. NPI areas with higher planning need should be prioritized to receive an NPI plan sooner rather than later.

The original NPI Strategic Plan (2016) identified an index consisting of 15 different data points to determine planning need. This system was replaced in 2022 by simpler map-based system that makes extensive use of existing map-based analysis from *Blueprint Denver 2019*. It is possible that the indicators of planning need will need to be updated again in the future to remain relevant as the city grows and changes, or as new data becomes available.

For this reason, the NPI Strategic Plan does not prescribe a specific analysis to inform plan sequencing, but instead recommends that the analysis, at a minimum, incorporates the following:

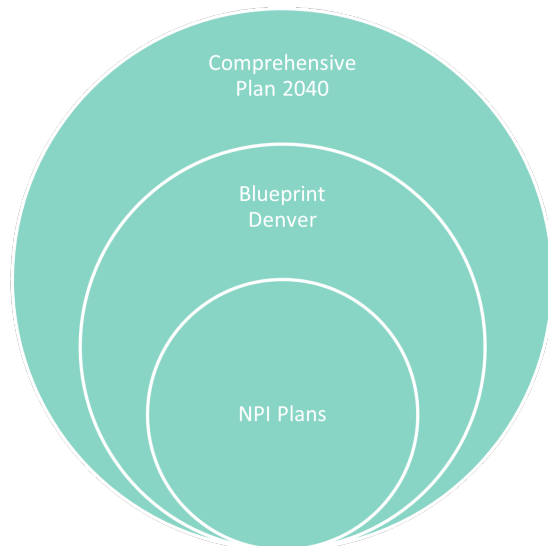
- Equity: Include equity-based concepts/analysis to identify and prioritize areas with higher equity needs.
- Change: Identify and prioritize areas where accelerated demographic or market-based change is happening or is likely to happen.
- Plan Recency: Prioritize areas that do not have current/up-to-date neighborhood plans.



## 3.2 INTEGRATION WITH *COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040* AND *BLUEPRINT DENVER*

### 3.2.1 Citywide Plans are the Basis of NPI Plans

Denver has citywide plans that are adopted by City Council: *Comprehensive Plan 2040*, *Blueprint Denver*, and *Game Plan for a Healthy City*. *Blueprint Denver* and *Game Plan for a Healthy City* are adopted as supplements to *Comprehensive Plan 2040*. NPI plans and other small area plans are similarly adopted as supplements to the comprehensive plan. NPI plans are chiefly guided by *Blueprint Denver*. However, while the citywide recommendations in *Blueprint Denver* are the foundation of NPI plans, NPI plans may also intentionally update certain parts of *Blueprint Denver*, primarily Future Neighborhood Context and Place Type maps.



#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *BLUEPRINT DENVER* AND NPI PLANS

*Blueprint Denver* is the starting point for NPI plans. NPI applies and refines *Blueprint Denver* guidance at the neighborhood level, and may update *Blueprint Denver's* maps.

### 3.2.2 NPI Plans Refine *Blueprint Denver* Recommendations at the Neighborhood Level

*Blueprint Denver* – one of the city's primary planning documents – sets forth a vision for an equitable and inclusive city. To achieve this, it provides high-level, citywide guidance on the elements of complete neighborhoods and transportation networks: land use, transportation, and quality of life infrastructure. *Blueprint Denver* and NPI plans have a two-way relationship. They inform and affect each other. *Blueprint Denver's* high-level guidance forms the basis of the more detailed recommendations in NPI plans. NPI plans should build upon the strategies and policies from *Blueprint Denver*. In doing so, NPI plans will highlight the most important aspirations and challenges of those neighborhoods and implement citywide policies in the way that best makes sense for each neighborhood. Because NPI plans and *Blueprint Denver* work in tandem to shape the future of Denver's neighborhoods, NPI plans should neither repeat nor contradict *Blueprint Denver's* recommendations.

### 3.2.3 NPI Plans May Update *Blueprint Denver* Maps

City Council adopts NPI plans as supplements to *Comprehensive Plan 2040*. NPI plans contain maps of the elements of a complete neighborhood that may differ from those in *Blueprint Denver*: the context, future place type, street type, and modal priority. To ensure that *Blueprint Denver* and small area plans are consistent, City Council updates those maps in *Blueprint Denver* to reflect changes from the NPI plans. In some cases, NPI plans may also make minor updates to the boundaries of *Blueprint Denver's* growth strategy, but they are not intended to make substantive changes to this map. NPI plans do not update the vision, goals, policies, or strategies of *Blueprint Denver*.

Insights gained from the NPI planning process may affect *Blueprint Denver* more broadly as part of that plan's regular updates. Some participants in the NPI planning process may present recommendations that extend beyond the boundaries of a single NPI plan. These often relate to citywide regulatory changes, services, or programs. While these ideas may not ultimately be included in NPI plans, they may merit discussion as part of the regular, five-year *Blueprint Denver* updates. During the NPI planning process, CPD staff will record these comments for consideration in the next update of *Blueprint Denver* or other citywide plans.

# 4.0 PLAN CONTENT

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# 4.1 NPI PLAN CONTENT ORGANIZATION

Because NPI plans take the general guidance from *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver* and tailor it to meet the needs of Denver’s neighborhoods, the format and content of NPI plans follow a similar structure to *Blueprint Denver*.

*Blueprint Denver* recognizes land use and built form, mobility, and quality of life infrastructure as the three primary elements of complete neighborhoods. *Blueprint Denver* and NPI plans address a whole host of topics that

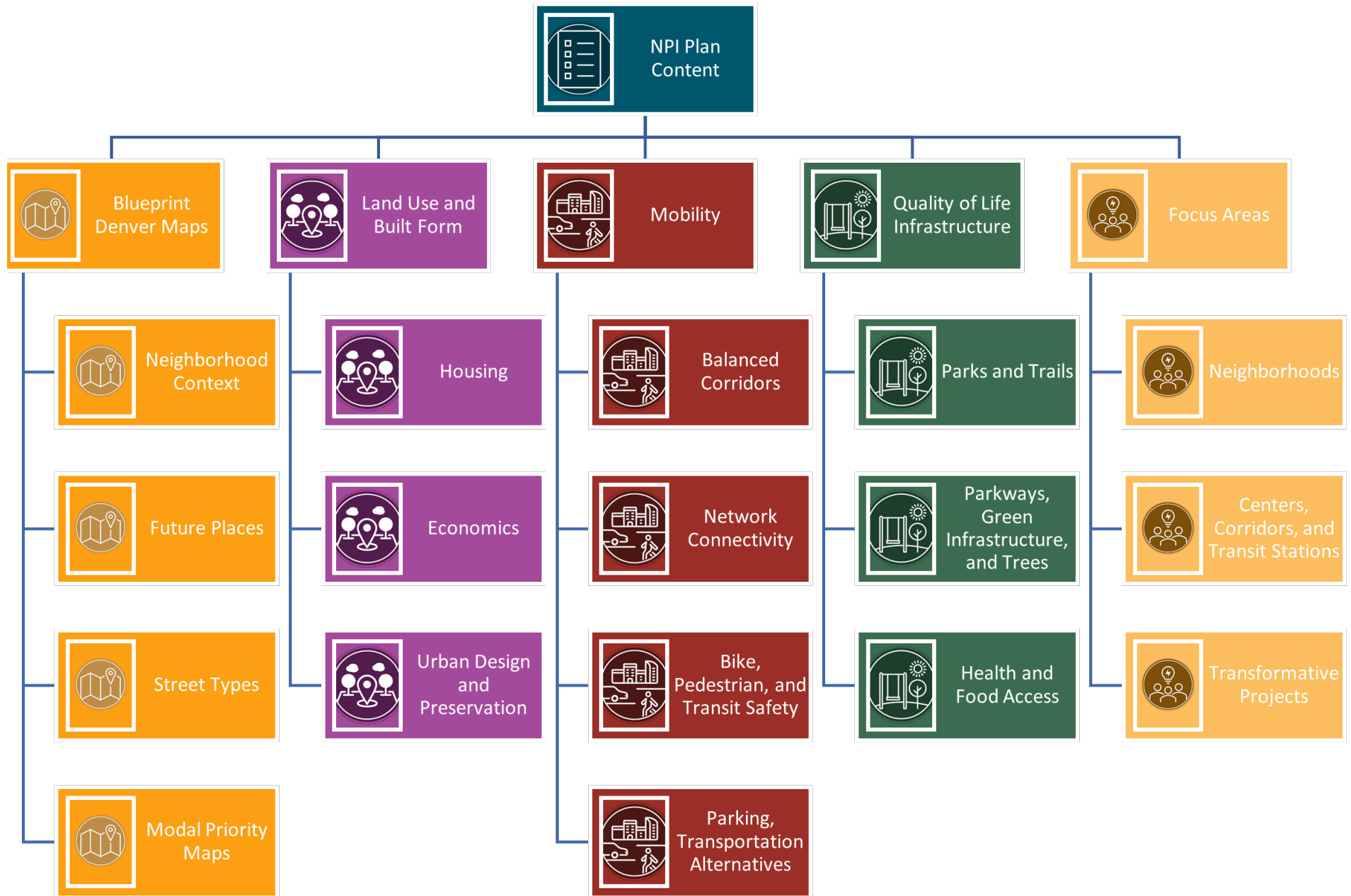
fall under these three broad categories, including urban design, streetscape, stormwater infrastructure, parks and open space, health, affordability, economic development, and historic preservation. Recommendations and plans may also draw from other city documents and policies that are not adopted by City Council but are aligned with *Blueprint Denver*. For example, transportation recommendations are informed by *Denver Moves Everyone*, and urban design recommendations are informed by the Urban Design Principles.

The *Blueprint Denver* task force identified three cross-cutting themes that fundamentally shaped all the goals, policies, and strategies within *Blueprint Denver*. Those three themes, equity, urban design, and water and climate are also key considerations for the breadth of topics that NPI plans address. Because these themes are integral to every topic that the NPI plans address, they are not restricted to a single section of NPI plans, but can be found throughout every section.

Generally, policies and strategies for land use and built form, mobility, and quality of life infrastructure should be applicable to the entire planning area. However, in some cases they may only be applicable to an individual neighborhood within an NPI plan grouping. Each statistical neighborhood will have its own chapter in the NPI plan where more neighborhood-specific guidance is appropriate.

Vision	The vision and guiding principles set the overall foundation for the plan.
<i>Blueprint Denver Maps</i>	<p><b>Neighborhood Contexts</b></p> <p><b>Future Places</b></p> <p><b>Street Types</b></p> <p><b>Modal Priority</b> (Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit)</p> <p><b>Growth Strategy</b></p>
Elements of a Complete Neighborhood	<p><b>Land Use and Built Form</b></p> <p><b>Mobility</b></p> <p><b>Quality of Life Infrastructure</b></p>
Focus Areas	<p><b>Neighborhoods:</b> Recommendations specific to statistical neighborhoods.</p> <p><b>Transformative Projects:</b> Ideas that may have a catalytic effect in furthering a plan’s vision.</p> <p><b>Other Focus Areas:</b> Varies by plan, but as an example may include transit station areas, major corridors, or neighborhood commercial districts.</p>

# NPI TOPICS CHART



## 4.2 METRICS AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Each NPI plan will conclude with a short section that identifies the implementation categories (regulatory, infrastructure or service/program) and key plan priorities for implementation. They will be accompanied by a more thorough implementation plan appendix and implementation matrix appendix that categorizes recommendations based on an estimated implementation timeframe of ongoing, short-term (0-5 years), and long-term (6 + year), identifies different levels of plan priorities and identifies parties responsible for implementation. Because the implementation plan and plan implementation matrix are not adopted as part of NPI plans, they are considered living documents that Community Planning and Development updates as plan goals are achieved.

Implementation priorities are determined through community input, in tandem with sequencing considerations and departmental feedback where there is an opportunity to leverage funding sources or build upon other funded project scopes.

### 4.2.1 Metrics

Within the implementation section of the plan, performance metrics should be included and used to assess progress implementing NPI plans. The same performance metrics used to track the citywide progress of *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver* should also be used to track progress for NPI plan areas. This will provide a consistent frame of reference to gauge implementation progress across geographic scales and provide efficiency in tracking and reporting. As the number of performance metrics are set by *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver* and based on shared plan topics, NPI plans are not expected to add unique metrics.

### 4.2.2 The Implementation Plan Appendix

The NPI plans are policy documents that outline the community's vision for the future. The plans themselves have policies and strategies that articulate the desired outcomes and identify priorities. NPI plans will have a plan implementation appendix that will provide additional detail on how to achieve those outcomes.

For some priority plan recommendations, the implementation plan identifies how to accomplish the recommendation, constraints and considerations, additional coordination needed, equity considerations, next steps and key resources. Recommendations that have estimated short-term implementation timeframes may have detailed implementation plans, while longer-term projects have a generalized plan of action.

The implementation plan appendix helps city staff and key stakeholders understand aspects of implementing a recommendation in a greater level of detail, providing an outline of steps to accomplish the recommendation.

### 4.2.3 The Plan Implementation Matrix Appendix

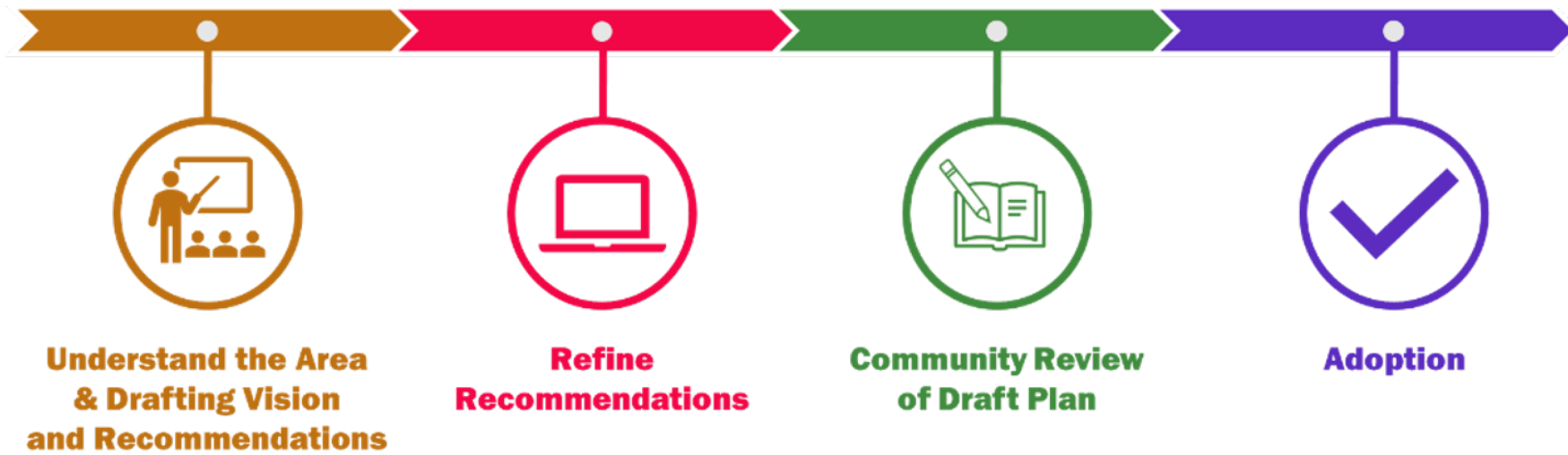
A plan implementation matrix should be included as a separate appendix to the adopted plan. This matrix will list out all recommendations and be categorized by estimated timeframe to implement the recommendation, will identify priority recommendations, agencies and partners primarily responsible for implementing the recommendation and status on implementation. To facilitate the transparent and on-going tracking of plan implementation projects, the implementation matrix should be posted on the plan implementation webpage.

# 5.0 PROCESS

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# 5.1 PROCESS OVERVIEW

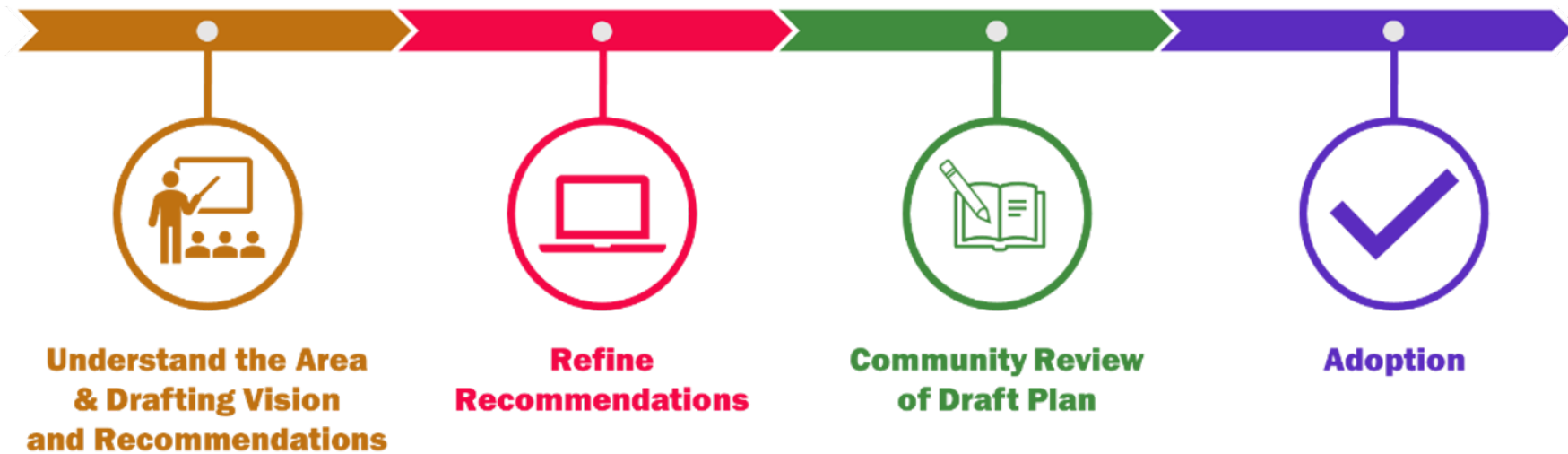


## STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING THE AREA AND DRAFTING VISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (4 MONTHS)

- Research existing conditions and apply citywide guidance from previous planning processes *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver* to develop a draft vision and preliminary recommendations
- Milestones:
  - » Researching and evaluating existing conditions
  - » Analyzing *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver*
  - » Drafting vision and recommendations
- Engagement:
  - » Recruiting and launching advisory committee
  - » Building awareness (including mailers) and education
  - » Developing relationships
- Deliverables:
  - » Existing conditions portal
  - » Historic contexts
  - » Character analysis
  - » Draft vision and recommendations

## STEP 2: REFINE RECOMMENDATIONS (6 MONTHS)

- Gather feedback from the community on the draft vision and preliminary recommendations through extensive outreach and engagement
- Milestones:
  - » Public kickoff and review of draft vision and recommendations
  - » Refinement and revision of draft vision and recommendations
  - » Creating first draft of the plan document
- Engagement:
  - » Awareness building including mailers
  - » Community workshop
  - » Online survey
  - » Statistically valid survey
  - » Community navigators and focused engagement
  - » Advisory committee
- Deliverables:
  - » First draft plan
  - » Implementation plan draft
  - » Engagement summary



### STEP 3: COMMUNITY REVIEW OF DRAFT PLAN (6 MONTHS)

- Compile updated recommendations into a draft plan and gather two rounds of community feedback
- Milestones:
  - » Public review of the first draft plan
  - » Updating and refinement of the first draft plan
  - » Public review of the second draft plan
  - » Updating and refinement of the second draft plan
- Engagement:
  - » Community workshop
  - » Plan review opportunities online and in person
  - » Community navigators and focused engagement
  - » Advisory committee
- Deliverables:
  - » Second draft plan
  - » Updated implementation plan draft
  - » Summary of changes
  - » Engagement summary

### STEP 4: ADOPTION (2 MONTHS)

- Finalize the draft plan and take it to Planning Board and City Council for adoption
- Milestones:
  - » Advisory committee review
  - » Planning Board approval
  - » City Council adoption
- Engagement:
  - » Advisory committee
  - » Public hearings
- Deliverables:
  - » Final plan
  - » Implementation plan appendix
  - » Community engagement summary appendix

## 5.2 ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

### 5.2.1 Advisory Committee

The project advisory committee is a group of volunteer community members who are expected to meet at vital points in the planning process throughout the duration of the project to ensure the process and recommendations reflect community needs, issues, priorities, and concerns. They help interpret community feedback, resolve conflicting direction, and assist the planning team in engaging a broad and diverse range of community members. The committee is composed of members who reflect a diverse set of interests in the plan area and meets before and after engagement rounds.

The committee also incorporates an equitable engagement subcommittee, which makes recommendations to ensure an equitable process and outcome and provides time and space for equity conversations. The subcommittee is made up of members of the advisory committee interested in serving on the subcommittee, and focuses on processes, policies, and decisions that have the potential to impact historically and currently underrepresented and underserved communities. Subcommittee members also serve as liaisons to underrepresented communities and inform and advise community navigators.

### 5.2.2 Equitable Engagement

The Neighborhood Planning Initiative's engagement efforts are designed to generate participation in the planning process from a broad range of community stakeholders, with a focus on equity. A community stakeholder is anyone with connection to the plan area: whether they live there, work there, own a business or property, are part of a non-profit or advocacy organization, or a school or church. Community stakeholders can participate in a variety of ways, including interviews, surveys, neighborhood meetings, and community events.

To ensure an equitable plan is created, the planning process itself must also be equitable in opportunity and voice. This requires intentional outreach to underserved groups and providing access in appropriate languages and venues. The NPI process also uses community navigators and tailored engagement strategies to help reach underserved stakeholders.

### 5.2.3 Language Access Plan

The City and County of Denver is committed to providing inclusive and welcoming services to all community members. As part of that commitment to inclusion, and to ensure equitable planning processes and outcomes that are inclusive of underrepresented communities, NPI will ensure meaningful access to resources, services, and engagement regardless of language. To achieve this, a detailed language access plan will be created and followed for all NPI planning activities.

## 5.2.4 Potential Tools

The planning team will undertake a variety of engagement strategies and communication tools to create broad awareness of the plan process, ensure transparency, respond to the specific needs of the community, and give everyone who wants to participate in the planning process an opportunity to do so. This list is intended to remain flexible so that tools can be added or modified as needed to meet engagement goals.

Engagement Strategies	Description
<b>Community Navigators and Focused Population Engagement</b>	The planning team will work with community navigators to strengthen outreach and help organize and support community meetings. Working with the community navigators relies on their expertise and trust with the local community to help remove barriers and ensure equitable access to engagement opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities. Focused population engagement is tailored to meet needs of underserved or underrepresented groups throughout the NPI planning process.
<b>Advisory Committee and Equitable Engagement Subcommittee</b>	Composed of community members who represent a diverse set of interests across the plan area, the advisory committee meets at key milestones throughout the process, helps spread awareness and gather community input, and seeks consensus on plan content. All meetings are open to the public. advisory committee meetings will include an experienced facilitator to help members of differing views to communicate constructively. The committee also incorporates an equitable engagement subcommittee, which makes recommendations to ensure an equitable process and outcome and provides time and space for equity conversations.
<b>Statistically Valid Survey</b>	The statistically valid survey will be collected, analyzed, and reported by an independent third party. The survey is weighted by demographics to ensure that representation within the survey sample is consistent with the demographic characteristics of the neighborhood.
<b>Public Meetings/Community Workshops</b>	These meetings are large platforms that offer opportunities for all community members to inform the plan at major milestones. They can be virtual or in-person.
<b>Stakeholder Interviews</b>	Meetings with individual or small groups of stakeholders to understand key issues, opportunities, and needs at the outset of the planning process.
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Focus groups will be identified to address key topics and/or key areas throughout the planning process. Focus groups will be intentionally composed of diverse community members and technical experts.
<b>Pop-up Events</b>	Meet people where they are and provide simple and brief opportunities for input. These activities can also be used to share project information. This can include small meetings held in community establishments (restaurants/coffee shops, parks, places of worship, schools or recreation centers, grocery stores, and during pre-existing community gatherings and events).
<b>Neighborhood Tours and Field Assessments</b>	On-site activities with community members to learn about specific areas or discuss recommendations for those areas.
<b>Public Hearings</b>	Official meetings before Planning Board and City Council public comment is taken before decisions are made on the plan.
<b>Office Hours</b>	Specified times where community members can meet one-on-one or in small groups with members of the planning team to have their questions answered and provide detailed input.



Communication Tools	Description
<b>Plan Website</b>	A website with information on the plan and planning process will be maintained and regularly updated for each NPI planning project.
<b>Review Drafts</b>	Review drafts are preliminary drafts of either the full plan or specific plan chapters. Open comment periods allow for detailed input on material before it is finalized.
<b>Mailers</b>	Mail postcards to the community to increase awareness of the plan and opportunities to participate.
<b>Newsletters</b>	Updates on the planning process are provided in newsletters, including the Denver Community Planning and Development newsletter, Council office newsletters, or registered neighborhood organization newsletters. Updates and meeting announcements are also provided via e-mail to people who provide an e-mail address for that purpose.
<b>Social Media</b>	Use city platforms to post information during key plan milestones and to encourage and share opportunities for participation.
<b>Registered Neighborhood Organizations and Other Community Organizations</b>	Leverage existing networks and provide shareable newsletter and social media content that organizations can forward to their memberships.
<b>Fliers, Posters, and Yard Signs</b>	Deliver fliers to community gathering places such as libraries, schools, recreation centers, and churches. Place yard signs in parks and other visible areas, request use of business storefronts for posters/decals.
<b>Other</b>	May include text messages, door hangers, newspaper ads, or other engagement ideas that are presented during the planning process.