

# Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000

A Vision  
for Denver  
and its  
People



1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

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2006





# Plan

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# 2000

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# Introduction

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*“The fundamental thing we want Denver to both be and become is a city that is livable for all its people. A city in which they can learn, move about, work and play in safety, comfort, with pleasure and pride, and in a spirit of openness and opportunity. It is essential that quality of life for all the people of Denver be perceived as this Plan’s central purpose.”*

*~ The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan*









Among Denver's legacies are a strong civic spirit and identity as a "green oasis"

## ■ Vision

An overall plan for a great city must answer this fundamental question posed by the 1989 Comprehensive Plan: "What do we really want this city to be, and to become?" This question has no single, simple answer, but many complex answers, each shaped by elements of an evolving identity. Some of this identity for Denver is created by a timeless and immutable geography that bequeaths to us a moderate and arid climate, nearby mountains, great open spaces of land, and the city's transportation and communications possibilities.

Then there are the legacies created by the human will and ingenuity of preceding generations and woven into Denver's urban environment: the "green oasis" of magnificent parks and tree-lined parkways; sturdy and well-designed civic buildings, monuments and public spaces; attractive residential neighborhoods; and well-maintained infrastructure and facilities for mobility and economic growth. Most significant to Denver's identity is the civic spirit expressed by the majority of its people in everyday life. Among these expressions are demonstrably high standards for local and state governance, a hard-charging business and economic development philosophy in the private sector, a special concern for children and youth, and a civic climate that supports cultural diversity and an ever-growing population. And in both the private and public sectors, there is a strong charitable and philanthropic compassion for people in need, with corollary insistence on fair treatment and equal opportunity for all.

All Denverites view their city through different lenses of experience, interests and values. For many, the dominant lens is that of family and neighborhood. Others emphasize Denver as the gateway to the Rocky Mountains and outdoor recreation. Many here were born to economic opportunity or came seeking it, and hard work is their central focus. Many others simply cherish the variety and the vibrance of a healthy and thriving city. For an unusually high number of residents, Denver is a work in progress, with problems to solve and challenges to face.

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 is the effort of hundreds of these residents, looking through their differing lenses, to agree on the City's long-term purposes, to think through Denver's special inheritance and its effect on those purposes, and then to suggest strategies that will buy that inheritance as much long-term insurance as possible to sustain it for the future.





## ■ Guiding Principles

*When we think about our personal obligation to the survival of the species, we think about the instruction given to us by our chiefs: Make our every decision on behalf of the seventh generation to come. To think not of ourselves, nor even of our own generation, but on behalf of those faces looking up from earth — each generation waiting its turn.*

*Chief Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation*

The question “Does this action improve the quality of life for people?” is the challenge Plan 2000 poses to both public and private civic leaders as they go about their leading. And if that livability is the “what” of Plan 2000, then sustainability must be the “how.”

Sustainability refers to the long-term social, economic and environmental health of a community. A sustainable city thrives without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A sustainable city manages resources efficiently and effectively by using only what is needed, replacing as much as possible, encouraging everyone’s contributions, and distributing opportunities and risks equitably.

Building a sustainable Denver depends on a common understanding that people, nature, the built environment, the economy and the social structure all depend on each other. A sustainable city is one where most citizens most of the time unite in the common understanding that people and things depend on each other. That “uniting” in “common” to sustain their city is the meaning of “community.”

Plan 2000 stresses that planning and policy decisions should be considered for both their short-term and their long-term impacts on the human and physical environments. Implicit is an approach to policy-making that is both flexible and disciplined — flexible to accommodate new information and techniques, disciplined to think about the long-term implications of decisions.

The following guiding principles — **Economic Opportunity, Environmental Stewardship, Equity** and **Engagement** — are the core values of Plan 2000.

Taken separately, none of these principles alone can lead Denver to become a livable city for all, now and in the future. Taken together and in balance, they can lead toward a shared community commitment to a sustainable future.

### **Economic Opportunity and Security**

A Denver that is focused on the quality of life for all of its people must be a Denver that is economically healthy, with a broad mix of good jobs.

Livability and economic activity are permanently linked — neither improves without the other.



The beautiful and historic Daniels and Fisher Tower on the 16th Street Mall





Environmental stewardship is a guiding principle of Plan 2000 — the Denver Digs Trees program reforests the city



Denver must capitalize on its unique geographical opportunity as a national transportation and technology center, the gateway to the Rocky Mountain recreation and natural resources empire, the nation’s most central port of the air age, and the most populous western intersection of the interstate highway system.

Particular priority must be given to educational excellence at all levels, for the quality of education is the cornerstone of a city’s spirit and each individual’s capacity to contribute and progress.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

Denver’s relationship with the environment is above all a matter of balance. Clean water, clean air, clean parks and streets, efficient use and reuse of resources, and protection of the mountain parks and open spaces must be abiding goals. Our arid environment, pressed by an ever-growing population, could not have supported — and cannot support in the future — a major city without careful reengineering of the natural environment to harness natural resources, especially water, which makes possible commerce and industry as well as Denver’s verdant landscape.

Until recently, less foresight was exercised with regard to air quality and land use. In the early 21st century, the most significant environmental challenges for Denver and its metropolitan neighbors will be the related issues of sprawl, traffic congestion, air quality, and water quality and supply. Sustainable solutions call for the integration of land-use strategies and transportation systems that balance the need for a variety of residential and commercial development types while ensuring mobility and quality of life.

### **Equity**

Denver must be a city that means what it says when it comes to providing all its residents with equal opportunity to share in its livability. Whether the concern is safety, adequate housing, excellent education, convenient mobility, solid family life, public health and safety, neighborhood investment, or diverse recreation, Denver must be a city that cares and shares, with compassion and equity. Despite the prosperous economy of the 1990s, some Denver neighborhoods have not thrived, and their residents have not benefited proportionally.

Plan 2000 calls for distribution of resources and benefits that result in more equitable outcomes to areas of the city that have been socially or economically marginalized. Denver must continue to reach out and embrace its cultural diversity as an asset, preserving the best of its heritage while





enabling social, economic and physical mobility for all. Especially in an era of expanding global connections, Denver has the opportunity to use cultural and linguistic diversity as a bridge rather than a barrier.

## Engagement

Sustaining a high quality of life is as much about building good human relationships as it is about performing tasks or creating things. Relational values — participation, communication, collaboration and partnership — are implicit in many of Plan 2000's goals, objectives and strategies. The City will continue to promote the involvement of and communication among residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, associations and governments at all levels in the life of the city.

The Plan encourages partnerships to innovatively and creatively tackle issues and solve problems that no individual party can easily resolve independently. In addressing specific objectives and strategies in Plan 2000, the City should structure partnerships among interested parties, combining resources to reach shared goals.

Sustaining Denver's future depends on its being a successful regional partner and collaborator. Interdependence, not competition, must become the dominant theme of the regional political dialogue. Denver and its neighbors have created a number of highly successful models of cooperation that can help guide future engagement among jurisdictions. In this regard, Denver City Council in August 1999 incorporated by ordinance into Denver's Comprehensive Plan the *MetroVision 2020 Plan* of the Denver Regional Council of Governments, a major step forward toward stronger regional partnership.



Center city residents harvest their crops in a Denver Urban Gardens neighborhood plot



We are challenged to shape the built environment through land-use policies and strategies

## ■ Key Issues and Challenges

*“Denver will reap tremendous benefits in the increased utility and efficiency of the physical city, as well as achieving large savings of money, which without comprehensive plans is frequently spent on ill-advised or impractical projects. Above these considerations is the incalculable benefit to be derived from making Denver a far more beautiful and inspiring place to live than it can ever be if permitted to grow haphazardly without forethought and orderly plans. The city planner sees the destiny of the city as a great meeting place of commerce and art. . . . He sees the ideal city as a place where the citizens can carry on their business with the least inconvenience and greatest economy while they may enjoy to the fullest extent the benefits of recreation and the inspiration of civic beauty.”*

**The Denver Plan, volume 1, “A Report by The Denver Planning Commission,”  
December 1929**

For organizational purposes, Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 is subdivided into three sections: **Our Long-Term Physical Environment**, **Our Long-Term Human Environment** and **Metropolitan Cooperation**. The connections between and among these sections and their chapters are clearly identified to signify the importance of viewing Plan 2000 as an integrated whole.

### **Our Long-Term Physical Environment**

**Environmental Sustainability** ■ Most basic to a sustainable quality of life in Denver and the region are the land we live on, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the natural beauty we enjoy. The greatest challenge to our environment in the early 21st century will be better management of inevitable population growth. We must avoid its potential for the excessive loss of open space, overconsumption of resources, ever greater congestion, and the added human stress created by unmanaged urban sprawl. The public policy challenge is to develop and implement balanced and sustainable growth strategies.

**Land Use** ■ The ability to meet our needs from the natural environment and to enjoy its wonders depends on how we shape the built environment through land-use policies and strategies. Rapid economic growth in the 1990s and the availability of 12,000 acres of land for redevelopment and development within Denver at Lowry, Stapleton, Gateway and the Central Platte Valley offer exciting opportunities. But these opportunities pose tremendous challenges to Denver’s land-use regulatory system.

**Mobility** ■ Increasingly, transportation must support land-use strategies — and vice versa — to provide a greater range of living and mobility options. The root of the problem is a society overly structured to accommodate automobiles, without providing a range of other mobility choices for residents, from neighborhood pedestrian connections to crosstown transit. The challenge





is to hold steady the number of auto trips or at least slow the rate of growth to that of population, in part by promoting alternative ways of doing business and living that are less dependent on single-occupant vehicles.

**Denver's Legacies** ■ Urban design, parks and parkways, and urban connections tie these three previous elements of Denver's physical environment together, while historic preservation serves our aesthetic and cultural needs to connect with our past while sustaining our building and landscape resources. A main challenge of the early 21st century will be to maintain the high quality of existing legacies and integrate their management and maintenance into the civic system as the City's inventory of parks, open space and public amenities undergoes rapid expansion.

**Housing** ■ Housing links to all of these core areas, because a sustainable community strives to integrate all of its members, wherever they live, into a shared community of homes and neighborhoods, transportation, environmental quality, employment, recreation and open space. Home ownership is increasingly a challenge for low- and middle-income households. Rentals for families are very difficult to find, and economic segregation is an unfortunate reality that must be addressed.

## Our Long-Term Human Environment

**Economic Activity** ■ Simply stated, economic activity is how our City and the people who live here earn a living. Work is not a choice for most people. It is a vital need to provide the necessities of life, to support our loved ones, and to give meaning to our lives. A main challenge in the early 21st century will be filling available jobs with qualified workers, particularly in Denver's rapidly growing high-tech markets. Another significant challenge is educating and training people who lack the skills demanded by the mainstream economy. A less obvious challenge is to avoid complacency in the midst of long-term economic growth. An optimist without the benefit of hindsight may believe that the good times are destined to roll on and on. They are not so destined, and foresighted Denver policy makers should consider slower or declining growth as possible economic scenarios for the future.

**Neighborhoods** ■ Our homes are our refuge. For many residents, our home lives extend onto the front porch, down the street, and around the corner. Many residents feel a much stronger bond with their neighborhoods than with the City. That can mean tension between City agencies and neighborhood groups. An ongoing challenge is to strengthen trust and communication between the City and neighborhoods in planning, crime prevention and reinvigorating neighborhood schools. An especially acute challenge of Plan 2000 is the siting of community facilities through processes that are open, fair



Economic opportunity is one of Plan 2000's guiding principles



Denver's aging population is likely to live on fixed incomes and need assistance to remain independent



and responsive to neighborhood concerns. The commonplace neighborhood attitude “Not In My Back Yard” (NIMBY) suggests a need for broader understanding that the city, as a whole, is our home.

**Education** ■ Striving to constantly improve the quality of education within the community will one day help our children sustain themselves and their society. The return to neighborhood schools in 1995 has reshaped interest in schools and education, and the Denver school census is growing again. The challenge for K-12 education in Denver is to even more effectively address the needs of today’s student population, of which nearly 75 percent are children of color, and more than one-third of which are growing up in poverty. For the City, the key challenge is to help strengthen the role of schools as neighborhood centers while continuing to play a leadership role in supporting early childhood and lifelong education programs that fall outside the scope of the regular K-12 system.

**Human Services** ■ Compassion, formalized and informal, can sustain communities; if it is not present, the fabric of community is shredded. A key challenge in the early 21st century will be to review the impact of welfare reform and its efforts to move recipients from welfare to work. In the short term, public and private human service organizations must also engage in key issues such as child care, transportation, job-readiness, counseling and rehabilitation, housing, and other individual and family needs that in part have defied systemic management.

**Arts and Culture** ■ Arts and cultural programs sustain the intellectual and spiritual life of the community, its thought and its basic humanity. A community without arts and culture withers or hardens. With a strong economy, Denver’s artistic and cultural environment has flourished during the 1990s. One key challenge for the future will be to sustain the City’s vibrant artistic and cultural life in less vigorous economic times. Another is to continue making arts and culture part of the everyday experience of residents, particularly children.

### **Our Relations Within the Region and State**

**Metropolitan Cooperation** ■ Denver’s relationships with its suburban neighbors have been complex and often difficult. Just 23 percent of the metropolitan area’s 2.3 million people live in Denver. While in previous decades problems such as traffic congestion, blight, violence and air pollution were viewed as problems of the inner city, almost every community in the metro area now faces them, creating more opportunity for cooperation. Denver and its metropolitan neighbors have cooperated successfully in several areas: enriching the artistic and cultural environment, building sports stadiums,





seeking solutions to social problems such as homelessness and youth violence, and developing a shared economic development initiative.

This growing cooperation has recently been formalized in Denver's adoption of the *MetroVision 2020 Plan* as part of Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. Some of the toughest challenges of the early 21st century — sustainable development, environmental quality, and services to the needy — necessarily involve metropolitan neighbors working together with shared long-term goals in mind.

*“The physical and cultural diversity of the many communities which comprise the Denver region creates the opportunity for a wide variety of economic development initiatives and living styles. Individual communities should prosper by contributing to regional efforts in regional facilities, transportation, air quality, water quality, water supply, waste management, provision of open space, and land-use mix. In turn a stronger, more ‘livable’ region will serve to strengthen and sustain its individual communities.”*

**MetroVision 2020 Plan**



In Denver we have not forgotten the joys of playing outdoors in a City Park fountain



Among the conditions shaping Plan 2000 are the health needs of the elderly

## ■ Significant New Conditions and Influences

The following conditions during the 1990s have especially influenced the content and shape of Plan 2000. These were foremost among hundreds of issues and themes considered by members of the 11 Plan 2000 task forces as they formulated the goals, objectives and strategies of the Plan.

### **Growth and Change in Population**

**Return to the city** ■ Denver began gaining population again in the 1990s after nearly two decades of losing residents. Although Denver gained an estimated 34,090 residents between 1990 and 1998, the city's population is not growing as rapidly as in surrounding jurisdictions. But that really isn't a very significant factor in considering the city's future. Its long-term future will be shaped by cooperating in the management of the exploding growth in the metropolitan region as a whole, for it is that total population growth which results in the significant pressures on the core city.

**Who lives here** ■ Denver's residents are increasingly diverse in race, ethnicity and cultural background, a trend that will continue. Denver's overall population was 61.6 percent non-Latino whites in 1990, but a sign of increase is the new fact that 75.5 percent of Denver Public Schools' 1998 student population are children of color. This included Hispanic (49.4 percent), African-American (21.3 percent), and other races (4.8 percent). Increasing diversity obviously calls for greater sensitivity, flexibility and adaptation by institutions operating in the public interest.

**Growing older** ■ Denver's population is also aging. The number of people over the age of 85 increased 27.5 percent between 1990 and 1998. The proportion of Denver's population over the age of 60 is expected to increase from 18 percent in 1990 to 23 percent in 2020. The implications of an aging population are that the number of Denver residents not in the workforce are more likely to live on fixed incomes and to need assistance to remain independent.

**Where people live** ■ Like many American cities, Denver is experiencing a renaissance of growth in its core area, with more people committed to an urban lifestyle. Many older Downtown commercial buildings have been transformed into residential housing, thanks in large part to an active historic preservation movement. Near-Downtown neighborhoods have experienced a resurgence of interest. More multi-unit housing is being built in the core city to accommodate market demand in all price ranges. More middle-income families are choosing to live in Denver's neighborhoods for many reasons, including the end of court-mandated busing for school integration. As more middle- and upper-income residents move into the heart of the city, higher





real estate prices threaten to displace low- and fixed-income residents. In addition, the availability of adequate housing for middle-income homeowners and families is a growing challenge.

**Variety in housing** ■ A strong economy and a rebirth of interest in Denver urban life have created an upward spiral in housing costs, for both home buyers and renters. Some Denver neighborhoods that have long prized the economic diversity within their communities are now threatened with market conditions that could force lower- and middle-income residents and growing families to leave. To encourage a healthy mix of diversity in Denver, the City must try to ensure housing opportunities in a range of types and prices throughout the city. Housing policies must address the needs of people of diverse incomes, household sizes, ages and lifestyles. Adequacy and variety of housing close to work also protect the environment by reducing driving.

### Growth in Land and Development

In 1989, Denver was landlocked on all sides. In 2000, Denver is in the process of redeveloping more urban land than any other major city in America, the following areas being cases in point:

**DIA/Gateway** ■ Denver's land area grew by 40 percent with the annexation of former Adams County land for Denver International Airport (DIA). The 4,500 acres of privately owned land within the Gateway provide opportunities for significant new housing and commercial development. The adopted plan for the area was the first to focus on the benefits of mixed-use development.

**Stapleton** ■ The relocation of the airport to DIA left 4,700 acres, an area one-third the size of Manhattan, for redevelopment at the former Stapleton Airport site. Stapleton's comprehensive master plan includes 1,700 acres of open space, a 273-acre business center that will eventually offer 30,000 to 35,000 jobs, and housing for 25,000 residents from a wide range of income levels. Build-out is expected to take 30 years. The *Stapleton Redevelopment Plan*, which is part of the Denver Comprehensive Plan, shares the sustainable city guidelines of mixed-use development, and substantial open space and environmentally oriented facilities.

**Lowry** ■ The end of the Cold War brought downsizing to the U.S. military nationwide. Lowry Air Force Base, located in both Denver and Aurora, closed in 1993, creating an economic void in surrounding neighborhoods, as well as the opportunity to create a well-planned, mixed-use neighborhood on Denver's eastern flank. At Lowry, 1,800 acres are under redevelopment, including more than 4,000 housing units, a 185-acre high-technology campus and training center operated by the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System, and 800 acres of



The new Denver International Airport is among the busiest airports in the world



The building boom of the 1980s changed the Downtown skyline



open space. Lowry was planned and development begun under a cooperative arrangement between Denver and Aurora.

**Central Platte Valley** ■ Denver’s former railyards have been cleared and rezoned for a mixed-use residential and commercial development that will extend the density and vitality of Downtown northwesterly to the banks of the South Platte River. A number of regional attractions have already been developed, including Six Flags Elitch Gardens amusement park, Colorado’s Ocean Journey, Coors Field for baseball, the Pepsi Center arena for basketball and hockey, and the replacement of Mile High Stadium for football. A new 65-acre urban neighborhood is planned, featuring more than 2,000 housing units and 4 million square feet of retail, office and hotel uses.

Perhaps the most significant development in the Central Platte Valley is the Platte River restoration. Denver’s historic waterway has been reclaimed from a century of neglect and abuse. It is well on its way to being the centerpiece of an extensive riverfront park and trail system linking the center city with its northern and southern neighborhoods. The Platte Valley is again becoming a dynamic example of both urban environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

### **A Thriving Economy**

The strong economy of the late 1990s offers the starkest contrast in background conditions between the 1989 Comprehensive Plan and those prevalent during the writing of Plan 2000. The late 1980s economic downturn was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s. By contrast, the late 1990s economy is the best in memory for many in today’s workforce, thanks in part to the following developments:

**Computer and communications technology** ■ The rapid spread of computer and communications technologies to workplaces and homes has fundamentally changed how Denverites, as well as all Americans, work and do business. These technologies contribute vastly to productivity, mobility and access to information. As a thriving center for technology industries, Denver offers exceptional career opportunities; however, many employers must still recruit from outside the region to find qualified high-tech employees. The demands of a technology-driven society include educating all children in the use of computers, and making technology and instruction in its use available to economically disenfranchised communities. Broader technology training is a key economic development objective for the early 21st century.



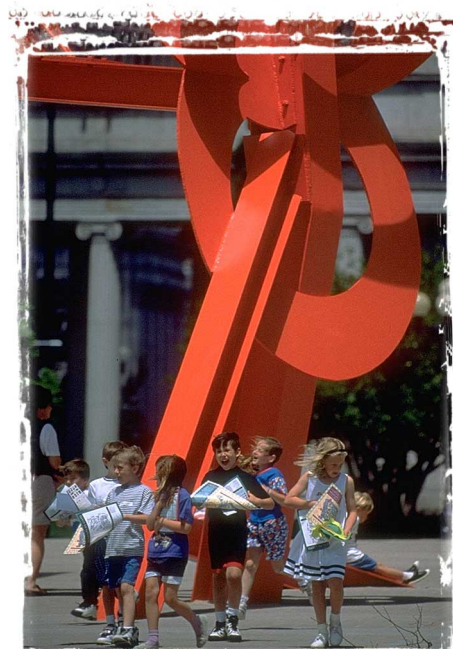
**Jobs and income** ■ The strong economy boosted general employment to record levels during the 1990s, with more than 49,000 jobs created in Denver and unemployment falling to historically low levels. Consequently, competition for qualified workers increased, pointing out a more pressing need to link education and training to the job market.

**Economic development** ■ Since the late 1980s, business and government leaders have spearheaded major efforts to diversify the region's economy, specifically concentrating on retaining and attracting growth industries of the future that offer higher-paid employment. The Denver Chamber of Commerce reorganized as the Denver Metro Chamber and stimulated a private-public partnership, the Greater Denver Corporation, which invested more than \$14 million in seeding economic development initiatives, including most prominently the new Denver International Airport (DIA). The success of DIA — ranked the nation's sixth busiest airport, with nearly 37 million passengers in 1998 — has cemented Denver's stature as a national and international transportation center. During the 1990s, Denver also gained international recognition as a center for major high-technology communications companies.

**Retail turnaround** ■ During the 1980s and early 1990s, four Denver department stores closed branches along Downtown's 16th Street Mall; numerous empty storefronts were called the "missing teeth" of the central business district. University Hills Mall on Colorado Boulevard closed in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, shopping centers and "big box" warehouse stores in the suburbs were drawing Denver shoppers and sales-tax dollars in droves.

Today, sales-tax revenues for Denver show a remarkable reversal of that former trend, a turnabout due largely to the spectacular success of Cherry Creek Shopping Center and its surrounding retail district. Also contributing to the revival are the popularity of Lower Downtown and the 16th Street Mall for shopping and dining. In addition, denser retail corridors along Colorado Boulevard and South Broadway brought discount and warehouse retailers closer to thriving Denver neighborhoods.

**Downtown revitalized** ■ Nowhere is Denver's economic revival more apparent than in Downtown, where the commercial vacancy rate stands at under 10 percent, compared to nearly 30 percent in the late 1980s. With the Colorado Convention Center (opened in 1990), the Denver Performing Arts Complex (the second largest in the U.S.), Coors Field baseball stadium, and the Denver Pavilions shopping center as major attractions for residents and visitors alike, Downtown has transformed itself from a daytime workplace to a 24-hour city offering an expanding array of restaurants, shopping, entertainment, housing and employment. Continuing to strengthen and diversify Downtown retailing remains a challenge.



The sculpture "Lao-Tzu" by Di Suvero stands in the busy plaza between the Public Library and the Art Museum





Kids from throughout the metro area are among those who benefit most from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District

## **Investment in People**

***Caring for children*** ■ In concert with national trends, Denver family life has changed significantly over a generation. Many parents spend much more time in the workplace; consequently, many more children and youth are either unsupervised or spending their time in child care centers, schools and before- and after-school programs.

Meanwhile, research clearly demonstrates that to thrive intellectually and emotionally, children need strong, continuous connections to caring adults from birth through adolescence. While the U.S. economy benefits from the labor of almost every adult who wants or needs to work, parents alone bear the responsibility for their children's care — financially, emotionally and in trying to balance family needs with employment demands.

In Denver, as elsewhere, social and economic structures have been slow to adapt to these changing life circumstances of children and families. Consequences range from parents coping with a persistent sense of inadequacy to children behaving violently and self-destructively. Particularly for low-income families, choices for nonparental care and supervision of children are too few, too expensive and too inaccessible. City social policy and planning must more closely embrace the care and well-being of children and youth if Plan 2000's vision of sustaining a community livable for all of its people is to be realized.

***Welfare reform*** ■ Federal welfare reform legislation in 1996 set new policies, focusing government assistance on moving welfare recipients into paid employment. Responsibility for welfare reform shifted from federal to local government. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was replaced with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), with limitations on cash benefits. While the number of families on welfare has declined significantly both locally and nationally, welfare reform has fundamentally altered the structure of human service delivery, now geared toward supporting parents' transition from welfare to work.

The long-term impact of this transition on low-income families and human service providers is unknown, especially if the economy weakens and unemployment rises. Since Denver has Colorado's highest concentration of low-income households, the greatest impact will be felt in the city. A principal concern of Plan 2000 will be the careful monitoring of this impact during the early years of the 21st century.

## **Changing Ties to the State and Region**

***Political status*** ■ Historically, Denver operated with more financial and political autonomy within the state and metropolitan region than it enjoys



today. The core city's political power has somewhat diminished, with Denver's state legislators representing less than 25 percent of metropolitan and less than 15 percent of state population. Consequently, political control over Denver's future must be enhanced by stronger partnerships on statewide and metropolitan issues. For example, several metropolitan funding partnerships, such as RTD, SCFD and the Metropolitan Stadium District, demonstrate how Denver has benefited from collaborative efforts with other jurisdictions.

**TABOR** ■ In 1992, Colorado voters passed Amendment 1, the "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" (TABOR), which places legal restrictions on the ability of state and local governments to tax and spend. The intent of TABOR was to control the rate of increase in government revenues and to encourage government efficiency. However, for some local governments, TABOR reduces their flexibility to cope with variations in the economy, changing public needs that require public investment, and long-term municipal planning.

Since TABOR was enacted, Colorado's economy and its tax revenues have continually grown, and Denver had not exceeded its TABOR revenue limit at the time Plan 2000 was written. But the full implications of TABOR will be more evident during an economic downturn. In that event, City revenue needed for public investment to spur recovery and redevelopment may be limited, and general fund balances will have been reduced by the law.

**Metropolitan funding partnerships** ■ Denver, its metropolitan neighbors and their principal businesses have learned the value of teamwork in creating facilities, supporting institutions, and providing services for residents and visitors to the six-county metropolitan area. For example, since the 1970s, a 6¢ regional sales tax has supported public transportation through the RTD (Regional Transportation District). Metropolitan voters have twice approved a one-tenth-cent sales tax for the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) to support artistic, cultural, and scientific programs and institutions. Metropolitan voters have also approved a one-tenth-cent sales tax for the Metropolitan Stadium District, initially created to oversee construction and operations of a major league baseball stadium, and later extended to construct a new professional football stadium.

These remarkably successful metropolitan tax-district initiatives offer models for future metropolitan cooperation. Also, from the private sector, Denver businesses pitched in for a \$14 million economic development fund in the late 1980s, and private foundations partnered with the City in funding, planning and beginning to redevelop the Platte River Greenway and old Stapleton Airport.



Climate and recreational amenities, such as a peaceful evening at Washington Park, are favorites among residents



Denver streets from earlier days

## ■ A Brief History of Denver

In 2008, Denver will celebrate its sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary of its founding as a rowdy mining camp at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River. The ideas and concepts of Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 will help shape the historical context in which the people of Denver celebrate this milestone.

To understand where Plan 2000 fits into Denver’s timeline, it is appropriate to conclude this Introduction with a brief recollection of the city’s progress from its 19th-century beginnings. For we are mindful that this Plan does not start us on a new adventure, but continues a journey that many people began years ago and are making together. And we journey not just because we must, but because we want to and we can.

### Still a Young City

Entering the 21st century, Denver is still young and robust as major cities go. It’s handsome, energetic, enterprising, gregarious, determined and often self-absorbed. It is a city endowed with bountiful natural and physical assets that are carefully groomed and tended. It is a city poised on the cusp of maturity, strong and fit from alternately wrestling with limitations and sprinting toward opportunities. It is a city that yearns to live long and well and that is beginning to understand it must manage its good fortune with discipline and wisdom.

For much of the 20th century, Denver has been a smart city — well educated, broad-minded, concerned with quality and civilized. But Denver has also inherited a bit of a roguish streak from its earliest days.

Denver began as one of what University of California historian Gunther Barth calls “instant cities” of the western mining frontier. These are human settlements that are born to a single purpose, usually to exploit, accumulate and move on. When the central purpose disappears, so may the cities that grew up to serve them. Instant cities attract people who are highly entrepreneurial, energetic, ambitious and fiercely independent. These cities develop a culture of expediency, one that thrives on growth, novelty and exploitation of resources. When the resources are gone, or when luck runs out, there’s always another opportunity somewhere else.

### Boomtown to City Beautiful

Like some of the boomtowns of the western gold rush era, Denver went from mining camp to regional center within one generation. By 1890, Denver was a bustling frontier town with 100,000 residents and already taking shape as a city of uncommon grace. But the boom went bust in 1893, with the crash of



Denver went from mining camp to regional center within one generation





the silver market. Many thriving mineral-rich “instant cities” in the West dwindled and disappeared almost as rapidly as they had appeared. Others, like Denver, hung on.

By the end of the 19th century, Denver could survive because it had begun to diversify its economy as a center for rail transportation and agriculture and as a supply and service depot for the surrounding region. But Denver’s fundamental purpose remained essentially economic. During its early years, Denver was a collection of disconnected newcomers from everywhere else, often moving on to somewhere else with the ebb and flow of a boisterous economy. Always, though, some people remained, planting their roots in the arid soil and raising the first generation who could call Denver home.

By the early 20th century, Denver had already developed a strong sense of place, with trees, parks, gardens, grand public and commercial architecture, and distinctive neighborhoods. All were connected by a streetcar system that allowed residents access to all parts of the growing city. The City Beautiful Movement championed by Mayor Robert Speer instilled in Denver neoclassical urban design standards shared by few cities west of the Mississippi. Meanwhile, a growing middle class took up residence in miles of brick bungalows that grew up along city streets and streetcar tracks in thriving neighborhoods farther and farther from Downtown.

### After the War

Development slowed significantly during the Great Depression, although with the help of the federal government’s “New Deal,” significant new public facilities were built. But, at the end of World War II, Denver was still just a regional city poised for its major breakthrough toward dramatic economic and social growth. Earlier civic leaders had focused efforts on building Denver as a regional headquarters for the federal government. Denver was a magnet for thousands of returning servicemen connected to the top economic development initiative of that era, military defense and its related industries. They started families, moved into new houses in new neighborhoods, earned college degrees and prospered.

From the mid-1940s through the 1960s, Denver’s character became increasingly suburban and its residents increasingly mobile. Its economic character focused more and more on technology industries, setting a pattern that continues today. How people lived also changed. Newer neighborhoods were for houses, not for hardware stores or places of worship or burger joints. Whatever one needed to do, one had to drive to get there. Three generations later, that driving habit is deeply ingrained, some say a permanent trait.



“Denver Squares” were built in many of the city’s core neighborhoods

Lowry Air Force Base was an active base spanning both Denver and Aurora until the mid 1990s





Urban renewal in the 1960s next to the D&F Tower in Downtown



The late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s also saw the rise of better government in Denver. The earlier system of individualistic patronage was replaced when Mayor Quigg Newton brought reform to City Hall, including an emphasis on human rights. It was a time of growth as Denver became the hub of the Rocky Mountain region with rapid improvements in communications, the interstate highway system, and the growth of air traffic at Stapleton Airport. It was also a time of rising expectations for city services, and they were delivered thanks to the advent of professional government administration in Denver.

### **Urban Renewal**

Nevertheless, during the 1960s and 1970s, Denver's central neighborhoods gradually became older, less affluent, dilapidated and, in some Downtown areas, bulldozed. Within these Downtown neighborhoods, swaths of streets, homes and older commercial buildings were razed to be replaced by skyscrapers, freeways and the other trappings of a truly "modern" city. Some neighborhoods became traffic corridors for commuters. Urban renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, a valued concept at that time in the city's history, emptied more than two dozen Downtown Denver blocks of their Victorian-era commercial buildings. These were often replaced by parking lots as a buffer zone between Downtown's retail and financial districts and Lower Downtown, Denver's version of Skid Row. In 1974, court-ordered busing to end racial segregation in Denver Public Schools sent thousands more middle-class families over the borders to suburbia. They wanted to raise their children in "safe" neighborhoods and send them to nearby schools. Denver's population dropped rapidly in the 1970s, leaving a higher concentration of elderly and poor people. Compounding the problem was the "Poundstone Amendment" to the state constitution, which limits Denver's powers to annex land. Suburban tax districts were thriving while Denver, with proportionately less revenue, pushed on as the workhorse of the metropolitan area, providing ever more services, infrastructure, facilities and cultural amenities.

### **Rocky Mountain High**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, an energy boom, and its related effect on real estate, sent Denver's fortunes skyrocketing once again. The city's skyline was busy with as many as two dozen cranes pulling skyscrapers upward from the sea of Downtown parking lots. Denver's first outdoor cafes began to appear along the newly constructed 16th Street Mall, which from a retail viewpoint initially seemed like a major mistake. Rather than strengthening Downtown retail, it seemed to kill it. Denver's main street was changing, with shoe stores and clothiers disappearing little by little, replaced by ice cream and sandwich shops, specialty retailers, souvenir stores and food courts.



Plentiful jobs, low rents, mountain recreation and a laid-back lifestyle attracted tens of thousands of newcomers once again as baby boomers came in quest of the “Colorado Rocky Mountain High.” They moved into declining neighborhoods — Capitol Hill, Congress Park, Broadway Terrace — and invested sweat equity in the sagging Queen Annes and prim Denver Squares. Little by little, entire neighborhoods began sprucing up. Throughout Denver, bands of urban pioneers began holding meetings, trying to figure out how to get the City to stop putting in one-way streets or to put more police on beat in their part of town. Upstart neighborhood groups began to matter in City Hall, especially when effective neighborhood organizers began running for, and getting elected to, City Council.



A 1970s ribbon cutting for a new  
Downtown building

### **New Energy, New Investment**

By the early 1980s, Denver had become increasingly diverse, its physical infrastructure was beginning to wear out, and the economy was still subject to its historic boom-and-bust cycles, symptomatic of an economy with employment and investment concentrated in too few industries. Predictably, the oil boom that began the 1980s came to an abrupt end about midway through the decade, with falling oil prices and changing federal policies shoving the oil business southward. All the new office towers built to house the elusive boom were suddenly no longer filled to their brims. As the decade progressed, office vacancy exceeded 30 percent in Downtown. Worse, Downtown’s two largest department stores, The Denver Dry and May D&F, both founded in Colorado’s gold rush days, closed their Downtown doors forever, abandoning their architecturally distinctive and historic homes.

In the mid-1980s, Downtown business leaders and City officials joined forces to develop a plan to revive the fortunes of a rapidly plummeting Downtown economy. The Downtown Area Plan was published in 1986, improbably suggesting a sweeping economic revitalization of Lower Downtown, a major retail center covering several blocks on the southeast end of the 16th Street Mall, and an ambitious mixed-use development in the Central Platte Valley. Ridiculous as it seemed at the time, someone’s wild idea of a Downtown amusement park was even drawn into that plan.

Today, Lower Downtown is an attractive and vibrant mixed-use neighborhood. Denver Pavilions opened on the southeast end of the 16th Street Mall in 1998, bringing attractive retail and entertainment to two full blocks formerly serving as surface parking lots. The Central Platte Valley has become an epicenter of major attractions, including Colorado’s Ocean Journey, the Pepsi Center, Commons Park Open Space and Six Flags Elitch Gardens, the only downtown amusement park in America. Soon, new





The 16th Street Mall under construction in 1981



commercial and residential development will take root in the former railyards, extending the vitality of Downtown northward and linking the center city more closely to Northwest Denver's neighborhoods.

The *Downtown Area Plan* became the prototype for *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* encompassing the whole city, particularly the participatory process that brought businesses, developers, neighbors, environmentalists, working moms and other professional and nonprofessional planners together to envision Denver's future. *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* was a significant turning point for Denver in modern times. It connected many different streams of thought into a single, unifying vision: "A city that is livable for all of its people."

There were, of course, many diverse views on how to fulfill that vision, but a unifying force in 1989 was economic adversity. Hence, the predominant theme of the 1989 Plan was strengthening the economy. Prolonged harsh economic conditions called for dramatic action. The Plan emphasized the need for partnerships between government and business to shape a diversified economy less vulnerable to Denver's perennial boom-and-bust cycles. Civic and business leaders rallied around the 1989 Plan and its ambitious agenda, which called for substantial public investment to fuel an economic turnaround.

That turnaround began in the early 1990s, with massive public investment in the construction of Denver International Airport, the opening of the Cherry Creek Shopping Center, followed shortly thereafter by the opening of the long-awaited Colorado Convention Center. In 1989 and 1991, building on the communications momentum of the planning effort, Denver voters approved nearly half a billion dollars in general obligation bonds for infrastructure improvements throughout the city, including a new Central Library and investments in neighborhood branch libraries. Simultaneously, the infusion of Scientific and Cultural Facilities cash into Denver's arts and culture scene, the replacement of streets and bridges, the improvements at city parks, and the push for a new Downtown baseball stadium all signalled good times ahead. Meanwhile, a revolution was occurring in the national and global economy, with high-technology stocks soaring and many of that market's biggest and best-positioned companies filling up long-vacant office space.

The prosperity of the 1990s has allowed Denver to fulfill many elements of the visions set forth earlier and to create permanent legacies for future generations, many of these achievements being noted in the body of this Plan 2000. The 1990s also presented many new challenges and opportunities not anticipated by the 1989 Plan. The Central Platte Valley has been extensively



redeveloped and rezoned for future development as a mixed-use, center-city neighborhood. More than 10 miles of South Platte riverfront has been revitalized as parks, open space and natural areas. The redevelopment of Stapleton and Lowry are well under way. Successful youth crime-prevention programs have helped turn lives around. With the completion of a new Mile High Stadium in 2002, three professional sports stadiums will have been built within the decade in Downtown.

At the end of the 1990s, the region's economic renaissance also reveals another side: urban sprawl, congestion, increasing social and economic disparity, and persistent tensions between entrepreneurs who want to shape new opportunities their own way and communitarians who uphold their concept of the greater good. And as part of metro Denver's increasing integration into the high-tech global economy, Denver's ownership structure began shifting dramatically, as the population began to grow and grow.

Cognizant of our history, Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 strives to identify the opportunities and challenges of our times, and to set a course for the future that reconciles many diverse aspirations into another coherent and compelling vision of what metropolitan Denver might become.



The Ritchie Center at the University of Denver — a grand, new building nears completion



# Plan

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# 2000

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# Introduction

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*“The fundamental thing we want Denver to both be and become is a city that is livable for all its people. A city in which they can learn, move about, work and play in safety, comfort, with pleasure and pride, and in a spirit of openness and opportunity. It is essential that quality of life for all the people of Denver be perceived as this Plan’s central purpose.”*

*~ The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan*





Among Denver's legacies are a strong civic spirit and identity as a "green oasis"

## ■ Vision

An overall plan for a great city must answer this fundamental question posed by the 1989 Comprehensive Plan: "What do we really want this city to be, and to become?" This question has no single, simple answer, but many complex answers, each shaped by elements of an evolving identity. Some of this identity for Denver is created by a timeless and immutable geography that bequeaths to us a moderate and arid climate, nearby mountains, great open spaces of land, and the city's transportation and communications possibilities.

Then there are the legacies created by the human will and ingenuity of preceding generations and woven into Denver's urban environment: the "green oasis" of magnificent parks and tree-lined parkways; sturdy and well-designed civic buildings, monuments and public spaces; attractive residential neighborhoods; and well-maintained infrastructure and facilities for mobility and economic growth. Most significant to Denver's identity is the civic spirit expressed by the majority of its people in everyday life. Among these expressions are demonstrably high standards for local and state governance, a hard-charging business and economic development philosophy in the private sector, a special concern for children and youth, and a civic climate that supports cultural diversity and an ever-growing population. And in both the private and public sectors, there is a strong charitable and philanthropic compassion for people in need, with corollary insistence on fair treatment and equal opportunity for all.

All Denverites view their city through different lenses of experience, interests and values. For many, the dominant lens is that of family and neighborhood. Others emphasize Denver as the gateway to the Rocky Mountains and outdoor recreation. Many here were born to economic opportunity or came seeking it, and hard work is their central focus. Many others simply cherish the variety and the vibrance of a healthy and thriving city. For an unusually high number of residents, Denver is a work in progress, with problems to solve and challenges to face.

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 is the effort of hundreds of these residents, looking through their differing lenses, to agree on the City's long-term purposes, to think through Denver's special inheritance and its effect on those purposes, and then to suggest strategies that will buy that inheritance as much long-term insurance as possible to sustain it for the future.





## ■ Guiding Principles

*When we think about our personal obligation to the survival of the species, we think about the instruction given to us by our chiefs: Make our every decision on behalf of the seventh generation to come. To think not of ourselves, nor even of our own generation, but on behalf of those faces looking up from earth — each generation waiting its turn.*

*Chief Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation*

The question “Does this action improve the quality of life for people?” is the challenge Plan 2000 poses to both public and private civic leaders as they go about their leading. And if that livability is the “what” of Plan 2000, then sustainability must be the “how.”

Sustainability refers to the long-term social, economic and environmental health of a community. A sustainable city thrives without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A sustainable city manages resources efficiently and effectively by using only what is needed, replacing as much as possible, encouraging everyone’s contributions, and distributing opportunities and risks equitably.

Building a sustainable Denver depends on a common understanding that people, nature, the built environment, the economy and the social structure all depend on each other. A sustainable city is one where most citizens most of the time unite in the common understanding that people and things depend on each other. That “uniting” in “common” to sustain their city is the meaning of “community.”

Plan 2000 stresses that planning and policy decisions should be considered for both their short-term and their long-term impacts on the human and physical environments. Implicit is an approach to policy-making that is both flexible and disciplined — flexible to accommodate new information and techniques, disciplined to think about the long-term implications of decisions.

The following guiding principles — **Economic Opportunity, Environmental Stewardship, Equity** and **Engagement** — are the core values of Plan 2000.

Taken separately, none of these principles alone can lead Denver to become a livable city for all, now and in the future. Taken together and in balance, they can lead toward a shared community commitment to a sustainable future.

### **Economic Opportunity and Security**

A Denver that is focused on the quality of life for all of its people must be a Denver that is economically healthy, with a broad mix of good jobs.

Livability and economic activity are permanently linked — neither improves without the other.



The beautiful and historic Daniels and Fisher Tower on the 16th Street Mall



Environmental stewardship is a guiding principle of Plan 2000 — the Denver Digs Trees program reforests the city



Denver must capitalize on its unique geographical opportunity as a national transportation and technology center, the gateway to the Rocky Mountain recreation and natural resources empire, the nation's most central port of the air age, and the most populous western intersection of the interstate highway system.

Particular priority must be given to educational excellence at all levels, for the quality of education is the cornerstone of a city's spirit and each individual's capacity to contribute and progress.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

Denver's relationship with the environment is above all a matter of balance. Clean water, clean air, clean parks and streets, efficient use and reuse of resources, and protection of the mountain parks and open spaces must be abiding goals. Our arid environment, pressed by an ever-growing population, could not have supported — and cannot support in the future — a major city without careful reengineering of the natural environment to harness natural resources, especially water, which makes possible commerce and industry as well as Denver's verdant landscape.

Until recently, less foresight was exercised with regard to air quality and land use. In the early 21st century, the most significant environmental challenges for Denver and its metropolitan neighbors will be the related issues of sprawl, traffic congestion, air quality, and water quality and supply. Sustainable solutions call for the integration of land-use strategies and transportation systems that balance the need for a variety of residential and commercial development types while ensuring mobility and quality of life.

### **Equity**

Denver must be a city that means what it says when it comes to providing all its residents with equal opportunity to share in its livability. Whether the concern is safety, adequate housing, excellent education, convenient mobility, solid family life, public health and safety, neighborhood investment, or diverse recreation, Denver must be a city that cares and shares, with compassion and equity. Despite the prosperous economy of the 1990s, some Denver neighborhoods have not thrived, and their residents have not benefited proportionally.

Plan 2000 calls for distribution of resources and benefits that result in more equitable outcomes to areas of the city that have been socially or economically marginalized. Denver must continue to reach out and embrace its cultural diversity as an asset, preserving the best of its heritage while



enabling social, economic and physical mobility for all. Especially in an era of expanding global connections, Denver has the opportunity to use cultural and linguistic diversity as a bridge rather than a barrier.

## Engagement

Sustaining a high quality of life is as much about building good human relationships as it is about performing tasks or creating things. Relational values — participation, communication, collaboration and partnership — are implicit in many of Plan 2000's goals, objectives and strategies. The City will continue to promote the involvement of and communication among residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, associations and governments at all levels in the life of the city.

The Plan encourages partnerships to innovatively and creatively tackle issues and solve problems that no individual party can easily resolve independently. In addressing specific objectives and strategies in Plan 2000, the City should structure partnerships among interested parties, combining resources to reach shared goals.

Sustaining Denver's future depends on its being a successful regional partner and collaborator. Interdependence, not competition, must become the dominant theme of the regional political dialogue. Denver and its neighbors have created a number of highly successful models of cooperation that can help guide future engagement among jurisdictions. In this regard, Denver City Council in August 1999 incorporated by ordinance into Denver's Comprehensive Plan the *MetroVision 2020 Plan* of the Denver Regional Council of Governments, a major step forward toward stronger regional partnership.



Center city residents harvest their crops in a Denver Urban Gardens neighborhood plot





We are challenged to shape the built environment through land-use policies and strategies

## ■ Key Issues and Challenges

*“Denver will reap tremendous benefits in the increased utility and efficiency of the physical city, as well as achieving large savings of money, which without comprehensive plans is frequently spent on ill-advised or impractical projects. Above these considerations is the incalculable benefit to be derived from making Denver a far more beautiful and inspiring place to live than it can ever be if permitted to grow haphazardly without forethought and orderly plans. The city planner sees the destiny of the city as a great meeting place of commerce and art. . . . He sees the ideal city as a place where the citizens can carry on their business with the least inconvenience and greatest economy while they may enjoy to the fullest extent the benefits of recreation and the inspiration of civic beauty.”*

*The Denver Plan, volume 1, “A Report by The Denver Planning Commission,”  
December 1929*

For organizational purposes, Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 is subdivided into three sections: **Our Long-Term Physical Environment**, **Our Long-Term Human Environment** and **Metropolitan Cooperation**. The connections between and among these sections and their chapters are clearly identified to signify the importance of viewing Plan 2000 as an integrated whole.

### **Our Long-Term Physical Environment**

**Environmental Sustainability** ■ Most basic to a sustainable quality of life in Denver and the region are the land we live on, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the natural beauty we enjoy. The greatest challenge to our environment in the early 21st century will be better management of inevitable population growth. We must avoid its potential for the excessive loss of open space, overconsumption of resources, ever greater congestion, and the added human stress created by unmanaged urban sprawl. The public policy challenge is to develop and implement balanced and sustainable growth strategies.

**Land Use** ■ The ability to meet our needs from the natural environment and to enjoy its wonders depends on how we shape the built environment through land-use policies and strategies. Rapid economic growth in the 1990s and the availability of 12,000 acres of land for redevelopment and development within Denver at Lowry, Stapleton, Gateway and the Central Platte Valley offer exciting opportunities. But these opportunities pose tremendous challenges to Denver’s land-use regulatory system.

**Mobility** ■ Increasingly, transportation must support land-use strategies — and vice versa — to provide a greater range of living and mobility options. The root of the problem is a society overly structured to accommodate automobiles, without providing a range of other mobility choices for residents, from neighborhood pedestrian connections to crosstown transit. The challenge



is to hold steady the number of auto trips or at least slow the rate of growth to that of population, in part by promoting alternative ways of doing business and living that are less dependent on single-occupant vehicles.

**Denver's Legacies** ■ Urban design, parks and parkways, and urban connections tie these three previous elements of Denver's physical environment together, while historic preservation serves our aesthetic and cultural needs to connect with our past while sustaining our building and landscape resources. A main challenge of the early 21st century will be to maintain the high quality of existing legacies and integrate their management and maintenance into the civic system as the City's inventory of parks, open space and public amenities undergoes rapid expansion.

**Housing** ■ Housing links to all of these core areas, because a sustainable community strives to integrate all of its members, wherever they live, into a shared community of homes and neighborhoods, transportation, environmental quality, employment, recreation and open space. Home ownership is increasingly a challenge for low- and middle-income households. Rentals for families are very difficult to find, and economic segregation is an unfortunate reality that must be addressed.

## Our Long-Term Human Environment

**Economic Activity** ■ Simply stated, economic activity is how our City and the people who live here earn a living. Work is not a choice for most people. It is a vital need to provide the necessities of life, to support our loved ones, and to give meaning to our lives. A main challenge in the early 21st century will be filling available jobs with qualified workers, particularly in Denver's rapidly growing high-tech markets. Another significant challenge is educating and training people who lack the skills demanded by the mainstream economy. A less obvious challenge is to avoid complacency in the midst of long-term economic growth. An optimist without the benefit of hindsight may believe that the good times are destined to roll on and on. They are not so destined, and foresighted Denver policy makers should consider slower or declining growth as possible economic scenarios for the future.

**Neighborhoods** ■ Our homes are our refuge. For many residents, our home lives extend onto the front porch, down the street, and around the corner. Many residents feel a much stronger bond with their neighborhoods than with the City. That can mean tension between City agencies and neighborhood groups. An ongoing challenge is to strengthen trust and communication between the City and neighborhoods in planning, crime prevention and reinvigorating neighborhood schools. An especially acute challenge of Plan 2000 is the siting of community facilities through processes that are open, fair



Economic opportunity is one of Plan 2000's guiding principles



Denver's aging population is likely to live on fixed incomes and need assistance to remain independent



and responsive to neighborhood concerns. The commonplace neighborhood attitude “Not In My Back Yard” (NIMBY) suggests a need for broader understanding that the city, as a whole, is our home.

**Education** ■ Striving to constantly improve the quality of education within the community will one day help our children sustain themselves and their society. The return to neighborhood schools in 1995 has reshaped interest in schools and education, and the Denver school census is growing again. The challenge for K-12 education in Denver is to even more effectively address the needs of today’s student population, of which nearly 75 percent are children of color, and more than one-third of which are growing up in poverty. For the City, the key challenge is to help strengthen the role of schools as neighborhood centers while continuing to play a leadership role in supporting early childhood and lifelong education programs that fall outside the scope of the regular K-12 system.

**Human Services** ■ Compassion, formalized and informal, can sustain communities; if it is not present, the fabric of community is shredded. A key challenge in the early 21st century will be to review the impact of welfare reform and its efforts to move recipients from welfare to work. In the short term, public and private human service organizations must also engage in key issues such as child care, transportation, job-readiness, counseling and rehabilitation, housing, and other individual and family needs that in part have defied systemic management.

**Arts and Culture** ■ Arts and cultural programs sustain the intellectual and spiritual life of the community, its thought and its basic humanity. A community without arts and culture withers or hardens. With a strong economy, Denver’s artistic and cultural environment has flourished during the 1990s. One key challenge for the future will be to sustain the City’s vibrant artistic and cultural life in less vigorous economic times. Another is to continue making arts and culture part of the everyday experience of residents, particularly children.

### **Our Relations Within the Region and State**

**Metropolitan Cooperation** ■ Denver’s relationships with its suburban neighbors have been complex and often difficult. Just 23 percent of the metropolitan area’s 2.3 million people live in Denver. While in previous decades problems such as traffic congestion, blight, violence and air pollution were viewed as problems of the inner city, almost every community in the metro area now faces them, creating more opportunity for cooperation. Denver and its metropolitan neighbors have cooperated successfully in several areas: enriching the artistic and cultural environment, building sports stadiums,





seeking solutions to social problems such as homelessness and youth violence, and developing a shared economic development initiative.

This growing cooperation has recently been formalized in Denver's adoption of the *MetroVision 2020 Plan* as part of Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. Some of the toughest challenges of the early 21st century — sustainable development, environmental quality, and services to the needy — necessarily involve metropolitan neighbors working together with shared long-term goals in mind.

*“The physical and cultural diversity of the many communities which comprise the Denver region creates the opportunity for a wide variety of economic development initiatives and living styles. Individual communities should prosper by contributing to regional efforts in regional facilities, transportation, air quality, water quality, water supply, waste management, provision of open space, and land-use mix. In turn a stronger, more ‘livable’ region will serve to strengthen and sustain its individual communities.”*

**MetroVision 2020 Plan**



In Denver we have not forgotten the joys of playing outdoors in a City Park fountain



Among the conditions shaping Plan 2000 are the health needs of the elderly

## ■ Significant New Conditions and Influences

The following conditions during the 1990s have especially influenced the content and shape of Plan 2000. These were foremost among hundreds of issues and themes considered by members of the 11 Plan 2000 task forces as they formulated the goals, objectives and strategies of the Plan.

### **Growth and Change in Population**

**Return to the city** ■ Denver began gaining population again in the 1990s after nearly two decades of losing residents. Although Denver gained an estimated 34,090 residents between 1990 and 1998, the city's population is not growing as rapidly as in surrounding jurisdictions. But that really isn't a very significant factor in considering the city's future. Its long-term future will be shaped by cooperating in the management of the exploding growth in the metropolitan region as a whole, for it is that total population growth which results in the significant pressures on the core city.

**Who lives here** ■ Denver's residents are increasingly diverse in race, ethnicity and cultural background, a trend that will continue. Denver's overall population was 61.6 percent non-Latino whites in 1990, but a sign of increase is the new fact that 75.5 percent of Denver Public Schools' 1998 student population are children of color. This included Hispanic (49.4 percent), African-American (21.3 percent), and other races (4.8 percent). Increasing diversity obviously calls for greater sensitivity, flexibility and adaptation by institutions operating in the public interest.

**Growing older** ■ Denver's population is also aging. The number of people over the age of 85 increased 27.5 percent between 1990 and 1998. The proportion of Denver's population over the age of 60 is expected to increase from 18 percent in 1990 to 23 percent in 2020. The implications of an aging population are that the number of Denver residents not in the workforce are more likely to live on fixed incomes and to need assistance to remain independent.

**Where people live** ■ Like many American cities, Denver is experiencing a renaissance of growth in its core area, with more people committed to an urban lifestyle. Many older Downtown commercial buildings have been transformed into residential housing, thanks in large part to an active historic preservation movement. Near-Downtown neighborhoods have experienced a resurgence of interest. More multi-unit housing is being built in the core city to accommodate market demand in all price ranges. More middle-income families are choosing to live in Denver's neighborhoods for many reasons, including the end of court-mandated busing for school integration. As more middle- and upper-income residents move into the heart of the city, higher



real estate prices threaten to displace low- and fixed-income residents. In addition, the availability of adequate housing for middle-income homeowners and families is a growing challenge.

**Variety in housing** ■ A strong economy and a rebirth of interest in Denver urban life have created an upward spiral in housing costs, for both home buyers and renters. Some Denver neighborhoods that have long prized the economic diversity within their communities are now threatened with market conditions that could force lower- and middle-income residents and growing families to leave. To encourage a healthy mix of diversity in Denver, the City must try to ensure housing opportunities in a range of types and prices throughout the city. Housing policies must address the needs of people of diverse incomes, household sizes, ages and lifestyles. Adequacy and variety of housing close to work also protect the environment by reducing driving.

### Growth in Land and Development

In 1989, Denver was landlocked on all sides. In 2000, Denver is in the process of redeveloping more urban land than any other major city in America, the following areas being cases in point:

**DIA/Gateway** ■ Denver's land area grew by 40 percent with the annexation of former Adams County land for Denver International Airport (DIA). The 4,500 acres of privately owned land within the Gateway provide opportunities for significant new housing and commercial development. The adopted plan for the area was the first to focus on the benefits of mixed-use development.

**Stapleton** ■ The relocation of the airport to DIA left 4,700 acres, an area one-third the size of Manhattan, for redevelopment at the former Stapleton Airport site. Stapleton's comprehensive master plan includes 1,700 acres of open space, a 273-acre business center that will eventually offer 30,000 to 35,000 jobs, and housing for 25,000 residents from a wide range of income levels. Build-out is expected to take 30 years. The *Stapleton Redevelopment Plan*, which is part of the Denver Comprehensive Plan, shares the sustainable city guidelines of mixed-use development, and substantial open space and environmentally oriented facilities.

**Lowry** ■ The end of the Cold War brought downsizing to the U.S. military nationwide. Lowry Air Force Base, located in both Denver and Aurora, closed in 1993, creating an economic void in surrounding neighborhoods, as well as the opportunity to create a well-planned, mixed-use neighborhood on Denver's eastern flank. At Lowry, 1,800 acres are under redevelopment, including more than 4,000 housing units, a 185-acre high-technology campus and training center operated by the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System, and 800 acres of



The new Denver International Airport is among the busiest airports in the world





The building boom of the 1980s changed the Downtown skyline



open space. Lowry was planned and development begun under a cooperative arrangement between Denver and Aurora.

**Central Platte Valley** ■ Denver’s former railyards have been cleared and rezoned for a mixed-use residential and commercial development that will extend the density and vitality of Downtown northwesterly to the banks of the South Platte River. A number of regional attractions have already been developed, including Six Flags Elitch Gardens amusement park, Colorado’s Ocean Journey, Coors Field for baseball, the Pepsi Center arena for basketball and hockey, and the replacement of Mile High Stadium for football. A new 65-acre urban neighborhood is planned, featuring more than 2,000 housing units and 4 million square feet of retail, office and hotel uses.

Perhaps the most significant development in the Central Platte Valley is the Platte River restoration. Denver’s historic waterway has been reclaimed from a century of neglect and abuse. It is well on its way to being the centerpiece of an extensive riverfront park and trail system linking the center city with its northern and southern neighborhoods. The Platte Valley is again becoming a dynamic example of both urban environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

### **A Thriving Economy**

The strong economy of the late 1990s offers the starkest contrast in background conditions between the 1989 Comprehensive Plan and those prevalent during the writing of Plan 2000. The late 1980s economic downturn was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s. By contrast, the late 1990s economy is the best in memory for many in today’s workforce, thanks in part to the following developments:

**Computer and communications technology** ■ The rapid spread of computer and communications technologies to workplaces and homes has fundamentally changed how Denverites, as well as all Americans, work and do business. These technologies contribute vastly to productivity, mobility and access to information. As a thriving center for technology industries, Denver offers exceptional career opportunities; however, many employers must still recruit from outside the region to find qualified high-tech employees. The demands of a technology-driven society include educating all children in the use of computers, and making technology and instruction in its use available to economically disenfranchised communities. Broader technology training is a key economic development objective for the early 21st century.



**Jobs and income** ■ The strong economy boosted general employment to record levels during the 1990s, with more than 49,000 jobs created in Denver and unemployment falling to historically low levels. Consequently, competition for qualified workers increased, pointing out a more pressing need to link education and training to the job market.

**Economic development** ■ Since the late 1980s, business and government leaders have spearheaded major efforts to diversify the region's economy, specifically concentrating on retaining and attracting growth industries of the future that offer higher-paid employment. The Denver Chamber of Commerce reorganized as the Denver Metro Chamber and stimulated a private-public partnership, the Greater Denver Corporation, which invested more than \$14 million in seeding economic development initiatives, including most prominently the new Denver International Airport (DIA). The success of DIA — ranked the nation's sixth busiest airport, with nearly 37 million passengers in 1998 — has cemented Denver's stature as a national and international transportation center. During the 1990s, Denver also gained international recognition as a center for major high-technology communications companies.

**Retail turnaround** ■ During the 1980s and early 1990s, four Denver department stores closed branches along Downtown's 16th Street Mall; numerous empty storefronts were called the "missing teeth" of the central business district. University Hills Mall on Colorado Boulevard closed in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, shopping centers and "big box" warehouse stores in the suburbs were drawing Denver shoppers and sales-tax dollars in droves.

Today, sales-tax revenues for Denver show a remarkable reversal of that former trend, a turnabout due largely to the spectacular success of Cherry Creek Shopping Center and its surrounding retail district. Also contributing to the revival are the popularity of Lower Downtown and the 16th Street Mall for shopping and dining. In addition, denser retail corridors along Colorado Boulevard and South Broadway brought discount and warehouse retailers closer to thriving Denver neighborhoods.

**Downtown revitalized** ■ Nowhere is Denver's economic revival more apparent than in Downtown, where the commercial vacancy rate stands at under 10 percent, compared to nearly 30 percent in the late 1980s. With the Colorado Convention Center (opened in 1990), the Denver Performing Arts Complex (the second largest in the U.S.), Coors Field baseball stadium, and the Denver Pavilions shopping center as major attractions for residents and visitors alike, Downtown has transformed itself from a daytime workplace to a 24-hour city offering an expanding array of restaurants, shopping, entertainment, housing and employment. Continuing to strengthen and diversify Downtown retailing remains a challenge.



The sculpture "Lao-Tzu" by Di Suvero stands in the busy plaza between the Public Library and the Art Museum



Kids from throughout the metro area are among those who benefit most from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District

## Investment in People

**Caring for children** ■ In concert with national trends, Denver family life has changed significantly over a generation. Many parents spend much more time in the workplace; consequently, many more children and youth are either unsupervised or spending their time in child care centers, schools and before- and after-school programs.

Meanwhile, research clearly demonstrates that to thrive intellectually and emotionally, children need strong, continuous connections to caring adults from birth through adolescence. While the U.S. economy benefits from the labor of almost every adult who wants or needs to work, parents alone bear the responsibility for their children’s care — financially, emotionally and in trying to balance family needs with employment demands.

In Denver, as elsewhere, social and economic structures have been slow to adapt to these changing life circumstances of children and families. Consequences range from parents coping with a persistent sense of inadequacy to children behaving violently and self-destructively. Particularly for low-income families, choices for nonparental care and supervision of children are too few, too expensive and too inaccessible. City social policy and planning must more closely embrace the care and well-being of children and youth if Plan 2000’s vision of sustaining a community livable for all of its people is to be realized.

**Welfare reform** ■ Federal welfare reform legislation in 1996 set new policies, focusing government assistance on moving welfare recipients into paid employment. Responsibility for welfare reform shifted from federal to local government. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was replaced with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), with limitations on cash benefits. While the number of families on welfare has declined significantly both locally and nationally, welfare reform has fundamentally altered the structure of human service delivery, now geared toward supporting parents’ transition from welfare to work.

The long-term impact of this transition on low-income families and human service providers is unknown, especially if the economy weakens and unemployment rises. Since Denver has Colorado’s highest concentration of low-income households, the greatest impact will be felt in the city. A principal concern of Plan 2000 will be the careful monitoring of this impact during the early years of the 21st century.

## Changing Ties to the State and Region

**Political status** ■ Historically, Denver operated with more financial and political autonomy within the state and metropolitan region than it enjoys





today. The core city's political power has somewhat diminished, with Denver's state legislators representing less than 25 percent of metropolitan and less than 15 percent of state population. Consequently, political control over Denver's future must be enhanced by stronger partnerships on statewide and metropolitan issues. For example, several metropolitan funding partnerships, such as RTD, SCFD and the Metropolitan Stadium District, demonstrate how Denver has benefited from collaborative efforts with other jurisdictions.

**TABOR** ■ In 1992, Colorado voters passed Amendment 1, the "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" (TABOR), which places legal restrictions on the ability of state and local governments to tax and spend. The intent of TABOR was to control the rate of increase in government revenues and to encourage government efficiency. However, for some local governments, TABOR reduces their flexibility to cope with variations in the economy, changing public needs that require public investment, and long-term municipal planning.

Since TABOR was enacted, Colorado's economy and its tax revenues have continually grown, and Denver had not exceeded its TABOR revenue limit at the time Plan 2000 was written. But the full implications of TABOR will be more evident during an economic downturn. In that event, City revenue needed for public investment to spur recovery and redevelopment may be limited, and general fund balances will have been reduced by the law.

**Metropolitan funding partnerships** ■ Denver, its metropolitan neighbors and their principal businesses have learned the value of teamwork in creating facilities, supporting institutions, and providing services for residents and visitors to the six-county metropolitan area. For example, since the 1970s, a 6¢ regional sales tax has supported public transportation through the RTD (Regional Transportation District). Metropolitan voters have twice approved a one-tenth-cent sales tax for the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) to support artistic, cultural, and scientific programs and institutions. Metropolitan voters have also approved a one-tenth-cent sales tax for the Metropolitan Stadium District, initially created to oversee construction and operations of a major league baseball stadium, and later extended to construct a new professional football stadium.

These remarkably successful metropolitan tax-district initiatives offer models for future metropolitan cooperation. Also, from the private sector, Denver businesses pitched in for a \$14 million economic development fund in the late 1980s, and private foundations partnered with the City in funding, planning and beginning to redevelop the Platte River Greenway and old Stapleton Airport.



Climate and recreational amenities, such as a peaceful evening at Washington Park, are favorites among residents



Denver streets from earlier days

## ■ A Brief History of Denver

In 2008, Denver will celebrate its sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary of its founding as a rowdy mining camp at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River. The ideas and concepts of Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 will help shape the historical context in which the people of Denver celebrate this milestone.

To understand where Plan 2000 fits into Denver’s timeline, it is appropriate to conclude this Introduction with a brief recollection of the city’s progress from its 19th-century beginnings. For we are mindful that this Plan does not start us on a new adventure, but continues a journey that many people began years ago and are making together. And we journey not just because we must, but because we want to and we can.

### Still a Young City

Entering the 21st century, Denver is still young and robust as major cities go. It’s handsome, energetic, enterprising, gregarious, determined and often self-absorbed. It is a city endowed with bountiful natural and physical assets that are carefully groomed and tended. It is a city poised on the cusp of maturity, strong and fit from alternately wrestling with limitations and sprinting toward opportunities. It is a city that yearns to live long and well and that is beginning to understand it must manage its good fortune with discipline and wisdom.

For much of the 20th century, Denver has been a smart city — well educated, broad-minded, concerned with quality and civilized. But Denver has also inherited a bit of a roguish streak from its earliest days.

Denver began as one of what University of California historian Gunther Barth calls “instant cities” of the western mining frontier. These are human settlements that are born to a single purpose, usually to exploit, accumulate and move on. When the central purpose disappears, so may the cities that grew up to serve them. Instant cities attract people who are highly entrepreneurial, energetic, ambitious and fiercely independent. These cities develop a culture of expediency, one that thrives on growth, novelty and exploitation of resources. When the resources are gone, or when luck runs out, there’s always another opportunity somewhere else.

### Boomtown to City Beautiful

Like some of the boomtowns of the western gold rush era, Denver went from mining camp to regional center within one generation. By 1890, Denver was a bustling frontier town with 100,000 residents and already taking shape as a city of uncommon grace. But the boom went bust in 1893, with the crash of



■ Denver went from mining camp to regional center within one generation



the silver market. Many thriving mineral-rich “instant cities” in the West dwindled and disappeared almost as rapidly as they had appeared. Others, like Denver, hung on.

By the end of the 19th century, Denver could survive because it had begun to diversify its economy as a center for rail transportation and agriculture and as a supply and service depot for the surrounding region. But Denver’s fundamental purpose remained essentially economic. During its early years, Denver was a collection of disconnected newcomers from everywhere else, often moving on to somewhere else with the ebb and flow of a boisterous economy. Always, though, some people remained, planting their roots in the arid soil and raising the first generation who could call Denver home.

By the early 20th century, Denver had already developed a strong sense of place, with trees, parks, gardens, grand public and commercial architecture, and distinctive neighborhoods. All were connected by a streetcar system that allowed residents access to all parts of the growing city. The City Beautiful Movement championed by Mayor Robert Speer instilled in Denver neoclassical urban design standards shared by few cities west of the Mississippi. Meanwhile, a growing middle class took up residence in miles of brick bungalows that grew up along city streets and streetcar tracks in thriving neighborhoods farther and farther from Downtown.

### After the War

Development slowed significantly during the Great Depression, although with the help of the federal government’s “New Deal,” significant new public facilities were built. But, at the end of World War II, Denver was still just a regional city poised for its major breakthrough toward dramatic economic and social growth. Earlier civic leaders had focused efforts on building Denver as a regional headquarters for the federal government. Denver was a magnet for thousands of returning servicemen connected to the top economic development initiative of that era, military defense and its related industries. They started families, moved into new houses in new neighborhoods, earned college degrees and prospered.

From the mid-1940s through the 1960s, Denver’s character became increasingly suburban and its residents increasingly mobile. Its economic character focused more and more on technology industries, setting a pattern that continues today. How people lived also changed. Newer neighborhoods were for houses, not for hardware stores or places of worship or burger joints. Whatever one needed to do, one had to drive to get there. Three generations later, that driving habit is deeply ingrained, some say a permanent trait.



“Denver Squares” were built in many of the city’s core neighborhoods

Lowry Air Force Base was an active base spanning both Denver and Aurora until the mid 1990s







Urban renewal in the 1960s next to the D&F Tower in Downtown



The late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s also saw the rise of better government in Denver. The earlier system of individualistic patronage was replaced when Mayor Quigg Newton brought reform to City Hall, including an emphasis on human rights. It was a time of growth as Denver became the hub of the Rocky Mountain region with rapid improvements in communications, the interstate highway system, and the growth of air traffic at Stapleton Airport. It was also a time of rising expectations for city services, and they were delivered thanks to the advent of professional government administration in Denver.

### **Urban Renewal**

Nevertheless, during the 1960s and 1970s, Denver's central neighborhoods gradually became older, less affluent, dilapidated and, in some Downtown areas, bulldozed. Within these Downtown neighborhoods, swaths of streets, homes and older commercial buildings were razed to be replaced by skyscrapers, freeways and the other trappings of a truly "modern" city. Some neighborhoods became traffic corridors for commuters. Urban renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, a valued concept at that time in the city's history, emptied more than two dozen Downtown Denver blocks of their Victorian-era commercial buildings. These were often replaced by parking lots as a buffer zone between Downtown's retail and financial districts and Lower Downtown, Denver's version of Skid Row. In 1974, court-ordered busing to end racial segregation in Denver Public Schools sent thousands more middle-class families over the borders to suburbia. They wanted to raise their children in "safe" neighborhoods and send them to nearby schools. Denver's population dropped rapidly in the 1970s, leaving a higher concentration of elderly and poor people. Compounding the problem was the "Poundstone Amendment" to the state constitution, which limits Denver's powers to annex land. Suburban tax districts were thriving while Denver, with proportionately less revenue, pushed on as the workhorse of the metropolitan area, providing ever more services, infrastructure, facilities and cultural amenities.

### **Rocky Mountain High**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, an energy boom, and its related effect on real estate, sent Denver's fortunes skyrocketing once again. The city's skyline was busy with as many as two dozen cranes pulling skyscrapers upward from the sea of Downtown parking lots. Denver's first outdoor cafes began to appear along the newly constructed 16th Street Mall, which from a retail viewpoint initially seemed like a major mistake. Rather than strengthening Downtown retail, it seemed to kill it. Denver's main street was changing, with shoe stores and clothiers disappearing little by little, replaced by ice cream and sandwich shops, specialty retailers, souvenir stores and food courts.



Plentiful jobs, low rents, mountain recreation and a laid-back lifestyle attracted tens of thousands of newcomers once again as baby boomers came in quest of the “Colorado Rocky Mountain High.” They moved into declining neighborhoods — Capitol Hill, Congress Park, Broadway Terrace — and invested sweat equity in the sagging Queen Annes and prim Denver Squares. Little by little, entire neighborhoods began sprucing up. Throughout Denver, bands of urban pioneers began holding meetings, trying to figure out how to get the City to stop putting in one-way streets or to put more police on beat in their part of town. Upstart neighborhood groups began to matter in City Hall, especially when effective neighborhood organizers began running for, and getting elected to, City Council.



A 1970s ribbon cutting for a new  
Downtown building

### **New Energy, New Investment**

By the early 1980s, Denver had become increasingly diverse, its physical infrastructure was beginning to wear out, and the economy was still subject to its historic boom-and-bust cycles, symptomatic of an economy with employment and investment concentrated in too few industries. Predictably, the oil boom that began the 1980s came to an abrupt end about midway through the decade, with falling oil prices and changing federal policies shoving the oil business southward. All the new office towers built to house the elusive boom were suddenly no longer filled to their brims. As the decade progressed, office vacancy exceeded 30 percent in Downtown. Worse, Downtown’s two largest department stores, The Denver Dry and May D&F, both founded in Colorado’s gold rush days, closed their Downtown doors forever, abandoning their architecturally distinctive and historic homes.

In the mid-1980s, Downtown business leaders and City officials joined forces to develop a plan to revive the fortunes of a rapidly plummeting Downtown economy. The Downtown Area Plan was published in 1986, improbably suggesting a sweeping economic revitalization of Lower Downtown, a major retail center covering several blocks on the southeast end of the 16th Street Mall, and an ambitious mixed-use development in the Central Platte Valley. Ridiculous as it seemed at the time, someone’s wild idea of a Downtown amusement park was even drawn into that plan.

Today, Lower Downtown is an attractive and vibrant mixed-use neighborhood. Denver Pavilions opened on the southeast end of the 16th Street Mall in 1998, bringing attractive retail and entertainment to two full blocks formerly serving as surface parking lots. The Central Platte Valley has become an epicenter of major attractions, including Colorado’s Ocean Journey, the Pepsi Center, Commons Park Open Space and Six Flags Elitch Gardens, the only downtown amusement park in America. Soon, new



The 16th Street Mall under construction in 1981



commercial and residential development will take root in the former railyards, extending the vitality of Downtown northward and linking the center city more closely to Northwest Denver's neighborhoods.

The *Downtown Area Plan* became the prototype for *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* encompassing the whole city, particularly the participatory process that brought businesses, developers, neighbors, environmentalists, working moms and other professional and nonprofessional planners together to envision Denver's future. *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* was a significant turning point for Denver in modern times. It connected many different streams of thought into a single, unifying vision: "A city that is livable for all of its people."

There were, of course, many diverse views on how to fulfill that vision, but a unifying force in 1989 was economic adversity. Hence, the predominant theme of the 1989 Plan was strengthening the economy. Prolonged harsh economic conditions called for dramatic action. The Plan emphasized the need for partnerships between government and business to shape a diversified economy less vulnerable to Denver's perennial boom-and-bust cycles. Civic and business leaders rallied around the 1989 Plan and its ambitious agenda, which called for substantial public investment to fuel an economic turnaround.

That turnaround began in the early 1990s, with massive public investment in the construction of Denver International Airport, the opening of the Cherry Creek Shopping Center, followed shortly thereafter by the opening of the long-awaited Colorado Convention Center. In 1989 and 1991, building on the communications momentum of the planning effort, Denver voters approved nearly half a billion dollars in general obligation bonds for infrastructure improvements throughout the city, including a new Central Library and investments in neighborhood branch libraries. Simultaneously, the infusion of Scientific and Cultural Facilities cash into Denver's arts and culture scene, the replacement of streets and bridges, the improvements at city parks, and the push for a new Downtown baseball stadium all signalled good times ahead. Meanwhile, a revolution was occurring in the national and global economy, with high-technology stocks soaring and many of that market's biggest and best-positioned companies filling up long-vacant office space.

The prosperity of the 1990s has allowed Denver to fulfill many elements of the visions set forth earlier and to create permanent legacies for future generations, many of these achievements being noted in the body of this Plan 2000. The 1990s also presented many new challenges and opportunities not anticipated by the 1989 Plan. The Central Platte Valley has been extensively






redeveloped and rezoned for future development as a mixed-use, center-city neighborhood. More than 10 miles of South Platte riverfront has been revitalized as parks, open space and natural areas. The redevelopment of Stapleton and Lowry are well under way. Successful youth crime-prevention programs have helped turn lives around. With the completion of a new Mile High Stadium in 2002, three professional sports stadiums will have been built within the decade in Downtown.

At the end of the 1990s, the region's economic renaissance also reveals another side: urban sprawl, congestion, increasing social and economic disparity, and persistent tensions between entrepreneurs who want to shape new opportunities their own way and communitarians who uphold their concept of the greater good. And as part of metro Denver's increasing integration into the high-tech global economy, Denver's ownership structure began shifting dramatically, as the population began to grow and grow.

Cognizant of our history, Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 strives to identify the opportunities and challenges of our times, and to set a course for the future that reconciles many diverse aspirations into another coherent and compelling vision of what metropolitan Denver might become.



The Ritchie Center at the University of Denver — a grand, new building nears completion



# Our Long-Term Physical Environment

**Environment**

**Land Use**

**Mobility**

**Legacies**

**Housing**



# Environmental

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# Sustainability

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*“It is every man’s obligation to return to this world  
at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it.”*

*~ Albert Einstein*







The City of Denver provides curbside recycling to neighborhoods



Sunflowers thrive in an urban garden



## GOAL ■ Preserve and enhance the natural environment.

OVERVIEW ■ The natural environment in and around Denver includes assets that are most prized by Denver residents: clear air, a moderate climate, nearby mountains, parks and open space, and beautiful vistas. The greatest challenge to the environment in the early 21st century is managing growth — slowing the loss of land, the consumption of resources, the congestion, and the human stress created by urban sprawl. At the same time, the public-policy challenge to develop and implement balanced and sustainable growth strategies addressing equity, stewardship and cooperation becomes more critical. Environmental sustainability is not something we actually achieve; it is something we as individuals, as a community and as a region aspire to achieve. DRCOG’s MetroVision 2020 Plan is based on sound principles of sustainability and offers reasonable direction to all the communities in the Denver metropolitan area.





## ■ Introduction

Denver citizens treasure the natural heritage within which the city has developed. More than one-third of respondents in the Heart and Soul of Denver Survey cited the climate as the most important factor in Denver's quality of life. Another 17 percent ranked the mountains and outdoor activities highest. Citizens surveyed also indicated that three environmental quality issues — congested roadways, growth and pollution — are among the City's top five problems. Clearly, a high-quality natural environment within and around Denver is crucial to sustaining our quality of life, today and in the future.

Sustainability means the prudent use of our natural resources without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It implies reclaiming, conserving and intensively managing resources to minimize the impact of development on the environment both locally and globally. It also means ensuring that all residents live in areas free from the unhealthy effects of environmental pollution.

Within Denver's urban framework, environmental sustainability will be achieved through policies and practices that reflect the congruency of environmental, economic and equity goals. Over the long term, efforts to prevent pollution, increase energy efficiency and conserve water will produce economic benefits. The role of the City is to ensure that all activities sponsored and sanctioned by the government consider their impacts on the environment.

## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Air quality** ■ Denver regularly complies with federal air quality standards, mainly because of tighter tailpipe-emission standards, the banning of wood-burning on high-pollution days, changes in street-sweeping practices, the use of oxygenated fuels, tight controls on industry, and voluntary trip reduction.

**Water conservation** ■ The City has implemented numerous water-saving measures, including completion of water metering of private homes and a revised tap-fee structure. Voluntary water conservation practices by citizens are strongly encouraged. The Denver Water Board estimates that these measures have saved 13,000 acre-feet of water annually. One acre-foot of water is estimated to serve the water needs of a family of four for a year.

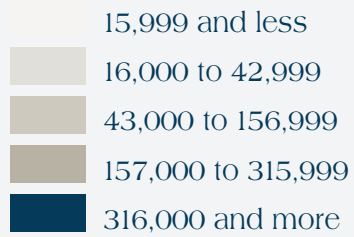
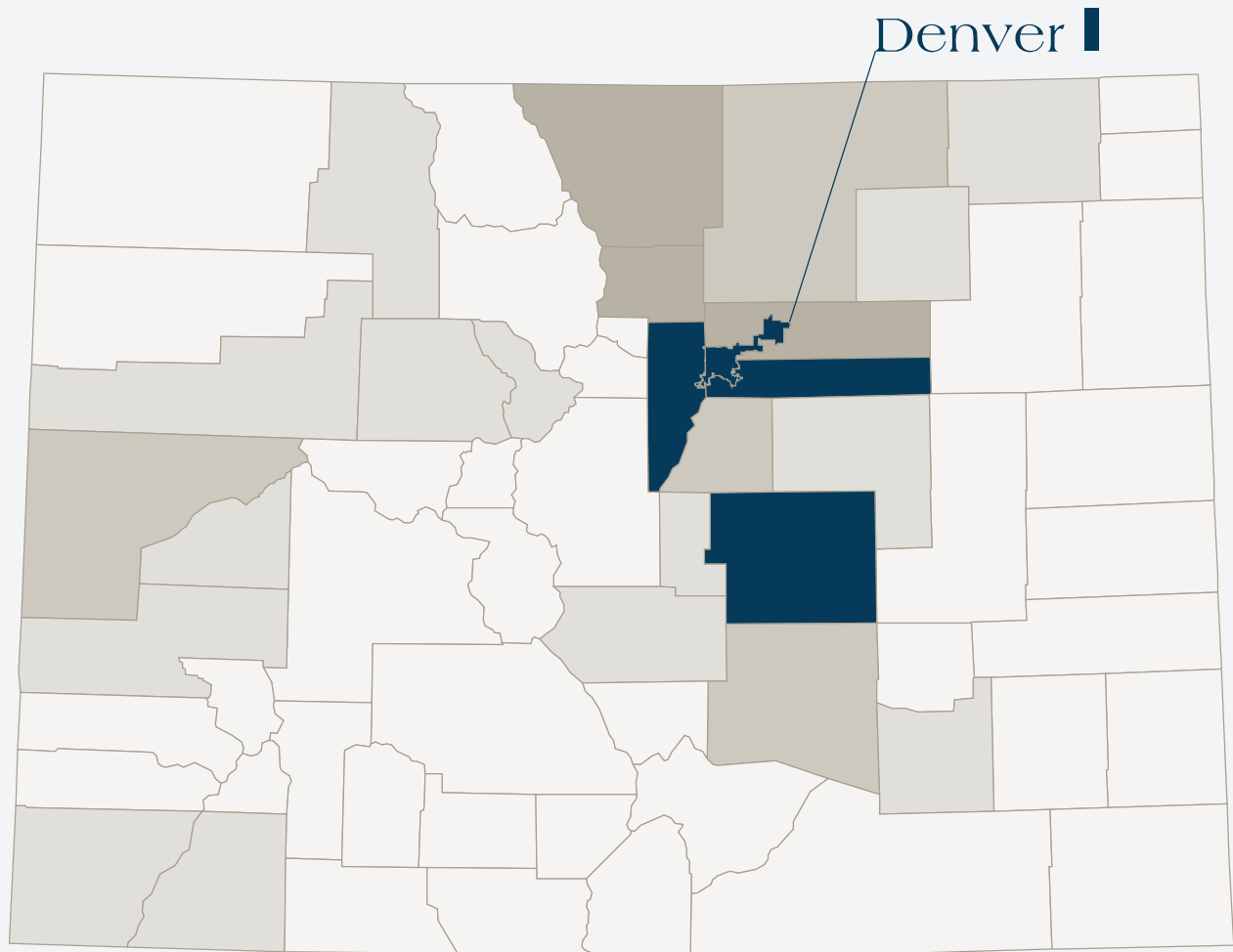
**Water quality** ■ The Mayor's South Platte River Commission has focused tremendous investment in improving water quality in the river



The brown cloud — Denver steps up to the challenge

The Platte River gets a community cleanup in the Central Platte Valley





Colorado County Populations — 1997





and its tributaries, increasing their importance as natural and recreational assets for the City. Wastewater management facilities have been expanded and improved. An intra-agency water quality group has been formed to review City projects that may have potential adverse impacts on Denver's lakes and streams.

**Recycling** ■ City-sponsored curbside recycling was available throughout Denver by the end of 1999. The City instituted Executive Order 108, a "reduce, reuse, and recycle" initiative for City agencies in early 1997.

**Renewable energy** ■ More consumers are asking for green power alternatives such as wind energy. More than 14,500 Colorado customers have signed up for wind energy, including the City and County of Denver.

**Natural resources conservation** ■ The City has promoted energy efficiency activities through the Colorado Public Utilities Commission and improved efficiency in City government through its Green Lights and Green Fleets programs. These programs have saved \$1.15 million a year and reduced sulphur dioxide by 138,000 pounds, nitrogen oxides by 130,000 pounds, carbon dioxide by 20,000 tons, and heavy metals by 50 pounds.

**Brownfields** ■ Industrially contaminated sites are gradually being cleaned up and reused.

*"Brownfields" is a term applied to property that is blighted and underdeveloped due to a number of factors, including environmental contamination. For economic reasons, businesses often seek less expensive undeveloped land distant from the core of the city, increasing sprawl, commuting and the need for publicly financed infrastructure.*

**Open space** ■ The City's emphasis on parks and open space has resulted in the addition of 75 acres of new parks and open space since 1995. In the next five years the City will develop 800 acres into parks and recreational areas.

## Challenges

**Identifying and measuring success** ■ Achieving sustainable development requires systemwide changes that are measured and have community support. This will require significant public education and consensus-building.

**Growth management** ■ If not properly managed, increasing population and expanding commerce throughout the metropolitan region can consume natural resources, reduce open space, add congestion, cause waste, and contribute to the brown cloud. The 1990 census placed the population for the metropolitan area at 1.8 million. In 1998 the population was estimated at 2.3 million. An additional 770,000 new residents are projected by 2020.



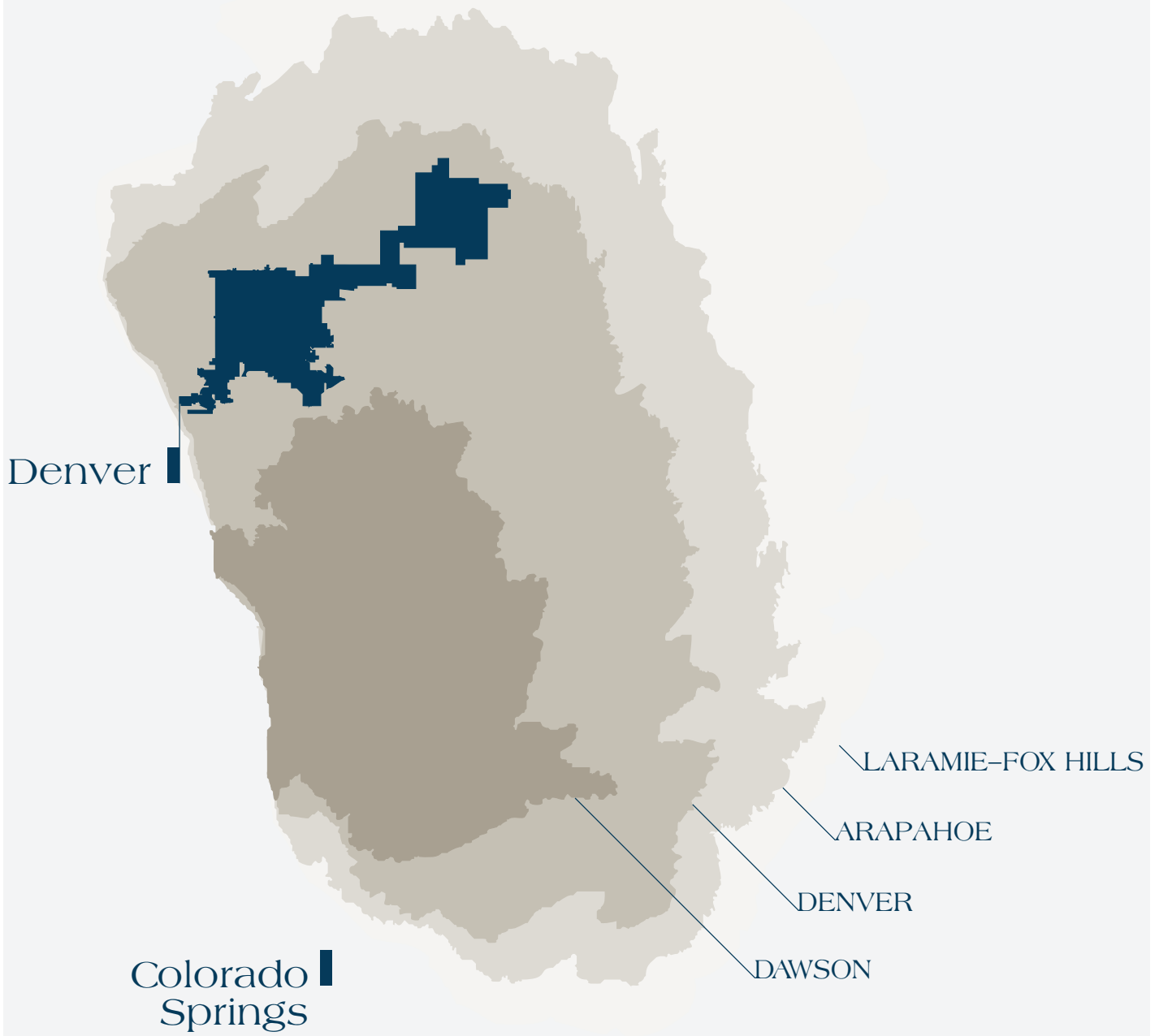
Denver's 300-plus days of sunshine make solar panels a favorite renewable energy choice

Community gardens are good for gardeners and good for Denver neighborhoods





Greeley



■ Denver Basin Water Aquifers



**Pro-environmental attitudes** ■ Influencing individuals to make even more “green choices” in their daily lives will require education and reinforcement over a long period of time.

**Economic pressures** ■ Environmental protection measures often add front-end costs to development projects, industrial production, and consumer-oriented products and services. These costs are not perceived as the true cost of doing business. In some cases such expenses may make certain investments or economic activities infeasible. In other cases people may simply not understand the long-term economic benefits.

**Renewable energy** ■ Denver, like the rest of the country, is too heavily reliant on fossil fuels as an energy source. In 1997 and 1998, the average Denver resident paid \$517 per year for electrical service, \$380 per year for natural gas, and \$750 per year for gasoline. The rising cost of a particular energy source can have an impact on people’s behavior and encourage the use of other renewable energy sources. (The price of electricity over the last 10 years has changed very little, while the cost of natural gas has increased 12 percent since 1990.) Renewable energy choices such as wind and solar power, as well as techniques to increase energy efficiency, must increase in the 21st century to diminish demand for fossil fuels.

**Recycling costs** ■ Comparatively low landfill fees that predominate in Colorado weaken the cost incentives for recycling. Further, people do not equate recycling with the need to make those materials into usable products (i.e., it’s more than just putting the paper into the bin).

## Opportunities

**Growth management** ■ In addition to reducing vehicular traffic, existing bus corridors and new regional transit corridors offer opportunities to shape transit-oriented, mixed-use developments, which encourage neighborhood self-sufficiency. Also, Stapleton and other areas offer tremendous opportunities for sustainable development.

*“The redevelopment of the Stapleton site will take at least 30 to 40 years to complete. The decisions made with respect to the site will influence the Denver community for many generations to come. ... [What] the community planned for the Stapleton site will provide a real-world example of sustainable development of significant scale. Sustainable development in the words of the United Nations describes a community that can ‘meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’”*

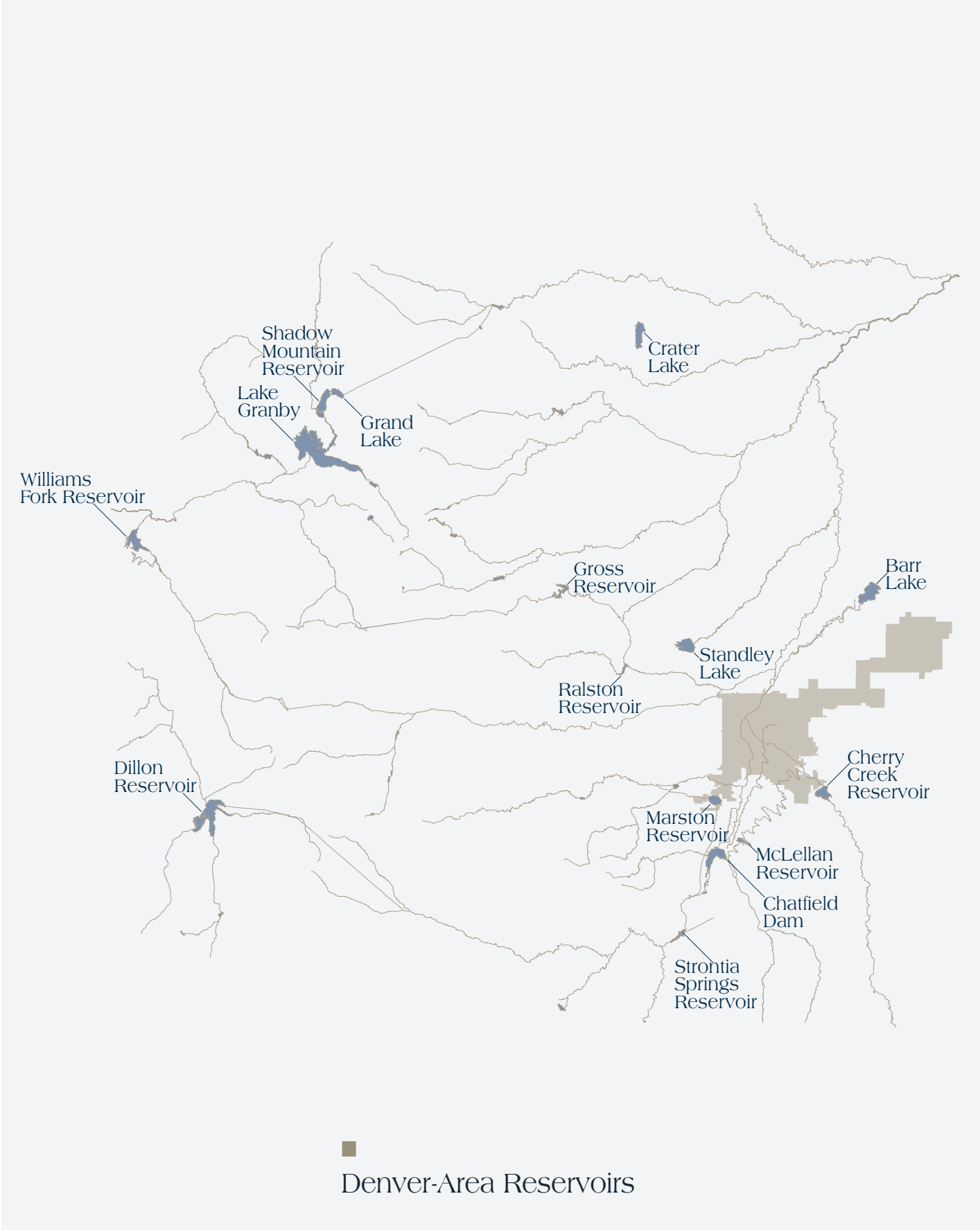
*Stapleton Redevelopment Plan, 1995, an amendment to the Denver Comprehensive Plan*



Residents work to improve the environment throughout the city



Rocky Mountain Arsenal is home to a wide variety of wildlife







**Pro-environmental attitudes** ■ The Heart and Soul of Denver Survey indicates that citizens value the natural environment and are motivated to protect it. Denver has begun to build a successful track record of cooperation among businesses, environmentalists, neighborhoods and policy makers on environmental issues such as identifying ways to reduce consumption, not just recycling.

**Sustainable economics** ■ The use of life-cycle costing leads to sustainable development decisions.

**Public policy regulation** ■ Governmental entities are working to use pollution prevention incentives and other voluntary programs to mitigate the need for regulation wherever possible.

**Metropolitan cooperation** ■ Increasingly, partnerships are developing to effectively face environmental issues across jurisdictional boundaries. Examples include the reclamation of the South Platte River, higher water quality standards, the metropolitan trails system, mountain parks, and the Chatfield and Cherry Creek Dams.

**Renewable energy** ■ Sufficient renewable energy resources exist within the Denver region to offer viable alternatives and achieve a substantial market share. Denver has more than 300 days of sunshine a year for solar energy, and wind energy has already been introduced into the electricity grid. The full value of Denver Water's hydroelectric resources has not yet been realized.

**Affordable housing** ■ Reduction of utility costs through energy efficiency can help make housing more affordable.



Water recreation at Confluence Park in the heart of the city



Father and daughter fish and learn about the South Platte River



More and more wild animals live within the city



## ■ Vision of Success

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000's goal, objectives and strategies for environmental sustainability will enhance the quality of life for Denver residents in a variety of ways:

**Living patterns** ■ Residents will be able to live more self-sufficient lives within their neighborhoods due to increased use of telecommuting policies and technology, expanded home-based employment, and a greater variety of commercial and recreational activity within neighborhoods.

**Air quality** ■ Measurements of air quality factors will continue to improve, as well as the visual appearance of the city.

**Water quality** ■ Water quality will improve, and waterways and groundwater will be cleaned up and "greened" up.

**Transportation** ■ Citizens will drive less, choosing from a greater variety of low-impact modes of transportation that effectively connect people from place to place and from one mode of transportation to another.

**Renewable energy** ■ Increased use of renewable energy sources will reduce consumption of fossil fuels and, thereby, air emissions.

**Health-care costs** ■ Savings in health-care costs will be realized because of a healthier environment.

**Natural resource conservation** ■ Eco-industrial parks will be developed in which one or more companies make use of their own or other companies' byproducts as raw materials or inputs for their own production. Existing and new development of all types will be more energy-efficient and water-conserving, and will use fewer resources. "Green" building practices will increase.

**Pollution prevention** ■ More residents and businesses will be directly involved in voluntary pollution prevention programs, reducing the need for government intervention.

**Water conservation** ■ Water consumption for irrigation will decline with increased awareness of the need to conserve water resources in Denver's semiarid climate.

**Recycling** ■ Denver will continue to increase its recycling activity and reduce the solid waste going to landfill.

**Shared environmental responsibility** ■ Progress will continue within the city to share environmental benefits and burdens among neighborhoods.

**Natural habitat and wildlife** ■ Denver's natural stream corridors and wetlands will be preserved and maintained for wildlife habitat.



## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Burdens and Benefits

Distribute environmental burdens and benefits.

*Undesirable impacts and burdens of environmental pollution such as health problems, low property values, and community disintegration often fall heaviest on neighborhoods where residents are likely to be people of color, low-income and politically marginalized. In addition, such neighborhoods often lack beneficial environmental amenities such as parks and open space. Denver supports distributing environmental impacts and benefits fairly, rather than imposing or ignoring negative impacts in some communities while focusing beneficial environmental amenities elsewhere.*

#### Strategies

- 1-A Encourage redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and environmentally compromised land known as brownfields.
- 1-B Promote public-private sector involvement and cooperation with citizens to formulate plans and actions that achieve shared responsibilities and benefits.
- 1-C Continue to implement the environmental review function as a tool to address pollution prevention and improve environmental quality.

*The City has initiated an environmental review function within its zoning process that mitigates or avoids concentrating those uses that could produce negative environmental impacts within any neighborhood.*

### Objective 2 ■ Stewardship of Resources

Ensure environmental stewardship of natural resources, taking into account the entire ecosystem, not just human needs.

Preventing pollution will be the action of first choice in accomplishing this objective. REF: Legacies Obj. 12

#### Strategies

- 2-A Promote environmental sustainability within neighborhoods by educating and encouraging residents to adopt environmentally friendly ways of living, such as recycling, water conservation, use of renewable resources, and low-impact methods of transportation.



***Renewable resources are those available from the environment — such as energy from the sun, wind or water — that can be adapted to meet the needs of people and slow down the consumption of nonrenewable fossil fuels.***

**2-B** Protect and improve air quality by:

- Annually remaining in compliance with all federal air quality standards, including carbon monoxide, ozone, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>.
- Decreasing the number of violations of the visibility standard over the next 10 years in accordance with the Regional Air Quality Council's Blueprint for Clean Air.
- Reducing vehicular pollution by expanding the use of transit and other travel alternatives, supporting telecommuting and home-based employment, increasing the mix of uses within neighborhoods, and expanding the use of alternative fuels.  
**REF: Land Use 1-D, 4-A; Mobility 1-B, 3-B, 4-E**
- Working with regulatory agencies to address the issues of hazardous air pollutants and indoor air quality to a greater degree during the coming decade.

**2-C** Conserve water and improve water quality by:

**REF: Legacies 12-A**

- Supporting and enhancing the Denver Water Board's policies established in *Water for Tomorrow: An Integrated Resource Plan*.

***The Water for Tomorrow plan includes policies that (a) encourage water conservation strategies to maintain an adequate supply and minimize future capital needs; (b) achieve water quality that meets or exceeds federal and state standards for drinking water, stream and surface water, groundwater, and storm water; and (c) provide water and water services in an environmentally sensible manner, and support citizens' desires for a vital natural urban environment and abundant outdoor recreation.***

- Achieving a steady per capita water-use reduction over the next 10 years.
- Encouraging the Denver Water Board to deny water service to areas where water-conserving landscape practices are not allowed.
- Reviewing, developing and amending City policies to allow and encourage water-conserving landscape practices.
- Working to encourage water-conserving landscaping and building techniques in new development areas.
- Identifying opportunities for City agencies to use native flora in landscape designs.





## 2-D Conserve energy by:

- Promoting energy-efficient technologies and the use of renewable energy (including solar, hydro, wind and others) in the home, the workplace, and for transportation.
- Leading by example to adopt policies that further the use of renewable energy resources and creating “green” city buildings.

REF: Housing 1-F

*Sustainable or “green” building considers the building’s total economic and environmental impact and performance. Considerations include overall product costs to manufacture, transport and maintain, as well as cost savings to residents for expenses such as utilities. A number of home-builders build “green” in the Denver marketplace.*

- Continuing the City’s efforts to reduce greenhouse gases.
- Promoting renewable energy in the marketplace.
- Adopting development design criteria that maximize energy conservation.

## 2-E Conserve raw materials by:

- Encouraging the use of recycled materials in the construction of buildings.
  - Promoting efforts to adapt existing buildings for new uses, rather than destroying them.
- REF: Legacies 5-A, 6-C
- Reducing per capita residential solid waste delivered to landfills by expanding City-sponsored and private recycling practices, and by raising public awareness of the benefits of recycling, especially by purchasing recycled materials.
  - Reducing the City’s use of materials and increasing its use of recycled materials through purchase or reuse.
  - Encouraging businesses to reduce the use of materials and increase their use of recycled materials.

## 2-F Conserve land by:

REF: Land Use 1-F, 2-A, 4-A

- Promoting infill development within Denver at sites where services and infrastructure are already in place.
- Designing mixed-use communities and reducing sprawl, so that residents can live, work and play within their own neighborhoods.
- Creating more density at transit nodes.
- Adopting construction practices in new developments that minimize disturbance of the land.



- | Sharing parking at activity centers.
- | Protecting natural corridors, wetlands and floodplains from the encroachment of development.
- | Encouraging the redevelopment of brownfields.

**2-G** Preserve and restore, wherever possible, natural habitat for wildlife and plants native to the region, such as those at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Area, Gates Crescent Park, Grant-Frontier, Bear Creek Park, Bear Valley Park, and the Cherry Creek corridor.

**REF:** Legacies 12-C

*The Rocky Mountain Arsenal was a military site where war gases and pesticides were produced. Federal and state agencies and a private company are working together to make the area part of the National Wildlife Refuge system, reclaiming it for future generations.*

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## **Objective 3 ■ Environmental Policy**

Develop environmental protection policies that take advantage of market forces and provide for regulatory flexibility while meeting the City's environmental objectives. Encourage policies and actions that consider environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity as complementary, not conflicting, goals.

### **Strategies**

- 3-A** Establish specific measurable goals for the environment, formulate strategies to accomplish them, and create time lines for implementation.
- 3-B** Encourage decision-making throughout Denver City government that recognizes long-term impacts on the environment, such as making life-cycle cost analysis the basis for economic decisions.

*Life-cycle cost analysis is a method of evaluating purchases or investments. The initial cost of a particular capital investment may be higher than another option, but it may last longer. For example, concrete costs more than asphalt for streets, but it will usually last longer with less maintenance. The additional front-end investment in concrete may be justified in some instances, ultimately requiring fewer resources. The City of Austin, Texas, used life-cycle cost analysis in designing a sustainability matrix that is used to evaluate capital improvement requests. REF: Land Use 1-E*



- 3-C** Adopt procedures and regulations that are appropriate to the nature and scale of problems and that reduce waste.
- 3-D** Provide market-based incentives and tax incentives to encourage sustainable development.
- 3-E** Encourage effective voluntary environmental management programs and activities that require less government intervention. The private sector has found pollution prevention to be profitable, and many businesses are voluntarily embracing opportunities to create a more sustainable environment.

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## Objective 4 ■ The Environment and the Community

Achieve environmental sustainability in all aspects of planning, community and building design, and transportation. Encourage implementation of recommended strategies within neighborhoods, citywide, and throughout the metropolitan region.

### Strategies

- 4-A** Promote the development of sustainable communities and centers of activity where shopping, jobs, recreation and schools are accessible by multiple forms of transportation, providing opportunities for people to live where they work.  
*REF: Mobility 3-B, 4-E; Land Use 1-D*
- 4-B** Promote energy efficiency, including the use of renewable energy, in the design of communities and in the construction of buildings and patterns of development.
- 4-C** Respect, conserve and expand wildlife habitat, watersheds, open space and other natural resources when planning, designing and building new projects.  
*REF: Legacies 10-B*
- 4-D** Promote convenient public transit for the community, including buses, light rail and other alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles.  
*REF: Mobility 1-A*
- 4-E** Use neighborhood development, such as Stapleton, as projects that incorporate principles of sustainable development at the community level. Use these neighborhoods as models to encourage sustainable development throughout the city over time.



- 4-F Introduce natural ecosystem strategies into the maintenance of our public and private lands.

*The City now uses goats instead of herbicides to keep weeds under control in riparian areas.*

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## Objective 5 ■ The Environment and the Region

Encourage the broad participation and cooperation of the entire metropolitan community on environmental sustainability issues, including transit, air and water quality, protection of floodways and wildlife habitat, and recreational areas and bike paths. REF: Land Use 5-A

### Strategies

- 5-A Support and use DRCOG's *MetroVision 2020 Plan*, which has been incorporated into the Denver Comprehensive Plan.  
REF: Metropolitan 1-A
- 5-B Continue Denver's leadership in metropolitan forums on smart growth, air quality, water, energy, natural resources and wildlife, recycling, climate, and other key environmental issues.  
REF: Metropolitan 1-C, 5-B
- 5-C Partner with other metropolitan jurisdictions to distribute environmental burdens and benefits.  
REF: Metropolitan 1-E
- 5-D Encourage building the planned extensions of the region's public transit network in a manner that is both convenient for users and energy-efficient.  
REF: Metropolitan 2-A; Mobility Obj. 5
- 5-E Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to develop shared open space and outdoor recreation amenities.  
REF: Metropolitan 5-A; Legacies 10-D
- 5-F Maintain existing connections and develop new connections among open space areas within Denver and with those of our neighbors.







# Our Long-Term Physical Environment

**Environment**

**Land Use**

**Mobility**

**Legacies**

**Housing**



# Land

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# Use

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*“Neither the country nor the society we built out of it can be healthy until we stop raiding and running, and learn to be quiet part of the time, and acquire a sense not of ownership but of belonging. . . . Only in the act of submission is the sense of place realized and a sustainable relationship between people and earth established.”*

*~ Wallace Stegner  
Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs, 1992*







Building is booming in Denver and all along the Front Range



Denver International Airport



**GOAL** ■ Manage growth and change through effective land-use policies to sustain Denver's high quality of life.

**OVERVIEW** ■ Rapid economic growth in the 1990s, along with the availability of 12,000 acres of land for development and redevelopment at Lowry, Stapleton, DIA/Gateway and the Central Platte Valley, offers Denver new opportunities. At the same time, infill development continues throughout the city, demonstrating the need to balance new investment with neighborhood character. These opportunities also pose tremendous challenges to Denver's land-use regulatory system. An effective land-use policy is essential to achieving many of Denver's aspirations: accommodating additional residents; improving economic vitality; enhancing the aesthetics and livability of the city; creating sustainable patterns of development such as mixed uses and higher density; and promoting walking, biking, transit and other alternatives to automobiles.

Two actions will begin implementation of such a policy: preparation of a Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan, and a complete reexamination of zoning classifications and the zone map. The existing regulatory system was designed to reflect the values and aspirations of another era; today it sometimes encumbers reasonable, healthy development reflecting the needs, values and vision of our times.



## ■ Introduction

Denver's first Zoning Ordinance was written in 1925. The city was completely rezoned in 1956 and the Zoning Ordinance recodified in response to changed conditions. Many of the development patterns the 1956 Zoning Ordinance reflects are the era's assumptions regarding the separation of uses, boundless space to develop, virtually unlimited resources, and minimal suburban competition.

Never completely static, the 1956 Zoning Ordinance has undergone more than 1,200 language amendments. The related Zone Map has been amended hundreds of times, and dozens of new zone districts and overlay districts have been added. However, despite these many modifications, the existing land-use regulatory system does not wholly facilitate sustainable growth as envisioned in Plan 2000.

The City must go beyond simply revising, updating and adapting its land-use regulatory system by increments. Rather, Denver should proactively determine the type, quality and amount of urban development it wishes to foster, and develop a decisive set of policies and programs to achieve its land-use goals. Three policies underlie sound land-use development in Denver:

- Retaining and attracting residents of all economic means.
- Enhancing the quality, diversity and stability of neighborhoods, business districts and other areas of Denver.
- Supporting strategies that provide multiple transportation modes, giving travelers more choices than simply using their cars.

*“Alternative transportation” refers to all modes of transportation except driving a single-occupant vehicle. Included in this broad category are light rail and bus transit, car pools, walking, biking, shuttle service and increased use of telecommunications.*

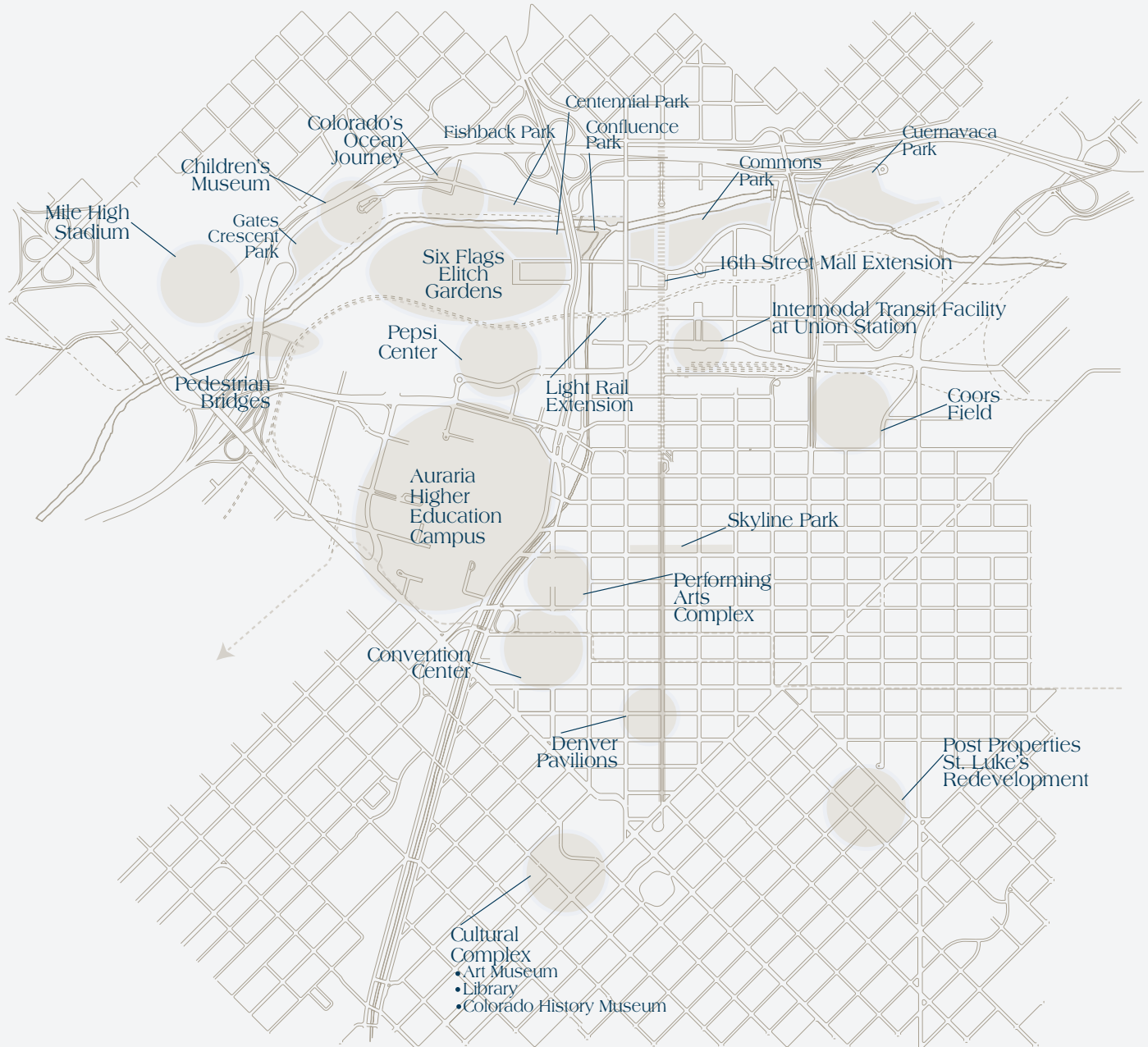
Two primary strategies have been identified to improve Denver's land-use regulatory system. First, the land-use regulatory system needs additional tools to achieve the City's goals, including a *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* to better link land use and transportation. Second, the Denver Zoning Ordinance and related components of the City's land-use regulatory system should be updated, clarified and simplified wherever possible. The updated Zoning Ordinance should be more user-friendly and more accessible to the public via communications technologies.



Denver's Central Public Library in the Golden Triangle, a mixed-use neighborhood



Six Flags Elitch Gardens took up residence in the Central Platte Valley



■  
Development Activity — Downtown and  
the Central Platte Valley





## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Economy** ■ A strong economy has caused dramatic increases in land values and development activity, contrasted with the 1980s, when Denver's economy was among the most sluggish in the nation.

**Population growth** ■ The population of the Denver metropolitan area has grown dramatically to more than 2 million people. Denver's share of that total has declined. The City's population in 1970 was 514,678, representing 42 percent of the six-county metro total. Denver's population declined to 467,610 in 1990, then climbed above the 500,000 mark again in 1998, which represented only 24 percent of the metro population.

**Vibrant, 24-hour Downtown** ■ The 1989 Comprehensive Plan focused on reinvesting in a seriously depressed Denver. By 1999, Downtown had become a showcase for the fruits of those investments. In 1990, the Downtown Denver Partnership reported an inventory of 51 vacant or underutilized buildings, many of them historic. By 1999, most of these buildings had been rehabilitated as housing and hotels, giving the Downtown area a substantial resident base to support a diversified range of restaurants, entertainment and new retail. The Colorado Convention Center, a light rail line, Coors Field and the Lower Downtown Historic District all illustrate this new vibrancy.

**Emergence of Cherry Creek** ■ A new Cherry Creek Shopping Center opened in 1990 and expanded in 1998, replacing its 1956 predecessor. The areas in and around Cherry Creek have blossomed with reinvestment in retail, office and many types of housing.

**High-quality infill development** ■ Since the mid-1990s, Denver has benefited from high-quality development on infill sites such as the old St. Luke's Hospital and the former Elych Gardens. In each case, national developers with experience in creating mixed-use projects at difficult urban sites have brought creativity and commitment to Denver.

**Lowry Air Force Base** ■ When Lowry Air Force Base closed in 1994, a plan was in place for a mixed-use community that included residential development of a variety of types and prices, educational facilities and an employment center. Development has proceeded at a rapid pace, with build-out expected by 2006.

### Challenges

**Compact development** ■ The public appreciates the positive benefits of appropriately located compact development — more public open space, more mobility options, nearby employment, shopping, recreation opportunities and

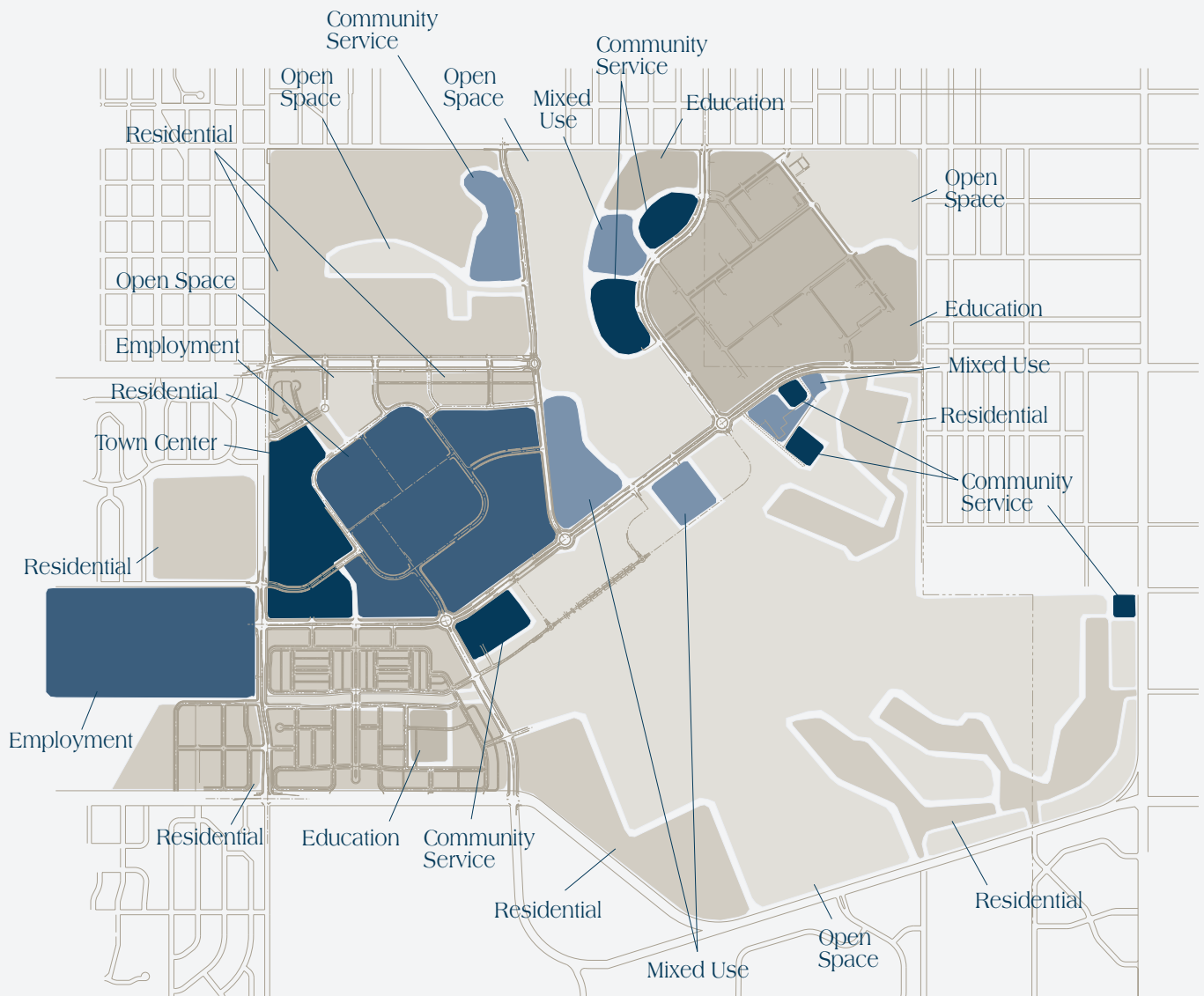


Cherry Creek North shops are elegant and unique



Downtown has experienced dramatic increases in new housing development





■  
Development Areas — Lowry



less sprawl. But few established neighborhoods welcome the higher densities suggested by population growth and its perceived impacts. Neighborhood resistance to denser development is a major challenge.

**Local circulation** ■ Conflicts are inevitable between the walkable character of neighborhoods and the traffic circulation needs of Denver's auto travelers. Equitable and workable resolutions for these conflicts will continue to challenge the City as it seeks to better integrate its land use and transportation systems.

**Range of housing** ■ Denver faces a shortage of housing that covers the full range of housing prices and types. Land-use policies must allow for increased availability, broader distribution and an expanded variety of housing options.

**Development plan and design review** ■ The complex array of land-use regulatory mechanisms can make the development review process confusing at best for both applicants and interested neighbors. The City's challenge is to create a streamlined, efficient and predictable development review process that ensures new development is compatible with its surroundings and provides quality architecture and site design. Increasingly, design review is being used as a tool to mitigate the impact of new development and redevelopment while reinforcing the best characteristics of the community. As with other regulatory tools, the staff time necessary to administer a program must be balanced in a manner that benefits both the City and its residents.

**Zone map amendments** ■ Denver's zone maps sometimes prescribe development patterns inconsistent with existing and desired land-use patterns. For example, some neighborhoods comprised of single-family houses are zoned R-3 or R-4, which allows high-rise apartments. Or a neighborhood zoned R-1 is developing at a higher townhouse-type density. "Upzoning" and "downzoning" of private property are extremely sensitive issues, often provoking prolonged and sometimes acrimonious debates, the results of which may be even greater inconsistencies.

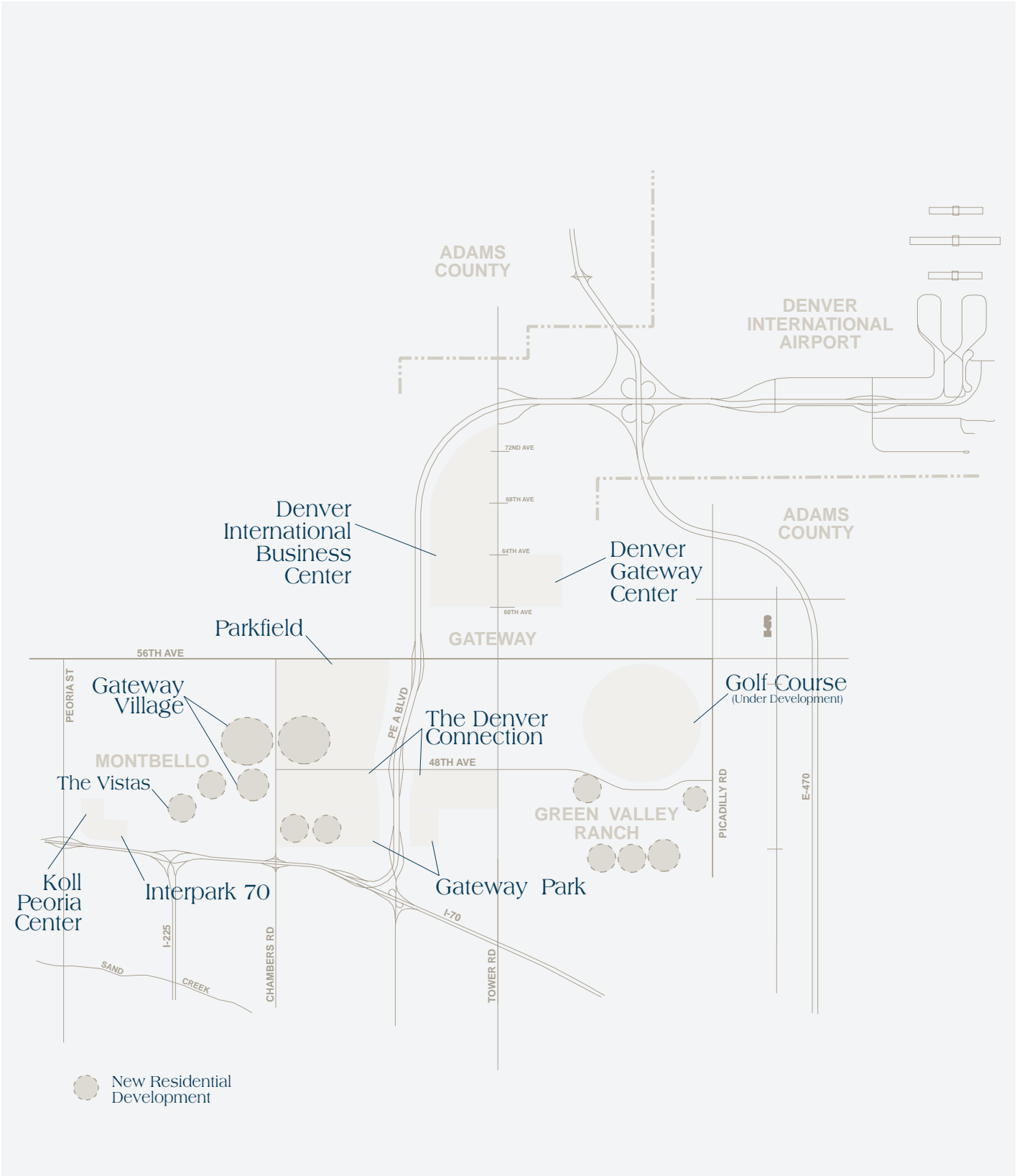
**Neighborhood blight** ■ Throughout the city, there are individual structures or groups of structures that create a negative or blighting influence on the immediate area. This may be as simple as a vacant house with weeds grown high or as complicated as a derelict structure used illegally for drug or gang activity. The need to balance the rights of the property owner with the community's right to real and perceived safety remains a challenge for the City.



A long-vacant flour mill under renovation to lofts in the Central Platte Valley

Houses in the Clements Park Historic District are within walking distance of Downtown





■ Development Areas — DIA/Gateway



**Infrastructure cost** ■ By regulation, the cost of infrastructure for new development is shared by the City and the developer. Typically, the City pays for improvements that benefit an area or the entire city, and the developer pays for local improvements needed by the development. The City is challenged to improve and maintain its existing public infrastructure while absorbing substantial additional costs of regional infrastructure required at DIA/Gateway, Stapleton, the Central Platte Valley and other development areas. This expanded demand for infrastructure investment requires more funds for capital improvements, more prudent and economical investment, and a wider range of financing alternatives for the public and private sectors.



A historic trolley powerhouse is being converted to a new retail use for REI, a recreation outfitting company.

## Opportunities

**Development areas** ■ A decade ago, when it was a landlocked center city surrounded by suburbs, Denver's growth opportunities appeared severely limited. In a reversal of fortune, Denver's major new development areas — Lowry, DIA/Gateway, Stapleton and the Central Platte Valley — offer about 12,000 acres, more than 50 years of build-out potential.

**Mixed-Use Zone Districts** ■ In November 1998, Denver City Council enacted the Mixed-Use Zone Districts to create the zoning flexibility desired by developers and property owners as well as review of development proposals by the City and the public. This represents the first effort to encourage mixing of uses as recommended in some of the sustainable development strategies of Plan 2000.

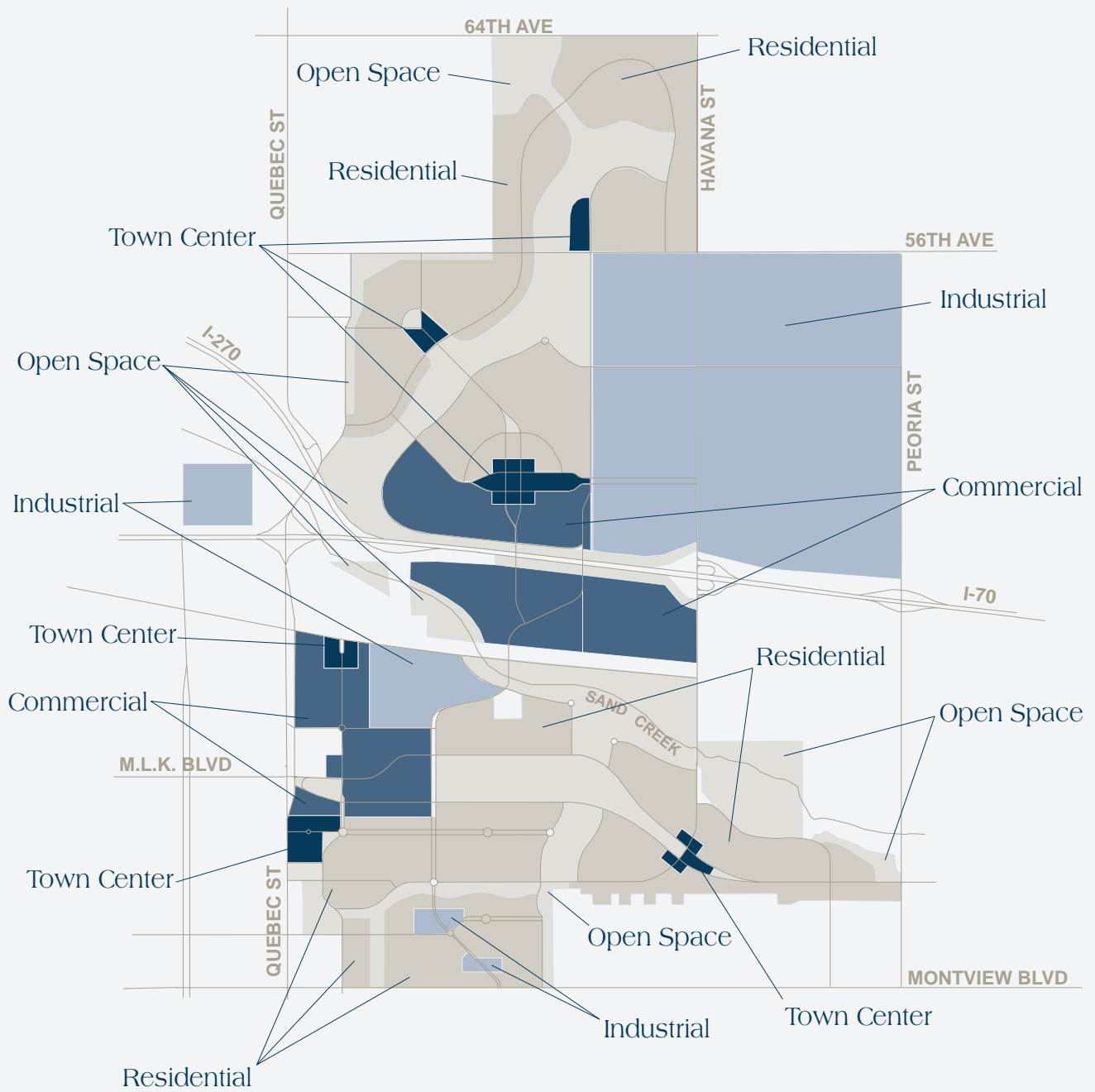
**Central Platte Valley** ■ Denver's former railyard area is undergoing substantial public and private development. The area is now home to some of the City's major sports and entertainment venues: Coors Field, Mile High Stadium, the Pepsi Center and Six Flags Elitch Gardens. Commons Park is under construction and the Platte River Greenway continues to be improved. Exciting development projects, including the REI Flagship Store in the old Forney/Powerhouse Building, Colorado's Ocean Journey and the Flour Mill Lofts, set the stage for new development that complements Downtown, Lower Downtown and the adjacent Highlands neighborhood.

**Industrial areas** ■ Manufacturing and warehousing uses have moved farther from the City's core to newer facilities and better access to highways. As these larger uses move out, opportunities are created for smaller custom fabrication and entrepreneurial start-up businesses. Some of these former industrial sites are quite large and contain interesting structures, but are also polluted. New environmental policies and experience with reuse of brownfields could create a new generation of manufacturing, service and warehouse businesses.

Surface parking lots await redevelopment







■  
Development Areas — Stapleton



## ■ Vision of Success

Implementation of policies based on Plan 2000's objectives and strategies for land use could result in the following features of Denver's future physical growth:

**Congruency of land use and zoning** ■ Ongoing clarification of the Zoning Ordinance in a process linked to a citywide land-use plan will eventually result in a built environment with greater overall urban design integrity, stronger connections among urban centers, and a richer and more diverse mix of uses within geographically proximate areas. The linking of these activities will be especially useful in identifying opportunities for the development of housing, transportation, open space, necessary community facilities and other essential uses that are more difficult to integrate.

**Information and communication** ■ Developers, citizens and City agencies alike will benefit from greater clarity in land-use regulatory policies, easier access to information, and more opportunities to communicate with City agencies and other interests about land-use policies and issues. Technology advances such as the [www.denvergov.org](http://www.denvergov.org) website will enable customers to access all land-use regulations for a specific property via the Internet.

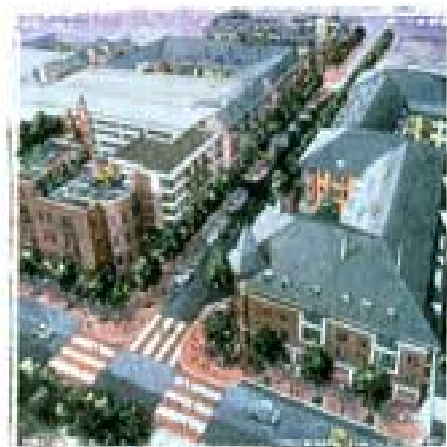
**Compact development** ■ Compact urban centers will meet the needs of 21st-century living while reinforcing the valued characteristics of Denver's neighborhoods. Development and redevelopment of urban centers present opportunities to concentrate population and land uses within a limited geographic space. Compact development will improve neighborhood cohesion, reduce urban sprawl and connect residents more directly to services and amenities within their immediate living environment.

**Mobility** ■ In every part of the city, residents will enjoy a greater variety of convenient transportation options and alternative mobility choices. Denver's street system, with its grid and continuity, will prove highly adaptable to meet transportation needs as they change over time.

**Preservation of urban legacies** ■ Denver's highly livable urban environment will be preserved and enhanced through policies that support the ongoing development and maintenance of the parks and parkways system, preserve historic resources, and require quality urban design consistent with Denver's traditional character. Mountain and Downtown views from public places such as parks will continue to be protected.



Upgrading our infrastructure: construction on Speer Boulevard Bridge



The old St. Luke's Hospital site becomes a mixed-use development



Open space is essential to Denver's livability



*Urban centers concentrate development within a relatively small area. They typically encompass a wide range of land uses, including higher-density residential, office, retail, services, entertainment and community facilities. Urban centers vary in type, size and intensity. Their density and variety enable a range of transportation alternatives; above all they should be walkable. Denver's urban fabric is best understood with three types of centers:*

**| Downtown:** *This high-intensity, mixed-use core serves the entire metropolitan area with businesses, entertainment, festivals and government. Downtown should remain the hub of the public transportation system.*

**| Regional centers:** *These concentrations of mixed-use development focus on one major use, such as a regional retail center (e.g., Cherry Creek Shopping Center) or an office park (e.g., the Denver Tech Center). Regional centers offer enough variety of uses to create an internal synergy as well as attract patrons from throughout the region. Again, a wide range of transportation alternatives is needed.*

**| Neighborhood centers:** *Within neighborhoods, higher-density residential and service uses tend to locate around supermarket-based shopping centers or historical streetcar districts, such as Old South Gaylord or 32nd and Lowell. Patterns vary greatly depending on the age, arrangement and amount of commercial space. Pedestrian access is particularly important.*



## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan

Balance and coordinate Denver's mix of land uses to sustain a healthy economy, support the use of alternative transportation, and enhance the quality of life in the city. REF: Arts & Culture 2-F

#### Strategies

- 1-A** Develop a *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* that anticipates growth and development patterns through 2020. Consider future needs for housing, commerce and industry, parks, recreation and open space, transportation, community facilities, and other identified land-use needs.  
REF: Mobility 1-G; Neighborhoods 1-A, 7-C; Environmental 2-F; Housing 2-D, 4-C; Legacies 3-A
- 1-B** Ensure that the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* reinforces the city's character by building on a legacy of high-quality urban design and stable, attractive neighborhoods; encouraging preservation of historic buildings, districts and landscapes; and maintaining the integrity of the street grid, parks, parkways and open space system.  
REF: Legacies 2-A; Neighborhoods 1-A
- 1-C** Incorporate relevant recommendations from neighborhood, corridor and area plans that are supplements to Plan 2000. Examples are the plans for Stapleton, Lowry, Gateway, Federal Boulevard, Central Platte Valley and the Golden Triangle.
- 1-D** Recognize the multiple transportation functions of arterial corridors, as well as their importance for commercial activity and projecting the city's image.  
REF: Mobility 3-B; Environmental 2-B, 4-A; Housing 6-A; Legacies 3-A

**Arterial corridors:** Many of Denver's higher-intensity uses are located along arterial corridors such as Colorado Boulevard, Broadway, East and West Colfax, South Wadsworth, and Interstate Highways 25 and 70. Because of the auto orientation of these streets, maintaining pedestrian, transit and bike connections is challenging. Colfax and Broadway are among streets with the additional challenge of maintaining their historical streetcar character.

- 1-E** Use the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* as the basis for making future decisions about City investment in transportation to improve mobility and in utilities to provide capacity. Promote land-use patterns and transportation systems that improve air quality over time.  
REF: Mobility 1-G; Housing 6-A





- 1-F** Encourage a balance between the use and protection of natural resources and protection of environmental quality, including air quality, within a regional context in the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan*.  
**REF:** Environmental 2-F; Metropolitan 5-A
- 1-G** Reinforce Denver as the focal point of the metropolitan area in the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan*. The Plan's recommendations must be flexible to respond to economic upturns and downturns while maintaining high-quality development throughout the city.  
**REF:** Economic Obj. 4
- 1-H** Encourage development of housing that meets the increasingly diverse needs of Denver's present and future residents in the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan*.  
**REF:** Housing Obj. 6; Housing 2-E, 2-F
- 1-I** Establish the location of existing community facilities in the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* as a basis for future siting decisions.  
**REF:** Neighborhoods 7-A

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## Objective 2 ■ Denver Zoning Ordinance

Clarify and update Denver's Zoning Ordinance and related ordinances, regulations and procedures to be consistent with the goals and objectives of Denver's *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan*.

### Strategies

- 2-A** Initiate comprehensive review and detailed revision of the Denver Zoning Ordinance and related components of the land-use regulatory system. The process should balance the perspectives of citizens, neighborhoods, businesses, developers and City agencies. The proposed revisions should ensure that the Denver Zoning Ordinance will be:  
**REF:** Neighborhoods 1-E; Legacies 2-A, 6-E
- consistent with the vision, goals and objectives of Plan 2000;
  - compatible with high-quality urban design;
  - flexible and accommodating of current and future land-use needs, such as home-based business and accessory flats;
  - accessible, understandable and easy to use;
  - supportive of Denver's competitive economic strengths and its interest in attracting new development of all types;
  - responsive to the needs for timely communication with parties affected by zoning procedures; and



- | enforceable through swift and fair procedures.

**2-B** Make organizational changes within City government to achieve Plan 2000's goals, objectives and strategies related to land use and zoning. The changes should:

- | reduce delays in planning and development review and enforcement;
- | increase cross-training and combine the functions of various City agencies in the planning and development review and enforcement processes; and
- | concentrate permitting and enforcement agencies in one central location.

REF: Economic 2-A

**2-C** Review and update City processes for enforcement of zoning and other land-use regulations. These processes should include a consistent and enforceable set of performance standards for the owners and operators of all land uses and a swift, efficient and fair inspection and compliance process.

REF: Arts & Culture 2-F

**2-D** Use up-to-date information technology to keep all aspects of the land-use regulatory system current and easily accessible to the public.

REF: Economic 6-B

## Objective 3 ■ Residential Neighborhoods and Business Centers

Preserve and enhance the individuality, diversity and livability of Denver's neighborhoods and expand the vitality of Denver's business centers.

### Strategies

**3-A** Complete neighborhood and area plans for parts of Denver where development or redevelopment is likely or desirable.

REF: Economic 4-B, 5-A; Legacies Obj. 7; Human Services 3-D; Mobility 6-A; Neighborhoods 1-A

*The template below provides a planning framework that can help bring consistency to the process of developing neighborhood, small area and corridor plans.*

**Process:**

Research and analysis  
Collaboration of stakeholders  
Goals and objectives  
Implementation

**Elements:**

Land use and zoning  
Economic development  
Mobility  
Urban design and historic preservation  
Housing  
Human services  
Education  
Community facilities  
Financial resources and fiscal impact



**3-B** Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood; that offers opportunities for increased density and more amenities; and that broadens the variety of compatible uses.

REF: Economic 4-A

**3-C** Work with the Denver Public Schools to preserve and incorporate educational facilities as key elements of healthy neighborhoods.

REF: Neighborhoods Obj. 4; Education 1-G, 1-F

**3-D** Identify and enhance existing focal points in neighborhoods, and encourage the development of such focal points where none exist.

REF: Neighborhoods 1-A, 1-C

*A neighborhood focal point might be a park, a school, a distinctive shopping area, a transit station, a cultural or recreational facility — any easily recognized amenity that helps create and define a neighborhood's image.*

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## Objective 4 ■ Land Use and Transportation

Ensure that Denver's *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* and regulatory system support the development of a clean, efficient and innovative transportation system that meets Denver's future economic and mobility needs. REF: Mobility Obj. 1

### Strategies

**4-A** Encourage mixed-use, transit-oriented development that makes effective use of existing transportation infrastructure, supports transit stations, increases transit patronage, reduces impact on the environment, and encourages vibrant urban centers and neighborhoods.

REF: Housing 6-A, 6-E; Environmental 2-B, 2-E; Mobility Obj. 3, 4-E, 5-A; Economic 4-B; Legacies 3-B

**4-B** Ensure that land-use policies and decisions support a variety of mobility choices, including light rail, buses, paratransit, walking and bicycling, as well as convenient access for people with disabilities.

REF: Mobility 8-A



## Objective 5 ■ Metropolitan Land-Use Planning

Pursue regional approaches to land-use planning and policy development with Denver's metropolitan neighbors.

REF: Metropolitan 1-E; Housing 6-F; Mobility Obj. 2; Legacies 9-C, 10-D, 11-C

### Strategies

- 5-A** Seek cooperation in building a regional agenda for planning and implementing the *MetroVision 2020 Plan*. Key issues for this agenda should include growth management, reduction of sprawl, regional transportation, open space, environmental quality, and metropolitan distribution of community facilities and affordable housing.  
REF: Environmental Obj. 5; Neighborhoods 7-B
- 5-B** Consider formulating and implementing a cooperative regional approach to revenue-sharing and cost-sharing for significant regional issues such as affordable housing, open space and public transportation. Evaluate use of incentives for development or expansion of major centers of jobs, transportation, retail and housing.





# Our Long-Term Physical Environment

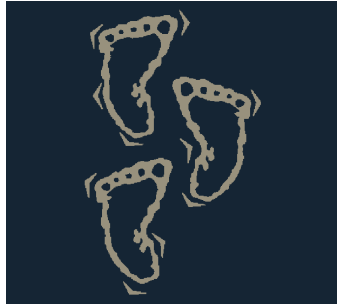
**Environment**

**Land Use**

**Mobility**

**Legacies**

**Housing**



# Mobility

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*“The facts of metropolitan congestion are undeniable: they are visible in every phase of the city’s life. One encounters congestion in the constant stoppages of traffic, resulting from the massing of vehicles in centers that can be kept in free movement only by utilizing human legs.”*

*~ Lewis Mumford  
The City in History, 1951*







Denver's mild four-season weather is good for walkers



Free shuttle buses on the 16th Street Mall contribute to the Mall's success



**GOAL** ■ Anticipate and meet the expanding mobility needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

**OVERVIEW** ■ Roadway congestion, traffic on neighborhood streets, and the search for that perfect parking space add up to lost time, lost money and lost patience. All diminish the quality of life. The root of the problem is a society focused far too much on accommodating automobiles. We do not provide a range of convenient mobility choices for citizens from neighborhood pedestrian connections to crosstown transit. Denver must address mobility in multiple ways: providing more choices, encouraging those that reduce impact on the urban environment, and cooperating with metropolitan jurisdictions and quasi-governmental agencies on mobility plans and projects. Perhaps the most difficult challenge is to get people and organizations to think in new ways about how they get from place to place.





## ■ Introduction

Mobility, the ability to get from place to place safely and conveniently, is a key measure of Denver's quality of life. Most Denver residents are accustomed to the convenience of getting places by car. Voluntarily or involuntarily, many others experience the difficulty of navigating the city and its surrounding areas without a car.

The planning and design of Denver's newer neighborhoods and activity centers assume automobiles as the predominant mode of access. However, throughout the 1990s, ever-expanding congestion on highways and streets increased commuting time, driver frustration, business inefficiency and pressure on neighborhoods. These pressures broadened public support for effective, convenient solutions such as bus and rail transit, carpooling, walking, bicycle riding and other alternatives to single-occupant vehicles.

The term "mobility" represents the balance that must be achieved between the supply of transportation facilities and the demand for their use. It has been demonstrated in city after city that government cannot afford to build enough roadways to meet the demand for auto travel. The cost is too great — in dollars, in environmental degradation and in visual blight. Instead, local governments will have to focus on alternative mobility solutions such as more efficient use of the roadway system, expanded transit, and more options for biking and walking. In addition, demand for transportation should be lessened with greater use of telecommunications, telecommuting, home offices, mixed-use development, and the opportunity to live and work in close proximity.

To that end, in the early part of the 21st century, Denver must take bold steps to address expanding mobility needs with well-integrated, multiple modes of transportation that provide convenient access for citizens, minimize impact on the environment, sustain quality of life throughout the city, and support economic activity. The City's transportation policies must simultaneously ensure the adequacy of the existing roadway system while aggressively developing and promoting practical alternatives that complement automobile travel. To be accepted by the public, transportation alternatives must be convenient, safe, affordable and comfortable.

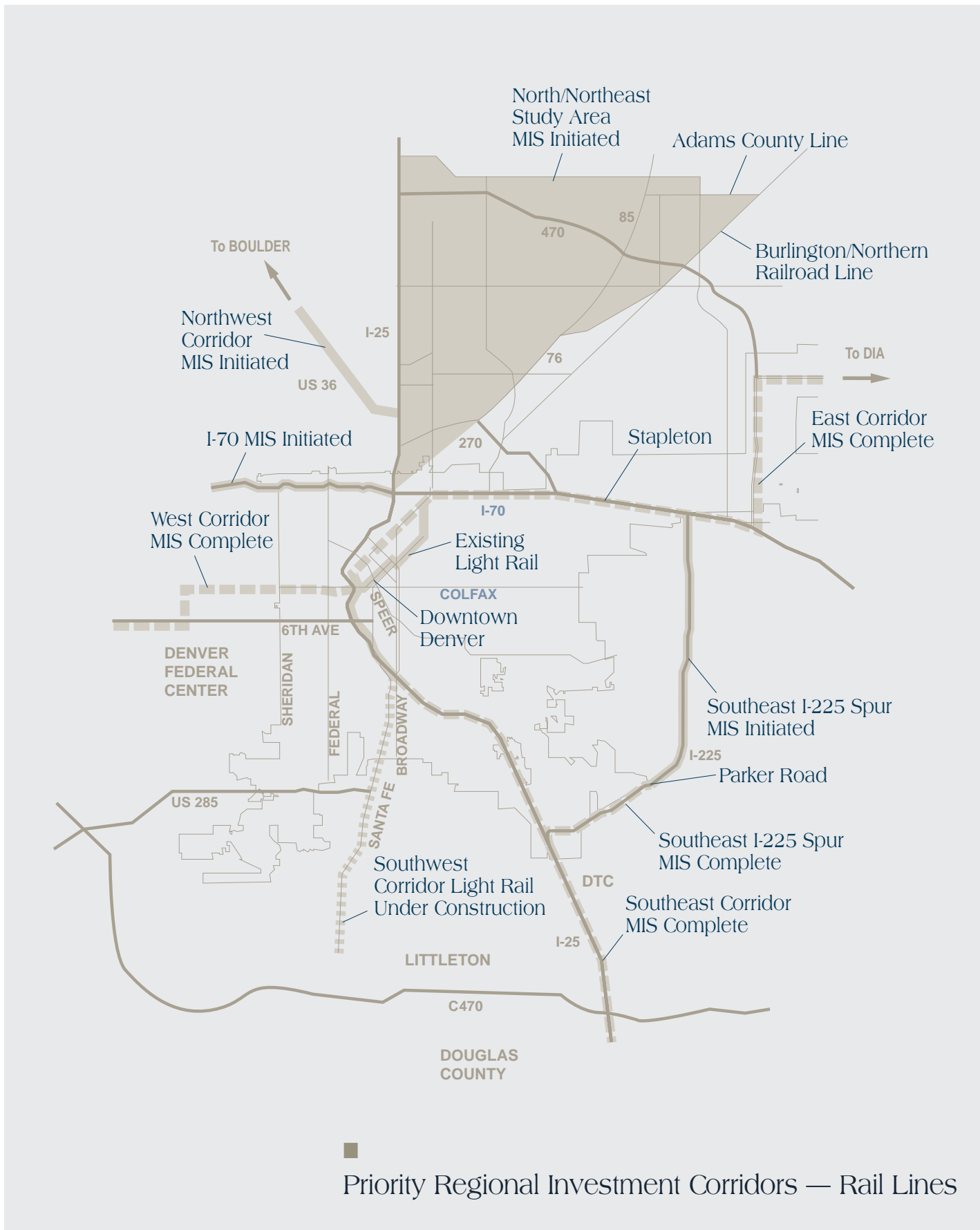
Transportation infrastructure is expensive, and it has major impacts on how residents live. It both influences and is influenced by development. Future transportation plans must consider a diverse range of users, including residents of all ages and abilities, business commuters, visitors and tourists, special-event travelers, shopping and recreational travelers, and commercial freight carriers. To achieve its transportation objectives, the City will work



Biking along the pathways at  
Confluence Park



By 2020 over 3 million people will live,  
and many will drive, in the Denver area





with a complex range of stakeholders, coordinating the efforts of its own agencies and including federal and state agencies, other metropolitan jurisdictions, RTD, DRCOG, employers, neighborhood groups, environmental organizations, industry associations and many others.

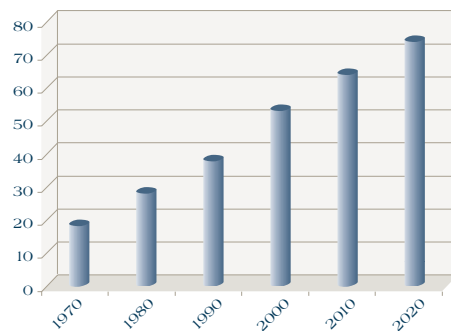
Plan 2000's objectives and strategies for mobility avoid any preferential judgments about some forms of transportation over others. Residents want and need a variety of options depending on where they are going on any given day, or any time of day. The Plan also recognizes that walking is a part of almost every trip, and supporting the safety and quality of the pedestrian experience is essential. Denver's social, economic and environmental sustainability requires that the overriding preference for automobile travel be balanced with transportation alternatives that help increase access while reducing impact.

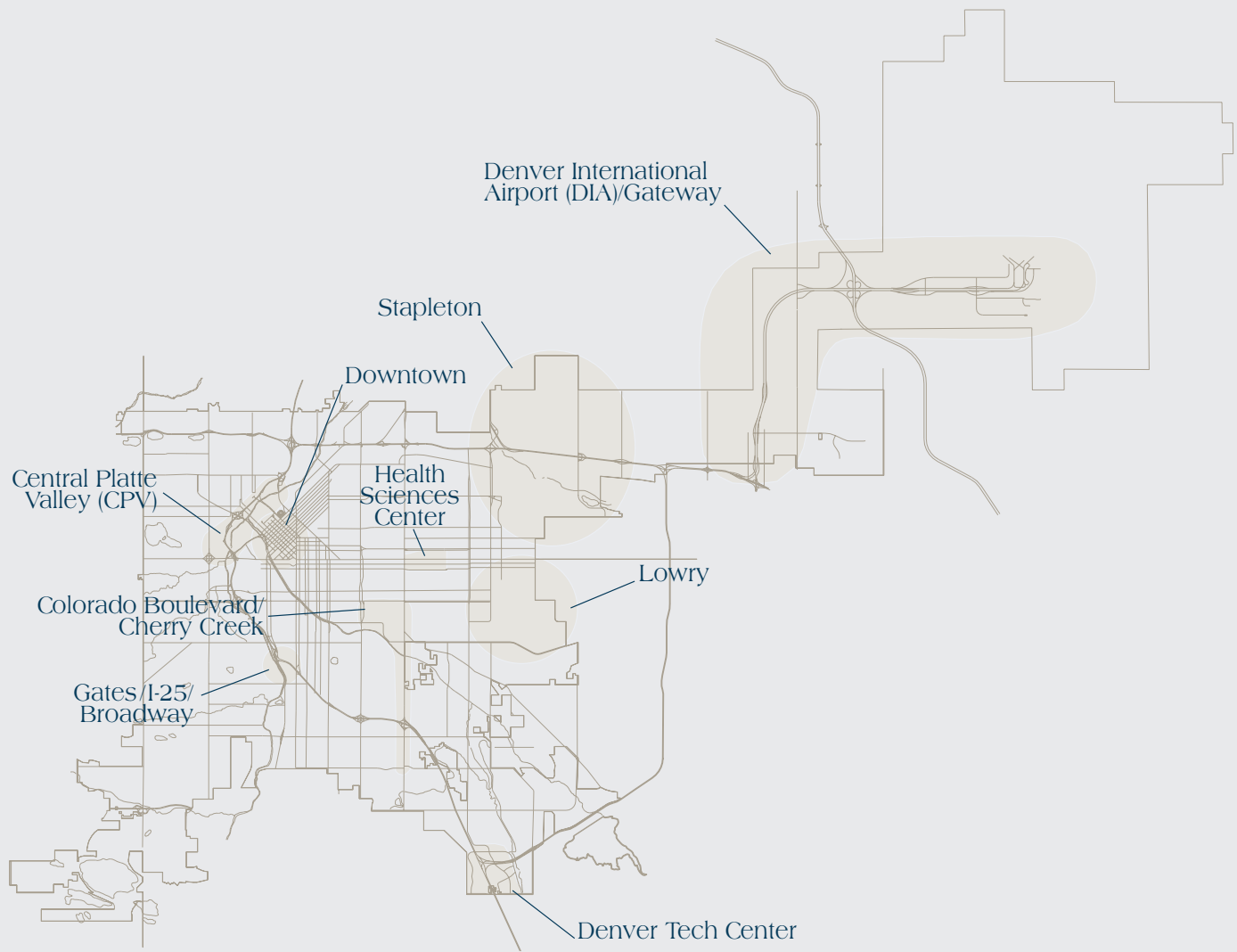


MOBILITY

The brown cloud and the highway system

Denver vehicle miles traveled (in millions)





■  
Denver's Major Urban Centers and  
Development Areas





## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Roadways** ■ Access routes to Downtown from surrounding neighborhoods and major highways have improved with newly rebuilt viaducts and intersections. The street grid system is being extended into the former railyards of the Central Platte Valley (CPV), the former Stapleton International Airport, Lowry, Gateway and other large and small development areas. HOV/bus lanes have been constructed on I-25 north, US-36, Santa Fe and Broadway/Lincoln to reduce travel time for buses and car pools.

**Light rail** ■ Since the 1989 Plan, Denver's first modern light rail line was built by RTD and began operating between Broadway at I-25 and 30th at Downing, traversing the Downtown core. The Southwest Corridor light rail extension, parallel to Santa Fe Drive, opens in 2000. Engineering for a spur into the Central Platte Valley moves forward to opening in 2001, and preliminary engineering is under way for a Southeast Corridor line parallel to I-25, as approved by voters in November 1999.

**Air quality** ■ Denver's air quality has improved, largely due to automobile manufacturing standards for vehicle emissions. The "brown cloud" has not disappeared, however. Other pollutants such as ozone, particulates, NOX and CO<sub>2</sub> will cause additional problems as vehicle miles traveled threaten to overtake technology.

**Family structure** ■ As family structure becomes more complex — two-worker households, dispersed employment locations, single-parent households, children with multiple activities — the demand on the transportation system increases. Transit solutions have become more challenging than getting dad to and from work.

**ISTEA/TEA-21** ■ Federal funding for transportation has changed dramatically with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and reauthorization through the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) of 1998. The federal government now requires a coordinated, planned approach to transportation investment with priorities for maintaining the existing system and supporting alternative transportation over building new roadways. DRCOG has a major role in distributing these funds to area communities.

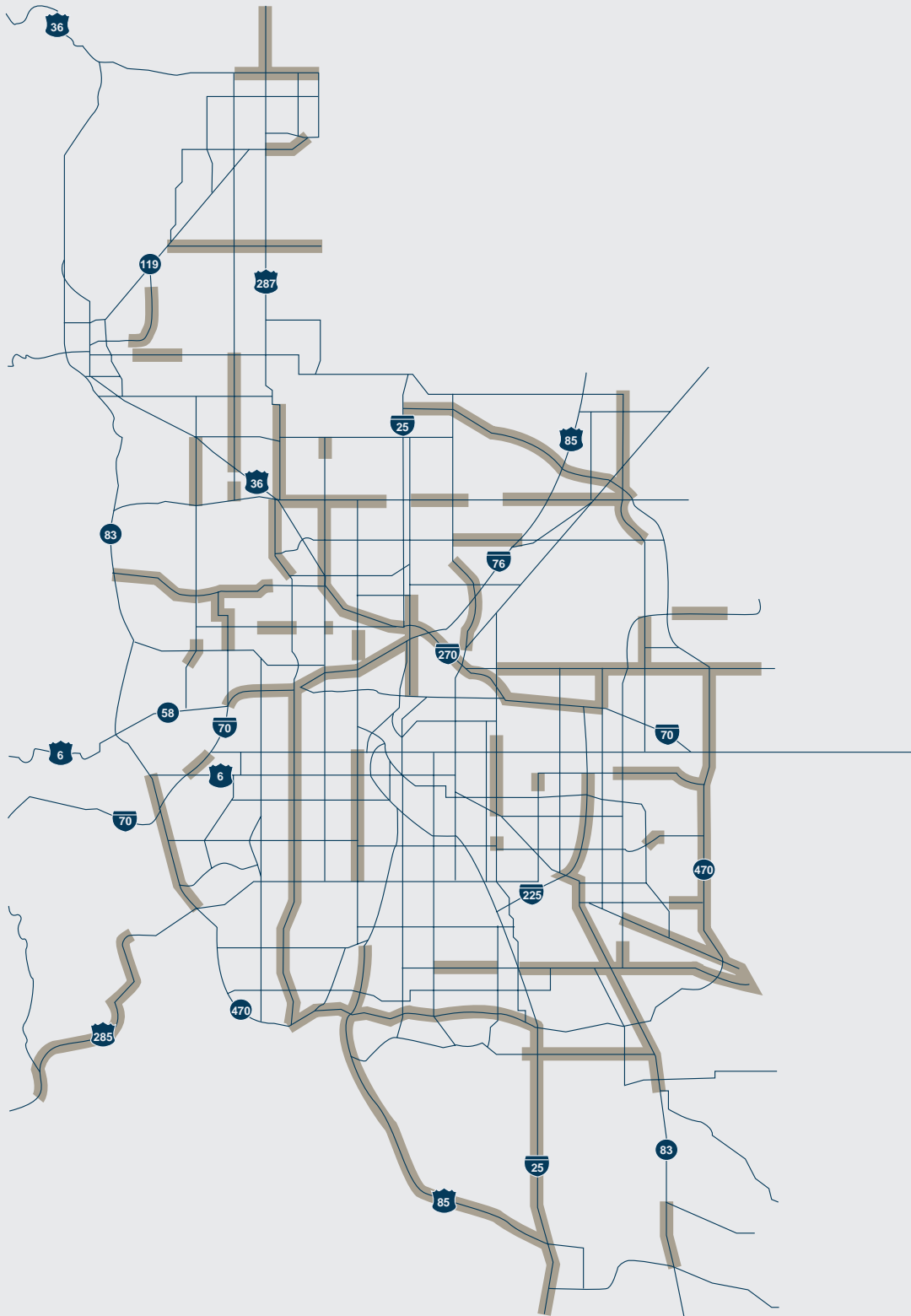
**Mixed-use neighborhoods** ■ Some of Denver's historic neighborhoods are mixed use, with small commercial nodes dotting residential development. The City has had considerable reinvestment as families find advantage in



New parking structures and parking programs attract people Downtown



Light rail stops in the Five Points Business District



MetroVision 2020 Highway and Street Widening



neighborhoods with retail and services close to home. New developments at Highland's Garden Village (old Elitch's), old St. Luke's Hospital and Stapleton, to mention a few, are echoing this historical mixed-use development pattern. Also, expanded housing in and around Downtown increasingly allows people to live, work, shop and attend cultural events in closer proximity.

**Denver International Airport (DIA)** ■ Denver International Airport in 1995 replaced Stapleton as Colorado's major commercial service airport. Peña Boulevard provides a freeway connection between I-70 and the airport. Vigorous commercial, hotel and apartment development continues in the DIA/Gateway area.



The City-owned Denver International Airport is a world-class air transportation hub

## Challenges

**Roadway congestion** ■ Streets and highways have become overcrowded, costly and inefficient for business, and frustrating and time-consuming for commuters. According to DRCOG projections, metropolitan population and employment will increase by about 50 percent between 1990 and 2020, while vehicle miles traveled (VMT) will increase by nearly 100 percent during the same period. One result has been driver frustration and impatience that sometimes becomes violent "road rage."

**Pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders** ■ Many roadways are designed with scant regard for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. Significant adaptations are necessary. For example, East and West Colfax Avenue, Hampden Avenue and Colorado Boulevard carry significant volumes of auto traffic and are major bus routes. But in many places, these streets lack sidewalks altogether or have narrow, discontinuous walkways.

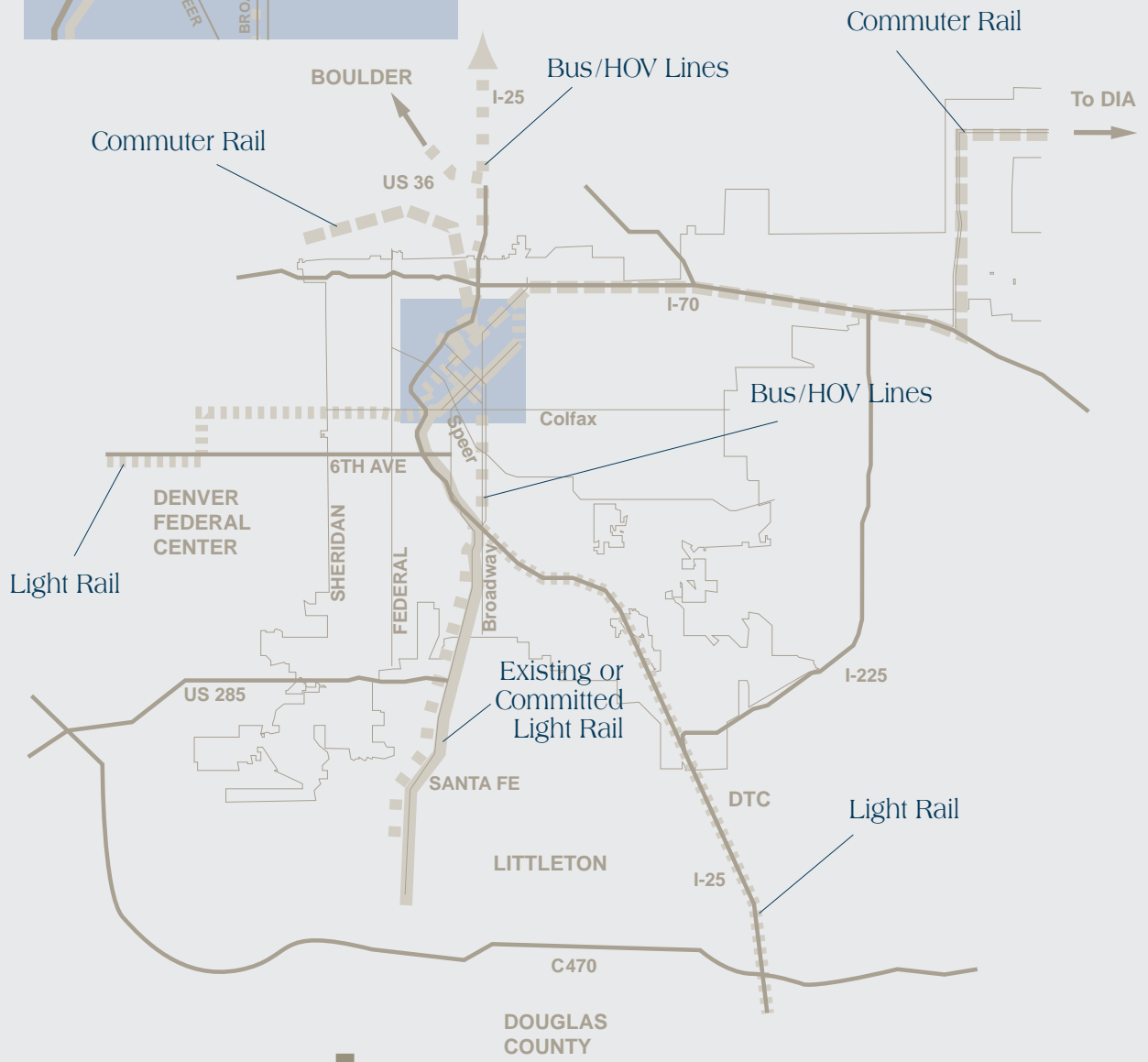
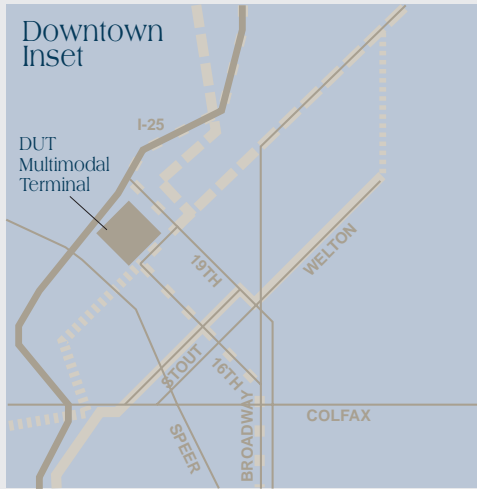
**Behavior change** ■ Automobile drivers will change long-ingrained habits gradually, and only if they experience alternative modes of transport that are comfortable, safe, convenient and affordable.

**Mobility for special populations** ■ People who must rely on public transportation — the elderly, low-income, disabled, or single parents with children — may be cut off from economic opportunity, health care, education, and social and cultural activities.

**Development patterns** ■ Automobile transport has dominated development patterns for most of the 20th century. Adapting multiple modes of transportation to existing urban centers presents significant design challenges. New development must take into account multiple modes of access.

Sidewalks are an important part of mobility





MetroVision 2020 Transit Systems





**Parking** ■ Parking in Downtown and other urban centers is perceived to be difficult to find and/or expensive. As a result, on-street parking in nearby neighborhoods is increasing, creating a significant impact on residents.

**Funding** ■ Expansion and improvement of the transportation infrastructure, whether roadway capacity or mass transit, are very expensive and will require the City to be aggressive in evaluating both traditional and nontraditional funding. Federal, state and local dollars are inadequate to meet the demonstrated need in Denver and the region.

## Opportunities

**New development** ■ In new development and redevelopment areas that include transit stations, transit-oriented development can support other goals of Plan 2000, including neighborhood revitalization, local business development, affordable housing and attractive public amenities.

*Transit-oriented development concentrates an attractive mix of housing, retail, entertainment and commercial development near transit stops. This enables residents to live, shop and socialize in their immediate neighborhoods while having nearby transit access to distant urban centers.*

**Pro-environment and pro-health attitudes** ■ Denver citizens are generally health-conscious and support environmental concerns; they are favorably predisposed to choose alternative modes of transportation if they are practical, comfortable and convenient.

**New technology** ■ New transportation technology is continually explored. Among the promising concepts is “intelligent transportation infrastructure,” which uses computer and fiber-optic technology to provide nearly instant information to help transportation users make more informed travel decisions.

**Public/private partnership** ■ As with the public/private funding for the Central Platte Valley light rail spur, the time has come for joint public and private funding of transportation facilities.



Light rail runs past the historic  
Denver Dry Goods Building



Walking is a part of every trip

## ■ Vision of Success

Excellence in public transportation is a hallmark of sustainable cities in the United States and throughout the world. Within Denver, the transportation system must strive to become well integrated with housing, various types of commercial development, job creation, neighborhood living patterns, and be of service to all people in their daily lives. If the goal and objectives for mobility are successfully implemented, the people of Denver could anticipate the following outcomes:

**Regional transportation system** ■ The metropolitan area will have a fully developed regional transportation system that enables individuals and commercial users to conveniently and efficiently access all major urban centers in the metropolitan area.

**Public transit** ■ The metropolitan area will be served by a multimodal public transit system that will be a popular choice for families, parents with young children, the elderly, those with special needs, local commuters and visitors alike.

**Transit-oriented development** ■ Transit-oriented development will become standard for development and redevelopment, and neighborhoods served by transit stations will enjoy popular appeal for their character and convenience.

**Clean air** ■ Air quality will continue to improve due to fewer pollutants from vehicles and reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

**Biking and walking** ■ Biking and walking will become much more common as practical and healthy modes of transportation.

**Funding** ■ Adequate funding for all modes of transportation will manage growth impacts by maintaining and improving operation of the region's transportation system. As a result of adequate funding for all transportation modes, residents of Denver and the region will have viable transportation choices in addition to their cars.



## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Diverse Mobility Options

Provide Denver's diverse residents, workers and visitors with a choice of transportation modes that are safe and convenient.

REF: Metropolitan 2-A; Economic 1-G; Land Use Obj. 4; Legacies Obj. 4

### Strategies

- 1-A Advocate transportation investments that increase mobility of people and their connections to employment, education, shopping, cultural opportunities and other activities. The *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* will inform and coordinate an investment strategy.  
REF: Environmental 4-D; Land Use 1-D, 1-E; Arts & Culture 2-G; Human Services 1-A
- 1-B Promote public transit, both bus and rail, as a safe, attractive and convenient choice for people who might otherwise drive to employment, education, cultural, shopping or other destinations.  
REF: Environmental 2-B
- 1-C Identify areas throughout the city where transportation policies should reflect pedestrian priorities. These include areas such as schools, child-care centers, civic institutions, business centers, shopping districts and parks.  
REF: Economic 4-A
- 1-D Consider and provide for the special transportation needs of people without cars, families with small children relying on transit, school-aged children, people with physical disabilities, and low-income persons.  
REF: Human Services 1-A
- 1-E Coordinate expansion and improvement of private transportation providers such as shuttles, taxis and specialized bus services to provide high-quality transit for the elderly and disabled.  
REF: Human Services Obj. 5, 1-A
- 1-F Address the transportation needs of visitors, tourists and people attending special events and major attractions.  
REF: Economic 3-A
- 1-G With the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan*, develop a mobility and thoroughfare plan that defines the transportation function of different categories of roadways based on changing land-use patterns.  
REF: Land Use 1-A, 1-E
- 1-H Recognize that due to the limitations of roadway size, existing streets must operate more efficiently to carry a greater volume of vehicles.



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## Objective 2 ■ Regional Transportation System

Support cost-effective transportation investments to provide regional connections consistent with DRCOG's *MetroVision 2020 Plan*.

REF: Land Use Obj. 5

### Strategies

- 2-A** Continue to reinforce Downtown Denver as the main transportation hub for the region, with the proposed intermodal transit facility at Denver Union Terminal as a focal point.  
REF: Economic Activity 4-A
- 2-B** Advocate a more balanced investment in roadway operational and reconstruction improvements in the central area of the region and roadway capacity improvements in the outlying areas. As a first priority, make operational and reconstruction improvements in the existing central areas. Then, consider capacity improvements for newly developing, outlying areas.  
REF: Economic 4-B
- 2-C** Support the development of major transportation corridors into, around and through Denver as outlined in DRCOG's *MetroVision 2020 Plan*. Specifically, the City should recognize the East, Southeast and West Corridors as priorities for regional investment.  
REF: Environmental 5-A
- 2-D** Create more convenient connections between different modes of transportation, as in pedestrian to transit, bus to light rail, or bike to transit.

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## Objective 3 ■ Accommodating New Development

In urban centers and in new development areas, plan, design and invest in transportation infrastructure and systems that support the principal uses within the area, provide well-integrated connections to urban centers and other destinations, and address the mobility needs of frequent users. REF: Land Use 4-A

### Strategies

- 3-A** Strengthen multimodal connections and transportation improvements within and between existing and potential urban





centers, including Downtown/Central Platte Valley, DIA/Gateway, Stapleton, Cherry Creek/Colorado Boulevard, Denver Tech Center, and the South Wadsworth Corridor.

- 3-B** Promote transit-oriented development (TOD) as an urban design framework for urban centers and development areas. Development at transit stations should provide both higher ridership to the transit system and viability and walkability in the area.  
*REF: Environment 2-B, 4-A; Economic 4-B; Land Use 1-D; Housing 6-E; Legacies 3-B*
- 3-C** Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities within urban centers and new development areas.
- 3-D** Use transportation management associations (TMA), where appropriate, to increase the transportation system's efficiency in urban center and development areas.

*Transportation management associations (TMAs) are public-private partnerships that bring together government agencies, businesses and neighborhood residents to address traffic congestion, air quality, mobility options and other related problems in specific areas. TMAs have been formed to serve the greater Downtown area, the Cherry Creek/Glendale/Colorado Boulevard/I-25/University Hills Corridor, and the Denver Tech Center/Southeast Corridor. TMAs typically advocate on transportation issues at the local and state levels, develop and market alternative transportation programs, and manage resources such as parking and paratransit.*

- 3-E** Work with TMAs to understand how the City and other public entities can provide effective assistance.
- 3-F** When transportation impact studies are required for new development projects, require the study to examine all modes of transportation (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit) and incorporate air quality mitigation strategies.  
*REF: Environmental 2-B, Neighborhoods 7-F*

## Objective 4 ■ Changing Travel Behavior

Explore and then use a wide variety of mechanisms to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled, especially at peak times.

### Strategies

- 4-A** Support public education and marketing efforts on the application of trip-reduction strategies to daily life.



- 4-B** Encourage the use of travel demand management (TDM) to improve the effectiveness of the transportation system and reduce trips by single-occupant vehicles.

*Transportation demand management (TDM) tries to influence travel behavior and reduce single-occupant vehicle trips at peak times by encouraging car pools, van pools and employer trip-reduction strategies. Trip-reduction strategies include alternative work schedules, telecommuting, free or reduced-cost transit passes (Eco passes), and preferential parking for car pools and van pools.*

- 4-C** Facilitate private-sector use of TDM strategies by collaborating with established TMAs and by supporting new organizations.
- 4-D** Continue the travel-reduction program for City employees and customers, and use it as a model for other public- and private-sector employers. Telecommuting and communication technologies may increase the potential of employers to reduce travel by single-occupant vehicles.  
*REF: Economic 6-B*
- 4-E** Continue to promote mixed-use development, which enables people to live near work, retail and services.  
*REF: Land Use 4-A; Environmental 2-B, 4-A; Housing 6-A*

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## Objective 5 ■ Public Transit

Encourage investment in various modes of transit, including light rail, commuter rail, bus/HOV lanes and the bus system to better link transportation and land use, increase mobility for Denver residents, and improve air quality. *REF: Environmental 5-D*

### Strategies

- 5-A** Advocate design, funding and construction of the preferred alternatives for the Southeast, East and West major investment corridors, and for future major investment corridors as studies are completed.  
*REF: Economic 4-B; Land Use 4-A*
- 5-B** Study transit investment options for other major transportation corridors affecting Denver, such as the East Central Corridor from Downtown to Aurora, to serve Cherry Creek, Glendale, Lowry and Aurora City Center.  
*REF: Economic 4-B*
- 5-C** Continue Denver's active participation in and coordination with regional agencies responsible for transit planning, including RTD, CDOT and DRCOG.  
*REF: Metropolitan 1-E*



- 5-D Determine the potential for transit-oriented development at public transit stations, and encourage such opportunities whenever possible.
- 5-E Work with RTD to address safety and cleanliness at transit stops and Park-n-Rides.

## Objective 6 ■ Roadways

Manage the effectiveness of Denver's roadway network, including its street grid, first by investing in operational and reconstruction improvements, and second by increasing new roadway capacity at key locations that best serve the city as a whole. REF: Legacies Obj. 4

### Strategies

- 6-A Support major improvements to the roadway system based on detailed subarea or corridor studies that investigate all mobility options, not just automobiles or transit. Detailed subarea or corridor plans require input from the whole community, as well as a comprehensive assessment of transportation, land use and other factors.  
REF: Land Use 3-A; Neighborhoods 1-B
- 6-B Advocate investment of regional and local funds to improve roadway capacity in this rank order: (1) radial improvements serving central Denver, (2) capacity improvements serving development areas in Denver, (3) capacity improvements serving adjacent suburbs, and (4) capacity improvements serving the freestanding communities in DRCOG's *MetroVision 2020 Plan*.
- 6-C Encourage investment in roadway reconstruction to increase operational efficiencies of the existing roadway system. Incorporate detached sidewalks into roadway construction and reconstruction projects to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.
- 6-D Use intelligent transportation infrastructure to improve operational effectiveness of the roadway network. Examples include programmable message signs and traffic signal interconnections with fiber optics.
- 6-E Invest in roadway infrastructure to meet major trucking and commercial freight company needs, and explore formulation and/or revision of City policies affecting their operations.  
REF: Economic 4-B



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## Objective 7 ■ Neighborhood Transportation

Address neighborhood transportation issues in a manner that balances overall mobility needs with neighborhood integrity.

*The City's process for addressing neighborhood transportation issues must consider trade-offs within and between neighborhoods as well as with economic interests. The following principles should apply:*

- *Avoid solving one neighborhood's problem at the expense of another neighborhood or at the expense of the City's economic interests.*
- *Distribute benefits and burdens; treat issues equally.*
- *Link land-use planning activities closely to transportation needs and actual transportation improvements.*
- *Increase enforcement of traffic laws to improve driver behavior.*
- *Provide a greater emphasis on transit and alternative modes.*
- *Increase awareness of the impacts of travel behavior on neighborhood quality of life.*

### Strategies

- 7-A** Create and use a citywide transportation advisory committee (TAC) as a forum for neighborhood and business involvement in City transportation issues and to define an overall process for addressing neighborhood transportation issues. Develop benchmark measures and standards for transportation impacts.
- 7-B** Use traffic-calming measures, such as improved law enforcement, narrowed streets and more stop signs, to encourage changes in driving habits.

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## Objective 8 ■ Walking and Bicycling

Provide safe and convenient facilities to encourage bicycling and walking for commuting, recreation and other trips.

**REF:** Land Use Obj. 4-B

### Strategies

- 8-A** Ensure safe and convenient access and accommodation of bicycle riders, pedestrians and transit riders.

**REF:** Land Use 4-B





- 8-B Ensure that sidewalks are continuous along all major Denver streets and that they provide pedestrians and transit riders with direct access to commercial areas, education facilities, recreational facilities and transit stops.
- 8-C Use Denver's *Bicycle Master Plan* to improve bike connections throughout Downtown and other major activity centers.

*In June 1993, the City adopted the Bicycle Master Plan as an amendment to the Denver Comprehensive Plan. The Bicycle Master Plan addresses engineering standards for facility design and construction, education of citizens about the benefits of biking and available facilities, encouragement of people to use bike trails, and enforcement of biking standards and laws. The plan mapped existing trails while identifying and prioritizing gaps in the system and areas needing improvement. It guides City funding decisions for bikeway improvements.*

- 8-D Expand bicycle rider education programs emphasizing bicycle safety.

## Objective 9 ■ Parking Management

Develop a comprehensive citywide approach to parking that addresses parking needs within major urban centers, at transit stations and in neighborhoods.

### Strategies

- 9-A Update parking studies for the Central Business District, and develop parking policies and plans based on current information.
- 9-B Promote parking management programs to maximize use of available parking spaces within the city's major urban centers.
- 9-C Explore opportunities for shared parking and evaluate the need for new shared parking structures within major urban centers such as Downtown, Cherry Creek and the Central Platte Valley. Where appropriate, reduce parking spaces required in the Denver Zoning Ordinance.
- 9-D For areas near transit stations, evaluate parking management strategies, such as reducing parking requirements and granting neighborhood parking permits.
- 9-E Encourage parking management strategies in the development approval process for new, expanded or remodeled community facilities such as schools, sports facilities, cultural facilities and health-care centers.



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## Objective 10 ■ Air Transportation

Provide residents and visitors using Denver International Airport (DIA) with an airport that is a leader in service, efficiency, innovative practices, safety, convenience and aesthetics. REF: Land Use Obj. 4-B

### Strategies

- 10-A Meet the growing demand for expanded regional, national and international air service for business and leisure travel.
- 10-B Optimize existing air cargo operations and create new air cargo facilities as needed to accommodate Denver's rapid economic growth and diversified economy.
- 10-C Increase the economic and commercial viability of the airport by enhancing and enlarging the mix of commercial services. Provide local and disadvantaged business opportunities under the airport concessions program.
- 10-D Use the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* to develop efficient and diverse transportation options linking DIA to Downtown Denver and the region.  
REF: Land Use Obj. 1
- 10-E Improve customer satisfaction while improving the productivity and efficiency of airport operations and services.
- 10-F Promote shared social and economic values pertaining to education, career development, environment, art and aviation. These activities include:
  - Ensuring compatibility between airport activities and surrounding communities' land-use, zoning and other related ordinances and regulations.
  - Creating improved environmental conditions with emphasis on water, noise and air quality.
  - Expressing a sense of place and image unique to Denver and the West through art, aesthetics and exhibits.
  - Actively promoting educational and career opportunities in aviation and airport operations.





# Our Long-Term Physical Environment

**Environment**

**Land Use**

**Mobility**

**Legacies**

**Housing**





# Denver's

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# Legacies

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Urban Design, Historic Preservation, Parks & Open Spaces

*"When we build let us think that we build forever."*

*~ John Ruskin*

HISTORY





Baseball fans stroll under the “Evolution of the Ball” sculpture at Coors Field



Historic Dora Moore School in the Capitol Hill neighborhood



**GOAL** ■ Use the best of Denver’s architectural and landscape legacies to guide the future.

**OVERVIEW** ■ Denver’s earlier leaders and builders left the City a legacy of natural beauty in a system of well-designed parks and parkways, as well as a tradition of excellence in urban design and architecture. We must sustain this legacy and create new places worthy of it. The focus of Plan 2000 is threefold:

■ **Stewardship.** To be good stewards, we must protect and maintain our legacies, both natural and human-made. Denver is nationally known for its park and parkway system and for its mountain parks. Master planning for the park, open space and recreation system in the city and its mountain parks is essential to providing adequate resources in an effective and efficient manner. Historic buildings, districts and landscapes add immeasurably to the quality of our city. Denver’s Victorian and early 20th-century architectural legacies are valued, and much has been accomplished in preservation and reuse of these structures and districts. Recognition and protection of Denver’s modern architecture legacy remain a challenge.

■ **Functional, safe, attractive connections.** The streets, trails and parkways that physically link our community and its neighborhoods are part of our legacy and must be designed and maintained as such.

■ **Quality design.** To be livable and admired, all of the components of the city — its infrastructure, buildings and open spaces — must function well and be attractive individually, while combining to create meaningful, beautiful places. The primary urban design challenge of the early 21st century will be to integrate elements of Denver’s traditional urban design character into redeveloping areas and into new, more compact mixed-use areas.





## ■ Introduction

Denver's natural setting and mild four-season climate rank highest among the attributes residents value, according to the Heart and Soul of Denver Survey. Many of the human-made physical assets Denver residents value most are legacies from earlier generations who knew how to use Denver's magnificent natural setting to the best advantage, and who were paying attention to the urban environment long before that became widely fashionable. Their visionary planning, design and engineering skills endowed Denver with magnificent parks and open spaces, both in the city and in the mountains; grand neoclassical public buildings, monuments, sculptures and fountains; and charming, sturdily built neighborhoods filled with trees, lawns and gardens. Denver became a "green oasis" on the High Plains whose livability is highly valued because of its arid, semi-desert environment.

After World War II, some of Denver's grandeur began to wilt. Rapid development of new housing tracts, the rise of suburban living, traffic growth and its accommodation, maintenance costs, and bulldozing of the old led to many irrecoverable losses. During the 1960s and 1970s, Denver witnessed a remarkable grassroots movement to reclaim and sustain Denver's civic heritage by preserving its historical architecture and urban design. And in the 1980s and 1990s, the City has been both leader and partner in an urban environmental effort to rebuild and/or renovate much of the City's historic infrastructure, improve parks and open space, provide more neighborhood amenities and programs, support historic preservation, clean waterways and lakes, and restore monuments and fountains. The result is an even stronger pride and pleasure Denver residents take in their city.

In the late 20th century, Denver residents not only reclaimed valuable urban heritage and environment but also nurtured a greater popular appreciation for it. In the early 21st century, in the face of ever-growing population, it will be essential for the City to ensure that the values and principles that give Denver its desirable qualities are sustained in new development, redeveloping areas and ongoing maintenance and improvements.

Expansive views of the foothills and mountains from several places in the city, such as the west side of the Denver Museum of Natural History, Cheesman Park and Cranmer Park, remind visitors and residents of Denver's spectacular natural setting. Sudden glimpses of the mountains from unexpected points are a daily thrill. Civic Center, Speer Boulevard, the 16th Street Mall and its Daniels & Fisher clock tower, the Lower Downtown (LoDo) Historic District, and the white-tented terminal at Denver International Airport are special "Denver" places, instantly recognizable. Denver offers big-city amenities while maintaining the ambiance of a much smaller town. Experiences such as

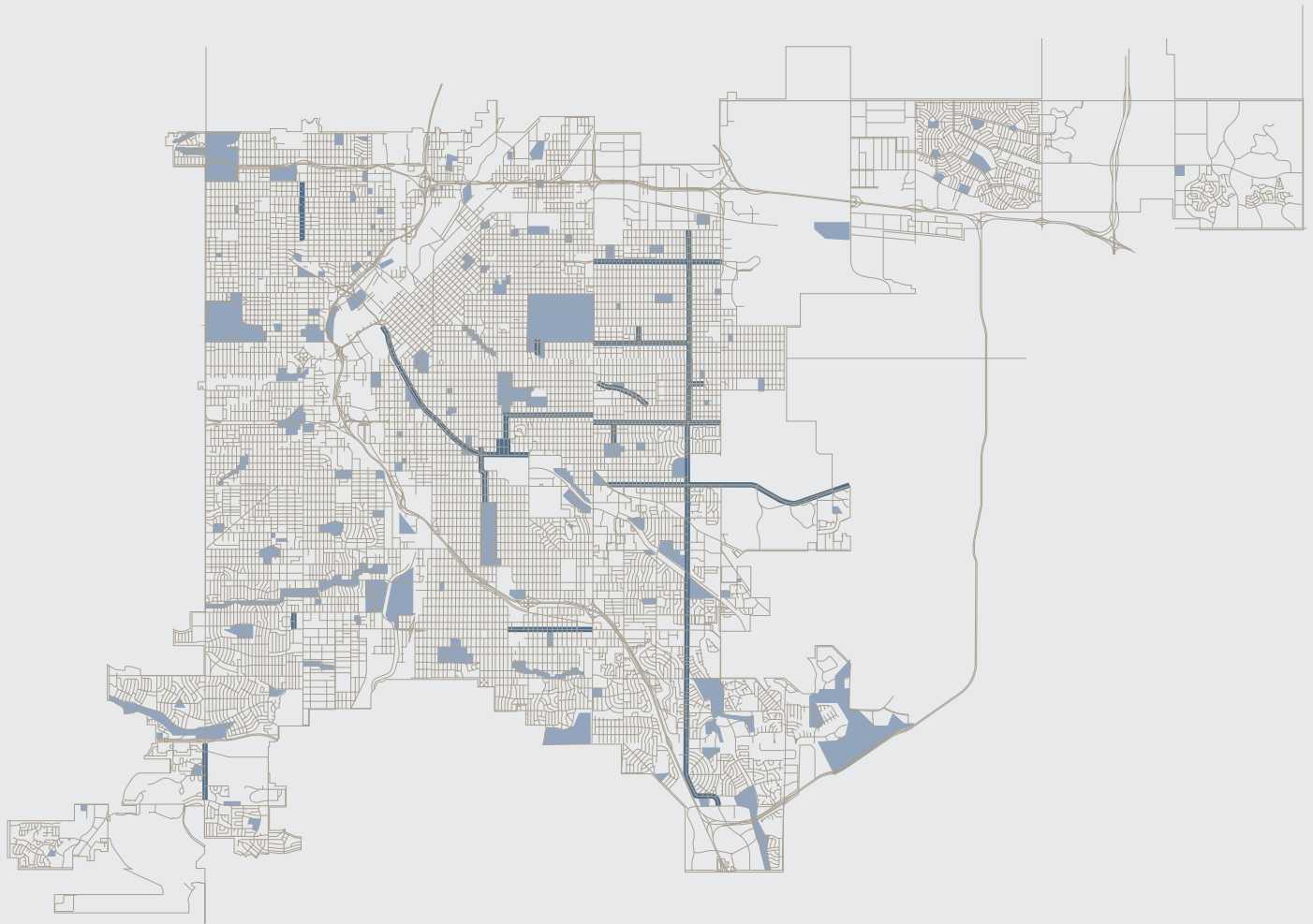


Union Station is a historic anchor for Lower Downtown

The sculpture on the Esplanade at East High School gets cleaned up







■  
Denver City Parks and Parkways



coming upon the city's buffalo herd at Genesee Park create one of the many connections with our land and our past that must be sustained.

## Urban Design

An essential element of Denver's quality of life is in its urban design — how the city looks, feels and functions. "Urban design" refers to the basic structural forms on which the city is built — natural features such as waterways and landforms; the street grid, alleys, parkways and open space system; the architecture of its buildings, infrastructure and public spaces; and the three-dimensional relationships among all of these elements. Only rarely have American cities achieved high-quality urban design consistently over time. In cities where it has occurred, people cherish the result, often without knowing exactly why a particular place attracts them.

Fortunately for Denver, at several critical points in its history, visionary urban planners recognized the value of Denver's natural features and put in place some exceptionally valuable elements that are now treasured fixtures and models for current and future generations. These include the extensive system of parks, parkways and trails; classically designed public buildings; and public open spaces that use Denver's natural assets to the best advantage and create a unique civic identity. Much of Denver's urban design identity stems from the early 20th century, when Mayor Robert Speer adopted "City Beautiful" urban design principles demonstrated at the 1893 Columbian World Exposition in Chicago.

Sustaining excellent urban design requires Denver to use its best legacies to guide the future. While new development need not conform to precise historical or architectural particulars, it must reflect the fine qualities of design and use of materials inherent in Denver's unique natural setting and urban character. This applies to Downtown, smaller commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial corridors, and both new construction and rehabilitation. It also applies to infrastructure — streets, bridges and drainageways — as well as to both public and private buildings.

The City must set the standard with its own projects and accept nothing less from others who aspire to contribute to the mosaic of Denver's public realm. We can and we must create and preserve places worthy of our affection.

*"A city changes because of dreams. Dreams give shape to plans, plans to actions, actions to results. We live our lives among the results, so we'd best share in the dreaming. Our children and grandchildren must live there, too, particularly among those physical results that dictate the character of their city. The question is, will they live among quality results? Will they live among those that grow from dreams and plans that many have shared through mutual thought and work. Or will they live among the results of accident and indifference, not much better than life among the ruins."*

**Downtown Area Plan, a part of the Denver Comprehensive Plan, 1986**



Beautiful architectural details include this doorway at the Eulipions Center



The new Central Denver Public Library incorporates the earlier 1950s structure



## Historic Preservation



Reminders of an earlier time adorn the Odd Fellows Hall on Champa Street in Downtown

Denver's identity as a city is shaped largely by the diversity and evolution of its architectural and landscape styles, dating from the 1860s to the present. Fortunately, some of the architectural heritage of every era remains as part of Denver's civic treasury. But historic preservation has not always been a guiding principle in the city's development. In the 1960s, preservationists rallied to save the home of the legendary Molly Brown from demolition. Soon thereafter, developer Dana Crawford demonstrated the economic viability of preservation at Larimer Square, still one of the most popular shopping and entertainment destinations in Denver.

During the 1990s, this economic wisdom of historic preservation became manifest. Nowhere was this more evident than in Lower Downtown, where dozens of old buildings were restored for contemporary use as offices, galleries, restaurants and residences. The Downtown area also reclaimed many other commercial buildings for profitable purposes, including small hotels, residential lofts and attractive retail uses. Real estate prices soared in many of Denver's distinctive historic neighborhoods, as the market for older homes with "character" expanded dramatically. Retaining this valued character may again be a challenge if Denver's economics change. The loss of modern architecture such as the May D&F paraboloid and the Boettcher School indicates the ongoing need for public education.

The City has a major role in sustaining Denver's architectural legacy through public policies and administrative actions that encourage and, in some cases, require preservation of designated structures and areas. The City's designation of properties or districts as landmarks is accomplished by City Council, which acts on recommendations of the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission, a volunteer body appointed by the Mayor. Numerous nonprofit and other private interests serve as advocates for historic preservation in the city.

Public art, form and function along Martin Luther King Boulevard



The Denver Landmark Preservation Ordinance establishes the authority, criteria and process for designating Landmark Structures and Historic Districts. Any exterior alteration or demolition of a designated property must be reviewed and approved by the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission. The Community Development Agency (CDA), the Mayor's Office of Economic Development (MOED), the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) and the Colorado Historical Society are public agencies that can provide funding and incentives for historic preservation activities.

## Parks, Parkways, Open Space and Recreation

Denver's growing reputation as one of America's most livable cities is partly due to its natural areas and extensive park and parkway system. The city has



recognized the importance of this system since before the turn of the century, and one of its first formal plans, the *Denver Plan of 1929*, stresses that the main reason for focusing on parks is “that the proper sort of park system makes the city more livable, adding vastly to health, happiness and enjoyment of the citizens.”

The rehabilitation of the South Platte River corridor through Denver serves as an analogy for sustainability of the city. The river runs 10.5 miles through many Denver neighborhoods and today forms the northwestern edge of the Downtown area. Nearly 60 percent of Denver’s residents live within one mile of the river or its tributaries. The confluence of the South Platte and Cherry Creek is the historic birthplace of the city, and in Denver’s early years was a major civic gathering place. However, with population growth, industrialization and urban runoff, the South Platte was abandoned and neglected, its banks a dumping ground.

The river’s revitalization began in 1974 through the nonprofit South Platte Greenway Foundation, which created pedestrian and bike trails as well as several small parks along its course. These improvements were well received by the public, contributing to the long-term success of the Greenway Foundation’s efforts. To add to this private effort, Denver made a \$45 million commitment to riverfront rehabilitation in 1995. City leaders recognized the value of the river as a recreational and economic development amenity. The South Platte River corridor has since been extensively revitalized with new parks, trails and natural areas. The historic river corridor will once again be a jewel running through more than 120 acres of open space in the heart of the city. In recent years, plans have focused on upgrading the Cherry Creek corridor into a linear park.

In the early 21st century, Denver will undertake an unprecedented expansion of the park system with nearly 2,300 acres of new acquisitions at Lowry and Stapleton, a rare opportunity for a major city. The challenge is to preserve and maintain the existing park and parkway system while integrating the hundreds of new acres of parkland.

Denver will continue its tradition of beautiful, well-designed parks and parkways as neighborhood amenities and as a unifying element of the city’s urban design framework. Parks will continue to express the “green oasis” tradition but will incorporate native with traditional landscapes, model environmentally friendly management techniques, and celebrate the city’s precious water resources and mountain views. As older recreation facilities age, they will be maintained and upgraded as needed to serve Denver residents.



Voorhies Memorial sits at one end of the promenade in Civic Center Park

DENVER'S LEGACIES

Bike and walking paths along the Highline Canal have been enjoyed by residents for many years







Speer Boulevard and Cherry Creek

## ■ **Changes, Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Changes, 1989–1999**

**Population and demographics** ■ Denver’s population is growing, aging, physically active, culturally diverse and increasingly mobile — all factors that affect various elements of urban design.

**Economy** ■ Denver’s strong economy of the late 1990s has made possible significant public and private investment in the conservation, expansion and improvement of its architectural and landscape heritage. The City must consider the cyclical nature of the economy in terms of protecting, managing and maintaining the public assets.

**Design review** ■ Between 1989 and 1998, the number of design review districts in Denver increased from one to 10. Public awareness of design issues has increased.

**Growth in designations** ■ By 1998, 298 structures and 32 historic districts had been designated as Denver Landmarks by act of City Council. Over 4,000 structures are now designated individually or in districts.

**Preservation advocacy** ■ Advocacy for historic preservation has continued to grow, with some notable successes such as incorporating an architecturally significant portion of the old Central Denver Public Library building as a wing of the new library, preservation and reuse of many Downtown buildings, and designation of the Lower Downtown Historic District.

**Growth in recreation** ■ A growing, more active population has increased use of recreation centers, creating pressures on those facilities. Growth in organized league play has created heavy competition for softball, baseball and soccer fields and volleyball courts.

### **Challenges**

**Design review** ■ Public demand for design review is sometimes an attempt to resolve land-use conflicts. Design review must be carefully administered as a means of influencing the form of new development and must complement the use and density parameters established in zoning.

**Neighborhood character** ■ The increasing need for a broader array of housing options requires a more diverse mix of residential types that are both affordable and complementary to neighborhood character. Conversely, pressure for development of larger houses in neighborhoods of traditionally smaller homes is a challenge to retaining neighborhood character.



Some of Denver’s famous — and infamous — are buried at Riverside Cemetery



**Street design** ■ Denver's streets have been carrying more and more traffic. Typically, streets in existing neighborhoods cannot be widened without creating significant impacts on urban design elements such as tree lawns and landscaped medians. Balancing the needs for traffic capacity and urban design features remains a challenge.

**Commercial and industrial areas** ■ Economically obsolete commercial and industrial areas must redevelop to be profitable while also being compatible with adjacent residential uses.

**Preservation plan** ■ To date, Denver has not developed or adopted a Historic Preservation Plan to direct citywide preservation policies.

**Undesignated structures** ■ Many buildings qualifying for landmark designation have not been designated due to owner indifference toward the program and competing development interests.

**Modern architecture** ■ The City has not adequately addressed preservation standards for significant examples of architecture from the second half of the 20th century. Without foresight, more architecturally significant structures of this underappreciated era may be lost. Neighborhoods and architectural styles developed after World War II are maturing but not addressed by preservation policies. These neighborhoods represent an important era in Denver's mid-century growth and provide the City with much-needed low- and middle-income housing stock.

**Water** ■ A public "green oasis" is an important legacy and enriches the quality of life for Denver residents, but it is imperative that innovative water conservation techniques and native landscaping be utilized, where appropriate, especially in the private sector. Balancing water conservation and supply problems with maintenance of historic landscapes of green lawns and large trees is an ongoing challenge.

**Balancing maintenance and expansion** ■ With Denver's opportunities for increased parks and open space, new investments must not compromise the City's ability to sustain the existing park system, including its buildings, monuments and fountains. The ongoing maintenance and restoration of existing historic resources have been sorely tested over the past decade and will continue to be challenging.

**Equitable distribution** ■ Some neighborhoods enjoy a greater abundance of park and recreational amenities than others.



An early train station languishes



A joint City/Denver Public Schools renovation of a historic school



Parks, parkways and open space are legacies left by our predecessors



**Increasing demand** ■ Demand for public recreational facilities and programs continues to grow at a rate faster than the City can adequately address. Competition for limited space creates management challenges, and heavy use of parks often creates tensions with adjacent neighbors.

**Costs versus fees** ■ Providing quality recreational amenities and programs is very expensive. Denver is committed to providing these services while keeping fees affordable for all residents. Finding this balance is a continuing challenge.

**Mountain parks** ■ Maintaining, managing and further developing Denver's mountain parks are difficult because of distance, remoteness and widely ranging levels of use.

**Street tree replacement** ■ Boulevards lined with sentinel elm trees with magnificent leafy canopies are among Denver's distinctive urban design legacies. Unfortunately, age and disease have eroded the urban forest. The City is challenged to retain the historic grandeur of its tree-lined boulevards with a new generation of more diverse and sustainable trees.

### Opportunities

**New development** ■ Development plans for Lowry, Stapleton, the Central Platte Valley and the DIA/Gateway area can extend the quality and character of Denver's historic urban design features.

**Neighborhood infill** ■ Projects such as Highland's Garden Village (the former Elich Gardens site) can incorporate traditional and new urban design concepts and high-quality, mixed-use development into larger infill areas of older Denver neighborhoods.

**Transit** ■ Expansion of light rail throughout metropolitan Denver can enable well-designed, compact, transit-oriented development at the stations.

**Profitable preservation** ■ The economic viability of historic preservation is well established and can stimulate interest and support among property owners for reasonable controls.

**Funding support** ■ Increasing funding of preservation activities is available from the Colorado Historical Society's State Historical Fund from gaming revenues and through state and federal preservation tax-credit programs.

**Redevelopment areas** ■ With the redevelopment of Lowry, Stapleton, Central Platte Valley and other areas, Denver has the opportunity to substantially increase the number of acres of parkland, open space and natural areas.



The Guaranty Bank Building on 17th Street, prior to its renovation



***New revenue*** ■ Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), a statewide initiative approved by voters in 1992, provides competitive grants for open space and recreation from Colorado Lottery proceeds. An innovative agreement with the Winter Park Recreation Association provides at least \$2 million annually to the City for parks and recreation capital projects.

***Creative funding*** ■ Open space, mountain parks and recreational amenities often cross jurisdictional boundaries, offering opportunities for funding collaboration and resource-sharing.

***Popular support*** ■ Because of the high value residents place on Denver's natural setting and outdoor activities, policies that support the conservation and sustainable development of these resources can be strengthened.



Beautiful terra-cotta detailing from a historic Downtown building





Families and parks  
... what could be better?

## ■ Vision of Success

In the early 21st century, Denver’s residents will continue to take pleasure in and be well served by their urban surroundings. Denver’s high-quality urban design traditions will be sustained by the City’s adoption of policies that address beauty, function, history, economic development and the future with equal vigor. Urban design considerations will be a high priority in every part of the city, including new development areas, public places, commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.

**Density and diversity** ■ Exciting new mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented areas will develop, offering a higher concentration of housing, retail, services, employment and transportation, all within walking distance.

**Continuity and connection** ■ Denver’s residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, public places, major activity centers and transportation corridors will be better connected through urban design.

**Development and character** ■ Denver’s traditional urban design principles — street grid and alleys, tree lawns and street trees, use of materials native to the region, and “green” connections — will be carried forward through creative adaptation to changing needs, expectations and technologies.

**Urban legacy** ■ Denver believes historic preservation of significant structures, features and landscapes contributes to its distinctive character, environment, culture, economy and the quality of neighborhoods. Denver will be vibrant with well-preserved and appropriately used structures representing every era of the city’s history. Quality of life will be enriched by an urban landscape that demonstrates the continuity and evolution of Denver as a unique place rich in history.

**Neighborhoods** ■ Preservation and respectful urban design will reinforce the distinctive identities of Denver’s historic neighborhoods, including structures, landscapes and views.

**Education** ■ The city will be a living classroom that teaches Denver’s history and architecture to children and all others who want to learn.

**Economic development** ■ By policies that link the values of historic preservation with economic development, Denver will create jobs, stimulate related retail and services, generate tax revenues, and shine as a business location and tourist destination.

**Image** ■ Well-preserved history will serve Denver as an excellent public relations tool and a testament to citizens’ commitment to their community.



***Distribution and accessibility*** ■ To the extent possible, parks, open space and affordable recreation will be accessible to all residents in every part of the city. Amenities and programs will be developed in underserved areas as opportunities arise. Program costs will not be a barrier to anyone's enjoyment of programs or facilities.

***Environmentally friendly development*** ■ Denver's parks, parkways and recreation facilities will be designed, built and managed to conserve resources, improve air and water quality, and protect Denver's traditional and native landscapes.

***Diversity*** ■ Recreation programs and park designs will reflect Denver's history and the diversity of its people.

***Stewardship*** ■ The city will benefit from increased resident stewardship of maintenance, programs and planning of recreational amenities.

***Shared amenities and partnerships*** ■ The City will meet increasing demand for parks and recreation facilities by partnering with schools, other jurisdictions, and other public and private groups for shared and reciprocal use of public and quasi-public facilities.



Sidewalks are transit for kids





## ■ Objectives and Strategies

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### Objective 1 ■ Design Excellence

Protect and continue Denver’s legacy of inspired urban design in the public realm. **REF:** Neighborhoods 7-D

#### Strategies

- 1-A** Provide a model of excellence in urban design and architectural quality by incorporating design quality standards and design review in City projects. Consider incorporating these same expectations for private development receiving substantial City funding.  
**REF:** Arts & Culture 6-B; Neighborhoods 1-D
- 1-B** Promote standards and incentives for design that enhance the quality and character of the city, including the preservation of significant historic structures and features.
- 1-C** Preserve Denver’s architectural and design legacies while allowing new ones to evolve.
- 1-D** Promote the use of designs and materials that reflect the region and Denver’s natural setting.
- 1-E** Invest in public infrastructure and amenities strategically to promote community identity and attract development.

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### Objective 2 ■ New Development, Traditional Character

In new development, adapt Denver’s traditional urban design character to new needs, expectations and technologies.

#### Strategies

- 2-A** Establish development standards to encourage positive change and diversity while protecting Denver’s traditional character.  
**REF:** Land Use 1-B
- 2-B** Focus design standards and review efforts on new and evolving districts that are undergoing the most dramatic change. Periodically evaluate their need and effectiveness, recognizing that locations of review focus may change over time.
- 2-C** Identify community design and development issues, and target specific concerns with appropriate controls and incentives.



- 2-D** Define and administer development and design goals clearly and efficiently to ensure they serve as effective tools and incentives to add quality, not cost. Provide development review services in an integrated and flexible package of controls and incentives.
- 2-E** Ensure that the Zoning Code reinforces quality urban design.  
REF: Neighborhoods 1-D; Land Use 2-A

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## Objective 3 ■ Compact Urban Development

Incorporate visionary urban design principles into new development patterns to achieve a higher concentration and more diverse mix of housing, employment and transportation options in identified areas of the city.

### Strategies

- 3-A** Identify areas in which increased density and new uses are desirable and can be accommodated.  
REF: Land Use 1-D, 1-C
- 3-B** Create regulations and incentives that encourage high-quality, mixed-use development at densities that will support Denver's diverse housing needs and public transportation alternatives.  
REF: Housing 6-A; Mobility 3-B; Land Use 4-A

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## Objective 4 ■ Strong Connections

Reinforce the design quality, function and character of connections among public places and activity centers, recognizing that they are places in their own right and an important part of the public realm. REF: Mobility Obj. 1, Obj. 6, Obj. 8

### Strategies

- 4-A** Preserve, enhance and extend the pattern and character of the primary street system, including the prevailing grid, interconnected parkways, detached sidewalks and tree lawns.  
REF: Neighborhoods 1-D
- 4-B** Focus incentives and design controls on private development fronting major new, existing and historic roadway corridors, including parkways, boulevards and avenues citywide. Specifically recognize and address significant intersections and gateways to the city.





- 4-C** Establish public design and maintenance standards for major corridors that incorporate historic preservation, design quality and local character.
- 4-D** Accommodate multimodal transit options within major corridors while maintaining traditional scale and character.
- 4-E** Recognize the significant design role of alleys in defining the character of traditional Denver neighborhoods with regard to access and building orientation.  
*REF: Mobility*

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## **Objective 5 ■ Preservation Planning**

**Preserve Denver’s historic resources.**

### **Strategies**

- 5-A** Consistent with goals and objectives of the Landmark Preservation Commission, adopt as a supplement to the Denver Comprehensive Plan a citywide preservation plan that addresses identification of historic resources and provides design guidelines for preservation.  
*REF: Environmental 2-E*
- 5-B** Develop design guidelines for historic landscapes, including the parks, parkways and boulevards.

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## **Objective 6 ■ Internal City Policies**

**Ensure that City policies support historic preservation.**

*REF: Economic 4-A*

### **Strategies**

- 6-A** Protect City-owned historic buildings and landscapes for the enjoyment of future generations. Consider Landmark designation as a means to provide this protection and set a good example for the private sector.
- 6-B** Support and encourage historic preservation of City-owned properties within all agencies and departments.
- 6-C** When procuring office space for City agencies, support and encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.  
*REF: Environmental 2-E*



- 6-D** Leverage City resources to protect Denver's Landmarks and eligible historic buildings and to avoid their demolition.
- 6-E** Evaluate and address the impact of building codes, development review and other City permitting processes on historic preservation.  
*REF: Land Use 2-A*
- 6-F** In City-sponsored projects, consider the recovery of archeological resources.

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## Objective 7 ■ Preserving Neighborhoods

Support historic preservation in neighborhoods.

*REF: Land Use 3-A*

### Strategies

- 7-A** Conduct resource surveys in the development of neighborhood plans.  
*REF: Neighborhoods 1-A*
- 7-B** Use the neighborhood planning process to uncover an area's cultural values and take steps to honor their significance. These values may be historical associations such as the commemoration of a historical event or recognition of a traditional ethnic neighborhood.  
*REF: Neighborhoods 1-D*
- 7-C** Explore the preservation and rehabilitation issues of post-World War II neighborhoods.

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## Objective 8 ■ Public Education

Support increased public awareness of historic preservation through education and marketing.

### Strategies

- 8-A** Encourage partnerships among preservation organizations, including the Denver Landmark Commission, Historic Denver, the Colorado Historical Society, the Colorado Historical Foundation, the Downtown Denver Partnership, Colorado Preservation Incorporated, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and neighborhood organizations.



- 8-B Support efforts to educate Denver residents on the importance of historic preservation, and the historic survey and designation process.
- 8-C Continue to support student involvement to secure historic designation for Denver's schools, including research, application preparation and public hearings.  
*REF: Education 3-B*

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## Objective 9 ■ Park and Recreation Master Plan

Plan for the maintenance and expansion of Denver's parks and recreation system.

### Strategies

- 9-A Update the *1986 Denver Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan* to address the key issues for parks and recreation. These include equity of resources, access and use, number and geographic distribution, hours of operation, design and construction quality, recreation trends, development of school parks, innovative financing, management and maintenance, pressure to commercialize facilities, preservation of historic buildings and landscapes, and conservation of urban ecosystems and natural resources. Adopt the plan as a supplement to Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000.
- 9-B Integrate sufficient open space and recreational amenities, including small urban parks, into large-scale development plans.
- 9-C Protect and expand the network of parkways and trails connecting Denver's parks to the regional system.  
*REF: Land Use Obj. 5*

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## Objective 10 ■ Mountain Parks and Natural Areas

Protect and enhance the City's natural areas and mountain parks.

*Denver's mountain park system consists of 48 sites containing approximately 13,500 acres. Sites range from less than one acre to 2,400 acres in size, and from undeveloped tracts that are home to buffalo and elk herds to the Winter Park ski area. Located outside the city's boundaries, these Denver assets are valuable amenities for residents of the entire region.*



## Strategies

- 10-A** Continue to develop The Natural Areas Program within the Parks and Recreation Department to oversee maintenance and restoration of natural areas, urban ecosystems and mountain parks.
- 10-B** Identify areas to be maintained in a natural state as “breathing room” for residents and habitat for urban wildlife, such as the South Platte River and Cherry Creek corridors and others.  
REF: Environmental 4-C
- 10-C** Ensure adequate maintenance to sustain Denver’s mountain park system.  
REF: Metropolitan 5-A
- 10-D** Build partnerships with the mountain parks’ host jurisdictions to share the costs of maintenance, management, programs and services.  
REF: Metropolitan 5-A; Land Use Obj. 5; Environmental 5-E
- 10-E** Explore ways to increase the use of natural areas and mountain parks for outdoor recreational and educational opportunities, especially for children economically and socially at risk.  
REF: Human Services 4-B; Education 3-D

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## Objective 11 ■ “Green” Connections

**Strengthen Denver’s system of “green” connections: trails, bicycle routes, parkways, greenways and watercourses.**

## Strategies

- 11-A** Complete and enforce design guidelines for Denver’s parkways.
- 11-B** Seek to expand and improve the existing system of parkways and boulevards throughout the city, connecting major parks.
- 11-C** Encourage metrowide cooperation to further develop regional trail systems, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, and transit access to parks, recreation and open space.  
REF: Metropolitan 5-A; Land Use Obj. 5
- 11-D** Continue to expand the street tree planting and replacement program and urban forestry education. Consider adopting incentives and requirements for tree conservation and replacement of trees removed for new development.





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## Objective 12 ■ Environmental Stewardship

Protect the environment while maintaining the City's parks to a high standard. REF: Environmental Obj. 2

### Strategies

- 12-A** Adopt environmentally friendly landscape principles for use by all City agencies, including appropriate use of native landscape materials, water conservation in irrigation system design and operation, and maintenance practices that minimize polluted runoff.  
REF: Environmental 2-C; Metropolitan 5-B
- 12-B** Continue to encourage residents' sense of stewardship for their parks through environmental education and volunteer maintenance programs, with a special emphasis on youth. Successful models include Friends of Bluff Lake at Stapleton and Denver Club middle school programs in the South Platte River Corridor.  
REF: Education 3-B
- 12-C** With the Colorado Division of Wildlife, evaluate the impact of new development on wildlife and its habitat, and work to mitigate it.  
REF: Environmental 2-G

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## Objective 13 ■ Recreation

Provide all Denver residents with access to innovative recreation programs that are responsive to community needs and especially to youth. REF: Education 3-D; Human Services 4-B

*In the fall of 2000, a new two-acre skateboard park will open in the Platte River Valley. Over 100 students from Denver middle and high schools are participating in the development, which is expected to be the largest, most innovative skateboard park in the region. Development of the park is being funded by voter-approved neighborhood improvement bonds.*

### Strategies

- 13-A** Evaluate staffing, hours of operation, and programming at all recreation centers to ensure that community needs and desires are balanced with efficiency and cost considerations.
- 13-B** Coordinate with DPS and community-based organizations to expand recreation opportunities and after-school programs throughout the city.  
REF: Education 5-B



- 13-C** Find innovative ways to reflect and celebrate community cultures and character in recreation programs and special events.  
REF: Human Services 3-A
- 13-D** Support volunteerism and community involvement in recreation programs, such as Hands On, the Parks and Recreation Department's volunteer program.

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## Objective 14 ■ Interagency Cooperation

Promote interagency cooperation to encourage shared facilities for community use.

### Strategies

- 14-A** Identify opportunities for shared use of facilities and initiate shared-use agreements.  
REF: Metropolitan 1-E
- 14-B** Encourage developing communities to create shared community spaces that will serve the needs of and be accessible to a variety of organizations and groups.
- 14-C** Encourage improvement of neighborhood school grounds and participate financially when shared uses are planned.  
REF: Education 1-G; Neighborhoods 4-A



# Our Long-Term Physical Environment

**Environment**

**Land Use**

**Mobility**

**Legacies**

**Housing**



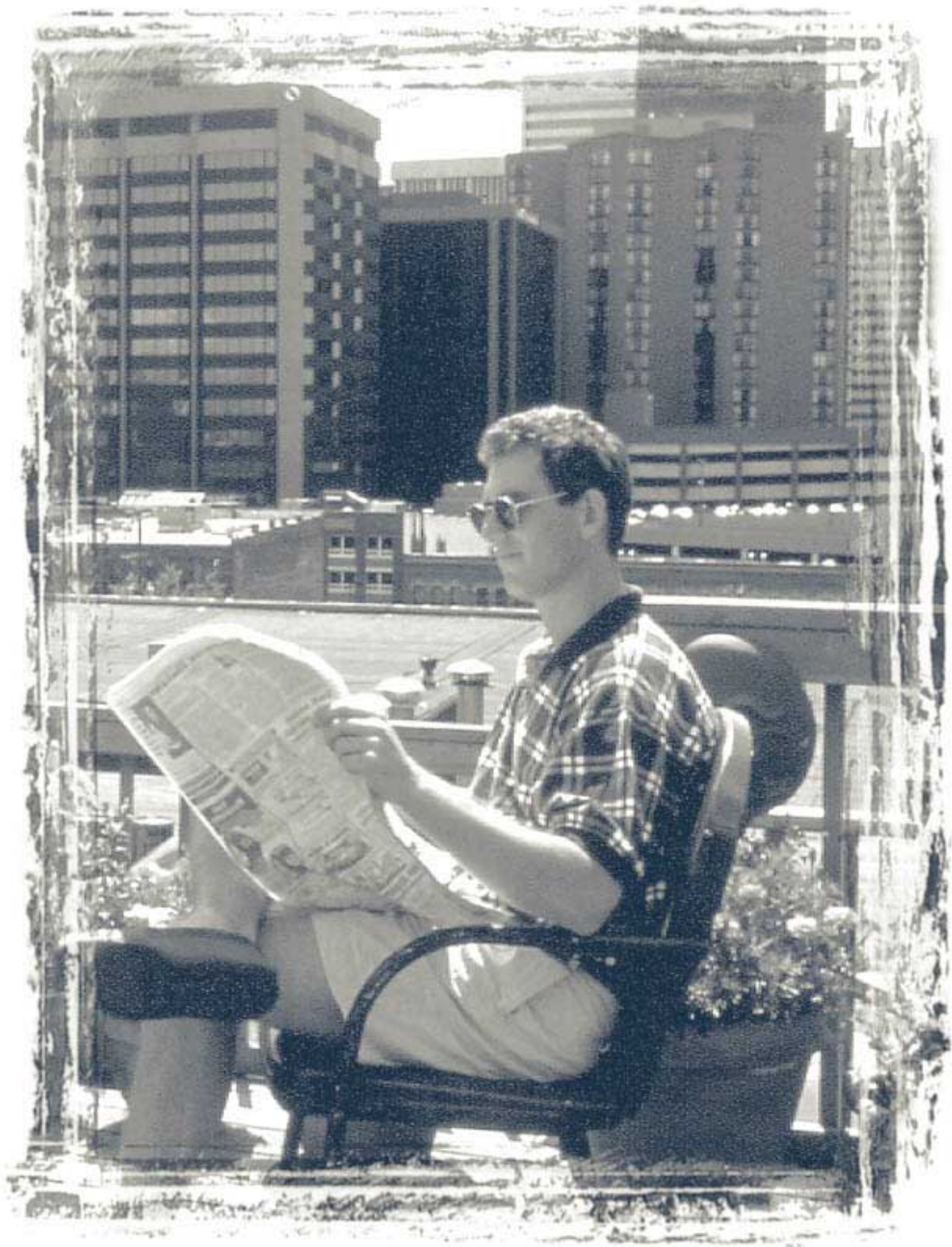
# Housing

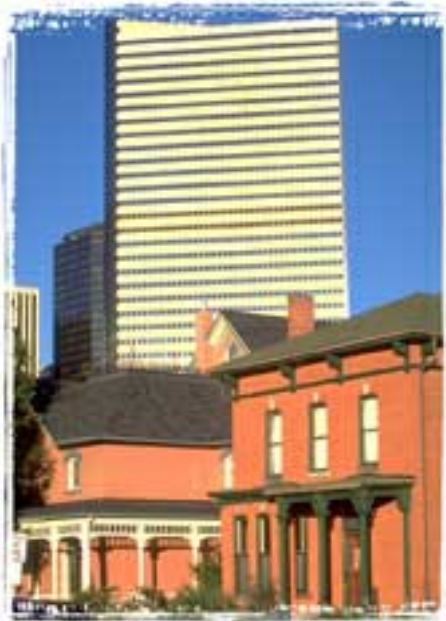
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*“Home is where safety begins. Home is where self-respect begins.  
Home is where our connections to our community,  
our city, and our nation begin.”*

*~ Henry G. Cisneros  
former Secretary of HUD*







Historic Five Points homes adjacent to downtown



The rental market for housing of a size and price affordable to families is tight



## GOAL ■ Expand housing options for Denver’s changing population.

OVERVIEW ■ When the essential question facing Denver is its livability, shelter and decent housing are basic concerns. As the new century begins, a strong economy has reduced rather than increased the availability of affordable housing in Denver. Home ownership is increasingly difficult for low- and middle-income households. Rental housing is expensive, and units for families are very difficult to find. As a result of these trends, economic segregation is becoming an unfortunate reality in Denver’s housing market.

The new Denver Housing Plan, which is reinforced in Plan 2000, provides a detailed approach to the development of housing types to meet the needs of diverse groups: middle-income households, people with special needs, families making the transition from welfare to work, and others. The Housing Plan’s focus recommendation is to preserve and upgrade the existing housing stock, and to increase variety in both the types and costs of housing, thereby providing options for all.





## ■ Introduction

Now and in the early 21st century, Denver faces substantial challenges in addressing the housing needs of its changing population. Expansion of housing opportunities for people of all income groups and for special populations must be a priority to ensure that Denver remains vital, diverse and inclusive. Habitable, safe housing is a basic need, critical to quality of life and human dignity. And a wide range of housing options of all types in all price ranges is critical to a sustainable economy.

In stark contrast to the depressed residential real estate market of the late 1980s, the housing situation during the robust economy of the late 1990s is characterized by rising rents and low vacancy rates, especially for affordable units. The scarcity of affordable housing prevents many lower-income households from participating in the benefits of economic growth or establishing a stable home environment. The housing shortage is especially acute for larger units that accommodate families. While housing production and pricing are clearly market-driven, the City has a responsibility to ensure that its policies encourage a wide range of housing, do not impede housing production unnecessarily, encourage maintenance of the existing housing stock, and provide financial assistance to enable all residents to live in habitable, safe housing.

With the need to expand affordable housing opportunities becoming increasingly apparent, Mayor Wellington Webb and Denver City Council convened the Denver Housing Summit in April 1997. The Summit formed committees to focus discussion on four key areas:

- Housing and other strategies to retain/attract middle-income families
- Expanding housing resources
- Reducing the cost of housing
- Strategies and programs for low-income housing

The recommendations that were developed by this consensus-building process were used to prepare the *City and County of Denver Housing Plan*, which was adopted as part of the Denver Comprehensive Plan on December 14, 1998. The Housing Plan is summarized in the goal, objectives and strategies of this chapter of Plan 2000, but should be read in whole to understand Denver's priorities and policies regarding housing issues.

*"Affordable housing" has many meanings. It is sometimes interpreted to mean federally subsidized housing or public housing. It is also used to describe market-rate housing that can be rented or purchased by persons of modest means. One frequently used affordability standard is that housing costs should require no more than 30 percent of household income. This is a benchmark for comparison purposes; often very low-income households cannot afford to pay 30 percent of their income for housing, while affluent households may choose to pay more.*



Many old warehouses in Lower Downtown have been renovated into loft homes

HOUSING

New rental homes at Lowry offer tenants attractive amenities





Older homes in close-in neighborhoods such as Highland are beautiful, charming and a challenge to keep up



## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Growth in new markets** ■ New construction in several neighborhoods has increased the housing stock in Denver. In 1998, the City issued building permits for 3,619 units in Gateway, Lowry, Grant Ranch, Montbello, Downtown, Green Valley Ranch and Cherry Creek. This represents 73 percent of permits issued. During the next few years, even more units will be built in those areas as well as in Stapleton and the Central Platte Valley.

**Deteriorating housing stock** ■ In 1990, nearly 26 percent of Denver’s housing had been built prior to 1940, and 57 percent prior to 1960. With growth in new areas and redevelopment in others, these percentages have decreased overall, but many older neighborhoods have seen little or no new housing. While some of Denver’s oldest housing is in excellent condition, housing stock in some areas of the city is deteriorated and/or substandard. Furthermore, there is a shrinking inventory of low-cost housing.

**Rising cost of home ownership** ■ Denver’s residential real estate has seen an average annual home appreciation of between 7 and 12 percent. This means fewer and fewer homes available for under \$100,000. Wages have not risen at the same rate, putting home ownership out of reach for many, even with relatively low mortgage rates. “Starter” homes are very often priced too high for households earning below median income, or if modestly priced, may have serious functional flaws.

**Rising rental costs** ■ Rents have increased 8 percent annually since 1990 to a median of \$651 per month by year-end 1998. For lower-income households, the cost of rent may often mean paying more than 30 percent and in some cases more than 50 percent of household income for rent. Vacancy rates are quite low, especially for the larger or more affordable units, which drives up rental rates.

**New public housing philosophy** ■ Public housing has historically been provided for basic housing only, often in high-density, high-rise developments. During the 1980s, the federal government and other housing providers began to promote lower-density complexes and scattered sites, with support services available to tenants. The Hope VI Program in the Curtis Park neighborhood will be an effort to create mixed-income public housing in an already economically diverse neighborhood. Programs to assist tenants in becoming home owners have also become more available.



Post-World War II housing is abundant in some Denver neighborhoods



### Challenges

**Housing and economic development** ■ For Denver to retain and attract businesses and workers, the City must offer an ample supply and a wide variety of housing types for people of all incomes.





**Affordable housing** ■ Rising sales prices and rental rates and very low vacancy rates make affordable housing extremely difficult to find, especially for larger families who may have no choice but to live in substandard, overcrowded conditions.

**Potential loss of subsidized housing** ■ Housing assistance contracts for more than 6,000 units in Denver that receive HUD Section 8 project-based subsidy are scheduled to expire early this decade. Further research will be needed to assess the full extent of the impending problem and develop strategies to help preserve Denver's stock of affordable housing units.

**Increasing homelessness** ■ The fastest-rising segment of the homeless population is families with children. Increasingly, the lack of affordable units is placing people at risk.

**Higher-density and rental housing** ■ Residents are sometimes resistant to new development perceived as changing a neighborhood's character. Higher-density and rental housing are examples.

## Opportunities

**City commitment** ■ The *City and County of Denver Housing Plan*, adopted in 1998 as part of the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, details the vision and priorities to address pressing housing needs in Denver. Plan 2000 is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Housing Plan.

**Citizen commitment** ■ Among Denver's strengths are its skilled and engaged neighborhood residents, forward-thinking and active nonprofit and business communities, and supportive local government environment. The Housing Plan is the product of a collaborative community effort, evidence of a broad commitment to solve housing issues.

**Government support** ■ Several City and State agencies and quasi-governmental programs support a range of services for low- and moderate-income renters, owners, new home buyers, and special needs housing.

**Mixed-use communities** ■ New developments at Green Valley Ranch, Lowry, Gateway, Stapleton, Highlands Garden Village and the Central Platte Valley provide opportunities to include a full range of housing types, sizes, and prices and include residential units in mixed-use developments.

**HOPE VI project** ■ The first-year federal award of \$25.7 million will begin funding the transformation of an older public housing development in Denver's Curtis Park neighborhood into a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood that will be a model community for future rehabilitation efforts.



Mixing apartment buildings with detached single-family homes is a difficult issue for some neighborhoods



Habitable, safe housing is a basic need, critical to quality of life and human dignity





Walkable communities offer a variety of uses, multiple housing options and diverse residents



Home values in many of the city's established neighborhoods have risen rapidly



*HOPE VI is a competitive HUD program that provides funding to public housing authorities to demolish obsolete, substandard public housing projects and build replacement housing in an effort to eliminate concentrations of deep poverty.*

### ■ **Vision of Success**

Working with the private sector, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood groups and governmental agencies, and through strategic policy development and implementation, the City will experience:

**Coordinated City efforts** ■ City agencies communicate and coordinate on housing issues. Regulatory costs of housing development are being reviewed and removed when possible. The City works to preserve and expand its housing stock, and housing efforts support economic development strategies.

**Expanded resources** ■ Support for housing programs and services enable the community to meet basic needs for decent, safe and affordable housing, including that needed by families, low-income households and special needs populations.

**Mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods** ■ Several neighborhoods provide opportunities for a stimulating urban lifestyle in walkable communities offering a variety of uses, multiple housing options and diverse residents.

**City living** ■ Living in Denver is an attractive choice. The city attracts and retains a large number of middle-income families and households.

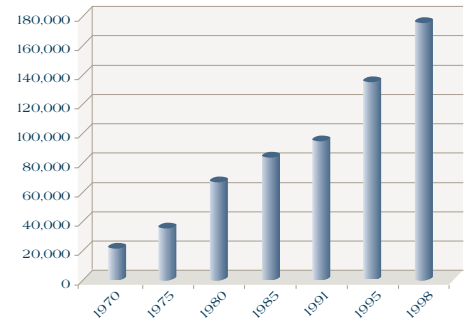


## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Support Housing Development

Ensure that City policies and procedures promote housing development and do not add unnecessary costs.

*The City and County of Denver is developing an aggressive and comprehensive strategy to address the increasing problem of providing affordable housing opportunities for working families and persons of need within our community. A key component of that strategy is the establishment of an **Affordable Housing Task Force** appointed from a select group representing the business community and the housing industry, agency managers, resident leaders and nonprofit housing providers. The purpose of the Task Force is to provide an open forum for residents, policy makers and private-sector partners to discuss, examine and act on critical housing issues, including implementation of the Housing Plan, expiring Section 8 vouchers, and expanding the supply of affordable housing.*

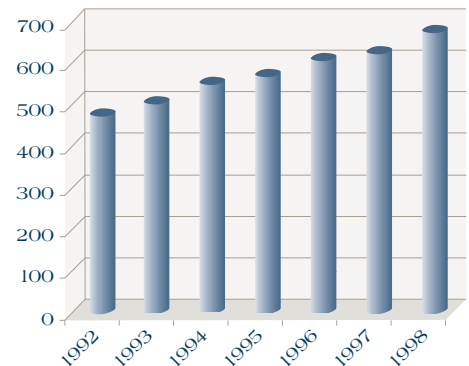


Average Denver single-family detached home sales prices

### Strategies

- 1-A Coordinate all City housing functions more effectively.
- 1-B Increase collaboration between and among housing agencies such as Denver Housing Authority (DHA), Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) and Colorado Housing Finance Authority (CHFA).
- 1-C Review current land-use planning, design and infrastructure requirements such as street widths, lot sizes, setbacks, parking ratios and utility standards. Consider changing requirements that add unnecessarily to the cost of development or discourage housing.
- 1-D Broaden the City's reorganization of its permitting processes.
- 1-E Review the Denver building code and the manner in which it is administered to identify changes that would reduce the cost of housing while preserving safety.
- 1-F Evaluate flexible building code standards for "green" home building to promote environmentally sound development and lower operating costs.  
REF: Environmental 2-D
- 1-G Support a climate of learning about housing. Establish a clearinghouse for ideas, best practices and information-sharing on housing issues and their impact on communities and individuals. Use information technologies to connect nationwide with other housing advocates.

Average Denver apartment rental rates





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## Objective 2 ■ Preserve and Expand Existing Housing

Encourage preservation and modernization of Denver’s existing housing stock and established neighborhoods. Support addition of housing in expansion and infill development.

### Strategies

- 2-A Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing, both rental and owner-occupied, by increasing funds for housing rehabilitation. Give priority to vacant structures.
- 2-B Upgrade and maintain streets, alleys and other infrastructure in aging residential areas to encourage maintenance of the housing, retain housing values, and preserve stable and viable middle-income and affordable housing.
- 2-C Review current codes and policies for residential infill development and additions to existing homes. Whenever possible, streamline the process while maintaining design and construction quality.
- 2-D As part of the citywide land-use planning process, identify vacant land and study the feasibility of assembling parcels for infill housing.  
REF: Land Use 1-A
- 2-E Adjust codes and policies regarding accessory residential units, such as granny flats, mother-in-law apartments and carriage units.  
REF: Land Use 1-H
- 2-F Explore opportunities for housing in all proposed development and redevelopment projects, including commercial and retail projects.  
REF: Land Use 1-H

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## Objective 3 ■ Housing Assistance

Build partnerships with other government agencies and nonprofit organizations to creatively deliver increased housing assistance. REF: Human Services 1-B, 6-B

### Strategies

- 3-A Work collaboratively with government, regional and nonprofit agencies to address the expiration of contracts for project-based Section 8 developments.





*Section 8 rental assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Many of the project-based contracts, which provided very low-interest loans to developers of rent-subsidized housing units, are nearing the end of their 20-year term. Contracts covering more than 6,000 units in Denver will expire in the next few years.*

*While difficult to pinpoint, different experts estimate that 600 to 2,000 of these units could opt out of the program and revert to market rents. Several projects with expiring contracts are currently owned by nonprofit organizations and will remain affordable. Some private owners may choose to offer their property to nonprofits as a buyout option, thereby sustaining the affordability of the units under different ownership. Several other options for current owners are available to retain the units as affordable. In the event of a conversion to market-rate rents, tenants would receive housing vouchers to keep their housing costs affordable. However, the DHA experience has been that about 27 percent of vouchers are returned because clients are unable to secure housing during the 120 days allowed for the housing search.*

- 3-B** Support stabilization programs that help people stay in their homes. Specific services could include a grant or loan for rental and security deposit assistance, budget management and tenant training, and access to resources to increase self-sufficiency.
- 3-C** Work with nonprofit partners to integrate very low-income housing units into predominantly market-rate housing projects.
- 3-D** In coordination with religious and other private organizations, develop permanent and transitional housing that is affordable for very low-income households and special needs populations.
- 3-E** Work with the Denver Department of Human Services to respond to the housing needs of its clients, including expanded rental assistance and transitional housing.
- 3-F** In public and private housing programs designed to assist low-income families, integrate case management and support services that promote residents' efforts to become economically self-sufficient.
- 3-G** Support DHA's efforts to meet the needs of households requiring very low-income housing. These efforts include:
  - improvement in the design and quality of its housing;
  - improved maintenance of its units;
  - revitalization of neighborhoods in which public housing is located;
  - replacement of demolished units on a one-for-one basis;
  - expansion of partnerships for project development; and
  - cooperation with private service providers to integrate support services to DHA residents.



- 3-H** Support the HOPE VI project and the surrounding community in every possible way.
- 3-I** Support the development of affordable housing using a variety of public finance mechanisms. Specifically:  
*REF: Economic 1-H*
- Establish an affordable Housing Trust Fund for the City and County of Denver funded from general fund dollars and private contributions.
  - Review the allocation of Denver’s annual Community Development Block Grant funding to maximize housing opportunities while continuing support for other identified community needs.
  - Continue to dedicate Denver’s Private Activity Bond (PAB) allocation to projects with affordable housing. Work with other metro jurisdictions to pool PAB allocations for affordable housing.  
*REF: Metropolitan Obj. 3*
- 3-J** Support efforts to raise awareness among corporations, the business community, legislators and the general public of housing issues such as the shortage of homes designed for the elderly and disabled and the scarcity of affordable housing, and the negative impacts these have on the economy.
- 3-K** Encourage regional approaches to providing affordable housing.  
*REF: Metropolitan 3-D*
- 3-L** Expand the supply of housing that is accessible for people with disabilities.

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## **Objective 4 ■ Middle-Income Households**

**Attract and retain middle-income households.**

### **Strategies**

- 4-A** Expand the availability of financing to enable middle-income households to buy and rehabilitate houses in existing Denver neighborhoods.
- 4-B** Support the work of schools, realtors, employers and neighborhoods to provide information on the advantages of living in Denver to current Denver residents, persons moving to Denver and residents of other areas of the region.  
*REF: Education 1-H*



- 4-C** Ensure that plans for new development areas include traditional urban neighborhoods with well-designed, well-built homes affordable to middle-income households and close to work, shopping and services.

REF: Land Use 1-A

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## Objective 5 ■ Support Home Ownership

Increase opportunities for low- and middle-income households to become home owners.

### Strategies

- 5-A** Establish a comprehensive Employer Assisted Housing Program to attract and retain a diverse, quality workforce, thereby reinforcing the connection between housing and economic development.  
REF: Economic 1-H
- 5-B** Continue to support nonprofit organizations offering home ownership counseling, affordable homes for sale, affordable down-payment loans, and other services supporting home ownership.
- 5-C** Foster partnerships to increase public awareness of housing programs and available financing.
- 5-D** Continue mortgage revenue bond issues and down-payment assistance programs that make it easier for more households of moderate means to purchase a home.

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## Objective 6 ■ Preferred Housing Development

Encourage mixed-use, mixed-income housing development in Denver's core area and along transit lines. REF: Land Use 1-H

### Strategies

- 6-A** Support mixed-use development consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan's land-use and mobility strategies.  
REF: Land Use 1-D, 1-E, 4-A; Mobility 4-E; Legacies 3-B
- 6-B** Continue to support mixed-income housing development that includes affordable rental and for-purchase housing for lower-income, entry-level and service employees, especially in Downtown and along transit lines.  
REF: Metropolitan 2-B; Economic 1-H



- 6-C** Encourage mixed-income rental housing with financing that allows both market-rate and subsidized units of equal quality in the same development.
- 6-D** Support DHA's mixed-income housing wherever possible, recognizing that support programs may be essential to those projects.
- 6-E** Identify and capitalize on opportunities to develop housing along transit lines.  
*REF: Mobility 3-B; Land Use 4-A*
- 6-F** In forums such as the Metro Mayor's Caucus and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, promote discussion and a regional commitment to goals for mixed-income and mixed-use housing development along transit lines.  
*REF: Land Use Obj. 5; Metropolitan Obj. 2*



The background features a collage of various scenes: a sun rising over mountains, a city skyline with a prominent tower, a modern building with a glass facade, and a large, stylized human figure. The text is overlaid on this collage.

# Our Long-Term Human Environment

**Economic Activity**

**Neighborhoods**

**Education**

**Human Services**

**Arts & Culture**



# Economic

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# Activity

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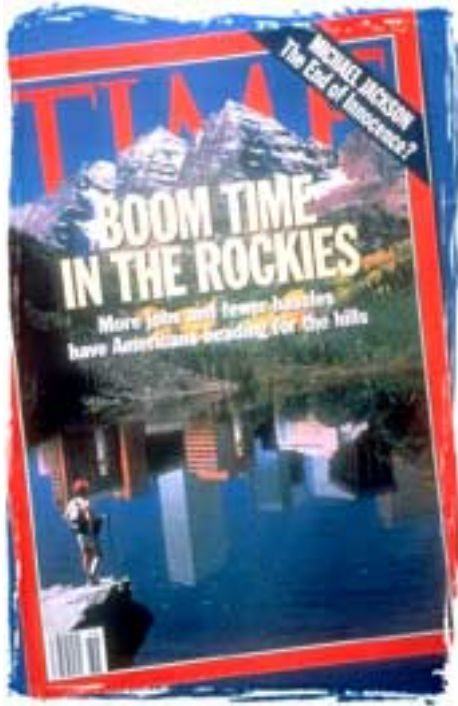
*“Livability isn’t some middle-class luxury;  
it is an economic imperative.”*

*~ Robert Solow  
Nobel Prize-winning economist*









Denver's strong economy in the 1990s has been national news



Roadway construction to support growth



**GOAL** ■ Create a sustainable economy that provides opportunities for all.

**OVERVIEW** ■ Denver has enjoyed a strong economy in the 1990s, and has begun to come into its own in the regional, state, national and international economic arenas. This has created opportunities for residents and businesses, but Denver must address significant challenges to remain competitive. These challenges include providing enough qualified workers to fill the jobs a growing economy generates; expanding economic opportunity for residents who remain in poverty; stimulating high-quality education at the preschool, K-12, technical and higher education levels; and maintaining the quality-of-life factors so important to business location. The intensity of effort to retain and expand existing businesses and to attract both large and small new businesses must continue, especially in Denver's target industries such as information technology. Strengthening economic enterprise is important to every part of Denver, be it large employment centers, Downtown, the corner coffee shop or the home occupations and small businesses found in every neighborhood.





## ■ Introduction

Denver is the largest employment center in Colorado, with 431,000 jobs and in 1998 a payroll of \$15.1 billion. In 1998, the number of Denver residents in the workforce was 295,870, nearly 60 percent of the total population; unemployment was 3.4 percent, contrasted with nearly 10 percent a decade earlier. By contrast, a decade earlier, in 1989, Denver's future was clouded in economic uncertainty and most ideas for the future were viewed through the prism of limitations. Despite this situation, *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* recognized the need for public investment in a variety of major public facilities, such as the new airport and convention center, as well as the need for long-term economic development strategies.

*The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* recognized eight target industries as a focus for economic development efforts: telecommunications, tourism, international trade, health care, insurance, higher education, retail, and business and financial services. Some of these industries have surpassed expectations; for example, telecommunications has expanded into information technology, of which Denver is a national center. Others have not proven as productive. Health care, for example, has seen limitations on growth due to national changes within the industry.

Yet, overall during the 1990s, the economy has shifted dramatically from one of high unemployment to one of significant skilled-labor shortage. Rapid population growth in the region places increasing pressure on schools, roads and the environment. Educational and training curricula, though expanded substantially, have not kept pace with the rapid growth of labor demand, especially for workers skilled in up-to-date computer technology. The robust economic climate is bypassing some low-income people who are ill-prepared for or disconnected from opportunities.

Economic activity will remain a top priority in the early 21st century. The most significant difference between the objectives of *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan* and those of Plan 2000 is this: in 1989, planners were intent on creating opportunity, jump-starting the faltering economy; in 2000, the challenge is to sustain and spread a strong economy. A strong economy will not sustain itself without strategic planning and action, and without aggressive economic development there will be no partnerships of the City with the private business sector and metropolitan, state and national governments. As throughout its history, Denver's future opportunities remain tied to regional, national and global influences.



17th Street, "Wall Street of the Rockies"

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

■  
The Colorado Rockies and Coors Field bring thousands into Lower Downtown on game days





Training for high-tech jobs at the University of Denver

*“The Denver region is enjoying a period of prolonged prosperity fueled by unprecedented growth along the Front Range. Population, employment, and income are at all time highs. The region has also gained significant national and international exposure from its civic investments, sports accomplishments, and outstanding recreational assets and quality of life. Yet the Denver region has seen prosperity before only to have it crumble as a result of cyclical and structural change.”*

**Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce Tech Vision —  
A Blueprint for the 21st Century of Metro Denver (1998)**

## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Demographics** ■ Denver’s population increased during the 1990s by just less than 12 percent, while the metropolitan population increased by 34 percent. Denver’s population is older, with 13 percent over 65 years old compared to 9 percent elsewhere in the metropolitan area. Denver has the highest proportion of people of color in the metropolitan area. During the 1990s, Denver has seen increased disparities in household income, with those at the higher and lower ends growing more rapidly than the middle.

**Job growth** ■ Since 1991, Denver has added more than 49,000 jobs — more than the 48,000 jobs lost statewide during the 1980s.

**Employment sectors** ■ The service sector of Denver’s economy has become its largest, with fully 33 percent of all workers falling into a broad range of categories ranging from health care to engineering. The number of jobs increased in the government and retail sectors as well as the service sector. Jobs were lost in mining, agriculture, manufacturing, transportation and utilities, wholesale trade, and finance and real estate. Denver still retains the largest proportion of jobs in all sectors, except agriculture, of any county in the state.

**Retail improvements** ■ Denver is the retail capital of the metropolitan area, with 1997 gross sales of \$44,063 per person in Denver compared to \$30,962 in the metropolitan area. Cherry Creek Shopping Center was completed in the early 1990s and expanded in 1998. Retail redevelopment is strong along South Broadway, in Bear Valley, at University Hills and in neighborhood business areas such as 32nd and Lowell. Linear business areas such as Federal Boulevard and South Colorado Boulevard have added new businesses. Opened in 1998, Denver Pavilions, the retail/entertainment center at the southeastern end of the 16th Street Mall, has sparked up that section of Downtown.

Ocean Journey, a regional attraction, and a special, Denver kind of aquarium





**Real estate** ■ Office vacancy dropped to 8 percent in 1998, down from 26 percent in 1990. Between 1990 and 1997, 5.2 million square feet of office space and 2.5 million square feet of industrial space were absorbed. Fifty-one vacant buildings in Downtown have been redeveloped since 1991. In the 1990s, the pace of home sales has increased dramatically, as have prices.

**Home occupations** ■ Fourteen percent of respondents in the Heart and Soul of Denver Survey indicated that a household member operated a home-based business.

**Downtown's resurgence** ■ Through thoughtful planning, significant public and private investment, and active historic preservation, Downtown Denver has redefined itself from a daytime workplace to a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week neighborhood with world-class amenities, many of them built in the 1990s. Downtown Denver is the churning center of financial, legal and accounting services and of telecommunications and other rapidly growing high-tech companies. In 1998, more than 2,600 additional residential units were under, or proposed for, construction. With the completion of the Buell Theater in 1992, the Denver Performing Arts Complex became the second largest performing arts center in the nation, and the building of Coors Field baseball stadium stimulated an already vigorous renewal of the Lower Downtown Historic District.

**Professional sports** ■ The 1990s addition of two professional sports teams, the Colorado Rockies (baseball) and the Colorado Avalanche (hockey); the Broncos (football); Nuggets (basketball); and the Rapids (soccer), have made Denver a regional and national sports mecca. Denver Bronco Super Bowl victories in 1997 and 1998 and the Avalanche's 1997 win of the Stanley Cup solidified this reputation. The opening of Coors Field in 1995, the Pepsi Center in 1999, and the new Mile High Stadium projected for opening in 2002 add three major state-of-the-art sports facilities within eight years. Concentrating these facilities in the Downtown area has allowed shared parking, construction of a light rail line and stimulation of new businesses.

**Leisure and entertainment** ■ New nightclubs, fine restaurants and art galleries have converged in Lower and middle Downtown. Denver Pavilions, with its retail, restaurants and movie theaters, has added new entertainment options to complement the Performing Arts Complex and the Paramount Theater. At its new Central Platte Valley location, Elitch Gardens has become a Six Flags amusement park. The economic spin-off of event patrons adding dinner or shopping to attendance at sporting or cultural events has sparked vitality in the whole Downtown area.



Denver Performing Arts Center has come alive in the 1990s



Six Flags Elitch Gardens is a major city attraction





A long-sought-after Downtown retail center becomes reality in October 1998 with the opening of Denver Pavilions



**Denver International Airport** ■ Opened in 1995, DIA is an operating and financial success, with nearly 37 million passengers in 1998, substantially surpassing the highest record at Stapleton, its predecessor. Air freight activity in Denver has more than doubled in 10 years. On-airport development, including airport concessions, hotels and state-of-the-art cargo facilities, further enhances the economic potential of DIA.

### Challenges

**Downtown** ■ Changes in Downtown raise new challenges. Traffic and congestion, with decreasing availability and increasing costs for parking, are concerns for businesses, employees, residents, patrons and customers. To grow as a vibrant business and tourism center, Downtown needs stronger pedestrian and transit connections between its various activity centers and close-in neighborhoods, as well as additional parking. To sustain its growth as a residential neighborhood, it needs to continue building an integrated and compatible mix of uses, including retail services that support high-density housing.

**Older industrial areas** ■ Denver's older industrial areas are concentrated along the South Platte River and railroad tracks. This crescent-shaped area has been an important part of Denver's economic base for over a century. Maintaining and enhancing the vitality of the industrial crescent as an important part of Denver's economy requires attention to address the age of the buildings and infrastructure and the changing needs of industrial users.

**Workforce** ■ Finding skilled workers challenges employers. For the City, the challenges are in three areas: (1) ensuring that Denver residents, including youth and low-income workers, can obtain the skills they need to share the benefits of economic expansion; (2) ensuring that Denver remains attractive for companies needing a skilled workforce; and (3) ensuring an adequate supply of housing that is affordable to workers.

**Competition with suburbs** ■ Denver will continue to compete with suburban areas for business and retail uses, as well as the jobs and the tax revenue they generate. However, a sustainable regional economy increasingly depends on interjurisdictional cooperation and partnership to address connected economic issues of employment, housing, transportation, public services and amenities, and revenues.

**Tax base** ■ Maintaining and increasing the City's tax base is a priority. The major contributors to City revenues include sales taxes on retail and business purchases, fees and property taxes. Sales and use taxes account for more

Quality retail and services thrive in the Cherry Creek North business district







than 65 percent of the City's general revenue. The TABOR Amendment, approved by Colorado voters in 1992, limits government revenue and spending, posing a further challenge to fiscal management.

**Quality education** ■ Quality public and private education — K-12, college and postgraduate — is essential to a livable community and to retaining and attracting new businesses. Denver Public Schools (DPS) must continue to improve quality in order for Denver to compete for new residents and businesses. Schools also need to provide students with the general education and workforce skills they need to succeed after graduation.

**Ensuring safety** ■ A climate of safety is essential for attracting and retaining businesses. In Denver, as elsewhere, the incidence of violent crime has decreased in the latter half of the 1990s; however, safety remains an issue in many center-city neighborhoods. The adverse impact of random violence has been felt throughout Denver and the nation. A positive national image can emerge only from a community that is effectively managing its social problems.

**Child care** ■ Most parents of young children are in the workforce, whether from one- or two-parent families. An adequate supply of convenient, affordable and high-quality child care is both a necessity for parents and essential to sustaining Denver's strong economy.

**Neighborhood conflicts** ■ Economic growth in the 1990s has enabled many new and longtime Denver businesses to expand, including some located in or adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods. As a business grows and needs larger facilities, conflicts with nearby neighborhoods can result. Resolution of these conflicts takes dedication on both sides to produce solutions beneficial to both.

**Corporate consolidation** ■ As companies merge to better compete nationally and internationally, Denver stands to lose some corporate headquarters that have been important to civic and economic development. Mergers among banks and telecommunications companies are the most notable recent examples.

## Opportunities

**New development** ■ Redevelopment of Lowry, Stapleton and the Central Platte Valley, and the annexation of the DIA/Gateway area provide Denver with extraordinary opportunities for exciting new neighborhoods, vital business areas and distinctive urban centers, making Denver a stronger attraction for residents and businesses.



The Colorado Convention Center attracts thousands of business visitors each year

New construction has surged in Denver and all along the Colorado Front Range





Business and private jet service is available at Denver International Airport



**Focused economic development** ■ Denver’s strategy to retain and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses, and facilitate strategic alliances, all with a focus on targeted industries, is paying off. These endeavors have made Denver a nationally and internationally recognized location for industry clusters that include information technology, business and financial services, environmental products and services, and energy and mining exploration and services.

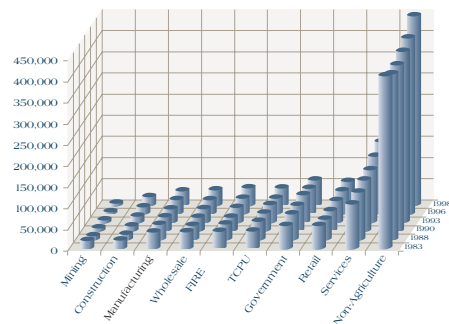
**Mixed-use development** ■ Integration of housing, retail, services, recreation and employment uses is increasing. New development in and around Downtown and at Lowry, Stapleton, Gateway and the Platte Valley will create the potential to live near work and use alternative transportation to reach destinations conveniently.

**Innovative infill** ■ As sites such as St. Luke’s Hospital, Elitch Gardens, the Northside Treatment Plant and the Air Force Accounting Center are abandoned, new mixed-use, residential and business developments are emerging. Redevelopment of old Elitch Gardens as Highland’s Garden Village, and the Northside Treatment Plant’s redevelopment as an armory, industrial park and public park demonstrate this potential.

**Positive national image** ■ Denver has a significantly positive national image. The amenities, quality of life, weather, outdoor lifestyle and highly educated workforce are attributes that continue to attract new residents and businesses.

**International markets** ■ In the 1990s, Denver began developing an international image with a visit from Pope John Paul II and the 1997 Summit of the Eight. In 1998, DIA inaugurated its first nonstop transcontinental air route, and international nonstops have emerged for Great Britain, Canada and Mexico, with others in the wings. The continued growth and development of DIA provides an economic engine to the local and regional economy and rapid connection to the world economy. The infrastructure, facilities and capabilities are in place for Denver to serve international business as an originator of products and services, a location for international businesses needing a strategic base in the region, and a source for business partners.

Denver employment trends by industry





## ■ Vision of Success

The small and large businesses that comprise Denver's sustainable economy will have the capacity to connect to global, national, regional and neighborhood markets to provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for Denver's residents. Success will be measured in the following ways:

**Resistance to economic recession** ■ Through economic diversification, maintaining a highly educated workforce, and placing a strategic emphasis on leading-edge industries, Denver will be less vulnerable to "boom-and-bust" cycles.

**Thriving neighborhood business centers** ■ Denver's neighborhoods will be enlivened by successful retail, service and hospitality businesses that enable residents to enjoy a high quality of life close to home. Business development in poorer neighborhoods will, at minimum, provide for residents' essential needs.

**Existing businesses** ■ Existing businesses, both large and small, new and old, will continue to thrive and expand.

**Good jobs** ■ Denver remains the largest employment center in the state. Jobs with good wages are available to all residents wishing to work. Adequate support systems, including education, training, child care and transportation, are available.

**The best downtown in America** ■ Downtown Denver will be one of the most exciting places in the nation to live, work, visit or operate a business. Downtown will be pedestrian- and transit-oriented, safe, affordable and fun.

**Leading-edge technology** ■ Denver will be a North American leader in state-of-the-art technology industries. The City will be a national model for successful use of up-to-date technology to streamline services.

**Enterprise everywhere** ■ With more home-based businesses, neighborhood business centers, easily accessed regional business centers, increased use of technology, and a supportive City government, doing business anywhere anytime will be easier, more fun and more profitable.

**International tourism and business** ■ Denver will be recognized on the global economic map with well-developed business connections worldwide and strong passenger and freight transportation connections to international locations. The metro area with Denver at its core will be a global hub for information technology, mining and energy services, environmental technology and financial services.



Business technology classes are in demand for today's workforce

Lunchtime on the busy 16th Street Mall





## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Workforce Development and Support

Ensure a skilled workforce. Economic development policies and initiatives should stress workforce needs for advancement, education and training, child care, a full range of affordable housing options, and transportation. **REF: Human Services 1-D**

#### Strategies

- 1-A** Enhance the City's leadership in workforce development by strengthening cooperation among City agencies addressing economic development and employment issues. An organizational structure consolidating and focusing workforce development efforts should be created.
- 1-B** Support a comprehensive approach to workforce development that is employer-driven and uses incentives that promote an appropriate mix of work-based and education-based training. Such an initiative should focus on work-readiness, employee retention, work-based training and education, use of private-sector employer resources, operation of the City's One-Stop Centers consistent with employer needs, and eliminating discriminatory practices from the workplace.  
**REF: Human Services 1-D**
- 1-C** In addition to job-readiness and placement, devote resources to sustaining employment during the first year.  
**REF: Human Services 1-D**
- 1-D** In partnership with business, support DPS in its quest to become a first-rate urban school district. Businesses should work with schools to develop curricula relevant to workplace requirements. On-the-job learning opportunities and school-to-work programs create important links to meaningful employment.  
**REF: Education 1-C, 3-C**
- 1-E** In partnership with business, work with post-secondary education institutions to develop curricula and centers of excellence to better support employer needs.  
**REF: Education 6-B, 3-1**
- 1-F** Support a collaborative effort by business, educational institutions and regulatory agencies to enhance the supply, quality and availability of child care, with a special focus on:  
**REF: Education Obj. 2**





- creating a high-quality and economically viable early care and education system for all of Denver’s young children;
- preserving and better utilizing tax credits for enhanced child care;
- including child-care services in employee benefit and assistance programs;
- promoting on-site child-care facilities in the workplace;
- supporting the development of joint ventures among related businesses to provide child care for employees, especially those with nontraditional work schedules (e.g., evenings and weekends).

REF: Human Services 1-E; Education Obj. 2

- 1-G** Support the development of a greater number of efficient, convenient and affordable options for workforce mobility, including rapid transit, improved bus service, pedestrian and bicycle access, private shuttle services and employer-sponsored transportation programs.

REF: Mobility Obj. 1

- 1-H** Support a variety of housing opportunities for Denver’s current and future workforce. Housing opportunities throughout Denver should be expanded — especially in the Downtown core and near employment centers — to accommodate people and families of all incomes.

REF: Housing 3-1, 5-A, 6-B; Metropolitan 2-C

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## Objective 2 ■ Business Environment

Stimulate the growth of business and the creation of good jobs with a business-friendly environment.

### Strategies

- 2-A** Improve the regulatory climate in City government by focusing on customer service and accountability. Components should include:
- rewarding City employees for efficient, streamlined, and accurate customer service;
  - streamlining the development process to ensure that it is fair, quick and includes an appeal process;
  - modifying City regulations to accommodate people working at home;
  - using up-to-date technology to streamline regulatory processes; and
  - creating a responsive, accountable, customer-driven environment within City agencies.

REF: Land Use 2-B



**2-B** Reinforce and maintain Denver’s attractive quality of life as an economic asset. Denver’s natural environment, climate and outdoor activities; well-maintained and architecturally diverse neighborhoods; professional sports, recreation, cultural and arts activities; post-secondary education; and real and perceived public safety all contribute to Denver’s attractiveness to businesses as well as residents. Expanding housing uses in Downtown and other urban centers supports other uses and extends hours of activity.

**2-C** Support entrepreneurship by addressing gaps and unmet needs for capital resources, investors and technical assistance. Focus such efforts on:

- ▮ early-stage seed capital, particularly for targeted industries;
- ▮ small-business development programs such as revolving loan funds and customized technical assistance;
- ▮ micro-lending for home-based business;  
*REF: Human Services 1-D*
- ▮ City purchasing policies that increase purchases from competitive local businesses; and
- ▮ creating partnerships between the City and local financial institutions to expand financing for businesses.

**2-D** Enhance Denver’s reputation as a business location with a highly educated workforce. Components of such an initiative include sustaining Denver’s quality of life to attract and retain well-educated residents and encouraging colleges and universities to develop and expand curricula, training programs and centers of excellence that complement Denver’s target industries.

*With the Auraria Higher Education Campus, University of Denver, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Regis University, and the various units of the State Community College and Occupational Education System, Denver has the largest concentration of higher-education students in the state.*

*REF: Education 6-B; Neighborhoods 2-C*

**2-E** Support economic development initiatives and programs that produce the greatest benefits for metropolitan Denver and support the goals of Plan 2000, including high-paying jobs for residents, improved profits for businesses, increased tax revenues for improved services, capital projects and more housing options.

**2-F** Support metropolitan cooperation and partnership with state, federal and other regional governments on economic development initiatives. A healthy core city must continue to be recognized as fundamental



to the economic vitality of the region. Continue City support for the Metro Denver Network, the economic development arm of the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce.

REF: Metropolitan 1-E

## Objective 3 ■ Expand Economic Opportunity

Continue to expand economic opportunity and the City's economic base with focused efforts to retain and expand existing businesses and to attract new businesses, especially in target industries. REF: Arts & Culture Obj. 3

### Strategies

- 3-A** Continually update Denver's target industries in terms of industry advancements and emerging clusters. Currently, Denver's target industries include information technology, tourism, business and financial services, environmental products and services, and mining and energy exploration and services.
- 3-B** Support retention and expansion of businesses in industries historically important to Denver, including small business, health care, manufacturing, and federal and state government.
- 3-C** Strengthen Denver as a destination for business, leisure and convention visitors as follows:  
REF: Mobility 1-F
- Expand national and international airline connections to DIA.
  - Work with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to provide high-quality information to potential visitors and quality accommodations for visitors.
  - Continue to reinforce the Central Platte Valley and the Downtown area as the primary location for sports, leisure, cultural and convention attractions.
  - Expand the role of the performing and visual arts in the city's economy, especially in Downtown.
- 3-D** Solidify Denver's reputation as a center for international business as follows:  
REF: Education 4-C
- Continue efforts to expand international tourism.
  - Create opportunities for Denver to expand the number and size of industry clusters for which it is recognized internationally.



- Continue to create opportunities for strategic alliances that allow Denver businesses, both large and small, to expand globally.
- Continue to attract foreign companies to locate in Denver.

**3-F** Use DIA, one of the world's most advanced airports, to develop aviation-related industries and expanded cargo services.

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## Objective 4 ■ Business Centers

Develop Denver's business centers to be competitive regionally, nationally and internationally, with the highest concentration of commerce in Downtown. **REF: Land Use 1-G**

### Strategies

**4-A** Ensure Downtown's future as Denver's preeminent center for business, tourism and entertainment, and as a focal point for the growth of information technology companies. To support Downtown economic development, the City should:

- Support business development efforts focused on software and telecommunications, tourism and conventions, business and financial services, retail that responds to an increasingly diverse market mix, and entertainment and hospitality businesses.
- Maintain Downtown's infrastructure and support installation of the highest-quality technology in the region.
- Ensure that Downtown remains the multimodal transportation hub of the region by supporting excellent roadway access, reusing Denver Union Terminal as a regional intermodal transit center, developing the Air Train linking Downtown to DIA, improving and expanding light rail and bus services to and from Downtown, and building the Central Platte Valley light rail spur to serve entertainment and sports facilities.

**REF: Mobility 2-A**

- Enhance pedestrian connections among Downtown's attractions and amenities by extending the 16th Street Mall to the Central Platte Valley, creating pedestrian links between Downtown and close-in neighborhoods, reactivating 14th and 15th Streets, and connecting destinations within Downtown.

**REF: Mobility 1-C**





- Encourage small businesses to locate in storefront spaces along the named streets in Downtown.
- Continue to support reuse of historic buildings in and around Downtown.  
*REF: Legacies Obj. 6*
- Continue to support development of high-density residential units in and around Downtown.  
*REF: Land Use 3-B; Housing 6-B*

**4-B** Enhance existing business centers and establish new business centers in a manner that offers a variety of high-quality uses that support Denver's business environment, complements neighboring residential areas, generates public revenue, and creates jobs. Consider the following key strategies as top priorities:

- Maintain the Cherry Creek Shopping Center, Cherry Creek North and other nearby areas as the premier retail destination in the Denver metro area and Rocky Mountain region.  
*REF: Mobility 5-B*
- Continue to enhance the Denver Technological Center, Denver's second largest employment center and home to many of the area's high-tech businesses. Help relieve congestion along the I-25/225 corridor by working toward a balance of jobs and housing within the DTC. Support pedestrian-friendly development links to the new light rail stations and further development of shuttle service within the center and to surrounding neighborhoods.  
*REF: Land Use Obj. 3; Mobility Obj. 1, 2-C, Obj. 5*
- Continue to strengthen and, where necessary, revitalize Denver's commercial corridors, such as East and West Colfax, Broadway, Colorado Boulevard, East Evans and South Federal.  
*REF: Mobility 2-B*
- Solidify the business identity for the Northeast Quadrant as a new, high-quality, high-technology business location. Link this identity to the redevelopment of Lowry, Stapleton, Gateway and the I-70 Corridor, and to opportunities at DIA. Expedite the development of public transportation and other infrastructure improvements in the Northeast Quadrant. Reinforce the linkages within the area, between DIA and Downtown, and throughout the region, for both people and goods.  
*REF: Land Use 4-A; Mobility 5-A, 6-E*



- As significant redevelopment tracts become available, and as needs of declining neighborhoods are addressed, engage in a master planning process to attract the highest-quality uses and the best development techniques. Reinvest in the city's historical industrial crescent to keep it viable for a wide range of business and employment opportunities.

REF: Land Use 3-A; Mobility 3-B

- 4-C** Use public-private partnerships to facilitate development and redevelopment projects that advance the City's goals and objectives. When appropriate, take advantage of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority's powers and experience.

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## Objective 5 ■ Neighborhood Economic Development

Support the creation and growth of neighborhood businesses that enhance the vitality and quality of life in their communities.

### Strategies

- 5-A** Support small-scale economic development in neighborhoods using the following key strategies:

- Incorporate neighborhood-based business development into the City's neighborhood planning process.

REF: Neighborhoods 1-A, 1-E; Land Use 3-A

- Support development of neighborhood business centers that serve adjacent residential areas in existing neighborhoods and new neighborhoods within development areas.
- Using a wide variety of public and private funding sources, enhance financial and technical assistance programs that support small business and neighborhood revitalization such as the City's Revolving Loan Fund, Enterprise Community programs and the Business Assistance Office.
- Deploy City resources to make these neighborhoods clean and safe, and provide park, recreational and cultural amenities nearby.

- 5-B** Support the development of sustainable economies in Denver's poorer neighborhoods. To accomplish this:

REF: Human Services 1-D; Neighborhoods 1-B

- Identify neighborhoods throughout Denver that need additional assistance in strengthening the economies of their communities.



- Provide essential retail and consumer services and neighborhood-based employment to residents.
- Assess, evaluate and coordinate funding sources available to assist in the stabilization and revitalization of these neighborhoods.
- Use economic development incentives to stimulate business development and job creation.
- Use tools available through federal, state and regional agencies to create resources to revitalize poorer neighborhoods. Examples include Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Community designation funding.

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## Objective 6 ■ Technology

**Build and maintain a leading-edge technology infrastructure within Denver.**

### Strategies

- 6-A** Work with private industry to ensure Denver’s capacity to serve the needs of high-technology companies, including assessments of possible future technological innovations.
- 6-B** Maximize the use of coordinated communications technologies within City government to improve interagency cooperation, enhance service delivery and customer service, achieve administrative efficiencies, reduce business travel and cut costs.  
REF: Land Use 2-D; Neighborhoods 2-C; Human Services 2-D
- 6-C** Support access to and training in the use of leading-edge communications technologies for all Denver residents and close the “digital divide.”  
REF: Education 3-D, 3-E, 6-C; Neighborhoods 2-C; Mobility 4-D; Human Services 2-D



# Our Long-Term Human Environment

**Economic Activity**

**Neighborhoods**

**Education**

**Human Services**

**Arts & Culture**





# Neighborhoods

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*“Neighbors are people united primarily not by common origins or common purposes but by the proximity of their dwellings in space. . . . There is nothing forced in this relationship, and to be real it need not be deep; a nod, a friendly word, a recognized face, an uttered name — this is all that is needed to establish and preserve in some fashion the sense of belonging together.”*

*~ Lewis Mumford  
writer and urban planner*





Denver's community events are as diverse as its neighborhoods



Small businesses in Park Hill neighborhood



**GOAL** ■ Build on the assets of every neighborhood to foster a citywide sense of community.

**OVERVIEW** ■ For the quality of their lives Denverites depend on their neighborhoods more than on any other part of the city. Residents are sensitive to change, especially in those things about which they care most. Thus neighborhoods prize their specialness and reject “one-size-fits-all” approaches to planning and development. The return to neighborhood schools enables the school building to be the visual, social and educational focal point for a neighborhood. But neighborhoods change, and building projects such as infill housing, neighborhood stores or other community facilities often introduce tense dynamics between conflicting interests.

Such tensions necessitate improved communication among all parties, be they applicants, neighbors, neighborhood organizations or the City. Both the City and neighborhood representatives welcome opportunities to build trust and strengthen communication. The siting of community facilities, whether they are perceived as detrimental or beneficial to neighborhoods, is one of the most difficult issues faced by public officials and residents alike. The City must develop and follow siting processes that are fair, reasonable and communicative with those affected.





## ■ Introduction

Neighborhoods are the places we call home, the places where we live. Denver residents treasure their neighborhoods. Thanks to a variety of redevelopment opportunities, Denver offers more choice than ever in types of neighborhoods where people can make their home. As the metropolitan area expands, the quiet, tree-lined streets of central Denver's well-maintained older neighborhoods provide refuge that often seems more like that of a small town than of a major city. Farther from the center city, one finds enclaves of wood-frame houses built for young families after World War II and the later suburban-style subdivisions with ranch-style and split-level homes typical of the 1960s and 1970s.

From the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s, Denver experienced a great deal of change in many existing neighborhoods, but with virtually no new neighborhoods created. In recent years Denver has formed new neighborhoods due to the sudden availability of redevelopment land, the adaptive reuse of buildings in the center city, a growing population, and a marked increase in the number of people wanting an urban lifestyle. Downtown Denver, especially the LoDo area, is becoming a lively and distinctive neighborhood, with the rapid growth of high-density housing in the center city. New neighborhoods at Lowry offer a residential environment more typical of suburban neighborhoods. Also new are luxury townhouses in Cherry Creek, mid- and high-rise condominiums in the Golden Triangle and along Speer Boulevard, and dense clusters of apartments in the Central Platte Valley. These all increase the lifestyle choices among Denver neighborhoods and expand the concept of how neighborhoods look and function.

Throughout the city, residents are very protective of the quality of life in their neighborhoods, which accounts both for the pride that is everywhere evident and for the occasional tensions when change occurs. But change and population growth are inevitable. The life of a city is cyclical. Downtown living seems a novel idea today, but before World War II, Downtown was a neighborhood for tens of thousands of people. The east Cherry Creek neighborhood, formerly solidly modest, middle-income frame homes, is rapidly transforming to upper-income townhouse and condominium residences. Over several generations, the historic Highland neighborhood has at different times been home for German, Irish, Italian and Latino residents. Today, its multiethnic character is increasingly vulnerable to the economics of a booming residential real estate market. And some near-Downtown neighborhoods that have long had the highest concentration of facilities to house and serve the needy are insisting that such facilities be more equitably distributed citywide.

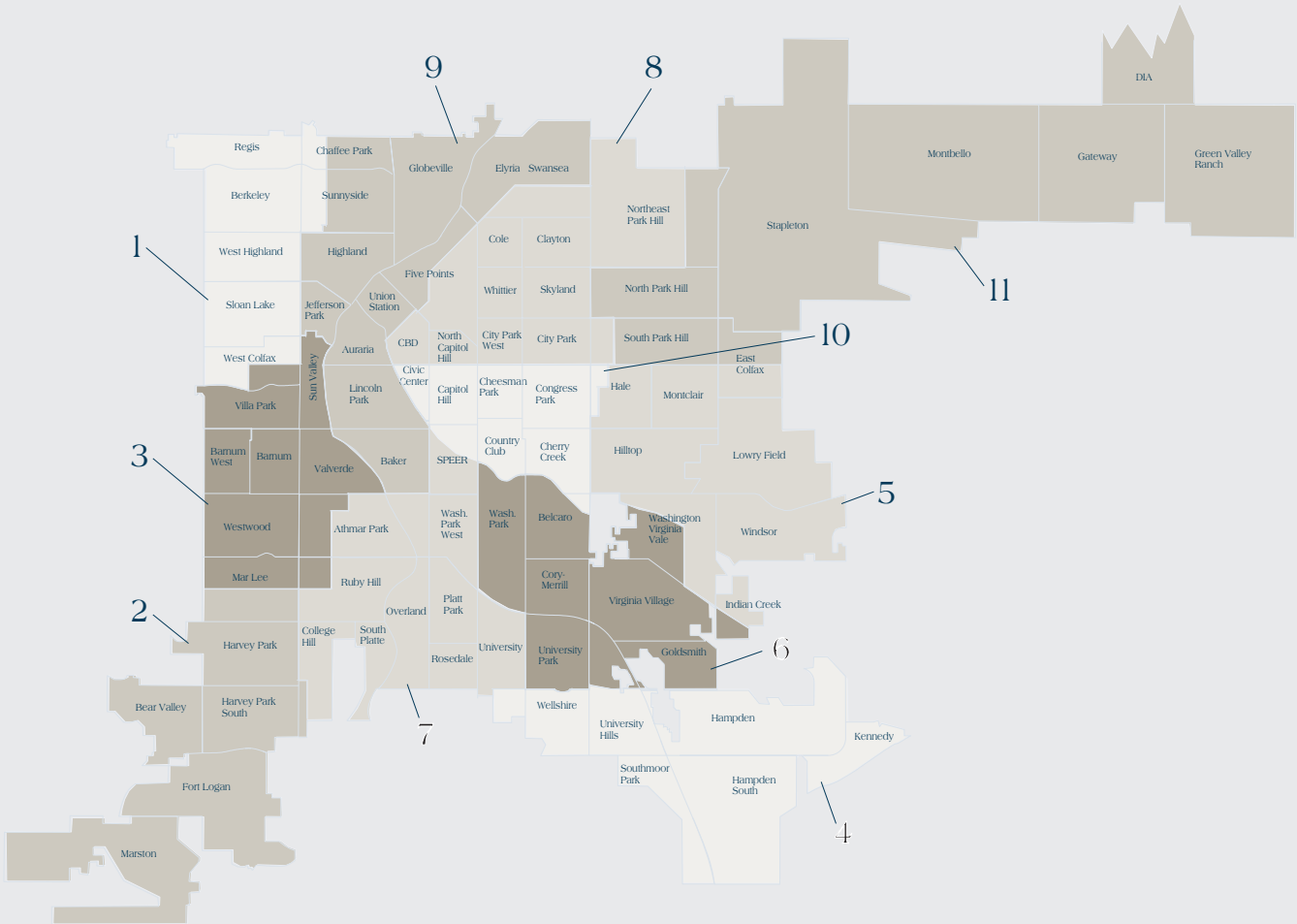


The Five Points Community Center houses a branch Denver Public Library

Watering the community garden in Curtis Park neighborhood







■  
Neighborhoods by City Council Districts



The role of the City in its neighborhoods is to continually reinforce the quality of life with services, facilities and resources that meet the needs of residents while achieving the overall goals and objectives of the entire community. Maintaining this balance is an ongoing challenge, because the needs and desires of neighborhoods are always evolving, as are the responsibilities of the City. When Denver began the program of Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs) in 1976, 30 neighborhoods enrolled. By 1999, 173 groups were registered. These RNOs include condominium associations, neighborhood associations of varying sizes, and a few broad coalitions of several neighborhood organizations, such as Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC).



People in the city are committed to the quality of life in their community . . .

With its strong emphasis on communication and partnership, Plan 2000 seeks to improve the quality of life within neighborhoods by building on their distinctive assets. The Plan also supports addressing neighborhood needs and concerns in a broader geographic context rather than merely through fragmented efforts within an area of the city. Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods (CHUN) and the Greater Park Hill Community are models of neighborhood organizations that each comprise a number of smaller neighborhoods. But they effectively represent the shared concerns and interests within large areas of the city. Finally, Plan 2000 focuses on building a shared identity of the entire city of Denver within all of its neighborhoods.

Many City agencies interact significantly with neighborhoods. Those most directly involved in policy-making and problem-solving include the Community Planning and Development Agency, which contains the Office of Neighborhood Response, Mediation Services, the Community Development Agency, Planning Services, Development Services and Neighborhood Inspection Services. For many neighborhoods, the most direct contact with City agencies is through police patrol, trash pickup, street repair, street sweeping, snow removal and neighborhood inspection services. Delivery of these basic services is a vital part of neighborhood well-being and quality of life. Traditionally, the City has operated on a schedule of equal service delivery to all neighborhoods, regardless of neighborhood conditions or need. This system of resource allocation is not always effective at achieving the goal of a clean city. Basic standards of cleanliness and service schedules, designed to maintain that standard citywide, should be adopted.

. . . and many work with their neighborhood organizations on important issues

One issue that leads to the greatest conflicts in neighborhoods is the siting and expansion of community facilities. Community facilities are physical structures that house vital services that directly or indirectly benefit everyone. These are created and must be maintained to safeguard the health, safety and





Young residents of this neighborhood are delighted with their garden harvest



welfare of the city's residents; to educate them; and to provide cultural expression and recreational opportunities. Community facilities perform remarkably diverse functions in the life of the city and its neighborhoods. Schools, libraries, performing arts centers, sports stadiums, museums, health centers and similar facilities are cherished parts of the urban landscape. Less popular but vitally necessary are jails, group homes, public or subsidized housing, treatment centers, and other facilities that address the needs of individual residents and the well-being of the entire community. Conflicts relate primarily to geographic distribution of these facilities and their impacts on residential neighborhoods. As Plan 2000 was being developed, the magnitude of these issues warranted a Community Facilities Task Force to focus on strategies to help mitigate impacts on neighborhoods and improve the public process for facility siting decisions.

Most controversial decisions about community facilities occur at the neighborhood level. Historically, some neighborhoods have felt overly burdened with facilities that have real or perceived negative impacts on property values, safety and quality of life. Proposals for community facilities that address human service and criminal justice needs, and those that could increase neighborhood traffic and congestion, often elicit vehement opposition. The federal Fair Housing Act, however, was enacted to ensure that vulnerable people are not discriminated against in their choice of location and type of housing. Conversely, some neighborhoods have enjoyed a disproportionately greater share of beneficial facilities such as libraries, school improvements and parks. But even highly desirable facilities create unwanted impacts; parking and traffic near some of Denver's popular cultural and sports facilities are ongoing problems, for example.



Neighborhood businesses can add to the distinctive character of an area



Equity is a key principle in Plan 2000. An increasingly involved citizenry expects the City to conduct fair and open processes for decisions that affect neighborhoods and residents. This Neighborhoods chapter of Plan 2000 addresses the City's role in siting public and private community facilities using processes that are fair and open, and in ensuring that these facilities are well maintained and well operated, wherever sited.



## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Neighborhood schools** ■ Court-ordered school busing to achieve integration ended in 1995. For the first time in a generation, all public school students could attend their neighborhood schools. In many neighborhoods, this is having a significant, positive impact.

**Infrastructure** ■ Neighborhoods throughout Denver benefit from major improvements to streets, parks, libraries and other amenities financed by voter-approved bonds.

**Population and demographics** ■ Demographic change is having an impact on some neighborhoods. Some areas with home owners of modest means face an influx of higher-income home buyers. Older, smaller houses are often razed to be replaced with much larger ones. Some neighborhoods are becoming more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse. Families, particularly single parents and very young children, are on the increase, as are the number of older adults and people who work at home.

**Safety** ■ Since 1989, Denver's crime rate has decreased generally. However, during the early 1990s, youth gangs and violence surged. City prevention programs have since contributed to substantial reductions in youth crime.

**Need for community facilities** ■ The need for shelters, transitional housing, facilities for people with special needs, a juvenile detention center and a judicial center — which would incorporate a jail — is increasing. The expansion of many cultural facilities and construction of new sports venues also increase traffic, parking and congestion.

**Revision of the Residential Care Use Ordinance** ■ This ordinance was revised in 1997 following extensive deliberations among residents, care providers and City officials. It provides for a process for siting group homes of all sizes and types that is humane, equitable and enforceable by laws that regulate facilities, not special populations.

*The primary goals of the Residential Care Use Ordinance are to integrate special populations into society; prevent the concentration of residential care use facilities in any one area of the city; comply with federal and state fair housing laws; and strengthen communication among neighborhood residents, group home operators and the City. The revised ordinance recognizes and addresses a set of mutually binding responsibilities. The City is morally and legally obligated to accommodate certain vulnerable populations. Each operator is required to run a facility that fits into the surrounding neighborhood without causing disruption to the lives of other residents.*



Barnum Elementary School



The Denver Rescue Mission provides essential human services





Denver is fortunate to have numerous neighborhoods with mature trees and parkways



## Challenges

**Affordable housing** ■ Rising housing costs have made affordable housing more difficult to find, especially for low- and middle-income families.

**Neighborhood character** ■ Pressure for infill and redevelopment may hamper efforts to maintain neighborhood character. For example, larger new houses are often perceived as out of scale with their smaller neighbors, and new architectural styles and materials may contrast sharply with a neighborhood's prevalent style.

**Traffic** ■ Traffic impacts have grown considerably due to population increase and higher-than-average vehicle miles driven. The increase is perhaps most felt in neighborhoods accustomed to far less traffic.

**Community diversity** ■ Efforts to expand community-based living for people with physical and mental differences challenge society in the areas of housing, access and acceptance. Ethnic, cultural and language diversity enriches Denver but can also result in new sets of issues and problems.

**Trust** ■ Many residents lack confidence in the City's decision-making processes, especially as related to the siting of community facilities. This is partly due to the City's failure to consistently communicate in an open and inclusive manner. It is also the result of well-organized neighborhoods being more influential in attracting popular facilities while precluding those perceived to have negative impacts.

**Mitigation** ■ In many cases, impacts of community facilities and other developments can be mitigated. Finding good solutions requires commitment, time and resources from both the City and residents, and sensitivity to the concerns of all parties.



Neighbors and friends working together to make their homes and neighborhoods safer



## Opportunities

**Neighborhood schools** ■ The return to neighborhood schools following years of court-ordered, crosstown busing is attracting more families with school-aged children to remain in Denver or to move into Denver's neighborhoods. Increasingly, neighborhoods are again strengthened by schools as centers for community-based services and activities.

**Reinvestment** ■ Residential neighborhoods that have been declining for years have become more attractive. Marginal residential areas are strengthened by increased property values, investment and the resulting stability.



**Enhanced neighborhood involvement** ■ By adhering to principles of fairness and open communication, the City and its neighborhoods can reduce tensions and reach better decisions faster on potentially controversial issues.

**Communication technology** ■ Advances in communications technology promise to increase the speed and efficiency of communications between the City and neighborhoods and lead to more constructive communication among all parties. The City and many neighborhoods now have websites available on the Internet.



NEIGHBORHOODS

A computer graphic rendering of an "ideal" neighborhood is decidedly less interesting than the real thing





Churches and their activities enrich lives and build community spirit



## ■ Vision of Success

**Community spirit** ■ Every neighborhood values its heritage, cultivates its own identity, and works to establish a sense of place within the city. Residents are involved, working with neighbors to build community, and share a sense of responsibility for each other and for the city as a whole. They value and celebrate the economic, ethnic and cultural diversity within the neighborhood.

**City-neighborhood partnership** ■ Neighborhoods enjoy good relationships with City agencies and with people in government. Residents have a broader understanding of the City’s responsibilities to all its people and to the greater good of the community. Residents have greater confidence in the City’s decision-making process and offer more support for the outcomes. The City understands its responsibility to make decisions in an inclusive manner that minimizes conflicts and mitigates adverse impacts.

**Community-building** ■ Schools, libraries, recreation centers, game fields and places of worship are lively activity centers, bringing residents together for sociability, education and recreation. Small neighborhood retailers, such as coffee shops and bakeries, offer informal, impromptu gathering places. Community facilities that contribute to neighborhood vitality are valued and preserved. Residents take active responsibility for the social and physical well-being of the community.

**Environment** ■ Neighborhoods are pleasant to live in and visit, clean, visually appealing and free of pollution. They are safe because people are on the sidewalks and porches with “eyes on the street.” Parks and open space are part of every neighborhood.

**Access and mobility** ■ Neighborhoods are well connected internally to surrounding neighborhoods and to urban centers by streets, sidewalks, pedestrian and bike paths, and transit. Residents have more mobility options due to the new transit lines, improved bus service, trails, bike routes and other modes of transportation.

**Mixed uses** ■ Business development is in harmony with neighborhood character. Many neighborhoods feature a diverse combination of easily accessible retail, service and entertainment businesses; employment opportunities; and home-based businesses.



New apartments at Lowry are part of a master-planned community with diverse housing, parks, retail and office development





## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ A City of Neighborhoods

Strengthen the positive attributes and distinctive character of each neighborhood to help sustain Denver as a healthy, vital city.

#### Strategies

**1-A** Respect the intrinsic character and assets of individual neighborhoods. Use the City's neighborhood planning process to identify the assets, clarify residents' goals and integrate all neighborhoods into the fabric of the city. Neighborhood planning will:

**REF:** Legacies 7-A; Land Use 1-A, 1-B, 3-D

- use a multidisciplinary approach that integrates physical, social, environmental, economic and educational elements;
- REF:** Economic 5-A; Human Services 3-D
- identify assets and liabilities;
- identify key elements of neighborhood character for conservation;
- accommodate appropriate infill and redevelopment;
- address the overall goals and objectives of the Citywide Land Use Plan as they affect specific neighborhoods; and
- define the geographic scope of neighborhoods by the conditions, problems and opportunities to be addressed rather than traditional neighborhood boundaries. Plans might be developed for neighborhoods, small areas or corridors.

**REF:** Land Use 3-A

**1-B** Establish priorities for small-area planning based on the following criteria, focusing first on neighborhoods characterized by one or more of the following:

**REF:** Economic 5-B; Mobility 6-A

- Evidence of disinvestment; deteriorating housing; and high vacancy, unemployment and poverty rates.
- A great amount of change is occurring or anticipated.
- Needs for public facilities and/or physical improvements.
- Opportunities for infill or redevelopment.
- Opportunities to influence site selection, development or major expansion of a single large-activity generator.
- Opportunity for development in conjunction with a transit station.





*In response to a federal funding program, the City identified 12 Empowerment Zone (EZ) neighborhoods — areas of Denver that have not benefited proportionally from the prosperity of the 1990s. Although Denver did not receive federal EZ funding in 1999, improving conditions in these neighborhoods remains a priority.*

*These Empowerment Zone neighborhoods had a population of 49,371 persons in 1990, compared to 80,000 in 1950. In 1990, 41.1 percent of the adults and 56 percent of children were in poverty; at the time of the application, 92 percent of the children qualified for free school lunches. These communities are characterized by high rates of school dropout, adults on welfare and working poor. EZ efforts focus on two main goals: (1) to build a new, broader economic future based on community-driven, public-private partnerships designed to develop people's knowledge, skills and abilities so they can work and sustain their economic independence; and (2) to revitalize these neighborhoods in a way that preserves and honors cultural and ethnic diversity while investing in social, economic and physical assets. REF: Economic, Obj. 5-B*

- 1-G** Strengthen the sense of place in each neighborhood with adequate and well-designed, public-realm facilities such as branch libraries, recreation centers, fire stations, neighborhood businesses and retail areas. Continue to help activate neighborhood-based facilities such as places of worship and schools. Continue City support for public art and historic preservation as a focus for neighborhood identity and pride.  
REF: Land Use 3-D
- 1-D** Ensure high-quality urban design in neighborhoods by enhancing their distinctive natural, historic and cultural characteristics; strengthen neighborhood connections to urban centers; and reinforce Denver's unifying design features such as street trees in the tree lawns, parkways and the grid system of streets.  
REF: Legacies 1-A, 2-E, 4-A, 7-B
- 1-E** Modify land-use regulations to ensure flexibility to accommodate changing demographics and lifestyles. Allow, and in some places encourage, a diverse mix of housing types and affordable units, essential services, recreation, business and employment, home-based businesses, schools, transportation and open space networks.  
REF: Land Use 2-A; Arts & Culture 2-F; Economic 5-A; Human Services Obj. 1
- 1-F** Invest in neighborhoods to help meet citywide goals and objectives for a range of housing types and prices, community facilities, human services and mobility. Continue to foster integrity and livability of neighborhoods.  
REF: Human Services 1-B, 3-D



## Objective 2 ■ Communication, Partnership, Participation

Engage neighborhood residents and organizations in collaborative efforts to share information, solve problems and plan for the future.

### Strategies

- 2-A** Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan that outlines roles and responsibilities of City agencies, neighborhood organizations, residents, community institutions and businesses potentially affected by proposed actions. The plan should:
- require timely communications among City agencies and between the City and other parties;
  - provide guidelines for discussions and interactions among interested parties;
  - require communications processes to be inclusive (e.g., multilingual);
  - identify City resources (services, programs and funding) for the project; and
  - evaluate the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of the process.
- 2-B** Take a leadership role in developing a mutually responsive communications network among City agencies, neighborhood groups, citizens, community institutions and businesses to identify neighborhood concerns and to address them openly, thoughtfully and fairly.
- 2-C** Enable citizens to share information and interact with City agencies by using up-to-date communication technologies. Ensure on-line access to City services and information for people without computers by making interactive communications technology available at libraries, schools and other public places.

REF: Economic 2-D, 6-B, 6-C; Human Services 2-D

*The City's website, DenverGov — [www.denvergov.org](http://www.denvergov.org) — opened in early 1999. It provides on-line information about City agencies, announcements (such as street sweeping schedules) and events calendars. It provides access to pertinent information such as property records, civil court records, bid documents, and permit applications and forms. This allows many customers to get the documents they need and "skip the trip" downtown. DenverGov will continue to grow and provide more interactive functions over time.*

- 2-D** Expand the use of mediation as a tool for resolving neighbor-to-neighbor and institutional conflicts.



## Objective 3 ■ Clean, Safe Neighborhoods

Make neighborhoods clean and safe places that inspire community pride, where residents and visitors feel secure and comfortable.

### Strategies

- 3-A** Establish acceptable and equitable standards for neighborhood cleanliness and deploy City personnel and resources to uphold those standards citywide. Standards may address street sweeping, alley or curbside trash pickup, large-item pickup, specially scheduled community cleanup days with City support, graffiti removal, and concentrated Neighborhood Inspection Services work rotating from neighborhood to neighborhood.

*Equitable standards based on outcomes may not require the same allocation of service or resources in every neighborhood, due to differing neighborhood needs. For example, the need for services such as large-item pickup and graffiti removal is greater in some areas than in others.*

- 3-B** Foster partnerships among the City, residents, volunteer service groups and nonprofits to improve neighborhood quality of life.

REF: Human Services Obj. 3

*Small projects initiated and carried out by neighbors are most effective in improving neighborhood and building community. Examples include tree-planting sponsored by The Park People; neighborhood small grants programs sponsored by Mile High United Way and The Denver Foundation; riverfront cleanup led by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado; and house-painting and property cleanup for senior home owners sponsored by service clubs and congregations.*

REF: Human Services Obj 3

- 3-C** Promote planning, urban design and activities within neighborhoods that foster supportive relations among family members, neighbors, different generations, cultural groups and institutions.

REF: Human Services 4-D

- 3-D** Develop strong partnerships among neighborhoods, police and other City agencies to solve problems, prevent crime and reduce violence. The City should encourage efforts to:

- mobilize the human assets within neighborhoods (e.g., scout troops and service clubs) to take responsibility for improvement activities such as trash cleanup and graffiti removal;



- increase resident involvement in Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention education;

*Neighborhood Watch consists simply of “eyes on the street” — neighbors watching out for each other to reduce crime in the community. Citizens are taught how to make their homes less inviting as a target for burglars; how to participate in Operation Identification, making their personal property less desirable to burglars; and how to be alert to suspicious activity in their neighborhood.*

- improve the image of safety in neighborhoods through public education, eliminating visual factors indicating crime (e.g., boarded-up houses, graffiti, litter), and increased police visibility; and
- create and enforce a “good neighbor policy” designed to address boarded-up properties, noise, odor, graffiti, trash, weeds and illegal conduct by owners, operators, tenants or patrons.

**3-F** Continue to develop policies that foster communication and partnership between neighborhoods and the Department of Safety, such as:

- implementation of the Denver Police Department Strategic Plan 1999–2004;
- adequate resources for community policing, including personnel training, equipment, facilities and current technology;
- continual reinforcement of high performance standards, professional ethics and integrity within public safety agencies; and
- consideration of expanding restorative justice and decentralization of judicial proceedings.

*Denver’s community policing hallmarks are problem-solving combined with community partnership and crime prevention. This approach attacks underlying causes of crime and disorder. In this model, the police, other City agencies and the community focus together on problem locations.*

**3-F** Prevent crime and promote personal safety by using principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in project design.

*CPTED principles promote safety and deter crime through the use of design concepts and physical components that reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior. Clear line-of-sight, good lighting, certain types of construction materials, space design, and location and choice of landscape materials are examples of components that can be incorporated into development to reduce opportunities for criminal activity.*

**3-G** Reduce gun-related violence, including injuries, homicides and suicides, by enacting reasonable and comprehensive gun-safety legislation.

REF: Metropolitan Cooperation 6-A





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## Objective 4 ■ Schools as the Center of Community

Collaborate with Denver Public Schools (DPS) to strengthen the role of neighborhood schools as community focal points.

REF: Education 1-F; Land Use 3-C

*In 1995, a federal court released DPS from a 1974 court order to achieve racial integration by busing many students from their neighborhoods to schools elsewhere. Court-ordered busing caused many middle-income families with school-aged children to move from Denver to suburban communities, resulting in a steep decline in DPS enrollment and funding as well as Denver's population. The end of court-ordered busing and the return to neighborhood schools is one of the most significant and positive events affecting neighborhood life in over a decade.*

REF: Education 1-F

### Strategies

- 4-A** Support efforts to utilize schools as neighborhood centers for community activities and services. When appropriate, locate City-sponsored services and activities at school facilities.  
REF: Education Obj. 5; Legacies 14-C
- 4-B** Encourage expansion of the role of schools in Denver's neighborhoods. Include representation from schools in neighborhood activities sponsored by the City. Support communication and interaction between schools and neighborhoods.
- 4-C** Take a leadership role in strengthening public support for schools by encouraging residents to volunteer in their schools, and by inviting schools to be actively involved in neighborhood life.  
REF: Education 1-C

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## Objective 5 ■ Management and Maintenance of Community Facilities

Maintain the physical and operational integrity of community facilities. REF: Arts & Culture 2-B

### Strategies

- 5-A** As part of the siting and approval process, require development of a management and operational practices plan for the facility, including ongoing communication with the public. The facility management will be responsible for implementing the plan.



- 5-B Maintain the physical integrity and appearance of City-owned community facilities and ensure proper operation.
- 5-C Ensure proper maintenance and operation of privately owned community facilities by enforcing all applicable regulations and codes.

## Objective 6 ■ Collaborative Decision-Making

Improve the decision-making process for both new facilities and the expansion of existing facilities. REF: Arts & Culture 2-B

*The development, ownership and management of community facilities may be public, such as a recreation center; quasi-public, such as a tax-supported sports venue governed by an authority; or private, such as a nonprofit performing arts center. Whether public or private, the processes for siting and management of community facilities outlined in Plan 2000 should be observed.*

### Strategies

- 6-A Develop a participatory process that encourages open communication among all affected parties for the siting and expansion of facilities that are not already guided by existing local, state and federal laws. The process should:
  - REF: Neighborhoods Obj. 2
  - use broad community outreach to achieve the greatest participation possible;
  - include all affected parties, including advocates, supporters and opponents in the process;
  - be principled, fair, open, respectful of all viewpoints, and comply with state and federal fair housing legislation;
  - ensure that all participants provide timely, complete and accurate information regarding the need or desire for the facility or expansion, including likely positive and negative consequences of the decision;
  - consider geographic distribution of similar facilities;
  - strive to reach general agreement of all affected parties concerning the need for or desirability of the facility, including possible consequences to the City and public if the facility is not provided or enlarged; and
  - provide for final decision-making by a neutral body if agreement is not achieved, when legally feasible.
- 6-B Perform an evaluation to critique the decision-making process and make adjustments as necessary.



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## Objective 7 ■ Planning for Community Facilities

Plan for community facilities and strive for fair distribution, sensitive siting and quality design to minimize their impact on neighborhoods. REF: Arts & Culture 2-B; Human Services Obj. 2

### Strategies

- 7-A** Strive for fair geographic distribution of community facilities to the extent possible by mapping existing facilities, using the map as a guide in future site selection, and addressing the issue of fair distribution in any recommendation to the Mayor and City Council.  
REF: Land Use 1-I
- 7-B** Pursue opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation in siting and financing of facilities that serve regional needs.  
REF: Metropolitan 1-E, 3-A; Land Use 5-A
- 7-C** Plan for future facilities and expansion of existing ones by identifying and reserving land. When financially feasible, purchase the land.  
REF: Land Use 1-A
- 7-D** Ensure quality design compatible with neighborhood character. The site plan, materials and landscaping should enhance the aesthetic and environmental quality of the neighborhood in which a facility will be sited or expanded.  
REF: Legacy Obj. 1
- 7-E** Encourage multi-uses of existing and future community facilities to maximize effective service delivery and financial efficiency.
- 7-F** Minimize traffic impacts by ensuring that facilities are accessible by multiple modes of transportation and, whenever feasible, use technologies such as teleconferencing to reduce the number of trips generated by the facility.  
REF: Arts & Culture 2-G; Mobility 7-D
- 7-G** Balance the potential negative impacts of a community facility by providing amenities and improvements desired by its neighborhood.







# Our Long-Term Human Environment

**Economic Activity**

**Neighborhoods**

**Education**

**Human Services**

**Arts & Culture**



# Education

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*“If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.”*

*~ Attributed to Derek Bok  
president of Harvard in the 1980s*







Denver schools nurture a love of reading in young children



A young student gets individual attention from her teacher



GOAL ■ Provide Denver residents with lifelong learning opportunities.

OVERVIEW ■ Denver's future lies in fostering excellent schools and a well-educated citizenry. The rapidly changing nature of information and technology, combined with the emergence of a global economy, mandates continuous lifelong learning, with a greater emphasis on multilingualism, to meet future workforce needs. Additionally, dramatic findings from brain development research have demonstrated that fundamental learning capacity is shaped at a very early age, underscoring the importance of quality child care.

While public education is not a municipal function, Denver's sustainability is inextricably linked to the quality of its school system. With the return to neighborhood schools in 1995, communities now look to schools to offer a wider range of educational, recreational and supportive services at all times of the day. Denver is challenged to promote and support a continuum of high-quality educational opportunities for individuals at every life stage, with an emphasis in the following areas: strengthening its partnership with Denver Public Schools (DPS) and finding effective ways to apply City resources to educational needs; playing a leadership role in the creation of a high-quality early care and education system; helping to expand the range of after-school offerings at neighborhood schools; and leveraging access to continuing education and training for working adults.





## ■ Introduction

There are no throwaway people in a sustainable society. Such a society recognizes that the well-being of the whole community depends on its investment in developing as fully as possible the abilities and talents of each person. Traditionally, education has been viewed as a process that begins with kindergarten and ends upon graduation from high school or college. Today and in the future, education will increasingly become a lifelong process for nearly everyone. More than ever, children must start school ready to learn, with preparation beginning at birth. The mission of education must extend beyond instructing students in specific curricula; schools must instill in students a love of learning that will serve them throughout their lives. The rapidly changing nature of information, knowledge and technology mandates continuous lifelong learning in every part of our lives: in structured education, in workplace training, and in everyday learning experiences in the community and at home.

The sustainability of Denver's economic, social and cultural health depends on the strength of its formal educational systems. The quality of education in Denver is critical to workforce development, one of the most crucial factors in attracting and retaining businesses and jobs. Denver's vibrant cultural life can be sustained only with the support of appreciative audiences receptive to new ideas and creative expression. The city's quality of life requires the involvement of citizens who are educated, creative and capable of engaging in complex problem-solving.

*"All cities that want to be livable must succeed in two areas — public safety and kids in schools. Denver has devoted money, time and people to this purpose, because the safety and economy of Denver today rest on public confidence in the schooling of its children in DPS. Our future lies in fostering excellent schools and a well-educated citizenry."*

*Mayor Wellington E. Webb*

Denver's population and its demographic mix will continue to be affected by the quality of K-12 education because this is often the determinant in a family's choice of where to live. During the 1970s, Denver offered the nation a clear example of a city profoundly transformed by the legal decisions of the Civil Rights era. In 1974, Denver Public Schools (DPS) implemented systemwide busing involving 56 of its 81 schools and 23,000 children, pairing mostly Anglo schools with schools that had predominantly students of color. After court-ordered busing began, DPS enrollment dropped from an all-time high of 96,936 in 1963 to a low of 58,279 in 1989; Denver also lost population.



A middle school student reads out loud in a school library project



Young musicians in Denver Public Schools



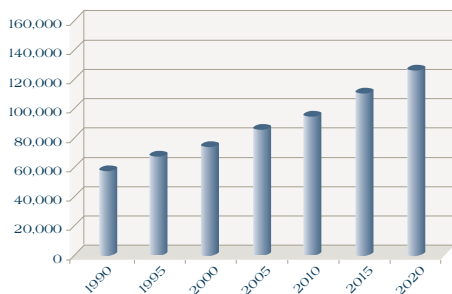
Hands-on learning in an outdoor science lab

In 1995, the U.S. District Court declared the district “unitary” and, after more than two decades of oversight, ended court-ordered busing. DPS enrollment rose above 69,000 in the 1998–99 school year, an increase of 5,000 in three years.

Thus, Denver’s schools are at an important juncture. In recent years, DPS has intensified efforts in the areas of literacy, early childhood education and school-to-career programs. It has also placed a priority on making a variety of educational alternatives available within the system. Families and communities are looking to schools for more relevance, before- and after-school programs, services and resources. The primary business of schools remains unchanged: educating young people in basic skills. Yet the complexities of our society and the future demand that our schools do the basics, do them well, meet the needs of every student, keep pace with technological advances, and respond to social problems and neighborhood needs. Appropriately, DPS and the City are engaged in partnerships to address this complex mix of mandates.

The quality and variety of higher education within Denver are competitive with those of American cities of similar size. Especially important in today’s rapidly changing world, all of these institutions offer continuing education opportunities for working adults: Community College of Denver (CCD), Metropolitan State College (Metro), Regis University, University of Colorado at Denver (UCD) and University of Denver (DU). These institutions are increasingly collaborating to offer expanded learning opportunities for students and partnering with business to meet workforce challenges. At Auraria Higher Education Center, three institutions — UCD, Metro and CCD — all share a Downtown campus and their curricula. The doors to higher education are opening wider due to the efforts of schools such as CCD, which experienced a 300 percent increase in graduation among students of color during the past decade.

Denver Public Schools  
projected student enrollment through 2020





## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Early brain development** ■ In the past decade, a significant body of research has been published that supports the need for enriched environments to stimulate growth and development in very young children, enabling them to reach their full physical, mental and emotional potentials. For example, when good early child care is provided to disadvantaged children, studies show immediate boosts in IQ of as much as eight points and ultimately a 31 percent increase in high school graduation rates.

**Increasing enrollment** ■ In 1995, after nearly a generation of court-ordered busing, DPS was allowed to return to a system of neighborhood schools. After approximately 20 years of declining enrollments, Denver schools showed consistent growth during the 1990s, climbing by more than 5,200 students from 1995 to 1998.

**Schools of choice** ■ To better meet students' goals and interests, DPS offers 12 diverse magnet school programs, ranging from fundamental academies to the School of the Arts and the Center for International Studies. DPS is also home to four charter schools offering parents and community members the chance to try out new approaches to education within the public school setting. In 1999, more than 20 percent of students attended a school of choice.

**Collaborative Decision-Making Teams (CDMs)** ■ The establishment of CDMs in the early 1990s allowed educators, administrators, parents, local businesses and neighborhood organizations to plan together for their school. CDMs use a consensus model of decision-making to help the students become successful learners.

**Adult education** ■ More students and older adults are recognizing the need for secondary, professional and continuing education. Adult programs teaching professional skills, weekend and evening degree programs, and work-to-career programs have increased in number and enrollment.

### Challenges

**Residual trust issues** ■ The school district has been challenged by concerns about access to quality education, fair allocation of resources, and its capacity to address educational needs of all students. Historic conflicts about educational philosophy and roles of stakeholders have weakened trust in some areas.



A high school student learns welding in a school-to-career program



Young competitors in a school chess club





Working together to solve problems in a Beacons after-school program



**School achievement** ■ While educational achievement in DPS has increased steadily, and while the annual dropout rate declined from 9.9 percent in 1994–95 to 6.5 percent in 1996–97, achievement remains below state and national averages. The dropout rate for Hispanic students remains unacceptably high, despite evidence of decline in the late 1990s.

**Early childhood care and education** ■ Numerous studies have demonstrated that children who receive high-quality early childhood care and education enter school prepared to learn, and experience sustained improvement in a wide range of cognitive, motor and behavioral skills. Unfortunately, however, fully 87 percent of child care in Colorado has been found to be mediocre to poor, with 20 percent of that care deemed unsafe for children. High staff turnover rates and inadequate teacher training, fueled by low wages for child-care workers, are eroding critical quality care.

**School voucher debate** ■ Vouchers have been soundly defeated in two public referendums, but across the country the debates continue. Vouchers allow families to use public school tax dollars for a choice of public, private or parochial schools. Critics say this leaves public schools with fewer dollars to educate remaining students. Proponents argue that vouchers will compel public schools to better compete in the education marketplace.

**Changing family needs and demographics** ■ Denver’s population has far greater racial, cultural, socioeconomic and language diversity than any other municipality in Colorado. That diversity is magnified in the Denver Public Schools, where in 1999, 48.4 percent of the student population was Latino, 25.3 percent Anglo, 21.4 percent African-American, 3.5 percent Asian-Pacific Island and 1.4 percent American Indian. Reflecting this cultural diversity, DPS provides English-acquisition instruction for 80 languages other than Spanish. In addition, 41 percent of DPS students come from families near, at or below poverty level. Another 11 percent of students enroll in special education programs. Faced with increasing cultural diversity and the expanding need for before- and after-school programs for working parents, schools are challenged by an ever-widening range of educational and family needs.

**Changing workforce demands** ■ All businesses need technologically savvy employees, and high-tech businesses need even higher levels of expertise. Denver’s strong economy heightens this need for highly skilled employees, which, as of 1999, is going unmet from the local labor pool in many industries. Preparing students and retraining adult workers for these jobs are significant challenges for educators and business.

Lifelong learning means pursuing your own unique talents







## Opportunities

**Denver is a partner** ■ The City of Denver has devoted money, time and people to partner with DPS in its goals for students. The City has pledged to help DPS to improve both education for children at-risk and community confidence in the schools.

**Early childhood programs** ■ Along with subsidizing child care for more than 5,300 children per month, the City of Denver has assumed administration of Head Start, serving 58 percent of Denver's eligible children in partnership with DPS and private service providers. DPS preschool programs serve almost 3,000 young children. A coalition of business, philanthropic, religious and political leaders in 1998 created Educare, an ambitious initiative to improve Colorado's early care and education system.

**Increased accountability** ■ DPS has demonstrated commitment to developing literate students, preparing students for school-to-career and college, increasing school-readiness for young children, and increasing participation in the communities it serves. DPS is holding itself accountable for literacy, graduation rates, improved instruction and significant change when progress is not evident.

**Education collaboration** ■ A coalition of 20 educational institutions has formed to provide a world-class education and training environment to support Colorado's growing manufacturing community. At Lowry, the Higher Education and Advanced Technology (HEAT) Center, an initiative of the Colorado Community College and Education System, focuses on technology-influenced learning and delivery processes.

**Distance learning** ■ Use of technology has opened education to those previously limited by transportation barriers and traditional class schedules. Both public and private higher education programs are now on-line, as with Colorado Electronic Community College and Western Governors University. Ultimate success hinges on using distance learning technologies appropriately and equitably.

**Family and community needs** ■ Collaborative decision-making teams in DPS schools facilitate school-community dialogue and site-based planning. Expanded efforts to make schools and school grounds available as neighborhood centers and parks with before- and after-school programs are transforming neighborhood schools into good neighbors for families and communities. Such programs include tutoring, middle school sports, academic enrichment and school-based clinics.



Sports are a valuable part of the school experience for girls



Middle school students learn to be knowledgeable and proficient users of information technology



Early childhood programs prepare children to learn at school

**Multilingualism** ■ By embracing its many languages and cultures, Denver can further its economic and cultural goals. Businesses can build on the skills of bilingual or multilingual employees, valuing their ability to expand business globally.

**Quality higher education** ■ Strong public and private educational institutions in Denver provide economic and educational benefits. More students are entering post-secondary school education with a broad range of choices such as professional schools, trade schools and technical schools in addition to community colleges and universities.



## ■ Vision of Success

The lifelong learning needs of Denver's residents will be met through cooperation and commitment to excellence in education for all citizens. The City will continue to support and cooperate with Denver educational institutions so residents can benefit from the highest quality and greatest variety attainable. The City will especially emphasize its relationship with DPS in Denver's neighborhoods. In coming years, Denver will experience the following developments in education:

**Early childhood education** ■ All Denver children receive quality early childhood care, education and child development services. Early childhood centers are staffed by educated and trained providers, with minimal turnover. Child-care providers are paid professional wages and respected for their work. All child-care and Head Start facilities meet or exceed appropriate quality standards. Child development services and parenting classes are easily available and affordable for all parents, especially new ones. Major employment centers include child-care centers. All Denver children enter school ready to learn.

**K-12 education** ■ Academic achievement of children from all socioeconomic backgrounds improves dramatically, and all children read and write at their grade level or higher. Public schools are well and equitably funded. Denver has an adequate supply of qualified teachers, well prepared in their subject areas and trained to deal with the challenges of urban education. CDMs effectively facilitate school-community dialogue and site-based planning.

**Neighborhood schools** ■ Neighborhood schools are a focal point of community activity, and schools are a key point of access to human services and continuing education. Schools offer organized activities after school, during the summer, and on weekends for elementary and middle school children.

**Access** ■ Children have access to resources regardless of the public school they attend. All-day kindergarten is available for all children.

**Technology** ■ Denver Public School students understand and use state-of-the-art educational technology. Adequate technical resources facilitate learning for all.

**Choices** ■ Public schools offer alternative educational philosophies and practices to families. School-to-career programs and cooperative work experiences connect more students to the world of work. School dropout rates dramatically decline. Multilingual students are valued and well served by education.



Good teachers enliven the classroom — they make learning challenging and fun



A stimulating and nurturing environment increases an infant's potential for future academic success — and makes a happy baby!





Three schools of higher education share the Auraria Campus



**Post-secondary education** ■ More high school graduates from all socioeconomic backgrounds continue education and/or pursue productive careers. Post-secondary education and career training reach working adults of all socioeconomic levels, including low-income persons striving for self-sufficiency.

**Adult education** ■ Colorado funds programs to teach and dramatically increase adult literacy. Opportunities for continuing education are plentiful and accessible, especially for working adults. Resident adults who are bilingual (or multilingual) are valued.





## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Working Together

Continue to strengthen the City-school partnership.

#### Strategies

- 1-A** Support Denver Public Schools' efforts to achieve its four core goals:
- Develop literate students.
  - Increase school-readiness.
  - Prepare students for the school-to-career/college transition.
  - Increase use of schools as neighborhood resources.
- 1-B** Support DPS's efforts to meet Colorado's education goals:
- Improve educational results for children at risk of school failure.
  - Cut the student dropout rate.
  - Boost graduation rates.
- 1-C** Encourage parent, volunteer, business and community involvement in education and schools.  
REF: Economic 1-D; Neighborhoods 4-C
- 1-D** Ensure effective communication between the City and DPS by strengthening joint planning and advisory groups such as the City-School Coordinating Committee, Council-Board lunches and the Mayor's Educational Advisory Committee.
- 1-E** Strategically link City resources with educational needs, such as promoting better coordination between the Denver Public Library programs and DPS's reading initiatives.
- 1-F** Identify and consider any opportunities to assist or coordinate with local schools whenever the City makes capital improvements in a neighborhood.  
REF: Neighborhoods Obj. 4; Land Use 3-C

*"Whenever it has been possible, schools and neighborhood parks have been combined so that it will be practical to use the school building in the recreational program and also to add to the charm of the setting of the building."*

*The Denver Plan, Vol. 1, A Report by the Denver Planning Commission, Dec. 1929*



- 1-G Encourage DPS to share grounds and amenities for community use, such as recreation, and joint landscaping projects to create more open space.  
REF: Legacies 14-C; Neighborhoods, Obj. 4; Land Use 3-C
- 1-H Support efforts to jointly market Denver neighborhoods and schools.  
REF: Housing 4-B; Legacies

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## Objective 2 ■ Optimal Child Development

Ensure that Denver children enter school ready to succeed by improving the quality and availability of early childhood care, education and child development services.

REF: Economic 1-F; Human Services 1-E

### Strategies

- 2-A Support high-quality comprehensive preschool educational experiences for all of Denver's children from birth to kindergarten.
- 2-B Ensure that all early childhood initiatives, programs, projects and policies of the City are consistent with *Our Children, Our Future Act II*.

*Our Children, Our Future is a five-year comprehensive plan for early childhood care and education in Denver, jointly developed and updated in 1997 by representatives from the City, Denver Public Schools and the community. The plan aims at the best system of care and education for all Denver children through high-quality services seamlessly and efficiently delivered.*

- 2-C Promote the cognitive, emotional, intellectual and physical growth and development of infants and young children by:
  - enhancing access to comprehensive prenatal, parenting and family support services;  
REF: Human Services 1-C, 4-A
  - integrating child health services into preschool programs, especially those serving low-income children; and
  - maintaining exceptional Head Start programs.
- 2-D Collaborate to promote adequate, convenient and high-quality child-care options for working families, especially those moving from welfare to work.
- 2-E Adopt reimbursement policies that support and reflect high standards in child care.



## Objective 3 ■ Success for All Students

Ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed in school and in their future workplace regardless of ethnic or economic differences.

### Strategies

**3-A** Support DPS in its efforts to provide all students with high-quality instruction and opportunities to succeed academically.

**3-B** Support and provide assistance with curriculum enhancement as appropriate, such as supplementing environmental education programs at city sites.

*REF: Legacies 8-C, 12-B; Arts & Culture 5-A*

**3-C** Support the efforts of the Denver School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) to increase access to primary health care for underserved children and youth.

*REF: Human Services 1-C, 4-B, 4-C*

*Through a partnership among DPS, Denver Health and several other agencies, the SBHC provides preventive and primary health services at eight high schools, three middle schools and four elementary schools. Teams of professional staff service needs regardless of ability to pay. Services include physicals and immunizations, mental health, substance abuse, counseling and reproductive health.*

**3-D** Collaborate with schools and other support systems to reduce the dropout rate and develop educational support for at-risk and out-of-school youth. As in community-based programs supported through Denver's Safe City Office, these initiatives should:

*REF: Human Services 4-B; Legacies 10E, Obj. 13*

- help children and youth gain skills, self-esteem and a sense of hope about the future;
- provide constructive after-school activities; and
- engage youth in leadership roles.

*The Geraldine Thompson School Attendance program is a joint project of DPS, Denver Department of Human Services and the Denver courts. The program uses an intensive team-based approach to help chronic truants return to and stay in school.*



- 3-E** Support school-to-career programs and cooperative work experiences that help students apply academic knowledge to the world of work and prepare them for the workforce of the future.

REF: Economic 1-D

*The City recently piloted Club Denver, a career-focused after-school program offered in most DPS middle schools. Club Denver was a first-place winner in the U.S. Conference of Mayors' City Livability Awards in 1997.*

- 3-F** Promote and encourage educational practices that provide every student with information technology training.

REF: Economic 6-C

- 3-G** Collaborate with school professionals and the broader community to ensure safe schools that are free from physical violence and psychological abuse.

REF: Human Services 4-D

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## Objective 4 ■ Multilingualism as an Advantage

Support the efforts of non-English-speaking individuals to both learn English and maintain fluency in their native language.

### Strategies

- 4-A** Support school-based efforts for non-English-speakers to gain proficiency in English.
- 4-B** Support the efforts of individuals to retain their literacy and skills in a non-English native language.
- 4-C** Capitalize on the economic benefits of a multilingual citizenry as an asset within the global marketplace.

REF: Economic 3-D

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## Objective 5 ■ Schools as Neighborhood Centers

Meet the educational, vocational, social, recreational and health needs of communities by supporting the use of schools as neighborhood centers. REF: Neighborhoods 4-A

### Strategies

- 5-A** Support and participate in collaborative, community-based planning processes to create within neighborhood schools a seamless system of





support services and educational opportunities for students, their families and the school community.

- 5-B** Assist schools in their efforts to enhance the range of programs and activities offered after school and year-round by promoting and supporting partnerships among DPS, service providers and neighborhood groups.

**REF:** Legacies 13-B

- 5-C** Support continued involvement with, and promote coordination among, school-linked programs that have demonstrated effectiveness as community centers.

*The Beacons Centers, located at three DPS middle schools, provide children, youth and families with academic, personal enrichment and recreational activities after school, on weekends and during the summer. These programs promote youth leadership, increased parental involvement, better academic performance and safer, more supportive neighborhoods.*

## Objective 6 ■ Lifelong Learning

Provide adults with opportunities to continue learning throughout life.

### Strategies

- 6-A** Encourage the broadest use of the Denver Public Library system, the new One-Stop Career Centers, community centers, schools, community colleges and other existing facilities.

**REF:** Human Services 1-D

- 6-B** Promote collaboration and innovation in providing educational, vocational and enrichment activities accessible for all adults, including those who are disabled, older, of lower income and working.

**REF:** Economic 1-E, 2-D

- 6-C** Support appropriate and equitable use of distance learning to improve access to education. Train people by using neighborhood-based, interactive communications technology.

**REF:** Economic 6-C

- 6-D** Support adult literacy initiatives.



# Our Long-Term Human Environment

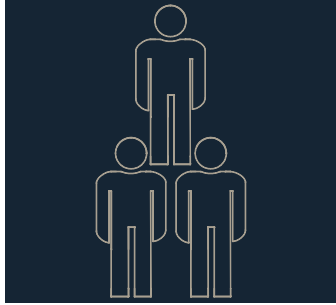
**Economic Activity**

**Neighborhoods**

**Education**

**Human Services**

**Arts & Culture**



# Human

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# Services

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*“In helping others, we shall help ourselves,  
for whatever good we give out completes the circle  
and comes back to us.”*

*~ Flora Edwards*







Serious sports at a wheelchair Frisbee competition



Throughout the city, individuals and organizations work to provide safe, decent and affordable housing



**GOAL** ■ Connect people in need to opportunity and support.

**OVERVIEW** ■ The 1990s ushered in major changes and challenges in the human service system. Among other events, the 1993 “Summer of Violence” and the Columbine High School shooting tragedy of 1999 riveted public attention on how our children are doing. Welfare reform’s ticking clock and new work requirements prompted a major shift from determining eligibility to supporting work. Meanwhile, Denver’s population became steadily more diverse and older.

Government cannot meet this wide range of competing human needs by itself, nor in the same old ways. System reengineering must start with building healthy communities that connect people to opportunity, caring relationships and access to services. There must also be a heightened public commitment to fostering the healthy development of children and youth, and a human service delivery system that is comprehensive in scope, coordinated and collaborative in action, and responsive to culturally diverse and working populations.



## ■ Introduction

People are our most precious resource. To contribute to communities and the workplace, individuals and families need a healthy environment that fosters their growth and supports positive, productive life activities. In human services, access is an overarching theme. Access is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond an individual's physical ability to conveniently reach or use a particular resource. It includes the capacity to know about resources through outreach and technology, to benefit from service delivery due to colocation and integration of high-quality programs, and to use a resource because it's culturally responsive and treats people fairly and respectfully.

To thrive, people at all ages need access to a comprehensive support system, ideally within their neighborhood. Components of this system are safe, decent and adequate housing; nearby employment and shopping; caring neighbors; ample amenities and open space; quality child care; educational and training opportunities; and nutritional, health care and other social services.

Most Denver residents can access most or all of these support systems. However, many residents need extra help for a variety of reasons — poverty, language and cultural barriers, lack of education, physical and/or mental disability, and isolation, among others. With changing family structures and demographics, human services for people in need must be more flexible and responsive.

Shifts in the nation's social welfare policies during the late 1990s became a driving force in delivering human services locally — especially the emphasis on moving public assistance recipients into paying jobs as quickly as possible and rigid time limitations on benefits. While the Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) is the lead agency in Denver, moving people from welfare to sustainable employment requires a broad range of services from many different community partners. The impacts of welfare reform affect child-care providers, schools, the health-care system, nonprofit human service agencies, job-training programs and housing programs. Their challenge is to serve increasing numbers of clients, helping them to juggle family and job-training responsibilities.

While welfare-to-work has become a dominant theme in human services, many Denver residents live with conditions that make self-sufficiency unlikely or impossible. People with permanent physical, mental and developmental disabilities will always need a measure of help to survive with dignity and to join in community life. Older adults, especially Denver's increasing number of people aged 85 and older, need varying degrees of care, both home-based and institutional. Some impoverished people lack skills and have lost hope of employment.



There is always a need for programs where people connect across generations

Neighborhood clinics provide comprehensive screenings for child and family care





Habitat for Humanity works with potential home owners to build their home

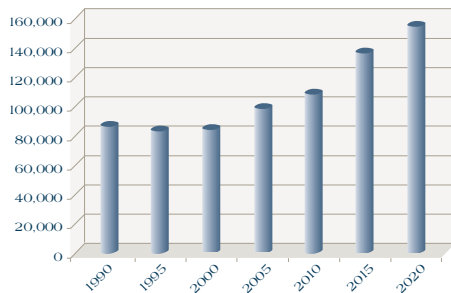


The 1990s have also sounded a wake-up call about the needs of children and youth. Recent research on brain development highlights the critical need of children for developmental stimulation in their youngest years. The 1993 “Summer of Violence” and the 1999 fatal shootings at Columbine High School alerted metro Denver to the need for more focus on the special needs of youth from all walks of life. And a heightened awareness of the number of children growing up in abusive, neglectful and dangerous homes calls for community vigilance in protecting and nurturing everyone’s children. It is time to focus on the question in the traditional greeting of Africa’s Masai tribe: *Kasserian ingera*, or “How are the children?” The commitment to concerted action has never been greater.

A city cannot sustain itself without compassion for people who need extra help to live decent and meaningful lives in the community. Helping people meet their basic survival needs is more than a moral imperative; it is essential to the social order and economic stability of the whole community. While the public system must ultimately be in place to provide basic safety-net services, government alone cannot meet the wide and diverse range of competing human needs. Future efforts must focus on creating more effective public-private partnerships, supporting approaches that prevent problems from developing, and cultivating nurturing neighborhoods.



Denver residents over 60 years of age, projected to 2020







## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Welfare reform** ■ Federal legislation in 1996 created welfare-to-work programs nationwide and changed welfare programs in place for decades. Given greatly enhanced local autonomy, the Mayor's Welfare Reform Task Force responded to welfare reform with a comprehensive plan for sustainable employment and self-sufficiency. A newly created citizen Welfare Reform Board now oversees making this plan and policy work.

**Reduced TANF rolls** ■ Households receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the welfare payments formerly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), declined substantially from a peak of 11,431 in 1990 to 4,276 in January 1999.

**Child support collections up** ■ In 1997, paternity was established in 65 percent of cases of children born out of wedlock to clients of the Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS). More than 40 percent of support orders were being paid.

**Child care** ■ DDHS established a model drop-in child-care center at its main training site, to serve parents attending self-sufficiency programs and to demonstrate qualities parents should seek in choosing their private-sector child-care providers. This center's capacity was doubled at the Richard T. Castro Human Services Center, DDHS's headquarters, opened in 1999.

**Youth** ■ Investments in youth programs, including the Denver Safe City Initiative, have provided teens with alternatives to gang activity and youth pregnancy.

*Denver's Safe City Initiative was inaugurated in the wake of the 1993 "Summer of Violence" when the number of youths killed or injured in gang-related activities climbed to new heights. The City created the Safe City Office to oversee youth public safety activities and to financially support youth-serving agencies focused on prevention.*

**Denver Health Medical Center** ■ Denver General Hospital, formerly a City-owned facility, was restructured as an independent hospital authority in 1997. This strengthened the viability of Denver's public health system to meet the needs of all Denver residents regardless of their ability to pay.



Denver's population is becoming more diverse and older

Neighborhood children celebrate the opening of Berkeley Park Center







Denver's public health system works to meet the needs of all Denver residents regardless of their ability to pay



## Challenges

**Poverty** ■ In 1990, more than 27 percent of Denver's children lived in poverty. In 1997, of 9,280 children born in Denver, nearly 30 percent are growing up in households at or below poverty level. In 1998, 56.5 percent of school-aged children qualified for the free lunch program because their family income was at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

**Aging population** ■ Denver's older adult population is growing. The number of people aged 85 and up increased 27.5 percent from 1990 to 1998. The population 60 and up is projected to grow from 18 percent in 1990 to 23 percent in 2020.

**Cultural diversity** ■ Increasing diversity creates the need for more culturally competent human services.

**People with disabilities** ■ Too many areas within Denver have sidewalks that are too narrow or have no sidewalks at all, blocking access for people in wheelchairs. The number of young people with disabilities living in Denver is increasing dramatically.

**Employment barriers** ■ While many welfare recipients have begun moving to work, many of those remaining on public assistance struggle with serious barriers to employment, such as domestic violence, little or no work history or education, physical and/or mental health problems, and substance abuse. Discrimination remains an intractable problem that has not been eradicated entirely from the workplace. At the same time, federal regulations severely restrict remedial education and training as stand-alone programs because clients must go to work as quickly as possible. Those rules require innovative work development strategies that combine work and learning.

**Case management** ■ The needs of individuals and families working toward self-sufficiency are complex, requiring individualized case management. Child care, transportation, shifting public assistance benefits, job-training requirements, social skills, wardrobe, motivation and fear of the unknown are among the more common challenges faced by adults entering the workforce. To be effective, case management requires workers with higher-level skills and smaller caseloads, factors likely to increase human service costs. Decreasing caseloads have created a public expectation that costs should be going down proportionately, even though those remaining are more likely to have multiple barriers requiring both case management and more intensive services.

**Increasing homelessness** ■ During the 1990s the homeless population increased significantly. The fastest-growing groups within the homeless population are women and children, and youth on their own. From 1988 to 1995, the homeless population in the metro area increased overall by 45



percent and by 75 percent for children. Families now comprise 46 percent of the homeless population, half of them headed by single parents. Ironically, Denver's robust economy attracts unskilled and semiskilled workers who can't earn enough for housing in a market with low vacancy and high rents.

**Expansion of managed care reimbursement** ■ Reimbursement policies under public and private managed care systems threaten to damage the quality of services and capacity at public health-care facilities. This makes it increasingly difficult for the City to ensure care for all Denver citizens regardless of their ability to pay. The managed care model is also being used to finance other care systems, including mental health, child welfare and substance-abuse rehabilitation. Problems of quality of and access to care, customer choice and paperwork are akin to those in health care.

**Child-care crisis** ■ The booming economy has increased working parents' need for child care. This economy also makes it more difficult to attract and retain qualified child-care workers who can easily earn more in less demanding occupations. Staffing shortages are reducing the number of licensed slots available, while turnover rates ranging from 47 to 60 percent erode the quality of care. Despite growing job opportunities in shift work, child care is generally not available at night and during weekends. Child care for children with special needs is in short supply. Care for sick children is woefully inadequate, creating an especially difficult situation for single working parents.

**Children in out-of-home placements** ■ A late 1990s survey found that more than 25 out of every 1,000 children in Denver were living in an out-of-home placement mandated by either neglect or abuse. This is the highest rate in Colorado.

**Teen pregnancies** ■ Teen pregnancy is a key indicator of poverty in young families. Denver's rate of teen pregnancy is double the state's. While teen pregnancies in Colorado dropped gradually in the mid-1990s, the rate in Denver rose again at the end of the decade.

**Safety-net services** ■ People whose circumstances permanently prevent them from earning a living and/or living independently must be provided with safe shelter, nutritious food, health care and/or mental health services, hygiene, a subsistence income, and connection to the community. Welfare reform has redirected resources to support self-sufficiency. The community must ensure a safety net for those who do not qualify for public assistance.



Denver Health's neighborhood clinics provide essential medical services to many residents



Community outreach events inform clients about available programs and services



## Opportunities

**Community support** ■ In the Heart and Soul of Denver Survey, residents expressed concern over the quality of life for people who are poor or have mental disabilities. They would be inclined to support efforts to reduce economic disparity.

**Welfare-to-work funding** ■ Denver has obtained a major welfare-to-work grant to offer a wider range of support services for new job entrants designed to make working affordable. This funding reflects the federal government's recognition that helping people find jobs is only the first step, and that those new to the workforce need extra support until they obtain a firm toehold in the workplace.

**Economic growth** ■ In 1999, the economy offers opportunities for almost anyone with the skills and motivation to work. Long-term economic forecasts suggest sustained growth and the ability to absorb many more entrants into the workforce. Wages are going up in many areas. The average wage for new job entrants graduating from government employment programs ranged from \$6.66 to \$9.42 per hour in 1998. Faced with major employment shortages, employers have become more open to helping individuals become and remain employable.

**Employment support** ■ A One-Stop Career Center system has been designed to meet the workforce development needs of job-seekers and employers.

*The Denver One-Stop Career Center system connects employment, education and training services into a network of resources at the local and state levels. Traditional Job Service and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) offices have been combined into the One-Stop Career Centers. Customers can visit the One-Stop Career Center in person or directly connect to the center's information holdings through a personal computer or remote access.*

**Neighborhood centers** ■ At schools and at other neighborhood sites, Denver has had a dramatic increase in the number of sites providing a wide range of integrated educational and human service programs at a common location. Examples include Denver Public Schools' Neighborhood Centers, the Beacons Project and the Southwest Family Centers.

**Increasing volunteerism** ■ With 54 percent of adults reporting some level of volunteer involvement, Denver's level of volunteerism has risen over the last 10 years and is higher than the national average. This volunteer pool has become more diverse in age and background, and is increasingly focused on helping children and youth.



## ■ Vision of Success

In the future, the City will be successful in integrating human services, policies and programs to support self-sufficiency, and enhancing access to programs that support youth and the aging, changing family needs, and persons with disabilities through coordinated, cost-effective and caring implementation. Success will look like this:

**Early intervention** ■ Children and youth issues are the community's priority. Public and private resources are strategically focused on helping every child get the type of good beginning needed to develop innate abilities and talents, including ongoing nurturing by caring adults in safe neighborhoods and schools. Families receive the services and support needed for their critical role as first teachers.

**Services** ■ Assistance and services that residents need and use, such as social, education, child care, recreation and economic support, are well coordinated and easily accessible to home and work. Residents can count on public transportation for timely delivery to work, medical appointments and shopping.

**Employment** ■ Workforce development policies and practices consider the needs of employers as well as the needs of individuals at risk of permanent loss of jobs. Full-time employment opportunities leading to a livable income are available to all, and discrimination is a thing of the past. A network of One-Stop Career Centers helps more people from all backgrounds find and keep jobs in the local labor market. Part-time employment is abundant for youth, seniors and others who need it.

**Health** ■ Public health-care services offer evening and weekend hours for families who work regular weekday hours. All children benefit from high-quality prenatal care, are immunized, and regularly receive high-quality health care. All Denver residents receive high-quality health care regardless of their ability to pay, and health insurance is available for those who have previously been uninsured. Mental health counseling and substance-abuse treatment are available and affordable for all.

**Older adults** ■ Older adults are able to live out their lives in dignity and safety, and as independently as possible. The community values the wisdom and experience of older adults to help solve current problems and enrich the cultural life of the city.



Every child needs caring adults, such as the professionals at Denver Department of Human Services







Community and nonprofit organizations work to create a network of caring relationships for youth



***Housing/Shelter*** ■ Sufficient emergency shelter and transitional housing are available for individuals and families who are temporarily homeless. Programs and services to help clients become self-sufficient are an integral part of housing initiatives. Housing for people with special needs is adequate and distributed in different parts of the city.

***Nurturing neighborhoods*** ■ Neighborhoods are safe places that provide residents with a supportive web of helping relationships and professional services; places and events that bring people together across age, income and cultural categories; and give them access to the opportunities and amenities that build quality of life.



## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Access

Improve access to personal and economic support systems.

REF: Neighborhoods 1-E

### Strategies

- 1-A** Improve access to and convenience of public transportation for work and everyday life with a special emphasis on:
- REF: Mobility 1-A
- A more accommodating public transportation system, particularly at the neighborhood level. This empowers single working parents, the elderly and persons with disabilities to reach essential destinations such as employment, grocery shopping, health care, child care and school.  
REF: Mobility 1-D
  - Reliable, around-the-clock transportation services for individuals unable to access the standard public transportation system.  
REF: Mobility 1-E
  - Subsidies for automobile ownership, when necessary, to maintain economic self-sufficiency, and as a last resort in addressing difficult transportation problems.
- 1-B** Increase the availability of safe, affordable housing for low-income households, the elderly and persons needing specialized housing due to disabilities. Link these shelter needs to appropriate support services and self-sufficiency programs.  
REF: Housing Obj. 3; Neighborhoods 1-E; Metropolitan 2-D, 3-D
- 1-C** Expand access to needed health services in areas critical to well-being and self-sufficiency:
- Ensure through effective outreach that individuals and families know about, understand and can access medical programs for which they are eligible, such as Medicaid, Medicare and Colorado's Child Health Plan Plus.  
REF: Education 2-C, 3-C
  - Help Denver Health provide high-quality health services for Denver residents, regardless of ability to pay.
  - Support initiatives to help small businesses provide health benefits for employees and their families.



- Increase health-care services that affect employability, such as dentistry, optometry, mental health and substance-abuse services.  
**REF: Human Services 2-F**
- Support efforts to develop health benchmarks for neighborhoods.

**1-D** Promote connections with employment opportunities that lead to a livable wage:

**REF: Metropolitan Obj. 2; Education 6-A; Economic Obj. 1, 2-C, 5-B**

- Foster a seamless group of services for learning, employment and career advancement through a One-Stop Career Center network.
- Provide new workers with ongoing support and convenient access to services that sustain employment.
- Support job improvement and career development for low-wage employees using innovative strategies that integrate on-the-job education or training.
- Continue education and enforcement activities to eliminate discrimination in the workplace.
- Cultivate an environment that nurtures small business startups and growth, including home-based businesses and strong microenterprise programs.

**1-E** Enhance access to quality child care to meet the needs of working parents and guardians:

**REF: Education Obj. 2; Economic 1-F**

- Increase the supply and quality of child care by setting public reimbursement rates at levels that promote vendor participation and quality while remaining affordable for families earning modest incomes.
- Address child-care deficiencies at night, after school and on weekends; for children with special needs; and for children who are sick.
- Provide drop-in child care that enables parents to access critical services.

*In 1999, Denver opened the first free, drop-in court child-care center in the Rocky Mountain region, the Denver Warm Welcome Court Child Care Center, for children whose parents have business with the courts.*



## Objective 2 ■ Enhanced Service Delivery

Build a seamless and comprehensive continuum of services that is community-based, customer-driven and flexible.

REF: Neighborhoods 6-A, Obj. 7

*The Southwest Family Centers, which operate out of seven elementary schools, one middle school and four community agency sites, model this approach to service delivery. Family advocates provide access to a working web of services designed to strengthen families in strategic locations along local bus lines. More than 30 service providers participate in this service network, and meet monthly to improve coordination and plan for changing service needs.*

### Strategies

- 2-A** Ensure that programs are available, accessible and responsive to a wide range of individuals, cultures and family structures, including single parents, grandparent caretakers and noncustodial parents.
- 2-B** Modify City-sponsored and City-funded programs and supportive services to better meet the needs of working families.
- 2-C** Facilitate collaboration and continuous program improvement through City grant requirements.
- 2-D** Improve access to services, information and training through the use of new technologies.  
REF: Economic 6-B, 6-C; Neighborhoods 2-C
- 2-E** Develop a comprehensive approach to addressing the problems of substance abuse that includes prevention, treatment and enforcement strategies.  
REF: Human Services 1-C
- 2-F** Promote the values of mutual respect and responsibility in the provider-client relationship.





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## Objective 3 ■ Caring Communities

Enhance the capacity of neighborhoods to nurture and support community members. **REF: Neighborhoods 3-B**

### Strategies

**3-A** Promote opportunities that bring people together to build connections to each other, family members, their peers, their neighbors and the greater community. Such endeavors could range from coffeehouses to community centers to cultural celebrations.

**REF: Arts & Culture 1-C; Legacies 13-C**

**3-B** Strengthen intergenerational activities. Encourage all people, but especially young people and older adults, to volunteer and become involved in community service projects.

**3-C** Support innovative efforts to meet human needs through neighbor-to-neighbor approaches, such as volunteer service-exchange banks.

*Based on the neighborly concept of giving and receiving, "PeopleLink," a volunteer time bank, encourages support of others while being supported oneself. Volunteers receive "credits" for their efforts in exchange for services or support for themselves or for others in need.*

**3-D** Ensure that neighborhood planning efforts address human service issues and violence prevention. Incorporate an asset-building approach into this process to inventory the human resources available to help meet community needs.

**REF: Neighborhoods 1-A, 1-F; Land Use 3-A**

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## Objective 4 ■ Children and Youth at Risk

Provide all children and youth with a safe and supportive environment in which to thrive.

### Strategies

**4-A** Enhance the capacity of families to nurture their children. Provide educational and family support services that empower parents as their child's first teachers.

**REF: Education 2-C**



- 4-B** Emphasize prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce risks and strengthen the resiliency of children and youth, with a special emphasis on linking them to caring adults.  
REF: Education 2-C, 3-D; Legacies 10-E, Obj. 13
- 4-C** Support continuing efforts to reduce Denver’s disproportionately high rates of teen pregnancy and low-birth-weight infants.  
REF: Education 3-C
- 4-D** Develop a family violence plan to break the cycle of domestic violence that is perpetuated from generation to generation.  
REF: Neighborhoods 3-C, 3-F; Education 3-G
- 4-E** Provide a well-coordinated menu of interventions, services and sanctions to help youth stay out of the criminal justice system, such as the City’s SafeNite Curfew and Diversion Program.
- 4-F** Institute and uphold the highest standards to protect children entrusted to public care.
- 4-G** When children are separated from their parent(s) for their own safety, reunite the families whenever possible. When necessary, place the child for adoption in a timely manner.
- 4-H** Provide homeless youth and those exiting the foster-care system with the educational, life management and employment skills they need to live independently.

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## Objective 5 ■ Older Adults

Support and enhance efforts that help older adults meet their basic needs, maintain their independence and provide them with lifestyle choices. REF: Mobility 1-E

### Strategies

- 5-A** Expand the availability of home-related services that enable older people to remain in their homes. Examples include home-delivered meals and affordable home repair/modification programs.
- 5-B** Support efforts to provide caregivers with education and respite services.



- 5-C** Work with other jurisdictions, institutions and community organizations to develop a strong continuum of community-based, long-term care services.  
*REF: Metropolitan 3-D*
- 5-D** Support the expansion of advocacy programs to protect the rights, safety and financial security of older adults living in the community and in long-term care facilities.
- 5-E** Promote the self-sufficiency of older and disabled adults by protecting and extending lifeline funding streams such as Old Age Pension, Aid to Needy and Disabled (AND) and the Older Americans Act (OAA).
- 5-F** Initiate planning and policy review to meet the needs of Denver's increasingly older population.

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## **Objective 6 ■ Homelessness**

**Collaborate with public and private service providers to provide a continuum of services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.**

### **Strategies**

- 6-A** Support programs and services focusing on homeless prevention and intervention services.
- 6-B** Ensure the availability of a continuum of housing services: sufficient emergency shelter for anyone in need; facilities designed to house individuals and families made homeless by domestic violence; transitional housing; and affordable, permanent housing opportunities. Services that encourage and support self-sufficiency should be integral to these programs.  
*REF: Housing Obj. 3*
- 6-C** Cooperate with metropolitan jurisdictions to seek systemic approaches to homelessness, increased availability of affordable housing, and coordination of services.  
*REF: Metropolitan 3-D*



## Objective 7 ■ Safety Net

Ensure that basic subsistence and compassionate care are available for people who are unable to care for themselves.

### Strategies

- 7-A** Identify and assess the capacity of City services that provide “safety-net” services.
- 7-B** Track what happens to social service clients who become ineligible for assistance.
- 7-C** Collaborate with public, private and nonprofit sectors to develop a safety-net strategy for individuals who do not qualify for public assistance, including immigrants.

*“While private interests are entitled to seek their advantage in the urban fabric, and city authorities and their experts are paid to find wholesale planning solutions to the problems of unfettered growth, it is the citizens as a collective voice who must ultimately decide the shape of their city solutions . . . if we still believe that cities are the most complicated artifact we have created, if we believe further that they are cumulative, generational artifacts that harbor our values as a community and provide us with a setting where we can learn to live together, then it is our collective responsibility to guide their design.”*

*Spiro Kostoff, The City Shaped, 1991*





# Our Long-Term Human Environment

**Economic Activity**

**Neighborhoods**

**Education**

**Human Services**

**Arts & Culture**



# Arts &

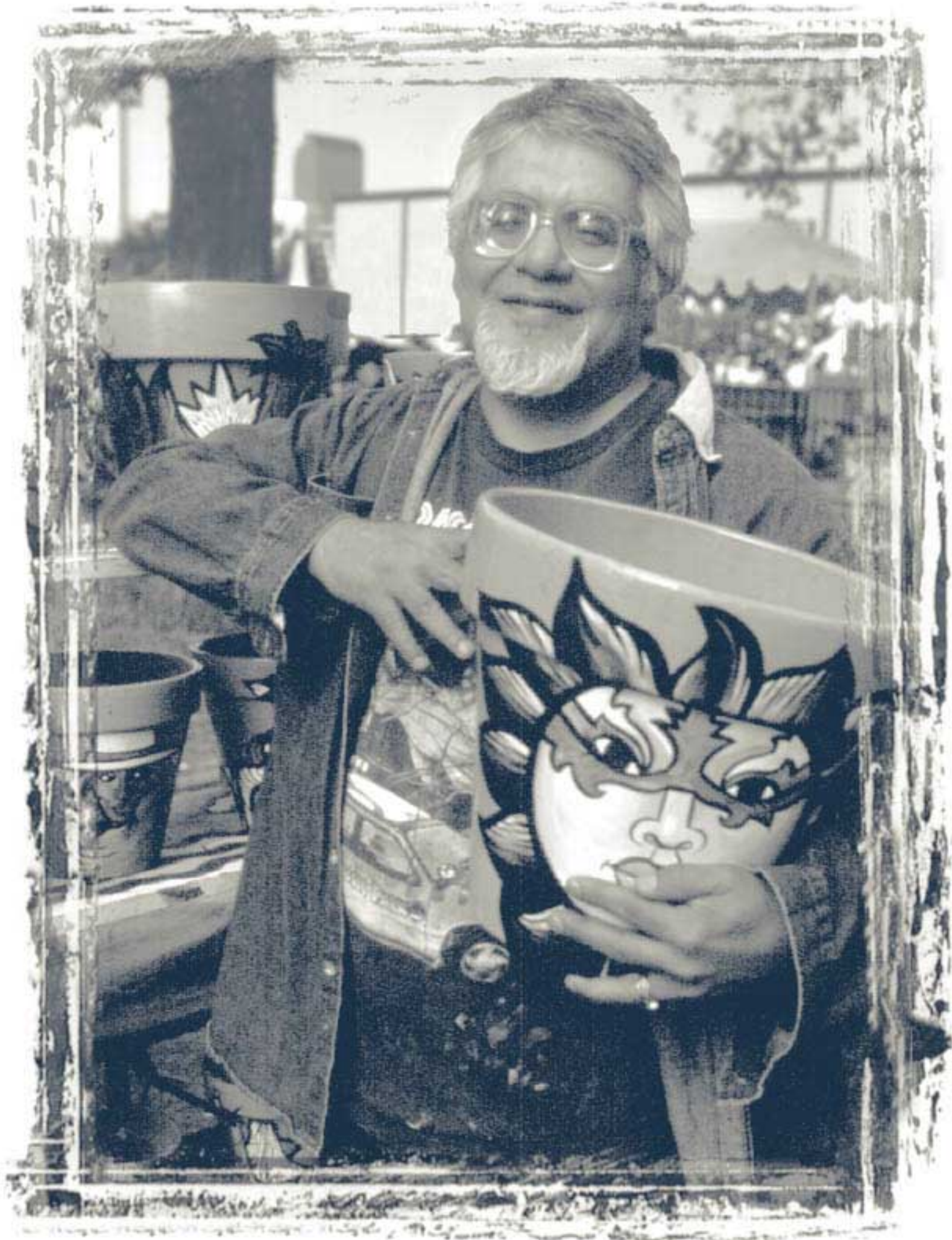
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# Culture

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*“There is no crisis in the arts. The only crisis is the failure to view them as resources to improve our cities.”*

*~ Nancy Hanks  
founding director of the National Endowment for the Arts*







Music students at the Lamont School of Music



A captive audience is engaged by the energy of a live performance



**GOAL** ■ Strengthen and expand the arts and culture by integrating them into the social and economic fabric of the city.

**OVERVIEW** ■ Due largely to the creativity of Denver's artists and cultural organizations, coupled with high levels of public and private support, Denver's cultural and artistic scene is thriving: attendance at cultural and artistic activities topped 7 million visits in 1995 and generated an economic impact of more than a half billion dollars. The four key issues facing the arts community are nurturing artistic talents; cultural awareness and participation of all residents, particularly schoolchildren; securing Denver's reputation as a major center for arts and culture outside the region; and sustaining a lively and growing artistic and cultural community resilient to less robust economic times. To continue their phenomenal growth, arts and culture must be woven into the fabric of the community. They must be an integral force in urban design, the educational system, commerce, community celebrations, neighborhood life and public-sector institutions. Forging a common vision, building a cross-sector alliance, and creating a forum for ongoing planning discussions are the first steps in establishing Denver as the arts and culture capital of the Rocky Mountain West.





## ■ Introduction

The arts are flourishing in Denver. While Denver in the 1990s has been well known nationally for its professional sports teams and the strength of the local economy, its rapid rise as a major arts and culture center is not widely recognized outside the region, or often even within the region. Yet, attendance at cultural and artistic events vastly exceeds that of professional sports. In the Heart and Soul of Denver Survey, Denver citizens ranked Denver's thriving artistic and cultural climate among the most important factors of its quality of life.

One measure of a city's livability is the degree to which the arts are integrated into all aspects of civic life. For many reasons, Denver should strive to make the arts part of everyone's daily experience. Above all, they enrich the cultural, aesthetic and spiritual values of residents, individually and as a community. Economically, the arts are the 11th largest nongovernment employer, with an economic impact of more than a half billion dollars annually. They enhance Denver's appeal as a center of cultural tourism, with more than 7 million visits in 1995.

Arts experiences contribute to educational achievement, measurably improving students' learning capacity in other areas, particularly among children and youth at risk. Arts education teaches technical skills and other workplace values. Finally, the arts stimulate our minds, training and exercising the essential, indefinable and priceless creativity needed to face the constantly evolving challenges of the future.

Denver traditionally supports excellence in its arts, cultural and scientific facilities, as evidenced by its host of outstanding institutions, among them the Denver Public Library, Denver Art Museum, Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver Performing Arts Complex, Denver Zoological Gardens, Denver Botanic Gardens and Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

Looking to the future, Plan 2000 recognizes the arts as the medium by which we transmit the kaleidoscopic legacy of our cultural values from generation to generation. To sustain the arts in the future, we must cultivate a healthy environment in which they can thrive. We need spaces for the arts to take hold and grow, programs to nurture and recognize artists, support for professional training, and arts-to-career classes in the schools. We can develop audiences through school-based arts-appreciation programs, enhanced public access, and diversity in cultural programming. And we should reinforce the arts and cultural infrastructure with collaborative audience development, central marketing and technical assistance to improve arts administration.



Creekside public art along the Cherry Creek bike path



Exciting, vibrant performers at the annual Black Arts Festival



A smorgasbord of performing arts is offered each year at the Denver Performing Arts Festival



The rapid growth of the arts during the 1990s was fueled largely by the creativity of Denver's artists and cultural organizations, and by a strong economy. Public financial support from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), increasing private-sector support, and consumers with discretionary income to attend performances and purchase art have helped make arts and culture a significant growth industry. However, history offers ample evidence that fertility within the arts is most often linked to the ebb and flow of wealth within the society: when wealth is great, artists are in great demand; when fortunes turn, the arts tend to suffer. It is also important to note that residents of the Denver metropolitan area voted overwhelmingly to create the SCFD with a new tax in the late 1980s during a severe and prolonged economic recession, demonstrating the prevailing high level of popular support for arts and culture.

Plan 2000 affirms and supports shared aspirations within the arts and culture community for Denver to emerge nationally and internationally as the arts and culture capital of the Rocky Mountain West. A profuse mix of strong established institutions, arts-related businesses, creative talent, educated and enthusiastic audiences, and culturally diverse groups actively enriches the community. But Denver's future as a major center for arts and culture is far from assured. Current optimism in the arts is based on the underlying assumption of continued prosperity. Sustained growth, however, depends on more than affluence and image. Arts and culture must be woven into the fabric of the community, becoming an integral force in urban design, the educational system, commerce, community celebrations, neighborhood life and public-sector institutions.



Colorado Ballet has built an outstanding reputation for its traditional and contemporary performances





## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

**Funding** ■ SCFD funding grew from \$14 million for 154 organizations in 1989 to \$30.4 million for 292 organizations in 1998. SCFD has provided more than \$192 million to arts organizations over 10 years.

*The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) was formed in 1988 by voters in the six-county metropolitan area to distribute a .01 percent sales tax to support scientific and cultural facilities within the six metro counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson. In 1994, metro voters renewed the authority until 2006.*

**City support** ■ Mayor Wellington Webb established the Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film in 1991. The "One Percent for the Arts" program (initiated by executive order in 1988) was elevated to a City ordinance in 1991, reserving 1 percent of certain Capital Improvement Program dollars for public art. The Arts to Career Project in 1996 increased arts education through workplace experiences and classroom standards.

**Urban design** ■ The Civic Center Cultural Complex Plan was completed in 1997, intending to unify Civic Center as a cultural center featuring the Central Denver Library, the Colorado History Museum, the renovated Denver Art Museum, several major public buildings and the Golden Triangle arts neighborhood.

**Visual arts** ■ The Denver Art Museum was remodeled and expanded. The Museo de las Americas, The Black Art Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art have opened. However, The Museum of Western Art closed. Denver has seen a 40 percent increase in commercial galleries.

**Libraries** ■ The new Central Library integrates world-class architecture into the heart of Denver while preserving a historical section of an earlier library structure built in the 1950s. Fifteen of Denver's 18 branch libraries were physically upgraded and four new libraries were built during the 1990s as part of a citywide capital improvement bond program. A new library is planned at Lowry to replace the Montclair storefront branch.

**Festivals** ■ The nationally recognized Cherry Creek Arts Festival began in the early 1990s, and rapidly became one of Denver's best-attended outdoor events. Denver's Cinco de Mayo is the largest traditional Hispanic celebration in the country. A number of highly successful ethnic, cultural, artistic, Downtown and neighborhood festivals are popular spring and summer attractions.



Art lovers become shoppers at the Cherry Creek Arts Festival



The Black American West Museum in the Five Points neighborhood





The Mexican Independence Day celebration is a kaleidoscope of music, dance, food, arts and families



**Theatre** ■ The Temple Hoyne Buell Theatre opened in 1991, adding sufficient seating and technical capacity to attract major national and international touring attractions. In 1998, the Denver Center Theatre Company received a Tony Award for the exceptional quality of its regional productions. Numerous small “storefront” theatre companies produce provocative theatre for their dedicated audiences.

**Music** ■ The Colorado Symphony Orchestra has emerged successfully restructured from its predecessor, the Denver Symphony Orchestra, attaining financial stability and national recognition for programming.

**Dance** ■ The Colorado Ballet has gained national recognition, and the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble is a national and international force in African-American and modern dance. A number of highly regarded dance companies perform at a variety of venues around the city.

**Film** ■ The Office of Film and Television was established within the Mayor’s Office of Art, Culture and Film in 1991 to facilitate filmmaking in Denver. In the late 1990s, productions requiring a permit were spending an average of \$30 million a year shooting in Denver. The Denver International Film Festival, held annually, has expanded into several cultural film festivals: Jewish, Asian, Pan-African and one just for kids.

**Academic institutions** ■ A new performing arts center is slated for the Auraria Campus. A new music school facility at the University of Denver is being developed.

### Challenges

**K-12 education** ■ Denver Public Schools does not include the arts as part of the core curriculum for all students, with implications for both arts appreciation and development of local talent. The DPS Arts Department and Arts Resource Council work to provide arts opportunities in targeted programs.

**Development of talent** ■ Affordable programs to develop the artistic talents of children and youth are inadequate and underfunded, particularly for low-income families.

**Funding** ■ The State of Colorado ranks 47th in state funding for the arts. SCFD expires in 2006 unless reauthorized by voters. Funding is virtually nonexistent to support individual artists.

**Arts education and appreciation** ■ Efforts to increase arts literacy and “audienceship” are inadequate and inconsistent for children, youth and adults.

Performance art in the streets of Denver







**Arts information** ■ There is no centralized source of information covering all aspects of arts and culture.

**Arts venues** ■ The City's inventory of arts and culture facilities is outdated. Gaps exist for certain performance and exhibition needs.

**Enhancement of cultural facilities** ■ The City's seat-tax revenues designated for venue capital improvements will diminish by about \$5 million annually due to McNichols Arena and Mile High Stadium being demolished, until the debt service for the Buell Theater, Mile High stadium parking and refinancing, and Red Rocks Amphitheatre improvements is retired in 2008.

**Access** ■ Increased attendance at events, cultural facilities and arts businesses has increased traffic and parking congestion in surrounding neighborhoods. Thus, the need of several cultural facilities to expand and the resulting traffic and parking are sources of conflict with neighborhoods.

## Opportunities

**Popular appeal** ■ Metropolitan Denver ranks second in the nation for college-educated adults, the most likely audience for the arts. The Heart and Soul of Denver Survey indicated Denver's arts events and facilities rated second of 22 factors in the City's quality-of-life-measurements.

**Cultural diversity** ■ Denver features a diverse array of cultural and ethnic festivals, performing groups, and venues that attract broad community support.

**Downtown revitalization** ■ The arts have been and continue to be a central feature in Downtown's renaissance as a 24-hour city.

**Tourism** ■ A lively arts and culture calendar is critical to attracting tourists and conventions. A diverse and growing array of restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues complements the artistic and cultural environment.

**Collaboration** ■ Ten percent of SCFD revenue is used to fund collaboration among organizations that foster cross-fertilization and innovation in the arts and sciences, thereby creating powerful new forms of expression and knowledge.



The Denver Art Museum has numerous programs introducing children to the visual arts



The Stage is an experimental space for the Denver Center Theatre Company



Arts education nurtures creativity and an awareness of cultural diversity, creating an appreciation for the arts and artists



## ■ **Vision of Success**

In the first decade of the 21st century, Denver will strengthen its national reputation as a regional center for arts and culture by valuing its artists and its diverse cultural heritage, nurturing creativity, inspiring original expression and cultivating appreciation. The arts will become an essential part of every Denver resident's daily life in the following ways:

**Public support** ■ The City continues to actively support diverse artistic and cultural endeavors. SCFD, or a similar metropolitan mechanism, continues to provide substantial funding for arts organizations and institutions.

**Arts education** ■ All Denver children are enrolled in arts instruction and appreciation through the schools and/or community-based arts organizations.

**Cultural heritage** ■ Cultural awareness and diversity are celebrated in neighborhoods and throughout the city.

**Economy** ■ The arts continue to be a focus of the developing Downtown economy. Many Denver neighborhoods also prosper due to arts and culture. Cultural tourism will grow substantially in economic importance to Denver.



Two harlequins prepare for the annual Denver Public Schools Shakespeare Festival Downtown





## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Cultivating the Arts

Support and promote a flourishing artistic community.

#### Strategies

- 1-A** Create a vision for Denver as a flourishing artistic and cultural community by helping build a coalition among interested stakeholders, including City agencies; arts, cultural and scientific organizations; educational institutions; foundation and corporate funders; and businesses.
- 1-B** Convene and communicate with the arts and cultural community on issues of concern through the Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film.
- The Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film is the agency for arts and culture for the City and County of Denver, guiding the City's efforts to coordinate and promote cultural and artistic plans and programs. The office works with similar organizations in the metro area, in the region and state, and within the private and public sectors.*
- 1-C** Support a full range of cultural and artistic opportunities within Denver's neighborhoods and among its diverse communities, including festivals, performing and visual arts events, and cultural activities.  
**REF: Human Services 3-A**
- 1-D** Maintain a major funding base for the arts by strongly supporting reauthorization of the SCFD in 2006.  
**REF: Metropolitan 4-A**
- 1-E** Support professional training and educational programs in the arts and culture that are distinctive and attractive to the finest talents in the world.
- 1-F** Encourage creativity and innovation across the broad spectrum of arts endeavors.



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## Objective 2 ■ Arts Venues

Encourage the development and maintenance of facilities within Denver to support diverse cultural and artistic activities.

### Strategies

- 2-A** Ensure that existing City-owned arts and cultural venues, such as Red Rocks Amphitheatre and the Auditorium Theater, are funded, operated and maintained adequately to meet projected needs.
- 2-B** Help public cultural facilities to expand responsibly and ensure that they are integrated with their surrounding communities.  
*REF: Neighborhoods Obj. 5, 6, 7*
- 2-C** Work with arts and culture organizations to develop and assess arts and cultural facilities, inventory existing facilities, and plan for current and long-term needs.
- 2-D** Support further growth, strengthening and development of private and nonprofit arts organizations and institutions capable of owning and maintaining artistic and cultural facilities.
- 2-E** Whenever appropriate, support the use of public facilities within neighborhoods, including parks and recreation centers, by neighborhood artists and arts and cultural groups needing space for exhibitions, performances and classes.
- 2-F** Review City regulation of arts and cultural facilities and services, and remove unnecessary barriers to arts-related enterprise.  
*REF: Land Use 2-C; Neighborhoods 1-E*
- 2-G** Promote multimodal solutions to access through appropriate transit, linkage and parking strategies.  
*REF: Mobility 1-A, Obj. 9; Neighborhoods 7-F*

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## Objective 3 ■ Economic Development and the Arts

Enhance the capacity of arts and culture to act as an economic generator, and integrate arts and culture into the City's economic development activities. *REF: Economic Obj. 3*

### Strategies

- 3-A** Include artistic and cultural organizations, institutions and businesses in business recruitment and retention efforts.





- 3-B** Incorporate Denver's arts and cultural activities, institutions and attractions into economic development and marketing plans that promote Denver as a center for tourism, conventions and business.
- 3-C** Support the development of strategic alliances to:
- market Denver's arts and cultural offerings regionally and nationally through a centralized approach;
  - promote collaborative audience development; and
  - provide technical assistance for stronger administration.

## Objective 4 ■ Cultural Diversity

**Broaden the scope, richness and attachment to the arts in Denver by encouraging ethnic diversity in cultural expression.**

### Strategies

- 4-A** Continue to encourage the expression of Denver's ethnic diversity, history and cultural heritage through a full range of cultural and artistic activities.
- 4-B** Integrate diverse cultural and artistic perspectives into the City's public decision-making about arts and cultural matters.

## Objective 5 ■ Artistic and Cultural Literacy

**Expand appreciation and support of arts and culture by supporting arts and cultural education, literacy and career opportunities for all Denver residents.**

### Strategies

- 5-A** Cooperate with DPS and arts advocates to make arts and culture part of Denver's K-12 core curriculum, including instruction, appreciation and participation. Assist in the development of partnerships that increase exposure of students to arts and cultural activities.  
REF: Education 3-B
- 5-B** Make cultural experiences, whether avocational or educational, accessible to the widest possible public by removing economic, physical and other barriers to participation and enjoyment.



- 5-C** Encourage educational institutions, arts and culture organizations, individuals and the community to provide career development and training in arts and culture disciplines.

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## **Objective 6 ■ Arts as a Civic Value**

Value the arts within the civic realm.

### **Strategies**

- 6-A** Continue Denver’s “One Percent for the Arts” program and encourage adoption of this model by other public and private entities.
- 6-B** Promote artistic distinction by setting high standards for design excellence in the construction and renovation of all City buildings, structures and monuments.  
*REF: Legacies 1-A*
- 6-C** Showcase and incorporate the work of artists into City activities such as wall displays, public information efforts and special events.

*“Investment in the arts, culture, and high quality leisure activities needs to be thought of as being as basic as safety or health costs. It is more than jobs, freeways and buildings that give people a reason to call a place home. Amenities make a city livable and exciting.”*

**The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan**



# Metropolitan Cooperation



# Metropolitan Cooperation

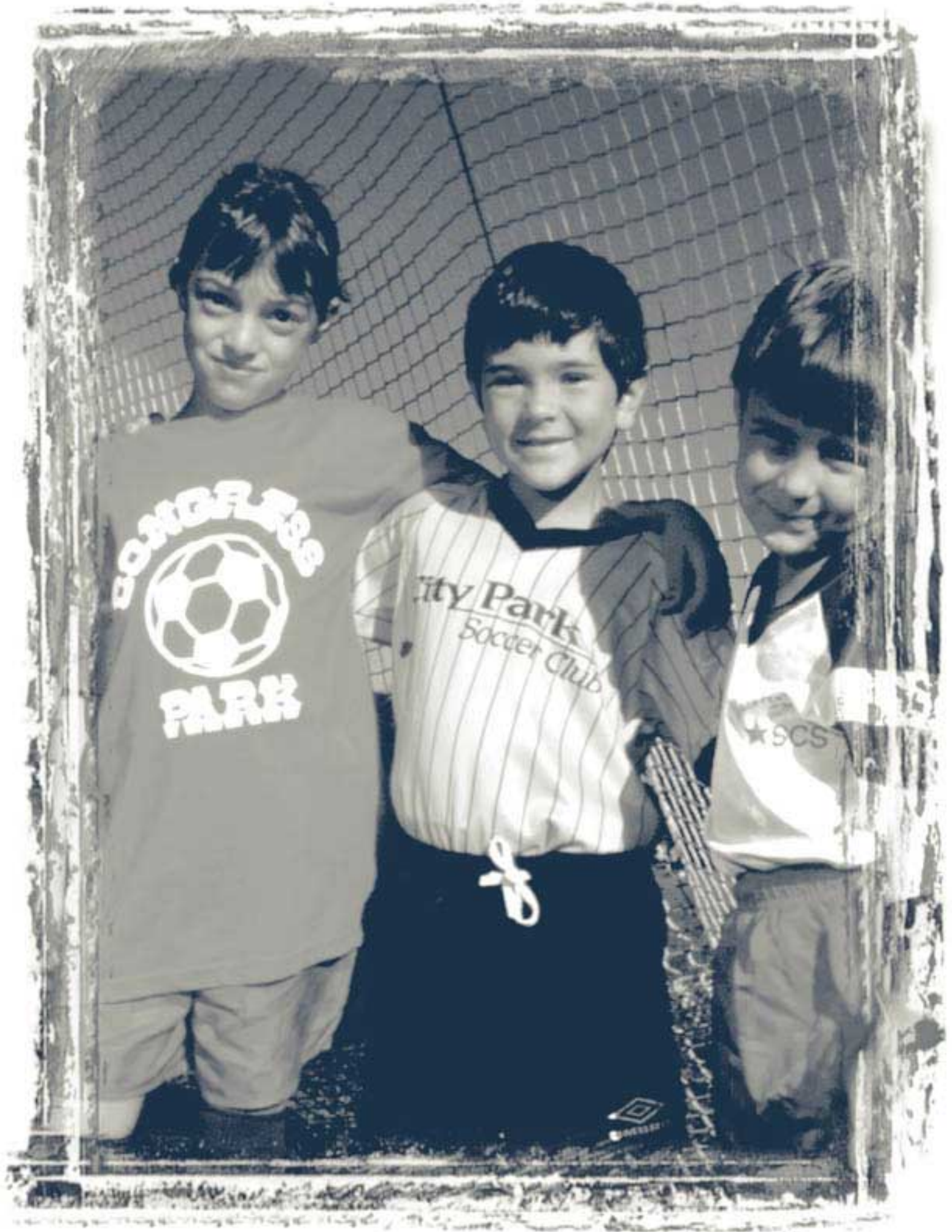
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*“In the metropolitan areas across the country, communities like Denver’s inner suburbs, satellite cities and low-tax-base developing communities are beginning to realize that the solutions to these problems are larger than their own jurisdiction.”*

*~ Myron Orfield  
Author and Minnesota state legislator*





BONGERLOS  
PARK

City Park  
Soccer Club

★ SCS





The tile mural at the Colorado Convention Center reflects the metropolitan area's many faces



The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District polar bear was the familiar mascot for the metrowide referendum



**GOAL** ■ Foster cooperation and share leadership on regional issues.

**OVERVIEW** ■ Denver's relationships with its suburban neighbors are complex and often difficult. Though only 24 percent of the metropolitan area's 2.3 million people live in Denver, the city remains the employment, financial, cultural and governmental center of the region and state. Conversely, Denver bears significant traffic congestion, poverty, air pollution, crime, medically indigent persons, and a host of other costly problems due to a variety of factors. In recent years, Denver and its metropolitan neighbors have cooperated successfully in several areas: enriching the artistic and cultural environment, building sports stadiums, and seeking solutions to social problems such as homelessness and youth violence. Some of the toughest challenges of the early 21st century — sustainable development, workforce housing, environmental quality and services to the needy — necessarily involve metropolitan neighbors working together.





## ■ Introduction

Denver is the urban center of the 23rd largest metropolitan area in the United States. The area is comprised of 42 incorporated cities and towns and includes vast expanses of unincorporated rural land that is rapidly disappearing due to development. The population of the six-county Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) in 1998 was 2.3 million; 501,000 were Denver residents, less than one quarter of the total.

The quality of life of Denver residents and the economic vitality of the region are irrevocably and increasingly linked to issues and conditions that do not recognize political boundaries. These include environmental quality, transportation, open space, the need for a range of housing types and prices, economic development, building capacity to address the needs of socially and economically disadvantaged persons, and increasing pressure for greater fiscal efficiency in government. Successful management of these issues depends on planning that anticipates increased cooperation and coordination with our metropolitan neighbors.

Several major metropolitan governance structures and revenue-sharing systems were already in place in 1989 and remain important in 2000. They include:

**Regional Transportation District (RTD)** ■ The metropolitan transportation system, funded primarily by a .6 percent sales tax in the six-county metropolitan area, provides bus transportation throughout the district. RTD added one demonstration light rail line (I-25 and Broadway through Downtown to 32nd and Downing) during the 1990s. A line to Denver's southwestern neighborhoods is under construction, and a spur line through the Central Platte Valley and the southeast line along I-25 to the Denver Tech Center and beyond are being designed.

**Urban Drainage and Flood Control District (UDFCD)** ■ A multijurisdictional special district, funded by property taxes, which plans storm water conveyance and detention and ensures flood safety and waterway improvements that are compatible with Denver's current and planned land uses.

**Metropolitan Wastewater Reclamation District** ■ Intercepts and treats wastewater for 60 local government jurisdictions.

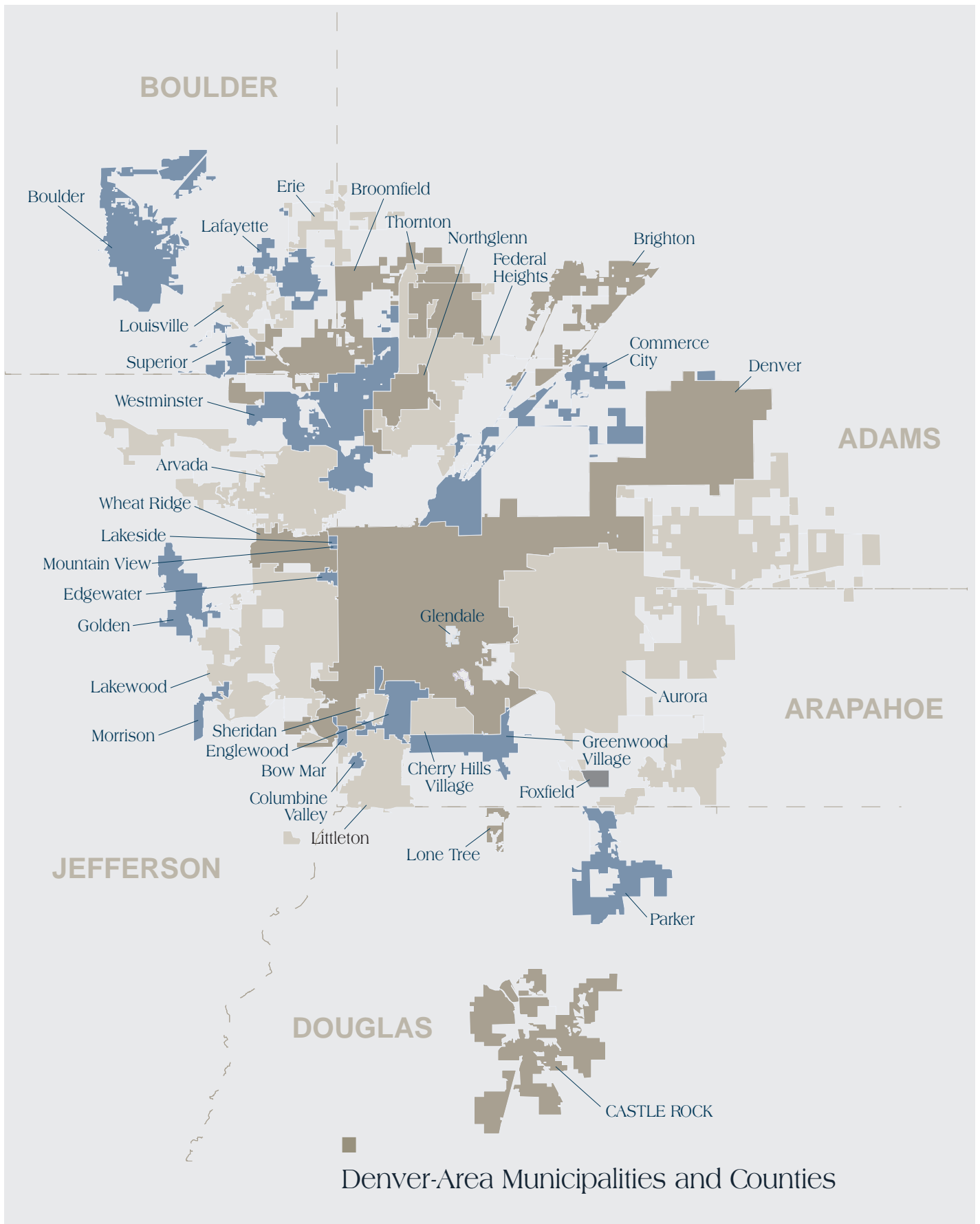
**Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD)** ■ A six-county district approved by voters in the 1980s, which helps support a full range of cultural institutions, major performing arts groups, and community-based arts organizations with a .1 percent sales tax. This yielded approximately



The quality of life for Denver residents and for residents of the entire region are irrevocably linked

Water and open space cross jurisdictions; opportunities for cooperation are limitless









\$30.4 million in 1998. In 1994, voters reauthorized the district's continuation until 2006.

**Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)** ■ DRCOG is the six-county metropolitan area's regional planning body and the conduit for federal funding (primarily transportation) to projects affecting multiple jurisdictions. It also provides services to the aged population and alternative transportation programs. It is a means to obtain local government support and address metropolitan issues.

## ■ Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

### Changes, 1989–1999

Several additional major metropolitan initiatives since 1989 include:

**Metropolitan Stadium District** ■ Voters in the six-county area (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Jefferson and portions of Douglas) approved a .1 percent sales tax to generate revenue to retire debt on Coors Field, which opened in 1996. In 1998, voters extended the Stadium District's taxation authority to finance the major portion of costs for a new Mile High Stadium for the Denver Broncos football team.

**DRCOG's MetroVision 2020 Plan** ■ This metropolitan plan integrates previously separate plans for growth, development, transportation, open space and water-quality management into a single comprehensive document. It has been adopted as part of *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan*.

**Metro Denver Network** ■ This coalition of 38 local economic development agencies from the six-county metropolitan area, including the City of Denver, was formed in 1987 by the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce and coordinates efforts to market metropolitan Denver through shared information, resources and technology.

In addition, Denver has had success collaborating with its neighbors on several ad hoc issues of mutual impact and concern, including the following:

- Joint economic development efforts among Denver, Aurora and Commerce City to spur economic development at DIA and the surrounding communities.
- Intergovernmental agreements with Aurora concerning the redevelopment of Lowry Air Force Base.
- The development of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative to provide housing and services to the homeless population.
- Reciprocal agreements among all metropolitan libraries to honor library cards from any metropolitan jurisdiction.



The Metro Denver Network is a coalition of 38 local economic development agencies

The Denver Art Museum, an SCFD funds recipient, brings world-class exhibitions to the Front Range and the region





Home building south of Denver—for some, it's healthy growth, for others, problem sprawl



- Agreements with Aurora and Lakewood to develop the historical identity of Colfax Avenue, the longest commercial street in the United States.
- Involvement in metropolitan solutions to air quality through the Regional Air Quality Council.
- Development of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Area.
- Participation in various issue-oriented metropolitan initiatives, including the Metropolitan Denver Public Safety Partnership, the Platte River Greenway Foundation and an anti-hate website.
- Through The Metro Mayor's Caucus, collectively made Single Family Mortgage Bond financing available to help first-time home buyers.

### Challenges

**“Urban” social problems** ■ Poverty, unemployment, elderly concerns, crime and disinvestment, once unique characteristics of a core city, have spread to the first inner ring of suburban communities, including portions of Littleton, Lakewood, Wheat Ridge, Englewood and Aurora.

**Demographics** ■ Throughout the metropolitan area, populations with special needs, particularly seniors, single-parent families, female-headed households and people without fluency in English, are increasing at a faster rate than the overall population.

**Growth** ■ All growth applies pressure on transportation facilities, land use, human services and the environment, and threatens quality of life by sapping existing City and metropolitan resources. From 1990 to 1998 the metro area's population grew by more than a half million people, a 30 percent increase.

**Lack of planning** ■ Efforts to address the region's development and growth influences are erratic, constantly shifting among communities in the metropolitan area. The State's lack of involvement in and commitment to regional solutions is a missed opportunity.

**Social inequity** ■ Economic segregation is spreading throughout the metropolitan area, resulting in a disparity in the availability and quality of services from community to community.

**Housing** ■ There is a lack of connection linking lower-paid jobs to nearby housing in a range of prices and types in the metro area. In 1991 the average price of a single-family home in the metropolitan area was \$102,766; by the late 1990s it had risen to over \$200,000.

**Competition** ■ Revenue generation is the primary driver for expansion of metropolitan jurisdictions, intensifying competition among neighboring communities to potentially damaging levels with wasteful results.

An artist's illustration of Colorado's Front Range shows diminishing open space





**Human services** ■ Cuts in federal spending for human services such as homelessness and housing increase demand on state and local funding streams.

**TABOR** ■ TABOR restricts the use of tax revenues, including the potential to develop innovative revenue-sharing strategies.

*TABOR stands for the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, a 1992 amendment to Colorado's Constitution by referendum. TABOR limits the powers of jurisdictions to raise taxes, increase spending, and use excess public revenues generated due to economic growth. TABOR's provisions restrict the flexibility of governments to develop alternative approaches to public finance. Real challenges appear not when the economy is growing, but when it diminishes.*



Beloved throughout the city, state and region, the Denver Broncos will play in a new stadium approved by metro voters

**Attitude** ■ Public officials in the metropolitan area often engage on cross-jurisdictional issues from a position of protectionism rather than collaboration. Much of this attitude is rooted in historic grievances, perceived inequities and political realities within diverse local electorates.

## Opportunities

The potential for cooperation, coordination and communication between metropolitan jurisdictions is almost limitless. All metropolitan jurisdictions share the need to sustain elements critically important to a high quality of life: the air we breathe, our individual mobility, clean water, a healthy economy, culture and the arts, our sense of ourselves as citizens, and our responsibility as stewards of the Front Range of Colorado. Yet, sustainability in these areas cannot be achieved by treating these as isolated issues or by local jurisdictions acting independently. Several existing assets or conditions for metropolitan cooperation present exciting new opportunities for the future:

- DRCOG's *MetroVision 2020 Plan*, which guides transportation, urban development, open space, environmental quality, urban centers and free-standing communities; and regional funding sources such as the SCFD and the Stadium District are successes upon which future collaborations can be built.
- The Metro Mayor's Caucus provides a forum to address shared issues and reinforce shared values.
- Historically, the region has relied on voluntary cooperation among local governance structures. In the future, great opportunities exist for the State to support regional work that must be done.
- Technological advances allow jurisdictions to share information and make better metropolitan plans to address the complex issues facing the region. Examples include computer modeling of future demographics, the Internet, GIS for land-use planning, electronic mail and digital photography.

Amenities such as golf exist both in the city and in surrounding communities





Surely we can recognize our individual best interests lie in working together as a team



## ■ Vision of Success

During the first decade of the century, Denver will both lead and actively take part in many more collaborative initiatives with its metropolitan neighbors. Over time, political and jurisdictional boundaries will begin to diminish in importance, removing long-standing barriers to intergovernmental cooperation. The improved climate for metropolitan cooperation will have the following characteristics:

**Communication** ■ Information is shared and communication flows freely among public officials in the metropolitan area.

**Collaborative problem-solving** ■ Shared problems are addressed with a shared sense of responsibility.

**Capital costs** ■ Costs of major capital improvements are spread across benefiting jurisdictions.

**Planning** ■ Joint visionary and physical planning efforts are commonplace, leading to more efficient use of public dollars as well as more access to funding streams requiring metropolitan problem-solving.

**Social concerns** ■ A regional approach to social problems — affordable housing, poverty, environmental quality and care for the disadvantaged — is in place.

**Revenue sharing** ■ More revenue-sharing initiatives are in place.

**Managed growth** ■ Growth occurs throughout the metropolitan area within a framework of managed opportunity, rather than unpredictable sprawl.

**Quality of life** ■ The metropolitan area shares both the responsibilities and the rewards of regional funding mechanisms for arts and culture, open space and recreation, and professional sports.

*“Growth has been a major issue of the 1990s. Slightly more than two million people now live in the eight-county region. By 2020 approximately 770,000 new people are expected to settle in the area — enough people to make a new Denver and Aurora combined. Such an increase guarantees the region’s look and shape will undergo dramatic changes. The challenges of growth require the region to plan and be visionary about the future. Effective and efficient use of limited resources, whether financial, societal, or natural, is essential to achieve the goals of the plan and progress toward a sustainable future. . . . the region can be a place where its people live close to where they work and play, where a balanced transportation network connects mixed-use urban centers, where urban communities are defined by significant open space, and where cultural diversity and respect for the natural environment are celebrated.”*

*DRCOG, MetroVision 2020 Plan, amendment to the 1989 Comprehensive Plan.*

*November 1995*





## ■ Objectives and Strategies

### Objective 1 ■ Growth Management

Share the benefits and mitigate the impacts of growth by forming partnerships with our metropolitan neighbors and cooperating on regional growth issues.

#### Strategies

- 1-A** Lead in supporting the adoption and implementation of DRCOG's *MetroVision 2020 Plan* for regional growth and report annually on compliance with Plan 2000.  
REF: Environmental 5-A
- 1-B** Accelerate the exchange of information among jurisdictions through existing forums, such as DRCOG and The Metro Mayor's Caucus, and through the use of information technologies.
- 1-C** Seek out and be more receptive to opportunities for cooperation with other jurisdictions on issues that can only be addressed regionally, such as mobility; air quality; and water conservation, quality and supply.  
REF: Environmental 5-B
- 1-D** When opportunities exist for cross-jurisdictional collaboration, initiate meetings with the residents of adjoining jurisdictions, among the staff of appropriate governmental entities, and with policy makers. Use technology and outreach efforts to stimulate citizen input and response on regional issues.
- 1-E** Adopt more comprehensive approaches to planning when multiple jurisdictions are affected. Such planning efforts could include sustainable development, service infrastructure enhancement, transportation facility development, open space connectivity, urban design, and land-use policies.  
REF: Environmental 5-C; Land Use Obj. 5; Economic 2-F; Neighborhoods 7-B; Mobility 5-C



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## Objective 2 ■ Access to Jobs

Promote a coordinated metropolitan approach to link lower-paid workers to jobs, and employers to the workers they need. REF: Human Services 1-D; Housing 6-F

### Strategies

- 2-A** Provide a variety of transportation solutions, including alternative forms of transportation such as vanpooling and private shuttle services, public transit, and voluntary transportation associations that help match available jobs with corresponding labor pools.  
REF: Mobility Obj. 1; Environmental 5-D
- 2-B** Encourage development of a range of housing types and prices in business growth areas to support employee access to entry-level jobs.  
REF: Housing 6-B
- 2-C** Focus job-creation efforts for entry-level workers in neighborhoods throughout the metropolitan area where potential employees already live.  
REF: Economic Activity 1-H
- 2-D** Ensure that development provides for mixed uses, allowing people of all income levels the opportunity to find housing near their jobs or find jobs near their homes.  
REF: Human Services 1-B

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## Objective 3 ■ Revenue Sharing

Work with other jurisdictions and state government on methods to modify government revenue streams so that the finance systems support efficient and stable growth.

REF: Housing 3-I

### Strategies

- 3-A** Develop innovative strategies for metropolitan revenue sharing that support cooperation, not competition. Recognize and build on the successes of existing revenue-sharing mechanisms such as the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), the Metropolitan Stadium District, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District (UDFCD).  
REF: Neighborhoods 7-B



- 3-B** Explore ways to use TABOR provisions to share excess federal, state and local revenues with other jurisdictions.
- 3-C** To encourage better land-use decisions, evaluate shifting a portion of the tax burden on local jurisdictions to alternative (state or regional) revenue mechanisms.

*Taxation and regulation of land development vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Local governments currently compete for opportunities to expand their sales tax bases to pay for government services. Because local land-use decisions and local revenue generation are tied so closely, decisions are often reached that favor revenue generation over sustainable development principles. Economic pressures on local governments would decrease by shifting part of local taxes to other sources of revenue.*

- 3-D** Collaborate with other jurisdictions through intergovernmental organizations, such as DRCOG, to find federal funds for projects that address cross-jurisdictional needs, such as help for older adults, homelessness, children's issues, youth and violence, and housing in a range of types and prices. Mobilize against federal policy decisions with unfavorable local impacts.

REF: Human Services 1-B, 5-C, 6-C; Housing 3-K

## Objective 4 ■ Arts, Culture and Sports

Continue to advocate a metropolitan approach to support artistic and cultural organizations and major sports facilities.

### Strategies

- 4-A** Actively support and promote cultural sharing, collaboration and reciprocity among the diverse mix of cultural and artistic organizations throughout the metropolitan region, such as the SCFD and its reauthorization by metropolitan voters.  
REF: Arts & Culture 1-D
- 4-B** Continue to support a regional approach to investments in high-quality professional sports facilities and activities.



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## Objective 5 ■ Natural Resources

Create a shared metropolitan commitment to the conservation and quality of our natural resources.

### Strategies

**5-A** Increase access to parks and open space through coordinated multijurisdictional planning and physical connections. Specifically:

**REF:** Environmental 5-E; Legacies 11-C

- Participate in regional open space planning activities through DRCOG.
- Continue to support the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Area.
- Partner with neighboring jurisdictions to create, expand and/or enhance parks, open space and mountain parks with management and maintenance pacts.

**REF:** Legacies 10-C, 10-D

- Develop funding strategies that encourage cooperative planning and development efforts among Denver and its neighbors.

**REF:** Land Use 1-F

- Develop metrowide design standards that ensure access and enjoyment by persons with disabilities.

**5-B** Actively participate in water issues that affect the metropolitan area. Specifically:

- Uphold the policies in *Water for Tomorrow: An Integrated Resource Plan*, prepared by the Denver Water Board, addressing growth, water sharing and future quality and supply issues.

**REF:** Environmental 2-C, 5-B; Legacies 12-A

- Work cooperatively with neighboring jurisdictions outside Denver Water's service area to develop mutually beneficial water supply projects.

*Denver's water assets are administered and governed by the Denver Water Board, an independent agency within the City and County of Denver. The mission of the Denver Water Board is to provide an adequate supply of high-quality water and excellent service to Denver's citizens and other Denver Water customers through responsible and creative stewardship of Denver's water assets.*





## Objective 6 ■ Openness to Cooperation

Encourage cooperation with metropolitan neighbors by fostering a climate of open, respectful communication between other jurisdictions and Denver City government.

### Strategies

- 6-A** Annually identify metropolitan issues in which the City has interests, such as housing, open space, comprehensive planning and gun safety; create an agenda for those issues; and share this agenda and related policies with individuals serving on metropolitan task forces.
- 6-B** Simplify the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) process to facilitate partnerships and expedite processes involving multiple jurisdictions.
- 6-C** Encourage staff efforts to work with other jurisdictions and reward employees for identifying and acting on partnership opportunities.
- 6-D** Use existing lines of communication to advance intergovernmental cooperation. Existing forums include The Metro Mayor's Caucus, DRCOG and professional organizations for staff. Denver officials should fulfill their obligations to regional organizations, make attendance at interjurisdictional meetings a high priority, and seek positions of leadership in regional organizations.





Getting

There

from

Here



# Implementation

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Plan 2000: A Living Document and Catalyst for Action

*“You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”*

*~ Wayne Gretzky  
hockey Hall of Fame player*







Young soccer players from throughout the city learn how to plan, work together and mutually benefit



**GOAL** ■ Implement Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 in a manner that preserves the integrity of its vision while responding to changing conditions.

**PLAN 2000: A WORK IN PROGRESS** ■

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 sets forth a vision that will come alive as City government, residents, businesses, foundations and others work together to fulfill the Plan's goals and objectives. This section of the Plan sets up a process to ensure that Plan 2000 is a living document that will be implemented over the years while being responsive and resilient to changing conditions. This final chapter of Plan 2000 describes the three components of getting there from here:

- Working year by year to implement the Plan in a coordinated and strategic manner.
- Keeping Plan 2000 a living document that is flexible enough to respond to changing conditions and expanding information.
- Disseminating information and documenting progress on Plan 2000's implementation through annual reports to the community.



## ■ Guiding Principles

The central theme of Plan 2000 is sustaining Denver's quality of life for its people. It is as much about building good relationships as it is about performing tasks, completing projects or showing results. This chapter reaffirms five guiding principles that should characterize all implementation efforts: communication, fairness and equality, comprehensive approaches, partnership, and the leveraging of resources.

**Communication** ■ The City values two-way communication with all of its constituents and will strive to broaden channels of communication among individuals, City agencies, private-sector interests and others. This will include the use of electronic communication accessible to all citizens.

**Fairness and equality** ■ Every Denver resident deserves the benefits of actions taken to fulfill the vision of Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. Fairness and equal treatment are standards that apply to every aspect of its implementation and are essential for it to succeed.

**Comprehensive approach** ■ City staff must take a multidisciplinary approach when looking at issues. This Plan is designed to build more connections within and beyond City government and, when opportunities arise, to erase boundaries. By approaching problems holistically and working across disciplines, City agencies can help to ensure that actions to implement Plan 2000 consider partnership opportunities and long-term impacts.

**Partnership** ■ Plan 2000 encourages partnerships to innovatively and creatively address issues and solve problems. It recognizes that many of the problems facing the City are complex and can often be addressed more effectively through the cooperative efforts of more than one agency or governmental entity. In this Plan, "partnership" applies to arrangements involving the City of Denver, its agencies and departments, other public and/or private partners with whom it shares specific common objectives or interests, and neighborhoods and businesses within the city.

**Leveraging resources** ■ Virtually every goal in Plan 2000 requires investment of resources from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. In its approach to civic investment, the City should be creative and entrepreneurial in leveraging its resources by building partnerships with neighborhood organizations, special districts, businesses, nonprofit institutions, other metropolitan jurisdictions, regional and state sources, and federal agencies.



The zoning ordinance will be reviewed under the planned Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan







The actual implementation process for Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 has two components: publishing and disseminating an Annual Report documenting accomplishments related to Plan 2000, and annually incorporating Denver Comprehensive Plan action priorities as part of each year's annual budget process.

*"Urban innovation is not the monopoly of one kind of place . . . it is a question of finding the moment and seizing the hour."*

**Sir Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization*, 1998**

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## **Objective 1**

**Establish action priorities for funding and implementation through the annual budget process, including both the general fund and Capital Improvement Program (CIP).**

### **Strategies**

- 1-A** Set action priorities annually, taking into consideration the findings of an Annual Report issued by the Denver Planning Board documenting progress on Plan 2000's implementation.
- 1-B** Through a Mayoral Executive Order, direct that the action priority recommendations be used to evaluate agency budget requests as part of the general fund budget process.
- 1-C** Review the CIP budget in light of the Annual Report's action priorities.
- 1-D** In 2000, implement the following action priorities:
  - I** Initiate the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan* and submit to City Council for review in early 2002, and modify the regulatory system following completion of the plan.

**REF:** Land Use Obj. 1, 2






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## Objective 2

Regularly track and report progress in achieving the vision, goals and objectives of Plan 2000.

### Strategies

- 2-A** Develop and use quality-of-life indicators to assess the effectiveness of implementation efforts.
- 2-B** Through a Mayoral Executive Order, require agencies to report their accomplishments related to implementation of Plan 2000.
- 2-C** Compile and distribute an Annual Report assessing the City's progress in implementing Plan 2000.
- 2-D** Amend the City Code to more closely reflect contemporary comprehensive planning.

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## Objective 3

Continuously update Plan 2000.

### Strategies

- 3-A** Add information that expands or refines the Plan's scope or purpose through the use of supplements such as neighborhood or corridor plans.
- 3-B** Make substantive changes to the Plan's policies or directions in response to a major change in conditions through the use of amendments to Plan 2000.
- 3-C** Ensure that Plan 2000 reflects all additions and changes immediately by disseminating it primarily as an electronic document.

*Denver City government's website, [www.denvergov.org](http://www.denvergov.org), will contain an up-to-date version of the Plan, including any amendments and supplemental plans. Published copies of Plan 2000 will be available through the Denver Public Library system.*

- 3-D** Amend the City Code to reflect the "living" (e.g., changing) nature of Plan 2000.



## ■ **Implementing the Plan**

### **The Annual Report: Tracking, Recognizing and Reporting Implementation Progress**

The Denver Planning Board will compile and issue an Annual Report to the Mayor and City Council. The report will assess the progress of the City in achieving the vision, goals and objectives set out in Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. The first report should be issued at the end of 2000, the first full year of implementation. It is recommended that the Annual Report include:

**Summary of changes to Plan 2000** ■ Summarize the supplements and amendments to Plan 2000 that have been adopted by the Denver Planning Board and Denver City Council. (See the Plan supplement and amendment processes described below.)

**Performance indicators** ■ The City will develop and use quality-of-life indicators to track the effectiveness of implementation efforts. These indicators will provide agencies, policy makers and residents with a way to evaluate whether implementation efforts are producing the intended results, or where alternative approaches are needed. The report will summarize the results of the indicators and, over several years, document progress toward achieving Plan 2000's goals and objectives. The first year will provide baseline data.

To be useful, an indicator must meet three criteria:

- be easily understandable;
- measure the vision and values of Plan 2000 using quantitative data; and
- provide reliable information that is already collected on a regular basis.

**Examples of indicators that meet these criteria are:**

- *Average annual utility (gas and electric) and water consumption per residential customer. (Public Service Company and Denver Water Department)*
- *Residential and commercial building permit activity. (CPDA)*
- *Annual ridership for selected bus and rail routes. (RTD)*
- *Average home sales price and average rent compared to household income. (Denver Board of Realtors and DRCOG)*
- *The number and percentage of child-care programs accredited at a specific level of quality. (Educare)*
- *Changes to the Urban Growth Area in Denver and the metro area. (CPDA and DRCOG)*



**Agency accomplishments** ■ At the direction of an Executive Order issued by the Mayor, City agencies will make a report each year on accomplishments related to implementation of Plan 2000 to the Planning Board. The Executive Order should reinforce the importance of reporting accomplishments as they relate to Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000, thus ensuring the participation of all agencies.

### **Annual Action Priorities: Taking Ownership and Being Accountable**

Past experience has shown that, to sustain progress toward the goals and objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan over the years, implementation of the Plan must become integrated into how the City does business. Plan 2000 achieves this by making implementation of the Comprehensive Plan part of the City's annual budget process.

*The draft 2000 Comprehensive Plan recommends a stronger tie between the comprehensive plan and the budget. This budget includes funding for the Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan and the Parks Master Plan, both of which are recommendations in the 2000 plan. In addition, capital projects that implement the plan are identified in the capital budget schedules.*

*Mayor Wellington Webb, 2000 budget letter*

As the budget cycle begins each spring, Plan 2000 recommends that the Planning Board set action priorities for the coming year. These priorities should be based on the findings of the newly published Annual Report on the Comprehensive Plan, suggestions from agencies, and suggestions from the public. To be most effective, the action priorities should:

- Continue those programs and projects that are proving effective at achieving Plan 2000's goals and objectives.
- Incorporate new initiatives proposed by City agencies.
- Engage and challenge City agencies to be creative, collaborative and resourceful.
- Be available to agencies as they develop their budgets.
- Be used to mold the six-, two-, and one-year Capital Improvements Program.

The Planning Board's action priorities become influential only if City agencies are directed to use the priorities as a factor in determining what projects and programs are recommended for funding each year. Therefore, Plan 2000 recommends that the Mayor issue an Executive Order with two directives.



First, the Executive Order should direct the Denver Planning Board to develop recommended action priorities based on the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000, accounting for progress already made.

Second, the Executive Order should recognize the importance of the Comprehensive Plan 2000 and action priorities as a management tool to be used to develop the Mayor's annual budget. Over time, the budget process should help facilitate agency implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, collaboration with other agencies, avoidance of duplication or contradiction, and the accomplishment of multiple goals or objectives.





## ■ Changing and Expanding the Plan

To ensure that Plan 2000 remains flexible and responsive over time, it may be altered in two ways. The first way is by adopting supplements, which will add greater detail to the Comprehensive Plan. Supplements do not change the fundamental vision and goals of the Plan; examples of supplements are quadrant, neighborhood and corridor plans. The second way is by adopting amendments to the Comprehensive Plan itself. Amendments will be adopted, if necessary, to address dramatic changes in Denver's situation. Denver City Council will consider adopting supplements and amendments to Plan 2000 upon the recommendation of the Denver Planning Board.

### **Adding Information: Supplements to Plan 2000**

The adoption of supplements is an essential process in fulfilling the vision of Plan 2000. Supplements expand or refine the Plan's scope and purpose. Supplements are consistent with and work to promote the Plan's fundamental vision, goals or objectives. The Denver Planning Board's protocol for adopting a supplement will include an evaluation of the long-term view of the proposed plan, the process used in the plan's development, and its consistency with the goals and objectives of Plan 2000. A number of previously adopted area plans are being readopted as supplements to Plan 2000. (See Appendix for list.)

#### ***Recommendations for the Supplement Protocol:***

**Step 1** ■ A plan is presented to the Denver Planning Board with a recommendation from the Planning Office and any other applicable agencies. The Planning Board will evaluate the long-term view of the proposed plan, whether an inclusive process was used in its development, and its consistency with the goals and objectives of Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. Using these criteria, the Planning Board will determine that the proposed supplement:

- meets the criteria and recommends adoption of the supplement to the City Council;
- does not meet all the criteria, but is consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 and, with suggested changes in content, recommends adoption to City Council;
- does not meet criteria for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan because of changed conditions that may warrant an amendment to the Plan, and makes such a recommendation to City Council; or
- does not recommend adoption to City Council because of failure to meet criteria.



**Step 2** ■ The City Council will review the recommendation of the Planning Board and vote on adoption of the plan as a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan. Upon completion of the review, it may take one of three actions:

- vote to adopt the recommended supplement as part of the Comprehensive Plan;
- decide not to adopt the recommended supplement to the Comprehensive Plan; or
- return the supplement to the Planning Board (and, subsequently, to the originators) for modification.

**Step 3** ■ Following the adoption of a supplement, the Planning Board will incorporate an abstract of the supplement into the Plan 2000 document. The abstract will also be incorporated into the Annual Report. The abstract is a brief (one-page) summary of the plan that includes the following information: date adopted, geographic area covered, description of the essential vision or purpose for the plan, and contact agency.

### **Adjusting the Course: Amendments to Plan 2000**

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 must have the flexibility to respond to unknown and unexpected future influences to remain an accepted vision for Denver. Amendments to Plan 2000 should be based on generally recognized shifts in circumstances in Denver for which the Comprehensive Plan no longer provides appropriate direction or vision, or where an unanticipated need surfaces. The fiscal impact of the TABOR Amendment, welfare reform and growing regionalism are examples of major social and political shifts that were not foreseen in *The 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan*. The Denver Planning Board will examine a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to determine first if there are situational changes that require a major adjustment in public policy, and if so, then to review the merits of the proposed amendment. Once adopted, amendments will be incorporated into Plan 2000.

#### ***Recommendations for the Amendment Protocol:***

**Step 1** ■ The proposed amendment is presented to the Denver Planning Board. The Board examines it to determine if changing city situations require a major adjustment in public policy and if the proposed amendment has merit. Using these criteria, the Planning Board may exercise one of two possible actions:

- recommend the proposed amendment to City Council; or
- return the proposed amendment to the initiator for further analysis and definition.



**Step 2** ■ The City Council will review the recommendation of the Planning Board and vote on adoption of the proposed plan amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Upon completion of the review, it may take one of three actions:

- vote to amend the Comprehensive Plan;
- decide to make no amendment to the Comprehensive Plan; or
- return the proposed amendment to the Planning Board (and, subsequently, to the originators) for modification.

**Step 3** ■ Once City Council adopts the amendment, it will be incorporated into electronic versions of the Comprehensive Plan and made part of the Annual Report.

### **Keeping the Plan Current and Disseminating the Annual Report**

To be a living document, Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 is designed to change in response to new information and changing circumstances — supplements and amendments. Therefore, it is essential that Plan 2000 exist primarily in an electronic format so that it can be updated easily, quickly and accurately. Plan 2000 and the subsequent Annual Reports will be available in hard copy through the Denver Public Library system. The City's website, [www.denvergov.org](http://www.denvergov.org), will contain an up-to-date version of the Plan, including the abstracts of supplemental plans and any amendments adopted by Denver City Council. Plan 2000 will also be available in hard copy and on CD-ROM from the Denver Community Planning and Development Office. Similarly, the Annual Report will be available on the City website each year at the time it is released to the Mayor, City Council and the community.

**■ Implementation Actions****1 Annual Report**

- a Summarize supplements and amendments.
- b Devise indicators to track progress and collect baseline data.
- c Collect indicator data and assess change.
- d Incorporate 2000 Census data into report and neighborhood profiles.
- e Issue Annual Report to Mayor, City Council and the community.

**2 Annual Action Priorities**

- a Evaluate results of Annual Report.
- b Develop action priorities for coming budget year.
- c Transmit action priorities to Mayor and City agencies.
- d Use the action priorities to evaluate the one-, two- and six-year Capital Improvements Program.

**3 Executive Orders**

- a Direct agency participation in reporting progress and barriers to implementation and initiatives for the coming year.
- b Direct the Budget and Management Office to use the action priorities to evaluate agency budget requests.

**4 City Code Amendments**

- a Amend City Code to be more reflective of contemporary comprehensive planning.
- b Amend City Code to reflect both supplement and amendment changes.

**5 Plan Supplements**

- a Establish contents of plan abstracts.
- b Prepare abstracts for plans readopted as part of Plan 2000.

**6 Updating the Plan and Disseminating the Annual Report**

- a Revise Plan document as supplements or amendments are adopted.
- b Update the website and produce CD-ROM copies; print and copy as needed.
- c Distribute copies of Annual Report to library.

**7 Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan**

- a Complete draft of Plan.
- b City Council action on adoption of the *Citywide Land Use and Transportation Plan*.

**8 Revision of Land-Use Regulatory System**

- a Obtain funding.
- b Initiate project.
- c Submit ordinance amendments to City Council.

**Responsibility****Completion Date****Recurring Action**

Planning Office	12-2000	Yes
Planning Office	10-2000	No
Planning Office	10-2001	Yes
Planning Office	mid-2000-2002	No
Planning Board	12-2000	Yes
Planning Board	1-2001	Yes
Planning Board	1-2001	Yes
Planning Board	2-2001	Yes
Planning Board	3-2001	Yes
Mayor	3-2000	No
Mayor	2-2000	No
CPDA/City Attorney	2-2000	No
CPDA/City Attorney	2-2000	No
Planning Office	3-2000	No
Planning Office/other agencies	6-2000	No
Planning Office	ongoing	—
CPDA	1-2001	Yes
CPDA	1-2001	Yes
CPDA/Public Works- Transportation Planning	11-2001	No
City Council	1-2002	No
City Budget Process	10-2001	No
CPDA	1-2002	No
CPDA	1-2004	No



