

Additional Questions for Denver Community Planning and Development regarding the Neighborhood Planning Initiative

Questions provided by INC; answers provided by Community Planning & Development.

Are there criteria for steering committee appointments to ensure that all points of view are considered?

CPD assembles steering committees that are representative of the community and a diversity of interests. Key considerations in selecting steering committee members include the following:

- Geographic representation (e.g., representing different neighborhoods)
- People/organizations who have a stake in the future of the area and represent different types of interests (e.g., RNOs, other neighborhood groups, business interests, subject matter experts)
- People/organizations who reflect the diversity of the community itself (diversity of age, race, etc.)
- People who are a designated representative for a larger group of stakeholders
- Consultation and close coordination with City Council offices to develop the steering committee roster

How are conflicts of interest with members on a steering committee handled (i.e., a real estate agent, developer, or transportation consultant promoting a particular solution)?

By design, the steering committee is assembled to represent different perspectives. A real estate agent, developer, or transportation consultant might have specific priorities, but each steering committee also includes many other community voices and perspectives that help achieve balance and consensus.

What was the total dollar amount spent on consultants who have been involved in each of the NPI processes that took place over the past three years? What is the role of consultants in the NPI process? Are consultants or CPD tasked with writing the draft plans?

All plans are led by city planners and driven by citywide priorities and neighborhood engagement. When it's time to draft a final plan document, this work is led by CPD staff directly. Given the amount of work that these plans involve, consultants serve as a temporary extension of city staff in order to provide the capacity necessary to organize and facilitate multiple simultaneous neighborhood planning processes. Importantly, consultants also provide specific subject-matter expertise to help enrich the ideas and recommendations the community can build upon to create a final plan. Each neighborhood plan is unique from the others, with a custom scope of work, so consultant tasks will vary in each area. A total of \$415,000 was allocated for consultant work during the Far Northeast plan. Approximately \$500,000 has been used toward consultant work for each of the East and East Central plans so far.

Where and when is affordable housing addressed in NPI planning process for small area plans?

Affordable housing is a topic that is addressed by every NPI plan. Affordable housing strategies appear in the *Land Use and Built Form* and/or *Economy and Housing* sections.

Is there a percentage requirement for affordable units in new development?

Previously, Denver’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO) required 10% affordability in new, for-sale developments of 30 or more units. In 2016, the city replaced the IHO with a fee assessed on all new development by square foot. This fee funds a dedicated affordable housing fund to help create or preserve thousands of affordable homes. Different rates apply for different types of uses.

To what extent do historic structures identified in the Discover Denver survey, and the potential to designate historic districts, affect the small area plans?

When available, Discover Denver data is incorporated into small area plans as part of the existing conditions analysis, and informs any plan recommendations on preservation and historic resources. Because Discover Denver data is so detailed, it can also be used to inform other plan recommendations related to urban design such as setbacks, massing, or building scale that help maintain compatibility with the historic character of an area.

How is neighborhood character protected in small area plans, such as Globeville / Elyria / Swansea, and Congress Park?

Neighborhood plans use a variety of tools to protect neighborhood character. The Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhood plans identify character areas within each neighborhood as well as concept land use and areas of change/areas of stability. This approach aligns with *Blueprint Denver* (2002), which was in effect at the time that these plans were written.

Congress Park is in the East Central planning area. As of the time of this writing, the East Central Plan is in the drafting phase and has not yet been released. When the draft comes out, you can expect it to address and protect neighborhood character using the planning tools from the recently-updated *Blueprint Denver* (2019), including neighborhood context, growth strategy, and future places.

Have constraints been placed on small area plans in determining the percentage of parks and open space relative to developed areas?

No, there are no such constraints. Recommendations for new parks and open space are based on the availability of suitable sites and indicators of need, such as park access gaps. *Game Plan for a Healthy City* (2019) established the city’s goal of having a park within a 10-minute walk for everyone.

What factors relating to sustainability are addressed in small area plans?

Small area plans address sustainability in several ways. First, sustainability is included in the vision for each plan in the form of the Environmentally Resilient and Healthy & Active vision elements. These vision elements come from the *Comprehensive Plan* and *Blueprint Denver*, and are also used in each small area plan. This sets the stage for sustainability to carry through as a theme throughout each plan. Second, sustainability as a topic is directly addressed in the Quality of Life section of each plan. This chapter of the plan addresses a variety of sustainability-related topics including environmental quality, parks, open space, and access to food and healthcare.

If Blueprint Denver has already defined and established land uses, what is the value of small area plans if they can only make minor adjustments to the determined uses?

Blueprint Denver established the system of future places and mapped it citywide. Small area plans use the same system as Blueprint Denver, and when they are adopted, any changes will update the Blueprint Denver maps. Small area plans allow us – in consultation with the community – to make map adjustments as needed to address neighborhood-specific needs that could not be addressed at the citywide level or to consider changing conditions. What small area plans are not intended to do is update Blueprint Denver maps in a way that ultimately subverts the city’s overall goals for equity, mobility and health.

How does NPI bring in priority items from prior plans that remain unaddressed at the time of an area plan?

At the outset of the NPI planning process, staff conducts a review of adopted small area plans within the study area. Because older plans are replaced when an NPI plan is adopted, it’s important to carry forward any recommendations from older plans that are still relevant and consistent with the updated vision for the area. This should be done by updating the recommendations and restating them in the new plan.

Does NPI always rank / prioritize focus areas?

Each NPI plan identifies focus areas that receive additional detail, analysis, and recommendations. Examples include individual neighborhoods within the larger study area, as well as other areas of focus including corridors, station areas, and transformative projects. Plans typically identify priority actions for implementation, but they do not usually rank focus areas.

What assessments are considered mandatory before a plan begins (for example, studies of traffic, parking, or carbon footprint)?

Existing conditions are studied at the start of each planning process. The intent is to provide a baseline of information across a wide variety of topics ranging from demographic information to infrastructure and land use. Additional studies are undertaken as needed as part of the planning process. These may include market studies, parking studies, or other analyses as identified by the project’s scope of work.

What changes are you considering in the NPI process considering feedback to date?

We are always looking to improve the NPI planning process and expect it to continue to evolve as we complete more plans. The primary change currently being considered is re-evaluating the steps in the 18- to 24-month planning process to produce a draft plan more quickly, so as to allow for more time at the end of the process for public review and refinement of the draft.

What methods are being considered to improve community participation?

All ideas are on the table for consideration as we look ahead to the next round of neighborhood plans and apply lessons learned to improve the public engagement process. Ideas include the following:

- Create an engagement manual to document standard procedures and to identify preferred strategies or approaches for different needs or situations.

- Direct a larger portion of project budgets to support community engagement.
- Increase the steering committee's role in developing a customized public engagement strategy for each plan.
- Adjust outreach strategies to achieve participation that better matches the demographics of the community that is being served.
- Increase the use of targeted outreach strategies to engage hard-to-reach populations.
- Increase demographic data collection efforts to better identify outreach gaps.
- Improve online resources (project website, use of videos and surveys).
- Increase overall public awareness of the planning process (social media postings, flyer distribution, postcard mailings, news media coverage).

Is there a reason you don't videotape your public meetings to put on YouTube so that the community members unable to attend can watch and listen to the presentation and discussions taking place?

CPD has done some of this in the past, most recently at key points in the Blueprint Denver planning process, and welcomes the opportunity when our partners, like INC, can help with the resources needed to film and share. We've also found that many people prefer to take our online surveys, which are purposefully robust in order to help explain the content presented at meetings and allow people to give feedback in a manner consistent with what's possible in person.

When a draft comes out, how are you determining that the replies online are coming from the neighbors in the area vs. outside the neighborhoods?

All our plans and processes are open to all members of the public. We weigh all feedback equally, whether it's given online or at a public meeting. However, we do try to get a sense of where people live in order to identify any geographic gaps in our engagement. This is harder to do in person, but our online surveys are able to ask respondents to drop a pin on a map or to identify their neighborhood by name.

What role do zip codes play in determining the validity of survey responses (i.e., is equal weight given to all survey responses even though some respondents may not live in the neighborhood)?

We do not use ZIP codes or any other identifiers to deem responses valid or not. Planning processes are open to all members of the public and are never limited only to residents of a particular area. This is true for both online surveys and in-person events.

What goals does CPD have regarding the percentage of a community that needs to know, and give feedback, about a plan?

Our goal is for our plans and our process to reflect the diversity of our city and our neighborhoods. We try to reach as many people as possible, but we know it is not realistic to expect to reach every single person. What is important is hearing from as wide a range of voices as possible, so we have plans that reflect the diverse viewpoints and experiences within a planning area.

Additional FAQs and information can be found online at www.denvergov.org/NeighborhoodPlanning.