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Background and Context

Note to MVPAC: This section will be located before table of contents in the final document.

About DRCOG

Created in 1955 to foster regional collaboration and cooperation, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) endures today as one of the nation's oldest councils of governments. DRCOG serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region and also plays several important roles:

- It functions as the Regional Planning Commission per Colorado state statute and prepares the plan for the physical development and social and economic health of the region. For nearly two decades this plan has been known as known as Metro Vision.
- It is the federally designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and is responsible for planning and funding the delivery of services to older adults pursuant to the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) and the state Older Coloradans Act.
- It is a council of governments, serving as a planning organization, technical assistance provider, and forum for local member governments to discuss emerging issues of importance to the region.

DRCOG includes 56 local governments, each of which has an equal voice. The towns, cities and counties of the Denver region have worked together to ensure the region remains a great place to live, work and play. DRCOG also has numerous additional partners comprised of regional districts and councils; state agencies and departments; and many other stakeholders representing a variety of interests.

MISSION STATEMENT (ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2014)

DRCOG is a planning organization where local governments collaborate to establish guidelines, set policy and allocate funding in the areas of:

- Transportation and Personal Mobility
- Growth and Development
- Aging and Disability Resources

VISION STATEMENT (ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2014)

Our region is a diverse network of vibrant, connected, lifelong communities with a broad spectrum of housing, transportation and employment, complemented by world-class natural and built environments.

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Metro Vision: 20 Years of Progress

What is Metro Vision?

Origin and History

For more than 50 years, the cities and counties of the Denver region have worked together as the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) to further a shared vision of the future of the metro area and to make life better for our communities and residents. That vision has taken various forms over the years. The current version, referred to as Metro Vision, is founded on the following guiding vision, which local communities developed in collaboration with the region's business, civic and environmental leaders and formally adopted in 1992.

Metro Vision Guiding Vision (Adopted 1992)

With regional cooperation as its keystone, the Metro Vision plan promotes a high quality metropolitan setting within which its people will live, work, and recreate. To advance and sustain this future, the region must function as an association of interrelated communities. Recognizing this, the economic, cultural and geographical significance of downtown Denver to the region must be acknowledged.

The health of downtown Denver, urban cores and the surrounding communities is necessary for, and synergistically linked to, the success and vitality of the region. To promote the health of all communities in the region, an equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of regional development is needed. This sharing could provide every community the resources to respond to the impacts of growth consistent with a vision for itself, while giving each a stake in quality planning and development for the health of the region as a whole.

Effective and efficient cooperative use of limited resources, whether financial, societal or natural, is essential to achieve the goals of the plan and progress toward a sustainable future. Through the implementation of the regional plan, 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.

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.

Key Metro Vision Principles

The hallmark of the Metro Vision planning process has been the open, collaborative and flexible nature of the dialogue. While the region has a strong shared sense of its collective future, the Board of Directors recognizes implementation of the vision requires local action, and moreover, individual communities will pursue the ideals of Metro Vision through different pathways and at different speeds. Six core principles have guided this dialogue since its inception, and remain valid today:

METRO VISION PROTECTS AND ENHANCES THE REGION'S QUALITY OF LIFE.

Metro Vision's most basic purpose is to safeguard for future generations the region's many desirable qualities, including beautiful landscapes, diverse and livable communities, cultural and entertainment facilities, and employment and educational opportunities.

METRO VISION IS ASPIRATIONAL, LONG-RANGE AND REGIONAL IN FOCUS.

Metro Vision's planning period extends to 2040 to help the region address future concerns, while considering current priorities too. The plan expresses a high level, regional perspective on how the region as a whole can fulfill the vision of Metro Vision.

METRO VISION OFFERS DIRECTION FOR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION.

Local governments can use Metro Vision as they make decisions about land use and transportation planning and a range of related issues. Metro Vision also helps local governments coordinate their efforts with one another and with other organizations.

METRO VISION RESPECTS LOCAL PLANS.

The region's local governments developed Metro Vision, working collaboratively through DRCOG. The plan doesn't replace the vision of any individual community; it is a framework for addressing common issues. Metro Vision is sensitive to the decisions local governments make in determining when, where, and how growth will occur. Metro Vision also recognizes that each community has its own view of the future.

METRO VISION ENCOURAGES COMMUNITIES TO WORK TOGETHER.

Many of the impacts associated with growth—traffic, air quality, and housing costs among others—don't recognize jurisdictional boundaries and it is important for jurisdictions to work collaboratively to address them. Metro Vision provides the framework for doing that; DRCOG provides the forum.

METRO VISION IS DYNAMIC AND FLEXIBLE.

Metro Vision reflects contemporary perspectives on the future of the region and is updated as conditions and priorities change. The DRCOG Board makes minor revisions to the plan annually and major updates approximately every four years.

Mile High Compact



MILE HIGH COMPACT SIGNING CEREMONY
AUGUST 10, 2000

In 2000, five counties and 25 municipalities came together to affirm their commitment to Metro Vision by signing the Mile High Compact, a landmark intergovernmental agreement to manage growth by adhering to the ideals in Metro Vision. As of January 2011, 46 communities representing almost 90 percent of the region's population have signed the agreement. The binding agreement commits communities to:

- Adopt a comprehensive land use plan that includes a common set of elements;
- Use growth management tools such as zoning regulations, urban growth boundaries and development codes;
- Link their comprehensive plans to Metro Vision, which outlines regional growth management; and
- Work collaboratively to guide growth and ensure planning consistency

How Metro Vision is Carried Out

For nearly two decades since the adoption of this vision statement, Metro Vision has served as the foundation for an ongoing conversation about how best to protect and enhance the quality of life that makes our region such an attractive place to live, work, play and raise families.

The ideals of Metro Vision are central to the policy and planning decisions of the DRCOG Board of Directors, providing an agenda for action that integrates regional growth and development, multimodal transportation, environmental conservation, community health and livability, and the vitality of region's economy into one comprehensive regional planning framework. The DRCOG Board released the first Metro Vision plan in 1997 – Metro Vision 2020—and has continued the dialogue about how best to achieve the vision of Metro Vision ever since.

This latest update of the Metro Vision Plan document – Metro Vision 2040 – is the primary policy statement of the DRCOG Board of Directors, and will serve to guide DRCOG's work as well as set shared goals and expectations with our partners. It outlines the broad outcomes, objectives, and strategies chosen by the Board to make life better for residents of the region. It also establishes the performance measures and targets that will be used to track progress towards our collective goals over time.

While Metro Vision promotes regional collaboration and shared goals by focusing attention on the long term costs and benefits associated with the decisions we make today, the ultimate success of Metro Vision depends on local implementation efforts by our many partners, particularly the region's many local governments.

Metro Vision 2040: A Call to Action

A Collaborative Process

PURPOSE OF THE 2040 UPDATE

Although many of the key concepts contained in Metro Vision 2035 have been carried forward, the 2040 update process represents much more than a routine technical update. Rather, the 2040 update process was undertaken to serve as a “call to action” for the region—an opportunity to increase understanding of challenges and opportunities, identify common values and regional priorities, and establish a clear course of action for the future.

Over the course of nearly three years, DRCOG staff worked closely with the DRCOG Board and its policy committees, member governments, partner agencies, a host of other regional stakeholders, and the community at large to transform the current Metro Vision Plan (2035) into a shared vision for action that is relevant to everyone involved in shaping the future of the Denver Metro Area. A variety of outreach mechanisms were used to help engage participants and inform the process: Metro Vision Idea Exchanges, local government surveys, listening sessions, stakeholder interviews with public and private sector interest groups, online forums, and neighborhood meetings, among others.

Sidebar/textbox: Shaping Metro Vision 2040: Key Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Metro Vision 2040 Listening Tour: The Listening Tour was conducted in 2012 in advance of the launch of the Metro Vision 2040 update process. The Listening Tour was a qualitative research process designed to hear individual visions of the future. The tour engaged residents, regional stakeholders and subject matter experts. More than 200 people participated in interviews and focus groups and there were nearly 1,200 online survey responses.

Metro Vision Local Government Survey: The Local Government Survey was conducted in fall 2013. The survey was an online voluntary survey for DRCOG's 56 member governments. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of local growth and development challenges throughout the Denver Region. A diverse cross-section of 27 communities from across the region participated in the survey.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC): The DRCOG Board of Directors created a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) in December 2012. The CAC advised DRCOG on effective ways to involve residents and businesses, raised awareness of Metro Vision and assisted in making connections with the broader community. CAC members also conducted outreach activities to engage their existing networks on topics being explored as part of the update process.

Metro Vision 2040 Transit Alliance Citizens Academy: In partnership with Transit Alliance, DRCOG facilitated a seven week leadership program for citizens from around the region. Education sessions were conducted on key Metro Vision topics including: economic vitality, multimodal transportation, community health and wellness, access to opportunity, and housing. All academy participants created an individual action plan to advance mobility-related issues in their community.

Our Shared Vision: In fall 2013, DRCOG launched an online platform that allowed idea generation through stakeholder-to-stakeholder interaction. Idea generation was achieved through on-line idea submissions, surveys, and polls. Participants provided feedback on numerous topics during the Metro Vision update process, including: community supports for older adults, key regional strengths and opportunities, economic vitality, housing, community health and wellness, and infill development.

Metro Vision Idea Exchange: Idea Exchanges bring together staff and elected officials from local governments and stakeholders from the private, public, and civic sectors to share information and learn about best practices to support goals of Metro Vision. In 2013 and 2014 three exchanges were tailored to gather feedback on key issues being explored during the update process – infill development, community health and wellness and urban center planning in areas outside the traditional urban core of the region. DRCOG will also host Idea Exchanges to further implementation of key strategies outlined in Metro Vision 2040.

ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

In 2011 the Denver region was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support regional planning and implementation activities. The Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) brought together numerous stakeholders to align investments, programs and policies to maximize the benefits of the region's investment in transit. The SCI also played a critical role in helping inform and shape Metro Vision 2040. In particular, it provided resources to support the exploration of two key issues that were not directly addressed in previous versions of Metro Vision – housing and economic vitality.

SCI engaged a broad consortium of municipalities, counties, state agencies, housing authorities, federal partners, and non-profit, academic and philanthropic organizations in shaping and implementing Metro Vision. While the grant brought many new voices to the table and cemented partnerships required for successful implementation efforts, the DRCOG Board of Directors makes the final determination of Metro Vision's contents, approves the plan, and guides organizational activities to ensure progress toward desired regional outcomes.

Plan Framework

While the fundamental components of Metro Vision have been carried forward through various updates and remain valid, Metro Vision 2040 is fundamentally different than its predecessors. Key elements of the Metro Vision 2040 Plan Framework include:

FIVE OVERARCHING THEMES

The plan's policy framework has been expanded from three topical "elements" (growth and development, transportation, and environment) to five overarching themes:

- An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern
- A Connected Multimodal Region
- A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment
- Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities
- A Vibrant Regional Economy

This shift reflects feedback from regional stakeholders regarding the plan's organizational structure and areas of emphasis, the collective desire for a more outcome-oriented plan that creates stronger linkages across issues and topics, as well as the incorporation of new and/or expanded topic areas, as discussed below.

NEW AND/OR EXPANDED TOPICS AND STRONGER INTEGRATION BETWEEN TOPICS

Metro Vision 2040, addresses a number of new or enhanced topics in a more comprehensive manner. These topics include housing, economy, community health and wellness, and community resilience. This shift reflects an increased emphasis on the need to plan for not just the physical aspects of the region, but also the social and economic health of the region. As noted previously Metro Vision is dynamic, flexible and represents current direction on the critical issues of the day, but the plan is updated as conditions and priorities change. Metro 2040 also places an intentional focus on "connecting the dots" between individual plan elements since in practice each one is cross-cutting, and directly relates to and influences the others.

OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Metro Vision is the long-range plan for the region. While long-range plans, by definition, focus on long-term goals for implementation—the most effective long-range plans are focused on desired outcomes, with measurable objectives. Focusing our efforts on measurable outcomes and objectives will help the region maintain its momentum and work towards desired outcomes. Metro Vision 2040 incorporates both short and long-term strategies and actions to help focus resources and document progress over time. Importantly, these strategies and actions focus both on what DRCOG can do to achieve these goals as well as actions that can be taken by local governments and other organizations can do to achieve these shared outcomes.

A Focus on Outcomes

The DRCOG Board of Directors recognizes that ensuring a high quality of life for residents of all ages, incomes and abilities requires integrated solutions that create multiple economic, environmental and social benefits. The Board has identified key outcomes – expressed as a desired "end state" – that it hopes the region can realize through the objectives and strategies outlined in the plan.

Each outcome represents a region-wide aspiration that local governments and other partners in the Denver metropolitan area will collectively work toward, each contributing in a manner appropriate to local circumstances and priorities. While

outcomes in Metro Vision 2040 describe a future desired “end state,” objectives detail tangible, relatable areas where improvement is needed to make progress towards the larger goal. As new information becomes available or circumstances change, the DRCOG membership may modify measures, targets, or the methodology for measuring progress.

To help track progress toward these key outcomes, the Board identified a series of performance measures, which can be found at the end of each plan element (i.e. An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern) and in the appendix. The identified measures were selected based on:

- Relevance to plan outcomes and objectives;
- Availability of regularly updated and reliable data sources;
- Focus on results, as opposed to measuring the actions taken to achieve those results; and
- Use of measurable, quantitative information, rather than anecdotal insights.

By regularly tracking these measures, DRCOG and our partners can verify whether our collective actions to implement the plan are moving the region toward the desired outcomes.

Ten foundational measures were selected from this set of overarching performance measures. These foundational measures were determined to be critically important in the ongoing measurement and monitoring of progress toward desired outcomes. For these foundational measures, the Board adopted a set of 2040 targets, which show the intended direction and magnitude of change. Several of these foundational measures carry forward goals and targets set in Metro Vision 2035. DRCOG will report on plan implementation progress through these measures, with reporting frequency based on data availability.

Note to MVPAC: An updated list of possible performance measures and targets will be presented and discussed separately for the December meeting, based on input received during the November MVPAC and TAC meetings. The ten foundational measures, along with a baseline condition and 2040 target, will be inserted here based on additional input received during the December meetings.

FOUNDATIONAL MEASURE	BASELINE CONDITIONS	2040 TARGET
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Building on Success and Facing New Challenges

Introduction

Since the Metro Vision Guiding Vision was adopted in 1992, the Denver region has seen many changes. Numerous successful regional initiatives have captured national and international attention, including construction of the Denver International Airport and several major sports venues, voter approval and construction of initial phases of the FasTracks transit expansion program (one of the largest public works projects in the nation), major infill and redevelopment projects including Stapleton, Belmar, and the Central Platte Valley, revitalization of Union Station as a mixed-use regional transportation hub, and extensive local planning for transit-oriented communities along current and planned transit lines throughout the region. The Denver region is the center of Colorado's increasing reputation both nationally and internationally as one of the leading states for innovation. Businesses and residents alike are choosing to move to—and stay in—the region because of the quality of life offered by its outstanding climate, centralized location, diverse communities and lifestyle options, access to ever-expanding recreational opportunities, and overall economic vitality.

As the Denver metro region continues to grow and evolve, we face new and ongoing challenges to our quality of life and economic prosperity. By 2040, the region's population is forecast to increase almost 50 percent, from almost 3 million to 4.3 million people. At the same time, the region's 60 and older population is growing at a faster rate than the remaining portions of the region's population—by 2040 over one million residents, or one out of every four people will be 60 or older. While these metrics will change over time as projections become reality, nevertheless they demonstrate that our region needs to prepare for these shifts. With this growth comes increased demand on our land and natural resources and the need to continually improve infrastructure and connectivity within the region. These shifts also have profound implications for regional and local planning, as housing and transportation needs change with the needs of our aging population. Furthermore, as the region's population grows, ensuring residents have access to opportunities, services, and care will be essential to promote a population that is healthy and well.

Challenges and Opportunities

While the region has made great strides since Metro Vision's inception, it is changing rapidly and continues to be faced with a series of complex challenges and opportunities that require the ability to respond to short-term needs while planning strategically for the future—some that have only recently emerged, and others that are ongoing. These issues, and others, surfaced during the preparation of this Plan update, through discussions with stakeholders as well as through a Metro Vision 2040 Listening Tour and Local Government Survey.

Changing Demographics and Lifestyles

GROWTH IN OLDER ADULT POPULATION

The region's percentage of older adults has risen dramatically over the past decade and will continue to grow throughout the planning period—by 2040 one in four residents of the Denver Region will be 60 years or older. There are near-term challenges as well. The region will experience a 65 percent increase in the population 75 years and older over the next 10 years (2014 – 2024). Persons 75 years and older often require some amount of support to remain in their home and community, which the vast majority prefer. Many inner-ring suburban communities currently have older adult populations that are over 20 percent of the city's total population and the region's outer-ring suburbs will increasingly see residents age. A shift away from residents in prime working ages toward residents in retirement will increase demand for new workforce. In spite of this shift, many older adults are staying in the workforce longer—either by choice or out of necessity—and a growing number, whether in the workforce or not, are seeking ways to remain active and engaged in their communities.

Call-out box: Meeting the Needs of a Graying Region

Communities can choose a future that both protects vulnerable older adults and challenges those who thrive. Today's older adults are seeking far greater opportunities than exist now to age successfully and give back to the community. The power of the next generation of older adults can be harnessed to the benefit of the region and individual communities.

As the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for the Denver region, DRCOG is responsible for planning and funding the delivery of services to older adults pursuant to the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) and the state Older Coloradans Act. DRCOG's AAA enables more than 25,000 persons in the metro area to receive services including personal care, assisted transportation, congregate and home-delivered meals, homemaker services, home modification, adult day care, and legal assistance. These programs allow older adults to remain in their homes and communities. The swelling ranks of Baby Boomers are increasing demands for aging services at the local and regional levels and are presenting Colorado's communities with new challenges and opportunities.

At the state level, Colorado is facing a looming long-term care crisis. Unless the state begins to invest now in cost-effective home and community-based services, the impact on future state budgets will be increasing burdensome. The federal budget sequestration has hit Colorado particularly hard. Colorado has been affected far more significantly than any other state by the reduction in federal funds for aging services—Colorado cuts have been as high as 15.4 percent, while some states received cuts of less than one percent. For some time, DRCOG has not been able to fully meet support levels requested by community agencies that provide direct services to older adults throughout the Denver region.

Meeting the needs of a rapidly growing older adult population in a constrained funding environment will require innovative and integrated approaches to delivering services to support healthy, successful aging. There is growing evidence that older adults who have access to affordable and accessible housing choices, are provided with the ability to age in place, remain connected to the community and its networks, and have access to long term care when needed are healthier and require fewer supports and services. DRCOG and its partners are committed to addressing growing needs by creating lifelong communities that allow for maintaining independence as long as possible.

INCREASINGLY DIVERSE POPULATION

The region's racial and ethnic diversity continues to increase as it grows—34 percent of the region's residents were racial and ethnic minorities in 2013, compared to 28 percent in 2000. This trend is expected to continue, adding to the region's diversity and vitality over time. However, few neighborhoods in the region mirror its overall racial and ethnic composition. The region is also segregated economically and its youngest residents are most directly impacted. Children have the highest rate of poverty of any age cohort in almost every county in the region; however, significant disparities exist by location.

DEMAND FOR NEW AND EXPANDED HOUSING OPTIONS

As our population changes, so too will demand for new and expanded housing choices to better meet the needs of our current and future residents. Many of our region's older adults will face housing challenges rooted in residential development patterns that have favored large, single-family units in auto-dependent communities that lack access to essential services. Continued in-migration of well-educated, young adults has and may continue to be an important part of the region's economic growth. Yet many of today's younger adults – an even larger cohort than their parents, the baby boomers – prefer to live in more urbanized areas with walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods served by transit.¹ Additionally, an expected increase in low and moderate income households will translate into increased demand for affordable and workforce housing. Another significant shift among all age groups is growth in single-person households, which is expected to grow to more than 30 percent of all households. All of the above reasons underscore the increasing importance of maintaining a diverse mix of housing choices in the region, and present great opportunities for growth and vitality in our region's communities.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

Building new infrastructure to serve the region's ongoing growth, whether for water supply, wastewater treatment, or transportation, is increasingly challenging as the costs to simply maintain existing infrastructure in good condition continue to rise and revenues shrink. As the region grows and as fiscal resources for facilities continue to remain tight, it will be increasingly important to maintain the right balance between expansion and improvements of infrastructure facilities to serve new areas with pressing needs for maintenance, upgrades, and increasing the efficiency of existing systems. While the Metro region generally retains a position of fiscal health and strength, now is the time to be considering the impacts of fiscal realities on its ability to maintain high quality services over the long-term. In addition, broadband internet service is an increasingly important form of infrastructure. Limited access to high-quality, reliable broadband internet service is a constraint to business and entrepreneurial development in some areas of the region, particularly in outlying communities and counties.

Call-out box: Infill and Infrastructure

Since its inception, Metro Vision has placed a significant focus on infill and redevelopment in established areas as a means through which a growing portion of future development should be accommodated. Investment in aging water and sewer infrastructure will be necessary to address existing deficiencies and, in some cases, to expand current capacity to support higher density development.

Properties that are otherwise ripe for infill or redevelopment may be passed over as a result of the higher infrastructure costs typically associated with such sites that are generally absorbed by the private sector and can increase uncertainty and risk for developers. In order to develop an infill or redevelopment site, most local governments require the developer to bring the site up to current land use, street, stormwater, and other utility standards. Many of those applicable standards may have gone into effect long after the majority of the area or neighborhood was originally developed at lesser standards, thus placing a disproportionate burden on the current owner and applicant. Many local governments in the region have taken steps to encourage infill and redevelopment in their urban centers by adopting supportive policies and regulations, establishing streamlined development processes, and providing incentives.

¹ Nielsen Media Research, "Millenials – Breaking the Myths", February 2014.

Historically, the focus of most major capital improvement projects in the region has been on expanding infrastructure systems into greenfield development or major redevelopment areas, not into established and developed areas. As a result, smaller infill and redevelopment opportunities are less likely to garner support for financing the infrastructure improvements necessary to support the higher densities called for by local policies and regulations.

FIRST AND LAST MILE CONNECTIONS TO WORK AND OTHER DESTINATIONS

Among the communities that currently or will soon have light or commuter rail service or high-capacity bus service, the ability to conveniently and safely get to one's final destination from a transit station is an important issue. While FasTracks has greatly expanded regional mobility by transit, the economic benefit of the regional mass transit system will not be fully realized without better access and connections for the "first and last mile" of a transit trip. With more convenient and safer access to stations, they will be more attractive to developers and employers, which will further increase the number of jobs and homes easily accessed from transit. The labor force will benefit from more travel choices and easier commutes, and the region will be more attractive to employers and employees who value transit access. These connections will be all the more critical as the region's demographics change over time.

LINKAGES TO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The region's extensive network of regional parks and open spaces is valued by residents and visitors alike and is increasingly recognized as a key contributor to our quality of life and ability to lead active lifestyles, the health of our environment, and our economic vitality. As the region grows, the value provided by this "green infrastructure" must not be taken for granted or limited to benefit only some residents. The Denver Regional Equity Atlas (www.denverregionalequityatlas.org) demonstrates that many of the region's larger parks and open spaces are not accessible by transit, and green space is generally less plentiful near affordable housing. A continued emphasis on expanding and increasing linkages within our existing green infrastructure network is needed to promote more equitable access throughout the system and to continue to support the varied roles these places serve as the region grows—providing residents with the ability to live healthy and active lifestyles, while protecting our natural systems.

Natural Resources and Resiliency

AIR QUALITY

Motor vehicle emissions are a significant source of air pollutants that are a persistent problem for the Denver Region. Reducing transportation-related emissions requires a suite of strategies such as cleaner fuels, more fuel-efficient vehicles, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as development patterns and transportation strategies that reduce the need to drive. While notable progress has been made within the region since Metro Vision was first adopted, the region's ability to stay on top of these challenges will be made more difficult by ongoing population and employment growth.

WATER

Water is a particularly scarce resource in the arid mountain west—a fact that has been underscored by an extended period of extreme drought over the past decade. While efforts to promote water conservation and make planning and development practices more sustainable are underway throughout the region—seeing the measurable effects of these changes on our built environment and resource usage on a broad scale will take time. A critical consideration now and in the future is the need to place an increased focus on issues surrounding the ability of the region's finite water supply to accommodate projected growth, as well as on protecting water quality, both of which are mandated and monitored at the state level. Establishing and maintaining this focus will require close collaboration at the local, regional, and state level.

HAZARD MITIGATION AND RESILIENCE

Wildfire and flooding have become increasingly common in our region and across the West over the past decade as a result of extreme drought and changing weather patterns. The effects of these patterns are projected to continue in the future due to climate change and increased levels of urbanization in areas prone to wildfires and flooding. With increased frequency comes increased cost for disaster response, management, and reconstruction. Continuing to educate the public and local elected and appointed officials about the risks and potential costs of developing in hazard areas and the need to actively manage growth in these areas through local plans and regulations will be an ongoing consideration.

Access to Opportunity

INCREASING OPTIONS AND REMOVING BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITIES AND SERVICES

One of the region's greatest challenges is providing access to the opportunities and services needed for residents of all ages, abilities, and economic means to improve their circumstances. In general terms, this issue is about making sure that people who need them have the ability to take advantage of the full range of community services—health care, education, job training, social services, housing, recreation, and public transportation. It includes the need for access to those things that contribute to a high quality of life in a community—decent employment, a healthy built and natural environment, arts and culture, and participation in civic life, to name a few. It also encompasses ready access to healthy choices and food, while implying access to the information that will make much of this possible – information about nutrition, for example, about travel choices, about housing options. Most importantly, it incorporates transportation and mobility choices to get to where one needs to go. In all these instances, the important issue is access: the ease with which people can gain it, the barriers that keep them from it, and the opportunities provided for them to take advantage of it so that all in the community, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life.

ACCESSIBLE WORKFORCE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The location as well as the pattern of development shapes the travel patterns of the regional population. For lower wage workers, suitably priced housing is often located further from employment and educational opportunities. The average working family in the Denver region spends 49 percent of its income on housing and transportation costs combined, whereas 45 percent is considered an affordable level for these combined costs.² Affordability is not just a function of housing cost. Housing located far away from employment and commercial areas mean that residents spend more of their household income, as well as more time, traveling between destinations. As the region grows it will be increasingly important that future housing is located where it takes advantage of existing infrastructure, occurs near job centers and transit, and maximizes access to opportunity for all. However, higher land prices near rail-transit stations have resulted in home prices and rental rates beyond the reach of many households.

WORKFORCE AVAILABILITY AND TRAINING

During stakeholder interviews conducted to help inform the Metro Vision update, the Region's "well educated labor force" was consistently cited as a strength, along with our ability to attract talent. The State's major universities (University of Colorado, Colorado State University, and Colorado School of Mines) were cited as assets. The region competes well for companies looking for IT and engineering talent. Yet education funding constraints for both K-12 and higher education

² The Location Affordability Index (www.locationaffordability.info) models housing and transportation costs for households with varying characteristics. This household includes four people with two commuters earning median household income.

systems and reliance on importing talent makes the regional economy vulnerable if we cannot provide the necessary training for existing residents or continue to attract new talent. The region and state will need to continue to look for solutions. A shortage of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills for advanced manufacturing was identified as a gap in the education system and is being addressed by the State Office of Economic Development.

Community Health and Wellness

INCREASE IN CHRONIC ILLNESS AND DISEASE

Although Colorado prides itself on being an active state with the lowest obesity rate in the nation, obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1990.³ In addition, while Colorado's adults lead the nation as the leanest, the state's childhood obesity rate is one of the fastest growing in the nation, with one in four Colorado children classified as overweight or obese.⁴ Obesity rates also vary by race/ethnicity, with higher rates among Hispanic/Latino, African American/Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations than White and Asian/Pacific Islander populations. Moreover, higher obesity rates are associated with lower incomes and poverty status. Our traditional reliance on automobiles and development patterns that reflect and reinforce this reliance affects quality of life by leading people to become more sedentary, ultimately putting them at higher risk for chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, heart and lung diseases.⁵ Inadequate access to open space, trails, parks, and bike and pedestrian facilities can also contribute to sedentary lifestyles. Despite these challenges, Colorado, and the region in particular are leading the charge nationally to reverse these trends by improving travel choices and increasing access to parks, trails, and open lands.

ACCESS TO CARE

There is a widening gap between different demographic and socioeconomic groups in the region in terms of health care accessibility.⁶ Higher health care costs reduce access to care for lower income households including older adults on fixed incomes, which not only affects overall health, but also ripples through the community and region in other ways, such as reducing income available for other household expenses such as housing, food, transportation, and goods and services. . Similarly, issues like lack of affordable housing and the number, type, and locations of medical providers and facilities can result in some people paying a significant portion of their income towards housing and transportation and foregoing medical care and/or insurance as a result, which negatively affect overall health. By focusing efforts within the region on improving the aspects of health care accessibility we can influence with respect to the built environment—such as land use and transportation planning and decisions—we can in turn help alleviate other aspects that are beyond our control—such as the actual cost of care.

³ [Trust for America's Health](http://www.fasinfat.org/states/co/), et. [Trust for America's Health](http://www.fasinfat.org/states/co/), et. al., "F as in Fat," 2014. <http://www.fasinfat.org/states/co/>

⁴ Childhood Obesity Facts. LiveWell Colorado, 2014. http://livewellcolorado.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/LWC_ChildhoodObesityFacts_Sources.pdf. Accessed February 20, 2014.

⁵ Frank, L.D. & Engelke, P., "How Land Use and Transportation Systems Impact Public Health: A Literature Review of the Relationship between Physical Activity and Built Form", Washington, DC: Centers for Disease Control, (updated) 2011. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pdf/aces-workingpaper1.pdf>.

⁶ Health Disparities Report. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2013. <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDPHE-Main/CBON/1251647897443>. Accessed March 3, 2014.

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

The availability and affordability of food within the region shapes nutrition and overall health. Access to and consumption of nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables, supports good health, while consumption of unhealthy foods may lead to health issues such as diabetes or obesity. Access to healthy food is influenced by costs of food, and the availability and proximity of grocery stores, specialty and convenience food stores, restaurants, farmers' markets, and other food outlets and distributors. The divide between those in the region who are able to afford and access fresh and healthy foods, and those who cannot, is growing.⁷ For some people, it may simply be a matter of convenience or location, and food options near their neighborhood may be limited to fast food restaurants or convenience stores. For others, the costs of fresher or healthier foods, time constraints, or a lack of cooking skills may lead them to choose less healthy options.

⁷ Food Research and Action Center, *Food Hardship 2008-2012: Geography and Household Composition*, September 2013.

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A Plan for a Sustainable Future

Introduction

Building on the foundation established by the Metro Vision Guiding Vision, this chapter is organized around five overarching themes—or plan elements:

- **An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern**
- **A Connected Multimodal Region**
- **A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment**
- **Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities**
- **A Vibrant Regional Economy**

Metro Vision 2040 places an intentional focus on “connecting the dots” between individual plan elements. While they are often referred to as discrete topics or groups of topics for the purposes of discussion—such as transportation or the built or natural environment—in practice each one is cross-cutting, and directly relates to and influences the others. To help reinforce this concept, each of the five plan elements contains a discussion regarding why it is important to the other four elements.

As noted in the introductory chapters of the Plan, Metro Vision 2040 also places an intentional focus on outcomes. Each of the five elements is organized around a series of key **outcomes**—which represent the aspirations that DRCOG, local governments and other partners in the Denver metropolitan area will collectively work toward. Each outcome is supported by a series of **objectives**—which identify a direction or path we need to collectively work towards to achieve our desired outcomes and see continuous improvement, and each objective is then supported by a series of **strategies**—which provide guidance for decision-making with regard to the types of steps that may be taken to help achieve specific objectives and outcomes.

The ultimate success of Metro Vision depends on both regional and local implementation efforts. With this in mind, the Plan includes a set of recommended local and regional actions to support the implementation of each objective and supporting strategies. **Regional actions** generally reflect ways in which DRCOG and other regional partners can support local governments in their efforts to implement specific objectives and strategies. **Local actions** reflect specific steps local governments can take on their own, or in collaboration with DRCOG and other partners, to implement specific objectives and strategies.

The Denver region is comprised of over sixty diverse communities—rural, suburban, and urban. As such, the degree to which the strategies identified in Metro Vision apply in individual communities will vary. As the Metro Vision Principles enumerate—the Plan does not replace the vision of any individual community; rather, it is a framework for working collaboratively as a region to address common issues that do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries—traffic congestion, air quality, housing needs, community health and wellness, regional and resiliency, etc. Local governments will ultimately determine how and when to apply and implement Metro Vision through their local plans, based on local conditions and aspirations.

Metro Vision 2040 also establishes a series of performance measures which can be found at the end of each plan element (i.e. An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern) and in the appendix. DRCOG will regularly track these measures to

verify if the region is moving toward the desired outcomes described in the plan. Additionally, Metro Vision 2040 identifies regional targets for critical measures, known as foundational measures. To help track progress toward key outcomes identified in the Plan, a series of performance measures were identified, which can be found at the end of each plan element (i.e. An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern) and in the appendix. The identified measures were selected based on:

- Relevance to plan outcomes and objectives;
- Availability of regularly updated and reliable data sources;
- Focus on results, as opposed to measuring the actions taken to achieve those results; and
- Use of measurable, quantitative information, rather than anecdotal insights.

By regularly tracking these measures, DRCOG and our partners can verify whether our collective actions to implement the plan are moving the region toward the desired outcomes.

From this set of overarching performance measures, ten foundational measures were identified. These foundational measures were determined to be critically important in the ongoing measurement and monitoring of progress toward desired outcomes. For these foundational measures, the Board adopted a set of 2040 targets, which show the intended direction and magnitude of change.

Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms are used throughout Metro Vision:

Outcomes—represent the aspirations that local governments and other partners in the Denver metropolitan area will collectively work toward. Each outcome is accompanied by a narrative that reinforces the range of issues addressed by the supporting objectives that follow.

Objectives—identify a direction or path we need to collectively work towards to achieve a desired outcome and see continuous improvement.

Strategies—provide guidance for decision-making with regard to the types of steps that may be taken to help achieve a specific objective (e.g., policy or regulatory changes, partnerships, identification of funding sources).

Actions—identify specific steps at the regional or local level that can be taken to help implement a particular objective.

Performance Measures and Targets—define quantitative ways in which progress can be measured over time.

Note to MVPAC: The numbering system used throughout this draft may be modified or removed for the final draft.

An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern

Introduction

The Denver region is comprised of over sixty diverse communities—rural, suburban, and urban—each of which contributes in different ways to the region’s economy, resiliency, quality of life, and sense of place. As the region continues to grow over the coming decades, it will be important to maintain these important distinctions and protect the ability for the region’s residents and businesses to choose the type of community that best meets their needs.

Since its inception, Metro Vision has supported this ideal by encouraging growth that is tailored to local communities; accommodates the needs of residents of all ages, incomes and abilities; makes efficient use of available land and existing and planned infrastructure; protects the region’s sensitive open lands and natural resources; and helps attain regional goals related to travel patterns, resource consumption, and air and water quality.

Achieving an efficient and predictable development pattern is dependent on the region’s ability to collectively work towards the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: Diverse, livable communities offer a continuum of lifestyle options;**
- **Outcome 2: Urban development is concentrated within the region’s defined urban growth boundary/area;**
- **Outcome 3: Vibrant urban centers and corridors accommodate a growing share of the region’s housing and employment needs; and**
- **Outcome 4: Freestanding communities and rural town centers remain distinct from the larger urban area.**

The objectives and strategies in this section aim to influence the type, location, and characteristics of development—both Greenfield and infill/redevelopment—required to accommodate future population growth and changing demographics.

Metro Vision is sensitive to the decisions local governments make in determining when, where, and how growth will occur and also recognizes that each community has its own view of the future. The plan recognizes that many areas in the region will experience significant change over the next ten to twenty years, while other areas are well-established and are likely to remain relatively stable. Because this element focuses largely on regional land use and growth management issues, it places an intentional focus on specific areas within the region that have historically been identified as key elements of an overall regional development pattern that contributes to local and regional aspirations. Importantly, this element further recognizes that communities across the region are able to contribute to regional goals and priorities in ways as diverse as the region’s communities themselves.

(SIDEBAR) CONNECTING THE DOTS: WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? (Linkages to other sections/issues)

A Connected Region. Maintaining a clear linkage between the region's land use patterns and multimodal transportation systems is integral to its ongoing success. Compact urban centers and neighborhoods can be more readily served by transit and other alternative modes of transportation, reduce the need for vehicle trips by making walking a part of everyday life, and ensure that a variety of housing and employment options are accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Likewise, limiting urban development outside of the urban growth boundary/area minimizes the need to extend new transportation infrastructure or upgrade existing infrastructure to serve a small segment of the region's population.

A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment. Where and how we grow has a significant effect on our air and water quality, and the health of our natural environment. Slowing the expansion of the urban area; supporting mixed, higher-intensity land uses; and increasing regional density will be key development strategies to increase transit usage and reduce growth in vehicle trips and miles of travel—all of which help reduce harmful emissions. Infill and redevelopment projects also add density in targeted locations without disturbing additional land outside of the urban growth boundary/area.

Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities. The region's built environment plays an important role in regional and community health and wellness. People who live or work in walkable communities and have the option of walking or bicycling to meet all or most of their daily needs are more likely to incorporate regular physical activity into their daily lives and, as a result, are more likely to maintain healthy weights and benefit from regular physical fitness.

A Vibrant Regional Economy. The region's diverse communities—rural, suburban, and urban—play a large role in its appeal to residents and businesses. The ability of residents to choose whether to live in a compact and walkable urban center; a suburban neighborhood; or on a working ranch or mountain property outside of the urban growth boundary/area plays an important role in the region's success in recruiting companies and skilled employees. In addition, carefully managing growth and development and encouraging infill and redevelopment can help the region achieve a more sustainable future by capitalizing on existing infrastructure, reducing energy consumption, and reducing vehicle miles traveled—all of which can help support the more efficient use of municipal resources.

Outcome 1: Diverse, livable communities offer a continuum of lifestyle options.

The Denver metro region will continue to embrace its diverse communities, ranging from urban downtown areas to suburban communities as well as free-standing cities and towns. Varied housing options, access to employment and a range of services and recreational opportunities, and the successful integration of multimodal transportation choices will promote livable communities that meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND COMMUNITY DESIGN FEATURES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, INCOMES, AND ABILITIES.

Strategy 1.1(a): Embrace the unique characteristics of the region's communities

Embrace the unique characteristics of all communities in the region—rural, urban, or suburban; recognizing that the way(s) in which each community will support the implementation of the region's objectives may be distinctly different based upon local context.

Strategy 1.1(b): Promote investment/reinvestment in existing communities

Promote investment/reinvestment in existing communities at all levels—centers, corridors, and neighborhoods—to help make them more livable and economically competitive, leverage the region's investment in transit and other transportation infrastructure, and limit the need for the expansion of development outside of the urban growth boundary/area.

Strategy 1.1(c): Promote compact, mixed-use development patterns

Promote compact, mixed-use development patterns that are easy to navigate and make walking, bicycling, or taking transit viable options; enhance the independence of people who prefer not to drive or are unable to because of age, income, or ability; and increase access to services, such as housing for older adults near social service providers, medical offices, and shopping.

Strategy 1.1(d): Create pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments

Create pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments by providing continuous sidewalks, narrowed street crossings in heavily traveled areas, curb ramps, adequate crosswalk signal timing, medians as midway stopping points, traffic calming measures, improved bike paths and trail systems, and other improvements to enhance safety and contribute to a sense of place, while enhancing mobility for diverse populations and travel needs.

Strategy 1.1(e): Encourage a diversity of housing types

Encourage a diversity of housing types to accommodate residents throughout the various stages of their lives. Locate housing to maximize access to employment, services, shopping, volunteer and educational opportunities, entertainment and cultural venues. Increase access to, and availability of, affordable rental and for-sale units that meet the region's present and future housing demands, particularly in areas where transit service exists or is planned.

Strategy 1.1(f): Integrate universal design strategies

Develop built environments that enable the widest spectrum of people—regardless of age, income or ability—to more easily participate in community life. Design buildings and spaces that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities; ensure safety and comfort; support wayfinding; facilitate social interaction, learning and social enrichment; and can be easily adapted to meet changing needs.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Provide education and support to assist in local efforts to integrate land use and transportation, promote increased diversity in housing options, and meet the needs of people of all ages, income, and abilities.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt policies, regulations, and incentives to support the implementation of universal design strategies.
- Reduce parking minimums near rail and along corridors with frequent bus service to promote increased ridership.
- Reduce parking requirements for affordable units, senior housing, small housing units, or other housing types that expand housing options near rail and along corridors with frequent bus service.
- Consider allowing accessory dwelling units in appropriate zoning districts.
- Target local funds to expand bicycle facilities and to create pedestrian- friendly environments
- Establish street design guidelines and standards that improve the environment for pedestrians.

Sidebar/text box: Accommodating all Ages, Incomes and Abilities

The age structure in the Denver region is undergoing unprecedented changes. As recently as 2003 1 in 8 residents of the Denver region was over the age of 60. In the coming decades the percentage will double – meaning 1 in 4 residents will be 60 years old or older. The unprecedented growth in people over the age of 60 will result in increased demands for aging services at the local and regional level. In order to support healthy, independent aging the Denver region must also consider how the design of our communities, services and infrastructure must evolve to meet the needs of this growing population.

DRCOG’s Boomer Bond initiative provides education and support to local governments around the region in the form of strategies and tools that can support healthy, independent aging, allowing older adults to remain in their homes and communities for as long as they desire. Working closely with stakeholders around the region DRCOG developed the Boomer Bond Assessment Tool. The tool is a resource local governments can use to evaluate how well the community’s existing resources, programs and physical design serves older adult residents.

Jurisdictions around the region have used the Boomer Bond assessment process to assist staff and policymakers in determining effective ways to meet the needs of existing and future older adult residents. How local governments in the Denver region support healthy aging in their community will vary as widely as the nature and composition of communities in our diverse region. The Boomer Bond will support the ongoing and continuing efforts of DRCOG’s member governments to implement measures to overcome barriers, become more livable, and improve the quality of life for older adults in the Denver region.

Outcome 2: Urban development is focused within the region’s defined urban growth boundary/area.

A defined urban growth boundary/area (UGB/A) promotes an orderly, compact and efficient pattern of future development within the region. Continuing to focus urban development within the urban growth boundary/area will prevent unnecessary and inefficient extension of roads, transit services, water and wastewater treatment plants, and other infrastructure; thereby reducing associated costs. In addition, it will reduce regional vehicle travel, help achieve greater density, conserve open land outside the boundary/area and maintain separation between communities. A limited amount of semi-urban or rural development will continue to occur beyond the urban growth boundary/area in response to locally adopted policies and market demand, contributing to the region’s diversity of land uses. This may include very low-density residential development as well as industrial/employment uses and commercial activities in targeted locations.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: CONTAIN URBAN DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE DEFINED URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY/AREA

Strategy 2.1(a): Maintain and monitor the urban growth boundary/area

Ensure that urban development occurs within the defined urban growth boundary/area. Continue to maintain the urban growth boundary/area and update the growth allocations for each community in the region annually, or as needed.

Sidebar/text box: DRCOG’s Urban Growth Boundary/Area– A Model for Regional Collaboration.

The Denver metro region has adopted a unique bottom-up policy for growth management that starts at the local government level and relies on voluntary collaboration among communities. The urban growth boundary/area defines where urban development will take place in the region over the next 25 years. The boundary/area currently encompasses 980 square miles of urban development, and is intended as a tool to:

- * anticipate and direct growth;
- * efficiently phase development to maximize infrastructure investment (especially transportation), saving money and resources for taxpayers;
- * stimulate infill and redevelopment activity; and
- * increase overall regional density within the UGB by at least 10 percent between 2010 and 2040.⁸

The DRCOG Board of Directors allocates growth areas to each community within the region, based on historical development trends and future projections. Each community determines the specific geographic location of this growth allocation.⁹ Communities have the flexibility to postpone committing their allocated urban growth area until specific development plans are in place. These communities will be referred to as urban growth area (UGA) communities.

Nearly 20 years after the adoption of the original Metro Vision plan, the Board remains committed to the UGB/A as a tool for promoting sustainable growth. The success of this voluntary approach has garnered both national and international praise for the Denver metro region.

Strategy 2.1(b): Direct growth to areas with infrastructure and services

Direct future urban growth within the urban growth boundary/area to areas where a complete package of infrastructure and services—including streets, water and wastewater, transit, police, fire, parks—already exists, or where plans are in place to provide such services.

Strategy 2.1(c): Encourage and plan for infill and redevelopment

Encourage infill and redevelopment on overlooked vacant parcels and under-developed parcels as a means to increase housing and employment options and density in existing developed areas. Identify appropriate infill locations that will use existing infrastructure and reduce the need for costly infrastructure expansion. Create plans and regulations that thoughtfully match desired public and private sector outcomes.

Sidebar/text box: Transforming the Region through Infill and Redevelopment

Encouraging and incentivizing infill and redevelopment activity can help energize and promote the economic vitality of older neighborhoods and help transform brownfields and other underutilized sites in the region from eyesores into vibrant communities. The revitalization of these areas through infill and redevelopment makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and helps promote regional goals, such as increasing overall regional density, increasing housing options and access to opportunity, and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

Many communities in the Denver region are actively working to promote infill and redevelopment. Some successful strategies include establishing a supportive policy foundation through adopted plans and policies; removing potential

⁸ Most effective methodology for measuring over time to be confirmed—move base year and end year each time, or increase target.

⁹ For this Metro Vision update, community allocation updates will be completed following the plan’s adoption and a table listing each community’s allocation will no longer be included in the plan appendix.

regulatory barriers and providing increased flexibility in development standards (e.g., parking, setback and height requirements; parks and open space set asides; and minimum lot sizes/permitted density) in areas where infill and redevelopment are desired; streamlining development approval procedures; and updating building and fire codes. In recent years, the results of these efforts have become increasingly visible—ranging from the construction of new housing options in established neighborhoods to the ongoing expansion of some of the region’s newest communities—Stapleton, Belmar, Midtown at Clear Creek, and the Central Platte Valley. Other emerging locations include the ongoing redevelopment of the former Gates Rubber Factory and environs—which will be complemented by plans to transform the Denver Design Center area north of I-25, Aria Denver, and countless others.

Strategy 2.1(d): Coordinate on municipal annexations of unincorporated areas within the urban growth boundary/area

Annexation of unincorporated areas within the urban growth boundary/area is encouraged when it represents a logical extension of a municipality’s boundaries and is consistent with local comprehensive plans and annexation procedures. Cities and counties should develop intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) that provide for the resolution of any urban growth boundary/area issues.

Strategy 2.1(e): Protect the long-term viability of significant regional facilities

Ensure the intensity or types of uses associated with future development will not conflict with or affect the day-to-day operations of or long-term viability of an existing or proposed facility of regional significance. Significant regional facilities may include airports, solid waste disposal sites, and other facilities with unique access and land use compatibility considerations.

Strategy 2.1(f): Minimize conflicts with extractive resources

Discourage development in areas with commercially viable deposits of sand, gravel, quarry aggregate, or other extractive resources until these deposits are extracted to minimize potential conflicts with surrounding land uses and maintain access to these resources within the region.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Work with local governments to monitor the extent of the urban growth boundary/area and the distribution/characteristics of the uses within it over time.
- Establish an online clearinghouse for local governments and developers that provides a list of potential sites or jurisdictions meeting a specific set of project parameters (e.g., infill or redevelopment site of a particular size, adjacent to transit).
- Plan for and invest in infrastructure and transportation systems in newly urbanizing areas within the urban growth boundary/area to ensure that services are in place when needed.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Align local land use, transportation, and utility/infrastructure planning with the urban growth boundary/area, where applicable.
- Coordinate with DRCOG on local growth area allocation and adjustments to the location of urban growth boundary/area as needed.
- Coordinate and establish intergovernmental agreements to address planning and service delivery issues in areas of mutual interest, such as in unincorporated portions of a community’s planning area and/or areas planned for future annexation.
- Consider annexation of contiguous, unincorporated areas of a community’s planning area as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: MANAGE THE EXTENT OF DEVELOPMENT OCCURRING BEYOND THE URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY/AREA¹⁰

Strategy 2.2(a): Prioritize funding to serve urbanized areas

Prioritize regional transportation infrastructure funds and other services in urbanized areas within the urban growth boundary/area by not expending regional funds to serve development in other locations.

Strategy 2.2(b): Limit development in Priority Preservation Areas¹¹

Avoid development in areas identified as Priority Preservation Areas (see map on page x), and in other sensitive environmental areas in need of preservation or restoration, or that enhance connections between designated areas.

Strategy 2.2(c): Conserve opportunities for future urban development¹²

Plan for and conserve appropriate areas for urban development beyond 2040, maintain separation between the larger urban area and smaller outlying communities, and avoid open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas.

Strategy 2.2(d): Require adequate facilities and services

Ensure that adequate water supply, wastewater treatment, and other facilities and services can be provided in areas where development outside of the urban growth boundary/area is necessary.

Strategy 2.2(e): Discourage development on non-conforming parcels

Discourage development on mining claim parcels that do not meet the development standards of the jurisdiction, especially access and setback requirements.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Monitor the amount of land consumed by semi-urban development occurring outside of the urban growth boundary/area.
- Maintain a map of Priority Preservation Areas, working with local communities to refine and potentially expand designated areas as appropriate
- Coordinate with service providers and local communities to identify urban reserve areas that should be conserved for future growth.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Use intergovernmental agreements to identify joint planning areas where future contiguous urban development beyond 2040 will occur.
- Adopt policies and regulations that define location and service provision criteria for development occurring outside of the urban growth boundary/area.

¹⁰Former Large-Lot Development section—references to “large lot” have been adjusted to reflect broader intent of the section, as characterized by the outcome.

¹¹Changed from Regional Open Space Plan to be consistent with “Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment” section.

¹²Moved from ‘Extent of Urban Development’ section (existing policy re: joint planning areas or future urban development moved to local actions)

- Ensure development outside of the urban growth boundary/area pays its own way, to the extent practical.
- Promote infill and redevelopment through zoning and funding for public infrastructure.

Outcome 3: Vibrant and connected urban centers and multimodal corridors accommodate a growing share of the region’s housing and employment needs.

The Denver metro region is recognized as an international model for healthy, livable communities by developing vibrant urban centers connected by a robust network of multimodal corridors throughout the metro area. While the location and context of each urban center and multimodal corridor will help define its unique character and density/intensity, they share a common set of characteristics. They are active, transit-, pedestrian-, bicycle-friendly places that contain a more dense and diverse mix of land uses than the surrounding areas; are designed to allow people of all ages, incomes and abilities to access a range of housing, employment, and service opportunities without sole reliance on having to drive; provide spaces where people can gather; promote regional sustainability by reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption; and respect and support existing neighborhoods.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: ACCOMMODATE A GROWING SHARE OF THE REGION’S NEW HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT IN URBAN CENTERS

Strategy 3.1(a): Direct new housing and employment growth to urban centers

Direct new housing and employment growth to urban centers, recognizing that the ability for individual urban centers to absorb future growth will vary based on the characteristics of each center—location, availability of infrastructure, type (infill vs. greenfield), status (existing vs. new), existing and planned mix of uses and development intensity, proximity to transit, and surrounding development context.

Strategy 3.1(b): Promote public/private investment and partnerships in urban centers

Provide resources and direct investment toward programs and infrastructure improvements that help local governments and the private sector develop successful urban centers.

Strategy 3.1(c): Prioritize investment in urban centers that are served by transit

Prioritize investment in urban centers located around existing or proposed rapid transit stations or in areas with high-frequency bus service and encourage the development of urban centers on infill and redevelopment sites within the urban growth boundary/area.

Strategy 3.1(d): Promote diverse housing options

Support the development of a variety of housing options in urban centers where jobs, services, and other opportunities may be accessed without driving. Encourage a mix of housing types within each urban center that offer options for individuals and families at the full spectrum of life stages and physical abilities and are attainable for a wide range of incomes.

Sidebar/textbox: High-Performing Urban Centers throughout the Region (Note: Images to be added for each example for final document)

Example: Downtown Castle Rock

Location: The Downtown Castle Rock urban center is in the heart of Castle Rock.

Description: Downtown Castle Rock serves as the Main Street of Douglas County, providing an authentic western downtown to gather families and individuals. A welcoming environment has been created through prioritizing the pedestrian experience, reinforcing bicycle and trail access, and maintaining an architectural scale that respects the urban center's historic past.

Highlights: The Town of Castle Rock's Downtown Overlay District provides zoning modifications that allow for building heights of four to six stories, mixed-use, no parking, and pedestrian focused. There are bicycle and pedestrian trails connecting into and throughout Downtown Castle Rock. There are multiple Castle Rock Free Cycle stations within the urban center that are free to rent and funded by Castle Rock Adventist Hospital. The Town of Castle Rock used Community Development Block Grant Funds to improve sidewalks and streets including ADA Accessible sidewalks and ramps. Downtown Castle Rock has also been successful in attracting small technology firms.

Example: Downtown Louisville

Location: The Downtown Louisville urban center incorporates the historic commercial core of Louisville.

Description: Downtown Louisville has the character of a thriving small town and provides a place for people to gather. Local implementation efforts have focused on programming community spaces to give residents and visitors a reason to spend time in downtown.

Highlights: The city's Mixed Use Development Standards allows residential densities that exceed those historically allowed in the area and also require a mix of uses including retail, office, and residential. The city's Downtown Patios Program allows businesses to lease patio spaces in parking spots located proximal to downtown businesses. The patio spaces significantly increase pedestrian activity downtown during the summer months. The city is constructing the Louisville Gateway Underpass which will provide continuous bicycle and pedestrian connections through the urban center, along Highway 42, and under the BNSF railway. The City developed preliminary design concepts for the underpass through DRCOG's Urban Center / Station Area Master Planning "next steps" funding program.

Example: SouthGlenn – City of Centennial

Location: The SouthGlenn urban center—known as "the Streets at Southglenn"—is located on the site of the redeveloped SouthGlenn Mall site.

Description: The SouthGlenn urban center is located in the western-quarter of the City of Centennial and serves as a multi-generational activity and entertainment node.

Highlights: The SouthGlenn Sub-Area Plan aims to integrate and connect adjacent neighborhoods to the center. The plan also calls for improving the pedestrian experience along major arterial roadways and intersections by breaking up the blocks to better integrate the urban center with surrounding neighborhoods. SouthGlenn includes a diversity of housing options, including new and existing multifamily residential to supplement the single-family options available in surrounding neighborhoods. As of 2014, there were 16 bus stops within the urban center and 34 bus stops within easy access.

Strategy 3.1(e): Foster the use of innovative tools and strategies

Foster the use of innovative planning, zoning, urban design, and parking management strategies and tools to support the implementation of higher-density, mixed-use development, pedestrian activity, and accessible public space within urban centers.

Strategy 3.1(f): Plan for balanced growth

Initiate collaborative planning to ensure potential market limitations for particular uses, such as retail, are taken into account for urban centers and multimodal corridors located within a shared trade area.

Strategy 3.1(g): Enhance internal and regional connectivity

Establish a network of clear and direct network of multimodal connections within and between urban centers and major destinations within the region to make taking transit, walking, or bicycling more efficient than driving.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Establish an online clearinghouse for local governments and developers that provides a list of potential sites located within urban centers or that meet a specific set of project parameters (e.g., infill or redevelopment site of a particular size, adjacent to transit).
- Collaborate with local governments to monitor levels of investment and development in urban centers on an ongoing basis and adjust the boundaries of individual urban centers, as needed.
- Continue to allocate resources to support ongoing planning for existing and future urban centers throughout the region.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Seek opportunities for public /private partnerships as a means to leverage available resources and implement infrastructure improvements or other catalytic projects within urban centers.
- Adopt policies and development regulations that support the implementation of higher-density, mixed-use development, pedestrian activity, and accessible public spaces within urban centers.
- Consider a range of parking management strategies, including but not limited to shared, unbundled, managed, and priced parking.
- Consider the use of regulatory tools and/or incentives to support the implementation of housing that is affordable, such as reduced parking requirements for affordable housing, senior housing, or other housing that is located proximal to within ¼ mile of transit, inclusionary zoning, or others as appropriate based on local conditions.
- Adjust parking requirements to improve the feasibility of infill projects (e.g. reduce minimums near rail and along corridors with frequent bus service, reduce requirements for affordable units, reduce for small housing unit, etc.)

OBJECTIVE 3.2: CONTINUE TO CREATE AND REVITALIZE MULTIMODAL CORRIDORS THAT CONNECT AND SUPPORT THE VITALITY OF THE REGION'S URBAN CENTERS

Strategy 3.2(a): Invest in multimodal enhancements along corridors

Retrofit auto-oriented corridors to include transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities that will improve safety, enhance first and last mile connections to existing/planned transit, strengthen linkages to and between urban centers, and stimulate public/private investment.

Strategy 3.2(b): Transition through infill/redevelopment and adaptive reuse

Transition low-density, auto-oriented land use patterns along corridors to compact, pedestrian- and bicycle friendly development through targeted infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse. Promote the intensification of existing uses where frequent transit service exists or is planned, accommodating an increasing portion of the region's population and employment.

Leveraging the Region's Investment

DRCOG directed significant Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) resources to demonstration projects along four transit lines that were either recently opened for service or are under construction. Each project was selected for its ability to serve as a model for effectively achieving economic, housing, transportation, community health and environmental objectives at the site-level. Additionally, the projects are expected to catalyze development activity adjacent to station areas and throughout each corridor.

Peoria Station: As the transfer station connecting the East Rail Line and the I-225 Rail Line, Peoria Station is an important intersection for travelers and commuters traveling between significant metro area destinations such as Denver Union Station (DUS), Denver International Airport (DIA), the Anschutz Medical Campus, and the Denver Tech Center. The project identified opportunities for development along Peoria Street to create a more attractive “front door” to the station. Activities focused on redevelopment planning for a 5-acre parcel owned by the Aurora Housing Authority. Additional strategies to transition parking from surface to structured, creating additional opportunities for development and investment were developed.

Ward Road/Ridge Road Improvements: The cities of Arvada and Wheat Ridge each adopted plans that encourage higher density housing and employment adjacent to the Arvada Ridge and Ward Road (Wheat Ridge) transit stations along the Gold Rail Line. The Ridge Road corridor connects the two communities and provides an opportunity to create multimodal access between the stations and to adjacent neighborhoods. The project identified transportation system improvements to facilitate safe and convenient access to the stations for pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles and RTD buses – setting the stage for a more comprehensive multimodal environment.

Westminster Station: Prior to the SCI, the Adams County Housing Authority assembled several properties within walking distance to the Westminster Station on the Northwest Rail Line. SCI supported the development of an actionable redevelopment plan for the properties. The plan focused on, bridging the gap between a conceptual vision for redevelopment and being responsive to existing land uses, community input, physical conditions, market dynamics and real estate development fundamentals, including the sequencing or phasing of development.

Sheridan Station: Denver, Lakewood and the Urban Land Conservancy (ULC) identified implementation strategies and the building blocks to create a 20-minute neighborhood around the Sheridan Station along the W Line. A 20-minute neighborhood provides residents with safe and convenient access by walking, bicycling, or transit to many of the places and services they use daily. The project also directed funds to the first phase of architectural and engineering design activities associated with a property owned by ULC. Located directly adjacent to the Sheridan Station the Jody Apartments will be transformed into a mixed-income housing community that will include permanently affordable housing units.

Strategy 3.2(c): Provide direct connections between urban centers and surrounding neighborhoods

Provide direct pedestrian and bicycle linkages between corridors and adjacent neighborhoods, prioritizing connections that enhance first and last mile connections to transit and access to other services and urban center amenities.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Continue to allocate resources to support corridor planning efforts, infrastructure improvements, and other efforts that will help catalyze further public/private investment.
- Adjust urban center evaluation criteria to ensure corridors are specifically eligible for designation in Metro Vision.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt policies and development regulations that support the implementation of multimodal enhancements and pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-oriented development along corridors.
- Prioritize investment in first and last mile connections to transit.
- Seek opportunities for public /private partnerships as a means to leverage available resources and implement infrastructure improvements or other catalytic projects within urban centers.

Outcome 4: Freestanding communities and rural town centers remain distinct from the larger urban area.

The Denver metro region will continue to distinguish Boulder, Brighton, Castle Rock, and Longmont as freestanding communities, each of which will remain separate from the larger urban area, is surrounded by an open space or rural buffer, and has an adequate mix of jobs and housing, an internal transportation system with regional transportation connections, and a town center at its core. Likewise, the role of the region's rural town centers will be reinforced as unique places that provide services, employment, and entertainment for the surrounding community, as well as for tourists and travelers.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: STRENGTHEN THE VITALITY OF FREE-STANDING COMMUNITIES**Strategy 4.1(a): Encourage self-sufficiency**

Achieve a balance between employment and population and provide a diversity of housing types so people can live and work in the same community. Maintain a vibrant mixed-use town center within freestanding communities to preserve each community's unique identity, protect historic resources, and support the needs of residents.

Strategy 4.1(b): Maintain physical separation from the larger urban area

Establish permanent open space or rural buffers to maintain physical separation from the larger urban area and retain a sense of community identity. Locate highway interchanges or transit stations away from these buffers to minimize development pressure.

Strategy 4.1(c): Develop internal and regional transportation options

Develop multimodal transportation systems within each freestanding community that include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and internally- and externally-oriented transit services. Communities will be linked to the larger urban area with rapid transit and highway facilities.

OBJECTIVE 4.2: STRENGTHEN THE VITALITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF RURAL TOWN CENTERS**Strategy 4.2(a): Maintain the unique characteristics of rural town centers**

Maintain the unique characteristics of rural town centers by promoting infill and redevelopment, the adaptive reuse of existing structures, and the protection of historic and cultural resources; and by enhancing multimodal connections throughout the community.

Strategy 4.2(b): Support growth within rural town centers

Encourage growth to occur within rural town centers where basic infrastructure, including central water and sewer, can be provided in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Strategy 4.2(c): Foster economic development

Encourage economic development efforts that support the ability of rural town centers to be self-sufficient by focusing on issues such as jobs/housing balance, the availability of services to meet current and future needs of the larger surrounding community that supports the center, increasing affordable housing options, improving access to jobs in neighboring communities, and increasing access to health care facilities.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Establish and convene a rural town center working group comprised of town staff, major employers, tourism and economic development professionals, and others as appropriate to promote collaboration on issues of common interest.
- Provide technical assistance and planning services to support rural town centers.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt policies, regulations, and incentives to support the preservation and rehabilitation of significant historic structures and cultural resources that contribute to the town's authenticity of place and ability to attract tourism.
- Encourage growth in the established, historic town center, and limit growth outside of developed areas.

Tracking our Progress/Measures of Success: An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern

Note to MVPAC: An updated list of possible performance measures and targets will be presented and discussed separately for the December meeting, based on input received during the November MVPAC and TAC meetings.

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A Connected Multimodal Region

Introduction

The nine-county DRCOG region aspires to have a connected multimodal transportation system that gives everyone the ability to move quickly and easily by providing viable travel choices. The region will have a multimodal approach to move people and goods, with transportation facilities and services tailored to the desires of individual communities. Public transit, bicycling, walking, and carpooling will be used for a much greater share of personal trips. The region's transportation system must address and adapt quickly to major trends affecting the region, such as significant population growth, a rapidly aging population, new technology, an evolving economy, changing residential and workplace styles, and others. Transportation and land use planning will be integrated to improve the region's quality of life.

Text box: Multimodal Considerations¹³

Transportation needs far outweigh available funding. This necessitates difficult tradeoffs and choices, such as balancing the need for additional multimodal capacity with maintenance and preservation needs. The region must use a range of funding solutions, such as public-private partnerships, innovative local funding strategies, and other cost-effective methods to build and maintain transportation infrastructure and services. Regional actions must be taken to increase transportation funding from all possible sources.

The region will have a multimodal system of regional roadways and local streets to serve people and goods via all modes of travel. The roadway system will be managed and operated to first optimize existing capacity and enable safe travel for all users. New capacity (new roads and widening projects) will address Metro Vision outcomes, and traffic congestion within the urban growth boundary/area and along major statewide connections. Managed lanes will be considered as part of new capacity projects where feasible. New and reconstructed roadways will be designed to optimize person-movement capacity.

Transit will play a crucial role in moving people along public roadways and rail systems. This includes completing RTD's FasTracks rapid transit system and envisioning future intra- and inter-regional rapid transit connections. Regional, local, specialized, and private transit services will be provided to meet the needs of the region's commuters, general public, and growing older adult and limited-mobility populations. Finally, the region and local jurisdictions will invest in transit solutions tailored to specific community needs, such as first and last mile connections, improved access to transit stations, and new or expanded transit service.

Walking and bicycling are valued travel choices in the DRCOG region, with their mode share steadily increasing. The region and local jurisdictions will increase the viability of walking and bicycling by expanding the bicycle and pedestrian network and providing additional supportive infrastructure. The network will also be accessible for persons with mobility devices.

Transportation demand management and other mobility innovations are also key transportation strategies. Carshare, rideshare, and bikeshare programs are increasingly important travel options within the region. Emerging technological innovations, such as connected and driverless cars, also have potential to influence personal mobility in the future. Technology and other innovations (e.g., broadband, smartphones, trip planning tools) play an important role in a connected multimodal transportation system, as does implementing strategies to avoid or manage travel, reduce congestion, and optimize existing capacity, such as teleworking, flexible work hours, virtual meetings, etc.

¹³ This text box to be moved to a facing page in formatted version (opposite introduction). Images to be added to reinforce the range of modes that are covered.

This Metro Vision element outlines an overall policy framework and vision for the transportation system through the year 2040, organized around three regional outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: A well-connected, regional multimodal transportation system;**
- **Outcome 2: A safe, dependable, and efficiently operated transportation system, and**
- **Outcome 3: A transportation system contributing to a better environment and quality of life.**

Supporting objectives and strategies will help the region achieve these outcomes. The companion 2040 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (2040 MVRTP) implements the transportation element of Metro Vision. The 2040 MVRTP also contains the fiscally constrained transportation plan, which defines the specific transportation elements and services the region anticipates being able to fund with expected revenues. The fiscally constrained plan is amended frequently to reflect ongoing system changes and must demonstrate conformance with Federal Air Quality standards.

(Sidebar) Connecting the Dots: Why is This Important? (Linkages to other sections/issues)

An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern. Maintaining an integrated approach to land use and transportation planning and investments in the region is essential. Focusing new housing and employment in urban centers that are well-connected to other destinations helps promote efficiency in the provision of transit services, increases transportation options for area residents and employees, and creates less reliance on motor vehicle trips. Likewise, encouraging infill and redevelopment in established parts of the region and limiting urban development outside of the urban growth boundary/area minimizes the need to extend new transportation infrastructure or upgrade existing infrastructure.

Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities. A well-connected transportation system plays a direct role in the health and wellness of the region's population. By providing travel choices to help reduce vehicle miles traveled, ground level ozone and other air pollutants can be reduced. This in turn will help reduce chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma. In addition, people who have the option of walking or bicycling to meet many of their daily needs are more likely to incorporate regular physical activity into their daily lives and maintain better health. Lastly, transit can help ensure people of all ages, income levels, and abilities have the means to access needed services and amenities.

A Vibrant Regional Economy. Ensuring people, goods, and services move through the region safely, efficiently, and predictably is essential to our economic health. Providing a range of multimodal travel options will help ensure the Denver region remains competitive with other major metropolitan areas for new employers and residents seeking a high quality of life, lower transportation costs, and diverse lifestyle choices.

A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment. The region's multimodal transportation system plays a direct role in the quality of our built and natural environment. Minimizing growth in vehicle miles traveled and providing multimodal travel options are key components to reducing ground level ozone, greenhouse gas emissions, and other pollutants. The design and proper use of transportation facilities can reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries caused by traffic crashes. Likewise, designing roadways and other transportation facilities using stormwater Best Management Practices can help minimize the effects of runoff on the region's water quality.

Outcome 1: A well-connected, regional multimodal transportation system.

A balanced, well-connected, multimodal transportation system will include regional transit, an integrated regional and local bus system, a regional roadway system, local streets, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as air and freight rail linkages. The integrated components of this system will provide reliable mobility choices to all users throughout the DRCOG region: residents and visitors of all ages, incomes, and abilities, as well as businesses that provide services and manufacture or sell goods. Users will find the transportation system easy to access, safe and secure, and it will permit efficient state and nationwide connections for people and freight. Finally, the transportation system will evolve to address future technology and mobility innovations as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: PROVIDE A MULTIMODAL ROADWAY SYSTEM THAT ENABLES PEOPLE, GOODS, AND SERVICES TO TRAVEL SAFELY AND RELIABLY BY AUTOMOBILES, TRUCKS, BUSES, WALKING, AND BICYCLING

Strategy 1.1(a): Maintain and enhance a regional roadway system

Maintain and enhance a regional roadway system comprised of freeways, tollways, major regional arterials, and principal arterials that provide regional and statewide multimodal connectivity for the movement of people, goods, and services.

Strategy 1.1(b): Incorporate multimodal facilities or treatments into all roadways and streets

Build new streets and roadways, and retrofit existing facilities, with applicable multimodal (aka Complete Street) elements where feasible that enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for people using all modes—driving, transit, walking, and bicycling.

Strategy 1.1(c): Expand the person-carrying capacity of existing regional roadways in the most critically congested corridors

Expand the person-carrying capacity of existing regional roadways in the most critically congested corridors, at key traffic bottlenecks, and along major statewide connections only after applying travel demand management and transportation system management and operations strategies to first optimize the use of existing capacity.

Strategy 1.1(d): Consider the use of managed lanes in new capacity projects where feasible

Consider the use of automobile and transit-capable managed lanes in new capacity projects where feasible to optimize the use of the new capacity, help fund the project, provide more reliable travel times, and to encourage carpooling and transit use.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Coordinate with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Regional Transportation District (RTD), local governments, and other regional stakeholders to cooperatively manage the existing multimodal roadway system and to plan for future roadway needs.
- Encourage the use of lower-cost operational mobility improvements to address capacity and traffic flow needs until more permanent projects can be funded and implemented.
- Maintain a fiscally-constrained regional transportation plan that identifies regional priorities and fiscal realities for roadway system improvements.
- Adopt TIP project funding and selection policies that address Metro Vision outcomes and encourage provision of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities within road projects.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt and implement street and development standards to improve multimodal connectivity in a variety of contexts—urban, suburban, and rural, considering unique land use settings—schools, parks, offices, and others.
- Fund roadway projects through local capital improvement programs that include multimodal connectivity components.

Insert 2040 Metro Vision Regional Roadway System map

OBJECTIVE 1.2: EXPAND TRANSIT FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO ALL PEOPLE

Strategy 1.2(a): Complete FasTracks

Continue to implement strategies to accelerate the completion of FasTracks' remaining components.

Strategy 1.2(b): Develop and maintain an expanded metropolitan rapid transit system

Develop, operate, and maintain an expanded metropolitan rapid transit system to provide connectivity for people traveling throughout the region. The rapid transit system includes FasTracks and future rail lines, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors, and transit-capable managed lanes, and bus-on-shoulder facilities.

Strategy 1.2(c): Provide a comprehensive fixed-route bus system

Provide a comprehensive fixed-route bus system that includes high frequency bus corridors, regional bus service, feeder routes to rapid transit lines, and local route service.

Strategy 1.2(d): Provide demand response service for targeted needs

Provide demand-response transit service to serve targeted needs, such as for older adults and persons with disabilities, travelers in less densely developed areas, or feeder service to rapid transit lines. Providers of such service include taxi companies, transportation network companies, and other for-profit companies and non-profit agencies.

Strategy 1.2(e): Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian support facilities

Provide bicycle and pedestrian support facilities by accommodating bicycles on transit facilities, and by providing amenities such as secure bicycle parking (racks, lockers, bike stations), bikesharing, bicycle repair kiosks, and infrastructure that supports bicycle and pedestrian movement to and from stations, park-and-rides, and major transit stops.

Strategy 1.2(f): Add transit service in areas lacking adequate transit service

Encourage the establishment of new or increased transit service to underserved communities and major activity nodes.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Coordinate with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and other transit service providers to implement major projects and services.
- Maintain transit system assets (vehicles and facilities) in a state of good repair per federal guidelines.
- Coordinate with Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council (DRMAC) and transit operators to provide transportation services to older adults, persons with disabilities, and low income populations to expand availability, improve the quality of service, and increase efficiency.
- Encourage and support fare structures and subsidy programs that keep transit service affordable to all users.
- Maintain a fiscally-constrained regional transportation plan that identifies regional priorities and fiscal realities for transit system improvements.
- Develop a regionwide evaluation of potential BRT corridors via a joint effort of RTD, DRCOG, CDOT, and other stakeholders.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt transit-supportive policies and development regulations.
- Implement bicycle and pedestrian facility connections to transit service (e.g., first and last mile connections).
- Consider the needs of mobility-limited populations in transportation planning activities.

- Coordinate with DRCOG, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and other transit service providers on the provision of transit facilities and infrastructure in development projects.

Insert 2040 Metro Vision Rapid Transit System map

OBJECTIVE 1.3: PROVIDE ROBUST BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBILITY THROUGHOUT THE REGION

Strategy 1.3(a): Require pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along all roadways

Require sidewalks or other pedestrian accommodations, and bicycle accommodations that meet or exceed applicable standards along all roadways and within private developments throughout the urban growth boundary/area and along corridors that serve rural town centers.

Strategy 1.3(b): Develop local and regional bicycle facilities

Develop well-connected regional off-street and on-street bicycle corridor facilities and encourage the provision of local facilities throughout the region.

Strategy 1.3(c): Provide bicycle and pedestrian support facilities and services

Provide bicycle and pedestrian support facilities and services, such as bikesharing, wayfinding, and bicycle parking in urban centers, at transit stations, and in association with major multi-use trails and other popular destinations.

Strategy 1.3(d): Provide first and last mile bicycle and pedestrian connections to transit

Provide specific bicycle and pedestrian facilities that connect transit services and stations to nearby neighborhoods, employment, schools, shopping areas, parks, and other major destinations.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Facilitate coordination between jurisdictions in expanding and connecting the region's bicycle and pedestrian network.
- Continue convening a regional forum for bicycle and pedestrian stakeholder collaboration.
- Support public and private bicycle sharing programs throughout the region.
- Maintain a fiscally-constrained regional transportation plan that identifies regional priorities and fiscal realities for bicycle and pedestrian system improvements.
- Provide tools, educational forums, and resources to jurisdictions on bicycle and pedestrian design, guidance, and implementation.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt and implement local street standards that address multimodal connectivity objectives in a variety of land use contexts, and other development codes/standards, such as cul-de-sac cut-throughs.
- Fund projects that address multimodal connectivity objectives through local capital improvement programs.
- Establish wayfinding signage, bicycle parking, and other supportive infrastructure in high traffic areas to assist pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Provide first and last mile bicycle and pedestrian facilities and connections to transit, such as sidewalks and bicycle facilities, bikesharing, wayfinding, bicycle parking and shelters, and carsharing at transit stations.

- Implement striped and/or protected bike lanes (on-street and separated by a barrier from traffic) with proper consideration of how users transition to and from the lanes.
- Implement off-street sidewalks and multi-use paths that are more comfortable to a wide array of users by providing separation (by landscaping, etc.) from traffic.
- Conduct education and promotional events to encourage bicycling and walking.
- Partner with local law enforcement agencies and advocacy groups on education and enforcement activities.
- Ensure ADA standards are met or exceeded in constructing or retrofitting facilities, such as curb cuts, ramps, etc.
- Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure a well-connected system across boundaries.

OBJECTIVE 1.4: PROVIDE EFFICIENT INTERCONNECTIONS OF THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM WITHIN THE REGION AND TO THE REST OF THE STATE AND NATION

Strategy 1.4(a): Facilitate the movement of goods and services throughout the region

Facilitate the movement of goods and services throughout the region by roadway, rail, and air travel by reducing obstructions such as congestion, bottlenecks, and disconnections between facilities, while providing sufficient opportunities for intermodal freight connection to destinations outside of the region.

Strategy 1.4(b): Balance primary park and ride functions with opportunities for transit-oriented development

Balance the need for dedicated parking at park-and-ride lots with future transit-oriented development opportunities, taking into account potential increases in transit ridership, housing and employment options, and other considerations as may be applicable by location.

Strategy 1.4(c): Provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists

Provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians and bicyclists to access rapid transit stations, bus stops, and park-and-ride lots. Also provide secure bicycle parking and bike sharing at these locations and maintain and expand the capability of transit vehicles to carry bicycles.

Strategy 1.4(d): Support and maintain Denver Union Station (DUS) as the region's primary multimodal hub and further develop other transit hubs

Support and maintain DUS as the primary multimodal hub of the region's transportation system. Further develop transit hubs to support other urban centers and major destinations across the region.

Strategy 1.4(e): Improve transportation linkages to major destinations and attractions outside the region

Support existing and continue to plan for future intercity bus and rail linkages to destinations outside of the region as articulated in CDOT State Transit and Rail Plans and applicable studies.

Strategy 1.4(f): Encourage multimodal access to Denver International Airport and the region's other airports

Encourage convenient access to Denver International Airport (DIA) and other regional airports for all modes of travel, and maintain DIA's important role in connecting the Denver region to the rest of the world.

Strategy 1.4(g): Maintain and enhance airport capacity throughout the region

Maintain the capacity of DIA and aviation airports throughout the region by supporting the provision of facility enhancements in response to air transportation demands, consistent with adopted plans.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Coordinate with CDOT and other stakeholder to include recommended projects identified through major studies into DRCOG's fiscally constrained Regional Transportation Plan once construction funding is identified for such project recommendations.
- Support continuing activities that might eventually enable through rail freight traffic to bypass population centers
- Provide wayfinding signage for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users to reach key destinations.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt local multimodal transportation plans that address connections within and between jurisdictions and communities.
- Adopt land use standards around airports to carefully guide compatible long range development plans.
- Facilitate the provision of wayfinding signage for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users to reach key destinations.

Outcome 2: A safe, dependable, and efficiently-operated transportation system.

As the region continues to grow, maintaining the safety, dependability, and efficiency of the region's multimodal transportation system is essential. A variety of approaches will be used to monitor and manage the flow of people and goods throughout the system and to identify ways to enhance safety and improve functionality. The region will maximize the multimodal transportation system's capacity through coordinated operations and management. As technology and mobility innovations occur, the multimodal system will evolve accordingly.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: ASSURE EXISTING AND FUTURE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES ARE WELL-MAINTAINED

Strategy 2.1(a): Maintain the transportation system infrastructure in good condition

Allocate transportation funds and conduct maintenance and preservation efforts to keep roadways, multi-use trails, sidewalks, transit vehicles and all supporting infrastructure in good operating condition.

Strategy 2.1(b): Develop and apply asset management principles and techniques

Develop and apply asset management principles and techniques for operating, maintaining, and improving existing transportation infrastructure.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Collaborate with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Regional Transportation District (RTD), local governments, and other regional stakeholders on a variety of asset management considerations.
- Coordinate with local governments on periodic updates to the Transportation Improvement Program.
- Maintain a fiscally-constrained regional transportation plan that identifies regional priorities and fiscal realities for transportation system maintenance and operations.
- Consider the use of managed lanes in new capacity projects where feasible.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Actively participate in periodic updates to the Transportation Improvement Program.
- Implement appropriate asset management principles and techniques.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: ACTIVELY OPERATE, MANAGE, AND INTEGRATE SYSTEMS TO OPTIMIZE PERFORMANCE

Strategy 2.2(a): Monitor and manage transportation systems

Deploy Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) such as roadway and traffic monitoring systems, transit monitoring systems, and coordinated and real-time traveler information systems (such as multimodal real-time trip planning technology) to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the transportation system. Develop and deploy performance monitoring procedures and processes and integrate into system operations.

Strategy 2.2(b): Implement Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O) projects

Implement transportation systems management and operations (TSM&O) processes and projects, such as intersection improvements, transit queue jumps and signal priority, ramp metering, acceleration/deceleration lanes, active traffic management, real-time traveler information, and others to reduce bottlenecks and improve personal mobility while balancing considerations for all modes.

Strategy 2.2(c): Implement access management projects to optimize the efficiency of roadways, reduce conflict points, and improve safety

Manage access (curb cuts on arterials or interchange ramps on freeways) to optimize existing infrastructure capacity, reduce conflict points, and improve safety for all users.

Strategy 2.2(d): Develop and deploy effective procedures and processes for incident management

Develop and deploy procedures and processes for incident management to reduce the duration and impact of incidents such as motor vehicle crashes or stalled vehicles upon the movement of vehicles on the regional roadway system. These procedures and processes will promote interdepartmental and interagency collaboration and consistency across the region.

Strategy 2.2(e): Implement and operate coordinated traffic signal systems

Implement and operate coordinated traffic signal systems across jurisdictional lines that integrate transit signal priority and pre-emption techniques for transit and emergency vehicles, respectively. Continue to research and employ innovative traffic signal system management techniques where appropriate.

Strategy 2.2(f): Support the use of congestion pricing and other tolling techniques

Support congestion pricing and other tolling techniques on existing freeways, and implement a tolling component (price-management) on new freeway lane-addition projects, where feasible. Include all impacted communities in tolling decisions, considering issues of social and economic equity, and using surplus revenues for multimodal investment or system preservation. Implement other active demand management, including parking supply and pricing mechanisms, where appropriate.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Work with CDOT, RTD, and other regional stakeholders to implement effective TSM&O projects, incident management procedures and processes, transportation demand management initiatives, and other innovative tools and techniques to safely optimize performance.
- Consider legislation that would implement VMT-based fees, pay-as-you-drive insurance, and other pricing strategies that more directly and equitably reflect the cost of vehicle travel to the user.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Develop and implement access management principles along major streets.
- Monitor and manage transportation systems (including traffic signal systems) in collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A SAFE AND SECURE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Strategy 2.3(a): Identify and implement safety enhancement projects

Identify and implement safety enhancement projects that analyses show will reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes involving motor vehicles, freight and passenger trains, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Strategy 2.3(b): Develop and implement strategies that enhance security

Develop and implement projects and strategies that enhance the security of all transportation facilities and users, including air and transit passengers, and aid in the efficient movement of people and vehicles during homeland security events.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Support legislation aimed at cost-effectively improving the safety of drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- Collaborate with public safety stakeholders to assess threats to and vulnerabilities of the transportation system, including consideration of national and regional homeland security initiatives, and establish and implement resolution processes in response.
- Coordinate with federal, state, regional, and local agencies to implement applicable homeland security plans and initiatives.
- Facilitate interagency coordination on safety and homeland security initiatives.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Accurately monitor and maintain crash and traffic safety data for all transportation modes.
- Implement projects that analyses show will reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes involving motor vehicles, freight and passenger trains, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- Enforce traffic laws and ordinances as they apply to all users of the transportation system.
- Participate in federal, state, and regional initiatives related to safety and homeland security initiatives.

Outcome 3: A transportation system contributing to a better environment and quality of life.

Transportation planning and investments should be integrated with other considerations, including land use planning and the environment. Concentrating new housing, employment, and services in urban centers, along multimodal corridors, and other areas served by transit will provide a broader range of travel options for residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities. Although specific needs will vary by location, development will be encouraged to incorporate – consistent with local jurisdictional plans – compact development patterns, a mix of land uses, complete streets, direct bicycle/pedestrian connections to transit and multiple land uses, and other features that can help reduce vehicle miles traveled, support aging in place, and enhance the quality of life of the region’s residents. These actions will also help to protect the region’s essential natural resources; strengthen the interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails; and conserve agricultural lands. Minimizing growth in vehicle miles traveled by providing multimodal travel options are also key components to reducing ground level ozone, greenhouse gas emissions, and other pollutants.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: EXPAND TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS
Strategy 3.1(a): Maintain and improve efficient transportation access to downtown Denver and other regional employment hubs

Continue to support transportation improvements that enhance access to downtown Denver and other major employment hubs within the region, such as the Denver Tech Center/South I-25 Corridor, Denver Federal Center, Denver International Airport area, Anschutz Medical Campus and the Fitzsimons Life Science District, the Interlocken Business Park, and Boulder/University of Colorado.

Strategy 3.1(b): Expand mobility options within urban centers and other areas of concentrated activity

Provide internal pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections between uses, and provide more mixed and compact land uses within urban centers and adjacent to transit. Create mobility hubs in urban centers or other concentrated areas of activity to provide and connect multiple travel modes.

Strategy 3.1(c): Focus roadway capacity increases within the urban growth boundary/area

Focus roadway capacity increases and new freeway interchanges primarily in areas within the urban growth boundary/area, in the most critically congested corridors, at key traffic bottlenecks, and along major statewide connections. Link the provision of new capacity to supporting Metro Vision outcomes, and add capacity only after applying demand management strategies and implementing operational efficiencies to first optimize the use of existing capacity.

Strategy 3.1(d): Promote multimodal connectivity

Promote multimodal connectivity in the design of new development and the retrofitting of established communities to facilitate the efficient movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, motor vehicles, goods, and services within and between centers, corridors, and neighborhoods.

Strategy 3.1(e): Implement transportation improvements that enhance transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities

Implement targeted bus, other transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and other transportation improvements in locations where transit-oriented development (TOD) already exists or is planned.

Strategy 3.1(f): Consider issues of land use compatibility

Encourage coordinated decision-making to ensure potential issues of compatibility between high intensity uses—such as airport operations, intermodal facilities, or other similar uses—and neighboring land uses can be minimized.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Promote integrated land use and transportation planning among state and regional agencies, local governments, and the development community.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Integrate comprehensive plan and transportation plan updates when feasible to promote efficiency and minimize the potential for future conflicts.
- Adopt land use policies and development regulations to support compact, mixed-use development patterns where appropriate.
- Reserve adequate rights-of-way in newly developing and redeveloping areas for pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and roadway facilities.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: EXPAND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND ACCESS THAT ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH MOBILITY OBSTACLES OR IMPAIRMENTS

Strategy 3.2(a): Provide local and regional transportation services that improve personal mobility, employment access, independence, and health for those with mobility obstacles or impairments.

Provide transportation services, such as fixed route and specialized transit, ridesharing, travel training, and other services that improve personal mobility, employment access, independence, and health for those with mobility obstacles or impairments (mobility-limited populations).

Strategy 3.2(b): Proactively consider the transportation needs of mobility-limited populations in land use planning and development.

Proactively consider the transportation needs of mobility-limited populations in land use planning and development, such as the orientation of and accessibility to buildings, available travel options, etc.

Strategy 3.2(c): Proactively consider the needs of older adults and mobility-limited populations in upgrading and redeveloping existing transportation facilities.

Ensure that traffic engineering and roadway redevelopment activities consider the needs of mobility-limited populations who are traveling on foot and/or with the use of mobility devices.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Routinely evaluate and monitor the mobility needs of persons with mobility obstacles or impairments.
- Coordinate information and services among regional and multi-jurisdiction providers of transportation services.
- Continually assess and fill service and access gaps by streamlining eligibility processes, encouraging carpooling, assisting limited English-proficient populations, and other actions.
- Consider the transportation needs of mobility-limited populations in local and regional transportation and land use planning and decision-making.
- Continually improve transportation services to reduce trip times and increase access for low-income and mobility-limited populations to access employment and vital human services.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Facilitate connections between populations in need of transportation assistance and service providers.
- Develop transportation service options to address mobility needs within communities.
- Include criteria for evaluating transportation needs of mobility-limited populations in new developments serving or adjacent to such populations.
- Upgrade existing facilities (sidewalks, signal timing, bus stops/shelters) to promote transit accessibility for older adults and mobility-limited populations.
- Encourage local governments to use DRCOG's Boomer Bond assessment tool to help their communities address the needs of the region's rapidly increasing aging population.

OBJECTIVE 3.3: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT PROTECTS AND ENHANCES AIR QUALITY, ENERGY EFFICIENCY, AND THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT

Strategy 3.3(a): Implement Travel Demand Management (TDM) services and strategies

Implement Travel Demand Management (TDM) services and strategies, including new and diverse incentives and targeted promotions that will reduce vehicle miles traveled and the demand for single occupant motor vehicle trips, and improve personal mobility and regional air quality. TDM services and strategies include carpooling, vanpooling, carsharing, bicycling, walking, trip-planning, teleworking, and others.

Strategy 3.3(b): Provide efficient, low-polluting alternatives to single occupant vehicles

Provide a wide variety of transportation facilities, including rapid transit, bus service, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, that are more energy efficient and less polluting in aggregate than single occupant vehicles.

Strategy 3.3(c): Ensure traditionally underserved populations receive a proportionate share of transportation improvements and are not disproportionately affected by negative impacts

Ensure that minority, low-income, and older adult populations, as well as individuals with disabilities receive a proportionate share of transportation improvements and are not disproportionately affected by negative impacts associated with transportation projects and facilities.

Strategy 3.3(d): Reduce potential environmental impacts of roadway construction and maintenance activities

Promote improvements in roadway construction and street maintenance activities to reduce dust and particulates, decrease associated energy consumption and pollutant emissions, and minimize and mitigate polluted water running off roadways.

Strategy 3.3(e): Encourage the use of alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure

Encourage use of alternative fuel sources and clean-burning technology and provision of supporting infrastructure and services for alternative fuels that lead to lower levels of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

Strategy 3.3(f): Support legislation that increases fuel economy standards and incentives

Support legislation that would increase fuel economy beyond current Federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, establish fuel economy standards for heavy duty vehicles, incentivize purchasing high fuel economy or

alternative fuel vehicles, and provide incentives for accelerated retirement of inefficient and/or high-polluting personal, commercial and fleet vehicles beyond repair.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Work with partners to manage a regional TDM program consisting of outreach, promotion, trip-planning, and marketing activities to shift commute choices to non-single occupant vehicle modes, including carpools, vanpools, transit, bicycling, walking, and telework and alternative work schedules. Conduct marketing consisting of advertising campaigns such as “Stop Being an SOV” and events such as Bike to Work Day.
- Provide funding, tools, educational forums, and resources to jurisdictions, Transportation Management Associations/Organizations, non-profits, and other TDM stakeholders.
- Facilitate and provide services for ride-sharing (carpools, vanpools, and schoolpools).
- DRCOG Way to Go and TDM stakeholders work with local jurisdictions and employers to distribute information about and encourage the use of technology, including multimodal real-time trip planning technologies.
- Prioritize transportation system improvements that minimize transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Provide first and last mile bicycle and pedestrian facilities and connections to transit, such as sidewalks and bicycle facilities; and bikesharing, wayfinding, bicycle parking and shelters, and carsharing at transit stations.
- Support actions or regulations that reduce engine idling.
- Cooperatively develop mitigation strategies with affected regulatory or resource agencies in instances of unavoidable environmental impacts.
- Ensure that benefits are proportional and negative impacts are not disproportional to vulnerable populations (e.g., environmental justice).
- Develop and invest in regional alternative fueling station infrastructure plans and projects focused on fuels that lead to the greatest reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Facilitate large-scale fleet conversions by local governments and shared fleets around the region.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Conduct local activities to educate and promote the use of TDM strategies and services by Transportation Management Associations/Organizations and local TDM providers.
- Implement parking supply and pricing mechanisms, such as shared, unbundled, managed, and priced parking in urban centers and other major activity nodes to incentivize walking, bicycling, carpooling and transit use.
- Include alternative fuel infrastructure within transportation projects as feasible.
- Develop supporting infrastructure and local regulations, policies, and ordinances regarding alternative fuels, fleet conversions, environmental preservation, and related topics.

Tracking our Progress and Measuring our Success: A Connected Multimodal Region

Note to MVPAC: An updated list of possible performance measures and targets will be presented and discussed separately for the December meeting, based on input received during the November MVPAC and TAC meetings.

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A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment

Introduction

The Denver region's unique setting and natural environment is one of our greatest assets. Mountain views, an abundance of natural amenities and outdoor recreation opportunities, and a pleasant climate have helped spur steady and sustained growth in the region for decades. As the area becomes more populous, our region must take care to ensure these assets, and the quality of life enjoyed by so many, don't disappear.

In the more than twenty years since Metro Vision was first adopted, the region has made great strides in its efforts to protect significant open space and agricultural lands—both at the local level and through collaborative regional efforts. Progress on the development of numerous parks and an interconnected regional trail and greenway system has also been significant, although a number of “missing links” remain. One consequence of the region's growth has been the increase in the number of residents who live in areas that while scenic, are at higher risk for natural disasters such as flooding and wildfire. As a result, the region's resiliency—or ability to respond to and recover from major events—has been tested by the significant social and economic costs associated with the multiple natural disasters that occurred during a relatively short period of time.

Achieving a safe and resilient built and natural environment is dependent on the region's ability to collectively work towards the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: Essential natural resources—air and water—are protected for current and future generations.**
- **Outcome 2: An interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails is widely accessible to the region's residents;**
- **Outcome 3: Working agricultural lands of significance are conserved for current and future generations; and**
- **Outcome 4: Reduced risk and effects from natural and manmade hazards.**

The objectives and strategies in this section seek to protect our region's natural resources, increase access to recreational opportunities, and promote more resilient communities.

(SIDEBAR) CONNECTING THE DOTS: WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? (Linkages to other sections/issues)

An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern. Where and how we grow and get around the region has a significant effect on our air and water quality, and the health of our natural environment. Slowing the expansion of the urban area; supporting mixed, higher-intensity land uses; and increasing density in urban centers will be key development strategies to increase transit usage and reduce growth in vehicle trips and miles of travel—all of which help reduce harmful emissions. Incorporating smaller parks, community gardens, and other types of open space as part of, or adjacent to, urban centers will also help reduce the need for vehicular trips.

A Connected Region. While the region's trails and greenways are often viewed as primarily a recreational amenity, they play a critical role in the transportation system by increasing multimodal options for residents and establishing efficient linkages between neighborhoods, employment hubs, and other activity centers. Increased options for transportation and overall mobility can have a profound influence on public health and community livability. Safe and convenient access to transportation options such as walking and biking provides opportunities for populations to experience less stress and blend physical activity and transportation needs, which can positively influence overall health. Transportation modes and commuting patterns also directly affect regional air quality. By reducing air pollution levels, the DRCOG region can reduce

the burden of disease from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma.

Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities. The conservation and stewardship of our region’s air, water, and other natural resources are critical in maintaining the health of people, as well as the other ecological systems that support life. In addition, access to parks, trails, and open space also affect regional and community health and wellness. People who live or work near these amenities are more likely to incorporate regular physical activity into their daily lives and, as a result, are more likely to maintain healthy weights and benefit from regular physical fitness.

A Vibrant Regional Economy. Businesses and residents alike choose to move to—and stay in—the region because of its scenic natural environment, wide open spaces, and access to ever-expanding recreational opportunities and numerous other quality of life amenities. These features play an important role in the region’s success in recruiting companies and skilled employees and attract visitors from around the globe who travel to the region to hike, bike, ski, and pursue a host of other outdoor pursuits. The ability of our region to maintain the quality of these assets and the ability for residents and visitors to readily access them is critical to continued economic health.

Outcome 1: A region with high quality water, clean air, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Ongoing efforts to reduce ground level ozone, greenhouse gas emissions, and other pollutants will be necessary to improve the region’s air quality over time, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and respond to the potential impacts of a changing climate. In addition, the wise use of the region’s limited water resources will be promoted through efficient land development, implementation of best management practices (BMPs), conservation programs, and other strategies to ensure future growth is compliant with applicable standards and requirements at the federal, state, and local levels.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

Strategy 1.1(a): Promote efficient development patterns

Promote regional and local development patterns that help replace or reduce the need for motor vehicle trips and thereby reduce growth in vehicle emissions.

Strategy 1.1(b): Incentivize alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure

Incentivize the purchase and use of alternative fuel vehicles and supporting infrastructure and services for alternative fuels, reducing the need for fossil fuels, enhancing energy security, promoting environmental stewardship, creating jobs, and reducing vehicle ownership costs.

Strategy 1.1(c): Expand multimodal transportation options

Increase multimodal transportation options such as ride-sharing, transit use, bicycling, or walking, as a means to reduce vehicle miles traveled and vehicle emissions.

Strategy 1.1(d): Improve the efficiency of transportation facilities

Improve the efficiency of the transportation system in the region and increase mobility for all modes by establishing multi-jurisdiction operational improvements, implementing high-occupancy toll lanes and other congestion pricing strategies, providing travelers dependable travel information, and reducing the time and impact of traffic incidents.

Strategy 1.1(e): Collaborate with local and regional partners on air quality initiatives

Collaborate with local and regional partners, such as the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC), the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the Regional Transportation District (RTD) on efforts to improve air quality through reductions in ground level ozone concentrations, and Carbon Monoxide (CO) and PM₁₀ emissions.

Call-out box: Ozone – a Persistent Problem

Ground-level ozone is formed when emissions from everyday items combine with other pollutants and “cook” in the heat and sunlight. Sources of such emissions include local industry; power plants; oil and gas production; gasoline-powered vehicles and lawn equipment; and household paints, stains, and solvents. At ground level, ozone is a health hazard for all of us—especially the young and elderly and people with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Those who are active exercising outdoors may also experience breathing difficulties and eye irritation, and prolonged exposure may result in reduced resistance to lung infections and colds.

In 2007, the 7-county Denver Metro Area plus parts of Larimer and Weld Counties were designated as marginal nonattainment under 1997 National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone. In 2008, the ozone standard was revisited by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to be more protective of human health, and in 2012, the region was once again designated as marginal nonattainment under this tighter standard. While the region has not exceeded the 1997 ozone standard since 2008 the deadline to come into compliance with the revised standard is December 2015. With the Denver Metro Area and North Front Range Ozone Action Plan as a guide, significant progress continues to be made towards attaining this goal. However, due to a mandate that requires EPA to reevaluate the NAAQS every five years, it is anticipated that an even more stringent standard will be recommended by the agency in the near future. With the region not yet meeting the current standard and a tighter standard on the horizon, there will continue to be a need for regional partnerships to help address the issue of air quality and further promote control strategies that reduce pollution including clean vehicle programs, multimodal transportation options, and progressive land use policies.

Strategy 1.1(f): Increase public awareness of air quality issues

Continue to increase public awareness of the direct role individual actions play in pollutant and greenhouse gases emissions and promote the benefits of behaviors that protect regional air quality and reduce greenhouse gases.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Continue to support programs and public awareness campaigns, such as Way to Go, Ozone Aware, and others that promote behavior shifts on an individualized level.
- Incentivize the use of cleaner technologies, such as alternative fuel vehicles.
- Facilitate communication and project implementation between state, regional, and local agencies to maximize the efficiency of the transportation network.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Review and modify local comprehensive plans and development regulations to improve community accessibility and to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit travel opportunities.
- Develop infrastructure needed to support the use of alternative fuel vehicles and the use of alternative modes, such as charging stations, bicycle racks, and shower facilities for employees.
- Update business and government fleets to alternative fuel vehicles.
- Develop specific plans and strategies to operate roadways more efficiently (e.g., traffic signal coordination and better manage traffic incidents).

OBJECTIVE 1.2: RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE REGION'S WATERS

Strategy 1.2(a): Require adequate wastewater treatment systems to serve new development

Support development only in areas where on-site wastewater treatment systems are already available or are planned, where new on-site wastewater treatment systems can be established consistent with state-adopted stream standards or in areas where on-site or individual sewage disposal systems are deemed appropriate.

Strategy 1.2(b): Promote best management practices

Ensure development in the region follows best management practices for addressing nonpoint pollution, such as stormwater retention or on-site wastewater treatment technologies, and grading, erosion, and sediment control ordinances to minimize sediment and other pollutant runoff into the region's waters.

Strategy 1.2(c): Pursue water protection and management initiatives

Define water quality protection and water resource management initiatives that will support a balanced community of aquatic life. Take into account the needs of both the natural environment and other resource uses, such as water supply.

Strategy 1.2(d): Limit groundwater contamination

Discourage the location of waste injection wells, sanitary landfills, and other uses that present potential for harmful discharge over alluvial aquifers or above recharge areas to bedrock aquifers to avoid groundwater contamination. Encourage appropriate mitigation measures, as adopted by the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission, for development over areas with permanently high groundwater levels.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Coordinate with the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission and other stakeholders to support the implementation of adopted water quality plans and programs.
- Maintain data and mapping of aquifers, recharge areas, well heads, landfills, and other information, as available to help inform local land use decisions that may affect the region's groundwater resources.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt and implement grading, erosion, and sediment control ordinances to minimize sediment and other pollutant runoff.
- Adopt policies and regulations for industrial uses to limit opportunities for potential groundwater contamination.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: REDUCE GROWTH IN REGIONAL PER-CAPITA WATER CONSUMPTION

Strategy 1.3(a): Reduce overall water consumption

Encourage compact development, innovative building design, drought tolerant landscape materials and irrigation, graywater reuse, education, and other strategies to help reduce water consumption and related infrastructure costs. Consider these factors in making service provision decisions. Overall, the regional increase in water consumption should be proportionally less than the population increase.

Strategy 1.3(b): Facilitate collaborative efforts to promote water conservation

Facilitate collaborative efforts among local governments, water providers, agricultural producers, the design and development community, and other regional stakeholders to promote water conservation.

Strategy 1.3(c): Require adequate long-term water service

Require adequate long-term water service in areas where urban development is occurring or is planned, either from existing or newly established service providers.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Collaborate with local and regional partners to increase the awareness and implementation of Best Practices and incentives available to support regional water conservation efforts among all users.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Promote water conservation through ordinance revisions and public education activities that encourage the use of low-flow plumbing devices, drought tolerant and native vegetation for landscaping, conservation-oriented irrigation techniques, and other low-impact site development techniques in new development and rehabilitation projects.
- Collaborate with adjoining communities, water districts, and other providers on efforts to promote the efficient delivery and use of water and infrastructure for commercial, residential, and agricultural purposes.

Outcome 2: An interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails is widely accessible to the region's residents.

As the region continues to grow, the protection of its diverse natural resource areas—its mountain backdrop, unique prairie landscapes, extensive riparian corridors, and other open space areas will be essential. Likewise, the restoration of natural features and open spaces, including those on brownfield sites that have been impacted by mining or other heavy industrial uses, will be important as they are redeveloped over time. Together, these areas will help define the urban area, establish both linkages and separation between individual communities, provide important wildlife habitat, and protect the health of our water and ecological systems. In conjunction with local and regional parks and the extensive trails and greenways that connect them, these areas will also provide the region's residents with the opportunity to participate in a variety of recreational pursuits that support community health and wellness.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: PROTECT AND RESTORE OPEN SPACE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Strategy 2.1(a): Protect important natural resources and other preservation focus areas

Conserve and protect important natural resources, such as surface waters, riparian areas, wetlands, forests and woodlands, prairie grasslands, wildlife habitats, other environmentally sensitive lands, commercial mineral deposits, and other preservation focus areas (as identified on page X).

Strategy 2.1(b): Preserve features of scenic, historic, and educational value

Preserve prominent geologic and geographic features and important cultural resources for the visual, historic, and educational value they provide to the region.

Text Box/Maps: Priority Preservation Areas

Metro Vision encourages preserving open space in priority preservation areas, as shown in Figure X. Existing parks and open space managed by all levels of government are also shown. Priority preservation areas reflect places that are characteristic of the region's unique landscape and/or play an important role in achieving an interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails is widely accessible to the region's residents. Key focus areas include:

Mountain preservation areas—intended to protect views of the foothills and high peaks, conserve unique geologic features such as the red rock hogbacks that span the length of the southern Denver metropolitan area, and visually distinguish urbanized parts of the region from its mountain backdrop.

Plains preservation areas—intended to protect areas of regional significance, including important habitat area along Box Elder Creek and the wildlife corridor from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal to the Lowry Range property, among others.

Reservoirs and rivers preservation areas—intended to protect six major reservoirs in the region and an extensive network of river and other drainage corridors. These corridors include the 100-year floodplain and, where practical, additional lands that buffer the floodplain and protect important wildlife habitat and other valuable resources.

Regional greenways—greenways such as the South Platte, High Line Canal, Sand Creek, Cherry Creek, Bear Creek, Mary Carter, Ralston Creek, Clear Creek, Little Dry Creek, C-470 and Colorado Trail, connect the region’s communities, function as critical wildlife corridors, and provide a wealth of recreational opportunities. Other proposed greenways that will ultimately complete the system include the Rocky Mountain Greenway, Colorado Front Range Trail, northern parts of the South Platte Greenway, and the St. Vrain Greenway.

< INSERT PRESERVATION FOCUS AREA MAPS HERE >

Strategy 2.1(c): Use open space as a tool to shape growth and development patterns

Protect or restore open space lands that will help support desired growth and development patterns by establishing linkages within or between communities, maintaining separation between freestanding communities, shaping urban centers or neighborhoods, limiting urban development outside the urban growth boundary/area, and/or providing increased access to open space.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Foster regional coordination surrounding preservation focus areas to update regional map as appropriate and leverage local, regional, and state funding available for parks, open space, and trails.
- Support the integration of parks, open space, and trails as part of the restoration of brownfields and other similar sites.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Prioritize the protection or restoration of open space in preservation focus areas and other locations that help fill “missing links” in the regional open space and greenway system in local plans and funding programs.
- Adopt policies and establish guidelines or standards that promote the incorporation of natural features into new development and redevelopment.
- Adopt open space set aside or fee-in-lieu requirements for future development or redevelopment.
- Coordinate with adjoining communities and municipalities and other organizations, such as Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to help leverage available funding.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: PROVIDE A PARKS SYSTEM THAT IS WIDELY ACCESSIBLE TO THE REGION’S RESIDENTS

Strategy 2.2(a): Support a diversity of parks to meet the region’s needs

Encourage the integration of active and passive parks of all sizes and a full system of recreational facilities as a core component of the region’s overall growth framework.

Strategy 2.2(b): Increase park accessibility

Enhance multimodal connections to existing parks and locate new parks in neighborhoods and other areas that are accessible to residents on foot, by bicycle, or using transit, such as within or adjacent to urban centers.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Increase awareness of the need to plan for and accommodate for smaller parks, greenspaces, and recreational amenities in urban centers.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt policies and regulations to enhance connections to parks and support the implementation of parks and recreational facilities in urban centers.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: ESTABLISH MULTIMODAL LINKAGES TO AND BETWEEN THE REGION’S PARKS AND OPEN SPACES AND DEVELOPED AREAS OF THE REGION

Strategy 2.3(a): Complete “missing links” in the regional trail and greenways network

Identify and prioritize the completion of “missing links” in the regional trail and greenways network—exploring all potential connections, including road and railroad rights-of-way, floodplains, ditch service roads and utility corridors.

Strategy 2.3(b): Increase transit access to major greenways and open space areas

Align transit service plans, local trail and sidewalk networks, and other multimodal improvements with major greenways and open space areas to increase the accessibility of these areas to the region’s residents.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Collaborate with local governments and other regional partners on the identification and implementation of priority trails and greenway expansion projects.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Complete local links in the regional greenway and trails network through strategic acquisition or other means, prioritizing linkages that will enhance connectivity to or within the regional network, or to nearby communities or urban centers.

Outcome 3: Working agricultural lands of significance are conserved for current and future generations.

Working agricultural lands are an essential component of the region’s heritage, health, and economic and cultural diversity. Whether used for livestock production, growing feed and forage crops for livestock, food production, greenhouse and nursery crops, agricultural lands and operations of all sizes create jobs in the region, support economic vitality, and promote healthier communities by bringing people closer to their food source. In some parts of the region, protected agricultural lands also function as community separators, provide access open space and trails, and provide agritourism and recreational services. Protection of existing agricultural land and the ability to bring additional land or operations into production where viable benefits local producers, saves energy resources, and offers a level of food security.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: MAINTAIN THE REGION'S AGRICULTURAL CAPACITY

Strategy 3.1(a): Conserve significant agricultural lands

Conserve agricultural resources of state or national significance, ranches and other grazing lands of local or regional importance, and other lands that play a key role in the health of regional economy, local and regional open space systems, and local food systems.

Strategy 3.1(b): Support diversity and continued innovation in the agricultural industry

Protect the region's capacity for agricultural production at a variety of scales and for a variety of purposes—livestock or crop production, food production, greenhouse and nursery crops, aquaculture, and others—recognizing that advances in technology and industry practices will continually evolve and new industries may emerge over time.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Monitor the quantity and distribution of the region's agricultural lands over time using resources such as those provided by the American Farmland Trust. Consider both lands that are being actively used for agricultural purposes as well as those that are zoned for agriculture, but are not currently in use.
- Coordinate with local communities and local, regional, and state conservation programs to identify and protect—through conservation easements, purchase, or other means—significant agricultural resources at risk of being lost and identify underserved areas in urban or semi-urban settings.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Establish clear policy support for agricultural lands and operations in local comprehensive plans.
- Establish definitions for agricultural lands and operations at all scales development regulations and ensure agricultural uses are allowed in appropriate areas. Identify and remove potential barriers to agritourism and other non-traditional agricultural uses.
- Direct interested landowners or individuals interested in preserving working lands or starting a new farming operation to programs and incentives available through the American Farmland Trust, Colorado Open Lands, and other organizations.

Outcome 4: Reduced risk and effects from natural hazards.

Careful planning with respect to the relationship between areas susceptible to natural hazards and land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments throughout the region can help reduce injuries and loss of life; trauma; and damage to property, equipment, and infrastructure. Having a hazard mitigation plan and disaster response plan in place can also help the region's communities be more resilient should a significant event occur in the future—minimizing community disruption and economic, environmental, and other losses.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Strategy 4.1(a): Limit expansion of the wildland-urban interface

Limit new development or the expansion of existing development in areas recognized as having a high probability of being impacted by natural hazards. High risk areas include, but are not limited to floodplains, steep slopes, and areas located within the wildland-urban interface. Establish guidelines for existing or future development in these locations to minimize loss of life and property should a natural disaster occur.

Sidebar: What is the Wildland-Urban Interface?

The wildland-urban interface, or WUI, is any area where man-made improvements are built close to, or within, natural terrain and flammable vegetation, and where high potential for wildland fire exists. Studies of the state's wildland-urban interface areas in relation to projected growth indicate that these areas are likely to increase from 715,500 acres in 2000 to over 2 million acres in 2030.¹⁴ Much of the increase will be focused along the Front Range and within the DRCOG region. Over the last decade, the frequency and intensity of wildfires in Colorado and across the west has increased dramatically. In recent years, severe drought conditions—combined with forests that have been heavily impacted by beetle infestations—have triggered numerous wildfires near major population centers along the Front Range, raising awareness of the potential dangers of living within the WUI and sparking debate at the state and local level over possible strategies to minimize future risk.

Strategy 4.1(b): Promote integrated planning and decision making

Integrate hazard mitigation considerations into plans and policies at the local and regional level to increase awareness of the associated risks and costs, identify strategies to minimize threats for existing development in high risk areas, and to promote informed decision making when future development within high risk areas is proposed for consideration.

Strategy 4.1(c): Foster interagency coordination

Foster interagency coordination to promote a greater understanding of what resources are available to support hazard mitigation planning and disaster recovery efforts within the region, minimize duplication of efforts, and ensure open lines of communication are established in advance of a major event.

Strategy 4.1(d): Prioritize open space protection in high risk areas

Prioritize open space protection efforts in areas recognized as being at risk of being impacted by natural hazards, including but not limited to floodplains, steep slopes, and areas located within the wildland-urban interface. Consider the protection of properties adjacent to, but not within high risk areas, as opportunities arise to provide additional protections in the event of unique storm events or other natural disasters in the future.

¹⁴ Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests, Colorado State University, 2007.

Sidebar: Flood Recovery Efforts

In September 2013, many communities in the DRCOG region and in other parts of the Front Range experienced massive flooding triggered by an unprecedented rain fall event. Damage to personal property and critical infrastructure was extensive and 8 lives were lost. While the immediate urgency of the situation has passed, the physical, emotional, and economic toll on area communities has not subsided. The reconstruction of critical infrastructure, such as roadways and bridges, in some locations will take many years—forcing the redirection of resources away from other priority projects and hindering the ability of local businesses and residents to move forward. In conjunction with recovery efforts, many communities are actively looking forward to explore ways in which they can reduce risk and develop plans that will increase their resiliency in the future.

In the aftermath of the September 2013 flooding community members from the Town of Lyons chartered a course toward recovery. The town formed Recovery Work Groups (RWGs) to identify issues, generate ideas, and identify recovery projects. Each RWG followed a nine-step process to create Project Development Guides (PDGs) for each long-term recovery project. The process helped community residents, business, and stakeholders identify a common understanding of the impact of the flood and a shared set of outcomes for each recovery project. The town's Comprehensive Plan served as a framework for identifying key issues, topics, and recovery projects.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Seek support necessary to update the Denver Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan every five-years and make available to local communities all mapping and accompanying databases of county-level hazard profiles to support local planning efforts.
- Coordinate with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, emergency responders, and others local, state, and federal stakeholders to help advance planning efforts, assemble best practices, and increase local and regional preparedness.
- Assist local governments impacted by natural disasters with recovery planning efforts.

Local Actions

- Integrate hazard mitigation considerations into local comprehensive plans and development regulations, either through an integrated plan update process or by reviewing and updating existing policies and regulations on a more targeted basis.
- Consider adopting the Denver Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, if development of a locally tailored plan is not feasible.
- Collaborate with emergency responders in the identification of critical facilities, and the review of local plans, regulations, and development projects of significance.
- Incorporate Colorado State Forest Service Firewise guidelines into the land development and building permit approval process.

Tracking our Progress/Measures of Success: A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment

Note to MVPAC: An updated list of possible performance measures and targets will be presented and discussed separately for the December meeting, based on input received during the November MVPAC and TAC meetings.

Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities

Introduction

Colorado and the Denver region are widely recognized as a model of livability and health. However, increasing rates of diseases, rising care costs, an aging population, accessibility of services, insufficient workforce and affordable housing, local food access, and socio-economic disparities are just a few of the many trends and issues of concern that threaten to undermine our quality of life, the health of our residents, and ultimately the region's economy. In order to remain economically competitive, we must strive to be inclusive in our efforts to address these issues—considering the needs of residents of all ages, abilities, and financial means in our planning and decision-making.

There are many efforts to address these issues and concerns underway at the local, regional, and state level that are working well, including coalition building, education and awareness initiatives, grassroots efforts, and the adoption of local programs, policies and regulations. However, the depth of understanding surrounding the importance of these issues at the regional level and the degree to which these issues are being integrated into local plans and policy making across the region is uneven and there is much to be done at all levels.

Achieving healthy, inclusive, and livable communities is dependent on the region's ability to collectively work towards the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: A built and natural environment that promotes healthy and active lifestyle choices;**
- **Outcome 2: The region's residents have expanded connections to care ; and**
- **Outcome 3: Diverse housing options meet the needs of residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.**

The objectives and strategies in this section aim to increase awareness of the importance of community health and wellness considerations, to build on the successes of ongoing efforts across the region, and to help advance the conversation at all levels.

(SIDEBAR) CONNECTING THE DOTS: WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? (Linkages to other sections/issues)

An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern. The location, types, and patterns of development all shape individual decisions and behaviors, and influence local and regional health outcomes, as well as the livability of individual communities. Careful planning can ensure that the region's centers, corridors, and neighborhoods are designed in ways that support good health and quality of life making it easier for people to make healthy choices that result in positive health outcomes.

A Connected Region. The transportation system can have a profound influence on public health and community livability. People that can walk and bike to destinations on a frequent basis are more likely to maintain healthy weights and benefit from regular physical fitness.¹⁵ Others who spend long periods commuting by car or cannot use other modes of travel often experience higher levels of stress, and are more susceptible to other health risk factors such as long periods of sedentary behavior and unhealthier weights. Transportation modes and commuting patterns also directly affect regional air quality which can lead to health issues such as asthma, lung cancer, and heart disease.

A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment. In addition to air quality, other environmental factors such as water quality, soil quality, and access to nature and open space also affect regional and community health and wellness. The

¹⁵ Alternative Transportation and your Health. <http://www.fta.dot.gov/14504.htm>

conservation and stewardship of these and other resources are critical in maintaining the health of people, as well as the other natural systems that support life.

A Vibrant Regional Economy. While health and wellness are themselves an important sector for future economic growth, health and community livability also impact the bottom line for regional business, in terms of costs of care, employee productivity, and ability to attract and retain employees. Residents and businesses alike are attracted to the Denver region’s reputation as a healthy place to live, and delivering on this “brand” is essential in capturing future economic opportunities. Moreover, health, or lack thereof, presents very real economic realities to households. Individuals experiencing poor health may struggle with affordability or access to care, which can also impact employment options and available resources for housing, transportation, education, and nutrition.

Outcome 5: A built and natural environment that supports healthy and active lifestyle choices.

The way in which we live influences our health in many ways—whether the choice of walking or biking versus driving; the mix of uses in our communities; access to civic services; the ability to engage in community activities; safe and convenient access to parks, trails, and open space; or accessibility of healthy food options. Expanding opportunities for the region’s residents to lead healthy and active lifestyles will require a deliberate focus on where we grow, how we get around, the types of places we build, access to the natural environment, and the individual needs of the diverse populations that we serve.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: INCREASE CONVENIENT AND SAFE MOBILITY OPTIONS FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

Strategy 5.1(a): Build active, connected places

Establish a mix of well-connected land uses and recreational amenities in communities throughout the region to create places that make active transportation and recreational physical activity safe for people of all abilities, part of an everyday routine, and foster opportunities for social interaction.

Strategy 5.1(b): Improve first and last mile connections

Improve first and last mile connections to important destinations across the region to ensure convenient and safe travel to and from transit to original and final destinations. Prioritize new or enhanced connections to and between health care facilities, social service providers, schools, grocery stores and other retail services, parks, employment centers, particularly in areas with transit dependent populations.

Strategy 5.1(c): Build Complete Streets

Build new streets, and retrofit existing streets, as “Complete Streets,” to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation by integrating separate facilities for bicycles and pedestrians along with motorized vehicles.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Prioritize funding for projects that meet Complete Streets objectives.
- Focus resources on building safe pedestrian and bicycle connections from transit stops to neighborhoods and activity centers within communities.
- Facilitate public/private partnerships to identify and address first and last mile connectivity issues associated with regional transit as development occurs.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt policies and implementing regulations that promote a mix of uses and active public spaces.
- Adopt and implement street standards that are locally tailored meet Complete Streets objectives in a variety of contexts—urban, suburban, and rural.
- Prioritize funding for projects that meet Complete Streets objectives through local capital improvement programs.
- Promote the development of the natural and built environment shade canopy and/or appropriate vegetative cover to create/maintain a safe, comfortable pedestrian environment.

OBJECTIVE 5.2: INCREASE ACCESS TO SAFE AND HEALTHY FOOD

Strategy 5.2(a): Expand opportunities for local food production and processing

Expand opportunities for the full spectrum of local food cultivation and sales to include—but not be limited to—personal and community gardens, edible landscaping, traditional agricultural operations, and small specialty farms, as well as aquaculture, greenhouses, and other indoor facilities that allow the growing season to be extended.

Strategy 5.2(b): Increase the efficiency of food distribution

Promote the efficient distribution of food within the region—reducing food-shipping distance by supporting both traditional and non-traditional agricultural operations throughout the region; community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, green markets, and other programs that directly connect producers with consumers; cottage food industry sales; and the addition of more healthy food outlets in urban/semi-urban settings throughout the region. Place a particular emphasis on increasing access and opportunities in low-income neighborhoods and areas with high levels for food insecurity.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Monitor the accessibility of health centers and food options from transit through periodic updates to the Denver Regional Equity Atlas.
- Support the integration of farmer's markets and other green markets within urban centers and rural town centers.
- Develop a regional food assessment and plan in collaboration with other stakeholders in the region and consider creation of a regional food system council as a potential outcome of this effort.
- Encourage the creation of a network of regional food hubs to facilitate the processing and distribution of local food, particularly in support of farmers markets.
- Consider regional coordination of institutional purchasing efforts to increase access to market for small producers.
- Monitor the quantity and distribution of community gardens, small-urban farms, and land that is zoned and used for agriculture over time, using regional mapping and working with local communities and others.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Adopt and implement policies and regulations that increase opportunities for local food production and processing by allowing community gardens, keeping of fowl and small livestock, and small-scale agricultural operations. .
- Remove regulatory barriers to household sales of produce grown on premises.
- Consider providing incentives to grocers who locate in urban centers and underserved areas of the community

OBJECTIVE 5.3: . MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND ACCESS TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Strategy 5.3(a): Expand the regional trail network

Identify and prioritize the completion of “missing links” in the regional trail network, with a particular focus on completing linkages that serve as first and last mile connections between transit stations and trails and increase multimodal options for residents and commuters.

Strategy 5.3(b): Improve transit connections to recreational opportunities

Align transit service plans with the region’s network of recreational facilities and parks and open space areas to increase recreational opportunities, particularly for populations that are currently underserved. Support the integration of smaller scale parks and recreation facilities as part of communities throughout the region.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Organize attention around the need for green space and recreational amenities in areas where a concentration of residents and/or employees exists or is planned, such as in urban centers.
- Collaborate with local governments in areas identified as part of the Regional Equity Atlas as having the greatest need on the identification and implementation of priority projects.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Focus on completing “missing links” in the regional trail network.
- Adopt policies and regulations to support small-scale parks, plazas, and other indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. Consider providing incentives for projects that provide a range of recreational options.
- Pursue agreements to share public properties or facilities that can increase access to recreation and/or community gathering places.

Outcome 6: Residents of all ages, abilities, and financial means have expanded connections to care within the region.

In order to enhance the overall health and wellness of the regional population, a range of factors that shape access to care must be considered—the types care available, the location, convenience, and accessibility of health care facilities and providers, and the ability of the region’s residents to pay for the care offered in light of their combined housing and transportation costs.

OBJECTIVE 6.1: IMPROVE CONNECTIONS TO HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Strategy 6.1(a): Increase access to health care facilities and services

Support the integration of health care facilities and services of all sizes into centers throughout the region—both urban and rural— where they may be more readily accessed by walking, biking, or using transit.

Strategy 6.1(b): Improve transit accessibility to health care facilities

Align transit service—including on-demand and other specialized services—with health care facilities, social service providers, grocery stores and other retail outlets that offer health services, and low-income and economically disadvantaged populations.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Conduct periodic updates to the Regional Equity Atlas and collaborate with local and state public health departments to conduct additional research at a neighborhood level to help inform discussions surrounding areas of the greatest need.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Collaborate with public health professionals, area hospitals, and other stakeholders to implement priority projects.
- Adopt and implement policies and regulations that support the integration of health care facilities as part of urban centers, employment campuses, retail centers, rural town centers, and other activity hubs.
- Collaborate with regional stakeholders, public health professionals, and service providers to identify and implement priority projects.

OBJECTIVE 6.2: INCREASE AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS ISSUES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Strategy 6.2(a): Promote collaboration among stakeholders at the local, regional, and state level

Identify and implement opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders at the local, regional, and state on projects and initiatives that highlight connections between community health and wellness and the built environment. Place a particular emphasis on projects and initiatives that present opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplicative efforts and increase formal roles or participation by health professionals in planning and development activities.

Strategy 6.2(b): Leverage existing health and wellness programs and services

Build increased capacity on community health and wellness issues at the local government level by partnering with public health organizations, health care providers, local governments, school districts, and others leading the charge on community health and wellness issues on initiatives that help leverage available resources and increase the visibility and effectiveness of existing programs, services, and other efforts within the region.

Strategy 6.2(c): Increase awareness of programs, services, and other assistance

Promote awareness of the range of programs, services, and other assistance available to help residents lead healthier and more active lifestyles and opportunities for them to become involved in related efforts at the local and neighborhood level.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Convene regular meetings of regional stakeholders—health care providers, local governments, public health organizations, major hospitals, business leaders, the development community, foundations, advocacy groups, school districts, insurance providers, police and fire officials, neighborhood associations and others as appropriate—surrounding health and wellness projects and initiatives of regional significance.
- Establish a central clearinghouse of information to support health and wellness initiatives throughout the region (e.g., regional health indicators, access to services, programs, best practices).

LOCAL ACTIONS

Work with local elected and appointed officials to integrate health and wellness issues and supporting information into plan and policy development and decision-making.

Outcome 7: Diverse housing options meet the needs of all residents.

A range of housing options across the region benefits both individuals and families, and can improve the economic vitality and diversity of local communities. Viable housing choices allow individuals and families to find desirable housing affordable and accessible to them in the communities where they want to live and stay in their community of choice as their economic or life circumstances change.

OBJECTIVE 7.1: INCREASE THE REGIONAL SUPPLY OF OWNERSHIP AND RENTAL HOUSING THAT IS AFFORDABLE TO A VARIETY OF HOUSEHOLDS AT ALL INCOME LEVELS

Strategy 7.1(a): Remove regulatory barriers and reduce cost of developing housing

Proactively pursue strategies that reduce regulatory and procedural barriers and expedite the development of housing in desired locations.

Strategy 7.1(b): Encourage creative approaches to foster the development of affordable, accessible workforce and senior housing

Coordinate with the private development community to understand and convey need to produce units, including clarity on key challenges that must be overcome. Identify realistic and effective incentives that can stimulate the production of housing products that meet the needs of residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities.

Strategy 7.1(c): Monitor and provide input on changing demands and preferences for new and different types of housing

Develop mechanisms to assess housing needs of current and future residents as they progress through the various stages of their lives, including changes in familial status, income, employment and disability.

Strategy 7.1(d): Promote better jobs-housing balance in employment-rich areas

Expand the supply and range of housing, including affordable and accessible units, in and adjacent to major employment centers around the region.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Share best practices in land use regulations, zoning and housing policies with local governments and other stakeholders.
- Convene local government officials and housing experts to identify ways to expand affordable, accessible workforce and senior housing development opportunities in local communities.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Review local plans and regulations to ensure that they encourage a mix of housing types and densities.
- Consider incentives to support affordable, accessible workforce and senior housing, particularly within centers and other areas that are or may be served by transit.
- Promote a variety of housing options to meet the needs of older adults, including independent and supportive options.

OBJECTIVE 7.2: ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSE HOUSING BY LEVERAGING TRANSIT INVESTMENTS

Integrating housing development and transit planning and implementation creates development patterns that support high transit demand, expand travel choices for households, and can reduce VMT.

Strategy 7.2(a): Promote transit-oriented communities that ensure a mix of housing affordability in transit station areas, including preservation of existing affordable housing

Implement programs and policies that support the production and preservation of housing options in location-efficient places, including urban centers, high opportunity areas, and areas well-served by transit.

Strategy 7.2(b): Encourage transit investments where housing densities support transit already, or are guided to support such densities through local community planning processes

Promote new and enhanced transit service in areas with densities that make bicycling, walking and taking transit viable options to reduce reliance on the automobile and enhance the independence of those who do not drive, by choice, or financial or physical circumstance.

Strategy 7.2(c): Elevate awareness of the catalytic role housing can play in transit-oriented community strategies

Develop small area plans for transit station areas that document future land uses, circulation needs, market conditions and implementation strategies. Prioritize catalytic developments that provide affordable, accessible workforce and senior housing and expand demand for other key amenities including commercial development and community services.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Continue to support local planning that furthers the implementation of the region's transit system and Urban Centers.
- Develop and share guidance based on existing best practices, to aid local communities in the identification of high opportunity sites, districts, or areas.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Assess current and future housing needs and programs in transit communities.
- Assess transit and mobility gaps near higher density, affordable, accessible, workforce, and senior housing.
- Plan for increased residential density in strategic transit and transportation corridors.
- Develop a focused strategy for preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing located near current and future transit areas.
- Develop and maintain cooperative efforts with entities focused on developing accessible, affordable, workforce and senior housing.

Tracking our Progress/Measures of Success: Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities

Note to MVPAC: An updated list of possible performance measures and targets will be presented and discussed separately for the December meeting, based on input received during the November MVPAC and TAC meetings.

A Vibrant Regional Economy

Introduction

An economically sustainable region balances economic vitality, environmental quality, and a high standard of living for the region's residents. A sustainable economy is also resilient in that economic downturns are less severe and recovery occurs faster. The benefits of economic health, vitality, and growth expand opportunities for all residents in a sustainable economy.

The underpinnings of a sustainable and resilient economy in the Denver region will include all of the region's assets: physical infrastructure and transportation, quality of life and amenities, an education system that supplies skilled labor and is accessible to all, the ability to attract and retain talent and innovators, a high quality built environment, and housing options that are accessible and affordable to all ages, incomes, and abilities.

Maintaining a vibrant regional economy is dependent upon the region's ability to collectively work towards the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: Access to opportunity for all residents.**
- **Outcome 2: Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.**

The Denver region is home to an extensive network of economic development professionals that focus on business recruitment, expansion, and retention efforts. Metro Vision aims to create a regional growth framework that ensures the underpinnings of a sustainable and resilient economy are considered in regional and local decisions. As such, the objectives and strategies in this section seek to support the ongoing efforts of the many economic development organizations and local governments who play a role in promoting the economic vitality of the region and to reinforce essential linkages between these groups.

(Sidebar) Connecting the Dots: Why is this Important (Linkages to other sections/issues)

An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern. The region's diverse communities—rural, suburban, and urban—play a large role in its appeal to residents and businesses. The ability of residents to choose whether to live in a compact and walkable urban center; a suburban neighborhood; or on a working ranch or mountain property outside of the urban growth boundary/area plays an important role in the region's success in recruiting companies and skilled employees. In addition, carefully managing growth and development and encouraging infill and redevelopment in locations that are accessible by transit can help the region achieve a more sustainable future by capitalizing on existing infrastructure, reducing energy consumption, and reducing vehicle miles traveled—all of which can help support the more efficient use of municipal resources.

A Connected Multimodal Region. Ensuring people, goods, and services move through the region safely, efficiently, and predictably is essential to our economic health. Our region's economy will prosper when residents have access to employment opportunities as well as access to basic needs and quality of life amenities. Providing a range of multimodal travel options will help ensure the Denver region remains competitive with other major metropolitan areas for new employers and residents seeking a high quality of life, lower transportation costs, and diverse lifestyle choices. Improving access to and from the region's employment centers will benefit the economy as well as enhance mobility options for residents in the workforce.

Healthy, Inclusive and Livable Communities. While health and wellness are themselves an important sector for future economic growth, health and community livability also impact the bottom line for regional business, in terms of costs of care, employee productivity, and ability to attract and retain employees. Residents and businesses alike are attracted to

the Denver region’s reputation as a healthy place to live, and delivering on this “brand” is essential in capturing future economic opportunities. Moreover, health, or lack thereof, can diminish access to opportunities for residents.

A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment. Businesses and residents alike choose to move to—and stay in—the region because of its scenic natural environment, wide open spaces, and access to ever-expanding recreational opportunities and numerous other quality of life amenities. These features play an important role in the region’s success in recruiting companies and skilled employees and attract visitors from around the globe who travel to the region to hike, bike, ski, and pursue a host of other outdoor pursuits. The ability of our region to maintain the quality of these assets and the ability for residents and visitors to readily access them is critical to continued economic health.

Outcome 8: Access to opportunity for all residents.

The region’s economy prospers when all residents have access to a range of transportation, employment, housing, education, cultural, and recreational opportunities. The region’s transportation network plays a critical role in enabling commerce and providing access to basic needs and quality of life amenities that allow the region’s residents to succeed and excel.

OBJECTIVE 8.1: ENSURE THE EFFICIENT FLOW OF PEOPLE, GOODS, SERVICES, AND INFORMATION IN AND THROUGH THE REGION

Strategy 8.1(a): Invest in the region’s infrastructure to ensure the region remains globally competitive

Develop and maintain connected multimodal infrastructure that businesses depend on to access local, national, and global customers and markets.

Strategy 8.1(b): Connect residents and visitors to cultural, educational, and natural amenities in the Denver region and across the state

Capitalize on regional and state amenities through efforts to promote reliable connections to key destinations. Invest in planning, design and mitigation strategies and approaches that support positive visitor experiences while protecting the character and integrity of the region’s natural and cultural resources.

Strategy 8.1(c): Preserve, protect, and enable employment opportunities that are accessible to transit

Concentrate a significant portion of the region’s employment in centers accessible via transit. Through multi-sector partnerships develop and implement strategies that safely and conveniently connect workers to final work destinations.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Identify current and future travel and mobility trends including: commuting patterns in employment and urban centers; freight and commercial vehicle travel; technological advances; and recreation and tourism.
- Identify best practices to support manufacturing and production businesses in areas served by transit.
- Identify best practices to support mixed use development, including a range of employment and housing options in areas served by transit
- Evaluate, promote, and encourage investment in first and final mile solutions.
- Provide and analyze data on the region’s demographic and economic conditions.
- Identify gaps and strategies in regional transportation infrastructure.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Develop plans to address potential conflicts between conservation of natural resources and public use and enjoyment.

- Engage economic development and planning professionals in efforts to align community-wide goals.
- Develop strategies that focus a range of employment opportunities directly adjacent to transit stops and stations.

OBJECTIVE 8.2: IMPROVE ACCESS TO AND FROM THE REGION'S DEVELOPED AND EMERGING EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

Strategy 8.2(a): Track, assess and respond to the mobility needs major employment centers

Analyze commute data for major employment centers to understand specific patterns and mobility needs. Align public and private investment to create a diverse portfolio of mobility options and strategies including new and/or enhanced infrastructure and transportation demand programs in these centers.

Strategy 8.2(b): Facilitate public/private partnerships to improve first and final mile connections to the region's high-capacity transit services

Develop first and final mile strategies that consider local conditions around stations including: street layout, bicycle and pedestrian network, property ownership, infrastructure opportunities and barriers, existing and future development, and operational needs for transit.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Establish a technical committee to identify best practices in addressing first and final mile barriers.
- Develop and track metrics that measure qualitative and quantitative urban design characteristics, and quantitative market and economic performance measures at transit stations.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Partner with transportation management organizations and/or improvement districts to determine travel needs of employees.
- Work with property owners, developers, transportation service providers, and RTD to implement first and final mile strategies in employment centers.
- Prioritize investments that will contribute to mobility enhancements in employment centers.

Outcome 9: Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.

The Denver region's economic vitality depends on providing a high quality of life in diverse communities. Quality of life is a major factor in the location decisions of businesses and individuals. Our region's weather, recreational and cultural assets, and diverse living settings have contributed to our success attracting talented labor. The region must also focus on efforts to promote economic advancement for our communities so that all residents share and contribute to sustained regional prosperity.

OBJECTIVE 9.1: INCREASE AWARENESS OF KEY REGIONAL GROWTH, TRANSPORTATION, AND ECONOMIC TRENDS BASED ON THE REGION’S SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Strategy 9.1(a): Assess whether the infrastructure our communities and residents depend on now and in the future will support the region’s near- and long-term economic vitality

Encourage coordinated economic and community development activities aimed at assuring the region’s infrastructure will maintain and grow the economic health and vitality of the region. Expand dialogues and partnerships that examine the role of the built environment in connecting residents to opportunities for economic stability and advancement.

Strategy 9.1(b): Develop monitoring and reporting programs to assess progress toward shared local and regional goals

Track key metrics and indicators that measure changes in economic vitality and progress toward achieving Metro Vision outcomes. Foster collaboration between planning, economic, and community development partners including efforts to develop and share data, information and analysis tools.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Create annual progress report on regional land use and transportation measures and targets that influence the region’s economic vitality.
- Consolidate regional data, analysis, and information to a “one-stop shop” accessible to a wide-variety of audiences.
- Develop informational products that highlight key trends that may impact the region’s ability to achieve desired outcomes.

LOCAL ACTIONS

- Collect and share local development data and trends that can inform regional analysis and modeling.
- Develop measures and indicators to assess progress towards local goals.
- Regularly assess the regional impact of local policies, programs and investments.

Tracking our Progress/Measures of Success: A Vibrant Regional Economy

Note to MVPAC: An updated list of possible performance measures and targets (for all other sections) will be presented and discussed separately for the December meeting, based on input received during the November MVPAC and TAC meetings. Due to DRCOG’s limited role in economic development issues within the region, a separate set of measures may not be necessary for this section.

Appendix A: Supporting Plans and Documents

The following plans and documents are available on DRCOG's website at www.drcog.org.

2011-2015 AREA PLAN ON AGING

The focus of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is to help people live independently as long as possible in their own homes and communities and provide support and assistance to those living in care facilities. To accomplish this, the AAA regularly identifies the needs of older adults living in the Denver region. The Area Plan on Aging captures public and service provider input to assess current programs and goals and sets a modified course to respond to the needs of the region's older adults.

METRO VISION 2040 LISTENING TOUR

The Listening Tour was conducted in 2012 in advance of the launch of the Metro Vision 2040 update process. The Listening Tour was a qualitative research process designed to hear individual visions of the future. The tour engaged residents, regional stakeholders and subject matter experts. More than 200 people participated in interviews and focus groups and there were nearly 1,200 online survey responses.

METRO VISION 2040 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY

The Local Government Survey was conducted in fall 2013. The survey was an online voluntary survey for DRCOG's 56 member governments. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of local growth and development challenges throughout the Denver Region. A diverse cross-section of 27 communities from across the region participated in the survey.

REGIONAL GOALS – METRO VISION 2035 SNAPSHOT

The DRCOG Board adopted a major update to Metro Vision 2035 in February 2011. The update included a focus on sustainability. The Board defined sustainability in the region through a series of measurable goals the region should achieve by the year 2035. The Regional Snapshot summarizes progress toward these goals using the most recent data available. Metro Vision 2040 will continue to periodically measure performance on key plan outcomes.

INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT ISSUES PAPER

The Infill and Redevelopment Issues Paper identified major issues facing infill and redevelopment in the region and discussed potential solutions for the region and local governments to consider during planning and implementation activities. DRCOG also hosted a Metro Vision Idea Exchange on infill development in December 2013.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS ISSUES PAPER

The issue paper introduced key challenges related to community health and wellness in the Denver region, and identified some potential solutions for DRCOG and local governments to consider during the Metro Vision 2040 update process and beyond. DRCOG also hosted a Metro Vision Idea Exchange on community health and wellness in February 2014.

METRO VISION REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2035 AND 2040)

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) addresses the challenges and guides the development of a multimodal transportation system over the next 25 years. It reflects a transportation system that closely interacts with the four other overarching themes of Metro Vision 2040. The fiscally-constrained RTP will be adopted prior to Metro Vision 2040. Remaining elements of the RTP will be adopted in conjunction with the adoption of Metro Vision 2040, or shortly thereafter.

DENVER METRO AREA HOUSING DIVERSITY STUDY

DRCOG commissioned a study to research a number of factors identified as potentially contributing to recent housing and development trends and conditions. DRCOG was particularly interested in understanding the characteristics and dynamics of higher density housing, including attached for-sale multifamily and the potential for designated urban centers to achieve a diverse housing stock, allowing people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live and thrive in urban centers.

REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Housing emerged as a critical issue for regional stakeholders and the public throughout the process to develop Metro Vision 2040. The Regional Housing Strategy included recommendations for addressing regional housing needs in the Denver metro area. Housing needs were identified through data analysis, interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders and residents who participated in the citizen input process.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Regional Economic Strategy identified specific roles, responsibilities, policies, and actions that DRCOG can adopt to promote economic sustainability in the Denver Region. The strategy focuses on improving and sustaining the economic health of the region, rather than business recruitment, expansion, and retention efforts that are handled by the existing economic development organizations.

URBAN CENTERS SURVEY AND REPORT

The Urban Centers Survey and Report summarizes the varying degrees of success local governments have experienced as they work to enhance the region's economy, protect our quality of life, and promote transportation choices through urban center planning and implementation. Over 80 designated centers completed on-line surveys and additional interviews were conducted to supplement the survey results. DRCOG hosted a Metro Vision Idea Exchange on urban centers in May 2014.

RURAL TOWN CENTERS INTERVIEWS AND REPORT

DRCOG first designated rural town centers in 2004 to encourage new growth beyond the Denver region's urbanized core to concentrated development in established rural areas. The Rural Town Centers report explored issues and opportunities in rural communities and their town centers, and best practices around the country. The report aimed to inform DRCOG's evolving role in supporting these vibrant places that occur beyond the Denver region's urban edge.

Appendix B: Urban Growth Boundary/Area (UGB/A)

In previous Metro Vision plans, the DRCOG Board of Directors established a policy that urban development will occur within a locally defined urban growth boundary/area (UGB/A). Metro Vision 2040 continues this voluntary, collaborative approach to growth management among communities in the Denver metro region. The current boundary encompasses 980 square miles of urban development, which is intended to achieve at least a 10 percent increase in the region's overall density between 2000 and 2035.

In March 2013 the DRCOG Board delayed member requests for additional urban growth boundary/area (UGB/A) until after Metro Vision 2040 is adopted by the DRCOG Board of Directors. Early in 2015, DRCOG staff will initiate preliminary efforts to support the regional allocation process. Preliminary activities will include identifying the current extent of urban development according the development classification system as outlined in the Metro Vision 2035 Growth and Development Supplement. DRCOG staff will also coordinate with member jurisdictions to determine changes to the existing UGB/A due to annexations.

Following the adoption of Metro Vision the Board will invite all member governments requesting additional UGB/A to submit an application detailing how their request meets Board criteria for allocation UGB/A. These criteria are described in the Growth and Development Supplement. The Supplement also details the emergency request provision which enables any member government at any time to request additional UGB/A outside of the designated regional allocation process. Additionally, the self-certification provision allows communities to make small changes to their UGB/A allocation that do not have regional impact without seeking Board approval.

Upon the conclusion of the UGB/A allocation process Metro Vision 2040 will be amended to include a current and accurate accounting of UGB/A for each member community.

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Appendix C: Urban Centers

Urban centers recognized in Metro Vision reflect a variety of community types and places including traditional downtowns, transit station areas, existing and emerging employment centers; and greenfield areas with development plans consistent with the key characteristics of urban centers outlined in Metro Vision. The process to designate urban centers stresses the key Metro Vision characteristics, but also strongly considers local circumstances and commitment. DRCOG does not unilaterally identify and designate urban centers – all potential centers are submitted by local governments.

Any jurisdiction interested in designating an urban center should schedule an informal consultation with DRCOG staff. Ideally this consultation will be scheduled during Cycle 1 of the annual Metro Vision Plan Assessment process. During Cycle 2, jurisdictions formally submit urban center proposals for evaluation by DRCOG staff and a panel of volunteers. The evaluation panel provides recommendations to DRCOG staff for urban center designations. Finally, recommended urban centers are presented to the Metro Vision Issues Committee (MVIC) and then to the DRCOG Board of Directors for their final consideration.

Please see the Metro Vision Growth and Development Supplement for details on the designation process.

The following table lists urban center currently recognized in Metro Vision. The table lists centers by jurisdiction and provides information on size of the urban center, whether the center is served by high-capacity transit, and magnitude of expected development – see below for details.

- Emerging centers are expecting significant growth relative to existing conditions (more than 50% growth in combined jobs and housing units)
- Existing centers have substantial development. These centers are expecting less than 50% growth in combined jobs and housing units.
- Planned urban centers are largely undeveloped, but will become intensely developed over time. These areas currently have less than 100 housing units and less than 100 jobs.

URBAN CENTER NAME	JURISDICTION	CLASSIFICATION	AREA	HIGH FREQUENCY TRANSIT STOP
			(ACRES)	
Olde Town/New Town	Arvada	Existing	158	X
Candelas	Arvada	Emerging	631	
Ralston Fields	Arvada	Existing	257	X
Iliff Avenue Center	Aurora	Emerging	315	X
Aurora City Center	Aurora	Emerging	868	X
Florida	Aurora	Existing	248	X
Iliff	Aurora	Existing	186	X
13th Avenue	Aurora	Emerging	179	X
Peoria - Smith	Aurora	Emerging	266	X
Smoky Hill	Aurora	Emerging	375	X
I-225/Parker Road	Aurora	Emerging	209	X
Hampden Town Center	Aurora	Emerging	105	
E-470 / I-70	Aurora	Emerging	1043	
Fitzsimons	Aurora	Emerging	821	X
Jewell Avenue	Aurora	Emerging	294	
Buckingham Center	Aurora	Existing	414	X
1st Avenue Center	Aurora	Existing	339	X
Colfax Avenue	Aurora	Existing	336	X
Airport Gateway	Aurora	Planned	40	X
56th Avenue	Aurora	Planned	203	
28th/30th Streets (BVRC)	Boulder	Existing	634	X
Gunbarrel Activity Center	Boulder	Existing	138	X
University Hill	Boulder	Existing	542	X
Downtown Boulder	Boulder	Existing	382	X
Adams Crossing Activity Center	Brighton	Emerging	779	
Bromley Park Activity Center	Brighton	Emerging	393	
Downtown Brighton Activity Center	Brighton	Existing	178	
Prairie Center Activity Center	Brighton	Planned	436	
Interlocken Loop Activity Center	Broomfield	Emerging	586	X
I-25 & SH 7 Activity Center	Broomfield	Emerging	2086	
Urban Transit Village	Broomfield	Emerging	250	X
Original Broomfield TOD	Broomfield	Planned	469	X
Downtown Castle Rock	Castle Rock	Existing	214	
Southglenn	Centennial	Existing	146	X
Alameda Station	Denver	Emerging	201	X

URBAN CENTER NAME	JURISDICTION	CLASSIFICATION	AREA (ACRES)	HIGH FREQUENCY TRANSIT STOP
62nd and Pena TOD	Denver	Emerging	161	
29th Ave. Town Center	Denver	Emerging	90	X
Broadway Station TOD	Denver	Emerging	145	X
Denver Technology Center	Denver	Emerging	287	X
Southmoor Park TOD	Denver	Emerging	50	X
Central Park TOD	Denver	Emerging	63	X
St. Anthony's Urban Center	Denver	Emerging	30	X
38th and Blake TOD	Denver	Emerging	238	X
Colorado Station	Denver	Existing	171	X
Decatur - Federal TOD	Denver	Existing	282	X
Colorado Blvd and Smith Road	Denver	Emerging	78	X
Central Business District	Denver	Emerging	1705	X
Denargo Market	Denver	Emerging	112	X
Stapleton North Regional Cen	Denver	Emerging	331	X
Bellevue Station	Denver	Emerging	75	X
Sheridan Station	Denver	Emerging	168	X
Bear Valley	Denver	Existing	83	X
Colorado Blvd. Health Care District	Denver	Emerging	137	X
Federal and Evans	Denver	Existing	155	X
Tamarac & Hampden	Denver	Existing	79	X
DU Campus Urban Center	Denver	Existing	204	X
Broadway	Denver	Existing	142	X
Evans Station TOD	Denver	Existing	113	X
41st and Fox TOD	Denver	Existing	311	X
Lowry Town Center	Denver	Existing	122	X
10th & Osage Station	Denver	Existing	171	X
East Colfax Main Street	Denver	Existing	559	X
Cherry Creek	Denver	Existing	603	X
Pena & 40th	Denver	Planned	50	X
MLK Town Center	Denver	Planned	27	
Highlands Ranch Town Center	Douglas County	Emerging	165	X
Englewood City Center	Englewood	Emerging	62	X
Glendale City Center	Glendale	Existing	353	X
Golden Downtown	Golden	Existing	132	X
Fehringer Ranch	Jefferson County	Emerging	334	X

URBAN CENTER NAME	JURISDICTION	CLASSIFICATION	AREA (ACRES)	HIGH FREQUENCY TRANSIT STOP
C-470 Corridor	Jefferson County	Existing	826	X
Bowles	Jefferson County	Existing	264	
Bergen Park	Jefferson County	Existing	149	
Southwest Plaza	Jefferson County	Existing	293	X
Denver West/Colorado Mills Center	Lakewood	Existing	546	X
Lakewood Center	Lakewood	Emerging	288	X
Union Center	Lakewood	Emerging	639	X
Wadsworth Boulevard	Lakewood	Existing	294	X
Oak Street	Lakewood	Existing	287	X
Littleton Downtown	Littleton	Emerging	220	X
Ridge Gate West Village	Lone Tree	Emerging	375	
Lincoln Station TOD	Lone Tree	Emerging	61	X
RidgeGate City Center	Lone Tree	Emerging	195	
SH66 Mixed Use Corridor	Longmont	Emerging	159	X
Ken Pratt Extension	Longmont	Existing	158	X
Twin Peaks Activity Center	Longmont	Existing	240	
North Main Street AC	Longmont	Existing	122	X
CBD of Longmont	Longmont	Existing	591	X
Downtown Louisville	Louisville	Existing	357	X
I-25 Corridor	Multiple	Emerging	5932	X
Northglenn City Center	Northglenn	Existing	252	X
Greater Downtown District (Parker)	Parker	Existing	280	
Superior Town Center	Superior	Emerging	81	
Eastlake	Thornton	Emerging	99	
I-25 / Hwy 7 Activity Center	Thornton	Emerging	502	
North End Station	Thornton	Emerging	127	
Thornton City Center	Thornton	Existing	491	X
S. Westminster Activity Center	Westminster	Emerging	232	X
Westminster Center Activity Center	Westminster	Emerging	622	X
Westminster Promenade Act Center	Westminster	Emerging	538	X
North I-25 Activity Center	Westminster	Emerging	561	
West 120th Ave Activity Center	Westminster	Existing	591	X
Wadsworth Wheat Ridge	Wheat Ridge	Existing	112	X
Northwest TOD Wheat Ridge	Wheat Ridge	Existing	119	