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# Background and Context

## 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 three oldest councils of governments. DRCOG serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region and 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).
- It is a council of governments, serving as a planning organization, technical assistance provider, and forum for local member governments.

Through their affiliation with DRCOG, representatives of our region's counties, cities and towns work together to ensure the region remains a great place to live, work and play.

### 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.

## Partners in the Region

DRCOG's partners in the region include 56 member governments, each of which has an equal voice. Additional partners include the Regional Transportation District (RTD), Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC), Air Quality Control Commission, Transportation Management Organizations and Associations, Community-based Agencies, Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council (DRMAC), and other stakeholders.

# 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.

### How is Metro Vision 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, transportation and environmental management into

one comprehensive planning framework. The DRCOG Board released its first Metro Vision-themed 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. It outlines the broad outcomes, objectives, and strategies chosen by the Board to make life better for residents and provides the context for specifics of the Board’s approach for fulfilling Metro Vision and the performance measures and targets that the region can use to track its progress over time.

While the ultimate success of Metro Vision depends on local implementation efforts, DRCOG promotes regional collaboration by educating elected officials, local government staff and citizens on the issues and ideals identified in Metro Vision, and by focusing attention on the long term costs and benefits associated with the decisions we make today. Many aspects of Metro Vision are implemented through the actions of local stakeholders, through local comprehensive plans and development regulations, as well as through direct assistance from DRCOG to its 56 member 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 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.

#### **ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE**

Concurrent with the Metro Vision 2040 process, the Denver region was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to support regional planning and implementation activities. With this grant, the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) facilitated a partnership of local government, foundations and community organizations, and private sector partners working together to implement Metro Vision while leveraging the multi-billion dollar FasTracks transit system expansion.

A key goal of the SCI was to align investments, programs and policies to maximize the benefits of the region's investment in transit with the intent of achieving:

- Greater access to job opportunities;
- Lower combined transportation and housing costs;
- Reduced consumption of fossil fuels and strain on natural resources; and
- Development of mixed-use, pedestrian, and bicycle-friendly communities along transit lines that allow residents to easily access their daily needs without having to get into a car.

The SCI played a critical role in helping to inform and shape the 2040 update process. In particular, it influenced the incorporation of new topics such as housing and economic vitality.

**KEY METRO VISION PRINCIPLES (CF)**

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.

**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

## 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.

## 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 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 Region
- A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment
- Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities
- A Vibrant 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, as well as the incorporation of new and/or expanded topic areas, as discussed below.

### NEW AND/OR EXPANDED TOPICS

Metro Vision 2040, addresses a number of new or enhanced topics in a more comprehensive manner as part of this update. These topics include housing, economy, community health and wellness, and hazard mitigation. 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.

### INTEGRATION OF TOPICS—"CONNECTING THE DOTS" BETWEEN PLAN ELEMENTS

Metro 2040 places an intentional focus on "connecting the dots" between individual plan elements. While they are often referred to as discrete 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.

### 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 interim milestones. Metro Vision 2040 incorporates both short and long-term strategies and actions to help focus resources and document progress over time. 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.

### **FOCUS ON RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITIES –“TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL ACTION”**

The ultimate success of Metro Vision depends on local implementation efforts. A significant emphasis was placed during the 2040 update on defining possible roles for DRCOG that would support, rather than duplicate or compete with other efforts already underway in the region, from the perspective of local governments, state and regional agencies and service providers, and other public and private sector stakeholders. Following adoption DRCOG will develop a series of toolkits to support the implementation of each of Metro Vision’s 5 overarching themes.

### **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 to realize through the objectives and strategies outlined in the plan for each of the plan’s five overarching themes. The Board also identified a series of performance measures and targets associated with each outcome.

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 the outcomes, objectives, and strategies accordingly.

# 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 completion of the T-REX transportation expansion program, 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. 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. They have profound implications for regional and local planning, as housing and transportation needs change with the needs of our aging population. Housing is in short supply in the region—the economic downturn, lack of housing development for many years and quick economic recovery, coupled with increased in-migration into the region, has led to a high level of unmet demand for housing across most of the income spectrum.

## 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 conducted early in the process.

## Changing Demographics and Lifestyles

### 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.

### **GROWTH IN OLDER ADULT POPULATION**

The region's percentage of older adults has risen steadily 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. 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**

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 AAA 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 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 for our senior population. 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.

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.

### **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.<sup>1</sup> 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. This change in household composition is expected to increase demand for smaller housing units. 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.

## Access to Opportunity

### INCREASING OPTIONS AND REMOVING BARRIERS TO SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES

One of the region’s greatest challenges is providing access to the services and opportunities 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, 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. 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 and 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 56 percent of its income on housing and transportation costs combined, whereas 45 percent is considered an affordable level for these combined costs.<sup>2</sup> 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 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

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<sup>1</sup> Nielsen Media Research, “Millenials – Breaking the Myths”, February 2014

<sup>2</sup> Robert Hickey, Jeffrey Lubell, Peter Haas, and Stephanie Morse, “Losing Ground: The Struggle of Moderate-Income Households to Afford the Rising Costs of Housing and Transportation”, Washington, DC: Center for Housing Policy and Center for Neighborhood Technology, October 2012. [http://www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround\\_10\\_2012.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround_10_2012.pdf)

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 in several ways. Auto-centric lifestyles have led people to become more sedentary, putting them at higher risk for chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, heart and lung diseases.<sup>5</sup> 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. Higher health care costs reduce access to care for lower income households, 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. These factors shape where people can live and work, and how they travel and spend money around the region. 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.

### FOOD OPTIONS AND NUTRITION

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. Food and nutrition is influenced by costs of food, and the availability and

<sup>3</sup> [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/>

<sup>4</sup> Childhood Obesity Facts. LiveWell Colorado, 2014. [http://livewellcolorado.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/LWC\\_ChildhoodObesityFacts\\_Sources.pdf](http://livewellcolorado.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/LWC_ChildhoodObesityFacts_Sources.pdf). Accessed February 20, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> 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>

Saelens, B.E., Sallis, J.F., & Frank, L.D., "Environmental Correlates of Walking and Cycling: Findings from the Transportation, Urban Design, and Planning Literatures", *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 2003 Spring; 25(2). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12704009>

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. 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.

## Infrastructure and Connectivity

### INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

Limited resources – both natural and fiscal – further challenge the region to find efficient ways to grow and develop. Building new infrastructure to serve the region's ongoing growth, whether for water supply, wastewater treatment, or transportation, becomes 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, limited access to broadband internet service is a constraint to business and entrepreneurial development in many areas of the region, particularly in outlying communities and counties.

#### Call-out box: Infill and Infrastructure

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. 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.

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. As the region continues to encourage infill and redevelopment in established areas, 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.

### FIRST AND LAST MILE CONNECTIONS TO WORK AND OTHER DESTINATIONS

Among the communities that currently or will soon have light rail or commuter rail 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 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. Many of the region's larger parks and open spaces are not accessible by transit, and green space is less plentiful near affordable housing.<sup>6</sup> 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, protecting our natural systems, and increasing multimodal travel options.

## **Natural Resources and Resiliency**

### **AIR QUALITY**

Motor vehicle emissions are a significant source of 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 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**

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.

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<sup>6</sup> Denver Regional Equity Atlas (pg. 37)

# 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 Region
- A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment
- Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities
- A Vibrant 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 local governments and other partners in the Denver metropolitan area will collectively work toward in each of the five areas. 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 defines a preliminary set of recommended actions to support the implementation of each objective and supporting strategies. Recommended actions call out specific steps that can be taken at the regional or local level to help achieve the “end state” desired. **Regional actions** generally reflect ways in which DRCOG or 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 local actions, or to a certain degree, 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, based on local conditions and aspirations.

To help track the region’s progress over time, Metro Vision also establishes a set of performance measures and targets for each of the five elements.

**Note to MVPAC:** *The lists of possible performance measures and targets located at the back of each element continue to be a work in progress. Additional discussion is needed to determine to refine the measures and targets and to determine whether these will ultimately “live” within the Metro Vision document, or be housed and monitored separately as part of the plans overall implementation strategy.*

### **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.

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

**Strategies**—provide guidance for decision-making with regard to the types of steps that may be taken to help achieve specific objectives (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 achieve the results we want.

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

## 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:

- Diverse, livable communities offer a continuum of lifestyle options;
- Urban development is concentrated within the region’s defined urban growth boundary/area;
- Vibrant urban centers and corridors accommodate a growing share of the region’s housing and employment needs; and
- 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 multi-modal 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.

**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 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.

**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 needed density in targeted locations without disturbing additional land outside of the urban growth boundary/area.

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**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.

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**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): 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.

**Strategy 1.1(d): 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(e): 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(f): 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.

**REGIONAL ACTIONS**

- Provide education and support to assist in local efforts to integrate land use and transportation 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, reduce requirements for affordable units, reduce for small housing units, etc.
- 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.
- Establish “level-of-service” standards for pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are tailored to the local context.

**Call-out 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 aims to arm local governments around the region with 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.

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**Outcome 2: Urban development is focused within the region’s defined urban growth boundary/area.<sup>7</sup>**

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.

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<sup>7</sup> From current Extent of Urban Development section.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.1: CONTAIN URBAN DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE DEFINED URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY/AREA<sup>8</sup>**

### **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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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): 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 more efficiently and reduce the need for costly infrastructure expansion. Create plans and regulations that thoughtfully match desired public and private sector outcomes.

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<sup>8</sup> Existing policy related to mining activity in current 'Extent of Urban Development' section moved to community resiliency section under 'A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment. Existing policy related to water supply in current 'Extent of Urban Development' section moved to water section under 'A Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment.'

<sup>9</sup> Most effective methodology for measuring over time to be confirmed—move base year and end year each time, or increase target.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

**Call-out 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. 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 communities 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(c): 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(d): Annex unincorporated areas within the urban growth boundary/area**

Encourage the annexation of unincorporated areas within the urban growth boundary/area, consistent with local comprehensive plans and annexation procedures. Support annexation that represents a logical extension of a municipality’s boundaries so the local government can provide urban services to the annexed area at a level equal to what is provided to the existing municipality.

**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.

**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.
- Coordinate with service providers and local communities on the identification of urban reserve areas that should be conserved for future growth.
- 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.
- 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/AREA<sup>11</sup>**

**Strategy 2.2(a): Conserve opportunities for future urban development<sup>12</sup>**

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(b): Limit development in Priority Preservation Areas<sup>13</sup>**

Avoid development in areas identified as Priority Preservation Areas (see map on page x), and in other sensitive environmental areas.

**Strategy 2.2(c): 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(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 semi-urban development occurring outside of the urban growth boundary/area.
- Maintain a map of Priority Preservation Areas.
- Prioritize the allocation of regional transportation infrastructure funds and other services in urbanized areas within the urban growth boundary/area.

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<sup>11</sup> Former Large-Lot Development section—references to “large lot” have been adjusted to reflect broader intent of the section, as characterized by the outcome.

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

<sup>13</sup> Changed from Regional Open Space Plan to be consistent with “Safe and Resilient Built and Natural Environment” section.

## 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.
- 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.

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### **Outcome 3: Vibrant and connected urban centers and 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 multimodal network of corridors throughout the metro area. While the location and context of each urban center will help define its unique character and density/intensity; all urban centers share a common set of characteristics. They are active, pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-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.

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#### **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 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**

To be added: section highlighting some of the region’s most successful urban centers—whether located in a rural, suburban, or urban community context. Include photos and a side by side comparison of key elements: mix of uses, average density, transit service, pedestrian/bicycle accessibility, supporting tools in place, etc.

##### **Strategy 3.1(c): 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(d): 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 corridors located within a shared trade area.

**Strategy 3.1(e): 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(f): Enhance internal and regional connectivity**

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

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

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

**REGIONAL ACTIONS**

- 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).
- 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**

- 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 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 or 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 bust service, reduce requirements for affordable units, reduce for small housing unit, etc.
- Seek opportunities for public /private partnerships as a means to leverage available resources and implement infrastructure improvements or other catalytic projects within urban centers.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2: PROMOTE THE CREATION AND REVITALIZATION OF 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 pedestrian, bicycle, and transit 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.

**Call out box to be added: Leveraging the Region's Investment**

Discuss Sustainable Communities Initiative and role of the various catalytic projects in helping to purposefully leverage the region's investment in transit.

**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 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: MAINTAIN AND SUPPORT 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: PROMOTE 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, 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.
- Limit urban development outside of the established, historic town center.

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

The table below contains some possible measures for discussion purposes. Additional discussion with staff and stakeholders is needed to identify the most effective measures and appropriate targets. Key considerations in selecting measures will include the overall availability of data and the extent to which measures are currently being tracked by DRCOG or others in the region to minimize overlap and promote efficiency.

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE MEASURES	POSSIBLE TARGETS
<b>Outcome 1. Diverse, livable communities offer a continuum of lifestyle options.</b>		
<b>Objective 1.1: Promote development patterns and community design features that meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix of housing by location</li> <li>Supply of units that are accessible to seniors</li> <li>Affordable housing units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2. Urban development is focused within the region's defined urban growth boundary/area.</b>		
<b>Objective 2.1: Contain urban development within the defined urban growth boundary/area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size of urban growth boundary/area</li> <li>Amount of urban development outside of urban growth boundary/area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% increase in the region's overall density between X and X.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2.2: Manage the extent of development occurring beyond the urban growth boundary/area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total amount of semi-urban development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limit the total amount of semi-urban development in 2040 to a proportion that does not exceed the current (2006) proportion of semi-urban households, estimated to be approximately three percent.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 3. Vibrant and connected urban centers and corridors accommodate a growing share of the region's housing and employment needs.</b>		
<b>Objective 3.1: Accommodate a growing share of the region's housing and employment in urban centers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of region's housing and employment in urban centers</li> <li>Median combined cost of housing and transportation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 percent of housing and 50 percent of employment in the region in urban centers<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> Existing Metro Vision goal stipulates 50/75 percent of "new" development. However, there is currently no way to distinguish between "new" jobs and jobs that have simply relocated from elsewhere in the region. The proposed target has been updated to allow for more meaningful tracking of the region's progress over time by removing the reference to "new" and reducing the overall target to reflect the overall percentage of the region's housing and employment located in urban centers.

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE MEASURES	POSSIBLE TARGETS
<b>Objective 3.2: Promote the creation and revitalization of multimodal corridors that connect and support the vitality of the region’s urban centers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total reinvestment in corridors (\$ of infrastructure improvements, infill and redevelopment activity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBD</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 4. Freestanding communities and rural town centers remain distinct from the larger urban area.</b>		
<b>Objective 4.1: Maintain and support freestanding communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs/housing balance</li> <li>Community separators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 4.2: Promote the vitality and self-sufficiency of rural town centers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>

## Toolkit for Local Action: An Efficient and Predictable Development Pattern

To be added.

## A Connected Region

To be added

## 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:

- Essential natural resources—air and water—are protected for current and future generations.
- An interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails is widely accessible to the region's residents;
- Agricultural lands of significance are conserved for current and future generations; and
- 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 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.

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## **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.

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### **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 infrastructure, reducing the need for fossil fuels, enhancing energy security, promoting environmental stewardship, creating jobs, and reducing vehicle ownership costs.

#### **Strategy 1.1(c): Support alternative transportation**

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 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 PM<sub>10</sub> 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): 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. Encourage conservation of water resources through innovative design, reuse, landscaping, and education and consider these factors in making service provision decisions. Overall, the regional increase in water consumption should be proportionally less than the population increase.<sup>15</sup>

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

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

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<sup>15</sup> Moved from existing Growth and Development Section (UGB/A sub-section).

**Strategy 1.3(c): Reduce water consumption in new and existing development**

Encourage compact development, through infill and redevelopment and the concentration of new development in or adjacent to urban centers, to help reduce water demand and related infrastructure costs. Consider use of drought tolerant landscape materials in publicly and privately maintained planted areas.

**REGIONAL ACTIONS**

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

**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, 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.

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**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.

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**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 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 multi-modal 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 MULTI-MODAL 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 multi-modal 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.

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**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.

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## **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.

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## **Outcome 4: Reduced Risk and Effects from Natural Hazards.**

Careful planning with respect to the relationship between 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..

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## **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 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.

**Strategy 4.1(e): 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.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests, Colorado State University, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Moved from UGB/A section in current plan.

**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. **(Language from Lyons' recovery plan to be added here)**

**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

The table below contains some possible measures for discussion purposes. Additional discussion with staff and stakeholders is needed to identify the most effective measures and appropriate targets. Key considerations in selecting measures will include the overall availability of data and the extent to which measures are currently being tracked by DRCOG or others in the region to minimize overlap and promote efficiency.

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE MEASURES	POSSIBLE TARGETS
<b>Outcome 1. A region with high quality water, clean air, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.</b>		
<b>Objective 1.1: Improve air quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 1.2: Restore and maintain the integrity of the region's waters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 1.3: Reduce growth in regional per-capita water consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced per-capita usage for residential uses</li> <li>Reduced per-capita usage for non-residential uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2. An interconnected network of open space, parks, and trails is widely accessible to the region's residents.</b>		
<b>Objective 2.1: Protect and restore open space of local and regional significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acres of new open space added (either raw land or areas that have been restored as open space in brownfield or other areas)</li> <li>Percentage of priority preservation areas that have been protected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set a goal for additional open space acquisition—either base on UGB growth rate or household population growth rate</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2.2: Provide a parks system that is widely accessible to the region's residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of regional households located within ¼ of a park (may need to vary distance by type of park)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase by X above baseline</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2.3: Establish multi-modal linkages to and between the region's parks and open spaces and developed areas of the region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Miles of "missing links" completed</li> <li>Total miles of greenways and trails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE MEASURES	POSSIBLE TARGETS
<b>Outcome 3. Working agricultural lands of significance are conserved for current and future generations.</b>		
<b>Objective 3.1: Maintain the region's agricultural capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acres of agricultural land overall and being actively used for agricultural purposes or as community separators</li> <li>• Economic impact of agriculture within the region by type</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 4. Reduced Risk and Effects from Natural Hazards.</b>		
<b>Objective 4.1: Enhance Community Resiliency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>

## Toolkit for Local Action: A Safe, Healthy Built and Natural Environment

To be added.

## 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:

- A built and natural environment that promotes healthy and active lifestyle choices;
- The region's residents have expanded connections to care ; and
- Diverse housing options meet the needs of all residents.

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<sup>18</sup>. 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.

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<sup>18</sup>Alternative Transportation and your Health. <http://www.fta.dot.gov/14504.htm>

**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 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 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.

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### **Outcome 1: 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.

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### **OBJECTIVE 1.1: INCREASE CONVENIENT AND SAFE MOBILITY OPTIONS FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES**

#### **Strategy 1.1(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 1.1(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 1.1(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 1.2: INCREASE ACCESS TO SAFE AND HEALTHY FOOD****Strategy 1.2(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 1.2(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 1.3: . MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND ACCESS TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **Strategy 1.3(a): 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.

### **Strategy 1.3(b): 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.

### **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.

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## **Outcome 2: 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.

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## **OBJECTIVE 2.1: IMPROVE CONNECTIONS TO HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS**

### **Strategy 2.1(a): Increase access to health care facilities**

Support the integration of health care facilities 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 2.1(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.
- Collaborate with local governments, public health professionals, area hospitals, and other stakeholders in areas of the greatest need to define the key attributes of healthy communities and implement priority projects.

## **LOCAL ACTIONS**

- 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.
- Link economic development incentives to employers that address community health care needs.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.2: INCREASE AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS ISSUES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS**

### **Strategy 2.2(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.

### **Strategy 2.2(b): Leverage current programs and efforts**

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 current programs and efforts within the region.

### **Strategy 2.2(c): Increase awareness of programs, facilities, and other assistance**

Promote awareness of the range of programs, facilities, 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, programs, best practices).

## **LOCAL ACTIONS**

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

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**Outcome 3: Diverse housing options meet the needs of all residents.**

This section to be developed based on additional input from MVIC Ad Hoc Housing Group.

**OBJECTIVE 3.1: TBD**

**Strategy 3.1(a): TBD**

To be added.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2: TBD**

To be added.

**Strategy 3.2(a): TBD**

To be added.

**OBJECTIVE 3.3: TBD**

To be added.

**Strategy 3.3(a): TBD**

To be added.

**REGIONAL ACTIONS**

- TBD

**LOCAL ACTIONS**

- TBD

## Tracking our Progress/Measures of Success

The table below contains some possible measures for discussion purposes. Additional discussion with staff and stakeholders is needed to identify the most effective measures and appropriate targets. Key considerations in selecting measures will include the overall availability of data and the extent to which measures are currently being tracked by DRCOG or others in the region to minimize overlap and promote efficiency.

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE MEASURES	POSSIBLE TARGETS
<b>Outcome 1. A built and natural environment that supports healthy and active lifestyle choices.</b>		
<b>Objective 1.1: Increase safe and convenient mobility options for all ages and abilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miles of new trails/connected sidewalks</li> <li>• Population located within X miles of trails/open space</li> <li>• Transit service levels and frequency (e.g., # of HH within ¼ mile of a transit stop or ½ mile of a rail station)</li> <li>• Number of parks and recreation facilities in urban centers c</li> <li>• Affordable/visitable housing units located within ¼ mile of transit</li> <li>• Bicycle and pedestrian fatalities</li> <li>• Safe routes to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of first and last mile connections in underserved areas</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 1.2: Increase access to safe and healthy food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acres of agricultural land in urban/semi-urban and rural context</li> <li>• Numbers and locations of community gardens</li> <li>• Extent of areas defined as being food insecure</li> <li>• Distance to full service grocery store</li> <li>• Number of local plans and codes that address food access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain agricultural acres in rural context</li> <li>• Increase in land devoted to agricultural uses in urban/semi-urban areas</li> <li>• Reduction food insecurity in low income and underserved areas</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 1.3: Maximize opportunities for recreation and access to the natural environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miles of “missing links” in the regional trail network</li> <li>• # of HH within a particular distance of a park (based on national guidelines by park type)</li> <li>• Safe, free, accessible indoor/outdoor recreation opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specified reduction in number of miles in “missing links”</li> </ul>

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE MEASURES	POSSIBLE TARGETS
<b>Outcome 2. The region’s residents have expanded connections to care.</b>		
<b>Objective 2.1: Improve connections to health care facilities and service providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of health care facilities and service providers served by transit</li> <li>• Number/location of neighborhood care facilities</li> <li>• Rates of disease (building on data being tracked by others)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase by X</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2.2: Increase awareness and knowledge of community health and wellness issues and support networks.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of meetings convened with regional stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific projects would need to be defined through collaborative discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 3. Diverse housing options meet the needs of all residents.</b>		
<b>To be added</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be added</li> </ul>	
<b>To be added</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be added</li> </ul>	
<b>To be added</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be added</li> </ul>	

## Toolkit for Local Action: Healthy, Inclusive, and Livable Communities

To be added.

## **A Vibrant Economy**

### **Introduction**

To be added.

Sidebar: Why is this important? (Linkages to other sections)

#### **TRANSPORTATION**

To be added.

#### **HOUSING**

To be added.

#### **HEALTH**

To be added.

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### **Outcome 1: Support the development of a strong labor force**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

To be added.

#### **GOAL(S)**

To be added.

#### **REGIONAL POLICIES**

To be added.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LABOR FORCE**

To be added.

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### **Outcome 2: Support continued enhancement of regional infrastructure to benefit people of all income levels**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

To be added.

#### **GOAL(S)**

To be added.

#### **REGIONAL POLICIES**

To be added.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CONTINUED ENHANCEMENT OF REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

To be added.

## **Tracking our Progress/Measures of Success**

Establish baseline and mid-term vs. long-term targets for 4-5 key indicators

## **Toolkit for Local Action: A Vibrant Economy**

To be added.