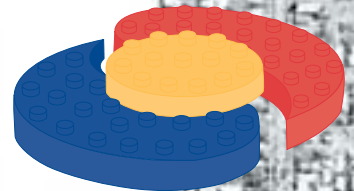


CHAPTER 8

# Small Area Planning





### **Key concepts:**

- ***Small area plans for neighborhoods, corridors and districts should utilize a standardized process, format and planning tools***
- ***Small area plans must ultimately agree with both Plan 2000 and Blueprint Denver***
- ***Civic responsibilities that improve the overall quality of Denver will be addressed in small area plans***

### **Small Area Plans:**

- ***Neighborhood***
- ***District***
- ***Corridor***

### **Subject Plans:**

- ***Blueprint Denver***
- ***MetroVision***
- ***Bicycle Master Plan***
- ***Parks Game Plan***
- ***Pedestrian Plan***

### **Comprehensive Plan:**

- ***Plan 2000***

## ■ **What is a Small Area Plan?**

A small area plan is any plan that addresses the issues of a portion of the city. Small area plans can cover as few as 10 acres or as many as 4,500 acres — the size of Stapleton or Gateway. It is useful to identify three different geographic scales for plans — neighborhood, corridor and district. Small area plans cover a specific geography that often has a cohesive set of characteristics.

The advantage of a small area plan is its ability to engage issues and people on a close-up, personal scale. The result can be a richly detailed plan that addresses the area's unique issues with tailored solutions. However, one disadvantage with small area plans is if they are unrealistically narrow in scope, considering only local issues while ignoring the city-wide context. The result can fragment Denver into a parochial society of neighborhoods that could contradict broader goals.

Similarly, there are disadvantages when each small area plan uses a different process or proposes unique solutions to similar problems. The result can be delayed implementation and difficult administration. If each neighborhood plan includes its own zoning designations, design standards, or street types, over time Denver's planning and zoning would become hopelessly complex and fragmented.

This chapter recommends a standardized process for small area plans so they can be smoothly crafted, readily adopted, efficiently administered, and more readily implemented. The chapter outlines minimum necessary content for a small area plan to ensure that, while addressing the localized issues of the area, it also responds to the city-wide context and addresses city-wide goals and issues. Additionally, a set of standardized tools is included for use in small area plans — again so those plans can be easily developed and efficiently administered. Small area plans also will be used to adjust, maintain and reinvigorate Blueprint Denver over time, thereby keeping it a vital and useful document. And finally, if solutions can be organized in a similar format, based on a standardized set of tools, the small area plans will more easily — and therefore more likely — be implemented.

Also of note are subject plans that cover the entire city. These plans further direct City policy and budgeting, especially for capital improvements. Examples of subject plans include Blueprint Denver, the Bicycle Master Plan, and the proposed Parks Game Plan. MetroVision 2020 is an example of a plan for regional growth covering the entire metro area.

## **Plan Context**

Now that it has been adopted by City Council, Blueprint Denver will become a significant part of the City's land-use and transportation policy. As such, it is



important to understand the context in which it will function. Denver’s land-use policy is set by elected officials and implemented by boards, commissions, and City staff. Land-use policy is developed in public processes that rely on public, board and commission, and staff participation. City Council reviews land-use policy-related ordinances and considers adopting them after an extensive public review process. Plan 2000 is the guiding document for land-use policy. The policy is primarily implemented through plans adopted as supplements to the comprehensive plan, the zoning ordinance, and the zoning map. Transportation policy is more widely spread out because the City is only one of several entities that provide and direct transportation systems and fund capital improvements.

Denver’s citizens, the Mayor, City Council, boards and commissions, and City staff all have specific roles and responsibilities in the development, review, adoption, and implementation of land-use policy. Denver has a strong mayoral form of government, with the Mayor appointing agency directors and other key staff positions, appointing boards and commissions, and structuring and assigning responsibilities to City agencies. City Council as a legislative body approves plans, zoning language and map amendments, budgets, contracts and payments. Depending on their specific charge, boards and commissions may provide direction, recommendations, or decisions regarding the development, adoption, interpretation, or implementation of land-use or transportation policy.

**Different Types of Small Area Plans**

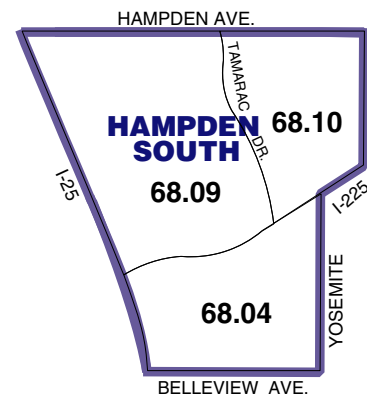
There are three kinds of small area plans: neighborhood, corridor and district. While most plans apply only to Denver, some include other jurisdictions. A corridor spanning several cities or a district straddling two communities are examples.

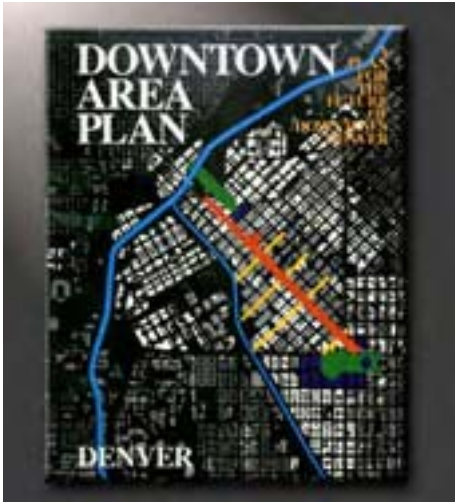
**Neighborhood** ■ Denver is organized into 77 statistical neighborhoods based on census tracts. Most neighborhood plans are for predominantly residential areas. Therefore, more than other types of small area plans, citizens or neighborhood organizations play a significant role. All plans, regardless of type, have a strong and significant component of citizen participation. Neighborhood plans often are initiated in response to changing conditions such as a large development proposal, transportation infrastructure construction, or expansion of a large institution. Because of the residential nature of many neighborhood planning areas, issues of city services, housing, education, and human services are high priorities. Some recently completed examples include the Park Hill, Whittier, and the Cherry Creek neighborhood plans.

**Corridor** ■ A corridor plan focuses on a significant linear feature such as a street, waterway or highway and the adjacent area of influence. Many

**Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county. Census tracts usually have between 2,500 and 8,000 persons and, when first delineated, are designed to be homogenous with respect to population characteristics, economic status and living conditions.**

The Hampden South Neighborhood has three census tracts.





Small area plans can deal with neighborhoods, corridors or districts.

**Criteria for selecting areas for Small Area Plans:**

- **Disinvestment**
- **Significant change**
- **Public improvements needed**
- **Redevelopment opportunities**
- **Large new development**
- **Transit station development opportunities**

corridor plans address streets that serve as the boundaries between neighborhoods. These streets tend to be long enough to encompass portions of several neighborhoods. The City or business associations typically initiate them in response to a proposed capital investment or a shared issue. Examples of capital investment projects include a major public beautification investment for the corridor; introduction of new transit technology such as bus rapid transit or light-rail; or open space and trails along a waterway.

Corridor plans place emphasis on land-use, transportation, infrastructure, urban design, and economic development issues. Examples of completed corridor plans include The Boulevard Plan (for Colorado Boulevard), the Federal Boulevard Plan, and the Cherry Creek Greenway Plan.

**District** ■ District plans are for a cohesive area with common conditions and issues. The content and process varies according to the development and constituency. District plans often address the land-use, development, urban design and transportation characteristics of relatively small areas such as neighborhood, town or regional centers and campuses, as well as large additions to Denver such as Stapleton or Lowry. Planning for relatively large areas also may encompass new open space and parks, public investments, new streets and transportation service, as well as land-use and transportation issues.

Recently, with the introduction of light rail to Denver, transit-oriented development plans have been in the spotlight as examples of district plans, such as the Colorado Station Area Framework Plan. Other examples include the Stapleton Development Plan, the Lower Downtown Plan and the Stadium Area Plan.

■ **Initiating a Small Area Planning Process**

Blueprint Denver sets a new framework for small area plans and provides new tools. Combined with the pressures of growth and public investment, this creates tremendous demand for undertaking small area plans. Again, small area planning is a partnership between the City and the area’s stakeholders — residents, businesses, institutions and other government entities. Neither can do an effective small area plan alone. As a result, there is and will be a need for more planning than there are resources. It is therefore essential to use criteria to evaluate and prioritize requests for small area plans.

Plan 2000 outlines a number of criteria to establish priorities for small area planning:

- Evidence of disinvestment, deteriorating housing, and high vacancy, unemployment and poverty rates.
- Significant change is occurring or anticipated.



- Public facilities and/or physical improvements need to be addressed.
- Opportunities for substantial infill or redevelopment are present.
- Opportunities arise to influence site selection, development or major expansion of a single, large activity generator.
- Opportunity for development in conjunction with a transit station exists.

Also important are criteria that more specifically address the goals of Blueprint Denver:

- Creating opportunity for appropriate development in Areas of Change.
- Stabilizing conditions that threaten Areas of Stability.
- Promoting public investments that increase transportation choice.

City staff from relevant agencies, with assistance from the Planning Board, will evaluate neighborhoods, corridors and districts using these criteria to establish priorities. Available resources will be allocated and timeframes established for starting specific plans. Organizations may be able to supplement City resources by helping with public involvement and participating in the planning process.

A small area planning handbook will provide more detailed guidance on how to prepare a small area plan. More detail about the process, using the Plan Map and other resources, will be provided. The handbook also will set parameters for plan amendments should conditions change dramatically.

## ■ **Standardized Process**

Small area plans historically have been done in isolation from one another. Lessons learned about the best method for drafting one plan are not necessarily transferred to the next. Under the goals of Blueprint Denver, however, a standardized process will be provided for all small area plans. It will entail an inclusive public process, similar format, established level of analysis, standardized set of tools, and recognition of civic responsibilities and City-wide context.

There are four positive consequences for having a standardized process to develop small area plans. First, citizen and staff time will be better utilized. Those who develop plans often learn some of the same lessons and come to the same conclusions as those who developed plans before, but only after spending valuable time reinventing the wheel. Second, a smooth process assures broader participation, more timely completion and faster response to changing conditions. Third, the content of each plan is improved because time saved can be spent on evaluating citizen input, thorough technical analysis and clearly articulated implementation strategies. Fourth, implementing a completed small area plan becomes easier because plans are

### **Standardized Process:**

- **Better utilization of time**
- **Broader participation**
- **More timely completion**
- **Faster response to changing conditions**
- **Better analysis and content**
- **Plans undertaken and updated more frequently**



Participants during a Land Use and Transportation Plan charrette.

in a similar format and address similar issues with similar recommendations and tools. As a result, small area plans will be undertaken and updated more often, implemented more easily and include more effective recommendations to improve conditions in the subject area.

Any small area plan is a joint undertaking of the City and the citizens of the affected area. Considerable teamwork and coordination is required, especially if another organization, such as a neighborhood association, is a co-sponsor of the planning effort.

Before beginning the plan, some basic research on the area, including a review of existing plans and studies should be completed so that a well-established set of steps can be outlined. Every plan must incorporate these steps, although the details may vary from plan to plan. The following sections describe the major steps, and the order in which they come, in the standardized planning process. The actual plan — the written document — may arrange its contents to best relay the information, so long as the plan document is well organized, clear, concise and tailored to the findings.

### **Community Participation**

Key to every plan is a thoughtful public involvement strategy that is integrated into the planning process. A successful public involvement strategy includes a wide range of mechanisms for people to share their ideas, questions and concerns. The strategy should: inform a broad variety of citizens; provide ample opportunities for participants to provide feedback; and give more involved citizens an opportunity to interact directly in the process. Some methods for citizen participation are described here. Depending on the size and complexity of the plan or group, several of these methods may be used for one planning effort. No matter which methods are selected, the goal is to engage as many citizens as possible in an efficient, effective and timely manner.

**Charrette** ■ A charrette is a workshop where participants actively design a future for the planning area using maps or aerial photographs. For example, participants may identify specific land uses they want to change, specific landmarks to be preserved, locations for additional growth, changes to the street cross sections, or key public improvements.

**Citizen Advisory Committee** ■ A citizen advisory committee is a group of informed citizens representing a full range of interests that meets regularly to review information and products and make recommendations as the plan is being developed. They are useful as a sounding board for new ideas, to ensure that the plan's content reflects the values of citizens and stakeholders in the area, and to develop innovative ideas.



**Newsletters and surveys** ■ Periodic newsletters can be delivered through a variety of means, such as the mail, as a newspaper insert, or through the Internet, to inform a broad constituency. An early newsletter may contain a response survey. The Internet also can provide an effective way to elicit response and comment from the public.

**Open Houses** ■ Open houses are a good way to keep citizens informed while giving them the opportunity to discuss issues with planners and stakeholders. Open houses not only allow citizens to get questions answered but also to provide feedback directly to staff. Open houses also help foster a sense of community in a neighborhood, district or corridor, helping to motivate support for the planning process.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)** ■ SWOT is an effective participation method designed to engage many ideas from many people on an equal basis. Participants are asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of, the opportunities present in, and the threats facing their area. The resulting list can be used throughout the process to develop a vision statement, check identified issues and verify that implementation covers those issues. It also can help focus planning efforts on issues that have the greatest impact on the area.

The planning process, once initiated, can best be described as a series of phases. The time and effort spent on each phase will vary depending on the characteristics of the area and experience of the participants.

### Phase 1 — Background and Introduction

This first phase sets the stage for the planning process to come. Typical components include:

- Defining the planning area and defining subareas, if applicable
- Defining the purpose of the small area plan for the City and for the other stakeholders
- Discussing the planning process
- Identifying stakeholders and partners and defining a public involvement strategy

### Phase 2 — Planning Context

Every area of the city has a planning context based on already adopted plans and previous studies. This phase defines the context, which may include some or all of the following:

- Comprehensive Plan (the current plan is Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000)

#### **Standard process**

1. **Background and introduction**
2. **Planning context**
3. **Vision statement**
4. **Assessment**
5. **Plan recommendations**
6. **Plan implementation program**



<b>Neighborhood</b>		
	<b>in 2000</b>	<b>in 2020</b>
<b>Population</b>	3,000	3,300
<b>Employment</b>	1,000	1,050

Population estimates and projections are an important planning tool.



- Blueprint Denver and other city-wide plans such as the Bicycle Master Plan or proposed Parks Game Plan
- Small area plans adopted as supplements to the comprehensive plan
- Transportation, urban design, drainage, or other studies of specific issues
- State or federal policy direction that may be applicable

### **Phase 3 – Vision statement**

The vision statement is a concise description of the area at some point 10 to 20 years in the future. There also may be guiding principles to further advise the planning process and recommendations.

### **Phase 4 – Assessment**

Assessment is the inventory and analysis phase of the process. It includes an inventory of existing conditions covering all of the chapter topics of the Comprehensive Plan 2000 and an analysis of the issues to be addressed by the plan. A list of the chapters and topics that might be included in the assessment follows. Neighborhood, district and corridor plans will place different emphases on the various components. As it becomes available, the City’s Geographic Information System (GIS) will create a fast, accurate compilation of the multiple layers of data for the area.

**Demographic trends** ■ Analysis of demographic trends should include past trends for the area, available projections and comparison with the city for population and household characteristics, income and poverty rates, and education levels.

**Environmental sustainability** ■ Analysis of environmental sustainability should include topics such as physical setting and topography, tree canopy, street trees, flood plain, brownfields, and air and water quality. The focus and depth of the discussion will depend on the attributes of the planning area.

**Land use and zoning** ■ A key component of the land-use and zoning study is to evaluate, refine and correct the Blueprint Denver Plan Map. Refinements may include regional and local destinations and additional Areas of Change and Areas of Stability. The existing land-use regulatory framework (zoning, view plane, historic structures and districts, design review districts) must be defined and mapped. The same must be done for the existing land uses and built form attributes. A comparison of these can identify needed buffers and transitions between different uses and densities and significant discrepancies between land use and zoning. Another component is to define the likely change agents such as significant land assemblages, opportunity sites, and major proposed projects.



Structures and areas can be designated as Landmarks.





**Housing** ■ Analysis of housing should include housing characteristics and change over time, an inventory of housing by type, home ownership and tenancy trends, and housing cost compared to city and metro area. Opportunities to meet a broader range of housing types and prices also should be identified.

**Legacies** ■ Plan 2000 identifies legacies such as historic preservation, parks, and urban design. Mapping residential types and discussing types of architecture, building materials, site attributes, and other aspects of urban form is one component. The historic preservation element should discuss the history of development and resulting development pattern and identify landmark structures and districts, both designated and eligible. Similarly, the existing parks, parkways, and open space system needs to be evaluated and mapped. Some of the other urban design elements may include significant views, focal points, gateways, and area and sub-area edges.

**Mobility** ■ Major components of mobility may include the street system (overall street pattern, street classification, street type), traffic patterns and volumes, parking issues and inventory, transit routes and frequencies, bike routes, pedestrian connections (especially related to destinations), and pedestrian and bike safety issues. In some planning areas, attention may be given to identifying existing or potential pedestrian or transit priority areas and to neighborhood traffic management issues.

**Economic activity** ■ Economic activity will vary considerably from one area to another. Where considerable employment, retail and other activity is an important present or future attribute, information about existing businesses and employment, retail, and industrial areas and sub-areas is essential. Other information may include estimates of employment by category and inventory of other economic generators, significant retail shopping patterns in and out of the planning area, and development trends. In some cases, it may be appropriate to conduct a market study.

**Neighborhood** ■ The key attributes of neighborhood issues may include the social fabric of the area (community organizations and informal gathering places, for example), communication, and an inventory of community facilities (schools, recreation centers, religious institutions, senior centers, libraries, other public facilities, and major private facilities). In some areas, public safety and health issues (crime rates) will be significant.

**Arts and Culture** ■ Arts and culture is sometimes an important component for an area. An inventory of large and small arts and cultural facilities often is the best way to depict this characteristic.

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

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



Small theaters can be a neighborhood attribute.

**Goal:**  
*Improve access for neighborhood residents*

**Issue:**  
*Transit is inadequate*

**Recommendation:**  
*Increase the frequency of bus service*

## **Phase 5 – Plan Recommendations**

The plan recommendations must incorporate three components: a concept plan for the planning area (based on the Blueprint Denver Plan Map); plan recommendations in the form of goals and objectives, issue identification and resolution; and civic responsibilities.

## **Phase 6 – Plan Implementation Program**

The final component of the plan is to create an implementation program by applying the tool kit to achieve the plan recommendations. As discussed earlier, the tool kit has three types of tools — regulatory, public infrastructure, and public-private partnership — that need to be considered and used to achieve the plan recommendations. Other components of the implementation program may include discussion of the capacity and resources for implementation (public, private, nonprofit, organizational) and assignment of priorities, responsibility and schedule. Follow up for evaluating progress and setting new priorities also should be discussed.

## **Civic Responsibilities and Community Context**

A basic tenet of small area plans is that specific areas cannot solve problems at the expense of their neighbors or the city as a whole. Each small area should address a set of civic responsibilities that will improve the city’s livability. As an example: it is a civic responsibility to provide many different housing types to accommodate people of different ages and income levels. By addressing this responsibility, Denver can be an accessible place for many different types of individuals and families. Another is accepting and reinforcing the Area of Change and Area of Stability designations that have been refined by the planning process. This assures a city-wide approach to channeling growth to increase benefits and minimize burdens.

## **Blueprint Denver Plan Map**

As a key inventory step, an area’s Blueprint Denver map gets reviewed, corrected and refined to balance neighborhood and city-wide interests. This includes the Areas of Change and Areas of Stability within the area, as well as the street types and transit lines. The plan recommendations must justify any significant deviation from the Blueprint Denver Plan Map.

- If the small area plan recommends land-use types, transportation, Areas of Change, and Areas of Stability consistent with Blueprint Denver, this portion of the plan would be considered acceptable without further study.
- If recommended changes represent an underlying change from Blueprint Denver, a technical study will be required to see if the change suggested has a significant impact to the city as a whole and if that impact is positive or negative.



Through the process of producing a small area plan, it might be determined that lower or higher levels of growth would be consistent with the plan's vision. Minor differences up to a 20 percent variation do not need to be specifically addressed. However, major differences should be addressed in the plan, and any impact on Denver as a whole should be examined. This includes not only the individual impact of the specific plan, but also the cumulative impact of similar decisions in other plans.

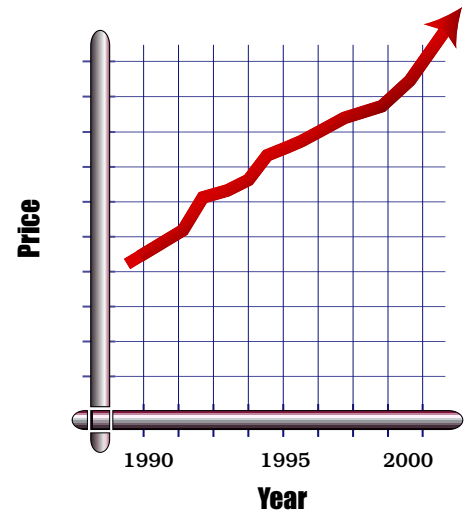
### **Other Civic Responsibilities**

**Affordable housing** ■ The need for a broad range of housing types and prices throughout the city is very important to the quality of life for Denver as well as the entire region. A diversity of housing is essential in every part of the city. Housing types that meet the needs of each particular stage in life enables a resident to age within the same neighborhood. This allows the young and old to live in the same neighborhood with their parents and children respectively, if they so choose. Affordable housing also can mean modest-wage workers living closer to their jobs, decreasing transportation expenses and increasing transportation efficiency.

**Transportation system integrity** ■ Having a connected regional system of roads and rapid transit is essential to continuing the metropolitan area's vitality. Improving streets so that they complement adjacent land uses, and vice versa, is encouraged. Roadways of city-wide importance and new transit lines are identified and discussed in Chapter 6. For example, there may be an opportunity to increase sidewalk width, provide on-street parking or add a transit stop along certain commercial streets. However, to decrease the traffic capacity of a street or reroute a transit line may have adverse impacts on other parts of the city.

**Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** ■ TOD is an example of another transportation element in Blueprint Denver that has broad importance for the city. TODs bring employees and residents within walking distance of high-frequency transit routes, and, as a result, improve the efficiency of the regional transportation system.

**Community facilities** ■ While most community facilities are viewed positively, those that are deemed less desirable nonetheless often are essential to serving the needs of the neighborhood and the City. Some of these facilities are best clustered, while others need to be dispersed throughout the city. Every plan needs to deal with existing facilities and potential expansions, as well as new facilities. Some major facilities will require special planning and site selection processes.



Average home sales prices and rents have been increasing rapidly.



**Consistency with adopted plans** ■ A proposed plan must be consistent with already adopted plans including Plan 2000, Blueprint Denver and plans for adjacent small areas. Substantial differences between the proposed plan and adopted plans must be identified. In some cases, the difference may point out a new trend that should be reflected in other plans; if not, the proposed plan should be adjusted. The Planning Board’s review and recommendations regarding proposed plans will take this into consideration.

**Regional coordination** ■ Regional coordination is increasingly important to Denver. In some cases, consistency with regional smart growth and transportation policies may take priority over local neighborhood recommendations.

### ■ **Required Content and Graphics Format**

For ease of administration, each small area plan should follow the same basic format that is outlined in the content above. Within this basic format, flexibility is allowed as long as the minimum content outlined in this chapter is addressed.

In addition to the basic order and minimum content, each plan should:

- Use standardized tools
- Summarize recommendations
- Determine priorities among the recommendations

### ■ **Tools For Small Area Plans**

Land-use and transportation conclusions in the small area plans should use standard tools, available City-wide, that are contained in Blueprint Denver’s toolbox. If a new tool is needed, it will be developed for use in other neighborhoods as well. The use of standardized tools keeps the administrative burden on the City within a reasonable level and enables recommendations to be drafted and implemented more quickly.

### **Regulatory Tools**

Regulatory tools can be implemented to shape, encourage and discourage future land-use changes.

### **Zoning**

Zoning tools include:

- Keep zoning as is
- Amend language in code
- Rezone selected parcels to a new district



- Apply fundamental overlay zones — e.g. transit or pedestrian overlay
- Utilize a specific overlay zone district
- Evaluate the need for additional development guidelines review

### **Landmark district**

For those buildings or districts with architectural, historical or geographical significance, a landmark district may be recommended to provide protection from demolition or inappropriate remodeling.

### **View protection**

A view of downtown or the mountains from a point in an important public place can be recommended for protection through a view preservation ordinance.

### **Public Infrastructure Tools**

Public investments in an area have an immediate impact and are not subject to market conditions and private decisions. However, they are subject to a competitive City budgetary process. Plans should prioritize desired investments to ensure that the most beneficial investments are addressed first. Recommendations from city-wide and small area plans will be included in the annual budget process.

The cost of public infrastructure is such that small area plans must include an evaluation of existing infrastructure for condition and capacity to handle future growth or change in land use. The plan also should identify all the potential sources of revenue, be they public, private, or partnership.

### **Transportation**

Transportation investments include:

- Neighborhood traffic management
- Street improvements, including storm drainage, alleys and targeted roadway capacity improvements
- Medians
- Transit improvements
  - new bus route
  - improved bus service
  - fixed-guideway buses
  - light-rail transit corridors
  - local circulator buses
  - additional transit stops
  - improvements to transit stops, including pedestrian connections



Parks and parkways, like 17th Avenue Parkway, are neighborhood assets.

- Bike lane, route, path, and other amenities
- Sidewalk improvements
- Priority signals for pedestrians, bikes and transit
- Street trees/detached walks
- Street furniture
- Parking structures and/or surface lots (shared-use)

The following table gives a sample of some construction costs for transportation improvements. Linear improvements are for a length of about one block or 600 linear feet (l.f.).

Infrastructure Element	Cost (2001 dollars)
Bus bench (1)	\$1,000
Bus shelter (1)	\$7,500
Bike lane-on-street (600 l.f.)	\$1,000
Bike path-off-street (600 l.f.)	\$47,000
Sidewalk (600 l.f.)	\$34,000
Curb & gutter (600 l.f.)	\$36,000
Alley (600 l.f.)	\$105,000
Roadway paving-asphalt (600 l.f.)	\$110,000
Traffic signal (1)	\$150,000

### **Parks**

New parks and open spaces have obvious benefits to the community and surrounding property owners. Park facilities are popular and sought after but can be expensive to create, operate and maintain. Combining facilities such as parks and open space with storm water quality and detention facilities is important but requires additional operation and maintenance coordination.

- Green streets — beautified pedestrian connections along streets between parks.
- Parkways — streets with broad medians and treelawns
- Parks — neighborhood, community or regional scale
- Open spaces — natural areas
- Plazas — public space within more dense urban districts

### **Facilities**

Some neighborhoods are in need of key civic facilities such as:

- Recreation centers
- Libraries
- Ballfields



## Partnerships Tools

In the absence of a strong private development market that can produce positive change without public money, partnerships can be formed between public and private partners. In Areas of Change, a partnership can help stimulate additional private investment by changing market perceptions. In Areas of Stability, partnerships can be useful tools in developing affordable housing or in improving a business district. Partnerships are discussed more fully in Chapter 7. Examples of investments that can occur through partnerships include:

- Shared parking
- Brownfield mitigation
- Public plazas or parks
- Affordable housing
- Land assemblage
- Business recruitment
- Façade improvement loans
- Business incubator
- Pilot projects

Various revenue sources are available to the City including Community Development Block Grants, tax increment financing and special programs, such as funding for cleaning up brownfields.

## ■ Implementation of Small Area Plans Into City-wide Policies and Priorities

### Plan Adoption

Because small area plans are so important in helping direct future resources, adoption involves a thorough evaluation, as well as formal action. The process, in order, is as follows:

- A completed plan draft is formally submitted to the Planning Director.
- The Planning Director directs a multi-agency, technical review committee to evaluate the plan's format, contents and process, especially related to the Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Denver, and other adopted plans. The committee recommends changes as needed. The recommended changes, if any, are reviewed by the entity that drafted the plan, and then a response to the recommendations is submitted.
- The Planning Director transmits the revised plan to the Planning Board for a work session to review the contents, committee

This median addition on Logan is both a transportation and aesthetic improvement





### ***Policies for Plans:***

- ***Consistent with Plan 2000***
- ***Standardized content and format***
- ***Standardized tools***
- ***Address civic responsibilities***
- ***City implementation***

recommendations and compatibility with Plan 2000, Blueprint Denver and other adopted plans.

- Planning Board conducts a public hearing and makes a recommendation to City Council based on the review committee's findings and public testimony.
- City Council acts on adopting the proposed plan as a supplement to Plan 2000.

The adopted plan is put into digital format and published electronically. Limited numbers of printed copies will be available.

### **City Commits To Implement Conforming Plans**

The premise of Blueprint Denver is that similar problems should have similar solutions. The toolkit presents a variety of mechanisms for developing implementation strategies for small area plans. If plans take advantage of the broader range of tools in the regulatory, public infrastructure, and partnership categories, City implementation should be readily available. Implementation takes place on many levels for the City and other partners. Regular recommendations and decisions such as review of proposed developments and recommendations on rezonings can benefit from a thoughtful, clear small area plan. Similarly, a neighborhood association's annual work program can be more targeted based on clear recommendations. Some of the more substantial recommendations, such as public infrastructure, are dependent on the highly competitive annual funding of capital improvements.

### **Evaluation of the Plan**

One of the criteria the City will use to consider implementing a plan's programs is the effectiveness of proposed investments in improving conditions in the City, as measured by objective benchmarks. Therefore, the plan should attempt to forecast how it would improve those benchmarks that are applicable to the small area planning process.

### **What About Existing Neighborhood Plans?**

Until they are updated using this process, existing neighborhood plans will continue to guide City decisions. For example, plans that call for implementation through zone changes or neighborhood improvements will continue to be considered for implementation. However, existing neighborhood plans vary greatly in their format and their implementation effects.

Neighborhood plan updates should build on the foundation of prior plans. These plans represented the neighborhood and City consensus at the time



the plan was completed. In many cases, these plans have been the agents of change for the areas they serve. A comprehensive review of the successes, failures and the ideas not yet implemented should form the foundation of any renewed planning effort.

## ■ Summary of Policies

- Small area plans must be in agreement with Plan 2000 and Blueprint Denver prior to adoption by City Council. If the small area plan complies with these two City-wide plans, it may be adopted without delay. If the small area plan conflicts with these two plans, it must be reviewed and reconciled, either through modifications to the small area plan or to Blueprint Denver.
- The City will establish a standardized content and format for small area plan documents.
- The City will establish a standardized set of tools to be used for implementing small area plans. Recommendations should be prioritized within the plan document.
- Small area plans must address applicable civic responsibilities.
- The City will commit to implement adopted small area plans that are in agreement with Plan 2000 and Blueprint Denver, subject to the City's competitive budget process.

This standardized approach to small area planning in Denver creates new opportunities. Plans can be developed more quickly, standardized tools can be applied, and subjects can be covered comprehensively. This process allows Small Area Plans to tackle required issues and to emphasize the qualities of place that make Denver unique, inviting and interesting.

