

# Phase 3 – Intentional Engagement Summary

## Youth Engagement

Our youth engagement for Phase 3 was focused on students at George Washington High School, including one full day of 7 planners interacting with 13 classes to share about planning work and receive feedback on 3 sets of recommendations that were relevant to youth and families in the area – affordable housing, safety for pedestrians/cyclists, and areas for future growth. The majority of youth who participated were non-white and live close to George Washington High School. Out of the three topic areas, a majority of youth said affordable housing should be the top priority. Conversations and written comments leaned towards ensuring the plan has adequate job support and ease of mobility options when new, affordable developments are built. Most youth agree with the recommendations for safety, especially around George Washington. Youth also suggest adding park amenities, different businesses and walking infrastructure to help support a pedestrian, bike and scooter friendly atmosphere in the neighborhood. Lastly, most youth said their first choice for growth would be along major corridors and would least appreciate all the growth to be at Colorado Station in the future.

### - Youth Engagement - details

- 81 worksheet responses, 206 digital survey responses
- 14 to 18-year-olds
  - 40% white
  - 22% black
  - 19% Latina/o
  - 11% biracial or mixed race
  - 8% other
- 70% live close to George Washington High School
- Affordable Housing Recommendations
  - 36% agree or strongly agree
  - 40% are neutral
  - 23% disagree or strongly disagree
  - Priority
    - 56% say it's at medium priority
    - 39% high priority
    - 5% low priority
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Recommendations
  - 45% agree or strongly agree
  - 36% are neutral
  - 17% disagree or strongly disagree
  - Priority
    - 38% say high priority
    - 55% say medium priority
    - 7% say low priority
- Growth & Development Options
  - 46% prefer Option 2 – focusing growth along major corridors in the area
  - 36% prefer Option 3 – focus growth inside the neighborhoods

- 18% prefer Option 1 – focus growth at Colorado Station
- General comments
  - Build affordable housing close to bus and transportation routes, and help connect those places with jobs so people don't have to travel so far
  - Need increase in safety and beautification for walking in the area
  - People would walk more if there were more places to walk to in the area like entertainment and stores, and if sidewalks and crossings were safer
  - Need an increase in park activities/amenities so people want to use them

### Renter Engagement

We aimed to engage renters, an underrepresented demographic in our traditional engagement, through two events in partnership with a local food truck. One event was located inside the parking lot of a small apartment building, with access to the surrounding apartments too. The other was located at a park across the street from several large apartment complexes. Through these events we were able to connect and talk with over 60 participants, a majority being people of color and half being between the ages of 18-35. When asked about growth strategies for the area, all opportunities were seen relatively the same and no standout was identified. Major issues that arose from conversations with renters were: sustaining affordability of homes now and into the future; having less apartments and more affordable duplexes; the need for major improvements to walkability in the area, especially crosswalks; and the need for some type of community-oriented center in or near Jacobs Park.

#### - **Renters events - details**

- 2 food truck-oriented events for renters specifically
- Total participants: 65
  - 70% of participants were people of color
  - Slightly more than 50% were between ages of 18-35
- Growth Opportunities
  - Business related
    - Opportunity 1: 14 votes
    - Opportunity 2: 17 votes
    - Opportunity 3: 18 votes
  - Housing related
    - Opportunity 4: 10 votes
    - Opportunity 5: 27 votes
    - Opportunity 6: 9 votes
- Major issues that came up
  - Affordability of homes currently and in the future
  - Increasing pedestrian friendly infrastructure and areas to go to
  - Duplexes over apartments
  - More affordable homes in the area
  - Community Center or something in Jacobs Park that is community oriented. It's an underused park
    - Add places for dogs

- Adding a homeless shelter for the area
- Want appropriate and responsive growth/development that will not create displacement
- Improvements to crosswalks and sidewalks around major intersections

### Minority Businesses

In an effort to hear from more businesses, we connected with and surveyed 11 minority-owned or operated businesses in the area, including restaurants, stores, auto shops and financial institutions. Each business was given a survey to fill out that asked about five business related recommendations in the plan right now and about future growth options they would like to see. Look at the recommendations, businesses either agreed or strongly agreed with all of them, lending more importance be put on their rankings of the recommendations. The most important recommendations, based on the average, are the creation of a local, small business support program and a program dedicated to providing financial assistance for businesses to prevent displacement. In determining best future growth options, most businesses would be supportive of growth happening along major corridors in the area, similar to the results of the youth engagement.

#### - **Minority Businesses**

- 11 minority owned businesses across the area
- Given recommendations, they either agreed with or strongly agreed with all 5 business-related recommendations. They are ranked by importance below:
  - Rec 1: Local, small business support program
  - Rec 4: Financial assistance for businesses to prevent business displacement
  - Tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> most important
    - Rec 2: Upgrading new business associations
    - Rec 3: Business incubators/accelerators to attract new businesses and patrons
    - Rec 5: Help with businesses going green in variety of ways
- Growth Option Ranking according to MO businesses
  - Option 2: growth along major corridors
  - Option 3: growth in neighborhood, local centers
  - Option 1: growth at Colorado Station

# MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Mike Ramsey and Scott Robinson, City of Denver  
**From:** Root Policy Research  
**Re:** July 23<sup>rd</sup> event engagement summary  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 27, 2022

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## Community event overview

Root Policy Research held a Near Southeast Area plan community event on Saturday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> in Frances Weisbert Jacobs Park from 10:30am – 2:30pm. The purpose of the event was to engage with renters and get their feedback on the plan's preliminary recommendations, as well as hear their ideas and perspectives on how they would like to see the area develop over the next 10-20 years.

There were two planned activities for the event. For the first activity, Root Policy staff talked through the preliminary recommendations and opportunities (development opportunities, missing middle housing opportunities, and industrial opportunities) presented at the most recent community workshops. Once the concepts and tradeoffs were discussed, participants were instructed to place dots on the opportunities that were most appealing/favorable to them. The second activity had participants write an idea, need, etc. on a sticky note and place it on a specific location on a 36" x 36" map of the planning area.

Overall, Root Policy engaged with approximately 25-30 individuals. The people that participated were diverse — both racially/ethnically and age wise. Below is a summary of the feedback that was gathered from participants.

## Feedback on preliminary recommendations

Overall, participants preferred opportunities 2 and 3 of the development opportunities section. One participant advocated for opportunity 2 because they felt “gentle growth” would most likely occur. Other participants liked opportunity 3 because they felt it could create more local jobs and they liked concentrating growth in neighborhood hubs.

- Opportunity 1| Continue concentrating growth at Colorado Station: **2 votes**
- Opportunity 2 | Focus growth along corridors and at key intersections: **9 votes**
- Opportunity 3| Focus growth at regional, community, and local centers: **7 votes**

Preferences among the missing middle housing opportunities were spread pretty evenly. One person advocated for opportunity 4, noting that the City should prioritize middle class affordable living. They felt that allowing duplexes would be the best way to do this. Another person felt that adding duplexes in the planning area was the best option, saying “apartments are fine but they can get crowded.”

- Opportunity 4| Allow duplexes in residential areas: **6 votes**
- Opportunity 5 | Transition from centers to corridors to residential areas: **6 votes**
- Opportunity 6| Allow triplexes and townhouses along larger streets: **5 votes**

Among the industrial opportunities, participants overwhelmingly supported opportunity 7. One person noted they would love to see arts and crafts festivals in this space. Another participant suggested that the City get ideas from the community on what they would like to see at this location. A different participant who voted for opportunity 7 suggested prioritizing community gathering space for the area. One participant who voted for opportunity 9 did so because they did not want to see any jobs leave the area.

- Opportunity 7| Innovation/flex place designation: **10 votes**
- Opportunity 8 | Value Manufacturing and Innovation/Flex: **3 votes**
- Opportunity 9 | Value Manufacturing and Local Center: **5 votes**

Participants were also asked to identify specific locations in the planning area where they wanted to see new development, improvements, etc. Information provided by participants included:

- One person noted that there is an empty lot at the northwest corner of Monaco and Evans — they suggested to “put something interesting” on the lot.
- Two participants wanted to see more affordable housing and apartments developed in the Washington Virginia Vale neighborhood. Both participants also articulated a desire for “landlords to be better regulated” — reasons they articulated for this suggestion included major rent increases and lack of responsiveness from landlords on concerns they brought to their attention.
- One participant suggested building a splash pad for children in Garland Park.

- Another participant wanted to see more affordable housing and green areas/parks in the area near Monaco and Florida.
- Another participant articulated a need for more tree cover on new bicycle paths in the planning area.

## Other community feedback

One person wanted a greater police presence around Jacobs Park — they felt that there has been an increase in people who are unhoused living in RVs and trucks parked around the park. They added that because there's not a police presence, a lot of illicit activities take place. They do not feel safe walking around the park early in the morning or late at night. They added that transit around the park and neighborhood is pretty good – the bus comes every 15-20 minutes. Security and safety concerns around the park was this person's main feedback for the area.

Other general comments from participants included:

- More parks, recreational opportunities, activities, and places for kids to go. A couple people indicated they would like to see a recreational or community center built in Jacobs Park or in the area.
- Prioritization for community gathering and connecting space. There are a lot of renters in the area and nowhere for them to come together and get to know each other outside of their individual complexes.
- More affordable housing options, especially rentals that cost less than \$1,000/bedroom and which accommodate lower wage workers.
- A homeless shelter should be located somewhere in the planning area.
- More tree cover throughout the planning area.











# MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Mike Ramsey and Scott Robinson, City of Denver  
**From:** Root Policy Research  
**Re:** August 18<sup>th</sup> event engagement summary  
**Date:** Friday, August 19, 2022

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## Community event overview

Root Policy Research held a Near Southeast Area plan community event on Thursday, August 18<sup>th</sup> in front of the Ramac Apartments (1640 S. Albion) from 4pm – 7pm. The purpose of the event was to engage with renters and get their feedback on the plan’s preliminary recommendations, as well as hear their ideas and perspectives on how they would like to see the area develop over the next 10-20 years.

There were two planned activities for the event. For the first activity, Root Policy staff talked through the preliminary recommendations and opportunities (development opportunities, missing middle housing opportunities, and industrial—innovation/flex—opportunities) presented at the most recent community workshops. Once the concepts and tradeoffs were discussed, participants were instructed to place dots on the opportunities that were most appealing/favorable to them. The second activity had participants write an idea, need, etc. on a sticky note and place it on a specific location on a 36” x 36” map of the planning area.

## Demographics

Overall, Root Policy engaged with approximately 30-35 individuals. Approximately 95% of the people engaged were renters in Virginia Village. The people that participated were diverse — both racially/ethnically and age wise. Approximately 70% of the participants were people of color and around 50% were between the ages of 18 and 35.

## Feedback on preliminary recommendations

Overall, participants preferred opportunities 1 and 3 of the development opportunities section. One participant advocated for opportunity 1 because they felt that growth would most likely be “contained” around Colorado Station and would be less likely to have impacts (e.g. gentrification, pricing people out) to surrounding areas. Another participant explained they would welcome more density around Colorado Station in order to preserve and expand green areas in the neighborhood and encourage the use of public transit to help with efforts to fight climate change. Participants that chose opportunity 2 noted that they liked that investment and opportunity was being spread more equitably, even if it meant that each area would see less significant improvements. One participant who chose opportunity 3 noted they liked that growth was spread more evenly throughout the planning area but that it didn’t seem like it would bring wholesale change to the neighborhoods.

- Opportunity 1 | Continue concentrating growth at Colorado Station: **12 votes**
- Opportunity 2 | Focus growth along corridors and at key intersections: **8 votes**
- Opportunity 3 | Focus growth at regional, community, and local centers: **11 votes**

Preferences among the missing middle housing opportunities overwhelmingly favored opportunity 5. Most participants liked the idea of more affordable housing in the area but concerns were raised about families that currently live in the area would not be able to afford any of the new developments. One participant felt strongly that any housing that was built in the area would attract people from outside the neighborhood, which would drive up rent prices.

- Opportunity 4 | Allow duplexes in residential areas: **5 votes**
- Opportunity 5 | Transition from centers to corridors to residential areas: **21 votes**
- Opportunity 6 | Allow triplexes and townhouses along larger streets: **4 votes**

Among the industrial opportunities, participants preferred opportunities 8 and 7. Most of the participants who chose opportunity 8 expressed enthusiasm around seeing new uses in the area but were reticent about too much growth occurring *[residents’ main concern throughout the event was that too much growth and development would gentrify their neighborhoods and price them out]*. When talking through opportunity 7, one participant felt that if implemented, “it would definitely make the rent go up.” Another participant emphasized they would like to see small, local businesses be prioritized for “community-serving retail” uses in the area over large, big box stores or other corporate companies. They added that the City should “prioritize long-term community stability over making a quick buck.”

- Opportunity 7 | Innovation/flex place designation: **11 votes**
- Opportunity 8 | Value Manufacturing and Innovation/Flex: **15 votes**
- Opportunity 9 | Value Manufacturing and Local Center: **1 vote**

Participants were also asked to identify specific locations in the planning area where they wanted to see new development, improvements, etc. Information provided by participants included:

- More dog parks in the area (several participants articulated this need);
- More parks/outdoor recreation opportunities closer to the planning area, particularly for kids;
- Provide more transit options in the area;
- Make it easier to access light rail;
- Make it easier for bicycles, scooters, etc. to get around, as well as making it easier to access light rail;
- More safety and pedestrian improvements on major roads (e.g. Colorado Blvd); one participant noted that they have almost been hit several times trying to cross Colorado Blvd.
- Provide better wayfinding;
- A neighborhood farmers' market; and
- A recreation center in the planning area.

## Other community feedback

Two main concerns articulated during the event were increasing gentrification of the area and rent increases. Many residents expressed concern about the possibility of getting priced out of their current neighborhood. One resident noted that the Virginia Village neighborhood was the only place they could find an affordable two-bedroom in the city. Another resident reflected that this area was one of the last remaining remnants of "old Denver", where the community is "affordable and diverse, has nice people and low crime."

Other general comments from participants included:

- More safety measures, traffic calming and pedestrian-oriented infrastructure across Colorado Blvd. One resident noted that their son goes to Merrill Middle School and they would love for him to ride his bike to school but it's too dangerous going across Colorado Blvd. Another participant felt the area was not pedestrian friendly.
- Property managers are not responsive to concerns of tenants. One resident noted that a wasp's nest is currently located near their stairwell and even after several tenants got stung, the property manager hasn't gotten it removed.
- A handful of residents noted that the homeless population has increased in the area over the last few years. One participant noted that anti-homelessness infrastructure (e.g. bright lights) had been installed in the area and did not agree with it being there.
- Several residents brought up crime in the area — some felt it had gotten worse, some felt the area had relatively low crime.
- A handful of residents were pleased with the diversity and variety of amenities in the neighborhood.

- A couple residents noted that the Perkins restaurant in the Virginia Village neighborhood just closed after 40 years of business. The residents insinuated some fear/concern over other small, local, and established businesses closing in the area and being replaced by corporate stores.





**Tradeoffs**  
Provides opportunities across the neighborhood with minimal change in appearance.  
*but...*  
Limits opportunities for adding larger types of units to accommodate more housing.

**Tradeoffs**  
Creates opportunities for missing middle housing that has access to centers and corridors and serves as a buffer to the larger neighborhood.  
*but...*  
Concentrates opportunities in specific areas, limiting options elsewhere.

**Tradeoffs**  
Provides missing middle options at locations across neighborhoods.  
*but...*  
Concentrates opportunities in specific areas, limiting options elsewhere.

**Opportunity 7: Intermediate Area**  
Provides opportunities for missing middle housing and employment uses.  
*but...*  
Limits opportunities for housing to support desired uses in the local center.

**Opportunity 8: Value Manufacturing and Industrial Uses**  
Provides opportunities for community-serving retail while maintaining space for employment uses. However, there would be limited opportunities for new housing in the Local Center.  
*but...*  
Limits opportunities for housing or employment.

**Opportunity 9: Value Manufacturing and Local Center**  
Provides opportunities for community-serving retail while maintaining space for employment uses. However, there would be limited opportunities for new housing in the Local Center.  
*but...*  
Limits opportunities for housing or employment.

**Map Annotations:**

- Blue sticky notes:**
  - Parks
  - Park-like lots
  - Refugee
  - more parks dog parks
  - MORE PARKS + MORE TRANSIT TRANSPORT
- Yellow sticky notes:**
  - DOG PARK
  - Something to help with walking and biking
  - MODE EASE OF ACCESS for Bikes, strollers
  - more parks dog parks
  - more parks dog parks
- Other markers:**
  - Red dots: Parks, Dog Parks
  - Green lines: Corridors
  - Black dashed lines: Boundaries
  - Scale: 0 to 0.75 Miles
  - North arrow



