

MEMORANDUM

To: Mike Ramsey and Scott Robinson, CPD
From: Frankie Lewington and Lucy McGehee, Root Policy Research
Re: NSE 12/15 Renter Engagement Event recap at The Hudson
Date: Friday, December 16, 2022

Overview

The following memo provides a summary of the feedback received on the Near Southeast Area Draft Plan from renters living at The Hudson Apartments (7201 Leetsdale Drive) on Thursday, December 15th from 4-6:15pm.

Six residents participated in the event. Participants were each given 20 tickets and asked to prioritize strategies related to four specific subject areas (noted by bullets below). Participants were allowed to put more than one ticket towards any strategy. Root staff also asked for feedback on a handful of maps taken from the draft plan.

- Directing growth/future building heights/elements of a complete neighborhood
- Local businesses and jobs
- Mobility improvements on corridors and multi-modal
- Parks and trails improvements

Directing growth/future building heights/elements of a complete neighborhood. Participants were asked to prioritize strategies related to the LU-1 recommendation. Overall, residents felt that strategies related to the **improvement of multi-modal transportation infrastructure and construction of diverse and affordable housing types near transit and amenities** should be prioritized among the LU-1 strategies. Participants also wanted to see **elements of a complete neighborhood when new development occurred** in the area.

Overall, participants agreed with the land use framework map and the future base height and base height with incentives maps. One participant spoke about Colorado Station and commented that it made sense to allow for greater height where taller buildings are already allowed.

A breakdown of participants' votes is below:

LU-1 | Direct growth to regional centers, community centers, and community corridors with improved infrastructure and design and incorporate elements of complete neighborhoods in areas where additional height beyond existing entitlements is recommended.

- Regional and Community Centers should accommodate the most growth (e.g. housing, employment, entertainment) in Near Southeast (0 votes)
- Improve infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit in Regional and Community Centers (4 votes)
- Ensure new developments will have quality design (0 votes)
- Promote the construction of a variety of affordable housing and mixed-income housing and encourage development near transit and amenities (4 votes)
- Encourage the development of larger units (e.g., 3 or 4-bedroom units) for families and for-sale options (0 votes)
- Ensure elements of a complete neighborhood (e.g., access to amenities, multi-modal transportation options, recreational opportunities) are provided along with new development (3 votes)

Local businesses and jobs. Participants were asked to prioritize strategies related to the HE-11, HE-12, HE-13, and HE-15 recommendations. For the HE-11 recommendation, participants felt that strategies related to **incentivizing new projects to offer smaller retail space and/or providing cheaper commercial space, as well as encouraging existing businesses to fill service gaps**, should be prioritized.

For the HE-12 recommendation, participants strongly advocated for offering **financial incentives to landlords that are willing to sign long-term leases with small businesses or limit rent increases**. Under the HE-13 recommendation, participants wanted to see the prioritization of **helping local businesses provide living wages and benefits to their staff, as well as supporting more childcare offerings in the area**, under the HE-13 recommendation.

Under the HE-15 recommendation, participants wanted to see **resources to people experiencing homelessness to help increase their housing stability and income** prioritized.

One participant stressed helping local businesses that are already located in the area as opposed to directing resources to attract new businesses.

A breakdown of participants' votes is below:

HE-11 | Attract new businesses to Near Southeast to better serve residents' needs.

- Develop small business incubators and/or accelerators to test new neighborhood serving retail and services (2 votes)

- Incentivize new projects that offer smaller retail spaces and/or provide cheaper commercial space through incentives (5 votes)
- Utilize small business loan programs to attract new businesses (2 votes)
- Focus business attraction efforts towards more local restaurants, grocery stores, recreational retail or services, and other local services (such as coffee shops and/or neighborhood serving retail) (3 votes)
- Encourage existing businesses to fill service gaps by expanding or adding additional products with limited availability in the area (4 votes)

HE-12 | Prevent business displacement from within the neighborhood.

- Broaden the range of financial incentives and assistance for small independent businesses to help prevent displacement (2 votes)
- Offer financial incentives to landlords that are willing to sign long-term leases with small businesses or limit rent increases (7 votes)
- Incentivize new projects that offer smaller retail spaces, provide cheaper space, and provide space for existing businesses to remain on-site with incentives (3 votes)

HE-13 | Encourage and ensure amenities to improve the quality of life at the workplace.

- Help locally-owned businesses provide living wages and benefits to staff, such as transit passes, to encourage job retention and growth (7 votes)
- Offer small business technical assistance to English-as-a-second-language business owners (1 vote)
- Connect employees to local childcare options near employment areas and support more childcare offerings in the area (6 votes)

HE-15 | Partner with Denver Public Schools, community organizations, and other major area employers in connecting Near Southeast residents to new opportunities through workforce training and continuing education.

- Develop partnerships with Denver Public Schools (DPS) in identifying opportunities to support students and families from birth to beginning of their careers (1 vote)
- Partner with DPS, business organizations, and other major employers to help residents with job opportunities and workforce training (3 votes)
- Expand access to benefits, job training, and other resources to residents experiencing homelessness to help increase their income and housing stability (6 votes)
- Increase educational opportunities for adults through adult and higher education (3 votes)

Mobility improvements on corridors and multi-modal. With The Hudson Apartments located at the corner of Leetsdale Drive and Quebec Street, participants were

asked to prioritize strategies related to the M-9 recommendation (South Quebec Street) and provide feedback on the Leetsdale Drive Transformative Project and Recommendations Map.

Under the M-9 recommendation, participants encouraged the City to **prioritize the maintenance of sidewalks during winter months to remove ice and snow**, as well as **upgrade existing sidewalks consistent with other City plans, install intersection improvements, and improve the safety of pedestrian and bicycle crossings** on Quebec Street.

There were no substantive comments related to the proposed improvements on the Leetsdale Dale Transformative Project and Recommendations Map. One participant did note they appreciated the enhanced safety crossings and access points on Leetsdale, particularly for students coming to and from George Washington High School. Another participant felt that the pedestrian signal timers to get across Leetsdale "...are timed for Usain Bolt." They added that they've seen a handful of elderly people get caught in the middle of the sidewalk because they don't have enough time to get across the street.

General comments. One participant commented that "improving transportation should be the number one consideration in the area," adding that transportation infrastructure in the area is "hit or miss." Another participant advocated for upgrading existing sidewalks, noting that the tire on her e-scooter has popped twice due to a grate on the sidewalk. Another participant voiced displeasure about scooters in the area but did not expand on why she didn't like them.

Another participant felt public transportation in the area was greatly lacking. This participant described getting to public transportation as "trying to get somewhere to get somewhere to go somewhere." They also added that there was not a great way to get around by bicycle in the area. They suggested implementing dedicated bikeways with traffic calming strategies to encourage more people to bike.

One participant felt there needed to be better roads in the area and there was "too much traffic [in the area]."

A breakdown of participants' votes is below:

M-9 | South Quebec Street Recommendations

- Install separated sidewalks consistent with other City plans (0 votes)
- Upgrade existing sidewalks consistent with other City plans (5 votes)
- Install intersection improvements and improve the safety of pedestrian and bicycle crossings (5 votes)
- Prioritize maintenance and encourage snow removal during the winter months to minimize the amount of ice and snow covering the sidewalks (7 votes)
- Study the feasibility of adding bicycle facilities to Quebec Street as part of the bikeway from Alameda Avenue to the Cherry Creek trail (2 votes)
- Encourage safe, context-sensitive speed limits to ensure compliance, especially where bicyclists, pedestrians, and other multimodal users are crossing the road (3 votes)

Parks and trails improvements. Participants were asked to prioritize strategies under the Q-1 and Q-2 recommendations. Overall, participants favored strategies that improved existing parks and trails as opposed to building new parks or trails.

For Q-1, participants overwhelmingly wanted to see **improved maintenance and safety in Near Southeast area parks**. To a lesser degree, participants wanted the City to prioritize **providing additional amenities in Near Southeast area parks**. Similarly, for the Q-2 recommendation, participants voiced a strong need for **improved maintenance and safety of trails in the Near Southeast area**.

A breakdown of participants' votes is below:

Q-1 | Ensure parks in Near Southeast serve the community and meet its needs by improving park accessibility and quality.

- Create new parks in areas that are more than a 10-minute walk or roll from existing parks (0 votes)
- Improve access to existing parks and open spaces through mobility improvements and partnerships (2 votes)
- Provide additional amenities (e.g. playgrounds, walking and biking trails) (4 votes)
- Improve maintenance and safety in Near Southeast area parks (10 votes)

Q-2 | Ensure trails continue to serve mobility and recreation needs in Near Southeast by completing new trails, improving access to existing trails, and making trails safer and easier to use.

- Improve existing trails in Near Southeast (4 votes)
- Improve maintenance and safety of trails in Near Southeast (11 votes)
- Study and develop strategies for connecting the Goldsmith Gulch trail from where it currently ends at Iliff Avenue to the Cherry Creek trail at Cook Park (1 vote)
- Evaluate the possibility of constructing a new multi-use trail along the former railroad right-of-way just north of Evans Avenue between Interstate 25 and Monaco Parkway (2 votes)



Near Southeast Area Plan Timeline

What outcomes matter to you?

- This draft plan aims to provide a long-term vision for the Near Southeast area by modernizing centers and corridors, balancing housing affordability, options, and preservation in neighborhoods and improving sustainability through mobility, infrastructure, and greenery.
- Vote for the outcomes that matter most to you by dropping one or more tickets in a cup.
- If there is an outcome you want that you don't see, write it down and put it in the "other" cup.

¿Qué resultados le importan?

- Este borrador del plan tiene como objetivo proporcionar una visión a largo plazo para el área del Near Southeast mediante la modernización de centros y corredores, el equilibrio entre la accesibilidad, las opciones, y la conservación de viviendas en los vecindarios y la mejora de la sostenibilidad a través de la movilidad, la infraestructura y la vegetación.
- Vote por los resultados que más le interesan dejando caer uno o más boletines en una taza.
- Si hay un resultado que desea y no ve, escríbalo y póngalo en la "otra" taza.

A. Regional and Community Centers should accommodate the most growth.

B. Improve infrastructure for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit.

C. Ensure new developments will have quality design.

D. Promote the construction of a variety of affordable housing and mixed-income housing and encourage development near transit and amenities.

E. Encourage the development of larger units (e.g. 3 or 4-bedroom units) for families and more for-sale options.

F. Ensure elements of a complete neighborhood are provided along with new development.

Near Southeast - Land Use Framework

E.

- Encourage the development of larger units (e.g. 3 or 4-bedroom units) for families and more for-sale options.
- Fomentar el desarrollo de unidades más grandes (por ejemplo, unidades de 3 o 4 recamaras) para familias y más opciones para de compra.

F.

- Ensure elements of a complete neighborhood are provided along with new development.
- Asegúrese de que se proporcionen los elementos de un vecindario completo junto con el nuevo desarrollo.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

"The Most Important Elements of a Complete Neighborhood Are..."

Element	Percentage
Other	9%
Improved access to services, shopping, and restaurants	37%
Greater sustainability (solar panels, green roof, etc.)	27%
Improved mobility options	29%
Community-serving businesses and uses	30%
Historic preservation and reuse of existing buildings	18%
Publicly accessible open space	37%
Enhanced landscaping	30%
Increased setbacks	16%
Improved design	25%
Housing for certain groups like senior or family-friendly	13%
Affordable housing	29%

Source: Near Southeast Plan Phase 2 survey

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- Encourage existing businesses to fill service gaps by

L.

- Broaden the range of financial incentives and assistance f

Near Southeast - Land Use Framework





MEMORANDUM

To: Scott Robinson, City of Denver
From: Root Policy Research
Re: January 21st NSE event engagement summary
Date: Tuesday, January 24th, 2023

Community event overview

Root Policy Research held a Near Southeast Area plan community event on Saturday, January 21st, 2023, at the Root Policy Offices (6740 E. Colfax Avenue) from 11:30am – 1:30pm. The purpose of the event was to engage with refugee families and get their feedback on targeted recommendations from the first draft of the Near Southeast Area plan.

Maryam Farhang, a cultural navigator from the African Cultural Center, facilitated and interpreted the conversation. After the discussion ended, Melissa Thate from the City of Denver's Department of Housing Stability (HOST) gave a brief presentation about housing resources that HOST offers.

Housing and Economy

The most common concerns expressed by attendees were unpredictable rent increases and the cost of housing relative to wages. Other pertinent feedback included:

- The Housing Coordinator for IRC expressed worry about rising rents in the area in the coming summer. The organization can pay for up to a year of rent, but as prices rise, options for large families are severely limited. She also noted that people tend to prioritize buying a car first to get to a job over paying rent. Robust public transportation would alleviate this tension.
- One attendee said she still does not feel stable in Denver. The instability comes from uncertain changes in rent. She had previously lived at a military base in Virginia for two months. Her family was given a one-night notice before they were airlifted from Afghanistan.
- An attendee said they want to feel at home in Denver, but as renters, their home feels temporary. She said, "We want to feel like we're paying for a place that will be our home."
- Two-years of tax returns and large down payments required in the competitive Denver housing market are barriers to homeownership for recent refugees. Many are discouraged when learning about the financial and legal requirements to purchase a home.

- One attendee who worked at the Denver International Airport said he cannot send money back to his family in Iran because his rent takes up almost his entire income. This attendee splits a one-bedroom apartment with his brother.

Quality of Life

Attendees had common experiences of missing basic amenities in their current housing situations. Other pertinent feedback included:

- Lamps/overhead lighting is absent in many units.
- Families need a bigger pantry in kitchens. One person reported their pantry was not big enough to hold staples, such as a bag of rice.
- Attendees desired balconies, a mudroom/place to hang coats and place shoes, and a designated laundry room. In some people's homes, laundry machines are in inconvenient spaces.
- One attendee questioned why bathrooms in city parks are locked in the winter. On the many days when it is not cold and snowy, he goes with his kids to the park to find the bathrooms locked.

Land Use

Attendees desired more community-centered spaces to connect with people from similar backgrounds and to expand their social connections to local people. Other pertinent feedback included:

- Common places to socialize in their home county were mosques and teahouses. One attendee said they would like to see more mosques, and another suggested there be a teahouse equivalent built that is free to access and is centered around community.
- One attendee emphasized that community centers should be welcoming and have staff equipped to meet needs of a diverse community. People desire a sense of belonging and this space could foster that, they said. For such a space, they emphasized that there should be no barriers to entry, such as a fee, and should be accessible by public transportation.
- One attendee commented that it is hard to find funeral services that accommodate their religion and that there doesn't seem to be many cemeteries in the area.

Mobility

Public transit was an underutilized resource by the group given its confusing structure and indirect routes. Other pertinent feedback included:

- Attendees said in their home city, many resources were in walking distance from one another. Going to the doctor and grocery shopping could be completed in the same trip.
- Walking distance to health clinics was a desire frequently mentioned by attendees.

- The bus system is confusing and many said that better signage was needed at bus stops because they have an inconsistent look. One attendee suggested that bus vestibules should be added to every stop and heated. This would make the experience more enjoyable for people waiting for the bus and stops more clear for bus drivers and users.
- One attendee said that after snowstorms, the roads are clear, but sidewalks are still icy. They had seen someone in a wheelchair in the road because of this.

Questions from Attendees

- One person asked if the plan is to rebuild or rehabilitate current housing stock, given that there is already housing. Frankie answered that plan is looking to diversify the types of housing that can be built in the area, as well as to balance the existing character of neighborhoods.
- One person asked if the plan only addresses the construction of units or also incorporates subsidies for existing units. Frankie answered that one element of the plan is to protect NOAH by helping connect residents to programs that help mitigate displacement, as well as supporting landlords/property managers with maintenance for their development(s).
- One person asked if the City will provide lower-interest rates for homeownership. Melissa from HOST answered this question and said there are down payment assistance programs that may be able to help people.
- One person asked if there will be homes available for pre-sale. Frankie answered no, but that the plan aims to set the groundwork for more affordable homes for purchase in the future.
- One person wanted to know if they had to pay for rec centers and parks in the neighborhood for their children. Melissa said the MyDenver card allows for free entrance to rec centers.
- One person asked if there would be community health centers. Frankie responded that the plan includes recommendations to improve access to health care in the Near Southeast area neighborhoods.
- One person asked if there are any laws to stop rent from going up. Melissa answered and said that under current state law, rent control is not allowed.

