



DENVER STREETS PARTNERSHIP

May 11, 2020

Laura Aldrete

Executive Director

Community Planning and Development

Dear Laura,

We are writing on behalf of the Denver Streets Partnership (DSP) to submit comments on the East Area Plan. The DSP is a coalition of community organizations advocating for people-friendly streets in Denver. On people-friendly streets, walking, rolling, biking, and transit are the first choices of transportation for all people. Streets for people are living, public spaces that connect us to jobs, schools, services and each other, and are designed to foster health, happiness, and opportunity for all.

We are pleased to see that many aspects of the draft East Area Plan (EAP) will support the creation of more people-friendly streets, consistent with similar elements in the recently updated Comprehensive Plan and Blueprint Denver. The DSP strongly endorses the following elements within the area wide mobility recommendations of the EAP:

- Measurable goals
 - Modeshare
 - Single occupancy vehicle trips from 70% to <50% in 2040.
 - Trips taken using transit from 6% to >15% in 2040.
 - Trips taken using a bicycle from 3% to >7.5% in 2040.
 - Trips taken as a pedestrian from 4% to >7.5% in 2040.
 - Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on East Central Area streets from a 3-year average of 25 per year to zero by 2040.
- Policies
 - Create bold changes to the mobility system by repurposing street space along key corridors to prioritize safe and accessible walking, biking, rolling, and transit.
 - Implement and upgrade planned Denver Moves: Bikes bikeways.
 - Install new bikeways not previously identified in Denver Moves: Bikes.
 - Install new sidewalks.
 - Install safety and accessibility improvements at existing pedestrian and bicycle crossing.
 - Install new safe, comfortable, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle crossings.



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- Prioritize implementing transit along corridors in East.
- Install rider amenities at transit stops and better connect transportation modes via mobility hubs.
- Study measures to slow traffic along neighborhood streets directly surrounding schools, parks, hospitals, libraries, commercial areas, and recreation centers.
- Update historic parkway guidelines to create new contemporary parkways for various mobility, stormwater, and quality of life benefits.
- Manage and more efficiently use curbside resources.
- Strengthen parking management tools that reflect the City's strategic parking goals.
- Adopt Transportation Demand Management strategies and policies to shift people's travel behavior and meet City goals.

People-friendly streets result not only from street designs that support walking, rolling, biking, and transit, but also land use and development patterns that make these transportation modes accessible and practical ways for people to reach daily destinations. The DSP therefore strongly endorses the recommendations in the plan for increased density along Colfax, Colorado, and other transit and commercial corridors. Allowing density near transit, major employment centers, and neighborhood-serving businesses maximizes the number of people who can access and use these services, and amenities on a regular basis. This will expand the benefit of existing and future transit investments, as well as help meet the plan's goals of supporting community-serving retail and expanding job opportunities within the East area.

Furthermore, two of the most significant household expenses are housing and transportation. Building affordable housing near transit ensures people who need it the most have access and can significantly reduce transportation costs for cost-burdened households, which make up one-third of households in the East Area, and most of the thousands of service workers along the corridor. Development that allows people to live close to their daily destinations also makes walking and biking a realistic option for getting from place to place, rather than forcing people to live so far away that driving is the only practical option for getting where they need to go.

Allowing for a greater diversity of housing types and prices would also benefit the existing 46 percent of East households who live in areas that are considered vulnerable to displacement. For these reasons, the densities and housing types recommended in the plan should be consistent with those identified in the Blueprint Denver. Imposing more restrictive measures would work against the vision of the East Area as a welcoming, walkable, historic, and dynamic place where a diversity of people live and work.

To further strengthen the area wide mobility recommendations in the East Area Plan, the DSP recommends the following changes and additions:



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Prioritize identifying public funding and construction solutions for new sidewalks. The East Area has a very high incidence of missing or substandard sidewalks compared to the city as a whole. The patchwork of sidewalks in the East Colfax neighborhood alone, where nearly all sidewalks are substandard or missing, demonstrates the flaws of the existing policy requiring property owners to build and maintain sidewalks. This policy disproportionately affects the East area and will not only fail to address the incomplete pedestrian network but will also reduce the effectiveness of the bicycle and transit network improvements that are being made at a significantly faster pace if residents still have to rely on cars to access the destinations closest to them.

Increase the 2040 goal for people in the East Area walking, biking, and taking transit and further reduce the 2040 single occupancy vehicle trip goal. With increasing housing density, large job centers, and bus rapid transit coming to the East area, there is enormous potential for mode shift and the goals should aggressively reflect that. The DSP recommends increasing this 2040 goal from 30% to 40%.

Move feasibility studies to the short term. A number of recommendations include feasibility studies in the long term. Many of these recommendations are related to safety improvements, like converting streets from one-way to two-way. If found to be feasible, these projects would require a significant amount of planning, which is why we recommend that the studies happen sooner rather than later.

Prioritize physically separated pedestrian and bicycle facilities. In order to reach the 2040 mode shift goals, we need to prioritize a network of protected, connected facilities that encourage people who would walk or ride if they felt safer, including families with children and older adults, to take more trips on foot or bike. With numerous parkways in the East area, there is an opportunity to create distinctive walking and biking paths that become a signature feature of this area of the city.

Include more north/south bicycle facilities to increase connectivity within the East Area. The DSP recommends adding high comfort facilities on Colorado Boulevard and Glencoe Street.

We appreciate the extensive amount of community engagement, data analysis, and thoughtful discussion that informed the development of the draft East Area Plan. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you or your staff would like to discuss any of the DSP's comments or recommendations. We would be happy to work with City staff to develop specific changes to the text of the document that address our comments.



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Sincerely,

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