



**Metro Vision 2040**  
A program of DRCOG

# INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

## Issues Paper



**March 2014**





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# Introduction

## Background and Overview

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Denver Metropolitan Area. As the Regional Planning Commission, DRCOG has statutory authority to prepare the region's long-range plan for growth and development, transportation, and environmental quality. With 56 member jurisdictions, DRCOG is dedicated to facilitating local governments working together toward common solutions for the region. DRCOG manages several programs to enhance the region focused on advocacy, aging services, environment, regional growth and development, shared services, and transportation.

In 2013, DRCOG initiated an update to the regional plan, Metro Vision 2035, to capture new trends and address some issues, such as infill and redevelopment, in further detail. There are many general benefits associated with infill and redevelopment. In many cases, utilities and other minimal infrastructure is already in place or within close proximity. Infill and redevelopment projects also add needed density in targeted locations supported by market demand without disturbing additional land near developed edges. Infill and redevelopment can also increase the range of housing choices available within proximity near transit and other existing amenities, and serve as a catalyst for the neighborhood revitalization. As development activity increases throughout the Denver region, DRCOG recognizes that much of the activity will occur in the form of infill and redevelopment rather than development on the fringe.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this report is to identify some of the major issues facing infill and redevelopment in the region and discuss potential solutions for local governments to consider during their planning activities and decision-making processes.

## Defining Key Terms

In many cases, the terms infill and redevelopment are used interchangeably. These terms and others are defined below for the purpose of providing context and consistency throughout the document.

### Infill Development

Development on vacant or mostly vacant parcels within areas that are substantially or fully developed. Infill sites are typically sites where public services and utilities are readily available but have been passed over for one or more reasons.

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<sup>1</sup> DRCOG, Metro Vision 2040 Local Government Survey, 2013.

## Redevelopment

A process to rebuild or restore an area or site that has already been developed but is underutilized (typically where the land value is higher than the improvement value), in decline, or obsolete. Sites potentially suitable for redevelopment include those sites that contain abandoned (or nearly abandoned) buildings such as empty shopping malls. They may also include those sites that have already been cleared and are being used for relatively temporary purposes such as surface parking lots and even mini-storage units. Redevelopment may also include “adaptive reuse,” which is the conversion of an existing building to a new and more productive use.<sup>2</sup>

## Urban Centers

DRCOG’s Metro Vision defines urban centers as areas that encompass a balanced mixture of housing, employment, and retail opportunities in areas accessible to a wide cross-section of transportation options. These areas include employment centers, transit station areas, traditional downtowns, and greenfield development areas (never developed before and surrounded by mostly undeveloped land) consistent with Metro Vision characteristics for urban centers. Metro Vision 2035 currently recognizes 103 urban centers throughout the DRCOG regional urban growth boundary/area (UGB/A). Urban centers are categorized as emerging, existing, or planned and are monitored for their performance related to housing and employment goals.

## What is Metro Vision?

The cities and counties of the Denver region have worked together as the Denver Regional Council of Governments to further a shared vision of the future of the metro area. That vision, known commonly as Metro Vision, serves as the foundation for ongoing dialogue about how best to protect the quality of life that makes the Denver metro such an attractive place to live, work, and play.

DRCOG maintains a long-range plan that identifies key principles, strategies, and desired outcomes to provide a road map for local governments and citizens to work collaboratively on building a better future. The current plan, Metro Vision 2035, is broken down into three main categories:

- **Growth and Development.** This section outlines policies for directing future growth by addressing urban centers, rural town centers, freestanding communities, large-lot development, and the role of community design in development patterns.
- **Transportation.** This section identifies the key corridors and systems central to the Denver region’s future. The goals and policies are targeted to help the metro area provide a balanced and sustainable multimodal transportation system to ensure that all of its users have reliable mobility choices.
- **Environment.** This final section addresses the elements of the natural environment (parks and open space, water quality and conservation, air quality, noise, natural hazards, agriculture, and

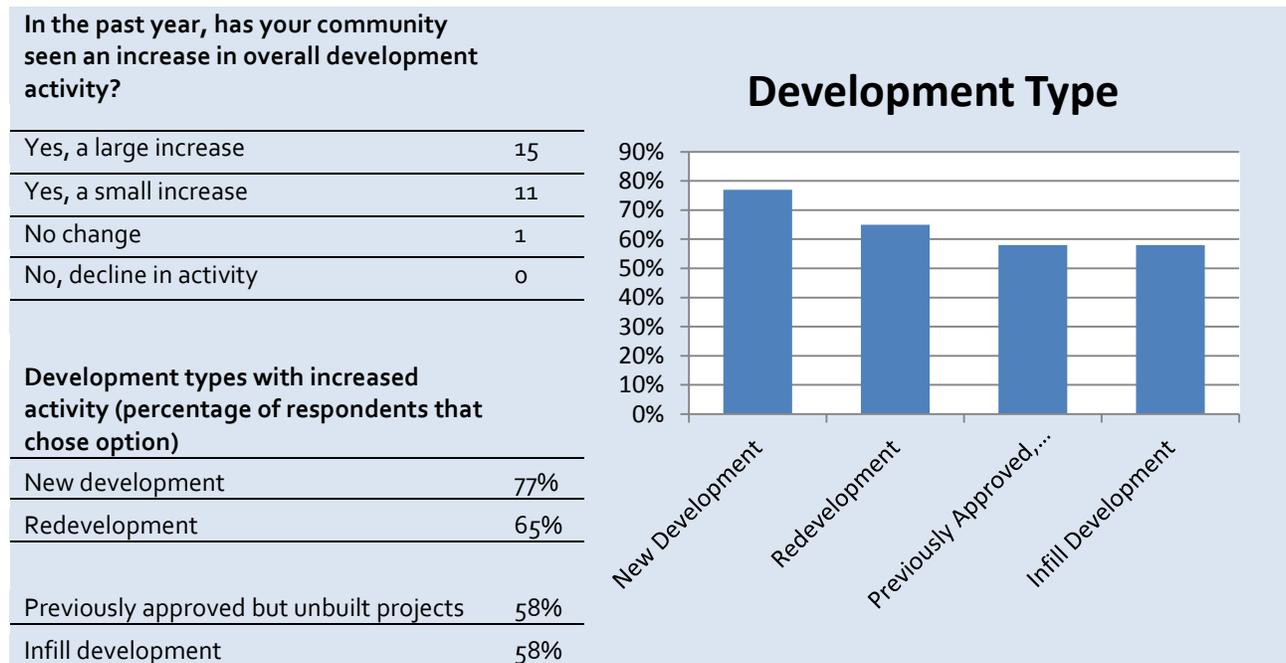
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<sup>2</sup> DRCOG, “Regulatory Strategies for Encouraging Infill and Redevelopment,” April 2006, p.3: accessed on December 10, 2013, <http://www.drcog.org/index.cfm?page=Publications23>.

recreation). The policies in this section seek to protect the natural environment for people, plants and animals, and natural resources.

Metro Vision 2035 is currently undergoing a comprehensive update to address changing demographic trends and market conditions, and to enhance several sections where current and projected conditions warrant revisiting the underlying principles and strategies for success. The updated plan, Metro Vision 2040, is expected to be completed in 2014. One particular area of focus for the planning process is to reinforce the role Metro Vision 2040 can play in helping to support infill and redevelopment throughout the region. Metro Vision 2035 identifies infill and redevelopment as an issue; however, existing policies will need to be refined to address trends and key issues that have emerged since the plan was last updated.

The 2013 Metro Vision 2040 Local Government Survey conducted by DRCOG exemplifies the need to update the plan related to infill and redevelopment. The survey shows 65% of the communities who are experiencing an increase in overall development activity are seeing redevelopment activity and 58% of the communities are seeing infill development activity. Survey feedback and other input from local communities indicate that infill and redevelopment activity in the region is not only occurring within designated urban centers and other strategic locations, but also through incremental development and adaptive reuse in neighborhoods and other locations throughout the region.



Source: DRCOG, Metro Vision 2040 Local Government Survey, 2013

Not only are infill and redevelopment a key component of development activity, but several local governments indicated in subsequent focus groups that infill and redevelopment are the only types of development that they are experiencing.

Lastly, interviews with area developers indicate that interest in infill and redevelopment sites in the region is growing for a variety of reasons:

- Market demand for infill and redevelopment sites that offer the ability to create walkable, human-scaled communities by building upon the existing amenities and sense of place provided in established neighborhoods is currently high.
- Unique locations, neighborhood contexts, and transit accessibility often associated with infill development in the region have the potential to support higher values and generate higher returns;
- Unique challenges associated with infill and redevelopment sites are viewed as more interesting and potentially rewarding to some developers than conventional development; and
- Many developers noted they draw a sense of satisfaction from the “pioneering” aspects of infill and redevelopment and the ability to act as a kernel of positive change in areas that have been neglected or overlooked previously.

## Outreach Methodology

Metro Vision 2040 will address infill and redevelopment in a meaningful way to provide DRCOG’s member jurisdictions with effective policy considerations. As part of the planning process, DRCOG and its team of consultants facilitated several stakeholder and community outreach efforts to discuss the potential impacts and barriers, associated issues, and reasonable solutions related to infill and redevelopment throughout the region. The following outreach efforts were employed to gather feedback to inform this report:

- **Focus Groups.** Local government representatives participated in roundtable discussions focused on the topic of infill and redevelopment with members of DRCOG staff and the consulting team.
- **Stakeholder Interviews.** Interviews were conducted by DRCOG staff and the consulting team. Stakeholders interviewed included both private sector developers experienced with infill and redevelopment projects in the region and local government representatives.
- **Idea Exchange.** DRCOG hosted a Metro Vision Idea Exchange on December 16, 2013 titled *Transforming the Community Fabric*. This session provided participants with presentations from varying backgrounds (redevelopment agency director, planning director, and developer) and concluded with an open forum to discuss infill and redevelopment barriers and opportunities in the Denver region.
- **2013 Metro Vision 2040 Local Government Survey.** DRCOG distributed a survey to its member jurisdictions to gather valuable feedback related to local policy strategies, development and market trends, and other challenges and opportunities.

- **Online Feedback.** DRCOG staff opened an online MindMixer forum to discuss infill and redevelopment. This allowed participants to respond to a series of targeted questions, have an open dialogue related to the subject, and to interact with DRCOG staff remotely.

These efforts helped to inform the development of this report and provide a solid foundation to continue dialogue on the specific issues to be addressed in Metro Vision 2040, including infill and redevelopment.

## Summary of Issues and Considerations

This summary provides a snapshot of the key issues and themes addressed in this report. More detail on each of these topics is included in subsequent sections of this document.

### KEY CHALLENGES FACING INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

- Inconsistency with Local Comprehensive Plans
- Lack of Advanced Planning and Organizational Support
- Land Use Regulations as a Barrier
- Remaining Sites Tend to Be “Challenged”
- Infrastructure Cost
- Market and Feasibility Limitations
- Construction Defects Legislation

### DRCOG’S ROLE IN ADDRESSING INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

- Aligning regional goals and policies to better address infill and redevelopment
- Developing a toolkit for local action that:
  - Connects developers with development opportunities
  - Establishes tools calibrated for different community contexts
  - Provides educational tools for local governments related to infill and redevelopment

### LOCAL STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

- Establish a Supportive Policy Foundation
- Remove Regulatory Barriers
- Promote Productive Community Dialogue
- Consider Creative Financing for Infill and Redevelopment



# Key Challenges Facing Infill and Redevelopment in the Region

This section identifies some of the key challenges to infill and redevelopment in the Denver region. The information presented here represents feedback gathered during outreach efforts in addition to independent research and analysis conducted by staff and the consultant team.

## **Inconsistency with Local Comprehensive Plans**

In Colorado, local governments are authorized by state statutes to adopt comprehensive plans outlining goals, strategies, and policies related to local land use, among other topics. Although comprehensive plans are policy documents and are not regulatory, they do provide appointed and elected officials with a basis for decision-making. Most comprehensive plans include a future land use map coupled with a narrative section describing potential growth scenarios and desirable uses in the community throughout the life of the plan. Local comprehensive plans frequently address infill and redevelopment as a major topic and identify areas where infill is most desirable. These plans are not always aligned with local market conditions or supply and demand, or local zoning regulations, leading to difficult decisions by elected officials. Because rezoning for higher development intensities typically associated with infill and redevelopment can be challenging, clearly identifying the community's desired direction in the comprehensive plan is an essential precursor.

For example, a community has identified an area as an employment center. Recent demand in the area is for low-density, multifamily housing. The local government is faced with a difficult decision in either approving a development application that is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan, or amending the comprehensive plan to reflect current conditions. Because the comprehensive plan is not intended to be updated on an ad-hoc basis, communities in the region should consider market conditions throughout the jurisdiction as one source of information, yet not the only source, when developing policies for future land use.

## **Lack of Advanced Planning and Organizational Support**

The infill and redevelopment sites that are frequently attractive to developers are those that have had extensive planning, and public and political processes completed. The physical planning is needed to establish a cohesive vision for development, and to identify and find solutions to infrastructure issues (utilities, roadways and access, transit station integrations, etc.). The public and political process is needed to ensure that the public, local agencies and departments, city councils, planning commissions, and other affected entities are "on the same page" with a clear definition of what they want in terms of development, and what tools, incentives, or other assistance they can offer a private developer. Sites that have not been addressed in this way are less attractive, as they would likely require an extensive

planning and entitlement effort at the developer's expense and risk. In all but the strongest markets and locations, developers are unlikely to take on a lengthy planning and entitlement process.

## Land Use Regulations as a Barrier

Land use and development regulations allow local governments to apply consistent treatment of development applications throughout the community, based on provisions adopted by the elected body. As with comprehensive plans, land use regulations require continual monitoring to evaluate whether or not they are achieving the desired results in the community. As new trends emerge (such as a change in demographics), plans and regulations must adjust accordingly. Land use regulations are frequently cited as prohibitive to infill and redevelopment projects – often because the regulations were developed primarily as a tool to guide greenfield development. This section will focus particularly on zoning, subdivision, and building and fire codes.

### ZONING

Zoning ordinances, frequently referred to as the “zoning code”, apply a specific set of development standards to land based on the physical location within the community. There are several different types of zoning codes – traditional, form-based, and hybrid codes to name a few. Some codes regulate the form of the buildings more than the actual use of the land, while others offer performance incentives for providing local governments with benefits such as protection of natural features or more aesthetically pleasing materials. Most communities in Colorado use some version of “Euclidean” or traditional zoning codes, where land uses are separated by intensity of use (e.g. residential uses are separated from commercial uses, and industrial uses are separated from commercial uses).

Zoning not only describes the permitted uses in an area, but also prescribes the form and function of those uses. A zoning code will likely determine how tall a building can be, how far it must be set back from the public right-of-way, and the level of landscaping included in the site design. When applied broadly, a set of zoning regulations that generally works for greenfield sites may be a hindrance to infill or redevelopment. This is partly attributed to most communities having adopted standards and uses that apply to a singular development pattern (frequently suburban) and are not easily adapted for more dense urban development. To address this concern, many communities are amending their land use regulations to apply context-sensitive regulations. For example, a community might identify appropriate infill or redevelopment areas where standards are different (relaxed standards, additional design requirements, increased density, etc.) than other areas in the community within the same underlying zone district.

As discussed previously in the infrastructure section, most new development (infill or not) will be required to bring the site to full compliance with the local government's codes. In the context of zoning, this could mean that in order for a developer to build on one of few remaining vacant parcels in an established area, he or she would have to provide required parking, landscaping, and setbacks from the right-of-way. In the case of a smaller infill parcel, this may make the project infeasible due to insufficient remaining buildable area.

During the focus groups and other outreach efforts, local governments and developers alike expressed several common issues related to zoning, including:

- **Inconsistency between adopted plans and regulations**—Permitted uses and/or densities are in some cases not aligned with the uses and urban development intensities desired for a site or area. In these instances, applicants must seek variances or alternative zoning for the project through a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or similar process.
- **One-size-fits-all requirements and development standards**—As noted above, most zoning codes were initially developed with one set of “rules”—meaning that regardless of location or the type of project, the same requirements apply. Unless codes have been modified to specifically support infill and redevelopment objectives, many local governments apply parking requirements or parks and open space land set aside requirements designed for suburban development patterns to infill and redevelopment projects. Often, these requirements are too high to allow for infill development to occur.
- **Unpredictable tools and procedures**—Many participants noted that PUDs or other similar tools are often the preferred tool for infill and redevelopment sites, particularly for larger and more complex projects. While the flexibility offered by these tools, which allow the developer to negotiate the specifics of the development approval through an adopted agreement, were generally viewed in a positive light, it was also acknowledged that they can be difficult to administer and do present some degree of unpredictability for applicants in terms of approval timeframes. Because PUDs are site-specific zoning, changes in market conditions or ownership can result in a lengthy amendment or rezoning process. In addition, development review procedures that are unclear or are applied inconsistently, can add an additional layer of unpredictability in terms of what the community is looking for and willing to approve.

## SUBDIVISION

A community’s subdivision ordinance determines how parcels of land may be subdivided and designed. A typical subdivision ordinance outlines the process for several applications including major subdivisions (where a large tract of land is divided into several smaller tracts for development), minor subdivisions (where a lot line may be adjusted), and dedication of easements. The ordinance also outlines the minimum requirements for site design, including the minimum lot sizes, street width, public sidewalks, connectivity to adjacent development, and more.

Like the zoning code, subdivision ordinances can present barriers to infill and redevelopment by requiring sites to be in compliance with standards that were perhaps not required when the surrounding properties were originally developed. Because infill and redevelopment sites are often the most challenging (lack of infrastructure, physical constraints, environmental contamination, etc.), they can be more costly to develop. This sometimes means that developers are looking to subdivide into smaller lots in order to increase overall yields in terms of number of residential units or total square footage. This again can lead to contention among surrounding neighborhoods due to the perceived or real increase in density.

## **BUILDING AND FIRE CODES**

Building and fire codes determine standards that must be adhered to during most construction projects involving a structure. For redevelopment projects that involve the adaptive reuse of historic structures in particular, the costs of complying with building and fire codes for renovations and repairs can be significant. For example, retrofitting a historic structure with a modern fire-suppression system can be a significant cost. Developers often look to a community’s building and fire code prior to engaging in development projects to determine if the regulations are too stringent or complex to make a project feasible. Life safety is the premise behind building and fire codes; however, redevelopment sites with older or antiquated systems will be burdened disproportionately to newer buildings and systems from a cost standpoint.

### **Remaining Sites Tend to Be “Challenged”**

For many reasons, some already discussed in this section, infill and redevelopment sites are often the most challenging to develop. Put simply, one can assume that if a property is undeveloped in an otherwise substantially developed area, there are likely to be reasons that the property has been overlooked. There are many factors that can make a property difficult and costly to develop, including:

- An existing structure that has been neglected for an extended period of time, rendering the reuse, repair, or removal of the structure too costly;
- Brownfield or other contamination issues that may require mitigation and compliance with federal, state, and local environmental laws;
- Physical site constraints, such as floodplain, topography, soil conditions, or other features that present unique challenges compared to surrounding properties and potentially limit the overall percentage of the site that may be developed; and
- Inadequate infrastructure or utilities on and around the site or the presence of physical constraints (e.g., railroad or highway bridges) making it especially costly to bring into compliance with current standards.

Aside from the potential physical factors noted above, some sites may also be faced with a history of opposition from neighboring residents in response to proposed increases in density as part of proposed infill or redevelopment projects or the perceived incompatibility of uses or intensity associated with such projects. If well-documented, the sheer potential for opposition of this nature may lead potential developers to pass over one site for another.

### **Infrastructure Cost**

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.

## **Market and Feasibility Limitations**

Many local governments in the region have taken steps to encourage infill and redevelopment in their urban centers by adopting supportive policies and regulations, establishing streamlined development processes, and providing incentives. In many areas throughout the region, these efforts have paid off. In other locations, many developers are finding it difficult to provide the type and scale of development products needed to support community objectives and achieve residential density and employment targets established by Metro Vision. Some reported that the urban center densities called for in suburban locations are not currently supported by the market, making financing for such projects difficult or impossible to obtain in many cases.

Although many of the first-tier suburbs in the region have been successfully attracting higher-density products at or near their downtowns and other urban centers, financing an urban product can be difficult for communities on the fringe, where the higher rents needed to support urban construction may not be attainable today and where higher density product types, such as vertical mixed-use or residential lofts, have yet to be “tested.” Additionally, with 103 designated urban centers in the region, it is important to recognize that those centers will develop incrementally over decades and will each have a unique character in terms of overall land use mix and development intensity. As the market for different types of development fluctuates, communities must be steadfast yet patient when it comes to realizing their development potential.

It was expressed repeatedly throughout the stakeholder outreach process that there is a need to foster a better understanding of what it takes to finance an infill project in the region—from both the local government perspective and the developer perspective. In addition, the private sector has suggested that local governments sometimes do not understand the risks of real estate development, especially infill and redevelopment which generally has more risk. Risk comes from three primary areas:

- Uncertainty in the entitlement process – risk that money spent on planning, design, and the entitlement process will be lost if approvals are not gained, or that the approval process will take significantly longer than anticipated;
- Potential for construction delays, mistakes, or unforeseen conditions; and
- Market risk – the risk that the market and business climate will change during the approval process, during construction, or during the lease-up or sale of a project. Market risk is also

present when a developer is the first to try a new concept in a location (e.g. urban lofts in a suburban single family community).

The private sector has also noted that the premium available for infill and redevelopment in walkable, human-scaled communities does not always transfer to suburban contexts. Developers that contribute to the urban framework by focusing on the quality of the built environment are more likely to achieve the higher premium associated with urban infill and redevelopment.

## Construction Defects Legislation

The Colorado Legislature passed HB 1394 in 2010, which establishes that faulty workmanship claims fall within a general liability policy's insuring agreement.<sup>3</sup> Developers and local government planning staff interviewed during this study expressed concern about potential lawsuits resulting from the law and noted that insurance premiums have responded in a way that makes attached multifamily for-sale product (other than townhomes) infeasible for many would-be developers.

DRCOG contracted with Economic Planning Systems in 2013 to study the potential impacts of the current construction defects legislation to housing diversity in the Denver metro region. The study, *Denver Metro Area Housing Diversity Study*, revealed both quantitative and qualitative results that indicate a limited opportunity for condominium development under the current regulatory framework. The study found that since 2010, the costs attributed to construction defects liability have grown. Based on the assumptions modeled in the study:

- Developers are estimated to need to pay an average of \$15,000 of additional cost per unit due to construction defects. Developers are unlikely to absorb this cost as a reduction in profit margin, unless the margins are sizeable.
- Increased costs have a larger impact on the profitability of entry-priced housing and appear to be disproportionately impacting the affordable end of the market.
- National builders interviewed indicated they are not currently building for-sale condominium projects in Colorado and have no plans to do so in the near future. The identified reasons were the real and/or perceived costs and risks associated with construction defects, insurance costs, and the potential for construction defects lawsuits.

To access the 2013 Denver Metro Area Housing Diversity Study, visit DRCOG's webpage at:

[http://www.drcog.org/documents/123065-Report%20102913\\_Final.pdf](http://www.drcog.org/documents/123065-Report%20102913_Final.pdf).

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<sup>3</sup> Summarized from the Colorado General Assembly website, accessed on December 20, 2013, [http://tornado.state.co.us/gov\\_dir/leg\\_dir/olls/sl2010a/sl\\_253.pdf](http://tornado.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/sl2010a/sl_253.pdf).

# DRCOG's Role in Addressing Infill and Redevelopment in the Region

## Relationship to Key Regional Goals and Policies

Although many of the infill and redevelopment issues are best addressed at the local level, it is paramount that the Denver region describes its goals, policies, and strategies for accommodating infill and redevelopment. Among the strongest and most relevant goals from Metro Vision 2035 are the "50/75" goal (50% of new housing and 75% of new employment located in urban centers), and the goal to increase the region-wide urban density by 10%. These goals have been central to the issue of how the region addresses infill and redevelopment and provide a basis for strategic collaboration surrounding planning and development practices and economic growth. The following subsections identify how the regional goals and policies are addressed in Metro Vision 2035, and suggestions for how they might be addressed moving forward.

### METRO VISION 2035 PLAN

The Metro Vision 2035 Plan addresses infill and redevelopment in several sections both directly and indirectly. In the introductory section of the plan, DRCOG recognizes two emerging trends that could ultimately affect infill and redevelopment in the region, both of which point to the need for an integrated approach to transportation and land use, a key premise on which Metro Vision was founded. First, changing lifestyles trends suggest that the single-use, low-density development patterns in the region may not meet the future needs of our aging population or today's younger



adults, both whom increasingly prefer to live in more urbanized areas with a diversity of housing and mobility choices. Second, cost of living trends show that affordable housing in mixed-use, transit-oriented and walkable neighborhoods is in high demand and short supply. Each of these trends plays a role in shaping the market for infill and redevelopment to meet the needs of the region.

- **A Focus on Outcomes.** In this section of the Metro Vision 2035 Plan, several measurable outcomes are identified, along with baseline conditions, goals for 2035, and key benefits associates with each outcome.
- **A Plan for a Sustainable Future.** This section of Metro Vision 2035 establishes the importance of the integration of land use and transportation, the need to focus investment in areas where growth is expected, and to promote development patterns that maximize benefits from those

transportation investments. Although not specifically called out, infill and redevelopment are certainly primary considerations for success with those goals.

These following additional strategies and policies are taken directly from the Metro Vision 2035 Plan and directly reference infill and redevelopment<sup>4</sup>:

- **Extent of Urban Development.** Metro Vision encourages local governments to use overlooked vacant parcels and under-developed parcels for infill and redevelopment. Infill and redevelopment can absorb significant population growth and use existing infrastructure more efficiently.
- **Urban Centers.** Metro Vision encourages the development of urban centers at infill and redevelopment sites within the UGB/A throughout the metro area, while recognizing the unique significance of the Denver central business district. Metro Vision prioritizes urban centers around existing or proposed transit stations or with high-frequency bus service.
- **Water Conservation.** Compact development, infill, and redevelopment consistent with DRCOG's urban growth boundary/area and urban centers policies will help reduce water demand and related infrastructure costs.

In addition to these direct policies, Metro Vision 2035 also addresses the problem of vacant and underutilized properties. The plan recognizes the need to encourage and incentivize infill and redevelopment as a way to promote the economic vitality of older neighborhoods and communities. The plan also notes that promoting infill and redevelopment support the regions efforts to increase overall regional density and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

#### **METRO VISION 2040 PLAN**

To emphasize the importance of infill and redevelopment in the Denver region, the Metro Vision 2040 Plan should build on infill and redevelopment concepts established previously while providing more detail surrounding some of the challenges discussed in this report. In particular, Metro Vision 2040 should:

- Expand the focus from primarily urban centers to include key corridors throughout the region. This expansion to corridors is intended to reflect infill and redevelopment occurring adjacent to designated urban centers as a consideration in regional policies and growth targets, and corridors that support multi-modal travel connecting urban centers.
- Expand the focus to include incremental, non-location specific growth and densification of neighborhoods. Many infill and redevelopment projects include incremental densification of established neighborhoods and this trend is not likely to slow in the foreseeable future. The Urban Land Institute's (ULI) *Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2014* projects infill and in-town housing at the top of the list for both investment and development prospects.<sup>5</sup> Although

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<sup>4</sup> "Metro Vision 2035 Plan"

<sup>5</sup> ULI and PwC, "Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2014," 2013, p.62: accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Emerging-Trends-in-Real-Estate-Americas-2014.pdf>.

difficult to track, established neighborhoods that continue to replace aging housing stock and commercial buildings, and to develop remaining infill sites, will impact the rate that the region meets its overall goals for infill and redevelopment.

- Continue to focus on long-term vision, goals, and strategies while recognizing immediate concerns affecting infill and redevelopment, such as market incompatibility, construction defects legislation, and availability of financial tools. DRCOG and Metro Vision 2040 can play a role by speaking to community readiness and identifying how local governments can prepare to address these immediate considerations.
- Offer relevant case study examples of infill and redevelopment projects highlighting the lessons learned and impetus for success.

### **Toolkit for Local Action**

Aside from establishing updated regional policies for infill and redevelopment as part of Metro Vision 2040, DRCOG could build a “toolkit” for local action to help implement the plan’s recommendations following adoption. The concept of the toolkit for local action is envisioned as a resource for its member jurisdictions when considering their own local decision-making process related to infill and redevelopment. Community context – whether urban, suburban, or rural – is essential for any tools included in the toolkit.

For instance, a local government might wish to increase density in their downtown yet are not seeing infill projects coming forward with an application. DRCOG, after further research and discussion, might provide that local government with a sample infill overlay ordinance, a list of potential financial incentives, or a contact name of another local government that recently explored solutions for similar issues. As another example, DRCOG could provide local governments with best management practices related to infill and redevelopment that are tailored specifically for different scenarios or contexts. Users could input specific needs, economic conditions, demographics, type of project, organizational structure, and more to provide feasible solutions and examples. This section is not an exhaustive list of potential items for inclusion in a toolkit, but rather a starting point for further dialogue.

#### **CONNECT DEVELOPERS WITH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Because local governments have unique policies, procedures, and regulations concerning land use and development, it can be especially challenging for developers to find an optimal site when they already have a specific development concept or product type in mind. DRCOG could play a critical role in establishing an online clearinghouse for local governments and developers that provides a list of potential sites or jurisdictions meeting a specific set of project parameters. This clearinghouse could include a map, developed by DRCOG with local input, which identifies potential infill sites and includes an up-to-date layer showing areas with approved entitlements. For example, a developer might query the resource for sites containing at least 26 acres, zoned for mixed-use, located within one-mile of a major transit line, and located in a jurisdiction where development approval times are less than six months on average. DRCOG could use that information to match the developer with local

governments that meet those parameters and provide contact information as a starting point for working with that community.

## EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

During the stakeholder outreach efforts, many noted the distinct role that DRCOG could play in providing local elected officials, administrators, and appointed officials with targeted education. Educational tools could range from handouts and memorandums, to webinars or live training sessions designed to equip local governments with information necessary to communicate with their constituents, make informed decisions, and to ultimately encourage and promote infill and redevelopment where it makes sense in their community. Some potential topics that may be immediately relevant to highlight with respect to infill and redevelopment in the region include:

- **Role of Changing Demographics on Infill and Redevelopment.** How are the changes in the makeup of our population in the region expected to affect the local government's ability to plan for, effectively regulate, and accommodate infill and redevelopment? For example, this topic might include discussion of a higher demand for personal services near urban centers due to an increasing aging population.
- **Fiscal Impacts of Different Types of Development.** One topic that continually rises to the surface of developer concerns is the perception that local governments are not fully aware of how developers make money (or lose money) on projects. Of equal importance are the financial impacts of development scenarios on a local government's bottom line. Understanding each perspective will benefit local governments and developers by providing a better framework to forge successful partnerships from.
- **Preparing a Successful Request for Proposals (RFP).** When a community wants to see development on a particular parcel, they will often seek development proposals through an official RFP. In the case of infill and redevelopment, it is vital to that parcel's success that the bidding process results in a good response. For instance, a community may explore issuing a Request for Information (RFI) in order to attract a larger pool of decent conceptual responses from the development community and adjust accordingly prior to issuing an RFP. DRCOG could facilitate training or develop publications related to managing successful bidding processes. By identifying best practices throughout the region and beyond, DRCOG can continue to support infill and redevelopment in the region.
- **Community Engagement Strategies.** As stated previously, infill and redevelopment projects can prove particularly challenging due to neighborhood opposition to real or perceived increased density or other associated impacts of further development within an established neighborhood. DRCOG may be able to provide useful examples and education on how to design a public engagement strategy that effectively examines and reasonably responds to community concerns related to infill and redevelopment.

# Local Strategies for Encouraging Infill and Redevelopment

Infill and redevelopment issues vary significantly by jurisdiction; however, many strategies for promoting infill and redevelopment could be successfully replicated by other communities throughout the region, state, or nation. This section of the report identifies which policies, regulations, incentives, and financing mechanisms might be worth further consideration by local governments within the Denver metro region. The strategies discussed below are based on feedback collected during the extensive stakeholder outreach efforts in addition to the collective experience of DRCOG staff and their consulting team.

## Establish a Supportive Policy Foundation

Because of the many challenges associated with infill and redevelopment, it is imperative to have a solid policy foundation in place to provide guidance for decision-makers, developers, and members of the community. The following discussion includes several areas where local governments can support infill and redevelopment in their community through strategic policy development.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Local comprehensive plans provide general policy direction for communities to consider when making decisions. A typical comprehensive plan might address land use, growth and development, the environment, economic development, governance, urban design, health and quality of life, housing, transportation, sustainability, and more. There are several ways a comprehensive plan can set the stage for accommodating infill and redevelopment in a community:

- **Future Land Use Plan.** The future land use plan identifies which areas within a community are appropriate for each category of use (e.g., parks and open space, low-density residential, mixed-use). Many communities are specifically identifying areas where mixed-use development patterns are common or appropriate, and areas designated for infill and redevelopment on their future land use maps. The narrative and policy section of the future land use plan further defines the desired uses, densities, and character of each area. These future land use designations can go a long way in building momentum for and encouraging updates to implementation mechanisms such as zoning codes.
- **Housing.** Infill and redevelopment is often raised as primarily a housing issue in many communities. Demographic shifts and associated demand for increased diversity in housing types continue to cause local governments to rethink housing policy, meaning that infill, redevelopment, and incremental densification of established neighborhoods are often

addressed directly in local comprehensive plans throughout the region and across the nation. These policies provide guidance for future implementation in land use regulations.

- **Transportation.** At the local level, comprehensive plans must address how transportation systems and corridors integrate with their policies on housing, employment, and land use. The linkage between transportation and land use is integral to the conversation, and one that most comprehensive plans are addressing in depth. Comprehensive plans should also address multi-modal transportation as a major element to foster a systematic approach to future development patterns that accommodate people of all ages and abilities, and various modes of transportation (walking, bicycles, transit, etc.). As areas are identified for potential infill and redevelopment, transportation policies should respond to support that type of growth.
- **Economic Development.** Policies related to employment centers and changing market conditions should reflect the community's desired approach to infill and redevelopment and establish a clear linkage to local and regional economic development strategies. For example, a comprehensive plan might encourage infill and redevelopment along strategic corridors, activity centers, and underutilized or vacant properties through financial incentives and public-private partnerships.
- **Sustainability.** Local governments are more commonly integrating sustainability into their comprehensive planning documents rather than including it as a stand-alone element. Infill and redevelopment opportunities can help communities achieve a more sustainable future by capitalizing on existing buildings and infrastructure, reducing energy consumption, and reducing vehicle miles traveled.

### **SMALL AREA AND SUB-AREA PLANS**

Just as comprehensive plans provide general policy direction for the betterment of the community as a whole, small area plans and sub-area plans provide the same level of direction for targeted areas or neighborhoods. These plans include many of the same elements (sustainability, transportation, economic development, housing, etc.) as a comprehensive plan, but typically get to a more fine-grained level of detail. Initiating such planning efforts for priority infill and redevelopment areas in local communities can be an effective way to help explore and develop strategies to overcome potential challenges associated with a particular site (e.g., infrastructure, circulation and access, or height transitions) before a particular development proposal is submitted. DRCOG has allocated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funds to assist local governments in preparing small area plans for station areas and urban centers. As part of the upcoming TIP, DRCOG should continue supporting local planning through this pool of funds. For more information on this program, visit: <http://www.drcog.org/index.cfm?page=StationAreaandUrbanCenterPlanningFunds>.

### **URBAN RENEWAL PLANS**

As one tool for encouraging infill and redevelopment, many communities in the Denver metro region have adopted urban renewal plans through their urban renewal authorities. The urban renewal plan further identifies how growth and development might occur within the defined area and what financing

mechanisms might be considered to implement the plan. In Colorado, urban renewal authorities can use financial tools such as tax increment financing (TIF) in areas declared blighted by statutory definition.

### TRANSPORTATION AND CORRIDOR PLANS

Transportation and corridor plans at the local level should not only integrate with regional transportation planning goals and policies, but should also consider infill and redevelopment during the development and prioritization of recommendations. For example, if a community establishes a key goal for redeveloping greyfields (obsolete or abandoned commercial and sometimes industrial areas), the transportation policies and improvement projects should be aligned by providing safe and reliable access to multiple modes of transportation to serve those areas. As mentioned earlier, the linkage between transportation and land use is an important consideration for accommodating infill and redevelopment and remains a central premise behind Metro Vision.

### Remove Regulatory Barriers

Once a community has a solid policy framework providing guidance related to infill and redevelopment, removing potential regulatory barriers and drafting the standards and requirements to implement those policies is the next logical step. The following paragraphs identify how different land use regulations can be applied to effectively promote infill and redevelopment.

### ZONE DISTRICTS AND PERMITTED USES

Having the right lineup of zone districts and permitted uses provides the basis for accommodating and promoting infill and redevelopment. It is important for communities to evaluate whether or not their current zone districts are aligned with future land use designations and policies in the comprehensive plan. Otherwise, the community may be targeting infill and redevelopment to sites where the underlying zoning does not permit it to occur. Local governments can adjust their zone districts and uses in a number of ways to encourage infill:

- **Mixed-Use Zone Districts.** Adopt mixed-use zone districts that allow for a diversity of appropriate land uses ranging from residential, to office and retail. Mixed-use zone districts can allow for both vertical mixed-use (commercial on ground floor and residential or employment on upper floors) or horizontal mixed-use where a particular block face may accommodate both commercial and residential land uses to serve the demand in a particular area.
- **Infill and Redevelopment Districts.** Adopt zone districts that are designed for infill and redevelopment in that they permit varied land uses, allow for increased density, support the adaptive reuse of existing structures where viable, and sometimes come with expedited administrative procedures for approval. Infill and redevelopment districts can be in the form of standard base zoning districts or as overlay districts where the conditions are in addition to the underlying base zone district.
- **Expanded Permitted Uses.** Many communities are revising existing zone districts to promote infill and redevelopment by simply expanding the list of permitted uses within that zone

district. When a site or building has been vacant for an extensive time period, additional uses can help incentivize development. Communities can also consider allowing additional land uses in conditions when the site or building has been vacant for a defined period of time, such as 10 years. Many communities are looking at accommodating increased demand for infill housing by permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in more zone districts.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

In addition to the specific land uses permitted within a zone district, a zoning code prescribes the requirements and standards for how development takes place within that district. These include, among others, how tall buildings and fences may be, how many parking stalls are required, how far the building must be set back from the public right-of-way, and the required landscaping. When standards are acting as a barrier, communities can consider adjusting development standards as follows to encourage infill and redevelopment:

- **Parking Requirements.** Parking requirements could be reduced for infill or redevelopment projects or areas designated as infill or redevelopment areas. More communities are also instituting shared-parking regulations and offering alternative transportation methods. Infill and redevelopment projects will benefit from those approaches as well as a straight exemption from or reduction of the number of required parking stalls per land use. There is a fine balance between providing enough parking and providing too much. Too much parking undermines the aesthetic value of the site (especially with surface parking), whereas not enough parking results in congestion and the basis for neighborhood opposition. Cost for parking is also worth consideration. Desired densities near targeted areas such as urban centers may warrant construction types that would require structured parking to meet both the minimum density and minimum parking requirements. The costs for structured parking can be significant and may make some projects infeasible. As such, this issue should be considered within the context of a specific area (e.g., within an urban center or downtown).
- **Parks and Open Space Set Asides.** As with parking requirements, communities in the region that have been particularly successful in implementing infill and redevelopment have significantly reduced or even eliminated set aside requirements for parks and open space. While each community has different needs, in many cases, demand for parks and open space can be met by existing facilities in the community.
- **Setback and Height Requirements.** For infill and redevelopment parcels, the underlying setback requirements often reduce the available building envelope to a point where the project becomes infeasible. Communities will sometimes relax setback and height standards to promote development on otherwise underutilized or vacant properties.
- **Minimum Lot Sizes and Permitted Density.** Because infill and redevelopment parcels are frequently challenging to develop, reducing the minimum lot sizes and increasing the permitted density can help to spur development activity on those sites. For example, a 9,000 square-foot parcel in a medium-density residential district might be continually overlooked because the minimum lot size on the site is 10,000 square feet. Allowing for reduced minimum lot sizes in

this case would encourage development to take place without substantially changing the character of the district. This could also be accomplished by relaxing standards on pre-existing nonconforming lots.

- **Engineering Standards.** As good practice, local governments should integrate new and existing land use regulations with other applicable standards and regulations such as stormwater regulations and street standards. When regulations are inconsistent, it makes developing property, including infill and redevelopment parcels, much more difficult. In addition to reviewing for consistency, communities may wish to develop new street cross-sections (narrower and including alternative modes of transportation) that support infill and redevelopment. Communities should consider regional stormwater retention opportunities wherever possible in-lieu of per-development requirements that result in costly solutions or ponds that require large areas of valuable developable land.

## PROCEDURES

The development approval procedures are almost of equal importance as the meeting the minimum requirements when it comes to promoting infill and redevelopment. During stakeholder outreach, the development community stated that a major component for reviewing a community's readiness for infill and redevelopment is the level of predictability in established review procedures and estimated length of approval times. Consistently applied standards and expedited review times build trust for the local government and make administration of the regulations more efficient for staff and officials. There are a number of ways that communities can encourage infill and redevelopment by adjusting development review procedures.

- **Uses by-Right.** As mentioned previously, expanding the permitted uses in zone districts is one way to encourage targeted development. Some uses might also be approved by-right, or administratively, rather than requiring final approval through a public hearing process.
- **Administrative Adjustments.** Some communities offer administrative procedures for making adjustments and minor modifications to code requirements. For example, the planning director may be authorized to reduce parking requirements by up to 10% without consent of the planning commission or elected body. Administrative adjustments provide added flexibility for unique challenges often associated with infill and redevelopment properties.
- **Pre-Application Review.** Communities can establish processes on the front end of development proposals that aid in the overall project understanding and provide a feedback loop for the developer and the local government. Communities that require pre-application meetings benefit by providing the applicant with information necessary to complete a successful project. This can lead to shorter review times and streamlined approval. Some communities also require a sketch plan review process – an informal and non-committal conceptual review of the project, to provide the applicant with a better understanding for what might improve the likelihood of approval for the project (e.g., aesthetic improvements, more green space, provisions for snow removal, etc.).

## **DESIGN STANDARDS**

Many communities are opting for increased design standards as part of their land development regulations. Aside from the underlying zoning and permitted uses, design standards regulate the physical form of structures and building sites. These might include requirements for façade materials and articulation, or set minimum transparency levels by requiring windows. The level of design standards usually depends on the local political environment and the ability of staff to administer such regulations. Communities can adopt design guidelines that are *suggested* provisions rather than mandates. Developers are not typically required to comply with guidelines, yet guidelines serve as a useful tool in communicating expectations ahead of development.

## **BUILDING AND FIRE CODES**

As mentioned previously, building and fire codes are typically adopted to protect the life safety of its inhabitants. As communities adopt updated (and more stringent) standards, infill and redevelopment properties become more challenging and costly to bring “up to code.” Communities can make amendments to their adopted building and fire codes that provide better accommodations for infill and redevelopment projects, especially for the adaptive reuse of and repair of existing older structures. For example, older properties might be eligible for a waiver, or exempt from certain building code requirements that could otherwise make the project infeasible. More flexible systems allow building and fire officials to make a determination that a building is reasonably safe without imposing more modern code requirements. Striking a balance between life safety and reasonable accommodation of infill and redevelopment requires focused interagency and interdepartmental coordination.

## **DEVELOPMENT CODE ASSESSMENT**

To better understand whether a local government’s land use regulations are calibrated for infill and redevelopment in desired locations, the community should continually monitor and evaluate their codes under a lens of infill and redevelopment. During the assessment, the local government should work with various stakeholders involved in development or who use the regulations on a regular basis. This will include internal departments such as planning, public works, parks and recreation, building, engineering, economic development, and the planning commission and elected body. The process should also include developers, neighborhood organizations, and business owners to paint a clear path for amendments that improve the community’s readiness for infill and redevelopment projects.

## **Promote Productive Community Dialogue**

One of the largest potential barriers to successful infill and redevelopment throughout the region is organized community opposition. Often the opposition to an infill or redevelopment project is based on a perceived neighborhood conflict such as parking, density, traffic, or other similar issues. Unless addressed head on as part of a collaborative community outreach effort, these perceptions can escalate quickly and turn would-be supporters of high-quality development into passionate critics. This issue can be particularly challenging for smaller infill sites where site constraints may limit the extent to which creative site planning and building design can be used to address potential concerns.

Communities can help build support for infill and redevelopment projects by making their objectives clear through various plans and policies as previously discussed; however, without continuing education and an open feedback loop, those policies can fall to the wayside of the next conflict. Local governments can encourage a positive dialogue with community groups by gathering influential members at key junctures throughout planning processes and development applications. It is important for local government outreach to address concerns related to infill and redevelopment while promoting the benefits to the neighborhood and the community as a whole. One common perception from neighborhood groups is that increased density is inconsistent with surrounding development patterns and diminishes the character of the neighborhood. The burden is on local governments to help educate its citizens about ways in which adopted policies and regulations can be used to address compatibility issues in an infill and redevelopment context and to promote a productive dialogue about potential projects.

### Consider Creative Financing for Infill and Redevelopment<sup>6</sup>

Encouraging infill and redevelopment projects often means considering creative and alternative financing mechanisms and creating strategic partnerships to close the deal. This section identifies opportunities for local governments to improve their readiness for infill and redevelopment projects as well as incentives for developers that encourage infill and redevelopment.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE

There are several tools available to Colorado local governments to aid in financing key infrastructure projects that attract infill and redevelopment projects. By providing roads, stormwater and sewer utilities, parking structures, or other critical infrastructure, local governments are able to offset would-be developer costs making it feasible for development to take place. This is also a way for communities to steer growth and development to areas designated as desirable for infill and redevelopment. Some of the tools local governments use to finance key infrastructure projects include:

- **Special Districts.** Formation of special districts allocates a portion of the property taxes to fund ongoing operating expenses or to finance capital projects. All properties within the boundaries of the special district would contribute property taxes to share the costs of funding the project. Special districts are governed by Title 32 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.
- **Tax Increment Financing.** Tax increment financing (TIF) allows a city or county to create a benefit district and “capture” the increase in net tax capacity that results when new development occurs within that district. Rather than going into the jurisdiction’s general fund, the increase in tax revenue is returned directly to the TIF district. The TIF authority uses the revenue to pay for certain approved development costs, such as acquiring land or buildings, demolishing substandard buildings, installing utilities or road improvements or building low or moderate-income housing. Colorado statutes allow the use of TIF for both sales taxes and property taxes in urban renewal areas or downtown development authorities (DDA).

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<sup>6</sup> Several of the topics discussed in this section were previously identified by DRCOG. DRCOG, “Financing Strategies for Encouraging Infill and Redevelopment,” April 2006.

- **Impact Fees.** Local governments can impose impact fees on development projects to raise proportionate funds to ultimately mitigate those impacts. For example, a community might collect impact fees based on the need to expand public parking facilities downtown. In this example, each development contributes a fee based on their individual impact to pay for future development of a public parking structure.
- **Capital Improvements.** Communities should continually review their capital improvement plans (CIP) and prioritize projects that support infill and redevelopment. CIPs can focus on the importance of infill and redevelopment areas by adding higher values to projects that improve streets, utilities, and public amenities in those areas.
- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).** In some cases, certain infrastructure improvements may be eligible for expenditure under HUD's CDBG program. Examples might include projects that would ultimately benefit low- to moderate-income families, or would eliminate slum or blight.

#### DEVELOPER INCENTIVES

Communities can offer several direct incentives to developers that encourage infill and redevelopment. Local governments are increasingly using incentives to attract growth and development in targeted areas throughout the community. These developer incentives include:

- **Tax Credits and Abatements.** Local governments can offer tax exemptions, credits, or abatements to developers that qualify by meeting an established set of program criteria such as offering affordable housing, converting existing structures into multifamily housing, or developing infill parcels in specified areas or zones.
- **Public Private Partnerships.** Any project where the public sector provides some financial support could be defined as a public/private partnership. In this discussion, however, such partnerships are defined more narrowly to include only those projects where the public partner is an "equity partner" that participates in funding and has some share in the potential revenues. The most obvious examples of public/private partnerships are projects with a clear public purpose, such as a convention center or arts facility. In these arrangements, a private partner is usually recruited by the public sector to provide financial and construction expertise.
- **Fee Waivers.** Local governments can consider waiving certain development or permit fees to offset some of the development cost, thus making infill and redevelopment of the project more attractive. Where waivers are not appropriate, communities might consider reducing impact fees and development fees for infill and redevelopment projects.
- **Technical Assistance.** Communities can offer developer assistance by helping organize neighborhood meetings, additional support during the development review process, or advice on business operations. Having a development "liaison" serves to promote infill projects that are otherwise challenging. Some communities might also offer expedited review procedures for designated infill and redevelopment projects.

- **Brownfields Assistance.** There are several technical and financial assistance programs available at the federal, state, and local level to help redevelop properties that experienced some level of environmental contamination. These programs range from revolving loan funds to subsidized environmental assessments. A good description of applicable programs can be found in *The Colorado Brownfields Handbook*, available online on the Colorado Department of Local Affairs website.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, “The Colorado Brownfields Handbook: A Local Government Guide to Site Reuse and Economic Development,” 2005, accessed on December 23, 2013, <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=DOLA-Main%2FCBONLayout&cid=1251611038074&pagename=CBONWrapper>.



# Best Practices for Infill and Redevelopment

The following pages highlight specific infill and redevelopment projects in the Denver metro region that represent successful projects in different phases of development and that utilized many of the strategies outlined in this report. This section also includes nationwide examples of how other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have addressed the challenges associated with infill and redevelopment using creative approaches.

## Development Projects

### PARK PLACE AT OLDE TOWN – ARVADA, COLORADO

**Developer:** Park Place Olde Town, LLC

**Uses:** Residential (apartments)

Park Place at Olde Town will be developed by Park Place Olde Town, LLC to meet an expected demand for commuter-focused and pedestrian-friendly units associated with the 2016 opening of the RTD FasTracks Gold Line. The project site is within the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority's Olde Town Station area, as defined by the urban renewal plan. The 2.89-acre site is adjacent to Olde Town Station (under construction), the Wadsworth Bypass, and historic McIlvoy Park. The development will consist of 153 one- and two-bedroom apartment units in a 5-story building. The site will take advantage of nearby transit-oriented development and will encourage multi-modal travel. The apartment building will include a bicycle maintenance facility and extra storage space for bikes and outdoor gear.<sup>8</sup>



### FITZSIMMONS VILLAGE – AURORA, COLORADO

**Developer:** Corporex

**Uses:** Office, retail, hotels, conference center, potential residential opportunities.

Fitzsimmons Village, developed by the Corporex Family of Companies, is the first new mixed-use development that will bring needed amenities



<sup>8</sup> <https://arvada.org/community-development-department/park-place-at-olde-town>. Image source: [https://static.arvada.org/docs/Rendering\\_sw-1-201305171120.pdf](https://static.arvada.org/docs/Rendering_sw-1-201305171120.pdf)

to the rapidly growing Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, Colorado. Fitzsimons Village's main entrance is located directly across from the entrance of The Children's Hospital, the central hospital on the campus. Fitzsimons Village connects to the hospital campus via an elevated pedestrian walkway. In Phase I, Fitzsimons Village brings a 150,000 square foot office facility with 16,000 square feet of retail space, a 153-room Spring Hill Suites by Marriott and a First Bank branch followed by a seven-story, 208,000 square foot office building and a full-service hotel and conference center. In addition, there will be over 20 acres available for further development of office, research, retail, and residential opportunities.<sup>9</sup>

The City of Aurora's Urban Renewal Authority will own the conference center and the 525-stall parking structure, financed through cash and bonds.

### DENVER DESIGN DISTRICT – DENVER, COLORADO

**Developer:** D4 Urban

**Uses:** Retail, residential, education, office, hotel

D4 Urban represents the Denver Design District ownership as developer of the 60 acre assemblage that currently consists of 900,000 square feet of leasable retail, office, and wholesale trade space. The site is part of a larger 75 acre General Development Plan (GDP) approved by the City of Denver in May, 2009. D4 Urban seeks to achieve greater densification and transform the current car-dominated retail based land use into a true mixed use transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly development based around the Alameda and Broadway Station light rail stations that bookend the site to the NW & SW. The GDP provides for several million square feet of commercial (office, retail and hotel), residential and educational use.<sup>10</sup>

This project is a perfect example of a public-private partnership, requiring coordination between D4 Urban, the Regional Transportation District (RTD), the City and County of Denver, and the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA). City investments of nearly \$18 Million have resulted in private investment of \$48 Million to date.



<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fitzsimons-village.com/>. Image source: PowerPoint presentation given by Bob Watkins at DRCOG Idea Exchange, December 16, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.denvergov.org/Planning/CompletedPlans/DenverDesignDistrictGDP/tabid/433040/Default.aspx>. Image source: PowerPoint presentation given by Chris Wagget at DRCOG Idea Exchange, December 16, 2013.

## ROOSEVELT PARK – LONGMONT, COLORADO

**Developer:** Burden Inc.

**Uses:** Retail, residential, arts

The 1.55-acre site is the largest available redevelopment site in downtown and is a critical gateway near Roosevelt Park. The project consists of 115 residential units, over 11,000 square feet of retail, 1,400 square feet of arts space, and 219 parking spaces. As another example of a public-private partnership, the City of Longmont and the Longmont Downtown Development Authority contributed to the project by way of TIF financing, reduced and waived development fees, reimbursing the developer for certain public improvements, and providing \$500,000 in public utilities. The development includes a parking structure that will provide parking for the onsite residences as well as public parking spaces.<sup>11</sup>



## MIDTOWN – ADAMS COUNTY, COLORADO

**Developer:** Brookfield Residential

**Uses:** Retail, residential

This 184-acre site at West 67<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Pecos Street is considered an affordable alternative to expensive neighborhoods of north Denver such as the Highlands. The land surrounding the project is substantially developed, rendering this site perfect for residential infill. The project upon completion will include approximately 1,000 single-family homes plus an additional 300-400 attached residential units. Five acres of the site is devoted to retail. As a former home of a manufacturing and component testing facility, the site has been cleaned up for the development of this new neighborhood of affordable and energy-efficient homes.<sup>12</sup> The development will have access to commuter rail upon completion of the Gold Line as part of Denver's FasTracks project.



<sup>11</sup> <http://www.downtownlongmont.com/item/roosevelt-park-apartments>. Image source: PowerPoint presentation given by David Starnes at DRCOG Idea Exchange, December 16, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hellomidtown.com/>

## LITTLETON VILLAGE – LITTLETON, COLORADO

**Developer:** WIP Littleton Village

**Uses:** Retail, office, residential, civic uses, stadium

This 77-acre former home of the Marathon Oil facility is the site of the largest mixed-use project in the city. This site had already undergone several iterations over the years before changing hands to WIP Littleton Village. The site has sat dormant since the closing of the Marathon Oil facility in 2000. It is completely surrounded by existing commercial and residential development, and located along two of the city’s primary corridors (Dry Creek Road and Broadway Avenue), making it an quintessential infill development project.<sup>13</sup> The project has an approved general development plan (August 2013) that would allow for up to 250,000 square feet of commercial space and up to 900 residential units. There is currently no development on the site.

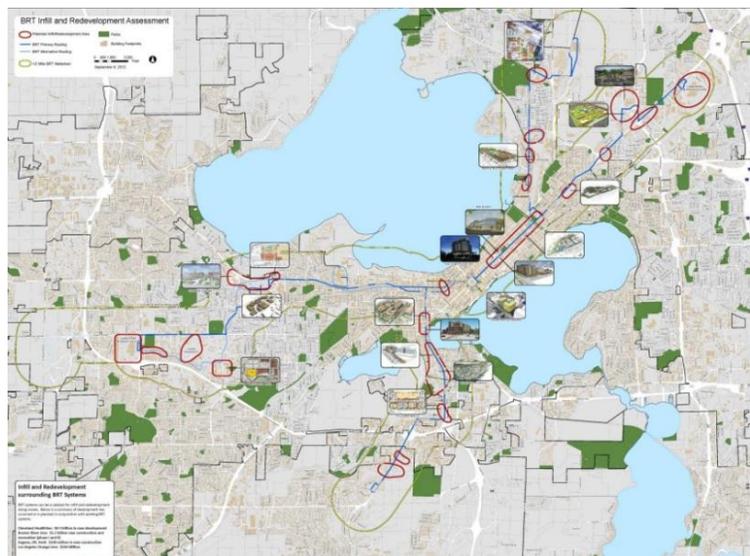


## Metropolitan Planning Organization Initiatives

### INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT (FOR BRT)

**MPO:** Madison Area Transportation Planning Board (MATPB), Madison, Wisconsin

The MATPB conducted an assessment of the infill and redevelopment potential along several stations of the proposed BRT system to better understand demand for system development. The assessment identified over 160 potential infill or redevelopment sites (often with multiple parcels) along the corridor using several mapping and data metrics. The results will be used to determine potential for ridership of the BRT based on infill and redevelopment potential over the next 10, 20, and 30 years.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>13</sup> <http://www.littletongov.org/index.aspx?page=639&recordid=30>. Image source: Captured from approved development plan attachment at [www.littletongov.org/index.aspx?page=639&recordid=30](http://www.littletongov.org/index.aspx?page=639&recordid=30).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.madisonareampo.org/documents/MBRTInfillRedevelopment021813.pdf>

**INVENTORY OF POTENTIAL INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT PROPERTIES**

**MPO:** Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Chicago, Illinois

The CMAP provided support to the 2040 Plan by analyzing land values in the region to determine potential for infill and redevelopment. Using the “Improvement-to-Land-Value-Ratio” approach, CMAP was able to identify vacant parcels and parcels where the

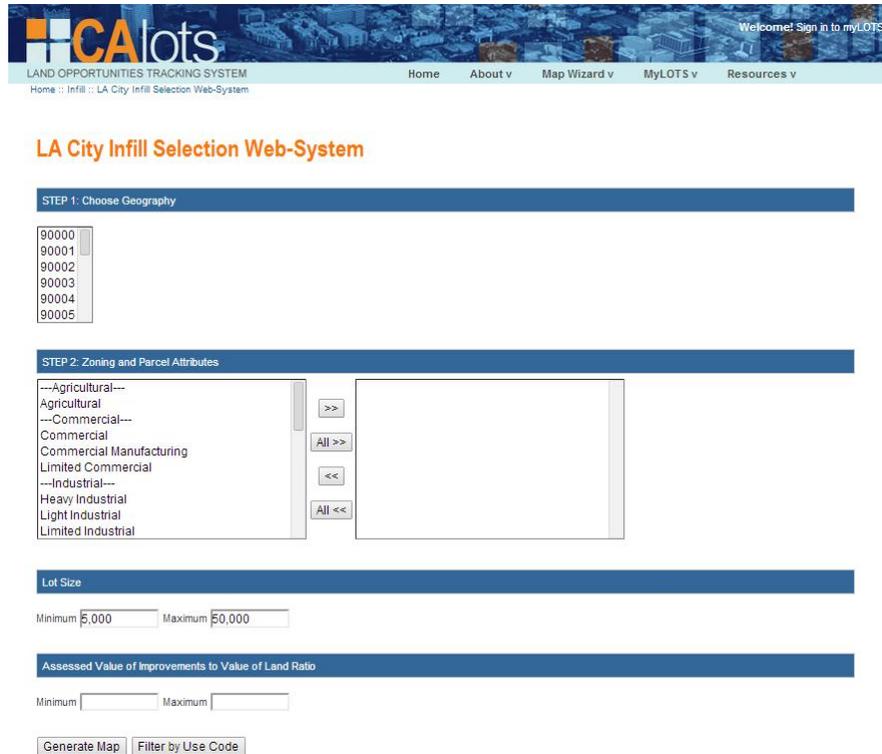
County	Total Infill Acres	Infill sites near transit, job centers, or in denser areas	Infill sites not near transit, job centers, or in denser areas
Cook	55,512	46,935 / 85%	8,577 / 15%
DuPage	15,052	13,306 / 88%	1,746 / 12%
Kane	18,076	9,084 / 50%	8,992 / 50%
Lake	39,941	23,723 / 59%	16,218 / 41%
McHenry	13,825	4,774 / 35%	9,051 / 65%
Will	35,235	9,897 / 28%	25,338 / 72%
Kendall	7,326	1,360 / 19%	5,966 / 81%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,967</b>	<b>109,079 / 59%</b>	<b>75,888 / 41%</b>

land was worth more than the assessed improvements or structures on the land. This data helps the region determine whether infill and redevelopment sites are aligned with existing and proposed transit improvements, employment centers, and areas at risk of teardowns of affordable housing.<sup>15</sup>

**LAND OPPORTUNITIES TRACKING SYSTEM**

**MPO:** Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

The California Land Opportunities Tracking System (CA LOTS) was developed by SCAG in partnership with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). It is an online mapping and spatial analysis tool for Southern California to assist in comprehensive planning efforts and to provide a one-stop shop for key stakeholders to obtain data and information. The tool provides city planners, elected officials, and developers with a user-



<sup>15</sup> [http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/35654/RS\\_INFILL\\_web819.pdf/bb89acca-2ccc-4538-bad2-fb40ba97935c](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/35654/RS_INFILL_web819.pdf/bb89acca-2ccc-4538-bad2-fb40ba97935c)

friendly platform to query properties based on infill potential, foreclosures, property near transit stations, and more. The self-guided mapping analysis can be completed at the regional, local government, neighborhood, and property scales. Many of the tools are currently limited to Los Angeles; however SCAG plans to expand the resource to cover larger areas with more data in the future.

#### **ENVISION TOMORROW SUPPORT**

**MPO:** Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)

As part of their recent *Creating Sustainable Places* initiative, MARC has developed a series of tools to help promote a more sustainable pattern of development in the bi-state Kansas City region. MARC, in partnership with Fregonese Associates, has developed a customized Envision Tomorrow platform that can be used to “test” the viability of infill and redevelopment opportunities throughout the region. The tool is intended to support regional goals in two primary ways:

- 1) Providing local governments with information needed to explore the possible return on investment of different incentive packages; and
- 2) Allowing developers, local governments, and the community at large understand the financial implications of different land use scenarios being proposed for a specific infill site or redevelopment area.

The tool, along with the staff support needed to explore specific parameters for a project, is currently being offered on a trial basis to local governments in the region.

# Conclusion/Summary

As infill and redevelopment projects continue to gain importance for communities throughout the Denver metro region, local governments must consider several benefits and challenges and respond accordingly to be able to accommodate such growth and development. Developers, local governments, and the region as a whole can realize the benefits of infill and redevelopment projects such as added density in areas already served by utilities and public transportation, improved surrounding property values, wider range of housing options, and revitalized neighborhoods or commercial centers.

Some of the key challenges facing infill and redevelopment in the region include:

- Inconsistency with Local Comprehensive Plans;
- Lack of Advanced Planning and Organizational Support
- Land Use Regulations as a Barrier;
- Remaining Sites Tend to be “Challenged;”
- Infrastructure Cost;
- Market and Feasibility Limitations; and
- Construction Defects Legislation.

DRCOG can play a significant role in improving the region’s readiness for infill and redevelopment through regional policies in the Metro Vision 2040 Plan, and through additional assistance by way of a toolkit for local action. Such a toolkit might include connecting developers with development opportunities, providing calibrated tools for different community contexts, and offering educational tools for local governments targeting specific challenges related to infill and redevelopment.

There are several strategies that local governments can consider to position themselves for infill and redevelopment in designated areas:

- **Establish a Supportive Policy Foundation**– Provide clear guidance and direction for local officials through comprehensive plans, sub-area or small area plans, urban renewal plans, and transportation and corridor plans with regards to where infill and redevelopment is desired. Strong policies will allow elected officials to better implement programs and regulations that encourage infill and redevelopment and provide increased predictability for the private sector regarding community expectations. Understanding the market and financial constraints will help communities align their land use policies and expectations.
- **Remove Regulatory Barriers** – Evaluate whether zoning districts and development standards are aligned with local policies and take steps to remove potential barriers to infill and

redevelopment, establish standards to promote compatibility, and establish regulatory incentives in priority locations.

- **Promote Productive Community Dialogue** –Engage neighborhood groups in planning processes and ongoing dialogue about infill and redevelopment issues to help de-escalate neighborhood opposition that is focused on a particular issue. It is important for local governments to address valid concerns while continually promoting the benefits of infill and redevelopment projects at the neighborhood and community scale.
- **Consider Creative Financing for Infill and Redevelopment** – How local governments provide necessary infrastructure and work with the development community will be increasingly important to realizing successful infill and redevelopment projects. This includes creative finance mechanisms as well as indirect developer incentives.

With further consideration of the issues discussed in this paper, local jurisdictions can continue to improve the viability of infill and redevelopment projects throughout the region.