

“Four Corners”
A Downtown Denver Buildout
Scenario Report



by
Jeff Mitchell
Cate Townley
Ray Winn

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SECTION 1: DOWNTOWN DENVER OVERVIEW

The Denver Metro area and more specifically the City of Denver have been in the past decade in a dramatic state of growth and exciting change. As the entire Colorado Front Range emerged from a recessionary decade in the 1980's, the 1990's and early 2000's have dramatically shifted the area into one of the hotbeds for exciting new growth. While the surrounding communities were the first to see an explosion in population and new development, the relatively small yet major metropolitan City of Denver has subsequently changed not only to meet the needs of the metro area, but has in more recent years seen a population boom of its own. The City's change from a desolate downtown into a bustling center of regional activity with a vibrant community of its own was a result of rooftops following retail. With the return of residents to the city core, the city is now in a stage of development where the focus shifts to an attitude of how to maintain the city's character through looking at the organization of neighborhoods and districts and opportunities for development. The one area of the city, which is now critical to examine, is the downtown core and how in the next 20-30 years the character can be maintained and enhanced.

General Downtown Character

The aforementioned change for the City of Denver has dramatically changed the character of the downtown area and in a sense returned its sense of community. The distinct neighborhoods that surround the city core have been strengthened and their residential character has been distinctly enhanced. The residential character and development of neighborhoods in the city core is starting to develop, but for the core city area that we are concerned with the character has been focused around entertainment, commerce and general vibrancy. The more established character of downtown, which has been maintained, is the sense of being a commercial and corporate hub. This character is one that is seen throughout the city, but for the most part is seen in the core central business district. It carries with it a very professional, yet very impersonal feel and is generally limited due to the weekday hours. The limited nature of this influence was responsible in large part for the city's once lonely feel and it wasn't until the influx of the more vibrant retail and entertainment character that the city's vibrant rebirth began. The character that has began to overtake downtown in recent years and make it a vibrant and

desirable place is defined by lively nightlife, top-notch entertainment, choice retail, and a growing desire for urban living. This character was spawned out of the renovation of what previously was a very crime-ridden and sketchy district and now is probably the most essential element to its success.

Organization

The downtown district of Denver has become much more integrated in recent years, yet there still are distinct pockets of use. One very distinct in our downtown study area is the Central Business District which encompasses a nearly a half of the city core. It is contained within an L-shaped area that spans the 17th-19th street corridors down to the southeastern core near Broadway and Colfax. This area, comprised almost exclusively of high-rise towers and parking lots, is in general rather segregated to commercial uses and encompasses the aforementioned corporate character. One of the newer and other more segregated districts in the city is the entertainment and convention district along the 14th street corridor. This area is organized currently with a limited mix of uses, but as the city's redevelopment continues in future years it should become more of a mixed-use area. Most other areas in our downtown core study area encompass a more mixed-use orientation with a general theme of ground-floor retail or residential support services and an upper-story mix between office and residential uses. The presence of strictly residential is generally seen to increase as you move out from the central business district. An example of this feathering is seen in the progression northwest with 3 very specific districts which move from majority retail to a majority of residential: 16th street mall, Larimer Square, & Commons Park.

Development

Currently the downtown core is seeing limited new development, with most new development being located just outside of this area in areas such as Commons Park and the old rail district near union station. However the one area within the central core that is in new or re-development is the area surrounding the convention and performing arts centers. Because of the completion of both of these massive activity centers, there has been an extreme demand for supporting hotel and retail uses. In response to this demand on major development project is the new Hyatt hotel being built just east of 14th. One other major new development to look at is the expansion of the city's civic facilities with the Webb Building just north of Colfax. However,

while there are not so many projects underway, there is a great deal of development projects on the horizon such as a proposed residential tower at the west end of the Larimer District, a proposed Wild Oats Market near Broadway, etc. This type of development is likely to increase in future years.

SECTION 2: DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL SUMMARY

Downtown Denver is littered with large concrete parking lots, void of character and charm, occupying valuable developable land. The vision for the future of Downtown Denver is to create a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere with higher density residential and higher intensity commercial development. The excessive parking lots in downtown Denver create both a problem and an opportunity for development of this nature. Currently, the scale and location of many of the parking lots diminishes the desirability of walking downtown. Many parking lots create a disjoint in the streetscape leaving pedestrians with little to view as they walk besides the irritating glare of the Colorado sun off the windshield of an SUV. In this problem an opportunity exists to create greater density in the downtown area by redeveloping the parking lots into mix use structures with parking facilities relocated within the building and creating a cohesive streetscape that appeals to pedestrians.

In the development scenario 82 parking lot parcels, totaling 1,352,727 square feet of land, were combined and or divided to create development sites. The mean parcel size in our project was 30,060 square feet. Most parcels were rectangular shaped providing for tangible development while some were triangular which may limit the development potential. Some building footprints were too large to create a single development and needed to be divided to a more human scale. According to developers, a square building footprint exceeding 30,000 square feet is too large for a typical residential, hotel or office development because too much of the internal space is blocked from sunlight. In this buildout scenario parcel number 2 (106,000 sq ft) and parcel number 45 (76,000 sq ft) exceeded the desirable size for a building footprint so, they were divided into towers with 25,000 – 30,000 square foot building footprints.

The buildout scenario also takes into consideration the uses of adjacent parcels in determining what type of development is appropriate and desirable in the area. Some parcels lend themselves to full capacity development able to sustain virtually any use while others are only

suitable for a certain type or scale of development. Parcels 21 and 22, located across from the city and county building between 14th and 15th and Court Street, are examples of sites that may not be suitable for full scale development. A two story historic stone building sits in the middle of the block between the two development parcels. Although the zoning code allows for high rise buildings in the parcels adjacent to the historic building, such development would diminish the character of the area by taking away from the beauty and significance of the historic building. The development of these parcels should take into consideration the architectural features of the historic building and the architecture and scale of the new development should compliment the old.

The use of adjacent parcels was very important in determining where residential development was appropriate in our buildout scenario. Our team felt that residential developments should be located in clusters near each other to help residents feel secure and to foster a sense of community. These residential developments need the amenities of other neighborhoods such as childcare, grocery facilities, retail shops and public transit. The residential districts create a bridge between the central business district and outlying neighborhoods and create a critical mass of people to sustain local retail and support services. The clusters of residential areas are buffered from the central business district by buildings with a mix of residential and office facilities. When residential districts reach capacity then more residential should be dispersed though downtown.

SECTION 3: PROPOSED BUILDOUT SCENARIO DESCRIPTION

The project theme is the Four Corners. This refers to residential development nodes located in four corners of the development map (see exhibit 3). The first is the North West corner at 15th Street and Lawrence where a three tower residential complex will be located. The second corner is the north east corner between Welton and 18th Street and contains mixed use residential and office to link the Central Business District with the uptown neighborhood systems. The third corner is an L shaped residential corridor in the south central area of the development map contained within 15th and 16th streets, California and Tremont. The final corner is the west corner within Arapahoe and Larimer and Speer and 15th street that will contain student housing for the Auraria Campus student community.

The plan also has a hotel district located by the Convention Center to service the lodging needs of those attending conventions. The project looks to utilize and the existing transportation systems (see exhibit 4) and expand upon the retail facilities bringing more cohesiveness to Downtown Denver development. The north corner combines lot 9 and 78 to create site 45 with a 75,000 square foot floor plate. This site will have three residential towers with 25,000 square foot floor plates. Our view is that downtown residents need the facilities of a local grocery store. However, most mainstream grocers like Safeway and King Soopers need more residential support before locating in downtown. In response to this dilemma we have looked at the demographics for this plan and developed an alternate solution. Our proposed one and two bedroom developments cater to the young and elderly who do not have the families that the mainstream grocers need for business, yet these residents still need a place to shop. Thus a Whole Foods or a Wild Oats grocery could cater to this demographic of residents that frequent the grocery store more often. With a 75,000 foot floor plate an alternate grocer could easily locate here and have a large customer base located just above the store. The site is also far enough away from the existing King Soopers that the competition will be minimal. These residential towers will also contribute to the already fast growing residential development in the area that indicates a viable market.

The north east corner is contained between California on the north side and 18th street on the west and the south of the residential district. The idea behind locating a residential district here is to link residential to the Central Business District and the uptown neighborhood systems of Capitol Hill and Five Points. This creates a common neighborhood link between the uptown and downtown areas creating more cohesiveness. Incorporating mixed uses of residential with office in this district, like in site 35 (lot 44-47), allows the district to avoid being vacant after business hours. Thus, the mixed use lets the community be occupied constantly by people during the day and night and avoids creating areas of stagnation during certain parts of the day. Site 33 (lot 65) contains residential with ground floor childcare or a community center. The community center could further strengthen the residential community, making residents feel like a more cohesive community.

Downtown is currently a commuting center where few people who work in downtown live in downtown. The above proposals look to strengthen ties to downtown by creating communities

where people can live and work in the same area. Site 30 (lot 69 & 70) is a mix use of residential and office uses with 40% residential and the rest office. This site is on the fringe of the northeast corner residential district and the Central Business District and thus the mix of both office and residential creates links between the two districts and thus a more cohesive and less compartmentalized downtown.

The next section of residential development lies in the south central area of the development map. This section is located between 15th and 16th streets and California and Tremont creating an I-shaped residential corridor. With the addition of 986 one-bedroom units and 698 two-bedroom units, the current retail on the 16th Street Mall would be invigorated and revitalized. This corridor is also centrally located in the core of downtown, allowing residents of the corridor to not be too far away from anything in the downtown area. Site 12 (lot 36, 38, and 40) comprises over 600k square feet of residential space and over 20k square feet of residential support. This site could be big enough for a child-care, pre-school, or other education centered facility. The central location in the core of downtown and new residential district would allow parents who work in the area to be close to their kids during the day and thus have flexibility of schedule.

The West corner is close to the Auraria campus and is encompassed by Speer, Arapahoe, and 15th streets. The area could be the future site for student housing for the Auraria Campus. The Auraria Campus is currently a commuter campus serving primarily older students and students who live outside of downtown. All schools are essentially corporations of education and thus, would love the idea of creating more revenue through increased enrollment. This residential corner includes site 2 (lot 26) with a 106,000 square foot floor plate. By using two residential towers and two hotel towers with 20,000 square foot floor plates each allows this to be one of the biggest buildings in the plan. Incorporating a mixed use in the ground floor and between the towers allows the building to be utilized for its great location to lower downtown and allows for different uses if student housing is not a reality of the future for the Auraria Campus.

The number one source of external revenue in the state of Colorado is tourism. Our vision for this plan attempts to build on the Denver Convention Center as a center for Downtown Denver tourism. To do so we have created a hotel district adjacent to the Convention and Performing

Arts Centers. Currently the occupancy rate of hotels near the convention center is at 95% indicating a need for more hotel development. The Denver Convention Center could attract more events by offering close places to stay and the hotels could attract business who wanted to hold conventions to use the Denver Convention Center. Companies who are located in Denver could also take advantage of this development opportunity by using the Denver Convention Center to host national meetings or conventions and use the hotels to house their out-of-town employees. A light rail station is also located here and offers tourists a great quick way to access the rest of downtown and other parts of Denver.

This project provides for a mix of future residential, retail, office and hotel development. Here are some of the development statistics for the entire project. 1,352,727 is the total land area for the buildout. The total gross floor area is 19,054,603. The net residential square feet are 6,876,853. Total 1 bedroom units are 4,220 and 2 bedroom units are 2,986 units. These numbers indicate a possibility of increasing the residential capacity of downtown Denver by over 10,000 residents. The net retail is 521,667 square feet. The net office is 5,582,453 square feet. The total hotel rooms are 7,291. The final FAR is 15:1 and the total parking spaces is 28,362. A development scenario such as this would bring a great deal more cohesiveness and vibrancy to the core downtown Denver area, something this district is currently lacking. Our buildout of downtown Denver enhances existing successful retail and office, greatly increases the density of residential development and utilizes public transportation. This blending of uses, we feel, is the key to revitalizing the city core and creating a sustainable urban center.

- EXHIBITS:
1. FOUR CORNERS RESIDENTIAL MAP
 2. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION MAP
 3. FUTURE LAND USE MAP
 4. DEVELOPMENT QUANTITY TABLE

