



7—Housing and Neighborhoods

Guiding Principle

Provide multiple types of housing serving a range of people and incomes in vibrant neighborhoods where people want to live.

Introduction

Commerce City grew very rapidly from 2000 to 2008, doubling the size of its 2000 population and expanding its housing supply through new neighborhoods largely in the Northern Range. In 2007, Commerce City had an estimated 14,037 housing units—more than double the 6,907 housing units in 2000. In general, residents and prospective residents find many quality options for neighborhoods within the city, ranging from traditional neighborhoods in the Historic City to new planned subdivisions in the Northern Range. However, some opportunities exist to further broaden the city's range of housing.

Influencing Factors

The following factors helped inform and define the housing and neighborhoods goals contained in this chapter.

Housing Market Gaps

Compared with other cities in Adams County, Commerce City offers many affordable homeownership options, but has limited affordable rental options. In addition, the city has few options for high-income households seeking to move into the community, or existing homeowners who want to upgrade to larger, or more expensive, homes within the city.

Changing Demographics

Currently, married couples make up a slight majority of city households. The city also has a younger population than in neighboring communities. However, while the proportion of seniors is lower than other communities in the Metro area, the population is aging, meaning that housing needs will change.



Commerce City's future and existing neighborhoods are important for quality of life and a well balanced community where workers can live near jobs.



Two-thirds of housing is single-family.

City Housing Mix

- Single-Family – 66%**
- Multi-family – 25%**
- Mobile homes – 8%**

How Does Housing Relate to Sustainability?

Benefits of strong neighborhoods with a mix of housing include:

- ✓ increased housing options near jobs, services, schools, parks and open space, and other community infrastructure,
- ✓ vibrant, safe neighborhoods where people want to live,
- ✓ reduction in travel miles and vehicle use when housing is near schools, jobs, and services,
- ✓ ability for residents to comfortably and safely age in place,
- ✓ potential cost savings on energy, transportation, and utilities in well-located and energy-efficient homes,
- ✓ potential reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (for homes with energy upgrades) and from reduced commute times.

City’s Housing Stock

The age, type, and availability of housing varies considerable from south to north in the city. In the Historic City, most of the housing was built when that part of the community developed in the 1950s and 1960s. The Historic City has a higher percentage of rental units (25% to 50% in 2000) than in the north. In the Northern Range, most of the housing was built after 1999. Housing is predominantly single-family and owner-occupied.

Directions and Goals

Based on the Influencing Factors outlined above, the housing and neighborhoods goals contained in this chapter are based on the following considerations:

Expanded Mix of Housing

As families and the population ages and grows, a greater variety of housing types and price ranges will be increasingly important. This Plan promotes quality neighborhoods near schools and services with all types of housing and price ranges available for a diverse community in order to support residents through their entire life (from birth to old-age).

Housing Affordability

Housing that is affordable, not only to buy or rent but also that is cost-efficient and healthy to live in, is important to enable more residents to live near where they work to allow them to become economically self-sufficient. Affordable housing should be accessible to transit.

Senior Housing and Universal Design

While Commerce City has a lower proportion of seniors than surrounding communities, its population is aging like the Denver-metro area as a whole. Currently, the community has very limited senior housing available. For seniors to be able to stay in the community, new senior housing will be necessary.

Housing and Neighborhoods goals address:

1. Reinvesting in existing neighborhoods and housing stock;
2. Increasing housing choices and variety;
3. Increasing the price range of housing; and
4. Neighborhood accessibility to all modes of travel.



Sustainability/Related Chapters



This Element Contributes to Sustainability...

Expanding the variety and viability of housing and neighborhoods is a key component of a sustainable community. The goals in this chapter help:

A Robust Economy and Commerce:



- ✓ Ensure a mix of housing types for workers located near primary jobs and to support retail and other revenue-producing businesses in the city, although this will take some time to achieve.
- ✓ Balance revenues with service expenditures required for different housing types. Higher-income housing types tend to be fiscally neutral or positive for the city.

A Quality Environmental Context:

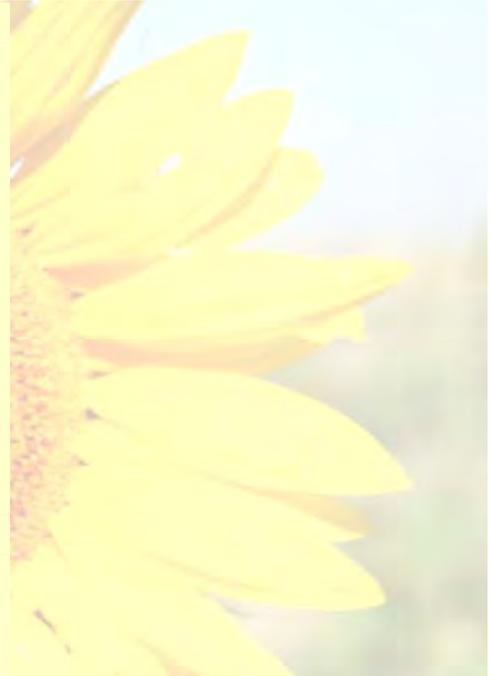


- ✓ Provide quality neighborhoods that contain amenities such as open space and parks that are located near schools, services, and jobs.
- ✓ Revitalize existing housing to strengthen neighborhoods.
- ✓ Create neighborhoods that are walkable, with access to transit and bicycle facilities.
- ✓ Reduce inefficient vehicle energy use by clustering housing in neighborhoods near services and by providing transportation options.

A Resilient Community:



- ✓ Allow people to live in Commerce City for their whole life—from youth, through employment, and into retirement. A mix of housing allows residents to age in place.
- ✓ Provide cost-efficient housing.



These Goals in Related Chapters

The housing goals relate closely to other Plan elements and chapters of this Plan, as identified in Table 7.1, below.

Table 7.1: Housing and Neighborhoods Goals and Related Chapters

Plan Element/Ch. #:	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Land Use, Growth	Economic Dev.	Fiscal Stability	Housing/Neighbor	Redevelopment	Transportation	Safety, Wellness	Parks, Open Space	Public Facilities	Appearance	Cultural Facilities	Environmental
Goals												
1. Rehabilitate aging housing stock	✗			✗	✗		✗	✗	✗	✗		✗
2. Increase housing types	✗			✗		✗	✗			✗		✗
3. Expand housing price range		✗	✗	✗				✗	✗	✗		
4. Neighborhood accessibility	✗			✗		✗	✗					✗



Why Reinvest in Housing?

Reinvesting in older housing stock contributes to neighborhood vitality and strength, making existing neighborhoods more appealing for all types of residents. In addition, reinvestment is the most important factor for aging seniors who want to stay in Commerce City.

Rehabilitation means...

...the repair of existing housing stock, to make improvements to safety and livability for elderly and low-income persons (e.g., replacing roofs, improving handicap accessibility, replacing appliances and heaters, and repairing broken floors and walls). Typically, projects are funded by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and other local partners.

Housing and Neighborhoods Goals and Policies

Goal HN 1—Reinvest in and rehabilitate aging housing stock

The city will reinvest in existing, aging housing stock to stabilize neighborhoods for current resident occupants, especially seniors aging in place. Reinvesting contributes to neighborhood vitality and strength.

Citywide Policies:

HN 1.1—Rehabilitated Homes

The preservation of existing housing stock (rental and ownership housing) and its rehabilitation helps prevent loss due to deterioration. It ensures that it will remain available to working families. Rehabilitated homes should be evaluated for environmental hazards. Identified hazards (e.g., lead-based paint, friable asbestos) will be mitigated before houses are re-occupied.

HN 1.2—Neighborhood Infrastructure Investment

To support private investment in housing and neighborhoods, the city will focus on reducing blight factors in neighborhoods (such as deteriorating infrastructure), preserving and building upon the character of tree-lined streets, and identifying priority reinvestment areas. As funds are available, the city will invest in infrastructure, spurring private investment in housing stock and neighborhoods. In addition, the city can provide incentives for, and provide standards to ensure appropriate types of infill through its development code.

HN 1.3—Property Maintenance

Increase property maintenance requirements to improve safety, appearance, and function of housing and neighborhoods and to consistently apply code enforcement.



Rehabilitating and maintaining existing housing increases available housing and improves quality of neighborhoods and housing stock, such as the well-maintained home to the right.





Goal HN 2—Increase housing types to meet current and future needs

Commerce City will expand the variety of housing types throughout quality neighborhoods for life-long living. Housing should accommodate students, families, singles, aging seniors, and people with disabilities, all at multiple-income levels.

Citywide Policies:

HN 2.1—Variety of Housing Types and Mixed-Uses within Neighborhoods

Encourage new neighborhoods that contain a mix of housing types, ranging from single-family detached, attached, townhomes, apartments, lofts, and housing for special needs (e.g., seniors). Site plans should include a mix of lot sizes, development densities, as well as housing types and styles, with high-density and multi-family housing near collector and arterial streets, transit, and services.

HN 2.2—Energy-Efficient and Healthy Homes

Promote programs to reduce costs associated with energy, transportation, and utilities by focusing on environmentally-friendly materials, construction methods, and design to improve efficiency. Green homes promote better health by improving ventilation and air quality, and reducing toxins. They also help decrease greenhouse gas emissions and transportation-related air pollution.

HN 2.3—Housing with Transportation Options

New housing should offer residents a variety of transportation options that are energy-efficient and affordable, including transit. It should also be located near jobs and services. Neighborhoods should be walkable to support a healthier lifestyle.



See Chapter 4, *Land Use and Growth*, related to strengthening city neighborhoods.

HN 2.4—Housing for Seniors and Special Needs Population

Promote senior housing and housing for individuals with special needs, including physical or mental disabilities. Senior housing types should range from affordable to higher-end retirement housing. Higher densities may be appropriate targeted locations to accommodate these needs. The city should modify regulations to allow senior housing and facilitate new housing practices that specifically accommodate seniors and people with disabilities. This type of housing should be highly accessible to transit.



Best Practices

Neighborhood Village Design



The *New Lands Plan* provides principles for new neighborhood development. This Plan continues those principles, including:

- ✓ Locating housing in villages that are easy to serve, fiscally sound, and that attract and retain residents.
- ✓ Organizing neighborhoods as cohesive “units” defined by streets, natural landforms, and open space with parks and schools at the center.
- ✓ Following a grid street pattern where possible, with connected streets and sidewalks.
- ✓ Mixing housing types (single-family, multi-family) within neighborhoods.
- ✓ Locating higher-density housing, services, and offices near arterial roads.



Commerce City aims to increase the range of housing prices, including additional executive housing options.



The city's housing goals focus on maintaining existing affordable housing stock, as well as providing new alternatives, such as townhomes.

Goal HN 3—Increase the range of housing prices

Commerce City will continue to focus on expanding housing price ranges, so that people of all incomes are able to live in the community.

Citywide Policies:

HN 3.1—Neighborhoods for Mixed Incomes

New neighborhoods should contain a range of housing priced at different points for mixed incomes, including high-end homes, to achieve overall diversity.

HN 3.2—Executive Housing

To aid in attracting additional executive housing and opportunities for residents to move up to higher-end housing, provide incentives for and require developers to provide amenities in neighborhoods such as additional open space, recreational facilities, and commercial services.

HN 3.3—Affordable Housing Options Maintained

Continue to support existing affordable housing options, partnerships, and programs to address the continued maintenance of the city's affordable stock, including existing maintained mobile home parks in the Historic City; multi-family housing; and affordable, small, single-family homes. Future affordable housing will be located throughout the community near jobs and services, so that pockets of low-income housing do not occur.

Goal HN 4—Ensure neighborhood accessibility to all modes of travel

Commerce City will encourage development of convenient access to transit routes, sidewalks, trails and bicycle facilities from neighborhoods and employment centers.

Citywide Policies:

HN 4.1—Multi-modal Level-of-Service Criteria

Establish multi-modal Level-of-Service criteria to be achieved in new and redeveloping areas.

HN 4.2—Pedestrian/Bicycle Connectivity Guidelines

Establish guidelines for development to assure convenient pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to transit routes.

HN 4.3—Guidelines for Residential Development

Establish guidelines for residential development to assure efficient internal transit circulation by minimizing cul-de-sacs and linking roadways in adjacent development tracts.



HN 4.4—Contiguous Network of Collector Streets

Provide a contiguous network of collector streets within the arterial grid to promote efficient circulation of all modes of travel.

Housing and Neighborhoods Strategies

This section contains a list of strategies to implement the housing and neighborhood goals. Table 7.2, below, coincides with the goals of this chapter. It identifies specific actions to take to achieve the goals.



See Chapter 16, Implementation, for the Priority Action Plan summarizing key strategies for the city to accomplish in the next several years. Appendix E contains a full list of all the chapters’ strategies.

Table 7.2: Housing and Neighborhoods Strategies

Goal/ Strategies	Related Goal/Strategies
Goal HN 1	Reinvestment and Rehabilitation of Aging Housing Stock
HN 1a	Citywide Housing Plan Develop a citywide Housing Plan to help refine needs and targets.
HN 1b	Housing Program Establish programs to preserve and recycle housing stock (e.g., acquire, redevelop, and resell single-family homes at affordable prices, and provide accessibility improvements), particularly in the Historic City.
HN 1c	Improvement Plans for Historic City Focus Areas Determine Neighborhood Focus Areas within Historic City (e.g., Southern Core/Rose Hill, Northern Core/Derby/Tichy, Fairfax/Dupont, and Adams City) where the city will develop improvement plans and seek funding to stabilize and improve conditions. Invest to the extent funds are available.
HN 1d	Proactive Property Maintenance Explore ways to make code enforcement more proactive, to ensure property maintenance and prevent further zoning and municipal code violations.
HN 1e	Zoning Amendments for Compatible Infill Evaluate/explore downzoning certain residential areas of the Historic City from R-2 to R-1, to ensure compatible neighborhood infill that strengthens neighborhoods.
HN 1f	Neighborhood Planning/Support Support a neighborhood planning program, particularly for neighborhoods identified above (see HN 1c).
HN 1g	Education about Development Permitting Provide educational materials regarding the development permitting process and where it applies. (See also Chapter 13, Appearance and Design, and Chapter 15, Environmental Conservation and Stewardship for strategies related to tree planting, energy efficiency, community gardens, and other neighborhood-related topics.)
Goal HN 2	Variety of Housing Types to Meet Needs
HN 2a	LDC Amendments: Accessory Dwelling Units Explore concept to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in new and existing neighborhoods where lot sizes would permit them.
HN 2b	Household Energy Programs Provide programs to reduce household energy costs (costs associated with energy consumption, transportation, and utilities).
HN 2c	Foreclosure Prevention Programs Work with all housing agencies to ensure that Commerce City residents are aware of and have access to the foreclosure prevention and assistance programs administered by Adams County.



Goal/ Strategies	Related Goal/Strategies
HN 2d	Senior Housing Programs Pursue federal, state, and local programs to build senior housing, such as Section 202 developments (affordable housing with supportive services) and senior housing for all income levels.
HN 2e	Senior Housing LDC Amendments Revise the LDC to allow higher density senior housing in mixed-use centers. Promote a visitability ordinance (to accommodate people in wheelchairs or with frailties).
Goal HN 3 Increased Range of Housing Prices	
HN 3a	Education and Counseling Inform renters and homeowners about options (education and counseling, foreclosure prevention strategies).
HN 3b	Affordable Rental Options Continue support for all housing agency efforts to provide quality, affordable rental properties dispersed in different parts of the community (including subsidized housing).
HN 3c	Mixed-Income Projects Require new development to include a mix of price ranges, potentially combining market-rate housing with affordable housing.
HN 3d	Housing Authority Evaluate increased responsibilities and scope for both the Housing Division and Housing Authority. (See Chapter 5, Economic Development, and Chapter 13, Appearance and Design, for strategies that will help encourage the construction of high-end homes in the community.)
Goal HN 4 Neighborhood Accessibility to all Modes of Travel (See Chapter 9, Transportation.)	

Monitoring Housing and Neighborhoods

This section identifies possible performance indicators for monitoring progress over time toward achieving the housing and neighborhood goals within this chapter.



See Chapter 16, Implementation, for a description of Plan Monitoring. That section describes how to narrow down and select appropriate performance indicators, and how to fine-tune and set targets.

Table 7.3: Housing and Neighborhoods Indicators

Related Goal	Target	Possible Indicators
HN 1—Housing diversity	Increase housing diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % mix of single-family, multi-family, mobile homes, and other types. ▪ Location of single-family and multi-family homes. ▪ Number of newly permitted Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). ▪ Number of senior residential units.
HN 2—Existing housing stock	Rehabilitate/ retain existing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private and public funds invested in housing rehabilitation projects.
HN 3—Increase price range	Greater variety in price range (upper end)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of housing in higher price ranges.
HN 4—Neighborhood accessibility, all modes of travel	Increased pedestrian, bicycle, transit access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See Chapter 9, Transportation.