

STRATEGIC PLANNING | PHASE 2

VISION TEAM REPORTS

LEVERAGE OUR PLACE



University of Colorado **Denver**

THEME

LEVERAGE OUR PLACE

CO-CHAIRS

- **Tobin Bliss** | Associate Vice Chancellor, Fiscal Planning
- **Nan Ellin** | Dean, College of Architecture and Planning

TEAM MEMBERS

- **Kelly Mason** | Assistant Director, University Events
- **Meg Touborg** | Director, Development, College of Architecture and Planning
- **Will Swann** | Assistant Professor, School of Public Affairs
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- **Cary Weatherford** | Executive Director, Office of Institutional Planning
- **Alice Crogan** | Director, Marketing and Communications, College of Arts and Media
- **Lori Pace** | CEO, Changing Paces
- **Eugene Howard** | Senior City Planner, City and County of Denver
- **Joey Carasquillo** | Principal, Anderson Mason Dale Architects



What We Aspire To Look Like In 2030

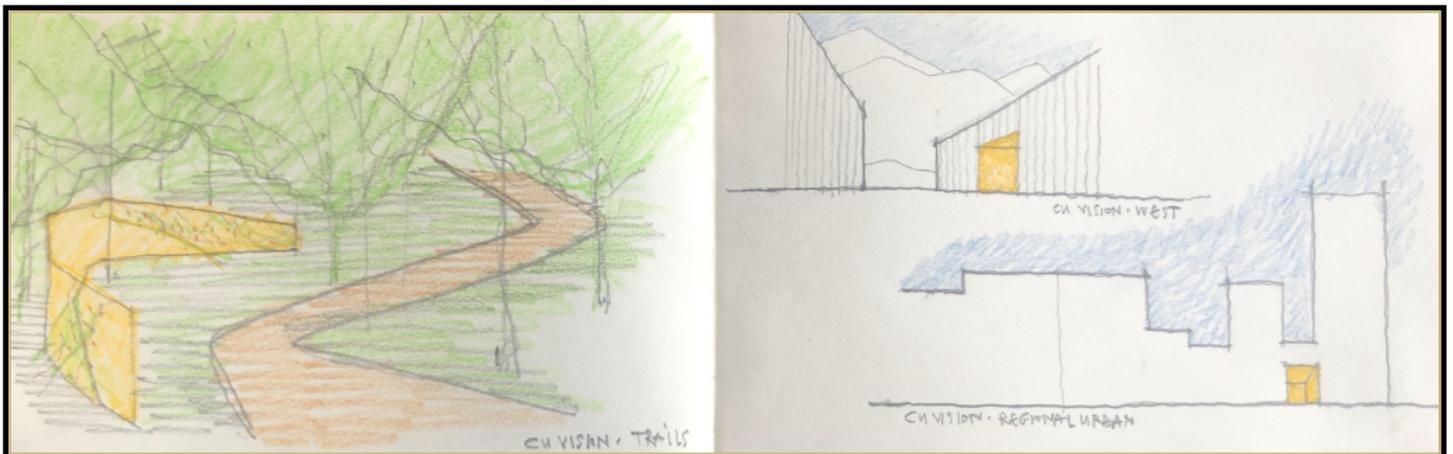
CU Denver is a destination and gateway to the city. People come through our front door with a sense of arrival, get what they are looking for and more, and keep coming back. CU Denver provides research and service as an action leader and thought partner, addressing pressing issues that face our community and beyond. CU Denver will be the first place people turn when they seek partnership, sponsorship, philanthropy, or expertise. The campus will also offer a rich array of arts and cultural events, reflecting our diverse community and including people from across the globe, as well as those whose families contributed to the history and evolution of Colorado migration and immigration.

WHERE WE EXCEL

- We are uniquely positioned within a magnificent landscape and a vital downtown, with diverse communities where both the city and environs continue to be our campus, as well as our canvas.
- We are accessible to students from all backgrounds and socioeconomic groups, including nontraditional students.
- Our campus is traversed by a creek that endows it with natural beauty, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities, while also connecting us with a major network of parks and waterways.
- Denver is an emerging global city with a healthy economy that allows many opportunities for engagement and impact: research, community outreach, arts and culture, philanthropy, revenue, and diverse partners.
- We engage in hands-on, experiential, community-based, and engaged teaching, learning, research, and creative work.
- We are scrappy, nimble, and willing/able to evolve.

WHERE WE STRUGGLE

- There is a lack of community awareness of — and affinity for — CU Denver.
- CU Denver has not fully recognized and honored the Native communities that originally lived on this land, nor have we fully engaged the West Denver community.
- There remains identity and brand confusion within the Auraria campus and the CU system.



Goal 1: Distinguish CU Denver And Strengthen Our Identity By Transforming The Larger Neighborhood And District

Distinguish CU Denver, strengthen our identity, and transform the larger neighborhood/district by creating an outstanding physical setting and developing strong symbiotic partnerships with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Success measures may include:

- Even stronger bridges are established to the community through outreach, community engagement, research and creative work, internships, mentorships, and philanthropy.
- Vital and vibrant public outdoor spaces are accessible to all, including organic learning gardens (so we eat what we grow) and the campus is designated an arboretum.
- CU Denver facilities are amenities for Denver and create impact for us as a civic institution.
- Students and community members feel welcome, safe, and comfortable here.
- We achieve a strong CU Denver identity.
- The district is a legal entity with political and economic authority, and has a name that speaks to all stakeholders.

Success cannot happen without:

- Good urban design, placemaking, and building in harmony with nature (sustainability).
- Bringing people to campus.
- Including neighbors, partners, community, and industry as well as students, faculty, and staff.
- Partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors as well as our Auraria campus partners.
- Honoring our location in Larimer Historic District, where Denver was founded.



Goal 1: Distinguish CU Denver And Strengthen Our Identity By Transforming The Larger Neighborhood And District

STRATEGY 1.1: ESTABLISH AN INNOVATION DISTRICT OR CORRIDOR

Establish a new district (Innovation District) that would distinguish CU Denver, strengthen our identity, and transform the larger neighborhood or district. This district would become a major hub in the larger regional network and a magnet for urban, economic, and ecological vitality through innovation, entrepreneurship, placemaking, and community building. It would also make CU Denver a magnet for intellectual life and a place for the creative spirit to flourish.

Initiative 1.1.1

Establish a clear value proposition for an Innovation district or corridor for CU Denver and the community, city, state, and region.

Initiative 1.1.2

Leverage our space by identifying opportunities for the diverse use of existing properties, including reimagining our workspace to include industry partners to provide enhanced educational opportunities along with mutual economic benefits through sharing and leasing space, equipment, and staff.

Initiative 1.1.3

Partner with developers of new buildings on the CU Denver side of Speer Boulevard for inclusion in their flagship buildings at Larimer and 14th Street and on empty lots adjacent to CU Denver in their building programs.

Initiative 1.1.4

Enhance the Auraria campus and CU Denver's presence on the city side of the creek through creative wayfinding and environmental design to provide a sense of place and enable students and visitors to easily navigate and find their way.

Initiative 1.1.5

Create an iconic pedestrian bridge over Speer Boulevard connecting the Auraria Campus to the CU Denver presence on the city side. Like the High Line in New York City, the bridge would be highly programmed with community spaces to attract and engage people.

Initiative 1.1.6

Establish strong physical connections with surrounding neighborhoods and with the new Meow Wolf, River Mile, and 5280 Loop.

Goal 1: Distinguish CU Denver And Strengthen Our Identity By Transforming The Larger Neighborhood And District

STRATEGY 1.2: CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Initiative 1.2.1

Strengthen collaborations with our Auraria campus partners - MSU and CCD – with the three Hispanic-serving institutions becoming a force for the region, something larger than the sum of our parts.

Initiative 1.2.2

Strengthen relationship with the K-12 public school system and be intentional about students' first experiences on campus through field trips to cultural activities, the wellness center, labs, etc.

Initiative 1.2.3

Reach out to underserved communities around Denver through active programming, research, recruitment activities, or partnerships.

Initiative 1.2.4

Create a centralized events office with clear processes to facilitate campus-activating events.

STRATEGY 1.3: CREATE A VIVID BRAND

Through “touchpoints” (color, fonts, collateral, textures, even potentially scent – every detail that conveys the essence of CU Denver), visually and symbolically link this new brand with environmental wayfinding.

Initiative 1.3.1

Refresh both the CU Denver logo and the CU in the City motto, leveraging the opportunity to re-introduce CU Denver to the larger community by vividly signaling distinction from the other CU's as well as MSU and CCD, and advancing beyond our mere location (“in the City”) toward weaving strong symbiotic partnerships with mutually beneficial outcomes.

Initiative 1.3.2

Introduce new traditions that distinguish us, honor those here before us, and foreshadow our unique future path.

Initiative 1.3.3

Create “pop-ups” in vacant storefronts, along the creek, on campus, and elsewhere – designed and built by transdisciplinary teams of CU Denver students – to simultaneously activate places while showcasing (Public Relations) the cutting-edge skills and talents of our students.



Goal 2: Honor Our Place And Those Here Before Us To Inform The Future

Finally, and inclusively, remember and reckon with Auraria's past as we imagine its future through appropriate land and community recognitions and ongoing activities. This cross-campus effort will engage transdisciplinary teams of faculty, staff, students from CU Denver, MSU, and CCD, along with community partners to heal festering wounds from the past so we may grow together for the benefit of all. This active remembrance of the campus's histories will generate a more welcoming and enriching learning and experiential environment for students, staff, faculty, community members, and visitors.

Ensure recognition and inclusion of Auraria's pre-Anglo and pre-CU Denver histories, peoples, and landscapes, and Include these communities in future planning efforts.

Success measures may include:

- A new entity to oversee these efforts that might include a living museum, exhibitions, panel discussions, related research, and creative work such as monuments, remembrances, and proposals for the future. This entity could be called The Bridge — bridging past, present, and future while also bridging and celebrating cultural differences — and it could be located on the new pedestrian bridge. In the meantime, it could be located in the Auraria Library, which is shared by all three institutions.

Success cannot happen without:

- Coordination and collaboration with representatives from surrounding neighborhoods, as well as displaced Aurarians and their children, to create a sense of belonging in an ongoing way.
- Connecting history to the future by emphasizing growth and the ability to transform and evolve.
- Applying for existing funding to support this work, especially restoration of Ninth Street Park and its buildings.
- Acknowledging the larger context of Denver.
- Ongoing staffing, programming, and participation of students, faculty, and staff.

STRATEGY 2.1: INTRODUCE A CAMPUS HISTORY PROJECT OR LIVING MUSEUM

To remember, un-erase, and make amends to co-create a stronger and more compassionate community, and educate current and future generations.

Initiative 2.1.1

Engage with Auraria partners to assemble, discover, and curate the extensive existing work on the campus' history, as well as gather its untold histories and narratives. This could include developing museum content by collaborating with courses and projects and creating a community-facing website to collect and discover untold stories.

Initiative 2.1.2

Produce physical places, spaces, and markers on campus to honor the campus history, including markers and plaques based on location analysis, campus and community input, and design.

Initiative 2.1.3

Support historical recognition and maintenance of our buildings. Apply for funding to restore Casa Mayan and other buildings, and for programming. Generate interest from History Colorado as a partner and apply for a History Colorado State Historical Fund grant.



Goal 2: Honor Our Place And Those Here Before Us To Inform The Future

STRATEGY 2.2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN TO FACILITATE AWARENESS OF HISTORY AND SUPPORT INVOLVED PARTIES

Open public relations and communications efforts to all, bringing together disparate initiatives to collaborate and cross-pollinate.

Initiative 2.2.1

Establish intentional community engagement processes. Bring the right people together, including History Colorado, Historic Denver Inc., Colorado Preservation Inc., students, faculty, staff to develop a facility that could potentially become a City of Denver History Museum, including information and material culture related to Auraria and Downtown Denver.

Initiative 2.2.2

Create an Inclusive Auraria Community Engagement Board. Consider a possible activist lens.

1. Support for native Aurarians
 - a. Inclusion of displaced Aurarians on Board
2. Land recognition, people acknowledgments
 - a. Build on existing partnerships with local tribes (Dr. Roane) to move towards land and peoples acknowledgments
3. Intentionality through landscape to reflect local flora (e.g., as part of a campus arboretum effort) and recognize a sense of "home"
4. Ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are visibly reflected in our campus spaces

STRATEGY 2.3: CREATE PRACTICAL WAYS TO IMPLEMENT OUTCOMES OF STUDIOS, SEMINARS, AND STUDENT PROJECTS

Initiative 2.3.1

Integrate coursework into these efforts. Consider, for example, an architecture studio that could develop museum designs on campus informed by this research and outreach; a public history course that would curate existing and new materials for current and future exhibit spaces on campus; and graduate students' professional projects for the Master of Historic Preservation degree.

Goal 3: Beyond The District, Leverage Our Larger Place: The Region, The State Of Colorado, The West

Success measures might look like:

- Local, state, regional, and international recognition of place-based and community-based work, engaged scholarship, and experiential and service learning at the university and what CU Denver graduates take with them.
- Leverage our impact because of our place, with local, state, regional, and international recognition of graduates and their impact.
- Develop recognizable CU Denver branding throughout the state and the region, using marketing and brand strategy.
- Meaningfully leverage our HSI status across the inclusivity, diversity, and equity of our student body and in our work.
- Establish opportunities to create individual and university identity through new traditions, contemporary work, and diverse representation in age, ethnicity, and geography.
- Broaden our influence beyond Denver, and validate CU Denver experiences in all locations.
- Extend our work for visible impact and positive transformation.

Success cannot happen without:

- Leveraging our current branding or new branding themes — leverage and build on “All Four ONE.”
- A clear identity and value proposition within Colorado and the CU system: What is your CU Denver; what will CU Denver be for you?
- Autonomy to take action as CU Denver, with our own goals.
- Flexibility in a variety of avenues, including financial or geographical backgrounds.
- Leveraging our collaborations and partnerships to do good in communities.
- Awareness of our identity.



Goal 3: Beyond The District, Leverage Our Larger Place: The Region, The State Of Colorado, The West

STRATEGY 3.1: ENHANCE CU DENVER BRANDING AND IDENTITY THROUGH PLACE-BASED TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND CREATIVE WORK TO BE CHANGE AGENTS FOR GOOD

Initiative 3.1.1

Develop clarity and strength of our identity and value proposition within Colorado and CU System.

Initiative 3.1.2

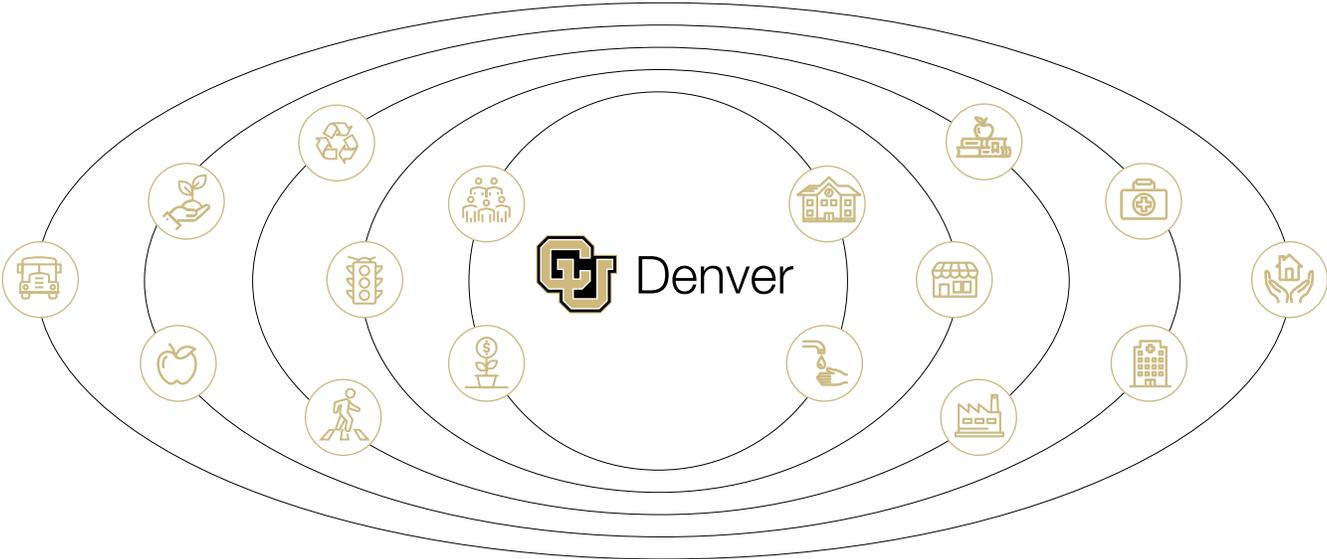
Partnership with local entities, establish community research and innovation hubs embedded in neighborhoods throughout the city, region, or state. Potentially, include health clinics in these.

Initiative 3.1.3

Provide research on topics chosen by communities to help them advance by addressing homelessness, displacement, poor air quality, traffic and street design, urban greening, transit options, access to education, healthcare, quality food and water, etc.

Initiative 3.1.4

Leverage the assets of the CU System as a partner in development to make targeted, strategic investments in land and locations around Denver aligned with the needs and opportunities of community stakeholders.



ABOUT THE PROCESS



ABOUT THE PROCESS

LETTER FROM THE STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Chancellor Marks,

When you charged our strategic planning steering committee you told us that CU Denver has built incredible momentum in the last 50 years and that there is great pride among our community about our progress. I was also struck by your comment that across your 100 Days of Listening tour nobody told you that we were done, but rather, our community is ready to capitalize on our unique strengths to become the type of university our city, state, and nation need.

During Phase 2 of our strategic plan, we brought together a team of 130+ exceptional students, faculty, staff, and friends that broadly represented the university community. They were organized in eight Vision Teams and a Steering Committee and asked to engage in an inclusive, innovative process to envision our future.

In the following pages you will find their work – the ideas conceptualized, articulated, and conveyed by our own community. These are dreams of what CU Denver can become by 2030 and high-level strategies for how we might get there. The work is phenomenal and I could not be prouder of our team!

I am immensely impressed by, and grateful for, the work of our Vision Teams, Steering Committee, and the Comcast Media Technology Center/Inworks Design Innovation team that facilitated this process with creativity, flexibility, and unmatched professionalism. I am confident that their work delivers on your charge to dream big and determine how we can carve out our unique and impactful future.

I look forward to working with you over the next several weeks to take these ideas and shape our community's very best thinking into a cohesive strategy for CU Denver that will guide us over the next decade. I could not be more excited for our future, and truly believe we will be the university the world needs in 2030!

Sincerely,

Marty Dunn

*Dean, College of Engineering, Design and Computing
Chair, Strategic Planning Steering Committee*

ABOUT THE PROCESS

BACKGROUND

CU Denver embarked on an ambitious [strategic planning process](#) in January 2021 to create a bold, exciting vision and strategy that will differentiate CU Denver by 2030.

After Chancellor Michelle Marks' [100 Days of Listening](#) tour, it was clear that our university community has tremendous pride and momentum, as well as a strong desire to launch CU Denver to national recognition as a leading public urban research university.

In January 2021, Chancellor Marks charged a team of faculty, staff, and students with collaborating on the development of a refreshed outlook for CU Denver, one that would capture a vision for 2030, strengthen and differentiate the university. The process was human-centered and inclusive by design and engaged hundreds of participants and generated thousands of ideas.

With the right vision, plan, execution, CU Denver can become a model university that truly meets the needs of all.

THE PROCESS

The strategic planning process used a unique method called design innovation (see page 5) that encourages big, bold idea generation, and the participation of the entire campus community. The process was divided into three phases:

Phase	Timing	Goal of Work	Format
PHASE 1 Our Vision for 2030	January 2021	Set the Vision	Broad community input was invited via multiple channels; 3,674+ ideas generated.
PHASE 2 Strengthen and Differentiate	February – April 2021	Develop the Themes	Eight multidisciplinary, cross-functional “Vision Teams” were charged to focus on themes informed by the 100 Days of Listening tour; they imagined, distilled, and recommended 4,000+ bold ideas.
PHASE 3 Synthesize & Deliver Our Strategic Plan	April – June 2021	Build the Strategy	Based on Vision Team reports and community input, a cogent and integrated strategic plan will be developed and released.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

PHASE 1: OUR VISION FOR 2030

Phase 1 consisted of foundational work around CU Denver's purpose, vision, values, and graduate characteristics. This began with gathering input from the CU Denver community through a series of community sessions and an online survey. The information-gathering process was rooted in appreciative inquiry – an inclusive, strengths-based approach to identify the most important attributes of our identity and ambitions — and served as a “north star” for the rest of our strategic planning work.

PHASE 2: STRENGTHEN AND DIFFERENTIATE CU DENVER — CURRENT PHASE

Phase 2 brought our community together to think big, dream, and strategize to determine how we can take CU Denver to the next level by 2030. This phase launched eight Vision Teams, organized around major themes informed by Chancellor Marks' 100 Days of Listening tour. These multidisciplinary, cross-functional teams were diverse and represented all corners of the university, bringing tremendous institutional knowledge to the table. They were charged with digging deep into our institution in order to develop goals, strategies, and initiatives to strengthen and differentiate CU Denver around their theme. A team of faculty, staff, and students from CU Denver's Comcast Media Technology Center/ InWorks, facilitated their work by co-creating a customized design innovation process with each of the Vision Teams.

The Phase 2 work represents the culmination of significant thought, discussion, data collection, and research that will inform the strategic plan for the future of CU Denver. The Vision Team reports are featured in this document.

PHASE 3: SYNTHESIZE AND DELIVER OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In Phase 3, the Vision Teams' work is being reviewed, synthesized, and distilled into a bold, exciting, integrated, cohesive strategic plan for CU Denver in 2030. We will present working drafts of this strategic plan through a series of community feedback sessions in early- to mid-May 2021. Following these sessions, we will begin the process of writing the final report, which will be a top-line synthesis of the community's work focused on high-level goals and strategies. The report is expected to be delivered to the CU Board of Regents in June 2021 and shared with the community shortly thereafter. Operationalizing the plan will follow in Fall 2021.



ABOUT THE PROCESS

HOW WE DID IT: PHASE 2

Phase 2 Participation



2,000+
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



8
VISION TEAMS



130
VISION TEAM MEMBERS



4,000+
STORIES, IDEAS, AND
ASPIRATIONS GENERATED
BY VISION TEAMS

ABOUT DESIGN INNOVATION

[Design innovation](#) (DI) is a human-centered approach that blends the mindsets, methods, and languages of design thinking, systems thinking, engineering design, and business innovation to discover, define, develop, and deliver innovative solutions to complex problems. The process centers the concepts of creativity, openness, mindfulness, adaptability, empathy, and freedom to explore radical and impactful ideas about our future.

A team of faculty, staff, and students from CU Denver's Comcast Media Technology Center/InWorks, co-led by Professor Kristin Wood and Lauren Hebert, facilitated the VisionT Teams' work. At a high-level, the teams:

- Kicked off their work by broadly engaging our community to understand individual points of view related to their theme.
- Analyzed what they heard to identify the opportunities where CU Denver could make the greatest impact.
- Generated initial ideas about how we could best make that impact and tested those ideas again with our community.
- Incorporated the community's feedback and created bold, differentiating ideas to take CU Denver to the next level by 2030.

This process was built around four sessions that intentionally brought together all eight Vision Teams in order to facilitate cross-collaboration and inspire new and bold ideas at the intersection of the distinct teams.

