

# **Findings from DRCOG's EPA-Funded Smart Growth & Aging Project: Removing Senior-Friendly Development Regulatory Barriers**

**Planning Commissioners Workshop 2007**

**March 10, 2007**

**Presenter: Joseph Hanke, AICP [jhanke@drcog.org](mailto:jhanke@drcog.org)**

**Senior Planner**

**Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)**



# Presentation Outline

- Regional Planning, DRCOG, the Area Agency on Aging, and the Metro Vision Plan
- EPA Grant: Senior-healthy Regulatory Guidelines
- Opportunities to Plan for the Aging

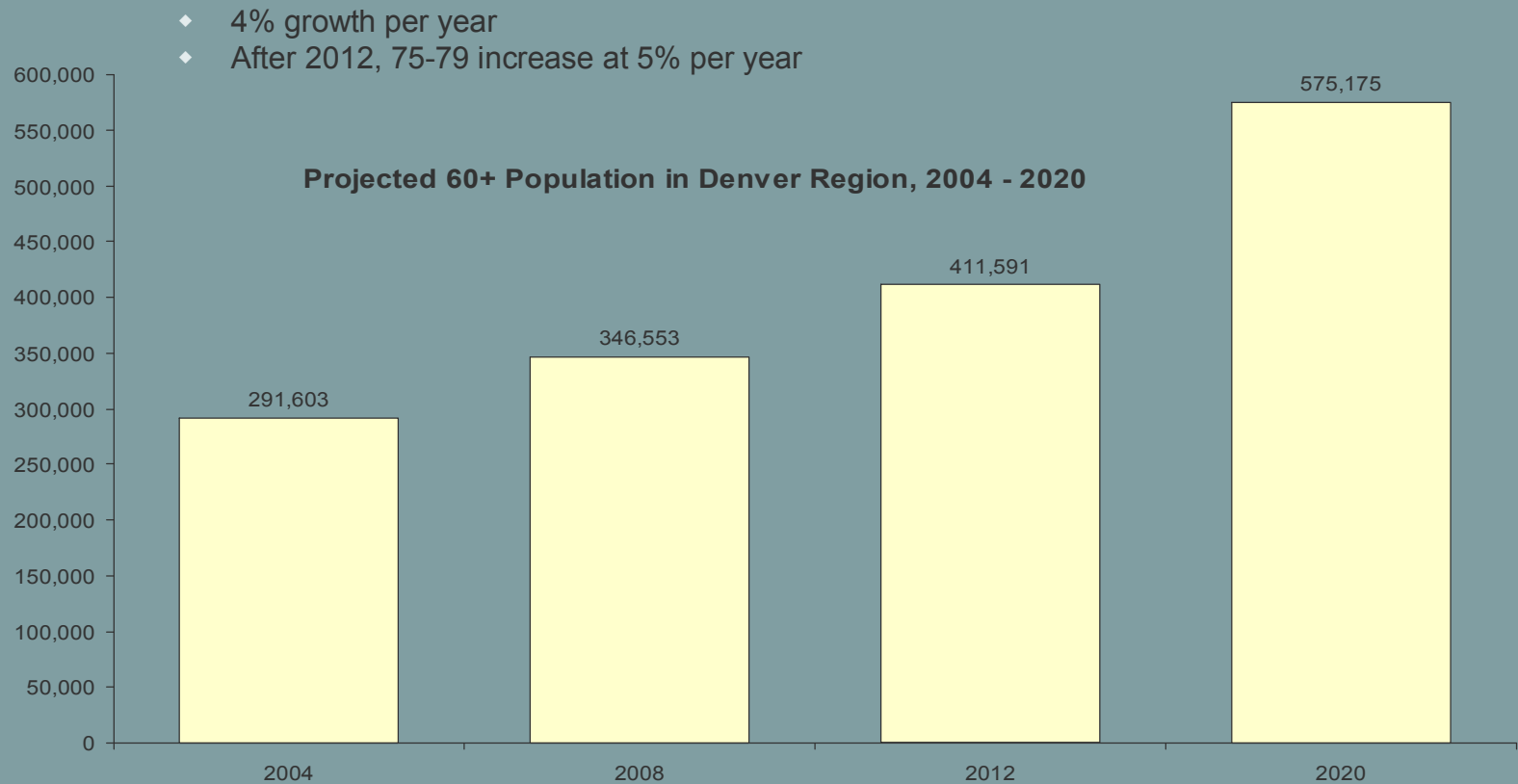
# **Regional Planning, DRCOG, the Area Agency on Aging, and the Metro Vision Plan**



# The Nine-County DRCOG Region



# Rapidly Changing Demographics



Source: Hayden, S., Lupher, K. A., Caldwell, E. M., Miller, T. I., Kobayashi, M. M., Reynolds, R. T., et al. (2004). *Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in the Denver Metro Area*. Denver: Denver Regional Council of Governments.

# Regional Issues

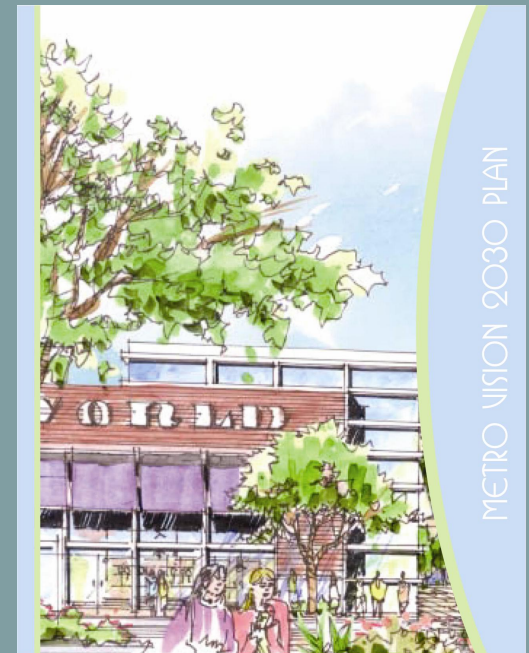
- Increasing population
- Increasing senior population
- Land consumption
- Competition for tax base

# **DRCOG's Role**

- DRCOG is Area Agency on Aging for Metro Region
  - Four-Year Regional Plans for Aging Services
  - Periodic Strengths & Needs Assessments
  - Livable Communities Advisory Committee

# Metro Vision 2030

- 2020 plan updated in 2004
- To be updated again in 2007





# Key Elements of Metro Vision

- Growth and Development
  - Senior-friendly Development
- Transportation System
- Environmental Quality
- Implementation
  - Mile High Compact

# Senior-friendly Development

- Promote development patterns and design features that meet the needs of seniors
- Encourage grid-based street systems
- Provide alternative transportation
- Accessible building and park design
- Larger signs, better lighting



**Barrier-free  
community design**



**Transportation options**



**Housing options**

# Implementation Principles

- Voluntary
- Flexible
- Collaborative (External and Internal)
- Effective – not intended to “sit on shelf”
- Through local government actions

# **EPA Grant: Senior-healthy Regulatory Guidelines**

**Special Acknowledgement:  
National Research Center,  
Boulder, CO**



### Healthy living

Access to:  
Fresh fruits/vegetables  
Health care services  
Recreational centers

### Active living

Shorter blocks  
Grid based communities  
(cognitive ease)  
Wider, continuous,  
well-maintained sidewalks  
Safe street crossings  
Narrower streets

### Parks

Street furniture  
Hard surface pathways  
Easily identifiable signs  
and equipment  
Commodes

## Smart Growth Principles

Range of Housing Choices

Mixed Land Uses

Compact Building Design (higher densities)

Walkable Neighborhoods

Distinctive Communities

Alternate Transportation Choices

In-fill development

Preserve Open Space and Critical  
Environmental Areas

Community and Stakeholder Collaboration

Development Decisions  
Predictable, Fair and  
Cost Effective

### Housing options

Accessible/adaptable  
detached homes  
Accessory dwelling units  
Congregate housing

### Universal design

No-step entry on accessible route  
First floor  
kitchen, bathroom and bedroom  
Reachable plugs and switches  
Accessible washrooms  
Maneuvering space

### Reduce isolation

Access to:  
Social services  
Commercial areas  
Public facilities  
Senior centers

## Senior Housing Needs

# Study Purpose

- To assist DRCOG with research, facilitation and setting progress measures for the creation of senior-friendly guidelines in the Denver region

# Study Components

## ■ Case studies

- Compile information from local communities in the U.S.

## ■ Developer/builder group discussion

- Get their input on regulatory impediments

## ■ Public-sector group discussion

- Get their input on developer's comments



# Case Studies

- **Housing accessibility**
  - Universal design
  - Visitability
- **Home Sharing**
- **Elder Cohousing and Cooperative Housing**
- **Accessory Dwelling Units and Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity**
- **Active Adult Communities**
- **Continuing Care Retirement Communities**

# Developer Input: Key Findings

- Understand “active adult” vs. “traditional” communities
- Public works, water and fire departments provide biggest zoning and regulatory challenges
- Developers must educate municipalities on unique requirements of active adult communities
  - Increase jurisdiction’s awareness of older adult housing options
  - Increase flexibility of jurisdiction’s codes and ordinances
- Would like DRCOG to have a continued presence in this arena

# Public Sector Input

- Understand the uniqueness of senior communities
- Public-sector departments must work together to overcome regulatory and process challenges
- The public-at-large must be educated on unique requirements of active adult communities
  - Increase public's awareness of older adult housing options
  - Keep codes and ordinances up-to-date with changing demographics
- Would like DRCOG to have a continued presence in this arena

# **Making the Land Use, Transportation, and Public Health/Safety Connection**



# Connection Components

- The Three Senior-Friendly Environments
  - “Complete Community Design”
- The Physical Environment in Detail
  - Sub-environments
  - Issues/Activities
  - Potential Collaborators

# Opportunities to Plan for the Aging

# **Future Activities by DRCOG**

- Further explore the effectiveness of ordinances and zoning codes in the Denver Metro Area
- Initiate discussions among city planners and developers on how to include tenets in Comprehensive Plans
- Commence with crafting a standalone Senior-Friendly Development element of the Metro Vision Plan

# Future Activities by DRCOG

- Hold discussions with some of the local communities highlighted in reports
- Develop a glossary of terms to provide a common language
- Collaboration between TOD and TDM programs at DRCOG



# Education

- Many obstacles could be removed through educating the municipalities on:
  - The current state of the active adult market
  - The market segmentation that has begun to emerge within the industry
  - The types of community characteristics and amenities that attract the active adult

# Questions/Comments