

Envision
LITTLETON

Help us see the future of Littleton!

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ADOPTION PENDING
Envision Report
December 18, 2018


Envision
LITTLETON
Our Community. Our Future.
2040

VISION 2040

FROM WHAT WE TREASURE TODAY ...

Littleton will continue to be a hometown community that is widely known and envied as a city with “strong bones.” Among the features that earn Littleton this reputation are its historic and vibrant downtown, its light rail transit link to the Denver region, and its distinguishing yet often unseen natural asset, the South Platte River. Along with the highly utilized greenway, trails, and preserves that frame the Platte, residents and visitors also prize the High Line Canal Trail that weaves through the city.

Littleton will especially be held up as the “real thing” when it comes to maintaining a sense of community among its residents and managing the essential physical traits that define community character, neighborhood by distinct neighborhood.

It will remain a place where nature and city living intersect, can both be enjoyed, and are guarded with a fierce sense of stewardship.

... TO WHAT WE STRIVE FOR GOING FORWARD

We recognize that our vision for Littleton’s future is framed differently than many communities as we are a largely built-out city. As we focus on managing change amid this reality, we envision a Littleton in 2040 that has:

- ▶ Maintained the integrity of its established neighborhoods and historic areas.
- ▶ Successfully integrated both new development and redevelopment into its cherished natural setting.
- ▶ Ensured that reinvestment in the community, whether in Littleton’s legacy housing stock or along its commercial corridors, has met local expectations for quality and compatibility with its surroundings.
- ▶ Made itself even safer and more accessible for all the ways that people navigate through and within Littleton.
- ▶ Achieved a higher standard for cleanliness and burnished its appeal as a place with strikingly beautiful vistas.
- ▶ Secured the long-term sustainability of city finances to continue providing its citizens the best in public services.

VALUES

In listening to stories and memories about Littleton, along with residents’ desires and concerns for its future, the following values came through consistently. The bulleted items under each are examples of how those expressing such values related them to their own experience of or pride in Littleton. Many communities share common values, issues, and priorities (e.g., to be a safe place). **Littleton’s core values include a passion for and/or commitment to:**

LOCAL HISTORY

- ▶ Preserve and celebrate it
- ▶ Highlight and tie it to our identity and events
- ▶ Origin as own town, rural and later suburban heritage
- ▶ Build on accomplishments of past eras and leaders

THE OUTDOORS

- ▶ Health and fitness focus
- ▶ Front Range proximity
- ▶ Stewardship of river and open space assets

BEING INCLUSIVE

- ▶ Age, race, income, and faith diversity
- ▶ Housing options
- ▶ Neighbors knowing neighbors
- ▶ Caring for those in need
- ▶ Welcoming to families, newcomers, and visitors

BEING A MODEL COMMUNITY

- ▶ Leader among metro and Colorado cities
- ▶ High in livability, family-friendly, and other rankings
- ▶ Partnerships with other public agencies

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- ▶ Being informed citizens
- ▶ Having a voice in city government
- ▶ Volunteer service

INTEGRITY

- ▶ Of community and neighborhood character
- ▶ Of natural resources and open space endowment
- ▶ Of architectural heritage and landmarks
- ▶ Of governance and open, inclusive processes

QUALITY

- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Built environment
- ▶ Air and water
- ▶ Open space
- ▶ Public services

SAFETY

- ▶ Pedestrian/cyclist/driver safety
- ▶ Security from crime
- ▶ Child protection



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Even in the face of potentially significant demographic change ahead, Littleton will remain **ANCHORED** by a firm belief among its residents and leaders of what makes this a truly special place. These features include Littleton's traditional downtown, established neighborhoods, and the literal "river that runs through it" in the South Platte. Littleton also has a longstanding reputation as a community of choice for quality schools and is home to the Arapahoe Community College main campus. Serving as the Arapahoe County seat, a destination for health care, and a hub for cultural and lifestyle amenities also keeps a consistent conception of Littleton in the minds of residents and visitors. Although stable in these various ways today, Littleton will approach its future with a sense of dynamism, looking to draw upon a culture of innovation and boldness inherited from earlier generations.



Littleton will continue to be **AUTHENTIC** and comfortable for both residents and guests. The often-cited "small town feel" and sense of community dates to our origin as a "Little Town" separate and apart from Denver. Littleton will continue to stand out in the region for its distinctive identity. Its genuine sense of place will always be contrasted with the look and feel of cities that came along much later or were master planned from scratch. The essential threads that will continue to sustain this community fabric include Littleton's historic character and architectural heritage, its varied neighborhoods and residential options, a robust and service-oriented faith community, and an inviting and safe atmosphere.



Littleton will be an increasingly **CONNECTED** and accessible place. From a physical and mobility standpoint, it will continue to have regional ties via highways and arterials, transit services, long-distance trails, and the Mary Carter Greenway. Evolving technology and network speeds will link it even more to the nation and world. It will be an inclusive and neighborly community that provides opportunities for youth, seniors, and residents in need to thrive, including through more mobility options. Littleton will also remain a fun and eventful locale throughout the year, bringing residents together for leisure and volunteer activities, and drawing visitors from near and far.



Littleton will always be a community of **ACTIVE** people who make the most of their city's cultural and natural resource abundance. It will support its residents' efforts to be fit and maintain a healthy lifestyle. It will embrace their desire to gather for live performances and other local happenings. And it will appreciate and build on the value of a lively downtown. Littleton will always seek to elevate its position as a dream community for outdoor recreation and nature enthusiasts – and a destination for visitors wishing to share in these local amenities.



Littleton will remain **ENGAGED** and civic-minded in all matters affecting the direction and priorities of city government and the community. Stakeholders will participate in transparent processes and take responsibility for maintaining a respectful and productive dialogue. Meaningful interactions must involve committed elected officials, informed residents, and other partner organizations and agencies interested in Littleton as it is today and will be tomorrow.



COMMON GROUND – SHARED PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS

The Envision Littleton survey asked residents what they value most about living in Littleton as well as concerns they have for the future of Littleton. In addition to the survey, the Envision team held over 100 events and had almost 3,000 in-person conversations. These helped to validate the survey results and enabled more “drill down” questions and interaction. Analysis of this input revealed that while there are various features and considerations about Littleton that people do not always agree on, many people share basic values that are reflected in the vision and guiding principles. Related to the lists below of most frequently cited priorities and concerns, examples of such underlying values include emphasis on fitness and healthy living, appreciation of natural assets and the outdoors, and interest in having a safe, inclusive, neighborly, and visually attractive community.

SHARED PRIORITIES

The following elements consistently came up as being valued in Littleton (sometimes to register concern about how an element might change or be threatened):

- ▶ Parks, trails, and open space (along the South Platte River, canals, and creeks and elsewhere)
- ▶ Small town feel and community
- ▶ Downtown Littleton
- ▶ Littleton Public Schools
- ▶ Safety
- ▶ Accessibility (having a variety of ways to get around Littleton as well as connect to Denver and other parts of the region)
- ▶ Amenities (such as Bemis Library and the Littleton Museum) and events (such as Western Welcome Week)

SHARED CONCERNS

The following elements consistently came up as being concerns about the future of Littleton, although in many instances there was significant variation as to why people were concerned about an issue:

- ▶ Traffic
- ▶ Growth impacts
- ▶ Compatibility of redevelopment
- ▶ Downtown parking
- ▶ Crime and safety
- ▶ Affordability
- ▶ Contentious local politics

“I have two sons, one currently of school age, and Littleton schools are some of the best around. Additionally my family and I have enjoyed, even prior to living here, the Downtown Littleton area, trails, Chatfield, basically all that Littleton has to offer. It's the whole enchilada.”



“Littleton is a great city to live in. It has a nice small-town feel and great amenities, including parks and local shops.”

“Crime seems to be going up.”

“The traffic, as is, is unsustainable, in 20 years it will be worse. It has to be addressed.”

“Affordability - home prices are making it tough to attract new residents, especially younger working professionals.”



“Littleton is a special place in the greater Denver Metro area. It has maintained its history in terms of community that is reflected in parks, common areas, buildings, walkability, friendliness, etc.”

“I could think of no other city I would wish to live.”



Quotes from Envision survey respondents.

SMALL TOWN FEEL AND COMMUNITY – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Over 150 survey responses cited “Small Town Feel” when asked to list words that represent what they value about Littleton. In addition, more than 100 survey responses mentioned “Community” or “Community Feel,” and similar comments were made repeatedly during in-person discussions. This was not surprising to the planning consultants on the Envision team as they hear these sentiments in most every city they work with, from small burgs of several thousand residents to cities with populations into the hundreds of thousands. The challenge is that “small town feel” and “a sense of community” can mean different things to different people, and they remain abstract concepts unless clarified. Based on lengthier survey comments, focus groups, community coffee chats, and in-depth discussions at community events, the highly valued “small town feel” and “community feel” that exists in Littleton stems from the following:

Stable Population

Many Littleton residents grew up in Littleton, stayed for a lifetime after moving here, or have family that also live in Littleton.

Active in Daytime

Littleton is an active daytime city versus a sleepy “bedroom community.”

SAFE

Complete Community

Littleton has many more pieces in place than others in aiming to be a complete community with homes, businesses, schools, diverse places of worship, outdoor recreation and health and fitness amenities, entertainment, healthcare, and transportation options.

Destination for Visitors

DISTINCT IDENTITY AND HISTORY

WELCOMING AND FRIENDLY

Neighborhoods

Gathering Places

Littleton has community gathering places - including Downtown Littleton, local businesses, Hudson Gardens, the Aspen Grove lifestyle center, Littleton parks, Bemis Library, and the Littleton Museum.

ENGAGED AND PROUD CITIZENS

FAMILY AND SENIOR FRIENDLY

Community Events

Quality Schools

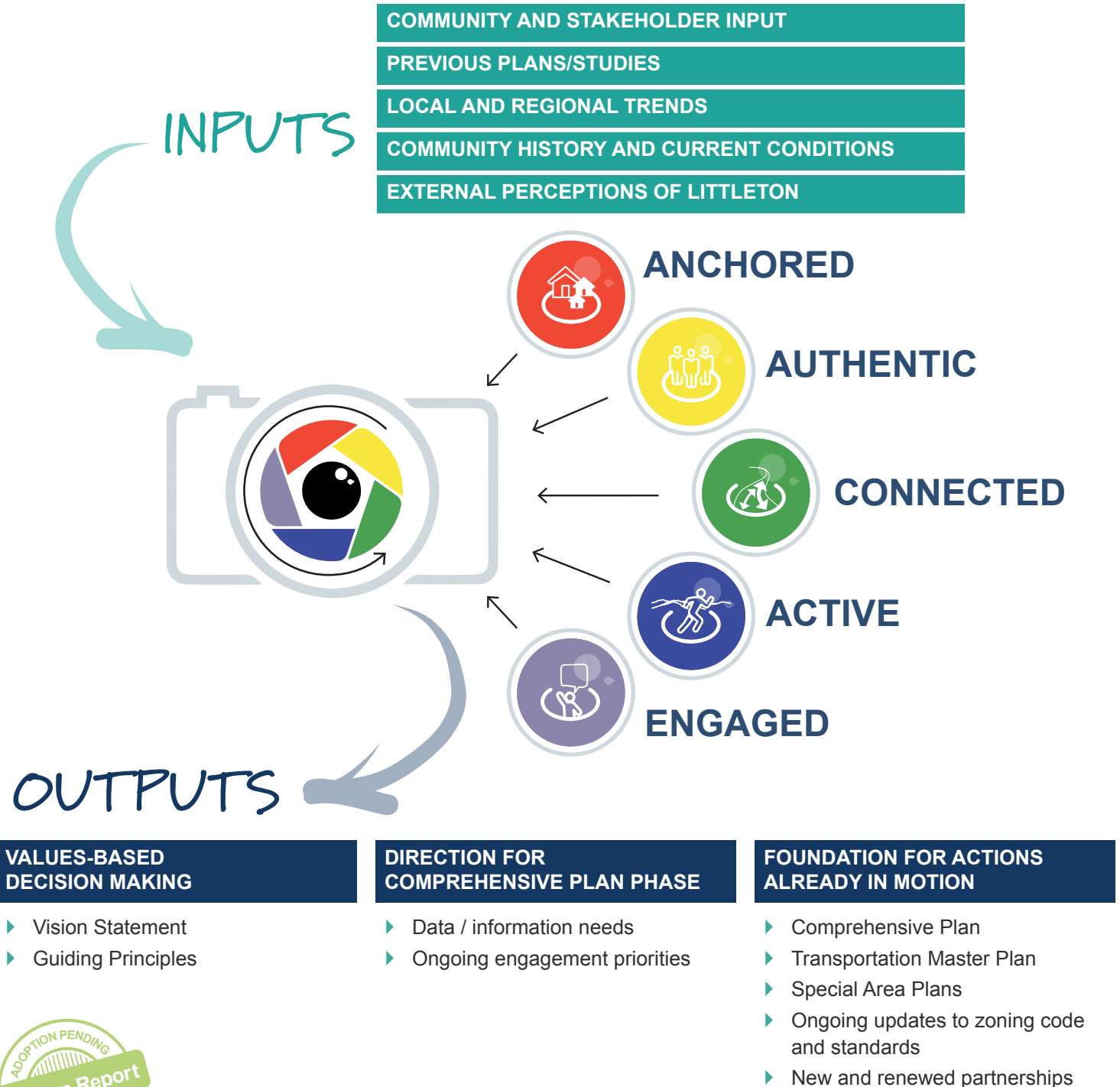
SUPERIOR PUBLIC SERVICES

ACCESSIBLE CITY OFFICIALS



WHY UNDERTAKE A VISIONING PROCESS AND HOW WILL IT BE USED?

Littleton has always been a great place and we want it to stay that way! Without a vision to define shared community values, decisions that impact those shared values will be made without a solid foundation. The vision will provide a guide to help the city and others make decisions, inform policy, and ensure our community never loses its heart and soul—**what makes Littleton, Littleton**—as it continues to grow and thrive. Envision Littleton has involved a filtering process of sorts. The Envision Team sifted through many essential yet disparate inputs, including expressed hopes and concerns and stated priorities of both community leaders and residents, to work toward more focused outputs. This is similar to how light and images are filtered through a camera as illustrated below:



WHY NOW?

VISION BEFORE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Littleton will develop a new Comprehensive Plan in 2019. The Comprehensive Plan goals, and its more fine-grained policies and objectives, will be based on the **Values, Guiding Principles, and Vision** identified through Envision Littleton. The first phase allowed the Envision Team to develop new relationships in the community with residents, organizations, and businesses, to build upon during the Comprehensive Plan process. Envision Littleton also exposed data gaps and areas and topics of contention or disagreement to focus on during the Comprehensive Plan phase.

BUILDING ON RECENT AND EARLIER EFFORTS IN LITTLETON

Envision Littleton builds upon the extensive existing planning work undertaken by the city as well as regional and local organizations. These existing, and in some cases ongoing planning efforts provide a baseline of data and ideas that will inform both this Vision Report and the 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

- ▶ **Recent City of Littleton Plans (LittletonPlans.org)**
 - 2014 “Citywide Plan”
 - Belleview Avenue Corridor Vision
 - Mineral Station Area Framework
 - Littleton Downtown Design Standards and Guidelines
- ▶ **Earlier Comprehensive Plans, both adopted and unadopted**
- ▶ **City of Littleton Resident and Business Surveys (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018)**
- ▶ **Littleton Housing Study**
- ▶ **Recent publications on Littleton's history and architectural heritage**
- ▶ **Regional and Local Partner Plans**
 - South Platte River Corridor Vision
 - High Line Canal Conservancy Vision
 - South Suburban Parks and Recreation Master Plan
 - RTD (Regional Transportation District) 2015-2020 Strategic Plan
 - DRCOG (Denver Regional Council of Governments) Metro Vision

KEY TERMS USED IN VISION REPORT

Envision Littleton—Envision Littleton is a community-driven process to develop a vision for Littleton that will directly inform the city's plans for the next 10-20 years. Envision Littleton imagines the future of the community. We listened to what you value, why you love Littleton, and your ideas about the future. This vision is the initial step in a larger process to update the city's Comprehensive Plan and prepare a first-ever Transportation Master Plan.

Vision—A broad statement of what a community hopes and intends to be in the future. With words and images, it offers a picture of that future to provide inspiration, motivation, and a framework for more detailed planning and decision-making.

Guiding Principles—Describe the values identified by the community and serve as the foundation for the Vision. The Guiding Principles provide a reference point for Littleton to consider when making decisions. The guiding principles reflect major themes, or areas of focus, for achieving the desired vision that emerged based on analysis of input by stakeholders.

Values—Identify what matters most to the community and how it wishes to be viewed by others. Our shared values inform the vision.



PROCESS OVERVIEW

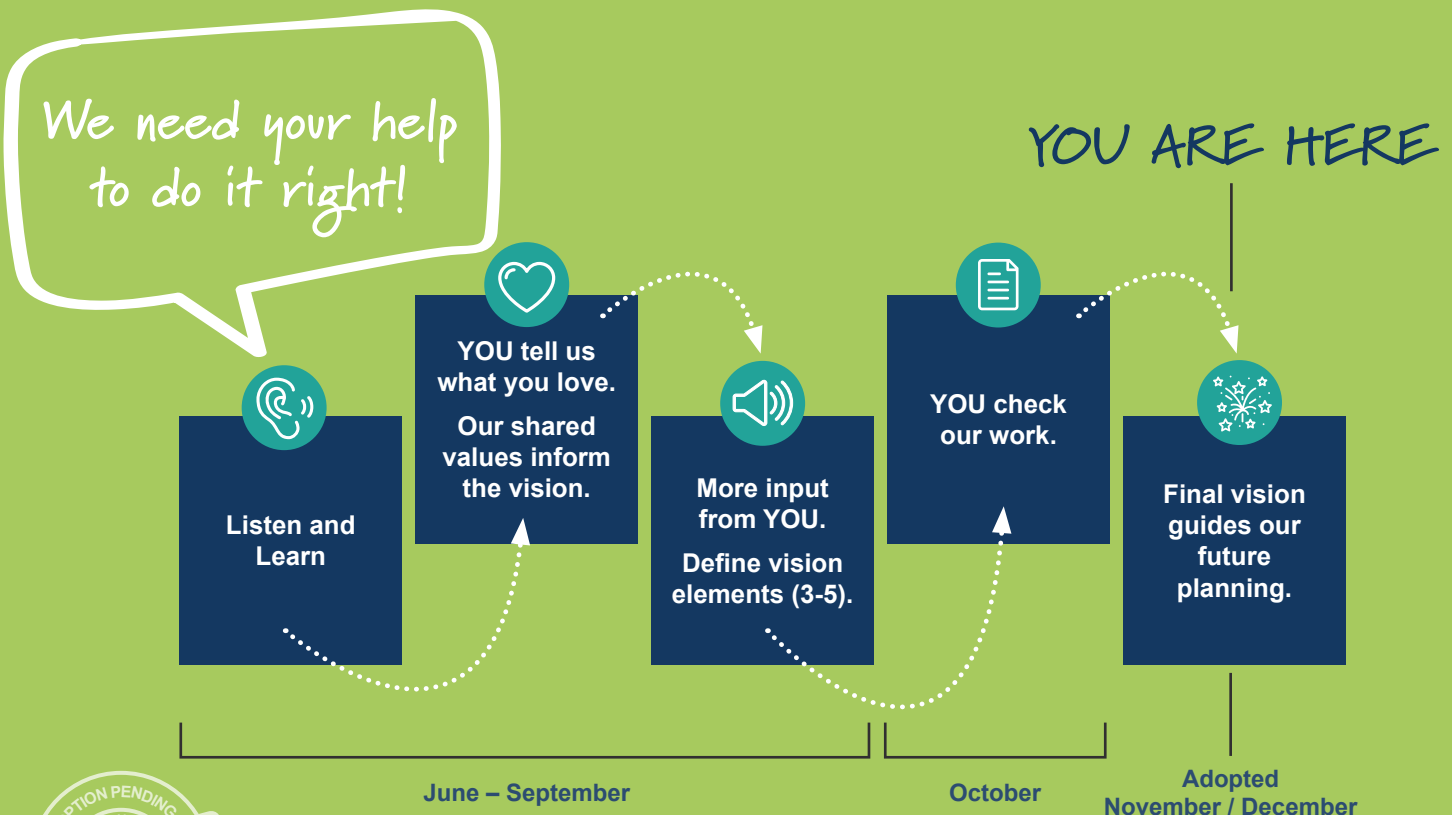
The goals of the Envision Littleton community engagement were to tailor the engagement to each group, go to the community where they were already gathering, and build long-term relationships, awareness, and engagement throughout all phases of Envision Littleton.

During both the first visioning phase and the second comprehensive plan phase we are guided by the following principles:

- ▶ We are working in partnership with our residents, businesses, and visitors.
- ▶ We are transparent.
- ▶ We strive to involve everyone including residents, employers, employees, and visitors.
- ▶ We tailor our interactions to bring out the wisdom of our participants.
- ▶ We are systematic in how we compare and analyze what we hear.
- ▶ We are building long-term relationships for all city efforts.
- ▶ We show participants how their input is used throughout the process.
- ▶ We build upon existing efforts, activities, and resources.
- ▶ We maintain flexibility to maximize opportunities and input.

VISION REPORT ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

The stages of Envision Littleton include:





ENVISION LITTLETON SURVEY

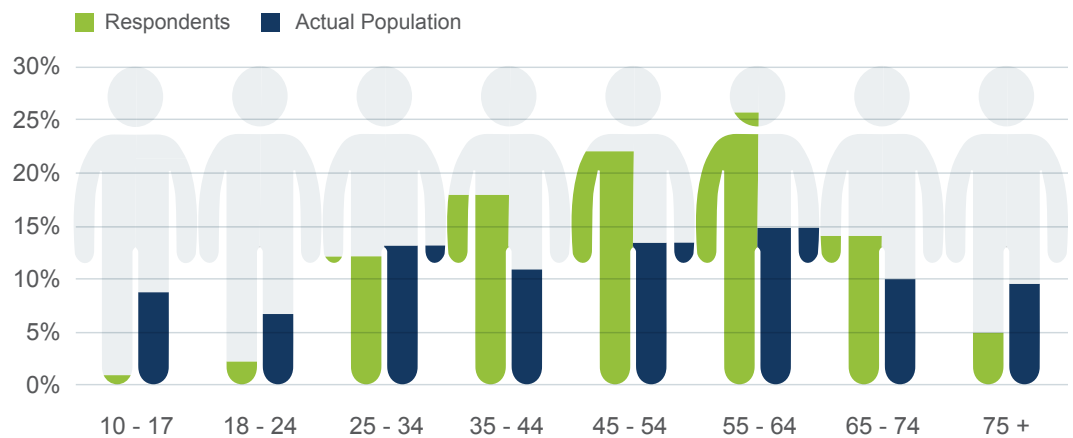
As part of the Envision Littleton engagement, an online survey was created as one of many opportunities to voice values, concerns, and priorities about Littleton's future. The Envision Littleton survey was open from June 12 to September 4, 2018. The survey was highly publicized through a variety of communication methods and a paper survey was also available. The survey was open to anyone and is not a scientific sample of residents. As such, the results represent the opinions of those who took the survey and are not representative of all voices and opinions. The survey results provide insight into values and priorities that, when combined with results from other engagement methods for Envision Littleton, establish the basis for the vision and guiding principles.



SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

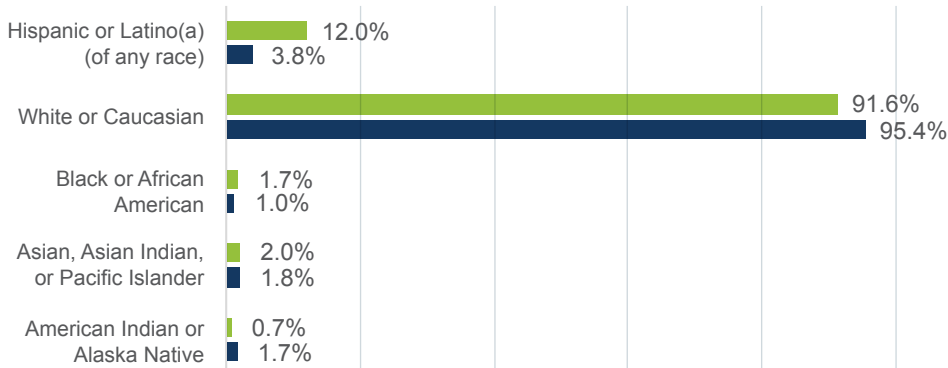
- ▶ Total Surveys Completed: **870 (852 online)**
- ▶ Total Resident Surveys (address within Littleton city limits): **635**

AGE DISTRIBUTION



RACE / ETHNICITY

■ Respondents ■ Actual Population

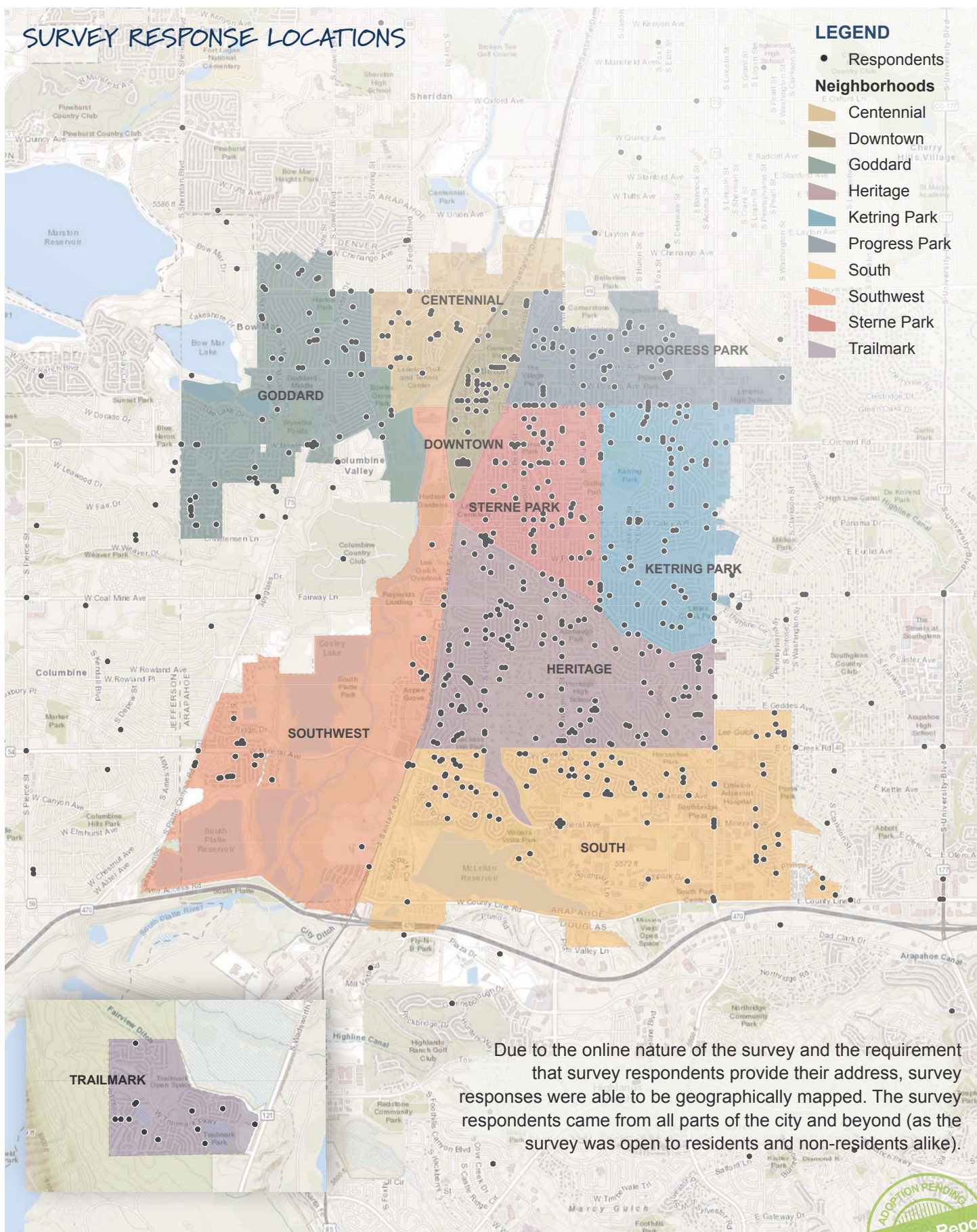


Year first moved to, began working in, or visiting Littleton

	% of Responses
Before 1970	9%
1970 to 1979	10%
1980 to 1989	12%
1990 to 1999	18%
2000 to 2009	20%
2010 to 2014	15%
2015 to now	15%
No Response or Unsure	1%

The demographics of respondents represent only the survey portion of the outreach and do not represent the full demographics of those reached through Envision Littleton. Of the approximately 3,000 community conversations held through September, it is estimated that 1/4 (750 people) were in the 0-24 age range.





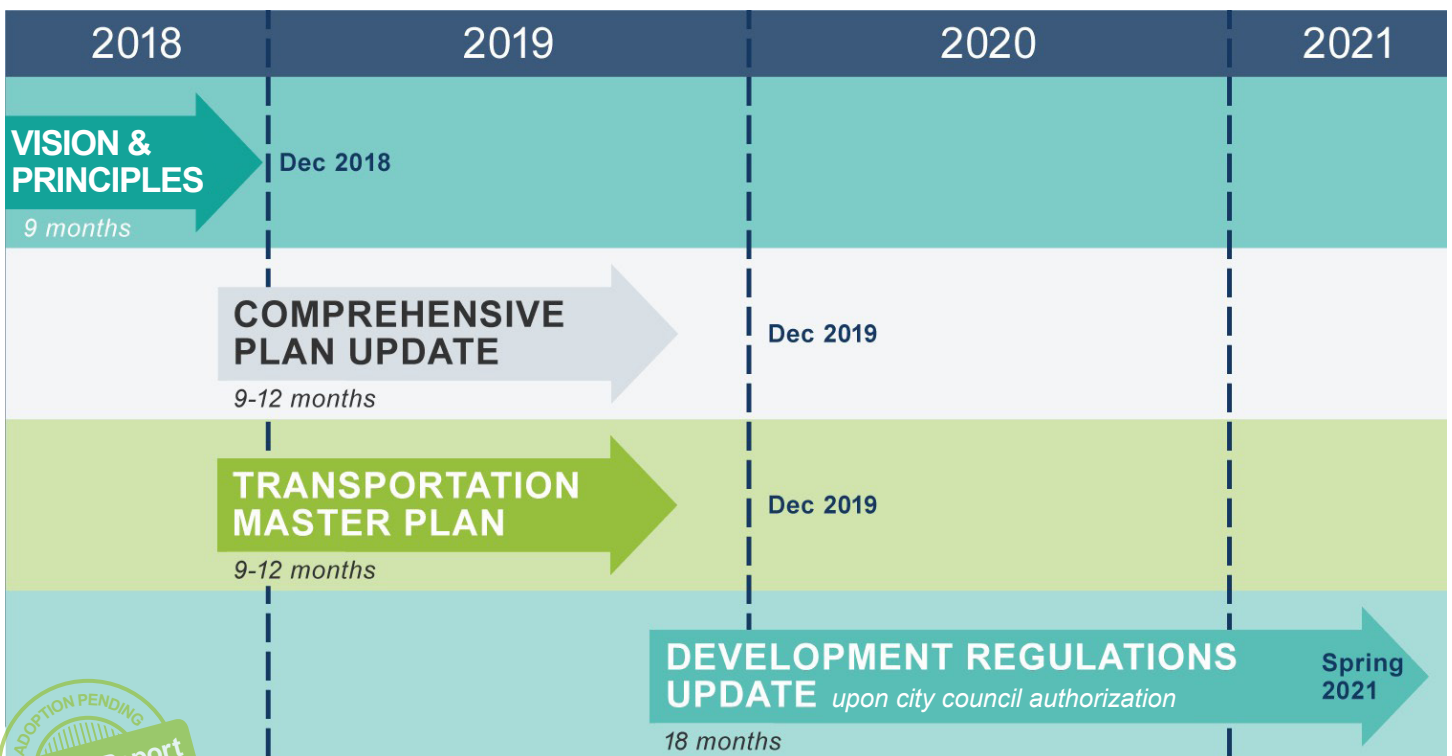
WE ARE HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD

Littleton will always build on the shoulders of its founders and past civic leaders who were the innovators and community champions of their day. They established expectations and standards for Littleton that enabled the community to prosper and navigate through periods of both incremental and phenomenal change. Among the core values ingrained many decades ago that still endure are civic involvement, outstanding public schools, preserving and celebrating local history, and being a model community and leading voice among other cities in the region and state. The proud residents and leaders of today, likewise, must pass on this community spirit and shared legacy that now reflects their influence.



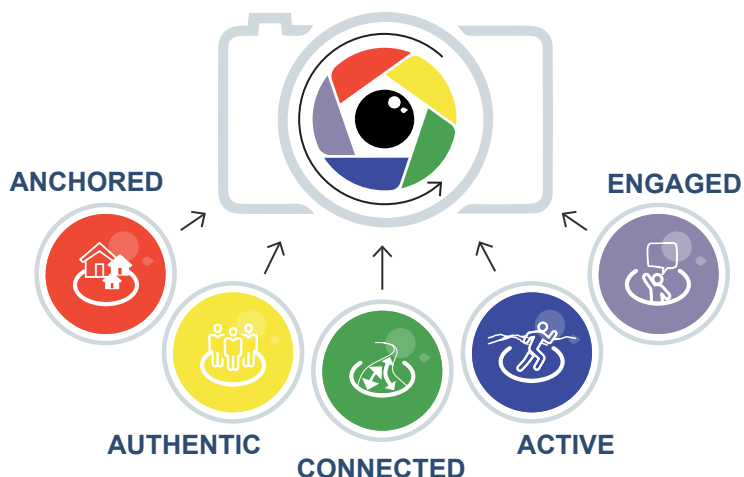
WHAT'S NEXT?

As shown in the timeline below, the Envision Littleton process was launched in the spring of 2018 as a prelude to initiating an update of the city's Comprehensive Plan. Concurrently, a first-ever Transportation Master Plan for Littleton will also be developed in 2019. Envision Littleton's initial phase will provide a firm foundation for these more in-depth planning efforts and a basis for ensuring both plans are well-aligned. The considerations, concepts and direction from earlier special area plans and studies will also be factored into the community-wide plans. The goals, policies and other specifics in the Comprehensive Plan will provide further context for the vision and guiding principles.



APPLYING OUR VISION AND PRINCIPLES

Following city council adoption of a finalized Vision Report in December, the city will immediately incorporate the vision and guiding principles into its strategic planning and routine operations to ensure values-based and priorities-driven decision-making. Just as Envision Littleton has involved an initial filtering effort to evaluate an array of inputs, the City of Littleton will apply the resulting new vision and principles when weighing various choices. Examples include budgeting, capital project priorities, department programs and staffing, grant pursuits, new or expanded partnerships, and zoning and land development proposals, among others.



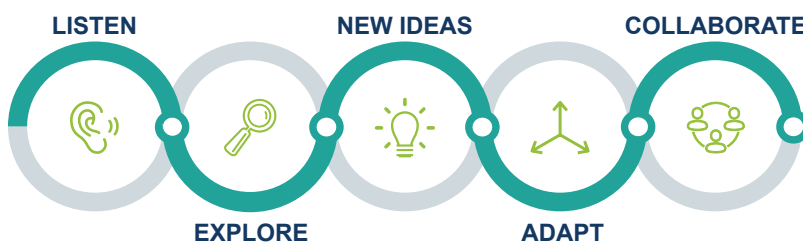
CHECK OUR WORK ENGAGEMENT

During the “Check Our Work” stage, Envision staff solicited input on the draft Envision Report both at in-person events and online. From October 6 to November 2, 2018, an estimated 2,500 people engaged with Envision staff at community events. In addition to providing feedback on the draft Envision Report, participants were reminded that planning for the future will not be easy and were asked what they believe is **the most important way to treat each other**. There was a fairly even response among the options, which included **Listen, Be Neighborly, Empathize, Be Open Minded, and Be Compassionate**.



WE ARE STILL LISTENING

Going forward, the city will continue to listen, learn, and adapt so that the desired future we are all seeking for Littleton will remain in focus. Effective communities evaluate their choices and revisit their vision and principles regularly. They must remain on target, be clearly understood, and encompass the range of likely issues that will arise. All who have contributed so far to Envision Littleton must remain stewards of the vision our community has put forward. This will ensure that Littleton is among the places where visions and values endure across decades and generations.





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LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

With the initial vision phase concluding in December, Envision Littleton will turn next to a fully updated **Comprehensive Plan**, to be drafted concurrently and closely integrated with a first-ever **Transportation Master Plan** for the city. Along with mobility, a Comprehensive Plan addresses many other “building blocks” of a community. Future land use and transportation planning, in particular, give physical shape and form to a community’s long-range vision.

The Comprehensive Plan will be centered on the concept of “**community character**” as a way to enhance Littleton’s approach to land use planning, neighborhood conservation, and open space preservation. Various land uses can occur in a range of settings within a community, from the most rural and suburban to the most urban, provided they are designed to match the character of the area. Community character accounts for the physical traits one can see in a neighborhood, on a roadway corridor, or along a greenway trail which contribute to its “look and feel” relative to areas with much different character.

Looking beyond land use alone, a character-based approach focuses on development intensity, which encompasses the density and layout of residential development; the scale and form of non-residential development; and the amount of building and pavement coverage relative to the extent of open space and natural vegetation or landscaping. How the automobile is accommodated is a key factor in distinguishing character types including how public streets are designed, how parking is provided, and how buildings and paved areas are arranged on sites. It is this combination of land use and the characteristics and context of the use that determines the real compatibility and quality of development, as well as the ongoing integrity of open space areas intended for minimal or no development.

Maintaining and enhancing desired character is a central aim – and challenge – of implementing community plans amid constant change.