

Deeply rooted for a sustainable future.

"ENVISION BRIGHTON"





Envision Brighton

Brighton Economic Development Corporation

Thoughts and Observations for Brighton City Council & Planning Commission
Regarding the Comprehensive Plan

November 2007

**“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”
Margaret Wheatley**

**“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”
Warren Buffet**

**“Some people see more in a walk around the block than others see in a trip around the
world.”
Unknown**

**“To get what we’ve never had, we must do what we’ve never done.”
Anonymous**

**“Some men see things the way they are and ask, ‘why?’ I dream things that never were
and ask ‘Why not?’
George Bernard Shaw**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Committee Members	6
Sustainability	7
Trends Analysis	11
Infrastructure Needs Analysis	13
Resources/Land Uses	14
Stormwater Management and Water Resources	16
Finance	18

INTRODUCTION

The City of Brighton is one of the fastest-growing communities in the region. Since 1990, Brighton's population has more than doubled, and more than 750 new businesses have located here. Nearly \$150 million in commercial and industrial development has occurred in the past eight years. New high-profile projects will draw even more attention to the area.

Brighton is also becoming more connected to the metro area, with E-470 and Denver International Airport providing excellent access and distribution opportunities for businesses.

But Brighton will not be the next bedroom community of Denver. Our community is, and always has been, self-sufficient. Once predominately agricultural, we now enjoy a healthy mix of commercial, residential, educational and recreational areas. We have a strong history, an established downtown district and a vision for the future. We have, in short, quality of life that people today value very highly--as do employers.

We need to grow in a sustainable manner while preserving what is best about our community. And we need to have a comprehensive plan that shows relocating businesses where our community is headed and how we will get there.

It is in this spirit that the Brighton Economic Development Council offers the following input for consideration by the City of Brighton during its comprehensive planning process.

This project is one of four key action items in the Brighton Economic Development Council's 2007 Work Plan. The BEDC Comprehensive Plan Committee began work in February to provide input into each component of the plan. It is comprised of business leaders and city officials.

These thoughts and observations represent the collective work of the business community and civic leaders within the economic development corporation looking over a 20 year horizon. **It is not intended to be a technical document and may contain ideas that are not currently feasible but worth considering.**

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SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainable community is one that embraces and delivers on immediate and long-term plans to drive a dynamic balance of the four pillars of a continuously improving quality life.

These pillars are: **Live** **Work** **Play** **Learn**

Each of these pillars has its own core components. While unique in themselves, they are inter-related and unstable without support of the other pillars. Elements within each pillar are:

Live: Adequate choice of housing to meet the needs of all families and individuals through all phases of their lives. From single-family starter houses to custom homes, apartments, condominiums and lofts to address the diversity of the city. For seniors, accessible one-story construction should also be considered. The environment must have clean air & water, be safe, and have ample open space nearby, retail, medical care and local services. It must reside near many modes of transportation including mass transit within the city, transit to nearby cities and be nearby highways. The living environment must be healthy and respectful with a visible police force and low crime. Citizens are encouraged and eager to participate in chamber of commerce, community events, politics and schools.

Work: Diversity of industry with professional and vocational employment options for all ages and backgrounds is essential. Gainful employment, proper taxation, viable enterprises, diverse choices, revenue growth, support of community, proximity to home and upward opportunity is needed. Diversity of industry mix is a must to level out the peaks and valleys of the economy.

Play: Recreation, social and cultural activities are key indicators of a thriving and sustainable community. This drives creativity, healthy lifestyles and builds energy in the citizens while creating a social fabric that binds that community together. Choices for everyone must exist that include at a minimum parks, open space, access to mountains, running, mountain biking, swimming, hiking as well as access to arts, rodeo, speedways, museums, film, and community events.

Learn: Education is the subtle differentiator between a sustainable thriving community and a stagnant town of limited desirability. Access to progressive schools for professional and vocational programs is core to sustainability. Flexible delivery is needed to provide distance learning, variable schedules and self-paced programs are needed from both public and private providers. Employers must participate as well to attract and retain employees through their education and training programs. Local government must support these employer programs at both the vocational level and at the post-graduate study level. Recognized universities with a local satellite campus are needed to alleviate the distance problem that typically exists in higher education. All levels of education must service the diversity of the community and be accessible to all members. Lastly, citizens, business and government must promote the availability of education and evangelize its value.

An individual review of the community will yield an understanding of why anyone, regardless of background and economic status, would move here now and stay here for the long run.

This sustainable community is self sufficient, though it draws from and contributes to surrounding communities. It is proud to develop its own brand and markets the community internally and externally. This brand must include the history and culture of the community in order to be embraced by all residents.

All members of the sustainable community understand its heritage, respect and appreciate the diversity of its population, value the contribution each member can make and acknowledge the need for continuous

improvement across all aspects of the community. The foundation for this attitude of continuous improvement is respect.

This respect starts at the individual level. Residents rooted in a sustainable community choose daily to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes the health of the community ecosystem. Day-to-day activities become more important when one considers the long-term repercussions of routine activities and conversations. Even the smallest examples can show respect: A young driver can consider foregoing a convenient parking space when it would be more beneficial for an elderly person to use it. Picking up a piece of litter adds to sustainable value, in lieu of dropping a gum wrapper on the sidewalk since it is thought to be insignificant in the big picture of the town. Word choice in casual conversation can either show respect for all other people and their situations, or these words can be judgmental, damaging any emotional momentum on common goals. Respect for self, for others and for the community remain naturally aligned. This respectful conduct builds a common ethic of service to the greater good, this being the sustainable community.

A future without a past creates new issues, as does an unbalanced approach to growth. We have seen that a sustainable community does not occur overnight, nor can it thrive if the four pillars are not balanced.

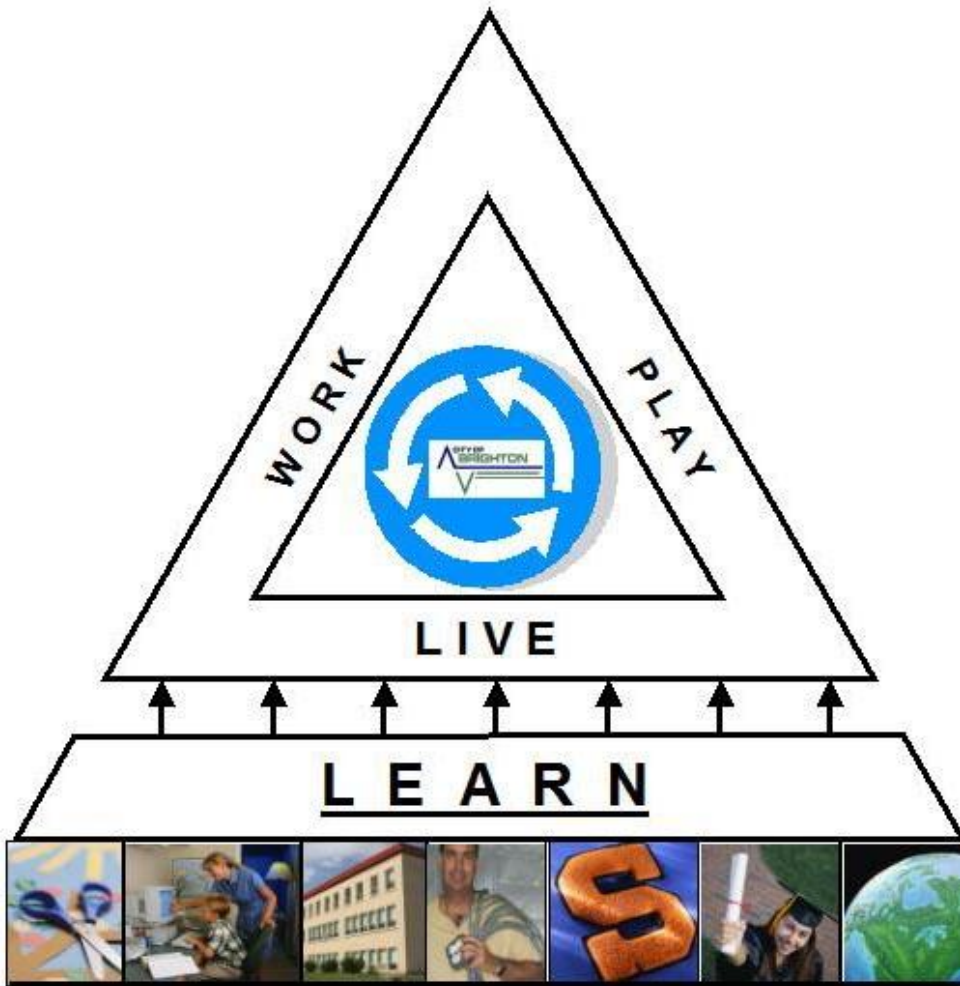
- Connection to the rest of the world is vital.
- Vision to see what is happening in the world and to prepare itself to be attractive to new residents and new industry.
- Awareness of the local history must be accounted for in order for the vision to be compatible with the history.

This awareness of history and the vision must be balanced to realize the vision and sustainable plans of our predecessors. This vision maintains a balance of the natural environment of the community with buildings, housing and infrastructure.

Sustainability starts with an attitude of long-term quality and a willingness to contribute to improving the quality of life for all residents. Sustainable thinking, planning, communicating and design should all start well before investment, infrastructure, development and population growth. Local initiatives, embraced by the elected community leaders, must be driven on a collaborative basis to attain the stated goals.

The sustainable community is a flexible platform that resides at the top of the four pillars; **Live, Work, Play and Learn**. As each pillar changes and grows, it must be done in concert with all others. In the event a pillar weakens, the entire platform becomes unstable, growth is hindered and sustainability is reduced.

The recent rise of economic activity in Brighton has sparked growth in some but not all of our sustainability support pillars. Recent news of potential employment growth and likely increased housing demand will further boost this growth. Currently, much of the recent change has been driven by actions external to Brighton. To seize the opportunities this change has brought, Brighton must proactively begin adapting to and shaping what the city will become. This adaptability requires new ways of thinking, and more so, investment in new areas. The key area of change to embrace is education, our “Learn” pillar. The graphic below represents a model of Brighton’s sustainable future.



Current efforts with Colorado State University and with Front Range Community College are vital to secure Brighton’s future.

Education resides as the foundation for all communities. All of America’s great cities and noted financial strongholds are located near educational centers. The tight correlation between education levels and income levels has become increasingly clear. As our country evolves from the industrial age into the information era, this disparity caused by educational shortcomings rapidly becomes more pronounced. More so, the rate at which the economic gap widens is accelerating as a result of the educational shortcoming being accelerated by the rapid pace of information exchange.

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”
Albert Einstein

Better schools, special needs programs, distance learning, vocational programs, and local university campuses, postgraduate programs all need to be available. Without this key element, the community is less dynamic, is more reliant on external support, is more susceptible to economic swings, suffers from stagnant property values, has a weakening tax base, is less attractive to industry, is less stable and left unable to seize future opportunities.

Improving local educational offerings is now the area with the greatest need for growth.

A sustainable community will appeal to and support all three phases of family development. These are:

1. Need the right place to work and live
2. Provides quality schools for my kids
3. Is a place my whole family can come back to for generations to come.

The sustainable community requires more than “Smart Growth” principles of sound infrastructure, desirable & affordable housing, jobs and energy conscious design. At a higher level, the sustainable community is an ever changing entity that:

1. Shares an ethic of responsibility and respect for all members of the community.
2. Recognizes the need to change with the times and consciously adapts to the rapidly changing environment both in the community and around the world.
3. Promotes and supports an ever expanding population through investments in housing, infrastructure, technology, education, environment and open space.
4. Actively seeks to build and maintain a long-term balance between the natural environment and the built environment.
5. Encourages community members to actively participate in local government decisions on planning, policies, taxes, education, environment and other foundational decisions.
6. Continuously monitors itself to track progress against goals, re-assess plans and recognizes the need to adapt to change.
7. Acknowledges its history as a foundation in defining its vision.

When the community and the members ask themselves “How will any particular decision impact my family & neighbors now and in the future,” they are thinking of sustainability.

The sustainable community is a product of strategic thinking coupled with the courage to change, actionable plans and an investment to build a better future.

TRENDS ANALYSIS

Sustainable communities have places to live, learn, work and play. The BEDC Comprehensive Plan Committee has identified the following housing, education, work and lifestyle trends that could impact the quality of life in Brighton for the next 10 to 25 years. This trends analysis should be updated on a regular basis, perhaps by a diverse team of community leaders involved in an “Envision Brighton” initiative.

Live

Local Population Trends

- The North metro population is projected to grow 22% by 2015 and 43% by 2030.
- Household size is projected to decrease from a regional average of 2.59 persons to 2.33 persons.
- The growth of Hispanic households is likely to outpace the growth of white, non-Hispanic and Asian households.
- More than 38% of Brighton citizens are Hispanic.

National Lifestyle Trends

- Single-person households will continue to outpace the growth of households with married couples and children.
- Baby boomers will continue to retire: housing demands shift to lower-maintenance homes, consumption of goods and services stays high.
- Employers will be left with jobs to fill with experienced and educated workers. Employers will focus on areas with skilled blue and white collar workers.

National Housing Trends

- Housing options that combine “live, work and play” will continue to be in demand as Boomers age and most consumers seek convenience in their daily life.
- “Green” housing developments will be in demand in response to increasing energy prices.
- Homeowners will seek a sense of community as the trend towards neighborly interaction and activities continue to increase.
- Open space will continue to be highly desirable and increase housing values.

Learn

- By 2017, the majority of Brighton school district students will be Hispanic.
- As these children age or the 2nd and 3rd generation matures, the demand for affordable, higher education will grow exponentially.
- Currently, national four-year higher education institutions are struggling to provide an affordable, quality education for students.
- Nationally, educators are reviewing the traditional K-12 education model, developed pre-WWII, to ensure that its structure is appropriate for changing demographics, industries, lifestyles and student maturity levels.
- Public school systems will continue to struggle financially as they adopt changes necessary to educate the next generation in a changing world.

- Availability of quality education will continue to be an economic driver for business development.

Work

Trends in workforce size and composition and in the pace of technological change and economic globalization will have implications for the future of work.

- Employees will work in more decentralized, specialized firms, and employer-employee relationships will become less standardized and more individualized.
- Slower labor force growth will encourage employers to adopt approaches to facilitate greater labor force participation among women, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- Greater emphasis will be placed on retraining and lifelong learning as the U.S. workforce tries to stay competitive in the global marketplace and respond to technological changes.
- Future productivity growth will support rising wages and may affect the wage distribution; the tie between employment and access to fringe benefits will be weakened.

Play

Demographic trends and recreation

- There are an increasing number of unfit Americans and a related health care drain.
- Americans are recreating less now than five years ago. The common reason cited is a lack of time and restrictions due to work.
- By 2010, one in five Americans will be older than 60, but they may spend less time recreating. Many seniors are pursuing further education or second careers.
- Almost 40% of households include children under 18. Many want riskier outdoor recreation opportunities like trail boarding, mountain biking, BMX courses and off-roading with vehicles.
- Convenient parks and recreation programs can encourage physical activity and life-long fitness habits.

Retail trends

- From 2007-2025 Baby Boomers will be retiring from working full-time, but not from shopping. The demand will be for quality products/services at a good price that can help them simplify their lives.
- Discount retailers will continue to thrive as will higher end retailers for the many affluent boomers
- The enclosed mall is not the future. It is too expensive to operate and keep leased. Mixed use areas that have housing/offices within walking distance of retail will continue to thrive, but ample parking is still important.
- Stand-alone retailers will combine space, if the space is available and their businesses are complimentary.

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS ANALYSIS

Transportation

- Consider developing a strategic plan to address the future needs of transportation and roadways in and around the Brighton area, including highway interchanges. Particular attention should be paid to the changing uses of city roadways from industrial and agricultural uses to commercial and residential uses. The plan might address the need to widen existing roadways to accommodate future growth, expand on the “Main Street” concept to allow for a more pedestrian friendly downtown area, and how existing interchanges and exits (off of 85) could be better utilized for alternative methods of travel (light rail, bus line etc.)

Water

- The decision’s we make as a community related to water over the next ten years or less, will impact the future of Brighton for the next 50 years or more.
- Brighton needs long term water resources that are sustainable, legal and reliable recognizing the likely continued growth trend.
- Consider addressing the future need of expanded metro districts for water use and storage in and around the area. Part of this process will call for a new and improved carrying system, removing parts of the aging water system and replacing it with a new and sustainable type of delivery system to each of Brighton’s neighborhoods.

Energy

- Brighton’s growing population will create more energy needs. The comprehensive plan might evaluate how Brighton can take advantage of renewable energy production and distribution throughout the community.
- Land-use requirements should allow for alternative energy options

Technology

- In order to attract and retain a dynamic business community, Brighton needs to improve its telecommunication infrastructure. The comprehensive plan might address how to upgrade existing phone and internet connections or how to create wireless “hot-spots” around the city. Businesses should be able to take advantage of the newest forms of communications if they locate in Brighton.
- The plan might also address educational partnerships with area universities and community colleges. This would appeal to businesses that depend on a trained labor force, or on advancing research.

RESOURCES/LAND USES

Growth Corridors

- The comprehensive plan identifies “growth corridors” on most of Brighton’s borders. The cities on three sides, through intergovernmental agreements and actual development, limit options for growth.
- The comprehensive plan should suggest a reasonable balance between commercial, industrial, office, residential, and open space in the growth corridors, as well as compatibility with neighboring development.
- The plan might also consider dedication of land in a controlled manner to provide optimal relationship between development types as well as land allocated to government and community services, open space and cultural preservation.

Traffic Corridors

- Major traffic corridors have previously been addressed or are already developed. The larger corridors, such as I-76, E470, and HWY 85 are in place. Growth around these major corridors should be designed to sustain future traffic flows in an efficient and logical manner.
- The proximity of DIA and the potential of the mid-continent rail hub being located nearby result in both national and international interest in the Brighton area. The comprehensive plan should consider addressing multi-modal transportation infrastructure and support facilities.
- The comprehensive plan should consider transportation corridors that facilitate rapid movement of truck traffic away from the general population without compromising the exposure that local businesses have to highway traffic. The plan might also consider the ideal balance and location of transportation support services such as truck stops, fuel stations, repair facilities, restaurants.

Education

- In order for Brighton to maintain long-term growth and advancement, emphasis on secondary educational opportunities in the near term is critical. Strategic alliances with universities and vocational/technical schools are needed to support the future demand for a trained workforce.

Natural Amenities/Recreation

- Brighton has worked diligently to create an extensive open space system. The comprehensive plan might look for ways to connect the areas into a regional recreation network, connected to Barr Lake State Park.

Water Supply

The availability of water for domestic use, fire protection and commercial use is critical to sustaining Brighton's future.

- The comprehensive plan might consider three sources for water--primary domestic water supply provided through fresh water sources, storm water runoff for irrigation of landscape and open space areas where possible, and recycled water for irrigation and commercial use where possible. The use of stormwater is not currently feasible due to legal limitations on its use and would require changes to current state policy; however, further discussion in this area may be beneficial.
- Water demand forecasts to sustain development of Brighton should balance with the comprehensive development programming, and updated regularly to reflect actual occurrences.
- Brighton will need to acquire new totally consumable water resources to continue to meet the demands of commercial and residential growth.
- Non-potable irrigation water for landscaping, parks and open space irrigation is currently a viable alternative

Intergovernmental Agreements

- Future growth along boundaries already designated by IGA's should be compatible with the plans of the bordering entities.

Incentives

- City leaders should establish the threshold of investment that the City is willing to commit to in order to bring seed businesses and support structure. Tax incentives, land dedications, and partnerships should all be considered, as should development priorities, such as brownfield or downtown redevelopment.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND WATER RESOURCES

Water is likely to be one of the largest issues impacting economic development in Brighton. Brighton's ability to deliver water will be among the evaluation criteria of both developers (investors) considering Brighton as well as end-users and residents. Perceptions and reality are both important.

1. Availability:

- A. We should develop a solid understanding of the current water system for potable water and a water resource inventory held by Brighton.

2. Future Needs:

Brighton's growth will likely need to occur with less water usage per capita than in the past and a higher dependency on water conservation

- A. Compile a Water Comprehensive Study to determine future additional water needs both in resource and treatment capacities within the current plant infrastructure. Future studies to include: potable/non-potable, water shares, ground water, well water, and deep well water sources.
- B. Develop a plan and financing strategy for the future acquisition of water resources to sustain Brighton's growth.
- C. There are a number of large regional water resource projects currently under review in this Northeast area; should Brighton be exploring the costs and benefits in these long term water development projects? With developers and Brighton bidding against one another, this is increasing the cost of the water, when in reality the water is going to the same place.

3. Re-use/ Recycling/ Non Potable-System:

- A. Institute an examination of possibly developing a two-line installation system for future new projects in Brighton, with encouragement that Brighton may develop a source for non-potable water.
- B. Re-Use the water coming out of our waste treatment facility into a two line system (Sustainability/Conservation). Research what sources are available for non-potable water; i.e. treated affluent, deep well water, etc. and make these a reality as well as economically feasible. Consider also that installing a non-potable line reduces the cost of treatment plant operations by a reduction in the water plant portion of the tap fee. As an example, South Adams County Water and Sanitation District reduces it water plan investment fee for sub-divisions that install a two-line system.
- C. Evaluate the potential for a re-use system with new development for non-potable irrigation and indentify potential sources i.e. consumable effluent, deep wells and trans-basin water.

4. Storm Water Conservation and Use:

- A. Explore best storm water management practices to create the most beneficial uses of storm water while retaining compliance with Colorado law
- B. Every new development will utilize retention/detention ponds. These will be built in the developments as an open space requirement with a double use; beauty and augmentation.

5. Augmentation:

- A. The retention/detention ponds will be used for the augmentation purposes as well as the above mentioned uses. Ponds will not be lined so the seepage will work for augmentation.

6. Best Practices for Water Quality:

Current limitations on stormwater usage preclude some opportunities for Brighton. As a community, we may want to work towards setting ourselves as a model regarding how we deal with stormwater drainage recognizing the legal limitations currently surrounding this issue.

FINANCE

The challenge is to build into the concept of a sustainable design the concept of financing. How can financing be incorporated into a concept that has been formally defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?” Is it possible to structure financing into the a community plan such that the funding resource is not consumed by the present generation, but rather continues to generate funding and financing resources to provide for future generations? Some elements discussed relative to the funding/financing in a sustainable community design where that a multi-year, comprehensive plan for a sustainable community should contemplate and provide for integration of:

1. **Long-term Impacts and Consequences** — the use of a long-term horizon for decision making in which the community strategies pursue long-term aspirations rather than simply making short-term, reactive responses to problems. By keeping an eye out for the long-term, sustainable development ensures that financing resources and options for future generations are maintained if not improved.
2. **Interdependence** — design community synergy that recognizes the interdependence of economic, environmental, and social well-being. It promotes actions that expand economic opportunity, improve environmental quality, and increase social well-being all at the same time, never sacrificing one for another. Is that too idealistic to be realistically achievable?
3. **Participation and Transparency** — financial decision-making likely needs to be inclusive, participatory, and transparent. It recognizes the importance of process and decision-making that includes the input of the present stakeholders who will be affected by decisions, but anticipates and preserves the wealth and equity for future generations that will be affected by and dependent on the results of present stakeholder decisions.
4. **Equity** — financing and funding should promote equity between generations and among different groups in society. It will recognize the necessity of equality and fairness, and will reduce disparities in risks and access to benefits, particularly in protecting future generations’ from risks and preserving their opportunity for benefiting from the financing and financial capital of the present.
5. **Proactive Prevention** — Sustainable development should be anticipatory. It should promote efforts to prevent problems as the first course of action; it should not destroy economic capital of prior and present generations to provide for the desires of future generations.

