

Skyland/North City Park 2008 Neighborhood Research Results

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, residents of Skyland/North City Park engaged in a collaborative neighborhood research project with faculty and students from the Department of Planning & Design at the University of Colorado Denver.

The overall goals of the neighborhood research include:

Completed Goals

- The creation of a collaborative partnership between the leadership and residents of North City Park and faculty and students in the Department of Planning & Design at the University of Colorado Denver.
- The completion of a neighborhood survey to understand how resident perceptions and needs have changed or remained the same since a city sponsored 2002 needs assessment.

- The engagement of community residents in the research and analysis of trends in their neighborhood, as well as policy formation.
- The creation of resources useful to community residents.

Ongoing Goals

- Build social capital among neighborhood residents, between residents and public officials, private foundations, university faculty and students, and the civic associations of North City Park and Clayton.
- Use the information to lobby public officials and other funding sources for neighborhood improvements and community development.
- Develop an action plan for the former YMCA and economic development in the community.
- Create a resident-generated community vision and neighborhood plan.

This report summarizes three completed research projects:

1. Infrastructure Needs Map
2. Local Businesses and Community Assets Maps
3. Community Survey

Suggestions for areas of action are outlined at the end of the report. All research is being shared with community residents via the North City Park Civic Association newsletter, community events, and an online blog. The research results are also being shared with public officials and other important agencies in Denver. This research is supported by a grant from the Denver Foundation and is currently being extended to the neighborhood of Clayton.

PART 1: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

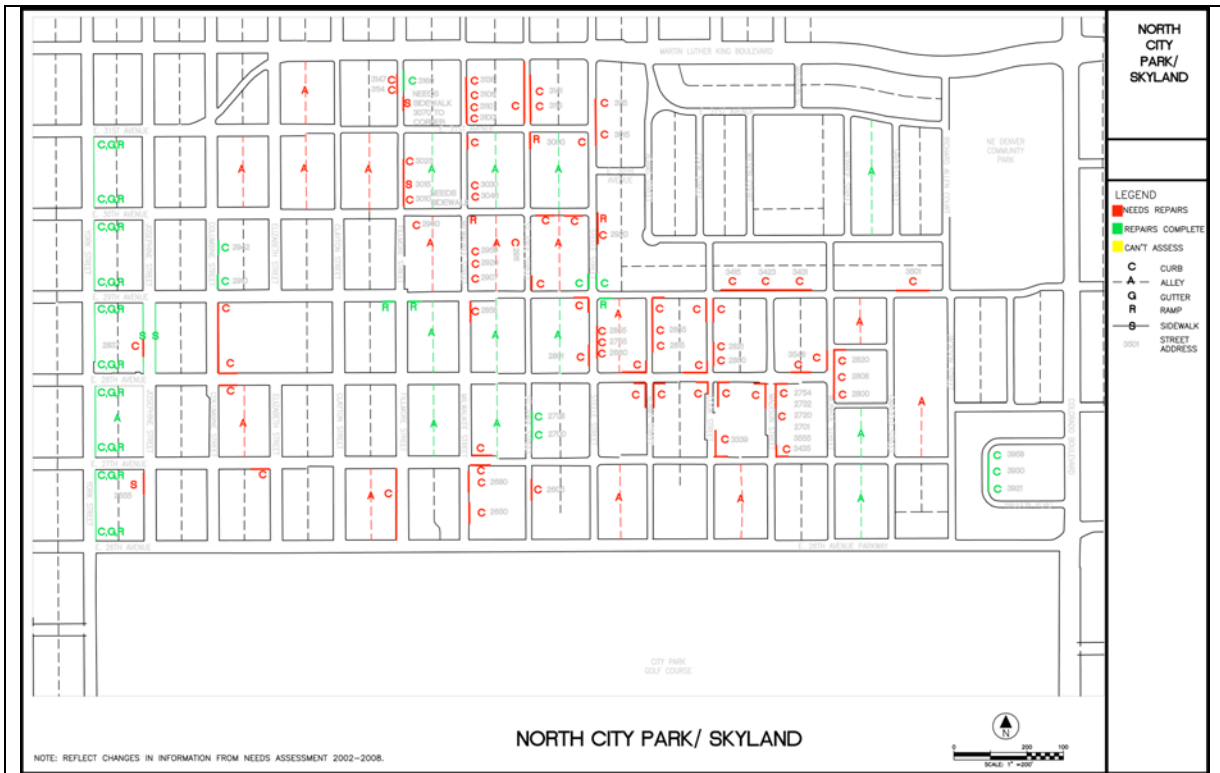
In 2002 the City and County of Denver's Housing and Neighborhood Development Services of the Community Planning & Development Agency conducted a needs assessment in a number of Denver's neighborhoods, including Skyland/North City Park. Residents identified infrastructure needs as the second most important local service that needed improving in 2002. Specifically, residents identified alleys that needed paving, a lack of sidewalks, and curb cuts that needed improvements.

What alleys, sidewalks and curbs have been repaired since the 2002 needs assessment? Using data from the 2002 needs assessment, field research and

interviews with neighborhood residents, a map was produced to document elements of the infrastructure that were improved and those that continue to need repair. The map below indicates elements that were repaired or improved in green, with elements still needing repairs in red. Most of the curbs, gutters and ramps along York Avenue were repaired. A few alleys were paved and curbs repaired in the center of the neighborhood, but there is a **clear lack of improvement overall from 2002-2008**.

Residents requested these improvements through 2007 with city council representatives and through the needs assessment done in 2002. Councilwoman Carla Madison requested the information contained in the map below and has promised to follow up on needed improvements. Residents need to understand what role they play in having their infrastructure needs addressed, what city programs are in place to improve sidewalks, curbs and alleys in their neighborhood, and what role the city and public works play in such processes. How do residents report infrastructure problems to the city? How long does it generally take to get infrastructure requests addressed?

Infrastructure Needs Map – Changes from 2002-2008



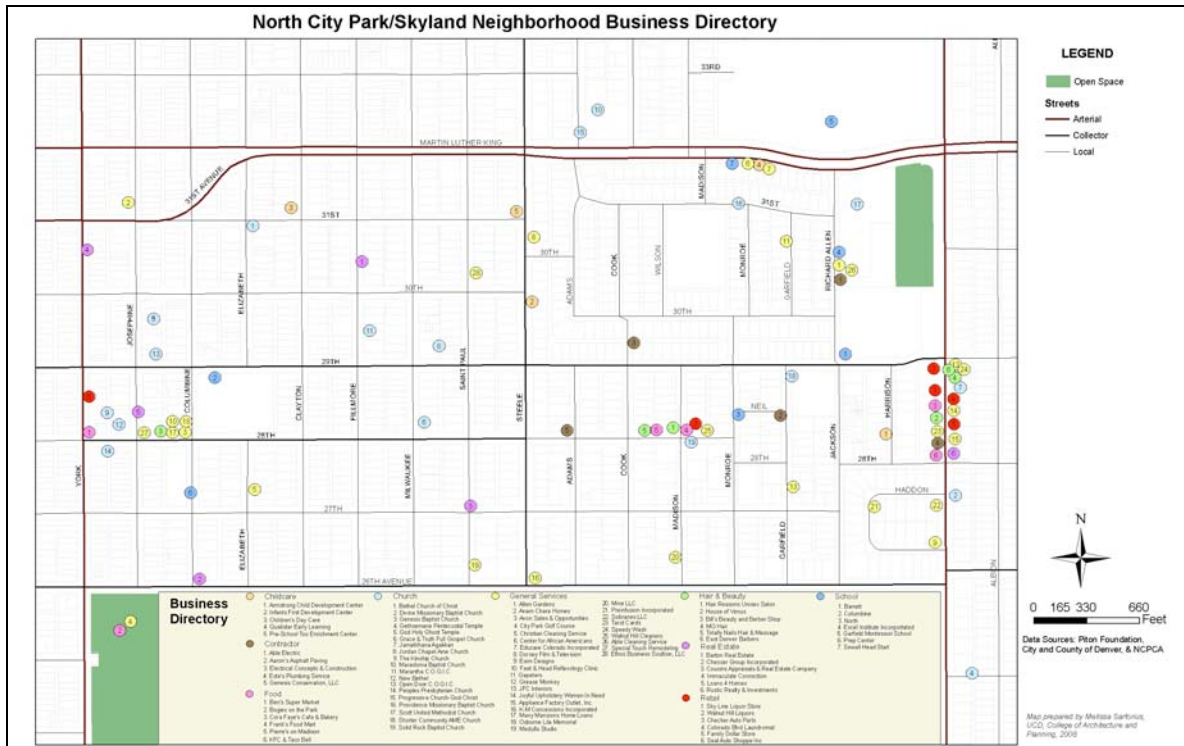
PART 2: LOCAL BUSINESSES & COMMUNITY RESOURCE MAP

Leaders of the North City Park Civic Association began compiling a neighborhood resource guide for residents. This guide is intended to showcase the history, architecture, culture and other assets of Skyland/North City Park for resident knowledge and to stimulate economic development in the community. Maps identifying the location of neighborhood assets, businesses and community resources were produced for this guide.

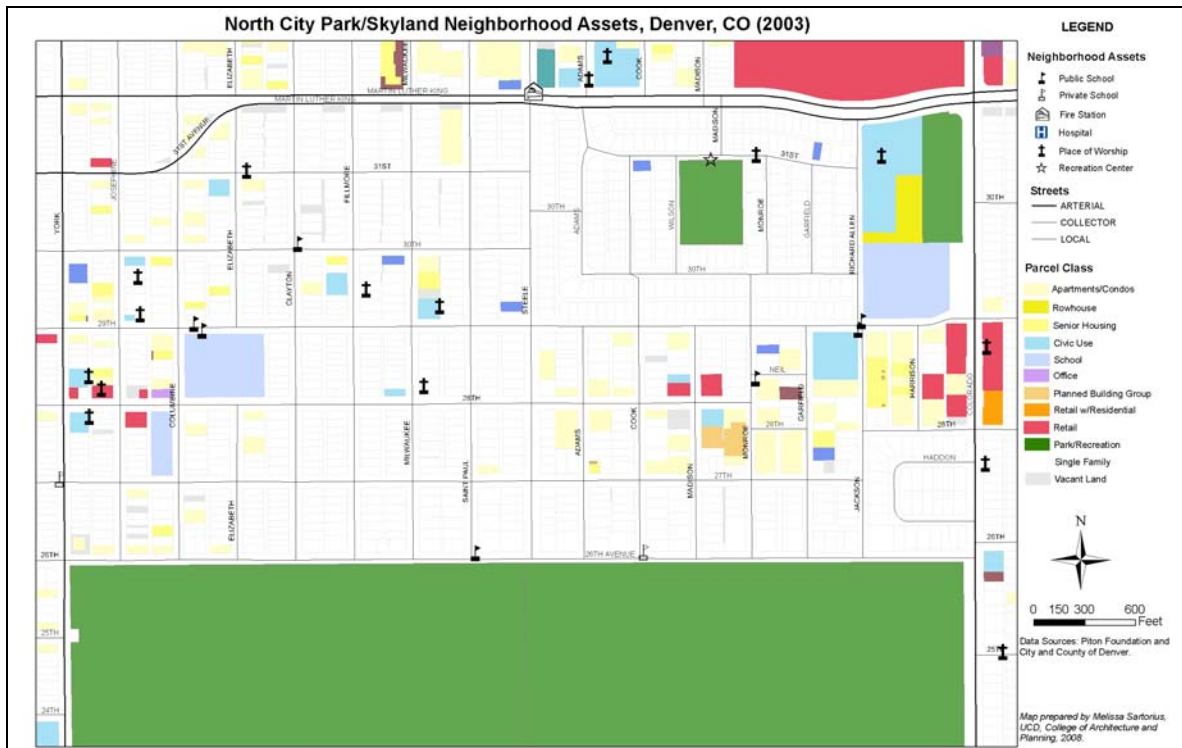
There are a rich variety of local businesses and community resources as indicated on the maps below. The most common type of local business is classified as “General Services,” including companies specializing in interior design, car repair, and other services. The number of churches in the community highlights the importance of religious institutions in the neighborhood. The survey presents additional data on which types of businesses are frequented by residents and their ideas for economic development in the neighborhood.

Most local businesses are “mom and pop” businesses that have been in the neighborhood for a number of years. Most businesses are concentrated along Colorado Blvd. and 28th Avenue, which are the two areas zoned for commercial activity in the neighborhood.

Local businesses and community resources



Neighborhood assets



PART 3: COMMUNITY SURVEY

A. Purpose of survey

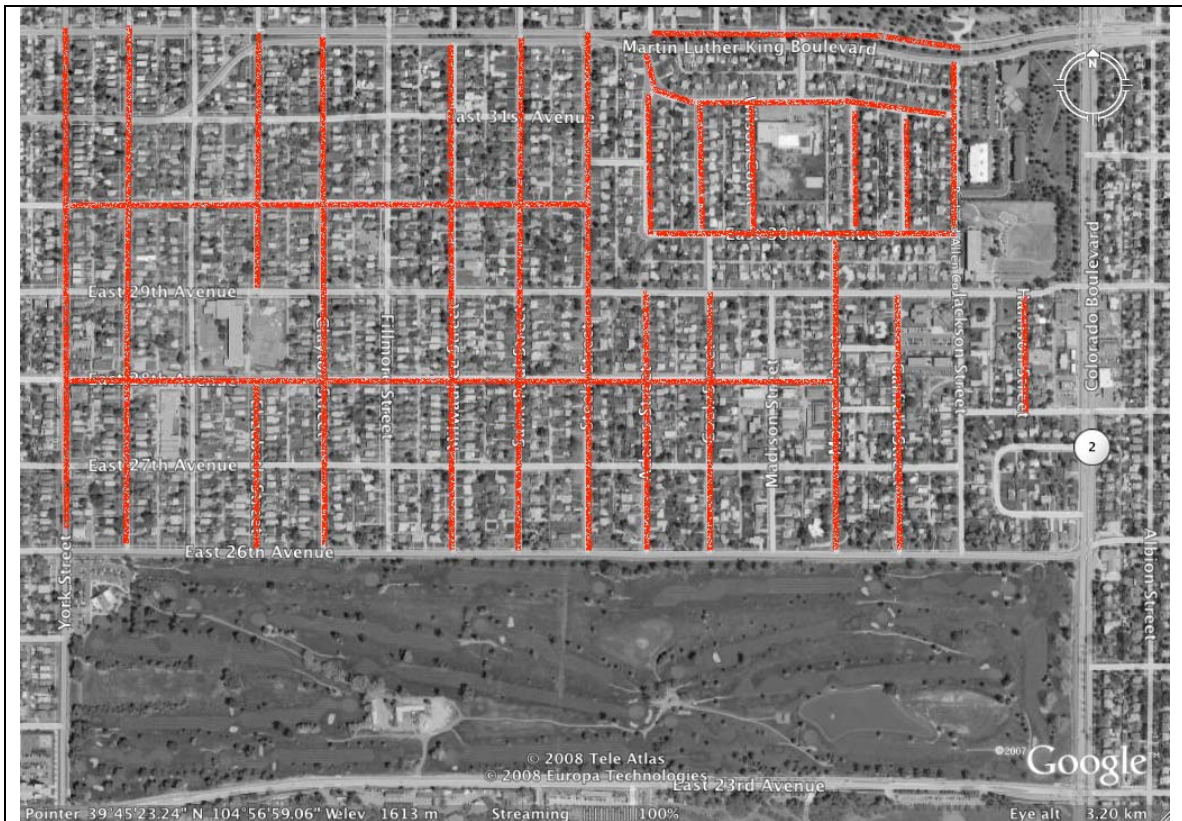
The purpose of the community survey was threefold:

- Economic Development – To learn how to better support existing businesses, attract new business into the neighborhood, and hear resident ideas for sparking economic growth.
- Youth and Senior Services – To learn about North City Park residents' opinions regarding the community services available to youth and seniors, in particular, their ideas for the former YMCA located in the neighborhood.
- Demographic Trends – To understand who is currently residing in North City Park to gauge how the community has changed since the 2000 US Census.

B. Survey process

The survey was conducted between March and August of 2008. Surveys were administered in four ways: 1) door-to-door, 2) civic association meetings, 3)

online, and 4) community events (alley clean up, Black Arts Festival, City Park Festival of the Arts). The following streets were sampled in order to obtain a balanced representation of community residents.



C. Who we surveyed

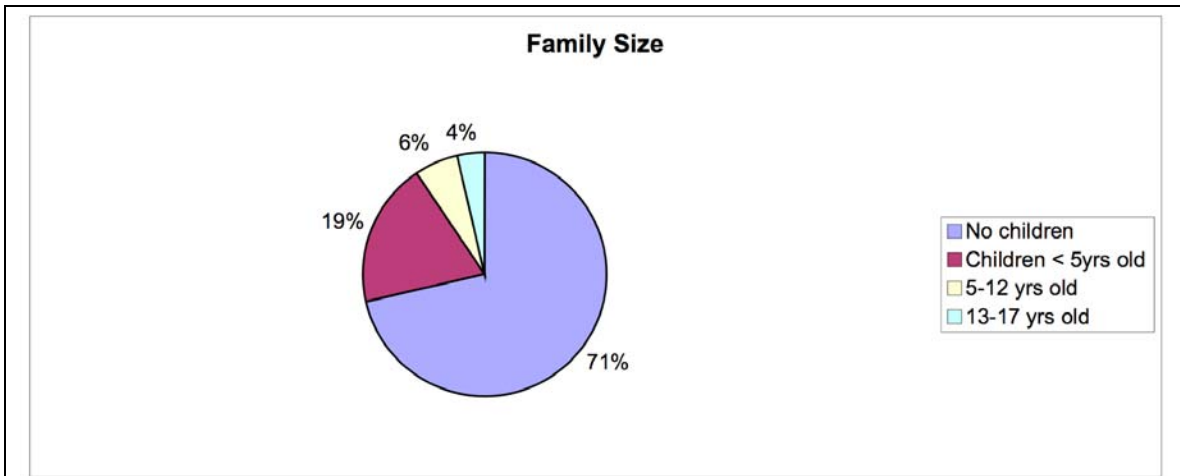
- A total of 103 households (7% of total households) completed the economic development and senior/youth services survey.
- A total of 85 households (6% of total households) completed the demographic information survey.¹

Gender and Age Group of Survey Participants

	Total (%)
Male	49
Female	47
Adults	68
Seniors	31

¹ Note: The city sponsored 2002 needs assessment surveyed about 25% of the total households in Skyland/North City Park.

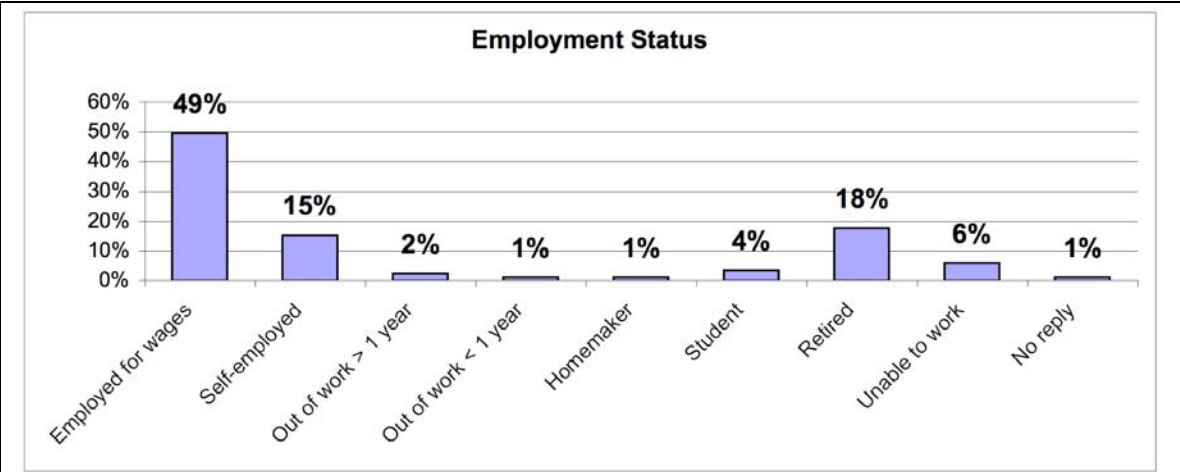
D. Demographic trends



A majority of survey participants indicated they have no children in their households, reflecting the presence of seniors and young urban professionals living in the neighborhood. 19% indicated they have children less than 5 years of age in their households, which was reported at 7% in 2000.² Families with children are spatially concentrated in the northeast section of the community, around the former YMCA, and the western section along York Avenue.

The neighborhood appears to be attracting new families from White and/or Latino backgrounds, while the African American population has aged in place. There is also evidence of return migration to the community by African American and Asian American adults to former family homes.

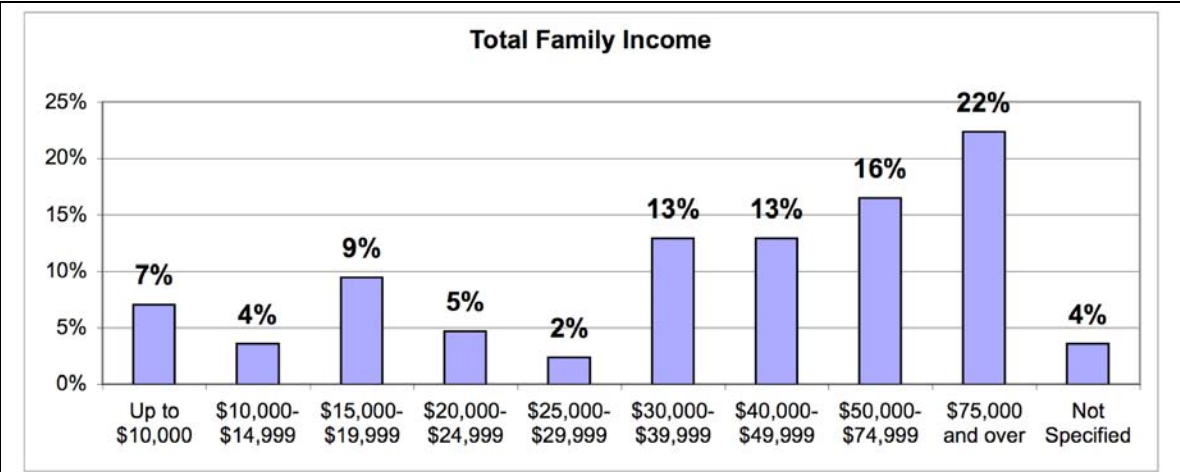
² Data from other time periods obtained from the United States Census and www.piton.org.



A majority of survey participants indicated they are employed for wages. A few indicated they are retired or self-employed. A rich tapestry of professions are represented in the community, including artists, interior designers, public officials/politicians, educators, homemakers, architects/planners, online/high-tech entrepreneurs, real estate agents, and construction trades and residential remodelers. The neighborhood appears to be attracting young urban professionals, students and artists from other communities of the Denver Metropolitan area and abroad.

The large percentage of retired individuals represents the presence of senior citizens, many of whom have lived in Skyland/North City Park all their lives. Newcomers are attracted to the community because of its proximity to downtown and City Park, relatively inexpensive housing, and the cultural diversity of the neighborhood. Longtime residents are attracted to the community for some of the same reasons, but because of their length of residency in the neighborhood, have formed strong social networks and place attachment to the community where they raised their families.

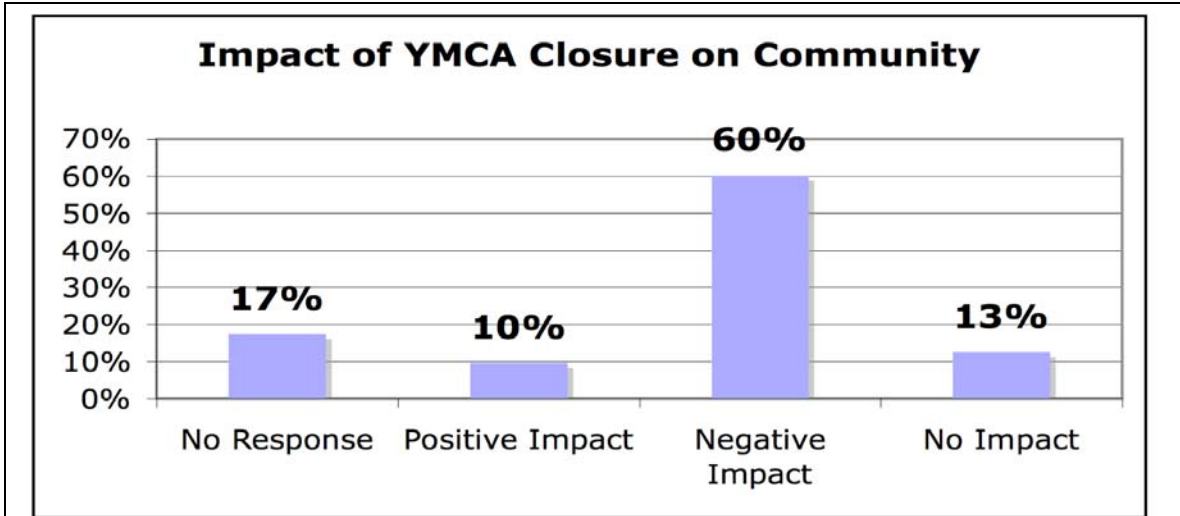
Longtime residents and newcomers are working together to make the community a better place, but there is some concern about the nature and pace of neighborhood change and how it may impact longtime residents.



There is a wide range of income diversity in the neighborhood. The largest percentage of survey participants indicated they earn \$75,000 or more as an annual family income. This may represent a shift or increase in the average household income from 2000, which was reported at \$41,136. This increase may reflect the changing demographics of the community, which is attracting young urban professionals and dual-household incomes.

In 2000, 15% of residents in Skyland/North City Park were living in poverty. This percentage may be increasing given 20% of survey respondents have household incomes below \$20,000 (the poverty line for a household of 4). Total foreclosure filings in the community rose from 16 in 2000 to 39 in 2007, but the average home sale price rose from \$149,225 in 2000 to \$193,389 in 2003.

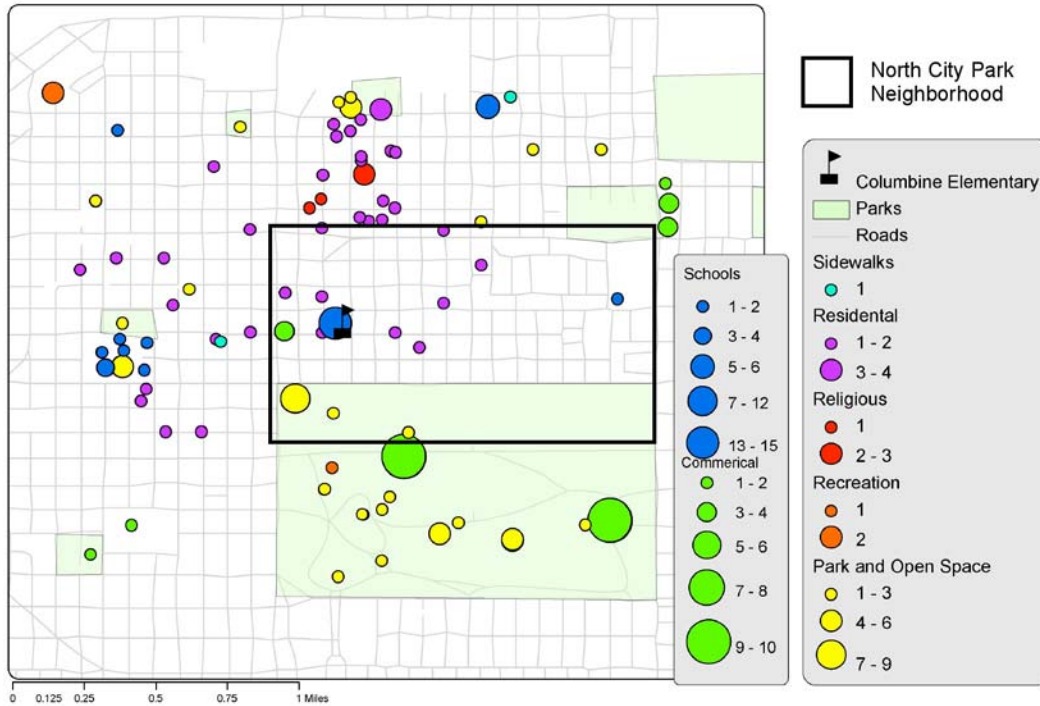
E. YOUTH AND SENIOR SERVICES



A majority of survey respondents stated the closure of the YMCA has a negative impact on the community. Some reasons stated by participants are: 1) a significant reduction of play and organized recreation for youth; 2) a significant reduction in senior services offered in the community; 3) nuisance use of property by youth and others; and 4) long-term under-use of the property leading to its physical deterioration and a subsequent reduction in property values of surrounding residences.

Surveys are currently being conducted in surrounding communities to assess the impact of the closure of the YMCA on their neighborhood. As of September 2008, 78% of respondents from the Clayton neighborhood agree the closure has a negative impact on their community. This finding echoes the results from Skyland/North City Park residents and suggests that surrounding communities will benefit from a revitalized facility.

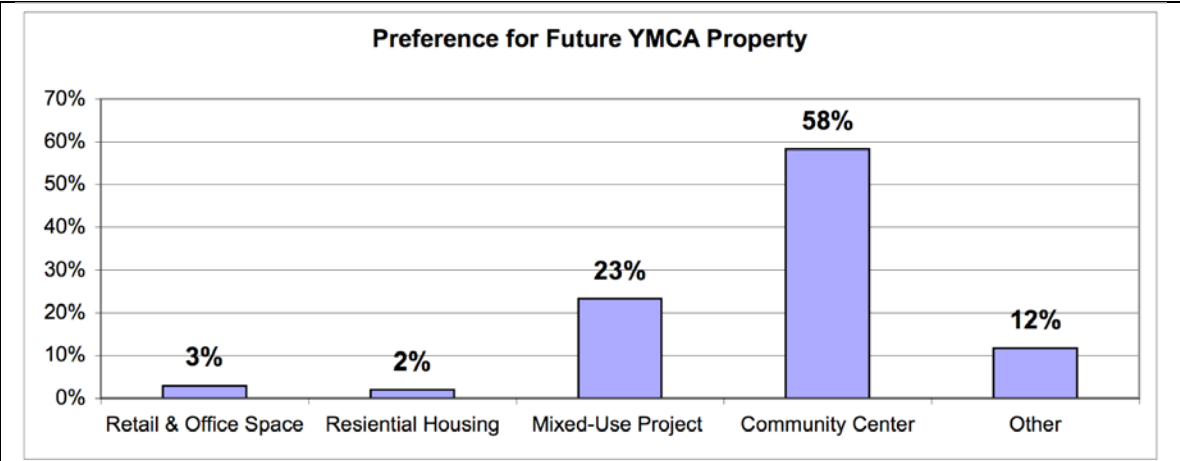
Play Spaces Used by Children Denver, Colorado



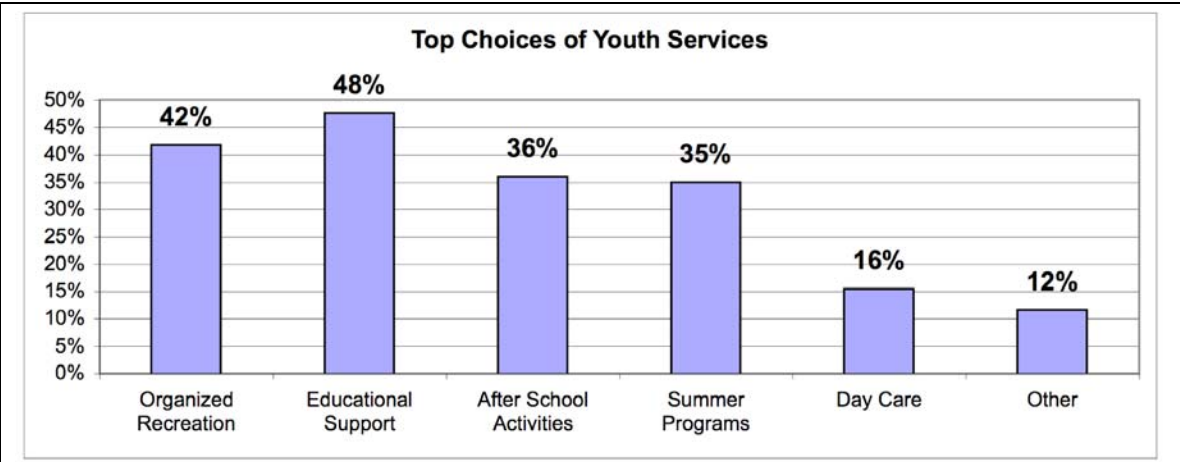
Children's Guide to Active Living, Pamela Wridt, PhD
 Children, Youth and Environments Center, University of Colorado, 2006
 Anobha Gurung, December 2nd, 2007

Previous research in 2006 with 5th grade students at Columbine Elementary School provides further evidence of the need for a community facility such as the former YMCA. There are very few places children reported playing and hanging out in the Skyland/North City Park neighborhood, including: 1) the City Park Golf Course, as part of a structured after school program, 2) Columbine Elementary School's Learning Landscape playground, 3) their personal residences, and 4) Ben's Corner Store.

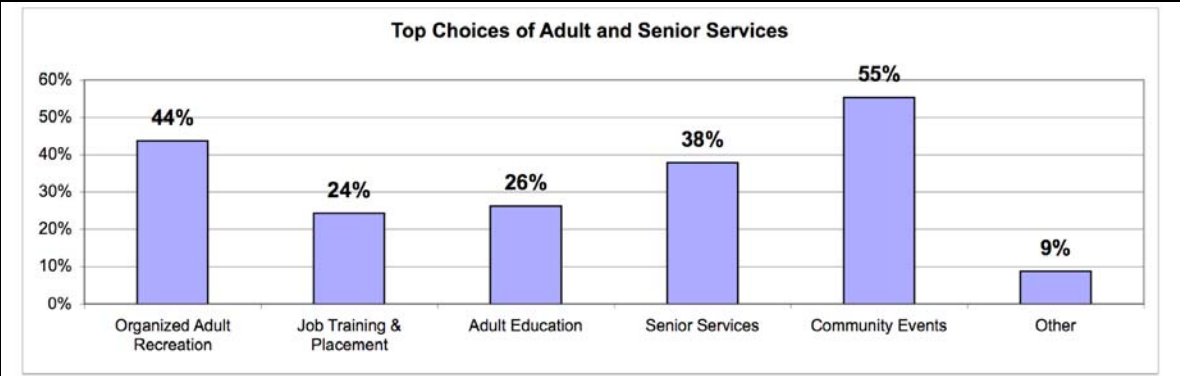
Parents and caretakers would like more opportunities for their children to attend programs in the community, including arts based after school programs, sports and club activities.



Most survey participants indicated they would like the former YMCA to be developed into a community center for youth and senior programs that keeps the open space. The facility was historically used for young people's and adult's recreational programs, primarily basketball and swimming, as well as fitness and other programs (including senior fitness programs in later years). The open space was primarily used as family grounds during swimming season, with some outdoor basketball, softball, and use of the playground. In addition, the open space was available for rental for family reunions.

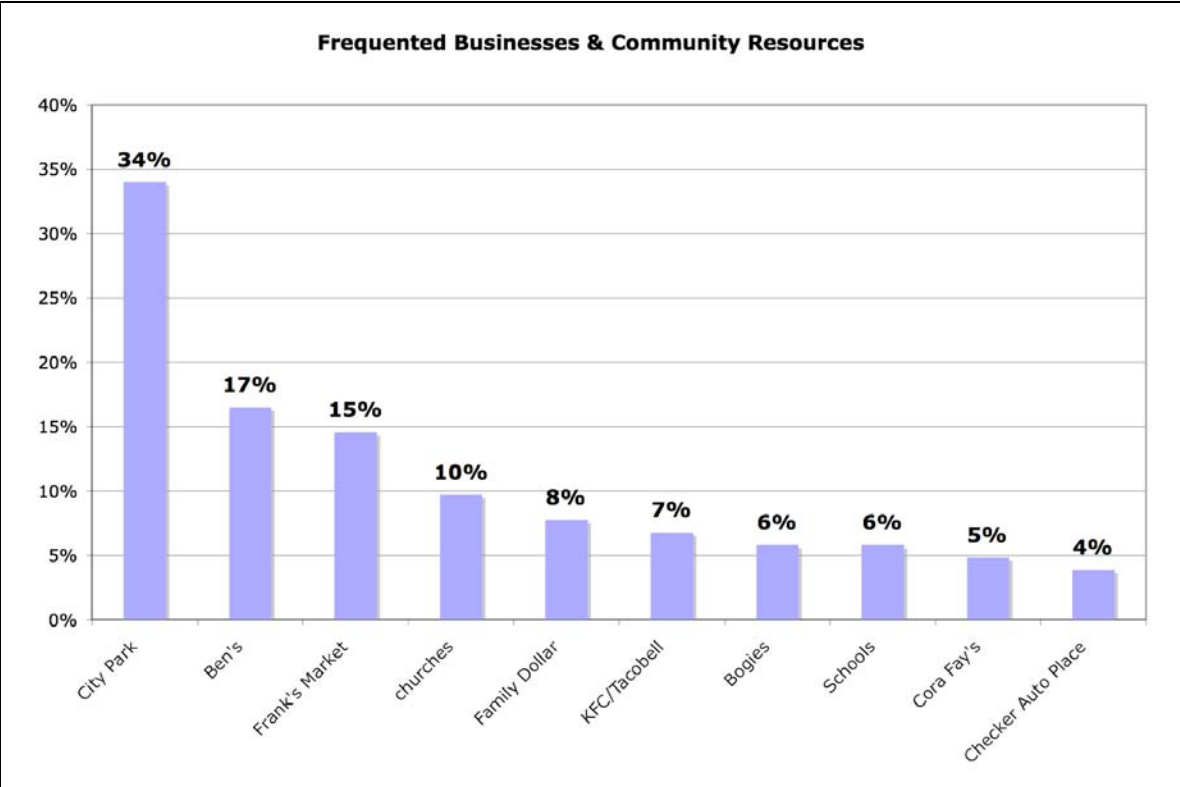


A wide range of youth services were valued by residents that could be offered at a new community center on the site of the former YMCA. These include educational and organized recreational opportunities for youth after school and during the summer. Survey participants suggested the creation of youth soccer and track club and gifted and talented after school programs that focus on the arts.

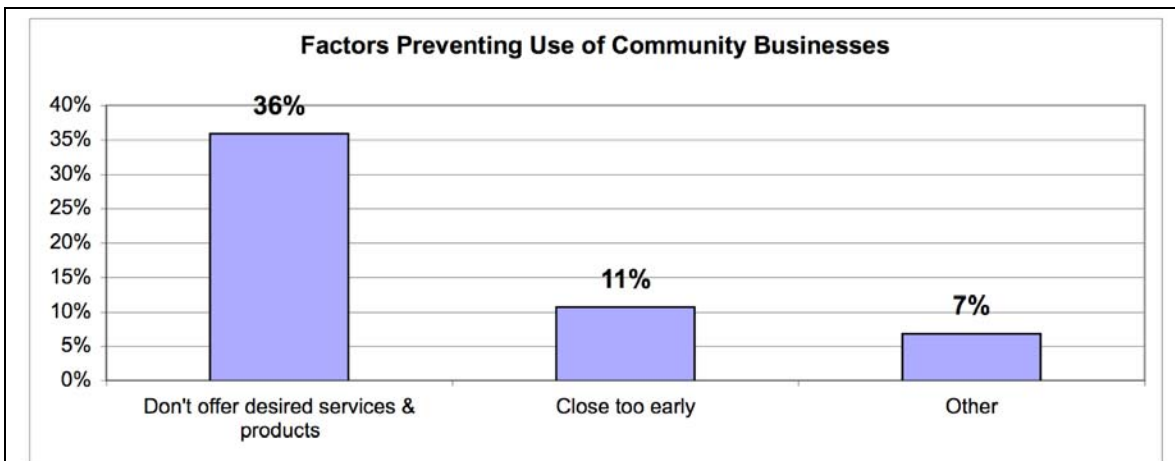


A wide range of adult services are valued by residents to be offered at a new community center on the site of the former YMCA. These include community events, organized recreation for adults, and senior services. Participants suggested offering pilates and yoga classes, martial arts and a fitness bar with healthy foods that can be purchased during/after exercising. Community residents also expressed a desire for organized events that let neighbors meet each other, such as more block parties, and art, music and other local festivals that can bring residents together for informal socializing.

G. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



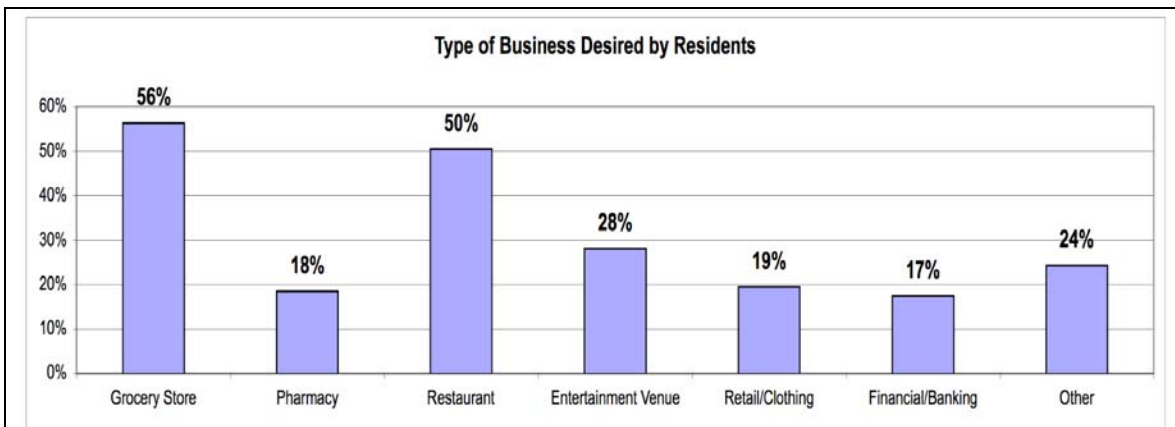
Residents use a wide variety of local businesses and community resources. The top three resources frequented by residents included: City Park, Ben's Supermarket, and Frank's Market. Residents also frequent local restaurants, including KFC/Tacobell, Bogies and Cora Fay's Café.



Most residents do not use community businesses on a frequent basis because they do not offer the products or services residents desire or need. Businesses have not kept up with the demographic change in the neighborhood.

This could be the result of the failure to understand the significance or extent of the demographic changes in the neighborhood due to lag time in census information available to businesses contemplating new outlets and entrepreneurs looking for new business opportunities. It may be related to a failure to effectively market the neighborhood vis-à-vis competing locations and the availability and quality of commercial space. 28th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard are the only two areas zoned for commercial activity.

These areas are currently NOT designated as urban enterprise zones, while all surrounding neighborhood commercial areas are. This could lead businesses to select other neighborhoods over Skyland because of the tax incentives provided in urban enterprise zones. There is also evidence of absentee business owners, who have little or no incentive to develop their property or sell it for economic gain.



Most residents would like a grocery store and new restaurants in their neighborhood. Residents stressed their desire for independent local businesses, rather than chain stores or restaurants, including a coffee shop, pub, Asian and Tex-Mex restaurants, and other places they can socialize with family, friends and neighbors. While residents value the convenience of Ben's and Frank's markets, they desire a wider range of healthy food selections at cheaper prices, something that a grocery store might offer.

PART 4: SUMMARY OF RESULTS & POTENTIAL ACTIONS

TOPIC	RESULTS	POTENTIAL ACTIONS
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Very few of the resident identified curbs, alleys and sidewalks have been improved since the 2002 needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Identify city policies, agencies and resident responsibilities in infrastructure improvements. → Lobby public officials for neighborhood improvements by a targeted deadline. → Consider how private uses of City Park pavilion can provide tax revenue for surrounding communities and their infrastructure needs → Link neighborhood needs with larger city-wide infrastructure initiatives, such as the "Living Streets Task Force" and the transportation committee of the Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation.
Youth & Senior Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Most residents consider the closure of the YMCA a negative impact on the community, representing a significant loss of youth and senior services. → Most residents would like to see the YMCA developed into an intergenerational community center with the adjacent open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A task force has been established to work on the redevelopment of the YMCA property. → A survey of surrounding communities that could potentially benefit from a new community center are underway. → Lobby public officials, private developers, private businesses

	space enhanced as an outdoor play and public space for families.	and foundations to purchase, redevelop and manage the facility. → Link neighborhood needs with larger city-wide parks and recreation initiatives, such as the “Parks and Recreation Task Force.” → Work with university architecture, landscape architecture and planning students to produce a community design vision and program for a new facility.
Economic Development	→ City Park, Ben’s Supermarket and Frank’s Market are the most used community businesses or resources. → Most residents do not frequent local businesses because they do not provide the services or products residents desire or close to early. → Most residents favor attracting independent businesses. → Most residents would like to have a grocery store and new restaurants in the neighborhood.	→ Create a task force to develop strategies that attract new businesses → Build upon the existing market analysis for the community → Determine extent of absentee business owners and incentives for invigorating existing businesses → Lobby public officials for designation of 28 th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard as urban enterprise zones.
Demographic Trends	→ The community is diverse and changing. → Most households have no children, but those that do have children under the age of 5 have increased since 2000. → Income diversity reflects influx of young urban professionals into the community, stable families that have resided in the community for generations and persons living in poverty. → The average family income has increased since 2000. → The percentage of families living in poverty seems to be increasing. → Demographic trends suggest the neighborhood is in a preliminary phase of gentrification.	→ Develop a community vision and action plan to retain neighborhood diversity. → Research city-wide policies and laws that promote equitable development practices. → Lobby public officials for tax deferment opportunities so longtime residents are not priced out of the housing market. → Link efforts with communities undergoing similar trends to determine best practices. → Develop a neighborhood plan.

PART 5: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding

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And to all the residents of Skyland/North City Park for their participation in this project!