Stapleton’s Timeless Neighborhoods

Stapleton neighborhoods are designed in the tradition of historic Denver through its compact, mixed-use design, tree-lined streets, generous parks, and gracious homes. Turn of the century neighborhoods embody the principles for neighborhood design at Stapleton.

Although they were constructed over many years, those neighborhoods share common elements — simple building forms, quality materials, appropriate massing and proportion, and streetscapes defined, not by garages, but by porches and other elements that create a strong relationship with a pedestrian friendly streetscape. Inspired by this local palette of landscape and architecture, the Stapleton neighborhoods will form their own special character while accommodating the needs of the residents of the 21st century.

These diverse, compact, and walkable neighborhoods are the building blocks of the first phase of the development at Stapleton. Streets, greenways, parkways and open space weave neighborhood to neighborhood and the community to the region.

The first residential development occurs within a framework of open space provided by a new central park to the north, a linear greenway to the south, Westerly Creek to the east, and Fred Thomas Park to the west. Yosemite Parkway and 29th Avenue are designed as classic Denver parkways that will form the edges of distinct neighborhoods. The primary east-west connector is 29th Avenue, acting as a “Main Street” between Quebec and Syracuse, a formal urban parkway from Syracuse to Yosemite, and a traditional Denver parkway from Yosemite to the Westerly Creek regional greenway. Yosemite Parkway is designed as a primary north-south arterial connection reaching north of I-70 and south to existing neighborhoods in Denver. A traditional grid system promotes pedestrian activity and provides multiple vehicular routes to diffuse traffic. Vistas created at the end of parkways and key local streets provide dramatic views of civic buildings and open space.

The design criteria for the residential neighborhoods at Stapleton will provide different architectural treatments that create varied and memorable streetscapes reminiscent of Denver’s most attractive neighborhoods.

Learn the Latest about Stapleton

Community Information Fair — Wed. Oct. 18, 7-9 pm
Park Hill Golf Course Clubhouse, 4141 East 35th Ave

 Obtain answers to your questions about commercial and residential development, open space preservation, transportation and other issues (story on page 8).
Q: How many residential units will Stapleton have and what is the timetable for the initial housing?
A: The first neighborhood at Stapleton will accommodate approximately 800 for-sale housing units and nearly 300 rental units. The for-sale component accommodates a broad range of housing types, including all sizes of single-family homes and various “attached” opportunities including lofts, row homes, and mansion homes. Model homes are anticipated by late summer or early fall 2001. Ultimately, there will be more than 12,000 housing units built at Stapleton over the next fifteen years.

Q: How will Stapleton be set apart from other neighborhoods?
A: Stapleton will be set apart from other neighborhoods by The Stapleton Plan, which integrates housing, employment, and recreation into a comprehensive community. Stapleton will be shaped by an open space system that connects walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use town centers, and employment. With its tree-lined streets and “garage-less” streetscapes, Stapleton neighborhoods will contain a broad mix of housing types, sizes, and styles to create diverse and memorable neighborhoods.

Q: What is the projected price of Stapleton homes?
A: There is a lot of talk about “affordable housing” these days. What is the projected price range for the initial neighborhood at Stapleton?

Q: What will Stapleton housing be like?
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Q: What is Stapleton’s approach to energy efficiency?
A: Yes. We are in the process of defining a telecommunications plan that will provide Stapleton with an advanced digital broadband network linking housing with offices, retail, schools, healthcare, and public facilities throughout the community. In today’s market, state-of-the-art telecommunication networks have become as important as plumbing and electrical systems. The homes at Stapleton will be installed with advanced home pre-wiring to facilitate the delivery of high speed information services, entertainment, home automation, educational programs, and community-wide services.

Q: Will Stapleton have single story housing for seniors and people with disabilities?
A: Yes. There will be single story and one- and-a-half story housing with first floor bedrooms and baths. And, we are working with the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities to address access needs for disabled residents.

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Q: Will brick be required?
A: Recognizing modern day cost concerns, our design guidelines require brick in a targeted manner to promote a “brick character.” Generally, three-quarters of all single-family corner lots must use brick, at least one house must be brick on block faces of six or more lots, and half of all row homes must use brick. In addition, certain locations require two-thirds of the homes to utilize brick.
By Mark Stevens, Denver Public Schools

As the plan for the redevelopment of Stapleton comes into sharper focus, even a casual observer can see that a one-of-a-kind community is being planned on the former airport site.

The creative vision, quite naturally, extends to the schools. The idea being developed calls for the successful Odyssey Charter School and Denver Public Schools to share the first school building on the site.

The details are still being worked out for this unique partnership, but the idea could give Stapleton residents — instantly — two options to find the educational program that’s best suited for their children.

Enrollment in the combined school building should be about 550 students.

But the choices don’t stop there. In Denver Public Schools, the word choice has several meanings. There are magnet programs, charter schools, and “regular” neighborhood schools, each with their own unique flavor and educational emphasis.

Choice, of course, is a function of distance from your home. But enrollment in one of the magnet schools in DPS comes with a bus ride provided by the district.

Want more? A high school computer magnet program, the Denver School of the Arts (soon to be located just south of the Stapleton site in a premiere facility at Quebec Street and Montview Boulevard), and the district-wide program for gifted education at Crofton Elementary School (near downtown Denver).

There’s also Knight Fundamental Academy and Traylor Fundamental Academy — both emphasize a disciplined learning environment and active parental involvement.

There are also seven charter schools, including Odyssey; P.S. 1; Pioneer Charter; Wyatt-Edison; Community Challenge; Challenges, and Denver Arts and Technology Academy.

Finally, any of the district’s “regular” neighborhood schools outside of your own neighborhood may provide the perfect educational setting for your child. Transportation, in this case, is up to you. This option works for nearly 10,000 students in DPS.

A complete list of addresses, telephone numbers and enrollment information can be found through the district’s web site (www.denver.k12.co.us) or by calling the Public Information Office, 303-764-3414.
AMONG THE HOUSING OPTIONS

Our goal for Stapleton is to create handsomely timeless architecture based on Denver’s historic neighborhoods. The four primary styles of Victorian, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and Mediterranean Revival will be used with the greatest frequency throughout the Stapleton neighborhoods. The two secondary styles of English Revival and Colonial Revival will be used more sparingly to create streetscape diversity and architectural interest.

LOFTS
Lofts create dramatic, affordable homes suitable for singles and couples. The principal attributes of the lofts are the high volume living space and open floor plans.

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES
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ROW HOMES
The Denver Row Houses provide the convenience of an attached garage tucked underneath second-floor dining, kitchen and outdoor living areas. Entry porches and raised front yards create a strong presence along the street. The backyard version of the row home utilizes a detached garage to create a small and intimate courtyard.

LIVE/WORK
The first phase of residential development at Stapleton will include a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood town center that will enable people to live within walking distance of jobs, retail, and a town green. An important element of the town center is housing above shops and offices located along 29th Avenue, the “Main Street.”

MANSION HOMES
The Mansion Home combines four or six affordably priced residences within one structure designed to resemble the large homes found along Denver parkways. The Mansion Home has well-defined porches and entries, with attached, tandem garages accessed from rear alleys.

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The foundation’s principles helped create it. Stapleton’s days as an airport became numbered after voters approved construction of Denver International Airport in 1989. Business, political and civic leaders then began the process of devising a future for the airport—4,700 acres—the biggest redevelopment undertaking in the country.

The struggle to build DIA and other public project controversies in the 1980s such as the fight over the location of the new convention center, taught leaders tough lessons, said Tom Gougeon, a former top aide to then-Mayor Federico Peña and member of the Stapleton Foundation board.

“We knew Stapleton could be a political football,” said Gougeon, a key player in getting DIA started and Stapleton reused.

That called for an organized way to meet conflicting goals for the city: to make the most money from the sale of the land to help pay off bond debt for DIA; and to find the best way over the long haul to remake the dormant site that will take more than thirty years to develop completely.

In 1990 the Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation was formed to organize a broad based community effort to devise a master plan for Stapleton. By 1995 a plan was finalized calling for a mix of commercial and residential development and the preservation of significant amounts of open space.

The plan was also firmly grounded on ideas about environmentally sound development that stressed the needs of people and neighborhoods similar to older ones throughout the city. Stapleton should be able to boast of extras such as more comprehensive schools and family oriented centers of activity, plan advocates said.

“The plan created a course that people couldn’t turn their backs on,” Gougeon said. But that would not happen on its own. After a hiatus of a few years, the redevelopment foundation re-emerged formally as the Stapleton Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities.

In the spring of this year Kay Miller was hired as the foundation’s executive director. Miller came prepared: for four years before taking over the foundation she was the executive director of the authority that redeveloped the Alameda Naval Air Station near San Francisco. Prior to that experience, Miller was the project manager for planning the redevelopment of the Lowery Air Force Base in Denver, which has become a national model of converting a military base to a thriving community of residential, commercial and industrial uses.

With her broad experience, Miller understands that a project like Stapleton takes many groups to fulfill its ambitious goals.

“The foundation will supplement the role of the developer in a number of important ways that will make Stapleton a truly unique place,” Miller said. “That’s what this is all about.”

The foundation’s immediate priorities are education and affordable housing. The foundation is working with Denver Public Schools to possibly start an innovative early childhood education program in the first elementary school that is scheduled to open in the fall of 2002.

The program would accommodate about 40 children from a few months to three years old. It would be the first facility for toddlers and infants located in DPS, which now offers early childhood classes beginning at four years old. If the program succeeds in boosting student achievement, the foundation would like to raise money to build an ECE center at the school with up to eight classrooms for up to 100 youngsters.

The center is especially attractive as a day care alternative for the hundreds of families expected in the first few years following the first home sales in late 2001.

Even more important, the center would be aligned with the school’s curriculum offering the structured learning environment for young children that is considered essential to achievement throughout their school careers.

The first Stapleton school will feature another first for DPS. Along with building a regular elementary, the district is building an adjoining school for the Odyssey Charter School, an expeditionary learning school for about 300 students. After operating on Stapleton in a temporary building for the 1999-2000 school year, Odyssey has relocated off site until its new campus at Stapleton opens in September 2002.

(continued on page 7)
“It’s a very family-centered approach,” Cronin said.

The foundation is also working with Forest City, the City of Denver, and the community to provide housing that is affordable to a wide range of incomes in order to create the diverse, urban neighborhoods envisioned in the Stapleton Plan. The foundation wants to find creative ways to bolster the efforts of Forest City to achieve greater amounts of affordable housing. The goal of the development plan is to ensure that anyone working at Stapleton — teachers, fire-fighters, and retail workers — can find a place to live at Stapleton.

The project is so enormous and demand for construction activity so great the foundation will work with Forest City to keep an eye on the big picture. Forest City is a prime funder of the foundation.

“It’s going to take a big effort on all our parts to make sure the guiding principles are realized,” Miller said.

And the foundation plans to be around to do that. It is designed to operate to far beyond the day that the last piece of ground is built on sometime in the next 30 years.

The approval of the school by the Board of Education was also needed, as were common areas dual entrances and administrative offices. The joint campus created the need for the Program Design Advisory Committee to mold the school’s educational focus.

Along with being Stapleton’s first, the school will stand out as a bold step in Denver’s education reform movement.

Denver Public Schools initially planned to build a traditional elementary that could accommodate 350 to 450 students. The district included the school, which was estimated to cost $9.1 million, in a $305 million bond issue that voters approved in 1998.

But within a year of the bond passage, Odyssey had located at Stapleton in 1999, an airliner passes in front of the original terminal at Denver Municipal Airport.

Additionally, The Stapleton Foundation proposed building two more ECE rooms, including a standard practice in many DPS schools.

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The joint campus created the need for dual entrances and administrative offices. A third main entrance for the entire building was also needed, as were common areas for community use. Both schools will use the library and gym.

The needs expanded the scope of the project and the budget. The school is now projected to cost $10.5 million.

Board member Bennie Milliner, who represents the Stapleton area, called the spending decision “a no brainer” because “the district was getting a second school” for less than $1.5 million.

The school will have two early childhood education classrooms for four year olds — a standard practice in many DPS schools.

The Stapleton Foundation hopes the new ECE program will boost student achievement. The program will be assessed after three years. If the results are promising, it could be duplicated at other DPS schools.

And if the trial program succeeds, the foundation wants to raise the money to add an entire ECE center with eight classrooms onto the school. The DPS Board agreed to set aside an acre and half of land adjacent to the ECE classrooms for the proposed ECE center.

Ms. Kelly said the CAB is particularly interested in personal recollections or artifacts that will supplement information that is already available through the Denver Public Library and such books as Stapleton: The First Fifty Years by Jeff Miller. Anyone wishing to contact Alice Kelly may do so by writing to The Stapleton Development Corporation, 3333 Quebec Street, Suite 8100, Denver, CO 80207.

In the next edition of The Front Porch, the Stapleton CAB will devote a special column to the history of Stapleton.

The school will incorporate many “green” building practices that are a critical part of the entire redevelopment scheme. Those will likely include: energy efficient lighting and mechanical systems, solar systems, water conservation, environmentally sensitive landscaping and recycling systems for waste management.

The board’s decision caps two months of intense work by the school’s Construction Advisory Committee (CAC). It cleared the way for the Program Design Advisory Committee to mold the school’s educational focus.

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The Stapleton information fair — to be held Wednesday, October 18th from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Park Hill Golf Course Clubhouse, 4141 East 35th Avenue — is co-sponsored by Forest City, The Stapleton Foundation, and the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) of The Stapleton Development Corporation. This event will be the latest opportunity for the public to receive updated information on Stapleton and get answers to questions about commercial and residential development, open space preservation, transportation and other issues of interest to the community.

“The successful redevelopment of Stapleton depends on our ability to keep our fellow citizens fully informed and involved in the Stapleton process,” said John Lehigh, chief operating officer of Forest City, the company selected to implement the community’s plan for Stapleton. “With the continued support of those citizens, we will be successful in creating the next great neighborhoods in Denver.”

Pat McClearn, co-chair of the Stapleton CAB agreed. “The hallmark of the Stapleton process has been the widespread involvement of people throughout the community. We invite everyone to attend the October 18th information fair to ask questions, get information, and register comments on the redevelopment of Stapleton.”

The two-hour information fair will feature the involvement of numerous entities that will staff various information tables on all key aspects of the redevelopment. Included will be representatives from various agencies of the City of Denver, the Stapleton Development Corporation, Forest City, Denver Public Schools, and the Regional Transportation District. Those entities are playing key roles in designing Stapleton’s parks and open space, its schools, and its transportation alternatives, as well as the new retail, commercial and residential development planned for the former airport.

The information fair will also have representatives from The Urban Farm at Stapleton, The Friends of Bluff Lake, The Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, The Bladium Sports Club and the Mile High Youth Corps. Participants will also include the cities of Aurora and Commerce City, and representatives from the redevelopment activities at The Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Lowry, and Fitzsimmons.