

SMART GROWTH IN ACTION

Redeveloping Stapleton Schools Educational Master Plan

DENVER, COLORADO

The redevelopment of Stapleton Airport is one of the nation's largest and most ambitious infill projects, converting Denver's old airport complex into 4,700 acres of homes, offices, shops, schools, and parks. Over six years, a grassroots effort of more than 100 public meetings gathered community input on reusing the site, creating a vision of "a network of urban villages, employment centers, and significant open spaces, all linked by a commitment to the protection of natural resources and the development of human resources."¹ The master plan emphasizes environmentally sound development, walkable neighborhoods, and lifelong learning. It rests on the principles of economic opportunity, environmental responsibility, and social equity. Stapleton will include a wide variety of housing choices, most of which will be less than a 10-minute walk from shops, schools, offices, and parks.

Stapleton residents, developer Forest City Stapleton, Inc., the city and county of Denver, and Denver Public Schools (DPS) created an Educational Master Plan, which addresses traditional K-12 public, private, and charter schools; early childhood learning; adult education; vocational training; online learning; and partnerships with libraries, churches, and cultural organizations. Based on this plan, DPS plans to open two K-5 schools, four K-8 schools, and two high schools to serve Stapleton.

The first elementary school, Westerly Creek Elementary School, opened in August 2003 for preschool through fifth-grade students and is one of Denver's most diverse schools. It shares a building and some facilities, such as the cafeteria, gymnasium, library, and play areas, with the Odyssey Charter School, a K-8 expeditionary learning school modeled after the Outward Bound program, which moved to Stapleton in August 2003. Following the principles to which all of Stapleton's schools will adhere, the building occupies a small site that fits into the town's compact, walkable neighborhoods; shares public playing fields and athletic facilities; and is designed to conserve energy and natural resources. The first high school, Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST), is a charter school that intends to increase enrollment of populations that are usually underrepresented in science and math disciplines. Some of its facilities are open to the public. The school will work with the local business community to provide internships and mentors to its students.

Friends of the Center for Human Nutrition, a nonprofit organization, won a five-year grant in early 2004 to demonstrate how community design can encourage physical activity, with Stapleton as its laboratory. Part of this Active Living Partnership will include walking school buses, Safe Routes to School, and in-school educational programs for the elementary school.

¹1995 Stapleton Development Plan.

QUICK FACTS

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Location: Denver, Colorado
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community/education](http://www.stapletondenver.com/community/education)

Implemented: 1999



SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES STAPLETON SCHOOLS MASTER PLAN

#1	Includes Mixed Land Uses	
#2	Exhibits Compact Building Design	★
#3	Provides Range of Housing Types	
#4	Promotes Walkable Neighborhoods	★
#5	Exhibits a Distinct Sense of Place	
#6	Preserves Open Space	✓
#7	Utilizes Existing Development	✓
#8	Provides Transportation Choices	✓
#9	Practices Fair Decision-making	✓
#10	Promotes Stakeholder Participation	★

For more information on Stapleton, see the case study *Redeveloping Stapleton: Sustainable Development Plan*.