Executive Summary

The Mariposa Healthy Living Initiative is an effort to advance the health and quality of life of residents through redevelopment.

Denver Housing Authority and their partners will redevelop nearly 900 new mixed-income housing units in a community called Mariposa, located in the La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood near downtown Denver.

The Mariposa Healthy Living Initiative began in 2009, when the Denver Housing Authority and its master planning team established physical, mental, and community health as a proxy to understand how redevelopment actions would change the quality of life for residents. The Initiative recognizes that the built environment is a determinant of health outcomes, which ultimately influence the quality and length of life for residents. The Initiative uses a responsive and rigorous approach to address environmental and social determinants of health, which include Healthy Housing, Environmental Stewardship, Sustainable and Safe Transportation, Social Cohesion, Public Infrastructure, and Healthy Economy. The Initiative framework is intended to be a living implementation tool for designers, developers, and practitioners.

In 2009, a rapid Health Impact Assessment was performed that examined the relationship between health and the built environment at the existing South Lincoln Homes, and then established a baseline needs assessment for the public housing residents. As master plan options were developed, a customized version of the Healthy Development Measurement Tool was used to evaluate those options. The Tool was used confirm that the final redevelopment master plan included strategies to address Mariposa’s priority issues, to: increase physical activity; improve pedestrian and bike opportunities; increase mobility and traffic safety; improve access to healthy foods; increase safety and security; and improve access to health care. The Healthy Development Measurement Tool also resulted in a series of recommended next steps and actions. These steps included redevelopment and services to help to improve health determinants for residents, and policies that incentivize healthy behavior and opportunities.

In the three years since the master plan was adopted, the first phase of construction has been completed and two other sites are now under construction. In 2012, a new effort was launched to further integrate health into every aspect of implementation by monitoring progress, refining recommendations, and developing implementation plans. A progress report has been completed that updates and refines the previously used health indicators and tracks health focused initiatives that have been completed to date. The progress report has informed priority initiatives, that focus on what is important for the health of residents now.

Progress to date

Monitoring has shown positive trends in many of the indicators of a healthy community, such as the total crime rate, which has dropped from 246 per 1,000 people in 2005, to 157 in 2011 for the La Alma/Lincoln Park and Auraria neighborhoods, or the average transit commute time, which has dropped from 24 minutes in 2010 to 20 minutes in 2012 for the La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood, as compared to 27 minutes in 2010 or 25 minutes in 2012 citywide. In the first phase of development, Tapiz, a 100-unit multi-family building, several elements were incorporated to improve health of residents, such as the 8-story building integrated mural that celebrates the cultural diversity and history of the neighborhood, the community gardens available
to residents to grow their own fresh foods in partnership with Denver Urban Gardens, and Connections@Tapiz, a community facility open to all that hosts a variety of programming through non-profit partners, including entrepreneurship and health classes.

Mariposa Healthy Living Initiative
The Mariposa Healthy Living Initiative includes:

- **Campaigns for Action**: campaigns with a specific goal and series of effective strategies to improve health. Each campaign is organized by a checklist and work plan.
- **Assessment and Indicators**: a 2009 baseline assessment, a 2012 status update on indicator trends, implementation completed to date, and lessons learned.
- **Mariposa Healthy Living Toolkit**: a comprehensive evaluation tool and implementation guide for practitioners to incorporate health into design, redevelopment, and construction, drawing on health evidence and standards. The Tool is intended to promote cross-sector partnerships, to use a participatory approach that values resident and stakeholder experience, and to provide the best available evidence to decision-makers.

Campaigns for Action
With this Initiative, the Denver Housing Authority is launching five Campaigns for Action to improve health and well-being at Mariposa. These campaigns, which are already underway, provide the structure and framework for DHA staff, property managers, residents, community partners, and others to get involved in health focused initiatives at Mariposa. They include:

1. **Get Connected**: Improve physical, economic, and social connectivity to improve access to services, jobs, education, health care, arts and culture. Promote community engagement and social cohesion, and celebrate cultural diversity.

2. **Healthy Places**: Create vibrant places that encourage physical activity and increase safety and security. Create living environments that support wellbeing.

3. **Healthy Eating**: Improve access to healthy and locally grown foods, promote healthy eating habits, celebrate cultural diversity, and improve social cohesion.

4. **Healthcare and Wellness**: Improve access to health care and services, support activities and programs to enhance wellbeing, and improve access to recreation facilities.

5. **Lifelong Learning**: Improve access to educational programs for all life stages, improve access to job training and career pathways, and improve financial literacy.

As design and construction moves forward at Mariposa, now is the time to act on what’s important to improve health for the residents, and catalyze positive change for the broader La Alma/ Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Mariposa has an enormous opportunity to become a leadership community for healthy living, not only in Denver, but across the country.

The Mariposa Healthy Living Initiative, Campaigns for Action, and Toolkit provide the resources and framework for developers, community partners, and residents to be active participants in this continually evolving journey.