



# STAPLETON DISTRICT 1

## *Denver, Colorado*

From 1929 through 1995, Stapleton International Airport served as Denver's municipal airport. By 1987, plans were underway to build a new, state-of-the-art airport farther east, and they met voter approval in 1989. Meanwhile, a nonprofit group of civic and business leaders, working in partnership with the city of Denver, formed the Stapleton Development Foundation to determine the disposition of the soon-to-be-redundant Stapleton airport. In 1999, based on the foundation's guidelines for development, the city selected Forest City Enterprises to be the master developer of the publicly owned site—located just five miles from downtown—which offered the largest urban redevelopment opportunity in Denver's history. Today, the former airport is being reborn as a 4,700-acre (1,902 ha) master-planned community that, at buildout, will contain more than 12,000 homes, 13 million square feet (1.2 million m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial development, and more than 1,100 acres (445 ha) of parks and open space. Construction began in 2001, and the first phase, Stapleton District 1, was substantially complete in 2005. Encompassing 489 acres (198 ha), District 1 contains 2,100 residences—ranging from rental apartments to single-family homes, in many styles and price ranges—plus 200,000 square feet (18,580 m<sup>2</sup>) of office and industrial space, 120,000 square feet (11,148 m<sup>2</sup>) of retail space, more than 100 acres (40 ha) of parks and open space, and four schools. Reversing the traditional “retail follows rooftops” approach, Forest City built two retail centers in the project's first year. Although the community is only 25 percent complete, District 1 already offers a mature, walkable, mixed-use community that is home to 4,500 residents.

Conceived as a sustainable, pedestrian-oriented, urban infill community with an average residential density of more than ten units per acre (25 units per ha), Stapleton's development is being guided by a new urbanist development plan that outlines not only the community vision for the built environment but also addresses important social goals related to education, affordable housing, demographic diversity, and more; by a sustainability master plan that requires all housing to meet or exceed Colorado's Built Green and federal Energy Star standards; and by a 130-page design book that aims to give the community a distinctive look and feel, with a wide variety of architecture and product types informed by the historic neighborhoods of Denver. Nearly 30 percent of District 1 has been dedicated to parks and open space; when complete, Stapleton will increase Denver's city park acreage by nearly 30 percent. “It's a rare real estate opportunity that allows us to create a community where walkability, sustainability, education, and open space all coexist with such ease,” comments Hank Baker, senior vice president of Forest City Stapleton, Inc. “Denver's far-reaching community vision for Stapleton and Forest City's generational perspective to development have combined to create a magical community that will endure for generations to come.”

### *Development Team*

#### *Owner/Developer*

Forest City Enterprises  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.stapletondenver.com](http://www.stapletondenver.com)

#### *Planners*

Calthorpe Associates  
Berkeley, California  
[www.calthorpe.com](http://www.calthorpe.com)

EDAW, Inc.  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.edaw.com](http://www.edaw.com)

#### *Site Engineers*

URS Corporation  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.urscorp.com](http://www.urscorp.com)

Matrix Design Group  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.matrixdesigngroup.com](http://www.matrixdesigngroup.com)

#### *Architect*

4240 Architecture, Inc.  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.4240arch.com](http://www.4240arch.com)



### *Project Data*

#### *Web Page*

[www.StapletonDenver.com](http://www.StapletonDenver.com)

#### *Site Area*

489 acres (198 ha), District 1

20 percent common open space

#### *Facilities*

200,000 square feet (18,581 m<sup>2</sup>)  
office area

120,000 square feet (11,148 m<sup>2</sup>)  
retail area

2,100 residential units

1,000 surface parking spaces

150 structured parking spaces

#### *Land Uses*

residential, retail, office, civic, cultural

#### *Start/Completion Dates*

2001–2005 (District 1)

#### *Jury Statement*

When completed, the Stapleton project will have transformed Denver's former municipal airport into a 4,700-acre (1,902 ha), master-planned community that meshes seamlessly with its urban surroundings. At this still-early stage, a 489-acre (198 ha) new neighborhood for 2,100 households has been completed successfully, proving the viability of the concept.



Forest City contracted to buy 2,935 developable acres (1,195 ha) in three phases—at least 1,000 acres (405 ha) every five years—for \$79.4 million, increased annually by the consumer price index, plus an additional \$15,000 per acre (\$37,066 per ha) for open-space conservation. Tax increment financing is being used to underwrite infrastructure costs such as streets, parks, and schools. The community is already a clear financial success: housing demand exceeds availability, land and home prices are escalating, and the retail and office space is substantially leased. Stapleton has become a national model. It demonstrates that large-scale urban redevelopment can compete with suburban greenfield development; that a mix of uses can be successfully included early in the life of a new community; that both the image and the reality of urban public schools can be improved in ways that benefit the community and create a market advantage; that traditional neighborhood design need not be limited to traditional architectural forms; and that mixed-income housing can be accepted by the market and does not deter appreciation.

