



Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative



Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative East Corridor Working Group – Meeting #6

Stapleton Foundation, 7350 E. 29th Ave., Suite 300.

October 9, 2013, 2:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Meeting Summary (As of 10/15/13)

Attendees

CWG Members

- Adams County – Deputy County Administrator Unit: Jeanne Shreve
- City and County of Denver – Community Planning and Development: Steve Gordon
- City and County of Denver – Public Works: Jenn Hillhouse
- City of Aurora – Comprehensive Planning: John Fernandez
- City of Aurora – Public Works: Duane Launder
- Aurora Housing Authority: Craig Maraschky
- Denver International Airport (DIA): Tom Reed
- Regional Transportation District (RTD): Mike Turner
- Stapleton Foundation: Angie Rivera-Malpiede
- Denver Housing Authority: Ismael Guerrero

Others

- CDR Associates (Facilitator): Laura Sneeringer
- Reconnecting America: Catherine Cox Blair, Bill Sadler
- Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG): Paul Aldretti, Flo Raitano

Action Items

- CWG members will review the Corridor Recommendations for Implementation and send Reconnecting America their comments on whether recommendations should be merged, added or deleted. They will also respond with their top 3-4 priorities.
- A subgroup will meet to develop the Scope of Work for the Catalytic Site.
- DRCOG will explore developing a written memo to outline roles and responsibilities of key CWG members on the Catalytic Site selection and day-to-day technical coordination with the consultant.

Agenda

- Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Overview
- Discuss the East Corridor Public Forum and other Updates



- Discuss Evaluation Criteria and Initial Ideas for the Catalytic Site
- Discuss Initial Priorities for Corridor-Wide Strategies
- Review Action Items/Next Steps

Meeting Materials (available on the Website or FTP Site)

- Agenda (Website)
- Proposed Catalytic Site Evaluation Criteria (FTP site)
- Catalytic Site Proposal for the Peoria-Smith station (FTP site)
- Corridor Recommendations for Implementation list (FTP site)
- Vision and Goals (Website and FTP site)

Discuss the East Corridor Public Forum and Other Updates

- The SCI Consortium Meeting is being held on October 10, 2013 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. It will include a presentation on how changing demographics impact planning, with speakers from the Brookings Institution discussing their publications on the suburbanization of poverty.
- The East Corridor Public Forum will be held on October 17, 2013 at the Stapleton Foundation. East Corridor Working Group members are encouraged to promote the event to their community members, staff and other interested individuals.
- A Regional Resource Fair has been postponed, and will be held after the New Year. The Regional Resource Group includes organizations that have offered specific in-kind or discounted services to communities as part of the SCI grant, including technical assistance and catalytic site activities. The fair will provide an opportunity for interested individuals to have meetings with the Regional Resource Group organizations and see if their services are a good fit for SCI activities. The Fair will be structured as a “speed dating” exercise, where people can register for 20-minute time slots with each group. DRCOG will be sending an e-mail with additional information.

Discuss Evaluation Criteria and Initial Ideas for the Catalytic Site

The group agreed that the evaluation criteria made sense and did not have any additions. They did discuss the following topics.

Selection Process:

- 1) This CWG will refine a Catalytic Site recommendation
- 2) A smaller subgroup will develop a Scope of Work before the November meeting. It will be reviewed and finalized at the Nov 13th CWG meeting.
- 3) The Scope of Work will be shared with the Coordinating Committee and Executive Committee to ensure it meets the SCI grant criteria.
- 4) The Scope of Work will be shared with HUD for final approval.

Contracting: DRCOG will be responsible for all contracting related to the Catalytic Site. This will remove contract management aspects from the local jurisdictions (which were challenging for the City of Lakewood on the West Line Catalytic Site) and reduce the time necessary for contracting. There will be no formal MOU between DRCOG and the local jurisdictions as this took too long on the West Line.

Project Management: DRCOG will also act as the Project Manager, but will form a Project Team to oversee the project. The West Line has a Project Team consisting of ULC, NEWSED, City of Lakewood and City of Denver. They have each assisted with developing the scope of work depending on services

needed, selecting the vendors, consultants, service providers, etc. Group members have concerns about control under this format but DRCOG said it will work with the local jurisdictions to make sure there is sufficient oversight and input from all stakeholders directly affected by the Catalytic Site activities. One suggestion is to develop a written memo (as differentiated from a formal MOU) describing the roles and responsibilities of CWG members in selecting vendors, providing day-to-day technical support and oversight of consultants, and other services.

Difference between Catalytic Site and Corridor-Wide Technical Assistance: The Catalytic Site proposal is site-specific and separate from the funding designated for Corridor-Wide Technical Assistance. There is \$300,000 available for the Catalytic Site. Some activities could be funded by either funding source, but the intent is that the Corridor-Wide Technical Assistance will be identified from the Corridor Recommendations for Implementation that Reconnecting America is developing as part of the Corridor Profile. The same issues can be addressed in both funded activities. The parking component of the Peoria-Smith Catalytic Site proposal, for instance, could fund site-specific recommendations for Peoria-Smith, and a separate parking demand and supply study could also be conducted for the entire corridor.

Combining Funding for Catalytic Site and Corridor-Wide Technical Assistance: DRCOG is open to being more flexible in how it allocates funding for the two activities. There is \$300,000 set aside for the Catalytic Site and \$150,000 on the Corridor-Wide Technical Assistance. There is an opportunity to leverage both pots of money on similar or complementary activities, such as the parking studies proposed for the entire East Line Corridor and Peoria-Smith station. The group feels strongly it should maximize funding for parking, and needs at least \$100,000 to do this; it may make more sense to do this study at the corridor scale.

Review the Peoria-Smith Catalytic Site Proposal

Denver and Aurora submitted a joint proposal for the Catalytic Site to be the Peoria-Smith station. No other proposals were submitted.

Considerations for recommending this site include:

- It shares a boundary with Denver and Aurora. The 40th & Airport station was another possibility, but the presence of large landowners, RTD's surface parking lot and other issues made it impractical. There would also be less flexibility on this site compared to Peoria-Smith.
- It will be an intermodal connection between the East Line commuter rail and I-225 light rail.
- It has proximity to Fitzsimons/Anschutz campus, which will provide employment and other opportunities.
- It is halfway between Downtown Denver and the Airport.
- Denver chose not to do a station area plan there given the challenges, but Aurora did do one because the I-225 Corridor Plan was underway at the same time. The existing plan is not very detailed on implementation strategies so additional analysis will be helpful.
- Peoria Street has a mix of uses. In order to advance the station area, there are multiple activities that need to be done – not one activity would be catalytic in itself.

The proposal has three aspects:

- 1) **A study to identify best uses for city parcels and opportunities related to multi-modal connectivity:** Denver and Aurora have specific parcels for development, of varying degrees of market readiness and suitability for transit-oriented land uses. For example, reconstruction of Peoria Crossing will create remnant parcels along the railroad tracks, which could be suitable for development. While many of the parcels are small, there are 3 to 4 that may be developable.

- 2) **A market analysis and/or initial design for an affordable housing project:** Aurora Housing Authority has 5 acres along Peoria that is planned for affordable housing. It has owned the site for 7-8 years and the intent has always been TOD. Between 80-100 units are planned for the first phase. AHA envisions the site as “Transformational Housing,” where residents will have resources for case management, income progression, job training and other services. AHA wants to do a market study or design to learn what makes this station unique.
- 3) **Analysis of structured parking feasibility and development of a parking guidebook:** This study would consider the feasibility of a structured parking garage on the site, and also new development on the site of surface parking lot over the long-term. The budgets for most stations no longer allow structured parking so many stations will have just surface parking. There is a need to understand the parking needs at this station and also package this information into a guidebook that can be used at other stations. UCD’s case studies on TOD will include a parking case study, so it ties into the Catalytic Site

The parking component of this project will be replicable across the region as other stations are facing the same challenges. Also, there are many stations with major arterials near the stations and challenging current uses. Findings and recommendations on how to deal with these issues will therefore be useful to others.

Questions/Concerns Raised

Marketability

Concerns were raised about the potential to spur developer interest at Peoria-Smith as a model for TOD. There is an interest in using resources effectively and not spending too many resources on activities that do not pan out. Others noted that there are many challenges with the Peoria-Smith station, and this is an opportunity to figure out what the challenges are and recommend how to overcome them. Also, the marketability at the site is expected to change once the I-225 line is open.

Parking

DIA has talked about converting many surface parking lots into structured parking so the parking study could be helpful. The parking situation at this station could evolve overtime as the station is midway between downtown and DIA, and some users may use it as a long-term parking location.

Affordable Housing

There is a demand for services in this station area, so locating new housing may not be beneficial unless those services come in as well (grocery store especially). A New Town Center is planned on the east end of Stapleton that could fulfill many of the service needs of the Peoria-Smith community, but this will all be developer-driven. A question was also raised about whether there is hard data that residents of affordable housing located near the station actually use it. The group shared the following insights:

- DHA has surveyed residents – more use the bus than light rail, but it is not clear where they work.
- Research on this topic varies by region.
- It is difficult to obtain good Denver data because lines are just opening.
- We would need to establish a baseline now to track whether residents of affordable housing are using transit over time.
- UCD is currently initiating a housing study. This question could potentially be incorporated.

West Corridor's Sheridan Site as an Example

When the West Corridor picked Sheridan, there were similar factors at play – shared boundary, specific redevelopment site, modeling/replicability (“20 Minute Neighborhood”), last mile connections, parking. The Sheridan Site can be used as an example for the Scope of Work and other next steps.

Discuss Initial Priorities for Corridor-Wide Strategies

Reconnecting America shared initial ideas for corridor-wide implementation strategies and associated technical assistance. The amount available for corridor-wide TA is \$150,000. The recommendations are grouped into six categories:

- Economic Development
- New Development
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Local Transportation and Infrastructure
- Funding and Finance
- Partnerships

The group had questions about some of the recommendations, including the economic development recommendation for a Jobs and Workforce analysis. The group is also very interested in parking, as well as doing an Implementation Typology similar to the one done on the West Corridor. Two recommendations were identified as priorities: a jobs and workforce development analysis (as long as it wasn't just a demographic analysis and would include actions and policies) and developing partnerships with the school districts along the East Corridor.

CWG members will review the list of recommendations before the next meeting, and suggest any additions or changes. They will also identify their priority recommendations. Based on this feedback, Reconnecting America will prepare a more detailed Corridor Recommendations for Implementation list and matrix to discuss at the next CWG meeting in November.