

Gold Line Corridor Opportunities and Challenges to TOD [DRAFT August 12, 2013]

The Gold Line Corridor Working Group and Stakeholder Committee have identified a number of opportunities and challenges to implementing transit-oriented development within station areas along the corridor. In some station areas, there are major opportunities for new development but infrastructure is lacking. In others, the presence of industrial uses is a major employment opportunity but a challenge for accommodating higher density, mixed use development. All station areas have connectivity challenges and physical barriers that hinder movement by all modes but especially for pedestrians. Existing land use is primarily industrial, and may remain so for the foreseeable future, presenting challenges to implementing the visions in many station areas that call for denser mixed-use development. Parking has also been identified as a challenge because of the cost of building structured parking garages, but some stations such as Pecos could potentially accommodate more parking. The following list provides a summary of these corridor-wide opportunities and challenges, followed by a detailed list by station area.

Corridor-wide Opportunities

Proximity to Major Destinations. The Gold Line provides access to downtown Denver, Olde Town Arvada, and many existing neighborhoods and job centers in between. This proximity makes certain station areas attractive for development and improves access for people living and working along the corridor. The Gold Line will also open up a transit connection to the greater region, allowing for travel to Denver International Airport, the Tech Center and other major regional destinations.

Access to Parks, Trails and Open Space Amenities. The Clear Creek Trail runs parallel to the Gold Line and is accessible from most of the stations. There are also several local and regional parks along the Gold Line. The station areas provide a gateway to these recreational opportunities, and the jurisdictions are capitalizing on their proximity by improving bicycle and pedestrian connections within the station areas.

Strong and Growing Employment Base. The Gold Line runs through some of the most valuable industrial land in the Denver region, and is home to thousands of jobs in industries such as manufacturing, construction, transportation and warehousing, health care and retail. Many of these employers plan to stay in the area, and there is potential for growth in certain sectors such as sporting goods manufacturing. Moreover, once the Gold Line opens, these existing job centers will have improved access via transit, providing workers with more commuting options and also reducing the time and cost for some workers.

Significant Planning by Gold Line Jurisdictions. The cities and counties along the Gold Line all see a significant opportunity to create attractive and functional places at the Gold Line station areas, and have completed detailed plans for achieving their visions. While many of these visions will take decades to be fully realized, all have begun putting the tools into place, such as rezoning land for mixed-use development, making infrastructure improvements, forming public-private partnerships to build new development and brainstorming solutions to overcoming challenges such as stormwater drainage and environmental contamination.

Existing Development Activity. New development is already occurring at several station areas, including Olde Town Arvada, where the 178-unit Park Place apartment complex is just finishing construction. The City of Arvada also selected a master developer, Trammel Crow, for

a 9-acre site near the station, which is one of RTD's TOD Pilot sites. At Arvada Ridge, there is a 378-unit apartment complex called Arvada Station. Several new retail developments have also been proposed or are under construction near the Gold Line.

Housing Affordability. The existing housing stock along the Gold Line is some of the most affordable in the Denver region, and there is a variety of housing types, from single-family homes to multi-family apartments and condominiums. There is also the potential to build new affordable housing at several stations, including Ward Road and Arvada Ridge, to accommodate increased demand for affordable housing near transit. The Denver Housing Authority also maintains a public housing development, the Quigg-Newton Homes, near the 41st & Fox station.

Availability of Land. Given the industrial nature of the communities around the Gold Line stations, there is an abundance of vacant and underutilized parcels, many large in size. This presents each jurisdiction with major opportunities for redevelopment, including the former Jolly Rancher site in Wheat Ridge.

Access and Connectivity Improvements. While the Gold Line station areas contain many barriers to access, each jurisdiction is investing in major improvements, such as pedestrian bridges, grade separations, bicycle lanes and new sidewalks to address these barriers and make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient ways to get to and from the stations.

Gold Line Branding. The Gold Line already has a built-in “brand” associated with its name, and the Working Group sees the potential to capitalize on the name and promote the line as a “destination.” Some additional technical assistance from marketing and branding experts may be needed to develop strategies to capitalize on the “Gold Line” name and attract new residents and employers.

Distinctiveness and Station-Specific Identities: The stations along the Gold Line each have their own identities that corridor communities can capitalize. Jurisdictions can focus on the strengths and assets at each station and draw people for those specific reasons, rather than repeating the same opportunities throughout the corridor.

Corridor-wide Challenges

Stormwater and Floodplain Issues. The Gold Line runs parallel to the Clear Creek and several other regional creeks, putting most station areas within a floodplain. It will cost millions of dollars to remove many parcels of land from the floodplain, which may not be cost-effective in certain circumstances. For instance, the 41st & Fox station is near an underpass on 38th Avenue called the “bathtub” for the amount of water it absorbs when it rains. Despite these challenges, each jurisdiction has developed a plan and cost estimates to address stormwater and floodplain issues. Denver has prepared a drainage plan for the 41st & Fox station, while Wheat Ridge has created a regional drainage system with detention ponds near the station area. Adams County is studying a wetlands bank in the area to accommodate new development while also preserving land to handle stormwater and floodplain capacity.

Existing Industrial Uses. The areas around the Gold Line are home to thousands of industrial jobs. Industrial land uses are often in conflict with the goals of TOD because of their low-density land use and heavy truck and freight traffic. Yet these are also major job centers, especially for low- and middle-skill workers in manufacturing, transportation and warehousing and other industrial industries. There is need to balance existing industrial land use with the desire for denser residential and commercial mixed-use development as identified in station area plans.

Moreover, development in many station areas may be years or decades away, so planning for appropriate interim uses is needed on some parcels of land, and certain industrial uses can fill the short-term gap without inhibiting future TOD.

Landfill and Environmental Contamination Issues. Because of the existing and former industrial uses at many Gold Line stations, there is a significant amount of environmental contamination that will need to be addressed before development can happen. This includes the Pecos and Federal stations, which sit on the sites of a former landfill.

Barriers to Access and Connectivity. Major roads, highways and freight railroad tracks intersect the Gold Line and present major barriers to accessing the station. The existing street grids in stations outside of Olde Town Arvada are also very auto-oriented and not set up to handle pedestrian and bicycle activity. While the jurisdictions are being proactive and investing millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements, there will remain numerous access and connectivity challenges that will remain in place given the natural and physical barriers that are present along the Gold Line.

Food Access. Except for the Arvada Ridge station, which is near a Super Target, there are no nearby full-service grocery stores along the Gold Line. There are some smaller grocery stores, farmer's markets and convenience stores selling fresh produce, but most have a limited supply and higher costs than larger grocery stores. The neighborhoods surrounding the line are also major food deserts. Building one or two new grocery stores within Gold Line station areas will provide healthier food options for people living along the corridor than are now available.

Lack of Amenities, Including Basic Services and Retail. In addition to a lack of grocery stores, there is also a lack of amenities at Gold Line station areas, including retail and basic services such as libraries and childcare facilities. The station areas present new opportunities to build these resources in close proximity to transit, but coordination between the jurisdictions is essential to ensuring all these basic amenities are provided in the most appropriate locations and that no one is competing with each other to provide them.

Preserving Affordable Housing. Because the Gold Line contains some of the most affordable housing in the Denver region, and the opening of the Gold Line will make this area more attractive, it is essential that the jurisdictions and their respective housing authorities work to preserve existing affordable housing units, both subsidized and market-rate, and look for new opportunities to build affordable housing near transit. Ensuring that the Gold Line provides access to greater economic opportunity, and also preventing displacement, should be top goals of the Gold Line Corridor Working Group.

Community Opposition to Density. Both Arvada and Adams County have heard from local residents who are opposed to new development within Gold Line station areas because of the recommended building heights. Adams County has a pending lawsuit from a neighborhood near the Federal station over the proposed Clear Creek Transit Village, while Olde Town Arvada has a growing contingent of neighborhood residents worried about preserving the historic character of the downtown area. These concerns may spread to other station areas and present challenges to TOD that the jurisdictions did not anticipate originally when preparing their station area plans.

Parking. Ensuring there is enough parking in some stations is an issue, while at others there are concerns that there will be too much. Most jurisdictions would like to build a structured parking garage instead of surface parking, but funding is a challenge. However, some stations may be able to accommodate more parking demand than others, such as the Pecos station,

and there could be an opportunity to shift the required parking from nearby stations to the Pecos station if RTD would allow it.

Placemaking and Market Readiness. Many of the Gold Line station area plans are aspirational—the station areas themselves are not major destinations today (with the exception of Olde Town Arvada) and lack the housing, retail and “bones” that are often a prerequisite for TOD. Development is likely to happen incrementally and require significant investments in infrastructure to make these station areas attractive and able to accommodate new residents and jobs. The market for TOD varies between station areas, and it may take years or decades to fully realize the visions in station area plans.

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Issues and Challenges by Station Area

The following table lists these identified opportunities and challenges by station area.

Figure 1: Opportunities & Challenges to TOD by Station Areas

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
41 st & Fox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to downtown Denver • Large parcels under single ownership with a single developer buying up many parcels south of the station • Adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods in Sunnyside and Globeville (single-family and multi-family) • Retail on 38th Ave. and Fox Street • Station area plan and drainage plan provide comprehensive visions for redevelopment of the station area • Improved connectivity via pedestrian bridges across Inca at 38th Ave and across the railroad tracks at 41st Street • Public housing owned by Denver Housing Authority (Quigg-Newton homes) • Student housing expansion (Regency) • Redevelopment of former Denver Post site (25/70 development) • Existing jobs base (mostly industrial) • Completed drainage study to address floodplain issues • Recreation center nearby • Opportunities to connect to the South Platte River • Desire to improve industrial uses and employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floodplain issues, including the “bathtub” at 38th Ave. • Major roads and railroad tracks pose barriers to connectivity (I-25, I-70, 38th Ave., UP & BNSF railroad tracks) • Balancing existing industrial uses with higher density mixed-use development • Preserving affordability of existing housing • Cost of drainage improvements • Cost of pedestrian, bicycle and other multimodal access improvements within the station area • Cost of basic infrastructure • Traffic congestion on 38th Avenue and constrained ROW for multi-modal improvements • Lack of parks, plazas or open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38th pedestrian bridge connecting Inca • 41st pedestrian bridge connecting station to Sunnyside • Rezoning and developer interest • Multi-use path along Inca between 38th and 45th and water quality and drainage improvements
Pecos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Creek Valley TOD Plan provides a comprehensive vision with several scenarios for redevelopment • Part of Adams County’s “Triangle of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the area is a former landfill • Floodplain issues • Environmental contamination issues • Area is primarily industrial and will remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking/Grade Separation Study completed • Exploring setting up a wetlands bank • Adams County has invested \$60-70M

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
	<p>Opportunity” along with the Federal and Westminster stations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good access to major roads and highways (I-70, I-25, I-76) • Transfer station between Gold and Northwest Lines • Construction of grade separation • Potential high-speed rail station for east-west I-70 corridor • Strong industrial jobs base with potential for growth, with plans to target certain industries like sporting goods manufacturing due to proximity to mountains • Large employers including Rocky Mountain Prestress (400-500 employees) • Ability to accommodate large amounts of parking • May be possible to explore brownfields funding, wetlands banking and other opportunities. • Opportunities to expand open space between Pecos and Federal stations. • Connection to CDOT’s Interconnectivity Study alignments; create a transfer station. 	<p>so for the foreseeable future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing existing industrial uses with higher density mixed-use development • Presence of freight railyard (Utah Junction) • Proximity to the rail maintenance facility 	<p>in planning for the stations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realigning 62nd Parkway to provide access to those east of I-25
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Creek Valley TOD Plan provides a comprehensive vision with several scenarios for redevelopment • Part of Adams County’s “Triangle of Opportunity” along with the Pecos and Westminster stations. Clear Creek Transit Village development proposed by the TOD Group (John Renne). The project has been added to Adams County Comprehensive Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the area is a former landfill • Floodplain issues • Environmental contamination issues • Area is primarily industrial and will remain so for the foreseeable future • Area being used as freight corridor • Geographical constraints with proximity to I-76 • Balancing existing industrial uses with higher density mixed-use development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Boulevard Corridor Framework Plan (52nd to 72nd) • Health Impact Assessment being conducted by Tri-County Health Dept. in conjunction with Federal Blvd. Corridor Framework • TOD regulations incorporated into Development Standards & Regulations • CDOT raised median and LED lighting project

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong industrial jobs base with potential for growth. • Proximity to Clear Creek Trail, local and regional parks and open space. • Proximity to nearby residential neighborhoods in Adams County and Denver, including the new Aria development on the former Marycrest site • Proximity to Regis University • Good access to major roads and highways (I-70, I-25, I-76) • Improved pedestrian and bicycle connections via local roads and the Clear Creek Trail, including new bicycle lanes and a new trail connecting southern neighborhoods to Clear Creek. • Realigning local roads (including 60th Avenue) to improve access to the station area • Channelizing Clear Creek to remove land near the station area from the floodplain • Clay Community Trail for connection to large residential area with bicycle and pedestrian connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market readiness and fiscal impact of TOD • Pending lawsuit by neighboring communities over Clear Creek Transit Village • Access and connectivity issues for pedestrians and bicyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian bridge being constructed across Clear Creek • 60th Avenue realignment for better access
Sheridan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong industrial jobs base with potential for growth. • Market support of flex industrial uses and employment uses • Land prices lower than other station areas where higher density mixed-use TOD is proposed (Olde Town Arvada) • Big-box retail is suitable at this station area • Proximity to Highlands neighborhood in Denver, as well as neighborhoods in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floodplain issues • Environmental contamination • Short term market wants low rise industrial • Area is primarily industrial and will remain so for the foreseeable future • Limited residential opportunities due to existing land uses and hazardous activity at some industrial sites • Access and connectivity issues for pedestrians and bicyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City working on TOD zoning to facilitate development

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	<p>Adams County and Arvada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Clear Creek Trail, Gold Strike Park and several local and regional parks • Recreation and open space opportunities for making use of the flood plain. • Hyland Hills Regional park expansion • Opportunity to keep it employment focused and provide residential/retail mixed use • The station is located in an area to attract Arvada and Northwest Denver residents. • Opportunities for bicycle connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City would like to promote mixed use development, but experienced some resistance to keep it employment focused. • Need additional parking capacity; RTD's surface parking occupies potential TOD area. 	
<p>Olde Town Arvada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to be a “destination” station on the line as it is one of the few historic downtowns in the regional transit network • Station area plan contains comprehensive vision for redevelopment and intensification of Olde Town Arvada • Existing retail, office and residential development in historic downtown • Existing street grid has the “bones” for TOD • Strong market demand seen as many want to be near authentic Downtown. • Opportunity for multifamily, some office, possibly a hotel and small grocer • The area east of Wadsworth is light-industrial and provides the opportunity to create mixed-use family housing. • Master developer selected for nine-acre site • Park Place multifamily development under construction with 181 units • Structured parking garage financed by the City and RTD • Station area within an urban renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher land prices make affordable housing more difficult • Higher land prices make projects more expensive. • Weak market for office development or additional retail. • Accommodating parking demand • Community opposition to higher density development and concerns for historic preservation of Olde Town Arvada. • Challenging area to accommodate a grocery store; may have to be a smaller grocer to provide access for residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City working on TOD zoning to facilitate development • Within Urban Renewal District • Trammel Crow selected as preferred master developer for nine acre site. • City working to build parking garage and expanded plaza.

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
	<p>district designated by the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a destination station as well as one that will serve many commuters in the area. 		
Arvada Ridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing multifamily apartments, including Arvada Station (378 market-rate units) • Potential to build affordable housing • Station area within an urban renewal district designated by the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority (Ralston Fields) • Nearby retail including a SuperTarget • Red Rocks Community College wants to expand current campus to attract more students. • Proximity to parks and open space (Ralston Fields complex, Clear Creek Trail) • Large employers including Target and Rocky Mountain Bottle (300 employees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to the station area, with primary access via Kipling to the south; improving access will be expensive due to some grading that would have to occur because of the location of the hill. • Access and connectivity issues for pedestrians and bicyclists • There is a need for increased parking capacity; surface parking being built on prime land for TOD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City working on TOD zoning to facilitate development • Within Urban Renewal District • Council has goal of improving access to area in next six years.
Ward Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated station area plan provides a comprehensive vision for redevelopment of the station area • Site is a priority of the Wheat Ridge City Council • Station has an urban renewal designation • Former Jolly Rancher site (15 acres) is a major redevelopment opportunity • Large vacant parcels – approximately 40 acres of vacant or underutilized land • City has put in place tools for by-right mixed-use development (mixed-use zoning, design standards, urban renewal, metro district) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for structured parking to accommodate 300 spaces – existing parking will be in a surface lot • Infrastructure improvements and financing • Access and connectivity issues for pedestrians and bicyclists • Balancing existing industrial uses with higher density mixed-use development, and transitioning to the latter uses over the long term • Placemaking • Station area has limited identity and appeal – need for branding • Traffic congestion • End-of-line station challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating 2006 subarea plan • Special Use Permit submitted by RTD • City-initiated rezoning to mixed-use • Regional drainage system – Metro District approved

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station area part of EPA study of infrastructure financing tools • Good access to I-70 and mountains • High traffic counts on Ward Road • Creation of multi-modal street grid, with RTD building out 50th Place to Ridge Road and Taft Court • Upgrades to the regional drainage system • Views to mountains and downtown • Nearby Kaiser Permanente medical facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of nearby amenities 	

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