

A banner for the Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative. It features a background image of a modern residential building and a park area with a paved path and trees. The text "Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative" is written in a white, cursive font across a dark blue horizontal band.

Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative



SCI East Corridor Working Group – Meeting #1

DRCOG, 1290 Broadway, Denver – Wolf Creek Pass Conference Room (First Floor)

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm, February 26, 2013

Meeting Summary As of 5/8/13 – Approved

Attendees

CWG Members

- Aurora Housing Authority: Craig Maraschky
- City of Aurora - Comprehensive Planning: Huiliang Liu (Alternate for John Fernandez)
- City of Aurora - Public Works: Duane Launder, (Alternate for Kevin Wegener)
- City and County of Denver - Community Planning and Development: Steve Gordon and David Gaspers
- City and County of Denver - Public Works: Terry Ruitter
- Denver International Airport (DIA): Tom Reed
- Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA): Tracy Huggins
- Northeast Denver Housing Center (NEDHC): Gete Mekonnen
- RTD: Mike Turner
- Stapleton Foundation: Angie Rivera-Malpiede

Others

- CDR Associates (Facilitator): Laura Sneeringer
- DRCOG: Paul Aldretti, Ashley Kaade, Teri Whitmore
- Place Matters: Jocelyn Hittle
- Reconnecting America: Bill Sadler

Absent CWG Member Organizations

- Denver Housing Authority
- Metro Denver EDC



Meeting Materials (available on the Website)

- Agenda
- Operating Protocol
- Interview Summary
- Presentations

Action Items

- CWG members will review the Operating Protocol closely to ensure they can meet all expectations and will determine if they'd like to designate an alternate. They will send any suggested modifications to the protocol and alternate information to Laura Sneeringer (lsneeringer@mediate.org; 303.442.7367 ext. 214). They will also provide information on any days/times of the week that generally do not work well for meetings.
- CWG members will review the interview summary and presentation on current efforts along the corridor before the next meeting in order to have an understanding of the corridor's context.
- DRCOG will provide information on Stakeholder Committee membership.
- DRCOG will work with members to schedule the next meeting. It will be a 3-hour meeting.

Parking Lot Issues

- How will the Implementation Strategy be used at the end of this grant? What is its ultimate purpose?
- When and how should developers and other key stakeholders that are not already part of the process be engaged?

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Goals for the East Corridor

As part of their introductions, participants were asked to identify a TOD-related outcome or goal they would like to see completed along the East Corridor in the next 3-years, whether part of East CWG efforts or not. The goals/outcomes included:

- Have the station at 61st/Pena Station open on Opening Day, even though it was added late in the process
- A TOD project that is built and functioning in any location
- Completion of the planned TOD project at the DIA station, including the retail plaza and Westin Hotel
- Obtain necessary funding to develop Aurora Housing Authority's site near the Peoria/Smith station
- Affordable workforce housing at every station
- Ridership beyond anticipated levels with interest in development at the stations
- Denver to become a TOD model for other regions
- State parking legislation passed to allow RTD to work with local governments and private entities to manage and charge for RTD parking. Related, develop an Aurora Parking Dept. to manage all parking.
- Both Aurora stations to have a high transit ridership
- Reinvigorate the type of excitement that was once part the 40 & 40th site (prior location for 38th/Blake that changed due to negotiation challenges)
- Develop a common and clear understanding of what TOD means, as there are many different interpretations
- Use the East Line strategically as a community building tool
- Develop a pedestrian/bicycle bridge near 38th and Blake



- Ensure community members understand the corridor vision and what TOD is, and make sure their needs and challenges are heard
- Establish successful CWG that will continue beyond the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which involves coordination among members to leverage resources and mobilize for TOD opportunities

Overview of the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) and CWGs Purpose

Paul Aldretti, DRCOG provided an overview of the Sustainable Communities Initiative and highlighted the mandate of the CWG. His presentation is available on the Website.

The CWG's primary tasks are the following. All activities need to be completed by January 15, 2015 at the latest.

- Develop a TOD vision for the East Corridor
- Identify challenges and opportunities related to implementing the vision
- Develop a detailed Implementation Strategy, focused primarily on cross jurisdictional TOD challenges and opportunities
- Identify a catalytic project site with redevelopment potential and conduct pre-development planning work for this site

The CWG will utilize input from a parallel Stakeholder Committee made up of community and business leaders. This is an advisory, non-decision-making group that will provide input to the CWG to help develop the East Corridor Vision. The Stakeholder Committee will review and provide feedback on the CWG developed vision and Implementation Strategy. In addition to providing input, the Stakeholder Committee is spending time developing their knowledge on TOD topics.

Technical resources are available through the SCI Resource Group, SCI Outcome Assessment and Knowledge Sharing (OAKS) Group and funding is available to hire technical consultants.

The Committee discussed the following questions:

How will the Implementation Strategy be used in the future? The CWG members will need to grapple with this question. The group may decide to continue working together to implement strategies beyond the grant period, similar to the West Corridor Working Group. Denver, Aurora and DRCOG could use the strategy as they consider their planning efforts, including the Metro Vision. One person noted that it is important to refine this soon because of DRCOG's TIP funding. This topic will be discussed further at future meetings.

How can the CWG ensure that the East Corridor Vision is realistic? It is expected that the compiled expertise of the CWG members will be able to evaluate the vision to ensure it is realistic. However, the group can invite technical experts to meetings for consultation and resources are available to fund technical consultants.

Comment: It may be unrealistic for the catalytic site to be a model for other sites, since each site is unique. It was noted that even if the plan for the catalytic site may be unique, the process for developing the plan can become a model.

Comment: It is important that the Corridor Vision includes more than development at the beginning and end of the line. There is interest in stations along the entire corridor. This is demonstrated through station-specific feedback in the interview summary and the fact that detailed plans have been developed at most sites.



How do we get feedback from key stakeholders such as developers? When in the process should they be engaged? A decision was made not to include developers in the Stakeholder Committee; however, it is important to obtain their feedback. One idea is to hold short, focus groups with developers. Additional discussion is needed to determine when in the process these could occur. The question was raised about whether it is better to engage them early on to help set the vision or later in the process once a vision is already established. This topic will be discussed further at future meetings.

Does the current CWG membership include all key organizations? Aurora EDC, Adams County and Commerce City were invited to be part of the group, but there has been little response. Aurora will think about whether their economic development perspective is met and if not a decision will be made on whom to include. Another idea was to invite a USFWS representative from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, though another person noted that they would not likely want to be involved. DRCOG will take this idea under consideration.

Review and Refine CWG Expectations

The group did a high-level review of the draft Operating Protocol (available on the Website) and agreed that they could meet the outlined expectations. An additional CWG member responsibility was added – to prepare for meeting discussion by reading meeting materials in advance. Every effort will be made to provide materials one-week prior to meetings. An additional meeting guideline was also added – to be present during the meeting (e.g., turn off cell phones). The group agreed that 3-hour meetings are acceptable since there is a lot of information to cover.

Overview of Current Planning Efforts along the Corridor

Laura Sneeringer, CDR Associates, provided a brief overview of context notes from the Interview Summary (available on the Website). Steve Gordon, City and County of Denver Community Planning and Development, and Huiliang Liu, City of Aurora Comprehensive Planning, provided a presentation describing the overall vision for each of the stations on the East Line. Their presentation is available on the Website. Highlights include:

Context:

- The East line has 4 transportation hubs along the line—Union Station, 38th and Blake (connection to the Central Corridor extension, which is not funded yet), Peoria/Smith (connection to the I-225 line) and DIA.
- In addition to Union Station and DIA, 40th and Airport and 61st and Pena can be considered end of the line stations as people will be travelling from surrounding communities to access the line.
- Blueprint Denver identifies areas of change vs. stability and most of the stations are identified as areas of change. In addition, the East Line is being called the Corridor of Opportunity.
- Denver's TOD Strategic Plan update is ranking projects by a combination of market readiness (i.e., is there demand) and development readiness (i.e., is the infrastructure available).
- Aurora has completed 6 station plans, including those on the I-225 corridor. Gateway was the first station area plan to be completed in 2008 and Peoria-Smith was adopted in 2009. Other relevant plans include the Aurora Comprehensive Plan, TOD Zoning, Urban Streets Standards and Urban Parks Standards.
- Airport City is land owned by DIA (on airport and some other landholdings along Pena Blvd). Aerotropolis includes a broader geography.
- Parking is an issue along the corridor, especially at Peoria-Smith as people need parking for the Anschutz/Fitzsimons campus.



Station-Specific:

- **DIA Airport:** The station will be directly under the Westin Plaza and retail.
- **61st and Pena:** Denver is currently developing a station area plan, General Development Plan, conducting rezoning and developing a Metro District. There are four property owners.
- **40th/Airport**
- **Peoria/Smith:** One issue is figuring out how people from Montebello will be able to easily access this station and the 40th/Airport station. The I-70 Peoria Crossing project provides a bridge for pedestrians to safely access the station.
- **Central Park (Stapleton):** The Central Park Plan was adopted in Sept. 2012. It includes 8 transformative concepts, including: Uinta Street, improved street network, Sand Creek Trail connections, station landmark, innovative station site design, Quebec Square, intermodal transportation center and bike sharing.
- **40th/Colorado:** Denver does not have the resources to do a station area plan here at this time, and will fold planning into the Elyria-Swansea neighborhood plan. There are neighborhood connectivity issues, such as a trench that divides the Swansea neighborhood from the station. A bridge is needed. This area is primarily industrial. The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless recently purchased a property from the Urban Land Conservancy, which purchased another site.
- **38th and Blake:** There is a station plan and next step plan. There are not good connections with adjacent streets. Specific conflict points have been identified. A pedestrian bridge is needed at 35th/36th. Denver's TOD Strategic Plan consultant is particularly excited about opportunities at this station.
- **Denver Union Station:** This station area will include multi-use – office buildings, housing units, open space in front of Wynkoop for events and access to Amtrak.

