

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE SYNTHESIS REPORT

August 2015



A Report to the Denver Regional Council of Governments



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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE SYNTHESIS REPORT

This report was prepared as a final summary for the Sustainable Communities Initiative Executive Committee as part of the Denver Regional Council of Government's Sustainable Communities Initiative program.

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Copies of this document may be obtained by contacting Denver Regional Council of Governments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
Part I: Background	1
Part II: Sustainable Communities Regional Principles	3
Part III: Project Summaries and Outcomes	5
A. Regional Housing Strategy	6
B. Regional Economic Strategy	9
C. Corridor Planning: Profiles and Corridor Implementation Blueprints	11
D. Stakeholder Engagement	21
Part IV: Bringing It Together	29

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

SYNTHESIS REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The Denver region's Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) addressed ways in which jurisdictions, housing and economic development agencies, investors and developers, and non-profit organizations can work together to focus future housing and jobs around transit stations. Through a host of partnerships and efforts, planners, technical experts, advocates, citizens, and decision-makers have come together to map out a more vibrant and sustainable future for how residents of the region will live, work, and play.

This summary report brings together information, outcomes, and recommendations from a number of SCI activities and reports, including (a) the Regional Housing Strategy, (b) the Regional Economic Strategy, (c) Corridor Blueprints (for the East, Gold, and Northwest corridors), and (d) the *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing* (OAKS) Report (which evaluated the Central, Southwest, Southeast, and West corridors, as well as transit development in three peer regions). The body of findings and recommendations is compared to the SCI Principles crafted by the Initiative's Executive Committee. The principles are grouped in five major topic areas: (1) housing opportunity, (2) healthy places (which consists of public health, environmental quality and the built environment), (3) economic vitality and resiliency, (4) transit accessibility, and (5) transit oriented communities. The recommendations from the various projects reinforce the Initiatives principles, and also expand on factors related to the primary themes addressed in the principles.

General

The region has come together before to address major challenges and opportunities. Collaboration must continue and advance to move forward with implementation actions in creating more vibrant, healthy, and complete communities around transit stations.

Housing Opportunities

A regional approach is required to address various housing challenges and opportunities, including changing demographics, changing lifestyles, affordability, and proximity to jobs and services.

Healthy Places

There are gaps or barriers in the design of station areas that create challenges for walking, biking, and active living. Services to support the health and wellness of residents, workers, and visitors at station areas should include childcare, fresh food, workforce information and training, and address other community and neighborhood needs.

Economic Vitality and Resiliency

There is an opportunity to partner with economic development organizations to brand and market the corridors. This should continue to build on the collaboration already taking place within the current light rail corridors.

Transit Accessibility

A number of issues relate to this theme:

1. Removing obstacles to transit ridership (particularly fare reductions or reduced fare programs), particularly for low-income communities, disabled persons and seniors;
2. Parking management;
3. Infrastructure (especially sidewalks and bicycle facilities; and
4. Initiating transit planning in the future.

Additional funding for walking, bicycling, and using transit to increase mobility and accessibility choices within transit communities is key.

Transit Oriented Communities

There is commitment across the region to successfully develop transit-oriented communities. Recommendations focused on better understanding the relationship of *Metro Vision* urban centers and station areas, crafting subarea plans that move away from automobile-oriented development patterns, and providing local jurisdictions with tools and strategies to allow for vibrant, healthy complete communities.

Just as the region came together to approve the multi-billion dollar FasTracks project to create a 21st century regional transit system, the region is well-positioned to advance further cooperation and collaboration to successfully direct housing, jobs, and services to transit stations to create complete, vibrant and healthy places in which to live, work and play.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Part I: Background

Purpose and Intent of This Report

This report provides an overview of efforts and outcomes from SCI. The report integrates information and findings for focusing homes, jobs, services, and amenities in transit communities throughout the Denver metropolitan area. Included are summaries of the programs, projects, activities and outcomes undertaken through the Initiative, including: the *Regional Housing Strategy*, the *Regional Economic Strategy*, and Corridor Blueprints – which include catalytic projects, corridor-wide technical assistance; corridor recommendations and stakeholder outcomes. In addition, this report incorporates the results of stakeholder engagement and the *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing* (OAKS) report. The OAKS report is based on the experience in existing Regional Transportation District (RTD) FasTracks Light Rail corridors: Central, Southwest, Southeast, and West. It includes additional corridor analysis, stakeholder interviews, and case studies of peer regions (Dallas, Portland, and San Diego).

Summary of DRCOG's SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE Program

SCI was a coordinated effort among 86 partner organizations led by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) to address one of the region's most pressing and exciting challenges: leveraging the planned multi-billion dollar expansion of the transit system to meet other regional needs and opportunities. This effort was financed by a three-year grant from the Sustainable Communities Partnership, a federal collaboration of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The overarching goal of the SCI was to align investments, programs and policies to maximize the benefits that result from the region's investment in transit. The vision of the Initiative anticipated a region with greater access to job opportunities across the entire income spectrum, lower combined transportation and housing costs, reduced consumption of fossil fuels, reduced strain on air and water resources, and ultimately the development of concentrated, mixed-use, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly “urban centers” along transit lines that allow residents to easily access their daily needs without having to drive. The introduction of transit provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve this vision.

Sustainable Communities Project Management and Governance

The SCI partnership consisted of a consortium of municipalities, counties, state agencies, economic groups, housing authorities, and corporate interests in collaboration with nonprofit, philanthropic and academic organizations. They joined together to conduct the Initiative work plan at three interrelated planning levels – regional, corridor and site-specific (catalytic projects). The remaining two program components – stakeholder engagement and *Leveraging the Investment in Transit to Achieve Community and Economic Vitality | Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing* (OAKS) – cut across and supported planning efforts at all three levels.

The SCI Executive Committee was charged with ensuring that proposed planning efforts meet regional objectives and result in implementation strategies that equitably benefit the Denver region. The Executive Committee consisted of community leaders representing the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The Executive Committee developed the Sustainable Communities Regional Principles to serve as a common foundation for implementing outcomes of SCI and enhancing Metro Vision 2040.

Sustainable Communities Initiative Planning Outcomes

Planning studies and projects were guided by consultation, interviews, community input, and SCI educational programs including public forums, the civic engagement website, symposia, and ongoing technical support for project planning efforts through the use of cutting-edge decision support tools such as the *Denver Regional Equity Atlas* interactive visual data base and the *Boomer Bond Assessment Tool and Resource Directory*, an online searchable database of best practices. These two tools work together to help community outreach and assessment to implement strategies that contribute to healthy successful aging.

Corridor Working Groups in the East, Gold, and Northwest FasTracks corridors developed vision statements and implementation strategies. These efforts coordinated with stakeholder engagement efforts in each corridor. A Corridor Stakeholder Committee was established in each corridor representing residential and business interests. Extensive additional outreach was conducted through educational meetings of the Transit Alliance, FRESC sponsored meetings with community and neighborhood citizens, and public forums to inform and solicit input on corridor issues. The *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing* (OAKS) report extracted lessons from the four initial corridors (Central, Southwest, Southeast and West).

Part II: Sustainable Communities Regional Principles

The Denver Region SCI Executive Committee developed a set of principles to organize strategies for implementing SCI outcomes and recommendations from all the elements of the Initiative programs and processes. According to the principles statement,

[T]he principles are intended to serve as a common foundation for work to meet shared challenges and goals. The ultimate outcome of these efforts is to ensure the highest possible quality of life for all residents by leveraging opportunities created through the expansion of the region's transit system... The principles include recommended strategies to guide action through partnerships among organizations as well as by specific groups based on their mission, roles and programs. The choice to adopt and implement strategies designed to achieve the shared principles will be determined by what is appropriate for specific circumstances.

Learning, adapting and optimizing new opportunities as the region moves into the future will depend on on-ongoing performance monitoring, metrics and learning infrastructure, as well as also strong leadership and collaboration. Because the principles provide a framework to achieve the goals of the SCI, they are used in this report as an organizing framework for the evaluation and comparison of the insights from the various Initiative projects.

The principles are grouped in five major topic areas:

1. Housing opportunity – Housing is more than just shelter. It is a key determinant of local and regional economies, drives travel patterns and habits, and is a primary factor in determining the physical and social health of the region's residents. Ensuring that every resident has a safe, decent, accessible and affordable place to live is critical to the long-term economic success of the Denver region.
2. Healthy places – One of the biggest attractions of the Denver region has long been the high quality of life and public health supported largely by environmental conditions and access to amenities that encourage active living. As the region continues to grow it must do everything possible to continually support and enhance the quality of public health, environmental resources and the built environment. The expansion of the regional transit system offers new opportunities for achieving this goal by enhancing accessibility to services and amenities, increasing activities that support healthy lifestyles, encouraging development that is conducive to health, and providing alternative modes of transportation. These activities should be conducted in partnerships with organizations currently involved in related work and should build on existing efforts.

3. Economic vitality and resiliency – The strength of the Denver region’s economy is its workforce. Continued economic vitality and resilience requires a targeted approach to ensure access to opportunity for all residents. This includes access to good paying jobs, affordable housing, health care and transportation that supports people in maintaining employment. Open communication and collaboration must cut across all sectors of the economy and focus on improving opportunity for all incomes, races and education levels. That is the basis for long-term economic growth.
4. Transit accessibility – The Denver region’s investment in building out its transit system presents an opportunity to provide enhanced access to opportunity such as jobs, education and health for all residents. However, these benefits can only be realized if the transit service is both physically and financially accessible to residents. Increased access to transit and multimodal options is especially critical for communities throughout the region, including low-income communities, the disabled, communities of color and older adults.
5. Transit oriented communities – Vital Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) are key to fully leveraging the regional transit system. These communities should demonstrate diverse uses including residential, retail, commercial, and industrial depending on the conditions specific to that station area. They should include a range of amenities and services to support people who reside and work in the station area, but also assist those who use the station to access transit. TOCs should be characterized by increased density, infrastructure that enhances accessibility and promotes active living, and design for resource efficiency (including water, energy, etc.). They also should be sensitive to the culture, character and needs of existing and surrounding communities.

These principles are predicated on continuing collaboration among key organizations and interests in the region including the Denver Regional Council Of Governments (DRCOG), the Regional Transportation District (RTD), local governments, and foundations, community organizations and other groups through the auspices of Mile High Connects (MHC).

Part III: Project Summaries and Outcomes

The SCI program was designed to help achieve the vision and principles through a series of coordinated activities including regional planning, corridor planning and technical assistance, corridor catalytic project development; stakeholder engagement and outreach, and an assessment of outcomes and knowledge sharing. The Regional Housing Strategy and Economic Strategy are informing the *Metro Vision 2040* planning process and providing stakeholder and research data on two of the most challenging and interrelated issues affecting the region: housing and economic vitality. Tangential to these issues, were the Healthy Communities and Boomer Bond initiatives which influenced conversations, stakeholder concerns, eventual outcomes in the planning processes of Metro Vision 2040, and deliberations of the SCI Executive Committee. Corridor planning created transit networks to develop corridor visions, catalytic projects, and stakeholder engagement and implementation strategies in the East, Gold, Northwest and North Metro FasTracks corridors.

Regional Planning Outcomes

The SCI regional planning outcomes were achieved through two studies and stakeholder engagement (interviews), which addressed housing and economic vitality in the region. The research on conditions and indicators were reviewed with planners, stakeholders, subject matter experts and advocates to formulate strategies intended to inform the DRCOG *Metro Vision 2040* regional plan and initiate baseline data for the regional planning and corridor planning. The *Equity Atlas Website* project and the *Boomer Toolkit* projects respond to the planning and data needs that emerged from local governments, agencies, advocates, researchers, policy and decision-makers in the region on issues of housing, equity, health, environment, and transit-oriented development. The need to develop useable data to measure outcomes of the SCI vision, as well as improve regional planning outcomes across functional elements of the regional planning process were clear benefits these outcomes helped to achieved.

A. Regional Housing Strategy

Purpose

The purpose of the *Regional Housing Strategy* was to inform *Metro Vision 2040* by identifying the nature and extent of the region's housing needs. The Strategy builds on the *Metro Vision* listening tour and extensive stakeholder network consultation and citizen outreach and engagement of low-income citizens and neighborhoods.

What the Strategy Addresses

Major results of the housing strategy were a forecast of demographic changes through 2040 and an analysis of housing conditions and their implications in the region. Stakeholder interviews and citizen outreach reinforced many of the findings and interpretations of consultant research.

Outcomes

Housing experts agreed on the shortage of affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents (particularly near job centers) and a growing disconnect between locations served by public transit and those where lower- and moderate-wage workforce and older adult population actually reside. Urban areas are shouldering the burden of providing housing for many of the region's residents living in poverty. Housing needs for these populations are reportedly growing in suburban areas. Persons experiencing homelessness face a variety of challenges and their complex situations require a multifaceted approach.

Community stakeholder interviews produced varied solutions: provide more affordable housing opportunities near transit (preferably in mixed-income settings); address construction defects legislation to expand affordable homeownership opportunities; establish a flexible source of funding to support the creation of housing where unmet demand exists; expand regional transportation solutions; and address special needs residents (older adults, persons with disabilities, persons experiencing homelessness).

Housing Demographic Issue Drivers

- Aging of the population, the impact of young adults entering the market, and an increase of individuals with disabilities increases demand for:
 - Aging in place and aging services,
 - Mixed use and walkable development,
 - Housing for people with disabilities, and
 - Affordable housing, particularly at middle and lower income levels

Housing Condition Issues

- Homeownership rates declining
- Increased housing prices are burdening households, and the lowest income residents
- Historically high rents and low vacancies
- Lower and middle income homebuyers have fewer options to buy
- Options for affordable rentals declining or largely nonexistent near job and training centers
- Aging in place increases demand for housing modifications and supportive services
- For sale housing concentrated in smaller number of communities – also further from major job centers limiting access to opportunity.

Major outcomes from the *Regional Housing Strategy* were key findings and recommendations based on identification of gaps and potential issues from stakeholder interviews and citizen outreach. Housing themes consistent throughout the region included the following:

- Permanent housing with supportive services is severely limited, for both those who are experiencing homelessness and those at risk.
- Rental subsidies for the region's lowest income renters are significantly oversubscribed and needed in all areas of the region.
- The aging of residents will shape housing needs in the future.
- The influx of younger workers and residents has boosted housing demand and led to new housing types – dense, attached housing.
- Issues identified by stakeholders include scarcity of affordable housing, neighborhood disinvestment, gentrification pressures, and the need for better access to transportation.

A final outcome of the Housing Strategy was the identification of a possible roll for the DRCOG in housing policy as a “convener, incubator, or doer,” and a list of suggested actions to initiate implementation of the framework.

The Housing Strategy made several recommendations for DRCOG in the context of three primary roles:

1. **Convener.** Provide information and bring together cities, counties, industry experts and other partners to discuss solutions to improve housing imbalances across the region.
2. **Incubator.** Set in motion, through provision of information, administrative and/or financial support, new regional programs and initiatives to support increased housing options.
3. **Do-er.** Implement programs and policies that support the production and preservation of housing options in location-efficient places, including urban centers, high opportunity areas, and areas well-served by transit.

Regional Housing Needs – Findings & Outcomes

- Growing disconnects between locations served by public transit and those where lower- and moderate-wage workforce (as well as older adult population) reside.
- Gaps in opportunity for low income and minority residents – primarily opportunity in education, job access, income segregation and neighborhood investment.
- Lack of funding to address housing needs.
- Lack of rental subsidies, permanent housing, and supportive services for region's residents living in poverty.
- Local jurisdictions, as primary providers of housing and services to many of the region's households with severe needs, shoulder a preponderance of the burden of providing housing.
- Housing needs for lower-income populations growing in suburban areas, which now struggle to serve increasing numbers of residents in poverty.
- Persons experiencing homelessness face variety of challenges; a multifaceted approach is needed & required.
- More permanent, supportive, region-wide housing approach needed for long-term, effective solution to homelessness.
- Gaps in information that jurisdictions need to address housing issues.

Regional Housing Strategy Recommendations for DRCOG		
Convener	Incubator	Do-er
C1. Sponsor discussions and workshops to provide information about best practices in land use regulations, zoning and housing policies	I1. Create catalysts for additional, flexible sources of funding	D1. Create and share information about housing condition
C2. Continue and amplify dialogue about visitable and accessible housing demand	I2. Explore new methods of coordinated and collaborative housing planning for homelessness	D2. Conduct research, education and outreach to member communities about the economic benefits of addressing housing needs
	I3. Gather and make available research on successful ways to improve economic opportunity for disadvantaged residents	D3. Require or reward communities that work to improve their affordable housing imbalances
		D4. Support expansions of existing programs to create mixed income housing in desired locations

B. Regional Economic Strategy

Purpose

The purpose of the *Regional Economic Strategy* was to determine how to integrate economic vitality principles into *Metro Vision 2040* to advance a broader approach to regional sustainability and an appropriate role for DRCOG in achieving regional economic vitality.

What the Strategy Addresses

The strategy relies on interviews and analysis of data and trends, including an economic development stakeholder input analysis, an economic indicators analysis, regional planning case studies, and a Metro Vision Plan Issues Evaluation to improve *Metro Vision 2040*.

Outcomes

Major outcomes of the *Regional Economic Strategy* focused on *Metro Vision 2040*, specifically that the plan should comprehensively address economic vitality and sustainability. According to the report, DRCOG should expand its involvement and engagement with local elected officials, economic development agencies, developers and businesses, workforce experts, educators, and major institutions and employers to establish DRCOG as a “hub of collaboration” and idea sharing.

Economic development activities, as currently organized and implemented, should remain under the leadership of the Metro Denver Economic Development Council and its local partner economic development organizations (EDOs). Working to maintain and gain strategic advantage is a key driver to collaboration in the region. This collaboration is critical to leverage the investment in transit in a manner that enhances quality of life and economic vitality.

Regional Economic Strategy Recommendations for DRCOG

Metro Vision 2040

- Integrate into Metro Vision the principles of economic vitality and prosperity, environmental quality, and social well-being and equity.
- Include an economic sustainability element in *Metro Vision*.
- Urban Centers have been effective in attracting employment to transit-accessible locations, but less effective in shifting regional priorities – only a few have attracted diverse, mixed-use development that includes employment and development at a regionally significant scale.

Economic Data & Analysis

- Increase DRCOG’s interaction with local communities to review socioeconomic data and forecasts.
- Strengthen DRCOG’s economic analysis program and include key indicators to measure changes in economic vitality and performance within the region.
- Complete a comprehensive study of commuting patterns for major employment centers.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Create an economic development committee to elevate the dialogue on economic health and sustainability in the region.
- Strengthen DRCOG’ role as a convener of forums on regional growth and development issues.
- Convene a regular meeting of mayors, city and county managers, and other important city and county staff or elected officials.
- Explore the feasibility of designating economically distressed areas of the region as Economic Development Districts under the Federal Economic Development Administration.
- Look for additional opportunities to partner with and provide technical assistance to communities, building on the popularity of the DRCOG’ Boomer Bond Program.
- Facilitate public/private partnerships to improve last mile connections at regional transit stations.

Regional Planning Technical Assistance

Boomer Bond

The Denver Regional Council of Government's Area Agency on Aging (AAA), in partnership with American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Colorado, launched the *Boomer Bond* initiative to consider how community design, services and infrastructure must evolve to meet the needs of the region's growing population of older adults. The *Boomer Bond* assists local governments in the region to develop strategies and tools to support healthy, independent aging, allowing older adults of all incomes to remain in their homes and communities for as long as they desire. This initiative will consist of three mutually supportive components: (1) a comprehensive set of policies, strategies and tools to support independent aging that local governments can choose to implement; (2) a voluntary certification process recognizing local governments that emerge as leaders in creating age-friendly physical and social environments; and (3) a voluntary regional agreement among participating member governments to pursue a portfolio of built environment and other services that meet the needs of the growing older population.

Regional Equity Atlas

The *Regional Equity Atlas*, developed by Mile High Connects, provides a visual representation of the many opportunities and challenges facing the Denver region and its vulnerable populations as a result of the planned transit expansion. The Atlas contains a multitude of maps and data that will assist Mile High Connects and the DRCOG in strategic planning, directing resources, and measuring progress moving forward. It also will help establish a baseline for tracking and measuring equitable outcomes as FasTracks undergoes major expansion, and will further build the case for why the region needs to focus on creating and enhancing access to opportunities through affordable transportation options and transit-oriented development.

Stakeholder Citizen Advisory Council

To ensure the participation of a diverse set of stakeholders in the regional planning process, the DRCOG established a technical planning advisory committee and a citizens' advisory committee. The Citizens' Advisory Council served in an advisory role to the Metro Vision Planning Advisory Committee in identifying the most efficient ways to involve residents in the *Metro Vision* update planning process. The committee met and discussed topics including housing, economic vitality, community health and wellness, and infill development.

C. Corridor Planning: Profiles and Corridor Implementation Blueprints

Purpose and Overview

The purpose of corridor planning is to support ongoing collaborative cross-/multi-jurisdictional and interagency planning and development along the East, Gold and Northwest corridors. The planning processes were informed by the development of Corridor Profiles that included baseline data and mapping analyses, and draft challenges and opportunities by a consultant team working with guidance from DRCOG and the Corridor Working Groups (CWG). The CWGs used the information contained in the profiles and subsequent SCI corridor planning efforts to strategically prioritize investments, funding sources, and development opportunities to benefit the corridor as a whole. These deliberations resulted in corridor visions, catalytic and technical assistance projects, stakeholder input, and a final *Corridor Blueprint* – an implementation plan and final report for each corridor.

The CWGs were comprised of decision-makers and implementers including staff from jurisdictions along the corridor, housing authorities, transportation management associations, RTD, and other key stakeholders. The CWGs were assembled to conduct corridor planning activities. Stakeholder engagement activities in each corridor also ensured that constituents including residents and businesses had the opportunity for input to inform planning efforts. They were engaged through Corridor Stakeholder Committees and other activities (including corridor-specific public forums and Transit Academies, and one-on-one and neighborhood meetings) conducted by a Stakeholder Engagement Team comprised of outreach professionals, community organizations and DRCOG staff.

1. East Corridor

The East Corridor is a 22.8-mile electric commuter rail line that will run from Denver Union Station to Denver International Airport. The line is currently under construction and is expected to open in early 2016. There will be six stations between Union Station and the airport, for a total of eight stations.

What the Profile Addresses

The East Corridor Working Group and Stakeholder Committee identified a number of opportunities and barriers 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, certain amenities such as a grocery store or park are present, but others are needed. All stations have connectivity challenges and physical barriers that hinder movement by all modes, but especially for pedestrians. Existing land use is primarily industrial or greenfield and may remain so for the foreseeable future, presenting challenges to implementing the vision in many station areas that call for denser mixed-use development. Parking has also been identified as a challenge because of the likely demand from both transit riders and airport travelers. It also presents an opportunity, however, because surface parking lots can be converted to other types of transit-oriented development in the long term through joint development with the jurisdictions, RTD, Denver International Airport, and other parties.

Catalytic Project/Technical Assistance

The **Peoria Station Catalytic Project** identified policy, project, and program-related strategies to catalyze additional investment and make the station area more transit-oriented and transit-supportive. The plan focuses on enhancing the character of the station area, providing a critical regional and local station with appropriate connectivity and safety improvements, and promoting mixed use development.

East Corridor Recommendations

- Create an Economic Development Marketing and Branding Plan based on the outcomes of the East Corridor Market Readiness Study to implement a strong, marketable brand to generate development interest.
- Build on existing local jurisdiction and Regional Transportation District programs, and prepare a Multimodal Transportation Enhancement Study that focuses on the potential for multimodal infrastructure improvements that can better connect neighborhoods to transit stations.
- Conduct a services assessment or market study of grocery stores, daycare, medical facilities and other community amenities and services.
- Develop a cross-jurisdictional/inter-agency parking plan to implement recommendations and outcomes of the East Corridor Parking Study.
- Conduct a Joint Development Study and create policy that promotes joint development opportunities where appropriate.
- Prepare an Affordable Housing Creation and Preservation Strategy focused on creating and preserving affordable housing and promoting diverse, mixed-income housing options at each station area.
- Continue collaboration among participants in the East Corridor Working Group.

The **East Corridor Market Readiness Study** analyzed businesses and housing along the East Rail Line. The study examined market assets, and identified needs and gaps, economic opportunities, infrastructure investment impacts, and vacant and underutilized land with the primary goal of creating middle-income jobs. The study included a market analysis of development potential and optimal business/industry types for each station; an economic development strategy including policies, actions and investments needed to remove barriers to development and to increase attractiveness and competitiveness of the station areas; and a marketing and branding study to attract businesses in the region – a blueprint in creating an identity for the East Rail Line from Downtown Denver to Denver International Airport.

Outcomes

Peoria Station Catalytic Project: Catalyzing this station could provide economic vitality, enhanced livability, a strong sense of place, and a recognizable identity for the community. The project generated a development plan for 5.5 acres of Aurora Housing Authority land within one-half mile of the station. The plan was presented to the Authority’s Board of Directors, which approved moving forward with a design-build request for proposals. They have adjusted their initial finance plan and incorporated modest areas of retail and community service elements that were not initially anticipated. Numerous strategies developed through the parking strategies analysis/tool kit can help meet potential shifts in parking demand along the corridor while providing development opportunities in the proximity of station areas, including opportunities for redistributing parking in the corridor if warranted.

East Corridor Market Readiness Study: The East Line can be one of the most prominent airport-to-downtown transit connections in the U.S., giving Metro Denver increased exposure to businesses and tourists through positive experiences. The East Corridor generally lags Metro Denver in key economic and socioeconomic metrics, although some areas are changing rapidly. Gaps in community development assets and infrastructure barriers contribute to lagging economic vitality and increase the need for economic and community development. While there are expected to be corridor-wide and regional benefits with the opening of the East Line, its effects on station area land use, real estate development, and economic opportunity are highly variable and station-specific given the diversity of land uses and market conditions present. Affordable housing developers and interests are actively pursuing sites and projects along the corridor to get ahead of rising property values. It would be beneficial to brand and market the corridor to attract new employers and retain and expand existing businesses.

2. Gold Corridor

The Gold Corridor is an 11.2-mile electric commuter rail line that will run northwest from Denver Union Station to Ward Road in Wheat Ridge. There will be seven stations along the line.

What the Profile Addresses

The Gold Line Corridor Working Group and Stakeholder Committee 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 vision 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 Junction, could potentially accommodate more parking.

Catalytic Project/Technical Assistance

The **Wheat Ridge-Ward Road Station/Ridge Road Catalytic Project** identified potential ways to improve the Wheat Ridge-Ward Road Station area and Ridge Road between this station and the Arvada Ridge Station. The project addressed the existing condition of roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, geotechnical issues and community services along Ridge Road. It also examined access to the Wheat Ridge-Ward Road station with emphasis on obstacles and opportunities associated with Ward Road.

The **Gold Corridor Market Readiness Study** included an economic analysis of businesses, housing and community services along the Gold Line and identified the strengths and market potentials along the corridor. The study was conducted in an effort to meet the vision of the Corridor developed by the Corridor Working Group. A key component of the work focused on grocery and food availability, including the need for services from traditional grocery stores, local food producers, community gardens and agriculture or food share programs. The study also identified community service needs including childcare, senior services and recreation facilities. An economic development strategy was developed for the corridor that identified a business attraction and retention strategy, and catalytic infrastructure investment opportunities for real estate development, employment and access to community services.

The **Affordable Housing Creation & Preservation Study**

documented the availability, existing conditions and needs for affordable housing in the short-and mid-term; identified potential development sites for affordable housing; documented planning and regulatory mechanisms that may enable or impede the preservation and development of affordable housing; recommended strategies from regional, state, and national models that will promote affordable housing in specific areas within the corridor; and developed an evaluation strategy to track progress of affordable housing preservation and development.

Outcomes

The **Wheat Ridge-Ward Road Station/Ridge Road Catalytic**

Project demonstrated that Ridge Road has great potential to provide access to the Wheat Ridge-Ward Road Station and a connector between this station and the Arvada Ridge Station. Improvements have been identified that would provide a complete street in the short-term, with on-street bike lanes, continuous sidewalks on the north side of the street and desirable left turn lanes for approximately \$4-million with limited additional right-of-way required.

The **Gold Corridor Market Readiness Study** determined that there is existing demand for transit-oriented housing. Multifamily housing projects have already been developed along the corridor in some stations areas and there are existing available land and development opportunities. Key opportunity sites require multi-modal connectivity improvements at the Corridor level and at each station to facilitate access. Additional infrastructure improvements (including sidewalk, drainage and parks) also are needed. There are key opportunities for partnerships to maximize development in the corridor, including at those stations with education, health and other institutions. There is also a need for greater coordination on issues such as food availability and bicycle infrastructure.

Gold Corridor Recommendations

- Continued communication and coordination is integral to the success of the corridor as a whole. An inter-jurisdictional working group should be formed and work toward the best means by which to achieve shared goals, including informal partnerships. Work should include prioritization based on type of group formed, goals, funding and timing.
- Collaborate on strategies to create and expand primary jobs along the Gold Line corridor.
- Implement the Affordable Housing Creation and Preservation Strategy focused on creating and preserving affordable housing and promoting diverse, mixed-income housing options at each station along the Gold Line Corridor.
- Collaborate on strategies to address first and final mile connections.
- Address healthy food and health care access. A health coalition can help maximize scarce resources and promote cooperation on healthy community design across jurisdictions.
- Collaborate on locating needed community services at or near station areas.
- Develop and implement a Gold Corridor Marketing Strategy to enhance visibility and attractiveness of the corridor to visitors, residents, business owners and developers.
- Identify the need, priority and funding for the improvements for each station area. These may include recommendations for station area improvements, development and land use; food access; community services.
- Create and update transit-oriented development plans to include consideration for identifying affordable housing as a desired use and recommending supportive zoning and development guidelines.

The **Affordable Housing Creation & Preservation Study** determined that a market for multi-family housing is already active in the area, but it is entirely market-rate and out of alignment with the need for affordable housing. By 2030, the age profile in the region will shift from the 20-30 year olds as the largest group, to three new dominant groups: teenagers, early middle age (40-55 year olds), and early seniors (60-65 year olds). This will influence the demand for housing, work and services in the corridor. Since most residents leave the corridor for work, these workers require alternative modes of transportation that currently are limited and require investment.

Large sites for affordable housing exist, but affordable housing developers acting alone will struggle to cover the costs of the high land values and infrastructure requirements. Jurisdictions and counties will need more tools, regulations, and financing sources to support the current and future demand for affordable housing that needs to be met through both preservation and new development.

The Gold Corridor Housing Strategy

Research was conducted on affordable housing challenges and opportunities in the corridor along the Gold Line. As with other corridors throughout the Denver region, the Gold Corridor has a growing gap in affordable housing.

The Gold Corridor Housing Strategy examined housing needs and sites for possible housing development around each rail station along the Gold Line. The strategy also addressed environmental conditions, as well as mobility and accessibility connections. Information is provided on development opportunities at key location throughout the corridor.

Outcomes

A key feature of the Gold Corridor Housing Strategy is a set of goals and policies designed to address ways in which the station areas along the corridor can develop into more complete and vibrant communities. The policies address the natural environment, development patterns, housing and economic development, mobility

Gold Corridor Housing Strategy Policies

The strategy includes a set of policies crafted to support the development of complete communities in and around transit station areas. Policy areas include:

General policies call for coordination, monitoring, and exploring new sources of funding.

Land use policies call for a mix of land uses, maintaining unique local character, developing density standards, and establishing housing and job targets for Centers and station areas. Additional policies call for ensuring that adjacent land uses are compatible, factoring health into planning and decision-making, and supporting food production and availability.

Housing policies call for preserving, improving, and expanding the housing stock to provide a range of housing types and choices to all people. Of special concern is taking steps to preserve and create much needed affordable housing.

Mobility policies call for clean, integrated, and highly efficient multimodal transportation, and increasing proportion of trips made by walking, biking, and transit as alternatives to driving alone.

Environment policies call for protecting and restoring natural systems, conserving habitat, improving water quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, and addressing potential climate change impacts. Additional policies address contaminated soils clean-up, brownfields and greyfields, and open space.

Policies for other services call for supporting development with adequate public facilities and services in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner that supports local and regional planning objectives.

and accessibility, and the provision of adequate services. The policies are supplemented with a set of implementation actions and measures. Among the actions are the following implementation steps:

- Create an integrated corridor-wide infrastructure plan to address mobility and accessibility, water management, open space, and the provision of adequate services.
- Inventory industrial lands and develop a corridor-wide industrial lands strategy.
- Conduct an analysis of buildable and vacant land.
- Establish targets for jobs and housing, including affordable housing.
- Develop a station area plan for each transit community, and include a housing strategy.
- Create a toolkit for best practices related to providing housing for all.
- Establish mode-split goals for each transit community to increase trips by walking, bicycling and/or transit.

3. Northwest Corridor

The Northwest Corridor consists of the first segment of the Northwest Rail Line up to the Westminster station and the U.S. 36 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line. The first segment of the Northwest Rail Line, a 6.2-mile segment to the Westminster station, is currently under construction as part of the Eagle P3 public private partnership project anticipated to open in 2016. The U.S. 36 BRT Line will be an 18-mile express bus line with dedicated lanes along U.S. 36 between Downtown Denver and Boulder. There will be six stations along the line. The express lanes and a parallel bikeway are expected to be completed in 2016.

What the Profile Addresses

The Northwest Corridor Working Group identified a number of opportunities and challenges to implementing transit-oriented development within station areas along the corridor. In many station areas, there are major new developments underway. The Northwest Corridor is close to many major destinations, job centers, and sports and recreation facilities. There is a strong desire by many jurisdictions to capitalize on this proximity through marketing, branding and placemaking. Common challenges include barriers to access and connectivity, as there are numerous highways, arterials, and railroad tracks that limit connections to the station areas and surrounding neighborhoods. The suburban nature of existing development was also mentioned as a common challenge, as was the age of housing stock, lack of affordable housing and limited market for multifamily development.

Catalytic Project/Technical Assistance

The **Westminster Station** area provides an excellent opportunity for development based on Adams County Housing Authority (ACHA) properties that can serve as an anchor for the site and bring needed density. This project meets a primary community goal by linking residential neighborhoods to multiple activity centers including employment, medical services, commercial centers and academic campuses. A primary objective is the need to accommodate affordable housing choices.

Northwest Corridor Recommendations

- Implement the recommendations from the First- and Final-Mile Study and Northwest Corridor Bicycle/Pedestrian Accessibility Study (*near-term*)
- Create US 36 Metro Districts to catalyze development and necessary improvements in the corridor (*near-term*)
- Conduct planning for the implementation of a bicycle sharing system (*near- to mid-term*)
- Develop a funding program for non-transportation infrastructure needs (*mid-term*)
- Understand lessons learned and outcomes from corridor housing studies/projects for applicability in other areas throughout the corridor to meet affordable housing needs (*mid- to long-term*)
- Continue to collaborate in implementing identified recommendations to achieve the corridor vision and goals.

The US 36 Bicycle/Pedestrian Accessibility Study examined the opportunities and challenges related to first- and final-mile connections to transit (particularly bus rapid transit) in the corridor, specifically bicycle and pedestrian accessibility. The study was part of the implementation process for a previous study commissioned by U.S. 36 Commuting Solutions.

Outcomes

The sites at **Westminster Station** provide a significant opportunity for developing affordable and market-rate housing in an urban neighborhood context under the City of Westminster’s draft Station Area Plan. The market analysis found uncertainty regarding the potential for a turn-around of the Westminster Station area based solely on providing transit. The Adams County Housing Authority’s site nearest the proposed city-owned garage, developed as affordable or affordable senior housing, provides an opportunity to catalyze new development around the station. The technical review found no major obstacles for site development. The shared vision for the properties’ full buildout may not be feasible for immediate implementation due to current market conditions, but can still progress in a reasonable manner by phasing the projects.

The **US 36 Bicycle/Pedestrian Accessibility Study** produced bicycle and pedestrian strategies intended to create connected, safe, and easy to navigate communities around each station. These included bicycle storage facilities, optimal bicycle and pedestrian routes and way-finding signage. CWG members supported a single option as the preferred design for corridor branding and way-finding. The bike and pedestrian station connections identified through this report are intended to be “easy wins,” i.e., projects that can be implemented quickly due to their relatively low cost and low level of controversy or complexity. As facilities transition to BRT stations, it is important to provide high-quality and secure bicycle parking to complement, and potentially replace, some share of existing bicycle parking. 36 Commuting Solutions can effectively support next steps and further collaboration among local governments to advance the study outcomes towards implementation.

4. Additional Corridor Efforts

West Corridor Catalytic Project/Technical Assistance

While the West Corridor was not part of the full SCI corridor planning process, a catalytic project was conducted at the Sheridan Station. A collaborative process (the West Line Corridor Collaborative) involving the City and County of Denver, City of Lakewood, the Denver Housing Authority, Metro West Housing Solutions, and RTD was in place prior to the SCI grant. The corridor was evaluated as part of the *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Report*. The *West Corridor Catalytic Sheridan Station 20-Minute Neighborhood Implementation Strategy* and *Sheridan Station Residences Plan* build upon the adopted Lakewood and Denver Sheridan Station area plans, with a focus on implementation. For example, the redevelopment of the existing Jody Apartment site near the station will provide 62 units of affordable housing.

Outcomes

The Mountair Park Community Farm, created just blocks from the Sheridan Station, provides residents access to fresh, locally grown produce and serves as a gathering place for community festivals and educational events. Newly installed bike signage will guide bicyclists and pedestrians between the Sheridan Station, Mountair Park and the West Line bike trail. A RTD utility box at the Sheridan Station was wrapped with art depicting the 20-Minute Neighborhood concepts and brand. The plan calls for sidewalks on the west side of Sheridan Boulevard between 6th and 9th avenues to increase accessibility and pedestrian safety. Sheridan Station Residences is intended to be the first of four apartment properties or mixed-use properties in a three-acre master planned community at this light rail station. Partners will develop and operate the first two phases of the master planned community, based on schematic design drawings and 50 percent design development drawings created using grant funds.

North Metro Corridor

With funds remaining near the completion of the SCI grant, DRCOG staff supported a working group composed of representatives from jurisdictions along the North Metro Line currently under construction and opening in 2018. DRCOG staff conducted GIS and data analysis work for identified stations along the North Metro Line and potential station areas on a proposed BRT line along I-25 in the North Metro area. Using this information, the working group developed a preliminary vision and goals, and identified challenges and priorities.

D. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was a primary aspect of the SCI grant from its inception and was designed to support the regional, corridor and site-specific (catalytic project) activities under the grant. The stakeholder engagement process recognized the need for involvement by the communities in the region – especially those communities traditionally under-represented in planning processes. These communities frequently are those most dependent on transit and most in need of the benefits that transit can bring (including housing opportunity, economic vitality and jobs, and access to needed amenities and services). The main goals for stakeholder engagement were:

- Engage all relevant constituencies – people who have a stake in the process and who may be impacted by the outcome.
- Equip all of these constituencies with the tools and knowledge they need to effectively participate in the planning process.
- Integrate stakeholder engagement with all proposed planning and implementation activities to ensure that stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to influence the outcomes of these activities.
- Create long-term capacity for continued engagement at the regional, corridor and catalytic project-levels.
- Effectively and meaningfully engage communities typically underrepresented in planning processes, including low-income individuals and families, people with limited English proficiency, and communities of color.

DRCOG staff coordinated the stakeholder engagement activities. DRCOG staff worked with a Stakeholder Engagement Team consisting of experts in a variety of aspects of community outreach in planning and conducting these activities. The primary members of the Stakeholder Engagement Team included:

- **FRESC** is a nonprofit organization with expertise in grassroots community organizing. The Center's community organizers assisted in recruiting, building capacity, and effectively and meaningfully engaging traditionally underrepresented populations in the SCI project.
- **Transit Alliance** is a public-advocacy organization that works to enhance communities and people's lives by supporting transit, active transportation and increased mobility to cultivate a healthy, resilient and more sustainable lifestyle. Transit Alliance conducted a Citizens' Academy for each of the corridors, and integrated additional elements into the program for its regional Citizens' Academy, including how transit can increase opportunities for all members of the community.
- **PlaceMatters** is a Denver-based non-profit think tank for civic engagement and process in planning whose work creates opportunities for informed, inclusive decision making in the planning of vibrant cities and communities. PlaceMatters activities for SCI included the following:
 - Conducted stakeholder interviews with municipal staff and community leaders who had been involved in previous planning efforts in the corridor including station area planning;
 - Provided recommendations that supported process design, activities and tools for stakeholder committees;

- Helped design interactive public forums for each corridor and synthesized feedback received, and
- Provided training to stakeholders on engagement tools, such as WALKscope and the Denver Regional Equity Atlas.

In addition, the Denver Foundation provided support for the stakeholder engagement efforts. Denver Foundation funds covered a number of services for participants in stakeholder engagement activities including translation service for non-English proficient participants, childcare, and food.

Stakeholder engagement was employed at all levels of planning associated with the SCI project. These activities included:

- Metro Vision Citizen’s Advisory Council (regional)
- Corridor Stakeholder Committees
- Corridor Public Forums
- Public meetings for Catalytic Projects and corridor technical assistance studies
- Regional and corridor-specific Citizens' Academies (Transit Alliance)
- Community outreach – one-to-one and neighborhood meetings (FRESC)
- Development and deployment of engagement tools (PlaceMatters)

Engagement of target communities often was especially challenging. Obstacles included a distrust of people perceived to be representatives of government agencies (particularly in communities fearful of incarceration and deportation), lack of understanding of planning and related processes, difficulty aligning work and family schedules with meeting times, unfamiliarity with transit plans, and language barriers. One of the biggest lessons learned in this process is the need to use existing and familiar networks including schools and churches to reach intended participants.

Outcomes

Several issues came up in all regional and corridor stakeholder engagement efforts. These included:

- Need for **reduced fares or fare options** – particularly for transit dependent communities
- Better **community engagement and information** about transit planning and opportunities
- Need for safe, convenient & reliable **first- and final-mile connections** to transit stations – bus routes, bike/pedestrian infrastructure, parking
- Access to **affordable housing** options – rental and ownership

- **Services and amenities** in proximity to station areas – healthy food, childcare, health care, etc.
- Middle income **jobs and job training** to help prepare for better employment opportunities

In addition, the Corridor Stakeholder Committees identified the following specific needs.

East Corridor	Gold Corridor	Northwest Corridor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of stops in underserved communities • Accessibility and Connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fare affordability, circulators, last mile challenges, bicycle/pedestrian connections • The corridor should be designed to serve the residents, employees and neighborhoods along the corridor in addition to commuters (Downtown/DIA) who live outside the corridor • Need for strategies to preserve existing neighborhoods and prevent potential negative impacts of new development such as gentrification that pushes out existing residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preserve live/work opportunities for artists in River North Art District (RiNO) • Mixed use development <i>and</i> housing for mixed incomes • Job creation and access to jobs and education • Opportunities for new development and redevelopment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First- and final-mile challenges/connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wayfinding • Access to opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transit ○ Employment ○ Housing (displacement, affordable, senior) ○ Older adults, person(s) with a disability • Public education • Safety • Preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods • TOD/economic opportunity • Multimodal transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bicycle, pedestrian ○ Bus access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment opportunities • Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide more housing opportunities, particularly affordable housing • Affordable Fares and Incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incentives for the public to use public transportation, including from local businesses ○ More affordable bus fare, more liberal bus transfer rules • Placemaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Highlight the uniqueness of each station/new and improved placemaking ○ Create inviting opportunities for people to visit, shop, and recreate ○ Increase diversity and density • Multimodal Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multi-modal connections, particularly walking and biking • Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Easy access to transportation ○ Better coordinated access at and to the stations for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians

East Corridor	Gold Corridor	Northwest Corridor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New businesses, access to fresh food and shopping, increase in density ○ How to use TODs to jumpstart other development in the corridor ● Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal safety (especially at stations) ○ Safe accessibility (sidewalks, crossings, etc.) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First- and last-mile connections (potential feeder routes, car and bike sharing) ● Connecting Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Connection to entire region ● Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality mixed-use TOD and redevelopment ○ Strong retail/more local businesses

E. Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing (OAKS) Report

Purpose

The purpose of the *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing* (OAKS) Report is to initiate an action plan for advancing transit-oriented development and complete communities along RTD's FasTracks rail system. The Report provides information on where the region is at present in its efforts to create vibrant and healthy communities around transit stations, and what needs to happen to attract additional housing, jobs, entertainment, and goods and services to station areas for generations to come.

Station Areas at a Glance

Existing and future station areas represent 3 percent of the region's urbanized land area, 5 percent of current population and growing, and more than 30 percent of existing jobs

What the Report Addresses

The recommendations presented in the *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Report* are based upon recent data on housing, accessibility, jobs, and development opportunities. The data are drawn from three different analytical exercises:

- **Evaluations** of 46 station locations on FasTracks lines currently operating – the Central, Southwest, Southeast, and West lines
- **Interviews** of 65 developers, financiers, nonprofit organizations, planners, and other officials creating transit communities at stations along these corridors
- **Case Studies** from peer urban regions: Dallas, Portland (Oregon), and San Diego.

Outcomes and Recommendations / Corridor-by-Corridor Analysis

The corridor analysis revealed that no two station areas are the same in terms of transforming into transit communities. Interviews with planners, developers, and transit experts concluded that housing is in short supply and home prices continue to rise, that housing and jobs are *out-of-balance* (that is, not proximate to each other resulting in increased commuting), that bicycle and pedestrian facilities are in need of major funding, and that more services and amenities – such as day care and shopping – are needed in the vicinity of rail stations. The table that follows, titled: *Corridor-by-Corridor Analysis – Strengths and Challenges*, highlights integrated outcomes by source: interviews and/or analysis.

Table III-1: Corridor-by-Corridor Analysis | Strengths and Challenges

Analysis	Housing	Accessibility	Jobs & Economic Development	Site Development
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of developers have track record in transit-oriented development, affordable housing (<i>interviews</i>) • Traditional financing available, more funding needed (<i>interviews</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within half mile radius of the surveyed corridor stations, average walk time about 9 to 10 minutes (<i>corridor analysis</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High share of region's jobs and businesses already clustered in half mile transit zones providing opportunity for job seekers to access these jobs by transit (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • 30 percent of metro jobs within half mile 46 stations (<i>corridor analysis</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stations with detailed and prescriptive station area plans and mixed permitted uses and zoning are higher performers (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Nearly 18 percent of station areas rated "high" (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Transit-oriented development – mixed-use developments popular and in demand (<i>interview</i>)
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development happening, but little to no affordable housing (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Affordable housing under stress (<i>interviews</i>) • Need more diversified housing (<i>corridor analysis and interviews</i>) • Limited state funding for affordable housing (<i>interviews</i>) • Some communities and their elected officials oppose "affordable" housing (<i>interviews</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking environment varies greatly around stations - some walking distances can be long (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Auto-centric land uses are dominant pattern – planning & zoning regulations need to actively guide TOD and land uses (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Roads within and connecting station areas not designed for all users, i.e., pedestrians or bicyclists (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Pedestrian & bicycle facilities funding is too limited (<i>interviews</i>) • Other infrastructure lacking at station areas (<i>interviews</i>) • Connectivity to stations incomplete (<i>interviews</i>) • Parking Management needed at all stations (<i>interviews</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office uses and employment more developed around stations than housing. • Great deal of un-met capacity to develop jobs around station areas in all corridors. • Job and housing locations out-of-balance – concentrations of housing removed from employment locations, resulting in moderate or significant commutes (<i>corridor analysis, interviews</i>) • Services lacking in transit communities, such as child care, workforce centers (<i>corridor analysis, interviews</i>) • RTD's fare structure problematic for low income individuals and for attracting new riders (<i>interviews</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About half of station areas rated as having "moderate" opportunities for site development. About a third rated "challenging." • Parking not coordinated or managed in station areas (<i>corridor analysis</i>) • Some station areas unprepared for or hesitant about transit-oriented development (<i>interviews</i>) • There are too many centers designated in Metro Vision and there is a wide variety of different types of center places (<i>interviews</i>) • There is too little money to support all currently designated centers (<i>interviews</i>) • Jurisdictions would benefit from additional technical assistance and tools (<i>interviews</i>)

Case Studies of Peer Regions: Insights Relevant to Outcomes

The project team focused specific attention on the peer regions' approaches to housing, accessibility, jobs and employment, and site development. The case studies of Dallas, Portland, and San Diego show that those regions are wrestling with many of the same issues. They provide examples of both similar and different approaches for addressing collaboration, real estate acquisition programs, and marketing transit-oriented development as a core part of their regional economic strategies.

Table III-2: OAKS Report: Case Study Insights

<i>Key Insights from Dallas</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Public-private partnership among the transit authority, developers, and nonprofit organizations is an effective tool for the realization of transit-oriented development objectives2. Education and outreach help to provide information to elected officials, developers, and the public about the benefits of transit-oriented development3. Regional plans emphasize the importance of connecting centers4. Streamlining/expediting the development review process for developments that achieve adopted policies and objectives
<i>Key Insights from Portland</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Collaboration across the region – and across sectors – will help facilitate regional development objectives2. Third-party organizations – non-profit entities – are critical for supporting transit-oriented development objectives, in part through advocacy that encourages supportive legislation3. Affordable housing objectives should be facilitated at the regional level4. Regional financing tools can support the development community in its efforts to develop affordable housing5. Accessibility is improved with active transportation infrastructure that is integrated into plans for surface and public transport
<i>Key Insights from San Diego</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A strong regional presence will support local transit-oriented development efforts (e.g., collecting, analyzing and sharing standardized data, and supporting it with funding)2. Real-estate acquisition – or coordinating among agencies for acquisition – will help foster transit-oriented development objectives3. Need to take concrete actions to provide amenities at transit-oriented development locations that can support equity objectives, such as through provision of space or funding for child care facilities4. Streamlining/expediting the development review process for developments that achieve transit-oriented development objectives5. Establish a regulatory framework at the local jurisdiction that fosters and encourages transit-oriented development

OAKS Recommendations

There are 19 recommendations put forward in the OAKS Report. These findings support a broad consensus on moving forward with transit-oriented development as a means to support the growth of the region's transit system. They also advance the regional goals of the Denver Region Council of Government's Metro Vision long-range growth and transportation plan. The recommendations serve as a *call-to-action* for moving the region and localities forward in accommodating growth and development at station areas.

Theme	Recommendations
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance funding for housing• Expand real estate acquisition• Integrate changing demographics into planning• Develop a regional approach to housing
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize first- and final-mile connections• Reduce fare rates as an obstacle to ridership• Manage parking in station areas
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market transit-oriented communities as economic catalysts
Site Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Streamline development review• Leverage funding for necessary infrastructure
General/Cross-Cutting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embrace collaboration as a foundation for success• Clarify relationship between urban centers and station areas• Develop and make available best practices and tools• Monitor investment and development• Plan station areas as complete communities• Adopt holistic integrated planning approach• Integrate adjacent neighborhoods in station area planning• Expand education, outreach and community engagement• Plan future corridors

Part IV: Bringing It Together

This section aligns the SCI principles with the findings, outcomes, and recommendations of the four primary project initiatives, including the *Regional Housing Strategy*, the *Regional Economic Strategy*, the Corridor Profiles, and the *Outcomes Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Report*. The recommendations from the various projects reinforce the Initiatives principles, and also expand on factors related to the primary themes addressed in the principles.

General

The Denver region demonstrated an ability to create the mechanisms to collaborate successfully on the SCI. That level of collaboration needs to be continued and expanded to move forward with implementation actions to create more vibrant, healthy, and complete communities around transit stations. The region has come together before to address major challenges and opportunities. That commitment to regional cooperation and collaboration needs to continue and evolve.

Sustainability encourages addressing contemporary issues and future challenges in a more systematic and integrated approach. To successfully direct housing, jobs, and services to station areas, a multi-faceted effort that addresses housing, health, jobs, accessibility, and placemaking is required.

Housing Opportunities

Housing tops the list of issues facing the Denver region. The recommendations from the various projects call for a regional approach to address housing, including changing demographics, changing lifestyles, affordability, and proximity to jobs and services.

Healthy Places

This theme reoccurs with regard to transit station accessibility and the design of complete communities. The various projects identified gaps or barriers to the design of station areas that are walkable, bikable, and promote active living. In addition, services to support the health and wellness of residents, workers, and visitors should include childcare, fresh food, workforce information and training, and address other community and neighborhood needs.

Economic Vitality and Resiliency

The recommendations from the various projects include an emphasis on partnering with economic development organizations to brand and market the corridors. This builds on much of the collaboration already taking place within the current light rail corridors.

Transit Accessibility

A number of issues relate to this theme: (1) removing obstacles to transit ridership, particularly bus fare reductions to build ridership, (2) parking management, and (3) initiating transit planning in the future. Funding for walking, bicycling, and using transit to increase mobility and accessibility choices within transit communities is key.

Transit Oriented Communities

There is a great deal of commitment across the region to develop transit communities successfully. Recommendations focused on better understanding the relationship of *Metro Vision* urban centers and station areas, crafting subarea plans that move away from automobile-oriented development patterns, and providing local jurisdictions with the tools and strategies to allow for vibrant and healthy complete communities.

An overarching recommendation includes monitoring investments and development taking place in transit communities. Providing information to planners, decision-makers, citizens, and other interested parties is necessary to support many of the recommendations and actions developed at part of the SCI.