

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 over a dark blue background.

# Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative



## Sustainable Communities Initiative Background

### Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program

In June of 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) joined with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to form a Partnership for Sustainable Communities. This federal partnership is focused on improving access to affordable housing, providing more transportation options, and lowering transportation costs while protecting the environment in communities nationwide.

The partnership is governed by a set of six Livability Principles:

- Provide more transportation choices
- Promote equitable, affordable housing
- Enhance economic competitiveness
- Support existing communities
- Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment
- Value communities and neighborhoods

Several funding opportunities emerged from the federal partnership, including HUD's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant (SCRPG) Program. This grant program supports multijurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments.

### The Denver region's grant application

The Denver region applied for funding from the SCRPG Program in 2010. Although the application was not successful, it scored highly and gave the region a competitive advantage in applying for the 2011 program.

### 2011 SCRPG application

DRCOG convened a consortium of more than 80 partners from the public, private and non-profit sectors to apply for 2011 SCRPG funding. An Executive Committee and a Stakeholder Committee were also formed to assist with developing the grant application framework and content.

#### *Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee, composed of community and organizational leaders, was responsible for the overall framework of the proposed scope of work for the HUD grant application, including the decision to focus corridor planning activities on three rapid transit corridors. This committee also helped to raise local matching resources, and ultimately signed off on the content of the grant application.



### *Stakeholder Committee*

The Stakeholder Committee provided input to the Executive Committee on the framework and contents of the grant application. Subcommittees were also formed to address specific themes within the grant application – housing choices, stakeholder engagement, public health, policy tools and technical assistance, environment and sustainability and economic and workforce development. Each subcommittee defined problems and needs, identified specific activities at each planning level to address these needs, defined partner roles and identified local match and leveraged resources.

Based on feedback from the Stakeholder Committee and its subcommittees, the Executive Committee came to consensus on moving forward with the following working concept for the application:

- Build on the region's 2010 application by including regional, corridor, and site-level (catalytic project) planning activities.
- Address the following common themes at all three levels:
  - Aging (leverage DRCOG's role as AAA)
  - Social equity and access to opportunity
  - Stakeholder engagement
  - Housing choices
  - Economic and workforce development
  - Environment, public health and sustainability
  - Technical support and policy tools (learning lab)
- Focus corridor-level planning activities on three selected rapid transit corridors while reserving funds in the overall application budget for learning lab activities to assist the remaining rapid transit corridors.
- Name a specific catalytic project in the West Corridor (to be determined by West Corridor communities) and set aside funds in the budget for additional catalytic projects that the East, Gold and Northwest corridors would select during the corridor planning process.

There are several other factors that contributed to the successful bid for funding:

- DRCOG's Board updated the Metro Vision 2035 Plan with several new regional sustainability goals and established a Metro Vision Implementation Task Force.
- DRCOG awarded over \$1.4 million in federal transportation funds for locally sponsored, small-area studies around station areas and urban centers.
- DRCOG developed a state-of-the-art travel model and started developing a next-generation land use model.
- Efforts were underway to expand the \$15 million Denver TOD Fund to a \$30 million regional fund.
- The West Corridor Working Group collaborated to develop TOD implementation strategies.
- Mile High Connects emerged as a collaborative of nonprofit and philanthropic organizations working together to ensure transit benefits all communities in the region, including low-income populations.

### **Resources:**

[2011 SCRPG application summary and full narrative](#)

[Appendices](#)

[List of partners and letters of support](#)

### **Helpful links:**

[Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#)

[Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program](#)

