

Northwest Corridor Opportunities and Challenges to TOD [DRAFT November 26, 2013]

The Northwest Corridor Working Group has 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, and there is a strong desire by many jurisdictions to capitalize on this proximity through marketing, branding and placemaking of the Northwest Corridor. Common challenges include barriers to access and connectivity, as there are numerous highways, arterials, 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. The following list provides a summary of these corridor-wide opportunities and challenges, followed by a detailed list by station area.

Corridor-wide Opportunities

Existing Collaboration and Political Support for Transportation. The communities along the Northwest Corridor have been working together for many years on land use and transportation issues, especially around the planning of the Northwest Rail and U.S. 36 BRT Lines. 36 Commuting Solutions provides support on transportation management to the Northwest Corridor communities and employers, and is a trusted convener for addressing and solving corridorwide issues.

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

Proximity to Major Destinations along U.S. 36. The Northwest Corridor, and U.S. 36 in particular, provide access to numerous destinations in the Denver metro region, including Downtown Denver, Downtown Boulder, the University of Colorado at Boulder, major job centers along the corridor, sports and entertainment centers, shopping malls and parks and recreation facilities. This proximity makes certain station areas attractive for development and improves access for people living and working along the corridor. The U.S. 36 BRT and future rail or BRT connections will improve transit connections along the corridor and to the greater region, allowing for travel to Denver International Airport, the Tech Center and other major regional destinations.

Strong and Growing Employment Base. The Northwest Corridor connects and runs through many of the Denver-Boulder region's largest job centers: Downtown Denver, Interlocken and Downtown Boulder. Commuters travel between Denver, Boulder and all the communities in between for job opportunities. There is a high concentration of research and knowledge-based jobs, as well as retail, food, healthcare and science and technology jobs. New BRT and rail service will provide enhanced connections to these job centers, providing workers with more

commuting options and also reducing the time and cost for some workers. It will also increase the attractiveness of locating near Northwest Corridor transit stations to potential employers.

Existing Development Activity. New mixed-use development is already occurring or planned at several station areas, including large-scale developments at the Westminster rail station, old Westminster Mall site, Arista development near the Broomfield station, Superior Town Center near the McCaslin station and Boulder Junction. These developments speak to a strong market demand for more housing types and choices near transit along the Northwest Corridor.

Existing Retail and Entertainment Uses. The Northwest Corridor is a major retail and entertainment corridor, including the Flatirons Crossing shopping mall, 1st Bank Center, and numerous big-box retail outlets that draw shoppers from across the region. The new BRT and rail lines will improve access to these destinations and there is an opportunity for the Northwest Corridor communities to promote taking transit to these destinations.

Access to Parks, Trails and Open Space Amenities. The communities along the Northwest Corridor contain significant amounts of green space, which is one of the many reasons people choose to live there. The station areas provide a gateway to these recreational opportunities, and the jurisdictions are capitalizing on their proximity by improving bicycle and pedestrian connections within the station areas. A new bikeway along U.S. 36 is also being constructed as part of the BRT project, providing a viable long-distance bicycle commuting option to people living and working along the corridor.

Housing Affordability. The existing housing stock along the Northwest Corridor, outside of Boulder, is some of the most affordable in the Denver region, and there a variety of housing types, from single-family homes to multi-family apartments and condominiums. There are a significant amount of multifamily rental units with a half-mile of Northwest Corridor station areas, and given demographic shifts among younger and older populations toward renting versus owning, these station areas could become very popular. Many workers and college students choose to live along the Northwest Corridor and commute to Denver, Boulder or elsewhere based on the variety of affordable housing choices.

Access and Connectivity Improvements. While the Northwest station areas contain many barriers to access, each jurisdiction is investing in major improvements, such as pedestrian bridges, grade separations, bicycle lanes and new sidewalks to address these barriers and make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient ways to get to and from the stations. While the Northwest station areas contain many barriers to access, each jurisdiction is investing in major improvements, such as pedestrian bridges, grade separations, bicycle lanes and new sidewalks to address these barriers and make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient ways to get to and from the stations. 36 Commuting Solutions also recently completed a First and Final Mile Study that provides concrete recommendations on how to improve last mile connections throughout the Northwest Corridor.

Northwest Corridor Branding. Because the Northwest Corridor is home to and connects many major destinations, the Northwest Corridor communities see the potential to capitalize on the name and promote the line as a “destination.” Some additional technical assistance from marketing and branding experts may be needed to develop strategies to capitalize on the “Northwest” name and attract new residents and employers.

Joint Development and Public-Private Partnership Opportunities. RTD owns land at several sites along the Northwest Corridor, and there are long-term opportunities to build on

surface parking lots once the station areas get built out, parking demand is better understood and structured parking becomes cost-feasible.

Improved Access to Opportunity for Transit-Dependent Populations. There are many existing residential neighborhoods along the Northwest Corridor, several of which contain a high percentage of transit-dependent residents, and the line will provide a new connection to jobs, goods and services and other essential destinations.

Corridor-wide Challenges

Barriers to Access and Connectivity. Major roads, highways and freight railroad tracks intersect the Northwest Corridor and present major barriers to accessing the station areas. U.S. 36 is a major highway and presents a barrier in itself for residents, workers and shoppers trying to access destinations on the other side of the station. There are also limited bus connections from the Park-and-Ride stations along the U.S. 36 BRT line. While the jurisdictions are being proactive and investing millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements, there will remain numerous access and connectivity challenges that will remain in place given the natural and physical barriers that are present along the Northwest Corridor.

Parking. Most of the station areas currently function as Park-and-Rides, and ensuring there is enough parking in each station area will continue to be a major issue. Most jurisdictions would like to build a structured parking garage instead of surface parking, but funding is a challenge. The need for parking limits the development opportunities at each station area in the short term, but it could turn into a major opportunity in the long-term, as these surface parking lots serve a land banking function. Boulder has implemented several innovative parking strategies that could be replicated at other station areas, such as unbundling parking and creating a tax district with property taxes directed at managing parking and TDM opportunities.

Placemaking and Market Readiness. While there is significant development activity going on along the Northwest Corridor, it is not widespread and has been very place-specific. Many of the Northwest Corridor plans are aspirational—the station areas themselves are not major destinations today and lack the housing, retail and “bones” that are often a prerequisite for TOD. Development is likely to happen incrementally and require significant investments in infrastructure to make these station areas attractive and able to accommodate new residents and jobs. The market for TOD varies between station areas, and it may take years or decades to fully realize the visions in station area plans.

Suburban Nature of Existing Development. The Northwest Corridor communities built out in the post-World War II era, when suburban single-family housing, low-density office parks and auto-oriented retail were the predominant development types. These land uses are not typically supportive of high-frequency transit service, nor the walkable, mixed-use development that is envisioned for most station areas. The existing housing stock is also aging. There is need to balance these existing land uses with the desire for denser residential and commercial mixed-use development as identified in station area plans. Moreover, development in many station areas may be years or decades away, so planning for appropriate interim uses is needed on some parcels of land.

Community Opposition to Density. The communities along the Northwest Corridor have heard concerns from local residents about the density and types of housing proposed for Northwest Corridor station areas. These concerns may spread to other station areas and

present challenges to TOD that the jurisdictions did not anticipate originally when preparing their station area plans.

Creating and Preserving Affordable and Workforce Housing. Because the Northwest Corridor (outside of Boulder) contains some of the most affordable housing in the Denver region, and the opening of the BRT and rail lines will make this area more attractive, it is essential that the jurisdictions and their respective housing authorities work to preserve existing affordable housing units, both subsidized and market-rate, and look for new opportunities to build affordable housing near transit. In Boulder, the situation is quite different, and there is a significant need for more affordable and workforce housing units in the city. While the City is committed to build new affordable units at Boulder Junction, they barely scratch the surface of demand for such units.

Connections to Low- and Middle-Skills Jobs and Workforce Development. The Northwest Corridor transit lines will provide improved connections to job opportunities throughout the region, as well as connect workers to educational and training institutions in Boulder, Denver and elsewhere. Ensuring that the line can act as an economic driver for all people in the region, from low- to high-skill workers, is important and unacknowledged in most existing plans.

Sales Tax Competition Among Communities Along the Corridor. The Northwest Corridor jurisdictions are heavily dependent on sales tax revenue to fund local government activities. As such, these jurisdictions compete for retail and other sales tax generating businesses. This raises concerns about retail cannibalization and overdeveloping retail space along the corridor at the expenses of other uses.

Overvalued Land. The value of land along the Northwest Corridor can be extremely expensive to both acquire and develop/redevelop, especially for public-sector improvements like parks and open space and affordable housing uses. There is often a gap between land appraisal and landowner expectations of the market price.

Issues and Challenges by Station Area

The following table lists opportunities and challenges by station area, as identified by Corridor Working Group members in their initial interviews with CDR Associates and follow-up by Reconnecting America.

Figure 1: Opportunities & Challenges to TOD by Station Areas

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
Westminster Rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 135 acre mixed-use redevelopment site (west of Lowell Boulevard, east of Federal Boulevard, south of 72nd Avenue and north of railroad tracks) • Housing Affordability • Improved Access to Opportunity for Transit-Dependent Populations • Proximity to Major Destinations • Creating Great Places • Job Access • Strong and Growing Employment Base • Connections to Denver International Airport • Joint Development and Public-Private Partnership Opportunities • Access to Parks, Trails and Open Space Amenities (planned 40-acre Little Dry Creek Regional Park) • Significant Planning by Corridor Jurisdictions • Existing Development Activity • Access and Connectivity Improvements • Corridor Branding • Part of Adams County “Triangle of Opportunity” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No direct link to the U.S. 36 BRT line • Access and connectivity for transit-dependent population – this station will be the end-of-the-line with limited connections to the north. • Placemaking • Market Readiness/block by block development • Aging housing stock and light industrial surrounds site • Connections to Low- and Middle-Skill Jobs and Workforce Development • Interim Uses • Some Community Opposition to Density 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolition of structures has occurred and sewer relocation/replacement in the area is underway. • The City of Westminster has released a Request-for-Proposals relative to the construction of a multi-level parking garage and development on City-owned land immediately adjacent to the planned structure. Responses to the RFP are under review by the City. • Final design work continues for the two primary access streets to Westminster Station, Hooker Street and Westminster Station Drive. The City is coordinating with RTD and Denver Transit Partners on infrastructure. The City is also working with CDOT on the proposed Federal Boulevard/Westminster Station Drive intersection. • Refinement of the Westminster Station Area Plan continues. Please see http://westminstertod.com/. • The City is working on betterments to North and South Plaza/Platform areas with RTD. • Little Dry Creek Storm drainage/Park project underway, which will maximize developable land north of the railroad tracks.

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
Westminster Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 105 acre redevelopment site (west of Sheridan Boulevard, east of Harlan Street, north of 88th Avenue and south of 92nd Avenue). • Busiest park n ride location on US 36 by boarding • Structured parking capacity • Proximity to Major Destinations • Creating Great Places • Job Access • Strong and Growing Employment Base • Connections to downtown Denver • Housing Affordability • Joint Development and Public-Private Partnership Opportunities • Improved Access to Opportunity for Transit-Dependent Populations • Access to Parks, Trails and Open Space Amenities • Significant Planning by Corridor Jurisdictions • Access and Connectivity Improvements • Corridor Branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placemaking • Lack of Housing (pre-development) • Preserving and Creating Affordable Housing • Connections to Low- and Middle-Skill Jobs and Workforce Development • Interim Uses • Access barriers presented by higher volume arterials that surround the park n ride (need for grade separated crossing at Sheridan Boulevard to access 104-acre redevelopment site) • Challenges identified in US 36 First and Final Mile Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City has acquired about 97% of the 105 acre property where the Westminster Mall used to sit. Demolition of the former mall is complete in order to create a vibrant, mixed-use, high-density community with all the elements of a true downtown. Please visit www.westminstercenter.us for more details. • Westminster's plans for a new downtown on the site of the former Westminster Mall took another step forward during an October 22 Planning Commission meeting where the Commission unanimously recommended that City Council approve a Preliminary Development Plan for the site. Land use entitlements will be provided for the site as a whole, allowing flexibility and encouraging development activity in the near future. 2,500 to 3,000 residential units are envisioned, 1 to 1.5 million square feet of office and 800,000 square feet of retail (approximate at this time). • The City has appropriated significant resources in 2014 for design activities for major water and wastewater systems improvements that will support significant density on the 105 acre Downtown Westminster.

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
Church Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Major Destinations • Creating Great Places • Job Access • Strong and Growing Employment Base • Connections to downtown Denver • Housing Affordability • Joint Development and Public-Private Partnership Opportunities • Improved Access to Opportunity for Transit-Dependent Populations • Access to Parks, Trails and Open Space Amenities • Significant Planning by Corridor Jurisdictions • Existing Development Activity • Access and Connectivity Improvements • Corridor Branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area is mostly built out • Placemaking • Market Readiness • Lack of Housing • Connections to Low- and Middle-Skill Jobs and Workforce Development • Interim Uses • Challenges identified in US 36 First and Final Mile Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promenade shopping center is exploring mixed-use
Broomfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central location between Denver and Boulder • Access to US 36 • Stellar existing regional bus connections to Boulder and Denver • Hub for RTD local routes • Served by Broomfield and Interlocken Call n Rides • Existing BRT station provides connection over US 36 and will receive enhancements thru US 36 Express Lanes Project • Existing shared structured parking garage with 1,500 parking stalls • US 36 bikeway will serve station with additional connections to development • Adjacent to Existing Arista TOD • Adjacent to 1ST BANK Center, a premier mid-sized venue holding up to 7,500 people, Aloft Hotel and Children's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current traffic delays due to US 36 Express Lanes construction • No parking facilities on northeast side of US 36 • Needed storm water improvements • Market for retail/office/mixed use • 120th Avenue Connection completion delayed due to BNSF crossing issues • Frequency of local bus service connections is low, span of service limited • Call n Ride span of service is limited • Final mile connections are lacking • Unknown timeline for NW Rail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US 36 Express Lanes construction 300 units of high density residential under construction on northeast side of station (Harvest Station). Zoned for more than 500 units, with future commercial. Pedestrian connection to station under construction

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	<p>Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arista zoned for 2.5M SF of retail/commercial • More than for 2000 housing units approved. 700 completed, 176 under construction • Within an urban renewal plan area • Planning Commission/City Council support of TOD plan • A detailed area plan guides public investment and urban design • Opening of Uptown Avenue Bridge provides better connectivity and improved image • Plans in place for redevelopment of Original Broomfield on northeast side of highway, mixed use and TOD • Development of high density housing on northeast side of US 36 • Proximity to Jefferson High Academy and Broomfield Business Center/Broomfield Industrial Park 		
Flatiron & 96 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central location between Denver and Boulder • Proximity to NW Parkway • Stellar existing regional bus connections to Boulder and Denver • Served by Interlocken and Louisville Call n Rides • Existing BRT station will receive further enhancements • Existing Park n Ride with 264 spaces has available capacity • US 36 bikeway connects to existing trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No local bus service • Call n Ride span of service limited • Midway does not connect to Main Street in Broomfield • Final Mile connections are lacking • Retail market • Creating additional housing density in Flatiron retail areas • Plans for Conoco Phillips site are not known • Unknown timeline for NW Rail • No current land use context to the north • Poor connectivity to surrounding land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Flatirons Crossing area has recently been designated for urban renewal. • Open space; vacant land • US 36 Express Lanes construction • 750 multifamily units under construction or programmed

Station Area	Opportunities	Challenges	Current Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Flatiron Regional Mall and Flatiron Marketplace • Existing and planned development has excellent visibility from highway • Proximity to Interlocken with more than 8,700 employees and 4M square feet of existing commercial space • Proximity to Parkway Circle (north of station), 100 acre neighborhood with mixed uses in an urban setting. Zoning permits up to 2.9M square feet of development. • Broomfield's Economic Development Department is focusing resources on development and redevelopment opportunities • Renewed interest in commercial and hospitality development • Significant opportunities for redevelopment of Flatiron Marketplace (directly adjacent to station) • Existing transit station area is within and urban renewal plan area and sub-area plan that guides public investment, land use and design • Good access to Louisville and Colorado Technology Park • Future station for NW Rail • Redevelopment of former Conoco Phillips site • New residential development in Broomfield • Connection to the US 36 bikeway • Connection to Northwest Parkway 	<p>uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96th St. not a pedestrian, or bicycle friendly environment. 	

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McCaslin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Retail & Entertainment Uses Opportunity for Shared Parking Reconstructed Diverging Diamond Intersection will reduce bus travel time Bikeway/Trail Connections, including the U.S. 36 bikeway Proximity to Planned Superior Town Center Located in Superior Urban Renewal Area Located in Superior Interchange Metro District Many CU Students, Faculty & Staff live in-Superior-Louisville McCaslin is a Principal Arterial with few other north-south routes Potential for redevelopment or repurpose of existing development Some excess land available with Diverging Diamond Intersection Connections to Open Space Job Access Lots of upside potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor connectivity from transit stop to major land use destinations Lacking sense of place/civic amenities; Poor/nonexistent housing stock - little housing within ¼ mile Little office uses within ½ mile Uncooperative landowners Suburban nature of existing development Need for retail business visibility from US 36 Livability of residences near noisy highway Limited local bus service Building Height Limits No nighttime population McCaslin is an autocentric road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First & Final Mile Recommendations DDI Design & Construction Signature DDI Interchange US 36 Bikeway Design & Construction, Wayfinding BRT Station Design McCaslin Underpass Superior Town Center Planning Superior Marketplace Economic development strategies Planning efforts underway to re-imagine the McCaslin Corridor on the Louisville side
Table Mesa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to Boulder Proximity to existing residential neighborhoods Improvements have been completed at the Table Mesa Park-n-Ride and Boulder Junction is in its first phase of development; more is planned for Boulder Junction in Phase 2. There is a considerable amount of growth occurring in Boulder which this station can support. Foothills Hospital is growing, with plans for Boulder Community Hospital to shift a majority of services from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing housing stock and suburban land use patterns End-of-line station means it will remain a Park-n-Ride for the foreseeable future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New underpass

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	<p>downtown hospital to the Foothills location.</p>		
Boulder Junction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boulder has a plan to guide mixed-use, higher density development of the station area - <i>Transit Village Area Plan (TVAP)</i>: see link. • The station area is an emerging district supporting the broader land use plans (infill and redevelopment) for the east Boulder area and linkages to the planned expansion of the CU East Campus area. • Boulder / Boulder Junction is a major regional destination for commuters and visitors, more so than it is an origin site (see <i>State of the System Report</i>). • Boulder Junction will also be the jumping-off point for other regional destinations. • Boulder has invested \$20 million+ public funding into a public/private partnership to implement Phase 1 of TVAP. City has leveraged multiple sources, including grants to make it work. • The site has parking management and TDM. It is an ongoing implementation and financing district for paid parking and TDM. • The site features shared street innovations, improved trails and a pocket park on Goose Creek, and the historic train depot. • Regional partnerships to identify solutions for first and last mile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further implementation steps, funding, and market forces for Phase 2 of the station area site are a bit uncertain. • Will be seeking additional funding. • Phasing of parking management needs to be identified. • Maintaining and growing regional transit and delivering true Bus Rapid Transit to serve regional travelers to and from the site. • Large influx of commuters into Boulder – last mile connections in town to other destinations via local transit, bike share, car share, walking, convenient access, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boulder Junction is in its first phase of development; more is planned for Boulder Junction in Phase 2. • Phase 1 is under construction, with \$20 million + of public investment and private partners. • Projects include Depot Square (a new underground transit station with parking (paid) structure open in time for US 36 managed lane project), hotel, housing and a renovated historic depot); 3100 Pearl including 317 residential units and supporting retail; Junction Place construction (a new shared street); Junction Place Bridge over Goose Creek; and reinvention of Pearl Parkway into a multi-way Boulevard.

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