

# COLORADO STATION

AREA FRAMEWORK PLAN

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
AND PUBLIC WORKS



CITY *and* COUNTY of DENVER  
SEPTEMBER, 2003





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the anticipated Light Rail Station at I-25 and South Colorado Boulevard, the City and County of Denver initiated the Colorado Station Area Framework Plan. The purpose of this plan is to guide redevelopment in a manner consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Denver, neighborhood objectives and principles of transit-oriented development. Opportunities identified through the public process and techniques for implementation are addressed in the Guiding Principles through potential land uses, urban design, economic strategies and travel demand management techniques. The goal of this plan is to create a successful Transit Oriented Development (TOD), in the short and long-term, that provides mixed-use development with multi-modal access to maximize transit ridership at the Colorado light rail station.

This plan documents community desires obtained through stakeholder group meetings, and describes opportunities and constraints affecting the Colorado Station and surrounding neighborhoods. By addressing desired effects and potential outcomes, the study proposes a general set of Guiding Principles, which convey the community's vision. These Guiding Principles have been developed through a community process that identified major goals for the ultimate development plan. The Guiding Principles address physical and economic improvements, open space enhancements with improved access, bicycle connections and pedestrian connections. The Guiding Principles represent a tool that can be utilized by both developers and City staff to realize and guide future development at the Colorado Station.

Colorado Center Drive, East Evans Avenue, I-25 and South Colorado Boulevard encase the primary study area on the north, south, east and west, respectively. This site will be defined as the "wedge" in future discussions.



The basic goals of the Guiding Principles are defined below:

**Development/Redevelopment:**

Create a mixed-use development for the area within the “wedge” and directly adjacent to it, which emphasizes residential uses and provides enough density to promote a high level of transit ridership for people who may live or work near the station.

**Transportation - Autos:**

Create a balance between density and traffic impact on streets surrounding the station area and develop a network of streets inside the wedge, which promotes multiple access locations for vehicles.

**Transportation - Transit:**

Provide a convenient alternative to driving to the station by encouraging transit, which serves the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Transportation - Bikes & Pedestrians:**

Create safe and direct pedestrian and bicycle systems connecting the station to adjoining districts, neighborhoods, and transit parking, as provided by the City’s pedestrian and bicycle plans.

**Parking:**

Develop a shared parking solution, which serves both development and transit and minimizes impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Travel Demand Management (TDM):**

Utilize travel demand management measures to reduce single occupant automobile demand related to development near the station.

**Development Tools:**

Planning, zoning and innovative partnerships are proposed as incentives to initiate station area development that reflects the Guiding Principles. The purpose for their inclusion is to expose property owners and developers to the array of alternatives that may aid in the successful development at the Colorado Station. Topics discussed include adjusting zoning around light rail stations to promote desirable development, regulatory incentives, and public/private partnership opportunities.

# INTRODUCTION

## ■ Background on the Light Rail Station Development Program

Through Denver's Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1989 and updated in 2000, a regional rapid transit system was identified as the primary form of transportation to address the mobility needs of the city, while at the same time offering the greatest benefit and protection for Denver neighborhoods. Development of a regional system was also viewed as a unique opportunity to promote higher density, mixed-use development patterns around rapid transit corridors and stations. Higher density is desirable in this situation to promote higher transit ridership and reduce reliance on cars.

Following the opening of the Central Corridor in 1994 (the region's first light rail corridor), the City established the Light Rail Station Development Program to encourage compact, mixed-use development around existing and future light rail stations within the City and County of Denver. Initial planning efforts focused on the Welton Street Corridor Stations and the I-25/ Broadway Station. The ongoing construction of the Southeast light rail line has shifted the program's focus to the Southeast Corridor (SEC) along I-25 between Broadway and the Denver city limits (Bellevue Avenue). The initial assessment of development opportunities in the corridor (Southeast Corridor Light Rail Station Development Program- October 1999) identified the Colorado/I-25 station as a high priority for development of a station area framework plan.

## ■ Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

As a result of increasing demand for transit, planners, developers and municipalities have focused their attention on TOD. TOD creates a transit-supportive environment by encouraging a land use mix that allows people to live, work and enjoy entertainment without having to use their car. Its intent is to promote high-quality transit, bike, and pedestrian connections while encouraging a compact, higher density mixed-use development pattern. TOD potential and configuration is unique to every situation, and needs to be tailored to fit the needs and goals of the City, local neighborhoods and businesses in the area. Ultimately, it is a strategy to preserve the mobility and livability of a region as it grows. A successful TOD links multi-modal station access by encouraging pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation connections to the site. Good pedestrian access and circulation is a fundamental strategy for successful TOD areas, especially with the increased density and mix of uses. One-quarter to one-third of a mile is considered to be an acceptable walking distance for those who use the light rail.

The Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 calls for TOD around the proposed light rail transit stations in Denver. The Denver Comprehensive Plan states "Transit Oriented Development concentrates an attractive mix of housing, retail, entertainment and commercial development near transit stops. This enables residents to live, shop and socialize in their immediate neighborhoods while having nearby transit access to distant



urban centers.” The Denver Comprehensive Plan instructs staff to “Determine the potential for transit-oriented development at public transit stations, and encourage such opportunities whenever possible” (Mobility Chapter, Strategy 3-B). In addition, the Comprehensive Plan states “Promote transit oriented development (TOD) as an urban design framework for urban centers and development areas. Development at transit stations should provide both high ridership to the transit system and viability and walkability in the area” (Mobility Chapter, Strategy 5-D). Abiding by the Denver Comprehensive Plan, the Denver Station Area Planning Program uses concepts related to TOD as the urban design framework for development in and around the Colorado Station. The Denver Station Area Planning Program identifies what neighborhoods, property owners and developers can do to prepare for new development around stations to insure quality TOD projects. A successful TOD responds to community wishes and concerns.

### ■ **Blueprint Denver Concepts**

On March 4, 2002, the City Council adopted **Blueprint Denver: An Integrated Land Use and Transportation Plan** as a supplement to the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. The planning process for Blueprint Denver resulted in a new vision for Denver through the year 2020. Two key concepts are a part of the citywide vision – “Areas of Change” and “Areas of Stability”.

The Plan’s key premise to achieve the vision is that growth should be directed to Areas of Change, and the character of neighborhoods in Areas of Stability should be preserved and enhanced. Blueprint Denver designated a number of areas adjacent to existing or future rail stations and other permanent transit facilities as “Areas of Change.”

The Colorado Station Area is identified as one such Area of Change. Surrounding the light rail station area are Areas of Stability – primarily residential areas to the south and west of the Colorado Station.

Blueprint Denver also identified key regulatory components to create attractive, pedestrian-friendly communities in these TOD Areas of Change including:

- ▶ adequate intensity, arrangement, and mix of uses to encourage transit ridership and support adjacent land uses;
- ▶ reduced parking requirements;
- ▶ flexible shared parking; and
- ▶ design standards and guidelines

Denver’s existing mixed-use zoning districts RMU (residential mixed use) and CMU (commercial mixed-use) established a framework to encourage a compact mix of land uses. In order to encourage desired development in these TOD Areas of Change, a new transit mixed-use zone district (TMU) was established as part of Denver’s Zoning Ordinance.



Figure 1- Southeast Corridor Light Rail Line and Stations



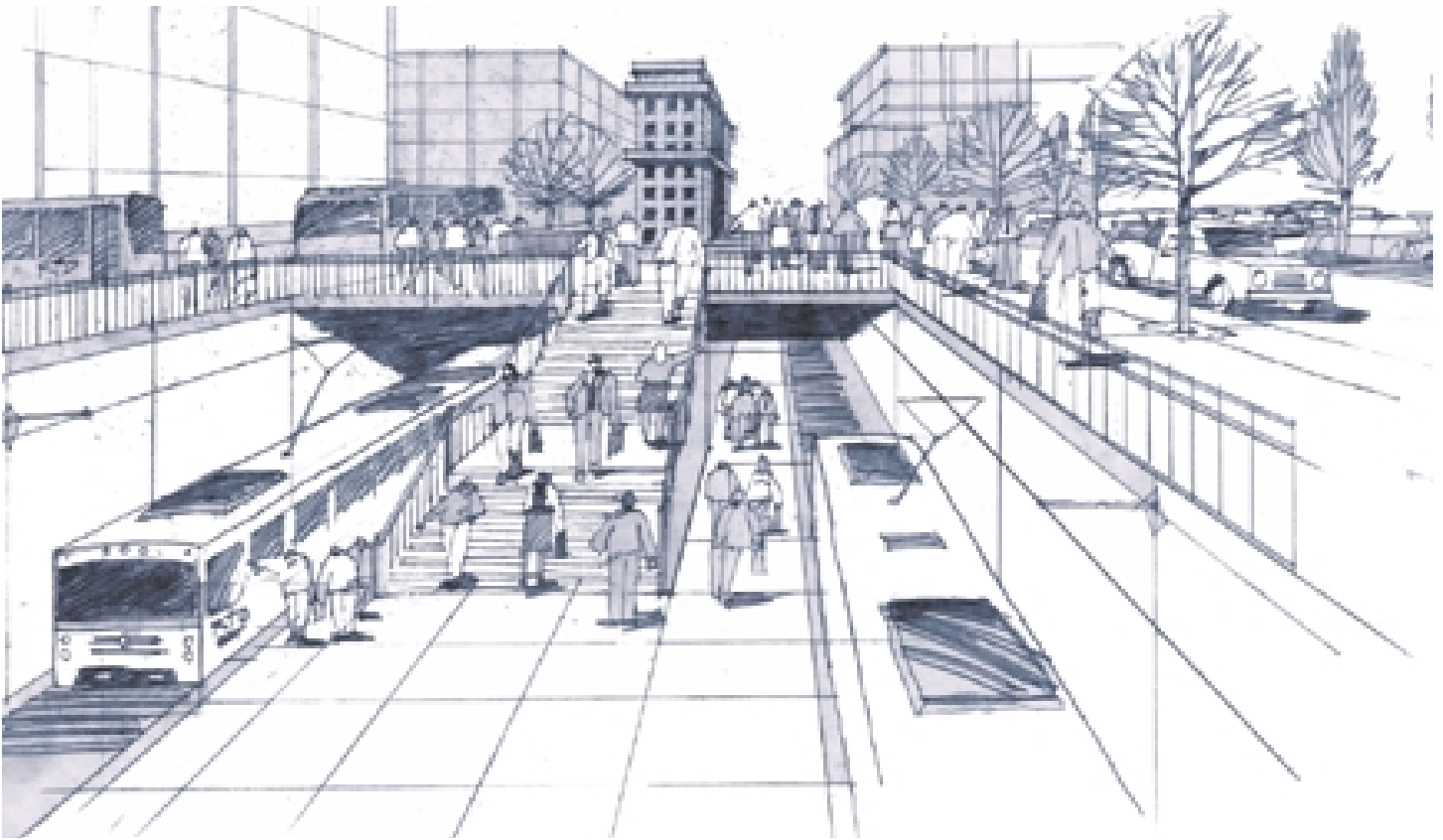


Figure 2- Perspective of Colorado Light Rail Station showing station and surface parking in cut section designed by SEC- (Source - SEC Project)



Figure 3- Aerial Plan View of Colorado Light Rail Station as designed by the SEC (Source - SEC Project)

The zone district allowing the most intensity and density – TMU-30 – was adopted by City Council on November 4, 2002. Establishment of at least one additional transit mixed-use district (TMU-20) is currently being considered. The TMU-20 zone district will allow lower density and fewer land use types than the TMU-30 zone. TMU-30 will be applied to sites twelve acres or larger. A less intense mix of land uses than permitted under the TMU-30 zone district is desired at the Colorado station, to minimize the impact of additional traffic on already congested roadways and intersections.

### ■ Southeast Corridor Project

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Regional Transportation District (RTD) are scheduled to construct 19 miles of Light Rail Transit (LRT) and improve over 16 miles of two interstate highways (I-25 and I-225) referred to as the Southeast Corridor (SEC). The SEC LRT line will connect to the Central Corridor LRT line in downtown Denver; as well as allow connections to the Southwest Corridor LRT line, providing service to Englewood and Littleton; and the Central Platte Valley LRT (CPV) providing service to the Denver Union Station (DUS). The SEC LRT line will include thirteen new stations. Construction will be completed by the year 2006. The SEC project parallels I-25 from Broadway in Denver to Lincoln Avenue in Douglas County. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed SEC project LRT alignment and thirteen proposed stations

As part of the SEC project, a LRT platform and Park-n-Ride have been designed for the Colorado Station location. The SEC project is acquiring two land parcels adjacent to the proposed Colorado Station

for construction of 363 surface parking spaces. The number 363 was developed by RTD and DRCOG through ridership planning and parking demand projections. Figures 2 and 3 shown on page 7 illustrate the SEC project design for the Colorado Station. The present plan for construction under the SEC contract is to utilize land adjacent to the LRT platform for surface parking. The Colorado Station Area Framework Plan has identified opportunities for TOD that benefit the adjacent neighborhoods, extend ridership, and improve access to the LRT system. In order to realize TOD at the Colorado Station, alternative site configurations may need to be considered. Assumptions fundamental to the plan include joint development and joint parking strategies - utilizing the RTD surface parking area to attain desirable densities, mix of land uses and convenient station access. The Colorado Station presents an opportunity to bring uses adjacent to the platform with a shared-use parking concept to meet redevelopment goals stated in the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. The Colorado Station Area Framework Plan evaluated adjacent parcels to the LRT platform location and identified a mix of land uses to create a transit-supportive environment.

### ■ Purpose of the Colorado Station Area Framework Plan

The purpose of this plan is to guide redevelopment in a manner consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Denver, neighborhood objectives and principles of transit-oriented development. This plan identifies opportunities associated with the proposed Colorado Station, and ways to realize development through public and private initiatives. Opportunities including enhanced connections to neighborhoods

and other destinations, investment in redevelopment, enhanced architecture, and related right of way improvements have been identified as key priorities. To guide future development a series of Guiding Principles has been developed for adoption into the Denver Comprehensive Plan. The Guiding Principles provide City staff, RTD, property owners and developers with clear guidelines to develop and/or evaluate specific development proposals for the area around the Colorado Station. The Guiding Principles address land use type and density, urban design, transportation management access, and parking. The Guiding Principles are detailed in the next chapter.

### ■ Public Participation

Initiating an effort such as this required the input and participation of many different interest groups at several levels. The project team relied upon the existing City and County of Denver's Light Rail Program Management Committee to provide technical direction and planning recommendations to the design team. Additionally, a stakeholder group was formed to represent the communities adjacent to the Colorado Light Rail Station. City Council recommended specific individuals represent neighborhood, business, and property owner's interests by participating in the stakeholder group. This group met monthly for over two years, exchanging information and ideas. The stakeholders acted as ambassadors of information for their constituents and to the surrounding community.

During the course of numerous stakeholder meetings, the design team met with the stakeholder group to present their progress, as well as document and incorporate the stakeholder feedback. At

each meeting, the design team presented a new topic. Neighborhood residents, property owners and business interests had the opportunity to discuss their own concerns and 'wish lists.' To reach a larger audience, the design team hosted two public open houses during the stakeholder planning process. In September of the year 2000, the first open house displayed compilations of existing conditions - including a review of the current SEC plans, stakeholder comments, planning and land use information and general goals as stated by the stakeholders. A second open house, held in mid-November of the year 2000, presented the design process from initial investigations through the conceptual planning, and highlighted the Guiding Principles.

The stakeholder meetings initially focused on background information presented by the design team. The last three meetings consisted of conceptual planning exercises guided by the stakeholder's comments. Throughout this process, the design team documented the stakeholder's feedback and posted the feedback list during each meeting. With this format, stakeholders were able to review what had been discussed and add to the list. Rather than preparing a specific conceptual plan for development, a physical plan was prepared to help the design team test a series of Guiding Principles for development. These Guiding Principles capture the essence of input and feedback from City staff and stakeholder members. The Guiding Principles prescribe goals that development should incorporate. (The Guiding Principles can be found in the following chapter)

**1. Technical Analysis** - The design team collected information about land use, zoning, neighborhood plans, area destinations, potential build out, pedestrian access, bus routes and bike routes. This information was presented to the stakeholder group for feedback.

**2. Develop Conceptual Guiding Principles** - A base set of Guiding Principles was developed using the results of the technical analysis, as well as stakeholder and public input. These Guiding Principles addressed critical issues identified by the stakeholders and the public, including traffic congestion, the

type and intensity of land use, and parking. Utilizing this set of Guiding Principles, the design team developed a series of alternative development concepts to test the viability of the Guiding Principles. These development concepts were presented to the stakeholder group to obtain their feedback and refine the Guiding Principles.

**3. Develop Station Area Framework Plan (Refined Set of Guiding Principles)** - The design team, together with the stakeholder group, finalized a set of Guiding Principles in order that critical goals and issues of the Colorado Station Area Planning effort be maintained. The Guiding Principles were developed to allow for flexibility in implementation. The Guiding Principles will serve as the Colorado Station Area Framework Plan. Figure 4 tracks the process utilized for engaging stakeholders while gaining input from City staff. The theme of this effort maximizes input in an interactive process. The three tasks outline critical steps in analyzing, developing and evaluating potential alternatives. The SEC design team provided input and assistance with this partnering approach.

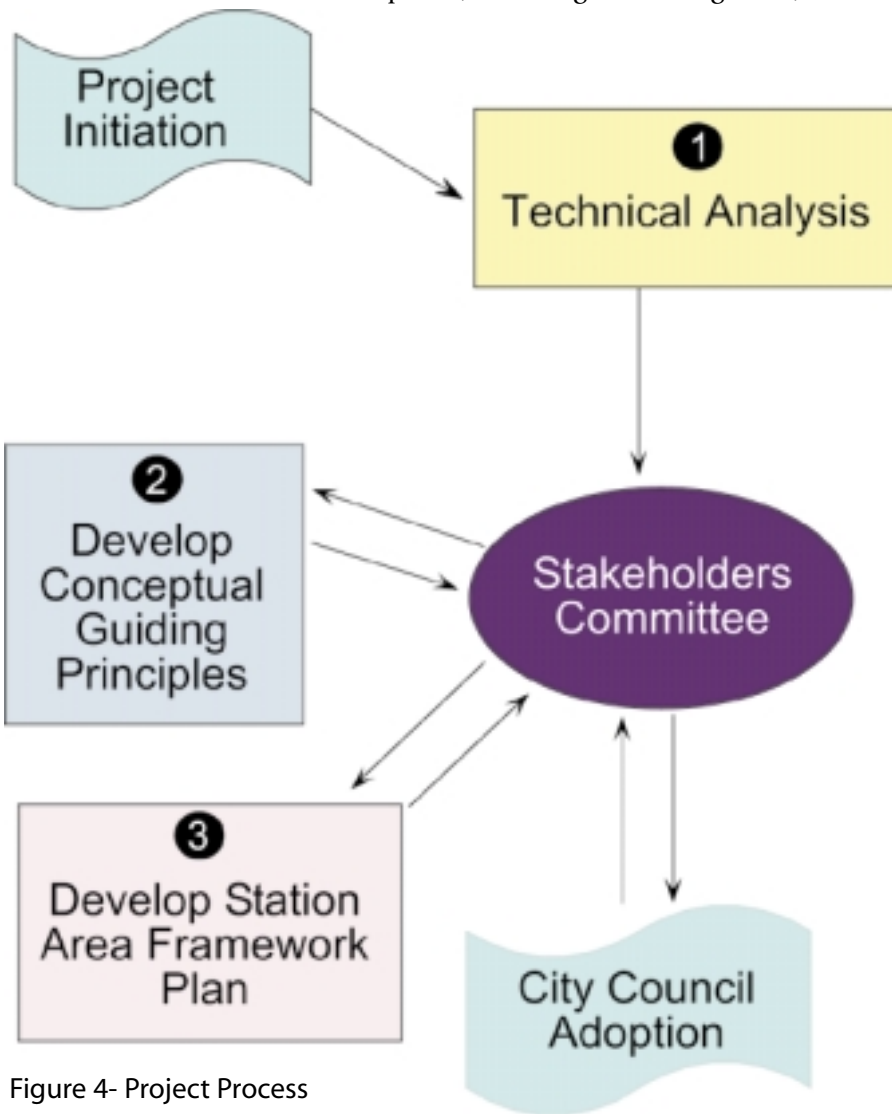


Figure 4- Project Process

# GUIDING

# PRINCIPLES

## ■ Overview

The Guiding Principles provide City staff, property owners, community residents and developers with clear guidelines to develop and/or evaluate specific development proposals for the area around the Colorado Station. The Guiding Principles address issues critical to development including: the type and intensity of land use desired, transportation issues (auto, bike, transit, and pedestrian), parking for development and transit users, and urban design.

These Guiding Principles were developed from public and stakeholder group input. The Guiding Principles are intended to achieve the goals of transit-oriented development.

The development of Guiding Principles occurred in an iterative process. A number of basic principles were derived from stakeholder input, input from public open houses, and the existing conditions and market analyses documented in the plan. These principles were used to create conceptual development alternatives. After receiving feedback from the stakeholder group on the conceptual alternatives, a refined set of Guiding Principles was developed and used to formulate two illustrative scenarios, which are discussed in detail in the Technical Appendix.

The two development scenarios displayed in the Technical Appendix present potential development patterns – assuming the Guiding Principles are

followed. These scenarios show alternative physical solutions for development, and are not intended to show a specific development program that must be followed by a property owner or developer.

## ■ Description of the Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles are separated into categories: development/redevelopment; and transportation – including automobiles, mass transit, bicycles and pedestrians, and parking. For each category, a basic goal is first described and then a series of objectives are listed.

### ■ Development/ Redevelopment

#### Basic Goal:

To create a mixed-use development for the area within and immediately adjacent to the “wedge” that emphasizes residential uses and provides enough density to promote a high level of transit ridership for people who may live or work near the station.

#### Objectives:

- ▶ Attain an appropriate mix of residential, office and retail uses that make sense economically, and provide transit-supporting densities.
- ▶ Ensure that the scale and design of development (height, density, bulk, intensity, and architecture) is compatible with adjacent, established neighborhoods.
- ▶ Provide retail development, which includes desired services that reduce off-site trips made by Colorado Station Area residents and employees.
- ▶ Balance residential development with commercial uses to distribute traffic impacts and reduce parking requirements.

- ▶ Focus retail development on convenience retail, personal services, residential support retail, and restaurants, rather than destination retail.
- ▶ Provide a system of plazas and comfortable pedestrian-oriented streets in support of the mixed-use neighborhood. Orient residences and active uses toward the open spaces and streets to create safe environments.
- ▶ Provide enough revenue generating density in the “wedge” to justify structured parking.
- ▶ Employ Design Guidelines and/or Zone Designations that assist TOD, overall site design, and architecture.
- ▶ Create a Place or series of Places within the “wedge” focused on or directly leading to the station.
- ▶ Encourage off-“wedge” redevelopment in support of the station.
- ▶ Redevelop the Super Block south of East Evans Avenue between South Colorado Boulevard, South Ash Street, and East Warren Avenue to support the ridership at the station.
- ▶ Encourage the continued presence of existing business which support the overall goal of revitalization, and which support the economic success of the area as an urban mixed-use, TOD development.
- ▶ Encourage residential development, appropriately scaled to the neighborhood, at the terminus of the proposed pedestrian bridge north of I-25. Discourage transit-related parking at this location.
- ▶ Future development at the Colorado Station should prioritize views, open space, and pedestrian systems oriented toward the station.
- ▶ Encourage phasing that creates transit ridership within the “wedge” as early as possible in the redevelopment process.
- ▶ Encourage redevelopment east of I-25 adjoining South Dahlia Street, both north and south of East Evans Avenue.
- ▶ Encourage redevelopment to utilize the air rights over the light rail station, and to generally improve the below grade character of the station by stepping back the retaining walls and introducing active uses at or near the train level.



**■ Transportation-Autos**

**Basic Goal:**

Create a balance between density and traffic congestion on streets surrounding the station area, and develop a network of streets inside the wedge that promote alternative access locations for vehicles and pedestrians.

**Objectives:**

- ▶ Ensure development within the study area is sensitive to additional vehicular traffic impacts to Buchtel Boulevard and the surrounding neighborhoods west and south of the Colorado Station Area.
- ▶ Minimize traffic impacts to South Colorado Boulevard and East Evans Avenue by balancing density with the capacity limitations of the adjoining arterial streets and intersections, and by minimizing curb cuts.
- ▶ Avoid overloading the South Birch Street and East Evans Avenue intersection with development-generated traffic.
- ▶ Implement a travel demand management plan that reduces the reliance on parking and single-occupant vehicles, in order to permit a wider range of development size and type.
- ▶ Consider parking ratio reductions consistent with the 25% (twenty-five percent) reduction allowed under the current mixed-use zone district for any development within a quarter mile of the light rail station. The table below illustrates typical zoning parking ratios and mixed-use zoning parking ratios for areas within a quarter mile of a light rail station. However, reductions in parking should be considered within the context of shared-use parking in the area.

Land Use	Typical Parking Ratio	Parking ratios @ mass transit locations
Residential	1.5 spaces per unit	1.13 spaces per unit
Commercial	5 spaces per 1000 sf ft	3.75 spaces per 1000 sf ft
Office	4 spaces per 1000 sf ft	3 spaces per 1000 sf ft

- ▶ Require new land developments to include mitigation of traffic and parking which include multi-modal access, access management, and TDM strategies.

\*Under the mixed-use zone district, any reductions in the parking requirements are at the discretion of the Zoning Administrator who must consider the issues involved in each situation.

**■ Transportation-Transit**

**Basic Goal:**

Create a convenient alternative to driving to the station by encouraging transit that serves the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Objectives:**

- ▶ Develop a timed-transfer center at the Colorado Station.
- ▶ Integrate the schedules of connecting routes (light rail; local bus routes 21, 40, 52; B-Line; circulator; and regional service D) to improve service.
- ▶ Improve bus service frequency to attract more riders
- ▶ Provide an off-street mass-transit center to facilitate transfers, enhance pedestrian safety, minimize traffic interference, and increase design flexibility.
- ▶ Enhance local pedestrian and bicycle facilities to improve safety and access to the station.

- ▶ Develop a circulator bus that will service the University, Warren’s University, Virginia Village, Cory Merrill and University Park neighborhoods and provide convenient service to the Colorado Light Rail Station, without the use of private vehicles.

### ■ Transportation-Bikes & Pedestrian

#### Basic Goal:

Create safe and direct pedestrian and bicycle systems connecting the station to adjoining districts, neighborhoods, and transit parking consistent with Denver’s pedestrian and bicycle plans.

#### Objectives:

- ▶ Improve sidewalks located within the transition area as development occurs over time.
- ▶ Retain South Steele Street and South Dahlia Street as primary pedestrian/bikeway corridors.
- ▶ Ensure that pedestrian connections adequately serve the prevailing and preferred walking trips for each connection.
- ▶ Ensure that sidewalk improvements are made to the South Colorado Boulevard bridge over I-25 as part of the Southeast Corridor project.
- ▶ Develop additional pedestrian improvements to the South Colorado Boulevard bridge over I-25 as part of any future bridge replacement project consistent with the width of sidewalks on the bridges being replaced as part of the Southeast Corridor project within the Narrows (South Broadway to South University Boulevard).
- ▶ Work to create another pedestrian connection (in addition to South Birch Street) across East Evans Avenue, south to Warren’s Statistical Neighborhood, either by an at-grade pedestrian crossing with a pedestrian-activated signal, or a grade-separated crossing.
- ▶ Ensure that future transportation improvements are consistent with Denver’s pedestrian and bicycle plans’ goals, principles, design, and routing.
- ▶ Work to create a grade-separated crossing, west over South Colorado Boulevard in the vicinity of the South Colorado Boulevard/Buchtel Boulevard intersection.
- ▶ Consider a grade-separated crossing over I-25 north to the Virginia Village Statistical Neighborhood.
- ▶ Provide a more direct and comfortable pedestrian crossing over I-25 along the old railroad alignment to the station from proposed transit parking at South Dahlia Street and East Evans Avenue.

## ■ Parking

### Basic Goal:

Parking should serve both development and transit by placing a priority on the implementation of shared parking alternatives, which minimize impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.

RTD has designated 363 surface parking spaces adjacent to the station platform in the “wedge”. RTD will work to incorporate private parking and transit parking in shared parking structures, as development proposals are submitted. Over time, as the commuter parking needs expand, additional parking may be added within the service area of the station platform. RTD may initiate parking fees for the transit parking facilities to encourage other modes of travel. Flexibility will be required to achieve adequate parking for transit riders.

### Objectives:

- ▶ Promote shared parking opportunities that maximize parking efficiency.
- ▶ Encourage the use of parking management strategies to reduce vehicular impacts.
- ▶ Mitigate and manage the traffic burden on the East Evans Avenue and South Birch Street intersection.
- ▶ Focus on providing shared-use/transit parking east of I-25 at South Dahlia Street, and at remote or satellite locations served by neighborhood-circulating busses.
- ▶ Provide adequate parking for transit users.
- ▶ If necessary, encourage the implementation of the restricted parking program in order to prevent

light-rail commuters from parking in the surrounding neighborhoods.

## ■ Transportation Demand Management

### Basic Goal:

Utilize travel demand management (TDM) measures to reduce single occupant automobile demand for development near the station, and maximize access to the station by transit users.

### Objectives:

- ▶ Work with existing businesses in the area to implement travel demand management measures prior to the opening of the light rail station. The TDM measures utilized should be consistent with those measures described in Option One in Chapter 6, the TDM element.
- ▶ Develop a more extensive TDM program for the “wedge” area as new development takes place. The more extensive TDM program should include measures consistent with those described in Option Two the TDM chapter.
- ▶ Coordinate and TDM efforts through the Transportation Management Association (TMA) covering the Colorado Boulevard Station Area.
- ▶ Encourage participation by the office and commercial employers and property owners in the Colorado Center area in TDM and TMA strategies.

**SITE AREA  
DESCRIPTION  
AND EXISTING  
STATION AREA  
CONDITIONS**

■ **Conditions**

Colorado Center Drive, East Evans Avenue, I-25 and South Colorado Boulevard encase the primary study area on the north, south, east and west, respectively. This site is defined as the “wedge”.

South Colorado Boulevard and East Evans Avenue are major arterial roadways that provide access to the site; however, congestion on these two roadways and at their intersections makes access to the site difficult.

The proposed light rail line will be recessed under South Colorado Boulevard, travel south of Colorado Center Drive and under East Evans Avenue, and return to I-25 south of East Evans Avenue. The platform will be located south of Colorado Center Drive, midway between South Birch Street and South Colorado Boulevard, approximately two blocks east of South Colorado Boulevard. The platform will be recessed below existing grade level, and stairs and elevators will provide access.

Current land use in the “wedge” consists of a mix of light industrial, retail, service-related, and small office uses. The largest businesses existing during the onset of this plan are Pier One, Freeway Ford, Public Storage and Bell Plumbing. The Bell Plumbing and Pier One properties have been acquired by RTD and CDOT for LRT alignment and parking. The existing uses, generally, are not complementary to a light rail transit facility. Uses such as residential, retail, office and entertainment would present opportunities for higher values and densities.

Under current zoning, little incentive exists for creative redevelopment or TOD. However, current zoning does allow for more density than currently exists in the study area. Current zoning alone does not provide a framework for pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive design.

■ **Local Setting/ Character**

To fully understand all factors affecting potential redevelopment at the Colorado Station, the study area was expanded into adjacent statistical neighborhoods and primary circulation areas. This larger study area was then divided into four focus areas. The four focus areas are described below and illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 5 - Site Description of the “Wedge”

- ▶ **The Wedge:** The first and most concentrated focus area is the “wedge”. The “wedge” is the area that is in closest proximity to the station and was determined to be the area with the most potential for redevelopment. The “wedge” is approximately 11 acres.
- ▶ **Station Area:** The next focus area is the “station area”. The “station area” includes the “wedge” and Colorado Center. It is deemed critical that the framework plan developed through this planning process function and relate to the existing and proposed development at Colorado Center.
- ▶ **Access Area:** The access area is important in terms of connections from local neighborhoods and commercial areas to the proposed Colorado Station.
- ▶ **Transition Area:** The fourth focus area is the “transition area”. The “transition area” was examined for long-term redevelopment and potential connections between the Colorado Station and the surrounding neighborhoods. The “transition area” extends approximately 1/2 mile around the light rail platform.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Wedge</li> <li>□ Station Area</li> <li>▨ Access Area</li> <li>▧ Transition Area</li> <li>— Platform</li> </ul>	<p>Primary Focus area for redevelopment</p> <p>Focus area for redevelopment, includes the “wedge”</p> <p>Transition from the redevelopment area to the existing neighborhoods and destinations.</p> <p>Connections to existing neighborhoods and destinations/orgins</p> <p>Future Light Rail Platform</p>
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Figure 6 - Four Focus Areas



■ Study Area

Land uses within the “wedge” today include a mix of light industrial services, retail, local and regional services, auto service and small offices. Existing destinations are shown in Figure 7. The existing development in close proximity to South Colorado Boulevard, East Evans Avenue and I-25 generates both local and regional trips to the area. The current intensity of uses in the “wedge” is below that allowed by the existing zoning. Buildings in the “wedge” are typically made up of single-story buildings with no

distinct architectural character. The business development to the north of the “wedge”, the Colorado Center, has a unified architectural character, which is not currently present in the “wedge”. Redevelopment in the “wedge” would present an opportunity for using design guidelines to establish streetscape and architectural standards for this area. Redevelopment should improve the quality of the architecture, landscaping and pedestrian connections. It is important that redevelopment enhances all modes of access to these areas.

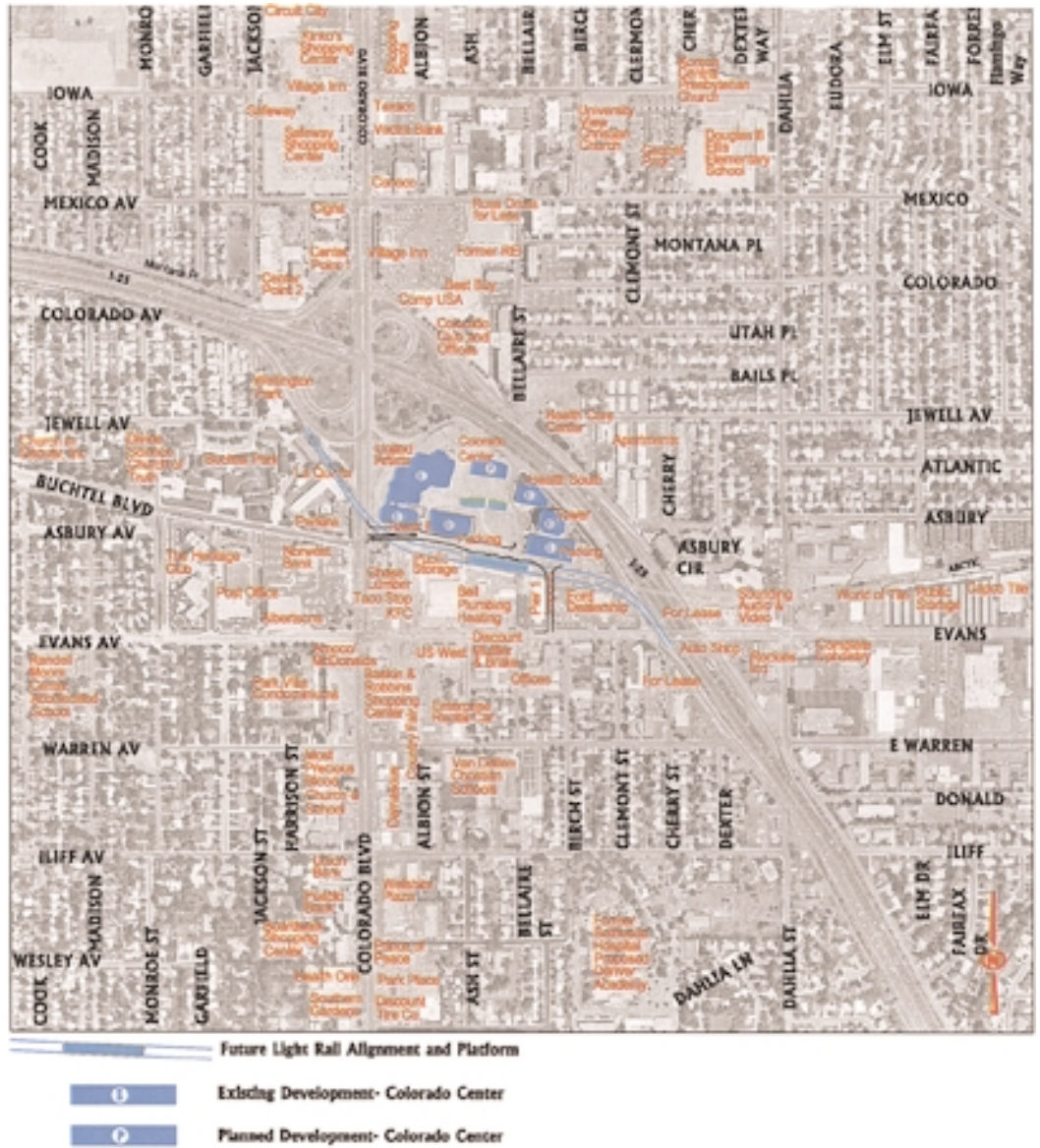


Figure 7- Destinations surrounding the LRT Station



**■ Zoning**

Under the current zoning, a wide range of uses are permitted and could allow nearly a doubling of the existing density.

**Zoning within the Station Area**

- ▶ B-4 General Business District, B-4 with waivers
- ▶ I-0 Light Industrial/Office District
- ▶ B-2 Neighborhood Business District, B-2 with waivers
- ▶ B-1 Limited Office District
- ▶ R-1 Single Unit Detached Dwellings, Low Density
- ▶ Planned Unit Development (PUD)

As a point of illustration, Figure 8 shows a photo of existing conditions looking west from 1-25 and Evans Avenue at the Colorado Station site and Figures 9 and 10 show the potential build-out of this area with the existing zoning. If development were to occur today without a station area plan and subsequent plan implementation, these densities could be developed – with or without respect to principles of transit-oriented development.



Figure 8- Existing conditions at Colorado Blvd. and Evans Avenue (looking N.W. from I-25 and Evans Avenue)



Figure 9- Potential "Build-out" allowed within current zoning looking west from I-25 and Evans Avenue

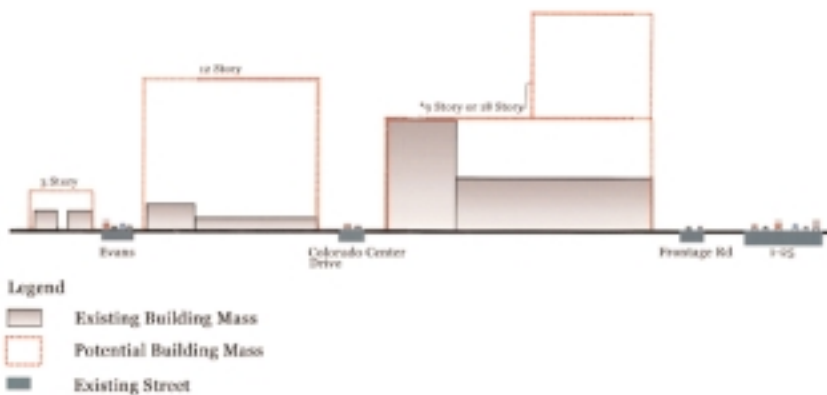


Figure 10- Potential heights allowed under current zoning at Colorado Boulevard and Evans Avenue

### ■ Neighborhoods

The proposed station is surrounded by several statistical neighborhoods. Neighborhood organizations registered with the City that represent adjacent neighborhoods include:

- ▮ Cory-Merrill
- ▮ East Colorado Avenue Homeowner's Association
- ▮ University Park Community Council
- ▮ South Jackson Street Neighborhood Organization
- ▮ Virginia Village/Ellis Community Association
- ▮ Warrens University Community Council

### ■ Neighborhood Composition

The neighborhoods surrounding the Colorado Station primarily consist of owner-occupied single-family houses with a mix of multi-unit residential, retail, office and industrial uses that line the major arterials. All adjacent registered neighborhood organizations participated in the Colorado Station Area planning process.



Figure 11 - Colorado Station Neighborhood Associations  
Source- City and County of Denver

**■ Stakeholder Issues/Concerns**

The monthly meetings with the stakeholder group were interactive workshops where key concerns and issues were identified. Once these key concerns and issues were identified, they provided a basis for design development and were incorporated into the Guiding Principles. The following list represents these key discussion points.

- ▶ Questions about East Evans Avenue Widening
- ▶ Pedestrian and bicycle access at East Evans Avenue/ South Colorado Boulevard / I-25
- ▶ Traffic / Parking serving retail
- ▶ Neighborhood Shuttle Service to the Broadway Station (during LRT Construction)
- ▶ Concerned with overspill traffic during construction of LRT
- ▶ Noise (LRT - Operations)
- ▶ Maintain Neighborhood Culture / Character / Scale
- ▶ Open space planned in new proposals at station / connections
- ▶ Mixed Use / Residential, Retail, Commercial on a neighborhood scale
- ▶ Crime / Security / Safety
- ▶ Build over LRT trench
- ▶ Why not covered station or integrated with architecture
- ▶ Minimize physical negatives of trench
- ▶ Would like to see more Residential Uses
- ▶ Revitalization / Introduction of new businesses
- ▶ Existing / Integration of businesses with new plan
- ▶ What is the precedent across the country?
- ▶ Outcome of consolidating curb cuts - re: traffic / circulation
- ▶ Comprehensive Planning / No piece meal planning
- ▶ Redevelopment of Evans and Colorado Boulevard
- ▶ Focus on pedestrian and bicycle access
- ▶ Pedestrian Access across I-25
- ▶ One developer / One Comprehensive Plan
- ▶ Don't put too much parking for LRT in wedge

■ **Pedestrian Access**

Existing pedestrian access to the proposed Colorado Station is illustrated in Figure 12. The sidewalks in neighborhoods proximal to the station area range from 2 feet to 5 feet in width, have limited handicap access, and are primarily “attached walks” constructed adjacent to the curb. As Figure 12 shows, existing pedestrian access to the station is limited by missing links in the sidewalk infrastructure and the barriers posed by the high-volume roadways such as South Colorado Boulevard and East Evans Avenue. South Colorado Boulevard, for example, is wide and carries a very high

volume of traffic (up to 80,000 vehicles per day). I-25 is also a major barrier, effectively limiting access to the Colorado Station from the north. The very narrow (2 foot) sidewalk along South Colorado Boulevard over the I-25 Interchange, combined with the on/off ramps exiting and entering I-25 in the vicinity, creates a hostile environment for pedestrian access to the proposed station. To maximize safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation, existing sidewalks need widening, missing links need connecting, and handicap ramps need constructing.

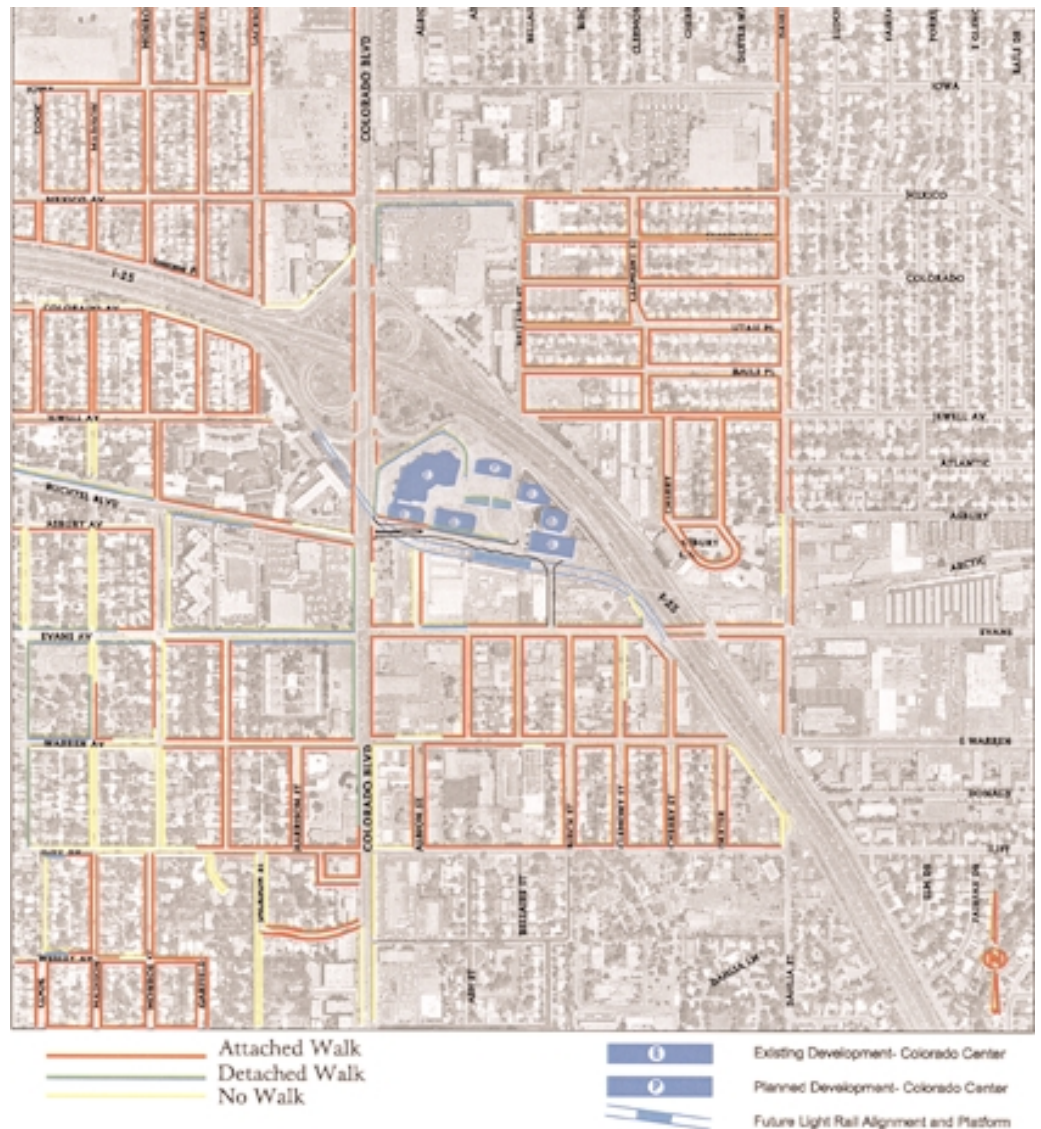


Figure 12- Existing Pedestrian Access to Proposed Colorado LRT Station; Source: City and County of Denver

**Transit Access**

Local bus routes that currently serve the “wedge” area are: 21, 40, 52, 56 and the B-Line. Regional bus routes that run along Interstate 25 are the D, P, T, and the W.

**Bus Route Destinations**

**B-Line** - University Hills, Cherry Creek (local shuttle)

**40** - Southmoor, Colorado Boulevard, University Hills Shopping Center

**52** - Alameda, Light Rail Station, Downtown, Old Town Arvada, University Hills Shopping Center

**21** - University Boulevard, Highlands Ranch, Southglenn Mall, York St.

Rerouting of bus service along the Southeast Corridor is proposed, in order to provide more frequent and more efficient service to the Colorado Station Area. Local and regional routes potentially subject to rerouting include: The “21”, “40”, “52”, “B-Line” and regional route “D”. RTD states in RTD Network Design and Development “Research shows that the following features are most important to retaining and attracting customers: on-time performance; minimal transferring; frequency of service; travel time; closeness

of stop to origin/destination; availability at times needed and to destinations; and amenities at stop and on vehicle.” With this in mind, further coordination with RTD is necessary in order to provide more frequency and better neighborhood service. In order to promote ridership at the Colorado Station and reduce private vehicle use, it will be important to provide enhanced neighborhood access including local bus circulators, enhanced RTD services, and safe pedestrian and bicycle connections.

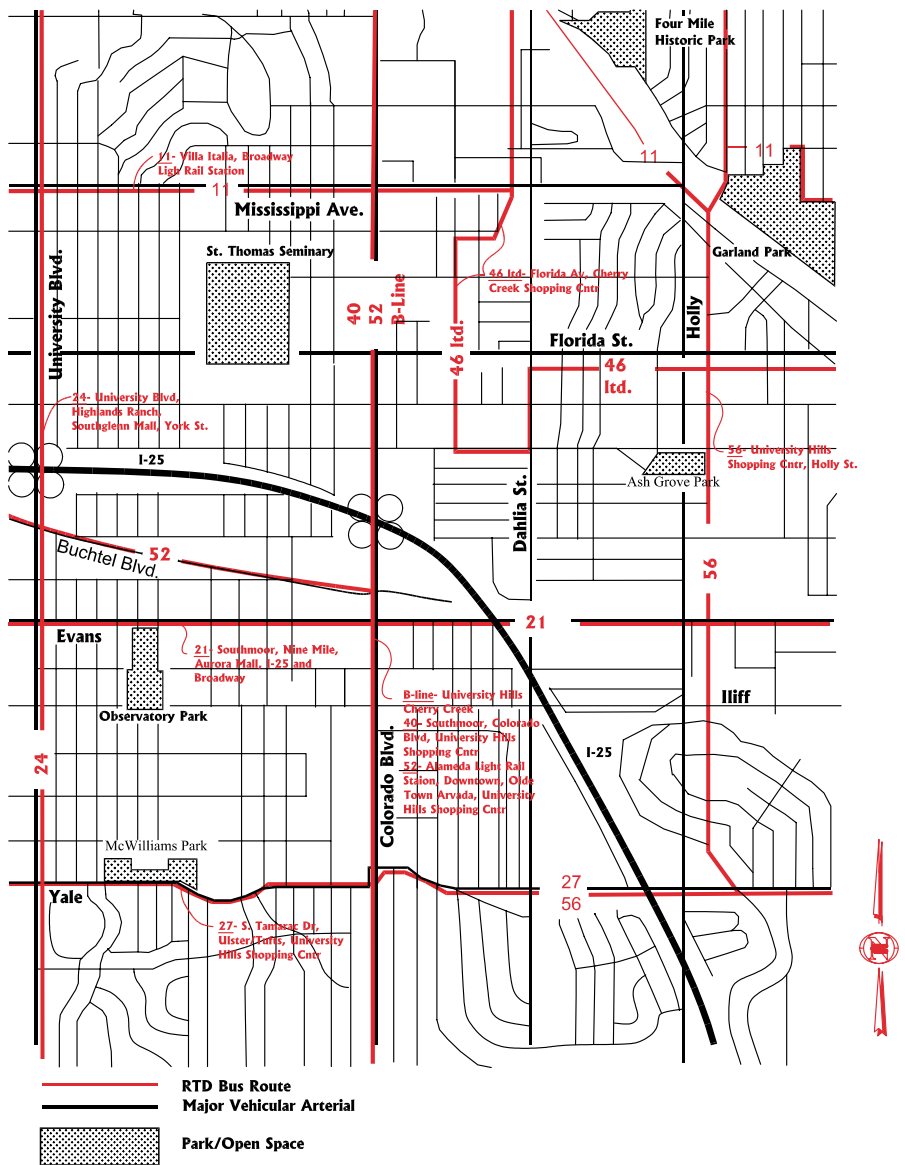


Figure 13 - Existing Bus Routes;  
Source: Regional Transportation District (RTD)



## ■ Auto Access

The roadway network in the vicinity of the project is described below:

### South Colorado Boulevard

South Colorado Boulevard is a major north/south six-lane arterial that carries approximately 4,500 to 6,000 vehicles per hour (vph) during the existing peak hours. The current interchange of South Colorado Boulevard and I-25 consists of loop ramps on the northeast and southwest quadrants, while the northwest quadrant is a typical on-ramp configuration. A frontage road, beginning in the southeast quadrant of the interchange, provides access to I-25 for vehicles traveling northbound on South Colorado Boulevard to southbound I-25.

### East Evans Avenue

East Evans Avenue is a primary east/west four-lane arterial that carries approximately 2,500 to 3,800 vph during the existing peak hours. The interchange of East Evans Avenue and I-25 is currently a diamond interchange with traffic signals at the ramp intersections. In addition to the ramp intersections, the signalized intersection of East Evans Avenue with South Dahlia Street was analyzed.

### Buchtel Boulevard

Buchtel Boulevard is a two-lane designated parkway and bikeway between South Colorado Boulevard and South University Boulevard that, until the recent development of the Colorado Center, terminated at South Colorado Boulevard. It has recently been realigned with the entrance to the Colorado Center at the intersection of South Colorado Boulevard and Colorado Center Drive.

### South Dahlia Street

South Dahlia Street is the first signalized intersection east of the East Evans Avenue and I-25 interchange. South Dahlia Street north of East Evans Avenue leads to residential areas, and is an alternative to the north side frontage road for access to East Mexico Avenue and nearby non-residential uses. It is a two-lane roadway carrying approximately 600 vph in both the AM and PM peak hour.

## ■ Conclusion

Regardless of the adoption of the Guiding Principles, further planning, design, and programming of transportation improvements needs to be completed for this area. The improvement of bike, pedestrian and bus connections will help minimize traffic congestion. It is important to plan development in a manner that may lessen the traffic impact that can occur under existing zoning. Traffic impacts will have to be examined in greater detail by developers and/or property owners proposing any new development in the area. Anyone who is moving forward with new development should follow the City's guidelines for traffic impact studies that are currently under development. In particular, access management, bicycle/pedestrian needs, parking and other improvements to the area to the west and south of the Wedge should be detailed, particularly with additional parking and commercial development outside the Wedge. A detailed traffic analysis can be found in the Technical Appendix.



# REAL ESTATE

# MARKET

# CONDITIONS

## ■ Introduction

As part of the planning effort for the Colorado Station area, an assessment of market and economic conditions in the surrounding market area was completed. This assessment was an integral part of overall planning, as it provided guidance where development opportunities may occur in both the short- (2000 to 2005) and long-term (2005 to 2010+). Supplemented with case study research, it also offered empirical evidence of development trends with respect to resident and employment profiles, preferred real estate product types and characteristics typical of transit-oriented development. Armed with this type of assessment, the City and stakeholder group could be assured that the land use plan derived from this process was grounded in market and economic reality.

## ■ Short-Term Regional Outlook (2000 to 2005)

- ▶ The short-term outlook for the Denver metro area is one of moderate population growth at a compound average annual rate of less than 2.0 percent.
- ▶ Household incomes and wealth are expected to increase above 2000 levels when the median household income was \$54,297 and median household wealth was \$80,785.

- ▶ Metro employment is expected to rise by approximately 3.0 percent annually (according to the Colorado Department of Employment baseline employment estimate) between year 2000 and 2010.
- ▶ Strongest employment gains, historically, have been realized within the construction, advanced technology, retail, services, communications and tourism sectors. The service sector remains the Denver metro area's largest sector, employing more than 30 percent of the workforce.
- ▶ Among the fastest growing service industries are: Information retrieval, mutual funds, data processing & networks, professional computer services, CAD/CAM/CAE software, space commerce, management consulting, securities, cable TV and financial services. The fastest growing manufacturing industries include: Printed circuit boards, space vehicle equipment, semi-conductors and related devices, radio & TV communications equipment, and telecommunications equipment.
- ▶ Strongest occupational gains have been in the managerial, professional, technical and clerical sectors indicating the created jobs have tended toward living wage jobs in the service sector rather than lower wage service labor jobs.
- ▶ New jobs added in the City & County of Denver in 1999 exceeded 10,000 with growth concentrated in the area around DIA, the Denver Technology Center and Downtown. The Southeast Corridor LRT will connect the two major front-range employment centers – the Denver Technology Center and Downtown Denver.

### ■ Mid-Term Regional Outlook (2005 to 2010+)

- ▶ Metro-wide population estimates area forecasted to rise while household size is forecasted to drop approaching 2.0 by 2015.
- ▶ Metro employment (excluding Boulder) is projected to grow by an average of between 35,000 and 40,000 jobs annually over the later part of the decade.
- ▶ Manufacturing jobs will decline further as a percent of employment. This does not indicate that manufacturing will cease to be part of the economy, but rather that the number of people required to participate directly in production is falling. The metro area is projected to gain higher-tech and value-added manufacturing while more traditional resource-based processing is expected to decline.
- ▶ Occupational gains will be highest in the managerial, professional and technical occupations, with the highest gains in the service industries.
- ▶ The new light rail project will allow easy linkage between suburban sub-centers in the southeast light rail corridor and Downtown Denver.

### ■ Market Analysis by Land Use Type Overall Market Opportunities and Constraints

The first step in the market analysis of various land use types was to set the market context for both historical and future development growth in the Denver metropolitan area, Denver County and ultimately, the Colorado Station Area. As presented earlier, there are four focus areas around the station area of influence including the wedge, station area, transition area and access area. Each was

considered for the purpose of projecting future land uses. Factors posing opportunities and constraints within this market context were then identified and used to form the foundation of development projections. These factors include:

- ▶ Construction of the Southeast line began during the summer of 2001. The number and type of projects entering the market prior to completion of the light rail line and station will influence conclusions presented herein. Identified opportunities reflect the timing of demand, which occurs by land use during the speculation period (prior to completion of the station), as well as during the period following development of the line. Actual square feet of space by use will depend on current market demand, availability and condition of supply, availability of vacant and under-utilized properties (potential for assemblages), and the availability of financing and incentives.
- ▶ New trends show buyers of existing homes locating closer to urban employment centers and in traditionally more affordable neighborhoods to avoid traffic congestion. Recent opportunities have been somewhat limited for buyers in these sectors as the number of homes in the resale market has declined in recent years and prices have increased.

- ▶ With continued growth in the Southeast Suburban office market in developments such as the Denver Technology Center (DTC), Inverness, Meridian and Greenwood Plaza, the Colorado Station Area offers one of the few remaining infill opportunities for commercial development connected to downtown by light rail.
- ▶ Retail in the vicinity of Colorado Station is currently representative of two principal categories- big box and entertainment, both destination-oriented. With the introduction of light rail, the area's ability to accommodate a growing destination population will be improved. Similarly, opportunities for neighborhood services increase.

**■ Residential Market Outlook (2000 to 2010+)**

**Historical Development**

- ▶ The flow of individuals with higher incomes to the area, from other parts of the state and country, has continued to impact residential markets throughout the metro area, resulting in increases in both new and existing home sales. The move-up residential market continues to be the most active segment.
- ▶ During the period from 1998-1999, construction of single-family homes increased approximately 10 percent, while construction of townhomes and condominiums increased approximately 36 percent. Housing prices in all segments also continued to rise, with average home prices increasing nine percent to over \$210,000.
- ▶ During the last half of the 1990's, average monthly rents in Denver

(City/County) increased at an annual rate of 5 percent. Comparatively, the metro-wide average monthly rent increased by 3.5 percent. Much of the City's increase was reflective of the transformation of remodeled lofts and apartments in Downtown Denver - commanding above market rents.

- ▶ The result of rising rents and diminished supply in lower rent ranges has been a tightening throughout the City and particularly in the Denver South Central sub-market (which includes the Colorado Station Area), which finished 1999 at a 2.2 percent vacancy rate. Overall vacancy rates within this sub-market declined nearly every year since 1994, while the overall City of Denver vacancy rate increased slightly or remained stable.
- ▶ Colorado Station (including the areas of influence) maintains nearly 1,000 housing units. Based on the current zoning, there is a build-out potential for more than approximately 1,800 units.

**Future Development**

- ▶ Between 2000 and 2005 Denver is expected to experience conservative growth of approximately 10,000 households with the household size dropping from 2.16 to 2.15. This household formation size is expected to drop further by 2015 to 2.0 persons per household with an even lower estimate within light rail areas.
- ▶ Employment trends indicate that high proportions of new employees will be managerial, professional, technical and clerical indicating that the new households will likely have above average incomes, characteristics consistent with the profile of typical station area neighborhood residents.

- ▶ Given a new household formation size of 2.0 or less (no children) and higher disposable income, future households will pay more for less space. The value in housing units will be driven by its surrounding amenity package including neighborhood services, convenience, and access.
- ▶ Demand within the four focus areas of the Colorado Station Area is projected to total approximately 1,900 to 2,500 units over the next 20 years, or approximately 5 percent of total market share.
- ▶ The success of residential and office products at Colorado Station will be closely tied to the accuracy with which developers analyze the profile of employees and residents along the line and match products to meet their needs.

### ■ Office Commercial Market Outlook (2000 to 2010+)

#### Historical Development

- ▶ Current office space in the South Colorado Boulevard/ Cherry Creek sub-market, that market which encompasses the Colorado Station Area, totals approximately 10 million square feet with 755,200 square feet vacant space. Class A office space is listed at \$22-\$26 per square feet-falling in the middle of the region-wide average rate.
- ▶ The strongest suburban market in the metro area continues to be the Southeast Suburban sector, which added 846,000 square feet of new space in the first half of 1999 alone. Class A space in the Southeast Suburban sector leads the market, accounting for all new construction and most of the absorption. This submarket, the second largest in the Denver Metropolitan Area, comprises the southeast I-25 Corridor including Colorado Station. Other major office developments along the I-25 corridor include the Greenwood Plaza, Inverness Business Park, and Meridian Office Park.

- ▶ The Colorado Station Area (including the areas of influence) maintains more than 2.5 million square feet of commercial space. Based on the current zoning, there is a build-out potential for more than 4.5 million square feet.

#### Future Development

- ▶ Demand for new office space is derived from three principal sources: expansion of existing industry, relocation of new companies into the market, and creation of new firms. The first two factors are addressed through an analysis of employment projections by including a factor for self-employed individuals; a sector historically not recorded in state-based employment calculations. Additionally, an adjustment is made for turnover to account for the movement of exiting tenants into new buildings, to arrive at total annual demand for office square footage.
- ▶ Growth in employment in Denver will create a need for approximately 1.5 to 2.0 million square feet of space (speculative and build-to-suit) per year over the near- to mid-term. Overall demand for office space will continue to be driven by existing local business expansions and new market entrants in growing industries.
- ▶ The primary driver of demand for office space over the near- and mid-term will be managerial, technical and professional occupations in the

Service, FIRE (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate) and Government sectors.

- ▶ Space needs in the service/institutional category covers service, managerial, professional and technical space for health services, as well as all non-health service employees. As discussed earlier, those occupations representative of residents who frequently prefer housing choices that offer the added convenience provided within station area developments.
- ▶ Demand within the influence areas of Colorado Station is projected to total 1.0 to 1.8 million square feet over the next 20 year, representing less than 6 percent of market share, limited only by space available for development and redevelopment.
- ▶ The success of office and residential products at Colorado Station will be closely tied to the accuracy with which developers analyze the profile of employees and residents along the line and match products to meet their needs.

**■ Retail Market Outlook  
(2000 to 2010+)**

**Historical Development**

- ▶ A profile of expenditures per household in the City of Denver suggests a distribution weighted towards leisure time purchases and purchases influenced by levels of disposable income. Food stores represent 26 percent of retail expenditures, followed by auto dealers. Eating and drinking represent 15 percent and Apparel 13 percent.
- ▶ Increased incomes and smaller household size indicate an increase in disposable income per household and a growth market for retail.
- ▶ The retail market is being addressed currently by approximately 2,988,800 square feet on retail in the Midtown sub-market which extends from I-70 on the north, South Quebec Street on the east, Sheridan Boulevard on the west and East Evans Avenue on the south. Since there is a strong tendency for people in this area to frequent big-box stores at Interstate 25 and South Colorado Boulevard and community centers north for general merchandise and other retail purchases, this is considered representative of the area.

- ▮ Vacancy rates in the Midtown sub-market were the second lowest in the metro area at 2.9 percent at year-end 1999. Rental rates (median) fell at the low end of the market at \$10.00 triple net.
- ▮ For the purpose of this analysis, existing commercial space includes both office and retail land uses. Therefore, as reported earlier, the Colorado Station Area maintains a supply of approximately 2.5 million square feet of commercial space with a build-out potential for more than 4.5 million square feet.
- ▮ The success of retail products at Colorado Station will be closely tied to an understanding of the difference in the spending patterns among residents and employees of station area developments and travelers to and through the stations. Among the challenges are: balancing parking for riders, patrons and residents; programming the space for a realistic tenant mix; integrating uses to serve multiple audiences; and, strengthening neighborhood connections.
- ▮ The introduction of light rail into the area will increase its exposure as a destination location for retail purchases, by individuals traveling by vehicle and train. Additional support will be generated by existing neighborhood residents, as well as new residents who relocate at the area. New “rooftops” will occur with the increase in access provided by light rail, as well as inevitable change in character to a mixed-use center.

#### **Future Development**

- ▮ Demand for retail/service space is based on retail expenditures and resident spending patterns within a trade area. Demand estimates represent “unmet” potential as measured by expenditures made outside the area, as well as future growth as determined by the potential level of retail expenditures by households.
- ▮ Demand within the influence areas of Colorado Station for retail space are projected to total 200,000 to 325,000 square feet, representing less than 5 percent of market share.

**■ POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Development opportunities over the near-and long-term are summarized in the following table:

Land Uses	Near-Term	Long-Term	Not Likely
Class A High-rise		■	
Corporate Headquarters			■
Class B*		■	
Incubator Space	■		
Mixed-Use	■		
Specialty Retail		■	
Entertainment Retail	■		
Neighborhood-Serving	■		
Theater**			
Fast Food/Carry-Out	■		
Sit-Down	■		
Bars	■		
Rental Apartments	■		
Rowhouse/Townhouse		■	
Condominiums	■		
Live/Work Lofts	■		
Affordable Housing	■		

\*Assumes shared parking

\*\*Currently existing

Source: Leland Consulting Group

**■ CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

In an effort to provide additional context to the patterns of growth occurring in the Denver area and their applicability to station area development, the consultant team conducted a case study of station areas in similar markets, as well as a review of industry information related specifically to real estate impacts from the introduction of rail into a neighborhood. The results of this case study research are summarized below.



## ■ Demographics of Rail-Based Housing

- ▶ The presence of rail transit draws a higher proportion of managerial and professional employees than exists in surrounding areas without the transit - among the strongest occupational sectors in the Denver Metropolitan Area.
- ▶ Households adjacent to transit are smaller (around 1.65 to 1.9 persons) irrespective of the surrounding area household size. Approximately half of the households at rail station areas were one-person while only one quarter of the households in surrounding areas were one-person households.
- ▶ Rail-based housing tends to draw two age groups: residents between 25 and 45 and residents over 65. (33 and 10.5 percent of the metro area total and 33.3 and 13.8 percent of the city total, respectively)
- ▶ Given that many station area households are one-person households, individual earnings are higher in rail-based housing than in surrounding areas. The majority of households in station-based housing made over \$35,000 per household, with from 28 to 42 percent making over \$55,000 per household (1998) — 69.7 percent of metro area households report an income in excess of \$35,000 and 58.6 percent of city households.
- ▶ Since there are few households with children, station-based households have more disposable income than their surrounding neighborhoods.
- ▶ Since Denver's goal of transit-oriented development is mixed-use, mixed-income, and affordable housing, overall vehicles per household will

likely be lower than typical higher-income, childless households.

- ▶ Because of its demographics, rail-based housing is primarily upscale multi-family rental or higher density single family (ownership) housing.

## ■ Transit Impacts on Value

- ▶ Trips by transit are typically to and from work. Having work destinations at transit station areas and residential uses at the origin point of the trip can contribute to higher transit use, if the employment characteristics of residents and the employment opportunities are matched.
- ▶ The effect of rail transit on land pricing is inconsistent, although there seems to be an initial rise in price based on speculation. In a study by the University of North Texas, the value of transit-served properties was approximately 25 percent greater than comparable properties not served by transit.
- ▶ Rail transit can generate a seven to ten percent increase in house unit pricing near the station with the price effect noted to around 1800 feet from the station. In Portland, Oregon, a premium of about \$5,000 per unit was noted adjacent to rail transit.
- ▶ Except for the provided affordable housing, apartment rents are higher per square feet (as much as ten percent) in rail-based housing, but the real value captured is in serving the higher-end demographic market, which prefers this location.
- ▶ Office rents appear to be higher at LRT stations and grade down in a radius of about 1.5 miles. In a study completed by the University of North Texas, commercial property rents increased

more than 47 percent over a four-year period following the introduction of light rail.

- Retail rents appear higher at transit stations with the effect grading down in a radius of about .4 mile. In addition to rent structures, rail was shown to positively impact occupancy rates, with the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) case study suggesting an 8 percent rise over a four-year period.
- Rail-based housing tends to have a higher density than housing in surrounding areas, but does not rise above normal market densities. Note: In a survey of 27 projects, it was found that no project was able to achieve rents sufficient to allow densities above 26 units per acre. The reason is attributed to the requirement for platform or structured parking among higher density developments, as well as high car ownership per person among relatively high-income individuals in rail-based housing. Platform parking is too costly to be supported under existing market rent structures in mid-rise projects, even in high-density areas such as in San Francisco, California.

**■ Lessons Learned**

Studies at station area and transit-supportive development contain several conclusions regarding factors that lead to successful transit-supportive development.

- The overall market is critical. A stronger market for development — and in particular higher density residential and office space - will help create the critical mass of development at station area locations.
- The locational advantages of each station should be carefully considered,

and development focused at those station areas that have multiple locational advantages, including good auto access, as well as transit access.

- Land use and transportation planning when coordinated at the state, regional and local levels are most effective.
- Land use regulations must permit higher-density residential and commercial development at station areas and restrict it where it is less desirable, such as stable, single-family residential neighborhoods.
- The public sector must be actively involved in development partnerships with the private sector. Public sector actions can include investment in pedestrian and transit improvements, regulatory incentives, land assemblage, site preparation and development studies.

**■ CONCLUSION**

Transit-oriented development is market-responsive and maintains its value. TOD can also be effective in addressing growth management issues. As discussed earlier, the City and County of Denver exhibits many of the supportive characteristics, which could contribute to the successful implementation of station area developments. The challenge, therefore, becomes less that of finding the market to support the development and more delivery of the development itself. As with most forms of urban development and redevelopment, a series of barriers exists within the delivery system. The challenge is to identify those barriers and then provide strategies to overcome them. Strategies to overcome barriers and promote investment in Colorado Station are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, the Implementation Section of this report.

# TRAVEL

# DEMAND

# MANAGEMENT

# (TDM)

# ELEMENT

## ■ Purpose

For the Colorado Station Area, a Travel Demand Management (TDM) program is recommended for maximizing the effectiveness of redevelopment and its interaction with the light rail station at Colorado Center. The program is designed to reduce employee travel to and from the area by single-occupant vehicles, as well as encourage residential use of alternative modes. Participation of existing businesses (including the office and commercial uses in the Colorado Center area) and of adjacent neighborhoods will be important.

## ■ The Colorado Station TDM Program

The Colorado Station Area TDM Program places comprehensive standards for travel reduction throughout the station area. For application purposes, the Colorado Station TDM Program is designed to serve two options: 1) implement travel reduction measures as properties redevelop independently, and, 2) provide for a comprehensive, station-area TDM program if a coordinated approach involving all station area properties were utilized.

## ■ Option One: Stand-Alone Travel Reduction Standards

Option One is designed to ensure travel reduction and shared parking standards are implemented when property owners individually redevelop. This option does not utilize an independent district or association of building/property owners to assist travel reduction efforts.

There are minimum travel reduction standards, which must be met regardless of redevelopment type, as well as additional activities that are triggered with redevelopment thresholds:

### Minimum Travel Reduction Activities

- ▶ Meet and/or exceed travel reduction goals per site
- ▶ 10% participation in alternative transportation modes and programs prior to the opening of the Southeast Light Rail Line
- ▶ 15% employee use of alternative modes of travel after the opening of the Southeast Light Rail Line and the Colorado Station
- ▶ Develop and document for the City and County of Denver, appropriate travel reduction program elements for the site (to be performed every two years). Each property owner would be free to implement any travel reduction strategy, provided it meets the stated goals and does not cause harm to the travel reduction efforts of adjacent properties. Such strategies for consideration include:
  - ▶ Parking management, preferential parking, and pay on the way out
  - ▶ Encourage shared and cooperative parking arrangements with adjacent properties

- ▶ Bicycle lockers, clothes lockers, and showers
- ▶ Alternative work arrangements
- ▶ Telecommuting policies
- ▶ Alternative transportation marketing and promotional efforts
- ▶ Carpool matching and incentives
- ▶ Discounted bus and rail passes provided on-site
- ▶ Participation in a Transportation Management Association (TMA) or similar area-based organization

**Additional Travel Reduction Activities**

- ▶ Office uses (more than 25 employees): Provide a designated Transportation Coordinator to assist employees meet travel reduction goals; meet a goal of 10% use of alternative modes prior to opening of the Southeast Light Rail line.
- ▶ Residential uses: Provide residential ECO passes (or similar bus/transit passes) through an annual homeowners fee; shared parking with office uses would be encouraged by the City and County of Denver.
- ▶ Retail uses: Provide discounted bus and rail passes for employees on-site.

**■ Option Two: Station-Area Overlay District for Travel Reduction**

Option Two is intended to provide for a more comprehensive TDM program throughout the Colorado Station Area.

This option includes the designation of an overlay district or service area that would serve to provide centralized management of the TDM program and shared parking facilities for transit and development. Although the exact boundaries have yet to be determined, the general guideline is to include both the station and access areas identified in Section 2.1.

Option Two provides a greater number of opportunities than Option One, due to TDM efforts being coordinated across all properties for economies-of-scale. The Option Two TDM Program would include:

- ▶ Meet and/or exceed travel reduction goals for the entire Colorado Station Area
- ▶ 10% participation in alternative transportation modes and programs prior to the opening of the Southeast Light Rail line
- ▶ 20% employee and visitor use of alternative modes of travel after the opening of the Southeast Light Rail line and the Colorado Station
- ▶ A centralized, staffed point-of-contact for the provision of transportation information (such as a Commuter Store). Services to be conducted from this location include:
  - ▶ A TDM program coordinator, serving as a shared resource to all employers and property managers within the station area
  - ▶ Services as identified in Option One above, however, maximized for implementation throughout the station area
  - ▶ Sharing and management of parking facilities serving the station area, including pricing
  - ▶ Station area membership in a Transportation Management Association serving the Colorado Station Area (currently Transportation Solutions)

## IMPLEMENTATION

## STRATEGIES

In order to accomplish the vision established by the stakeholder group that is reflected in the Guiding Principles, several action items have been identified. These action items are intended to address existing development incentives as well as the creation of new regulatory tools to promote TOD. A proactive pursuit of the Guiding Principles identified by the stakeholders is critical to realizing the vision identified for the Colorado Station Area.

Before outlining implementation strategies for the Plan, several important characteristics of the Colorado Station Area Framework Plan and small area plans in general should be noted.

**First, plans themselves are advisory in nature, provide guidance to City decisions, and are not regulatory tools.** Plans provide a vision, which is a collective picture of a desired future and a roadmap for achieving that vision.

Generally, plans are not implemented quickly, but require a number of years to achieve the vision. Rather, plans are implemented incrementally with the vision and goals providing common direction to a multitude of public and private undertakings. Despite this imperfect situation, plans have proved to substantially influence the development of a plan area.

The Comprehensive Plan requires that new development and redevelopment of the plan area be in conformance with plan goals and policies, as well as with Citywide

plans, and adopted rules and regulations. Developers are expected to meet with neighborhood associations and with adjacent property owners to discuss their development and rezoning proposals

**Second, the adoption of this Plan does not change the zoning.** However, zoning is the primary land use regulatory mechanism, and is, thus, an important tool for implementing small area plans.

Throughout the City's development review process, neighborhood associations and individual citizens are provided opportunities to provide feedback on the development proposals and whether they meet plan goals and policies. Traffic impacts, the proposed density of the project, the mix of land uses, and design considerations will be taken into account during the process.

**Finally, the adoption of this Plan does not automatically provide funding for operational improvements or capital projects** for multi-modal transportation facilities – roadway, bus, bicycle and pedestrian – or for other infrastructure systems such as storm drainage facilities. Obviously, public funding resources are limited.

Capital projects, such as street improvements, can be funded by the City through its capital improvements program, by property owners through special taxation districts, or by private developers as development occurs. Funding availability, timing, and the necessary public land are constraints to achieving the Plan's vision and goals with regard to capital improvements.

The implementation action items listed below include a description of the action and identify whether the action is a short-term strategy (within 1 to 3 years), a mid-term strategy (within 3 to 5 years), or a long-term strategy (within 5 to 15 years). The time frames listed are provided in terms of years from the Plan adoption date.

**■ Short-Term Strategies (1 to 3 years):**

***S-1: Formalize Citywide TOD Coalition***

A collaborative effort between the City of Denver, The Denver Urban Renewal Authority and the Regional Transportation District (RTD) is being formalized. The TOD coalition will share information and provide a coordinated response to development proposals, both at the Colorado Station and citywide.

**Time frame:** 1-3 years  
**Responsibility:** City (Community Planning and Development/Public Works/DURA), RTD  
**Financing:** NA

***S-2: Investigate Opportunity to Change Zoning to Promote TOD within the Station and Transition Areas***

The current mix of B-2, B-4 and I-O zoning provides limited opportunity for creating development consistent with the Guiding Principles. Different zoning may provide incentives for appropriate development and reduced parking requirements. A change in zone districts should be developed with key property owners at this and other station areas. Design guidelines that coincide with a TOD overlay or a new TOD zone district should also be strongly considered.

**Time frame:** 1-3 years  
**Responsibility:** City (Community Planning and Development), Property owners and Developers  
**Financing:** \$

***S-3: Determine Conceptual Design for East Evans Avenue between South Colorado Boulevard and I-25***

Improvements to East Evans Avenue between South Colorado Boulevard and I-25 will be needed with increased development near the Colorado Light Rail Station. Conceptual design should address the right-of-way required for future improvements, priorities for bike and pedestrian access across East Evans Avenue and along the north and south sides of East Evans Avenue, and preliminary cost estimates for the proposed improvements. Completing conceptual design of East Evans Avenue will allow the City to pursue a variety of funding options including federal funds through the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

**Time frame:** 1-3 years  
**Responsibility:** Property owners & developers  
 City (Public Works/  
 Urban Design)  
**Financing:** Public & private \$\$\$ (Public Works, DRCOG, CIP)



**S-4: Consider the Formation of an Urban Renewal Area (URA)**

Conduct a blight study to determine if a URA is appropriate or desirable to further TOD development in the Colorado Station Area.

**Time frame:** 1-3 years  
**Responsibility:** DURA  
**Financing:** \$ City (Public Works - Transportation Division)/DURA

**S-5: Study the feasibility of a circulator bus**

Because of interchanges at Colorado/I-25 and East Evans Ave./I-25, the area surrounding the station area is subdivided into quadrants. Without circulator buses, residents in each of these quadrants beyond 1/4 mile from the station will be unable to access the station conveniently without the use of their private vehicles.

**Time frame:** 1-3 years  
**Responsibility:** RTD, City (Public Works, Community Planning and Development, Transportation Solutions)  
**Financing:** \$\$\$ TMA, DRCOG, RTD City (TABOR if available)

**■ Mid-Term Strategies (3 to 5 years)**

**M-1: Actively Encourage New Development in the "wedge"**

The pressure for new development in the vicinity of Colorado Boulevard and I-25 is growing. Because of this pressure it is advantageous to actively encourage new development consistent with the Guiding Principles identified in the "wedge." The City should encourage partnerships among

existing property owners to pursue larger development opportunities rather than smaller ones. Additionally, the City should require a General Development Plan from any developer's ownership and develop the "wedge" as a single project.

**Time frame:** 3-5 years  
**Responsibility:** Property owners & developers; City (Community Planning and Development/ DURA/MOED/ Public Works)  
**Financing:** NA

**M-2: Develop New Tools to Encourage and Preserve TOD Opportunities**

Currently, there are a limited number of tools that City has available to encourage TOD. New tools need to be developed which increase the probability of TOD happening sooner rather than later at the Colorado Station and at other existing and proposed stations within the City. The new tools should focus on two main areas: shared parking and land preservation/consolidation. For shared parking, resources should be developed or combined, which encourage and promote sharing of parking between a mix of land uses and transit commuters. Also, as properties go on the market, the City should devote resources to gaining control of key land parcels near transit stations. The City could then transfer control of those parcels to prospective TOD developers when the timing is appropriate.

**Time frame:** 3-5 years  
**Responsibility:** City/RTD

**Financing:** \$\$\$ TABOR Transit Dollars/Other sources to be determined

**Responsibility:** RTD/City Council/ Neighborhood Organizations

**Financing:** \$\$ RTD

**M-3: Implement TDM Plan**

Strongly encourage implementation of the travel demand management (TDM) plan developed as part of the overall planning effort. Property owners and tenants within the Station and Transition Areas should implement it as development progresses. Participation by existing employers in the area will help to establish a pattern for future tenants of TOD to follow and reduce the current number of single occupant drivers traveling to and from the area. Existing TDM programs offer strategies. Inclusion in a Transportation Management Association (TMA) should be a condition of a rezoning or development plan approval.

**Time frame:** 3-5 years

**Responsibility:** Existing employers within the Station Area/Transportation Solutions

**Financing:** \$ Existing employers and residential neighborhoods within the Station and Transition Areas

**M-4: Improve Neighborhood Transit Access**

Neighborhood access to transit service is inadequate. RTD has started to address this issue with its proposed timed transfer network. However, more needs to be done to address transit access at a neighborhood level to reduce the need for neighborhood residents to park at the Colorado Station.

**Time frame:** 3-5 years

**M-5: Determine Needed Neighborhood Pedestrian Improvements on Buchtel Boulevard between South Colorado Boulevard and South Monroe Street**

The University Park Neighborhood has raised concerns relating to pedestrian access across Buchtel Boulevard, between South Monroe Street and South Colorado Boulevard. This section of Buchtel should be evaluated to determine what could be done to enhance pedestrian access across Buchtel Boulevard to better serve the Colorado Station and the University Park Neighborhood.

**Time Frame:** 3-5 years

**Responsibility:** Property owners & developers; City (Public Works, Urban Design, Community Planning and Development), University Park Neighborhood, TMA, RTD

**Financing:** \$\$ Combine private and public sources, including DRCOG & RTD

**M-6: Explore Potential for Pedestrian Access from Colorado Center to Station Area**

Currently, the T-Rex improvements do not include pedestrian access across the light rail line and Buchtel/Colorado Center Drive, from the office and theatre complex to the north in Colorado Center. The involved parties should explore the

feasibility and cost of a pedestrian bridge or other structure to connect the areas.

**Time Frame:** 3-5 years  
**Responsibility:** Property owners & developers; City (Public Works, Urban Design, Community Planning and Development), University Park Neighborhood, TMA, RTD  
**Financing:** \$\$ Combine private and public sources, including DRCOG & RTD

■ **Long-Term Strategies (5-15 years)**

***L-1: Examine the Feasibility for Construction of Pedestrian Bridges over I-25***

Two pedestrian bridges over I-25 to the Colorado Station (one directly north of Colorado Center and the other in a similar alignment to the existing railroad bridge north of East Evans Avenue) were identified as essential to improving pedestrian connectivity to the station. Feasibility of these bridges should be explored.

**Time Frame:** 5-15 years  
**Responsibility:** Property owners & developers; City/RTD/CDOT  
**Financing:** \$\$\$\$ City/RTD/DRCOG/CDOT, TMA, Private sources

***L-2: Determine Needed Neighborhood Pedestrian Improvements South of Evans***

Pedestrian connectivity was an issue to the Stakeholder Committee. Gaps in sidewalks and inadequate sidewalks exist in the neighborhood and should be examined in more detail to determine what types of improvements could be made to improve pedestrian connectivity between the neighborhoods and the Colorado Station. This issue should also be considered as part of the Citywide Pedestrian Master Plan.

**Time Frame:** 5-15 years  
**Responsibility:** TMA; City (Transportation Planning/Traffic Engineering)/Warrens University Neighborhood  
**Financing:** \$\$\$ Public Works, Developers, Sidewalk Maintenance Program, TMA

# APPENDICES

## ■ Analysis of Development Alternatives

This section describes the process for creating the conceptual development alternatives based upon stakeholder input. The purpose of developing the conceptual plans was to test the validity of the Guiding Principles. The Conceptual Plans test the Guiding Principles and apply those principles to a physical plan. The alternative concepts successfully achieve the intent of the Guiding Principles. (The Alternative Concepts can be found in the Technical Appendix)

### Process for Alternatives Development

Development on this site, including both the light rail and highway expansion project, has been a sensitive issue for the established neighborhoods in the area. Knowing this, input from the stakeholder group was key to developing a successful framework plan.

Upon identification and consensus of the Guiding Principles, the design team prepared alternative conceptual plans. These conceptual plans were subsequently refined with stakeholder input. Issues of primary concern through the alternatives development process included:

- ▶ circulation and access
- ▶ safety
- ▶ land-use
- ▶ parking
- ▶ open-space
- ▶ aesthetics

These issues were addressed in a variety of ways, building massing, site organization, type of land-use mix, and location of

pedestrian connections. Concepts were prepared and presented to the stakeholders for comments. Stakeholder input was then used to refine key characteristics, which were deemed most important by stakeholder groups.

### Demonstration of Guiding Principles in Action

From the Guiding Principles a series of conceptual plans were developed to test and validate goals. Three conceptual plans found in the Technical Appendix follow the Guiding Principles (listed on pages 11-15) and respect them with different physical solutions. The plans honor key similarities:

- ▶ Majority of parking on the edge of the station area.
- ▶ Short-term parking adjacent to station.
- ▶ Length of the open trench at the LRT line minimized.
- ▶ Grade-separated crossings of Colorado and I-25.
- ▶ Clear, distinct open spaces.
- ▶ Improvements to the existing infrastructure through the creation of a new network of streets.
- ▶ A strong landscape buffer and tiered development between the existing neighborhood and proposed development.
- ▶ Provision of short-term parking adjacent to LRT.
- ▶ Tree-lined streets with appropriately-sized sidewalks.
- ▶ Strong landscaped connections from surrounding community to light rail station.
- ▶ Commercial uses lining Evans Avenue.

The plans differ in site configuration, densities and mixture of residential, commercial and retail development.

## ■ Glossary

### **Access Area**

The “access area” is one of the 4 geographical focus areas of the plan. The “access area” physically surrounds the proposed light rail “station area”. The “access area” is important in terms of connections from local neighborhoods and commercial areas to the proposed Colorado Station (See Section 2.1).

### **Areas of Change**

An underutilized or deteriorated area or neighborhood designated by Blueprint Denver for redevelopment.

### **Areas of Stability**

An existing area or neighborhood designated by Blueprint Denver for preservation and enhancement

### **B-Line**

A shuttle bus serving local and specialty areas.

### **Blueprint Denver**

An integrated Land Use and Transportation Plan adopted by the Denver City Council as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan 2000 on March 4, 2002.

### **Commuter Store**

A centralized, staffed point-of-contact for the provisions of obtaining transportation/transit information.

### **Conceptual Alternative**

A preliminary alternative design solution. A design solution alternative that illustrates one of many possible physical forms that incorporate the Guiding Principles.

### **Denver’s Comprehensive Plan**

Plan 2000 is a policy guide for Denver in response to problems, conditions and opportunities for the early part of the 21st Century. Hundreds of Denver residents were involved in developing Plan 2000.

### **Destination-Oriented**

A “place” or facility that has the ability to draw people from a large area; a place with the characteristics or features to which people are drawn.

### **Destination-Location**

A “place” or facility that people travel to for the sole purpose of being at the location. The opposite type of place would be one that someone “happens upon”.

### **Destination-Retail**

Commercial retail uses with limited competition and which draw patrons from a large trade area; uses for which consumers are willing to travel a significant distance to experience and patronize. Examples include: specialty retail areas, entertainment-retail, specialty dining operations, etc.

### **Eco-Pass**

An annual bus pass available from RTD that entitles patrons to unlimited rides on all RTD transit services. This program is only one type of reduced fare programs offered by RTD.

### **Guiding Principles**

The Guiding Principles prescribe minimum goals that will guide future development planning. The Guiding Principles represent the Colorado Station Area Framework Plan goals.

### **Incubator Space:**

An enterprise that is set up to provide office space, equipment, and sometimes mentoring assistance and capital to new businesses that are just getting started. Business incubators are often set up by universities, non-profit groups, and increasingly by venture capitalists.

### **Joint Use**

A physical property or land use that serves multiple purposes or attains multiple goals, eg. shared parking structure developed through a public/private partnership.

### **Mixed-Use**

A combination of retail, commercial and residential uses in one development.

### **Overlay Zone District**

A land use designation for a particular defined area on a zoning map, which modifies the underlying zone districts in some specific manner. Specifications may include uses, height of buildings, open space, pedestrian access, parking and exterior design.

### **Program Management Committee**

The City and County of Denver organized committee of technical direction and planning representatives to provide recommendations at LRT stations in Denver.

### **Rooftops**

Real estate industry term for the number of households in a geographic area.

**Shared Parking**

A surface or structured parking lot that is intended and managed to be utilized by different destinations, land uses or land owners simultaneously. Shared parking works best when the various users have parking needs at different times of the day.

**Stakeholder Group**

A group of property owners, business owners, surrounding residents and neighborhood liasons formed to represent community interests adjacent to the Colorado LRT station.

**Station Area**

The “station area” physically includes the “wedge” and Colorado Center. This area is immediately adjacent to the platform and offers a high degree of opportunities for redevelopment.

**Timed Transfer**

Transit schedules and routes developed together in order to enable an efficient transfer of modes or routes. This enables the transit system to serve a more diverse pattern of origins and destinations with more varied opportunities and more convenient and easy to remember schedules.

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**

Creates a transit supportive environment by encouraging a land use mix, which allows people to live, work and enjoy entertainment without having to use their car. It’s intent is to promote high quality transit, bike, and pedestrian connections while encouraging a compact, higher density mixed-use development pattern. It is also described as transit-supportive development.

**Transition Area**

The “transition area” extends approximately 1/2 mile from the light rail platform. The “transition area” was examined for long-term redevelopment and potential connections between the Colorado Station and the surrounding neighborhoods. (See Section 2.1)

**Transportation Coordinator**

A coordinator to assist employees to meet travel reduction goals.

**Transportation Management Association (TMA)**

An organization that provides a structure for developers, property managers, employers and public agencies to cooperatively support and promote programs that mitigate traffic congestion, auto-oriented travel and parking.

**Transportation Solutions**

A Transportation Management Association (TMA) in Denver that provides alternative mode choices within Cherry Creek and the South Colorado Boulevard corridor.



### **Travel Demand Management (TDM)**

Describes a variety of actions that encourage more efficient use of existing transportation systems. Actions can include increasing the number of persons in a vehicle, or by influencing the time of, or need to, travel. TDM programs rely on incentives or disincentives to make these shifts in behavior attractive.

### **T-REX/Southeast I-25 Corridor**

Transportation Expansion Project (T-REX). An LRT and highway improvement project on I-25 and I-225, which includes a number of light rail station including the Colorado Station.

### **Wedge**

The primary study area. The “wedge” is defined by East Evans Avenue on the south, South Colorado Boulevard. on the west, I-25 on the east and Colorado Center drive on the north.

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