



Urban Land Institute (ULI) Colorado Commerce City's 72nd Avenue Station Area A Technical Advisory Panel Report



A Report from the Commerce City Technical Advisory Panel

By ULI Colorado

August 26-27, 2021



Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary.....	2
II.	Background.....	4
III.	Findings.....	8
IV.	Recommendations.....	10
V.	Conclusion.....	28
VI.	Stakeholders.....	29
VII.	ULI Volunteer Panelists.....	30
VIII.	Appendix.....	32

Supported by:

The City of Commerce City and the Denver
Regional Council of Governments

Writers:

Marianne Eppig, Director, ULI Colorado
Jacqueline Davis, Volunteer

Overview of ULI Advisory Services

Since 1947, the national ULI Advisory Services program has assembled 400+ ULI-member teams to help sponsors find solutions for issues including downtown redevelopment, community revitalization, and affordable housing, among other matters. In Colorado, ULI Advisory Services have provided solutions for such key sites as the Colorado Convention Center, Coors Field, Fitzsimons, and the Denver Justice Center.

Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs)

ULI Colorado's Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs) offer the same expertise at the local level. Each panel is composed of qualified and unbiased professionals who volunteer their time. Panel chairs are respected ULI members with previous panel experience. Since 2003, ULI Colorado has completed more than 60 TAPs, leading to positive policy changes and built projects across the state.



ULI volunteer panelists tour the 72nd Avenue Station Area with Commerce City staff.

I. Executive Summary

The City of Commerce City (Commerce City) asked ULI Colorado to study the area around its new Regional Transportation District (RTD) commuter rail station at 72nd Avenue to identify opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD), connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods, and additional community amenities. In August 2021, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) composed of volunteer experts to provide recommendations. This report includes the findings and recommendations that came out of that TAP.

The City of Commerce City sought the panel's insight and recommendations in answer to the following problem statement and questions:

In 2020, construction of the E. 72nd Avenue Commuter Rail Station was completed and opened to the public. This is the first commuter rail line to pass through Commerce City and the first station to be established within the City. The station is located near major highways and the South Platte River, but access and connectivity to the throughfares is limited. The residents around the study area have coped with a lack of safe connectivity, damaged or incomplete sidewalks, fast-moving traffic, and limited neighborhood services.

The station is in an area with an existing neighborhood that is a patchwork of city parcels and pockets of unincorporated Adams County with low-density single-family homes, schools, and civic buildings next to industrial uses. Within this patchwork, there is currently a lack of “destination” places in the project area. Previously, Adams City High School and Alsup Elementary School served as anchors of the neighborhood, but they have since relocated. There are no recreational facilities or cultural amenities in the immediate area, except for the South Platte River trailhead, which could be further amenitized and connected. The vision for this station area is one of pedestrian, bike, and automobile connectivity with diverse housing stock, economic development opportunities, employment, and neighborhood-serving uses. It will take critical thinking and innovative infill to achieve the goal of a vibrant transit-oriented development and community center.

This project is a focus of a city-driven, community engaged Station Area Master Plan (STAMP) that was completed in 2013. The STAMP was a culmination of efforts by a wide range of community stakeholders to identify improvements to existing neighborhoods, leverage the area’s assets and opportunities, and envision a preferred future for the area. Now that the station is in place and construction is finished, Commerce City is seeking a ULI Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to help identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for the area.

1. How has the station changed since the STAMP was completed? Does the station area still align with the city’s STAMP vision? How can we learn from other jurisdictions with existing successful or unsuccessful TOD with their stations?
2. How would an Urban Renewal Authority (URA) help maximize activities in this area? How does a URA compare to other funding opportunities?
3. Who should lead this effort? The city? A developer? Another party or configuration? How?
4. How can the city drive development to have meaningful ridership? Is it even achievable and on what timeline?
5. How do we reconcile inconsistent land uses and get “less interested” landowners on board with the vision of this area?
6. How do we best connect the station to the west, where it is broken up by major highways and the South Platte River? How can we take advantage of the proximity to the river?
7. How do we encourage development while preserving and maintaining the existing neighborhood and its assets such as affordable housing?

The panel’s recommendations are divided into sections based on the questions posed to them:

- **Addressing the Vision in the Station Area Master Plan (STAMP):** pages 10-14
- **Trails and Open Space:** pages 15-19
- **Mobility and Access:** pages 20-22
- **Housing and Affordability:** pages 23-24
- **How to Lead Change:** pages 25-27

Key Takeaways:

- This is a great location for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Embrace the South Platte River, its green space, and trail system
- Celebrate the people and culture of the area with redevelopment efforts
- Create spaces for the community to gather
- The City needs to invest in infrastructure and public realm improvements
- Public financing is necessary to catalyze the redevelopment that the community desires. Explore the formation of an Urban Renewal Authority and Metropolitan District in the station area to provide the financial resources necessary for redevelopment.
- There is a need to increase pedestrian access and multi-modal connectivity in the area

- Phasing development to start on available properties east of the O’Brian Canal will support transit ridership & catalyze development on the west side of the O’Brian Canal, around the station
- Focus on maintaining and adding affordable housing to the station area
- Align with concurrent planning efforts & previously adopted plans
- Keep implementing the STAMP plan & conduct community outreach for a 10-year check-in on the plan in 2023

II. Background

On August 26-27, 2021, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide guidance on transit-oriented development and connectivity around Commerce City’s new RTD station at 72nd Avenue. For this two-day workshop, ULI Colorado assembled six land use experts (see panelist bios on pages 30-31) who volunteered to offer objective, third-party advice. The panel reviewed a detailed advance packet of information about the area, toured the site, and interviewed local stakeholders, including City staff, public officials, property and business owners, and local residents and organizational leaders (for a list of stakeholders interviewed, see page 29). This TAP was part of a series of advisory services provided by ULI Colorado on the South Platte River and its adjacent land uses.

Commerce City gave the panelists the following problem statement and questions to address during the TAP:

Problem Statement

In 2020, construction of the E. 72nd Avenue Commuter Rail Station was completed and opened to the public. This is the first commuter rail line to pass through Commerce City and the first station to be established within the City. The station is located near major highways and the South Platte River, but access and connectivity to the throughfares is limited. The residents around the study area have coped with a lack of safe connectivity, damaged or incomplete sidewalks, fast-moving traffic, and limited neighborhood services.

The station is in an area with an existing neighborhood that is a patchwork of city parcels and pockets of unincorporated Adams County with low-density single-family homes, schools, and civic buildings next to industrial uses. Within this patchwork, there is currently a lack of “destination” places in the project area. Previously, Adams City High School and Alsup Elementary School served as anchors of the neighborhood, but they have since relocated. There are no recreational facilities or cultural amenities in the immediate area, except for the South Platte River trailhead, which could be further amenitized and connected. The vision for this station area is one of pedestrian, bike, and automobile connectivity with diverse housing stock, economic development opportunities, employment, and neighborhood-serving uses. It will take critical thinking and innovative infill to achieve the goal of a vibrant transit-oriented development and community center.

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This report includes findings and recommendations related to each of these questions.



Map of the study area around Commerce City's 72nd Avenue RTD Station. Map courtesy Google Maps.

About the Study Area

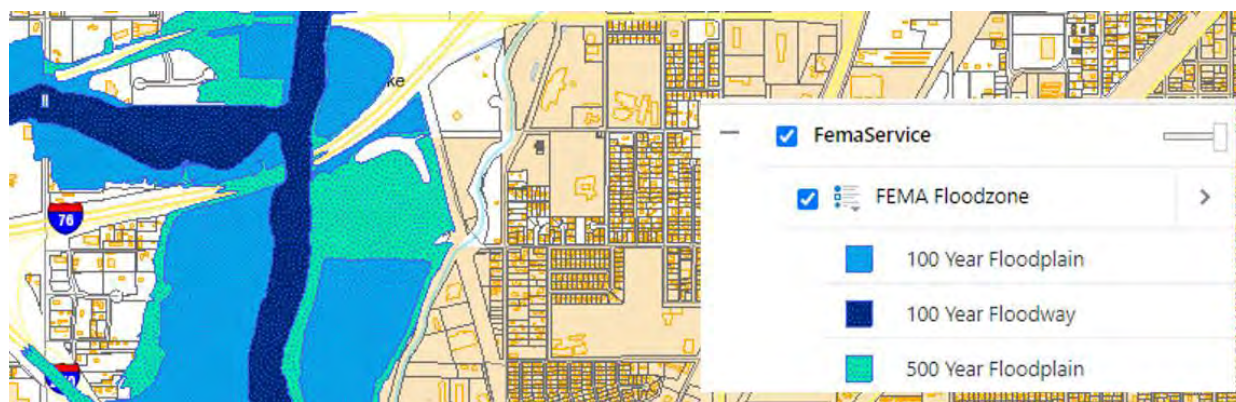
Commerce City is one of the fastest growing communities on Colorado's bustling Front Range, with a 3.3% growth rate compared to 2% throughout the area. With over 36 square miles of developable land in the Denver metropolitan area, Commerce City is ripe for growth and development. There is perhaps no better representation of a catalytic opportunity than the area around the Commerce City-72nd Avenue Station along the RTD North Metro Rail Line.

The existing urban fabric around the Commerce City-72nd Avenue Station area is a patchwork of city parcels and pockets of unincorporated Adams County with low-density, single-family homes, schools, civic buildings, and industrial uses. While this area is predominantly built out, there are a number of underutilized and vacant parcels that could

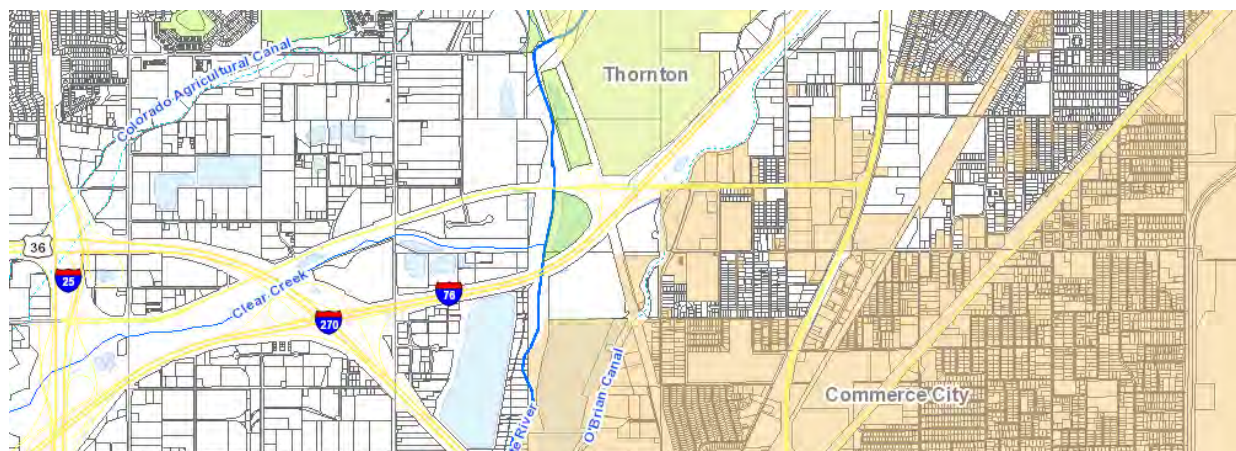
support transit-oriented development and maximize use of the newly opened station, where dramatic views of the Rocky Mountains and Downtown Denver are visible.

The station is located along the South Platte River, in addition to major highways such as 25, 70, 76, and 270. Although the station is located near crucial arterials and a major river, the access and connectivity to them is limited. The Fernald Trailhead provides the only pedestrian connection from the station to the South Platte River, which provides a rich wildlife habitat and corridor. The study area also includes several reservoirs, lakes, and ponds, which have various municipal owners, including Adams County, Commerce City, the City and County of Denver, and the City of Thornton. As a result of its proximity to bodies of water, portions of the study area are in the 100- and 500-Year Floodplains.

The Station Area Master Plan (STAMP) outlines the city's vision for equitable development and redevelopment around the new rail station over a 20-year horizon. During the development of the STAMP, the community discussed its aspirations, challenges, and vision for the station area and local neighborhoods. Both in 2013 and today, the Adams City and Adams Heights neighborhoods crave a well-connected, walkable environment. Moreover, residents are seeking a distinct identity with a range of services including retail, employers, and balanced housing solutions, along with safe access to healthy spaces and daily goods and services.



Portions of the study area are within the 100- and 500-Year Floodplains. Map courtesy Commerce City.

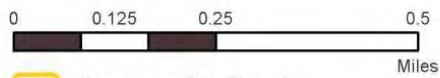
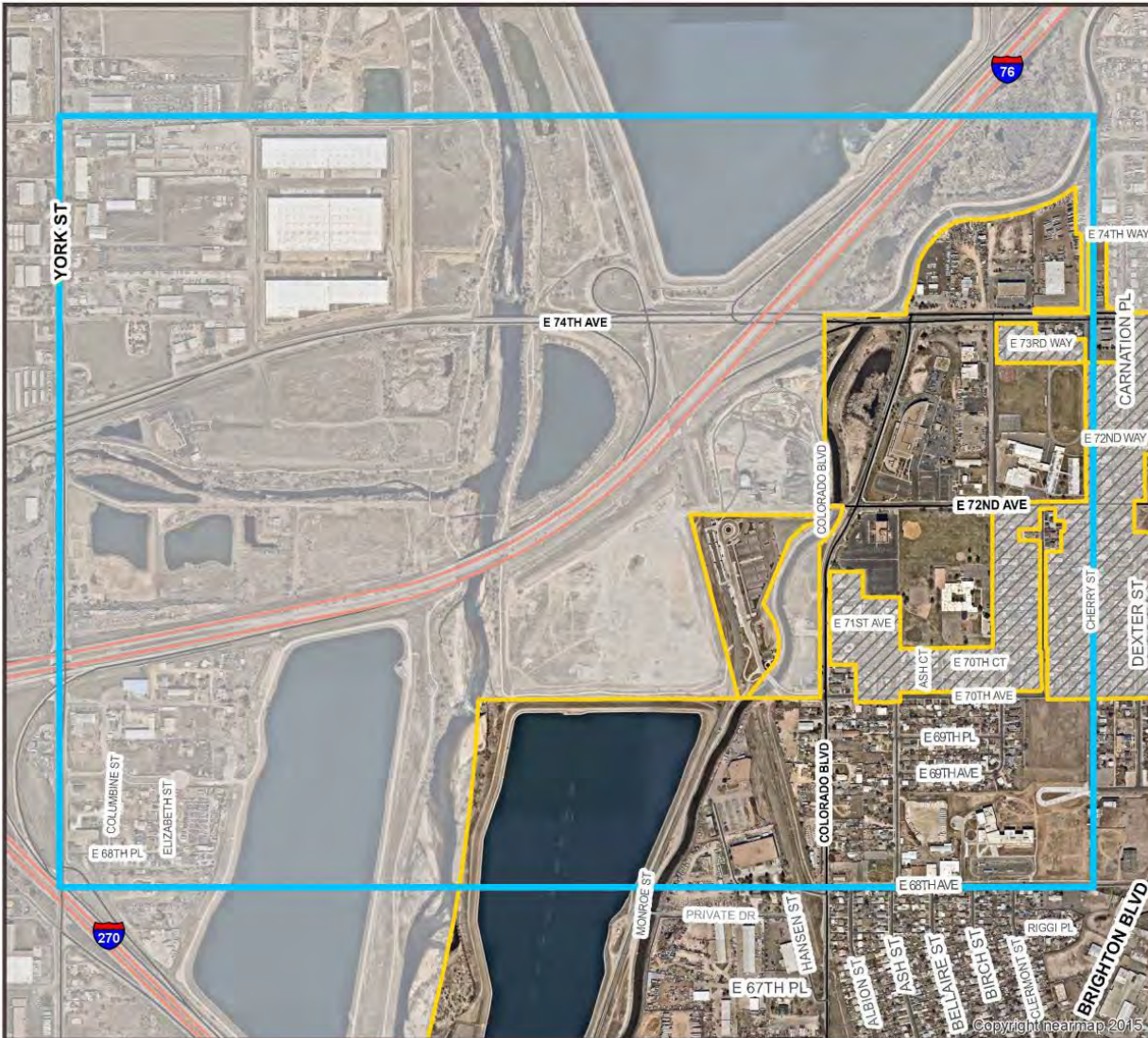


The study area is under the jurisdiction of Adams County (white), Commerce City (yellow), and Thornton (green). Map courtesy Commerce City.



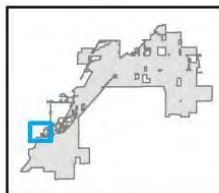
Study Area: 72nd Station RTD

Technical Advisory Panel



- Commerce City Boundary
- Enclave

Commerce City GIS Division
Created: 7/23/2021



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 HARN
State Plane Colorado Central

DISCLAIMER:

This product was produced by the Commerce City GIS Division. Commerce City as made every effort to produce data as accurately as possible. Maps are general representations as are produced for general representation only. This map may contain information that is no longer current. Use of this information is the sole responsibility of the user. Commerce City shall assume no liability for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in the information provided on the map.



A view of the area around the 72nd Avenue RTD Station, from the site immediately to the west of the station.

III. Findings

During the workshop, the panelists toured the study area, spoke with local stakeholders, and reviewed materials from Commerce City about the site. Before diving into recommendations, the panelists came up with the following findings.

Strengths & Opportunities

Panelists agreed that this site has many assets that could be leveraged for successful transit-oriented development in the area. Some of the specific existing strengths include:

- New RTD station!
- Proximity to Downtown Denver & the National Western Stock Show
- Spectacular mountain views
- Available properties
- South Platte Riverfront
- Connected trail system
- Naturally occurring affordable housing
- Developer interest in the station area
- Opportunity Zone & Qualified Census Tract designation
- Current redevelopment efforts in the area

Some of the opportunities for the area include:

- Stakeholders desire connection to surrounding communities and greater city at large
- The station area is a great opportunity for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which would increase density with infill development on available properties around the station

- The site immediately west of the station is under contract and the potential buyers are interested in mixed-used development with housing
- Current Commerce City Comprehensive Plan update underway
- South Platte River planning underway
- The US Army Corps of Engineers recommends expanding green space around the South Platte River
- LEED Neighborhood Development designation could be used as a guide for the station area
- Growing population

Weaknesses & Threats

Commerce City is wise to proactively pursue recommendations for overcoming the significant challenges to redevelopment around the station. The panelists identified the following weaknesses and threats specific to the study area:

- Lack of connectivity, access, safety, integrated green space, and community amenities
- Lack of destination places in the area now that schools have moved
- Fractured property ownership & jurisdictions
- South Platte River, O'Brian Canal, and roadways divide the study area
- Lack of utilities and infrastructure on sites adjacent to the RTD station
- Industrial uses in close proximity to residential uses
- Brownfield sites around the station
- Lack of water rights on available sites

LEARNING FROM OTHER STATION AREAS

Other RTD light rail stations that have similar challenges to Commerce City's station and that may be helpful to learn from:

- [41st and Fox Station](#): This completed station is adjacent to a major interchange (I-70 and I-25), heavy rail, and a mix of uses, including neighborhood residential.
- [Lamar Station](#): This station is adjacent to industrial uses that will be redeveloped as well as multifamily and single-family residential.
- [National Western Stock Show Station](#): This station area is undergoing significant redevelopment with a mix of uses. The station is also close to the South Platte River and on the same rail line as Commerce City's station, only one stop away. Learning from this station's functionality, identity, and branding within transit-oriented development could be helpful.
- [Clear Creek and Federal Station](#): This station is along Clear Creek and adjacent to a Brannan Sand and Gravel site, just like Commerce City's station.

The links above provide information about the plans for each station area and RTD's transit-oriented development team can be contacted regarding the status and lessons learned from each of these station areas.



Rendering of the potential future 72nd Avenue by panelist Mark De La Torre.

IV. Recommendations

The panel's recommendations are divided into sections based on the questions posed to them:

- **Addressing the Vision & Planning Framework in the Station Area Master Plan:** pages 10-14
- **Trails and Open Space:** pages 15-19
- **Mobility and Access:** pages 20-22
- **Housing and Affordability:** pages 23-24
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Addressing the Vision & Planning Framework in the Station Area Master Plan

The [Commerce City Station Area Master Plan](#) (STAMP) was completed in October 2013 in anticipation of the then proposed North Metro Corridor commuter rail line and the E. 72nd Avenue commuter rail station. The plan provides guidance for land use, transportation, and infrastructure for the area approximately one-half mile around the commuter rail station.

Completion of the station in September 2021 sparked an opportunity for Commerce City staff to ask the TAP panelists to reflect on the STAMP plan and whether it still aligns with the new realities of the station area. Since it has been eight years since the STAMP plan was released, the panelists evaluated how the station area has changed, what progress has been made, and how to build from the plan's near-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations.

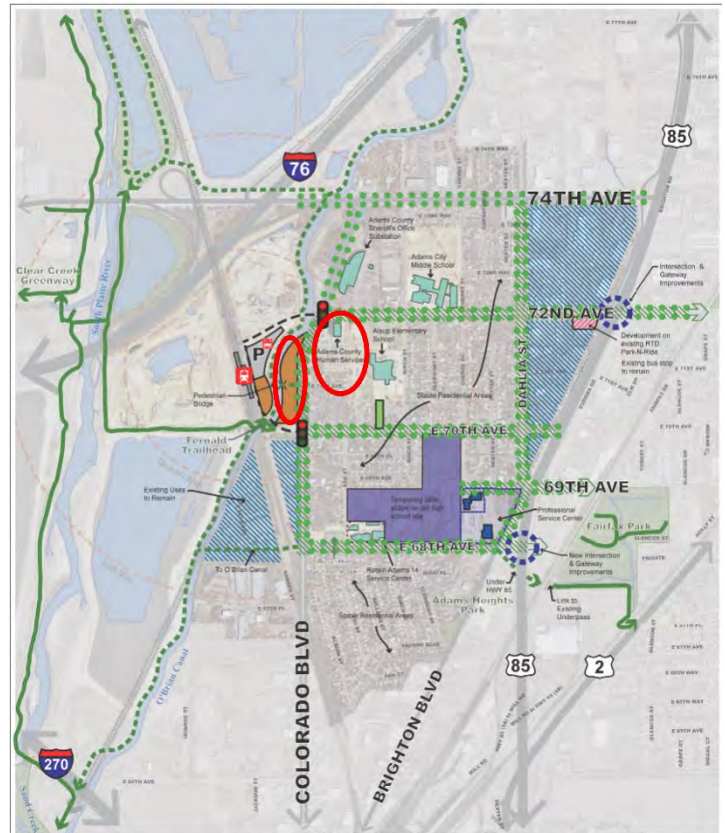
STAMP Plan Year 0-10

Some of the elements identified in the first phase of the STAMP are currently underway and the panel recommends keeping up this momentum. The Appendix includes updates on the implementation of the STAMP plan recommendations.

Key Elements of the First Phase:

- **Old Adams City High School Site Redevelopment:** With the goal of eventually developing a new school on this site, the STAMP recommended starting with temporary landscaping. The school moved to a different site in 2009 and in September 2021, the school board decided to demolish the former high school buildings due to safety hazards.
- **Roadway and Streetscape Improvements:** Currently improvements are complete on Colorado Blvd between 70th and 72nd Ave. This year, Commerce City Public Works will be designing improvements between 68th and 70th Ave.
- **Station-adjacent residential development:** Recently pre-application meetings have occurred for developments west and east of the station. The Urban Land Conservancy is planning a 60-unit affordable housing development on the former Adams County Motor Vehicle site.

STATION AREA MASTER PLAN IN YEARS 0-10



Map showing recommendations in the STAMP for years 0-10. The red circles show areas that the TAP panelists recommended focusing on for station-area residential development and connectivity improvements during this phase.

Map from page 44 of the STAMP.



Map showing current and potential connectivity improvements with green arrows and development areas with yellow circles. Map courtesy of Mark De La Torre.

STAMP Plan Year 10-20

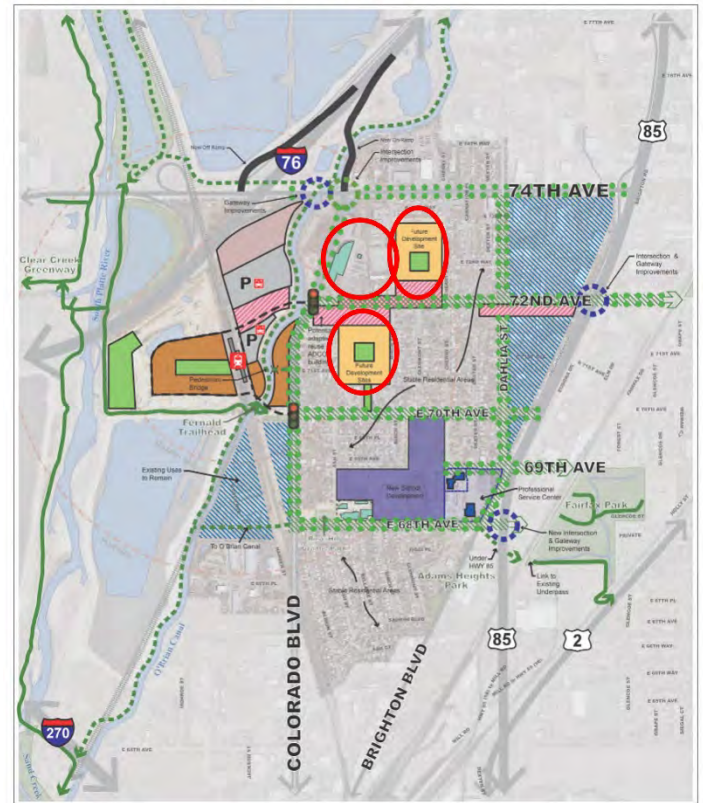
The 10–20 year phase of the STAMP plan includes recommendations that begin to deviate from the existing conditions of the study area and the panel’s suggested course of action.

The panel recommended starting redevelopment on available sites east of the O’Brian Canal. This way, the redevelopment could build momentum within the existing urban fabric on the east and create near-term community amenities. Once there is more certainty regarding sites immediately adjacent to the station, areas to the west of the canal will have more capacity to develop during a later phase.

Key Elements of the Second Phase:

- **Development East of the O’Brian Canal:** The panelists recommended prioritizing the redevelopment of available properties along 72nd Avenue, east of the O’Brian Canal. Several of those available properties are former school sites or have civic uses that could be incorporated into new developments.
- **Establishing a Mixed-Used Main Street:** With redevelopment east of Colorado Boulevard, establishing a mixed-use main street along 72 Avenue will become more viable.
- **72nd Avenue Extension:** The panelists did not think focusing on extending 72nd Avenue west from Colorado Boulevard is likely in this timeframe without a change in use from the existing sand and gravel site that 72nd Avenue currently serves.

STATION AREA MASTER PLAN IN YEARS 10-20



Map showing recommendations in STAMP for years 10-20. The red circles show areas that the TAP panelists recommended focusing on for redevelopment opportunities during this phase. Map from page 45 of the STAMP.



Map showing priority redevelopment sites in yellow circles and connectivity improvement areas with green lines for this phase. The red dot indicates a prime opportunity area for community amenities, such as a farmers market. The gray lines indicate recommendations from prior phases. Map courtesy of Mark De La Torre.

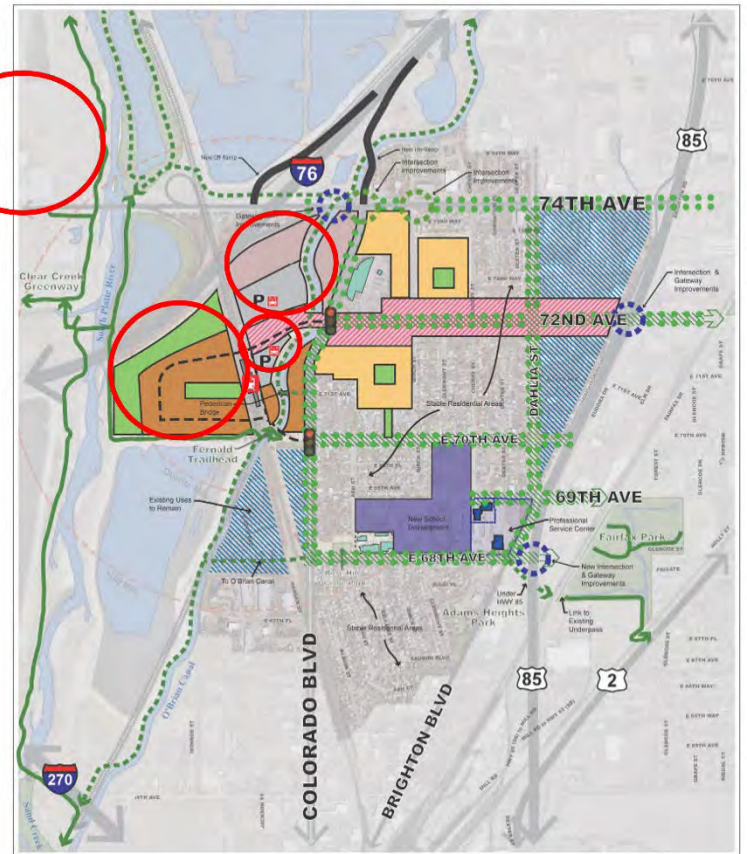
STAMP Plan Year 20+

During the phase of 20+ years, the panel discussed ways to implement the STAMP plan's vision both east and west of the O'Brian Canal.

Key Elements of the Third Phase:

- **Development West of the O'Brian Canal:** With momentum from redevelopment east of the O'Brian Canal in the prior phase, the panelists thought that development west of the canal at the scale and with the uses the STAMP plan envisioned would now be more likely. Available sites northwest of the South Platte River within the study area could also be considered for future mixed-use, transit-oriented development.
- **Second Point of Access from 70th Avenue to the Site West of the Station:** Development of site immediately west of the station is limited due to a lack of secondary access. The panelists suggested above-grade crossing of the rail tracks, since below-grade would encounter the water table and RTD would likely be wary of an at-grade crossing due to the lack of visibility at the turning tracks.
- **Expansion of the Mixed-Use Corridor Along 72nd Avenue:** With additional development along 72nd Avenue and improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure, this corridor could become the desired mixed-use main street.
- **Green Space Access to the South Platte River:** The panelists recommended prioritizing access to green space and to the South Platte River corridor, especially when the station area sites develop. The red circles on the map below indicate opportunity areas to enhance connectivity to green space along the river corridor.

STATION AREA MASTER PLAN AT BUILDOUT IN 20+ YEARS



Map showing recommendations in STAMP from years 20+. The red circles show areas that the TAP panelists recommended focusing on for development opportunities. The STAMP includes the community's desired land uses, such as housing, commercial, and community amenities. Map from page 46 of the STAMP.



Map showing potential long-term redevelopment areas in the station area, indicated with yellow circles. The red circles indicate areas to enhance connectivity to green space along the river corridor. The gray lines indicate recommendations from prior phases. Map courtesy of Mark De La Torre.

Envisioning Future Development in the Station Area



From top left to bottom right: St. Paul Street in Denver's Cherry Creek North by Sam Adams; University of British Columbia Vancouver Campus by Hover Collective / UBC Brand & Marketing; The Nature Kids Discovery Zone in Lafayette courtesy SlidesandSunshine.com; Rendering of 4300 Stevens Creek Blvd. in San Jose, CA by KTG Architecture; Mixed-use street in Portland by Nick Baldi; Painted crosswalk in Madrid by Rafael Perez Martinez.

Trails & Open Space

At the beginning of this process, Commerce City asked the panel: “How do we best connect the station to the west, where it is broken up by major highways and the South Platte River? How can we take advantage of the proximity to the river?”

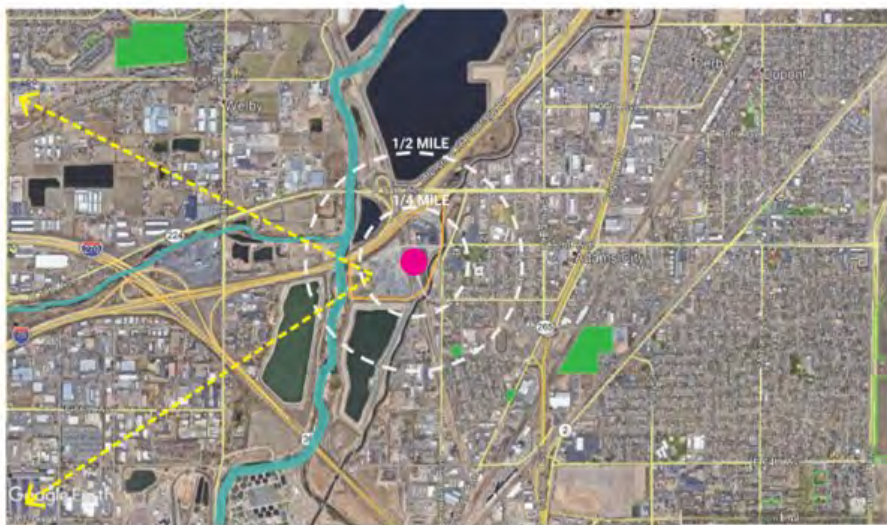
After assessing the study area’s proximity to existing trails and green space, the panel agreed that this area presents significant opportunities regarding trails and open space, especially along the South Platte River. The panel recommended that priority should be given to enhancing existing trail connectivity, as opposed to creating new underpasses, overpasses, and on- and off-ramps.

“We’re interested in an integrated community area with trails that connect neighborhoods to the river.”

- Alisha Reis, Acting County Manager, Adams County

Access to Green Space & Healthy Food

It’s known that access to green space and healthy food increases health both mentally and physically. Currently, access to both in the study area is limited. Rose Hill Grange Park, which is small, is the only park within a half-mile walking distance of the station, making trail access to the South Platte River all the more important for the community to access green space and active transportation opportunities. The closest grocery store is 1.3 miles away from the station, so panelists suggested adding a food truck and/or farmers market location near the station and Fernald Trailhead, providing access to food for both the local community and trail users.



Map showing ¼ and ½ mile radiuses from RTD station, which are considered normal walking distances. Parks are highlighted in green and no grocery stores are within the study area. The yellow arrows indicate the viewshed of the Rocky Mountains in the study area. Map courtesy Gretchen Wilson.

Transit- and Trail-Oriented Development

The 2016 ULI report, “[Active Transportation and Real Estate: The Next Frontier](#),” reported that 52% of all people and 63% of Millennials would prefer to live in a place where they do not need to use a car very often. With the proximity to the new rail station and the South Platte River, the study area has significant opportunities for both transit-oriented

development (TOD) and trail-oriented development, both of which connect the community to the greater Denver region and beyond without the need for individual cars.

Trail Connection Opportunities:

- **South Platte River Greenway Trail:** 34 miles from Adams County to Chatfield Reservoir. The Fernald Trailhead is adjacent to the RTD station along 70th Avenue.
- **Colorado Front Range Trail:** 270 miles from the borders of Wyoming to New Mexico. This trail uses the South Platte River Greenway Trail within the study area and will include 876 miles of trail along Colorado's Front Range once it's complete.
- **Clear Creek Trail:** 21.8 miles from Welby to Golden. Access to the Clear Creek Trail from the RTD station includes less than a mile north and west along Fernald Trail.
- **Sand Creek Trail:** 14 miles from the High Line Canal in Aurora to the South Platte River Greenway Trail. Access to the Sand Creek Trail is less than a mile south from the station along the South Platte River Greenway Trail.
- **Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge:** 10 miles of hiking trails 2 miles east of the station area. Opportunity to provide a bike and pedestrian connection from the station area along 72nd Avenue.



Map showing trails in the vicinity of the station area, which is indicated with a red dot. Map courtesy sandcreekgreenway.org.

Benefits of Access to Nature:

With so many regional trail systems in the vicinity of this study area, it's an ideal place for community members to access nature. There is mounting evidence that interacting with nature delivers measurable benefits to people. A 30-minute visit to a park, for example, can improve heart health and circulation, and lower cholesterol, blood glucose, and blood pressure. Frequent exposure to nature reduces anxiety and depression, while promoting a sense of

wellbeing and fulfillment. Physical activity in a green space can reduce stress and lowers cortisol levels by 15% ([source](#)).

Because people want to live near nature, housing development in this area would be ideal. The many trail connections are a significant incentive for developers to invest in this area, since they serve as community amenities and recreation opportunities.

Potential Trail Amenities:

Adding amenities to the trail within the study area would encourage the community to use the trail system and receive the benefits of accessing nature and engaging in physical activity along the trails. The panelists came up with the following list of potential amenities, but asking the community what they want would be even better:

- Community Gathering Spaces
- Recreation
- Events & Programming
- Food Trucks & Vendors
- Farmers Markets
- Nature Play
- Destination Play
- Loop Trails
- Signs for Trails
- Bike Repair Station

ULI's 2021 report, "[Five Characteristics of High-Quality Parks](#)," provided the following checklist for creating high-quality parks:

1	HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE IN EXCELLENT PHYSICAL CONDITION ☐ Is the park well maintained? ☐ Are park amenities in good condition?	2	HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL POTENTIAL USERS ☐ Can people of all ages and abilities get to and around the park? ☐ Do people know about the facility and what they can do there? ☐ Is it free or affordable to use?	3	HIGH-QUALITY PARKS PROVIDE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES FOR PARK USERS ☐ Does the park provide a diverse range of amenities and activities? ☐ Do all community members feel welcome and safe in and around the park? ☐ Is the park comfortable to spend time in?
4	HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE RELEVANT TO THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE ☐ Does park design and programming reflect the culture and interests of community members? ☐ Does the surrounding community actively use the park? ☐ Do user demographics reflect the community? ☐ Are community-based organizations involved in park decisions and operations?	5	HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES ☐ Does the park accommodate a variety of uses? ☐ Are park features adaptable to evolving circumstances? ☐ Does the park enhance environmental sustainability and resilience?		

"Go out into the community and ask what types of programming they'd like to see on their trails and open space."

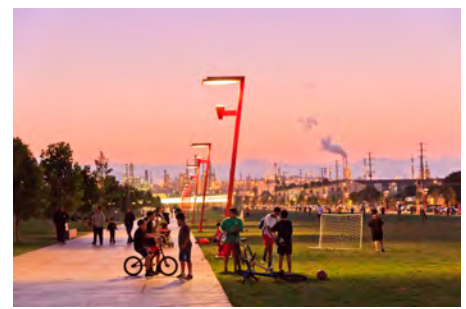
- Panelist Gretchen Wilson, Principal Partner, Dig Studio

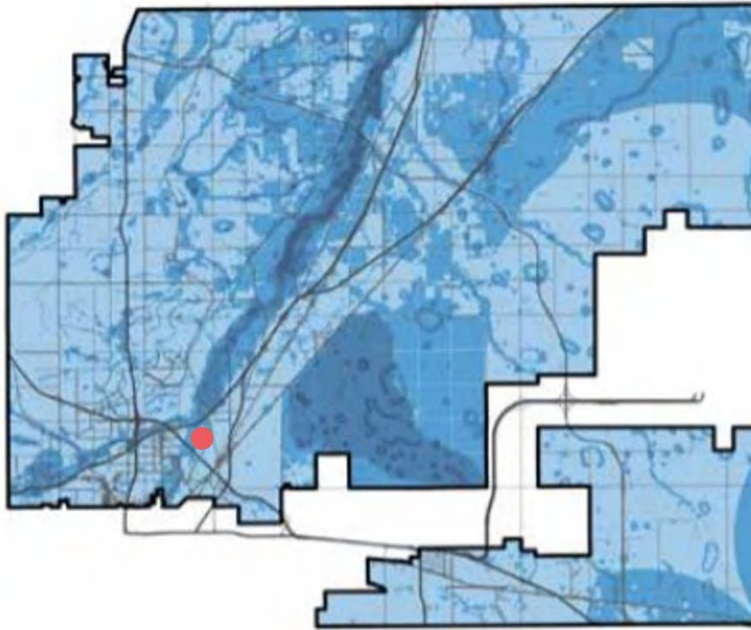
Park Vision for Station Area



Left: Rendering of what the study area could look like along the South Platte River. Courtesy Dig Studio.

Below from top left to bottom right: Historic Fourth Ward Park in Atlanta by Steve Carrell; John G. and Phyllis W. Smale Riverfront Park in Cincinnati courtesy Sasaki; Riverside Park South in NYC courtesy SWA Group; The Edge in Williamsburg courtesy W Architecture; Scioto Audubon Metro Park in Columbus; Wilmington Waterfront Park in LA courtesy Sasaki; Hunter's Point South Waterfront Park in Queens courtesy SWA Group; First Creek Park in Denver courtesy Valerian; Rayback Collective food truck park in Boulder by Tate Norden.



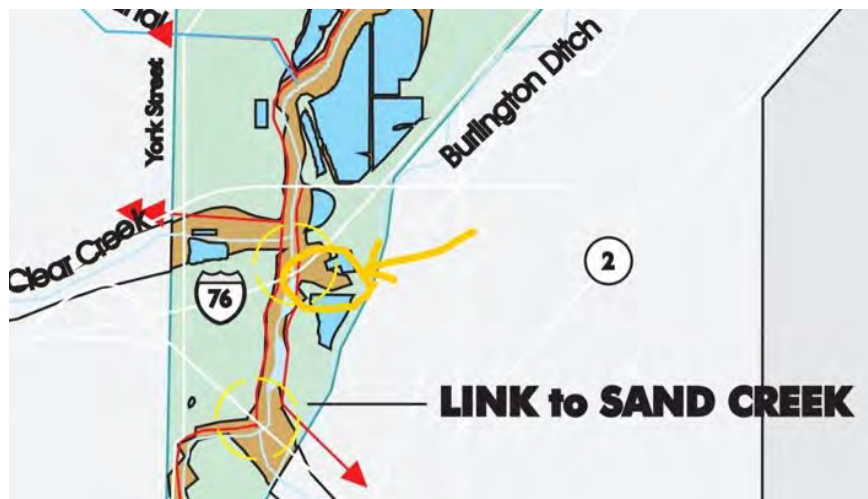


Dark blue areas are areas of high value for wildlife. Red dot is the Station Area. Map courtesy Adams County Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan.

Riverway Habitat Restoration

The urbanization of the City and County of Denver over the past 150 years has resulted in infrastructure and development encroaching into historic stream and floodplain habitats along the South Platte River and its tributaries. In addition, the construction of the Chatfield and Bear Creek Dams have altered the natural flows by greatly reducing flood flows and increasing late summer and fall base flows. The combined effect of these changes has negatively impacted the South Platte River's natural flows and native aquatic and riparian habitat systems.

Restoring the ecosystem and habitat along the South Platte River corridor is a priority for the region. The City and County of Denver is partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Omaha District) on a study to evaluate possible ecosystem restoration solutions to the degraded South Platte River habitat systems in Denver. In the Corps' concept diagram below, they identified the TAP study area as a potential location to create a larger riparian buffer. It may be possible to get funding from USACE or FEMA to help create this enhanced river habitat.



Map showing the 1997 USACE [South Platte River Heritage Plan](#). The yellow circled area is the location adjacent to the station area. The orange area is identified as potential riparian buffer to reduce flooding and create habitat for wildlife.

Mobility and Access

Commerce City has the great benefit of having the third rail station from downtown Denver. Now that the RTD station is complete, the City asked the panel to consider how to increase multimodal access to the station to increase ridership and community connectivity. The panel provided the following recommendations for each mobility type.

Vehicular Mobility & Access

Increasing vehicular access to the sites immediately around the station is critical to unlocking their development potential.

Secondary Access into Station Area: Currently, the site west of the station lacks secondary access, which would be essential for emergency service vehicles to reach any future development. The panel proposed the following options for getting secondary access into the station area:

- **70th Avenue:** As 70th Avenue turns into the station area, there is a vertical grade change of around 10 feet. The panelists suggested an above-grade crossing of the rail tracks here, since below-grade would be challenged by the water table, and RTD would likely be wary of an at-grade crossing due to the lack of visibility as the tracks turn. A track crossing would be required to provide secondary access to the site west of the station here.
- **72nd Avenue:** Currently, as 72nd Avenue enters the station area, it is used exclusively as a private access road for Brannan Sand and Gravel, which occupies the site north of the station. The panelists agreed with the STAMP plan that 72nd Avenue is the most logical point of access to the station area, especially if the sites around the station redevelop.

"This is a great TOD location. The City needs to be able to step up with regards to infrastructure. We need a traffic light for safe access to and from the station."

- Aaron Miripol, Urban Land Conservancy

"I see the area as a blank slate and as an opportunity to form an area that is close to downtown, with opportunities for residential and commercial space. An area that will primarily serve as an intermediary for connecting. It's a perfect opportunity to create a TOD bubble."

- Carson Priest, Smart Commute Metro North



Map showing potential access opportunities for the Station Area circled in red. Top left circle: 72nd Ave; Bottom left circle: 70th Ave; Right circle: Ash Street extension to restore the street grid. Base map from STAMP plan.

Ash Street Extension: To help create additional development opportunities in the station area, the panelists suggested extending Ash Street through the prior Alsup Elementary School site east of the station. As it is currently, this site is at least double the width of the normal street grid in the area. Reintroducing the street grid within this site could create additional redevelopment opportunities that require access, such as housing. The Denver Housing Authority's developments in Sun Valley and Benedict Park Place are examples of how to leverage the reintroduction of the street grid.

No Need for Additional Interstate 76 On- and Off-Ramps: The STAMP discusses extending Colorado Boulevard north of E. 74th Avenue to create a new on-ramp onto Interstate 76 and providing a southbound off-ramp from Interstate 76 to E. 74th Avenue utilizing the existing frontage road. The panel felt this is inconsistent with what Commerce City and local stakeholders are seeking to accomplish in the station area. New interstate ramps would lead to more vehicular through-traffic as opposed to making the area safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. With the current street configuration, panelists did not find a problem for vehicles reaching the station.

"This area has been extremely disconnected. With the new station, we have the opportunity to connect the people who live here to the greater Denver Metro area. The community also lacks access to green space, open space, and recreation. The trails are underutilized, so we should continue efforts to make them more accessible and appealing. I would emphasize connectivity for this area, which has traditionally been left behind."

- Colorado State Senator
Dominick Moreno

Bike and Pedestrian Mobility & Access

A priority for the community is to increase bike and pedestrian safety and connectivity, as well as adding bikeable & walkable destinations in the station area. In support of the STAMP recommendations, the panelists offered the following suggestions for next steps.

72nd Avenue Improvements: In order to create a vibrant walkable main street corridor along 72nd Avenue, the STAMP recommended streetscape improvements such as "sidewalks, benches, street trees, lighting, trash receptacles, bicycle parking (particularly close to the station), public art, and decorative paving. A range of public realm improvements on E. 72nd Avenue should energize the neighborhood and station area and build momentum for additional retail and destination uses." The panelists agreed completely. They added the following recommendations:

- **Extend 72nd Avenue West to the South Platte River:** By extending this main street corridor through the station area and connecting it to the river, it would increase access and connectivity to both the station and to the green space and trail system of the South Platte River. If vehicular access circulates through the site west of the station as indicated in the STAMP, the panel recommended creating a trail that connects all the way to the South Platte River.
- **Four-way Stop at 72nd Avenue & Colorado Boulevard:** Currently, the intersection at 72nd Avenue and Colorado Boulevard is unsafe for all modes. Foot and bike traffic in this area will increase as 72nd Avenue becomes a main street and if it is extended into the station area for public access, making a four-way stop at this intersection critical for traffic calming and safe crossing.
- **Add Bicycle Infrastructure:** Adding bike infrastructure, such as bike lanes, parking, and repair stations to 72nd Avenue, the station, and on trails could significantly improve safety, connectivity, and ridership in this area.

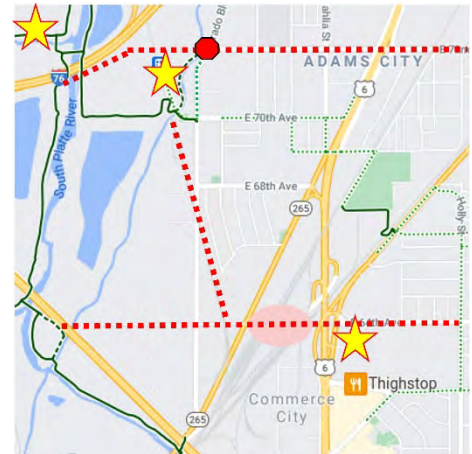


Proposed Colorado Boulevard section in STAMP with off-street bike lanes, on-street parking, and sidewalks on both sides. Rendering courtesy Commerce City Station Area Master Plan.

Transportation Demand Management Policy: The panel recommended instituting a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Policy that promotes multimodal infrastructure for biking and walking and dense development. A TDM policy is intended to reduce traffic and redistribute transportation demand in space or time, usually by expanding people's travel options and creating attractive alternatives to driving. The City and County of Denver recently adopted a [TDM policy](#) that requires developers to contribute to bike and pedestrian infrastructure, such as bicycle parking, bike-share, and transit passes. This policy is intended to increase mobility options and reduce single occupancy vehicle trips, which contribute to traffic congestion and greater levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Increasing Community Connectivity: Panelists suggested the following opportunities to add multimodal improvements connecting the station to other destinations in the area.

- **Extending sidewalks and bike lanes on 72nd Avenue east** to Adams City High School and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.
- **Connect the abandoned rail trail** from the station at 70th Avenue to 64th Avenue.
- **Add a bike lane to 64th Avenue** so that it can provide a bike connection between the South Platte River and the redeveloped Greyhound Park. For this connection to work, there would need to be a way for bikes and pedestrians to cross Highway 6.

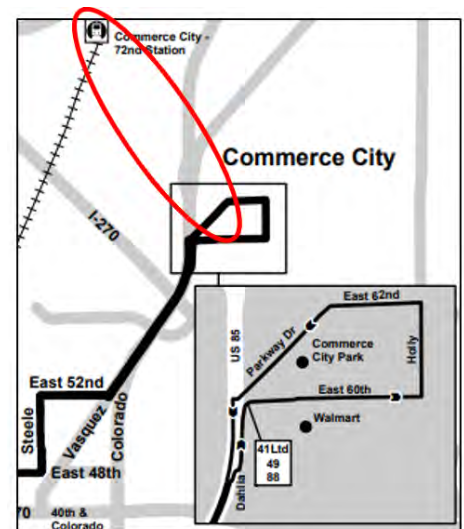


Map showing recommendations for bike and pedestrian connections, shown with red dotted lines. Stars show destinations such as the rail station, the redeveloping Greyhound Park, and Welby. The red octagon indicates the four-way stop at 72nd Ave. and Colorado Blvd. Base map courtesy Google Maps.

Transit Mobility & Access

Transit access expands regional equity and allows for access to opportunity and economic vitality for a greater portion of the population. To best take advantage of the new RTD station in Commerce City, the panel provided the following recommendations.

Bus Connectivity: Although the station enjoys service from four bus lines, there is a fifth line that does not serve this station: Route 48 that runs between Denver's Civic Center Station and Commerce City. The panel suggested that Commerce City could work with RTD to add a Route 48 stop at the 72nd Avenue Station. To add transit connections to other areas in the vicinity, such as Welby and the Mile High Greyhound Park, stakeholders from Smart Commute Metro North, a transportation management organization, encouraged Commerce City to explore other service providers beyond RTD. Examples include the [Montbello Connector](#) free on-demand ride share program, the [Englewood Trolley](#) between Englewood Station and Craig Hospital Swedish Medical Center, and Lone Tree's [Link On Demand](#) shuttle service that allows app users to go anywhere in Lone Tree for free.



Map showing a gap in bus connectivity for RTD's Route 48 circled in red. Map courtesy RTD.

Park-and-Ride Capacity: The RTD Park-and-Ride at Commerce City's rail station can accommodate up to 300 cars. As the rest of the station area redevelops, it may be necessary to eventually relocate RTD parking to a shared neighborhood facility and introduce transit-supportive land uses immediately adjacent to the station. The [Boulder Junction at Depot Square Station](#) is an example of a shared parking facility that accommodates RTD transit users.

Housing and Affordability

Commerce City asked the panel: “How do we encourage development while preserving the historic appeal and maintaining the neighborhood assets such as affordable housing?”

The STAMP includes strategies for creating and retaining affordable housing and supporting anti-displacement initiatives on page 61. The panel grappled with how to implement those strategies and provided the following recommendations.

Maintaining Affordability

With an increase in population and popularity of this area, it’s likely there will be cash offers for homes that will be hard for local residents to resist. The panel recommended coming up with a plan to support long-term stability and affordability in Commerce City.

To maintain the area’s affordable housing and prevent displacement, the panel recommended:

- Include community members in discussions related to redevelopment in the area.
- Work with the [Maiker Housing Partners](#) and [Commerce City Housing Authority](#) to add additional affordable and attainable housing to the area and add funding programs for property improvements.
- Work with [Elevation Community Land Trust](#) to create a land trust to preserve affordability in the station area.

The panel also recommended investigating options for affordable housing requirements allowed under [House Bill 1117](#) and for affordable housing funding opportunities from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Under the federal act, the state of Colorado receives over \$500 million to address the housing needs of populations, households, or geographic areas disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency. The act creates the affordable housing and home ownership cash fund in the state treasury. The act authorizes the general assembly to appropriate or transfer money from the fund to a department or cash fund for programs or services that benefit populations, households, or geographic areas disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency, focusing on programs or services that address housing insecurity, lack of affordable housing, or homelessness. For more information, visit: <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1329>.

“The people in the neighborhood have to be part of the redevelopment conversation.”

*- Panelist Mark Marshall,
Vice President of Real Estate
Development, Rocky
Mountain Communities*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY TO PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

House Bill 1117 modifies state land use statutes so that local governments can require affordable housing in new or redeveloped projects without running afoul of the rent-control prohibition. Under House Bill 1117, developers must be given alternatives to building affordable units on-site. For example, they could trade those for affordable units built elsewhere, pay a fee into an affordable housing fund, or any number of other options. The bill leaves it up to local governments to decide if they want to adopt such policies and what that menu of options for developers would be. More information is available here: <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/HB21-1117>.

Increasing Housing Stock

Increasing the mix of housing stock will add to the community vitality in the area and allow for the addition of amenities that the community desires.

Some of this is already underway. A 60-unit affordable housing development was planned for the Urban Land Conservancy site across from the station on 72nd Avenue (the former Adams County Motor Vehicle site). The development applied for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC); however, they were not awarded due to lack of pedestrian infrastructure. This strengthens the case for Commerce City to invest in multimodal infrastructure along 72nd Avenue—including direct access to the RTD station and a four-way stop with pedestrian crossings at Colorado Boulevard—as LIHTC projects would add a significant amount of affordable housing stock to the area.

Phased Approach to Redevelopment

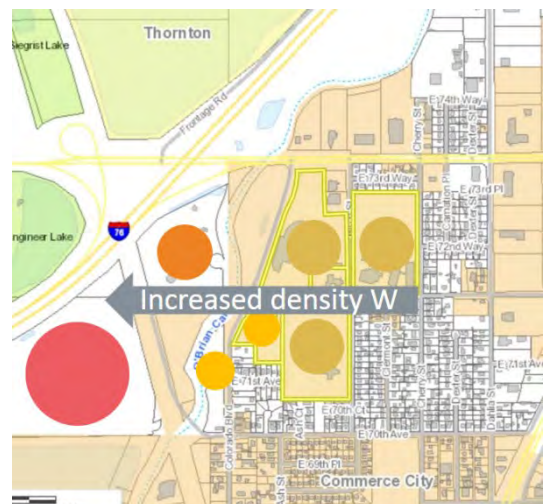
With so much land being considered for redevelopment within the study area, a phased approach is needed.

The panelists recommended prioritizing redevelopment of available properties along 72nd Avenue, east of the O’Brian Canal first. In this area, infrastructure is already in place, and redevelopment here provides more opportunities for increased ridership in the near future. They focused on Adams County and prior school sites along 72nd Avenue as the primary opportunities to add mixed-use developments with a higher density of housing than in surrounding areas.

The market will support much a higher density and mix of uses on the sites immediately adjacent to the station, west of the O’Brian Canal, if they develop once there is greater demand in the area. An increased number of households nearby supports right-of-way improvements, a greater mix of uses, and community amenities. Also, while redevelopment occurs east of the O’Brian Canal, time will allow for a potential change of uses at the current Brannan Sand & Gravel site adjacent to the station.

"With Commerce City's growth, there's a need for increased density. We recommend a gradual progression from neighborhoods to higher density at the station area."

- Panelist Mark Marshall, Vice President of Real Estate Development, Rocky Mountain Communities



Map of proposed phasing of development from east to west, with lowest density development next to existing neighborhood residential and the highest proposed density adjacent to the station. Map created by Sarah Laverty.



For the study area, the panelists suggested adding a diversity of housing types that scale up closer to the station. They recommended medium density infill housing development in the station area, much like these townhomes in West Line Village, Lakewood, CO. Photo courtesy REcolorado.

How to Lead Change

Commerce City asked the panel, “Who should lead this effort? The city? A developer? Another party or configuration?”

The panel determined that the City is the appropriate entity to create and support the overall vision for the area and ensure consistency across private and public development over time. The panel provided the following recommendations for how the City can lead change.

Planning & Zoning Coordination

The STAMP provides an excellent foundation for planning in the station area. The panel recommended a 10 year “state of the plan” effort to ensure it’s still aligning with community interests and changes in the area.

Additionally, Commerce City can review all plans to ensure their alignment. This can help prevent conflicting rules that development can’t meet. Review could include the STAMP, the Commerce City Comprehensive Plan, and Adams County’s proposed TOD overlay. The panel also recommended engaging with riverway plans, such as the Mile High Flood District’s South Platte River planning efforts, the USACE South Platte River plans, and the Clear Creek Corridor Master Plan.

There are various parcels within a half mile of the station in unincorporated Adams County, which Adams County’s proposed TOD overlay covers. The panel recommended reviewing the TOD overlay, including the area it covers, and ensuring it aligns with Commerce City’s vision and goals for the station area. The panel also recommended coordinating with Adams County on the zoning of those parcels to ensure that their redevelopment matches the vision for the station area.

Leading with Publicly Owned Properties

This station area is relatively unique considering the large parcels of vacant land owned by Adams County and local school districts that are available for redevelopment within its vicinity. The panel recommended focusing on redeveloping the large properties owned by Adams County and school districts. Ownership of the properties allows for more influence over development outcomes. Public sector property owners could issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the sites and/or sell the properties with stipulations regarding what should occur on the sites.

For the sites immediately adjacent to the station, Commerce City staff could work with the landowners and tenants to ensure the STAMP

“The City should take the lead with consistent vision and planning to support redevelopment of different sites over different time periods.”

- Panelist Sarah Lavery,
Development Director,
EnviroFinance Group

“This is an opportunity for Commerce City to expand and shine. It’s important to create connections to the other side of Colorado Boulevard and to the core city, and to add different housing and commercial opportunities.”

- José Guardiola, Commerce
City Councilmember, At Large



Map highlights in green the areas that panelists focused on for potential redevelopment in the study area. Base map courtesy Google Maps.

vision is realized. Economic development staff may be able to work with Brannan Sand and Gravel to help them find a new site.

When the sites immediately north and west of the station are available, the panel recommended focusing on development there and adding right-of-way improvements along 72nd Avenue leading into the station area. Eventually, the RTD parking lot may need to be redeveloped in coordination with the surrounding developments.

Financing Opportunities

Public finance opportunities are a primary way that Commerce City can lead change. They are also likely necessary to implement the vision for the station area, which lacks critical infrastructure. The panel suggested the following financial tools and opportunities.

"Infrastructure and connectivity are top of the list for public finance like TIF, especially to support the planning that has already been done. [...] Ask the city what they want the site to be and not just what will generate the most tax increment. Pursue the tools that best serve that vision."

- Tracy Huggins, Executive Director, Denver Urban Renewal Authority

Capital Improvement Program

The panel strongly recommended that Commerce City continue adding right-of-way (ROW) improvements for the station area to its Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Eventually, maintenance of the station area's parks and green spaces may need to be added as well.

Coordinating External Funding Sources & Partners

The panel recommended applying for and coordinating external funding sources and partners to accomplish goals within the study area. A few that they suggested include:

- Adams County Open Space Grants
- Community Development Block Grants
- Funding or conservation credits from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help create an enhanced riparian habitat and buffer along the South Platte River
- Work with the Maiker Housing Partners and Commerce City Housing Authority to add additional affordable and attainable housing to the area and add funding programs for property improvements
- Work with Elevation Community Land Trust to create a land trust to preserve affordability
- Investigate options for affordable housing funding opportunities from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The act creates the affordable housing and home ownership cash fund in the state treasury. Funding will be distributed by the Department of Local Affairs' Division of Housing.

Urban Renewal Authority & Tax Increment Financing

Commerce City asked the panel, "How would an Urban Renewal Authority (URA) help maximize activities in this area? What are the developer benefits to a URA?"

The panel agreed that a URA would likely be necessary to implement the STAMP vision. Tax increment financing (TIF), made available by the URA, could be used to fund large-scale area improvements such as access improvements, utility connections, and potential brownfield remediation if it is needed.

Commerce City can lead the effort to create a URA for the station area. The panel recommended that Commerce City conduct the conditions study to determine the URA boundaries prior to developer involvement and TIF initiation. TIF could be provided as a tool for private development in areas where and when it is needed within the URA. It's possible to set multiple TIF areas within a URA to start the clock on TIF at the right time for each area.

Based on the vision for the area, Commerce City could add requirements for the types of development that are allowed to access the TIF. As an example, the land developer of the previous St. Anthony's Hospital site near Sloan's Lake set up a URA, and to access TIF funds, parcel developers had to follow requirements that would add value to the area, such as reuse existing buildings, add vitality to West Colfax Avenue, or contribute affordable housing. In the station area, it may be helpful to add requirements for enhanced streetscapes, affordable housing, and open space improvements.

Metropolitan District

A metropolitan (metro) district is another important tool that could generate more immediate resources for infrastructure and ongoing operations and maintenance than a URA could for the station area. That is why the panel recommended using both a URA and a metro district for the station area, since the tools have different timing and both bring needed resources to an area that lacks infrastructure.

Metro districts use special assessments within their borders to finance the infrastructure necessary to support development, such as internal streets, water, storm drainage, gas and electrical, as well as ongoing operations and maintenance of community amenities such as parks.

Commerce City could decide to put control measures in place to ensure that the metro district doesn't lead to unintended consequences for the area, such as:

- Impose a mill cap lower than the statutory cap of 50 mills
- The metro district cannot issue debt until improvements are finished
- Create staff finance audit position and hire a dedicated staff person who ensures the plan lives up to its standards
- Add a clause, like Broomfield's Dissolution Clause, that ensures that after the development is complete and the debt is paid off, the metro district is dissolved. This does not generate additional revenue over time for operations and maintenance, but it does allow for a clear exit strategy for the metro district.

Regardless of which control measures Commerce City may put in place, a metro district is likely a critical component to achieving the type of development desired in the station area.



Photo of the study area from the South Platte River facing north.

V. Conclusion

Commerce City is wise to proactively look for solutions and opportunities to invest in the future of its new station area, and to check in on the viability of the now eight-year-old STAMP plan. Overall, City investment in the area can attract additional private and public resources. How long it will take to develop and connect the area depends on willingness of the parcel owners and the City to collaborate. This could happen within a couple years if the parties are willing to plan together and work in a cohesive way to implement the plans.

"I would counsel patience. The right forces are in action for this site. Think about where you want to end up in the future. Don't rush it."

- Chris Nevitt, Citywide Manager for Transit-Oriented Development, City and County of Denver

Key Takeaways

- This is a great location for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Embrace the South Platte River, its green space, and trail system
- Celebrate the people and culture of the area with redevelopment efforts
- Create spaces for the community to gather
- The City needs to invest in infrastructure and public realm improvements
- Public financing is necessary to catalyze the redevelopment that the community desires. Explore the formation of an Urban Renewal Authority and Metropolitan District in the station area to provide the financial resources necessary for redevelopment.
- There is a need to increase pedestrian access and multi-modal connectivity in the area
- Phasing development to start on available properties east of the O'Brian Canal will support transit ridership & catalyze development on the west side of the O'Brian Canal, around the station
- Focus on maintaining and adding affordable housing to the station area
- Align with concurrent planning efforts & previously adopted plans
- Keep implementing the STAMP plan & conduct community outreach for a 10-year check-in on the plan in 2023

"This station is a wonderful opportunity for this area. People can get off the light rail and do something here. People would like to see arts and entertainment, including restaurants, in the area. Residential close to industrial has been there a long time. We can figure out how to blend all the uses."

- Susan Noble, Commerce City Councilmember, Ward IV

VI. Stakeholders

Stakeholders Who Participated in the Workshop

Commerce City Staff:

- Jamie Rice, Planner III
- Jason Rogers, Deputy City Manager of External Services
- Roger Tinklenberg, City Manager
- Jennifer Jones, Principal Planner
- Steve Timms, Planning Manager
- Traci Ferguson, Parks Planner III
- Brent Soderlin, City Engineer
- Michelle Claymore, Economic Development Director
- Lee Alverson, Development Review & Coordination Engineer
- Dalton Guerra, Planner II

City Council and Planning Commission Members:

- Councilmember Susan Noble, Ward IV
- Councilmember Jennifer Allen-Thomas, Ward II
- Dennis Cammack, Planning Commissioner
- Councilmember Robyn Smith, At Large
- Councilmember José Guardiola, At Large

Regional:

- Dominick Moreno, Colorado Senator
- Tracy Huggins, Executive Director, Denver Urban Renewal Authority
- Chris Nevitt, Citywide Manager for Transit-Oriented Development, City and County of Denver
- Jim Jones, District Manager, South Adams County Water and Sanitation District
- Alisha Reis, Acting County Manager of Community Infrastructure & Development Services, Adams County
- Jenni Grafton Hall, Director of Community and Economic Development, Adams County

Transportation:

- Carson Priest, Director of Program Management, Smart Commute Metro North
- Bill Fox, Principal, Fox Tuttle Transportation Group
- Angie Rivera-Malpiede, Executive Director, Northeast Transportation Connections
- Chessy Brady, Transit-Oriented Development Manager, Regional Transportation District

Property Owners & Users:

- Eric Nesbitt, President & CEO, The Nesbitt Commercial Group
- Ben Frei, CEO, Albert Frei & Sons, Inc.
- Becky Rigo, In-House Counsel, Albert Frei & Sons, Inc.
- Aaron Miripol, President & CEO, Urban Land Conservancy
- Alex Schatz, Regulatory and Legal Affairs Manager, Brannan Companies
- Sarah Harman, Vice President of Real Estate, Urban Land Conservancy
- Craig Fitchett, Director of Acquisitions & Business Development, Delwest

VII. ULI Volunteer Panelists



Panel Chair Mark Marshall, Vice President of Real Estate Development, Rocky Mountain Communities

Mark Marshall joined the Rocky Mountain Communities team in February 2021. He brings to the organization more than 35 years of experience in architectural design, construction management, and real estate development with a focus on supporting nonprofits. Previously, he worked with the Urban Land Conservancy.



Nicholas Carlson, Public Management Specialist, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP

Nic Carlson works with the Public Management team at CliftonLarsonAllen. He specializes in management of Title 32 Special and Metropolitan Districts across the front range. He is a candidate for a master's degree in public administration at the University of Colorado Denver – School of Public Affairs in Fall of 2021.



Mark De La Torre, Director of Visualization, MIG

Taking notes from architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and real estate development practices, Mark has strived to engage the community as the primary stakeholders in every design process. His focus has largely revolved around the graphic representation of the design process. As the Director of Visualization at MIG in Denver, Mark works on projects across the country, from streetscape designs to comprehensive master plans. He holds a bachelor's degree in architecture, and a graduate degree in landscape architecture.



John Hersey, Founder, Sustainable Urban Planning Advisors LLC

John consults with municipalities, developers, and partners on station-area redevelopment, including multimodal connections, parking management, inclusive housing, and public policy. He works at the intersection of transportation and land use promoting affordable housing, economic resilience, and healthy mobility. Previously, he served as a Senior Associate of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) for RTD. He was also a graduate-level instructor in mobility and TOD at the University of Colorado Denver. He holds master's degrees in community and regional planning and real estate development.



Sarah Laverty, Development Director, EnviroFinance Group

As the Development Director for EnviroFinance Group, Sarah is responsible for all aspects of the company's land development projects. Projects she has worked on include the redevelopment of former St. Anthony's Hospital into 7-block mixed-use community called Sloans, remediation and redevelopment of the 77-acre for Asarco smelter site into Crossroads Commerce Park, and remediation of former floral greenhouse into 89-unit townhouse project called Yarrow Gardens. She has an MBA in Real Estate and Finance from the University of Colorado Boulder.



Gretchen Wilson, Principal Partner, Dig Studio

Gretchen Wilson, ASLA, PLA, LEED AP is a Principal Partner with Dig Studio. Dig Studio is a landscape architecture, urban design and planning firm based in Denver. Gretchen draws from all aspects of a project including client goals, history, culture, site features, users and ecology to create meaningful, successful designs. Her knowledge of construction and attention to detail allow her to shape ideas into reality. Gretchen's dedication and collaboration has shaped streetscapes, parks, plazas, and public spaces at varying scales to artfully and sustainably tie communities together.

Special thanks to the ULI Colorado TAP Committee Chairs Al Colussy, Andrew Knudtsen, and Anna Jones and to the sponsorship of the City of Commerce City and the Denver Regional Council of Governments.

APPENDIX: COMMERCE CITY STAMP INITIATIVE UPDATES

Urban Design Strategy	Action	Funding	Lead	Timing	Update
Complete E. 72nd Avenue and Colorado Boulevard streetscape improvements	• Implement sidewalks, bike lanes, street trees, pedestrian amenities	TIF Assessment District Non-Contig. Metro Dist. DRCOG TIP Enhancement Funds, CDBG funds	C3	0–5 years	Improvements are complete on Colorado Blvd between 70 th and 72 nd Ave
Improve E. 72nd Avenue as a “main street”	• Develop the following “next step” plans: corridor redevelopment plans, street design standards/manuals	City DRCOG	C3	0-5 Years	This year, Commerce City Public Works will be designing improvements between 68 th and 70 th Ave.
Existing home improvements	• Facade and property improvements	Grants or low interest loans	C3	0-5 Years	Being met through CDBG.
Improve E. 72 nd Avenue as a “main street”	• Develop comprehensive wayfinding plans and strategies • Develop subarea plans for gateways	City, DRCOG, TIP	C3	1-10 years	Could be achieved through Safer Main Street grant though DRCOG.

Vehicular, Transit, Pedestrian and Bicycle Strategy	Action	Funding	Lead	Timing	Update
Direct traffic flow to E. 72 nd Ave close to the 72 nd Ave Station	• Establish a plan that addresses east-west traffic flow and increases average daily traffic (ADT) nearest to the station area	TIF Assessment District Non-Contig. Metro District DRCOG TIP Enhancement Funds	C3	0-5 years	Currently 72 nd is not the main entrance to the light rail station. Businesses west of Colorado would need to re-develop to accomplish this.
Improve vehicular access, parking and public transit connections in the	• Extend Colorado Boulevard north of E. 74th Avenue up to a new on-ramp onto Interstate	City DRCOG	CDOT RTD C3	0-5 years	Not currently in the Capital Improvements Plan. Staff would need to

station area	76 • Construct new vehicular bridge at the Fernald Trailhead at the western edge of E. 70th Avenue • Establish a plan that addresses east-west traffic flow and increases ADT nearest to the STAMP • Develop the following “next step” plans/ studies: traffic circulation studies (including traffic simulation model development), access management plans, first/last-mile mobility implementation, financing and partnership studies, transit circulator feasibility, transportation demand management studies and implementation activities, and parking management studies				add it to the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (MVRTP) and go through the 1601 process.
Enhance the quality of the walking and biking experiences in the station area	• Construct two new pedestrian bridges over the O’Brian Canal east of the station • Construct the O’Brian Canal Trail	City DRCOG TIP	C3	0-10 years	O’Brain Canal Trail is included in the Parks Master Plan, but does not have a timeline or funding attached.

New Transit-Oriented Development Strategy	Action	Funding	Lead	Timing	Update
Create a development incentive package to help implement development projects slated for the two school redevelopment sites (Adams City	• Develop urban design and development guidelines and design studies for multimodal infrastructure projects • Identify possible public funding	City ED funds TIF P3s	C3	0-10 Years	Mainstreet grant could be potential funding source.

Middle School and Alsup Elementary School)	mechanisms/partners				
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Zoning Strategy	Action	Funding	Lead	Timing	Update
Sponsor zone changes	• Adopt land use standards with minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and density targets • Establish minimum densities around the station area and along E. 72nd Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and Birch Street • Work closely with prospective development partners to facilitate zoning and other development approval requests that are consistent with STAMP recommendations	City Planning	C3	0-10 years	No updates on this strategy.

Safety and Security Strategy	Action	Funding	Lead	Timing	Update
Enhance safety and security	• Provide additional street lighting and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood	TIF Assessment District Non-Contig. Metro Dist. DRCOG TIP	C3	0-20 Years	Being accomplished through Public Works improvements.

Income Diversity Strategy	Action	Funding	Lead	Timing	Update
Create and retain affordable housing	• Update the Adams County Housing Study and seek to increase diversity of housing; consider both lower- and upper-income residents as important segments of the Commercial City community • Establish a set-aside standard and dedicate a specific percentage of new housing to households earning less than the Area Median Income (AMI) • Seek partnerships with regional entities focused on	City and County Comp Plan CDBG LIHTC	Commerce City Housing Authority, Adams County Housing Authority	0-10 years	The Adams County Housing Study has been updated through the housing authority.

	displacement solutions for TOD areas. • Advocate for an allocation of 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) to provide the needed capital for a development targeted to households earning 30 – 60% of the AMI • Establish a partnership with an experienced tax credit developer to work collaboratively to raise the interest from CHFA in a site with direct access to transit that preserves diversity				
Support anti-displacement initiatives	• Increase workforce development programs in the area • Support and funding of small neighborhood businesses • Programs to help renters become homeowners • Increase educational and medical opportunities • Programs to combat gentrification	TIF Assessment District Non-Contig. Metro Dist. Private Developers	South Adams County Water and Sanitation District, C3	0–10 yrs 10–20 yrs 10–20 yrs 10–20 yrs	Commerce City owns and operates the Commerce City Small Business Resource Center (CCSBRC) to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs in the community. Partner organizations such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and Adelante Community Development provide bi-lingual workshops, trainings and one-on-one counseling to help address some of the most important challenges when starting or growing a business. These organizations all share a commitment and passion for serving small business owners. Commerce City's small businesses needing financial assistance can apply for a business loan through Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF).



ULI Colorado Leadership in Responsible Land Use

ULI Colorado is the 1,400-member District Council of the global Urban Land Institute. ULI Colorado consists of a four-person staff, 25-member executive committee, and 15 committees with more than 250 volunteers. More than 40 programs a year include advisory panels, leadership and mentoring programs, panels, project tours, publications, and community service. ULI is a non-lobbying educational and research institute supported by its members, sponsors, and foundations. Key issues include affordable housing, healthy communities, transit-oriented development, and sustainable design and planning.

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