



# Denver, CO: Denver Livability Partnership

## Green, Profitable, *and* Inclusive Development

In a 2004 referendum, the citizens of Denver, CO, voted a resounding “yea” to [FasTracks](#), a transit improvement plan that will add 60 new stations to Denver’s existing light rail network. The plan will begin with the West Rail Line, a light rail line that traverses two counties in the Denver metropolitan area. The Denver Livability Project is working to create opportunities for 5,000 households to reduce vehicle mileage and increase their usage of public transportation, biking and walking. Denver is a national leader in urban sustainability that stands to only get greener with the light rail expansion.

However, local leaders recognized this was an opportunity to do more. The West Rail Line will pass through some of Denver’s highest need neighborhoods. Home to the region’s lowest median household incomes and largest recent immigrant populations, the west side requires an economic engine that will ensure all Denver residents enjoy its prosperity. The West Rail Line is poised to serve this role, moving the west side’s people *and* economy. With assistance from a HUD Community Challenge grant, the City and County of Denver are planning to ensure the West Corridor can capture the added value the transit line will inject into the west side.

With the rail line scheduled to open in 2013, the City and County of Denver developed the Denver Livability Partnership, an ambitious, six-part initiative to ready the West Corridor for transit-oriented redevelopment. This includes planning and zoning efforts being undertaken that would enable the creation of 55 acres of new infill development. Three other initiatives are showcased below, illuminating Denver’s commitment to sustainable, inclusive development.

### *Housing Development Assistance Fund*

Housing is a unique predicament on Denver’s west side. There is a high demand for housing along the new transit line, especially from lower income populations. By 2050, at least 52 percent of household demand for transit-oriented development will come from families that earn less than 80 percent of the median area income. Despite this rising demand, local developers insist that the average home price on the west side is much too low to warrant the new construction necessary to accommodate the area’s growing need.

The Denver Livability Partnership is set to bridge this gap with its Housing Development Assistance Fund, the nation’s first affordable housing land acquisition fund centered on transit corridors. The monies will operate as a sub-grant program, paying for land banking and other pre-development activities on a variety of projects.

## Description

The Denver Livability Partnership, a project of the City and County of Denver, will provide a series of complementary community planning activities for the 2013 opening of the West Corridor light rail line. Denver will leverage partnerships and opportunities along the West Corridor to transform Denver’s west side into livable, transit-oriented neighborhoods.

## Grants

- 2010 HUD Community Challenge grant: \$1,797,500
- 2010 DOT Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Planning grant: \$1,155,872

## Partner Commitments

- Enterprise Community Partners: \$5 million
- Denver Public Works: \$2 million
- Denver Community Planning and Development: \$597,767
- Urban Land Conservancy: \$100,000
- Denver Housing Authority: \$100,000
- Denver Public Health: \$9,000
- Regional Transportation District: \$4,460

## Partners

LiveWell Westwood, Urban Land Institute, Transit Alliance, Urban Land Institute, Mile High Business Alliance, University of Colorado—Denver, and others.

## Benefits

- Increases the supply of affordable housing proximate to transit on the west side.
- Reaches 2,000 plan stakeholders representing west side neighborhoods and interests.
- Establishes plans for the preservation, creation, or improvement of 5 acres of parks within ½ mile of transit.

### For more information:

<http://www.denvergov.org/dlp>  
[www.hud.gov/sustainability](http://www.hud.gov/sustainability)



# HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

## *Cultivating Vital, High Opportunity Places*

With the goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing proximate to transit on the west side from 1,400 units to 3,000 units by 2013, the Housing Development Assistance Fund will be well on its way to solving West Corridor's housing dilemma in time for the opening of the new transit line.

### *Decatur-Federal Station Area Planning*

Denver's Sun Valley neighborhood, a west side enclave of recent African, Asian, and Latino immigrants, resembles many urban, American poverty pockets. Home to a concentration of the region's public housing, the average home sale price in Sun Valley is \$130,000, less than half of the city's average; 78 percent of Sun Valley's children live in poverty. Most adults, 56 percent, have not completed high school.

Sun Valley citizens are engaged and active. Thus, the Denver Livability Partnership is working closely with the people of Sun Valley to plan for their local light rail stop, Decatur-Federal Station. Recognizing the potential of transit to attract new residents, employers, and businesses, this local effort will author a community vision that ensures Sun Valley can harness the fiscal potential of the light rail stop, revitalizing the neighborhood and benefitting residents old and new.

In February 2012, a "listening session" was held in Sun Valley to understand the community's needs and aspirations. Residents used graphics to choose their optimal housing types, jobs, and community spaces. Subsequent meetings will teach planning concepts, discuss drafts, and share the final plan. Moving forward, the plan will guide the redevelopment of Sun Valley.

### *Denver City Kitchen*

Known for its eclectic culinary offerings, Denver's gourmet food scene may belie the health crisis in the city's "food deserts." Without access to healthy foods and vegetables,



neighborhoods in the West Corridor struggle with childhood obesity and chronic heart disease. Recognizing this and the region's high poverty rates, public health became a major concern of the Denver Livability Partnership.

With assistance from the HUD Community Challenge grant, Denver is taking steps to make sure all can enjoy its bounty through the Denver City Kitchen. This project aims to identify ways to improve healthy food access for 3,000 west side residents. Just kicking off, the City Kitchen program will begin with local outreach meetings to determine residents' food needs. Interpreters will be on hand to help with Denver's immigrant communities. Once a consensus is reached, the city will develop a food hub plan that responds to both residents' concerns and the city's enthusiasm for locally grown food. Potential outcomes include community gardens and urban farms, nutrition education programs, food processing and distribution centers, and even health screenings.

The Denver team expects the City Kitchen to be complete in fall 2012. It is truly a collaborative effort; everyone from a local catering company, to the City of Lakewood, to the mayor's office has offered to be involved. Soon, Denver will be known not just for its gourmands, but also for its west side healthy food hub.

## *REGIONAL EQUITY WORK: THE DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS*

Recipient of a \$4,500,000 Regional grant, the Denver Regional Council of Governments is poised to make change throughout the Denver region, including the city's west side. Capitalizing on the FasTracks transit expansion and their *Metro Vision 2035* plan, DRCOG and its partners will develop a Regional Equity Atlas that takes stock of economic, education, mobility, and health disparities in the Denver area. The data will then aid decision-making at the state and local levels. Their grant will also support a series of catalytic projects, including redevelopment plans for the Jody Apartments, a West Corridor apartment complex envisioned as an amenity-rich neighborhood. This regional work will nicely complement the West Corridor project occurring under Denver's Community Challenge Grant.

