

UPDATE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

The information in this update is based on the following Housing and Transportation positions:

- ✓ [LWV Jefferson County Program and History](#), page 24 and
- ✓ [LWVCO Program for Study and Action](#) page 23.

LWV Jeffco has long been interested in quality affordable housing and a transportation plan that increases accessibility and affordability to a large number of residents.

The scope of this update includes: what is currently in place for affordable housing; future needs for affordable housing; and what Jefferson County municipalities plan for transit oriented housing development.

DEFINITIONS

Affordable Housing- Residential housing that meets applicable construction and building codes and is priced to provide ownership or rental opportunities to households with annual incomes that do not exceed from 30-60% of the reported annual median income for the Denver metropolitan area. The income limit is based upon the requirements of the funding program, such as Section 8 or Tax Credit Financing; within the program limits, subsidies decrease as income rises.

Transit Oriented Development(TOD)- Moderate to higher density development, located within an easy walk (.5 mi.) of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment and shopping opportunities designed for pedestrians without excluding the auto.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

The following chart gives an estimate of what affordable housing is available in various municipalities in Jefferson County and the source of their funding.

Location	Habitat / Private Non-profit	Section 8 Vouchers	Tax Credit	Housing Authority Owned	Senior Housing*
Arvada	9 duplexes	419	1299	533	546
Edgewater	8	47			
Golden		180	105	68	
Unincorporated Jeffco	27	385	47	79	143
Lakewood	46	1849	1154	621	192
Westminster		41	55		134
Wheat Ridge		422	88	264	120

* Senior housing may be included in other categories as well.

There are others available, but they are difficult to document because they are privately owned and may or may not fit in any of the above categories. In addition, some families may have applied in several categories simultaneously.

NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In all categories, demand far exceeds supply. In some cases there are waiting lists years long. According to 2009 statistics, a total of 3,742 families were on the waiting list in Jefferson County for Section 8 housing, including West Metro Housing Solutions, Jeffco Housing Authority, and Arvada Housing Authority. Waiting lists for affordable senior housing are also lengthy.

PROGRAMS AND CHANGES IN FEDERAL FUNDING

The federal government has changed its method of funding. The programs currently in use for affordable/workforce housing are: 1) tax credit financing status for use by public or private housing developers, 2) "Home" funds to counties for housing assistance to a variety of programs, and 3) Section 8 Housing Vouchers tied to specific multiple-unit buildings or granted to housing authorities to be passed through to income-qualified households for finding their own units on the open market 4) tax credits financing and 5) special grants. Many of the older programs have been discontinued, for example, Public Housing or the HUD 202 program for senior facilities, but facilities built under the latter program by non-profit entities may still be in use. The most noticeable change seems to be a move away from the focus on public and non-profit agencies to a greater focus on the private sector.

Each municipality has its own plan for affordable housing, and the units may or may not be accessible to existing or future public transit.



LAKWOOD

The city of Lakewood recognizes the influence of light rail transit stations upon potential future development and encourages community-supportive development in TOD areas. In preparation it adopted station area plans for six of its seven West Corridor light rail stations. At its four major stations Lakewood adopted Transit Mixed Use (TMU) zoning for areas within one-quarter to one-half mile of the station. Properties zoned TMU have more developmental choices than in the traditionally zoned districts.

The Lakewood Comprehensive Plan has policies in place that support the development of a range of housing opportunities at TOD sites, including affordable housing. While not requiring specific percentages or number of units of affordable housing per project, Lakewood supports affordable housing by 1) encouraging plan goals and objectives that provide it, 2) providing the increased flexibility found in its station area plans and TMU zoning for density limits, land uses, and development standards, 3) reducing the uncertainty inherent in rezoning, thereby potentially reducing the developer's total costs.

The City of Lakewood works closely with the Metro West Housing Solutions, and other entities along the light rail line as partners in the West Corridor Working Group to coordinate mutual objectives of providing a range of housing choices along the Corridor. More specifics about Lakewood are provided at the end of this document.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

The Jefferson County Comprehensive Master Plan and the recently adopted South Plains Area Plan both emphasize transportation and its integration with jobs and housing. Both plans include a number of relevant goals, such as: The Vision of Jefferson County as "A collection of healthy, energy efficient communities with a range of housing types for all income levels, which address the needs of those who work and live here and provide opportunities for those with special needs."

The Affordable/Workforce Housing section has objectives including "Encourage a diversity of housing types and locations throughout the county to meet the housing needs of the people who work and live in our communities," and "Maintain and ensure an adequate and diverse supply of affordable housing in the county." Implementation measures include, "Identify the location of potential affordable workforce housing sites in each subarea plan and create guidelines for those locations with specific affordable workforce housing policies/actions,"; and "support and encourage non-profit organizations and developers to increase affordable housing supply." For senior housing, "...Promote senior housing near transit and support services," and "Work with RTD to provide routes near services for aging populations."

Although FasTrack transit lines pass through the county, unincorporated Jefferson County will not be blessed with any of the new transit stations. However, it does have land not far from the Gold Line's Ward Road Station. The County is applying for a housing grant for affordable housing units in that area.

The Jefferson County Housing Authority is the principle provider of the County's affordable housing stock, and, as such it received a small but important amount of direct funding from the County. This has ceased, because of severe budgetary needs for other County services. In addition, federal grants that can be used for housing have been cut back in recent years. The county can direct both Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Home grants to non-governmental agencies as well as to the housing authority. In recent years the County has awarded CDBG and Home Grants to Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Family Tree, Habitat for Humanity's Denver Humanity, and Habitat for Humanity's Blue Spruce for providing house for people with special needs.

JEFFERSON COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

For its housing units the Jefferson County Housing Authority (JCHA) chooses sites close to public transportation whenever possible. In every case it researches and considers all possible funding sources and all acquisition or development possibilities in order to acquire or build the maximum number of safe, high quality, efficient-to-maintain, well-located affordable units that it can offer to people of low or moderate income (current parlance is "limited income"). The JCHA's waiting lists indicate that the demand always exceeds supply.

Affordable Housing was in the past financed in part by grants from Jefferson County. In recent years the county has greatly diminished its contribution.

Arvada

Arvada plans to develop housing close to the proposed Gold Line and will continue to collaborate with developers and RTD as the Gold Line proceeds. The Olde Town station area has been designated as a pilot project for TOD based on the extensive preparation work done by the city including multi-use plans and flexible zoning. It is a high priority for the city and the area commands a healthy infill market.

Currently, Arvada has an estimated 1,540 limited income units and 508 Section 8 housing choice vouchers for very low income households. There are no public housing units or shelters. Their goal is to have multi-family units throughout the community, especially along existing transit lines. As of 2000 18% of affordable units consist of households with a person 62 yrs. or older and 16% of those renting were more than 62 yrs.

Golden

Golden has several affordable housing developments which are accessible to the West Corridor Jeffco Government Center station. There are also plans for circulator bus service to the station as well as existing RTD bus service. A successful instance of providing transportation along with housing is Lewis Court Apartments in Golden, now under construction, planned and designed by Jeffco Housing Authority in cooperation with RTD and the City of Golden. This building for seniors is placed so that the rear entrance opens to a choice of transportation possibilities, including an RTD bus stop at the sidewalk, auto access, and a pedestrian path. In the future the bus line will probably include a stop at the Jefferson County Government Center light rail station. From there passengers will have access to St. Anthony hospital, and other medical facilities, the Federal Center, stations along the Colfax corridor, downtown Denver, the Southwest and Southeast light rail lines, and later on the East Corridor Commuter Rail to Denver International Airport (DIA) and the Gold Line.

WHEAT RIDGE

Wheat Ridge does view TOD as an excellent opportunity for meeting its developmental goals and encouraging dense development near its only transit station. Wheat Ridge adopted a TOD Master Plan, Mixed Use-Transit (MU-TOD) zoning, and an Urban renewal Plan for the area surrounding the station at 50th and Ward Rd. The city believes these plans and future transit accessibility give the Ward Road Station area a strategic marketing advantage for added redevelopment potential over the next 5-10 yrs. Taken together these tools encourage new development via streamlined administrative approval processes and the ability to utilize innovative finance tools. An EPA Smart Growth Grant will provide the city with additional ideas and strategies for funding and building necessary public infrastructure.

The city also likes to tout the fact that the entire city is well served by existing bus service on all of its existing north-south and east-west transportation corridors. Developers, tenants, and buyers increasingly look to corridors with multi-modal transportation options.

The Wheat Ridge Housing Authority will continue to identify opportunities to acquire and rehabilitate properties to create low and moderate income home-buying opportunities. The housing authority does not retain ownership of any properties and JCHA handles its Section 8 vouchers

TRANSIT IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

In 2005 the Regional Transportation District (RTD) proposed a plan named FasTracks, along with its dedicated tax, to provide rapid rail transportation throughout the region. The proposal was adopted by Denver Metro Area voters. It will add 119 miles of new light rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit lines to the existing 36 miles of light rail already completed by RTD.

The West Corridor light rail line is the first line to begin construction under the FasTracks regional transportation plan. It stretches from lower downtown Denver, along the 13th Avenue corridor through Lakewood, dipping south to the Federal Center and continuing west to the Jefferson County Administration Building in Golden. It is due to go into service in May, 2013. The Gold Line, from lower downtown Denver to 50th and Ward Road and serving Denver, Wheat Ridge, and Arvada, is the next to be built, along with the line to Denver International Airport, both currently in the planning or design-build stage. (see maps included)

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

Development at and around the system's transit stations (TOD) is an exciting element of the FasTracks program. It "can leverage market momentum for new investment and community building. A focus on TOD will support growth near new transit stations, enhance access to opportunity, preserve and enhance the supply of a range of housing choices, reduce the combined costs of housing and transportation, and support walking and biking to stations." ¹

RTD points out that, in addition, TOD can be used to reduce sprawl, protect existing neighborhoods, reduce commute times and traffic congestion, improve environmental quality and open space preservation, and discourage automobile dependency.

ROLE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT (RTD) IN TOD

RTD, the Denver region's public transit agency, plays an important role in the implementation of Transit Oriented Development (TOD). RTD's TOD mission is to help facilitate TOD opportunities that increase ridership or enhance transit investments throughout the District through station design, close coordination with, and assistance to, local jurisdictions and developers.

ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES OR COUNTIES IN TOD

Local jurisdictions encourage and may zone for increased density and mixed uses near transit stations to achieve the above goals, as well as to assure that future development or redevelopment meet community values and strengthen both local businesses and the tax base.

ROLE OF HOUSING AUTHORITIES

In TOD locations local housing authorities can provide opportunities for healthy, affordable, decent and safe residential environments with easy access to transportation for people of the local community whose low or moderate income frequently limits their access to good housing and adequate transportation.

PLANNING FOR RAPID TRANSIT LINES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

RTD started developing plans for a metro-wide transit system long before presenting its proposal to the voters. After FasTracks won approval for its plan and accompanying tax, RTD drew up detailed designs for each line to meet with the approval of all municipal and federal stakeholders. Shortly after the adoption of the resulting Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the West Corridor the price of construction materials went through the roof, leaving RTD to negotiate modifications to reduce overall costs to match its available funds, euphemistically termed "Value Engineering."

During the planning stages and later in making decisions on cuts RTD negotiated with, and received approval from, municipal entities. Many public presentations and forums included broader segments of the public who were given information but neighborhood suggestions mostly fell by the wayside or were negated, during "Value Engineering."

At the same time that RTD was developing plans, the affected municipal entities prepared their own plans, with dual tasks: 1) to involve their communities in devising goals and plans beneficial to the neighborhoods and to the community as a whole, and 2) to ensure that RTD's transit design would be as compatible as possible with these goals.

For the Gold Line the Environmental Impact Statement has been completed and the line is now in the design-build part of the process. The West Line, being the first to finish all parts of the planning and design phase, and having received all required Federal approvals, is under construction.

Electric, gas, water, sanitation, telephone and cable lines were removed and reconstructed to make way for the transit corridor. Streets were periodically closed to allow multiple and complex jobs to move forward. Some streets were closed permanently for better transit efficiency and safety.

At this point RTD turned the construction of the West Corridor over to its contractor, Denver Transit Construction Group (DTCG) to handle construction, retain sub-contractors as needed, and handle relations with the public.. The light rail line itself is now complete on much of the line, with construction continuing on the rest. Installation of electrical wiring to power the trains is under way. Stations are still to be completed.

THE WEST COLFAX WORKING GROUP: HOW A MUNICIPALITY CAN FIND SUCCESS IN IMPLEMENTING TOD

"Five public partners in the West Corridor – the Cities of Denver and Lakewood, the Denver Housing Authority and Metro West Housing Solutions and the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) recognized the opportunity and potential for TOD and the necessity of a corridor-wide partnership.

"West Corridor Working Group (WCWG) coalesced around the objective to create a TOD implementation strategy for the corridor. These public agencies will be the leading public-sector agencies to initiate TOD activities in the corridor. By laying the foundation now through activities such as 1) adopting appropriate policies and 2) investing in high value catalytic projects, the WCWG can ensure that over time and as the market matures, the overall value of new private investment will ultimately surpass the public investment.

"*Connecting the West Corridor Communities* report, funded by the West Corridor Working Group, provides a comprehensive summary of relevant information for TOD and strategies for successful implementation in the West Corridor. The Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD) examined the fourteen station area plans as well as demographic, economic and real estate conditions at each station and throughout the West Corridor. Based on these conditions, the station areas were organized into three types of categories for implementation as transformational, intensification or infill stations. CTOD provides recommendations to the WCWG for moving from vision in the station area plans to reality in the corridor."²

RECOMMENDATIONS

CTOD recommended that the municipalities prepare for TOD by adopting plans that would facilitate the kind of development the locality wished to encourage. Additional recommendations were individualized for each station. CTOD states: "The implementation process differs depending on the condition of the real estate market in a particular location. In a cooler market, it is especially important that the WCWG continue to exhibit leadership by promoting public-sector support for infrastructure and amenities. In hotter market locations, there will be less need for the public sector to intervene initially, but it can assist with the financing of infrastructure and amenities that make a location attractive to TOD."²

AN EXAMPLE OF PLANNING FOR TOD AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD

Lakewood has been at the forefront of planning with an emphasis on accessibility to the new West Corridor Light Rail line. They have participated in a consortium of groups to develop a comprehensive plan as the light rail nears completion. The following is a summary of that process, starting with what CTOD has to say upon completion of its analysis of the West Corridor.

"... implementing TOD along the West Corridor will not be a quick or simple process. The overall economic conditions in the country are vastly impacting the pace and magnitude of private sector development activity everywhere. This macro-level challenge, combined with some micro-market conditions along the West Corridor, where residential home values are relatively low and the potential value increases related to transit have not yet been realized, indicates that in the near term, most implementation activity in the West Corridor will fall to public agencies."² (However, one does have to recognize that the West Corridor has rich and wonderful amenities, such as the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design, as well as connections to major employment, education and entertainment destinations.)

The City of Lakewood (the city) had a double-barreled challenge. First, it needed to provide a solid foundation for future development of the areas around Lakewood's transit stations: Sheridan, Lamar, Wadsworth, Garrison, Oak, and Federal Center. Second, it had to encourage development that would mesh with its high-priority goals of redeveloping Colfax Ave. and the Federal Center Station area. The answer: a series of viable plans for future development plus cooperative, informative city staff to help potential developers to build or renovate projects that align with the community's goals.

The City used a forward-looking method for making the plans. The City of Lakewood gave a decision-making role in the design process for planning the future of the West Corridor to interested citizens. Instead of the experts devising the plans and asking for a response from the community, the City used an inclusive approach. It set up series of "Taking Part" workshops where planning staff provided expertise and support, and citizens cooperatively devised plans for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council. The final plans adopted by Council were changed very little from those offered by the citizen groups.

This series of plans integrates the well-being of the neighborhoods, the transit line, and the West Colfax Corridor community and provides a solid framework for future development near the transit stations and along Colfax. The plans are "owned" by the community. They include:

- West Colfax Avenue Action Plan (2006)
- Designation of West Colfax Avenue Corridor Reinvestment Area (2007)⁵
- Sheridan, Wadsworth, Oak and Federal Center Station Area Plans (2007)
- Transit Mixed Use Zoning for the above station areas (2007)
- Colfax Mixed Use Zoning (2009)
- Garrison and Lamar Station Area Plans (2010)
- Master Infrastructure Plans for the Wadsworth Boulevard and Oak Street station areas
- Federal Center/Union Boulevard Corridor Connectivity Plan
- Lamar Art District Plan (in process)
- Union Corridor Urban Design Plan

Building upon these plans the City later added a *Colfax Mixed Use Zone District Development Manual* and *Connecting the West Corridor Communities: An Implementation Strategy for TOD along the Denver Region's West Corridor*.

In April 2010, the City of Lakewood was presented with the Gold Award for Planning with Vision from the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). The highest award in this category recognized Lakewood's extensive efforts to integrate land use and transportation planning along the West Corridor, including station area planning and development and implementation of the Transit and Colfax Mixed Use zone districts.⁴

METRO WEST HOUSING SOLUTIONS' LAMAR STATION HOUSING is a proposal for investing in a high catalytic project. The CTOT placed the Wadsworth ct and the Federal Center stations in the "Transformational" category, recognizing that, having sufficient development opportunities to transform into something different and more significant than current uses and densities, are most likely to attract private development and therefore have the best development potential among Lakewood stations.

The Lamar station, however, is much less attractive to developers. Because it does have redevelopment potential, although more challenging than the "transitional" station areas, it is in the "intensification" station category. For such areas the CTOD report recommended that the City continue to support infrastructure improvements and the formation of an arts district, and that the public sector acts as a catalyst for getting development started. It also suggested an arts district.

That's exactly what the Lakewood Housing Authority, now called **Metro West Housing Solutions (MWHS)**, is proposing. Using its own financial resources to purchase 5.34 acres across the street from the light rail station, it won a grant to help clean up the underutilized, environmentally-contaminated site.

MWHS proposes to build 176 units of new affordable housing (75%) and market-rate housing (25%) apartment units. The project will be built to LEED-certified, Platinum level standards for sustainability. The attractively laid-out development, called Lamar Station, will have more than 2 acres of public open space, recreation, and community gathering space and will include playfields, natural open space, walking trails, a plaza, and a playground. More than 3,000 square feet of indoor spaces are planned for education, entertainment, and socializing. MWHS will construct a pedestrian/ bicyclist bridge over Dry Gulch and install more than 1,500 linear feet of new sidewalk to connect the apartment community and the Two Creeks neighborhood to the public spaces and light rail station.

In response to MWHS's request the City of Lakewood recently rezoned Lamar Station's 5.34 acres of property at 6150 West 13th Avenue to Planned Development (PD). The approved plan allows for 176 residential units, and a limited number of accessory uses, such as art galleries and studios; dance studios; general retail; personal services; and restaurants.

"Lamar Station," the proposed development, which goes by the same name as the transit station, will be submitted for a Federal Housing grant next spring. MWHS would like to see the project completed soon, to increase the community's equitable, affordable housing and a wider choice of transportation options, and to provide a flagship development that will attract additional high quality development and redevelopment to the station area and to the entire neighborhood.

AN IMPROVING FUTURE

Already the activity at Lamar Station and the City's support have boosted interest in the area.

- 1) The West Colfax Business Improvement District (BID) was accepted by businesses and owners with a positive vote of 77% on Nov. 1, 2011. The BID will help current businesses and spur the revitalization of West Colfax, a long time city priority.
- 2) This Organizing Committee, together with the City, community members, and myriad interested artists have started the "40 West Arts District" that connects Lamar Station and the Two Creeks Neighborhood to West Colfax Avenue and to the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design (RMCAD).
- 3) The Two Creeks Neighborhood received a grant to build a trail around the neighborhood that will connect to the walkway through the "Lamar Station" land, to the transit station, to RMCAD, to all the current and future businesses near Colfax, and to art galleries and studios to come.

SOURCES

All sources will be published on the League website at www.lwvjeffco.org and made available at the January Unit Meeting.

LWV Jeffco Housing Committee members: Marjory Beal, Janet Carlson, Carol Karlin, May Williams, and Fran Yehle