

Bellevue Corridor Plan

COMMENTS

Don Bruns

Station #2: EXISTING CORRIDOR CONDITIONS

Under BACKGROUND

“As a first step in the planning process, existing corridor conditions were evaluated to:

- **Establish a baseline inventory of current conditions;**
- **Identify key issues and opportunities to be addressed;**
- **Serve as a foundation for discussions with property owners, businesses, residents, City officials, and other key stakeholders in the area; and**
- **Inform plan recommendations.”**

The section title is incomplete and misleading because its content also deals with planned future conditions. The quoted statement also appears to be incomplete. Conspicuously missing from the displays and handouts presented at the open house were objective descriptions of existing community character and resource character conditions. Both for “Character + Identity” itself and as it pertains to “Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Resources—Parks + Trails.” Detailed comments follow.

Under LAND USE + DEVELOPMENT

Under “Development Pattern”: **“The retail trade area around the corridor is largely built-out and there is limited potential for additional households to drive additional retail demand.”**

Under “CURRENT ZONING”: **“Demand for retail is expected to grow over the next ten years. New demand will increase the amount of retail space supportable in the area by approximately 209,000 square feet by 2027. There is likely current and future demand for neighborhood-oriented convenience retail, small or special food stores, furniture or home furnishing stores, sports and recreation stores, and local/neighborhood restaurants and bars.”**

These two statements reflect two differing perspectives that are conflicted. Accompanying rationale is needed for readers to know which statement is correct.

Under LAND USE + DEVELOPMENT—EXISTING LAND USE

“Zoning. Current zoning in the eastern-half of the corridor doesn’t match with the current market or more recent development trends, requiring rezoning for redevelopment to occur. The political and timing risks make rezoning unattractive to the development industry.”

Although this effort is called a corridor plan, text quoted above suggests it is instead a development plan. Is it possible for the Community Development Department to consider “Land Use” without tying it to “Development” as if this is the only kind of land use that matters? Although development *is* what this department does, how citizens be expected to regard the raft as an objectively balanced corridor plan if development and redevelopment is being regarded as *the* forgone conclusion? And why does the draft not yet address sustainable community character and resource stewardship considerations?

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More specifically, should the draft not acknowledge, or at least consider, that that the reason why current zoning in the eastern half of the corridor doesn't match current market or development trends may well be that it facilitated maintenance of existing, desired community character conditions? Could this observer be blamed for surmising that the draft's authors appear to have been compelled to focus its content on the desires of developers?

Why does the draft suggest that the kinds of development and redevelopment that would require rezoning to occur are the city's central concern? There are numerous instances of in-character redevelopment occurring elsewhere in the city. Absent rationale for it, the draft narrative appears predecisional—that only market forces are sufficient determinants of kinds of redevelopment in greatest need. But where do concerns of citizens affected by what happens here enter in—if at all? Such supply and demand considerations, essential components of a fully integrated, responsive conceptual planning framework appear missing from the draft.

The last phrase in the above quoted is alarming. Why should planners functioning as public servants instead position themselves as representatives of development by considering the prospect of rezoning a political and timing risk? Because the statement suggests that authors were more concerned about rezoning getting in the way of business interests than about what further development would do to affected citizens. This begs asking, "Who is serving whom?" The draft's silence on the risks that transformative development to affected citizens is troubling, particularly because Community Development staff is well aware that citizens living nearby have expressed concerns about continued urbanization of at least of portions of the corridor.

Under LAND USE + DEVELOPMENT—CURRENT ZONING

"River Frontage. The South Platte River and Mary Carter Greenway are significant amenities for corridor residents that can be marketed to attract reinvestment along the corridor or retailers hoping to target users of the regional trail system."

This sentence appears to position public resources of the South Platte River and Mary Carter Greenway to serve business interests. It therefore appears inappropriate.

Under LAND USE + DEVELOPMENT—CURRENT ZONING

Under "Revitalization of Underutilized Sites."

"The South Platte River and Mary Carter Greenway are significant amenities for corridor residents that can be marketed to attract reinvestment along the corridor or retailers hoping to target users of the regional trail system."

The benefits of parks and open space to communities are well established. And because community residents benefit from them, so do businesses that serve those residents. The draft's acknowledgement that the park and greenway "are significant amenities for corridor residents" is on target. But the next part of the sentence suggests using public resources for the specific purpose of advancing private sector business interests.

That introduces significant imbalance to the draft. These are public not private resources. Where is the rationale that would justify the city's use of public park and open space resources to advance private sector interests? Moreover, urbanized development proximate to parks and open space has demonstrably proven to be adverse, both to their character and to the consequent generation of adverse impacts to citizens who depend on them. Positing that public resources should be marketed as private sector amenities to attract reinvestment appears wrong-headed and well outside the city's public service role.

Under PARKS, RECREATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES—PARKS + TRAILS

Neither of the two subsections in this subsection contains any objective descriptions of the character of parks and trails that will be affected by what the plan sets in motion. The map legend, for example, only outlines the broad categories of "Parks/Open Space", "Trails," "Parks/Open Space

25 mile Buffer" (left undefined). Needed is an objective description of the character qualities against which the appropriateness of the diverse kinds of developments envisioned in the draft could be assessed. Unless such content is added to the draft plan, the statement made under "Background," that "existing corridor conditions were evaluated" would remain inaccurate.

There is a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. It has been in use for more than 30 years and would admirably serve this purpose—even though South Suburban does not apply it. It should not be difficult to classify recreation settings (particularly for affected portions of the greenway and larger parks (see map in draft) using that framework to provide an objective basis for the draft's content pertaining to parks and recreation resources. This is especially important for this effort as there is a considerable range of existing setting character conditions within this relatively small area—three or more existing character classes appear likely present here.

Under CHARACTER + IDENTITY—CHARACTER AREAS

"The map legend indicates that "Character Areas" are described as "Single Family Neighborhoods," "Multi-Family Neighborhoods," and Mixed Use (Commercial, Office, Industrial)". While those categories may define uses they inadequately define character, for several reasons. This may be different from what Community Development has done but it does not have to be difficult.

First, community character transcends uses (not to be confused with "Land Use"). For example, more than one kind of use may occur within a specific character condition. Character does not necessarily have to change to accommodate different kinds of uses (e.g., buildings in which small business locates do not have to violate the character of neighborhoods in which they occur).

Secondly, this reality is especially relevant given the differing character conditions represented in the Belleview corridor. Development can and often does change the relative balance of trees and other pleasing greenery that softens rectilinear architectural lines. For example, scale, mass and extent of building structures and paved over parking areas at the area's big box stores largely replaces most green biomass. Urbanized development pushes back open space setbacks and removes treescapes, which still characterizes much of Littleton as being distinctly different from adjoining communities. Most of the affected immediate greenway corridor still is natural appearing. Lying in between those two kinds of areas are residential neighborhoods still having human scale architecture and tree-lined streets such as those immediately northwest of Columbine Square.

Until and unless the area's defining character qualities have actually been described, it would seem inaccurate to maintain that existing corridor conditions have been evaluated.

Under CHARACTER + IDENTITY—CHARACTER AREAS:

Under "ISSUES, Lack of Identity Along Corridor."

"The Belleview Avenue streetscape lacks a distinctive character or brand, and most uses east of Federal Boulevard are typical of other commercial corridors found in the region and throughout the country."

Such a statement suggests an unawareness of the actual elements that define community character. Quoted text suggests that the existing streetscape of the Columbine Square area is the same as big box stores, and that neither is any different than the large scale "cracker box" architecture adjoining Santa Fe and Oxford, for example. That is simply untrue. This can be photographically illustrated.

Following is Google Earth imagery from three different commercial corridors in Littleton:

Comments from Don Bruns

This westbound auto-urban Belleview streetscape adjoining Home Depot . . .



Is very different than the urban streetscape of Main Street . . .



And different still yet from the Broadway streetscape south of Mineral:



However, perhaps the draft's statement that "The Belleview Avenue streetscape lacks a distinctive character or brand" is to be understood from the perspective of business interests that the draft appears to represent, rather than from a more balanced planning perspective. Either way, it appears amending or qualifying the statement could add clarity.

Under CHARACTER + IDENTITY—CHARACTER AREAS:

Under “ISSUES, Single-Family Neighborhoods.”

“Residents value the distinct character of their single-family neighborhoods. Although the area has seen little, if any, pressure to date for residential ‘tear-downs,’ neighborhoods to the west in Bow Mar are seeing significant redevelopment activity. The large lot sizes and older, smaller housing stock characteristic of study area neighborhoods may make them more susceptible to redevelopment pressure in the future.”

The fact that residents value the distinctive character of their neighborhoods, coupled with increasing interest in transformative development to the east and west, suggests that the draft should make an effort to describe their character and not simply label it “single-family.”

More importantly, if the draft is to be an objectively unbiased corridor plan, it appears needful that it addresses how the city plans to those resident values affirmed by the quoted text. More specifically, the absence of any draft content addressing how community character stewardship is to be sustained appears to be a glaring omission.

Under CHARACTER + IDENTITY—CHARACTER AREAS:

Under “OPPORTUNITIES, New Unique Destinations/Gathering Places”

“As underutilized properties within the study area are revitalized, opportunity exists to build on the area’s existing assets—such as O’Toole’s Garden Center, and the South Platte River—to create additional destinations/community gathering places that benefit area residents, and help draw people from outside the area to local businesses.”

“Underutilized properties”? Missing context for that phrase indicates the draft’s verbiage is insufficiently transparent. From whose perspective are properties underutilized: citizens and current businesses that will be impacted by the draft’s *“Let’s Build More Stuff”* theme? Or the development community? The draft fails to specify and state why.

Also, what is the evidence that indicates citizen want increased area traffic? Or did authors simply assume that affected citizens would welcome drawing additional people from outside the area to local businesses? Or, for that matter, by affected existing local businesses?

More specifically, since the draft cites O’Toole’s Garden center and the South Platte River as existing assets to build on, where is the supporting documentation that either O’Toole’s itself or South Platte River visitors want more building? Not only does the draft provide no rationale for the assertion, but also it appears likely that the necessary legwork needed to address these observed deficiencies has not yet been done.

Bottom line is that the draft appears to be more a development plan than a balanced plan to ensure both a sustainable Belleview Corridor and the quality of life of residents and businesses that will be affected by it. It is unclear why the city has not yet addressed these most basic essentials of sound and responsible land use planning.

These observations are made with the hopeful intent they will be found to useful in correcting and improving the draft. Thank you!

Don Bruns
District IV

[Type text]

BELLEVUE CORRIDOR PLAN

STAFF NOTES

PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENT #3 / OPEN HOUSE #1 / STATION #5
MARCH 22, 2018

STAFF NOTES

Station 5: Corridor Enhancements

Initial Input Received at the Open House

- **Columbine Shopping Center**
 - Mixed opinions on what is most appropriate/desired for this site.
 - Some believed apartments were inappropriate. Others thought apartments or mixed-use developments were better suited for the site. Other desired uses included an arts center, long-term care facility, and retail.
 - The design and quality of public space was also reiterated with people desiring more water fountains, playgrounds, greenspace, and nice lighting.
 - Safe circulation and access to and throughout the site were also emphasized by many people.
- **Streetscape Improvements**
 - Vehicular access to and from the commercial centers along Bellevue need to be improved.
 - More crossings need to be constructed or improved along Prince Street and Federal Blvd – roads are very wide and make crossing the street very difficult for pedestrians.
 - Better trail connections to the Mary Carter Greenway for neighborhoods west of the Riverwalk Community – current multi-family homes and golf courses seen as a barrier to accessing the trail.
 - Specific sidewalk and lighting improvements have been noted on the map.
 - Improved streetscape along Bellevue – one suggestion included extending the current medians located along the western portion of Bellevue Avenue further east.

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BELLEVIEW CORRIDOR PLAN

STAFF COMMENTS

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Bellevue Corridor Planning Process

As the City of Littleton works to create a plan for the Bellevue Avenue corridor, city staff are seeking feedback from the public. Your feedback will be used to shape the draft plan.

BELLEVUE CORRIDOR PLAN COMMENTS FROM:

1) COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENT #2: February 5

2) OPENLITTLETON: Posted February 8 – February 27

All registered responses sorted chronologically



OpenLittleton is not a certified voting system or ballot box. As with any public comment process, participation in OpenLittleton is voluntary. The responses in this record are not necessarily representative of the whole population, nor do they reflect the opinions of any government agency or elected officials.

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As of April 13, 2018, 9:50 AM, this forum had:

Attendees:	198
Registered Responses:	9
All Responses:	20
Minutes of Public Comment:	60

This topic started on February 8, 2018, 11:45 AM.

This topic ended on February 27, 2018, 11:56 AM.

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