

# Merit Award – Sustainability and Environmental Planning: Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan





Capitalizing on the recently opened West Corridor public

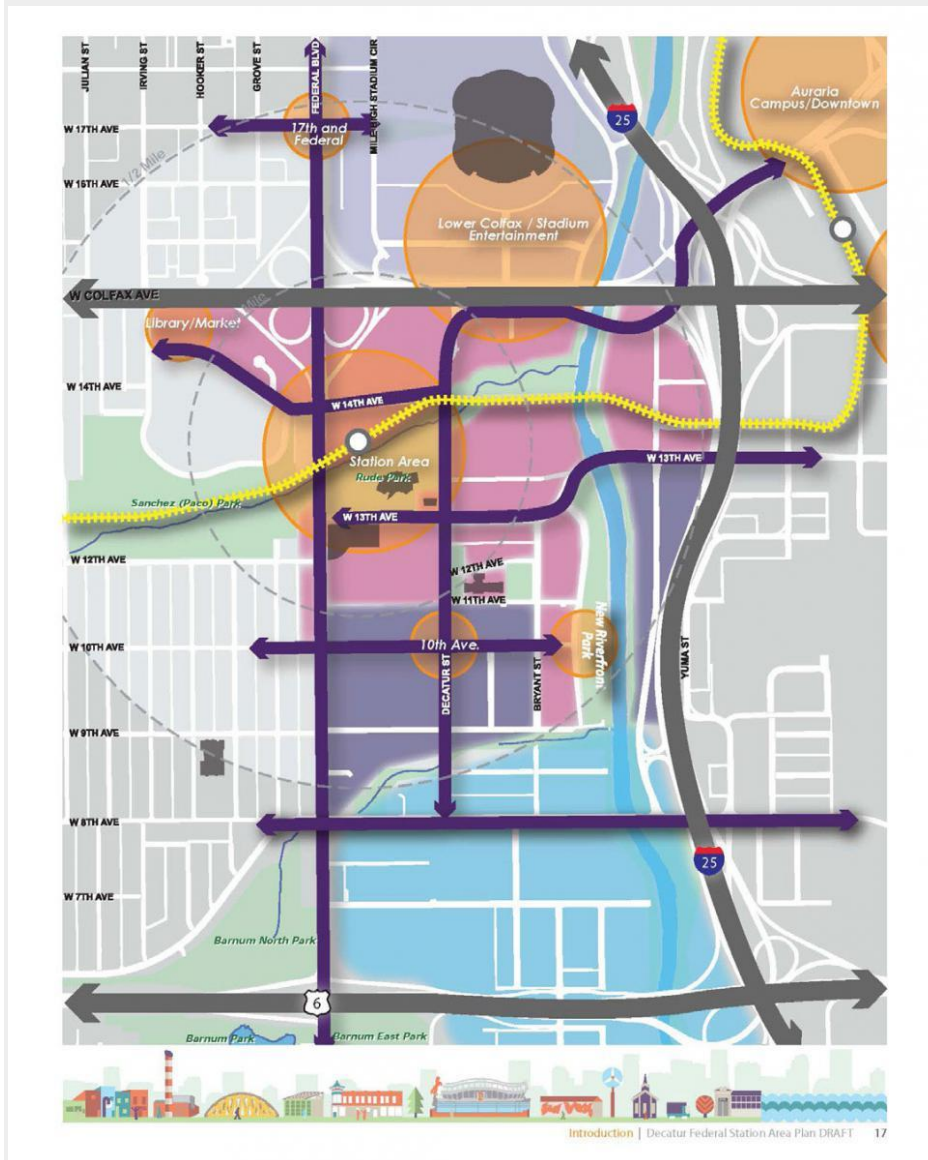
transit investment, the City of Denver's Community Planning and Development Department and the Denver Housing Authority (DHA) joined together to take advantage of an unprecedented alliance of federal agencies to transform a neighborhood with the worst performance record in the city and create a more healthy, livable community at the Decatur-Federal light rail station in the Sun Valley neighborhood. This planning activity focused on station area planning and transit-oriented development (TOD) implementation strategies for the Decatur-Federal Station, located in the poorest neighborhood in the entire state of CO with an average per capita income of \$8,000 and 84.64% of residents living below the poverty line. The project area, focused on the one-half mile radius around the station, aimed to create a celebrated, connected, innovative, and healthy Sun Valley. This neighborhood in particular must overcome numerous barriers to realize the vision of a higher density, mixed-use, mixed-income, and walkable community. The Sun Valley neighborhood has limited access points, disproportionately high crime rates and is landlocked by the professional football stadium, Sports Authority Field at Mile High, a light industrial park, a power and steam generation plant, interstate highways and the South Platte River. The neighborhood is also a landing point in Denver for many refugees and immigrants (primarily Somali, Somali Bantu and Vietnamese). Despite these challenges, Sun Valley residents and business owners share a sense of pride for this community and strong determination to help it rise up to meet its potential.



The scope of work for the Station Area Plan was specifically sculpted to overcome these unique challenges, including a substantial public outreach process specifically tailored to the unique challenges and characteristics of the community. This project involved some of the most intensive public outreach conducted by the City of Denver for a planning project to date, along with the inclusion of many activities to specifically target hard to reach and traditionally marginalized populations. Additionally, the plan effort engaged the major landowners and in the community (Mile High Stadium, Xcel Energy, Denver Health and Human Services, among others) and challenged them to reach consensus on a shared vision for the neighborhood.

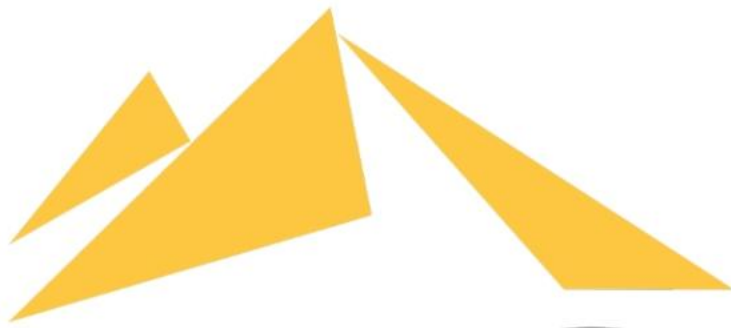
The Station Area Plan was adopted in April 2013. Building off of the successes, the City of Denver has determined that the future of this neighborhood will be one of the six focus areas for the City helping to infuse resources and investments. The City is mobilizing to assemble an implementing partnership made up of the major land owners in the neighborhood, and DHA is pursuing grant money to begin master planning their site and the future of the DHA housing within the greater Sun Valley neighborhood. Additionally, the City is just finished working on a General

Development Plan for the area which further studies and refines the concepts outlined in the Station Area Plan.



While the Sun Valley neighborhood has many barriers to overcome in order to be a successful mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhood, the planning team saw this challenge as an opportunity to build upon the assets within the community. An asset-based planning approach was applied to connect the value inherent in the light rail station, major arterial and highway corridors, a regional bike trail system, the open space amenities of Lakewood Gulch and the South Platte River, the Mile High Stadium, and a previously unrecognized thriving light industrial district. Through extensive and innovative public outreach the adopted Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan will guide future growth and change near the light rail station and in the Sun Valley neighborhood over the next 20 years. Facilitating the transformation of Sun Valley into a place that is celebrated, connected, innovative and healthy is a critical element in Denver's mission to create a world class city where everyone matters.





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