



Urban Land Institute – ULI Colorado Morrison Road Technical Advisory Panel



A Report from a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)
of ULI Colorado
November 15-16, 2018

Morrison Road Technical Advisory Panel

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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.



Overview

On November 15-16, 2018, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide guidance for enhancing the Morrison Road corridor in Denver's Westwood neighborhood.

This TAP follows the successful national ULI panel that convened in 2013 to advise Westwood on ways to improve the built environment to benefit community health. Building on the progress of the past five years, this panel provided recommendations that can be used to transform the 1.5-mile diagonal corridor into a street that knits together the neighborhood, as opposed to dividing it. Its recommendations focused on:

- Ways to activate the public realm along the Morrison Road corridor
- Street designation and design opportunities
- Zoning and overlays that could be used to implement the vision of a linear mercado
- Incentives that could be used to encourage developers to create the kinds of development desired by the community
- An action plan for how to phase the transformation of the corridor

For this two-day TAP, ULI Colorado assembled seven land use experts (see panelist bios on page 21) who volunteered to offer objective, third-party advice. The panel reviewed a detailed advance packet of prior studies, toured the site, and interviewed local stakeholders, including city staff, elected officials, longtime property and business owners, and local residents and artists (for a list of stakeholders interviewed, see page 23).

BuCu West gave the panelists the following problem statement and questions to address during the TAP.

TAP panelists discuss findings and recommendations for the Morrison Road corridor.

To see the 2013 national ULI Advisory Services Panel Report on the Westwood neighborhood, visit: http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/WestwoodPanelReport_finallo.pdf

This panel provided recommendations that can be used to transform the 1.5-mile diagonal corridor into a street that knits together the neighborhood, as opposed to dividing it.



Jose Esparza, Executive Director of BuCu West, explains details about the corridor to the TAP panelists during the tour.

The Problem Statement:

The Scope of Work for the ULI Technical Advisory Panel focuses on studying the existing zoning regulations along Morrison Road and recommending changes to help us achieve the “Linear Mercado” vision outlined in the Westwood Neighborhood Plan (2016) and Morrison Road Streetscape Implementation Plan (2017).

Our goal is to leverage the funds allocated from Denver’s 2017 General Obligation (GO) Bond to implement the Morrison Road Streetscape Plan and use it as a catalyst for economic opportunity and cultural expression. Morrison Road provides a unique challenge given the irregular parcels created by the diagonal main street that cuts across Westwood’s orthogonal street grid. The need for a zoning overlay and was highlighted in the Neighborhood plan with a goal to redevelop and create adaptive reuse of underutilized commercial and private property along Morrison Road.

BuCu West is asking for support from the ULI TAP to get to the next level of assessment and move from planning to implementation. Adopting zoning guidelines designed specifically to address Morrison Road will leverage opportunities engendered from public investment and guide redevelopment in a way that is consistent with the communities culturally driven vision for the neighborhood. The outcome will build on existing efforts and maximize benefits to community residents.

Questions for the Panelists:

1. How do we activate public/private spaces and underutilized areas?
2. What are the appropriate zoning regulations to create the right conditions for activating the corridor?
3. What opportunities can be offered to developers to encourage investment?
4. How to activate public/private spaces and underutilized areas?

About BuCu West Development Association

Started in 1987 as the Morrison Road Business Association, the organization donned the name BuCu West in 2010. Since the name change, it’s been a community development corporation. That means it can ask for larger, sometimes federal, grants and be involved in commercial real estate and business operations. BuCu West works to connect businesses, and those looking to start businesses, with resources that can get them off the ground. Before the change, the organization depended mostly on business owners’ contributions and volunteer efforts, but the community needed more resources than that.

As a community development corporation, it involves residents that bring a wide variety of skills to the table. Rather than only assisting businesses, BuCu West can search for resources to help the area in other ways.

“Morrison Road used to be a cut-through for traffic, but our vision is for it to become a main street for the neighborhood. Since we don’t have a lot of space, we’ll have to get creative on how to use weird triangular parcels.”

– Councilman Paul Lopez



Findings

Westwood is a strong and culturally vibrant community that has been making great strides. In addition to attracting GO Bond funding for the corridor and a recreation center to the neighborhood, it has gained state certification as a creative district, and local entrepreneurs and artists are transforming the auto-oriented corridor, all while the area has been addressing issues with housing, traffic, gentrification, and safety.

Through the review of the city's previous plans and studies, as well as interviews with local stakeholders, the panelists noted the following challenges and opportunities for continuing to transform the corridor.

Challenges:

- The Westwood Neighborhood Plan, adopted by Denver City Council in 2016, proposes zoning for the Morrison Road corridor that doesn't currently exist (UE-MX-5) and that is likely not right for the entire corridor based on what the community wants (more information available on page 14)
- "It's hard to be healthy here"
- Fear of change that will lead to gentrification
- Crime and perceived lack of safety
- High traffic speeds
- Lack of safe pedestrian paths and crossings
- Lack of lighting
- Lack of alleys and secondary access
- Too many curb cuts
- Lack of trees and green space
- Lack of youth activities along the corridor
- Too many auto body shops
- Developers focused on rental and not for-sale residential housing
- Rental units require expensive deposits
- Influx of outsiders who don't engage in the local community
- Many irregular and small parcels along Morrison Road

View of the Morrison Road corridor from its intersection with S. Raleigh Street.

"Traffic is uncontrollable here. Trying to cross the street is ridiculous."

– Erick Garcia, Kitchen Network

"The goal here is to increase pedestrian safety and bike crossings."

– Heather Noyes, Studio CPG and co-creator of the Morrison Road Streetscape Implementation Plan

Opportunities:

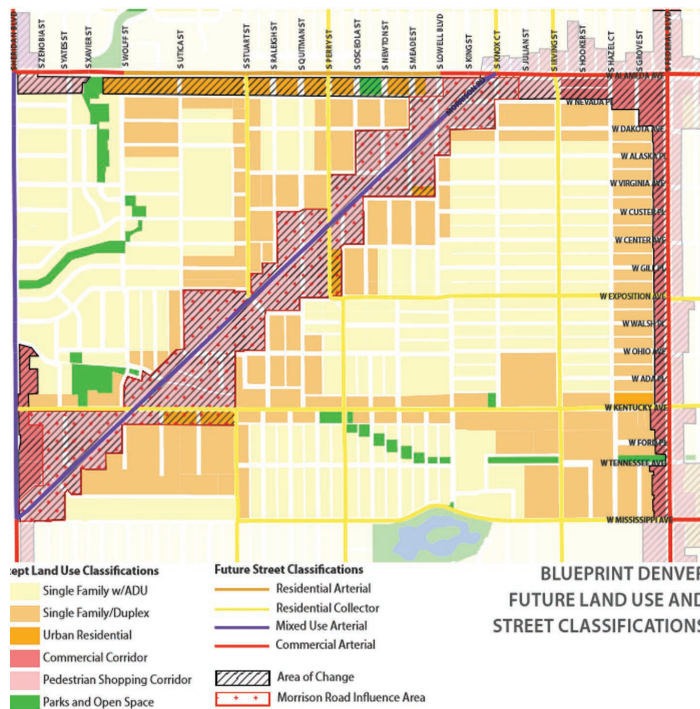
- Rich cultural identity
- Arts and cultural district has been formed and designated
- Desire to be a destination
- Resources for desired outcomes are available (like the GO Bond, Parks and Recreation initiative for Via Verde, and other partnerships & funding)
- Well-considered neighborhood and streetscape plans in place
- Local and political will to implement local plans
- Density of neighborhood organizations willing to be part of the solution
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Community energy
- Food and music scene is growing
- 3 designated areas of character and brand
- Recreation center in the works that could also be a cultural center
- Views of downtown Denver and the mountains
- Variety of parcels available
- Custom auto shops can be embraced as part of the character and culture
- Opportunity Zone at northeast end of Morrison Road and Westwood

“We need a place that creates ‘gravity’ - something that draws people here, like food and arts venues.”

– Aaron Elinoff, BuCu West board member

“Most parcels here are irregular and because of the way buildings are oriented to the street, each has its own little gathering area/plaza.”

– Charles Woolley, St. Charles Town Co.



Map of future land uses and street classifications along Morrison Road showing the irregular parcel shapes. Courtesy Blueprint Denver.

Opportunity Zones

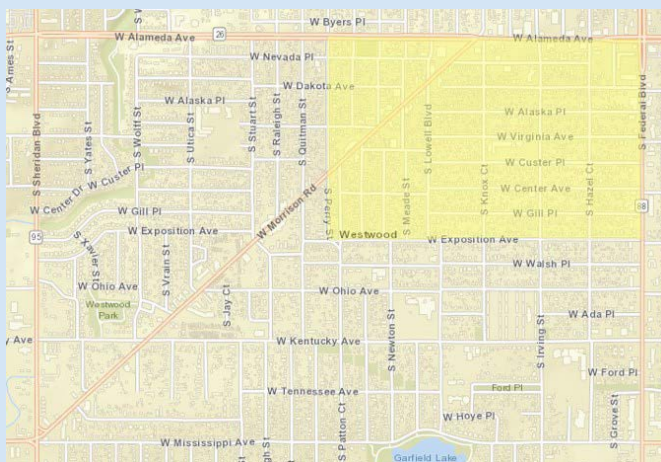
There is an Opportunity Zone in the northeast corner of Westwood.

Opportunity Zones were enacted as part of the 2017 tax reform package (Tax Cuts and Jobs Act) to address uneven economic recovery and persistent lack of growth that have left many communities across the country behind. The new program provides a federal tax incentive for investors to invest in low-income urban and rural communities through favorable treatment of reinvested capital gains and forgiveness of tax on new capital gains.

This economic and community development tax incentive program provides a new impetus for private investors to support distressed communities through private equity investments in businesses and real estate ventures. The incentive is deferral, reduction and potential elimination of certain federal capital gains taxes.

These funds can go toward investments in affordable housing, new infrastructure, startup businesses and various capital improvement projects in any of the selected 126 communities. The incentives expire in 2026.

For more information, visit choosecolorado.com/opportunity-zones.



Map of the Opportunity Zone (in yellow) in Westwood courtesy choosecolorado.com/opportunity-zones.

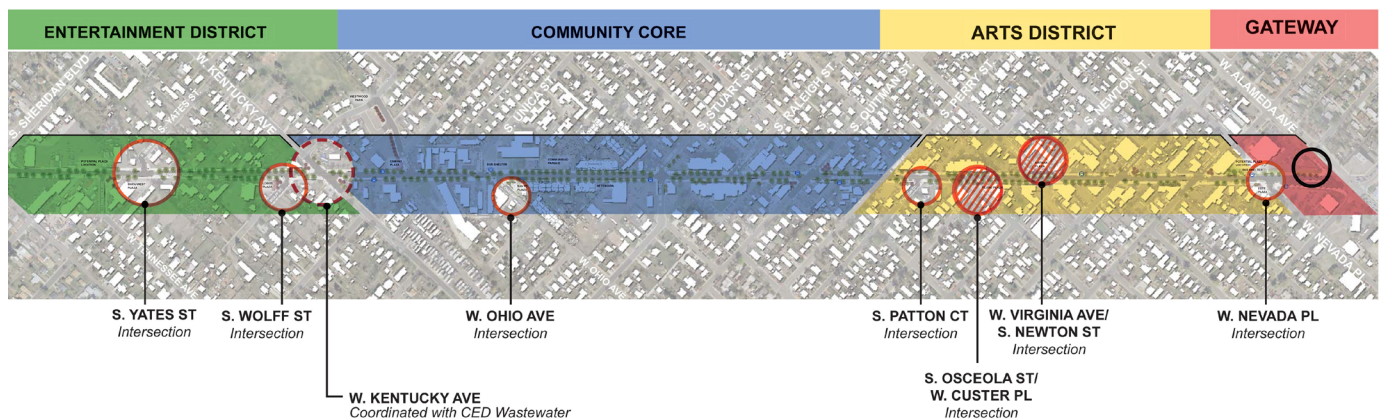


Recommendations

Morrison Road has the potential to become both a local and a regional destination, highlighting Mexican and Latin culture and knitting together the Westwood neighborhood.

Currently, \$12.24 million of the 2017 General Obligation Bond (GO Bond) funding is earmarked for Morrison Road improvements, which will include updates to the Entertainment District (Sheridan Boulevard to Kentucky Avenue), the Arts District (Perry Street to Alameda Avenue), two plazas (Newton Street and Osceola Street), and five key intersections (Nevada Plaza, Patton Court, Ohio Avenue, Wolff Street, and Yates Street).

Rendering of how Morrison Road could look in the future. Courtesy the Morrison Road Streetscape Implementation Plan from 2017.



Streetscape Implementation Plan Areas designated by BuCu West in 2017.

BuCu West and the surrounding Westwood community is at a critical juncture, with the opportunity to get ahead of these changes, leveraging the funding to implement the community's vision and plan, while preventing displacement.

This investment offers the unique opportunity to fundamentally change Morrison Road so that it begins to prioritize people over cars.

There is an urgency to act now to minimize the displacement of existing residents and businesses that may otherwise come with the incoming resources and development.

1. How do we activate public and private spaces and underutilized areas along the corridor?



"The Hole" on Douglas Ave in Downtown Wichita transformed into a temporary Pop-Up Urban Park. The park was activated with food truck vendors during the week and provided a space for community engagement. Image courtesy ictpoppark.com.

The panelists recommended that the BuCu West Development Association lead efforts to manage the public realm along Morrison Road, promoting and supporting the creative arts district and partnering with other local organizations to develop and manage plazas along the corridor.

BuCu West is well-positioned to provide this leadership, focusing on the economic, environmental, and cultural health of the corridor as a whole. To activate both public and private spaces along Morrison Road, BuCu West could continue to:

- Support and attract creatives.
- Build on efforts of the Westwood Creative District and leverage its creative district designation for additional grants and support.
- Apply for funding for affordable housing from Denver's Affordable Housing Fund.
- Encourage and support the creation of live/work/exhibit space (i.e. through down payment support, Colorado Creative Industries grants, and recruitment of art space developers and co-ops).
- Encourage local ownership for preservation of the district.

Inclusion of Public Art

From the 2017 Morrison Road Streetscape Implementation Plan:

"City and County of Denver Arts and Venues should be engaged in the next phase of the design process to ensure local involvement and to coordinate public art opportunities with street reconstruction so that the streetscape design and public art are integrated. Phase I of Morrison Road will be designed and constructed as a GO BOND project, which will require the project to include a **'1% for Public Art'** element or elements. This component should not be initiated at the conclusion of the project, but rather in tandem with design refinement to more fully engage the artist in the overall streetscape design process, and to ensure that any lighting and/or irrigation necessary to support the art installation are fully integrated with street reconstruction."

For more information about Denver's Affordable Housing Fund, visit:
www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-office-of-economic-development/housing-neighborhoods/DenversPermanentFundforHousing.html



Tactical urbanism like painting the pavement can test strategies for traffic calming and pedestrian safety. Photo by J.T. Wampler, courtesy Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette.

“We wanted to create an art studio/community center/teaching facility, but we couldn’t afford the down payment. If we were able to own the building, we could stay here and establish connections to community.”

– Tony Diego, local artist

Specific recommendations related to the activation of publicly accessible spaces along the corridor include:

- **Make the identity of the neighborhood clear to people coming through the corridor.** Encourage artists, local residents, and small businesses to get involved so that they have a say in the appearance of their neighborhood.
- **Test ideas through pop-up tactical urbanism.** Work with property owners to create pop-up plazas and public spaces that include art and retail, like market stalls. These spaces can be activated with seating and games. Painting creative pedestrian crosswalks, decorating the sidewalk, and adding planters along the street are creative ways to test ideas and see what works.
- **Improve user comfort along the corridor.** The corridor today is not comfortable or inviting for pedestrians. More trees, green space, and shade will add comfort and green infrastructure will also help with stormwater runoff. Seating, shelter, and lighting (such as string lighting in the creative district) will also help improve the pedestrian experience along the corridor.
- **Foster the arts and support the creation of artist co-ops.** Art highlights the cultures of the neighborhood and attracts people from around the region, supporting local businesses. The Westwood Creative District can build on its efforts to support and attract creatives by applying for funding for art space and creation and supporting artist ownership within the district. If artists own live/work/exhibit space, they won’t be as easily priced out of the area by increasing rents and can lower expenses by combining these needed uses into a single space. To support this kind of ownership, the district can allow a mix of live/work/exhibit uses in the overlay zoning (more on page 14). It can also financially support the creation of artist co-ops that share the expenses of developing live/work/exhibit space and living and working in the district. By staying in the creative district, artists can continue to add art and activation on Morrison Road and in its publicly accessible spaces.

Live/Work Space for Artists

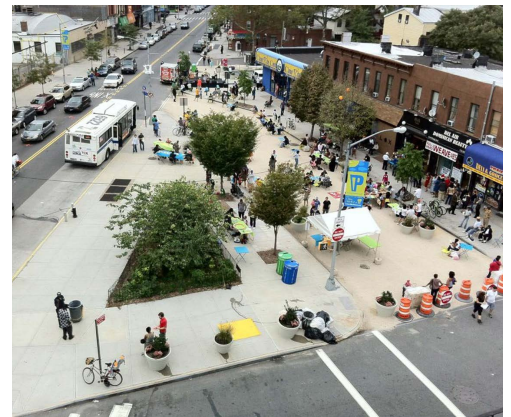
Artspace is a nonprofit developer and owner of live-work spaces for artists nationwide. To vet prospective artist-tenants, Artspace forms a local artist-selection committee to approve potential tenants based on three criteria: the applicant’s sustained commitment to their craft; their excitement about participating in the building’s community and neighborhood; and their willingness to live in a potentially lively, social environment. Artspace is currently working on projects in Loveland and 40 West Art District.

For more information, visit:
www.artspace.org.

- **Consider evolving the BuCu West maintenance district into a different type of special district.** As a maintenance district, BuCu West can use local assessments on streetscape improvements. BuCu West could evolve into a different type of special district, such as a Business Improvement District (BID) or a General Improvement District (GID), to best financially support the needs of the local community and to add amenities to the corridor.
- **BuCu West could serve as nonprofit developer early in the transition of the corridor.** Panelists recommended acquiring property in the near term before GO Bond improvements and development interest ramps up along the corridor. That property could be used for public plazas, community gathering space, or artist co-op space.
- **Create great public plazas.** Over time, pop-up plazas can transition into more permanent public plazas. Private plazas, like the Del Corazon plaza at Ohio and Morrison, can be made publicly accessible to enhance their activation. For users to feel that plazas are safe and activated in a positive way, they should have active edges (such as with retail or community uses on the ground floor instead of blank walls) and “eyes on the plaza” (people are able to see into the plaza). Buffers from street traffic, which could include vegetation, seating, lighting, active uses and programming (like with festivals, events, exercise classes, etc) all contribute to great plazas. The overlay zoning (more on this on pages 14-16) can help to reinforce activation.
- **Support a variety of inter-generational public spaces.** Public spaces along the corridor could have a variety of uses that serve different groups of people. Playgrounds, sports fields and activities for all ages could be located close to a public plaza with movable seating and a coffee stand, allowing parents and older generations to spectate. Designing for flexibility (such as movable chairs and tables and programmable space) and integrating local public art will make these spaces inviting for the community.
- **Add to the mix of neighborhood amenities.** Westwood is slated for a \$37 million recreation center, funded by the GO Bond. Before this is designed and built, neighborhood residents could advocate for inclusion of cultural, educational, artist, and community amenities. Some recreation centers allow local artists to exhibit their art with prices along hallways. Cultural education, language classes, and healthy cooking classes could also be added to the facilities. Panelists also suggested working with the Mi Casa Resource Center to add business training for artists or a small business incubator.
- **Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs) can work with local police to enhance safety in the area.** Westwood Unidos and Westwood Residents Association are two local RNOs whose boundaries include all of Westwood, including the Morrison Road corridor.



A public plaza in Mexico City uses paint, planters, movable seating, and umbrellas to enhance comfort. Photo courtesy ecpamericas.org.



Temporarily closing and painting a section of the street allowed for the creation of this pilot plaza before making it permanent. Photo courtesy NYC DOT.



Plazas could offer great spaces for arts and cultural activities. Photo courtesy BuCu West.

PROPOSED STREET RECONSTRUCTION AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS



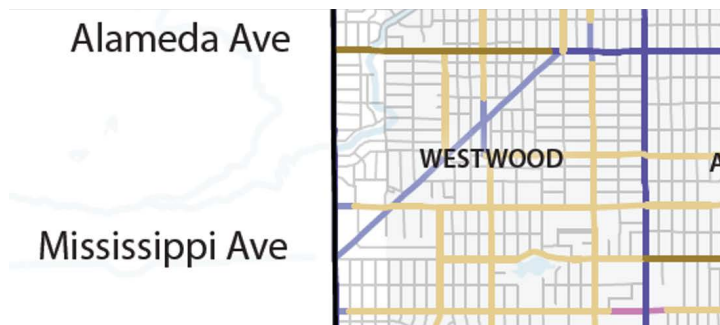
Rendering from the Morrison Road Streetscape Implementation Plan from June 2017.

EXISTING



The panelists also brainstormed specific updates to the corridor. They came up with the following recommendations for Morrison Road:

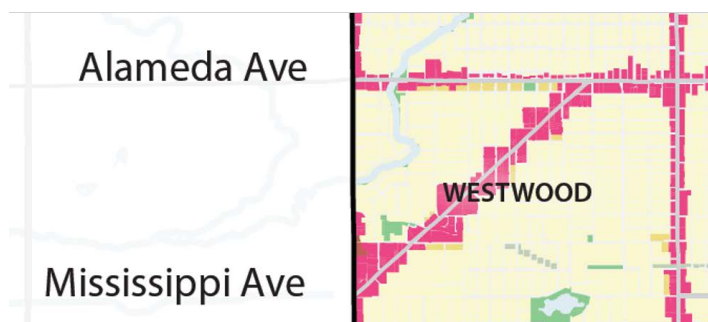
- Reclassify Morrison Road from Arterial to Main Street Collector.** The Blueprint Denver Draft Update currently includes this suggested change, but eventually the functional class will need to be changed by a city traffic engineer. Panelists recommended this change to prioritize and enhance the safety of pedestrian and bike activity along Morrison Road.



Future Street Types

Downtown	
Arterial	Collector
Main Street	
Arterial	Collector
Mixed-Use	
Arterial	Collector
Commercial	
Arterial	Collector
Industrial	
Arterial	Collector
Residential	
Arterial	Collector

Morrison Road was already reclassified as a Collector in the draft Blueprint Denver plans from January 2019.



2040 Future Places

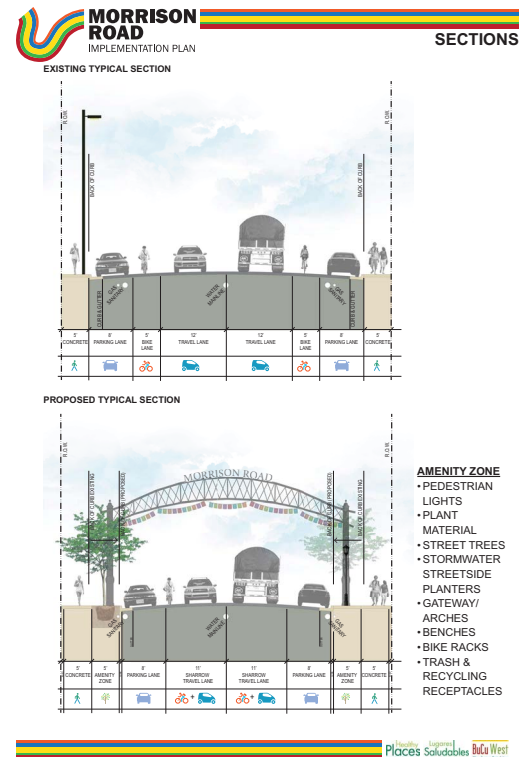
Centers	
Local Center	Community Center
Regional Center	
Corridors	
Local Corridor	Community Corridor
Residential Areas	
High	High-Medium
Low-Medium	Low

Blueprint Denver currently designates the area as a Community Corridor.

- **Change the place designation of Morrison Road from Community Corridor to Local Corridor in Blueprint Denver.**

The Blueprint Denver Draft currently designates Morrison as a Community Corridor, based on traffic driving through the corridor from and to surrounding areas. By changing the designation to a Local Corridor, local foot and bike traffic will be prioritized over regional traffic counts. Even if Morrison Road retains the Community Corridor designation, it would be on the lower end of the designation in terms of density, intensity of uses, and building stories compared to other places in Denver.

- **Slow traffic on Morrison Road with improved street design.** While the speed limit along Morrison Road is 30 mph, traffic frequently goes faster. Street design elements like narrower lanes and textured pedestrian crosswalks will help to calm traffic, making the street safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Enhance the pedestrian experience.** Transforming Morrison Road from “a place to get through” to “a place to arrive” involves prioritizing pedestrians. Widening sidewalks, planting trees, creating pedestrian plazas, and adding comfortable transit shelters will all help to enhance the pedestrian experience along the corridor.
- **Create safe places to cross Morrison.** Currently, there are few pedestrian crosswalks on Morrison Road. Adding crosswalk paint, signs, and signals every few blocks could greatly enhance the safety of pedestrian crossings. Narrowing the crossing distance with wider sidewalks, bulb outs, or medians could also increase the safety of crossings throughout the corridor.
- **Reconfigure the Morrison/Alameda intersection to create a safer gateway into the corridor.** Panelists suggested removing one of the turn lanes from Alameda onto Morrison to reduce oncoming traffic into the corridor.
- **District branding and wayfinding at key intersections and crossings.** BuCu West has done a commendable job of adding banners, murals, and public art along a section of Morrison Road. Panelists suggested adding to the district branding and wayfinding along the corridor to let people know when they’ve entered the art district and where to park.
- **Get creative with parking on side streets.** Currently, there is more than enough street parking available throughout the corridor. In the future, when there is greater demand for parking, the panelists suggested that creative parking options, like diagonal street parking, could be added to side streets.



Existing and proposed Morrison Road cross-sections from the 2017 Streetscape Implementation Plan.



Bus stops can integrate public art, becoming enhanced shelters. Photo by Kara Pearson Gwinn, courtesy Confluence Denver.



Pedestrian crosswalks with medians enhance safety by decreasing the crossing distance. Photo courtesy picswe.com.



Removing one of the turn lanes from Alameda Avenue onto Morrison Road and adding a bulb out and median will calm traffic coming into the corridor. Image by Meredith Wenskoski.



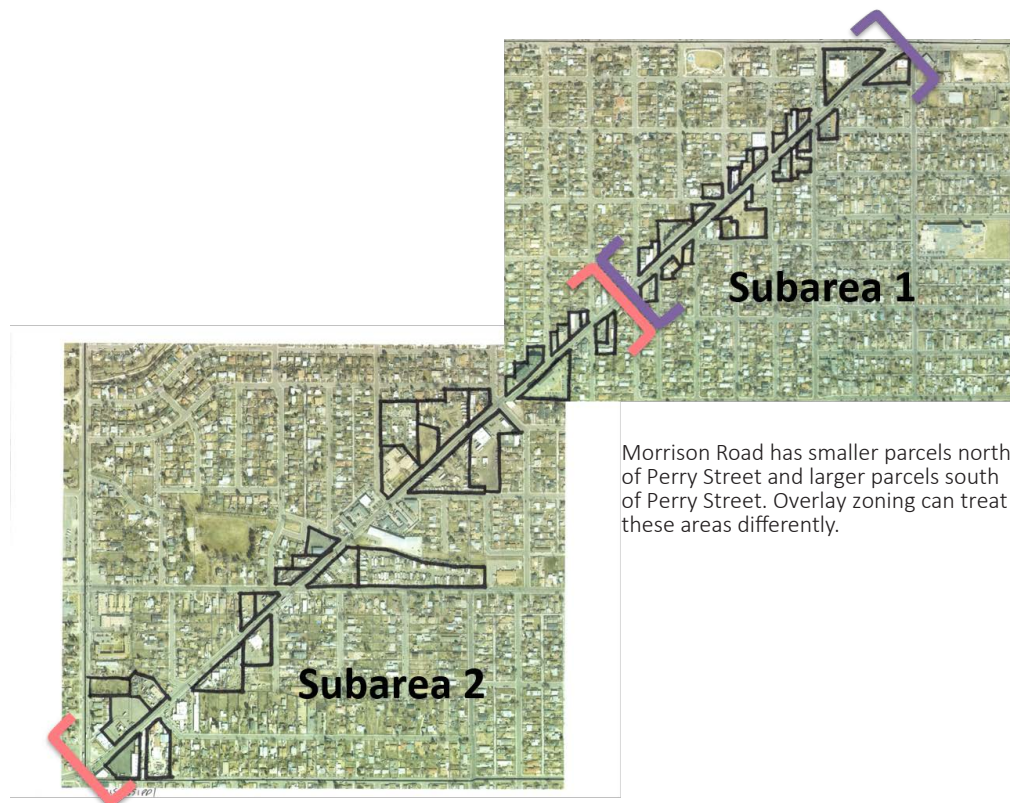
Rendering of a proposed plaza along Morrison Road. Image courtesy BuCu West.



Diagonal parking spaces were added to E. 7th Avenue and Logan Street in Denver, allowing for additional street parking. Image courtesy Google Maps.

- **Massing & Setbacks:** Attention to height and shading of adjacent properties. Support diverse housing types (mixed-use, townhomes, duplexes, row homes) throughout the corridor. Scale amenities (i.e. setbacks, open space) to lot and building size.
- **Public Space Activation:** Ensure options for pop-up and cluster vending in public spaces.
- **Live/Work/Exhibit Space:** Allow live/work/exhibit space for artists in the mixed-use zoning.
- **Public Art:** Create options for interactive and installation public art (special uses).

Since Morrison Road has smaller parcels and uses north of Perry Street and larger parcels and uses south of Perry Street, overlay zoning can treat these areas differently:



Morrison Road has smaller parcels north of Perry Street and larger parcels south of Perry Street. Overlay zoning can treat these areas differently.

Sub-Area 1 (Perry Street to Alameda Avenue):

- This area includes the “Westwood Creative District” and the “Gateway” into the corridor from Alameda Avenue. It is also within the Opportunity Zone.
- Parcel sizes along the northern end of the corridor tend to be smaller and buildings tend to be older, which can be preserved with Overlay specifications in this sub-area.
- The Overlay Zoning in this sub-area can address flexible form standards for siting, setbacks, and additions to preserve the unique attributes of parcels and support existing organizations that are located there.
- When property owners close curb cuts into their small parcels along Morrison Road, reduce their parking requirements.
- Promote small-scale development, rehab, and reuse of old buildings in this sub-area, which will support small local organizations, creative rehab, and new construction on the larger sites (as opposed to parcel assembly and demolition on the smaller sites).
- Consider tax incentives and support for legacy businesses in this area, such as relief from property and/or sales taxes.

Pop-up Retail in Denver

Pop-up retail in Denver currently requires a Temporary Zoning Use Permit, which can be approved or denied on a case-by-case basis.

- In this sub-area, change the place designation from “Community Corridor” to “Local Corridor” in Blueprint Denver.

Sub-Area 2 (Perry Street to Sheridan Boulevard):

- This area includes the “Community Core” and “Entertainment District” areas designated by BuCu West.
- Parcel sizes along the southern end of the corridor tend to be larger in this sub-area.
- The Overlay Zoning could allow for larger scale development and mixed-use in this sub-area.
- The Overlay should account for appropriate transitions between the larger scale development and surrounding residential areas, such as with setbacks.
- Development incentives could be used in this sub-area to encourage the addition of community benefits (more details below).
- This sub-area could retain the “Community Corridor” place designation in Blueprint Denver.

3. What opportunities can be offered to developers to encourage investment?

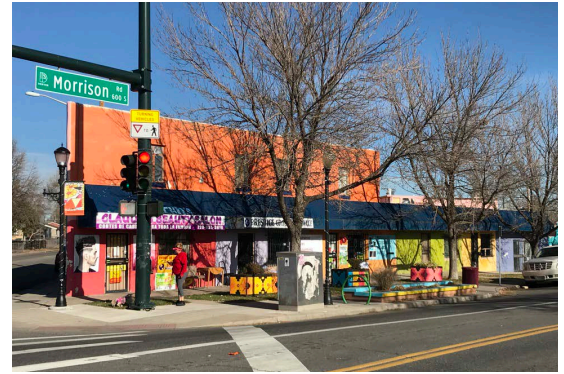
With the high costs of new construction and development in metro Denver, it can be difficult to make projects “pencil” without charging high rents upon project completion. To avoid the gentrification and displacement that typically follow increasing prices, a different strategy is needed to encourage reinvestment along this corridor.

Developers can apply for Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to provide affordable housing in the area, but that does not guarantee that the developers will incorporate the amenities—such as community gathering spaces, public art, and affordable commercial space—that the community desires.

Other communities in the Denver metro area, as well as in other parts of the country, have used Overlay Zoning to incentivize developers to provide the community benefits desired. Denver’s RiNo neighborhood now has a design overlay and an incentive overlay, allowing increased building height in exchange for affordable housing. City of Boulder staff and City Council are currently investigating what community benefits should qualify for height and density zoning variances.

A community benefits program is a tool to ensure that new growth and development contribute positively to the community’s quality of life. Currently, Site Development Plan Review by the City and County of Denver is done on a case-by-case basis, which may result in vastly different outcomes, leading to uncertainty on the part of both developers and the community. Typically, staff will review sites based on adherence to current zoning and the neighborhood plan, which may not incorporate the community’s desires for the corridor.

By adding an Incentives Overlay to the corridor, the community can standardize what incentives (like building height, floor area, and



Retail along Morrison Road north of Perry Street.



A large vacant lot south of Perry Street on Morrison Road.

River North Design Overlay and 38th & Blake Incentive Overlay

In 2018, Denver City Council voted to adopt Denver Zoning Code text and map amendments to establish an incentive height overlay for the 38th and Blake Station Area and a design overlay for the station area and surrounding River North (RiNo) Art District.

- The design overlay establishes new high-quality design standards.
- The incentive overlay requires projects that use the height incentives to provide affordable housing units in the station area, or significantly greater contributions to Denver’s Affordable Housing Fund than are required elsewhere in the city.

The intention of the overlays is to help direct growth into areas of the city that are best equipped to handle change, while also ensuring that those areas become great places. The overlays promote high quality design and capture a portion of the increased property values that result from significant public investments, such as the train station, and use them to ensure that new development benefits the community.

For more information, visit: www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/community-planning-and-development/zoning/text-amendments/38th_and_Blake_Plan_Implementation.html.

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Inclusion of Community Benefit

“1.11 Enhanced Community Benefit: For land use or zoning district changes that result in increases in the density or intensity of development beyond what is permitted by the underlying zoning or for added height that increases intensity, the city will develop regulations and incentives so that the new development provides benefits to the community beyond those otherwise required by the underlying zoning. Any incentives are intended to address the community economic, social and environmental objectives of the comprehensive plan. Community objectives include without limitation affordable housing, affordable commercial space, spaces for the arts, community gathering space, public art, land for parks, open space, environmental protection or restoration, outdoor spaces and other identified

social needs and services. Community objectives also may be identified through other planning or policymaking efforts of the city.”

“2.35 Building Height: The city will review and update site review regulations to provide clear guidance on height and intensity of land uses and to address relationship of building height to aesthetics and view protection. The city will consider additional height (up to the City Charter 55-foot height limit) as an incentive in exchange for community benefits that further other community objectives such as the provision of permanently affordable housing.”

- Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

density) can be provided in exchange for specific community benefits that reflect local values.

The Incentives Overlay could provide a menu of community benefits, like affordable housing, affordable commercial space, community gathering space, and public art. The specific amount of incentives provided to the developer would be proportional to the value of the community benefits added to the development project.

It should be noted that Colorado law does not allow for the negotiation of community benefits on a case-by-case basis. Conditions of approvals must be based on adopted standards that are sufficiently specific to be applied consistently and fairly.



Examples of Community Benefit Program Processes

The City of Austin established specific metrics for each community benefit to ensure that the requirements are proportional to the requested development bonus.

Santa Monica established three approval tiers or procedural tracks to regulate development, tied to the type, location, and level of development for its community benefits program.

Developer St. Charles Town Co. of Del Corazon apartments voluntarily included a plaza and futsal court along Morrison Road. Panelists brainstormed how to incentivize other developers to add similar public amenities along the corridor and how to activate these spaces.

Panelists recommended the creation of an Incentives Overlay for the Morrison Road corridor, especially in sub-area 2, that allows an increase in height from 3 stories to 5 stories for development projects that incorporate specific community benefits identified by the community, such as:

- Affordable Housing
- Affordable Commercial Space
- Community Gathering Space
- Green Space
- Public Art
- Live, Work & Exhibit Space for Artists

Other incentives and resources that could increasingly benefit this area include:

- **The Opportunity Zone north of Perry Street** allows for the deferral, reduction, and potential elimination of certain federal capital gains taxes on investments in affordable housing, new infrastructure, startup businesses, and various capital improvement projects. The incentives are set to expire in 2026.
- **Denver's Office of Economic Development (OED)** has many programs and financial resources for: 1) fostering a thriving business environment, 2) developing a skilled workforce, 3) expanding affordable housing options, and 4) creating sustainable neighborhoods. The OED runs Denver's Affordable Housing Fund, as an example. Many of these programs and their resources can be leveraged to bring investment to the Morrison Road corridor and to support existing businesses, organizations, artists, and entrepreneurs in the area.
- **The Mi Casa Resource Center**, located three blocks east of Morrison Road, provides resources and assistance for business development, career development, and youth development. In addition to business training, it operates a loan program for business owners. They offer microloans for start-up businesses ranging from \$500 to \$4000 and lines of credit for existing businesses ranging from \$1000 to \$7500.
- **The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)** has many financial assistance programs, such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), for which this corridor would likely be eligible.
- **The Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA)** allocates Low Income Housing Tax Credits, provides long-term financing, and fills financing gaps to support affordable multifamily housing in Colorado.
- **Colorado Creative Industries** provides programs and grants to designated creative districts in Colorado, and the Westwood Creative District is eligible. The Westwood Creative District could continue to use its state certification to pursue grants.



Murals by local artists fill the corridor with a sense of history and culture. Photo courtesy BuCu West.

4. How do we phase this transformation?

Many recommendations throughout this report can be pursued concurrently and as opportunities arise with funding and other resources. The following phasing could assist as a plan of action and/or checklist for the community.

- Advocate for street and place designation changes in the draft Denveright plans.** Panelists recommended the street designation change from Arterial to Main Street Collector and the place designation change from Community Corridor to Local Corridor on pages 11-12.
- Connect with city planning staff around requirements for developing Overlay Zoning.** Express interest in creating a Design Overlay and an Incentives Overlay, similar to what RiNo has implemented. Further recommendations for Overlay Zoning are on pages 14-16.
- Let city staff know what amenities are desired in the recreation center.** More details about neighborhood amenities and the recreation center are on pages 9-13.
- Use tactical urbanism to test ideas along the corridor.** Temporary plazas and public spaces, pop-up markets, planters, string lighting, seating, painted crosswalks, and public art could all be used to test concepts and refine implementation over time. More details are on page 9.
- Reach out to successful artist co-ops and live/work/exhibit space developers.** Learn best practices on how to promote artist ownership in the creative district. Apply for grants to support art space development and artist ownership in the district. More details on artist ownership are on page 9.
- Evolve the maintenance district into a different kind of special district.** This will allow BuCu West to leverage local funding for uses beyond streetscape improvements, such as for the creation of public plazas. More details are on page 10.
- Apply for funding and develop partnerships to create public plazas.** More details about plaza creation are on page 10.
- Work with CDOT on streetscape improvements.** Advocate for CDOT to add safe pedestrian crosswalks and streetscape improvements coming into and along the corridor. More details about streetscape recommendations are on pages 11-12.
- Work with Denver Arts and Venues, Public Works, and local artists on district branding, wayfinding, and public art.** As a GO Bond project, 1% of the money must go towards a public art element(s). Artists can be engaged in this process through a design competition, in which local artists submit ideas for inclusion of art along the corridor and/or a district gateway. More details about district branding, wayfinding, and public art are on page 12.
- Work with Public Works on creative parking solutions in the district.** More details about parking recommendations are on page 12.



Local artist and business owner Santiago Jaramillo paints a mural along the corridor. Photo courtesy Denverite.



Conclusion

Development is coming to Morrison Road. The question is whether the community is ready to meet that development with standards for how development should benefit the community.

One scenario is similar to how development has progressed in much of metro Denver: gentrification and ultimate displacement.

An alternative is to enforce community values and to protect the people and places that are already there through regulatory tools. Overlay zoning and incentives are prime regulatory tools for leveraging development and investment interest for the benefit of the community.

Currently, the City and County of Denver is working on finalizing its Comprehensive Plan, which impacts the designations of the corridor. Developers are submitting site plans for this area. To get out in front of these efforts, BuCu West and other community supporters must act quickly.

ULI Colorado and its volunteer panelists saw how energized this community is around creating a great place. The TAP panelists believe that BuCu West and the Westwood community can attract the resources necessary to jumpstart the work ahead and make their vision for Morrison Road a reality.

Kahlo's Traditional Mexican Restaurant on Morrison Road.

ULI Volunteer Panelists



Panel Chair Amy Cara has worked with East West Partners since 1999, where she is now a Managing Partner. “Neighborhood placemaking,” are Amy’s words to describe what she and her team have done in the Riverfront Park neighborhood of Denver and The Landmark development in Greenwood Village. These two developments have created a contagious, positive spirit that gives everyone who lives there, or even visits, a true sense of place. Prior to leading the revitalization of The Landmark, Amy helped to create the Riverfront Park community and the Union Station redevelopment. When she is not working on the community projects, she is creating Denver’s first commuter bike station, connecting youth with artists to plan and produce bodies of work, and fostering good stewardship in development through her involvement with ULI.



Brad Segal is the Founder and President of Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.). He has extensive experience in downtown management and community development as both a practitioner and consultant. A self-proclaimed “urban therapist,” Brad is one of the nation’s leading authorities on downtown trends and issues, reinventing downtown management organizations and forming business improvement districts to finance them, and pioneering efforts to create healthy communities. Prior to establishing P.U.M.A. in 1993, he designed and managed economic development programs as senior director of the Downtown Denver Partnership. Brad is well-known as a featured speaker on downtown issues in international, national and regional forums and is a lecturer in the University of

Colorado Denver’s master’s degree program in urban and regional planning. He has served four terms on the board of directors of the International Downtown Association and is a past president of Downtown Colorado, Inc. Brad holds a master’s in business administration from Columbia University and a bachelor’s degree in urban analysis from the University of California at Berkeley.



Renee Martinez-Stone is the Director of the West Denver Renaissance Collaborative (WDRC), Renee is working to align resources, critical assets, leaders, and investments in West Denver with the goal of moving community priorities and integration opportunities from concept to implementation. Renee’s prior work includes many Denver metro infill redevelopment projects where she has provided master planning, site development studies, and revitalization strategies for more than 20 years as a private consultant. Renee’s “community-based” approach has creatively incorporated community stakeholders into plans and award-winning built projects with meaningful community outcomes. Renee is a fifth generation Colorado native, wife, and mother of two daughters.



Molly Veldkamp, AICP is a Senior Transportation Planner for Apex Design. She enjoys the entire transportation planning process, from developing transportation vision, goals, and policies to piloting innovative transportation solutions and using data to drive decision making. She has extensive experience with bicycle network planning, transit system planning and evaluation, citywide complete streets policy development, transportation master plans, and complete streets design. She is a passionate planner committed to working with diverse stakeholders to identify transportation solutions that encourage safe use of active transportation modes. She is active in WTS Colorado and is a graduate of the University of Colorado at Denver.



Meredith Wenskoski is the President and Owner of Livable Cities Studio. She has over 13 years of expertise in urban redevelopment, parks and public space design. She is distinguished for her leadership, design and project management of large-scale complex efforts. She has worked on public parks, streetscapes and urban design projects focusing on developing responsible and innovative designs that respond to the needs of the place and community. Meredith's projects emphasize the role of public space as a way to stimulate redevelopment and create socially active spaces that provide long-term benefits for cities. Meredith is known for her interdisciplinary team leadership, her responsiveness to clients and her excellent communication skills. A firm believer in the benefits of collaboration, she forms strong long-term working relationships with design teams and clients. Meredith is recognized for her rigor and follow-through and for instilling discipline and accountability into design processes.



Tyler Gibbs, AIA brings over 39 years of public and private sector experience in architecture, planning, zoning, entitlements, design standards and placemaking as a part of an urban design perspective that assists in gaining community support for development proposals in sensitive contexts. He previously served as the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Steamboat Springs, as well as a Plan Implementation Manager and Urban Design Director for the City and County of Denver.



Jack Pappalardo is an attorney who previously served as the President of Denver's Art District on Santa Fe from 2004-2008 and 2011-2015. He is a proven legal professional in the areas of commercial leasing, real estate development and franchise law and a leader in the arts and community redevelopment. During his term as president of Denver's Art District on Santa Fe, the number of creative businesses and nonprofits grew from 12 members to over 100 and gained national attention in the areas of culture and community revitalization. The Art District is studied nationally and recognized as one of the top "organic" art districts in the US. In 2012, the Art District on Santa Fe became one of two districts in Colorado to be designated as a "Certified Creative District" and was the winner of the Mayor's Award for Excellence in Arts and Culture.

Interviewed Stakeholders

Local Elected Officials

- Paul Lopez, City Council, District 3
- Adriana Lara, Office of Councilman Lopez

City Staff

- Steven Chester, Senior City Planner, City and County of Denver (planner of the Westwood Neighborhood Plan)
- Michael Koslow, Public Works (Morrison Road Improvements)
- Gaby Arismendi, Public Works
- Ashley Grace, City Planning (Via Verde)
- Andrew Webb, Senior City Planner, City and County of Denver
- Elvis Rubio, Office of Economic Development

Local Organizations

- Mark Marshall, Urban Land Conservancy
- Emily Patterson, Trust for Public Land
- Christina Contreras, BuCu West Board

Local Artists

- Santiago Jaramillo, BuCu West board
- Tony Diego
- Thadeaous Mighell
- Julio Mendoza
- Crystal O'Brien
- Aaron Nuanez
- Victor Escobedo

Local Residents

- LaLa Jaramillo, young artist and resident
- Ceci Sandival, Westwood resident
- Lupe, mobile home resident
- David De Santiago, Re:Vision property manager
- Yurida Santana, Westwood Food Co-op Board
- Maricendi Jaimes, Westwood Unidos Community Connector

Local Business Owners

- Nestor Castillo, Alamo Restaurant Owner and BuCu West Board
- Marco Martinez, MGM Bar Owner and BuCu West Board
- Noe Bermudez, Tarascos and Kahlos Restaurant Owner
- Aaron Elinoff, Property owner, attorney and BuCu West Board
- Alberto Tejada, Los 3 Potrillos
- Erick Garcia, Kitchen Network

Local Real Estate Professionals

- Chris Coble, Black Label Real Estate
- Charles Wooley, St. Charles Town Company
- Felipe Bedon, First Bank Commercial Lender
- Dan Strammiello, Westbrook Development Partners
- Lydia Prado, University of Denver

Prior Consultants

- Heather Noyes, Studio CPG (lead designer of the Morrison Road Streetscape Plan)
- Tom Hanna, THK Associates



ULI Colorado Leadership in Responsible Land Use

ULI Colorado is the 1,300-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.

Chair: Tracy Huggins, Executive Director,
Denver Urban Renewal Authority

Vice Chair: Mike Zoellner, Managing
Partner, ZF Capital

Treasurer: Mark Tompkins, Principal, Strae
Advisory Services

Chair of Mission Advancement: Marilee
Utter, President, Citiventure Associates

Governance Chair: Bruce O'Donnell,
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Chairs emeriti: Amy Cara, Kirk Monroe,
Chris Achenbach, Bill Mosher, V. Michael
Komppa, Marilee Utter, Julie Underdahl,
James DeFrancia, Buz Koelbel, Byron Koste

Executive Director: Michael Leccese

Director: Sarah Franklin

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