

Meeting Notes

Joint Sunnyside Highland Debriefing on student 38th & Inca Light Rail Study 11 Jan 2005

Attendees: Doug Wheeler, Denver Planning Office and planner for North Denver; Doug Valerio, Sunnyside; Masha Budde of Highland and Sunnyside; Jacy Montoya HUNI Board Member; Pam Brown, Highland; Ed Bryant, Highland; Carl Kraus, Highland; David York, Highland

The intent of the meeting was to obtain feedback on the design studies and to plan next steps for planning and community involvement.

These notes constitute a DRAFT of a goals statement. Please use this draft in order to help solicit more and even contrary views from other neighbors in Sunnyside, Globeville, and Highland. More views from business owners and residents in Sunnyside are particularly needed for this document. Please direct comments to Michael Tavel via email (tavel@tavelweise.com) or phone 303 477 6200. I will write a final working draft in late January after receiving comments and this document will then be used to initiate communication with our councilperson Judy Montero, with RTD, the city, and most importantly with the two EIS studies.

1. Location of Station:
 - a. Exact location is not yet terribly contentious.
 - b. The location should try to accomplish the following:
 - i. Be near enough to 38th ave that it supports businesses and existing pedestrian activity along 38th ave, and can link with bus transit on 38th ave.
 - ii. Be easily accessible on foot from where people live, with emphasis on residents living west of the rail yards
2. Pedestrian, Transit & Multi-modal Connections:
 - a. The Gold Line, and the train to Boulder/Longmont need to connect in some way so that riders do not have to go south to Union Station in order to head north to Boulder/Longmont.
 - i. This might not be realistic at 38th & Inca but could happen at the next stop north near Pecos and north of I-70.
 - ii. Highland and Sunnyside is home to many residents who commute to Boulder and who have used the RTD B bus line for many years – which has had stops on Central Street. This regional bus link to north Denver was just recently discontinued, forcing residents to start driving to Boulder instead of taking transit.
 - iii. Quick access to Boulder and points north for Highland and Sunnyside residents will encourage more people to live in this area and increase city tax revenues – consistent with the goals of Blueprint Denver.
 - b. New automobile and bus traffic related to the station should not severely impact existing residential neighborhoods.

- i. Those functions could be located on the East side of the tracks in the “Fox Street Neighborhood.”
 - ii. A pedestrian bridge over the tracks near the station could connect people to the train.
 - iii. Traffic movement through Sunnyside and Highland should be closely studied to control and mitigate any increases in type or volume.
 - c. Inca Street should be connected across and over the 38th Ave underpass.
 - i. Priority would be for pedestrians and multi-modal movement to have easy access to the light rail station for residents of Highland and Sunnyside, and easy access for Sunnyside residents to the bike path heading under I-25 to the Platte Valley trail system.
 - ii. This link would provide a safe way for peds and kids to move between Sunnyside, Highland, and the Platte Valley. It would be very useful to north Denver teenagers heading to the Platte valley skate park.
 - iii. A two-lane car connection here would also further diversify the link between the neighborhoods. The street could be narrow at the crossing in order to slow down traffic speeds. The location of this connection would not likely lead to a negative increase in through-traffic, but such impacts need to be studied and discussed by residents.
 - d. Good pedestrian connections are needed across the rail yards.
 - i. The 38th ave underpass could be rebuilt in a fashion similar to the 15th street underpass.
 - ii. A pedestrian bridge could also link Inca Street and Fox Street with each other and with the light rail station.
 - iii. The Regency site also needs good pedestrian connections to the light rail station, to the Platte Valley, and to 38th Ave and North Denver.
- 3. Character and Zoning along Inca Street:
 - a. The light rail station will increase property values and also increase the market demand for mixed use and multi family in the current I-zoned districts near Inca and Jason. The city would support such changes as being consistent with Blueprint Denver and “Transit Oriented Development.”
 - b. We should encourage and allow such multi family and mixed-use development in this area, but there may be differing opinions on density. Many residents support more residential density in this area, but traffic impacts must be carefully considered.
 - c. Existing businesses in this area provide important employment and services and are not a negative. Any changes in the zoning, or future development, should or could allow existing business and industrial uses to remain indefinitely. At some point, market demand will inspire most industrial property owners to reap the benefits of increasing property values by allowing their land to be redeveloped.

- d. Traffic of large semi-trucks into the neighborhood should be discouraged in the area south of approximately 44th ave.
- 4. Character and Zoning of the “Fox Street Neighborhood” east of the rail yards:
 - a. If there is a bus turnarounds, or a park-n-ride these may be best located East of the railyards with good access to the light rail station.
 - b. This area would have more intensive uses than the west side of the rail yards.
 - c. New mixed use should be encouraged which supports existing uses including industrial uses. New industrial uses should also be permitted.
- 5. Public Participation in the Planning Process:
 - a. Public participation is required as part of any EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) but Highland and Sunnyside would benefit greatly if they are proactive in making sure that their views are included in every EIS.
 - b. The US36 Corridor EIS studies the rail line to Boulder. This study is in progress and a draft should be available summer 2005. We should get our views considered before the draft is complete.
 - c. The Gold Line EIS is scheduled to commence work in the summer of 2005. We should get our views communicated early and often as part of that planning process.
 - d. There is a history of extensive pollution in lands near these rail yards and we should make sure these issues are thoroughly addressed in the EIS.
 - e. Related to these two EIS studies, and probably following them, we should push for a study of the light rail station, with leadership from Judy Montero’s office and participation by city staff, RTD and the neighborhoods.
 - i. Planning studies usually need to follow after the EIS.
 - ii. This planning study should also consider the 38th Ave underpass and drainage issues.
 - iii. The first meeting about this study should be called by Judy Montero and include Catherine Cox Blair of planning, Doug Wheeler neighborhood planner, Laurie Fox of RTD, and possibly Jason Longsdorf of Public Works Infrastructure Planning and Programming.
- 6. Notes on the Development Process:
 - a. There are 91 new stations proposed as part of fast tracks. Because of this there will not be a lot of city or RTD involvement any time soon on surrounding development associated with the 38th & Inca Light rail station.
 - b. At the Gates Rubber Factory, by comparison, there is extensive public involvement in redeveloping private land near a rail station. 38th & Inca has not been identified as such a major location for redevelopment.
 - c. It is possible that this station will not be treated as a major “TOD” (Transportation Oriented Development) and therefore will not have extensive redevelopment leadership from the city or RTD.

- d. Doug Wheeler believes that we will not know for many years whether the city and RTD will play a role in development near the 38th & Inca Light Rail station.