in 2011, The City and County of Denver, along with its partners received a joint Housing and Urban Development Community Challenge Grant ($1.8 million) and Department of Transportation TIGER Grant ($1.2 Million). This grant was the foundation for the Denver Livability Partnership (DLP). The DLP worked to expand permanent affordable housing, improve access to jobs and create better multi-modal connectivity along Denver’s transit corridors. The federal funding allowed Denver to leverage partnerships and opportunities along the west light rail corridor to transform Denver’s west side into livable, transit-oriented neighborhoods. Through capacity building and knowledge sharing, best practices will now be applied to other corridors in Denver, in the region and nationwide. Denver’s work, made possible by the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant, sets a national model for effective and comprehensive planning along a transit system.

PARTNERS:
- City and County of Denver
- Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.
- Enterprise Community Loan Fund, Inc.
- Urban Land Conservancy (ULC)
- Denver Housing Authority (DHA)
- Regional Transportation District (RTD)
- Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)
- Denver Health, Department of Public Health
- LiveWell Westwood
- Transit Alliance
- Urban Land Institute (ULI)
- U.S. Dept. Of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Dept. of Transportation (DOT)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
The Denver Livability Partnership’s goals were to expand permanent affordable housing, improve access to jobs and create better multi-modal connectivity along Denver’s transit corridors through the work of the following projects:

**Housing Development Assistance Fund**
This fund was used to cover predevelopment and land acquisition costs to preserve land and opportunity for affordable housing within one-half mile of transit stations and high frequency bus routes. These funds will ensure that costs do not get passed through to the renter/owner, thereby lowering housing and transportation costs for west side families.

**TOD Strategic Plan**
The TOD Strategic Plan update assessed lessons learned from the original plan and shifted the focus toward implementation of TOD. The plan identified citywide strategies and station specific strategies for implementing TOD throughout the city.

**Decatur Federal Station Area Plan / GDP**
The Station Area Plan and GDP outline a vision for the future of the Sun Valley Neighborhood, illustrating the necessary steps for the area to become a celebrated, connected, innovative, and healthy neighborhood.

**West Side Transit Enhancement Study**
This two-phased study first assessed the condition and amenities of all bus stops in west Denver, then provided recommendations, service recommendations, and a future investment matrix to help guide improvements to the existing transit network.

**City Kitchen**
This study created a market analysis, case study report, and business plan for a community destination for urban agriculture, food storage, processing and distribution, nutrition education, business incubation and health screenings among other potential activities.

**Knox Court Bike Boulevard**
The Knox Court bicycle boulevard study created a “tool box” of potential treatments for bike boulevards throughout Denver, along with a conceptual design for a bike boulevard along Knox Court in west Denver. This route will connect communities in West Denver to the Knox Court light rail station via bike.

**Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**
The grant enabled the Denver Livability Partnership to learn from experts throughout the country on creating livable communities, and share lessons learned and best practices from the grant.
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND
ENSURING AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR HIGH QUALITY TRANSIT

The creation of this fund helped preserve land for affordable housing within one-half mile of transit stations and high frequency bus routes. It was made available as sub-grants to the Urban Land Conservancy and to the Denver Housing Authority of up to $750,000 each. These funds ensured that pre-development and holding costs do not get passed through to the renter/owner, thereby lowering housing and transportation costs for west side families.

HDAF funding went to a number of different projects throughout west Denver. Master site planning and design was funded for projects such as the Jody Apartments, Yale Commons, and Mile High Vista, while project pre-development expenses were covered for other projects on Blake Street, West 11th, and Zuni Street in Denver. In addition, funds were used for site acquisition for affordable and public housing in the Sun Valley neighborhood.
The HDAF augmented the City’s existing TOD Fund to support acquisition of TOD parcels for affordable housing. The City’s fund at the time was only accessible to the Urban Land Conservancy as sole borrower, but could only fund the acquisition of parcels. The soft costs associated with due diligence were not covered by the TOD Fund. The HDAF supported ULC and Denver Housing Authority in their collective efforts to minimize costs associated with due diligence on identified TOD properties. This means fewer costs are passed on to the buyers. The City looks forward to future opportunities to replicate this program following the grant.

In order to access HDAF funds, the City and HUD worked together to approve a strategy that allowed “soft” costs such as environmental analysis, legal fees, land studies and appraisals to be excluded from the more complex Federal Part 50 environmental review requirements associated with acquisition expenditures. This exclusion worked well for relatively quick reimbursement by HUD for soft cost expenses, but linking HUD’s federal environmental review requirements to time-sensitive real estate acquisition transactions added time and expense and in some cases resulted in lost opportunities.

This document summarizes the projects funded by this grant. Projects include site acquisition and pre-development costs.

Funds ensured that pre-development costs do not get passed to the renter/owner, lowering housing and transportation costs for West Side families.
The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Strategic Plan is intended to guide the critical City-led actions needed for successful TOD in Denver. Since the 2006 TOD Strategic Plan, multiple stations have been constructed and needed infrastructure improvements have been identified. Multiple city departments and agencies have policies, goals, and strategies that broadly and specifically address TOD. The strategic plan does not revise station area plans or alter long-standing TOD policies; rather, it focuses these multiple efforts into a concise work program for the City.

Denver’s TOD Strategic Plan provides a foundation to guide public and private investment at rail stations. Residents, business owners, builders, and public employees can use the strategic framework to eliminate or reduce barriers to TOD, create realistic financing plans, and direct growth and investment to rail stations with the best opportunity for development in the next 5 to 6 years.
The TOD Strategic Plan is intended to guide the critical City-led actions needed for successful TOD in Denver. Different than the 2006 plan, this plan focuses on implementation and identifies near term strategies to support TOD within the next 5 to 6 years. This strategic plan focuses these multiple efforts into a concise work program for the City.

As with many plans, the largest challenge is how is the plan institutionalized. Many city departments came together for the creation of the plan, but whether they will be as invested in the implementation of the plan remains a question. Work still needs to be done on how the City will execute the big ideas and keep the stakeholders involved, such as developing financing plans and catalytic projects.

The plan takes the next step beyond the 2006 Strategic Plan of categorizing a specific set of stations where the city can focus investments and have near-term expectations of a return on that public investment. Additionally, the plan identifies and costs out catalytic projects and establishes the expectation that the city will develop financing plans to fund those projects, which goes much further than evaluating stations and developing a generic tool kit. The TOD continuum, which identifies that stations are constantly evolving is an approach that CPD hopes to carry further throughout its entire work-plan.

Serving as an update to the 2006 plan, this plan aligns city departments around planning and implementing transit oriented development.

The plan contains both citywide, high-level policy recommendations and on-the-ground, station-level action items.
The Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan guides 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.

The plan is a result of extensive public outreach and coordination with neighborhood stakeholders and is truly the neighborhood’s plan, rather than the City’s plan for the neighborhood. Seven transformative projects are identified in the plan which are the most critical steps to positively transform the station area.

One of the near-term implementation recommendations of the plan was a general development plan which provides next-level infrastructure and open space analysis and planning, while providing more predictability for the neighborhood.
The Sun Valley neighborhood is made up of many different groups that are typically harder to reach and thus may be left out of traditional planning processes. The Decatur-Federal team created an innovative public outreach strategy to reach out to these groups, along with designing various methods of receiving feedback to make sure everyone’s voice was heard and recorded to better inform the plan. Every effort possible was taken to ensure the plan is truly the neighborhood’s vision for Sun Valley.

**Project Innovation**
The Sun Valley neighborhood is made up of many different groups that are typically harder to reach and thus may be left out of traditional planning processes. The Decatur-Federal team created an innovative public outreach strategy to reach out to these groups, along with designing various methods of receiving feedback to make sure everyone’s voice was heard and recorded to better inform the plan. Every effort possible was taken to ensure the plan is truly the neighborhood’s vision for Sun Valley.

**Project Materials**
- **Decatur Federal Station Area Plan**
  - The vision for a celebrated, connected, innovative, and healthy Sun Valley
- **Decatur-Federal Market Analysis**
  - Supporting economic and market study for the Station Area Plan
- **Colfax/Federal Interchange Study**
  - Existing conditions and alternatives analysis for the existing cloverleaf interchange in the center of the station area
- **Decatur-Federal General Development Plan**
  - Bridges gap between the station area plan and site development plans for the neighborhood.

**Project Goal**
Sun Valley, Denver’s poorest neighborhood, suffers from a feeling of isolation, along with a mix of incompatible land uses. With the opening of the West Rail Line, the Decatur-Federal Station can be the catalyst the neighborhood has been waiting for to better connect the area with the region, kick start redevelopment and make the station area Denver’s next great neighborhood.

**Project Challenge**
Some have said that the Sun Valley neighborhood has been “over planned” with a number of planning processes coming and going without much physical change to the area. The Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan differs in that it is implementation-focused and provides very tangible short term steps to realizing the vision created by the neighborhood.
WEST SIDE TRANSIT ENHANCEMENT STUDY

IMPROVING TRANSIT SERVICE AND AMENITIES

Strengthening transportation connections between Denver’s west side neighborhoods and the rest of the region is crucial. This study focused on the feasibility of improved transit service that will enhance connections between Denver’s west side and the new west corridor and existing central corridor light rail lines. The study included an assessment of current RTD facilities and focused on how those services could be adjusted to better connect west side populations to light rail transit. The study also identified infrastructure improvements that are needed around transit stops to better connect pedestrians and other modes of transportation to RTD facilities and services. The goal of this study is to identify the gaps in the existing network and strategies that improve access for the west side to jobs, recreation, education, and other services and opportunities.
Despite resource challenges, the project was successful in developing a dynamic database to help capture physical needs at over 200 bus stops and then prioritize those needs based on an innovative approach. The team created a benefit formula that for each bus stop location considers existing ridership, the potential for new users based on trip generation models for the surrounding land uses, and the value of each new infrastructure improvement or amenity to a specific stop’s location.

**West Side Transit Enhancement Study**

**Project Goal**
The study focused on the feasibility of improved transit service that enhances physical connections between Denver’s west side and existing light rail service. Phase 1 assessed RTD routes and identified service improvements to better connect west side neighborhoods to the rail transit network. Phase 2 focused on infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate the connections required for pedestrians and cyclists to access the transit system.

**Project Challenge**
The team was fortunate to partner with RTD on the project and coordinate with the opening of the W Line, but the project coincided with service cuts that impacted routes in the study area. This created a challenging environment to brainstorm increased service opportunities.

**Project Innovation**

**Final Materials**

**Service Plan Assessment**
Assesses feasibility of improved transit service and connections in west Denver

**Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment**
Identifies improvements around transit stops and prioritizes strategies for these improvements

**The Tool and Prioritization Methodology Serve as a Helpful Prototype That Can Continue to Evolve and Be Applied to Other Study Areas Citywide**
Much of Denver’s west side is an urban food desert lacking sufficient access to fresh, nutritious food (especially fruits and vegetables). In underserved communities the lack of a supermarket negatively affects residents' ability to obtain a nutritionally adequate diet. At the same time, incidence of diet-related diseases is disproportionately high in these areas. A movement to correct imbalances, promote sustainable local food systems and improve access to nutritious food is underway. To address these issues, this feasibility study and concept plan explores the possible development of a food hub in the vicinity of the W Line.

The City Kitchen Study will create a community destination for urban agriculture, food storage, processing and distribution, nutrition education, business incubation and health screenings among other potential activities.
The food hub discussion in Colorado, and even bigger, in the West is largely dependent on creating a regional context for discussion regarding supply and climate to support a destination food hub as recommended in City Kitchen. The plan acknowledges different food hub “types” based on services provided, starting with wholesale, then brokerage, all the way to a terminal destination food hub. This food hub “typology” allows for the integration of a “stepping stone” approach toward building a food hub model that is sustainable. The key to this approach is to think big but identify early champions and partner on efforts that might be part of the solution.

City Kitchen Food Hub Feasibility Study-
Through a community focus group and expert resource interviews, case study research and site evaluation, the study identifies potential next steps in the conversation around creating a terminal destination food hub.

To be successful, a food hub must increase market access for local and regional producers, add value to the current system, and impact the community through innovative and sound business practices including job creation. Community feedback aligns with these objectives, but in reality to meet them all will take continued dialogue about the City’s and partners’ priorities to create such a dynamic hub. Project partners like the Denver Housing Authority are expressing interest in being part of a food hub solution in the future, and everyone supports some of the smaller steps (urban gardening and education) to move toward introducing fresh fruits and vegetables into the community. Whatever the action, the question each time must be whether or not the action provides fresh food access to a community that doesn’t have this opportunity right now.
The Knox Court bicycle boulevard study is important to the active transportation network on the west side. Bicycle boulevards are a new, innovative type of bicycle facility that optimizes low volume, residential streets for bicycle travel. In other cities, implementation of bicycle boulevards, in combination with public outreach efforts, has been successful at attracting novice bicycle riders and new users into the active transportation network.

The Knox Court bicycle boulevard study complements other active transportation projects occurring in the west side. Knox Court from Alameda Avenue to Lakewood Gulch has been identified as a candidate for bike lanes, which would link the bicycle boulevard to the Knox Court light rail station. The completion of these facilities will create a backbone for the active transportation network in the west side, connecting neighborhoods to the FasTracks W Line, schools, parks, and businesses by bike or foot.
Knox Court will be Denver's first bicycle boulevard – creating a high ease-of-use facility recommended in Denver Moves, Denver’s bicycle and pedestrian master plan. The Knox Court bike boulevard will include innovative solutions for traffic diversion and intersection treatments. These elements will allow safer travel along the corridor and through a very busy intersection, connecting west side residents to region-wide bicycle and transit systems.

**project innovation**

Knox Court will be Denver’s first bicycle boulevard – creating a high ease-of-use facility recommended in Denver Moves, Denver’s bicycle and pedestrian master plan. The Knox Court bike boulevard will include innovative solutions for traffic diversion and intersection treatments. These elements will allow safer travel along the corridor and through a very busy intersection, connecting west side residents to region-wide bicycle and transit systems.

**project goal**

The purpose of the study was to gather technical data and work directly with the adjacent property owners and surrounding community assess the viability of Knox Court as Denver’s first bike boulevard, and to identify appropriate bike boulevard treatments based on technical evaluation and public input.

**project challenge**

The Knox Court Bike Boulevard presented various challenges in the way Denver balances transportation needs. Connecting neighborhoods with a safe and convenient bicycle facility required the community to make tough choices about parking, traffic diversion and stop configurations.

**project materials**

Denver Bike Boulevard Design Guidelines - This toolbox outlines a variety of tools available to achieve the desired characteristics of a bike boulevard in Denver.

Knox Court Study - This study gathered technical data and by working directly with the adjacent property owners assessed the variability of Knox Court as a bike boulevard, and identified appropriate treatments.

BICYCLE BOULEVARDS ARE A NEW, INNOVATIVE TYPE OF BICYCLE FACILITY THAT OPTIMIZES LOW VOLUME, RESIDENTIAL STREETS FOR BICYCLE TRAVEL.
The Denver Livability Partnership worked tirelessly to strengthen the capacity of Denver agencies, partners and the public – both locally and nationally – to advance the objectives of HUD, DOT, EPA and the Sustainable Communities Initiative. Additionally, the Federal HUD/DOT/EPA partnership was emulated at a local level through the inclusion of members from a variety of fields and levels of government.

The grant provided various opportunities for partners to share best practices and lessons learned from the various projects with audiences both local and national, including the annual Rail~Volution Conference and the Congress for the New Urbanism. Local capacity-building activities include the funding of a citizen’s academy through the Transit Alliance and a Transit Oriented Development marketplace in partnership with the Urban Land Institute.
CAPACITY BUILDING & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

**project goal**
Through federal funding, the partnership was able to tackle difficult problems and test innovative solutions. The partnership was able to attend several conferences and trainings to share the lessons learned during the six separate projects, along with building local capacity to address similar issues and challenges in other neighborhoods of Denver.

**project innovation**
Through the grant, partners were able to create and participate in a number of peer exchanges. Being able to be face to face with cities going through similar circumstances was invaluable. The grantee network could have been stronger and the HUD capacity builders often did not offer detailed enough research or support to enhance the work of our partners.

**events attended**
- APA Conference 2012
- APA Conference 2013
- APA-Colorado 2012
- APA-Colorado 2013
- APTA Sustainability and Public Transportation
- Congress for the New Urbanism 2012
- Congress for the New Urbanism 2013
- Housing Colorado 2011
- Housing Colorado 2012
- HUD Convening 2012
- HUD Convening 2013
- HUD Infrastructure Funding Exchange
- Institute of Traffic Engineers – Western Division
- New Partners for Smart Growth 2012
- New Partners for Smart Growth 2013
- New Partners for Smart Growth 2014
- Peer Exchange – Twin Cities
- Railvolution 2011
- Railvolution 2012
- Railvolution 2013
- Safe Routes to School 2011
- TOD Summit
- Transit Alliance Citizens Academy
- ULI TOD Marketplace
- Western Planner / Four Corners APA Conference