North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative (NDCC)

2013 Annual Report

An initiative of Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Dear Friends,

This year has been an exciting time for Denver. The City continues its robust climb out of the national economic recession, and all signs are strong that Denver is well positioned in its quest to truly become a leading, global city. To that end, I have outlined a bold vision for the Corridor of Opportunity, including the formation of the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative (NDCC) to coordinate key project planning efforts in the Globeville, Elyria and Swansea neighborhoods. The NDCC is a critical component of the Corridor’s expected long-term success.

Since its founding in May 2013, the NDCC Projects Office has focused on planning integration and deliberate connections among six unique projects that are playing a significant role in rebuilding and reconnecting our neighborhoods to the rest of the City. I encourage you to keep reading for more information.

Kelly Leid and I are humbled to lead the NDCC with a great team of professionals and a vibrant community that is passionate about its future. Councilwoman Judy Montero’s commitment to this part of the city is unmatched, and her efforts have laid a strong foundation that has helped us move forward. Our common desire for community engagement, transparency, and creative thinking will help rebuild a connected community and reenergize a gateway to downtown Denver.

Our work has just begun, but I am optimistic about what we will accomplish together in 2014. Wishing you and your family a prosperous 2014 and may the accrued benefits of collaboration and our unwavering spirit guide our important, community-building work.

Respectfully,

Michael B. Hancock
Mayor

Kelly Leid
NDCC Project Manager
NDCC at a Glance: Six Projects – One Vision

**Neighborhood Plans**

Ensuring that the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhood plans are aligned with each other and that the future plans support the needs of a diverse set of historic communities.

**National Western Center**

In partnership with the National Western Stock Show, Colorado State University, Denver Museum of Nature & Science, History Colorado and the City & County of Denver, this major “placemaking” reinvestment project will focus on creating a unique, year-round destination centered on education, economic development, tourism and entertainment.

**Brighton Boulevard Corridor**

Overseeing the effective public infrastructure and urban design improvements to this critical boulevard and continuing the momentum of reinvestment that is beginning to emerge and energize this gateway between Downtown Denver, I-70 and the National Western Center.

**River North (RiNo)**

Reclaiming the river via greenway enhancements is an essential component to the future of RiNo. This project also focuses on improving multi-modal transportation and identifying sustainable development opportunities.

**I-70 East Reconstruction**

Collaborating with the Colorado Department of Transportation and area stakeholders are key components to ensuring smart improvements are made to I-70 between Colorado and Brighton Boulevards that will help reconnect Denver neighborhoods.
NDCC Accomplishments 2013

New Internal Organization Builds Collaboration – In early 2013, Mayor Michael B. Hancock appointed Kelly Leid as the NDCC Project Manager and the establishment of the NDCC Projects Office as a key initiative of the Mayor and his administration. With a small NDCC team in place by late summer, intentional cross agency efforts were strengthened between Community Planning & Development, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Office of Economic Development among other agencies. To date, approximately 60 City staff members are working on NDCC projects at any given moment and preliminary funding was identified to help support initial planning efforts. Collaboration is the driving factor in accomplishing a robust and assertive schedule of projects over the next decade and beyond.

Master Project Schedule Defined – In partnership with internal and external project teams, a master plan milestone schedule was developed to guide the future work of the NDCC for years to come. This road map drives timeliness, accountability and provides shared strategies for existing and new public/private partnerships that will drive aligned project planning, design and implementation.

Foundation Created for Community Outreach Efforts – The NDCC launched several community outreach channels to distribute project updates and information to the neighborhoods and interested stakeholders. A new website portal provides project highlights with direct links to project specific websites, listings of public meetings, media stories and other relevant information and documents related to the NDCC. In addition, a monthly eNews and bilingual newsletter was established giving residents and the general public easy access to the NDCC efforts through diverse channels. Since the launch of the eNews report, hundreds of people have signed up to receive the monthly update. A road show also kicked off providing organizations, businesses, schools and other interested parties an overview of the NDCC’s vision. Over the course of the six months the NDCC Projects Office was up and running, nearly 50 public presentations were conducted to share

Working with the Regional Transportation District and city agencies to coordinate the planning and implementation of the new East, North and Gold Rail Lines that will connect downtown to the National Western Stock Show, Denver International Airport and the entire Front Range.
this unique and historic opportunity. Last, the NDCC began hosting interactive quarterly town hall meetings showcasing all six projects and giving the community the opportunity to share their concerns and recommendations with project team members and decision makers.

Established Open Dialogue with Local, Statewide & Federal Policy Makers – Throughout 2013, the NDCC worked closely with Councilwoman Judy Montero and other Denver City Council members to create a platform for information sharing of all six projects. The importance of these projects to the rest of the city also reinforced the need to establish consistent communication channels with other state and federal policy makers to keep all parties connected to the progress of the NDCC.

Partnerships Formed to Recreate the National Western Stock Show and Other NDCC Projects – This past summer, the National Western Stock Show, Colorado State University, the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, History Colorado and the City solidified their partnership to turn the National Western Complex and Coliseum site into an all year round destination. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, each partner committed to developing a strong sustainable program that will focus on education, economic development and tourism/entertainment. Beyond the NWSS project, the NDCC began to build a growing network of public, private and nonprofit partnerships to help advance the best thinking and implementation across these projects.

Residents Help Jump Start National Western Center Planning - Upon the creation of the National Western Center’s Memorandum of Understanding, the partners turned to the community to jump start the plan. The National Western Center Advisory Committee (NWCAC) was formed to create a forum for education and discussion on major issues related to the National Western Center. The NWCAC consists of nearly 30 stakeholders and began meeting monthly in 2013.

Announcement of Brighton Boulevard’s Preferred Cross Section – After months of public input, the Brighton Boulevard project team announced a set of preferred schematic cross sections for the corridor in December 2013. The selected cross sections for the character areas accommodate all modes of travel; dedicate spaces for street trees along the corridor and other community amenities such as public art. It also allows a phased approach for implementation that minimizes cost and maximizes opportunities for cohesive implementation to occur.

35/36th Pedestrian Bridge Preliminary Preferred Alternative Determined - In mid-December, the City selected a preferred alternative for the new bike and pedestrian bridge with public feedback that will span over the railroad tracks near 35th Street to connect Blake Street and Wazee Street on the City’s northeast side. A community process helped guide the decision and can be viewed by visiting denvergov.org/35-36bridge.
Private Development Continues to Energize RiNo – With the NDCC’s efforts to energize the river and River North’s established art district; it’s no surprise that developers want to take part in Denver’s next hip and trendy place. This year, RiNo has welcomed The Source and has been busy planning for new developments such The Great Divide and Industry among others.

Neighborhood Plans Guide Future – While the Globeville neighborhood plan continued to evolve in 2013, the residents of Elyria and Swansea began their journey to create a plan for their unique neighborhood. Residents prioritized housing, mobility, land use, environmental sustainability, and historic legacies to create a new vision for their neighborhood. With the changing conditions of the neighborhoods, residents identified opportunities and made recommendations to reconnect their neighborhoods and rebuild a mixed-use community.

City Enhances CDOT’s I-70 East Recommendations & Helps Strengthen Partnership – In 2013, the City provided an enhanced version of the Partial Cover Lowered Alternative identified by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Through the work of the City’s urban design consultant Ron Straka, the enhanced cover can stitch the neighborhoods back together and provide community space for Swansea Elementary School. In addition, the city is also began exploring a second cover at the Vasquez /Steele interchange which could provide new affordable housing and commercial amenities options based on resident and business input. The City’s proposed enhancements will be included in the Supplemental Draft EIS in 2014. CDOT and the City began hosting joint public meetings to present the preferred alternatives and garner feedback that will help complete the Supplemental Draft EIS.

North Metro Rail Line Contractor Selected – In late 2013, RTD approved a $343 million contract award to build North Metro Rail line to 124th Avenue. Formerly known as Graham, Balfour Beatty, Hamon Constructors (GBBH), the new Regional Rail Partners is committed to designing and building the rail line by early 2018. This 18.5 mile electric commuter rail line will run from Denver Union Station into Adams County and will include a key stop at the National Western Center, which will help create easier, year-round access to the complex.

2014 at a Glance – Work Plan

NDCC Project Funding – The NDCC will aggressively explore private/public partnerships to further projects in the corridor. To that end, a new NDCC Finance Committee is expected to launch in early 2014, and will consist of internal and external stakeholders, to help jump start this effort and will creatively consider all funding options to ensure projects become a reality. Over the course of 2014,
the finance committee will make recommendations to the Mayor through the NDCC Projects Office, aligning NDCC project needs and timing.

**Release of Supplemental Draft for Reconstruction of I-70** – During the summer of 2014, CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration will release the Supplemental Draft EIS to the public with a formal 45 day comment period. Next, CDOT will work toward releasing the Final EIS followed by a Record of Decision.

**Design Work** – This coming year, our teams will work on design elements for River North and Brighton Boulevard that will support the community’s previous input and recommendations. The intent is to align key project components to maximize synergies and advance design far enough that will allow for a growing list of “shovel ready” projects as public and private partnership funding sources become available.

**Short Term Improvements** – The NDCC will work with stakeholders to identify short term milestones along Brighton Boulevard and other NDCC projects as design work continues across all six projects. Whether temporary or permanent, the goal of shared early milestones is to continue building important momentum in the region as we collectively work together towards the fulfillment of the larger, more complex projects.

**Neighborhood Plans** - After a diligent community effort to create a vision for Globeville, its neighborhood plan will be completed in 2014. Upon City Council’s review, the plan will be adopted for future use. By the end of 2014, Elyria-Swansea residents will be closer to completing their vision for the neighborhood.

**National Western Center Master Planner to Be Selected** – The National Western Center partners will announce the master planner that will provide planning and technical services to lead the Center’s Master Plan efforts in early 2014. In partnership with the NWCAC, the master planner will have a preferred master plan by the end of the year.

**Multi-modal Transportation Efforts Continue** – RTD will continue advancing its construction plans for the East Rail Line and Gold Line. The North Metro Rail Line will begin preparations to break ground on March 20, 2014. The City will continue working with RTD on the transit oriented development opportunities surrounding the stations.

**Community Involvement** – The NDCC team will enhance outreach efforts in 2014 to ensure residents and other interested parties stay connected and informed of progress and any new developments pertaining to the NDCC. In addition, the NDCC will establish channels for community support that will help build sustainability and maintain the neighborhood’s diversity. Quarterly NDCC Town Hall Meetings will continue to be a forum that provides information and encourages feedback and engagement for all six projects.