

CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
MEETING DATE: April 7, 2009

AGENDA TITLE: Consideration of a motion to accept the March 10, 2009 Study Session Summary on the Boulder Transit Village: Concept and Site Planning Project

PRESENTER/S: Jane S. Brautigam, City Manager
Stephanie A. Grainger Deputy City Manager
Maureen Rait, Executive Director of Public Works
Michael Gardner-Sweeney, Acting Director of Public Works for
Transportation
Martha Roskowski, GO Boulder Manager
Randall Rutsch, Senior Transportation Planner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This agenda item provides a summary of the March 10, 2009 City Council Study Session on work to date for the Boulder Transit Village (BTV): Concept and Site Planning Project. The study session was intended to update the council on existing constraints affecting the site, design work done for the transit facility prior to concept plan review by the Planning Board on Nov. 13, 2008 and the additional work done by the design team in response to comments from the Planning Board. The key question for council consideration was whether to proceed with the project into site design based on the "RTD Acceptable Alternative."

Attached is a summary of council's discussion of the issues and questions that were presented at the study session.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the summary from the March 10, 2009 Study Session Summary for the Boulder Transit Village: Concept and Site Planning Project included with this agenda item as **Attachment A**.

Suggested Motion Language:

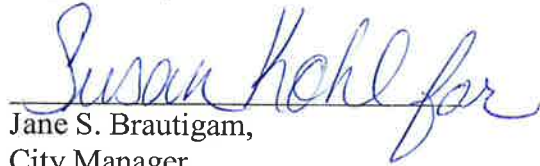
Staff requests council consideration of this summary and action in the form of the following motion:

Motion to accept the study session summary from March 10, 2009 included in this agenda item as **Attachment A**.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff and the design team will be moving into the site design process. A check-in with council will be scheduled at the 30 percent design point when initial cost estimates are available and options have been explored for addressing the design concerns of council. The check-in will allow council to prioritize areas of spending to address these concerns.

Approved by:



Jane S. Brautigam,
City Manager

Attachment:

- A. – March 10, 2009 for the Boulder Transit Village: Concept and Site Planning Project Study Session Summary

**March 10, 2009 Boulder Transit Village:
Concept and Site Planning Project**

Study Session Summary

PRESENT:

City Council: Suzy Ageton, Mayor Matthew Appelbaum, Macon Cowles, Angelique Espinoza, Deputy Mayor Crystal Gray, Lisa Morzel, Susan Osborne, Ken Wilson

Planning Board Members: William Holicky and Philip Shull

Staff members: Michelle Allen, Jane S. Brautigam, David Driskeil, Stephanie A. Grainger, Louise Grauer, Ruth McHeyser, Elaine McLaughlin, Karen Rahn, Robert Ray, Martha Roskowski, Maureen Rait, Susan Richstone, Randall Rutsch, Mike Sweeney,

PURPOSE

This study session briefed the council on:

- The alternatives developed in 2008 and the "RTD Acceptable Alternative" presented to the Planning Board on Nov. 13, 2008.
- Work conducted in response to the Planning Board concept plan review on Nov. 13, 2008, including an additional layout developed in response to Planning Board comments.

Council was asked to provide direction to RTD and city staff on whether to proceed with the design process and ultimately to site review with the "RTD Acceptable Alternative" as the first phase of development on the RTD owned site.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

The presentation was made by Senior Transportation Planner Randall Rutsch, Executive Planning Director Ruth McHeyser, EDAW Design Consultant Rhonda Bell, and Bill Sirois, manager of Transit Oriented Development for RTD. Following the introduction, Ms. McHeyser discussed the overall vision of the Transit Village Area Plan (TVAP) and how the Boulder Transit Village (BTV) implements the TVAP vision, particularly with the construction of the first segment of Junction Place. Mr. Rutsch then outlined a brief history of the project, its goals and also highlighted the strong partnership with RTD that has been in place since the 1990s.

Rhonda Bell provided an overview of the technical design work conducted for the project, including:

- The RTD transit program and city desires that need to be accommodated
- Existing constraints of the site affecting the design alternatives, including; the fixed intersection of Junction Place with Pearl Parkway; the alignment of Junction Place; the location of the historic depot; and, the elevation of the Junction Place Bridge over Goose Creek.

- The different orientations explored for the bus facility in the concept plan alternatives and the issues with each.
- Work undertaken in response to Planning Board concerns from the concept plan review, including analysis of the potential for an underground bus facility requested by the Planning Board and a new 'L' option developed by staff to provide a structure on the corner of Pearl Street and Junction Place
- Opportunities for future phases of development on the site and comments on housing integration and the historic depot.

Bill Sirois, RTD, concluded with comments from the RTD perspective. He noted the strength of the partnership on this project and RTD's willingness to accommodate city concerns within the limitations of the site and the grant. RTD is open to shared parking arrangements with the historic depot and is flexible on future phases of development on the site, though this development would likely need to be funded by other sources.

COUNCIL RESPONSES TO STUDY SESSION QUESTIONS:

The study session memo provided three questions for council and three options on ways to respond to the "RTD Acceptable Alternative." The following questions were provided for council consideration:

1. *Do you agree with the "opportunities and consequences" analysis of the proposed Options to Proceed as presented in Section XI? Does council and Planning Board have any additional comments or observations?*
2. *Given the project funding and timing and RTD's willingness to work with the city to ensure flexibility for future phased development of the RTD property, should staff move forward with the "RTD Acceptable Alternative" into site design work and the site review process?*
3. *Do you have additional input for staff regarding working with RTD and the consultant team to address immediate and future design concerns?*

Council comments relative to each question are listed below.

1. *Do you agree with the "opportunities and consequences" analysis of the proposed Options to Proceed as presented in Section XI? Does council and Planning Board have any additional comments or observations?*

There were no specific additions to the analysis. Both council members and the two Planning Board members present expressed disappointment that there were no other viable options but understood the constraints and the need to meet the transit operational requirements. A number of council members expressed concern with the potential movement of the railroad ROW and the resulting impacts. A specific concern was whether movement of the railroad ROW would preclude a parking structure.

2. *Given the project funding and timing and RTD's willingness to work with the city to ensure flexibility for future phased development of the RTD property, should staff move forward with the RTD Acceptable Alternative into site design work and the site review process?*

While council had a number of concerns and desires for improvements, they broadly endorsed moving forward into site design with the "RTD Acceptable Alternative." Some members felt that it was time to begin making city investments in the area and that the city needed to honor the long standing commitment to bring transit service to the area. Some council members expressed the sentiment that development of the transit facility is also key to the larger regional picture of transit, where the city needs to be seen by our regional partners as supporting transit. Members also recognized the value of the infrastructure that will be installed with the development of the bus based facility for accessing the historic depot and supporting development on the Housing Division owned site. Council members recognized that previous decisions have constrained the site, but that there are many opportunities to make the facility a special place within these constraints. They suggested the active participation by the public sector to include a focus on public art, sustainable and ecological design, and energy efficiency.

Council asked for a mid-point check in during the site design process once there were initial cost estimates. This would update council on efforts relevant to their concerns and allow them to prioritize where dollars should be spent relative to these concerns. Mayor Appelbaum summarized the sense of council as approving the "RTD Acceptable Alternative" to move forward into site design, but that council has a lot of specific design concerns to soften the suburban feel of the alternative. Council expects these concerns to be taken seriously and felt that progress in addressing them would help the project enormously.

3. *Do you have additional input for staff regarding working with RTD and the consultant team to address immediate and future design concerns?*

As noted above, council has serious design concerns, particularly in the area of reducing the suburban look of the bus facility and creating an interesting, pedestrian friendly distinctive place. Specific requests and concerns from the discussion are listed below:

- Clearly define pedestrian movements through and to the facility, and to the depot and Housing Division sites. Pedestrian movement to and from the transit stop on Pearl Street is not currently defined. Should include raised crosswalks to help define the pedestrian space.
- Define the edge on Pearl Street in a way that is distinctive and interesting for pedestrians and passing vehicle drivers. The facility needs to have a presence on Pearl Street even in this first phase of development. This can be addressed with art and design.
- Explore opportunities for other uses that will add interest, such as passenger serving retail. These could be in small footprint buildings or in mobile carts, and we should look at examples like the Plaza in Kansas City for creative ideas.
- Consider using different textures and types of pavement as design features to add interest and define areas of activity.

- Ensure a future parking structure at the location of the surface parking lot. Incorporate design and construction considerations associated with the future parking structure (foundation locations, access, etc.)
- Want the facility as sustainable, green and energy efficient as possible. Explore new and better ways of doing things and use the site to set an environmental tone for the rest of TVAP. Use recycled materials and strategies like bio-swales where possible.
- Pursue shared parking for the Historic Depot.
- Investigate opportunities for special events space on the site, potentially associated with the depot.
- Articulate and provide definition to the southeast corner to recognize the importance of Pearl Street and the end point of its sight corridor.
- Make this place as good as it can be.