

Creating a Sustainable and Inclusive Neighborhood

Based on the Denver region's plan for growth, which included transportation as a core element, the Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) developed FasTracks, an ambitious transit expansion plan. The FasTracks plan proposed nine new or extended rail lines, more than 55 new stations, bus rapid transit, and enhancements to existing bus and rail service across the eight-county region. The business community, local governments, environmental groups, and others supported FasTracks as a way to make the Denver region more livable, affordable, and economically competitive. Investing in this new infrastructure would attract jobs and support new business growth, while the expanded transit would reduce traffic congestion and pollution. In 2004, voters approved a ballot measure to fund FasTracks through a regional sales tax.

FasTracks' new transit corridors and stations present the Denver region with many opportunities for transit-oriented development—walkable neighborhoods near transit stations that make it easy for people to visit, live, or work nearby without having to drive. After FasTracks passed, local jurisdictions began planning transit-oriented development on land near both existing and planned stations and formed partnerships with



The Tapiz Apartments are a HUD-owned senior housing complex in La Alma/Lincoln Park. The building features a mural by a local artist. Photo courtesy of EPA.



“The Partnership provided excitement around the issue of collaborative planning across disciplines. Without it, we wouldn't have been able to attract decision-makers to the table in the areas where we had gaps to fill (energy, stormwater, and transportation). With the decision-makers participating in the visioning and implementation exercises, we were able to actually take the plans and make them a reality. This is, I believe, due to the Partnership's oversight.”

—Kimball Crangle, Senior Developer,
Denver Housing Authority

property owners, developers, and neighborhood leaders. The La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood hosts one of many redevelopment efforts now underway.

The Power of Partnership

La Alma/Lincoln Park, just south of downtown, is one of Denver's oldest neighborhoods. Located next to the 10th & Osage transit station, it has a distinctive identity as a culturally diverse community with a long tradition of valuing the arts. The neighborhood is attractive for reinvestment because of its proximity to transit, many nearby amenities, and active involvement by residents. The Denver Housing Authority (DHA) owns an aging residential development near the station. Next to both the DHA parcel and the transit station were two undeveloped parcels with minor contamination. Seizing the opportunity to transform the vacant parcels and the DHA site, the city and county of Denver, DHA, and RTD formed a partnership to create a new vision for what would become the Mariposa District.

To ensure that the character and quality of the Mariposa development would fit the community's needs and values, more than 120 community meetings and group interviews were held with residents, community leaders, city agencies, businesses, and local government representatives.

Community members outlined their vision for the redevelopment, which included buildings and services that met the community's needs, economic self-sufficiency, more jobs and job training, homes affordable to people at various income levels, safety and security, more education opportunities, enhancing residents' health, and fostering a strong sense of community. The result of this intensive community engagement was a master plan that would guide the redevelopment by looking at the neighborhood as a whole, rather than parcel by parcel. Based on this vision, the parcels were purchased by the city and county of Denver from the Regional Transportation District in 2007 and then assessed and cleaned up with funding from EPA brownfield grants to the city.

State and local officials asked the Partnership for Sustainable Communities to support their plans. In 2009, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson [visited to kick off the work](#).

The Mariposa redevelopment shows how the three agencies are working together and with the community. Funding from the EPA Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization and HUD funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act helped make construction of the 100-unit Tapiz Apartments possible, providing affordable homes for seniors and disabled people. The redevelopment project was a [Sustainable Communities Brownfields Pilot](#), under which the Partnership organized three workshops that brought together community representatives, residents of DHA housing, city agencies, EPA, HUD, and DOT to develop more detailed implementation plans around specific issues like transportation, energy efficiency, and green infrastructure. A [2011 HUD](#)

[HOPE VI](#) grant helped fund further implementation activities, including an environmentally friendly and health-conscious design for Mariposa. New construction will use 50 percent less energy than comparable conventional buildings, and Mariposa will incorporate green infrastructure to handle stormwater. "Mixed-income housing, a healthy living environment, and transportation choices are essential ingredients of sustainability. The Mariposa community has all of these elements and is a great example of how housing policies can improve communities," says HUD Regional Administrator Rick Garcia.

DOT funds helped make the 10th & Osage station more accessible for people with disabilities and increased the frequency of train service, better connecting La Alma/Lincoln Park to other parts of Denver. The Mariposa redevelopment can be a model for transit-oriented development around the new stations built under FasTracks. When complete, Mariposa will feature better access to a range of transportation choices and will replace old, dilapidated public housing with more than 800 units of mixed-income housing, maintaining the same number of affordable units on the site and creating new homes at a variety of price points. The extensive community involvement has helped ensure that the neighborhood will preserve its character and sense of place while creating opportunities to bring in new residents and businesses.

This case study appears in *Three Years of Helping Communities Achieve Their Visions for Growth and Prosperity*, a report of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, June 2012. Learn more about the Partnership at www.sustainablecommunities.gov.

