

Building Healthy Places

*Workshops on healthy solutions
for the built environment.*

**Workshop #3: Highway 287 Corridor
Loveland, Colorado**

April 2, 2015



- I) Overview
- II) What's the problem with 287?
- III) Findings: Challenges and Opportunities
- IV) Recommendations
- V) What's Next?
- VI) Appendix: Panel bios, Stakeholders, and Acknowledgments



I. Overview



In 2012, the Colorado Health Foundation and the Urban Land Institute, a 501-c-3 nonprofit membership organization dedicated to best practices in land use, launched the Building Healthy Places Initiative. The initiative links alarming health factors – particularly obesity and related diseases – to the physical design of communities that discourages active lifestyles, while limiting access to healthy food. This is especially a problem in lower-income areas where residents may not be able to afford health clubs, youth sports leagues, or shopping at Whole Foods. Active living, healthy food, access to nature, and a strong sense of community are not a luxury and must be embedded in or near their neighborhoods.

The initiative seeks to make an impact in specific areas including:

- Active living: Buildings and community design that encourages walking, cycling, play and other physical activity as part of everyday life
- Access to healthy food. Many communities lack a local market that sells fresh food, farmers market, or community gardens. High-calorie, low-cost fast food is a cheaper alternative
- Healthy buildings that are energy efficient, have good indoor air quality, and invite access to natural light and fresh air
- Access to parks and natural areas
- A safe public environment essential for active living, community gardens, playgrounds, and other outdoor activities
- A strong sense of community to foster social and mental health

In 2013, ULI and CHF studied three Colorado communities – Arvada, Lamar and the Westwood neighborhood of Denver—to recommend physical improvements. Later that year, ULI Colorado—the 1,100-member District Council of the international ULI—received a \$10,000 grant from the ULI Foundation to work with another two Colorado communities in a new program of Building Healthy Places Workshops. This resulted in studies of Lake Creek Village in Edwards, Colorado, and the 40th and Colorado FasTracks station area in Denver (reports available on request).

In 2014, the Colorado Health Foundation awarded a grant to ULI Colorado to study two more communities. Through a competitive application process, a selection committee chose applications from Loveland and Pueblo for BHP workshops taking place in Spring 2015.



Katie Guthrie holds a new ULI publication, "Building Healthy Places." Photo taken during the panelists tour of Highway 287.



730 17th Street #750
Denver, CO 80202

P: (303)893-1760
E: Colorado@uli.org

<http://colorado.uli.org>

“We started calling Loveland the City of Gardens and Art. This should be celebrated in everything you do. We think art should be a big part of the improvements on 287. This defines the city and really separates Loveland from any other city.” – Chris Dunn, ULI panel chair



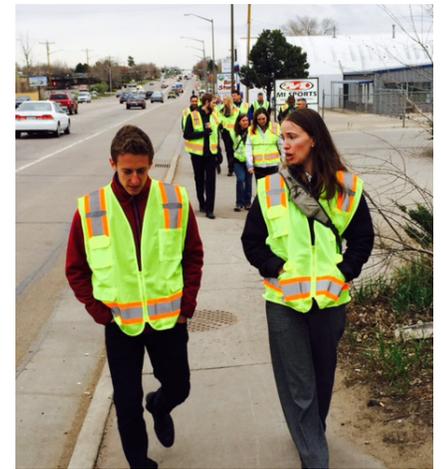
Artworks from Loveland's Benson Sculpture Park. The panel discussed using art to brand 287 as a gateway.

A tour of this section of arterial road neatly summarized the issue. Simply to stroll down this stretch, ULI volunteers and stakeholders had to don bright reflective safety vests while walking on a highway shoulder as vehicles sped by. They walked past a mixed-bag of fairly active retail, vacant lots, used-car lots, and fraying signs.

Katie Guthrie of CanDo said that when she takes schoolchildren on this tour, they often ask, “Who made this place this way?” The answer is no one did intentionally. The corridor evolved haphazardly with little thought to pedestrians, cyclists or transit riders. The corridor also includes low-income residences, the elderly and nonprofits providing social services—two populations who tend not to drive.

The community identified four major areas of concern:

1. Walkable/bikeable access to goods and services (especially for vulnerable populations)
2. Public safety
3. Connectivity between neighborhoods, commercial areas, schools, parks, and transit
4. Safe access to play spaces



Panelists Max Gibson and Angela Loder touring corridor.



Looking for solutions, the ULI panel studied an advance packet of background information, toured 287 and worked with local officials and residents for a daylong workshop at Orchards North on Thursday, April 2. The volunteer panel included experts in real estate development, transportation planning, traffic engineering, landscape architecture, urban planning, and public health.



ULI Colorado Panelists hard at work! Left: Chris Dunn and Emily Gloeckner; right: Max Gibson.

The guest ULI panel identified the following general barriers to addressing these issues:

1. Design of adjacent suburban neighborhoods where streets and paths do not connect to destinations except by car travel
2. Little incentive for new private investment in commercial areas that could transform them from “auto-oriented” to “pedestrian-friendly”
3. Adjacent right-of-way may not be wide enough to add detached sidewalks and paths
4. Not enough public funding to “fix” all this infrastructure at once

“Touchstone has two offices for family services but there is nowhere for families to go along 287. Most of our families are in or near poverty; also a lot of veterans. Most get here by bus walk bike, usually from the transit center.”— Chris Fine, Development Specialist, Touchstone Health Partners

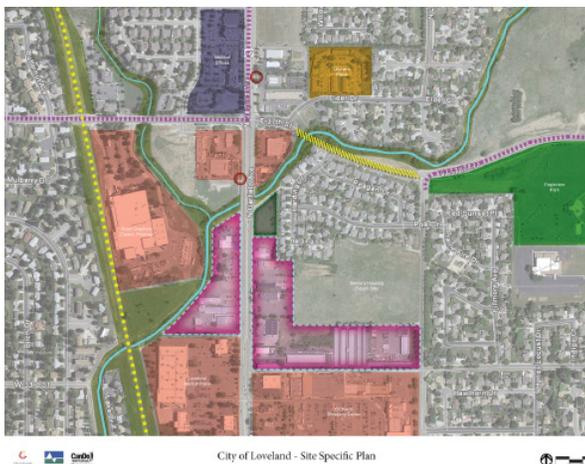


Panelist Greg Dorolek's overlay sketch.

“I see gaps that are technical but not daunting. Our panel could supply a vision but you have to figure out how to fund it. You’ve got \$13 million of need and \$100,000 a year to spend ... Are there stormwater funds, CDOT, ditch funds that can be applied?”—Greg Dorolek, ULI panelist

Challenges:

- Corridor has “retail fatigue”—too much commercial zoning for the amount of vitality that local residents and drive-by can support
- There is low demand for new development or redevelopment in the corridor
- Most residents leave Loveland to go to work, which reduces local retail opportunities
- This will intensify with major retail developments underway in Fort Collins and Longmont
- The corridor lacks both an identity and sense of place
- There is little safe, appealing connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods. Kids can’t walk or bike to school and residents can’t reach the nearby supermarket and other services without car



Current land use plan shows little connectivity between neighborhoods and 287.

- As a result, local populations (low-income and children for example) are “vulnerable” to more health issues without access to fresh food and active living
- The border of the 287 right of way lacks room to add full tree lawns and detached sidewalks that are continuous
- There is no obvious funding for a project to improve 287

Opportunities:

“Start looking at idea of Lincoln as having a more pedestrian character. It would still have autos on it but would be prioritized for pedestrians and bikes. As it connects with 287, it creates an opportunity for a monumental gateway featuring sculpture.”

—Christopher A. Smith, Colorado Health Foundation



“You can add room for pedestrians and bicycles while maintaining four lanes of vehicle travel on 287.”

—Emily Gloeckner

- Loveland has a great identity based on its geography, foundries, public art, galleries and art festivals



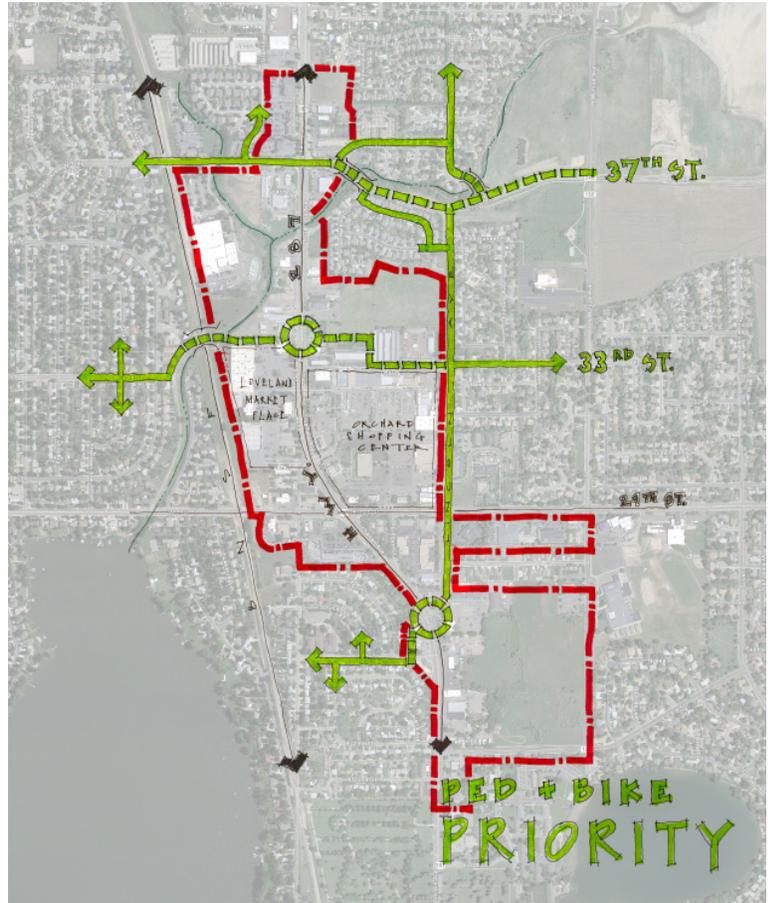
- This “brand” can be extended to other parts of the city including the 287 study area
- Benson Sculpture Park is essentially “full” and the city continues to purchase 3-5 new sculptures a year
- The corridor is well-positioned as a “gateway” to Loveland’s historic downtown and to the Big Thompson corridor
- Adjacent streets can be upgraded as pedestrian-bikeways that connect residential neighborhoods to retail services
- Highway 287 itself has the capacity to be redesigned with public art, dedicated bike/ped-ways, and landscaped medians
- Strategic rezoning (particularly at 37th Street) and new streetscapes may encourage new residential “infill” development

“29th Street at 287 is primed to be a gateway. The two-block space as a dead zone is really a disservice to the city.”
 —Max Gibson, ULI panelist

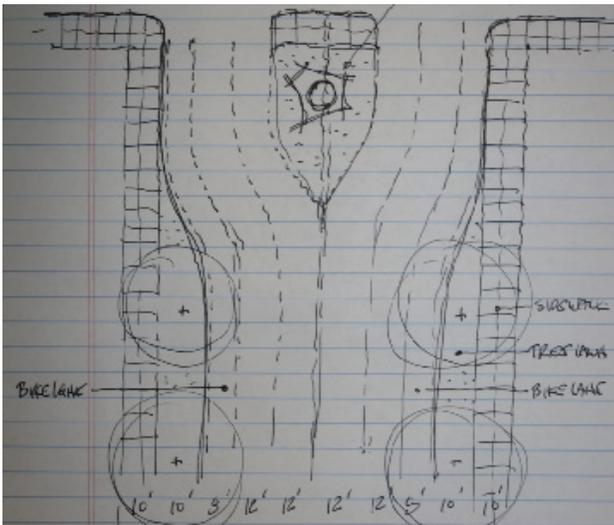
A) General recommendations:

1. Plan a north-south, east-west ped-bike network linking specific destinations. The panel identified five schools, six parks, lower-income communities, the transit center, bus stops, retail and medical amenities, the Benson Sculpture Park, and open space.

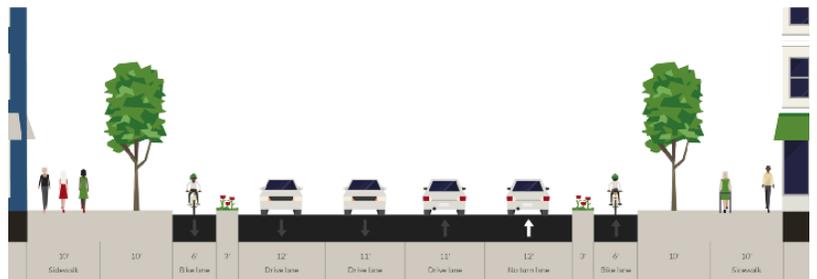
2. Open discussions with CDOT on improving this section of 287. Using the panel’s schematic designs and precedents from other communities, advocate for pedestrian and bicycle improvements that maintain level of service and traffic flow. This can be achieved, for example, without reducing the number of auto traffic lanes.



The panel’s schematic design for new connections for bikes and pedestrians.



Pictured above and right are traffic and streetscape schematics, provided by panelist Emily Gloeckner. These show an alternative road that provides ped and bike routes without compromising the number of lanes.



3. Begin exploring funding partnerships including Federal grants, DOLA, Colorado Health Foundation, LiveWell, Mile High Connects.

4. Begin exploring such public funding alternatives such as Tax-Increment Finance, Enterprise Zones, CDOT funding (examples in Boulder and Fort Collins), public art funding.

5. Begin negotiating for potential rights-of-way (along ditches and rail tracks, for example), to create important links for non-vehicular travel.

B) Specific recommendations for the Redesign of 287:

“When you slow cars down, the value of adjacent land goes up. All the places in the world where the traffic slows down have the highest land value. Highway 287 today is designed to help people in Loveland to leave and go shopping in Fort Collins.” – Jeff Bedard, ULI panelist

“Make a distinction between recreational and commuter paths. I don’t know many women who would go down a dark path at night to go the grocery store.”—Angela Loder, ULI panelist

“We surveyed kids and they would rather be on a separate path on a busy road rather than a separate, out-of-site path.” – Shelley Aschenbrenner, Staff Engineer, City of Loveland

1. “Brand” the corridor using strategically placed public art purchased through an existing city program.
2. Use public art and landscaping to create gateways to the corridor and other Loveland destinations.
3. Repurpose the overly wide shoulders and acceleration/deceleration lanes as dedicated and safe sidewalks and bike trails, including landscapes “tree lawn” buffers from the main roadway (see diagram below left).



4. Reduce the length of left-turn “suicide” lanes to make room for landscaped medians (see upper diagram).
5. Create dedicated “bicycle boulevards” (also for peds) bike-pedestrian ways along 33rd, 37th to link residents to the Orchard Shopping Center, Loveland Marketplace and other amenities.
6. Explore the possibility of using part of the BNSF right of way as a bike-ped path (provides a North-South link).
7. Explore the possibility of a trail, connections and open space with the private owners of the Dry Creek canal that crosses 287 near Orchards North housing.

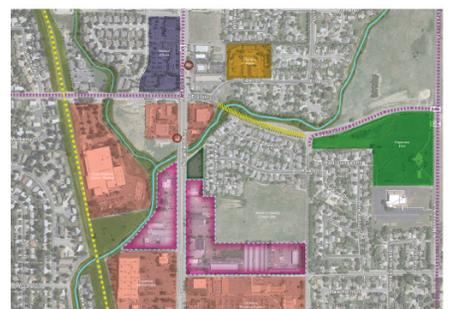
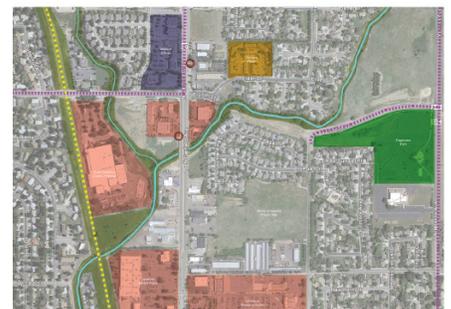
“Some streets that cross 287 can become what we call Bicycle Boulevards. You combine these streets with traffic calming elements. Vehicles might not be able to get through at every intersection but families can.”
—Emily Gloeckner, ULI panelist

Specific land use recommendations:

“Some of these deeper lots along 287 could be ideal for multifamily, which would bring more people to live near the shopping and services.”
—Loveland stakeholder

1. Rezone the odd-shaped parcel just north of Loveland Marketplace encourage private investment, potentially in residential development.
2. Rededicate the vacant land bordered by Dry Creek, Harding Drive and auto-oriented stores as a public open space and sculpture garden.

Pictured above right is the existing zoning. Below is the recommendation for the area, north of Loveland Market Place to be re-zoned.



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It is important that the Loveland leadership and community act on the momentum of this initiative and workshop. Achieving a long-term vision is hard, but getting started is fairly easy.

Sample first steps:

- Find a champion (elected official, property owner or neighborhood resident) to advocate for change
- Appoint a citizen task force to study the recommendations and take them to the next level of detail and action
- Schedule a City Council presentation to present the Workshop findings and recommendations
- Begin thinking about a Pilot Project: What strategic redevelopment or streetscape improvement in the corridor would point the way toward a positive transformation of the entire corridor? How might this be funded?
- Pick a project that is fundable and will produce attractive, dramatic and highly visible results, even on a small scale

“We’ve been here for six hours, but you can take the next step; for example, start identifying what these improvements will cost.”

—Emily Gloeckner, ULI panelist



Christopher Smith of Colorado Health Foundation works with panelists Angela Loder and Emily Gloeckner.

Vi. Appendix

Stakeholder Interviews:

City of Loveland

Alison Hade, Administrator, Community Partnership Office

Karl Barton, Planner, Community & Strategic Planning

Mike Jacobsen, Civil Engineer/Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, Public Works

Shelley Aschenbrenner, Civil Engineer/Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Public Works

Christopher Barnes, Interim Transit Manager, Public Works

Elected and Appointed Officials

Michele Fenwick-Forrest, Planning Commission

Joan Schaffer, Ward II Loveland City Councilor and 287 Coalition Member

Others

Sam Betters, Executive Director, Loveland Housing Authority

Kelly Burwell, Obesity Prevention Coordinator, CanDo Loveland

Bruce Croissant, Citizen Advocate

Edgar Dominguez, Equity Coordinator, Vida Sana/CanDo Loveland

Chris Fine, Development Specialist, Touchstone Health Partners

Megan Moore, 287 Strategic Plan Project Manager, Logan Simpson Design

Kelly Robenhagen, Advisor, Project Self-Sufficiency

Dixie Schmatz, Citizen Advocate

Jake Schuch, EIT II, Colorado Department of Transportation

Panelist Bios:



Jeff Bedard
Founder, New Providence Company

Jeff heads a mixed-use builder developer of residential, retail and office projects in high-density urban locations. He currently works with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to help create sustainable, net-zero energy communities. Previously Jeff was a partner with Continuum Partners responsible for land acquisition, entitlements, permitting, project management, design, construction, sales and financing for over \$300 million of development.



Greg Dorolek
Principal & Project Manager, Wenk Associates

Greg is a talented designer with experience in the planning and design of urban redevelopment including stormwater gardens, streetscapes, parks, trails and green infrastructure. He has a Bachelor of landscape Architecture from the University of Georgia and completed his Master of Landscape Architecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.



Chris Dunn (panel chair)
Principal, Dunn & Kiley Landscape Architects

Chris is a Colorado landscape architect and urban designer with experience in master planning and detailed design for resort, civic, retail and residential environments worldwide. His 35 years of professional practice have culminated in enduring solutions for complex and environmentally challenged development projects in Colorado, North America, Asia and the Middle East.



Max Gibson
Jefferson County Public Health

Max has eight years of experience in improving health outcomes of fringe communities as both a medical worker and a field guide. His specialties include stakeholder engagement, land use policy analysis, and community resilience development. Mr. Gibson's dual master's degrees in Public Health and Urban & Regional Planning address today's most important health issues: healthy eating, active living, and hazard mitigation.



Emily Gloeckner
Civil Engineer, Fehr & Peers

Emily's professional experience incorporates multi-modal analysis in all the work that she does, including the analysis of pedestrians, bicycles, transit and traffic on roadway systems. She has extensive experience with the design and layout of bicycle, pedestrian connections and routes, roadway design, signing and striping, signal systems, traffic operational analysis, and traffic forecasting.



Angela Loder
Strategic Planner, Jefferson County Health

Angela is a researcher and strategic planner whose work looks at sustainable urban form, health, and nature. She looks at how healthy buildings can be integrated with ecological city and planning objectives; how building design and access to nature impacts stress, concentration, and creativity; and what kind of interdisciplinary collaboration is needed to move health in buildings forward.



Christopher Smith
Colorado Health Foundation

As a member of the foundation's Healthy Living outcome team, Christopher works closely with the Portfolio Director of Healthy Living and other members of the philanthropy and evaluation teams achieve the Foundation's mission. Responsibilities include program management, implementation and leadership of strategic initiatives. Chris holds master's degrees in architecture and public administration from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Acknowledgements:

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ULI Colorado Building Healthy Places committee chaired by:
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Josh Radoff, YR&G

Special thanks to the Loveland Working Group:

Bethany Clark, Planner, Community & Strategic Planning, City of Loveland

Katie Guthrie, Health Planner, CanDo Loveland

Greg George, Director of Development Services, City of Loveland

Leah Browder, Director of Public Works, City of Loveland

Ralph Trenary, Ward IV Loveland City Councilor

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730 17th Street #750
Denver, CO 80202

P: (303)893-1760
E: Colorado@uli.org

<http://colorado.uli.org>