

LAND USE  
TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM  
FOR THE  
Federal Boulevard Improvements between  
West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Howard Place  
Environmental Assessment

**Prepared for**

CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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**October 2014**

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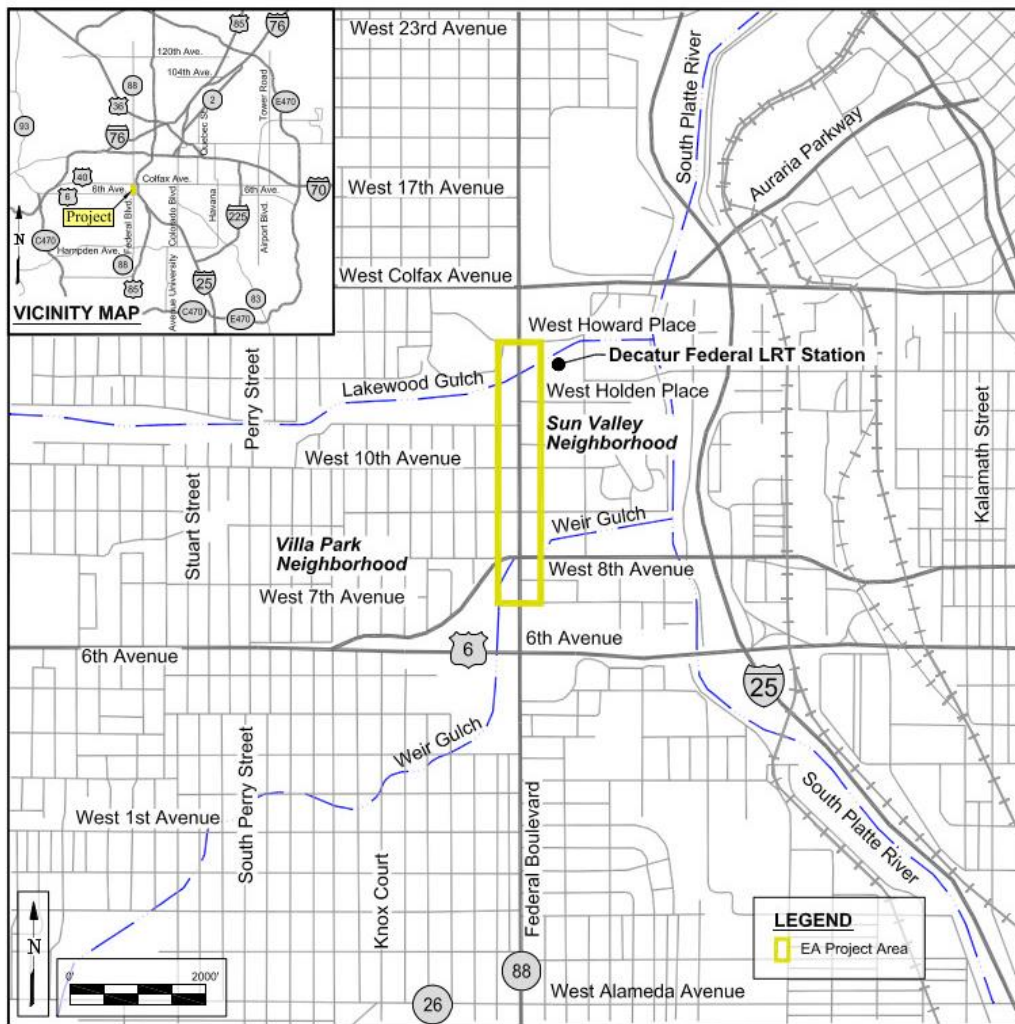
## ACRONYMS

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CCD	City and County of Denver
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
EA	Environmental Assessment
FHU	Felsburg Holt & Ullevig
LRT	Light Rail Transit
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
RTD	Regional Transportation District
US	United States

## INTRODUCTION

This Technical Memorandum has been prepared in support of the *Federal Boulevard Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA)*. The general project area extends from West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue to West Howard Place along Federal Boulevard (“Project Area”, Figure 1). This Memorandum evaluates the effects of the Federal Boulevard Improvement Project (the Proposed Action) and the No-Action Alternative with respect to land use. The study area used in this assessment encompasses the actual limits of disturbance, including areas that would be impacted as a result of right-of-way acquisitions (“Study Area”).

**Figure 1. EA Project Area**



### *Local Policies*

Land use generally refers to human modifications of land, often for residential or economic purposes or for preservation or protection of natural resources. Land uses are

frequently regulated by management plans, policies, ordinances, and regulations that specify the types of activities that are allowed or that protect specially designated or environmentally sensitive land uses. Land-use guidance documents include general land use and ownership, land management plans, and special-use areas.

For this EA, land use within the Study Area is governed by the following land-use plans:

- *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000*
- *Blueprint Denver 2002*
- *Villa Park Neighborhood Plan 2000*
- *City and County of Denver Pedestrian Master Plan 2004*
- *Denver Moves 2011*
- *Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan 2013*
- *West Colfax Avenue Action Plan 2006*

In 2010, the City and County of Denver (CCD) revised the Denver Zoning Code (Code). The updated Code intends to be more pedestrian-friendly and more harmonious with current land uses and related transportation plans. The Code's purpose is to implement the *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000* and guide orderly development of the CCD in a way that preserves and promotes the public health, safety, prosperity, and welfare of CCD inhabitants.

## PEL STUDY SUMMARY

A Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study was prepared to evaluate transportation improvements along Federal Boulevard from West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to West Howard Place within the CCD in October 2009 by Felsburg Holt & Ullevig (FHU, 2009). During the PEL Study, land use in the PEL Study area primarily consisted of commercial and/or industrial properties and a limited number of residential properties. Based on the Study's project description, location, and observations made within its study area, the PEL Study concludes the following:

- The study area defined as part of the PEL Study was located within an Area of Change as designated by *Blueprint Denver 2002*. From West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to West Howard Place, future land use was designated as Transit Oriented Development.
- Federal Boulevard would remain a commercial corridor as designated at that time and implementation of the proposed action would require the relocation of some existing businesses; however, implementation would likely increase additional business activity in the future.
- The Proposed Action identified in the PEL Study would better connect the Villa Park and Sun Valley neighborhoods, which could help create community cohesion through the development of pedestrian improvements.

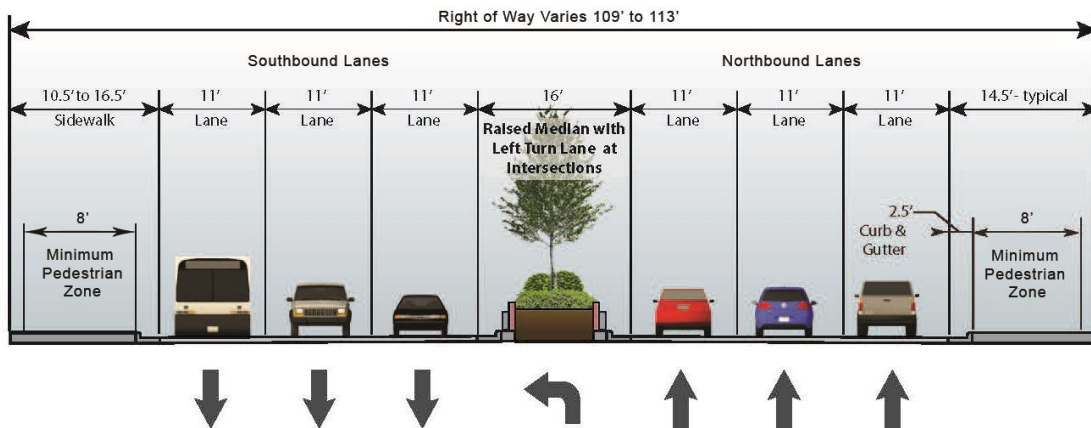
- The Proposed Action identified in the PEL Study balanced transportation improvements that would be fully consistent with locally adopted plans and with environmental and social considerations.
- No mitigation for land use, community facilities, services, and/or neighborhood cohesion would be required as a result of the implementation of the Proposed Action identified in the PEL Study.

## PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to add a third northbound lane between West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and a raised median throughout the Project Area to improve mobility and safety (Figure 2). North of West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the width of the existing three northbound lanes would be brought up to standard (11 feet). The existing southbound lanes would also be brought up to standard width in areas where they are currently substandard.

Note that this Project Area differs from that of the PEL Study as the portion of Federal Boulevard to the south of West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, including the interchange with United States Highway 6 (US 6), is being addressed by the US 6 Bridges Design-Build project. However, the proposed improvements are consistent with the Proposed Action in the PEL Study.

Figure 2. Proposed Action



The widening of Federal Boulevard during the Proposed Action will meet American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) standards. Access will be limited by controlling left-turns at non-signalized points. In the Proposed Action, the existing signalized crosswalks at the intersections of Federal Boulevard with West 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue will be upgraded with new traffic and pedestrian signal indications and enhanced concrete crosswalks. Sidewalks on the west and east sides of the street will be brought up to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards; this will match the existing sections of Federal Boulevard to the north and south.

Access to bus service, which connects to local and regional destinations as well as the greater transit system, including the nearby West Line of RTD's LRT system, will be improved by upgrading the sidewalk to be consistent and compliant with ADA standards. Additionally, connectivity to the Weir Gulch Trail would be enhanced with better signage for the trail, reducing the curvature of the "T" intersection where the trail and sidewalk connect along West 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, signage for the Trail, and a wider sidewalk along West 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, all of which support the CCD's Bicycle Master Plan (CCD, 2001) and Denver Moves (CCD, 2011). These improvements are anticipated to improve mobility, safety, and enhance multi-modal options within the Project Area.

In summary, the Proposed Action consists of the following elements:

- Federal Boulevard roadway alignment and improvements
  - Widening Federal Boulevard from the ROW boundary on the west side of Federal Boulevard toward the east between West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and approximately West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue with an additional 11-foot northbound lane
  - Restriping and widening the three northbound lanes on Federal Boulevard between approximately West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to approximately West Howard Place to be 11 feet wide
  - Restriping and widening the three southbound lanes on Federal Boulevard between approximately West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to be 11 feet wide
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements
  - Improving the sidewalks on the east side of Federal Boulevard between West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to meet ADA standards and better accommodate pedestrians
  - Standardizing inconsistent sidewalk widths on both the east and west sides of Federal Boulevard with an 8-foot pedestrian zone consisting of either a detached 5-foot sidewalk with a 3-foot buffer or an attached 8-foot sidewalk with ADA-compliant curb ramps and driveway cuts
  - Enhancing access to the Decatur-Federal LRT station through improved multi-modal connectivity by improving the sidewalks throughout the Project Area
  - Upgrading existing pedestrian signals and constructing enhanced concrete crosswalks at the signalized intersections of Federal Boulevard with West 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue
  - Enhancing bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to the Weir Gulch Trail with better signage, wider sidewalks, and access ramps
  - Enhancing bicycle connectivity to Routes D-10 and D-12 by adding signage in the Project Area that meets CCD and CDOT standards

## NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No-Action Alternative would leave Federal Boulevard as it currently is configured and would not provide any improvements beyond typical maintenance activities. The roadway would remain the same, with 3 southbound and 2 northbound lanes (each 9.5 to 11 feet in width) and a continuous two-way, center, left-turn median between West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Figure 3). The segment of Federal Boulevard from West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to West Howard Place has three southbound and three northbound lanes, and a continuous two-way left-turn median over Lakewood Gulch (Figure 4). The existing sidewalks along the both sides of Federal Boulevard in the Project Area are either narrow or not well-defined, and the curb ramps at intersections do not meet current ADA or CDOT standards. As part of State Highway (SH) 88, normal maintenance of Federal Boulevard would continue to be performed by CDOT. This includes the current direct discharge of stormwater to the nearby gulches.

**Figure 3. No-Action Alternative between West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

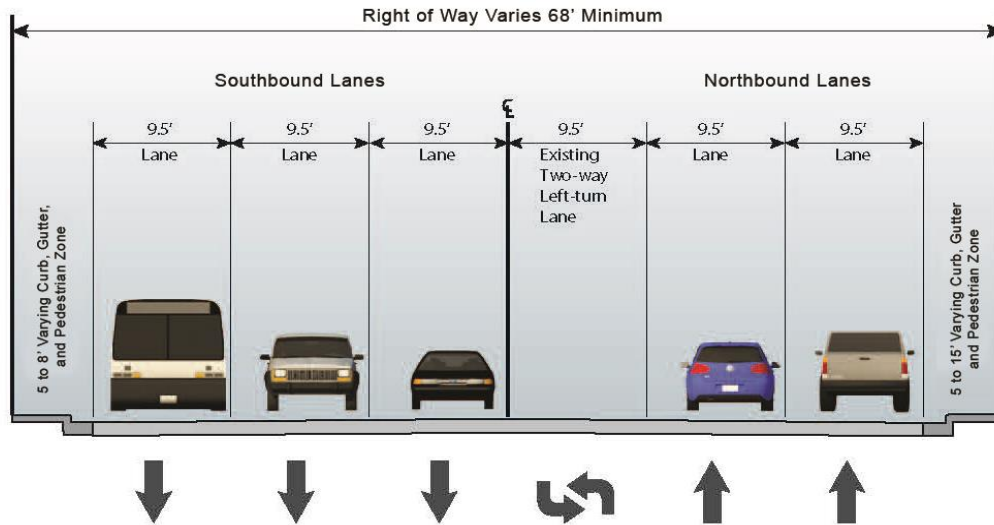
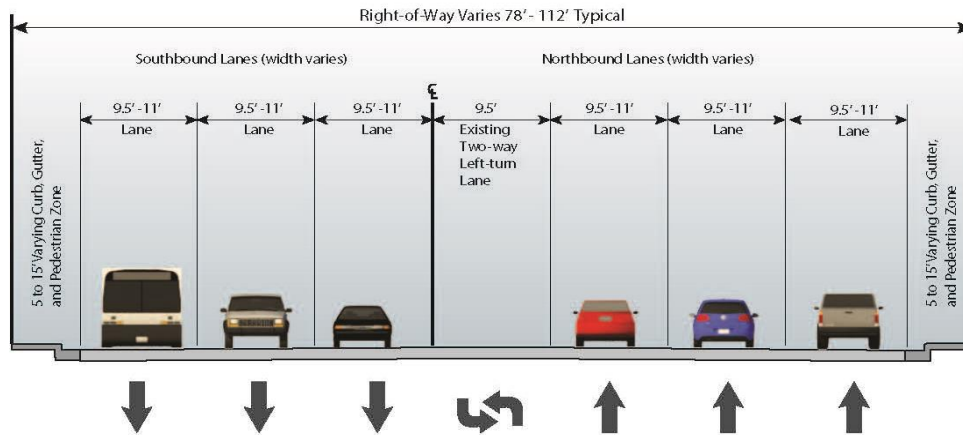




Figure 4. No-Action Alternative between West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Howard Place



## METHODOLOGY

Current land-use impacts are based upon information collected during the development of this EA, through reviews of local and regional land-use plans, to assess whether land uses have changed from those described by the PEL Study. This information permitted an evaluation of the compatibility with related land-use plans and a determination of the impacts of short-term construction and long-term maintenance and operations.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Study Area is entirely located within the CCD and land use is consistent with the land uses described in 2009's PEL Study. Land-use development within the Study Area along Federal Boulevard consist of predominantly industrial and commercial properties, including Denver Public School facilities, retail stores, automotive fueling and service stations, and the recently constructed Decatur-Federal LRT station. Community facilities are also located within the Study Area and consist of public parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields; recreational trails and bicycle routes; public and private schools with afterschool programs, such as Head Start programs; a Denver Public Library branch; Westside Family Health Center; the Rude Recreation Center; the Denver Department of Human Services – Workforce Center at Westside; the Denver Community Credit Union; the Sun Valley Youth Center; and multiple places of religious worship.

According to the *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000* and the supplemental *Blueprint Denver 2002*, the Study Area is defined, within these master plans, as an Area of Change, which is consistent with the PEL Study (Figure 5). An Area of Change is defined as an area of Denver where change is either desirable or is underway, and such change will benefit from, and indeed thrive on, an infusion of population, economic activity, and investment.

This is exemplified by the small-area plan that is in place for the Villa Park neighborhood located to the west of the Study Area. This plan was adopted in April 1991 and readopted

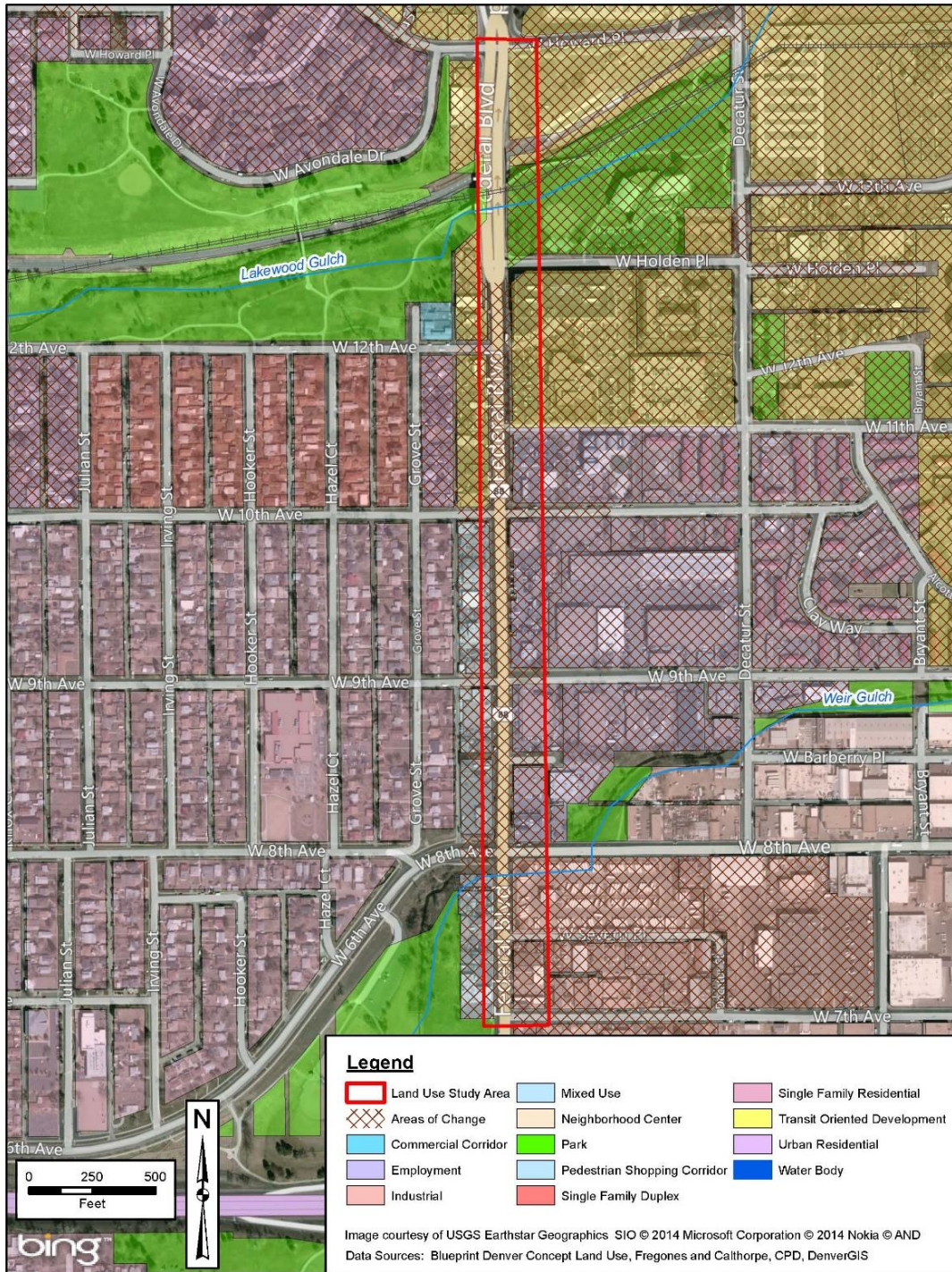
in January 2000. Eleven neighborhood goals were set in place, some of would be realized with the implementation of the Proposed Action including the following:

- Support and enhance neighborhood commercial activity
- Improve neighborhood circulation for all modes of travel
- Enhance neighborhood safety
- Create neighborhood recreational opportunities

To the east of the Study Area is the Sun Valley neighborhood. The Sun Valley neighborhood is considered to be the lowest-income neighborhood in the State of Colorado. Ninety percent of the 1,500 residents live within subsidized housing and have a median income of \$8,000 (The Denver Post, 2013). This neighborhood has historically and primarily been occupied by immigrants and refugees. Development of the recently adopted *Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan* included involvement by the Sun Valley residential community, business and property owners, several government agencies, Sun Valley-area employees, non-profit organizations, and real-estate development experts. The vision of the *Station Area Plan* included creating a celebrated, connected, innovated, and healthy Sun Valley neighborhood (CCD, 2013).

Communities are made up of public services and facilities such as libraries, public parks, recreational areas and trails, grocery stores, and places of religious worship. The residents who reside in the Study Area now have access to these types of public facilities, including a full-service grocery store, Mi Pueblo Market, located at the southwest corner of West Colfax Avenue and Federal Boulevard; this grocery store is less than 1/2 mile to the north of the northern terminus of the Study Area. This grocery store was not open at the time of the PEL Study. In addition, a “7-Eleven” convenience store is located within the Study Area, at 1000 Federal Boulevard. Further, there is a “Family Dollar” retail store located approximately three-quarters of a mile to the north of the northern terminus, at 1845 Federal Boulevard.

Figure 5. Conceptual Land Uses within the Study Area



## IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Implementing the Proposed Action would keep Federal Boulevard as a transportation corridor. It would also require acquisition of land adjacent to the existing corridor. Twenty-seven businesses would be acquired as part of the Proposed Action. There would also be temporary easements during construction. However, the enhancements brought about by the Proposed Action would provide a safer and more mobile pedestrian and bicyclist thoroughfare. The displacements would result in minimal indirect effects on neighborhood cohesion, school enrollment, local tax districts, and housing availability. In addition, the improvements would better connect the Villa Park and Sun Valley neighborhoods. There would be temporary easements during construction.

As described in the PEL Study, the Proposed Action would be consistent with already adopted regional-transportation and land-use plans; therefore, the Proposed Action would not alter planned land use.

The No-Action Alternative would not improve the Federal Boulevard corridor beyond typical maintenance activities within the Study Area. Therefore, the roadway itself, the existing sidewalks along the Federal Boulevard corridor, and the curb ramps at intersections that do not meet current ADA or CDOT standards would not be improved. The No-Action Alternative would not improve mobility or safety, nor would it enhance multi-modal options within the Study Area. Finally, it would not be consistent with already adopted land-use plans.

**Table 1. Land-Use Impacts**

Resource	Proposed Action	No-Action Alternative
Land-use development along Federal Boulevard between West 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Howard Place consists predominantly of industrial and commercial properties, including Denver Public School support facilities, retail stores, automotive fueling and service stations, and the recently constructed Decatur-Federal LRT station. According to the <i>Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000</i> and the supplemental <i>Blueprint Denver 2002</i> , the Project is located within an Area of Change.	<p><b>Permanent Impacts:</b></p> <p>The Proposed Action would have beneficial impacts that are compatible with currently adopted regional-transportation and land-use plans through supporting and enhancing neighborhood commercial activity, improving neighborhood circulation for all modes of travel, enhancing neighborhood safety, and creating neighborhood recreational opportunities.</p> <p><b>Temporary Impacts:</b></p> <p>There would be temporary easements during construction.</p>	<p><b>Permanent Impacts:</b></p> <p>No permanent impacts to land use would occur if the No-Action Alternative is implemented. The No-Action Alternative is not consistent with currently adopted land-use plans.</p> <p><b>Temporary Impacts:</b></p> <p>No temporary impacts to land use would occur if the No-Action Alternative is implemented.</p>

## MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures will not be required as part of the Proposed Action.

## REQUIRED PERMITS

No permits are required for the Proposed Action. CCD has continued to provide opportunities for public involvement between the PEL Study in 2009 and initiation of this EA. Stakeholder coordination will continue to take place throughout Project development and construction.

## STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

The CCD has continued to provide opportunities for public involvement between the PEL Study in 2009 and initiation of this EA. A public meeting was held in August 14, 2014 prior to the completion of this EA to solicit further comment on and discussion of the Project. A Spanish-speaking translator was present at the open house, and materials were presented in both English and Spanish; Korean translation was available upon request. Stakeholder coordination will continue to take place throughout the Project's development and construction.

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