



**ECONOMIC RESOURCES  
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

**Prepared by**

PINYON ENVIRONMENTAL, INC.

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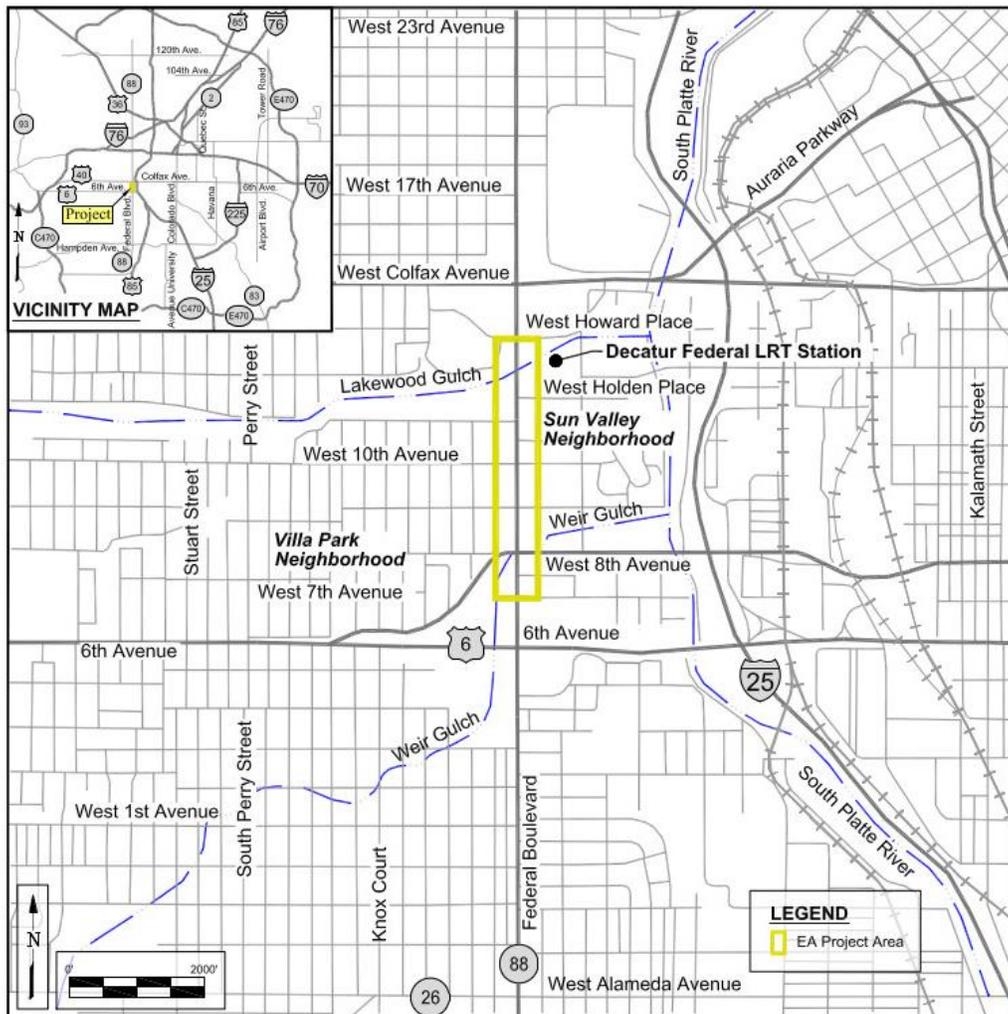
## ACRONYMS

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
LRT	Light Rail Transit
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
ROW	Right-of-Way
RTD	Regional Transportation District
SH	State Highway
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 economic resources. The study area used in this assessment encompasses areas that would be impacted as a result of right-of-way acquisitions (“Study Area”).

**Figure 1. EA Project Area**



Economic resources are defined as the basic attributes and features associated with economic activity. Economic indicators typically include personal income, unemployment, property value, and property taxes as well as industrial and commercial growth. Changes within these economic indicators are generally accompanied by changes in other economic attributes, such as housing availability and the provision of

public services. Population levels, a key influence on economic indicators, are subject to fluctuations due to regional birth and death rates as well as the immigration and emigration of people.

## PEL STUDY SUMMARY

A Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study was prepared for the project in October 2009 by Felsburg Holt & Ullevig (FHU, 2009). During the PEL Study, economic resources in the study's area primarily consisted of limited commercial and industrial areas. Based upon the PEL Study's project description, location, and observations made within its study area, the PEL Study concluded the following:

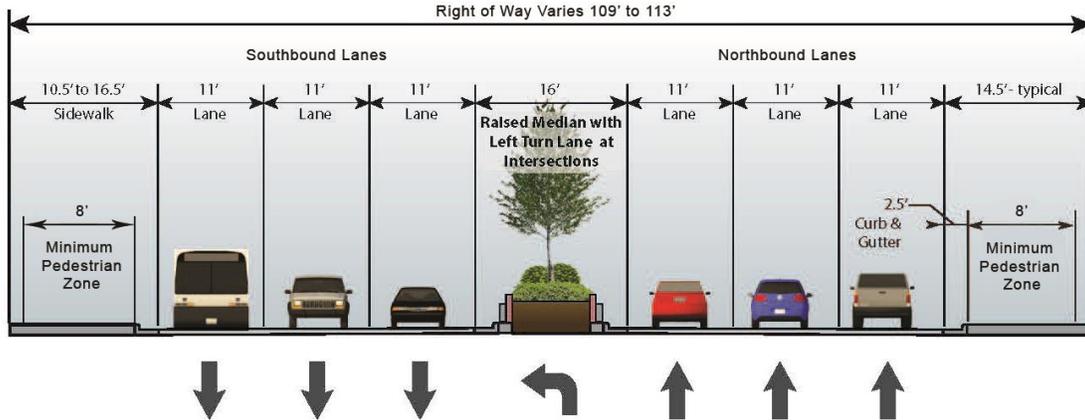
- The highest percentage of low-income households resided in the Sun Valley neighborhood, which includes Sun Valley Homes, an affordable-housing complex that was constructed in the 1950s. Underinvestment in public facilities in this neighborhood has occurred historically over time (FHU, 2009).
- The study area was located within an Area of Change as designated by *Blueprint Denver* (CCD, 2002). 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.
- No mitigation measures with respect to economic resources would be required as a result of the implementation of the specific 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 City and County of Denver’s (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 88 (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

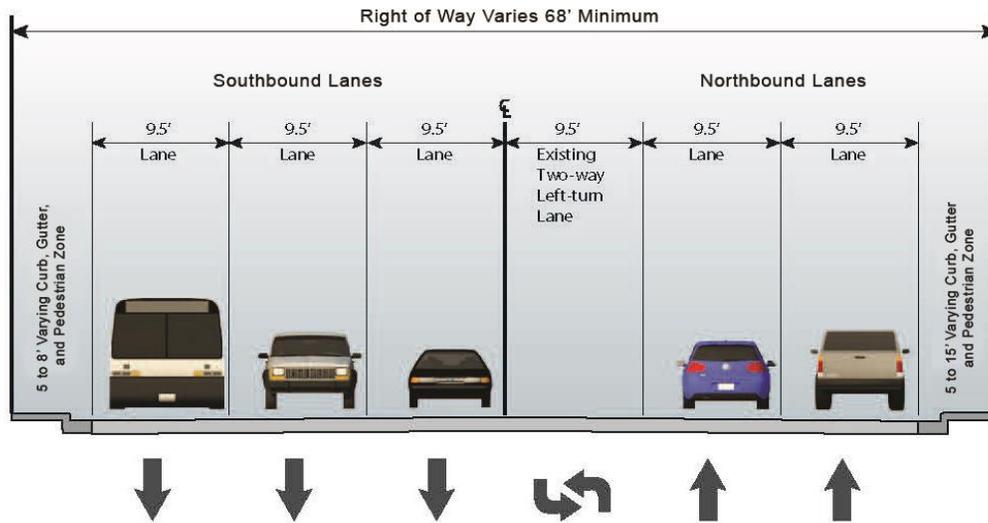
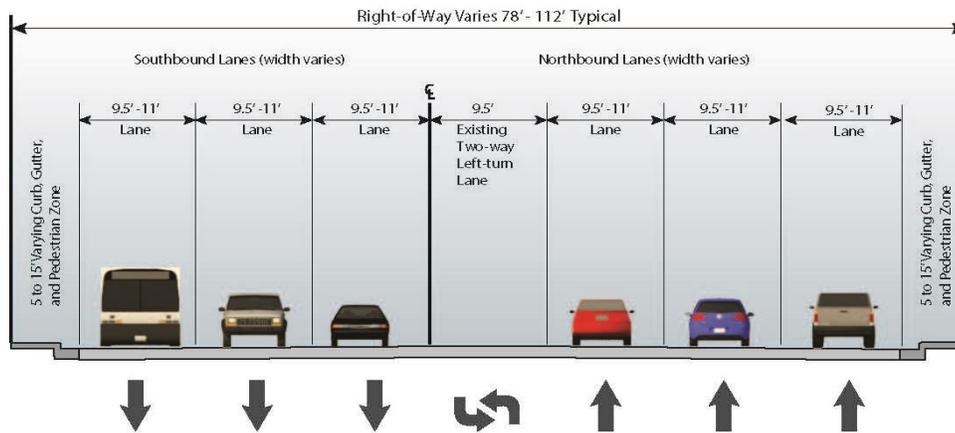


Figure 4. No-Action Alternative between West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Howard Place



## METHODOLOGY

Impacts to economic resources were assessed in terms of direct effects on economic indicators, such as income, unemployment, property values, and property taxes. The impacts to the economic resources adjacent to the Study Area from short-term construction and long-term maintenance and operations of both the No-Action Alternative and the Proposed Action were evaluated.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Federal Boulevard serves a substantial vehicular volume, combined with a high-frequency bus service and pedestrian use. Federal Boulevard is considered to be one of RTD's busiest routes (CCD, 2012a). Nonetheless, this area has changed from a strong

commercial corridor into a distressed, urban-blighted corridor due to a disinvestment of both commercial development and the surrounding residential community (CCD, 2012a).

*Median Family Income*

For the purposes of this Technical Memorandum, three spatial areas are used to define median family-income boundary conditions: Census Tracts 9.05 and 8.0 and the overall CCD (Figure 5). Census Tract 9.05 is located to the west of Federal Boulevard and includes the Villa Park neighborhood. The Sun Valley neighborhood, located to the east of Federal Boulevard, consists of Census Tract 8.0 (Figure 5). Census Tract 7.02 is also within the Study Area; however, the Proposed Action is not anticipated to directly impact this latter Census Tract because the bridge over Lakewood Gulch was widened at a part of a previous project. Based upon this information, Census Tract 7.02 will be not be used for comparison purposes. The median family-income data were collected for the Study Area from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Neighborhood Survey (Survey), which was conducted between 2008 and 2012. The median family size differs between these two communities. In the Villa Park neighborhood, the median family income is \$37,423. The median family income for the Sun Valley neighborhood is \$11,023. Median family income for the overall CCD was \$62,473 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In Census Tract 9.05 (i.e., the Villa Park neighborhood) and Census Tract 8.0 (i.e., the Sun Valley neighborhood), the median family size is 3.29 and 2.77, respectively. The median family size for the CCD is 2.29.

*Low Income*

“Low income” is defined as persons or families whose incomes are at or below the poverty line as determined by the US Department of Health and Human Services or the US Census Bureau. Table 1 presents income statistics by neighborhood. The data show that between 41 and 60 percent of Study Area residents spend more than one-third of their income on housing. The recommended standard to meet a family’s needs is to spend one-third of the household income (25 to 30 percent) or less on housing.

**Table 1. Income Statistics**

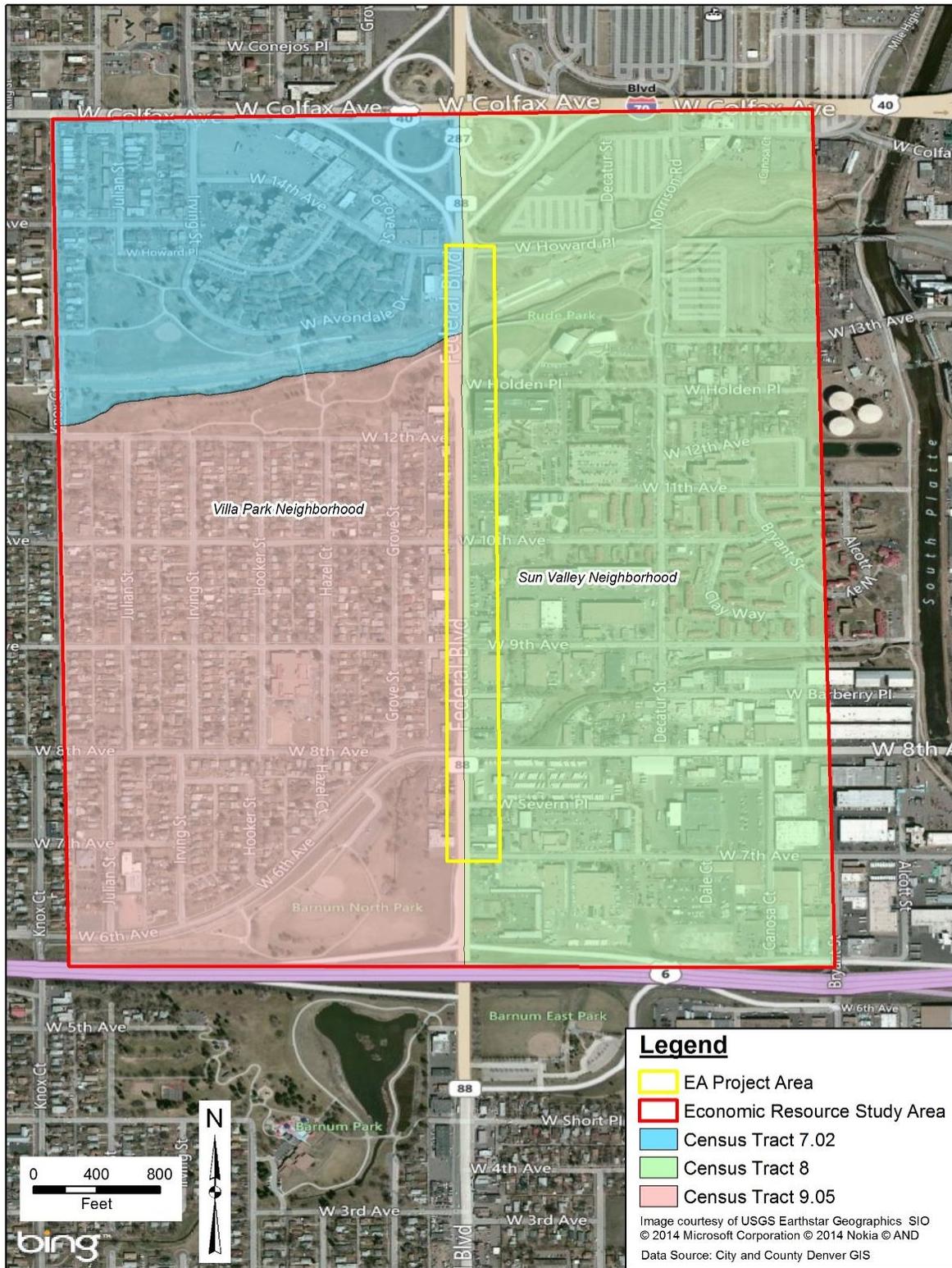
<b>Geography</b>	<b>Average Household Income</b>	<b>% in Poverty</b>	<b>% Renters Spending &gt;30% Income on Housing</b>
CCD	\$77,900	19	50
Census Tract 9.05	\$39,735	29	62
Census Tract 8.0	\$13,540	77	41

Source: U.S. Census 2010 (2008–2012/5-year American Community Survey Estimates)

Notes:

Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Figure 5. Federal Boulevard Census Tracts



*Unemployment*

Unemployment data within the Study Area was collected from a 2011–2012 survey of the Villa Park and Sun Valley neighborhoods (Figure 5). Within the Villa Park neighborhood, unemployment was at 10.6 percent. For the Sun Valley neighborhood, the unemployment rate was 17.4 percent. The estimated unemployment rate for the CCD was 8.6 percent. Based upon this information, the unemployment rate in the Study Area is higher than that within the CCD.

*Assessed Property Values and Property Taxes*

The Study Area includes 55 parcels of land immediately adjacent to Federal Boulevard; 8 full-parcel acquisitions and 12 partial-parcel acquisitions would occur as part of the Proposed Action. There would be no full- or partial-parcel acquisitions if the No-Action Alternative were to be implemented. Property-assessment values and property-tax data have been obtained from the CCD Assessor's active, in-progress 2013 file. Table 1 indicates the total assessed value for the “current” and “prior” years and the percent change of the assessment value of parcels that would either be fully or partially acquired if the Proposed Action were to be implemented. The "current year" values are from the 2013 tax year for real property tax due in 2014. These values are based upon the property's physical status as of January 1, 2013. Based upon the information within Table 1, 13 of the 20 parcels within the Study Area that would be impacted by the Proposed Action underwent an average increase of 4 percent. Within the Study Area, 3 parcels had an average decrease of 31 percent, while the property values for the remaining 4 parcels experienced no change from the prior year.

**Table 2. Total Assessed Value of Parcels That Would Be Acquired in the Proposed Action**

Parcel	Total Assessed Value (2013)*	Total Assessed Value (2014)*	Percent Change from Prior Assessment Year (%)
<b>Full Acquisitions</b>			
710 Federal Boulevard	\$99,670	\$111,650	+12
724 Federal Boulevard	\$160,020	\$165,680	+4
730 Federal Boulevard	\$109,710	\$113,970	+4
2970 West Severn Place	\$34,170	\$35,840	+5
816 Federal Boulevard	\$176,230	\$177,770	+1
830 Federal Boulevard	\$255,960	\$256,150	—
990 Federal Boulevard	\$344,180	\$344,290	—
2901 West 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	\$27,170	\$28,570	+5

## Economic Resources for the Federal Boulevard Improvements EA

Parcel	Total Assessed Value (2013)*	Total Assessed Value (2014)*	Percent Change from Prior Assessment Year (%)
<b>Partial Acquisitions</b>			
750 Federal Boulevard	\$679,210	\$693,800	+2
888 Federal Boulevard	\$494,460	\$511,510	+3
900 Federal Boulevard	\$127,720	\$128,760	+1
950 Federal Boulevard	\$137,370	\$90,940	-34
970 Federal Boulevard	\$122,500	\$122,500	—
995 Federal Boulevard	\$103,240	\$106,810	+3
1000 Federal Boulevard	\$206,110	\$209,120	+1
1005 Federal Boulevard	\$96,100	\$95,700	—
1030 Federal Boulevard	\$122,550	\$80,710	-34
1065 Federal Boulevard	\$58,350	\$58,840	+1
1100 Federal Boulevard	\$1,618,120	\$1,206,780	-25
1200 Federal Boulevard	\$14,129,170	\$14,912,090	+6

Source: CCD Assessor's Office and CCD, 2012b

Notes:

\* The data are obtained from the CCD Assessor's active, in-progress 2013 file. These values are based upon the property's physical status as of January 1, 2013.

— No change

Percentage changes were rounded to the nearest whole number.

## IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Under either the Proposed Action or the No-Action Alternative, median household incomes would likely remain at the lowest income level within the CCD because of factors unrelated to the transportation system, such as language and educational barriers. Similarly, the unemployment rates of the neighboring communities would likely remain higher than the overall CCD average. Property values for most of the parcels within the Study Area would likely continue to increase based upon the percentage change between 2013 and 2014. The percent change of the assessed value ranges between 2 percent and 5 percent (Table 1). Even though property values did rise, appreciation falls short of the value increases experienced in other nearby Denver neighborhoods and the city as whole. This pattern reflects a continued, relative disinvestment from this area, due to neighborhood characteristics (such as accessibility and safety). In addition, this rate of increase for the Study Area may lag due to factors intended in the Area of Change goals; these goals include the improvement of the functioning of corridors within the CCD, which creates improved transit and provision of better pedestrian and bicycle facilities (CCD, 2002).

If the Proposed Action were to be implemented, improved access to public transportation facilities (e.g., bus and LRT) could help enable neighborhood residents to access employment outside the Study Area. Improved safety and traffic flow could facilitate redevelopment of the Study Area, possibly providing employment to community residents. The Proposed Action would support these goals associated with an Area of Change, including those related to transportation improvements. The No-Action Alternative would not result in any improvements to Federal Boulevard between 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Howard Place, which does not support the goals associated with an Area of Change.

The Proposed Action would likely increase access to the established businesses and major employment centers, such as the Westside Workforce Center, which could result in an increase in economic activity and expanded employment opportunities. In addition, the Proposed Action could potentially attract new businesses as well as strengthen existing businesses by supporting the revitalization goals of an Area of Change. No parcels that currently have direct access from Federal Boulevard would lose that access.

According to the ROW plans for the Project, the Proposed Action includes the full acquisition of 8 parcels and 12 partial-parcel acquisitions. (Note: Two of the parcels are recognized as one parcel within the ROW plans and one parcel is recognized as two parcels by the CCD Assessor.) The Proposed Action would require the full acquisition of 8 parcels, totaling approximately 2 acres of private property, and the partial acquisition of 12 parcels, totaling approximately 0.86 acres. These acquisitions would result in the relocation of seven parcel owners within the Study Area. (Note: Two parcels are owned by the same entity). Table 2 depicts the total property-tax revenue of approximately \$211,000 for 2014 and the total loss of property-tax revenue that would occur if the Proposed Action were to be implemented. The acquisitions would result in an approximate yearly loss of property-tax revenues of \$114,000 in 2014 dollars, assuming that the taxation rates do not increase or decrease. However, following final design and construction, it is possible that an entire parcel may not be needed for ROW and the remnant could be sold back into private ownership. If partial parcels revert back to private ownership, property taxes would be collected for that square footage.

There is a potential that the resulting residual land may not have much economic value, as the remaining land may not be able to be bundled into a configuration that would allow new scale development. However, the improved mobility and safety aspects of the Proposed Action would likely encourage businesses to move into the Study Area, thus having a positive impact on the future redevelopment opportunities. This reinvestment in the Study Area would have positive impacts on nearby property values.

The No-Action Alternative would not affect property-tax revenues collected. However, this area is considered to be an urban, blighted area and, if the No-Action Alternative and the corridor improvements are not implemented, existing commercial businesses may not be revitalized as may occur if the Proposed Action were to be implemented.

**Table 3. Potential Loss in Property-Tax Revenue in the Proposed Action**

Parcel	Total Square Footage of Parcel (Square Feet)	Total Land Acquired (Square Feet)	Percent of Parcel (%)	Total Property Tax Revenue (2013)	Total Loss in Property-Tax Revenue (2014 Dollars)
<b>Full Acquisitions</b>					
710 Federal Boulevard	11,860	11,860	100	\$9,277.00	\$9,277.00
724 Federal Boulevard	9,373	9,373	100	\$13,766.35	\$13,766.35
730 Federal Boulevard	6,248	6,248	100	\$9,469.76	\$9,469.76
2970 West Severn Place	6,257	6,257	100	\$2,977.95	\$2,977.95
816/830 Federal Boulevard <sup>1</sup>	39,628	39,628	100	\$36,054.42	\$36,054.42
990 Federal Boulevard <sup>2</sup>	32,864	32,864	100	\$28,067.05	\$28,067.05
2901 West 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue <sup>2</sup>	2,218	9,211	100	\$2,373.88	\$2,373.88
2901 West 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue <sup>2</sup>	6,993				
<b>Partial Acquisitions</b>					
750 Federal Boulevard	203,190	7,178	4	\$0 <sup>3</sup>	\$0 <sup>3</sup>
888 Federal Boulevard	53,256	8,006	15	\$41,534.41	\$6,230.16
900 Federal Boulevard	19,810	3,821	19	\$10,698.67	\$2,032.75
950 Federal Boulevard	23,697	3,967	17	\$7,556.20	\$1,284.55
970 Federal Boulevard	24,614	2,092	8	\$10,178.52	\$814.28
995 Federal Boulevard	6,250	97	2	\$8,874.84	\$177.50
1000 Federal Boulevard	26,472	2,498	9	\$17,375.78	\$1,563.82
1005 Federal Boulevard	6,034	37	1	\$7,951.71	\$79.52
1030 Federal Boulevard	32,160	2,820	9	\$0 <sup>3</sup>	\$0 <sup>3</sup>
1065 Federal Boulevard	7,814	219	3	\$4,889.02	\$146.67

**Economic Resources for the Federal Boulevard Improvements EA**

Parcel	Total Square Footage of Parcel (Square Feet)	Total Land Acquired (Square Feet)	Percent of Parcel (%)	Total Property Tax Revenue (2013)	Total Loss in Property-Tax Revenue (2014 Dollars)
1100 Federal Boulevard	146,601	5,038	3	\$0 <sup>3</sup>	\$0 <sup>3</sup>
1200 Federal Boulevard	145,421	1,827	1	\$0 <sup>3</sup>	\$0 <sup>3</sup>

Sources: CCD, 2012b; CCD, 2014

Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> *Parcels 816 & 830 Federal Boulevard are owned by the same entity and are listed within the ROW plans as one parcel.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Parcel 2901 West 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue is owned by two entities and are listed within the ROW plans as two parcels; however, the parcels are recognized as one parcel within the CCD Assessor’s records. This exception also applies to Parcel 990 Federal Boulevard.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Owned by the public and is exempt from paying property taxes on the assessed value of the parcel.*

Expected short-term, construction-related impacts would include roadway-access changes, construction-related noise, temporary detours, and out-of-direction travel. These changes could impact the commercial businesses within the Study Area; however, the changes would be temporary.

**Table 4. Economic Resource Impacts**

Resource	Proposed Action	No-Action
Over time, the Project Area has changed from a strong commercial corridor into a distressed, urban-blighted corridor (CCD, 2012a).	<p><b>Permanent Impacts:</b> Implementation of the Proposed Action would support the economic revitalization of the Project Area, as it would support the goals of an Area of Change.</p> <p><b>Temporary Impacts:</b> During construction, temporary impacts to businesses would result from roadway-access changes, construction-related noise, temporary detours, and out-of-direction travel.</p>	<p><b>Permanent Impacts:</b> There would be no permanent impacts if the No-Action Alternative is implemented; however, it does not support the CCD goal of an Area of Change and may depress revitalization of the economy in the Project Area.</p> <p><b>Temporary Impacts:</b> No temporary impacts to economic resources would occur if the No-Action Alternative is implemented.</p>

**MITIGATION MEASURES**

Mitigation measures that will be implemented for economic resources for short-term construction related impacts are outlined in Table 5 below; no mitigation measures are required for permanent impacts which are anticipated to be benefits.

**Table 5. Economic Resources Mitigation Measures**

Impact	Proposed Action
Temporary Impacts to	Access will be maintained to businesses during construction; signs indicating access points and construction ahead, as well as advance notification of

Businesses during Construction	construction activities, will be provided. To avoid disruption of business activities during construction, any new access points will be provided before the existing access points are removed.
Temporary Impacts to Access during Construction	During final engineering design, access points (i.e., new, modified, or combined) will be identified in a formal access-control plan prepared for the Proposed Action from West 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to West Howard Place along Federal Boulevard. All access points will be constructed in accordance with CCD and ADA standards.

## REQUIRED PERMITS

The following permits would be required as part of the Proposed Action:

- Construction Access Permit would be required for the temporary access needs outside of the Project limits.
- A State Access Permit would be required for all new or modified access to Federal Boulevard (SH 88).
- Other local permits may be required by CCD, such as a building, utility, or survey permits to support Project-construction requirements.

## 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.

## REFERENCES

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