



## North Greeley Rail Corridor Sub-Area Plan Frequently Asked Questions from July 14, 2008 Open House

### General

#### 1. Q. What is this planning process is all about?

A. The City of Greeley and Weld County, in coordination with the City of Windsor, have undertaken a study of the North Greeley area that will culminate in a sub-area plan that will supplement the respective Weld County and Greeley Comprehensive Plans. The process will evaluate existing conditions and provide options for future growth with a particular focus on the industrial Great Western rail corridor area. The Plan will define how the area is expected to grow in ways that support economic development for the region. The intent of the plan is to provide residents, businesses and property owners, community leaders and elected officials a means to articulate a shared economic development vision and provide guidance and policies to move toward this vision in this sub-area.

### Area Development

#### 2. Q. What and when is residential development planned for the area?

A. Given the current economy and inventory of homes and surplus lots in the developed portions of Greeley, it is not expected there will be any residential development in North Greeley in the near future. However, some concept plans presented for review in the North Greeley study area would add 6,500 dwelling units, which is more than three times the current number of units in North Greeley. Two of these early plans would translate into over 17,500 people in this area (more than 50% larger than the 2006 Windsor population). The two potential developments shown are:

1. The Grainery - located north of "O" Street, east and west of 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue with potentially over 700 acres of residential use which could accommodate just less than 13,000 people. (Site not yet annexed to Greeley)
2. Poudre Ridge – located northwest of WCR 64 and 47<sup>th</sup> Ave. with over 400 acres of annexed and zoned residential land that is initially designed to easily accommodate 1,700 units or 4,600 people.

The western end of the study area will continue to experience significant commercial, industrial, and mineral extraction (oil & gas, sand and gravel) activity and related truck traffic over the foreseeable future.

### O Street

#### 3. Q. Why and when will "O" Street be widened?

A. As a major east/west roadway between US Hwy 85 and I-25, the projected build-out of North Greeley traffic volumes on "O" Street will be similar to the current levels of 10<sup>th</sup>

Street. It is necessary to plan now for major roadways so that the city and county, prospective job-producing industries, existing businesses (such as gravel quarries), and oil/gas and water transmission line providers will know where the road alignment will be located and road width established. "O" Street widening is not currently in the 5-year Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) for either Weld County or Greeley and will not be until there is significant development in the area.

**4. Q. Will the Espanola subdivision (Spanish Colony) be removed due to "O" Street being widened? Should Spanish Colony be moved?**

A. There is no reason at this time to believe that any portion of the Espanola subdivision would need to be removed when "O" Street is widened. At the very most, some right-of-way may have to be purchased from the northernmost properties.

**5. Q. Can a new "O" Street be built between WCR 64½ and the railroad tracks?**

A. No, for several reasons:

1. A minimum of 140 feet of right-of-way is necessary for a Weld County major arterial roadway. There is inadequate right-of-way between the railroad and frontage road to build a four-lane street at that location.
2. If "O" Street were to be built there, the road width would need to be narrowed from four lanes to two, creating a traffic bottleneck.
3. The Bracewell Subdivision that would be impacted by such a move, would not likely support having the road moved next to them.
4. The Weld County Commissioners have adopted an alignment and businesses have moved forward in reliance on that alignment.

**6. Q. Will "O" Street at 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue be straightened?**

A. Probably. From a safety perspective, this is a very high priority and a prerequisite to connecting "O" Street to Crossroads Boulevard on the west. Eliminating the sharp curve would make that intersection much safer. However, at this time, there are no plans or funds to correct the intersection.

**7. Q. Will the new "O" Street alignment take traffic off of US Hwy 34?**

A. Connecting "O" Street to Crossroads Boulevard would take traffic off of US Hwy 34 to some extent. If "O" Street is not connected, then traffic on both US Hwy 34 and SH 392 will most certainly increase with development. Without the "O" Street connection, SH 392 in downtown Windsor would eventually be gridlocked.

**8. Q. If the problem with Hwy 392 is a potential bottleneck in downtown Windsor, why not do a Windsor bypass?**

A. A bypass has been proposed and studied, but there are no easy options due to the existing residential at any proposed roadway alignments. As a result, there would be much difficulty in routing a bypass around the developments north of Windsor. Having Hwy 392 loop south of Windsor would require a detour of at least three miles south of the current alignment, and one mile south of "O" Street. Such out-of-direction patterns tend to cause people to not use such roads and make them ineffective.

**9. Q. There is concern about Greeley acting as a developer & condemning properties for either "O" Street or for industrial development.**

A. The City of Greeley and Weld County are not in the development business. Both the City of Greeley and Weld County will help private property owners who wish to develop their property when the proposed development is consistent with the County or City

Comprehensive Plans. Both jurisdictions rarely exercise condemnation rights, and only for a clear public purpose. Condemnation law requires fair market payment for any land acquisition.

## **Likelihood of Residential/Industrial Development**

### **10.Q. When will Poudre Ridge (1,700 units), and the Grainery (2,300 – 4,800 units) be built?**

A. This is a market driven action. Until the housing market stabilizes, the current excess inventory is reduced, and there is new demand for housing, it is unlikely either of those developments will be built soon.

### **11.Q. Is the Clark Minor property a part of the proposed Poudre Ridge development?**

A. No, the Clark Minor property is not part of the proposed Poudre Ridge development. It is west of Poudre Ridge. This site is located in Greeley and is currently zoned for low-intensity industrial uses.

### **12.Q. What else might be built?**

A. There are no other proposed residential plans at this time to build anything besides the Poudre Ridge and Grainery developments. However, 300,000-500,000 more people are anticipated to move to Weld County by 2035. Because of this, there may be several more major developments in the North Greeley area built within the next 30 years. In the last several years, there have been regular inquiries concerning potential commercial and industrial development in the sub-area.

### **13.Q. Will the proposed residential (The Grainery) in close proximity to the Weld County Jail really be compatible?**

A. Commercial rather than residential is proposed immediately adjacent to “O” Street rather than residential. Residential is proposed to be phased in to the north of the commercial uses. However this project is only speculative at present. The site has not been annexed or zoned for any of these uses.

## **Potential Development Impacts**

### **14.Q. What was Buxman planning for development SW of Poudre Ridge?**

A. An existing, approved 8-lot subdivision called “Buxman Estates” exists off of County Road 29 a half-mile south of Highway 392. However, neither the County nor the City have received any application for development on any of the other Buxman holdings, including those further south, and southwest of the Poudre Ridge.

### **15.Q. It is hard for me to get out of my driveway now, will it be worse in the future?**

A. As development increases there will certainly be more traffic along major roadways making access more of a challenge. Some strategies can be used to help, such as joint access points, or access off of a different road, but the access issue will continue to be a matter of interest to the Public Works department of the City and the County.

### **16.Q. A property owner NE of 47<sup>th</sup> & “O” Street area is looking to move from California and build a big home and retire in the country, but they are not sure that is such a good idea now.**

A. This area has been zoned industrial since the 1980’s. Generally, residential development in industrial zones is not a good idea, and in Greeley it is not allowed, although existing residential uses may be “grandfathered.”

## **Potential Train Impacts**

**17.Q. Similar issue for property NW of Loveland Industry as in the question above. The concern is that increased “O” Street and unit train traffic (up to 112 cars) at the intersection of the railroad tracks & “O” Street will be a real back-up of “O” Street traffic.**

A. As noted above, car and truck traffic are only going to get heavier with continued development. The same is true with rail traffic. Planning for key corridors and avoiding the creation of new conflict points can mitigate these affects and even improve them over time.

**18.Q. How many trains per day are eventually anticipated on the Great Western Railroad?**

A. Great Western hopes to draw industries that are significant rail users that want to be in northern Colorado. At build-out there could be 10 or more trains of over 100 cars each per day.

**19.Q. Many residents were concerned about the unit train and sounding of the horn – will it be hard to sell my house if it is located next to tracks with the increased noise?**

A. The increased train traffic may have an impact on residential properties. Most likely the residential property impacts will be a function of distance from the tracks and individual tastes, just as the usefulness and value of properties for industrial uses increase based on how close the property is to the railroad. As the number of trains increases with development, sounding of horns will certainly become more frequent.

**20.Q. Can the railroad tracks be moved further north?**

A. The railroad has been in its present alignment for over 125 years. The Great Western tracks are privately owned and the company has not indicated that it would move their line further north, particularly now that industrial rail users have located for years adjacent to the current tracks. In addition, the approval process and acquisition of property for relocated tracks would take years, and the cost of moving the tracks further north appears to be prohibitive. As a result, this does not appear to be a viable option. In general, there are very, very few new rail corridors built anywhere in the U.S., and the transportation effort is almost always to preserve and build upon existing corridors, rather than build new ones. Also, moving the rail north will simply impact new properties.

**21.Q. Will the trains be blocking the streets crossing the GW tracks for a long time?**

A. As a policy, the trains try not to block roadways for more than 15 minutes and they are typically very responsive to emergency services (fire, police, sheriff, ambulance) when dispatch calls, so there hasn't been a real health/safety issue so far. From a public inconvenience perspective, Longmont and Fort Collins have studied this question, with limited changes. Train transport rights to use existing rights-of-way are well-established; last year the Illinois Supreme Court said that it was unconstitutional for governments to limit the time a train can block a road. In the future, this could become a larger issue for North/South traffic. For example, a single unit train could simultaneously block 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenues, if train company controls were not put in place. However, with advance planning such as that intended by the sub-area plan, such conflicts can be mitigated, and new conflicts in the future can be avoided or reduced. The purpose of planning for such challenges in the future is to limit negative effects, while still recognizing the broader economic benefits that come from fully utilizing an existing resource, such as the rail line.

## **Flood Study**

### **22.Q. What is status of the Poudre Flood Study and what will be the impact on my property?**

- A. The study has been approved by the Army Corps of Engineers. It is currently under review by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and will hopefully be adopted by Greeley and Weld County sometime in 2010. Greeley will then need to adopt the amended study and begin the rezoning process based on the study

## **Build-Out**

### **23.Q. What is “ultimate build-out scenario”?**

- A. See scenarios I – V handouts and identify your preference and reasons. Actual “build out,” however, will be a function of market forces, and industrial demand for local resources such as water, an educated workforce, and the trail line. The policies proposed by the Sub-Area Plan are intended to coordinate land use and these resources to create as optimal of an economic development environment as possible.

### **24.Q. Will Greeley annex the entire study area?**

- A. Annexations only occur at the request of the landowner (with some limited exceptions - for enclave properties). Sometime in the next 50 years Greeley will probably annex most of the study area, simply based on historic trends and market motives. The entire sub-area is located in the Greeley long-range growth area as identified in the Greeley 2060 Comprehensive Plan.

### **25.Q. Will this whole area be one continuous development up to Eaton?**

- A. The Greeley Comprehensive Plan calls for community separators and buffers between neighboring jurisdictions. This can be accomplished with such tools as the Weld County cluster subdivision alternative or lower-density, large-lot development concepts.

## **Property Compensation**

### **26.Q. Some property owners were concerned that they would not get a fair price for their home if “O” Street became a four-lane major arterial.**

- A. The procedure for acquiring property and determining a fair price is controlled by state statute. Typically property values tend to go up as development gets closer.

### **27.Q. Will they (City/County) pay to relocate me?**

- A. Typically no. Just as if you were to sell your property to an individual you would not expect the individual to pay for your relocation. In very limited circumstances and *only as a last resort* would land be condemned and individuals be relocated after being paid a fair market price for the land by Weld County or Greeley. Under the Constitution, a property owner *cannot* be relocated by the government without just compensation. The Sub-Area Plan does not contemplate or rely on any involuntary relocation of residents.

## **Zoning**

### **28.Q. The zoning map shows industrial zoning on property in the old Budweiser annex – will the owner build industrial uses close to my house?**

- A. That is really the decision of the property owner. Given the zoning, the most likely development to be built on the property is industrial. Greeley originally annexed much of the land north of the Poudre River in the early 1980s and zoned it industrial to accommodate anticipated construction of the Anheuser-Busch brewing plant. The brewery was built in Fort Collins, but zoning typically remains on a property unless a re-zoning is sought by the landowner. Whenever the land in that location is developed, there will be

structure setbacks from the property line and probably landscape buffering, but there still could be a fair amount of impact created by an industrial use in the area. Any rezoning of the land, however, will include public noticing and opportunities for public comment. Neither the City nor the County have received indications of any immediate development of this area.

**29. Q. Why can't I have a mobile home for my grandmother next to my house (located in the industrial zone about 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue & 2<sup>nd</sup> Street)?**

A. Mobile homes within the City of Greeley can only be placed in the Residential Mobile Home Zone District (R-MH). Mobile homes are typically not allowed in industrial zones or other residential zones in Greeley. Temporary mobile homes are allowed as an accessory dwelling unit in certain circumstances in unincorporated Weld County; however, this is not an option for this property.

**Other Questions**

**30. Q. Why does Clover Creek Homeowners Association have to pay additional fees for stormwater to cross the railroad?**

A. Greeley charges a stormwater utility fee to anyone living within the city, but no Greeley fee is known to be used for financing a specific pipe across the railroad tracks. This appears to be a fee the developer privately negotiated for the transfer of the stormwater.

**31. Hillcrest Estates same questions as above.**

A. See answer above.

**32. Q. What will happen with the gravel pits on the east and the one being mined now?**

A. The city hopes to make the gravel pits into a series of parks as part of the Poudre Trail system. As with several other gravel pits, they will be filled with water and made into lakes.

**33. Q. How are gravel pits being converted to fishing ponds, as discussed in the North Greeley Profile? When?**

A. Former gravel pits near Island Grove Park owned by Greeley are being converted to water storage and fishing ponds as a part of the gravel pit reclamation. The fishing pond element is being assisted through various grants such as the Colorado "Fishing is Fun" program.