



6/21/2017

RiNo General Improvement District

2901 Blake Street STE 165
Denver, Colorado 80205

Honorable Mayor Michael B. Hancock

City and County of Denver

Dear Mayor Hancock,

On behalf of the RiNo General Improvement District (GID), we are formally writing to request your consideration for re-inserting committed funding support for the RiNo Promenade, and for considering how to also support three other important River North initiatives out of GO Bond funding or other financial resources from the City of Denver. We are working together collaboratively with the RiNo Business Improvement District (BID) and RiNo Art District Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) to support this request. A brief description of the RiNo Promenade, and reasons we are asking for your strong consideration, follow:

RiNo Promenade

A currently gritty stretch of riverfront that is at the heart of the RiNo neighborhood is poised to become one of the City's most compelling and creative riverfront park and pedestrian areas and a true regional destination for the City of Denver. The RiNo Promenade will extend and improve the regional Denver Parks and Trails system into a growing neighborhood that is seeing many new projects with their own new open space requirements that will now be able to more easily connect together a string of green pearls. In total, the combination of the RiNo Park, the RiNo Promenade, and the proposed open space to be included in private developments will add (at current tally and likely growing) a total of 12.5 new acres of public and private open space to a neighborhood with a current, serious deficit. The RiNo Promenade will continue to improve the Platte River edge along a section that has been impacted negatively in the past by misuse and environmental hazards and will help finish and enhance the impacts of recent regional stormwater projects being completed by the City of Denver.

Currently at 30% design (with funding being committed by the neighborhood, the City and the General Improvement District (\$50K contribution) to get to 100% design quickly), the design for the RiNo Promenade calls for closing Arkins Ct. from approximately 34th to 38th Streets and transforming the entire area from 29th to 38th along the S. Platte River into a 10-block long linear greenway that also connects into the planned (and funded) RiNo Park at 35th Street. The total budget for the Promenade is estimated at \$12M. Key considerations for including funding for the RiNo Promenade in the GO Bond include:

- The City of Denver has been able to leverage its funding for design for the RiNo Promenade from the neighborhood through strong public/private partnerships. Approximately 60% of the total cost of the design to date has or will come from the City via the NDCC and Parks

Department, while the remaining 40% has been committed by the RiNo GID (\$50,000), individual neighborhood stakeholders, and The Greenway Foundation.

- The RiNo Promenade is envisioned as a “Highline-esque” urban park that turns a car-focused street into a pedestrian amenity, cleans up the riverfront, adds greenspace and creates an activated environment. This addresses a number of significant needs for the RiNo neighborhood and surrounding area. Notably, the area of northeast Denver where the Promenade will be built was recently named the most polluted neighborhood in the nation. Recent studies that the RiNo GID helped commission the University of Colorado to conduct identified that currently 60% of the total surface area of RiNo is impervious, or impenetrable to water, which means dirty stormwater goes right from our streets and concrete surface area into the S. Platte River. Within the just over 1,000 acres that make up the RiNo neighborhood, there are currently only 11 acres of dedicated park and open land space. The RiNo Promenade directly addresses all these issues.
- The Promenade ties into the RiNo Park, which is nearly to 100% design and for which construction is fully funded and anticipated to begin in Spring 2018 with full completion by Summer 2019. Timing these two projects together could set a major precedent for how Denver invests in urban greenspace as well as clearly stating its commitment to clean up and activate its precious riverfront area. Without the RiNo Promenade, the RiNo Park becomes a green island, disconnected from other public and private open space areas.
- The RiNo Promenade brings to RiNo a new, creative amenity for the neighborhood, creating a place for families and children that is sorely lacking in this neighborhood, and establishing a connection into Globeville, Elyria and Swansea so that they too may benefit from the amenity investments in RiNo.
- A funding commitment from the City from the GO Bond will help leverage additional funds, including from GoCo grants, The Greenway Foundation and the neighborhood, to get the project done at the full \$12M price tag.

The RiNo GID is requesting the City re-commit to \$8M in funding for the RiNo Promenade project in the GO Bond.

While funding may be limited for additional River North projects to be included in the bond issue, and we recognize the need to ensure the entire City benefits from the process, we want to make a case for further consideration for funding projects, whether that funding comes from the GO Bond, CIP funds, consideration for use of TIF, or other sources. We believe this request is valid for a number of reasons. First, this neighborhood chose to self-organize and self-fund to be able to be a better partner with the City in leveraging their investments. The RiNo GID is committing \$3M to Brighton Blvd., and to its long-term maintenance. Collectively, the RiNo GID, BID and Art District generate close to \$2M annually to invest in this neighborhood. We believe in collaborating and we are here to be your partner. As our neighborhood develops out and we see significant investment, we know there is the perception that much has been directed here in terms of City resources, but we are also investing in ourselves. We believe the Promenade is the most important large project to put into the GO Bond. In addition, we would also like to work with the City of Denver to see if the following projects, which we feel are critical to the

neighborhood, can be funded through the GO Bond or that we may work to find other avenues to get these projects funded jointly:

38th Street Underpass

A critical connector in a neighborhood with significant connectivity challenges, the 38th St underpass is proving to be a challenging east-west viaduct for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles alike. There are physical challenges with the bridge that constrict safe movement from RiNo's east to west side, and currently, the only other vehicular connection east-west is located at Broadway/Brighton. In 2016/2017, the RiNo neighborhood approved an upzoning centered around the 38th and Blake Street commuter rail station. With increased density will come a significant need to address connectivity at this point, improving safety as the neighborhood takes on significant new population growth.

The RiNo GID is requesting the City commit to funding for 30% design so that we may come up with community-serving designs and completely understand cost implications., We are already working with the City of Denver to explore other alternatives for funding further design and implementation.

35th Street Construction (from Wazee Street to Arkins Court)

35th Street is a key east-west connector in the RiNo neighborhood, and one that overcomes the challenges of the railway that bisects the neighborhood via a pedestrian/cycle bridge, pulls together 4 blocks of 35th Street that crosses the currently under-development Brighton Blvd. at a new signalized intersection, and ties in both the RiNo Park and the proposed RiNo Promenade as well as connecting to a soon-to-be constructed (all through private funds) pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the S. Platte River, creating connections not only to the TAXI campus but also to the Globeville, Elyria and Swansea neighborhoods. This street is designed as a pilot project street that could set a new precedent for Denver. The neighborhood has been given an opportunity to lead on design, and the street will ultimately attempt to treat 100% of the stormwater through green stormwater improvements, while featuring a shared-street concept that will tie into the RiNo Park and Promenade and prioritize pedestrians and cyclists. 30% design is completed and was jointly funded by the RiNo GID (\$20,000) and the RiNo BID (\$20,000) with a match from the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative.

We are requesting the City commit to \$5M in funding for the 35th Street project in the GO Bond. RiNo is working to leverage an additional \$2-3M which will be needed to fund final design and complete construction. In addition, RiNo will commit to identifying funds to maintain the improvements.

1-way to 2-way Conversion of Walnut Street (from Broadway to 40th Avenue)

According to the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan (2011), Walnut was identified as a street with solid potential for conversion from one-way to two-way. From the plan: *"Evaluate conversion of Walnut contingent on significant redevelopment along this street that eliminates most of the existing loading docks. This recommendation is long-term and reliant on land use changes."* Today, what we know is that there are more than a dozen active development permits on the street, and the City has committed to complete temporary improvements to the street to create safe pedestrian space in the next 30-60 days. The City is also funding a study to explore the impacts and design of a two-way conversion. But we also recently learned this process was

delayed, and that funding for getting the conversion done is not guaranteed in the near term. With significant bike and pedestrian traffic in the neighborhood, this street is simply unsafe. There have been numerous car/pedestrian/bicycle conflicts in the last year alone due to more people, development, construction and activity in the neighborhood, and that is only likely to increase. The conversion of Larimer St. from one-way to two-way in 2011 and the recent 2016 conversion of Blake St. from one-way to two-way which was a partnership with the City of Denver and the RiNo BID have been extremely successful and not only improved safety, but the economic welfare of businesses.

We are requesting the City commit to expedite funding for the completion of the two-way conversion of Walnut St. in the GO Bond.

We have asked the neighborhood to share their support with you as well. We believe that there is significant value in investing in neighborhoods where there is organization, funding to leverage, and a commitment to take care of improvements for the long-term. You have all of that in RiNo.

Please let us know what more we can do to demonstrate the need, and the opportunity for further partnership, and big wins for all involved.

Best regards,

RiNo Denver GID Advisory Board

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