

You CAN Get There From Here



Solving connectivity issues between
Auraria and Downtown

Presented by the
2006 Downtown Denver Leadership Program

November 16, 2006



**DOWNTOWN DENVER
PARTNERSHIP, INC.**

511 16th Street, Suite 200
Denver, CO 80202
p 303.534.6161
f 303.534.2803
www.downtowndenver.com

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
History of Auraria	3
Master Plan and Infrastructure	10
Partnerships	20
Arts / Culture / Entertainment	23
Housing	28
Internships and Professional Services	33
Marketing and Communications	38
Parking / Transportation	41
Recreation / Parks / Athletics	46
Retail / Restaurant	50

Introduction

This report is the culmination of nine months of work by the participants in the Downtown Denver Partnership's 2006 Downtown Denver Leadership Program, a program designed to engage Downtown's emerging leaders by familiarizing them with Downtown's unique opportunities and challenges through an intense immersion in urban issues, policies and programs.

A key element of the Leadership Program is a project that demonstrates the Partnership at work – analysis, collaboration and problem-solving. The project for the 2006 class involved the Downtown Area Plan, and focused on the economic, social and physical connectivity issues and opportunities between Downtown and the Auraria Higher Education Center.

The “obvious” answer to connecting Downtown and Auraria is typically assumed to be physical in nature – an overpass or underpass bypassing Speer Boulevard. It's important to realize, however, that the social and economic components of this problem are just as significant. After all, without compelling reasons to go from one place to another, the connection is truly only physical.

The Leadership Program class identified what they determined to be the ten most important aspects of the Downtown / Auraria connection, from Arts, Culture and Entertainment to Housing to Retail and Restaurants. The report reflects those areas of focus. The names of the contributing class members are listed at the end of each section.

The 2006 Downtown Denver Leadership Program class appreciates the opportunity to participate in the 2007 Downtown Area Plan and respectfully submits this report as their contribution to it.

History of Auraria

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

As the site of Denver’s first settlement, the 169-acre Auraria Campus is an historical asset to Downtown Denver. For almost 100 years, it was an ethnically and culturally diverse neighborhood with a variety of commercial and residential structures. While the majority of these buildings were demolished in the early 1970s, several important historical landmarks remain, and the student population continues to be ethnically and culturally diverse.

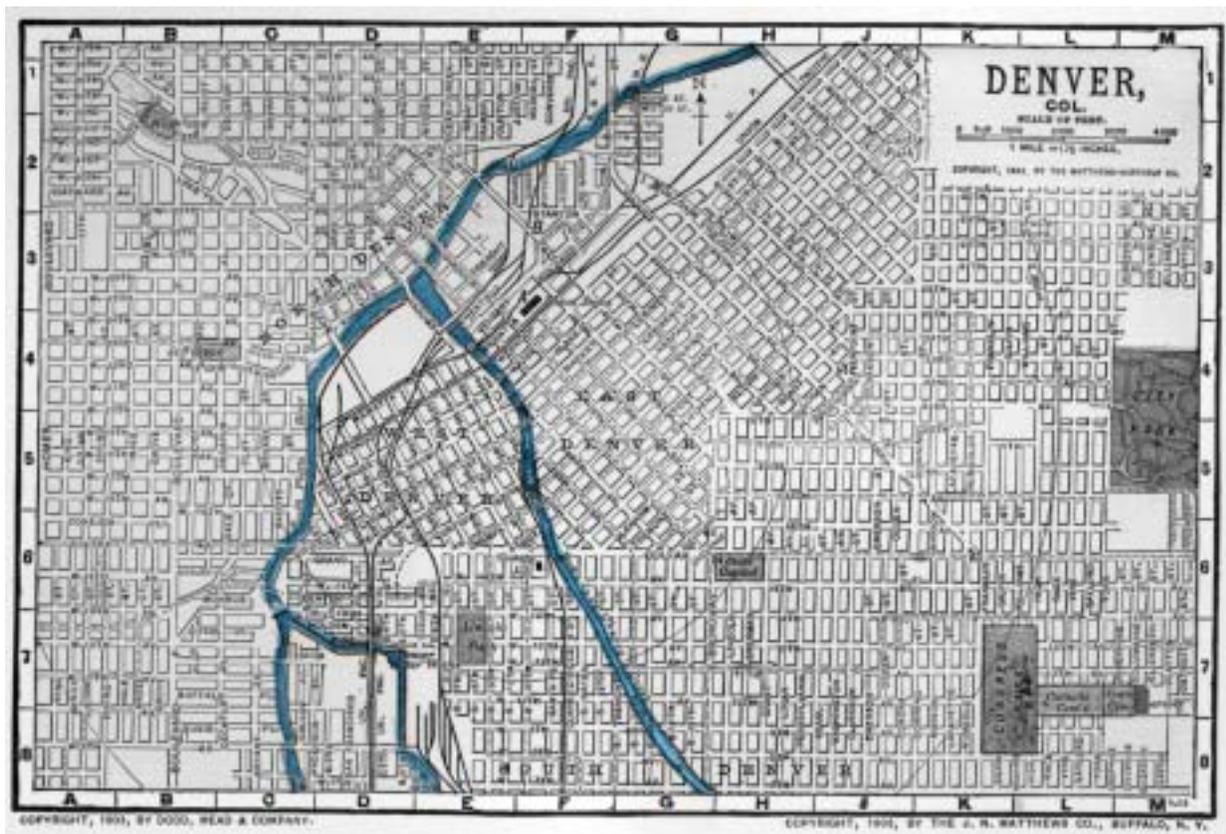


image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC

Historic Overview

The Platte River Valley became home to numerous travelers caught up in the 1850s Gold Rush in the west. Early settlers chose the site where the Platte River and Cherry Creek intersect. Their new home was named “Auraria,” Latin for gold. During the 1900s, this area continued to serve as home to many of the families of those who originally settled here. It became one of the most diverse, deeply rooted communities in all of Colorado.

In 1971, this original Denver settlement was to become a new center for higher education in Denver. Under the authority of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), the

History of Auraria

Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) project contracted with the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) on May 5, 1971, to purchase and demolish existing structures in the 169 acre area with grants and bonds from a special election, and to build a center for higher education. The campus was envisioned as an ultra-modern commuter facility to serve 33,000 students in vocational and professional studies.



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Process/Approach for Evaluation

We researched the rich history of the Auraria Campus using a variety of resources. In addition to reviewing the following publications and websites, we enlisted Dr. Tom Noel to present his history of Auraria Campus. We also contacted the Colorado Historical Society to determine existing historical initiatives on Auraria Campus, and explore future enhancements.

History of Auraria

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

As the birthplace of Denver, the Auraria Campus plays an integral part in the history of our great city. While most of the neighborhood was demolished to make way for the Auraria Higher Education Center in 1973, many historic structures still exist and are enjoyed to this day. In addition to maintaining and preserving these important structures, the following short, mid, and long-term recommendations will help to promote and monetize Auraria's historical assets. A better understanding and appreciation of this historical site will help to reconnect the campus to Downtown Denver.

Short-term

- Signage and kiosks highlighting historical points of interest.
- Historical tours (create new ones, promote existing ones).
- Change the names of Auraria classroom buildings from the current generic names (e.g., West Classroom) to commemorate notable Denver pioneers (e.g., Larimer).

Mid-term

- Use of Tivoli gallery space for historical photography exhibits.
- 9th Street Park can be used as an entertainment venue for summertime concerts and theatrical productions.
- On campus festivals and fairs celebrating the diverse multi-cultural heritage of the neighborhood and the student body.
- Public Service Announcements and other marketing strategies highlighting the importance of vibrant, ethnically diverse higher education centers in urban metropolitan areas, and the historical significance of the Auraria Campus in particular.

Long-term

- Future construction of new buildings on Auraria campus should reflect the historical character of the site (with the potential creation of design guidelines).
- A trolley car on Larimer Street would improve the physical connection to Downtown, while harkening back to the extensive network of trolley cars that was discontinued in the 1950s.



image courtesy of Photos West

History of Auraria

- Continue to relocate historic structures from blighted neighborhoods to the campus, adding usable square footage for Auraria while reinforcing the historical character of the campus

Summary

Currently, the Auraria Campus maintains several important historical landmarks. The recent painstaking renovation of the Tivoli Student Union Center reflects Auraria's commitment to continuing to preserve these monuments to Denver's past. Improved signage is planned in the near future, and there are some interesting informational kiosks at the light rail stops. The Colorado Historical Society guides tours by appointment, and Dr. Tom Noel ("Dr. Colorado") leads fascinating tours (also by appointment).



St. Cajetan Catholic Church (1925)

The Spanish Colonial St. Cajetan Church was one of three Catholic churches in the Auraria neighborhood. The landmark church now serves as a multi-purpose auditorium for lectures, concerts, recitals and other community events.

image courtesy of Photos West

History of Auraria

St. Elizabeth's (1898)

St. Elizabeth's Church was designed by Brother Adrian, O.F.M., in the German Gothic style. St. Elizabeth's parish, the second Catholic parish to be established in Denver, was created in 1878. When the Campus was created, St. Elizabeth's became the campus chapel. After a \$250,000 restoration, St. Elizabeth's sparkles today as it did in 1898.



image courtesy of Photos West

image courtesy of Photos West



Emmanuel Shearith Israel Chapel (1878)

Known as Denver's oldest standing church, the Emmanuel Shearith Israel Chapel features a mixture of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. The church was originally known as Emmanuel Episcopal. In 1903, the church was purchased by the congregation of Shearith Israel and converted into a synagogue. In 1963, the building was sold to a private owner, who transformed it into an artist's studio. Presently, it is used as gallery space for the Campus.

History of Auraria

image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver



Ninth Street Park (1872)

Consisting of 14 buildings dating back to as early as 1872, Ninth Street Park makes up the oldest restored residential block in the Denver community. Now used for primarily administrative purposes, these 19th Century residences were once homes of middle-class Jewish and Hispanic families. After almost \$1,000,000 in restorations, 14 structures have been preserved - 13 residential and one commercial, covering three acres of park and bike paths.

Tivoli (1866)

Built as a German Brewery in 1866, the Tivoli changed ownership and experienced multiple renovations and additions over the years. Auraria obtained the building in 1991 and turned the facility into a student union. It has become the heart of the campus where students and faculty from all institutions gather.

In 1973, the Tivoli was placed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1994, following renovation, it was reincarnated as a student union and retail center featuring shops, restaurants, a food court, and conference and meeting space.



image courtesy of Photos West

History of Auraria

image courtesy of Photos West



The Golda Meir House (1911)

The only remaining U.S. residence of former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, this Denver landmark serves as a museum, conference center, and the Golda Meir Center for Political Leadership. In 1981, the tiny duplex at 1606-1608 Julian Street was identified as the Denver home of Golda Meir. The house was moved twice before being relocated by the Auraria Foundation to the Auraria Campus in September 1988. The Golda Meir House was designated a Denver landmark in 1995.

Sources:

Abbott, Frank C.

The Auraria Higher Education Center: How it Came to Be. Auraria Higher Education Center, 1999.

Etter, Don D.

Auraria: Where Denver Began. Colorado Associated University Press, 1972.

Brenneman, Bill

Miracle on Cherry Creek. World Press, Inc., Denver, Colorado, 1973

Auraria Higher Education Center Master Plan, May 2001

Websites:

<http://www.ahec.edu/campus/landmarks.htm>

<http://carbon.cudenver.edu/public/library/archives/ninthst/main.html>

<http://www.coloradohistory-oahp.org/programareas/register/1503/cty/dv5.htm>

http://www.denvergov.org/AboutDenver/today_landmarks_tivoli.asp

http://www.dumondchemicals.com/html/tivoli_student_union.htm

<http://www.hellodenver.com/HistoricPlaces.Cfm>

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/CO/Denver/districts.html>

Group members:

Byron Craig

Don Jaksa

Jeanine Mayer

Kip Preston

Lee Rock-Cook

Megan Moye Zacher

Master Plan and Infrastructure

At present, there are two significant factors related to the infrastructure and plan of the Auraria Campus which affect its connection to Downtown Denver.

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

The organizational structure of the Auraria Campus can be improved to help unify the three institutions in their pursuit of a common goal.

Process/Approach for Evaluation

Based on (1) discussions with current and former Auraria officials; (2) a review of the Communications Audit performed by Stacy Lewis & Associates for Metro and; (3) reviews of the various campus web sites and marketing efforts, we concluded that the organizational structure of Auraria can be improved to help unify the three institutions in their pursuit of a common goal. Overall, there is no “one stop shop” for campus activities and resources, or a user-friendly contact point for Downtown businesses needing interns or employees.

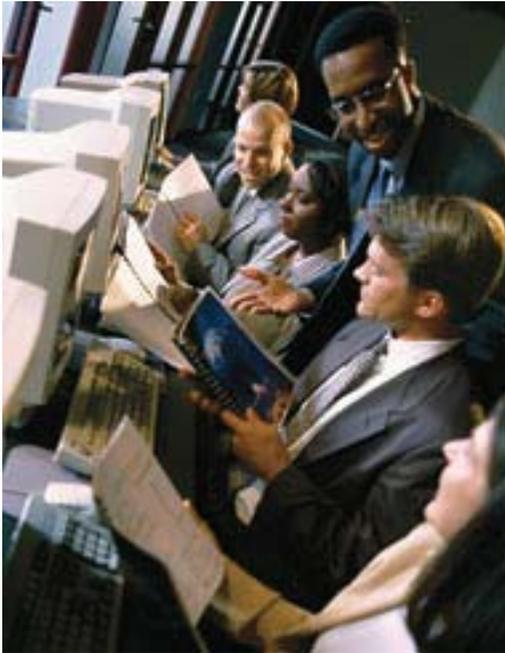
While the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) oversees the structural framework of the campus, only limited investment is allocated for this function. Legislative allocations tend to be directed toward individual institutions, leaving AHEC with limited resources to oversee and implement joint programs on a cross-institutional basis.



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Master Plan and Infrastructure

image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC



Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

- The organizational structure of the Auraria Campus and its governance needs to be strong and effective in unifying the three schools in pursuit of common goals.
- Auraria can better leverage resources such as its art and athletic facilities to enhance its visibility to and connection with the Downtown populations (workers, residents and visitors).
- A marketing campaign can be initiated to make the Downtown populations more aware of campus amenities and programs, such as student performances, guest lecturers and sporting events.
- Auraria can be the “trainer of choice” for Downtown businesses through continuing education and targeted employee training programs.

Process/Approach for Evaluation

Through our review of case studies, we have found that urban campuses most integrated with their surrounding communities provide learning opportunities that extend well beyond the course offerings of their graduate and post-graduate programs. They are thriving centers of learning that provide educational programs to a wide variety of community constituents. Summary information on some of these case studies is provided in Exhibit A. Some examples include:

- Youth summer academic programs such as the University for Youth offered by the University of Denver in partnership with University Park Elementary School and Denver Public Schools;
- Youth Tech Camp at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois;
- Summer athletic programs at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs;
- Year-round urban community athletic programs similar to those offered by the University of Denver and Stevens College in Hoboken, New Jersey;
- Worker training programs that directly address the needs of the community at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, and;
- Certificate programs in management that specifically address individual corporations’ strategic needs at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia.

Auraria should attempt to model and brand itself as the Denver metro area’s leading center for life-long learning programs. This initiative could begin with an expansion of the campus’ existing early education program to also include a K-12 program in conjunction with Denver Public Schools (DPS). In addition to Auraria’s current course offerings, the

Master Plan and Infrastructure

campus should also continue and expand non-degree educational seminars and life-long learning opportunities through programs offered both on campus and in the Downtown area. Auraria's institutions should also strive to become Downtown businesses' "trainer of choice" by offering targeted training courses specifically designed to meet the needs of Downtown businesses.

Student internships and consulting projects (in tandem with alumni outreach and mentoring) and community outreach also represent critical components in building the "soft" infrastructure necessary to create mutual benefits between Downtown and Auraria. This is an area where the Campus and Downtown groups can have a quick, tangible impact. We reviewed best practices in



this area in comparable urban situations and have included these case studies as Exhibit A. While some elements (such as the Skyline Park lecture series sponsored by Metro State this past summer) are not new to Auraria's institutions, Auraria could reap tremendous dividends by implementing more programs similar to these.

Case studies also demonstrate that employee training programs are a critical element in linking the campus with Downtown. The Downtown Denver Partnership's Business Retention Survey identified critical employment issues and industry trends. These trends were then compared with programs available at the Campus. There are many obvious potential links; however, it is not obvious that there is any sort of infrastructure (joint planning committee, finance committee, etc.) that links industry customers (local or otherwise) to campus learning program development in the Master Planning process. There are some informal ones (individual campus recruiting networks, internships, etc.), but there is an opportunity to grow this resource.

Master Plan and Infrastructure

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

The following suggestions may help encourage cohesion between Downtown Denver and Auraria:

1. Create and enhance programs and groups that strengthen ties between the Campus and Downtown, including community outreach programs and non-degree educational seminars;
2. Expand internship opportunities and strengthen the activities of the alumni associations and;
3. Include the Downtown business community in structuring academic and worker training programs that build the transportable skill sets necessary for today's employees.

Short-term

- Continue to aggressively market programs such as the Skyline Park classes.
- Offer “Lunch and Learn” type programs that would facilitate one-hour lectures by faculty members or artistic performances by staff and students. These would be open to the public.
- Develop a Speakers Bureau that would identify speakers and topics of interest from Auraria's faculty members. For example, humanity professors might offer a pre-theater lecture prior to performances at the Denver Performing Arts Complex, or educational professors might speak to Downtown residents on evaluating child care options.
- Continue and expand programs that encourage information sharing and learning between the campus and Downtown, such as efforts of the Bard Center for Entrepreneurship, the Center for Information Technology Innovation and the LoDo Gallery.



Image courtesy of the Downtown Denver Partnership

Master Plan and Infrastructure

Mid- and Long-term

- Move and expand Auraria’s child care facility. A new location could serve students, faculty, administration and Downtown residents and workers. Adjacent outdoor playground space should also be available to residents on the weekend and could be jointly funded with Denver Parks and Recreation. The facility could provide services year-round, including summer camp programs that leverage the campuses’ recreational, athletic and cultural facilities as well as the skills of students majoring in education.
- Develop a K-12 educational program on campus in conjunction with DPS to achieve the following objectives: (1) improve educational options for Downtown residents and workers; (2) provide a laboratory school for education majors and researchers; (3) enable gifted students to readily access college-level curriculum, and; (4) firmly anchor the Auraria Campus in the public’s mind as the state’s most comprehensive center of learning.
- Working together, the three schools could employ a joint Director of Corporate Outreach focused on creating partnerships with private sector companies for internships and jobs, a joint Director of Community Outreach focused on building bridges with both the local residential and business communities, and a joint Director of Marketing with sufficient budget to promote these efforts.
- Both Downtown and Auraria should work together to shape learning programs based on industry requirements. We recommend that this network become a public/private partnership in the Auraria Master Plan. Private, local investments will naturally flow to programs where there is an expectation of future returns. Students will naturally gravitate to learning programs that provide them with career and lifelong learning opportunities.

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

The physical connection between Downtown and the Auraria Campus lacks a safe, cohesive design that could facilitate easier exchanges between the two areas.

Process/Approach for Evaluation

We reviewed similar campus areas around the country to learn how they provided safe, cohesive physical connections. Comparable campuses included Columbia University in New York, The University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Pittsburg. Each of these institutions experienced similar challenges and were able to overcome the physical barriers by partnering with their respective cities.

According to AHEC and the Auraria Master Plan consulting team, infrastructure and financial barriers are the main limiting factors for the lack of a safe physical connection across Speer Boulevard. Existing campus buildings on the Downtown side of Speer

Master Plan and Infrastructure

Boulevard, such as the Dravo Building and Lawrence Street Center, and the emergence of new student housing at the Inn at Auraria, warrant a greater need to overcome the existing barriers for a safe physical connection.

Upon review of the Downtown Area Plan Work Group Recommendations and Special Review District Graphic Guidelines, there appears to be an evolving interest in new development on the Downtown side of Speer Boulevard. The City of Denver has stated a desire to relocate the fire station, and Auraria's latest Master Plan anticipates new campus growth along the Speer Boulevard edge. The proposed and existing campus developments lend credence to incorporating a safer physical connection to facilitate pedestrian traffic flow adjacent to and across Speer Boulevard.

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

Short-term

- Implement a shuttle bus that can be incorporated into a larger Lower Downtown district shuttle between Auraria, the Pepsi Center and LoDo. This will facilitate quicker, easier access to these areas and increase visits and exposure.
- Improve traffic signal timing to allow for safe pedestrian crossing at peak traffic times. The crossing signal does not always allow pedestrians enough time to completely cross Speer Boulevard.

Mid- and Long-term

- Construct a gondola (similar to the one connecting the Town of Telluride with Mountain Village) that would link Downtown with Auraria. A gondola system would be innovative and imaginative. We envision



image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC

Master Plan and Infrastructure

it serving as a free public transportation system to enhance the pedestrian experience. In some cases, it would virtually eliminate the need for a car and drastically reduce the amount of air and noise pollution. It would also eliminate growing traffic congestion and subsequently increase safety. It would provide residents with an easy commute to work or school and, by linking to planned light rail corridors, would allow tourists to avoid needing a car. Most remarkably, it is more convenient and timely than a bus, a car or even light rail.

image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC



- A gondola would offer tremendous environmental benefits by mitigating transportation impacts caused by regional growth. The system would significantly reduce noise and air pollution, parking demands and the need for people to drive their vehicles between destinations. It simultaneously would provide clean, smooth, quiet and visually spectacular transportation. Gondola towers would be low profile, usually not exceeding the average-size building or any tree line, decreasing the visual impact associated with typical gondolas while dramatically reducing the likelihood of closure due to high winds.
- A gondola would provide transportation between destinations for people commuting to work, school, attending an event or meeting friends, easing the burden of traffic

Master Plan and Infrastructure

between destinations. The transportation itself would become an event.

- Longer-term goals include an overhead bridge, or a sub-surface tunnel that connects to the existing bicycle and pedestrian trail along Cherry Creek, as well as incorporating pedestrian linkages along 14th Street's planned "Arts Avenue".
- Financing could be addressed by aligning with adjacent land and business owners who would also benefit from safe physical connections (Pepsi Center, future student housing, Larimer Square, Lower Downtown are examples). Auraria should also consider the potential revenue generation to offset costs for a new physical connection by allowing nearby business patrons to park in Auraria's parking lots and safely walk to nearby businesses and attractions.

Summary

Case studies throughout the country indicate that urban campuses and their surrounding communities can mutually benefit from each other. Sharing resources and strengthening ties are essential to developing a cohesive, supportive relationship. Programs such as non-degree educational seminars and academic/worker training programs are inexpensive and easy to implement.

Bridging the physical gap between Downtown and the Auraria Campus across Speer Boulevard is imperative to ensure success of the other programs. Whether it is conventional solutions such as timing the traffic lights or building a bridge, or more unconventional ideas such as extending a free shuttle or building a gondola, facilitating a safe and easy way to connect between Downtown and Auraria is paramount.

Master Plan and Infrastructure

Exhibit A

Internship and Community Outreach Case Studies

I. Marymount University - Arlington, Virginia (Washington DC)

The first case study analyzed was Marymount University just outside of Washington, DC in Arlington, Virginia. With a river and a state border separating Marymount from the District, the geographic distance and challenges to connecting the university with downtown and vice versa are even greater than those faced by Auraria. The highlights of the programs in place include:

1. A comprehensive transportation plan that ranges from organized carpooling to a dedicated Marymount shuttle bus;
2. A mandatory, refined internship program leveraging opportunities downtown and integrating the academic curriculum with the city; and
3. A dedicated Director of Corporate Outreach focused on creating partnerships with private sector companies for internships and jobs.

II. Vanderbilt University - Nashville, TN

The second case study reviewed was Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. Vanderbilt's Office of Community, Neighborhood and Government Relations reaches out and connects the university with the community through several important programs:

1. A Speaker's Bureau, which assists civic groups with obtaining speakers from Vanderbilt as well as 10 other schools;
2. A Retirement Learning Program, which supports lifelong learning on a non-credit basis;
3. A Lunch Box Lecture Series; and
4. A Roads Scholars Tour, which introduces 50 faculty plus administration staff and student leaders to the community and the university's engagement and impact through a two-day bus tour.

III. The third case study involves the Arizona Biomedical Collaborative (ABC) in downtown Phoenix:

1. A cooperative effort to develop bioscience programs among Arizona State University (ASU), the University of Arizona and its medical school, Northern Arizona University, and the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen).
2. Construction funded through a voter-approved \$879 million bond issue of which \$223 million will be used to construct ASU's new downtown campus. (The City of Phoenix purchased the land for the 20-acre campus)

Master Plan and Infrastructure

for \$100 million.)

3. ASU's new downtown campus will be linked to the main campus in Tempe on the Metro Valley light rail system, currently under construction.
4. The downtown campus, which opened Fall 2006, is expected to ultimately serve 15,000 students and will include the College of Nursing, College of Public Programs, and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The School of Global Health and Medicine will open in 2008.

Group members:
Vicki Bogenberger
Melinda Cox
Helen Cregger
Michael King
Bill Moon

Partnerships

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

To effectively build the connectivity between Downtown and the Auraria Campus, Downtown must efficiently communicate with the key stakeholders (i.e., government, neighborhoods and private entities) in conjunction with the campus.



Process/Approach for Evaluation

The process and approach for evaluating the situation consist of:

- Evaluating the area around the campus to identify neighborhood groups.
- Interviewing those who have been successful in collaborating with stakeholders in the past (i.e., Justice Center in the Golden Triangle area).
- Evaluating the current connectivity between the surrounding stakeholders, Auraria and Downtown Denver.
- Analyzing the gathered data to make sound recommendations.

Partnerships

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

Short-Term

- Develop a comprehensive list of all stakeholders – campus-wide, governmental, neighborhood/city and Downtown.
- Conduct a benchmark study through surveys, both in person and online, with as many constituents as possible to determine usage, understanding of Auraria, expectations, etc. Share results of the survey through public meetings in conjunction with larger Downtown Area Plan happenings to receive further input.
- Further connect community to Auraria by having campus activities marketed to the community through Urban Eye, Eye on Events, Skylines, etc.

Mid-Term

- Using a benchmark study, identify key areas for improvement and work toward developing a 2, 5 and 10 year plan, implementation of which closely mirrors the Downtown Area Plan.
- Identify key personnel from the campus to be the initial liaisons to the Downtown Area Plan. Their role will be to utilize survey results and identify the campus' needs and to further identify ways to open up the campus to stakeholders (i.e., open space, plays, sports events, etc.).
- Gather data on alumni from all institutions in the stakeholder area to bring them together to see how they can support the new plans for the campus. This may also be taken a step further by identifying alumni who live and/or work Downtown to gain their support as well.
- Identify ways in which partnerships can evolve with Auraria through internships, job placement, job training etc.

Long-Term

- Hire a full time community liaison through the campus to ensure ongoing communication between Auraria and Downtown Denver.
- Re-evaluate the benchmark study to determine achievements and develop a maintenance plan to ensure changes are implemented.
- Develop an advisory council comprised of key stakeholders to support Auraria and the community to address scholarship, campus awareness, Downtown awareness, connectivity issues and other pertinent concerns as they may arise.

Partnerships

Summary

To ensure a successful connection between Auraria and Downtown Denver, buy-in from all stakeholders must occur. Free flowing, consistent and ongoing communication between all stakeholders will strengthen connections. As the Colorado job market continues to become more competitive, the need for producing a quality workforce will become paramount for local, national and international businesses. As the connections improve, benefits will come through higher employee retention, student retention, increased revenue and, ultimately, enhancing Downtown Denver as a welcoming and comfortable place to be educated, to work and to live.



image courtesy of the Downtown Denver Partnership

Group members:
David Bowes
Gretchen Miller Busch
Chris Crosby
A.J. Klebba
Janell Lindsey
Amy Sodnicar

Arts/Culture/Entertainment

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

A destination, by definition, is a site that consistently draws people to it – whether it is employees, residents, students or visitors – because of the presence of high quality art, entertainment and/or cultural venues. Downtown Denver has many destinations, including the 16th Street Mall, Larimer Square, the Denver Performing Arts Complex (DPAC) and major sports venues such as the Pepsi Center, Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium and Coors Field. The Auraria Campus could become one of Downtown’s destinations.

Process/Approach for Evaluation

There are several “barriers” to the creation of Auraria as a destination place:

- The perimeter of the campus is surrounded by extremely busy traffic corridors on all four sides: Interstate 25, Auraria Parkway, Colfax Avenue and Speer Boulevard;
- Transportation and parking issues (either real or perceived) continue to be a problem in attracting audiences;
- Each of the three colleges has a different mission and goals, and their targeted student is not always the same demographic;
- The campus is the property of the State of Colorado, making it more difficult to navigate through some issues related to additional layers of government bureaucracy;
- The student demographic as a target audience is often overlooked in marketing plans;
- The commuter nature of the campus makes it difficult to communicate with the population;
- Information highlighting and celebrating the amenities offered on campus is not readily available to both the student and general public populations.

While Auraria is home to some arts/culture/entertainment venues, most notably the Kenneth King Center for the Performing Arts, they appear to draw mostly internal campus audiences for events sponsored and produced by the three institutions. Information regarding these events is not readily available to the general public. With sufficient marketing to the Downtown workforce, visitor and residential populations, the presence of the performing arts at Auraria could be a catalyst toward building connectivity between Downtown and Auraria.

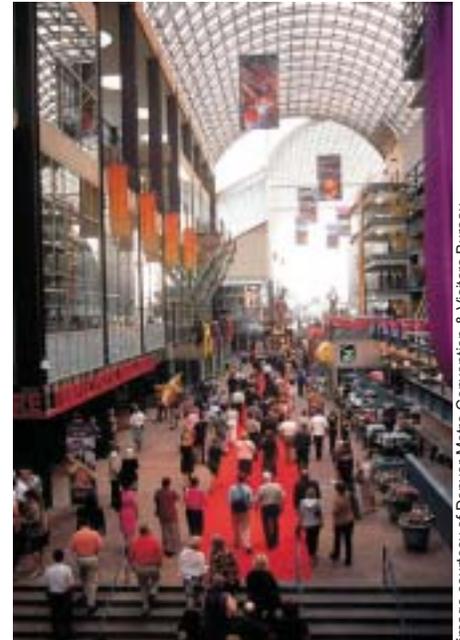


image courtesy of Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau

Arts/Culture/Entertainment



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

It is also necessary to explore how the arts and cultural organizations located Downtown view Auraria's student population as a target audience. It is important to determine if the organizations, primarily located in the Downtown area, view the large student/faculty/administrative population on campus as potential patrons, clients and/or customers. 81 organizations funded by the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District located in Denver County were surveyed to assess their relationships with AHEC. The survey was sent out electronically and contained an e-mail response mechanism. Thirty-four organizations replied. 76 percent of those responding did not specifically include the AHEC population as a target audience in their marketing plans. Reasons offered included budget restrictions, lack of staff time and lack of a strong relationship with AHEC institutions. Only 24 percent of those saying they did include AHEC as a target market indicated they offered student discounts. 41 percent of respondents offer paid or unpaid internships, mainly in arts-related fields, public relations, development/fundraising and marketing. Comments from respondents seemed to carry a common theme: no strong relationships exist between the organizations and AHEC, but most arts leaders were interested in pursuing this further. Lack of funding to forge those relationships was consistently mentioned.

Arts/Culture/Entertainment

The current campus environment for arts-related activities was also explored. We met with Michael P. Bautista, Ph.D., Dean of the Center for Arts and Sciences at the Community College of Denver and former executive director of the King Center. Dr. Bautista explained that events at the King Center were primarily sponsored by the three schools and ranged from solo recitals to musicals, in which the casts consisted of students. The audiences for these performances and shows were primarily attracted by the word-of-mouth advertising of family and friends of the performers. The King Center does advertise events in *On Stage*, a performing arts calendar of events which serves the state, mainly because it is affordable. Cost of advertising in the Denver newspapers, *Westword*, 5280, etc., was prohibitive. Dr. Bautista indicated that there have been some events that included performers with name recognition, but publicity for those came via word-of-mouth and the events usually sold out without having to reach out to the general Downtown audience. Dr. Bautista was excited about the prospect of connecting better with Downtown employees, residents, visitors and employers.

We also met with Britta Erickson, Media & Industry Relations Director for the Denver Film Society (DFS), which is housed in the Tivoli Center at AHEC and is the highest profile, non-AHEC sponsored arts organization on campus. Ms. Erickson indicated that DFS is viewed as a tenant of campus facilities; AHEC provides no support for the Film Society's activities in terms of marketing to students and/or signage on campus. A DFS patron recently pledged to finance the construction of an electronic sign on Speer Boulevard that would announce film screenings and other events at the DFS theatres, but efforts were abandoned as implementation of the proposal proved too difficult. Ms. Erickson indicated that the DFS is actively seeking a new home, one in an area that also offered dining/entertainment options that could complement the Society's programs. Because none of these options exist on campus, attendance at programs has suffered, particularly on evenings and weekends.

We conducted online research concerning other outdoor urban destinations, including Chicago's Millennium Park, to determine what features attract people to them. Millennium Park's Crown Fountain, Kapoor sculpture, Pritzker Pavilion and other features serve to draw crowds to the area, and the BP Bridge that serves as a connection to the park provided a functional, safe and beautiful pathway for those traveling to the park (across extremely busy streets) on foot or by bicycle. Water features at Disney World and the Brooklyn Museum also attract visitors and make walking more enjoyable.

A study was done of several universities, looking at how they use their websites as a tool for communicating their arts, entertainment and cultural events to their surrounding communities. The websites of New York University, the University of Minnesota, the University of California-Davis, the University of Arizona and AHEC were reviewed. One of the team members was able to visit the sites of New York University and the University of Minnesota to look at how these campuses physically integrate into their cities. General conclusions are that the AHEC website can be an effective communication tool to market the

Arts/Culture/Entertainment

arts, entertainment and cultural offerings to the Downtown populations. The site visits dramatically illustrated how the physical barriers between the campus and Downtown hinder integration, and played a strong role in developing the following recommendations.



image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC

Recommendations

Short-Term

- Create a clearinghouse on campus for communication and information to create a “buzz”. A website that is well-managed, up-to-date and easy to navigate, and which offers student discount information and the ability to purchase those discounted tickets/admissions on-line, would help students become more active in Downtown events, assist the organizations by raising needed earned revenue and help Downtown employees and residents become more familiar with what is available on campus. The arts/culture/entertainment organizations and venues in Downtown should include the Auraria population in their marketing plans. There must also be a strong partner on campus working closely with the arts organizations for this effort to be effective. A concerted and consistent marketing effort, especially when students are registering for classes or going through the orientation process in August and January, could help organizations sell more tickets or admissions;
- Ensure that AHEC programs have a presence at Downtown events, such as A Taste of Colorado, so that the general public begins to become more aware of available campus activities.

Mid-Term

- Implement a cash-loaded debit card for students and the general public to use not only at arts/culture/entertainment venues, but also at retail outlets, restaurants, sports venues, etc.

Arts/Culture/Entertainment

- Working with RTD, establish an east-west connection to the Free Shuttle on the 16th Street Mall that would transport people from the heart of campus to the Mall and/or 17th Avenue.



image courtesy of City & County of Denver

Long-Term

- Re-structure Speer Boulevard so that it tunnels underground, creating a lush green space (with Cherry Creek as a dominant feature) in Downtown, adding valuable real estate to the city. This park, perhaps modeled after Chicago's Millennium Park, should connect with and complement the one that currently exists at the Denver Performing Arts Complex. The use of

dramatic sculpture, water features and an 'arts walk' (incorporating work by both student and professional working artists) could beautifully connect Downtown and the campus, creating an oasis in an urban setting.

Summary

Arts, culture and entertainment venues can greatly contribute to the connectivity between Downtown Denver and the Auraria Higher Education Center. There seem to be two parallel communities that exist at the current time: one looking to offer a greater quality of life for its growing, ever-diversifying audience, and one looking to discover an identity that would help incorporate it more into the culture of the city. The campus has arts facilities, venues and degree programs in place that could help make it a destination. Downtown has the employees, visitors and residents that could serve as an audience. Conversely, Downtown has major arts, cultural and entertainment attractions that, if utilized by the student population, could greatly enhance their college experience. There are some 'barriers', either real or perceived, that prevent the full utilization of the amenities offered by Auraria and Downtown. Breaking down these barriers is where to begin.



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Group members:
Tameeka Aviles
Lynea Hansen
Christian Lewis
Kate Swan
Tom Wuertz
David Zupancic

Housing

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

Since its inception in the 1970s, the Auraria Campus was conceived of and planned strictly as a “commuter” campus. Its primary objective was to serve students’ educational needs, rather than create a campus environment that would include traditional student and faculty housing components.

As the student population has diversified and its needs have changed, there has been increased demand for housing on or near the campus. In response to this demand, the Inn at Auraria, the Campus Village and the Regency have been developed as the initial step toward accommodating the needs of the new students. Although not necessarily located on campus, all of these developments use their proximity and ease of access to Auraria as one of their major selling points.



image courtesy of AR7 HooverDesmondArchitects

Housing

While these projects have had a significant impact on the demand for student housing, the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) 2003 Student Housing Study suggests that all of the institutions still have significant unmet demand for student housing. AHEC's study determined that fifteen percent (15%) of all full-time students and six percent (6%) of all part-time students would "definitely have lived" in student housing had it been available; twenty-two percent (22%) of all full-time students surveyed were said to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current housing situation.

Such results suggest that a real opportunity exists for the institutions on the Auraria Campus to satisfy this demand and better serve the students' (and potentially faculty and staff) housing needs. Finally, as Auraria continues to update its identity and diversify activities and uses on campus, having a residential population on or near campus is a powerful tool to animate it. Creating an increasingly 24-7 environment at Auraria by providing convenient housing is a means of improving connectivity with Downtown Denver. An enlivened campus with varied uses and offerings—including housing—can only serve to make Auraria more attractive to Downtown workers, residents and visitors, and in turn increase the students' exposure to Downtown's businesses and amenities.

Process/Approach for Evaluation

In evaluating how to better connect Downtown and the Auraria campus via housing, the following issues were considered:

- The emerging demand for Auraria-related housing;
- The availability of affordable housing in the urban core and in close proximity to the campus; and
- Further defining the housing goals and/or issues identified in the Auraria Campus Master Plan.

To better understand these issues, the following research tasks were undertaken:

- Inventory existing student/affordable housing options in Downtown or in close proximity to the campus;
- Review national best practices for strengthening campus housing alternatives;
- Review the existing Auraria Master Plan's approach to housing issues and initiatives;
- Interview relevant Auraria staff regarding current student housing resources;
- Review maps to determine potential locations for on-campus student housing;
- Interview the Downtown Denver Partnership's Housing Program Manager to better understand existing efforts to address Auraria's housing demand and Downtown's involvement in the Auraria Master Plan; and
- Conduct an in-depth analysis of the 2003 AHEC study of student housing demand.

Housing

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

After assessing Auraria-related housing issues, the following conclusions have been reached:

- There is a significant, unmet demand for Auraria-related housing. In 2003, the demand for “student beds” (the traditional measuring unit for this market) was estimated to be approximately 2,500. The same study estimates that this demand will increase to at least 3,000 in 2013. Currently there are 1,878 beds available near campus, developed with the cooperation of or in consultation with the campus.
- Within the overall demand for housing mentioned above, there is currently a lack of affordable housing near campus. The same study found that for 95 percent of those surveyed, proximity to campus is the single-most important factor for students when choosing housing, with affordability a close second.
- In creating a strategy and process to address the student housing demand, the following items should be considered and evaluated:
 1. Capitalize on the existing and emerging housing demand.
 2. Leverage housing on/near campus as a tool to achieve a larger, more diverse student population.
 3. Review and implement similar strategies and practices from other partnerships between higher education institutions, such as Temple University, CUNY, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the cities they reside in (Philadelphia, New York City, Madison).

On-Going Assessment of the Demand for Auraria-Related Housing

- Review and conduct a follow up to the 2003 housing demand study in 2007 to re-evaluate housing demand.
- Analyze the demand for faculty (both current and retired), administration and staff housing on or near campus, which could also serve as a retention tool.
- Formally assess the “lessons learned”--successes and/or failures of the first three student housing projects.
- Reassess the housing demand every five years to stay abreast of the potential market for Auraria housing.

Addressing the Need for Affordable Housing Near Campus

- Conduct an in-depth study to determine what the current affordable housing price-points are for students, and how to use affordability to attract a broader range of the Auraria population (age, income, nationality, profession, etc.) to live on or near campus.
- Inventory underutilized land on/near the campus for affordable housing opportunities,

Housing

including identification of public and privately owned parcels in and around campus (Pepsi Center parking lots, Six Flags Elitch Gardens) as possible re-development sites.

- Support public/private partnerships and establish incentives to encourage the development of affordable on-campus housing.
- Inventory affordable housing supply and demand for Auraria students, staff and faculty in five years to assess progress and opportunities.

Ensure Efforts to Create Downtown Housing Options for Auraria's Users are in Harmony with the Auraria Campus Master Plan

- Partner with the individual institutions on the Auraria campus in order to transition the campus' identity from a commuter campus to an integrated college community with a significant housing component.
- Improve existing Auraria resources for assisting students, faculty and staff in identifying available Downtown housing, utilizing resources such as the www.livedowntowndenver.com website.
- Take advantage of the completion of the Southeast light rail line, and the fact that when FasTracks is completed the Auraria Campus will be served directly by light rail service from three different corridors (Southwest, Southeast and West).
- Coordinate the outcome of future demand studies with the Auraria master planning process, using the results to actively pursue partnerships with private developers.



Image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC

Housing

Summary

Downtown Denver and Auraria should continue to assess and address the demand for Auraria-related housing, with particular attention to the need for affordable housing. Transit-oriented development—existing and future—should be leveraged to capture a broader range of household types that wish to live in proximity (via transit) to the Auraria Campus. Also, nation-wide “best practices” in leveraging public/private partnerships to create housing on or near the campus should be reviewed. Finally, all efforts to create housing options should be done in cooperation with the Auraria Campus Master Plan process. A diverse, affordable and adequate supply of housing benefits both Auraria and Downtown by changing the perception such that the two communities are seen as one, encouraging more engagement by their varied populations.

Group members:
Jessica Baker
Margaret Ebeling
Kevin Foley
Megan Lennox
Josh Magden
Dan McGowan

Internships and Professional Services

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

At present, a process doesn't exist to match the supply of students at the Auraria Campus to internships and jobs available in the Downtown Denver area. The career services offices at the three institutions have limited resources, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive awareness of internship and job opportunities with Downtown Denver businesses. Conversely, Downtown businesses have limited knowledge of the skills and abilities possessed by the students of the Auraria Campus, and no easy means of assessing whether students may be a fit with their internship or job opportunities. In addition, these businesses generally seek to fill positions on an individual basis rather than in an aggregated fashion, making finding these opportunities much more difficult for any given individual student. This situation can be improved, resulting in a better matching of supply and demand.

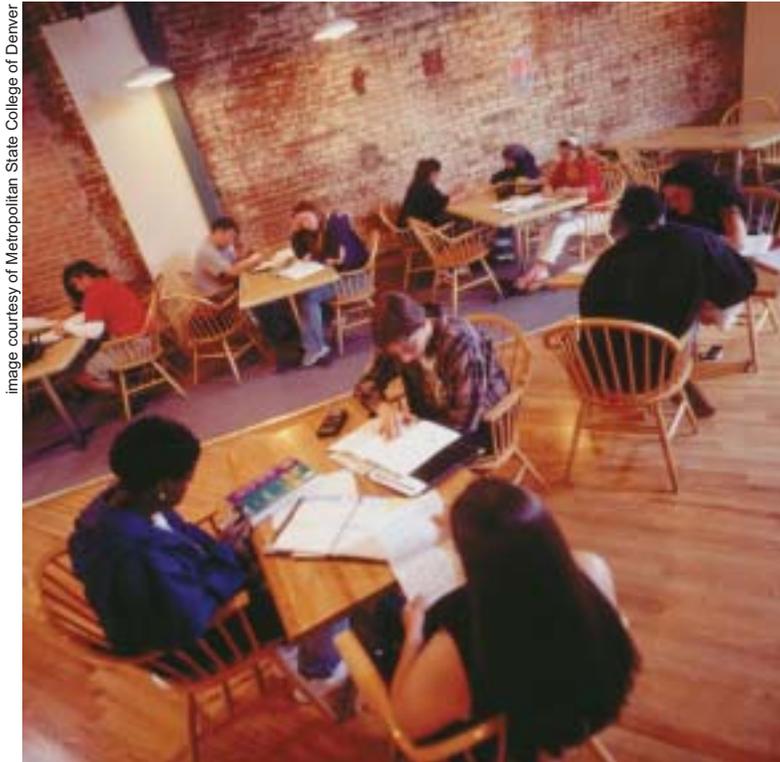


image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Process/Approach for Evaluation

Improve Downtown Denver's ability to utilize the Auraria Campus' talent pool, creating a situation that is beneficial to both entities.

Gauging the extent and characteristics of this issue was done through the use of a SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis. This analysis was used to identify the critical issues central to the Auraria/Denver internship and employment gap, and to refine the research goals.

From our analysis, we developed the following objective:

Improve Downtown Denver's ability

to draw from the Auraria talent pool, thereby tightening the relationship between the two entities.

Research Methodology

Data was collected with three main information-gathering methods:

- Personal interviews and meetings with key career guidance staff at each college
- Identification of significant majors and curriculums at each institution to identify largest internship and employment opportunities
- Internet research

Internships and Professional Services

Data was systematically compiled into a research matrix of consistent criteria for each institution. The research criteria included categories ranging from whether there are physical career resources at each school, to identifying existing student resources for internships/employment, to gauging professional resources for tapping student talent.

In tabulating the existing resources available at the three institutions, opportunities for improvement were quickly identified.

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

Research revealed that the three schools tend to approach the challenge of connecting with the internship and employment opportunities represented by the Downtown business community independently, but with the same challenges: communication, partnerships and resources.

Recognizing that each school's desire is to develop and market programs that are tailored to their student body, there is still a need for greater cross-promotion and marketing between Auraria's three career centers and Downtown Denver employers. The recommendations are:

Short-Term

- Partner with business membership organizations like the Downtown Denver Partnership, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau, the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, etc. to grow awareness of career centers.
- Participate at events sponsored by organizations mentioned above as appropriate.
- Create a marketing/awareness campaign aimed at Downtown businesses. The goal of this campaign would be to communicate the benefit of the internship programs at the Auraria schools. (An excellent model already in place at Metro State College is coordinated through the Cooperative Education Internship Center. Susan Warren Lanham, Ph.D., is the director of



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Internships and Professional Services

this organization. Dr. Lanham leads a successful interaction of academics proactively interacting with the business community.)

- Create a process for literature placement within the student transportation system.

Mid-Term

- Target employers- The three career centers could host a periodic breakfast or lunch presentation for employers that match the targeted industries and allow them to market their student profile.
- Alumni database improvement - Implement a more cohesive and organized database management system for Auraria school alumni. These contacts could be used to establish internship or employment connections, as well as further promoting the benefits of being alumni of an Auraria institution.
- Professor database - Build a database of professors who are willing to provide lecture services to corporations within the Denver metro area. Professors who are experts in their fields could serve as valuable resources to companies as they are conducting their industry specific corporate training. This corporate training could range from entry level training to executive management training. Additionally, it would be beneficial to develop a database of industry professionals in the Denver area that professors would have access to. These industry professionals could support the academic efforts of the institution by being available to serve as guest speakers to the classes which teach a curriculum associated to that professional's industry expertise.

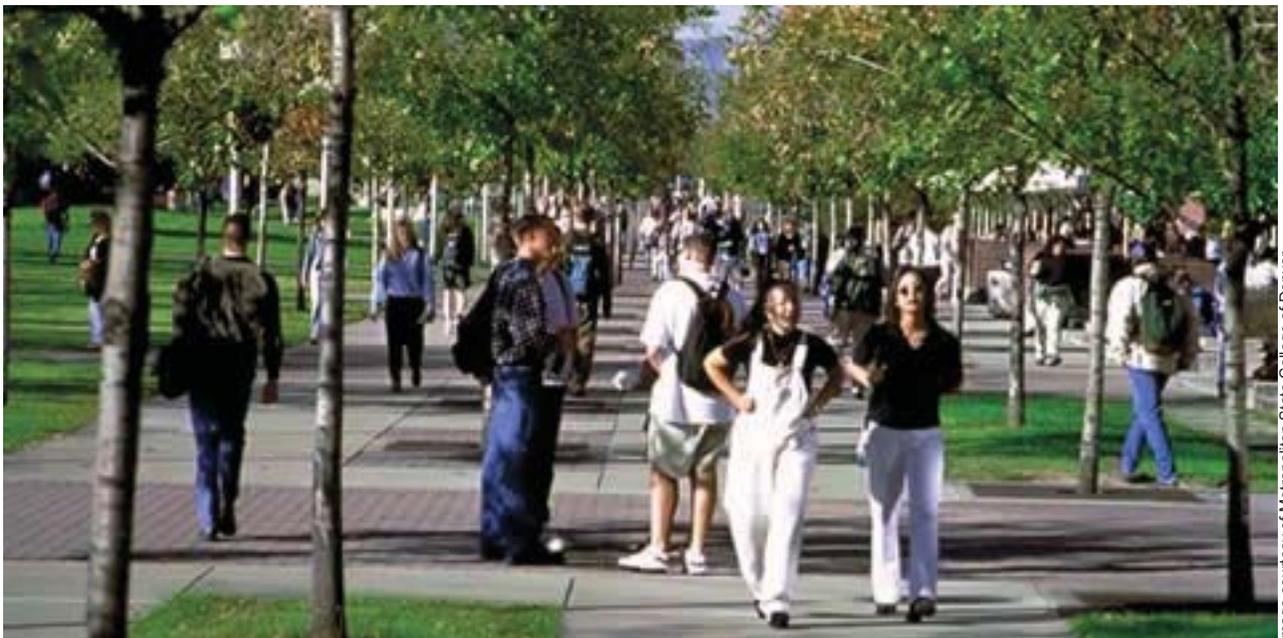


image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Internships and Professional Services

Long-Term

- Establish a physical presence on the Auraria campus and in Downtown Denver that promotes the activities of each entity. The presence would take the form of either a kiosk or store front, designed to promote Auraria along the 16th Street Mall. Conversely, a Downtown Denver kiosk/store front at a high traffic area of the Auraria campus would promote the benefits of Downtown. Within these centers would be computer access resources, collateral material displays, and/or a volunteer to answer questions and provide information.

Summary

There is probably no better way to improve connectivity between Downtown and Auraria than at the business community level, represented by opportunities for internships and employment. The attached description (p. 37) of the partnership between EnCana Oil and Gas and the University of Colorado at Denver – that may grow to include the entire energy industry and the University of Alberta – is a great example of the mutual benefits of collaboration between the private sector and institutions of higher education.

Internships and Professional Services

In December of 2005, EnCana Oil and Gas Corporation approached the Dean and Associate Deans of The Business School of the University of Colorado and Health Sciences Center to discuss the possibility of an accounting course focused on the oil and gas industry. EnCana had just moved their finance and accounting operations to Denver and felt they would benefit from a “local pipeline” of students who had some knowledge of the industry itself and the accounting intricacies of that industry. A group of faculty and administrators discussed the issues involved both on the corporation side (financial support, speakers) and the university side (scheduling, faculty with industry knowledge). Since there was a faculty member who had worked in the oil industry, the discussion was pursued and an agreement was reached that was agreeable to both parties. EnCana was gracious in both their monetary support for the course and their willingness to provide speakers for special topics as were other oil and gas firms in Denver. EnCana suggested a text for the course and the faculty designated to teach the course agreed to their choice; from this point on, the faculty member determined the academic content of the course. Although there was little time to advertise the course, about 30 students, both graduate and undergraduate, registered. The feedback we have had about the course has been positive and the course will be offered in spring semester 2007, again with financial support from EnCana.

This course has led to discussions with several oil and gas companies in Denver about the possibility of the Business School creating a new MS in Energy Resources Management, tailored to the needs of the energy industry in all areas (oil, gas, coal, land management, nuclear, and unconventional sources of energy production). The new degree would educate present and future energy industry leaders on the business side of energy management. Presently we have held discussions with Duke Energy, Anadarko, Petro-Canada, Western Gas, Evergreen and others. In addition, the Canadian Consulate is assisting us with introductions to many Canadian energy companies. We are exploring offering the new degree as a joint degree between ourselves and the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. The new degree would be innovative in that it would be delivered as a combination of intensive one to two week in class seminars each semester rotating between Denver and Edmonton, Alberta, Canada with the rest of the semester on-line to accommodate the geographical dispersion of energy people world-wide. John Turner of the Business School is the Project Director for this new degree.

Group members:
Robert Heilbronner
Kaia Nesbitt
Josh Robbins
Joe Schmidt
Tim Streeb
Ginger White

Marketing and Communications

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

The biggest gap in the connectivity between Downtown Denver and the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) is the lack of awareness of the services and amenities each area has to offer. There is not a central point of contact by which to get information about the respective entities, creating a significant barrier to partnering and utilizing each other's services. Many business leaders are not aware of the areas of focus of the three colleges, and it is difficult to find information about their activities and services. As a result, connectivity between Downtown Denver and Auraria is minimal.

The benefits of a better connection between Downtown Denver and Auraria are many: Downtown Denver provides retail and entertainment business, while Auraria provides potential consumers. Downtown businesses have employers and jobs, while the schools have interns, employees, training and education that could provide value to Downtown employers. Auraria also has entertainment and activities that the Downtown community could enjoy. These are compelling reasons to pursue tighter connections.

The lack of awareness of the respective services and amenities offered by these establishments is due in part to limitations in current website infrastructures. Auraria's website can be difficult to navigate and is somewhat limited in offering information regarding activities, internships and job openings. Neither does the website provide information on Downtown Denver. There are efforts underway to improve this condition, which will require approval from the three institutions at the campus. Similarly, Downtown Denver lacks a central website for information and, more importantly, does not celebrate Auraria as a center of services and amenities available for Downtown. The notion of 'one-stop' shopping to obtain information on services, activities, amenities and events offered by both entities is absent from both populations.

image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC



In addition to the website infrastructure limitations, promotional efforts by the respective entities are lacking. There has not been a significant marketing effort to create enticements for Downtown businesses or Auraria to utilize the available services or resources that each provide. Even with awareness, there need to be incentives to "cross Speer" and receive benefits from each other.

Marketing and Communications

Process/Approach for Evaluation

In order to understand the existing communication patterns between Downtown Denver and Auraria, the following tasks were engaged:

- Interviews with Auraria communications personnel to collect information on their communication focus and plans.
- Interface with websites, kiosks and publications to identify information that is available to both Downtown Denver and Auraria populations.
- Interviews with chairpersons of the Downtown Denver Partnership 2006 Leadership Program Focus Groups to collect their assessments, ideas and proposals pertaining to connectivity in an effort to identify marketing and communications strategies.



Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

Short-term

- Form a centralized communication department for all three educational institutions; improve the existing website (in progress). In the meantime, utilize the existing central information center; add a Downtown central communication hub, utilizing the Downtown Denver Partnership as a resource.
- Begin providing promotional information to Downtown businesses for the spring semester, including vouchers, coupons and discounts; provide information on student enrollment; define measures of success, impact and usage.
- Form a committee of Downtown employers and representatives from the colleges to focus on employment and internship opportunities.
- Involve Downtown merchants with campus activities.
- Promote activities, events and key Auraria contacts at Downtown kiosks.

- Ensure Downtown publications provide information regarding events at Auraria, including seminars, entertainment and the arts.

Mid/long-term

- Develop a gateway website that identifies all activities and events being held at both locations.
- Create a central hub for employment opportunities and internships

Internships and Professional Services

- Create a Coordinator of Communication role for Downtown and Auraria that would be responsible for maintaining information, websites, promotional activities, etc. This individual would also track utilization of communication vehicles.
- Develop a credit/debit card program for Downtown businesses that also serves as a campus ID.
- Launch a marketing campaign that promotes Downtown merchants and significant activities at the campus.

Summary

As both Downtown Denver and the three institutions at the Auraria Higher Education Center continue to grow, it is important to recognize the financial, social and cultural benefits to be realized as a result of expanding the perceptions and understanding of their respective boundaries. Optimizing the efforts made in presenting these establishments to the general public, and to each other, will reveal the synergies that can launch new partnerships and relationships that will be of value to the vitality of each establishment, and crucial in evolving both toward a more progressive and vibrant future.



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Group members:
Nancy Botiller
Scott Bressler
Jim Hall
Brent Lloyd
Shelly St. John
Barb Weiske

Parking/Transportation

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

Denver is growing. With that growth, demand for more public transportation has increased. Denver has responded by adding new light rail lines and bus routes to accommodate the southeast corridor. RTD and the Front Range communities have plans to connect west toward Lakewood and Golden and also east toward DIA within the next ten years.

Auraria presents a number of transportation and parking challenges not only for the students and faculty, but the Downtown community as well. The Downtown Multimodal Access Plan (DMAP), completed in December 2005, provides recommendations largely to address parking and transportation issues. DMAP presents a detailed, integrated plan for vehicular, freight, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access into and throughout Downtown, though an examination of DMAP suggests that the campus' transportation issues are not adequately addressed within this plan. In order to promote a stronger relationship between the Auraria Campus and Downtown, the multimodal transportation mechanisms require improvement; connecting Auraria and Downtown in the truest sense of the word is essential. Parking and transportation are the key to reconnecting the campus to Downtown.



image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC

Parking/Transportation

Process/Approach for Evaluation

Issue 1

The scale of Speer Boulevard is not pedestrian or bicycle friendly, thus hindering safe connections between the campus and Downtown Denver. DMAP outlines strategies for improving streetscapes in Downtown Denver. By applying these strategies, Speer Boulevard will provide access for a greater variety of multimodal transit opportunities more conducive to providing safe connections.

Issue 2

The city's current plans for transportation expansion minimally address the anticipated need for increased student housing in Downtown Denver.

Issue 3

Many current parking opportunities do not allow for “in and out” access. Students needing to leave campus are not able to utilize alternative forms of transportation and may be penalized. Students leaving for internships, employment opportunities, or other activities requiring a short-term departure from the campus may have difficulty in finding available parking opportunities. The demand for parking spaces and revenue by the campus, combined with the desire to limit vehicle traffic, presents certain constraints, but we recommend a workshop with students, the campus, RTD, and the city to identify potential solutions.

Issue 4

Student safety and intra-campus circulation is a significant concern relating to reconnecting the Auraria Campus and Downtown. We understand that student safety is of paramount concern to the campus, and believe that this issue could be magnified as more Downtown residents and workers begin to utilize the campus during off-hours.

Issue 5

Increase awareness of transportation lines in and out of the Auraria Campus.

Recommendations for Resolution/Improvement

Issue 1

Short-term

- Create areas for merchandise and food vendor carts.
- Increase the number of bike racks along Speer Boulevard.
- Consider signal timing changes based on traffic operations analysis along Speer Boulevard and key cross streets.
- Improve crosswalk markings with high visibility striping, colored concrete, additional signage, and in-pavement or sign mounted flashers.

Parking/Transportation

- Reconfigure existing RTD routes to cross Speer Boulevard into the campus, preferably at two locations: Auraria Parkway and St. Francis Way.

Mid-term

- Provide curbside parallel parking along Speer Boulevard, buffered by bicycle lanes and landscaped curb yards.

Long-term

- Enhance underground passageways to include retail space and improved lighting and landscaping.
- As suggested by DMAP, provide a wide, inviting below-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossing of southbound Speer Boulevard between Larimer and Lawrence Streets. This would be an extension of the current below grade crossing of northbound Speer Boulevard at Creekfront Park.

Issue 2

Short-term

- Reconfigure existing RTD routes to include stops at student housing developments such as Campus Village and all future student housing developments.
- Ensure that campus shuttles can provide students with transit to housing developments 24/7.

Mid-term

- Increase the number of bicycle lanes in Downtown and extend them to student housing developments such as Campus Village at Auraria and future developments.
- Require all future housing developments (high-end, market rate, and affordable alike) to provide bicycle storage commensurate with the number of occupants.
- Provide bicycle path maps and information to students at orientation and/or on Campus websites.

Long-term

- Provide a gondola system, open to students and the public, with stations at each of the various campus centers as well as Downtown nodes such as Union Station and the Pepsi Center.



Image courtesy of Zebra Graphics, LLC

Parking/Transportation

Issue 3

Short-term

- Provide prepaid in and out cards that allow for a less expensive second park.

Mid-term

- Work toward decreasing the demand for in and out parking by improving alternate methods of transportation in and around campus. These could include FlexCar or a similar short-term rental bike solution.
- Consider a shuttle/circulator similar to the 16th Street Mall Shuttle extending north-south from 19th Street through the Campus to provide both day and evening access for students and non-students. A possible location for the shuttle could be adjacent to or through the Convention Center. This shuttle would also generate additional parking revenues as people could park anywhere, Downtown or at Auraria, and still get easily to any point in the city.

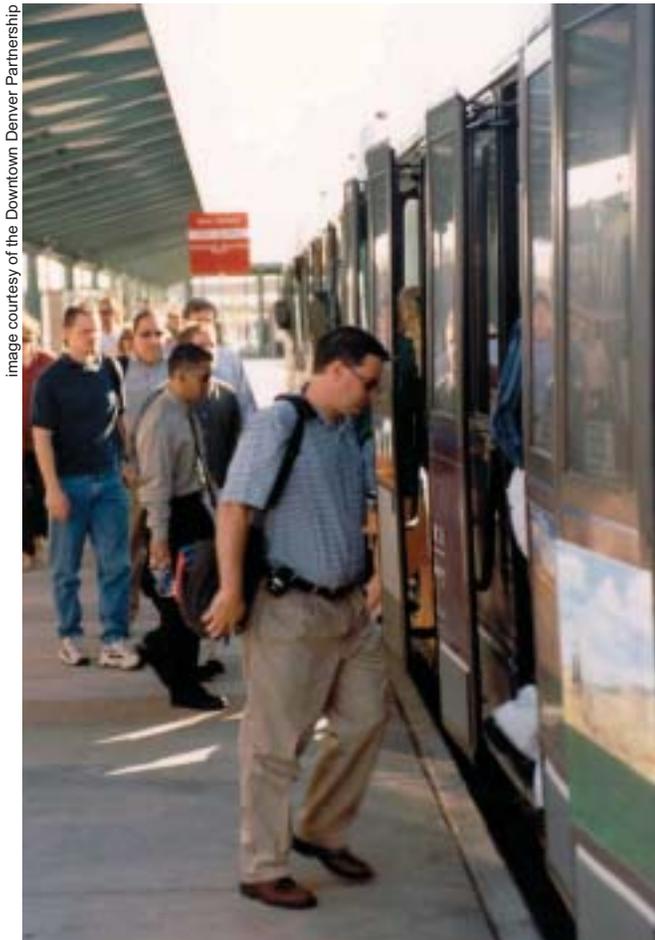


image courtesy of the Downtown Denver Partnership

Long-term

- Permanently decrease the demand for parking by reconfiguring RTD routes service into and out of the campus to Downtown.

Issue 4

Short-term

- Determine if expansion of the campus shuttle systems could be expanded or modified to improve intra-campus access.

Mid-term

- Explore lighting and way-finding solutions to improve general safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

Long-term

- Review current campus master plan update process to determine the extent that this issue is being addressed.

Issue 5

Short-, Mid-, and Long-term

- Provide cash key information and payment kiosks to students on campus.
- List all modes of transportation on campus websites, mailers, and/or orientation materials.

Parking/Transportation



image courtesy of the Downtown Denver Partnership

- Provide Downtown Denver businesses, apartments, etc. a list of events, shows, classes, etc. that will be on campus, and parking options and bus/light rail transportation information.

Summary

Numerous parking and transportation challenges exist in reconnecting the Auraria Campus and Downtown. This report only begins to summarize key issues and opportunities for change. The recent efforts of DMAP, coupled with the ongoing Downtown Area Plan, create a forum for dialogue related to multimodal transportation and parking opportunities throughout the Downtown area. A thoughtful dialogue between Auraria, the city, key Downtown associations, and RTD will undoubtedly yield positive results for the future of the Downtown community and greater opportunities for connectivity across Speer Boulevard.

Group members:
Sydney Hamilton
Danny Martinez
Slavica Olujic
Gary Petak
Erik Petersen
Dan Thompson

Recreation/Parks/Athletics

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

One of the most important aspects of the college experience revolves around what occurs outside of the classroom, as students spend 10 percent of their time in class and 90 percent outside of class. A significant piece of the college experience occurs through recreational and athletic activities. These experiences are an important aspect to Auraria, as it is a commuter campus, and home to many non-traditional students. However, this dynamic is changing as student housing opportunities are springing up on and adjacent to campus. The maintenance and creation of recreation and park space for the campus is handled by the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC). Of the three institutions, Metro State is the only one that offers intercollegiate athletics, and it also oversees Campus Recreation at Auraria, which serves all students at Auraria by offering a state of the art work-out facility, climbing wall, club sports, intramurals, drop-in aerobics, etc.

The Auraria Campus sits on 127 park-like acres in Downtown Denver. Much of what passerbys may see is the space located between Speer Boulevard and the Tivoli Student Union, space that is used for athletic events throughout the year. The other open spaces are in the interior of the campus, not easily accessible to those who are not a part of the campus. Those driving or walking around the perimeter of the campus only see students coming and going, not necessarily able to perceive them enjoying the campus environment.

As the campus continues to grow and change from a commuter campus to one that has more full-time residents, there is an opportunity for Downtown and Auraria to take advantage of both learning and social activities. This is key given the increasing density occurring in the adjacent areas of Downtown Denver.

image courtesy of the Downtown Denver Partnership



Process/Approach for Evaluation

One part of the evaluation was an examination of the park and recreational facilities in Downtown Denver. The nearest Denver parks are Commons Park between 15th and 19th along the South Platte River; Confluence Park located at the nexus of Cherry Creek and the South Platte; and Lincoln Park at Mariposa and 11th Avenue. Both Commons and Confluence Parks are primarily passive parks with no active programming. Lincoln Park has a number of amenities including an outdoor pool, a football

Recreation/Parks/Athletics

field and a recreation center. However, none of these parks is immediately adjacent to the Auraria Campus or the section of Downtown Denver near Larimer Square. Additionally, Denver only has two recreation centers within one mile of the campus – La Alma Recreation Center (located in Lincoln Park) and the Twentieth Street Recreation Center. Unfortunately, neither of these facilities is close enough to Auraria that they would likely be utilized by students or the future residential population along 14th Street.

A second part of the evaluation process involved meeting with Cary Weatherford, Director, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center Real Estate and Facilities, and Barbara Weiske, Director, Student and Auxiliary Services at the Auraria Higher Education Center. Both individuals provided insight and information about the campus facilities and their use. Master planning efforts undertaken by AHEC determine the use of the available green space and, as funds continue to be reallocated, the surface parking lots are being redeveloped as there is a desire to retain or increase the amount of green space that currently exists.

In order to understand the recreation and athletic programs, the group interviewed Tony Price, Director of Campus Recreation at Auraria and Joan McDermott, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics at Metro State. The athletic fields on the campus are used by recreation and physical education classes and the athletic department. The campus community utilizes all the facilities located in the Physical Education and Events Center and is at capacity most days.

Recommendations for Resolution/ Improvement

As both Auraria and Downtown Denver continue to grow, the social and recreational opportunities for Auraria students and Downtown residents need to be enhanced to promote better health and well being. After assessing the existing conditions, the following recommendations are being made:

Recreation Short Term

- Publicize athletic activities and amenities, such as aerobics, lap swims, weight room, etc. to Downtown residents. These activities are possible revenue generating opportunities



image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver

Recreation/Parks/Athletics

image courtesy of Metropolitan State College of Denver



for the campus. This will allow the Recreation Department to earn revenue that could go to improving the facilities.

- Have student nights at the Rockies, Broncos, Nuggets, Avalanche and Rapids games. This will give students the opportunity to become more engaged in the Downtown Denver area after their classes.

Mid Term

- Dedicate more ‘wellness’ space on campus, including weight and aerobic rooms, pilates, etc.
- Build an athletic track that is open to the public. It could be located either around the current outdoor fields or using trails that provide a loop around the campus.
- Move the tennis courts to the top of the (new) parking structure as it is not often at capacity. This would free up space for a possible new recreation center or other campus uses.

Long Term

- Explore partnerships with the YMCA and Denver Parks and Recreation on a multi-purpose recreation center that can be used by students and Downtown Denver residents.

Parks and Open Space

Short Term

- Enliven the green space along Speer Boulevard by exhibiting student art work.
- Develop a monthly art walk through the campus where more art work can be displayed.
- Install landscape improvements to enliven campus space.

Mid Term

- Develop an agreement with the City of Denver and the Denver Center for the Performing Arts (DCPA) for the area in front of the Denver Performing Arts Center (located across Speer Boulevard) to use this green space for student concerts and activities. This will allow the campus to host larger events and market them to the general public.
- Build an outdoor classroom or amphitheater that can be used by all three schools. This unique classroom setting may attract prospective students and visitors to the campus from the growing number of Downtown Denver residents and workers.

Recreation/Parks/Athletics

Long Term

- Improve the green space along Speer to be more park-like.
- Improve the Cherry Creek Trail link to Auraria at Lawrence Street to make it a more compelling and enjoyable experience.
- When new buildings are needed along Speer Boulevard, locate them closer to Speer and Auraria Parkway to provide an edge to the campus and bring the campus “closer” to Downtown.



Athletics

Short Term

- Initialize a marketing campaign to increase awareness of Metro State’s athletic events (men’s basketball championship).
- Attract Downtown workers and residents at athletic events by instituting special promotional nights with special admission prices, etc. Utilize Speer Boulevard and other high traffic locations to promote events.

Long Term

- Build a multi-purpose stadium for all athletic events – possibly in a partnership with Denver Public Schools as they also need such a facility – and locate it near the light rail stop to allow for easy access.

Summary

Recognizing the proximity of Downtown to Auraria, the limited amount of developable space and the city’s reputation as the fittest and healthiest in the country, it is only natural to promote and expand the recreational and athletic amenities that are provided by Downtown and Auraria.

Group members:
Tiffany Arries
Joey Carrasquillo
Ray Cullen
Janel Highfill
Jill Jennings

Retail/Restaurant

Description and Significance of the Current Situation

According to the Downtown Denver Partnership website, “Downtown Denver is one of the largest and most diverse shopping areas in the Rocky Mountain Region, with 3.58 million square feet of retail space. Downtown has an excellent mix of retail, with a diverse selection of more than 400 retailers. While Denver is the 22nd largest city in the nation, its Downtown is the 10th largest in size.” A year-end 2005 report by Frederick Ross details the strength of the Downtown submarket, showing a vacancy of only 2.36 percent and an average rental rate of \$20 per square foot.

Tourists, Downtown residents, and Downtown workers largely drive retail demand in Downtown Denver. Downtown generates about 50 million tourists per year, with the average length of stay at 6 nights per visit; these visitors spend significant amounts of money on shopping, dining, and entertainment.

9,000 people call Downtown Denver home; including the adjacent neighborhoods, that number increases significantly to about 85,000, creating a significant market for Downtown retail.

Finally, approximately 110,000 people work in Downtown Denver, and these workers display the following spending habits:

- 76 percent of workers report staying Downtown after work to eat out an average of 16 times per year.
- 56 percent go to bars and clubs Downtown after work an average of 16 times per year.
- 42 percent stay to go shopping, averaging 15 visits per year.

A group that does not receive much attention is the student body at Auraria Campus. Metro State University has approximately 21,000 students, University of Colorado at Denver’s Campus population is 12,500 and the Community College of Denver has approximately 4,500 students. The total student population of these three institutions numbers 38,000. This figure goes up significantly when you include faculty and staff.

According to anecdotal evidence, the majority of students at Auraria commute to class and, as a result, do not spend much time outside of the classroom on campus or in Downtown Denver. There are new housing opportunities emerging for students in the vicinity of the Campus, and the leaders of the three schools anticipate a growing number of students living nearby. However, due to the current student population’s propensity to commute, it is most appropriate to compare them to the population of Downtown Denver workers in order to determine their potential retail spending impact.

Retail/Restaurant

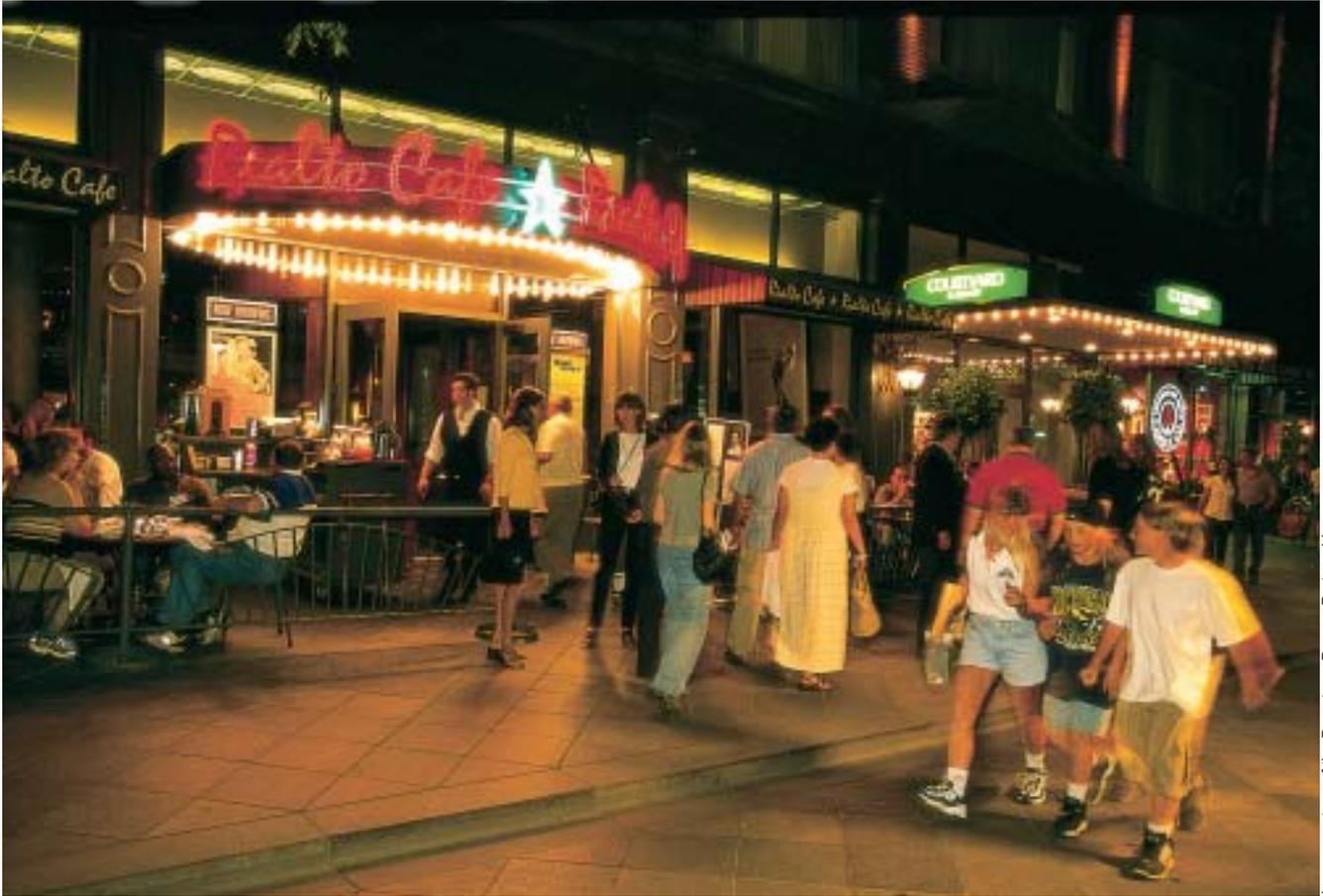


image courtesy of the Downtown Denver Partnership

Case Studies

For simplicity, we calculated that any time a Downtown employee stays downtown to eat, go to a bar or club or go shopping, they spend \$50. The retail impact of Downtown workers can therefore be calculated accordingly:

Restaurants:	110,000 workers x 76% x 16 visits x \$50 =	\$66,880,000
Bars and Clubs:	110,000 workers x 56% x 16 visits x \$50 =	\$49,280,000
Shops:	110,000 workers x 42% x 15 visits x \$50 =	\$34,650,000
Total:		\$150,810,000

We anticipate that if retail opportunities are marketed to the Auraria campus, and the programs we recommend are implemented, the percentage of students staying Downtown as well as their number of annual visits can match those of the Downtown employee population. Because some students may be more conservative spenders than Downtown office employees, a spending rate of \$30 per visit is used for the following calculation:

Retail/Restaurant

Restaurants:	38,000 students x 76% x 16 visits x \$30 =	\$13,862,400
Bars and Clubs:	38,000 students x 56% x 16 visits x \$30 =	\$10,214,400
Shops:	38,000 students x 42% x 15 visits x \$30 =	\$7,182,000
Total:		\$31,258,800

The example illustrated above is based on untested assumptions, but it does highlight the magnitude of the retail potential from the Auraria campus population. Improving the integration between Downtown and Auraria would be beneficial to retailers, the City and County of Denver, and the students of Auraria.

Primary Source: www.downtowndenver.com

Long-term

The statistics show that a market opportunity exists, necessitating a need to create a motivating and compelling reason for students to frequent Downtown retailers. The long-term recommendation is a declining balance card that students can use at retailers. This proposed solution would make it easy and worthwhile for students to patronize participating retailers.



Background

In essence, a declining balance card is similar to a debit card. The card is presented and swiped much like a credit card, and each purchase reduces the available balance on the card by the amount of the purchase. However, unlike a debit card, a declining balance card cannot be overdrawn. If the balance remaining on the card is not sufficient to conduct the transaction, the transaction is refused. In most cases, the card purchases and balance can be tracked online and money can be added from various physical locations as well as online. Possible uses for a declining balance card on the Auraria Campus include:

- Retail vendors on campus
- Retail vendors off-campus
- Parking
- Vending machines
- Laundry facilities in student housing
- Campus bookstore
- Library charges
- Other printing/copying
- Campus event tickets
- Campus event concessions
- Cultural events off-campus

Retail/Restaurant

Challenges

- Determining how the program will be applied and administered to the three campus institutions. The biggest component of this is whether the program will be undertaken by the entire campus or separately by the three institutions.
- Determining what equipment will be necessary for vendors of all types (vending machines, retail, laundry, ticket offices, etc.) to be able to participate in the program.
- Marketing the program to vendors, both on and off campus.
- Marketing the program to students and parents.
- Determining how the actual card fits in with the campus ID system currently in place. (Will it be possible for students to use the existing campus ID cards of the respective institutions as a declining balance card? Is it possible, during implementation of the declining balance card, to examine the possibility of one card serving all purposes for all students on the campus (declining balance, access, transportation, identification)?

Case Studies

The institutions listed below currently have declining balance card programs. All are either local or are located in an urban setting similar to that of the Auraria Campus. A website address and brief description of the program is provided for each.

University of Denver

Darren Moitzfield-DU Pioneer ID office

<http://www.du.edu/pioneercard/index.html>

- The University of Denver currently has 18 restaurants signed up and participating, such as Quiznos and Tokyo Joes; many others have expressed interest.
- The restaurants must pay for the swipe unit (most use Verifone Tranz330 and the cost per unit is \$200) but the ID Office will set it up for them. This will cost the retailer and require new equipment.
- The restaurants pay 5 percent of sales back to the university.
- Blackboard, the system vendor, does much of the management of the system and the online site that allows users to check their balance and add money.
- Transactions and the cards are also administered by a bank.
- Students use the card for laundry as well.

Virginia Commonwealth University

<http://www.vcucard.com/home.jsp>

University of Washington- Seattle

http://hfs.washington.edu/husky_card/

University of Utah- Salt Lake City

<http://www.ucard.utah.edu/>

Retail/Restaurant

University of Cincinnati
<http://www.uc.edu/bearcatcard/>

Short-term

Realizing that this recommendation will require great collaboration and timely implementation we recommend that in the short-term Auraria embrace Rainbow Rewards, an existing local credit and debit card rewards program that would provide students with up to 20 percent cash back at local Downtown retailers. Students would simply enroll their existing credit or debit card.

www.rainbowrewards.com

Background

Rainbow Rewards is a free debit and credit rewards program that offers cardholders up to 20 percent cash back when they make purchases at local participating retailers. Rainbow Rewards is designed to drive traffic and increase frequency of visits. Rainbow Rewards provides retailers with a low-cost loyalty infrastructure that is pay for performance; as a result, retailers are charged only when a cardholder makes a purchase. In return, Rainbow Rewards provides retailers marketing advantages that are traditionally cost prohibitive (see sample marketing materials).

Work in Progress

Rainbow Rewards has met with local merchant groups such as Larimer Square, Tabor Center and Pavilions, and is in the process of enrolling the Tabor Center retailers in the program. Currently, there are over 50 Downtown merchants in the Rainbow Rewards program. These merchants include Illegal Pete's, Bruegger's Bagels and Executive Tans among others. Participating merchants are across all categories; as a result, students can purchase anything from automotive supplies, tans, flowers, shoes or food while earning cash back.

www.rainbowrewards.com

Rainbow Rewards has met with the three campus institutions and representatives of campus housing, and they have all agreed to help market and promote Rainbow Rewards to their students and residents. Rainbow Rewards will fund, create and customize communications to Auraria student promoting downtown retailers, thus creating a new marketing channel for them. (See marketing examples).

Rainbow Rewards is a cost effective way to promote and encourage Auraria students to patronize Downtown retailers. Furthermore, it is a local program that supports the community.

Retail/Restaurant

Summary

There are many good reasons to create and support better connections between Auraria and Downtown, but none as economically compelling as the impact the Auraria populations (student, faculty and administration) can have on Downtown's retailers and restaurants. And, as the Auraria populations increase and more and more students become residents instead of commuters, the economic impact grows correspondingly.



Group members:
Mike Dorsey
Megan Lemieux
Tim Martinez
Cary Weatherford

Downtown Denver Leadership Program 2006

Ms. Tiffany Arries*	Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.
Ms. Tameeka Aviles	TIAA-CREF
Ms. Jessica Baker	Downtown Denver Partnership
Ms. Vicki Bogenberger*	CH2M HILL, Inc.
Ms. Nancy Botiller	Kaiser Permanente of Colorado
Mr. David E. Bowes*	Bowes and Company
Mr. Scott Bressler	URS Corporation
Ms. Gretchen Miller Busch	Faegre & Benson LLP
Mr. Joey Carrasquillo*	Anderson Mason Dale Architects
Ms. Melinda S. Cox	Colorado Dept. of Human Services
Mr. Byron Craig	Xcel Energy
Ms. Helen Cregger	Piper Jaffray
Mr. Christopher G. Crosby	The Nichols Partnership
Mr. Raymond R. Cullen	Hensel Phelps Construction
Mr. Michael Dorsey	Corum Real Estate Group
Ms. Margaret Ebeling	Larimer Square
Mr. Kevin Foley	CB Richard Ellis
Mr. James J. Hall	FirstBank of Denver
Ms. Sydney G. Hamilton*†	Humphries Poli Architects
Ms. Lynea Hansen	The Kenney Group
Mr. Robert Heilbronner	Headwaters MB
Ms. Paige Heydon-McCrary	Civic Results
Ms. Janel Highfill	Community College of Denver
Mr. Don Jakska*	Northern Trust Bank
Ms. Jill Jennings	Design Workshop
Mr. Michael W. King	Brownstein Hyatt & Farber, P.C.
Mr. A.J. Klebba	Kiewit Building Group
Ms. Megan Lemieux*	Rainbow Rewards
Ms. Megan Lennox	Perkins Coie, LLP
Mr. Christian Lewis*	First Western Trust Bank
Ms. Janell Lindsey*	Metropolitan State College of Denver
Mr. Brent Lloyd*	Wenk Associates
Mr. Joshua Magden*	George K. Baum
Mr. Danny D. Martinez	Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Timothy Martinez	Office of Economic Development
Ms. Jeanine M. Mayer	SafeHouse Denver
Mr. Dan McGowan	Staubach Company
Mr. William M. Moon	David Owen Tryba Architects
Ms. Megan Moye-Zacher*	Zebra Graphics LLC
Ms. Kaia Nesbitt*	EDAW
Ms. Slavica Olujic	Emily Griffith Opportunity School
Mr. Gary G. Petak	Matrix Bancorp
Mr. Erik C. Petersen	J.E. Dunn Construction Company
Mr. Kip Preston	Qwest Communications
Mr. Josh Robbins	Focus Property Group
Ms. Lee Rock-Cook	Central Parking System
Mr. Joseph J. Schmidt	Colorado Business Bank
Ms. Amy V. Sodnicar*	CBS 4, KCNC-TV Denver
Ms. Shelly St. John*	Primary Objective LLC
Mr. Jeffrey K. Starkey	BKD, LLP
Mr. Tim Streeb	Linhart McClain Finlon
Ms. Katherine Swan	Kelly-Haglund-Garnsey & Kahn LLC
Mr. Dan Thompson	GHP Horwath
Mr. Cary Weatherford	CU Denver and Health Sciences Center
Ms. Barbara Weiske	Auraria Higher Education Center
Ms. Ginger White	Denver Office of Cultural Affairs
Mr. Thomas M. Wuertz	RNL Design
Mr. David Zupancic	Denver Center for the Performing Arts

* Presentation/Report Committee

† 2006 DDLP Trustee