



A Vital 88th Avenue

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE THROUGH STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PREPARED FOR

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Steuteville, 2018; ULI, 2016; <https://bbandm.wordpress.com/tag/bike-lanes/>.
Retrieved April 2021.; ULI, 2016

Executive Summary

Thornton is a growing community that seeks to continuously improve the ability of its residents to live, work, and play in the city. The City has recently turned towards the revitalization of 88th Avenue as a key chance to fulfill these aspirations. The corridor currently faces challenges of disinvestment, aging infrastructure, and auto-oriented land uses. Despite these challenges, the corridor boasts many existing assets and nodes of opportunity. The City hopes to identify a catalytic project that will propel the corridor towards becoming a vital place.

According to Thornton's adopted plans, vital places:

- Have high quality gathering spaces
- Are people oriented
- Are accessible to all members of the community
- Are unique and have community identity
- Have quality and diverse employment opportunities
- Have diverse housing and retail options
- Have walkable neighborhoods with access to various amenities
- Are well connected

With this vision for the vitality of 88th Avenue in mind, the goals of this revitalization project are to:

- Identify the special and unique places along 88th Avenue that are assets to the community
- Identify areas that are currently underutilized and could become high quality, people-oriented places
- Design interventions the City can make to capitalize on these unique assets and spur high quality investment in the area
- Identify and develop opportunities to provide connectivity between neighborhoods, amenities, community centers, and employment centers

Nodes of Opportunity

The 88th Avenue corridor is a unique opportunity to create a center for Thornton. This report identifies four major nodes of opportunity along the corridor. The map on the opposite page depicts these nodes.

On the eastern boundary of the corridor, the Platte River and Gravel Lakes have enormous potential to become a recreational destination for community members, as well as a regional draw. RTD recently opened the N-line with a station north of 88th Avenue. The area surrounding the station is prime for a mixed-use urban center. The intersection of Washington Street and 88th Avenue is one of the major commercially zoned areas within the city. The revitalization of this node could be a major asset to the City of Thornton and the community by providing public gathering spaces, services and retail, and quality employment. The RTD Park-n-Ride station located at the westernmost boundary of the 88th Avenue corridor study area has enormous potential to be developed as a regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) center.

88th Avenue is the connecting thread across these unique assets and lies within the walkshed or bike shed of each node. Investment in the street itself could spur investment in each of these opportunity centers.

Recommendations

A survey of corridors facing similar challenges to 88th Avenue revealed that intervention along the street itself through streetscape, infrastructure, and placemaking improvements can dramatically spur investment in the surrounding properties and serve as a catalyst to the revitalization of the neighborhood.

This report presents recommendations that will provide opportunities for the City of Thornton to catalyze the revitalization of this corridor through streetscape improvements. Reallocation of the existing right-of-way can reorient the corridor towards people. Investment in traffic calming measures, pedestrian amenities, and bicycle safety will allow

the street to be used as a public space. Placemaking and aesthetic improvements can help each node be reimagined as a unique place and destination. Table 1 provides an overview of these recommendations. While public transportation improvements are also key to a sustainable and vital corridor, those improvements are outside of the scope of this study. Transit improvements should be investigated further in later project stages.

Carrying out the recommendations discussed in this report will involve coordination and engagement with stakeholders, a variety of funding sources, and regulatory changes. Implementation will require additional research and decision making beyond the scope of this report to determine the strategies that best fit the 88th Avenue corridor. Additional investigation will also be needed to determine the effects of these revitalization efforts on housing affordability and displacement.

Overall, the revitalization of 88th Avenue through infrastructure investment, streetscape improvements, and placemaking efforts would capitalize on the enormous opportunities and existing assets present along this corridor. The recommendations presented in this report are direct actions the City can take to catalyze revitalization and help the corridor fulfill its potential as a uniquely Thornton core and destination.

88th Avenue Nodes, Walksheds, and Bikesheds

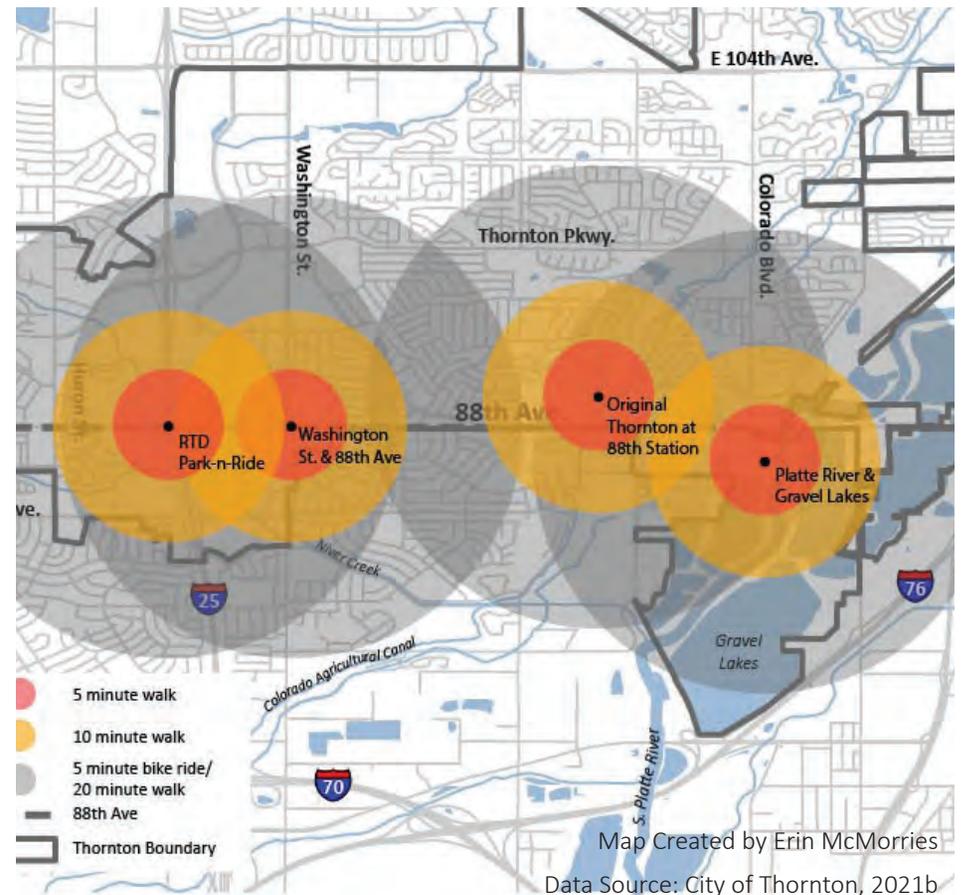


Table 1: Recommendations Overview

Traffic Calming & Street Space Reallocation	Pedestrian Safety	Bike Safety	Aesthetics & Placemaking
Reallocate existing ROW space towards pedestrians, cyclists, and amenities	Improve pedestrian comfort and ability to cross 88th Avenue	Make 88th Avenue a comfortable place to ride bikes for all users and abilities	Install pedestrian-scaled infrastructure
Change infrastructure and signage to decrease driver speeds	Improve pedestrian comfort while walking along 88th Avenue	Increase awareness of bicycle infrastructure at key locations	Plant additional street trees and water-conscious plantings
		Increase connections to South Platte River Trail, both on and off 88th Avenue	Rebrand nodes along 88th Avenue as unique districts to highlight their significance and unique characters
			Install public art