



Urban Land Institute – ULI Colorado North Boulder Art District Technical Advisory Panel



A Report from a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)
of ULI Colorado
October 5–6, 2017

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North Boulder Art District Technical Advisory Panel

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Contents

Executive Summary.....3
Overview & Questions for the Panel.....5
Findings.....7
Key Opportunities.....11
Recommendations.....13
Conclusion.....23
ULI Volunteer Panelists.....24

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Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs)

Technical Advisory Panels bring Urban Land Institute (ULI) Colorado expertise directly into communities to help solve tough real estate problems. TAPs provide advisory panels composed of ULI Colorado members who volunteer their time to offer unbiased, disinterested professional advice. Each are leading experts in their fields.

Since 2004, ULI Colorado has been invited to conduct more than 60 TAPs throughout Colorado.



Executive Summary

North Boulder has historically been the hub of Boulder’s art community. But due to climbing rents and new development prospects in the area, there is a need to secure retail space, housing, and studio availability for artists before they are displaced.

On October 5-6, 2017, the Colorado District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI Colorado) convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide guidance on how to make the North Boulder (NoBo) Art District a thriving art district, while maintaining affordability for local artists.

The TAP panelists found that the newly designated NoBo Art District has many assets, including strong surrounding neighborhoods, adjacency to a world-class open space and trail system, upscale, mixed-use new urbanism with a diversity of residential and commercial uses, and funky, artist-friendly warehouses. There are also opportunity areas, such as deteriorating and vacant commercial buildings, struggling retail, few community gathering spaces and evening activities, and limited parking availability.

Although the district currently lacks cohesion, the art district has significant community support. There are around 3,000 artists in the area who lack gallery space and other venues to share their work and many face challenges in housing and studio affordability, increasingly forcing them to leave the city.

With the support of the community and the city, creative placemaking within the art district has the potential to attract visitors to the area, generate affordable options for artists, and increase cohesion of the art district.

The TAP panelists suggested the following short-term and long-term strategies for supporting the art district.

The Armory has become iconic for the art district. Developers Jim Loftus and Bruce Dierking originally planned to transform the Armory into affordable live-work space for artists, but have since refocused on mixed-use housing on the site to get city approval for the project.



The current plan for the Armory site includes 182 apartments and 18 townhomes designed for middle-income earners, and 8,500 square feet of restaurant and commercial space. Rendering courtesy Bruce Dierking and Jim Loftus.

Short-term strategies:

1. **Build momentum by utilizing the group of local leaders** convened by Matt Chasansky, Manager of the Office of Arts and Culture for the City of Boulder, to lead a community engagement process for defining a vision and identity for the art district. This outreach should also help to strengthen the participation of a broader stakeholder group to support local art and placemaking efforts.
2. **Use tactical urbanism**, such as painted crosswalks and wayfinding, node activation with food trucks, and interactive projection art, to begin to knit together the district.
3. **Foster frequent activation and programming**, focusing on smaller scale, more frequent activations as opposed to large scale, one-off events.
4. **Work with city staff** to ensure that existing and ongoing infrastructure projects include art enhancements that will strengthen the character and legibility of the district.
5. **Give clear direction to developers**, letting them know what the community wants by giving them the art district’s top priorities, such as live/work space, galleries, and community art venues.

Long-term strategies:

1. **Support land uses that the community wants**, such as galleries, makerspace, live/work space, mixed-use development along the west side of Broadway, and affordable housing for artists.
2. **Use policy and regulation to support the art district**, such as allowing live-work space in more zones, establishing incentives for arts and culture as a community benefit, making zoning consistent with the vision for the art district, and managing parking throughout the district.
3. **Develop sustainable funding sources for the art district**, such as a Business Improvement District, Colorado Creative District Certification, and membership, sponsorship and grant opportunities.

With new development on the horizon, the district is as ready as it ever has been for an infusion of the arts—but the community must actively pursue this now for it to happen.

The NoBo Art District is the city’s only formal arts district and it serves as a gateway into the City of Boulder. With new development on the horizon, the district is as ready as it ever has been for an infusion of the arts—but the community must actively pursue this now for it to happen. The process of working together as a community to create a vision and plan, and then implementing it together with the city is vital to the success of this art district. The ULI panel concluded that the community of the NoBo Art District can make this happen.



Overview & Questions for the Panel

On October 5-6, 2017, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide guidance on how to make the North Boulder (NoBo) Art District a thriving, cohesive art district. The NoBo Art District was formalized through acknowledgement of the Boulder City Council in May 2017—making it the first formal art district in the city—although it has yet to reach its full potential.

At the invitation of the North Boulder Creative Community and the Boulder Art Matrix, with the support of the City of Boulder and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, ULI Colorado assembled six land use experts (see the list of panelists on page 25) who volunteered to offer objective advice. For the two-day TAP, the panel reviewed a detailed advance packet of planning and demographic data, toured the site, and interviewed local stakeholders, including city officials and longtime property and business owners (for a list of stakeholders interviewed, see page 27). The sponsors gave the panelists the following problem statement and questions to address during the TAP.

View of the Foothills from the North Boulder Art District.

The Problem Statement:

North Boulder has historically been the hub of Boulder's art community, because low rents attracted artists. But due to climbing rents and new development prospects, there is a need to secure retail space, housing, and studio availability for artists before they are displaced. Infrastructure and design in the newly city-designated art district includes a confusing visual character, deteriorating warehouses, vacant commercial buildings, few amenities for residents, limited public gathering spaces, few evening activities, and few parking spaces. Designation as a State of Colorado Creative District could boost retail and art industry in the area, but the district is in need of guidance to go from vision to implementation in order to achieve this goal. Since the west side of Broadway is currently

being considered for redevelopment and retail in the area is struggling, we hope creative placemaking will attract visitors to the area, create affordable options for artists, and increase cohesion of the district identity.

The following questions were posed to the TAP panelists:

1. What recommendations can be developed for uses and market improvements for the west side of Broadway that would both (a) fulfill community aspirations for development that are articulated in the subcommunity plan and (b) retain affordable, functional studio spaces for artists?
2. What needs to be added or changed in the built and economic conditions to advance a marketplace that supports the activity and community of artists?
3. What recommendations can be developed for visual environment design criteria for a creative district, i.e. the elements of a “design handbook” for developers and city departments that will result in developments and infrastructure that contribute to the look, feel, and uses of a creative district and strategically meet incentive guidelines for community benefit?
4. Are there appropriate paths forward that would make it reasonable to annex Emerald City, the existing affordable studio space in Boulder?
5. How can we work with the DOT plan to include elements of art and culture?
6. How do we implement the amendments in the comprehensive plan using the community benefit of arts and culture?
7. Are there possible solutions for increasing arts anchors that can act as hubs for engagement and economic vitality for the arts in Boulder?



Panelists interview local stakeholders during the TAP.



Findings

The TAP panelists found that the newly designated NoBo Art District has many assets, including strong surrounding neighborhoods, adjacency to a world-class open space and trail system, upscale, mixed-use new urbanism with a diversity of residential and commercial uses, attractive restaurants and shops, and funky, artist-friendly warehouses. According to Matt Chasansky, Manager of the Office of Arts and Culture for the City of Boulder, however, there are around 3,000 artists in the area who lack gallery space and other venues to share their work. Already, the art district has significant community interest and support. At the time of this TAP, the art district had over 200 members and increasing visibility and recognition by the general public. To continue this momentum and the development of the area as an art district, the panelists noted the following findings as integral to their recommendations.

Panelists interview public officials and city council members during the TAP.

Organizational/Cultural:

Multiple organizations leading the way: There are various organizations attempting to lead the path forward for the art district, including those listed below.

1. *The North Boulder (NoBo) Art District* is a grassroots 501(c)(3) non-profit supporting the art district, its events and activities, and local artists with a 9-member volunteer Board of Directors representing over 200 active individual and business members. To date, NoBo Art District has organized over 80 First Friday events, opening an average of 20 locations and showcasing around 30 artists nearly every month. The organization also participates in local events that promote art production, education, and community engagement.
2. *Boulder Art Matrix (BAM)* is another 501(c)(3) non-profit in the area with a 4-member board formed initially to support the redevelopment of the Armory



Stakeholders, sponsors, and panelists stop in the Hoi Polloi Workshop during the NoBo Art District tour.

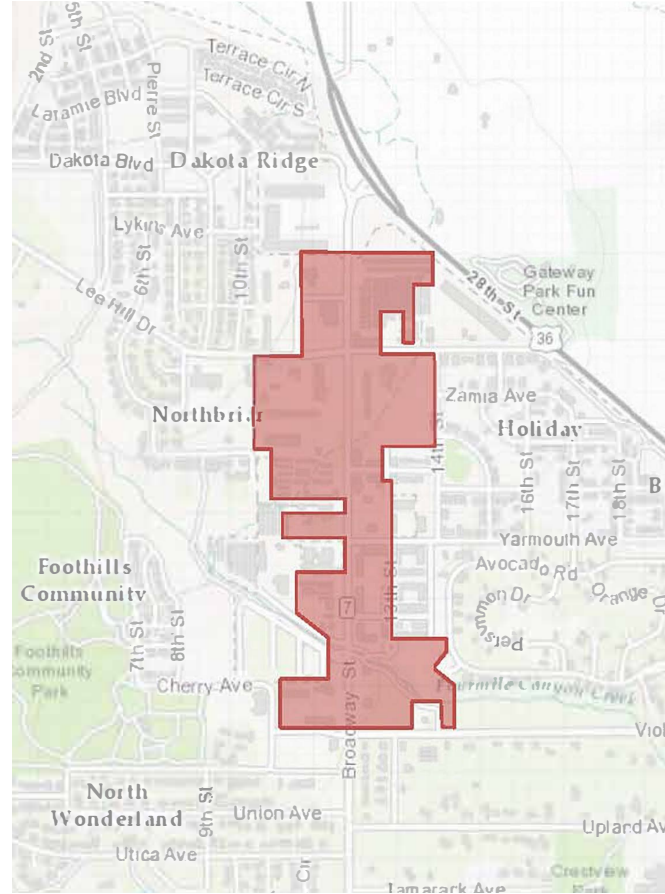
into a community arts anchor by hosting large informational events at the Armory for the community to experience the space as a potential art pavilion. Since original plans for the Armory changed to focus more on housing, BAM now engages in arts advocacy, helping to add arts and culture as a community benefit to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan and supporting this TAP. They are also working with Boulder County Arts Alliance to create an online art listing for Boulder County, with plans to launch by this winter.

3. *The North Boulder Creative Community* is a neighborhood group led by 5 members that includes a network of local community advocates, concerned citizens, and artists who wish to support the arts in North Boulder. They also supported the TAP by applying for DRCOG funding.
4. *The City of Boulder* has generously sponsored this TAP and city staff have been active, engaged participants in the development of the newly designated art district. Matt Chasansky, Manager of the city's Office of Arts and Culture, has also organized a group of local leaders to serve as an operating board for the development of a potential Business Improvement District (BID) within the art district.

Intermittent community outreach and communications: Despite the presence of various organizations supporting the art district, community outreach on behalf of the art district has been intermittent. The NoBo Art District hosts First Friday events nearly monthly, although there is not a central location for the event, and sends out regular e-newsletters, primarily about upcoming events. The North Boulder Creative Community used to do door-to-door community outreach, but has not done so in approximately a year. The result of the fragmented outreach is that some members of the community are not up-to-date on what is happening with the art district (some still believe the Armory will become a community arts anchor) and may not feel engaged in the visioning process for the district.

Ambiguity of vision for the art district: While all the stakeholders interviewed seemed enthusiastic about and supportive of the development of the art district, they did not seem to have a single unified and cohesive vision for the art district. Community members do have consistent desires for the art district, though, such as more art venues and installations along Broadway, an arts anchor that serves as a community gathering place, innovative placemaking, safer transportation routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, better wayfinding and lighting, more local bars, and parking options.

Boulder residents are not buying local art: Interviewed stakeholders believe that local residents do not buy art that is made locally. In one anecdote, a stakeholder recounted that a Boulder resident bought art made by a Boulder-based artist in Santa Fe, N.M., but never in Boulder. The stakeholder thought that this may be related to a lack of cachet within the Boulder art scene, since many Boulder residents collect art from around the world. It may also be related to the low number of galleries in Boulder where locals can view and purchase art.



The NoBo Art District is defined as properties that abut Broadway in the city limits, north of Violet and south of US 36. This means that the boundaries of the district are irregular. The entire area covered by the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan has been designated as the influence area for the art district



Panelists walk along the west side of Broadway during their tour of the district.

Physical:

Lack of affordable space for artists: Artist space, let alone affordable space to create and sell art, is lacking in North Boulder. According to Matt Chasansky, the vast majority of creative enterprises occur in people’s homes. The current zoning, however, does not allow people to sell art from their homes and there are no galleries in North Boulder. To sell art in the area, artists must pay for a second studio space, which they open to the public on First Friday or Open Studios events. Many studio spaces in the area have closed, though, due to rising rents. The owner of Mercury Framing, a custom frame shop that hosts an art show every 3 months, says that there is more demand for art shows and gallery space than she has the capacity to host.

Lack of critical mass and density to support retail: Vacancies in retail spaces in the area are indicative of a larger reality in North Boulder: a lack of critical mass to support local retail. According to a 2013 market study by ArLand Land Use Economics, “Without a strong retail anchor, more area households, or activities to help bring people into the neighborhood to shop, future retail demand would tend to be more limited with slow absorption of space.” Meaning that vacant retail spaces are not filled quickly in the study area and will not be without greater demand. Artist studios have had difficulty staying open in the area due to high rents and low foot traffic.

East/West divide of development: The east side of Broadway was developed in a way that is consistent with the North Boulder Subcommunity Plan, although relatively inconsistent with the desire for an art district. The mixed-use retail and community hub, called the Village Center, includes popular destinations such as Spruce Confections and Amante Coffee and is considered pleasant by locals, although they say that the architecture does not look like it’s part of an art district and the rents are not affordable enough for galleries or art space. The west side of Broadway is underdeveloped by comparison, with uses such as self-storage facilities and auto repair shops. The west side is in a floodplain and zoned for industrial and commercial uses, limiting future development potential.

Lack of connectivity and wayfinding between venues along Broadway: Visitors during First Friday events tend to have trouble finding and navigating between art venues. They also have difficulty finding parking and walking the large distances in the dark between venues. Crossing Broadway on foot is dangerous even during the day and sidewalks do not connect all the way to the Emerald City industrial area just outside city limits, which houses the Hoi Polloi Workshop, one of the district’s biggest assets for making and showing art.

Challenging parking: While there are parking spaces in the area, there are no time limits on them, so if they are filled, it can be difficult for visitors to find available parking spaces.

Need for right-of-way improvements: Broadway would benefit from improvements such as lighting, pedestrian crosswalks, more consistent sidewalks, and, at least aesthetically, from underground power lines. Pedestrian safety and connectivity along and across Broadway should be a priority within the district.



The east side of Broadway currently lacks a critical mass of density to support retail.



The west side of Broadway currently hosts many self-storage facilities and auto-related businesses.

West side of Broadway:

Small parcels with varied ownership and zoning: With so many relatively small parcels with different ownership and zoning, it would be difficult to assemble properties for a more cohesive district development on the west side. Many of the parcels are still in use by self-storage facilities and auto-related businesses, making assembly even more of a remote possibility.

Floodplain: Since the west side of Broadway is in a floodplain, developers would need to adhere to more regulatory requirements and stricter height requirements if they were to take on projects on that side.

Emerald City future uncertain: Emerald City, located in unincorporated Boulder County, is a complex of industrial buildings northwest of the district. It has the most affordable space available for artists working in Boulder. Many artists who use this space belong to the NoBo Art District. Annexation into the City of Boulder has been discussed, although it remains uncertain.



Emerald City, located north of the art district, has the most affordable artist space in the area.

East side of Broadway:

Positive pedestrian experience in nodes: Walkability around the Village Center and along trails to surrounding neighborhoods is a strong community asset.

Under-performing retail: Various storefronts within the Village Center are vacant and have been unoccupied for some time. Residents hope for more restaurant and bar options, as well as artist space.

Lack of art space: There are currently no designated galleries or studios in the Village Center or along the east side of Broadway.

Conformity in architecture: The architecture of the Village Center does not scream art district. The height limits may contribute to this conformity in architecture and roof lines.

Regulatory:

Challenging regulatory environment: Boulder has reputation among developers for having a difficult regulatory environment that frequently leads to lengthy, expensive, and contentious approval processes. Coupled with high land costs, this makes new projects challenging in Boulder. Particularly in this district, development requirements and fees, diverse zoning, constrained height limits, and the floodplain all make it difficult for developers to make the numbers work on projects without significantly raising prices to cover the increased costs. While many of these regulations help Boulder live up to its values, they make it hard to create affordable properties without city support.

Disparate zoning: There is diverse zoning throughout the district—including eight different zoning codes—which would make development of a cohesive art district challenging.



Walkability along Yellow Pine Avenue is positive, but other parts of the district are difficult to navigate on foot due to inconsistent sidewalks, crosswalks, and poor lighting.

Key Opportunities



The panelists suggested the following areas and sites as opportunities to add art venues to the district.

The North Broadway Reconstruction Project from Violet to US 36: The North Broadway Reconstruction Project to improve street infrastructure and multimodal facilities along North Broadway includes \$165,000 to commission artists to integrate public art that visually acknowledges the NoBo Art District. This is a great opportunity to use art to contribute to the district's identity. The panelists suggested that public art be added to the northern gateway, at the intersection with US 36, and the district's southern gateway at Violet Avenue. This project is also an opportunity to strengthen pedestrian safety, access, and wayfinding along the corridor.

The North Boulder Mobility Hub: The City of Boulder, RTD, Boulder County, and CDOT are partnering to develop the North Boulder Mobility Hub - envisioned as a high quality multimodal transit center and a new northern gateway into the city. The draft concept plan provides a combined set of transportation services on one site, including a transit station and bus turnaround, Boulder B-cycle, a Bike-n-Ride shelter, car share services, and placemaking elements, such as architectural and sculptural gateway features. Public art could be integrated as part of this northern gateway into the district and the city.

Key district intersections: Public art, identity, and wayfinding features could be added to key intersections within the art district, such as the Yellow Pine and Yarmouth intersections with North Broadway. These intersections have high foot traffic and visibility within the district, making them opportunity sites for painted pedestrian crosswalks, signage, and architectural details.

The Bustop: Developer Andy Allison's upcoming project at 4871 Broadway to redevelop

Down the road in Denver, RiNo Art District uses signage with rhino branding to identify the district. Photo courtesy RiNo Art District.



As a possible example for the North Broadway Reconstruction Project, the Short North Arts District in Columbus, Ohio, added metal arches with changing colored lights over North High Street to identify its art district. Photo courtesy Short North Arts District.

The Bustop, a former adult entertainment club, has the potential to include affordable housing and art space. When interviewed, Allison seemed open to working with potential future tenants. He said, “Partner with tenants who are going to make your development successful. To ignore them and just look solely at the bottom line is silly.” Community members and potential tenants could ask Allison for live/work space, for example.

Namasté Solar: While Namasté Solar is leaving the North Boulder area, the owners hope to rent this space to an arts organization. The roughly 15,000-square-foot warehouse and office building at 4571 Broadway is currently under consideration by the Boulder County Arts Alliance as a potential cultural arts center. The space could serve as a community anchor for the arts, where artists could create, perform, and exhibit their work. The Arts Alliance could potentially work with the city to afford rent for this much-needed art anchor space.

City of Boulder Library Annex: The City of Boulder is planning to open a new branch location in North Boulder, where there is the potential to include arts-related programming and makerspace. Galleries, art installations, and makerspace in that branch could support and energize the art district, catalyzing other innovative uses around it.

Emerald City: Owners of this complex of industrial buildings on the west side of Broadway, north of the city boundary in Boulder County, have been in conversations with the City of Boulder about potential annexation into the city. Although they were originally interested in annexation, the city’s requirements were too high, including two times the normal linkage fees and a 60 percent affordable housing requirement. Currently, there is no incentive for Emerald City to annex into the city, but this could be negotiated if the site eventually needs utilities and the city wants to preserve commercial artist space.

The Armory: Developer Bruce Dierking originally planned to transform the Armory (the former site of the Colorado Air National Guard Headquarters) into affordable live-work space for artists, gallery space, and a 5,300-square-foot “flex” arts space. Since the project did not get city approval, he has changed plans to focus on mixed-use housing on the site. Although the development will focus primarily on housing, there is still an opportunity to add gallery space within the site’s retail and community spaces.

“I think the opportunity for placemaking is huge up here. It’s a really wonderful neighborhood with a great sense of place. They want gathering spaces. The plaza vision we had—someone needs to do it—or a mini main street.”

— Developer Bruce Dierking



Panelists mapped existing art uses and key intersections within the district.



Namasté Solar is soon to leave this warehouse, which the Boulder County Arts Alliance is hoping to make into a cultural arts center.



Emerald City is the local nickname for the complex of industrial buildings on the west side of Broadway, north of the city boundary in Boulder County. It houses Hoi Polloi and other artist workshops.



Recommendations

“You’re in a good place. It’s what you do next that matters.”
 – Bill Marino, Executive Director, Lakewood West Colfax BID; Board Chair of 40 West Arts District

Panelists present their findings to local stakeholders on October 6th. Photo by Deborah Ossi.

The art district, as it was at the time of the TAP, was disjointed, but filled with potential energy. As TAP panelist Bill Marino, who has experience starting and running an art district along West Colfax in Lakewood, said, “It’s not unusual to start with multiple pieces, but creating a unified district is all about how they’re ultimately bound together.” He added, “You’re in a good place. It’s what you do next that matters.”

Back to the basics.

In terms of first steps, the panelists recommended getting back to the basics by asking what pieces are in place for an arts district. Given their experience in Colorado Creative District Certification, which offers access to financial and technical resources, the panelists mentioned that state certification for the NoBo Art District seemed unlikely at this time, but that there are currently building blocks in place. They said that more is needed: a district identity, art venues, and programming.

What’s needed for an arts district?

- Thriving art scene with destinations and activities to attract patrons
- Sense of place with an authentic story to tell (what makes the district unique)



Artist studio space in the Hoi Polloi Workshop in Emerald City.

“Art and culture is what makes us human. It differentiates us.”

– Jamie Licko, President, RiNo Art District

- Strong backbone organization with sustainable funding
- Active support and policies from local municipalities

“The DNA is here, you just need the building blocks to move forward.”
 — Bill Marino

What kind of a district do you want to have?

The panelists mentioned that defining a vision and identity for the art district is important for creating an authentic sense of place that attracts both artists and patrons. **By focusing on People, Places, and Programming (the “3Ps,” as the panelists called them), the community can generate a defining and authentic story for where they’ve been, who they are, and where they’re going.**

Visioning what kind of art district the community wants to have can be a fun and creative process. The panelists thought up a few examples of potential visions for the NoBo Art District:

- *Innovation & Art:* Building on the growing local digital and tech industry as well as local artists to allow for creative innovation at the intersection.
- *Family-friendly Makerspace:* Focusing on family-friendly makerspace and educational programming and workshops throughout the district.
- *World-class Art Scene:* Bringing global art in addition to local art to venues and programming, to attract more patrons to a world-class art destination.

A combination of niches could be successful in addition to focusing on a single district identity.

The panelists joked about branding the art district as “**Zone 43**,” since there are currently 42 zone districts in Boulder, and they suggested that this could be the 43rd zone, which would allow the kind of development worthy of an art district.

Art districts around the world have unique identities:



The Santa Fe NM International Folk Art Market. Photo courtesy Crafts Council of India.



The Cherry Creek Arts Festival is one of the largest arts festivals in the nation with over 500,000 attendees and art from around the world. Sculpture and photo by Garrett Brown.



The BreckCreate Art District in Breckenridge uses historic buildings for artist residencies, studios, and performance space. Photo by Nikita Mamochine.

How to move forward...

The panelists suggested both short-term and long-term strategies for creating the kind of art district the community ultimately wants to have.

Short-term strategies:

1. **Utilize the group of local leaders** convened by Matt Chasansky to lead a community engagement process for defining a vision and identity for the art district. While this group was originally created to serve as an operating board for the development of a potential BID for the district, its diverse composition of relevant stakeholders and city support could make it the right group to spearhead this process. Starting a community engagement process with a neutral, broadly representative group of leaders that's supported and convened by the city would ensure that all the relevant community interests are represented. Ultimately, the art district will need to have a single, consolidated structure with a unified vision, leadership, staff, and action plan. A single entity getting community buy-in on a single vision will be more effective than diverse efforts by varying organizations. This outreach should also help to strengthen the participation of a broader stakeholder group to support local art and placemaking efforts.



Sponsors and panelists gather to discuss affordable housing in the district.

Organizations that aren't cohesively knit together in terms of mission, vision and funding will be a potential challenge later."
—Jamie Licko

How to conduct community outreach for visioning and action:

1 Conduct community outreach to develop a common vision:

Through a series of community meetings, bring together diverse groups and solicit feedback on setting a vision for the art district. The city could help with this process and the community outreach could also inform the RFP for the BID.

Create a plan:

The art district's mission, vision, and values should be based on community feedback. Set one- to two-year goals with measurable metrics to develop a strategic plan for achieving the district vision. Those goals, for example, can include programming, tactical urbanism, district operations, and funding. Creating a BID or special district can be included as part of the plan. Once a vision and plan have been established based on the community feedback, roll it out with the community to gain buy-in.

Implement initiatives:

Start developing a BID. Ramp up programming along Broadway. Roll out more branding and wayfinding. Meet with Boulder Housing Partners, Thistle Community Housing, Artspace, and other developers about creating affordable housing and venues for artists. Follow the plan and measure and celebrate progress as you go!

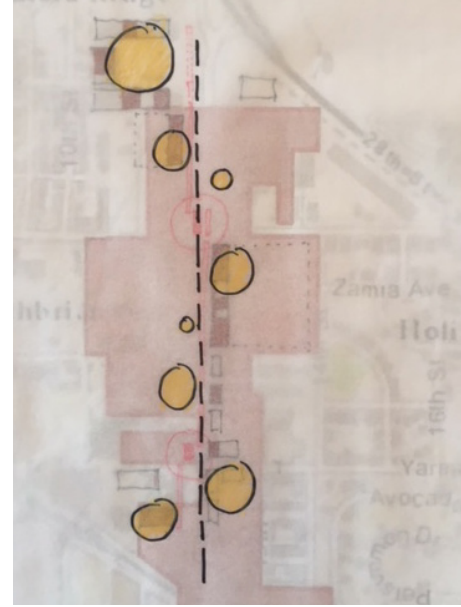
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2. **Use tactical urbanism** to knit together the district. The panelists likened the district to a string of pearls and suggested connecting the dispersed pearls of art venues and activities through wayfinding, node activation, and temporary and permanent public art installations. They encouraged allowing artists to paint sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, and murals. Artistic light installations and projection art can transform walls and engage visitors in innovative ways. Nodes, like the intersection of Yellow Pine and Broadway, can be activated with food and fashion trucks during pop-up street art festivals. Overall, tactical urbanism can make the district exciting, since it will be different every time someone visits, and it can also provide artistic interventions in problem areas, such as district gateways, wayfinding, and lighting.

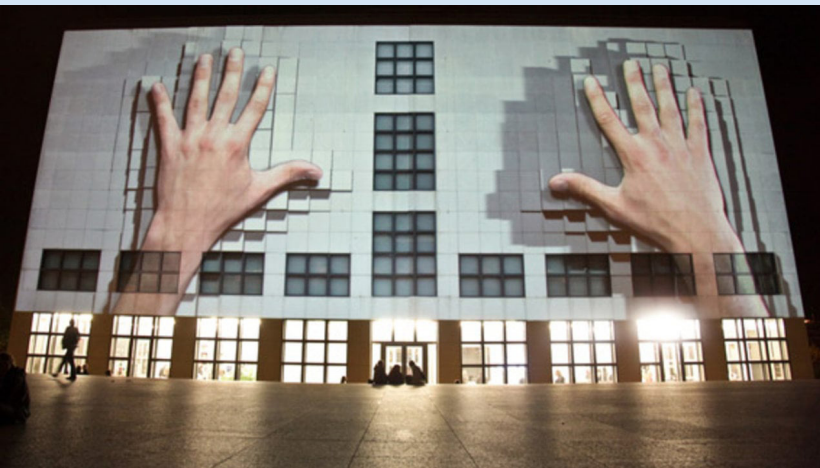
Tactical urbanism is an umbrella term used to describe a collection of low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighborhoods and city gathering places.

For more information and guidance, see “The Planner’s Guide to Tactical Urbanism” by Laura Pfeifer.



Panelists likened the art district to a string of pearls, with the arts venues as the pearls. They recommended activating the district between the pearls with tactical urbanism and public art.

Projection art can be used to enliven spaces:



555 Kubik façade projection. Photo courtesy Urbanscreen.
Video projection series in Montreal by Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon.
Photo courtesy infopresse.com.



Dumbo Arts Fest. Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Daily Eagle.
Multimedia installation by Charles Sandison at the Denver Art Museum.
Photo courtesy ARNDT Fine Art.



Examples of crosswalks from around the world:



Photo courtesy Buzzly.



Photo courtesy Uncustomary.org.



Photo by Rafael Perez Martinez.



Photo courtesy Buzzly.



Photo courtesy Paperblog.



By Artist Christo Guelov.

- 3. Foster frequent activation and programming.** Panelists suggested focusing on smaller scale, more frequent activations as opposed to large scale, one-off events. Activations like pop-up markets with food trucks, open mics and concerts, temporary projection art installations, and street art events with community participation (like sidewalk chalk events), should be in central, visible areas. Allowing food and beverage at events can be key to success. They also recommended activating areas between venues during First Friday events, so that there are things to do and wayfinding for visitors as they walk.
- 4. Work with city staff** to ensure that current and ongoing infrastructure projects, such as the North Broadway Reconstruction Project from Violet to US 36, the North Boulder Mobility Hub, and the City of Boulder Library Annex include desired art enhancements that will strengthen the character and legibility of the district.
- 5. Give clear direction to developers.** Let developers know what the community wants by giving them the art district's top priorities, such as live/work space, galleries, and community art venues. Generally, developers want community buy-in for their projects, and that can mean incorporating community priorities into their projects.

Long-term strategies:

- 1. Support land uses that the community wants.** This may include preserving existing art space and creating new spaces where people can create and interact with art, such as galleries, exhibits, makerspace, studios, live/work space, and public art. This may include redeveloping the west side of Broadway so that it has ground-level retail and supports district continuity. This may include working with Boulder Housing Partners and developers like Artspace to add affordable housing and live/work space for artists.



Sidewalk art. Photo and art by Leon Keer.



Pop up events with food trucks, like this one in Melbourne, can be successful for activating under-utilized spaces. Photo by Clare Fargher.

Maps of increasing art venues and activation throughout the district.



2. Use policy and regulation to support the art district. To make policy changes happen, there needs to be a common vision in place and a roadmap for how to get there. When efforts are aligned, the art district can more effectively advance its goals.

Overall, panelists recommended that the City strategically leverage opportunities like land, capital funds, fees, and zoning updates to achieve the goals of the art district—once they are clearly defined. For example, capital funds for a new library could be used to facilitate mixed-use development that incorporates the library facility. Additionally, the City could work with the NoBo Art District to set up specific goals and metrics for gallery and event space, live/work space, and affordable housing. This work could also help to better define and address the community benefit of and incentives for arts and culture, which is currently not articulated, and thus not utilized as part of the city’s negotiation process with developers.

Specifically, panelists provided the following policy recommendations:

Establish incentives for arts and culture as a community benefit. Now that arts and culture are recognized as a community benefit in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, the city has the opportunity to work with developers to integrate art components, such as art space and facilities, into their projects. Frequently, developers need public tools to help make their projects financially viable. The city can promote the inclusion of art into development projects with the following incentives:

- Density bonuses to developers who include arts components, such as those provided for affordable housing

40 West Colfax Art District created its 40-year vision and action plan to build buy-in with community leaders and public officials. Putting the vision and plan on paper made it predictable and unified.

RiNo Art District asked the City of Denver to make RiNo a test area for pilot projects and policy, which has allowed them to employ innovative planning and policy within their borders.



Artspace is a non-profit developer and owner of live-work spaces for artists nationwide. Photo by William Wright.

Artspace is a Minneapolis-based non-profit developer and owner of live-work spaces for artists nationwide. To vet prospective artist-tenants, Artspace forms a local artist-selection committee to approve potential tenants based on three criteria: the applicant’s sustained commitment to their craft; their excitement about participating in the building’s community and neighborhood; and their willingness to live in a potentially lively, social environment. Artspace is currently working on projects in Loveland, RiNo, and 40 West Art District in Colorado.

- More flexible height measurement within the 55-foot limit. Currently, developers are limited along the slope in the district, in addition to floodplain regulations for raising and flood proofing the first floor's height. If height is measured differently (by story, for example), more interesting roof lines could be used to create architectural interest and developers may be more willing to take on projects on the west side of Broadway.
- Public improvement grants
- Tax and fee rebates

Make zoning and plans consistent with the vision for the art district. Update zoning in the area to encourage mixed-use development along the west side of Broadway. The Subcommunity Plan could be updated as well to align with district goals. An overlay district and/or design guidelines could also be utilized to support the design of the art district. Under current zoning, artists are not allowed to sell art from their home studios, meaning that they must pay for separate studio space. The 2014 Action Plan called for the modification of live-work definitions and the possible creation of live-work performance standards. It also suggested that live-work should be explicitly allowed in more zones throughout Boulder, which has yet to be implemented.

Manage parking throughout the art district. A district parking plan may help identify new opportunities, such as shared parking and time limits on street parking in front of retail.



Artist Shanties at Bismore Park on Hyannis Harbor. Artisans throughout the Cape Cod area are invited to submit an application to show and sell their work for a specific period of time during the season. For this reason, any time you visit the area, there are likely to be different artists displaying their work. Photo courtesy HyArts District.



Art has been successfully incorporated into Boulder Housing Partners' permanently affordable housing project at 1175 Lee Hill Drive in North Boulder. Mural and photo by Sally Eckert.

In **RiNo**, they're using a tiny home village and container buildings to house local artists. These structures are temporary and affordable. The City of Denver subsidizes makerspace and gallery space in the art district, and RiNo Art District directs partnerships and programming.

From the North Boulder Subcommunity Action Plan:

Analyze Public Art Regulations and Incentives

Through the citywide Community Cultural Plan, foster public art through private development to contribute to the artistic and eclectic character of the North Broadway area through requirements or incentivizes. The likelihood of continued private redevelopment in the North Broadway area in the next several years presents an opportunity to encourage public art that contributes to the creative, unique, and eclectic character of the North Broadway area. However, the city does not currently have regulations or policy guidance to address the goal of providing public art in private developments.

1.3.1. Public Art Requirement for Larger Private Development:

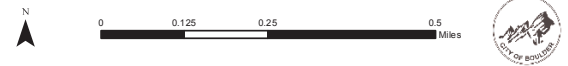
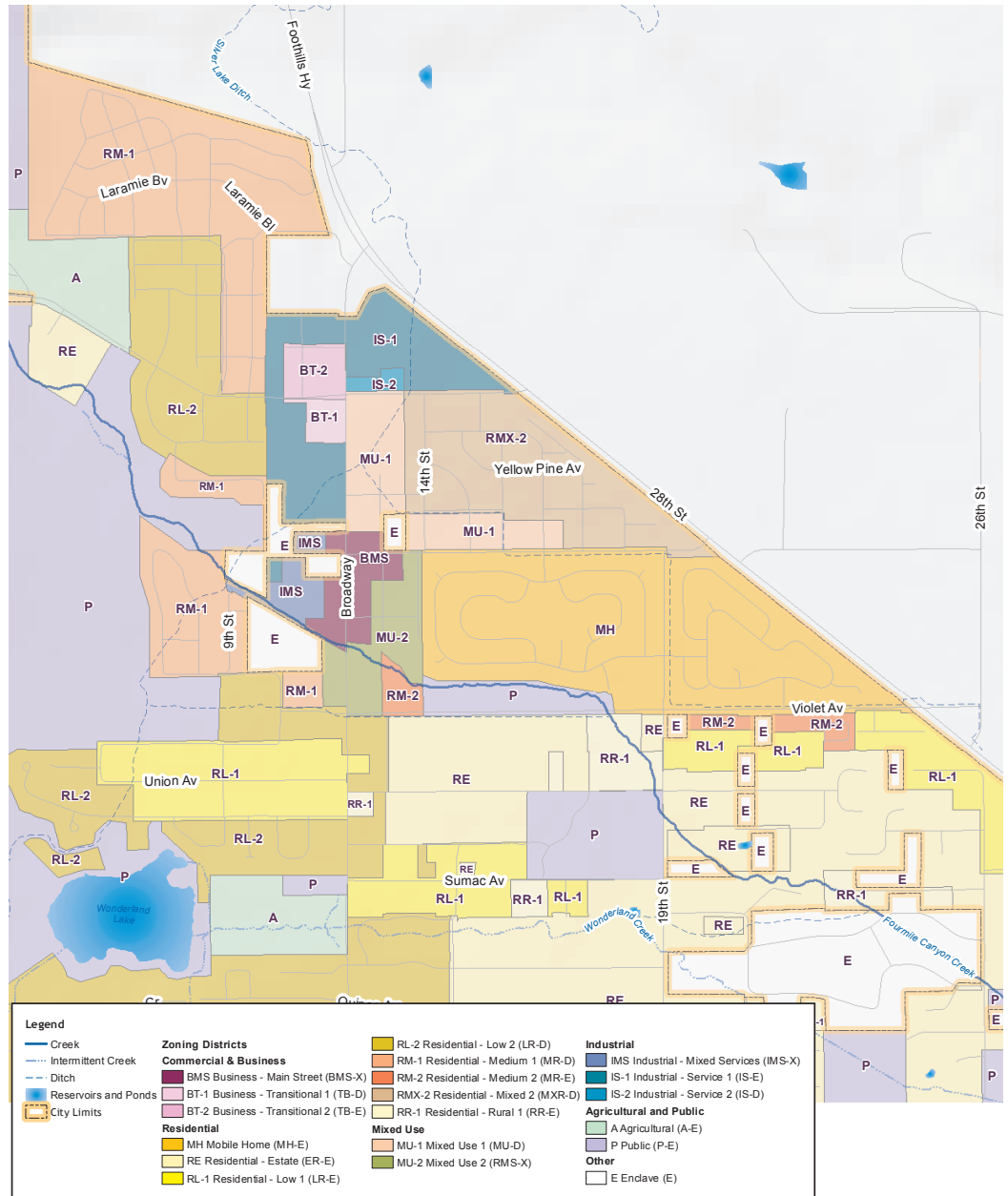
Utilize tools from the citywide Community Cultural Plan that may include requiring larger private development projects in the North Broadway area to provide public art, contribute to a public art fund, or include an artist on the design team. Private redevelopment may include nonresidential and multifamily projects over a size threshold, TBD during implementation of this action item.

1.3.2. Public Art Incentives: Evaluate regulatory incentives for provision of public art in North Broadway area such as density bonuses and expedited development review.

City of Santa Monica, CA – Cultural Arts Program provides incentives for public art in nonresidential projects over 7,500 square feet or more

City of Tampa, FL – density bonuses for public art

Zoning



Zoning in North Boulder.

3. Develop sustainable funding sources for the art district.

There are many ways to fund an art district. The panelists suggested the following options.

- **Create a Business Improvement District (BID),** or some sort of special district. If at least 50% of businesses in the district agree to voluntarily assess themselves to improve the district, a BID can help them increase their revenues and property values as well. Currently, Matt Chasansky is convening a group of local leaders to investigate the potential for creating a BID in the area and may release a RFP for a consultant to set up the BID, which may take around a year. So far, locals seem open to the idea.
- **Build membership and sponsorship opportunities.** The NoBo Art District is already a membership-based organization that could use member fees and sponsorship to help generate funding for district projects and operations.
- **Apply for grants through a lead organization.** Local non-profits, and especially the art district's lead organization, can apply for arts-related grants to take on projects within the district.
- **Pursue Colorado Creative District Certification.** While the certification process takes time, it is worth the effort to gain access to the financial and technical resources available through Colorado Creative Industries, a division of the state's Office of Economic Development & International Trade.



Murals on storage facility walls in Yucca Valley. Photo by Nina Subin.



Hoi Polloi Workshop. Photo by Deborah Ossi.



Conclusion

The NoBo Art District is the city's only formal arts district and it serves as a gateway into the City of Boulder. With new development on the horizon, the district is as ready as it ever has been for an infusion of the arts—but the community must actively pursue this for it to happen. With the support of the city, the art district can continue to develop while allowing artists to stay.

Neighborhoods like Holiday around the NoBo Arts District combine mixed-income housing and walkability with a strong sense of place. Photo by Deborah Ossi.

It was clear from the interviews that no one in the area is opposed to having a thriving art district. Art brings everyone together. It makes us human.

During the TAP, the panelists recommended that the NoBo Art District add a fourth “P” to the three Ps of People, Places, and Programming for the arts district: Process. The process of working together as a community to create a vision and plan, and then implementing it together, is vital to the success of this art district.

We believe that the community of the NoBo Art District can make this happen.

ULI Volunteer Panelists



Panel Chair Rick Petersen, AIA, LEED AP is a Principal with OZ Architecture and leads a wide range of design projects that benefit from collaboration among highly diverse stakeholders, whether in his home town of Denver or in Antarctica. His work yields resource-efficient communities that promote well-being, including Transit-Oriented Development, workforce housing, adaptive re-use, and cultural facilities. Rick received his Master of Architecture from Harvard University and BA in Environmental Design from the University of California, Berkeley. Rick is an adjunct faculty at the University of Colorado, Denver, and serves on boards for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society and the Denver Architecture Foundation.



Daniel R. Guimond, Principal of Economic & Planning Systems, is an economist and planner with over 30 years' experience in economic and financial analysis and in development planning for the public and private sectors. He has worked on economic development plans and strategies for a range of smaller cities and counties in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Region. He has directed more than 40 downtown, district, and corridor revitalization projects. These assignments include market analysis and determination of retail, residential and other development potentials; overall development strategy; specific project feasibility; financing; and implementation strategies. He has also evaluated the feasibility of a wide range of public facilities including conference, cultural, recreation and community centers. Mr. Guimond has a master's degree

in Urban Geography from the University of Colorado. He is a member of the Urban Land Institute, American Planning Association, Downtown Colorado Inc., and Lambda Alpha International.



Jamie Licko empowers districts, neighborhoods, and communities to effectively manage themselves. She works closely with community members, businesses, stakeholders, and local groups to form effective public/private partnerships and implement strategies to allow for places to successfully manage their needs and thrive economically, socially, and culturally in the long-term. She is the founder and president of Centro, a consulting firm dedicated to the strategic and (re)inventive creation of cities, places, and neighborhoods. Centro has guided cities across the globe through various projects, redesigns, and improvement efforts. Under her leadership and expertise, Centro has become an internationally sought-after resource for best-practices and proven-processes in developing high-quality spaces and enhancing quality

of life across communities. Jamie is also the president of RiNo Art District, Denver's mold-breaking River North neighborhood. She led the district and its various communities—ranging from business owners, artists, developers, and residents—through the special district process and on to the creation of a neighborhood wherein artists and developers work together to pursue a unique and united vision for the area. As president, Jamie continues to oversee neighborhood vision, policy, programs, and project. Her work with RiNo, Centro—and her contribution to professional outlets and platforms—pushes the boundaries of how neighborhoods, districts, and communities operate to serve their residents and the cities of which they are a part.



William Marino, entrepreneur, author, and community organizer, leads the Lakewood-West Colfax BID, advocates for 40 West Arts, a state-certified creative district along historic West Colfax in Lakewood, Colorado; and is co-founder of The Creativity Lab of Colorado, a nonprofit that serves creatives and their communities. Earlier, Marino built and sold several companies in the publishing and technology sectors, served as a two-term planning commissioner, and chaired numerous task forces on business strategies, community engagement, and economic development. He was also a member of a multi-national development team on large, mixed-use projects in Orlando, Florida; London, England; and Seoul, South Korea, totaling more than \$2.5B. A frequent speaker on entrepreneurship, Marino sits on the boards of 40 West Arts, Metro West Housing Solutions, The Creativity Lab of Colorado and a number of start-up companies.



Sarah Nurmela is the Real Estate and Development Manager for Downtown Westminster with 16 years of experience in the public and private sector in redevelopment, planning, urban design and architecture. Currently, she manages the redevelopment of Westminster's 105-acre new downtown. The project encompasses a wide range of developers, cultural and civic organizations, and municipal and transportation entities to achieve the community's vision of a downtown and regional destination. Her previous work has included leading long range planning and urban design with the City of Westminster, writing and managing the citywide Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Specific Plan. In the private sector in California, her work included

multiple transit-oriented redevelopment and station area plans, citywide comprehensive (general) plans, and community and area-specific outreach processes. Sarah has a Masters of Urban Planning from Harvard University and a B.A. in Architecture from Washington University in St. Louis.



Bill Parkhill is a real estate developer with over 25 years of experience in planning, design, construction and financing projects in a variety of asset classes. He is focused on urban infill development projects that combine his planning vision with his financial experience. Mr. Parkhill's projects utilize tax increment financing, metro district financing, and private bank financing that create for cost-effective solutions for large mixed-use development projects. Since 2011, Mr. Parkhill has been focused on the River North (RiNo) neighborhood in Denver, becoming one of the earliest adopters in that market segment. He founded Tributary Real Estate with Ryan Arnold to combine development, planning and brokerage to more effectively deliver projects to market. Mr. Parkhill graduated from University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Architecture and the University of Colorado with a Masters of Architecture. He has served as the Chairman of the Board for Bishop Machebeuf High School and the Chairman of the Board for Rocky Mountain Human Services.

Interviewed Stakeholders

Bryan Bowen, City of Boulder Planning Board member

Jane Brautigam, City Manager

Aaron Brockett, City Council member

Matt Chasansky, City of Boulder Arts & Cultural Services Manager

Bruce Dierking, developer of the Armory site

Jeremy Durham, Director of Real Estate Development, Boulder Housing Partners

Sally Eckert, professional artist, Boulder Art Matrix president, North Boulder Creative Community member

Lesli Ellis, City of Boulder Comprehensive Planning Manager

Charles Ferro, Development Review Manager

Jim Leach, Wonderland Hills Development

Richard Lopez, Land Use Attorney for Emerald City

Alex May, City of Boulder Engineering Project Manager, Public Works, Transportation

Chris Meschuk, Assistant City Manager

Lisa Morzel, City Council member

Lisa Nesmith, professional artist, NoBo Art District president

Lisa Rutherford, owner of Mercury Framing

Cindy Sepucha, possible art anchor at Namaste, executive director of Open Studios

Jerry Shapins, environmental designer, professional artist and NoBo Art District board member

John Tayer, President and CEO of the Boulder Chamber

Julie Van Domelan, Emergency Family Assistance Association



Panelists visit the Hoi Polloi Workshop in North Boulder's Emerald City.

ULI Colorado Leadership in Responsible Land Use

ULI Colorado is the 1,400-member District Council of the global Urban Land Institute. ULI Colorado consists of a four-person staff, 25-member executive committee, and 15 committees with more than 250 volunteers. More than 40 programs a year include advisory panels, leadership and mentoring programs, panels, project tours, publications, and community service. ULI is a non-lobbying educational and research institute supported by its members, sponsors, and foundations. Key issues include affordable housing, healthy communities, transit-oriented development, and sustainable design and planning.

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