



June 27, 2008

Tour sheds light on Mason project

Dispelling myths among trip's goals

BY CARI MERRILL

CariMerrill@coloradoan.com

Doug Johnson hopes more people in Fort Collins will understand that the Mason corridor plan isn't just a downtown project.

Dispelling that myth was one of the goals of a bus tour of the corridor Thursday afternoon, beginning and ending at the south end of the proposed 5-mile stretch from Cherry Street to Harmony Road.

The trip provided Realtors and developers a chance to get a better visual of how the Mason corridor will develop and specific landmarks along the way, such as future sites for transit centers and parking options.

"Today was a good chance to clear up some myths," said Johnson, director of implementation for UniverCity, which provided the transportation for Thursday's two-hour tour. "They could see it, touch it, smell it. It becomes real."

The Mason corridor is critical to UniverCity, encompassing aspects from many of the program's task groups such as homelessness, economic development, and arts and culture, he said. "It's a true UniverCity connection."

More than 125 attendees piled into a charter bus and double-decker party bus to tour the \$74 million Mason corridor project, funded mostly by federal and state transportation money.

"You'll see a corridor that doesn't make a lot of sense now but you have to think of it in 10 to 15 years," Realtec agent Eric Nichols said at the beginning of the tour.

And tour-goers understood that idea, many seemingly excited for the development.

Initial feedback was positive.

The tour took a few stops along the way, one on CSU's campus to discuss how the MAX Bus Rapid Transit will go through campus with transit centers at the south, middle and north ends of Colorado State University.

Another stop at the Downtown Transit Center provided a look at how the new Penny Flats residential and commercial project is situated just a hop, skip and a jump away and perfectly positioned on the corridor.

Michelle Jacobs, government affairs for the Fort Collins Board of Realtors, said she was impressed with Thursday's tour and how the event brought so many people from different industries to one place for the afternoon.

As a Fort Collins developer who is "committed to infill," Steve Spanjer of Spanjer Homes said he was interested in learning as much as possible about the project and took away new information Thursday on the project's timeline.

"We share the vision for the next 30, 40, 50 years," he said at a reception after the tour for those who came together for the event.
