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Mason Corridor project is eco-friendly development

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Is there such a thing as eco-friendly development?

If you're a devout developer hater, a NIMBY or a traditional 1950s-1990s auto-centric developer, you probably don't think so. If your mind is open to the possible, open to the probable, and the thought of \$5 a gallon gas scares you stiff, then maybe, just maybe, you can see that development can be eco-friendly.

This week the city sponsored an event, Eco-Friendly Transportation Options and Transit-Oriented Development.

The focus of this program was the enhancement and growth of the Transfort system and its positive impacts on the environment and on the community. Attendance was strong and participation covered the entire spectrum of the aforementioned thinkers.

Three key areas were covered during the program starting with the gamut of services offered by Transfort. Of particular interest were employer-based programs and services. Transfort staff can chart the location of employee residences and determine if existing fixed-route bus service is plausible for the employees to travel to and from work. The savings to the employee can be significant, especially if gas goes to \$5 a gallon.

Employers are encouraged to contact Judith Lavalley of Transfort at TransfortMarketing@fcgov.com, to determine if they can participate. Next time you look to relocate your business, you may want to consider a facility with proximity to a Transfort route. Same is true for those shopping for a home.

Hand-in-hand was a presentation and discussion on the city's ClimateWise program. The focus was on strategies to voluntarily reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's no secret that we put a lot of noxious stuff into the air while driving to and from our destinations.

Finally, the program touched on the Mason Corridor and Transportation Oriented Development, or TOD. Mike Flaherty, deputy city manager of Englewood, and Alan White, director of community development, Englewood, gave a thorough presentation on the defunct Cinderella City mall's redevelopment into a thriving, mixed-use neighborhood known as "CityCenter." This was the first time in Colorado that a once proud mall was replaced with a new "Downtown." CityCenter is no Old Town, but it's impressive with mixed use buildings lining its streets and even has a Wal-Mart.

Linked to Denver's RTD light rail system, CityCenter serves as a shining example of how proper TOD planning and flexibility, along with public/private sector financing, can produce an eco-friendly development.

In hindsight, Flaherty said the city would have increased the number of residences in CityCenter, as full-time residents are required to support the restaurants, merchants, etc. No surprise there.

The Mason Corridor has the potential to become an incredible, eco-friendly development. Unlike CityCenter, we'll be dealing with dozens of developers and projects spanning several decades. City and County policy must be flexible and yet ensure we stay the course.

Not an easy task, but a task we can handle if we work together and toss out the personal agendas and old ways of thinking.
