



# RiNo Aligned: Next Steps for River North's Future

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

RiNo Art District (RiNo) is a dynamic, creative and growing neighborhood located along one of the major arteries into Denver's downtown. Developing out of an historic industrial area, River North is home to a thriving arts community that is setting the tone and foundation for new commercial and residential development, creative businesses and artistic endeavors. New models for working together – with a confluence of purposes – are emerging from RiNo and setting the stage for 21st century life.

RiNo advocates have worked very hard over the past eight years to revitalize the area and our goal is to continue providing a leadership role in River North by encouraging collaboration through an aligned neighborhood vision. To further that goal, in early April of 2014, the RiNo Art District hosted an important district visioning and strategy session designed to:

- Align stakeholders who have a vested interest in River North around a clear vision for the district, including artists, businesses, property owners, developers, residents and City of Denver leadership and staff;
- Identify specific goals and objectives critical to achieving that vision;
- Establish and set priorities for a program of work that will achieve those goals, inclusive of infrastructure and public realm, economic development, management and maintenance;
- Identify what resources are required to do this work, and determine the tools most appropriate to provide funding;
- Determine boundaries where implementation of both projects and funding tools need to occur;
- Determine a strategy for implementation and a clear path forward.



## Priorities

The result of the workshop was the identification of 10 key priorities for RiNo stakeholders. These priorities are items stakeholders feel are critical to the continued economic and physical growth of the district, and also align with priorities identified in previous City planning efforts for RiNo, including:

- Blueprint Denver
- River North Plan (2003)
- 38th and Blake Station Area Plan (2009)
- 38th and Blake Next Steps Study (2011)
- South Platte Corridor Study (2013)

## The consolidated top 10 priorities agreed upon by RiNo stakeholders, in order of importance, are:

### 1. Brighton Boulevard Infrastructure and Streetscape

Creation of a safe, multi-modal Brighton Blvd. that slows traffic and brings important amenities including sidewalks, bicycle lanes, stoplights and improved lighting.

### 2. South Platte River Improvements

Improving river visibility and access, and adding trails and active spaces.

### 3. Connectivity

Connecting both sides of RiNo for pedestrians and bicyclists utilizing bridges and underpasses and key connector points (31st/Blake, 35th/Blake, and 38th Street Underpass).

### 4. Artist Housing

Creating affordable work/live space that keeps the creative component in RiNo.

### 5. Stormwater/Water Quality

Think outside the box to utilize stormwater enhancements as an amenity and to create a green environment and improve water quality.

### 6. District Management

Provide resources to manage, market and maintain RiNo, as well as to ensure it remains clean and safe, and that placemaking and public art are facilitated. Also support the growth of the RiNo Urban Art Center.

### 7. Wayfinding

Signage to brand the district and help visitors navigate it.

### 8. Park Lands and Public Spaces

Recreational green space to support and enhance the RiNo experience.

### 9. Preservation/Education

Definition and preservation of the character of RiNo, and education to communicate that consistently.

### 10. Parking

Support increased parking and better parking management, as well as shared parking opportunities.



## Outcomes and Next Steps

The list of top priorities for the area is relevant and important to all key stakeholders. **Identifying and implementing funding for these as soon as possible is of the utmost importance.** To that end, RiNo stakeholders are in support of moving forward creation of the following:

### 1. Urban Renewal Area (URA):

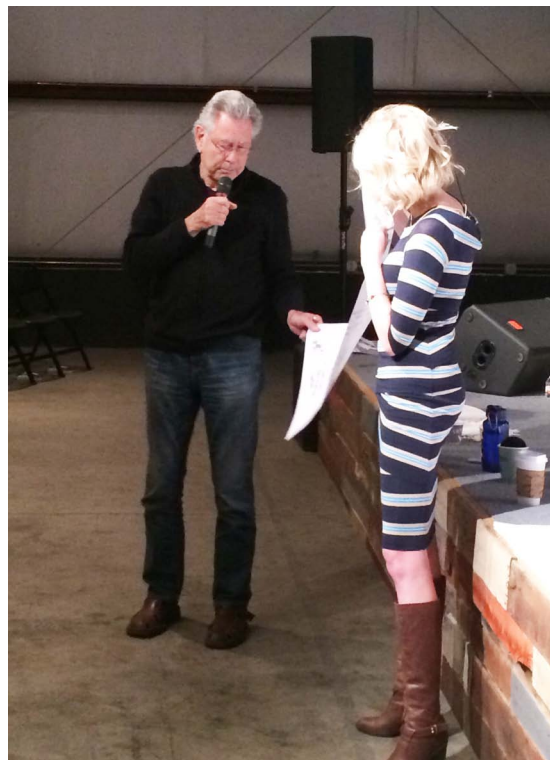
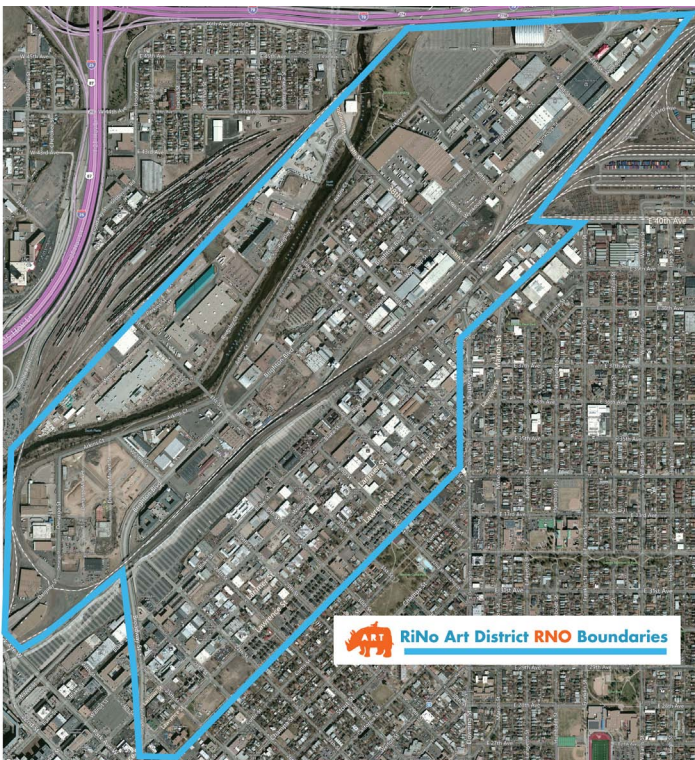
To support some of the larger infrastructure-related projects. **We request approval from the City for the creation of an Urban Renewal Area (in the area identified in the visioning session) and the initiation of a blight study as soon as possible, to best be able to leverage future increment.**

### 2. Business Improvement District (BID):

To support other critical priorities and to give RiNo stakeholders a stronger voice and help control the future of the district. **We request the initiation of a feasibility and creation study for a BID in the area identified through the Visioning Session.**

**Both** funding strategies are critically important to achieving the priorities set out, and both are critical to make an impact on RiNo and should be viewed as a package deal:

- Without the URA, the level of funding to affect significant change will not be available.
- Without the BID, the ability to create a formal RiNo-centric entity through which to manage change is missing, and the funding to tackle other priorities does not exist.
- Together, both tools provide RiNo with a mechanism through which to better partner with the City on delivery of important investments in the area and become a true leader for RiNo.





The map displays the RiNo Art District in Denver, Colorado. A green-shaded area in the center is labeled "URA STUDY AREA". A blue outline delineates the "RiNo Art District RNO Boundaries". The map shows a dense urban grid with streets such as E 43rd Ave, E 44th Ave, E 45th Ave, E 46th Ave, E 47th Ave, E 48th Ave, E 49th Ave, E 50th Ave, E 51st Ave, E 52nd Ave, E 53rd Ave, E 54th Ave, E 55th Ave, E 56th Ave, E 57th Ave, E 58th Ave, E 59th Ave, E 60th Ave, E 61st Ave, E 62nd Ave, E 63rd Ave, E 64th Ave, E 65th Ave, E 66th Ave, E 67th Ave, E 68th Ave, E 69th Ave, E 70th Ave, E 71st Ave, E 72nd Ave, E 73rd Ave, E 74th Ave, E 75th Ave, E 76th Ave, E 77th Ave, E 78th Ave, E 79th Ave, E 80th Ave, E 81st Ave, E 82nd Ave, E 83rd Ave, E 84th Ave, E 85th Ave, E 86th Ave, E 87th Ave, E 88th Ave, E 89th Ave, E 90th Ave, E 91st Ave, E 92nd Ave, E 93rd Ave, E 94th Ave, E 95th Ave, E 96th Ave, E 97th Ave, E 98th Ave, E 99th Ave, E 100th Ave. The Colorado River is visible on the left side of the map. The Interstate 25 corridor is shown on the right side of the map. The map also includes labels for "URA STUDY AREA" and "RiNo Art District RNO Boundaries".





# BID Study Area





## Partners

In addition to working with stakeholders in RiNo, we have engaged a broad cross-section of community leaders and organizations who have both participated in and been kept informed of our process as we move forward.

### *Our partners include:*

- Denver City Council leadership, including support from Councilwoman Montero and Councilman Brooks
- City and County of Denver Staff, including representatives from the departments of Arts & Venues, Finance, Public Works and Community Planning and Development
- Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA)
- North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative (NDCC)
- RTD
- Urban Land Conservancy
- The Greenway Foundation

We will continue to engage and work with these partners throughout the next steps of this process.

## Final Thoughts

RiNo is undergoing significant and swift change. It is a place full of spirited and entrepreneurial personalities with big visions and ideas. We have managed to pull these ideas together to establish a clear direction and way forward. The next steps we propose will help address identified challenges and allow RiNo to grow and thrive.

## A Special Thank You

Session Facilitation: Jamie Licko from Centro Inc. for her facilitation expertise.

Lisa Gedgaudas, Arts & Venues and the North Cornerstone Collaborative for funding assistance for this important session.

The RiNo Urban Improvement Committee & RiNo Art District Board of Directors

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