

Opening Statement
Senator Michael F. Bennet
Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Development Committee
“Greener Communities, Greater Opportunities: New Ideas for Sustainable
Development and Economic Growth”
June 16, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Shelby, thank you for holding this hearing. I also want to thank Secretary Donovan, Secretary LaHood and Administrator Jackson for coming here today. We have heard a lot about the need to change the way we do business in Washington, and the collaboration between each of your agencies is evidence that we are beginning to remove barriers to achieving smart policy solutions across the country. Our success in supporting sustainable development is critical to our economic security, our environment, and our health.

I am pleased to see the evidence of your collaborative thinking about how we can support and incentivize localities to work together to develop walkable, sustainable communities. I am particularly glad to see that the EPA has joined this effort. For too long, environmental sustainability has been an afterthought, rather than a guiding principal for our development. Across the West, our limited water is stretched between sprawling

communities, and we need to do more to encourage smart, thoughtful planning in all aspects of development.

However, as many of you have noted, there are substantial barriers to this kind of integrated development. Our housing and transportation agencies have not historically worked together, and it takes work to break down silos. From what I've heard today, you are all committed to doing that work. I look forward to seeing local communities reap the benefits of that cooperation, and I am willing to support you however I can along the way.

I am also concerned that successful development too often fails to benefit long time residents of communities, who can no longer afford to stay in their neighborhood once it improves. Our current system doesn't do enough to reward innovative and creative ways to transform urban, suburban, and rural communities into diverse, livable neighborhoods. I hope that as we approach reauthorization of the transportation bill, we can work to better incentivize this kind of growth, and I welcome your input on how we can be successful on that front.

We do not need to convince people of the benefits of smart development, as you have pointed out; the demand is far exceeding the supply. I look

forward to working with you to identify ways this committee can support this important work.

During my time in Denver, I was able to work with Mayor Hickenlooper whose vision has helped transform many neighborhoods in Denver to embody the kind of development we are hoping to support with these sustainable development initiatives. The Denver Housing Authority is working with the City of Denver on a transit oriented HOPE VI project at South Lincoln homes. They are working to employ Smart Growth Principles, Energy Efficiency and Sustainability and Multi-Modal transportation planning. The project is located near a light rail stop. The redevelopment of South Lincoln homes is taking a broad view of sustainability, taking into account factors such as access to outdoor activities for health, and new approaches to storm water management that address water quality treatment and storage. This is the kind of collaboration and development that we want to incentivize around the country.

The Sustainable Communities Initiative is an important step in towards facilitating planning. However, it is critical that we also fund projects like

the one at South Lincoln Homes, and make it easier for localities like Denver to undertake such ambitious efforts.

Thank you for taking the time to come here today, and thank you for your willingness to cooperate on these issues. I am encouraged by your dedication, and I look forward to working with all of you to make our communities even better places to live.