

East Colfax

East of I-225 Corridor Plan

Amendment to the Aurora Comprehensive Plan



EAST COLFAX EAST OF I-225 CORRIDOR PLAN

INTRODUCTION

East Colfax Avenue and the history of the City of Aurora are deeply intertwined. Long before Interstate 70 was built, East Colfax Avenue was the travel route between Denver and points east (as U.S. Highway 40). In this role, East Colfax developed with highway-oriented businesses such as motels, restaurants and motor vehicle fueling stations. After Interstate 70 opened, the role of East Colfax changed. Businesses proliferated to serve the new residential subdivisions to the north and south. Several mobile home parks developed beyond the city limits, as did industrial activities desiring to be outside of town.

Purpose of the Planning Effort

The purpose of the East Colfax East of I-225 Corridor Plan is to provide a blueprint to create a vibrant commercial and mixed-use corridor integrated with surrounding residential neighborhoods. Community sentiments are that East Colfax today is not acceptable as a major gateway into the City of Aurora. The layout and appearance of older development does not meet the standards desired, and the 'bar' for future development needs to be raised.

Community Involvement

Public meetings were held throughout the process. These included a meeting on existing issues and conditions, followed by community workshops. The workshops provided opportunities for the community to express ideas and preferences for future land use, design guidelines, and transportation improvements.

PLANS AND ORDINANCES

Aurora Comprehensive Plan

The project area is a part of the Colfax Corridor East of I-225 Strategic Area identified by the Aurora Comprehensive Plan. Strategic areas are physical areas critical to the city's economy and identity, each with its own mix of uses and unique physical characteristics, and each with its own set of strategies to effect the city's vision. The East Colfax East of I-225 Corridor Plan builds on the issues and directions for the Strategic Area as identified within the Comprehensive Plan. At the first of three community meetings for the Corridor Plan, participants expressed a preference that the focus of this plan be the East Colfax corridor rather than the larger area of the Comprehensive Plan Strategic Area. The boundary of the East Colfax East of I-225 Corridor Plan is shown in Figure 1 on page 3.

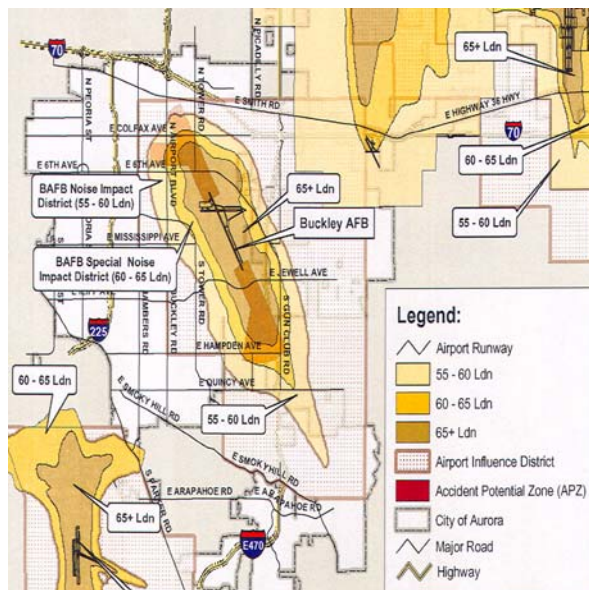
Aurora Zoning Ordinance

Land use in Aurora is regulated by the Zoning Ordinance. The B-4 zone is the most intensive of the commercial zones regulating land use and development within the East Colfax corridor, and accommodates highway-oriented uses. The most intensive of the Industrial zones, M-3, is for heavy industrial uses. The auto salvage yards at Tower Road are zoned M-3, and predate incorporation of the properties into the city. Existing zoning within the Corridor is shown in Figure 2 on page 3.

Residential zones exclusively for mobile home uses apply to some of the existing mobile home parks. Several other mobile home parks are commercially zoned, and are thereby non-conforming uses (when constructed all zoning ordinances in force were met, but zoning ordinance changes since then would not allow the same uses to be developed today). There are also existing land uses that are no longer compatible with surrounding uses, even though they are allowed by the zoning regulations for the land on

which the activity occurs. Examples include the automobile salvage yards and the outdoor automobile and equipment storage uses.

The community wants mixed-use development at certain locations. With proper design, residential and non-residential uses can exist in close proximity with few negative consequences.

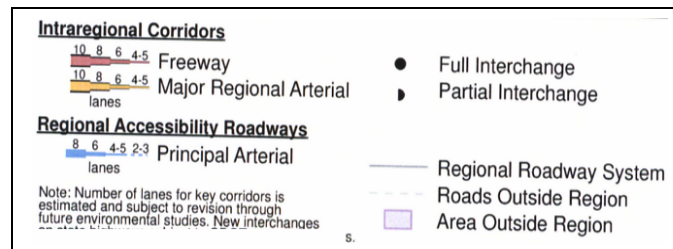


Within the East Colfax Corridor is the Buckley Air Force Base District (BAFD) overlay zoning district and its sub-districts. The Noise Impact District (NID) and LDN 55 Subarea both impact the East Colfax Corridor as shown on the map to the left. The Special Noise Impact District (SNID) also impacts a length of East Colfax just west of Tower Road, within a higher noise level contour (60 LDN Subarea) than is the NID.

Metro Vision Plan

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) is the designated metropolitan planning organization for the Denver metro area. It is federally charged with preparing a long-range regional transportation plan, the result of which is the 2030 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (2030 MVRTP). Among the roadway system improvements recommended by the 2030 Regional Roadway System is East Colfax, planned to be widened to six lanes between I-225 and Picadilly Road during the planning horizon. Below is the graphic representation of the Regional

Roadway System from the adopted 2030 Metro Vision Transportation Plan.



EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Land Use

Along East Colfax most existing development occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. The broad range of land uses can be attributed to the evolution of East Colfax, first as a segment of a major interstate highway and later as the main business route into Aurora from Interstate 70. The result is piecemeal development of land uses.

The existing land uses include relatively few suppliers of goods and services catering to nearby residential neighborhoods. Instead, most of the businesses along East Colfax are oriented to the convenience of the motorist, and the mix of land uses is not well balanced. Local-serving businesses, such as grocery stores, drug stores, and dry cleaners are particularly scarce east of Chambers Road. The existing land use mix provides few housing opportunities aside from mobile homes. A map of the existing land uses is shown in Figure 3 on page 6.

More than fifty percent of the land area in the East Colfax corridor is vacant or in dry-crop agricultural use. The vacant and agricultural land provides a significant opportunity for future corridor development, guided by the community's desire for a greater variety of businesses oriented to the local community, and mixed-use development. The future land uses could include mixed-use activity center developments within which businesses and residences can be in close proximity.

Visual Quality and Design

East Colfax today has no dominant visual aspects. Due to the wide variety of development standards applied to the corridor over the past 30 years, there is no unified character of architecture, site design, or signage. Few developments conform to the current city design standards. The result is an unorganized streetscape

appearance. Much of the land within the corridor remains vacant or in agricultural uses, and these sites present opportunity to create consistent design standards for future development including planned developments exhibiting consistent site and building design standards.

Transportation and Circulation

East Colfax is a business loop for I-70, and thus an appendage to the interstate highway system. It is also a major east-west transportation corridor in the city. It is configured with four travel lanes with space for a median along the entire length within the corridor, plus left-turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes at primary intersections. Traffic volumes vary between 20,000 and 39,000 vehicles, depending on roadway segment. The heaviest volumes are between I-225 and Sable Road, where daily traffic volumes approach 39,000 vehicles, declining to 25,500 vehicles east of Chambers Road, and 19,800 vehicles at Airport Road.

The entire corridor is within the service area of the Regional Transit District (RTD). The RTD's bus Route 15 provides service along the corridor between Denver and Chambers Road. There are no striped bicycle lanes or exclusive bicycle facilities in the corridor except where bicycle trails cross East Colfax at the Highline Canal and Sand Creek.

The community perceives that automobile traffic uses East Colfax primarily as a high-speed commuter route, and that pedestrian and bicycle travel is unsafe and uncomfortable. The transit stops along East Colfax are also perceived as uncomfortable and unsafe. Pedestrian travel along East Colfax is difficult in many locations because sidewalk facilities are substandard or lacking. There are no sidewalks along more than 70% of the length of the street, and east of the Highline Canal only non-continuous short segments of sidewalk exist. West of the Highline Canal, sidewalks are more often present, but widths are inconsistent and

most sidewalks are attached, abutting high-speed traffic lanes. Signalized pedestrian crossings are widely spaced and, like the rest of the pedestrian environment, uncomfortable. The roadway is a wide expanse of asphalt without median refuge, and therefore crossing of the entire street must be accomplished at once, a daunting task for the elderly, handicapped, or small children.

The Metro Vision 2030 Transportation Plan forecasts significant roadway congestion on I-70 in north Aurora. To help achieve congestion relief, the plan calls for widening of East Colfax to accommodate a greater share of regional east-west traffic. East Colfax provides the only continuous major east-west travel route between I-70 and Jewell/Illiff Avenue located five-plus miles south. As such, East Colfax is an important element of the regional transportation system. Its future widening is considered to be vital by regional transportation planning policy.

Re-construction of East Colfax, as recommended by the regional and state transportation plans, could present opportunities to improve the community environment around the road while accommodating planned capacity improvements. Roadway designs that accommodate pedestrian and bicycle facilities could evolve out of a collaborative work effort between the city and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Intersection crossings need considerable design focus as well, so that even if they remain physically far apart they accommodate elements of safe and pleasant pedestrian and bicycle crossing.

Parks and Open Space

The eastern half of the East Colfax corridor is well served with recreation facilities, while the west is not. While there are no city parks within the corridor, there are numerous adjacent recreational facilities including the 220-acre Aurora Sports Park near Dunkirk Road. The 200-acre Star K Ranch natural area is easily accessible to the north via the Sand Creek trail, which terminates at East

Colfax Avenue. The wide array of park facilities near the eastern corridor is an asset for residents, and could be a draw for the development of housing within the corridor. Combined with the adjacent City Sports Park, there is ample opportunity to connect future mixed-use developments along East Colfax with trails and parks.

PLANNING SUB-AREAS

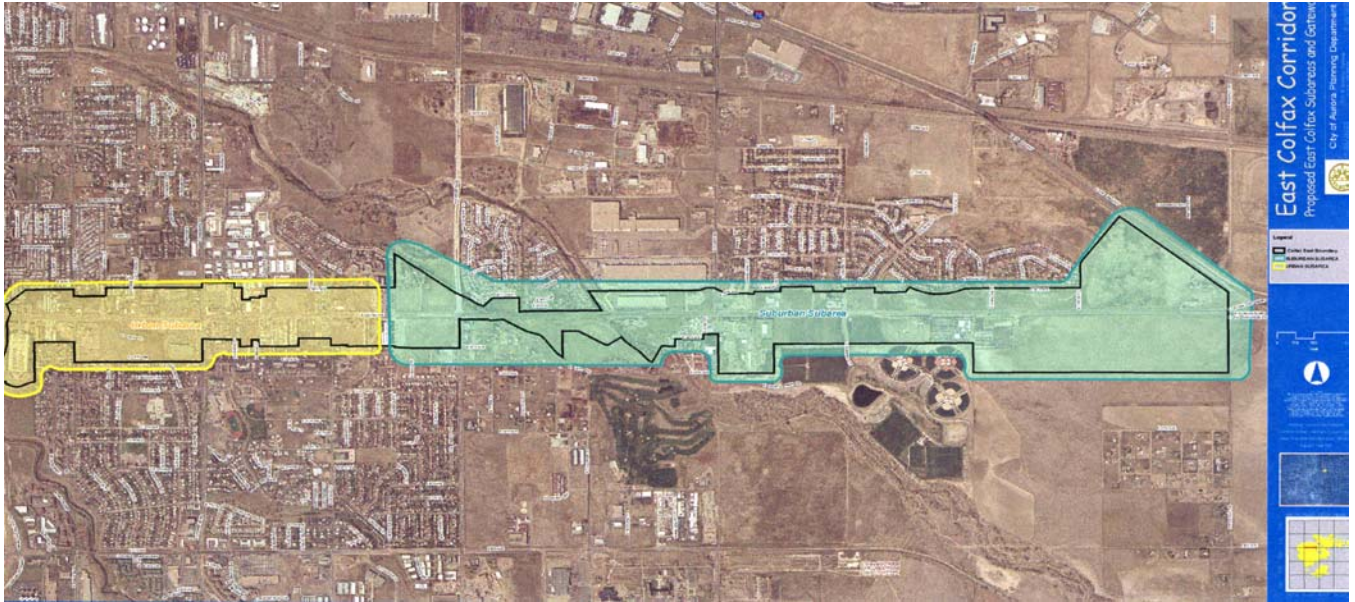
This plan identifies two sub-areas with distinct characteristics. The boundaries between the sub-areas are not absolute and there will be considerable interaction between the sub-areas. Each sub-area, however, possesses its own existing characteristics, opportunities, issues, and vision. (A map of the subarea boundaries is Figure 4 on page 10.)

*Urban
Subarea***Strengths**

- Access to other parts of the city and the region is readily available via I-225, I-70, East Colfax, and planned light rail transit (within the I-225 corridor).
- The Fitzsimons campus to the west and the proposed Horizon City Center to the east will provide significant activity centers adjacent to either end of East Colfax, and will be the 'driving forces' behind much of what occurs within the Corridor itself. Fitzsimons will provide population for retail, service, and housing demand within the East Colfax corridor.

Challenges

- The roadway dominates the East Colfax environment. The traffic speed and lack of pedestrian amenities, including street crossings, create a difficult environment for pedestrians, transit patrons (who are also pedestrians) and bicyclists.
- The sidewalks are of inconsistent width and in many locations in need of repair. Along most of the corridor sidewalks are lacking entirely.
- The lack of street amenities on East Colfax, including trees, pedestrian lighting and benches, contributes to the impression that the pedestrian is almost an intruder.



East Colfax Subareas

- As a designated state highway, East Colfax is subject to a regulatory framework that limits the number and location of access points. These limitations assist in the rapid movement of automobiles, and discourage the development of short blocks and a more urban local street system.
- Development has occurred piecemeal over the past 70+ years, and has created a streetscape with no unifying theme of design or even dominant pattern of development.
- Many commercial sites are still economically viable, yet exhibit sub-standard design elements and landscaping.
- Many parcels of land along the corridor are under-utilized. This is evident in the presence of unused pavement, partially developed sites, and vacant land.
- Overhead utility lines contribute to an overall discordant and cluttered street appearance.

*Suburban
Subarea***Strengths**

- Access to other parts of the city and the region is readily made via I-225, I-70, and East Colfax.
- The new I-70 interchange at Picadilly Road will improve automobile access into the subarea.
- The Horizon City Center will provide a major population source for retail and service uses, housing, and employment.
- Significant vacant and agricultural land area provides an open feel and expansive views to the west and south.
- Recreation opportunities are abundant, with the adjacent Sports Park, Star K Ranch, and Environmental Day Camp.

Challenges

- The roadway dominates the East Colfax environment. The traffic speed and lack of pedestrian amenities, particularly sidewalks, creates a difficult environment for pedestrians, transit patrons (who are also pedestrians) and bicyclists.
- As a designated state highway, East Colfax is subject to a regulatory framework that discourages short blocks and an urban street system.
- Many of the commercial sites are still economically viable, yet exhibit sub-standard design elements and landscaping.
- Median landscape improvements have not been implemented and the result is a bleak appearance for the roadway.
- Overhead utility lines contribute to an overall discordant and cluttered street appearance.

CONCURRENT PROJECTS

During the course of this study, several large projects were in various stages of review and construction. The projects described here are those that will have a notable influence on the East Colfax Corridor.

*Fitzsimons
Redevelopment*

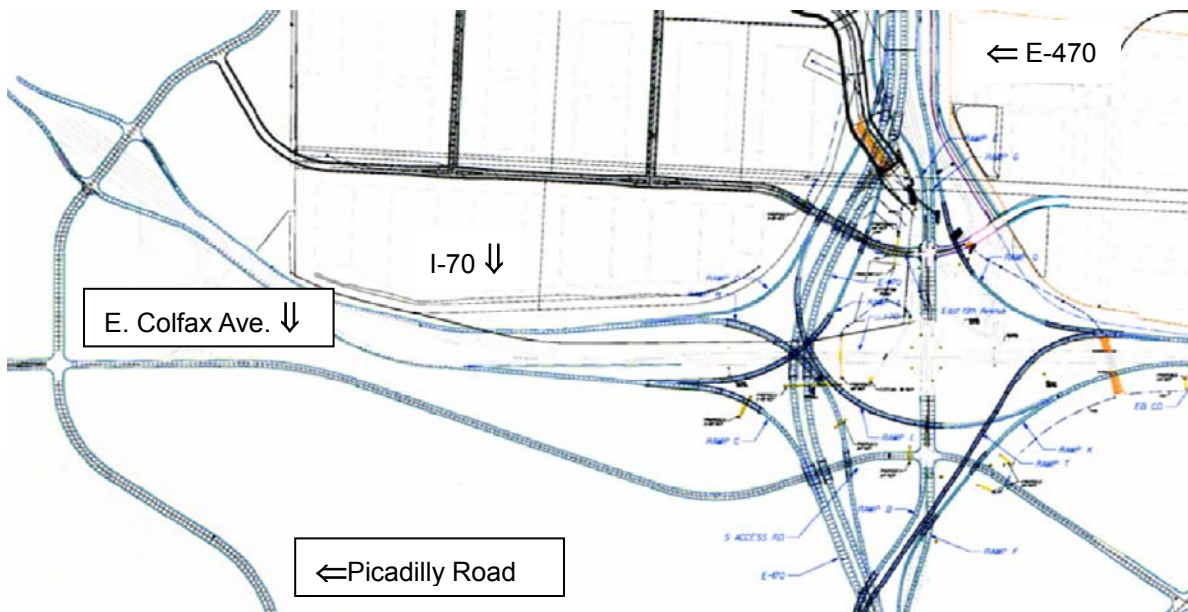
The Fitzsimons redevelopment is a major on-going project in Aurora. The presence of a large employment base and resident population will have a significant influence on East Colfax, directly impacting demand for retail goods and services. In addition, the large employment base may generate demand for new housing along East Colfax.

*Horizon City
Center*

The Horizon City Center project is in the initial planning stages on a large site adjacent to the east of the East Colfax Corridor. When completed, the development will have reconstructed East Colfax Avenue east of Picadilly Road in a 'one way couplet' configuration, which consists of two parallel one-way roads. The design of couplets encourages a more efficient movement of traffic, with fewer conflicting movements than with a typical two-way road, and traffic can be moved more efficiently.

*E-470/East
Colfax and
I-70/Picadilly
Road
Interchanges*

Construction of a 'flyover' structure for the E-470 and East Colfax Avenue interchange is ongoing. The project consists of a two-mile bypass of the signalized intersection at East Colfax, and is scheduled for completion in October 2006. A new interchange at Picadilly Road and I-70 will be constructed within the next few years as well. The illustration on the next page shows the approximate location for the planned interchange at Picadilly Road.



E-470/I-70 Interchange Reconstruction

Capital Improvement Program

The City Council has adopted a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for construction projects, including improvements related to water and sanitary infrastructure, between 2005 and 2009. Plans for the improvement of water supply infrastructure include new supply lines within both Picadilly Road and Himalaya Avenue crossing East Colfax. Planned sanitary sewer infrastructure projects include a force main within the roadway segment between Picadilly Road and Tower Road, to be constructed during 2009. This utility project could provide an opportunity to re-construct the segment of East Colfax at the same time. A regional drainage facility is planned on the north side of East Colfax, just west of Altura Boulevard. The city is completing design work and plans to start construction in early 2006. The planned widening and extension of Tower Road is outside of an adopted CIP program. The segment between East Colfax and Smith Road is planned for construction in the year 2008, depending on funding availability. A new segment, between East Colfax and Sixth Avenue, is planned for construction in 2009. Any or all of these roadway projects could provide an opportunity to re-construct segments of East Colfax at the same time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The city staff and the community, working together, identified two distinct subareas within the corridor and recommended different development directions within each. Mixed-use development sites have been recommended at strategic locations within each subarea. Mixed use may not be appropriate on parcels that are too small to feasibly accommodate mixed use. A map of subarea boundaries and potential locations for mixed-use activity center is on page 16.

Urban Subarea

The Urban Subarea today has a typical suburban character, but exhibits certain characteristics that support a more urban environment in the future. In addition, the community wants the future development of this area to be more urban, and at the same time to be more oriented to the needs of nearby residents. Following are vision statements regarding the subarea in the future if it evolves as intended by this Plan.

Vision for the Future

- Over time, the built environment will evolve from a typical suburban commercial strip to a more mixed-use street oriented to the needs of new residents and residents of adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- The Urban Subarea will undergo a transformation into a neighborhood-oriented district, including a number of small-scale retail establishments attracted to the area.
- The Urban Subarea will be anchored by several mixed-use activity center developments, attracting new residents because of the improved East Colfax environment.

- The proximity to jobs at Fitzsimons, Horizon City Center and along E-470 will support residential development and businesses along East Colfax.
- Other sites that were formerly vacant or under-utilized will be developed with a more urban character.
- The need for automobile access within new developments will not be ignored, but rather balanced with needs of pedestrians, transit patrons, and bicyclists.
- Developments within this subarea will establish a strong, visually unified design theme giving pedestrians and drivers the sense they are in a unique district.

Suburban Subarea

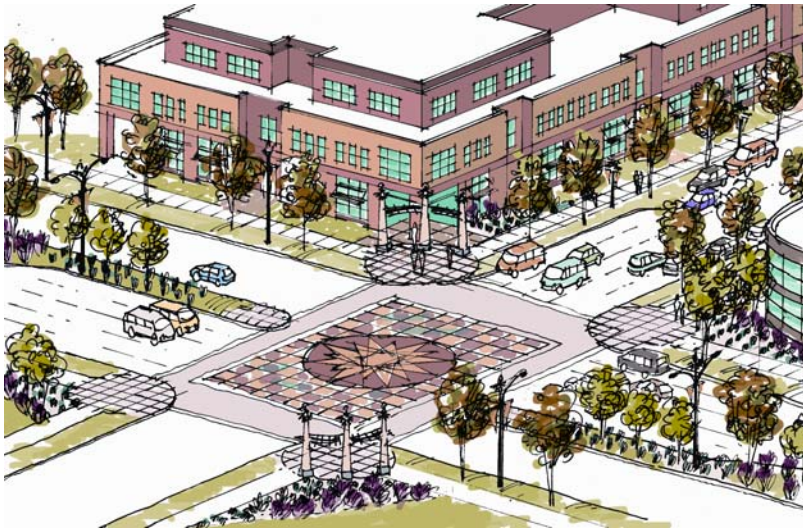
The open land and unobstructed views are strong positive character elements within this subarea.

Vision for the Future

- The portion of the subarea along the north side of East Colfax is intended to contain mixed uses, with a variety of retail, employment and residential uses mixed horizontally or vertically.
- Mixed-use activity center developments will be encouraged at key locations, adding housing diversity and neighborhood-serving businesses for the residents and employees of the surrounding area. Mixed use may not be appropriate on certain ownership parcels that are too small to accommodate mixed use.
- Office and light industrial projects will be developed with a campus feel, exhibiting large landscaped common areas

between buildings and fronting East Colfax. The open areas will be well landscaped with pedestrian walkways between the buildings.

- Design will be of high quality. Significant attention to building, site and landscaping design elements will be evident.



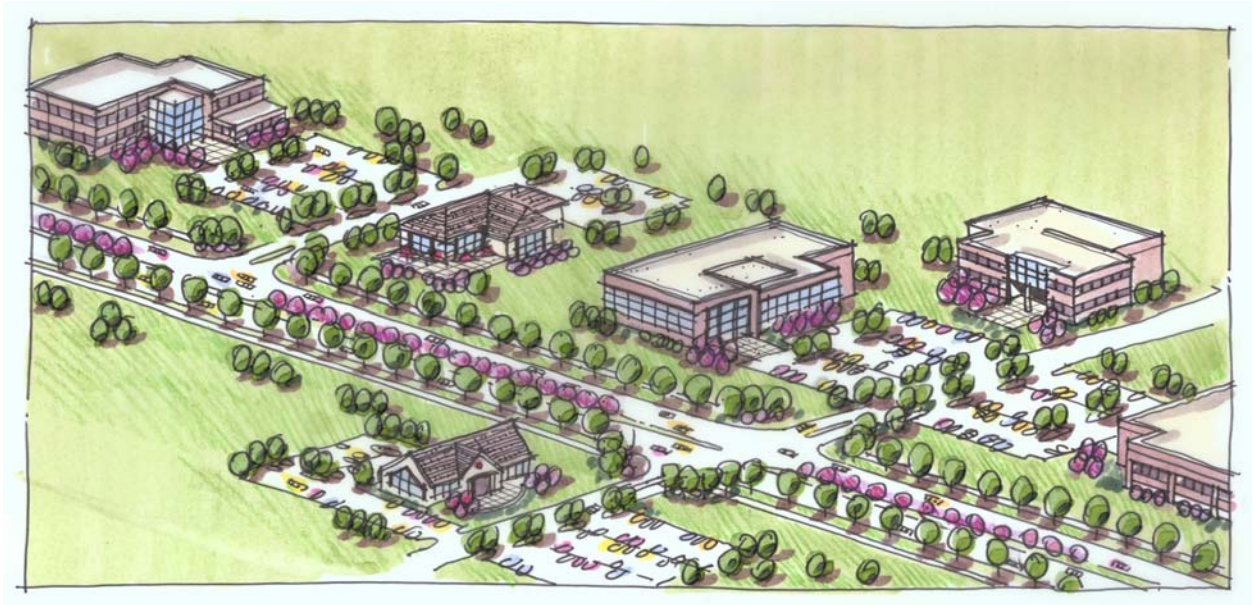
**Example of a
Mixed Use
Development
and Enhanced
Street
Intersection**

- While the automobile will remain the dominant travel mode, transit and bicycle travel will be emphasized in site planning.
- A business park area at the east end of the corridor will be encouraged to develop with high tech, and research and development uses in a master planned campus-style setting surrounded by abundant landscaped areas with walking paths and art. The business park zone will take advantage of the proximity of the I-70 / Picadilly Road interchange and E-470.

Activity Centers

Activity centers create a focal point for activity and visual interest. These areas provide an opportunity for people to walk and interact. Activity centers feature a mixture of land uses all in proximity, including higher density residential condominiums,

townhomes and apartments, and retail uses to allow for pedestrian travel. They physically connect to adjacent neighborhoods and to parks and open space, and they include internal public spaces.



Example of a Business Park

Residential and retail uses on the same parcel of land, whether or not within the same building, are not permitted under the current zoning of any parcels along East Colfax. Therefore, the ability to develop a desirable mixed-use project within the corridor will require a different regulatory approach than is currently available. It is recommended that an overlay zone be applied to the entire corridor, with specific performance criteria for mixed-use development.

Zoning Overlay

The general purpose of a zoning overlay district is to address the unique characteristics of a geographic location by adopting special rules to establish a level of quality appropriate for the location and the desires of stakeholders.

An overlay district can:

- Support and stimulate economic development and revitalization within the district;
- Provide a tool and procedures to encourage flexibility in the physical and economic growth of the Corridor;
- Create design continuity within the Corridor through the use of special design standards; and
- Advance and promote a pedestrian-friendly environment within the Corridor.

The overlay district can provide a second set of regulatory criteria that respond to the uniqueness of the site location. The overlay district can, for example, allow a greater range of uses than allowed by the underlying zoning, e.g. higher density residential uses. The existing underlying commercial zoning categories do not allow any type of residential use and consequently do not allow true mixed-use developments. The overlay district can also establish specific design standards for development and redevelopment. It is recommended that an overlay zone be adopted for the entire corridor, including specific requirements for mixed-use activity centers. If an overlay zone is adopted for East Colfax, all of the following elements should be included:

- Allow a significant residential component within individual mixed-use activity centers.
- Develop a mix of housing types and densities within each activity center. The residential densities should transition from attached townhome dwellings where adjacent to existing single family residential neighborhoods, to higher density condominiums and apartments close to East Colfax Avenue.

- Design the activity centers to be easily walkable with a network of detached sidewalks connecting different land uses.
- Create a primary entry point to the activity centers adjacent to the main street intersection, with a pedestrian plaza or main street open to view from the abutting streets, and features including landscaping and seating areas.
- Organize some portions of the site interior of the activity centers around civic or public spaces such as a plaza.
- Define several entry points to the activity centers with art, signage or other design features.
- Locate all parking lots to the side or rear of buildings at intersections of public streets.
- Limit the number of automobile access points directly to East Colfax to reduce the number of curb cuts and the potential for vehicle conflicts.
- Design pedestrian connections between the residential developments and adjacent recreation facilities, such as the Highline Canal trail and Sand Creek regional greenway, where feasible.

*East
Colfax
Avenue*

The DRCOG 2030 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan and the 2030 Statewide Transportation Plan project significant residential and employment growth in the I-70 corridor. To this end, the 2030 plans identify the widening of East Colfax, between Peoria Street and Airport Boulevard, as a 'congestion relief' project related to I-70. Such widening may be justified by increasing traffic but may also conflict with the goals of pedestrian

access and an improved streetscape. Aurora needs to work closely with CDOT and property owners to achieve the following:

- There should be sufficient, safe vehicle access to the land uses and activity centers discussed in this plan.
- Pedestrian travel should be improved through continuous detached sidewalks and landscaping to provide a comfortable walking environment along the corridor.
- Attractive, comfortable transit stops should be provided along the corridor.
- Vehicle speeds should be controlled to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.
- A complete bicycle and pedestrian network should be planned with the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and provided throughout the corridor.
- The City and CDOT should consider alternatives to traditional roadway widening for Colfax Avenue throughout the corridor.
- Particular care should be given to the design of pedestrian crossings along Colfax Avenue. Medians or refuge islands and state-of-the-art pedestrian signals, including time countdown signals, should be employed.

GOALS AND ACTION STRATEGIES

The following goals are intended to capture the vision for the corridor. The action strategies identify specific methods for carrying out the vision.

Land Use

Goal 1: Promote a balance of compatible interconnected land uses.

- **Action 1.1: Promote the development of mixed-use projects and compact development patterns through the adoption of a Zoning Overlay along the length of the corridor.** The Urban Subarea in particular should have mixed-use activity centers developed at strategic locations. These developments will provide neighborhood-serving retail and service businesses on the ground floor, readily accessible to residents via walking, bus or bicycle as well as by automobile. The mixed-use activity centers will provide adequate, safe and pleasant sidewalks and landscaping along East Colfax Avenue. The zoning overlay will permit mixed uses in appropriate locations, and will establish design standards for buildings and site improvements.
- **Action 1.2: Encourage high quality infill development through the adoption of incentives related to desired design characteristics.** This scale of development will typically be smaller than the mixed-use activity center, but will be oriented toward the same goals of neighborhood orientation and connectivity, and pedestrian considerations.
- **Action 1.3: Encourage rezoning of the existing M-3 (Heavy Industrial) zoned parcels adjacent to the Tower Road and East Colfax Avenue intersection.** The existing automobile scrap yard operations require M-3 zoning. However, when redevelopment of the properties is proposed, a rezoning to a category compatible with the surrounding area should be a part of the application process.

- **Action 1.4: Improve housing stock within the corridor while maintaining the availability of affordable housing units.** Redevelopment of existing mobile home parks should only be initiated by the property owners, and should occur only after affordable housing units have been built in or near the corridor.

Goal 2: Create a community where the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods are integrated.

- **Action 2.1: Improve the physical connections between East Colfax and adjacent neighborhoods by requiring pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections.** Provide connections between residential neighborhoods and East Colfax to enhance residents' accessibility to businesses and services on East Colfax.
- **Action 2.2: Provide informal gathering places for people.** The provision of public spaces and activity nodes, as focal points within mixed-use activity centers, will provide outdoor gathering places, and thereby foster a sense of community between businesses and residents.

Goal 3: Provide varied housing opportunities and neighborhood-serving retail within the corridor through mixed-use developments.

- **Action 3.1: Encourage mixed-use activity center developments with significant housing components at appropriate locations.** An adopted overlay zone will require, within each mixed-use activity center development, a substantial portion of the total building floor area for housing. Appropriate locations for activity centers include the following:
 - Intersection of Tower Road and East Colfax Avenue.
 - Intersection of Airport Road and East Colfax Avenue.
 - Entrance to City Sports Park from East Colfax Avenue.
 - Intersection of Chambers Road and East Colfax.

The overlay zone maps will designate the locations where mixed-use activity center developments may be appropriate.

- **Action 3.2: Encourage a diversity of housing types and densities along the corridor.** This is necessary to provide for a choice of high quality housing for residents of all incomes, ages, and household type. The presence of mobile home parks is evidence of demand for affordable housing within the corridor.
 - Require, within the overlay zone, a variety of residential densities within each mixed-use activity center.
 - Require through the overlay zone that each mixed-use activity center project provide a diversity of residential unit types.
- **Action 3.3: Adopt development standards for mixed-use activity centers.** These include:
 - Public spaces and sidewalks for people to interact and walk.
 - Connections to adjacent neighborhoods for pedestrian and bicycle travel.
 - Connections to adjacent parks and open space.
 - A consistent design theme for buildings and landscaping. This design need not produce identical appearance of buildings but should create a cohesive pattern.
 - Parking lots restricted to the side or rear of buildings. Limit the parking lot street frontage allowable along a public street.
- **Action 3.4: Design buildings to surround a public space, such as a plaza, with seating areas and art features such as water elements or sculpture.**
 - Building frontages facing the public spaces shall incorporate commercial frontages, with either primary or secondary entrances to those businesses on adjacent public streets.
 - Define entry points from public streets to the plazas with art, signage or other means.

- **Action 3.5: Create a transition in land use intensity between non-residential development and single family residential neighborhoods.** Protect the quality of life within single family neighborhoods near East Colfax. One technique is to require a land use transition. This could consist of medium density residential and low intensity non-residential uses between these neighborhoods and East Colfax. Such transition would be supplemented with appropriate buffering techniques for noise, lighting, and other impacts generated by non-residential activities.

Design

Goal 4: Create a distinct identity for the East Colfax Corridor through the built environment.

- **Action 4.1: Adopt an Overlay Zone.** The overlay zone will reflect, with specificity, the designated subareas discussed above. Through zoning regulations the desired design standards for urban form, architecture, landscaping, and street improvements will be implemented.
- **Action 4.2: Establish design standards for two planning subareas.** Adoption of standards for the Urban Subarea and the Suburban Subarea will recognize the unique character of each subarea.
- **Action 4.3: Explore an appropriate range of incentive options for redevelopment of smaller commercial sites.**

Goal 5: Create a higher quality of development within the corridor through enhanced site design standards.

- **Action 5.1: Adopt design standards specific to development outside of mixed use activity centers and adjacent to East Colfax**

intersections. Implement the standards through an overlay zone. Include in such standards the following design criteria:

- Locate parking to the side and/or rear of buildings, and design parking to be outside of the building setback measured from the intersecting streets.
- Share parking where feasible to reduce parking surface area, to limit curb cuts, and to organize accessibility and signage.
- Locate drive-through lanes to the side or rear of buildings. Prohibit drive-through lanes adjacent to public street intersections.
- Locate off-street loading areas so they do not project into any setback measured from an intersecting street.
- Design loading and service bay doors to face away from East Colfax Avenue if feasible.

- **Action 5.2: Adopt design standards specific to locations within one block of East Colfax intersections.** Implement the standards through an overlay zone. Include in such standards the following design criteria:

- Two rows of off-street parking shall be permitted between the building and East Colfax Avenue with the remainder of the parking located to the side and rear of buildings.
- Share parking where feasible to reduce parking surface area, to limit curb cuts, and to organize accessibility and signage.



**Example of a
Mixed-Use Activity
Center**



Example of Design Standards for Intersection Locations

- Locate off-street loading areas so they do not project into any setback measured from an intersecting street.
 - Design loading and service bay doors to face away from East Colfax Avenue if feasible.
- **Action 5.3: Adopt design standards for a safe and continuous pedestrian and bicycle network.** Implement the standards through an overlay zone. Include in such standards the following:
 - Install detached sidewalks from private streets or drives with tree lawn.
 - **Action 5.4: Adopt design standards for open space and common amenities.** A continuous open space system should connect properties within larger developments, to adjacent developments, and to components of the parks and trails system. Higher density residential projects, whether or not an element of a mixed-use project, should provide common amenities for residents. Implement the following:

- Designate a minimum area of a residential project as open space.
 - Organize open areas to create integrated internal connections and connections within adjacent parks, school sites, open spaces, regional trails, and activity centers.
 - Locate each open area to be visible from a public street or site and accessible to residents of the development.
 - Provide common amenities within larger townhome and multi-family residential projects.
- **Action 5.5: Adopt standards for on-site surface parking.** Surface parking lots should be located and designed to minimize visual impacts. Include the following in such standards:
 - Set a maximum percentage of street frontage on East Colfax where surface parking may be located.
 - Orient garage and carport entries and parking garages away from street frontage.
 - Locate parking to the side and/or rear of buildings where feasible.
- **Action 5.6: Adopt standards for building height, setbacks and lot area.** Include in such standards the following criteria:
 - Set standards for all development within mixed-use activity centers.
 - Establish standards for townhome and multi-family development, where a stand-alone development and where part of a mixed-use development.
- **Action 5.7: Adopt standards for residential building design.** Include the following in such standards:
 - Design building massing to consist of variety in wall planes and roof planes.
 - Set maximum allowable building lengths.
 - Prescribe required roofing materials and roof shapes.
 - Describe design features required for building facades, windows, entry areas, garage doors, and decks or balconies.

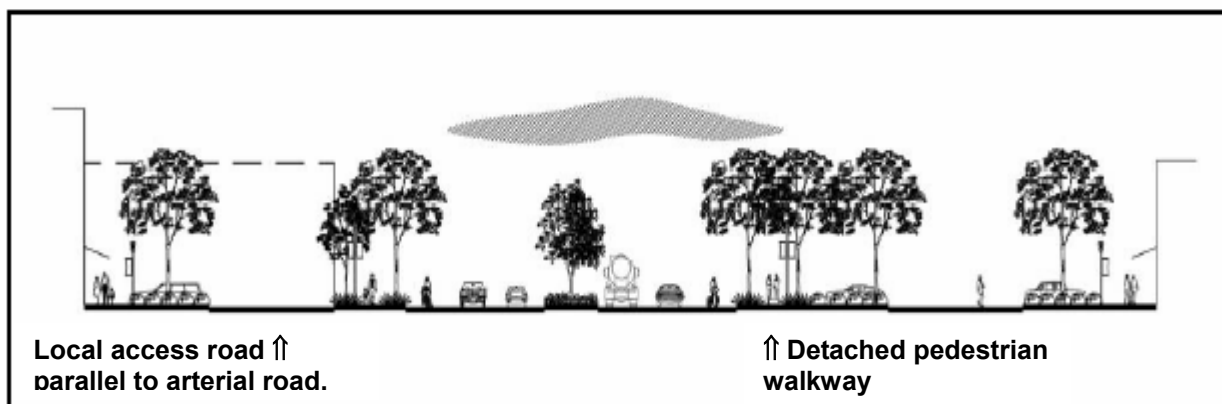
- Prepare a list of required design elements from which a minimum number must be incorporated into any development.
- **Action 5.8: Adopt standards for non-residential building design.** Implement the standards through an overlay zone for the corridor, and include the following:
 - Develop all buildings with four-sided design.
 - Design buildings with textured surfaces including projections, shadow lines, parapet height changes and similar architectural devices.
 - Limit the use of intense or bright exterior colors, and of reflective window glass.
 - Prescribe consistent roof design by limiting roof slopes and requiring the use of varied roof planes.
 - Require screening of loading dock and service areas.
 - Establish additional standards for commercial office, hotel, retail, entertainment, and restaurant uses regarding exterior building materials, design details, and façade treatments.
 - Adopt additional design standards for big-box retail buildings to reduce the appearance of undifferentiated bulk, including requirements for facade articulation, façade design pattern, concealing mechanical equipment, pedestrian-oriented features, customer entrances, and outdoor amenities.
 - Establish additional design standards for industrial buildings to reduce the appearance of undifferentiated bulk, including use of certain exterior materials.
- **Action 5.9: Adopt standards for signage.** Include the following in an overlay zone:
 - Set allowable types of signage including wall-mounted, monument and suspended.
 - Adopt standards for the size and placement of signs. Lettering standards for signage types should be adopted.

- Establish sign material standards regarding both finishes and colors.
- **Action 5.10: Adopt standards for Mixed Use Activity Center developments.** Implement standards specific to these developments through the adoption of a Zoning Overlay, and include the following:
 - Require design elements specific to mixed-use activity center developments, such as public spaces and minimum building height.
 - Prescribe connections for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles.
 - Set minimum and maximum non-residential building area as a percentage of total building floor area within a mixed-use development.
 - Establish minimum open space areas and landscaped areas and locational standards for such features.
- **Action 5.11: Adopt standards for residential buildings within mixed-use developments.** Implement standards specific to mixed-use environments, including the following:
 - Establish minimum and maximum for residential building area as a percentage of total building floor area within a mixed-use development.
 - Adopt location criteria for residential development in relation to the mixed-use development.
- **Action 5.12: Explore the creation of unique gateways at three primary entrances to the East Colfax corridor.** Within each gateway a theme or themes unique to this segment of East Colfax should be presented. For example, an eastern gateway may consist of a small art park displaying historic and visually unique roadside business signs.

Transportation

Goal 6: Create a community street environment, rather than a high-speed highway environment, along East Colfax west of the Highline Canal.

- **Action 6.1: Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to implement the community's preference for the function of East Colfax.** Evaluate the feasibility of alternatives including but not limited to the following:
 - The City and CDOT study alternatives to widening of East Colfax for I-70 traffic congestion relief;
 - The City and CDOT collaborate in planning improvements to East Colfax to allow for future traffic volume increase while also addressing the community's desired design for the roadway.
- **Action 6.2: Adopt specific street standards for the East Colfax roadway.** Adopt a cross-section standard for the length of East Colfax between I-225 and I-70. The adopted street standard should include, at a minimum, the following:
 - Enhanced intersections incorporating features for safe and pleasant pedestrian and bicycle crossing.
 - Facilities for pedestrian and bicycle travel, physically separate from the automobile travel lanes except at intersection crossing locations.
 - Where sidewalk area and an off-street bicycle path will be using the same space, the width of the sidewalk/path will be a minimum of 10 feet to accommodate both modes of transportation.
- **Action 6.3: Evaluate measures to calm traffic through intersection design particularly within the Urban Subarea.** Such measures could include enhanced intersection design with bulb corners, and special pavement at crosswalks. Intersections appropriate for study for the enhanced intersection design include Sable Road and Chambers Road.



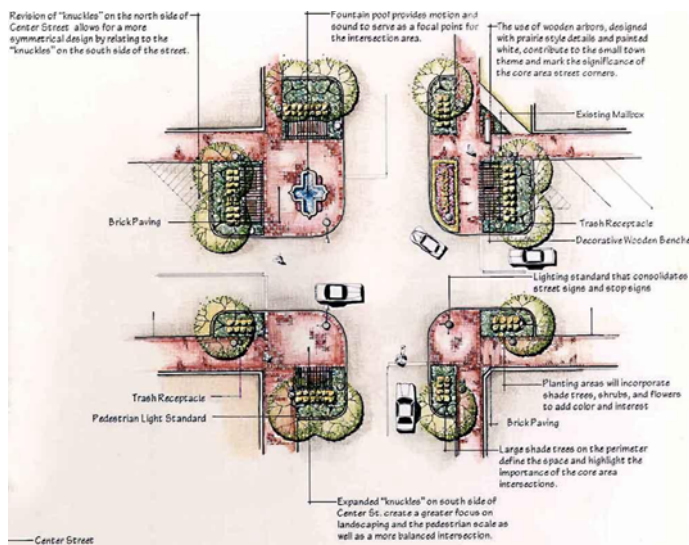
Example 6.1

Example of Arterial Road Cross-Section

- **Action 6.4: Investigate mechanisms for funding the streetscape and intersection enhancements.** Improvements to the pedestrian environment, particularly completion and upgrading of the sidewalk network, will be most effective if done as part of one improvement project rather than a piecemeal basis at individual development sites. Sources of program funding may include special districts, the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) or the Transportation Improvements Program (TIP).

Goal 7: Provide multimodal alternatives to single occupancy vehicles so all residents enjoy the benefits of mobility.

- **Action 7.1: Plan for alternative modes of travel, including transit and trail systems.** Require the local transportation system, as it evolves with new development along the corridor, to be designed to link housing, shopping, employment, parks, schools and civic facilities with road, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.



Examples of Pedestrian-Oriented Intersection Improvements.

- **Action 7.2: Enhance transit alternatives available to populations with less access to private automobiles, including seniors, students, and the handicapped.**

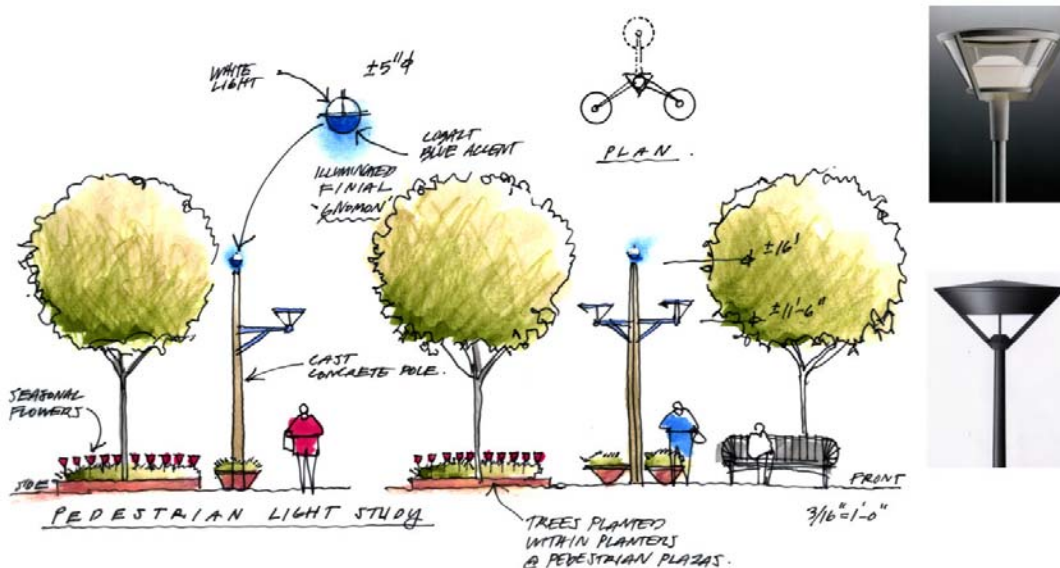
Goal 8: Create a desirable pedestrian environment along the length of East Colfax.

- **Action 8.1: Implement the streetscape enhancements required by the Code for all new development and, to the maximum extent allowed by existing conditions, retrofit older development sites.** The current requirements will, if implemented, further the goals of this Corridor Plan. The requirements of Chapter 146, Article 14 are the following:
 - A fully detached sidewalk of no less than eight feet in width;
 - A tree lawn area of a minimum ten foot width; and
 - Street trees planted at the rate of at least one tree for each 30 lineal feet of frontage.

- **Action 8.2: Seek opportunities for implementing a program of streetscape improvements.** Program elements including undergrounding of overhead utilities, adding street furniture (e.g. bus stop benches, pedestrian lights, and street trees) and detached sidewalks. Create a 'package' of streetscape elements, including landscaping, lights, and street signs that can be used along the corridor to create a consistent design theme, and can also be used in different combination to create unique identity for particular locations within the corridor. Improvements will be more effective if installed in a uniform manner, rather than waiting for the improvements to be completed on a parcel-by-parcel basis as new development occurs. A photograph below shows street frontage that is in compliance with current city standards. An example of a streetscape furniture 'package' is also provided on the next page.



Photograph of Street Segment Meeting City Standards for Pedestrian Improvements.



Example rendering of street furniture package.

- **Action 8.3: Emphasize pedestrian safety measures in street design.** Streets in the corridor should have clearly-marked pedestrian crossings, provide pedestrian refuge space within the center median, and provide adequate lighting for pedestrian visibility.

Goal 9: Enhance the attractiveness of public transportation for travel along East Colfax.

- **Action 9.1: Collaborate with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) to improve public transportation facilities along the Corridor.** Promote public transportation as an alternative to automobile dependency for corridor travel.
- **Action 9.2: Identify and explore funding mechanisms for improving the existing transit stops.** Improve the comfort, appearance and safety of bus stops, including the installation of shelters where none exist. Where stop locations may be relocated to make service more rapid and efficient, evaluate the service efficiency.

- **Action 9.3: Evaluate the feasibility of creating unique transit options within the Corridor.**
 - Consider a unique signature experience for local bus service between primary destinations at the edges of the corridor such as the Fitzsimons campus and the Horizon City Center.
 - Include historic transit vehicles from the era of East Colfax's peak highway service role, generally pre-1970.
 - Implementing this transportation concept would necessitate an operations and maintenance budget through a source such as a business improvement district.

Parks and Open Space

Goal 10: Expand the accessibility of parks and open space to users without the need for access by automobile.

- **Action 10.1: Link parks and open space areas to the north and south of East Colfax with a system of trails, pedestrian ways and bicycle routes.**
- **Action 10.2: Complete the trail connection for the Sand Creek regional greenway south of Colfax Avenue (high priority).** Connect trails extending north and south of East Colfax, as an underpass or overpass across East Colfax.
- **Action 10.3: Require new developments adjacent to parks and open space to provide clear, well-lit pedestrian connections to the existing trail system.**

Goal 11: Preserve and enhance the quality of the natural environment.

- **Action 11.1: Encourage the preservation of habitat and natural resources through enhancement of significant areas as passive recreation facilities.** Preservation of natural areas will be required, where appropriate, by the overlay zone.

**Economic
Growth***Goal 12: Promote a diverse economic base*

- **Action 12.1: Encourage a mixture of uses, including office and research and developments, to provide greater employment opportunities within the corridor.** The Overlay Zone will specify regulations and standards applicable to employment-generating uses and developments.
- **Action 12.2: Accommodate a wide range of business types.** Retail and services along the corridor should be oriented toward local as well as regional markets.

Goal 13: Facilitate the redevelopment of underutilized areas along the corridor to strengthen the corridor's economic health.

- **Action 13.1: Apply a coordinated approach to planning for redevelopment projects supported by the city.** The Overlay Zone will put forth regulations and standards applicable to redevelopment projects within the East Colfax corridor.
- **Action 13.2: Explore incentives to encourage re-investment in existing businesses.**

IMPLEMENTATION

This Corridor Plan may be used as a basis for the formulation of a zoning overlay ordinance. The overlay would be used as a primary basis for the review of development applications.

Priorities

The city will develop a prioritized action list of public improvement projects from the following list of general improvements identified by the community as desirable and necessary.

- Landscaped medians east of Airport Road
- Under-grounding of utility lines
- Enhanced intersections
- Pedestrian crossings
- Gateways; and
- Streetscape improvements including street furniture, pedestrian lighting, sidewalks, landscaping, and transit facilities.

Involvement of the Public and Private Sectors

Feasible alternatives for financing the improvements will be evaluated. Depending on the financing program selected to implement the desired improvements, the city and private landowners will work together to enable the improvements to be made.

Compliance with the Corridor Plan

The city will actively explore opportunities for funding selected public improvements by all means feasible including existing city funding sources, and new taxing entities such as a general or a business improvement district. The business improvement district approach could levy a property tax mill levy for construction and maintenance of improvements.

The city will use the following criteria as part of the evaluation process for individual projects within the East Colfax corridor.

- Compliance of the project with adopted goals and action strategies;
- Ability of the project to create an immediate and direct public benefit.
- Location of a project within, or relative to the location of, a mixed-use activity center or other focal point desired by the community.
- Whether the project can serve multiple users or interest groups.
- Ability of the project to gain the greatest visual impacts for the dollars invested while also serving immediate functional needs.
- Ability of the project to enhance existing improvements.
- Opportunity for the project to leverage private investment and grants.
- Whether the project fits within the larger capital improvement project; and
- Availability of funds for continued maintenance.

Coordination with Affected Agencies

The City will work closely with CDOT and property owners regarding the plans for widening of East Colfax, between Peoria Street and Airport Boulevard, as a 'congestion relief' project related to I-70. The city's objectives in coordinating the plans will be to ensure the approved roadway design achieves the following:

- There should be sufficient, safe vehicle access to the land uses and activity centers discussed in this plan.
- Pedestrian travel should be improved through continuous detached sidewalks and landscaping to provide a comfortable walking environment along the corridor.
- Attractive, comfortable transit stops should be provided along the corridor.
- Vehicle speeds should be controlled to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.

- A complete bicycle and pedestrian network should be planned with the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and provided throughout the corridor.
- The city and CDOT should consider alternatives to traditional roadway widening for Colfax Avenue throughout the corridor discussed in this plan.
- Pedestrian travel should be improved through continuous detached sidewalks and landscaping to provide a comfortable walking environment along the corridor.
- Attractive, comfortable transit stops should be provided along the corridor.
- Vehicle speeds should be controlled to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.
- A complete bicycle and pedestrian network should be planned with the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and provided throughout the corridor.
- Particular care should be given to the design of pedestrian crossings along Colfax Avenue. Medians or refuge islands and state-of-the-art pedestrian signals, including time countdown signals, should be employed.

The city will develop, in consultation with CDOT, an access control plan for East Colfax Avenue. The access control plan will reflect future needs for business access and median crossings and will include not only control points but also design plans for improved pedestrian crossings, pedestrian refuges, median and landscaped islands.

The city will also coordinate with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) to evaluate the best location for transit services, transit facilities, and stops in the East Colfax corridor.

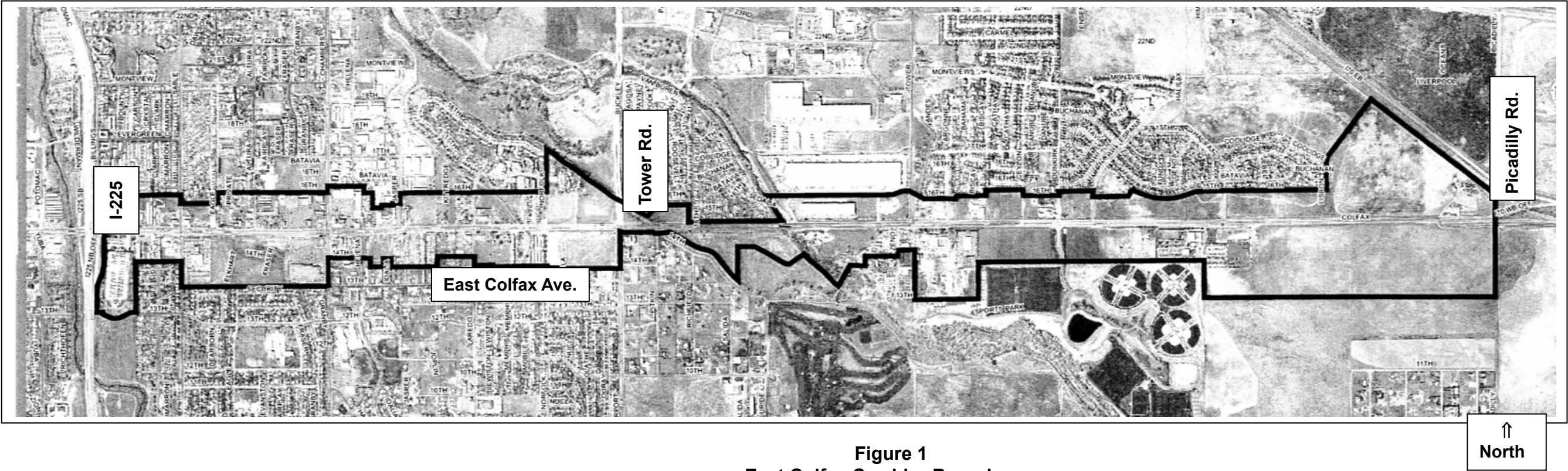


Figure 1
East Colfax Corridor Boundary

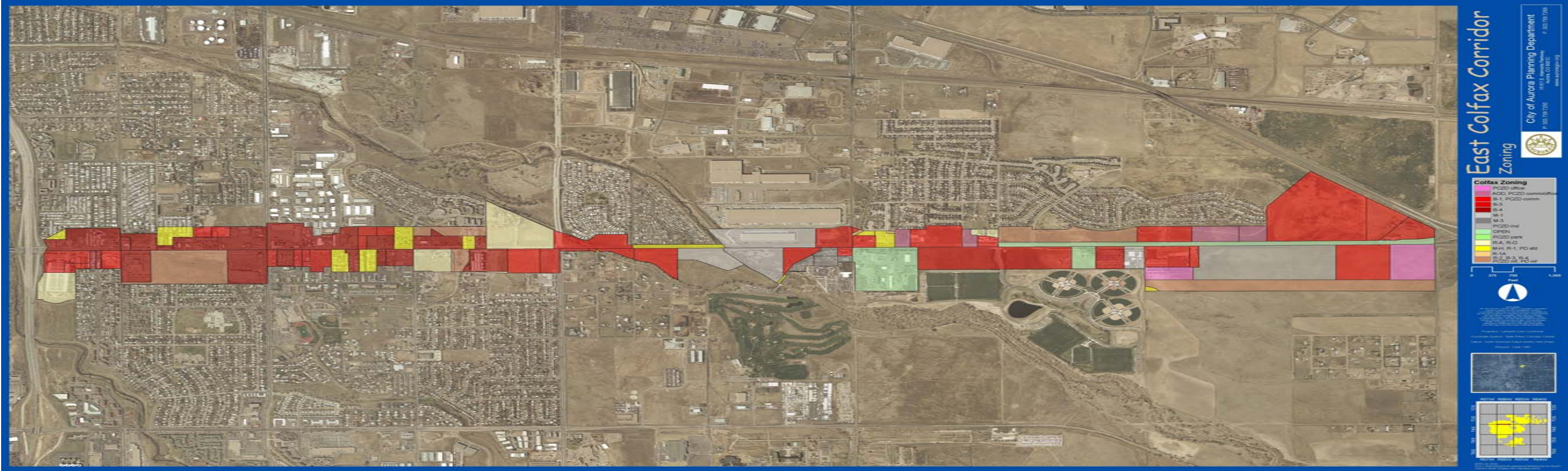


Figure 2
East Colfax Existing Zoning



Figure 3
East Colfax Existing Land Use

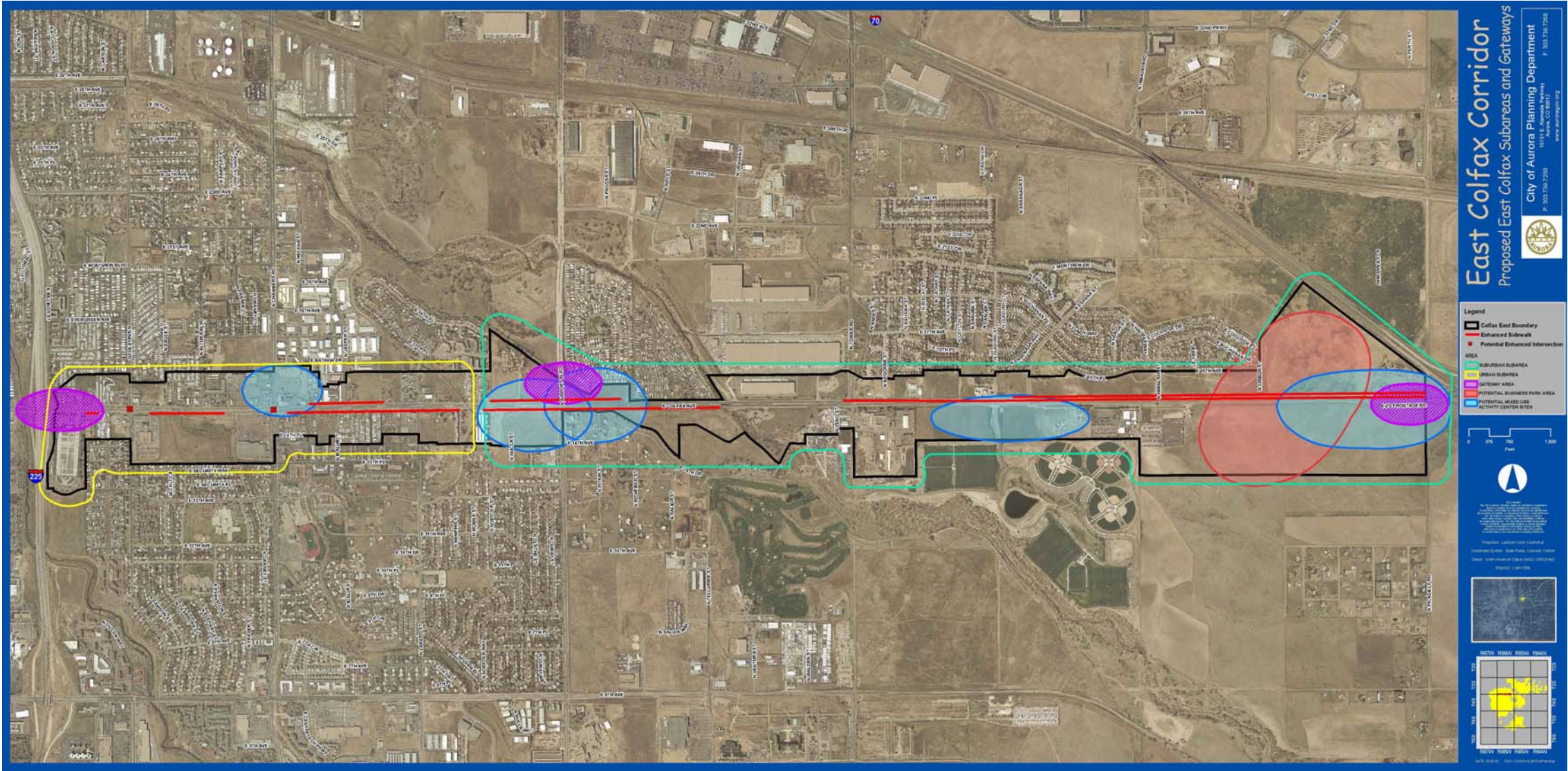


Figure 4
East Colfax Subareas and Gateways