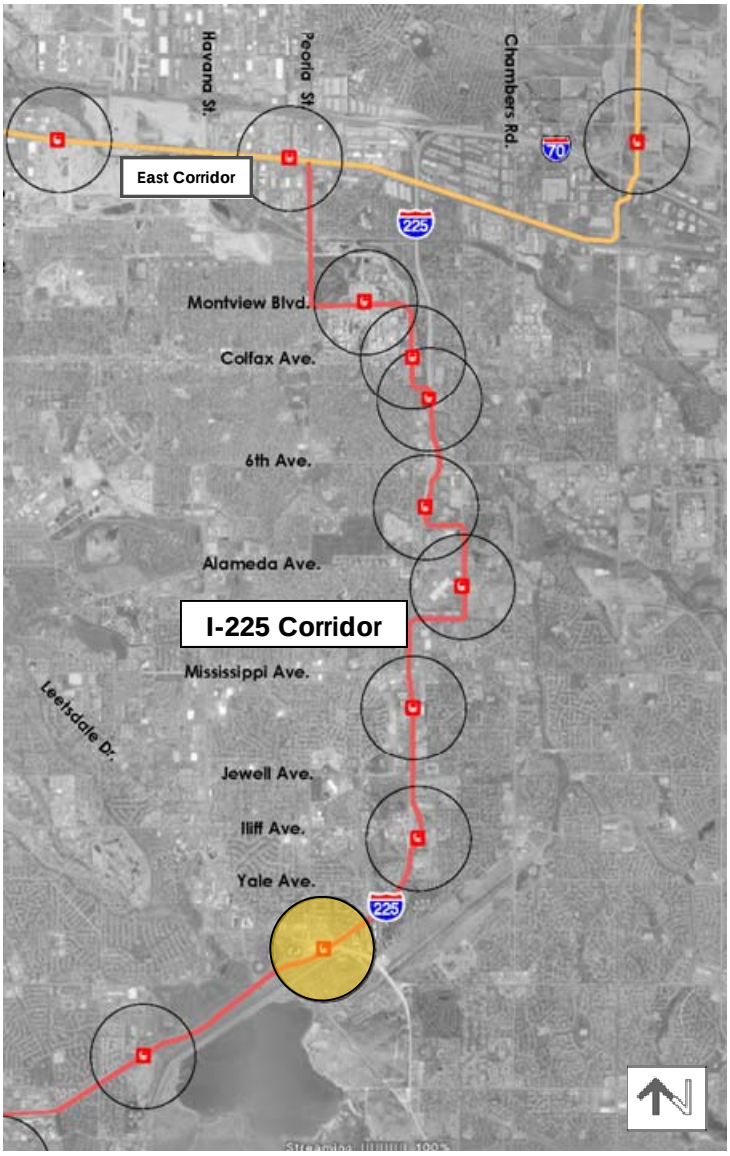
Nine Mile Station Area Plan

A Framework for Transit-Oriented Development



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Preface

The Nine Mile Station Area Plan is one in a series of station area plans prepared by the City of Aurora to promote transit-oriented development (TOD) around the existing and planned rail transit stations. This plan presents the long term vision for the station area, illustrated with fundamental concept and land use framework diagrams. By planning in advance for potential redevelopment, problems relating to piecemeal infill development in fragmented ownership patterns can be addressed.

This station area plan is based on fundamental concepts derived from the policy directions of the ***2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan***. The plan was developed in consultation with the property owners, residents in the adjacent neighborhoods, the Regional Transportation District (RTD), and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). This plan defines planning principles, planning and design concepts, land use recommendations, design guidelines, and implementation strategies (e.g., rezoning and public improvements) for the defined study area. The intent of this plan is to identify opportunities for urban-scale, compact, mixed-use development that is transit-supportive, and to develop strategies to implement a common vision. Bringing property owners, residents, designers, and real estate professionals together to discuss challenges and opportunities, and to create the vision for this area has been the over-riding goal of this plan. The plan presents city policy for the long-term (approximately 20 years) to prepare for public investment and private development.

This plan is intended to be flexible. Property owners and developers can provide site plans that vary from the fundamental concepts and framework visions without necessitating amendments to this plan. Any variations or alternatives must conform to the key principles for transit-oriented development as outlined in the ***2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan*** and the fundamental TOD concepts presented in this plan.

Figure 1: Aerial view looking north to the Nine Mile Station and core of the study area

1. Background Information

The area surrounding the Nine Mile light rail station has an incredible opportunity for redevelopment. Situated on high ground at the intersection of Parker Road and I-225, with access to a light rail system that will expand as part of the FasTracks transit system build-out, the commercial lands in this area are in a unique position to redevelop in a new urban form. The location represents one of the most significant transportation nodes in the metropolitan region. On an average day, over 120,000 vehicles pass the site on I-225 and approximately 90,000 vehicles drive by on Parker Road. In addition to its location at a major crossroads, the station area is adjacent to a unique recreational and open space amenity, the 4,200 acre Cherry Creek State Park that attracts 1.5 million visitors each year.

The Nine Mile station opened in November, 2006 as part of the RTD's Southeast Corridor. Over 5,600 people board or arrive at the Nine Mile station each day and it ranks as the sixth busiest rail station in the RTD system. Currently, Nine Mile functions as an end-of-line transit station, providing commuter parking and bus transfer operations for transit patrons. The adjacent RTD parking structure contains 1,225 parking spaces for commuters and ten bus lines access the station.

The station's function as the terminus for the H light rail line will change in mid-2016 when the I-225 rail line extension to the Peoria-Smith transfer station will open. Even with the I-225 light rail corridor completed, it is expected that the Nine Mile station will continue its function as a major access point to the metro area transit system. The station serves a very large commuter-shed in the Parker Road corridor and it is expected that the population will continue to grow in this area. Parker Road, and hence the Nine Mile station, will continue to be busy transportation links. Since Nine Mile also has a major bus transfer facility, this will also ensure that it will continue to be a very busy station in the future.

With the advent of light rail to the Denver/Aurora metropolitan area, changing demographics, and a growing demand for compact, mixed-use and sustainable living and working environments, this area can evolve into a unique place centered on the transit station. In the region, there is a projected demand of 138,000 households within the one-half mile surrounding transit stations by 2030. This is substantial growth in demand due to the convergence of trends, namely the aging population and changing consumer lifestyle preferences. What this means is that lands that were previously considered developable for solely commercial uses can evolve into mixed-use areas.

Plan Purpose

The Nine Mile station area is identified as an urban center in the ***2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan*** and is a focal point and sub-regional center for residential and employment uses. With the advent of light rail, the context for redevelopment has changed and infill redevelopment opportunities exist for creating an urban center focused on the station.

The purpose of the Nine Mile Station Area Plan is to:

- establish a long term vision for the station area;
- identify the key opportunities for redevelopment in the station area;
- provide a policy framework for TOD specific to the Nine Mile station area;
- identify safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to the Nine Mile station, specifically addressing Parker Road; and
- establish implementation actions that are instrumental in realizing the vision.

Study Area

The boundaries for the Nine Mile station study area are illustrated in Figure 2. The 165 acre study area is generally bounded by Cornell Avenue to the north, Parker Road and I-225 to the south, and S. Heather Gardens Way to the east and includes a variety of commercial uses. This plan focuses on the commercial lands adjacent to Parker Road, and specifically the land north of the RTD parking, including sites such as King Soopers, Regatta Plaza and KeyBank. The Regatta Plaza shopping center, Firestone and other properties in the same ownership total approximately 14 acres. The King Soopers store is located on a 4.8 acre site.

East of I-225 is an office and hotel area which sits on high ground with panoramic views to the mountains and Cherry Creek State Park. This approximately 39 acre area has approximately 1.3 million square feet of commercial uses in eight buildings. Parking is provided in both surface lots and parking structures. West of Peoria Street are a variety of retail, office, and other commercial uses in several different ownerships.

Existing Land Uses

Almost 4,000 people live within one-half mile of the Nine Mile light rail station in Aurora and Denver. Housing tenure is divided evenly between owner occupied and rental units. Almost 70 percent of the housing units were built in the 1970s and 26 percent were built in the 1980s. High density housing in a variety of forms, ranging from townhomes to six story buildings, make up approximately 60 percent of the housing in the station area. Approximately 1,500 people work within this one-half mile station area. Additional land use, housing and economic data is available in the *Nine Mile Station Area Profile* (available online at www.auroragov.org).

Plan Process

This plan is a result of collaborative effort between property owners, and a consultation effort with a number of stakeholders and community residents. Integration of the stakeholders and the adjacent neighborhoods into the planning process was accomplished through the Nine Mile Steering Committee, stakeholder meetings, and three public meetings.

In January, 2007 a design team led by RNL Design was commissioned by the City of Aurora to prepare a station area vision for an area approximately one-half mile around the Nine Mile light rail station. This plan presents the long-term vision for the area developed through this process, with input from the Nine Mile Steering Committee and the neighboring residents in three public meetings.

In the three public workshops held in 2007, participants were asked to identify community priorities and their preferences for the type and scale of new development. As identified through this process, the objectives of this plan are to:

- Promote mixed-use land uses at a higher density close to the station;
- Create a vibrant village-like atmosphere;
- Promote high quality development that will improve the character and land values in the

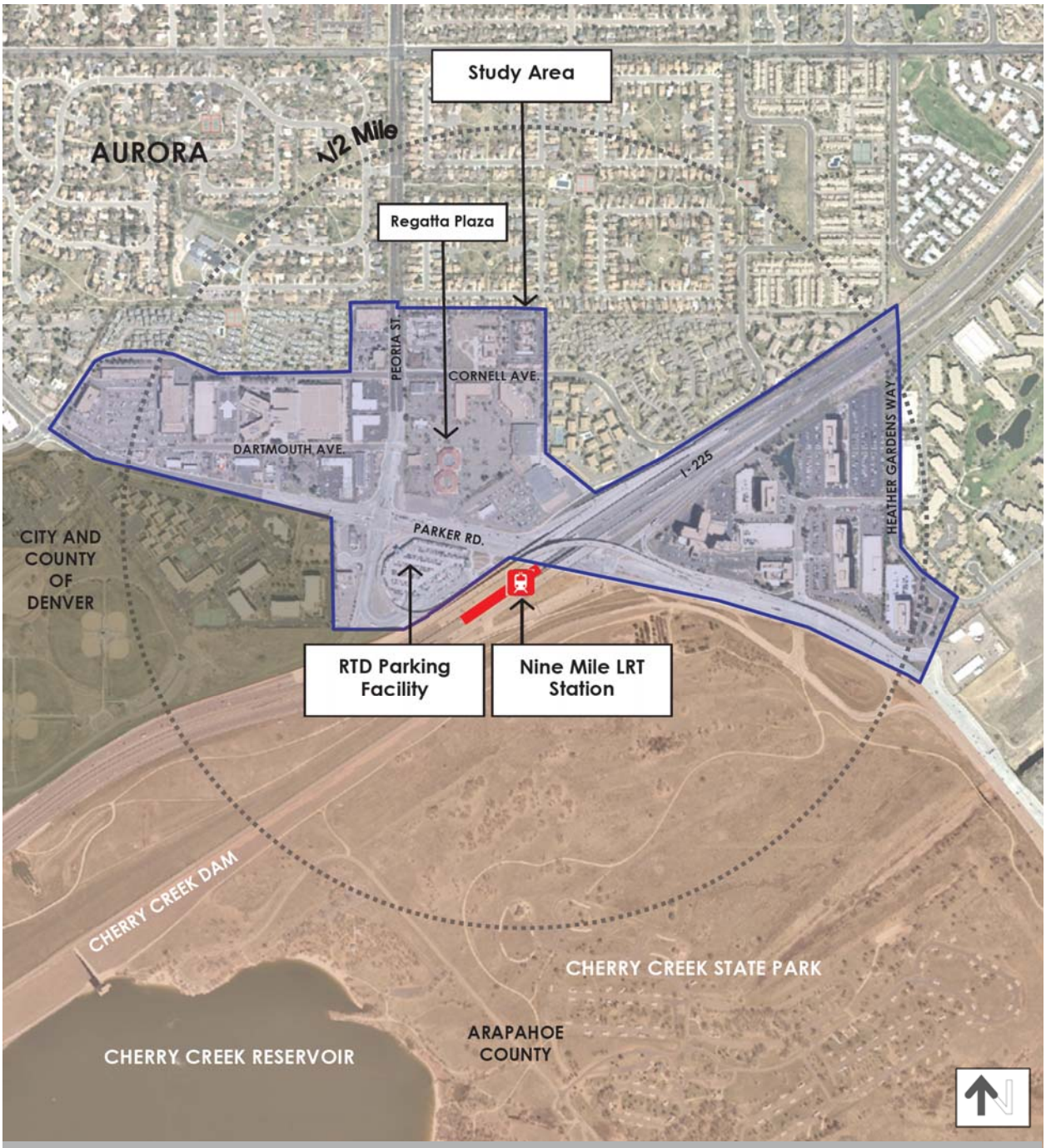

Figure 2: Existing Conditions Map and Study Area

area;
- Ensure that new development adjacent to the existing residential neighborhoods is in scale with the neighborhoods;
- Build a pedestrian and bicycle bridge to span Parker Road to link new development with the station;
- Create a pedestrian and bicycle system that provides access to the station and to Cherry Creek State Park;
- Provide additional parking for transit commuters using either light rail or buses;
- Protect views from the parks in the residential areas to the mountains; and
- Address potential traffic congestion and anticipate traffic shortcutting through the existing residential neighborhoods.

Economic and market demand advice was provided by King & Associates for the purpose of ensuring that the urban design proposals are consistent with market demand projections. The Nine Mile Station Area Market Study was completed in early 2008 and determined that the aging automobile-oriented retail uses could transition to a range of higher density uses over time. A demand for housing was projected as the major use for land closest to the station, followed by retail and services that could primarily be neighborhood serving. Office and hotel uses could also be possible, but at a future time when demand has rebounded.

In addition, a real estate developers' forum was hosted by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Colorado and the city in January, 2010. The focus of discussion was the approximately 22 acre Regatta Plaza area and how redevelopment challenges in the area could be overcome. The forum participants agreed that the area is a very good site for predominantly residential uses and some retail uses. Office uses are also possible, however on a much longer time frame. Strategies and action steps were identified and have been included in the implementation section of this plan. The developer forum summary report is available from the Planning and Development Services Department.

This station area has several interesting characteristics. Firstly, one of the owners of Regatta Plaza has prepared the site for redevelopment by terminating leases. Redevelopment of this core area is seen as a potential catalyst for other development projects in the area. The second characteristic of note is Parker Road, which is a heavily travelled, six-lane roadway. The vehicular speeds and traffic volumes pose a formidable barrier to safe pedestrian crossing of this state highway. Not only is bicycle and pedestrian access to the light rail station and the RTD bus transfer facility important, but also providing a safe connection to Cherry Creek State Park is also an important consideration. Due to the wide road width and the necessary intersection operations with multiple turn lanes, pedestrian and bicycle traffic should be routed to a pedestrian/bicycle bridge in order to provide a safe crossing over Parker Road.

To prepare better and safer pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Nine Mile station, the city was awarded a grant by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) through its Transportation Improvement Program. This funding will provide for sidewalk improvements, implementation of signed bike routes, and traffic signal improvements in the area. These improvements are to be undertaken in 2013 and 2014.

2. The Plan

The following documents and studies have informed and guided the development of the concepts presented in this station area plan:

- *2003 Aurora Comprehensive Plan* and the *2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan*;
- *Aurora Strategic Parking Study*; and
- *Nine Mile Station Area Developer Forum Summary Report.*

Throughout the planning process, the following key principles from the Aurora Comprehensive Plan shaped the development of the fundamental concept and the land use framework.

Summary of TOD Principles

1. **TOD works as a "district".** The one-half mile area around the transit station is the minimum area of influence from the transit station. These areas can become new neighborhoods where development draws value from the transit stations, parks and plazas are gathering places, and the mix of uses allows pedestrians to easily reach their destinations.

2. **TODs must be walkable.** TODs are to create an urban scale where the pedestrian is important. Attractive and safe pedestrian connections are a priority in TODs.

3. **Central spaces give identity to TODs.** Public spaces are very important in TODs, and parks, plazas and main streets that are beautiful and useful can become important identifying elements.

4. **TODs connect to the surrounding neighborhoods.** The pedestrian network of the TOD should allow easy pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods. The relatively small size of the blocks should allow for an attractive and convenient pedestrian experience.

5. **Density is important.** TOD should have density sufficient to create an active center for an existing or new neighborhood. Higher densities take advantage of the massive public investment in transit. Density also creates the potential for diversity of housing types, a range of land uses, and the possibility of neighborhood-serving retail. Density should transition from the highest densities in the core of the TOD around the transit station to lower densities next to existing residential neighborhoods.

6. **Design matters.** The quality of building architecture and the design of streets, parks and plazas are important elements that create the identity of a station area.

7. **Promoting sustainability.** Compact development promotes efficiency in infrastructure, and may require innovative approaches to detention and water quality.

Fundamental Concept

It is envisioned that, over time, the existing commercial areas will be redeveloped based on the design principles for TOD. The concept developed in this plan envisions an "urban village", characterized by compact residential development containing a range of housing types and supporting uses. The urban village concept is based on a pedestrian-friendly environment where residents can easily walk to their destination. Residents are within a 15 minute walk of public transit and can live, shop and be entertained in their own neighborhood.

Redevelopment and intensification of uses can occur over time throughout the study area, and the expected uses and areas are shown in the fundamental concept diagram in Figure 3. The fundamental concept diagram presents a quick visual summary of the essential concepts of the station area plan. These are:

Mixed-use Buildings with Active Edges

- Mixed-use is appropriate and desirable for all the areas indicated in the diagram, however frontages on Parker Road and Peoria Street generally are more suitable for commercial uses.
- The desired building form has active ground floor uses, particularly on the Dartmouth Avenue main street, along with concealed on-site parking.
- The high visibility corners at Parker Road and I-225, and Parker Road and Peoria Street, can have taller buildings to capitalize on their prominent locations.

Transit-Supportive Housing

- Residential uses are desirable within all the mixed-use areas and are particularly encouraged along Cornell Avenue. Buildings should be approximately four stories in height or taller. Buildings over four stories should have upper story set-backs so as not to overwhelm the residential neighborhoods on the north. Having residential uses within an easy walk of the station is a paramount goal for this plan.

Central Public Space and Main Streets

- A central plaza or park space in the Regatta Plaza area is an important amenity, not only for any residential uses, but to also provide retail visitors and office workers a passive recreational area.
- It is important that the ground floor uses near this central space be active uses, such as restaurants, retail uses, etc. Retail uses in small kiosks could also be located on the plaza or park, depending on its size.
- The public space and the extension of Dartmouth Avenue east of Peoria Street are seen as the major pedestrian spine and amenity in the area, and should be designed with wide and well landscaped sidewalks.

Street Patterns

The street pattern is proposed to remain intact with additional roads within the Regatta Plaza area. Dartmouth Avenue is envisioned as the connecting street which could be converted into a pedestrian-oriented retail street on both sides of Peoria. Its existing width and its views to the mountains make it potentially a very attractive street. It can become a signature street for the area, with redevelopment

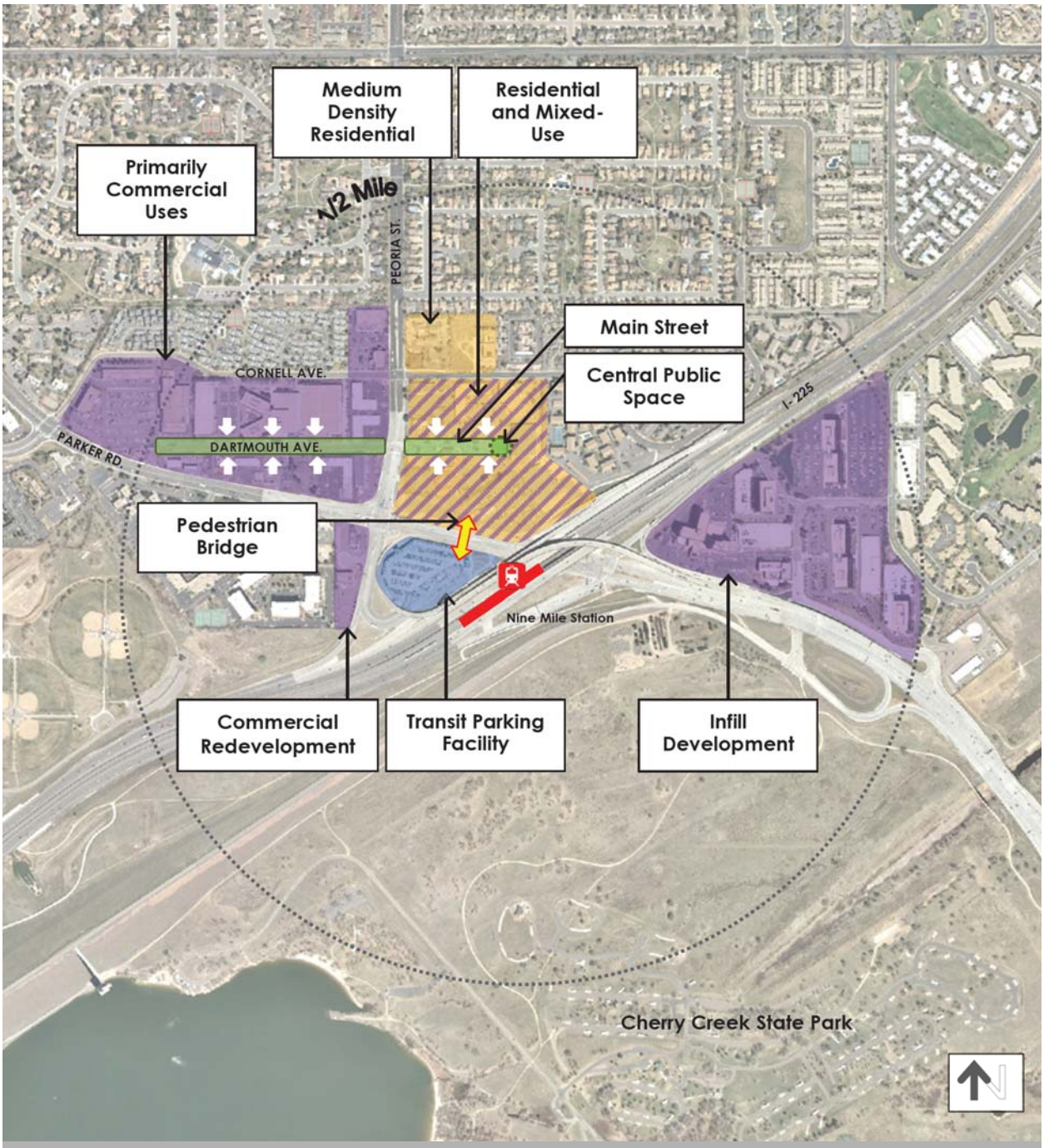

Figure 3: The Fundamental Concept Diagram

focused on a pedestrian-oriented streetscape and ground floor uses such as restaurants and cafes extending onto the sidewalks.

Walkability is a key design consideration for the Nine Mile station area with wider sidewalks and street trees on the internal streets as well as on the major arterial streets. For a pedestrian-oriented environment, roadways should be as narrow as possible and rights-of-way designed with pedestrian and cyclists needs having priority along with automobile traffic. The streets in the area should conform to the City of Aurora ***Urban Streets Standards*** and incorporate 16 foot wide sidewalks with redevelopment. Bicycle use is also a necessary and visible component, with bike usage incorporated either through sharrows or bike lanes. A system of bike connections will extend from the Nine Mile station into the surrounding neighborhoods.

The internal street grid and the pedestrian character created by the ground floor retail fronting Dartmouth Street will contribute to creating a "main street" and a sense of identity for the area. The street grid layout for the Regatta Plaza area also provides the structure for development phasing (Figure 4).

The commercial hub focused on Dartmouth west of Peoria and at the Regatta Plaza site will:

- Activate the area with ground-floor retail;
- Provide for a transition to higher density development that can happen incrementally; and
- Be supported by the drive-by visibility from Peoria and Parker Road due to the through-block, or double frontage lots that front these two streets.

Regatta Plaza Core

This core area is seen as a mixed-use area with new development being primarily residential (Figure 4). The suggested concept elements are:

- King Soopers, its parking lot and fueling station occupy a location close to the light rail station that preempts desirable higher density redevelopment that could capitalize on being close to the station. Since King Soopers may consider the option to develop a new store adjacent to Cornell Avenue and Peoria Street, the plan allows for a new, larger King Soopers as part of the potential redevelopment. This new store may be up to 80,000 square feet in size and have an associated fueling station and drive-through window for an in-store pharmacy. Parking for the new King Soopers could occur in a surface parking lot in front of the store with a parking ratio of up to 4 spaces for every 1,000 square feet of gross floor area.
- Residential uses of approximately three to four stories are located on the north and south sides of Cornell Avenue. The height of the buildings decreases to the property line with the Dam East neighborhood.
- Dartmouth Avenue is the "main street" with retail uses at ground level.
- A signature building is located at the east terminus of Dartmouth Avenue.
- A small plaza or park is located at approximately the center of the new development and it is suggested that retail uses surround this public space. The height of buildings on the south and east sides of the park should be set back so that the park is not in shadow, if possible.
- Higher buildings are located near the intersection of Peoria Street and Parker Road. These

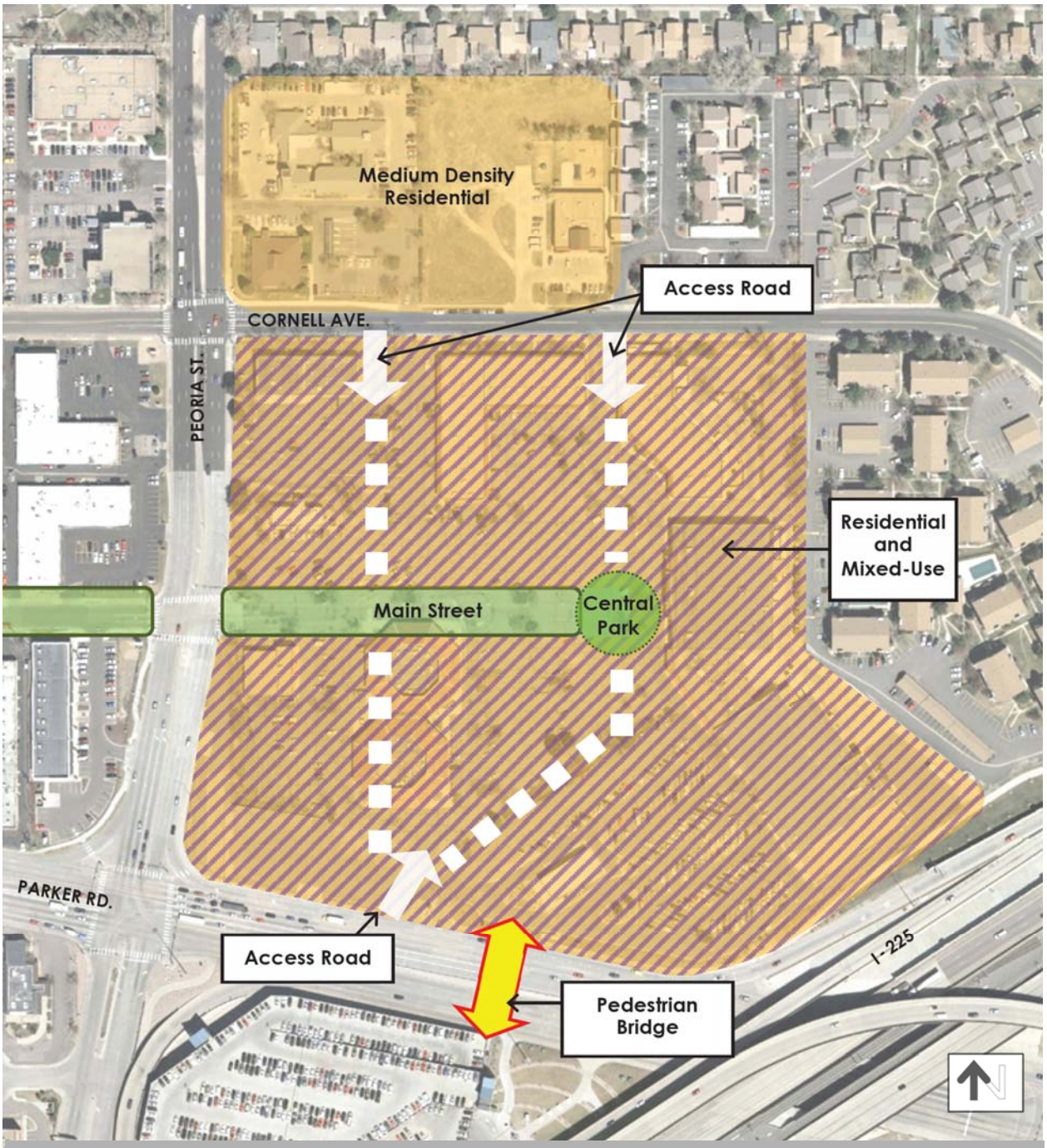

Figure 4: Regatta Plaza Framework Diagram

uses could include both residential and office, depending on market demand.

- Any large parking structure should be wrapped with residential, office and/or retail uses on four sides. Retail and/or office uses could be located on top of the parking structure. To keep views to the mountains, the footprints of any building should be fairly compact (at approximately 20,000 square feet).
- At the corner of I-225 and Parker Road, a tall building could be located as a signature building on I-225.
- A commuter parking structure could be sited north of Parker Road or west of Peoria Street and south of Parker Road. A pedestrian bridge could connect any new parking structure with the RTD parking structure and to the light rail station.

Office and Hotel Area East of I-225

The suggested concept elements are:

- Infill development can be developed on what are currently surface parking lots. With this new commercial development, parking is suggested to be structured.
- Since the Heather Gardens residential area is the neighbor to the east, housing could be developed on the eastern edge of the area to provide a complementary land use. The height of this residential development should not be higher than five stories so as not to overwhelm the scale of the Heather Gardens buildings.

Area West of Peoria Street

The suggested concept elements are:

- The relatively small lot sizes in multiple ownerships would suggest that this area will transition slowly from the existing one story buildings to two story or higher. The lots are fairly shallow, but good drive-by visibility on Parker Road and a suggested reduced setback requirement on Dartmouth Avenue would serve to orient the front door of new developments onto Dartmouth.
- The Parker Landing shopping area could redevelop with higher density buildings that front onto Dartmouth Avenue.
- Given market demand, properties oriented toward Cornell Avenue could continue the existing office uses, or redevelop to residential at a height of no more than four stories so as not to be out of scale with the existing residential area north of Cornell.

Pedestrian Circulation

The pedestrian environment surrounding the Nine Mile station is currently dominated by high volume, high speed roadways and highways. While these facilities serve an important mobility function for motorists traveling on I-225 and on Parker Road, they create barriers that are difficult and very dangerous for pedestrians to overcome. With new development to higher density residential and commercial uses, the potential for walking trips, particularly to and from the light rail platform, will be increased.

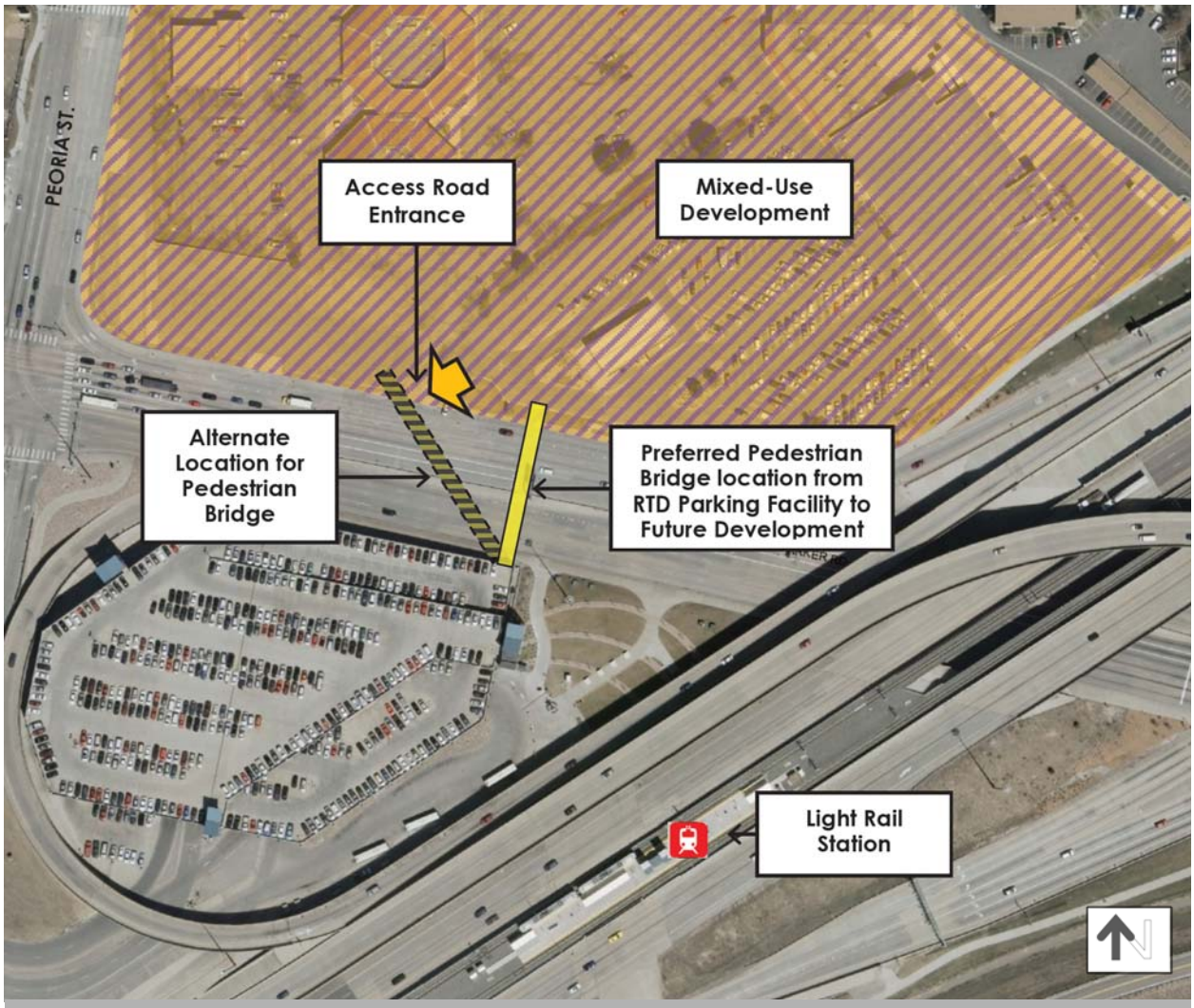

Figure 5: The Pedestrian Bridge Location

The following issues were raised in the planning process:

- High traffic volumes, multiple crossings, and long pedestrian crossing distances make crossing Parker Road, Peoria Street and the I-225 ramps difficult and dangerous;
- Pedestrian paths conflict with vehicular access through the existing RTD parking garage;
- The sidewalk along the north side of Parker Road leads to an unsafe crossing at the I-225 off-ramp; and
- It is difficult to find the safest and the most direct route to the light rail station.

Adjustments to signal timing at the Parker Road and Peoria Street intersection to provide adequate pedestrian crossing time have been completed by the City of Aurora. Even with this timing adjustment, Parker Road is a significant barrier to pedestrian circulation unless pedestrians are separated from the vehicular traffic on Parker Road.

As a result, the primary pedestrian improvement in the station area is to be a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across Parker Road (Figure 5). The preferred location for the bridge is aligned perpendicular to Parker Road and connects the second level of the RTD parking facility with an elevator and stair tower on the north side of Parker Road. The stairs and elevator on the north end of the bridge should allow use by both pedestrians and cyclists. Though the bridge landing, stairs and elevator may be in a separate, free-standing structure, another option would be to integrate the bridge into new development. Should this preferred location not be feasible, an alternate bridge location is identified in Figure 5, with the northern terminus of the bridge landing west of the vehicular entrance to the Regatta Plaza area. In order to facilitate bicycle use of the bridge, the use of ramps in addition to or in lieu of stairs should be considered in the design of the bridge.

Through the planning process, it was determined that the bridge should be enclosed, of sufficient width for pedestrians and cyclists, and be designed as a “signature bridge”. As part of the implementation of this plan, the city will work with the property owners and developers in the area to determine the best location for the bridge and the funding methods.

3. Zoning Guidance and Design Guidelines

Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District

A Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District is available for use in Aurora. The TOD zoning district references and uses the station area plan to provide guidance concerning boundaries, form and intensity, and land uses. The TOD zone district uses the development standards in the station area plan. The land in the Nine Mile Station Area is currently zoned with a variety of conventional zoning districts. These districts do not permit the range, intensity and height of uses envisioned by this plan. TOD zoning will be essential to take full advantage of the development potential of this area. The city anticipates that TOD zoning will be applied at the request of property owners.

Permitted land uses and parking requirements, including those that apply only for the Nine Mile station area, are specified in the TOD Zoning District.

Sub-Districts and Land Use

Three basic sub-districts are defined for the Nine Mile Station area, each with its own land use characteristics.

1. Core Sub-District.

a. *Location.* This sub-district includes all commercial lands east of Peoria Street, south of Cornell Avenue, west of South Heather Gardens Way and Wheeling Street, and north and west of I-225 to Peoria Street.

b. *Uses.* This zone includes medium to high intensity commercial, residential, hotel, civic and entertainment uses. The variety of uses is often greater than the other sub-districts, and may include civic and entertainment. Ground-floor commercial uses are encouraged to occur along any “main street” frontages and surrounding any public parks or plazas.

2. General Sub-District.

a. *Location.* This sub-district includes all the commercial lands west of Peoria Street, south of Cornell Avenue, and north and south of Parker Road. This is an area which can transition from traditional auto-oriented retail to higher density mixed-use development.

b. *Uses.* With a density less than the Core, the uses in this area will be mixed but primarily commercial adjacent to Parker Road and Peoria Street, and potentially commercial or residential south of Cornell Avenue.

3. Transition Sub-District.

a. *Location.* This sub-district functions as a zone in which building height adjusts from the medium to high density buildings in the Core to the single family residences in the Dam East neighborhood. The area is defined by Peoria Street on the west, Cornell Avenue on the south, while the eastern boundary of the office condominiums forms the east edge, and the boundary

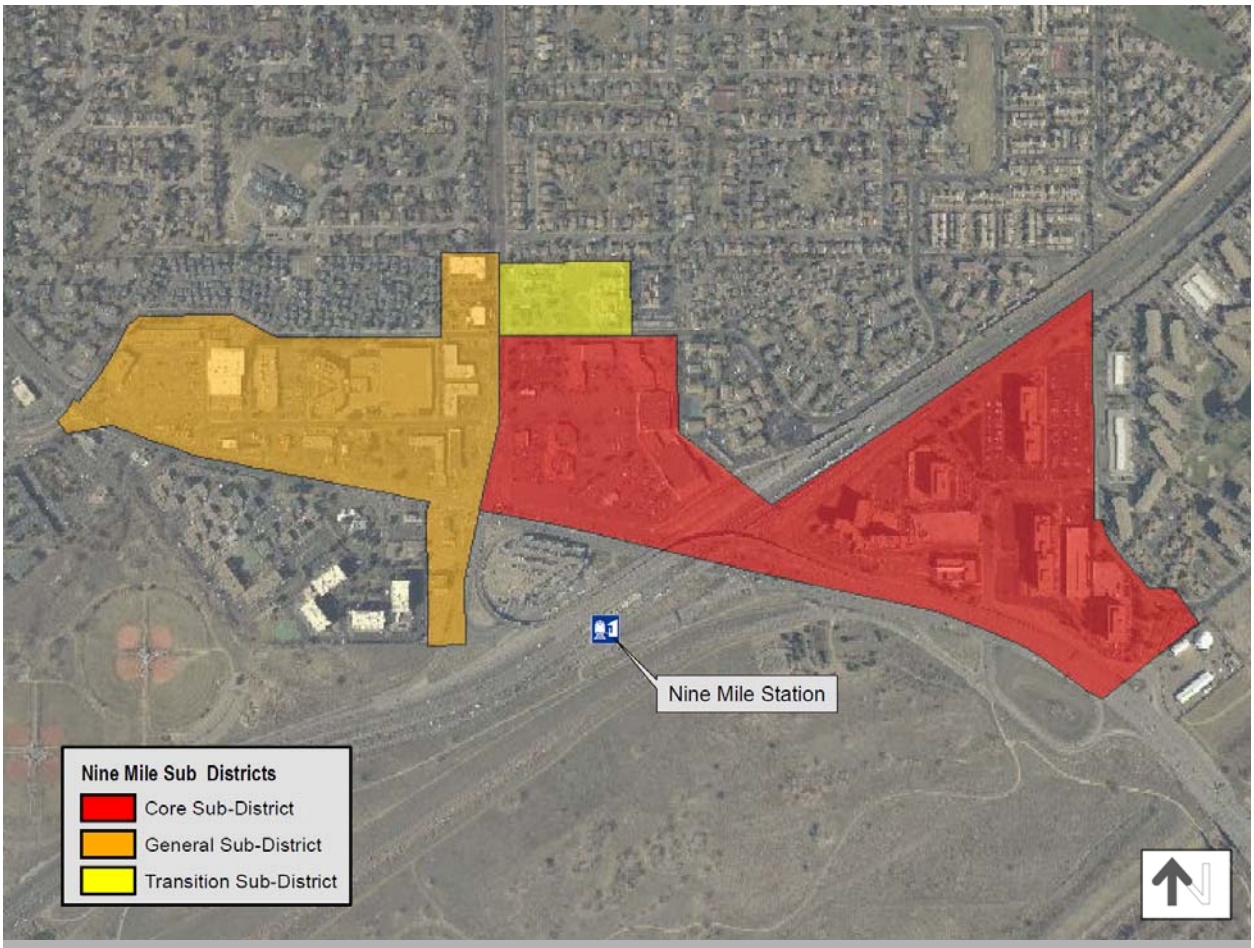

Figure 6: Nine Mile Station Area Sub-Districts

with the Dam East neighborhood forms the north edge.

The following section provides modification to the Aurora Zoning Code, Sec. 146-728. Development Standards.

Block Size and Street Grid. Blocks shall typically be no longer than 500 feet in length and no more than 1,600 feet around the perimeter.

Residential Density. Minimum residential densities for the sub-districts are:

Core Area: 35 units per acre
General Area: 20 units per acre
Transition Area: 15 units per acre

Building Heights. Building height may be maximized at the high traffic sides of the site, and reduced adjacent to surrounding neighborhoods. Building height is allowed to be highest along Parker Road and I-225. Building heights should shade the sidewalks on the south and west sides in hot weather but allow sun exposure on the north side during cold weather. Building heights for the sub-districts are:

1. **Core Sub-District:**

   Minimum height of three stories. Minimum of forty percent of the buildings shall be four stories in height or higher. No maximum height except for a maximum building height of five stories on the south side of Cornell Avenue east of Peoria Street. This five story height limit shall apply for a property depth of fifty (50) feet from the property line on Cornell Avenue, beyond which there shall be no maximum height. All buildings three stories in height and taller shall be elevator served. Banks, savings and financial institutions and grocery stores can be one story.

2. **General Sub-District:**

   Minimum height of two stories. Properties between Parker Road and Dartmouth Avenue shall have no maximum height. Properties on the north side of Dartmouth Avenue shall have a maximum height of seven stories, however for that portion of the property on the south side of Cornell Avenue across from land zoned residential, the maximum height shall be four stories. This height limit shall apply for a property depth of fifty (50) feet from the property line on Cornell Avenue.

3. **Transition Sub-District:**

   Maximum height of three stories. Building height shall be no higher than twenty-five (25) feet along all north edges of the station area site, where it is directly adjacent to existing single family residential neighborhoods.

Urban Form. Building forms should be related to the width and activity on the street that fronts them, so that a sense of enclosure is created. Ground floor uses shall consist of active commercial uses,

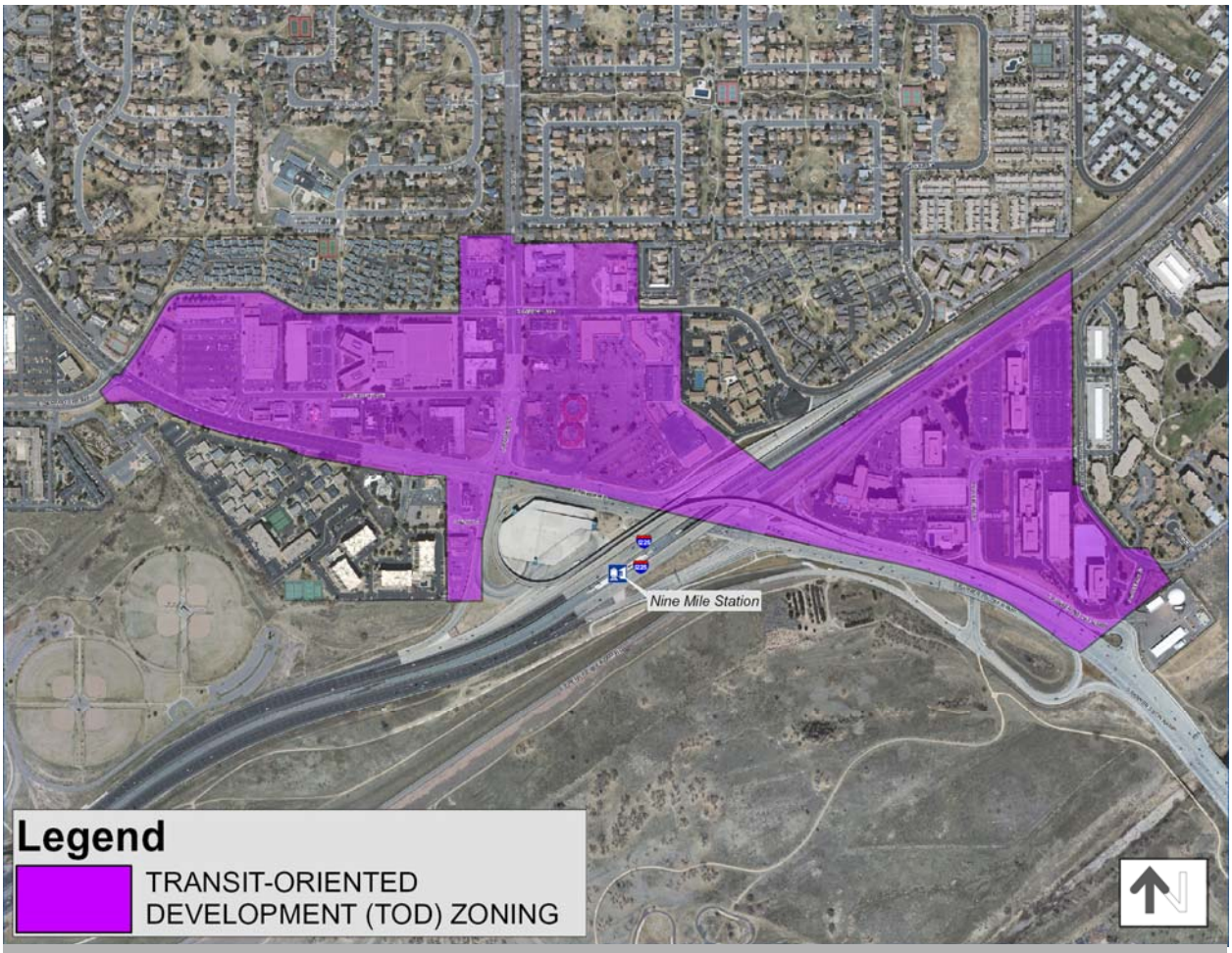

Figure 7: Nine Mile Station Area Zoning Map

restaurants and entertainment venues in areas that will be frequented by pedestrians. The active space shall be organized in relation to a logical pedestrian flow, without isolating retail activities from public spaces and streets. Landscape and streetscape shall be urban in character, allowing for pedestrian traffic and seating, and for visual relief from the urban environment. In the Station Area Core, buildings shall be built to the property line, defined as the back of sidewalk, with allowances made for shallow setbacks in each block, consistent with a uniform street frontage.

Desired Building Setbacks. The setbacks for the sub-districts in the TOD Zoning District shall apply. In addition, the following development standards shall apply.

a. Front. Setback of up to but not more than twenty (20) feet in the Core and General sub-district, and no more than eighteen (18) feet in the Transition sub-district. The twenty (20) foot setback is permitted in the Core and General sub-district for outdoor cafes, overhanging balconies and front yards for residential buildings. Steps, stoops, balconies, awnings, chimneys, bay windows, etc. may encroach into the setback.
b. Side. Setback of up to but not more than twenty (20) feet in the Core sub-district for a grocery store and its accessory use of a motor vehicle fueling station.

Desired Building Forms. The following additional development standards shall apply.

a. Continuous building frontage is required on Dartmouth Avenue and Cornell Avenue and building façades shall occupy a minimum of eighty (80) percent of the property's street-facing frontage. A grocery store use is not required to meet this development standard.
b. Retail and personal services uses at-grade on main streets and surrounding any public spaces are required to provide pedestrian activity.
c. Clear windows at grade are required for a minimum of sixty (60) percent of the façade length except for residential uses and grocery stores.
d. Quality materials on the ground floor façade are required on all buildings on major streets.
e. Eight-five (85) percent of the building façade facing a public park or plaza must be brick, stone or cultured stone, except for grocery stores.
f. An upper story setback of a minimum of ten (10) feet is required above four stories on Dartmouth Avenue and on Cornell Avenue east of Peoria Street.
g. Entries should be generously proportioned and defined with architectural features. Awning and structural canopies for weather protection at building entrances are desirable.
h. Mid-block access at-grade through buildings is permitted.
i. Feature buildings are to be located at key locations in the area, specifically at locations terminating the view on Dartmouth Avenue, at the corners at Dartmouth Avenue and Peoria Street, and at the intersection of Peoria Street and Parker Road.
j. Retail construction standards with a minimum height of sixteen (16) feet at ground floor are required for all buildings facing Peoria Street, Cornell Avenue (south side), Dartmouth Avenue and Parker Road. Buildings on these streets are at key locations to accommodate conversion to retail uses when supported by the market.
k. Blank walls are not permitted on any façade. All façades shall have architectural details that add visual interest.
l. Loading docks and entrances shall not be directly facing the major pedestrian streets of

Dartmouth Avenue and Cornell Avenue.

m. Alternative uses for building roofs such as terraces, roof gardens and green roofs are encouraged.
n. Exterior stairs are not permitted in multi-family residential buildings.

Design Guidelines

The following design guidelines have been developed to establish high quality requirements for design of all projects subject to TOD zoning.

Pedestrian Connections
Convenient and interconnected pedestrian routes are an important element in the station area and the following standards should be considered in the site and building design:

- walkways, bridges and pedestrian crossings should constitute a network that interconnects all transit, commercial and residential buildings.

- hidden areas and blind corners should be avoided in favor of open, visible gathering places and unobstructed paths with clear visual connections to destinations beyond.

- pedestrian walkways should avoid doubling back or acute changes in the travel path, and should have good visual connection with the surroundings at all times. Active uses should be located along the pedestrian paths.

- a deck, building level or walkway level should meet the deck of the Parker Road pedestrian bridge at the north side of the street.

Public Spaces
There shall be a central open space as a focus in the Regatta Plaza core area. This space should be a focal point and public gathering space, containing pedestrian amenities that make it comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. Street trees should provide shade in summer, and elements such as public art should provide winter interest. The space should be located so that it is not overshadowed by adjacent buildings.

Views
Buildings should be located and massed to allow views of the mountains and Cherry Creek State Park. Tall buildings along Parker Road shall spaced at an appropriate distance from each other to allow views to south and west toward the mountains and Cherry Creek State Park.

Landscape and Streetscape
Streetscape and open space areas should add a distinctive identity to the area, using planting, paving, lighting, signage and street furnishings as cohesive elements. Features should be coordinated throughout the development. The landscape treatment on each development parcel shall be coordinated with the public space streetscape design.

The station area contains a hierarchy of streets which reflect different streetscape treatments. It is bisected by Parker Road and Peoria Streets, which are considered *boulevards* under the City of Aurora ***Urban Street Standards***. The *main street* leads directly into the center of development and should have ground floor retail along its length. Two other street types recommended are the *local urban* standard and the *neighborhood street* standard, depending on the surrounding building type.

Specific Locations

- Streetscape design shall have a unified concept throughout the station area core, with special emphasis on a central space in the middle of the core.

- The intersections at Parker Road and Peoria Street, and at the Dartmouth "main street" are considered the *Primary Gateway Intersections*, and should have features which clearly identify the TOD area, are visible from east and west, and are at a larger scale than elements within the development.

- Parker Road and Peoria Street shall have street trees, wide sidewalks and pedestrian scale light fixtures. The landscape should be bold and distinctive from neighboring properties, including clear and simple signage. Deciduous street trees should be at no more than 35 foot spacing and understory plantings should be bold and in large groupings. A continuous streetscape design shall be applied along Parker Road.

- The *main street* section contains a pedestrian-scale streetscape with decorative lighting, street furnishings, canopies, planters, and special paving such as pavers, colored concrete or stone. Outdoor eating areas, small plazas, artwork, and community kiosks should be located through-out this main street. Large, deciduous street trees are placed at a minimum of 35 feet apart. Dartmouth Street shall be a continuously and consistently landscaped street connection between the station area core and the west end of the station area.

- The typical *local urban* street sections are narrower than the main street section, but still emphasize the building frontages and pedestrian-oriented spaces. Paving patterns, lighting styles and site furnishings shall be consistent throughout. Street trees shall be spaced no further than 35 feet apart and should be within a tree grate or tree lawn.

- The typical *local residential* street sections should contain narrow frontages with tree lawns and concrete pedestrian walkways. Street trees should be spaced no further than 35 feet apart and center within turf areas. Parking lots and service areas shall be screened in accordance with the city standards.

Parking

Wherever possible, surface parking lots should be reduced in size. Specifically in the Core Sub-District, it is preferred that surface parking be minimized. Parking considerations include:

- The Core Sub-District as a whole should be self-sufficient in terms of parking; shared parking

shall be utilized and may be shared from parcel to parcel.

- Parking structures should be wrapped with residential or commercial buildings to minimize visual impact on public streets and spaces.
- Vehicle access to parking should be avoided on high-traffic pedestrian frontages.
- Parking access should be well-identified by signage.
- Parking structures should not front on the main street or public or private parks.

Architecture

Architectural design will distinguish the station area from other development areas in Aurora, through its timeless architecture, attention to detailing, humane scale and relationship to the public spaces. Long building profiles shall be broken up with relief in the façades and rooflines to minimize apparent bulk and mass.

360 Degree Architecture: To create an urban environment that is visually pleasing from all points of view, all sides of a building shall exhibit design continuity, with no unimproved sides being visible from public rights-of-way. Early phase buildings which will have buildings abutting them may have building faces that are without fenestration or other façade design features.

Solar Orientation, Shading and Solar Access: Building façades shall be environmentally responsible by adapting fenestration, shading and materials individually to respond to the environmental conditions of each façade's orientation. Buildings shall minimize the negative impact of winter shade on public open spaces and sidewalks. Buildings shall not contain gold glass coating or other first surface coatings that are highly reflective or mirrored.

Fenestration: For the ground floor of buildings, clear glass storefronts should be used to ensure visibility of retail and other active uses. On upper levels, façades shall respond to their orientation by individualized treatment of façades to accommodate sun shading and solar gain as appropriate. Clear, low E or slightly tinted glazing should be used.

Rooflines: Each building over four stories in height shall have rooflines with distinctive profiles that will help in branding the Nine Mile station area with buildings of visual interest.

Awnings and Canopies: Awnings and canopies can be an integral part of the architectural design. Canopies shall not extend more than ten feet beyond the faces of buildings, and no less than six feet. Awnings shall be solid colors. Awnings or canopies shall not be supported from the sidewalk.

Materials and Finishes: Materials, finishes and detailing shall enrich the station area's visual and tactile qualities. Regionally-appropriate and compatible materials shall be used, carefully detailed and combined. The building materials shall establish a consistent and high level of quality that is durable and appropriate to pedestrian contact at the street level. Materials used shall convey a high level of visual amenity that is commensurate with the urban character of the station area.

Storefront Design: Storefront entry thresholds shall be at the adjacent sidewalk level. Storefronts shall be scaled and detailed to break down large façades of buildings into small units. A variety of small scale storefront designs shall predominate over a uniform series of longer storefronts. A high proportion of clear glass shall be used in storefronts, consistent with energy conservation requirements and to increase visibility.

Equipment and Service: All rooftop equipment and ground floor equipment, trash storage and utilities shall be screened from view from public rights-of-way.

Building Signage: Signage shall comply with Aurora Codes and Ordinances. Pedestrian scale signage is encouraged.

Site Furnishings and Lighting Fixtures: Site furnishings and public lighting should:

- be incorporated as part of the building design and architectural style;
- express a hierarchy from the TOD core to outlying areas;
- be durable and appropriate for the climate;
- illuminate all sidewalks and pedestrian pathways with uniform light levels; and
- not cast light directly into residential windows.

Roof Landscaping
Building roofs may be developed as open space resources, amenity decks and green roofs.

Sustainability
Sustainability of the Nine Mile Station Core Area should be encouraged by promoting the use of the well-established Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, established by the US Green Building Council (USGBC). Buildings in the Nine Mile Station Core Area are encouraged to achieve a minimum of LEED-NC Certified rating. Refer to the USGBC web site for a full description of the LEED ratings that are available. Certified is the lowest of all ratings, which progress upward to Silver, Gold and Platinum.

4. Implementation

The Station Area Plan presents a vision for redevelopment around the Nine Mile station and this section outlines the strategies and action steps to pragmatically build on the near-term opportunity for transit supportive development. Given the recent decline in the real estate market and the expected slow recovery in both the residential and office markets, one question that arose during this planning process involved the timing of development for creating a successful TOD. An option was to wait ten to fifteen years until the I-225 light rail extension is built and the TOD market evolves, or to build on what exists now. The consensus has been that the opportunity for developing transit-supportive development in the region is competitive, perhaps more so than initially thought given the current real estate market conditions. Therefore, with a station in place and property owners willing to move forward to implement a vision for redevelopment, it is timely to focus attention on the Nine Mile station area.

Policy Changes

The key to implementing TOD is the ability to establish a high quality pedestrian environment and an identifiable central core with higher density. The fundamental recommendation of this plan is to change the automobile orientation of the commercial lands in the study area to a pedestrian-oriented, compact, mixed-use area. The specific implementation steps are:

- adoption of the Nine Mile Station Area Plan;
- adoption of the Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District for the currently zoned commercial properties in the Nine Mile station area. This may be implemented in phases, depending on a property owner's redevelopment plan and schedule; and
- creation of the Nine Mile Urban Renewal Area and the associated urban renewal plan.

Public Realm Improvements

To provide a pedestrian-friendly environment in an area with several heavily-travelled roads will require the following improvements:

1. The pedestrian bridge spanning Parker Road. The City of Aurora will need to partner with RTD and CDOT to implement the pedestrian bridge over Parker Road. Since the bridge may be constructed prior to the full build-out of the Regatta Plaza area, the location of the bridge landing on the north side will need to anticipate the final form of development. City staff will continue to coordinate the design and construction timing of the bridge with the affected property owners.

2. A wayfinding and signage system. The city will partner with local property owners, businesses and RTD to develop and implement a wayfinding system for visitors to the Nine Mile station.

Property Development Process and Urban Renewal Area

To move the vision of Nine Mile Station Area Plan into reality, several private and public players will need to be coordinated. Development of this area will be complex, but within five to ten years, substantial progress can be made toward a new identity and sense of place for this important Aurora destination.

The key to redevelopment of the area is the conversion of the Regatta Plaza area, a nearly 22 acre aggregation of four ownerships. The initial development focus, both public and private, should be on this core area, to create a catalyst for outlying development.

Discussions with the Regatta Plaza property owners indicate support for the development framework for the Regatta Plaza area identified in this plan. Based on this agreement, the direction is to implement an urban renewal area for financing infrastructure and other improvements necessary to implement the vision for the area. The following are the proposed actions steps following adoption of this plan:

1. The city will identify the time frame for the urban renewal plan implementation together with the property owners.

2. The city will inform the residents in the adjacent neighborhoods about the urban renewal area process and address how redevelopment may progress.

3. The city will complete a blight study for the Regatta Plaza area as the first formal step in establishing an urban renewal area. The blight study will identify what factors of blight are present and to what degree. If at least four blight factors are found to be present in accordance with the Colorado statute, the City Council may find that their presence substantially impairs or arrests potential redevelopment, and approve an ordinance declaring the area appropriate for urban renewal.

4. The city will then draft an Urban Renewal Plan and propose the formation of the Nine Mile Urban Renewal Area to City Council. The purpose of the plan is to describe the actions that will be taken to eliminate the blighting conditions and prevent their recurrence. Once the Nine Mile Urban Renewal Area is established, the Aurora Urban Renewal Authority (AURA) can use its powers to work with developers and property owners to implement the plan.

5. The city will continue to identify potential funding sources for the pedestrian bridge, including applying to DRCOG for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding.

Acknowledgements

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