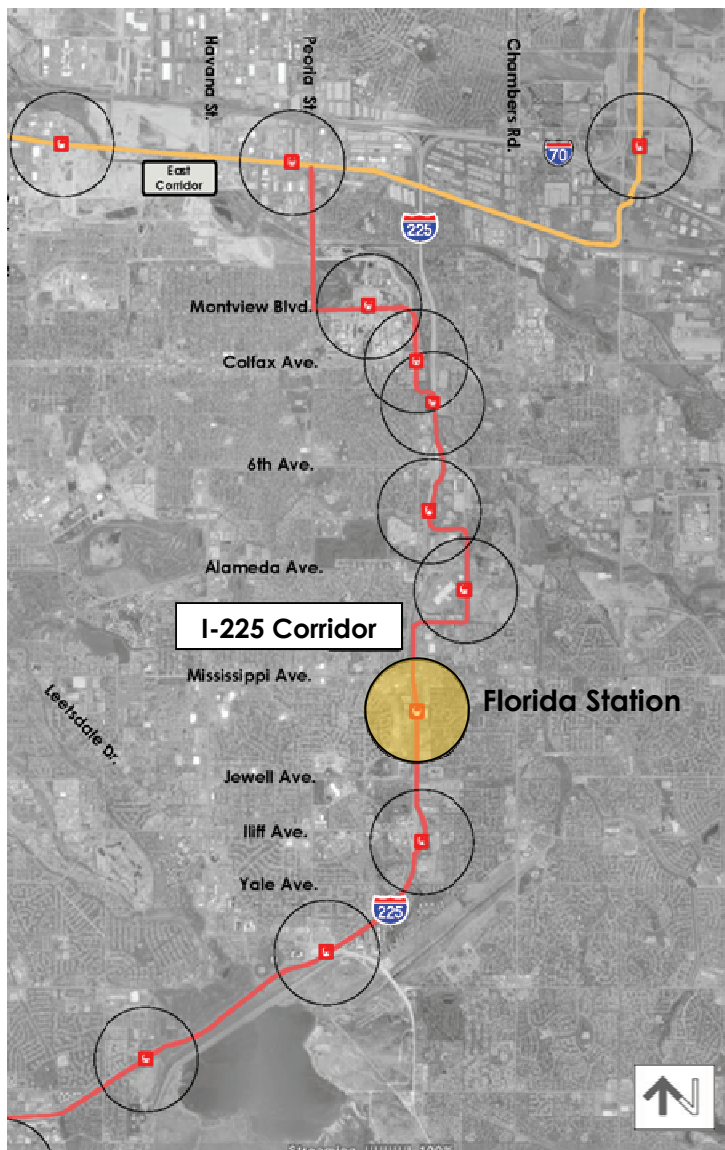


# Florida Station Area Plan

A Framework for Transit-Oriented Development



City of Aurora  
November, 2011

## **Florida Station Area Plan Team**

### **City of Aurora**

Bob Watkins, Director of Planning and Development Services  
Dave Chambers, Public Works  
John Fernandez, Planning and Development Services  
Jim Sayre, Planning and Development Services  
Mac Callison, Planning and Development Services  
Huiliang Liu, Planning and Development Services  
Curtis Bish, Parks, Recreation and Open Space  
Bill McCormick, Public Works  
Rick Hunter, Public Works  
Loretta Daniel, Planning and Development Services

### **RTD FasTracks - I-225 Corridor**

Chuck Culig, I-225 Corridor Project Manager  
Danielle Smith, RTD I-225 Corridor  
Bill Sirois, Transit-Oriented Development Project Manager

### **Consultant Team**

#### **Crandall Arambula**

George Crandall, Principal  
Don Arambula, Principal  
Erin Riddle, Associate/Project Coordinator

#### **Navjoy Consulting, Traffic/Transportation**

Navin Nageli, Principal

### **Planning and Zoning Commission**

Bradley Dodds - Chair  
Dexter Harding  
Michigan Hill  
Brent Jones

Keith Singer  
William Wiggins  
Gladys Witt

### **Florida Station Area Plan Steering Committee**

Molly Markert, City of Aurora Council Ward IV  
Carol Gregory, The Medical Center of Aurora  
Julie Taylor, The Medical Center of Aurora  
Greg Menke, The Medical Center of Aurora  
Tony Maestas, NexCore Group  
Mike Seifert, Ecotech Institute  
Eric Partridge, Ecotech Institute  
Ann Taylor, First Industrial  
Greg Downs, First Industrial  
Glenn Wentzel, Holiday Inn  
Michael Diehl, Xcel  
Jim Craig, Xcel  
Tom Tobiassen, Bicycle Aurora

# Table of Contents

Preface	1
1. Background Information	3
2. The Plan	7
3. Zoning Guidance and Design Guidelines	17
4. Implementation	25



# Preface

The Florida Station Area Plan is one in a series of station area-specific plans prepared by the city to promote transit supportive development along the I-225 light rail corridor. The plan outlines a vision for future redevelopment in the station area that takes advantage of opportunities for increasing density and changing land uses. With the introduction of light rail, the focus on the existing automobile-oriented retail uses can expand to include a variety of land uses that capitalize on proximity to transit and the adjacent employment centers, access to I-225, and the attractive views to the mountains.

In 2010, the city retained a design team led by Crandall Arambula to prepare a station area plan for an area approximately one-half mile around the proposed Florida light rail station. The Florida Station Area Plan presents the long-term vision for the area developed with input from the Florida Station Area Steering Committee, property owners, RTD, and neighboring residents. Three public meetings and several steering committee and stakeholder meetings were held as part of this planning process.

This station area planning process is intended to implement a city-wide vision for the development of mixed-use, higher-density activity nodes at infill locations serviced by light rail transit. Policy directions are derived from the **2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan**. Bringing property owners, residents and the design team together to discuss challenges and opportunities and to create the vision for this area has been the over-riding goal of this plan.

This plan provides a long-term vision for the Florida station area. The fundamental concepts and land use framework presented in this document are 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. However, such alternatives must conform to the key principles for transit-oriented development as outlined in the **2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan** and must provide alternatives to the fundamental concepts and framework described in this plan in a manner that conforms to those key principles. Such alternatives should conform to the general design guidance and guidelines described in this plan.

**PLANNING FOR TOD**



Figure 1. Aerial view looking north along I-225 and over the Florida station area

# 1. Background Information

The extension of light rail transit in the I-225 corridor is eagerly anticipated by businesses, property owners and residents in Aurora. The new light rail stations can provide opportunities for changes in land use, expansion of employment districts and creation of new ones, and new forms and types of housing. The extension of the I-225 light rail line north from the Nine Mile to the Liff station is to be complete in mid-2014. The Florida station is the next station on the line. It is envisioned to function as primarily a destination station, serving the existing medical, sales and office uses in the area. RTD will not provide commuter parking, so access will be primarily by walking or cycling. The Florida station is one of three stations on the I-225 line that will not have commuter parking and will function as a “walk-up” light rail station. As part of the station, RTD will construct a pedestrian bridge that will provide access to the Medical Center of Aurora - South Campus, on the west side of I-225.

As with the other stations along the I-225 corridor, there exists the opportunity to create distinctive transit supportive uses adjacent to the Florida station. The existing land uses comprise a mix of automobile retail uses which may be poised for redevelopment. This purpose of this plan is to identify a range of opportunities that respond to changes in site access that the station can bring. The plan will serve as a guide for development in the station area with the goal of capitalizing on the benefits of the new station. This plan does not mandate redevelopment but provides a framework for future development should existing property owners choose to redevelop, sell or relocate.

Through the station area planning process, the City of Aurora worked closely with the Regional Transportation District (RTD), property owners, neighborhood associations and residents to identify the planning principles and objectives that guided this plan, and the framework plan that is the result. The plan presents the vision developed with the public at three public meetings and workshops during 2010.

As identified through this process and with RTD, the objectives of this plan are to:

- complement the location of the station by creating development concepts for the adjacent land, primarily the land east of Abilene Street;
- address the issue of commuter parking for light rail transit patrons;
- develop a framework plan for a compact concentration of transit supportive development within the station area;
- identify and develop strategies to mitigate any negative transportation impacts to the surrounding residential neighborhoods;
- identify direct, convenient and attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections to the station; and
- identify how a unique identity can be created in the station area.

The project study area comprises the one-half mile surrounding the station. This includes low density commercial, hotel and residential uses east of the station and the Medical Center of Aurora - South Campus and medical office buildings and retail uses west of the station and I-225. The study area extends north to Mississippi Avenue and south almost to Jewell Avenue. On the east side of I-225, there is a mix of single family, townhouse and low-scale multi-family housing that extends to Sable Boulevard. On the west side of I-225, medical and health care facilities line Potomac Street, including the Medical Center of Aurora - South Campus, the Potomac Medical Plaza, the Garden Terrace Alzheimer’s Center, Rocky Mountain Cancer Center, Aurora Advanced Health Care, and Heritage Club at Aurora. West of the Medical Center of Aurora are single family neighborhoods with some multi-family

## PLANNING FOR TOD

areas adjacent to Louisiana Avenue. Retail uses are adjacent to Mississippi Avenue as well as a variety of office uses. The Jewell Wetlands serve as the area's primary open space.

There are numerous vacant or underutilized retail uses on Abilene Street between Jewell and Mississippi Avenues. Recently, the conversion of a retail/entertainment building into the Ecotech Institute was completed. The former Circuit City retail building is also being considered for another use, a Bally's Fitness center.

I-225 provides the regional auto access to the uses within the study area but it also divides the station area and is a major barrier to easy pedestrian access to the station. Today, Mississippi Avenue, approximately one-half mile north of the planned station, provides the only access across I-225 within the station area.

With a major employment center adjacent to the station, this station area has several opportunities for changing land uses. While there is some vacant land in the study area, the opportunities lie with redevelopment of the existing retail uses east of Abilene Street. These sites are visible from I-225, which may be advantageous to changing uses. Also, the Medical Center of Aurora does have some vacant land within their campus for future development, but long-term medical office demand may spark new development east of I-225.

On Oct. 20, 2009, the RTD Board of Directors approved the final **I-225 Light Rail Transit Environmental Evaluation** (EE). The EE describes the infrastructure changes that would occur to construct the light rail line, achieved through collaboration between RTD, the City of Aurora and CDOT. These changes include reducing the width of Abilene Street north of Iliff Avenue by one lane to accommodate the light rail track between Abilene Street and I-225. The EE also identifies light rail operations and states that the H line would run from the Florida station to downtown Denver (18<sup>th</sup> Street). Pocket tracks constructed immediately north of the Florida station would allow the northbound H trains to enter and stop, and change direction to the southbound tracks. Even with the completion of the I-225 light rail alignment to its terminus at the Peoria-Smith transfer station, the Florida station would continue to function as the last stop for the H line. Another change is that CDOT's northbound travel lanes would be adjusted to accommodate the station and pocket track.

While RTD will not provide parking at the Florida station, the City of Aurora's **Strategic Parking Plan and Program Study** projected a commuter parking demand for approximately 300 spaces at the station, primarily due to its function as an end-of-line station. Since surface parking would not be desirable close to the station due to the limited amount of existing commercially zoned land, the option of a parking structure was one of the concepts investigated in this study. However, funding for a structure is uncertain, and the goal was to identify where, if possible, a structure could be located.

One of the challenges at this station is the actual station design itself. Since the Florida station is to be located between I-225 and Abilene Street, safe pedestrian access is a concern. The physical comfort of transit patrons waiting at the station, and to a certain extent, the safety of these patrons, was identified as a concern. To address this, the concepts define a different character for Abilene Street. The proposals contained in this plan have the support of the major property owners and the government agencies.

This plan condenses information from a source document that contains details such as roadway cross-sections, detailed site plan illustrations, comments from the public process, etc. The reader should contact the Planning and Development Services Department for further information on this document.



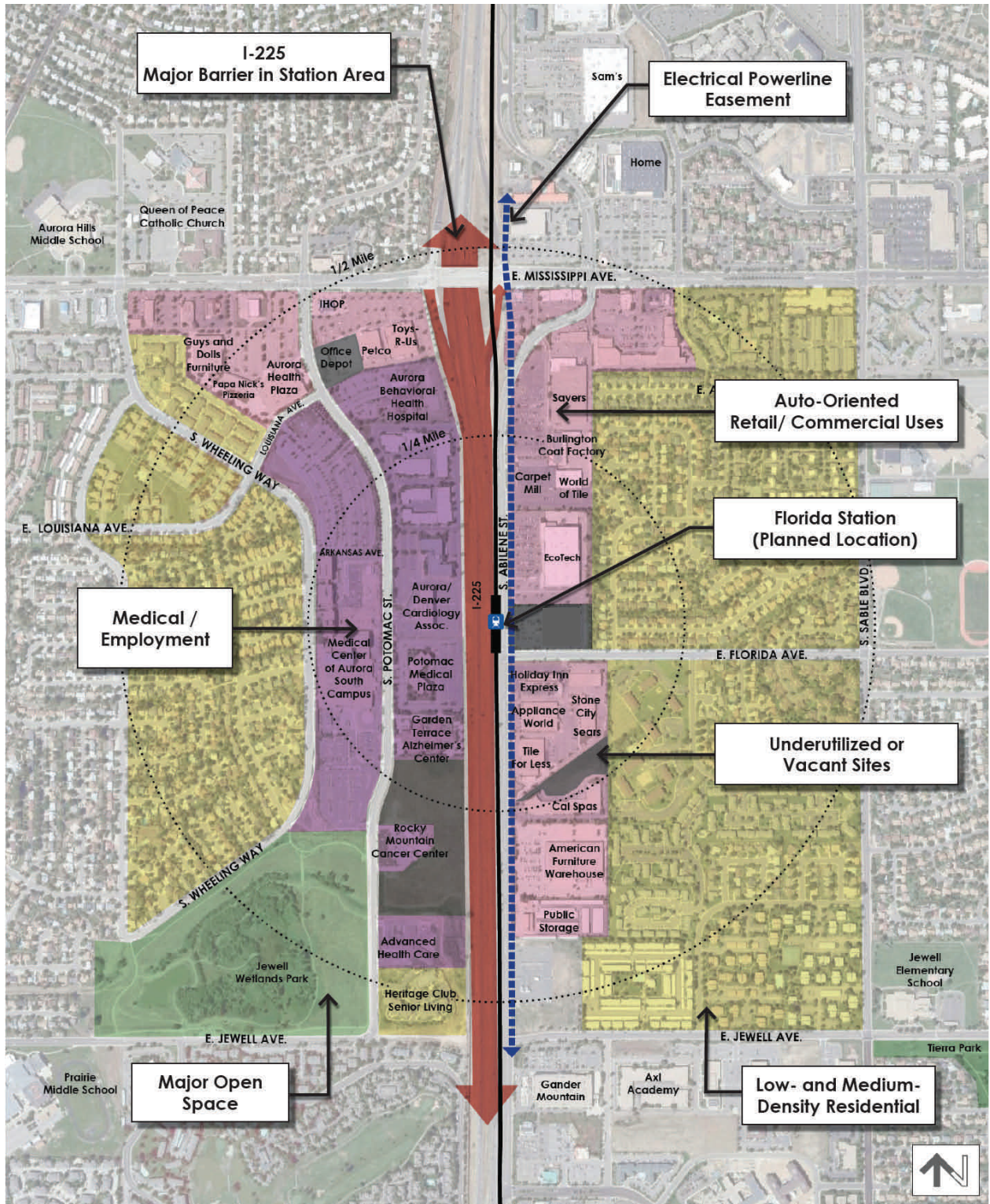


Figure 2. Existing Conditions Map

## PLANNING FOR TOD

## 2. The Plan

The following documents and studies have informed and guided the development of the Florida Station Area Plan:

- **2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan;**
- **I-225 Corridor Environmental Evaluation (RTD);** and
- **City of Aurora Strategic Parking Plan and Program Study.**

The goal of this plan is to enable the transformation of the Florida station area from a disconnected auto-oriented area into a pedestrian-focused district that capitalizes on uses such as the Medical Center of Aurora and the Ecotech Institute. Rather than piecemeal development, a long-term vision and development framework for the station area presents a direction for development and public infrastructure improvements. A mix of employment and residential uses and park amenities is seen as the means for contributing to the pedestrian character of the area. The RTD pedestrian bridge is the feature that will anchor the pedestrian and bicycle paths and connections throughout the area.

To realize the plan's vision, the area will need to develop with higher-density uses consistent with the city's transit-oriented development (TOD) principles. These principles, identified in the **Aurora Comprehensive Plan**, are intended to provide guidance at both the area-wide and site level.

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.

## PLANNING FOR TOD

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

### Fundamental Concept

The essence of TOD is to provide land uses with real transportation choices including convenient access to the light rail station, and pedestrian and bicycle connections to the surrounding land uses and destinations. This plan seeks to create a new district around the station, different from the existing situation of large format retail establishments. To achieve this, expected new land uses are identified and streets are re-designed for the bicycle connections and frontage roads.

Since there currently exists only one vacant parcel in the study area, it is expected that redevelopment or reuse of existing buildings will occur to capitalize on proximity to the station. The highest intensity of development should occur closest to the station. Future demand could include an employment and education district, building on the presence of the Medical Center of Aurora and the Ecotech Institute. Housing demand is also expected close to the station, and despite proximity to I-225 and the noise issue, good views to the mountains could be a feature for residential development.

The fundamental concept provides a quick visual summary of the key concepts of the station area plan. These are:

#### Neighborhood Connector

- This connection expands on RTD's pedestrian bridge over I-225 by creating a pedestrian/bicycle bridge and ramp system to cross Abilene Street.
- Protected bikeways on Florida Avenue and pedestrian and bicycle routes north and south on Anaheim Street and along Potomac Street link to this connector.
- The connector serves not only the station area but provides an important link to connect neighborhoods on the east and west sides of I-225.

#### Employment and Education District

- The redevelopment of existing underutilized large-format retail sites into employment and education uses will build on the function of the station area as an employment center.
- This area could provide complementary uses to the Medical Center of Aurora.
- The large parcel sizes provide the opportunity to develop high density buildings set behind a frontage road, yet still provide a transition in scale to the adjacent single family neighborhood.

#### Housing District

- In this area, existing retail uses can redevelop as higher density residential uses that could include market-rate and mixed-income units, both rental and ownership.
- A neighborhood park provides passive recreation opportunities and is an important and desirable amenity for the residential uses.
- Medium density housing that faces the frontage road by Abilene Street could have active ground floor uses, such as live/work spaces.
- The buildings on the east side would transition down in height so not to overwhelm the adjacent existing single family residential neighborhood.

#### Station Hub

- A public plaza area, surrounded by retail and restaurant uses, provides a gathering area and "front door" to the Florida station. Though separated from the station by Abilene Street, this plaza is an important element to provide activity and identity to the station area.
- This is a key site within the station area and may be suitable, in the long term, for structured parking.

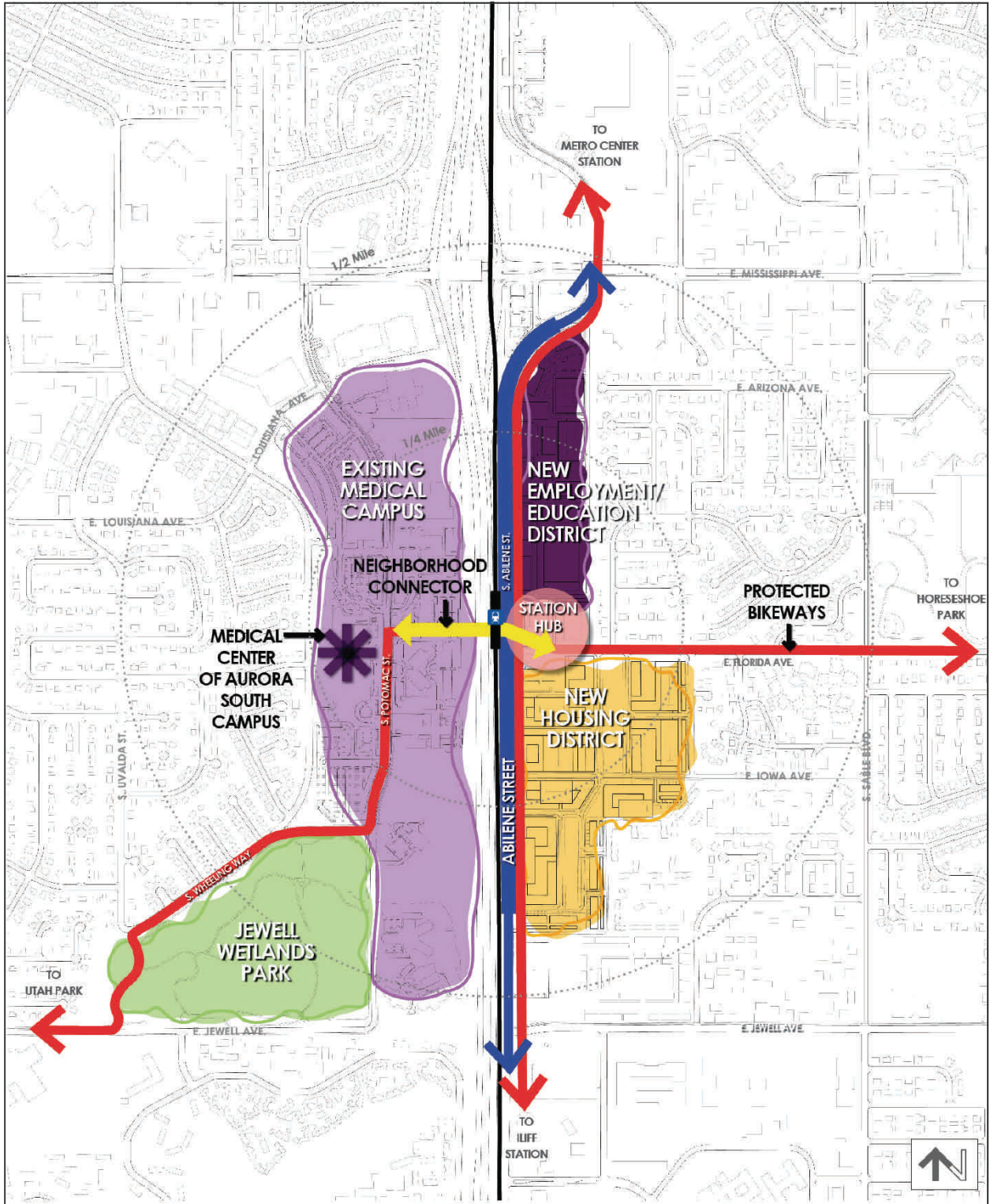


Figure 3. Fundamental Concept Diagram

## PLANNING FOR TOD

### Protected Bikeways

- These are two-way bicycle routes that are separated from auto and pedestrian traffic by barriers. They provide a safe and direct bike ride between neighborhoods, public parks and other destinations within the station area.

### Abilene Street

- Abilene Street would be redefined as a multi-way boulevard with east side frontage roads extending north from the station hub and south of the Holiday Inn Express.
- The frontage roads provide visibility and easy access to new development.

### The Land Use Framework

The intent of the land use framework diagram is to illustrate key planning principles and concepts for the station area, including:

- The frontage road on Abilene Street
- The conceptual form and street-orientation of new buildings
- The approximate location of potential park spaces and plazas.

The land use framework diagram illustrates the planning principle that the buildings front onto the Abilene Street frontage road. Parking could be located either in surface lots behind buildings, or in decked or podium parking structures. The predominant land uses are identified in the fundamental concept diagram, however, a mix of uses is encouraged. Commercial and retail ground floor uses may be feasible at some locations in the housing district. Private parking should be provided on all residential and office sites, at the standard defined in the TOD Zoning District.

The character of the different uses is described below.

### Office and Education

The proposed land use framework capitalizes on the station area's existing primary employers, the Medical Center of Aurora and the Ecotech Institute. Since there is a finite amount of land available for the Medical Center's expansion, there could be long-term opportunities for medical office buildings on the east side of I-225, adjacent to Abilene Street. The Ecotech Institute may also require additional space for expansion or for complementary educational facilities. This proposed office and education precinct has the following advantages:

- Good drive-by visibility and easy access from I-225
- Large parcel sizes that could accommodate Class A office building footprints and associated parking requirements
- While the highest development intensities can be focused on Abilene Street, the considerable depth of the lots allows for building heights that can taper downward as a sensitive transition to the adjacent single family residential neighborhoods.

### Housing

The residential precinct is proposed south of Florida Avenue and the framework layout takes advantage of the deep and large lot sizes by aligning a new road and creating central park blocks. A mix of housing forms could occur here, ranging from medium density multi-family buildings to townhouses. The main advantage of this area is its proximity not only to the station area's employment and education uses, but also to other employment centers along the I-225 corridor, such as the Anschutz medical

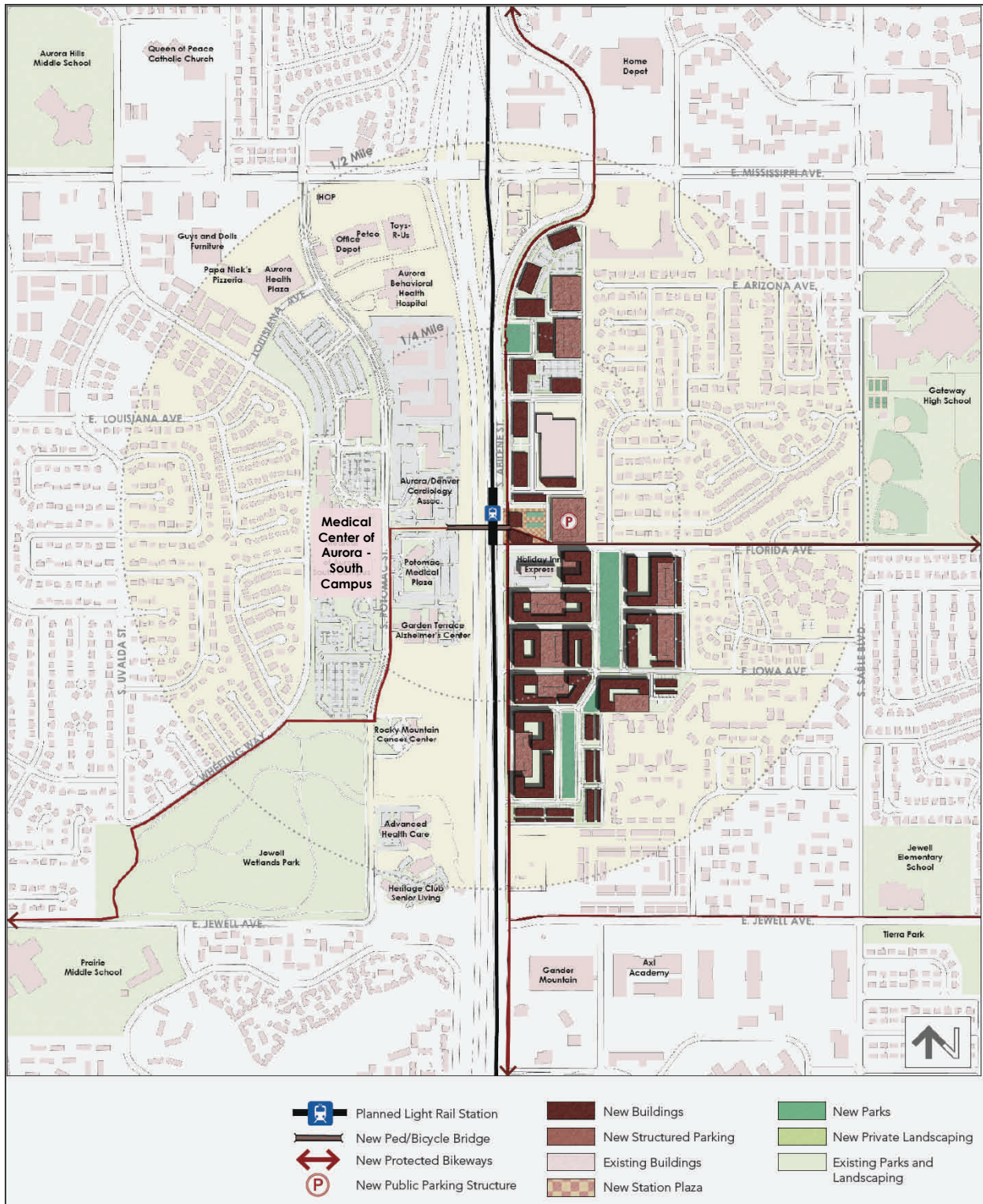


Figure 4. Land Use Framework Diagram

## PLANNING FOR TOD

campus.

The proposed residential precinct will:

- Provide sites suitable for a wide range of housing types
- Provide the opportunity for infill residential development at heights that provides a transition between the low-density neighborhood and the higher density development along Abilene Street.

### Retail and Commercial

New retail and commercial uses are envisioned along Abilene Street that provide services not only for area residents, employees and transit patrons, but can also attract regional users. The design of the frontage road on Abilene Street would:

- Provide a unique and attractive street-oriented retail character that provides continuous building frontages and on-street parking
- Provide an active commercial precinct that enlivens the station area and increases safety for the station by providing “eyes on the station”.

### Public Parking Structure

The **Aurora Strategic Parking Plan and Program Study** identified a demand for approximately 300 parking spaces for transit patrons. This commuter parking is critical for the Florida station if, as proposed by RTD, it serves as an end-of-line station. It is recognized that RTD’s FasTracks program has a defined budget, but the city will continue to advocate and insist on the necessity of commuter parking at the Florida Station.

In this plan, the purpose of this parking structure would be to provide parking for RTD transit patrons as well as provide parking for adjacent development. If the structure would not be financed by RTD, another funding mechanism such as a general improvement district (GID) would need to be implemented. The structure would:

- Provide approximately 300 parking spaces for transit patrons, as projected in the **Aurora Strategic Parking Plan and Program Study**
- Provide off-site parking for new commercial development and retail uses
- Incorporate ground floor commercial uses that are oriented to the public plaza.

The objective is to keep the parking structure as close as possible to the Florida station. Ideally, transit patrons should not have to cross roadways to access the station. Also the walking distance, particularly in inclement weather, should be minimized. The ideal location for a parking structure is on the property opposite the station. If it is not possible to build a parking structure on this property, the next best location would be south of Florida Avenue, east or south of the existing Holiday Inn Express. Locating the structure south of Florida Avenue could provide the option for shared parking with new developments. The third possible location for a parking structure could be north of the Ecotech Institute. However, this location is less than ideal since it is more than 1,000 feet away from the station and would be a considerable walk for the transit patron.

In addition, a permanent location for a kiss-n-ride should be identified by RTD and be operational with the opening of the station. Absent a parking facility, and with the Florida station operating as the terminus for the H line with service to downtown Denver, a safe and convenient kiss-n-ride facility is needed to avoid conflicts with property owners and to ensure transit patron safety.



## Public Spaces

A key element of the framework concept is a central gathering place opposite the Florida station, and surrounded by structured parking, retail and commercial uses. This central space is envisioned to be urban in character and a central gathering space for the station area. This is, however, a long term vision and is dependent on structured parking feasibility. Another smaller-scaled public open space is envisioned to the north, as the focus of a future employment area. With redevelopment of existing commercial and residential uses south of Florida Avenue, new park blocks are identified that provide passive recreational space and a park amenity to these new residential uses.

The proposed plaza adjacent to the Florida station, the park in the employment district and the park blocks in the residential precinct are amenities that support the proposed uses. These green spaces are essential as attractive and functional outdoor spaces that can serve as a focal point for new development. They provide passive recreation opportunities for office workers and residents. As public spaces, they would be accessible at all hours.

The Station Plaza, located within the Station Hub, is envisioned as a gathering place for the new and existing neighborhoods. With mostly paved surfaces, this plaza could be a setting for public art and designed with ample seating and canopy trees. The pedestrian and bicycle ramp that links to the RTD pedestrian bridge would be on the south side of the plaza.

A small park located in the office and education district provides an informal setting for daily use by the office workers. The park would have lawns, benches and canopy trees, providing a location for lunch time activities.

In the residential precinct south of Florida Avenue, the linear park blocks provide recreation space for the multi-family housing. Design elements should include:

- Children's play areas and structures
- Areas for outdoor recreation, picnicking and strolling,
- Attractive pedestrian paths throughout the parks blocks
- Pavilions for picnicking and other activities.

## The Neighborhood Connector Concept

A major element of the plan is the development of a bicycle and pedestrian connection system that provides users with easy access to many destinations. Currently, crossing I-225 is only possible at Mississippi and Iliiff Avenues. Both these streets have high traffic volumes and do not provide safe bike routes. RTD will construct a bridge that spans I-225 with elevators and stairs on the station platform and on private property on the west side of the interstate. With the RTD pedestrian bridge, there is the opportunity to provide access to the many destinations without having to drive. Given the schools in the area and the number of young children, providing safe access to the Jewell Wetlands, and the pool, tennis courts and other recreation facilities at Utah Park, is desirable.

The focus of the station area's pedestrian and bicycle circulation system is the Neighborhood Connector. It is a key element in developing a pedestrian and bicycle system that extends the benefits of the RTD pedestrian bridge into the neighborhoods. The pedestrian bridge and connector will unite the east and west halves of the station area.

There are four components to the Neighborhood Connector. From east to west, these are:

- The east pedestrian/bicycle ramp to and from Florida Avenue

## PLANNING FOR TOD



Figure 5. The Neighborhood Connector Concept

- The bridge over Abilene Street
- The RTD I-225 pedestrian bridge
- The west pedestrian/bicycle ramp to and from Potomac Street.

The Neighborhood Connector has ramps that are universally accessible and allow walkers, joggers, people with strollers and wheelchairs, and bicyclists to safely and comfortably access the station platform or travel between the east and west sides of the station area.

Of the four elements that comprise the Neighborhood Connector, only the RTD bridge over I-225 has identified funding. The city would need to work closely with RTD and property owners fund and implement this connector.

### **Bicycle Circulation and the Protected Bikeway**

The proposed bicycle framework extends the existing bicycle network by creating new links to transit, neighborhoods and major destinations. The area with one-half mile of a transit station generally represents a fifteen-minute walk and the area within one mile generally represents a five-minute bike ride. The routes identified in the Bicycle Framework are within approximately one mile of the Florida station. This provides transit patrons the opportunity to access the station by bike since it is too far to walk. A comprehensive bikeway network has the potential to significantly reduce accidents for motorists and cyclists while increasing the number of people who choose bicycling for transportation.

Integral to the Bicycle Framework is the concept of protected bikeways. Protected bikeways use



## PLANNING FOR TOD

barriers or buffers between automobile traffic and people riding bikes to help riders feel more comfortable on the street. Protected bikeways are separated from the sidewalk and automobile lanes by curbs or other raised barriers, striping, signage, planters, or other means.

Protected bikeways are proposed for:

- **Florida Avenue and Potomac Street**, linked by the Neighborhood Connector. On Florida Avenue, the protected bikeway would be on the north side of the street, which is currently not used for on-street parking. The protected bikeway would extend to the west side of Potomac Street and then link to the multi-use path in the Jewell Wetlands. This route links the surrounding residential neighborhoods to the heart of the Florida station area – the “transit hot spot” that is the area directly opposite the station and most valued for high intensity uses.
- **A continuous east-west route on Jewell Avenue**, with the possibility of a pedestrian bridge over I-225 that links Horseshoe and Utah parks and ties into the Westerly Creek and Toll Gate Creek trails. This is a more ambitious connection since it required a bridge over I-225, but nonetheless helps to establish a city-wide bicycle network. This continuous Jewell Avenue route would link schools and open space corridors in the city.
- **A north-south bikeway on Abilene Street** that links the Florida light rail station to the stations at Iliff and City Center. The ten foot wide bikeway would be located between Abilene Street and the frontage road, east of the Xcel power line. On the west side of this bikeway would be the sidewalk for pedestrians. A landscaped area would be located between the sidewalk and Abilene Street. The bikeway and sidewalk would be separated by pavement markings or a raised curb.

The bicycle routes offer the opportunity for the casual cyclist to commute to the station. Necessary improvements to enhance this system include bicycle route signs, cyclist-activated crossing signals and other improvements such as pavement markings at major intersections, and storage lockers adjacent to the station.

### Pedestrian Circulation

New sidewalks along Abilene Street are proposed to provide safe access to the Florida station. With redevelopment, a more extensive system of sidewalk connections should be built according to the city’s Urban Street Standards. Additional details on the pedestrian circulation system are contained in the background report to this station area plan.

### Abilene Street

Currently, Abilene Street is a wide arterial that carries approximately 15,000 vehicles per day between Mississippi and Florida Avenues. Implementation of the I-225 light rail system will require that Abilene Street be narrowed from the existing four lanes to three lanes. The at-grade access to the Florida station will still require transit patrons to cross this busy street. Reconfiguring Abilene Street with a curb extension at the Florida Avenue intersection will shorten the crossing distance and also define this as a pedestrian precinct.

The frontage roads proposed on Abilene Street north of the station hub and south of the Holiday Inn Express provide the structure for new buildings that can capitalize on direct street access, good visibility from I-225, and panoramic views to the mountains.

### Bally’s Fitness Center

Soon after the completion of the public planning process for this plan, a proposal was submitted to the

city for re-use of the former Circuit City building as a Bally's Fitness Center. The concept in Figure 9 was developed to integrate the Neighborhood Connector with the fitness center. There is sufficient space to implement this concept with the fitness center's support. The Bally's Fitness Center is a long-term tenant and both Bally's and the property owner are supportive of this concept.

Building a parking structure on this site for commuter and adjacent commercial uses is the long-term vision and recommendation of this plan. It would address the issue of projected commuter parking demand as well as provide off-site parking for adjacent uses. An efficiently sized structure would allow for the more profitable use of developable land north of this site. It may not be feasible to construct a parking structure while the Bally's Fitness Center is in operation. A parking structure could be located south of Florida Avenue, east or south of the existing Holiday Inn Express. This structure could provide parking for both commuters and adjacent residential or commercial uses. Another, though less optimal location, would be to locate a parking structure north of the Ecotech institute. While a structure at this location could provide parking for both commuters and new development, it is a considerable distance from the station and is less convenient for commuters.

Creating a high-quality TOD requires a vision to guide appropriate development to individual sites. The vision presented in this plan identifies this site opposite the station as very important to create the character and uses that will make the Florida station area successful. The proposed mix of a central plaza, parking structure and commercial uses with retail and restaurants will provide the lively hub needed in this station area. Partnerships between the city, property owners and RTD are key to implement this vision.

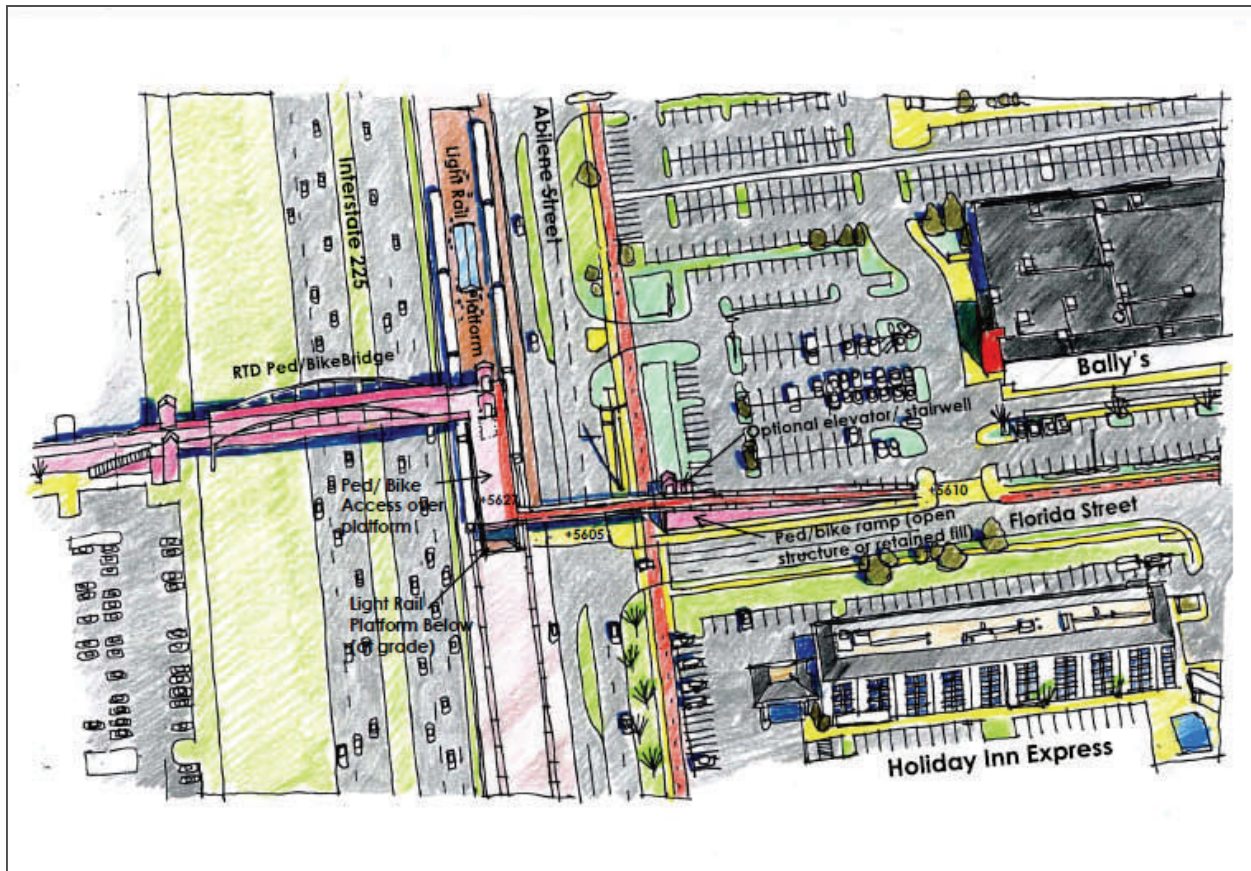


Figure 9. Bally's Parcel Concept

## PLANNING FOR TOD

## 3. Zoning Guidance and Design Guidelines

### Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District

A Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District is available for use in Aurora around the light rail and commuter transit stations. The TOD zoning district references the station area plan to provide guidance concerning boundaries, building form and intensity. This station area plan is to be used by applicants in conjunction with the city's TOD zoning district. Specific sections of the TOD zoning district are modified by this station area plan.

Existing zoning around the station currently consists of a wide range of commercial zoning districts. These land use districts do not permit the mixed-use, compact and high density building form 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. The new zoning can be applied incrementally, parcel by parcel.

### Sub-Districts and Land Use

Two sub-districts can be defined for the Florida Station area, each with its own land use characteristics:

#### 1. Core Sub-District.

- a. *Location.* This sub-district includes all commercial lands east of I-225 and adjacent to Abilene Street, between Mississippi Avenues and south almost to Jewell Avenue. Commercial and office lands west of I-225 and adjacent to Potomac Street south of Mississippi Avenue are also included.
- b. *Uses.* This zone includes medium to high intensity commercial, residential, hotel, civic and entertainment uses. Public and private parking structures are also permitted. Ground-floor commercial uses are encouraged along Abilene Street.

#### 2. General Sub-District.

- a. *Location.* This sub-district includes residential lands east of Abilene Street and south of Florida Avenue. This is an area which can transition from traditional auto-oriented retail to more compact mixed-use development.
- b. *Uses.* With a density less than the Core, the uses in this area will be primarily residential.

There is no Transition Sub-District identified at the Florida station.





## Development Standards

This section provides modifications to Sec. 146-728. Development Standards of the City of Aurora Zoning Code:

**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: 40 units per acre  
 General Area: 30 units per acre

**Building Heights.** Building height may be maximized adjacent to the high traffic streets (Abilene Street and Mississippi Avenue) and lowered adjacent to the existing single family and townhouse neighborhoods. There is no height limit in the Core Area. Building heights should shade the sidewalks on the south and west sides of streets in hot weather but allow sun exposure on the north side of streets during cold weather. Building heights for the sub-districts are:

### 1. Core Sub-District:

Minimum height of three stories. No maximum height, except for buildings adjacent to the existing residential neighborhoods. Buildings that front or back directly on existing residential properties shall have a maximum building height of four stories. This height limit shall apply for a property depth of fifty (50) feet from the property line from the existing single family or low rise residential district.

### 2. General Sub-District:

Minimum height of three stories and a maximum height of five stories.

**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, 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 Core Sub-District, buildings shall be built to the property line, defined as the back of sidewalk, with allowances made for shallow setbacks, 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 not more than ten (10) feet in the Core and General sub-district. The ten (10) foot setback is permitted in the Core and General sub-districts for outdoor cafes and overhanging balconies, but shall not exceed forty (40) percent of the building frontage. Steps, stoops, balconies, awnings, chimneys, bay windows, etc. may encroach into the setback.

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

- a. Continuous building frontage is desired on the Abilene Street frontage road. A continuous building height façade along all streets shall be a minimum of three stories to provide a defined urban edge to the street.



- b. Along Abilene Street (and any northern extension), the building façades shall occupy a minimum of seventy (70) percent of the property's street-facing frontage.
- c. Commercial uses at-grade on main streets and surrounding any public spaces are required to support pedestrian activity.
- d. Clear windows at grade are required for a minimum of sixty (60) percent of the façade length except for residential uses.
- e. Quality materials on the ground floor façade are required on all buildings on major streets.
- f. Sixty (60) percent of the building façade excluding doors and windows facing a public park or plaza must be brick, stone or cultured stone.
- g. Entries shall front on the major streets and shall be generously proportioned and defined with architectural features. Awning and structural canopies for weather protection at building entrances are desirable.
- h. Drive-through windows of any kind shall not be permitted in the Core sub-district.
- i. Blank walls are not permitted on any façade. All façades shall have architectural details that add visual interest.
- j. Loading docks and entrances shall not be located on the major pedestrian streets.
- k. Alternative uses for building roofs such as terraces, roof gardens and green roofs are encouraged.

### Design Standards and Guidelines

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

#### **Sustainability:**

Sustainability of the Iliff Station Core Sub-District 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 Iliff station 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.

#### **Pedestrian Connections:**

- Walkways, bridges and pedestrian crossings shall constitute a network that interconnects all transit, commercial and residential buildings.
- Hidden areas and blind corners shall 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.

#### **Public Spaces:**

There should be a central open space as a focus in the Core Sub-District. 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.

#### **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.

## PLANNING FOR TOD

The station area should contain a hierarchy of streets which reflect different streetscape treatments, according to the Aurora Urban Street Standards.

### **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;
- not cast light directly into residential windows

### **Roof Landscaping:**

Building roofs should be developed as open space resources, amenity decks and green roofs where possible.

### **Landscape Materials:**

Materials should be provided based on the following considerations:

- safety – avoid visual obstructions especially at circulation intersections;
- local microclimate – provide summer shade and open canopies for warmth in winter;
- low watering requirements – 100 percent of plant material should be drought resistant;
- ease of maintenance – minimize litter from plant materials and trees;
- attractiveness – intensify in key locations with seasonal color, texture, scale;
- screening – screen service areas, parking lots, meters and garbage dumpsters.

### **Parking:**

- Surface parking lots are discouraged in the Core Sub-District.
- The entire Core Sub-District 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 shall be well-identified by a way-finding signage system.
- Parking structures shall not be exposed to streets or public areas in the interior of the TOD block.

### **Architecture**

Architectural design should distinguish the Iliff station area Core Sub-District 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:** Clear glass storefronts on ground floor façades should be provided to ensure visibility of active uses. On upper levels, façades should 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. Clear glass shall not have a reflectance rating of greater than 0.20.

**Awnings and Canopies:** Awnings and canopies shall 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. Signs directly related to a business shall be allowed to extend over the sidewalk, at a height of no less than 9'-0" above the sidewalk.

**External Building and Site Lighting:**

- External lighting of buildings shall be minimized, except for accent lighting of building entries or features.
- The impact of lighting on the night sky shall be minimized by cutoff fixtures, downward projecting fixtures and minimizing light energy.
- Exterior light fixtures shall confine direct light rays to the premises, and the light source shall not be directly visible from any adjacent property or beyond two mounting heights distance from the fixture.
- Power consumption for external building lighting shall be minimized.
- Minimum light levels at building entries shall be 5.0 foot-candles and at loading docks 15.0 foot-candles. Levels elsewhere shall comply with Aurora code and ordinances, and shall be as uniform as possible on pedestrian sidewalks.
- Some types of lighting shall be prohibited, including moving, blinking or flashing lights, lights that may be confused with traffic control, and any light that is distracting to the operator of a motor vehicle.

## PLANNING FOR TOD

## 4. Implementation

The Florida Station Area Plan presents the vision developed through a collaborative process between government agencies, property owners and residents.

The specific implementation steps are:

- Adoption of the Florida Station Area Plan as an amendment to the **2009 Aurora Comprehensive Plan**;
- Adoption of the Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District for the currently zoned commercial properties in the Florida area. This may be implemented in phases, depending on a property owner's development plan and schedule.
- When appropriate, the city is to seek Transportation Improvement (TIP) Funding from the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and other grants to implement the Neighborhood Connector, the protected bikeways, and Abilene frontage roads.
- The city is to continue to work with Bally's Fitness Center and the property owner to implement the Neighborhood Connector when appropriate.
- The city is to continue to advocate for RTD's implementation of a parking facility to meet projected commuter parking demand, based on the city's **Strategic Parking Plan and Program Study**. In conjunction with this, the city is to investigate funding sources and other opportunities to provide structured parking close to the Florida station. This parking structure would provide commuter parking and could also provide parking for adjacent redevelopment.
- The city is to also advocate and insist on RTD's implementation of a permanent kiss-n-ride facility that will provide a safe location for transit patron drop-off and pick-up.



City of Aurora

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Planning and Development Services Department  
15151 E. Alameda Parkway, 2nd Floor  
Aurora, CO 80012  
[www.auroragov.org](http://www.auroragov.org)  
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