

# City Structure Plan



Fort Collins  
**CITY PLAN**  
*Changes and Choices*





# Introduction

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The *City Structure Plan* Map (on page 67) is an important element of *City Plan*, intended to clarify how we move to a clear plan for the City's future. The *City Structure Plan* is focused primarily on the physical form and development pattern of the City. The *City Structure Plan* is a map that sets forth a basic framework, showing how Fort Collins should grow and evolve over the next 20 years. It will serve as a blueprint towards the desired future described in the Community Vision & Goals element of *City Plan*.

The vision diagramed in the *City Structure Plan* shows changes and choices about how our City might develop. The Plan reflects significant decisions made in several key areas:

- density and land conservation
- redevelopment and infill
- direction of growth
- commercial development patterns
- transportation choices
- system of open lands
- lands surrounding the edges of our GMA

The *City Structure Plan* illustrates a future city made up of four basic kinds of places:

- Neighborhoods
- Districts
- Corridors
- Edges

The organization of these *places* -- their "structure" -- gives meaning and form to our community's vision. These are not intended to be thought of as single-use "zones" in the sense of traditional land use zoning patterns, but rather as distinct and diverse places that contain mixtures of uses and activities.

This section includes an overview of the primary building blocks and choices represented by the Plan, as well as a description of how the *City Structure Plan* is to be used.





# City Structure Plan

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## Key Principles of the *City Structure Plan*

The *City Structure Plan* has evolved out of extensive community discussion. Fort Collins residents have tackled the challenging choices about how our city might develop—how to grow, where to grow, and how to shape growth so that it can benefit, and not detract from, the city's quality of life. Each of these choices has required balancing complex, and sometimes conflicting, issues. Each represents a significant decision to be made about the future form and pattern of our city. What has emerged from these choices is a set of key principles that have guided the development of the *City Structure Plan*. These principles are as follows:

**Compact Development Pattern.** Growth within the city will be focused to promote a compact development pattern. By directing urban development to well-defined areas at higher densities, growth can be accommodated without fostering urban sprawl. The compact form of the city will also contribute to preserving environmentally sensitive areas and rural lands, efficiently providing public services, and encouraging infill and redevelopment of existing urban areas.

**Interconnected Transit System.** An expanded public transit system has been incorporated as an integral element of the *City Structure Plan*. The system is designed to provide for high-frequency transit service along major travel corridors, with feeder transit lines providing connections from all major districts within the city. The city's compact form will help make comprehensive, convenient, and efficient transit service possible.

**New Activity Centers in Transit-Served Areas.** The *City Structure Plan* establishes a number of community-wide destinations, including Downtown and other mixed-use areas that serve as focal points and centers of activity. The physical environment of these activity centers will be pedestrian and transit -oriented, with a high quality urban life for residents.

**Interconnected System of Open Lands.** A comprehensive network of open greenways will link important open lands, neighborhoods, and community facilities, weaving its way along major waterways and drainages.

**Growth Management Area Boundary.** The *City Structure Plan* retains and reinforces the concept of a growth management area as one means of managing our community's growth. *City Plan* presumes that the GMA boundary will generally remain as it presently is configured. However, the GMA boundary needs to be flexible in order to provide for minor amendments in limited cases. The GMA can help preserve a physical



separation between existing cities. This will require careful policy coordination with Larimer County and surrounding communities, to ensure that the goals of containing urban growth and maintaining rural character in non-urban areas can be attained. A system of community separators will be implemented to help reinforce the community's boundaries.

**Multiple Means of Travel.** The City's form and structure will facilitate pedestrians, bicycles, and transit, as well as cars and trucks. New development will be organized and woven into a compact pattern that is conducive to automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit travel. Street standards and site planning requirements for new development and redevelopment will ensure that neighborhoods and districts throughout the City will be connected and accessible by all travel modes.

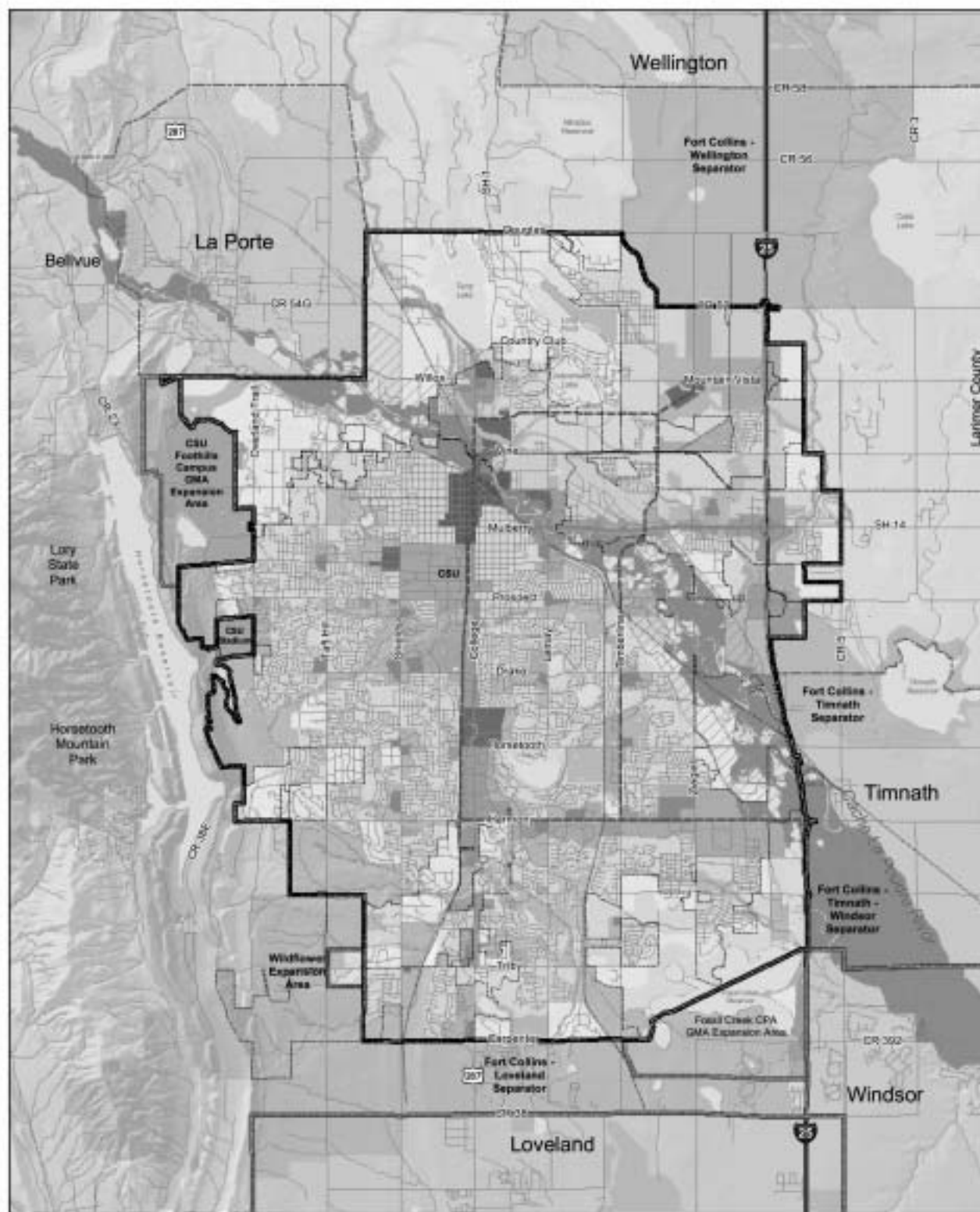


A Community Commercial District is accessible by all modes of travel.





# CITY OF FORT COLLINS STRUCTURE PLAN



## Boundaries

- Fort Collins GMA
- Potential GMA Expansion
- Other City GMA
- Planning Area
- Adjacent Planning Area
- City Limits

## Districts

- Downtown District
- Community Commercial District
- Commercial Corridor District
- Neighborhood Commercial Center
- Campus District
- Employment District

## Neighborhoods

- Industrial District
- Urban Estate
- Low Density Mixed-Use
- Medium Density Mixed-Use

## Edges

- Community Separator
- Potential
- Rural Lands

## Corridors

- Enhanced Travel Corridor (Transit)
- Poudre River Corridor
- Poudre River
- Open Lands, Parks, Stream Corridors



0 0.5 1 Miles

Adopted  
May 4, 2004





## Choices Made by the *City Structure Plan*

When reviewing the *City Structure Plan*, it is important to understand some of the choices that are represented by the Plan. The key choices that are represented by the *City Structure Plan* are described below.

### Density

One of the choices made is about the density of our neighborhoods... how many dwelling units are built on each acre of land. Our existing neighborhoods historically developed at an overall average density of about 4 dwelling units per acre. The *City Structure Plan* recommends *that* new neighborhoods have a minimum overall average density of about 5 dwellings per acre, resulting in a more compact urban form. These areas are shown on the *City Structure Plan* as “Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods.”



Medium density mixed-use neighborhood.

The “Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods” shown on the *City Structure Plan* have higher densities -- 12 dwelling units per acre. These Medium Density Mixed- Use Neighborhoods are located next to Neighborhood Commercial Centers, Community Commercial Districts, and/or along existing or future transit routes.

### Redevelopment and Infill

Most of the city’s new housing will be built in areas that are currently undeveloped. However, some new housing will also be built in existing neighborhoods. Some homes will be built on lots that are currently vacant. Some will be second homes added to lots that are large enough to accommodate an additional housing unit, or as accessory units above garages. Some will be redevelopment of underutilized properties in a neighborhood. (“Underutilized” means a relatively low level of economic value of improvements compared to the underlying land value, and/or land that is physically capable of supporting additional development.) The *City Structure Plan* assumes that about ten percent of the new housing built over the next twenty years will be in the form of infill development in existing neighborhoods, designed to be in character with existing development.



## Direction of Growth

Direction of growth determines where the outskirts of Fort Collins are, and what the edges of the community look like. Where should future new growth in our City occur? The *City Structure Plan* balances the direction of growth among several areas such as:

- A new growth area in the northeast, shown on the map as a major Community Commercial District at Timberline Road and Mountain Vista Drive;
- Continued growth to the south of Harmony Road;
- Protecting the foothills as a natural backdrop to our community;
- Preserving a physical separation between Fort Collins and neighboring communities, such as Loveland, Timnath, Windsor, and Wellington; and
- Encouraging redevelopment and infill at appropriate locations including the downtown area.

## Commercial Development Patterns

Commercial areas are an important part of the city. The *City Structure Plan* shows a different approach to our commercial areas than we have taken in the past.

**Commercial Districts** -- now typically strip commercial development such as along parts of South College Avenue, will continue to accommodate a full range of commercial uses, including auto-related uses, but will be transformed over time. The shift will be from exclusively auto-oriented places, to places that are more walkable destinations, with a mix of activities.

**Community Commercial Districts** -- combining a mix of retail, services, civic uses and housing, in uniquely distinct and identifiable “places.” Some of these districts are new, while others (e.g., Campus West) will transform over time in accordance with specific subarea plans.

**Neighborhood Commercial Centers** -- with supermarkets, shops, and services, will be designed to encourage walking, and will be better oriented to the neighborhoods that they serve.



## Transportation Choices

The *City Structure Plan* shows a city that makes choices for transportation a real possibility. Cars will continue to be the primary means of travel for many purposes, yet transit, bicycling, and walking will become equally viable and attractive. The choices will become possible because of the *City Structure Plan's* design. "Activity centers" in our neighborhoods and districts -- including our places of work and shopping -- will be designed to support a variety of modes of transportation. Our transportation corridors will link our destinations and activities, making it easier and more enjoyable to move around our city. Enhanced Travel Corridors uniquely designed and reserved for high frequency transit, bicycling, and walking, will link our major activity centers.



Bicycling.



Transit.



Automotive.



Walking.





# Types of Places

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The *City Structure Plan* shows, in a simplified diagram, what the city could look and be like in the future. It provides a basic layout of how Fort Collins should evolve over the next 20 years. It helps us grasp the larger relationships between areas within the whole city, and represents our vision for the city.

The areas contained on the *City Structure Plan* are grouped into four kinds of places that make up our City: Neighborhoods, Districts, Corridors and Edges. These basic planning terms generally group and describe more distinctly identified areas in order to simplify the diagram of the *City Structure Plan*. The types of places shown on the *City Structure Plan* are briefly described below. A more detailed description of these places is contained in the *City Plan Principles and Policies*.



Downtown Fort Collins with the Rocky Mountains in the background.



## Neighborhoods

As the dominant and most important areas within our city, neighborhoods will serve as the primary building blocks. Neighborhoods will be walkable and connected, and will include a mix of housing types. Neighborhoods will include destinations within walking distance, such as schools, parks, neighborhood shopping, employment areas and civic uses.

The goal is to work towards more “complete” neighborhoods over time, so more of our daily needs are met closer to home. This will reduce our dependence on driving, as well as help avoid further degradation of our city’s air quality. Travel routes and land uses will link and connect individual neighborhoods. The reality, however, is that because of what’s already here, the *City Structure Plan* can have only a limited effect on existing neighborhoods and subdivisions. In other words, not all of our existing neighborhoods will meet this ideal. The most opportunity for change is in the undeveloped, new growth areas, with change occurring in existing neighborhoods over time as zoning permits or according to subarea plans.

Most of our city’s new housing will occur in the new growth areas, in Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods, Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods and in redevelopment and infill areas.

**Urban Estate Neighborhoods** are areas that will develop as low density, single family and large-lot housing with a maximum density of 2 dwelling units per acre. These areas will acknowledge the presence of the many existing County subdivisions which function as part of the community, and to provide, in some cases, a physical transition between urban development and rural or open lands.



Urban estate neighborhood.

**Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods**, which will be the predominant form of new development, will develop at approximately five dwelling units per acre overall. These neighborhoods will consist of a mix of detached homes on small and average size lots, townhomes, duplex units, and manufactured housing.

**Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods** will develop at approximately 12 dwelling units per acre, and will include a mix of small-lot single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family housing. These neighborhoods will be located in close proximity to Neighborhood Commercial Centers, Community Commercial Districts, and transit routes.



## Districts

Districts are larger areas *of activity*. The Downtown area and the CSU campus area are examples of districts. Several residential neighborhoods might make up a residential district, linked to each other and that *share everyday activities that the neighborhoods in the district may have in common, such as schools, parks, or shopping areas*.

Districts, as referenced in the *City Structure Plan*, are more general in nature and are *not intended to precisely correspond to existing or future zoning districts*. In keeping with our *City Plan* vision, our primary Downtown will be supported by other districts with *unique or specialized uses and activities, such as Industrial, Employment, and Community Commercial Districts*. New districts will be located and designed to provide a high quality living environment and multiple transportation choices.

Redevelopment of existing districts, such as the Downtown, Campus West, North College, and the Foothills Mall area, *will provide opportunities over time for more choices in housing, land use and transportation, as well as the establishment of a more walkable and distinct environment*.

## Corridors

Corridors provide a connection between different areas or destinations. The primary corridors are travel corridors and “green” corridors. Corridors are not just about more streets and open space in our City -- this is about a network of travel routes, choices for how we move throughout the City, reducing our need for vehicle trips, linking pockets of green space, and maximizing every positive feature that green corridors can contribute to Fort Collins.

Major transportation corridors link our destinations and activities and make it easier to move around the City using various modes of travel. Among these are enhanced travel corridors, multi-modal corridors supported by complimenting land uses that link key areas of the city. “Green” corridors -- such as the Poudre River, streams, drainage ways and trails -- collectively create a network that links our open lands to areas of the city where residents live and work.



Enhanced travel corridor concept.



Trails.



## Edges

Edges form the boundaries of our community for the next twenty years and beyond. In keeping with our *City Plan* vision, our city's edges will be clearly defined, promoting a compact land use pattern in order to avoid sprawling development. This will allow for the more efficient delivery of public facilities and services. Our edges will contribute to conserving environmentally sensitive areas, open space, and rural lands, and to distinguishing between what is "city" and what is not.

Edges define the extent of our city, and assure its unique identity. Fort Collins will have different types of edges. In some cases, our edges will be our adjoining communities. The City will recognize the planning efforts within the growth management and planning areas of the adjacent communities of Laporte, Timnath, Wellington and Loveland.

In other cases, our edges should reflect a transition from the developed areas of our City to the rural character of Larimer County. These edges will take on many forms, including foothills, agricultural/rural lands, and urban estate development. Certain edges will be permanently protected through direct acquisition or conservation easements, such as community separators and open lands that preserve habitat and native landscapes. Others will remain privately-owned under agricultural use or clustered residential development.



Urban/rural edge.





# How to Use the City Structure Plan Map

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The Structure Plan is a map that sets forth a basic framework, showing how Fort Collins should grow and evolve over the next 20 years. It is intended to serve as a blueprint towards the desired future described in the Community Vision & Goals element of *City Plan*. As such, the map is only intended to serve as a general guide for future land use decisions. It not a zoning map. Many of the boundaries on the map are generalized for illustrative purposes, and in actuality may vary somewhat when applied “on the ground” as a result of natural and man-made features or as a result of varying conditions or circumstances.





# Summary

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The *City Structure Plan* is a map that sets forth a basic framework to show how Fort Collins should grow and evolve over the next 20 years. This plan illustrates a future city made up of four basic kinds of places:

- Neighborhoods
- Districts
- Corridors
- Edges

The key principles of the *City Structure Plan* include a compact development pattern, an interconnected transit system, new activity centers, a system of interconnected open lands, a growth management area boundary, and multiple means of travel – including driving, walking, bicycling, and transit. Together, these principles reinforce the desired future described in the Community Vision and Goals element of *City Plan*, and establish a blueprint for future growth.



