



# South College

CORRIDOR PLAN

## BUSINESS FORUM SUMMARY



Panelists:

**DAVID MAY**, President & CEO, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce

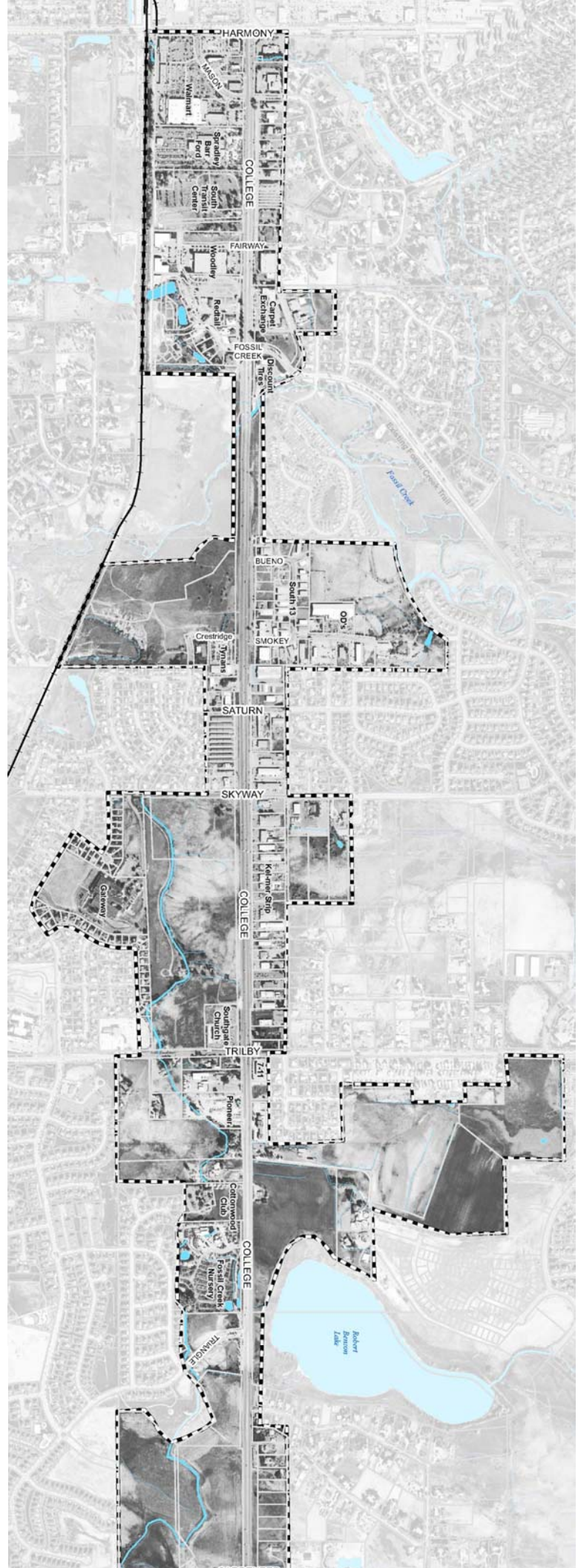
**DEAN HOAG**, President, North Fort Collins Business Association and Owner of Rocky Mountain Battery Service of Fort Collins

**MIKE FREEMAN**, Chief Financial Officer, City of Fort Collins

**JOSH BIRKS**, Economic Planning Systems



EDAW | AECOM



On April 10, 2008 at the SouthGate Church (at Trilby and College), property and business owners conversed with their peers in a special Business Forum for South College. Sponsored by Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce and City of Fort Collins, the event provided opportunities to network, learn about resources for locally-owned businesses in Fort Collins, and hear how other businesses in the City are overcoming similar challenges.

The four panelists highlighted the many assets and opportunities in South Fort Collins, such as stable neighborhoods with high income levels, open space, high traffic counts (with Harmony and College Avenue being one of the busiest intersections in the City), Mason Corridor, and larger parcels of vacant land. Politically, the South College Corridor wields the votes of two city councilpersons: Diggs Brown, representing the area east of South College, and Wade Troxell, representing the western half.

Panelists shared lessons from personal experience about working with other business owners, and how to leverage the City's resources. David May emphasized that by "speaking with one voice" through the corridor plan, City leaders would better be able to prioritize projects. Mike Freeman explained that his role in the City Manager's office is "to effectively and efficiently help businesses grow in Fort Collins," noting that "we have made wholesale improvements in development review to make it more responsive to business concerns." He recognized that there was a time where 'no-growth' attitudes limited development. Today, he said, "even though Fort Collins is not anti-business, we still have the stigma of being difficult. We're working to change that."

When asked how his business association got started, Dean said that "we just started talking to each other." An association can be as large or as small as business owners would like it to be. Dean's association also gives back to the community, by sponsoring elementary schools and holding fundraisers, which further bolsters their standing as being interested in the greater common good beyond strictly development projects. As they have with the North Fort Collins Business Association, the Fort Collins Area Chamber can assist South College owners in facilitating and organizing business association meetings.

A highlight of the event was Dean Hoag's story about forming and leveraging a business association to make necessary improvements throughout North College. In place for nearly 20 years, the NFCBA enjoys 40-50 attendees at their monthly meetings, and recently helped guide flood control improvements along Dry Creek, remedying a century-old development constraint and public hazard – a problem that has been one of their top priorities. For Dean, who is the owner of Rocky Mountain Battery Service of Fort Collins, the business association is about accountability - making sure the city follows through with what the corridor plan says. "A major objective of the association is, quite simply, equality with the rest of the city," because it helps direct taxes back to your own property or corridor. The NFCBA has been successful in creating an Urban Renewal Authority (or URA), which Mike Freeman called "the best, most effective economic development tool for jump starting projects."



*"Consistently, persistently focus on specific priorities."*

*"The polite, squeaky wheel gets the grease."*

*"The City shares many of your same interests. They have good intentions and are willing to work with you."*

- David May, President & CEO, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce

*“Form an association that works with the City well.”*

*“Your association will help make the area into what you want it to be.”*

*“The City listens to us now. We have a voice. I think it makes a lot of difference.”*

- Dean Hoag, President, North Fort Collins Business Association  
Owner, Rocky Mountain Battery Service of Fort Collins

The NFCBA has worked with CDOT and the City of Fort Collins to develop and implement an Access Control Plan since 1995. “This year we’ve obtained \$4 million dollars to improve infrastructure based on our plan,” Dean said, noting that it couldn’t have happened without a clear plan. Panelists recognized that with the current financing conditions, the area cannot rely on the State to fund highway improvement projects, and that the City, citizens, and development community must work together to find creative ways to improve the corridor’s infrastructure. Setting specific priorities, speaking with one voice, and identifying a champion within the City – either an elected official or staff person – are essential for obtaining funding for corridor projects. “If it is important enough,” said David May, “we can do it.”

Attendees then shared their concerns with panelists, discussing as a group issues such as:

- How the NFCBA was established
- Whether a Urban Renewal Authority would be an effective financing tool
- Speed and safety issues
- Access control issues
- The City’s development review process
- Ownership of frontage roads
- A desire to extend Mason Corridor further south.

For more information about the South College Corridor Plan and upcoming events, contact Timothy Wilder, City Planner, at 970-221-6376 or [twilder@fcgov.com](mailto:twilder@fcgov.com) or visit <http://www.fcgov.com/advanceplanning/south-college.php>.