

MIDTOWN

REDEVELOPMENT STUDY

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Public Meetings:

Public Open House and Presentation

Conducted March 10, 2010

City of Fort Collins City Council Finance Committee

Conducted May 17, 2010

City of Fort Collins City Council Workshop

Conducted May 25, 2010

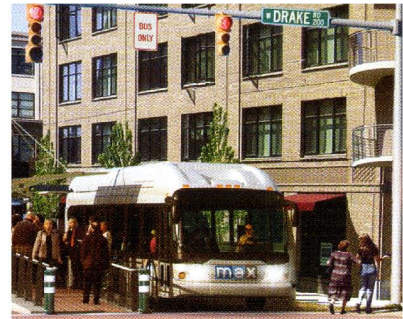
PROLOGUE

Fort Collins is acknowledged as one of the top cities in America, featuring great natural beauty, a thriving historic downtown, Colorado State University, and a diverse and stable economic base.

As the commercial and cultural anchor for northern Colorado, Fort Collins has an opportunity to continue its role as a regional destination despite the current economic downturn. As a maturing city, the opportunities for greenfield development are diminishing, placing a greater focus on infill redevelopment. Midtown presents a central location and a positive, development-ready mix of established businesses and opportunity sites combined with great access, including the Mason Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). New development, particularly for housing along the BRT, provides the opportunity for Midtown to become a diverse mixed-use district. Foothills Mall can also be revitalized, securing Fort Collins as a regional retail destination.

These elements of Midtown – Bus Rapid Transit, redevelopment of existing buildings, use of existing utilities and roads, the provision of in-town housing, and the promotion of bike and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods – make the redevelopment of Midtown among the most environmentally sensitive development alternatives possible and place Fort Collins in the forefront of environmentally sustainable city planning.

Over time and with thoughtful planning, the redevelopment of Midtown can produce a district as identifiable and memorable as Old Town or CSU, further reinforcing Fort Collins as a great place to live and visit.



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Introduction:

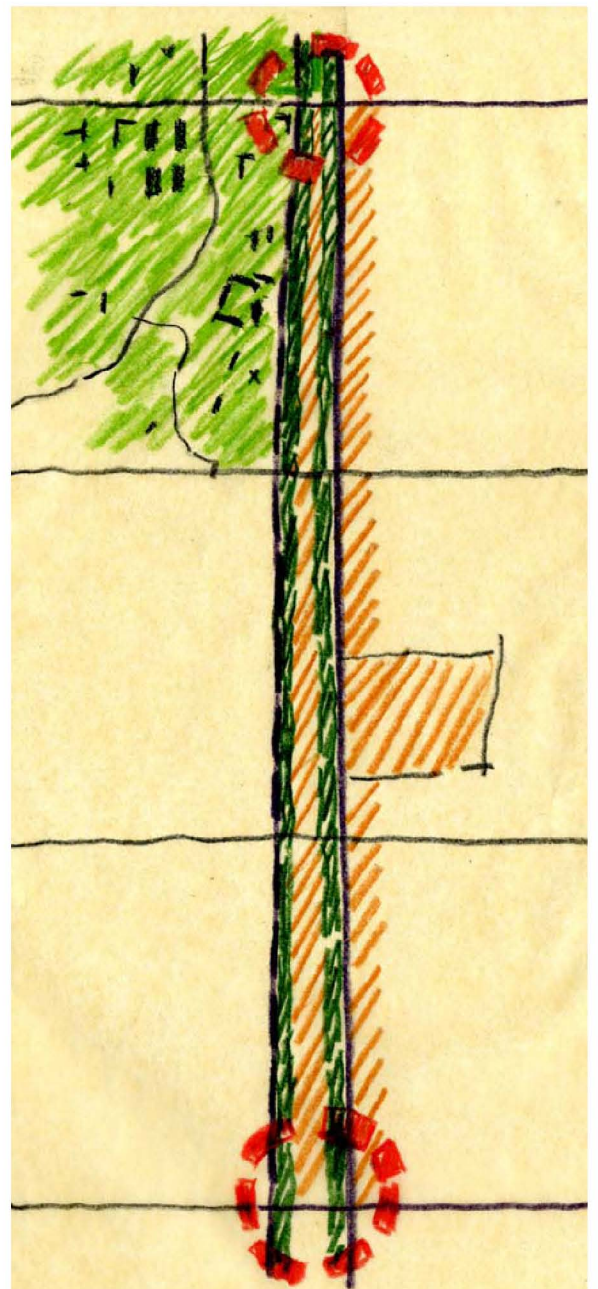
Midtown, the South College Avenue commercial corridor running from Prospect Road to Harmony Road, has been in decline as a prominent regional destination for retail uses. Increased regional competition, aging and outmoded space, and the impact of the national recession have contributed to nearly 700,000 square feet of vacant space. However, Midtown still accounts for over 40 percent of total retail sales in the City, making it central to the identity and economic vitality of Fort Collins.

In 2009 the City of Fort Collins, recognizing that the Midtown Corridor deserved and required an immediate assessment of its economic outlook and community aspirations for its future, initiated this Midtown Commercial Redevelopment Study. From late October, 2009, to April of 2010, the Midtown Study consultant team worked with the City, stakeholders, and the public to assess Midtown conditions, make recommendations for its future, and outline next steps for action.

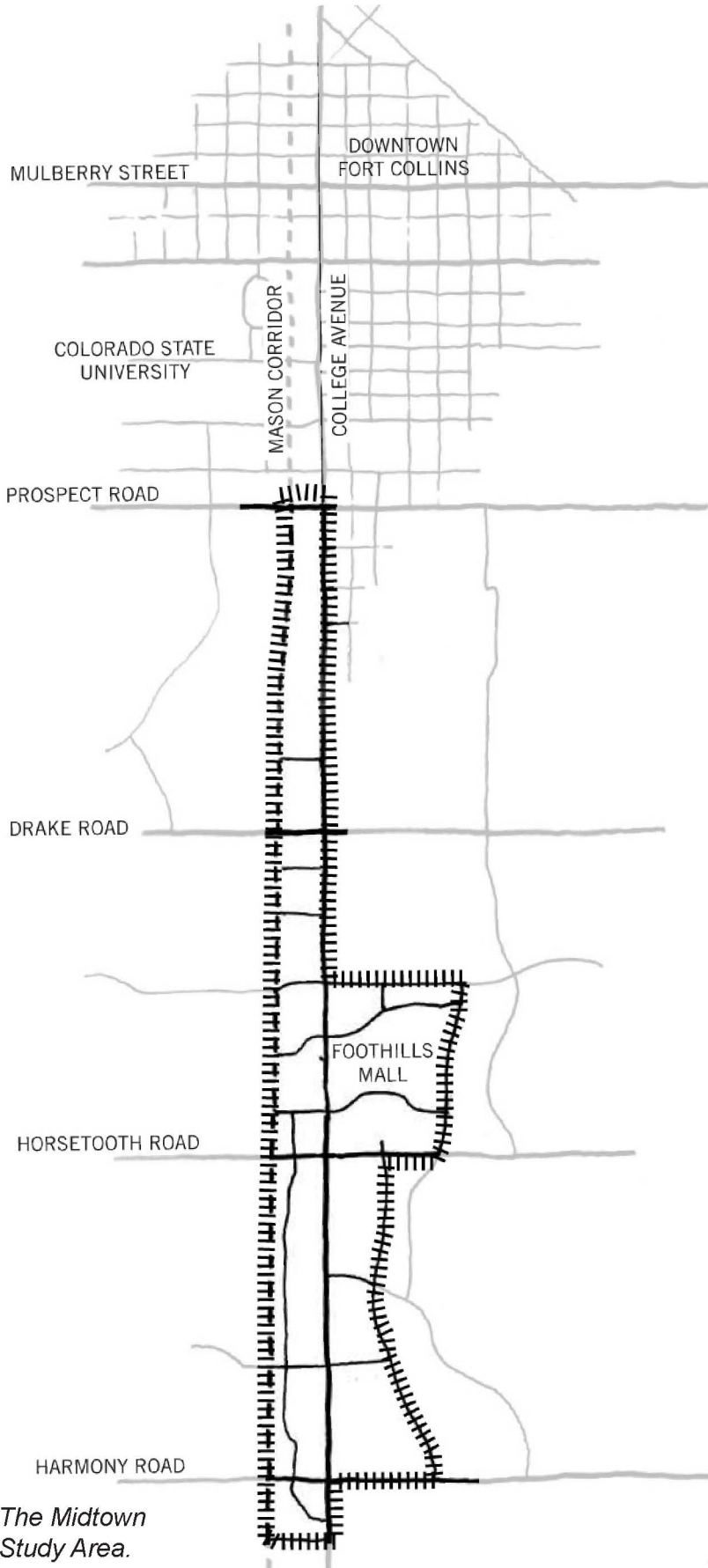
During the course of its study of Midtown, the consultant team has become an enthusiastic supporter of Midtown's potential. The commercial corridor has a critical mass of retail uses, and a number of important anchors. The College Avenue Corridor and Foothills Mall individually represent significant redevelopment opportunities that can then be integrated into a central and cohesive mixed-use district, tying together Old Town and CSU to the north, and Harmony Road and adjacent communities to the south and east. Of course, inherent in these opportunities lie challenges as well, and both public and private support will be needed to effect positive change.



The close proximity of the Rockies contributes to the unique character of Fort Collins.



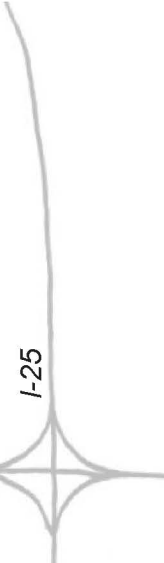
College Avenue, CSU, Foothills Mall, and gateway intersections at Prospect and Harmony Roads give Midtown an identifiable character.



Old Town Fort Collins provides an excellent example of a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use district.

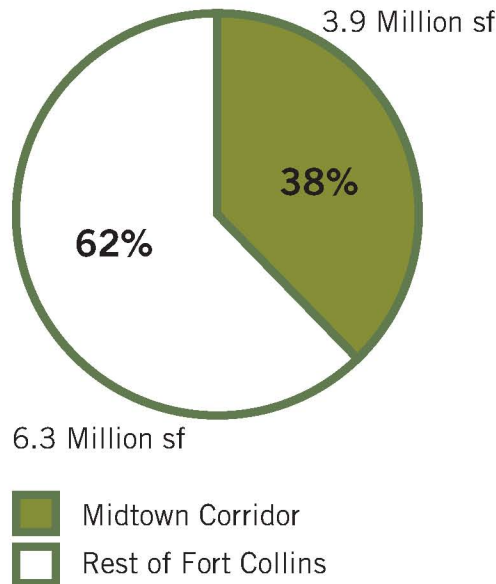


Colorado State University brings unique intellectual, cultural, and economic opportunities to the Fort Collins community.

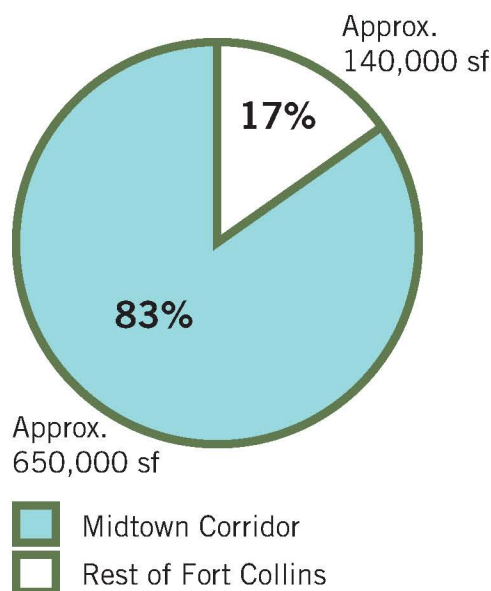


TOTAL RETAIL SPACE

Fort Collins has a total of 10.2 million square feet of retail space, with Midtown accounting for 38 percent of it.

**VACANT RETAIL SPACE**

Fort Collins vacant retail space is concentrated in Midtown in a small number of larger format stores such as the former Walmart, J.C. Penny, and Mervyn's.

**Opportunity in Change:**

Anchored by CSU, Old Town, and a diverse employment base, and located at the spectacular intersection of the high plains and the Rockies, Fort Collins consistently rates among the most desirable places to live.

Despite the impact of the current economic recession and the departure of some key retailers, Fort Collins remains a strong regional center for the growing northern Colorado area. Within the city, College Avenue provides a central location with easy access to Downtown, CSU, and surrounding neighborhoods and communities, making the Midtown Corridor a key element of a thriving city.

Many vacancies are due to national retailer bankruptcies and mergers. Fort Collins' market conditions remain strong, with robust sales for many operating retailers, and national retailers such as Whole Foods recently locating in Midtown. In fact, these vacancies can be viewed as opportunities for redevelopment and reinvention that would not otherwise be possible. Furthermore, the imminent construction of the Mason Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) promises to improve Midtown's integration and connection with CSU and Old Town, and will provide an important catalyst for redevelopment.

The area's inherent value, combined with its retail vacancies and aging properties, represents a valuable opportunity for the positive evolution and reinvention of Midtown.

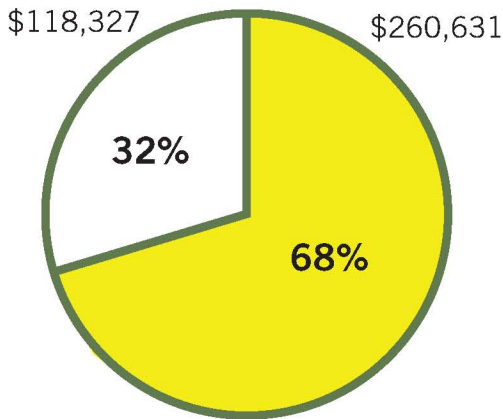


Large vacant sites are an opportunity for housing and mixed-use redevelopment.

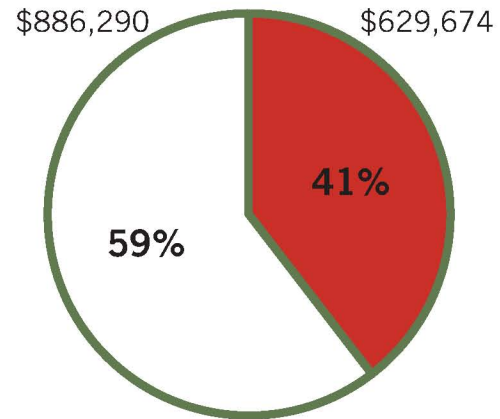
MIDTOWN CORRIDOR AND CITY WIDE SALES

1 opportunity in change

The Midtown Corridor generated \$630 million in retail sales in 2008. This represents 41 percent of total retail sales and 68 percent of shoppers' goods sales (apparel, furniture, electronics, sporting goods, etc.) in the City.



Shopper's Goods

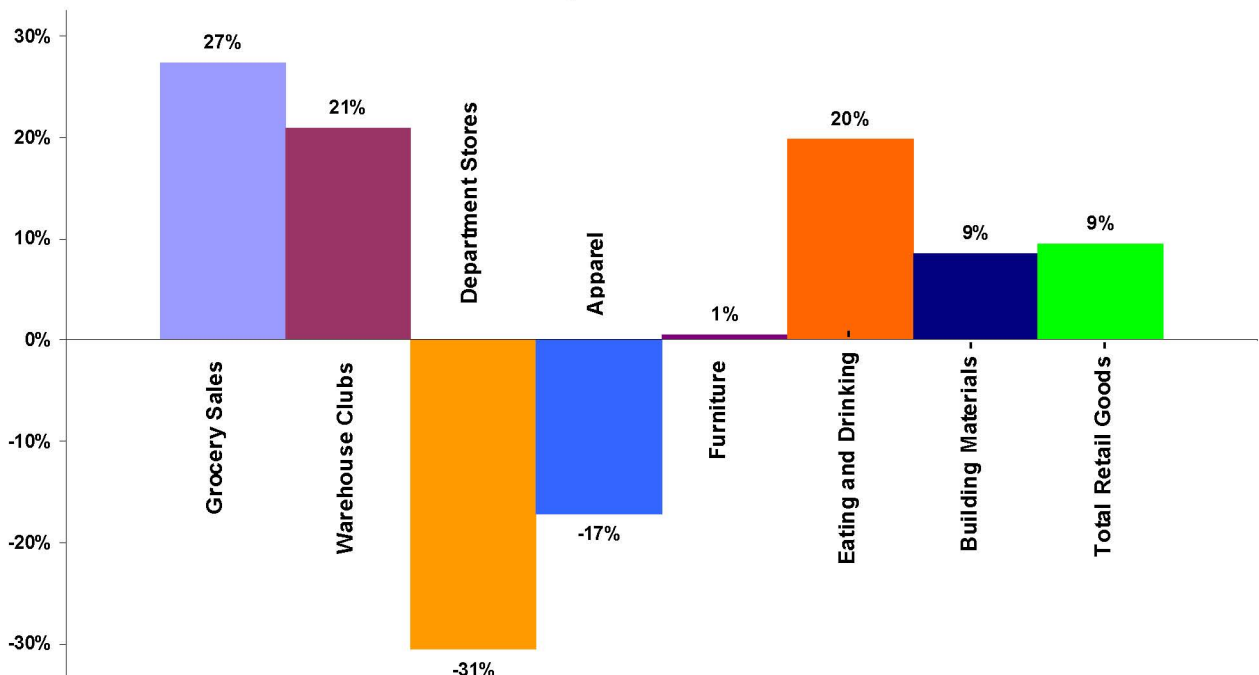


Total Retail Goods



CHANGE IN CITY-WIDE RETAIL SALES 2004 - 2008

Total retail sales have grown over the last five years. However, department store and apparel sales have dropped 31 percent and 17 percent, respectively, and total furniture sales have remained flat. This indicates a loss in market share to new regional retail destinations.





National tenants such as REI and Whole Foods have recently located in Midtown demonstrating its continued relevance as a strong retail address.



Recent projects in other areas of Fort Collins indicate the type of development that can be expected in Midtown.

Overall Economic Outlook:

Fort Collins is the central city of the growing northern Colorado metropolitan area. Today, it is a maturing community, with slowing green field growth and a greater emphasis on infill and redevelopment. Surrounding communities will continue to grow, strengthening the role of Fort Collins as the regional center, particularly as the economy recovers. Due to its established identity, marketable address, and current retailers, in addition to its inherent amenities and environment, it is possible for Fort Collins – and Midtown in particular – to retain and enhance its position as a regional retail destination.

Projections for retail demand in Midtown over the next twenty years indicate an opportunity to capture retail space roughly equivalent to or slightly less than the existing vacant inventory. And while some new tenants may choose to move into existing vacancies, most are not likely to find locations in Midtown in its current state, leading to redevelopment of existing retail properties to replace the predominant strip centers of today.

There is the potential for development of 1,500 to 3,000 infill housing units in Midtown. Modest increments of office, institutional, and hotel uses are also expected to seek locations in Midtown.



Regional competition for Midtown has developed in Loveland, Windsor and Timnath.



Newer retail developments east on Harmony Road have also impacted the Midtown corridor.



The addition of residential uses into Midtown can lead to the creation of new neighborhoods.

Market Analysis Findings:

Estimated potential new development in Midtown through 2030:

500,000 – 590,000 new or re-leased retail square feet.

- 260,000 to 350,000 square feet supportable in the redevelopment of Foot-hills Mall.
- 240,000 square feet additional along the Corridor.
- This area is roughly equivalent or slightly less than the vacant retail area in Midtown. However, new retail will likely be located in new or substantially reconfigured buildings.

200,000 new office square feet in Midtown.

1,500 to 3,000 new housing units.

- 1,580 of these units can be accommodated on opportunity sites in Midtown identified for possible near-term development.

22 opportunity sites for near-term development totaling 125 acres of land were identified along the Midtown Corridor.

Approximately 40 percent of the acreage represents opportunities for the reuse of existing buildings, while 60 percent of the acreage represents redevelopment opportunities.

Mixed-Use and Density:

Repositioning and repurposing outmoded retail space, adding thousands of new residents, and bringing in associated and contributing uses can transform Midtown into a thriving mixed-use district that benefits the entire city. Utilizing an abundance of surface parking lots and replacing many low-density, first-generation buildings, this future development is an opportunity to thoughtfully define the character, look, and feel of Midtown. The Midtown Study includes several alternatives for development, based on projected market demand, which test new planning standards and design concepts for the public realm.

The Study represents the beginning of a forward-looking conversation about the future of Midtown: one that is grounded in real estate economics, and addresses community aspirations.



Pedestrian and bike friendly redevelopment of Midtown will expand opportunities for Fort Collins residents to live more independently of their cars.



Added density in Midtown represents an opportunity to create distinct neighborhoods for living, working, and shopping, with public amenities, a central address, and access to enhanced transit on the Mason BRT.



Clustering a variety of uses, including office, retail, and housing, allows residents to choose a lifestyle based on foot, bike, or public transit.



Urban communities with strong connectivity often generate pride among residents and a unique local identity over time.



Attractive neighborhood amenities create destinations that also serve the greater community.

CORR

The combination of positive market forces, the introduction of the BRT, and the availability of good sites for redevelopment, in combination with its established address and identity, can lead to Midtown's transformation into a flourishing new district for Fort Collins.



I D O R

DISCUSSION:

MASON CORRIDOR OPPORTUNITY SITES

SUB-AREAS

ACCESS AND ADDRESS

PLANNING CONCEPTS

PROTOTYPES

Mason Corridor:

The BRT will enhance access between downtown, CSU, and the three-mile Midtown Corridor, and will allow for pedestrian connections and development opportunities east to College Avenue. Underutilized sites between College Avenue and the railroad tracks are the most likely and best location for the projected addition of up to 3,000 housing units over the next 20 years. With this influx of additional housing and the natural evolution of commercial uses, the Midtown BRT Corridor has the potential to be transformed from a strip-center dominated highway into a walkable, bikeable, mixed-use district. Based on the market analysis and initial planning, new residential development may include a range of housing types, including townhomes, stacked apartments and condominiums, with ground-floor retail development at key locations.

In order to test the impediments to and impact of projected new residential development and commercial redevelopment, the Study includes prototype studies for three hypothetical projects. These studies include illustrative material that demonstrates the possible look and feel of the new proposed neighborhoods for community review and comment.

The results of these prototype studies are encouraging. Assuming redevelopment of only a portion of the possible redevelopment opportunity sites, 3,000 housing units can be accommodated with building heights not exceeding four or five floors while allowing for significant commercial redevelopment and preservation of success-

ful existing businesses. This density of mixed-use development conforms well to existing zoning, indicating no need for significant rezoning. In order to promote redevelopment, however, it is recommended to provide height bonuses for horizontal mixed-use development in addition to current bonuses provided for vertically integrated mixed-use.

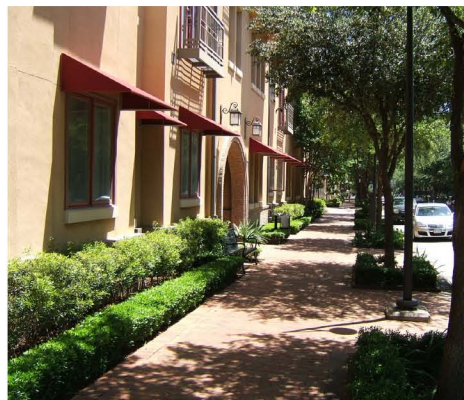
The prototype studies also test recommended planning concepts that are intended to improve access and increase marketable commercial and residential frontage within the Corridor. Again, the results are promising and indicate that incremental mixed-use development can lead to an integrated pattern of access and open space that promotes redevelopment, increases land value and, ultimately, transforms the Corridor into a new and distinct neighborhood.

Since anticipated development will occur over many years and may not reach projected levels, it is also important to address immediate needs for upgrading and re-leasing existing buildings. This is addressed by Study recommendations to develop “Here-to-There” strategies.

The recommended planning concepts require further community input, refinement, and study to ensure that the investments of current stakeholders are secure and to guide projected development towards an integrated plan for the Corridor. This continued work is included in the Action Plan in the final section of this report.



The addition of significant residential units will be key to the creation of a new Midtown neighborhood.



Pedestrian-friendly streetscapes help create a sense of place and address for residential and commercial building uses.

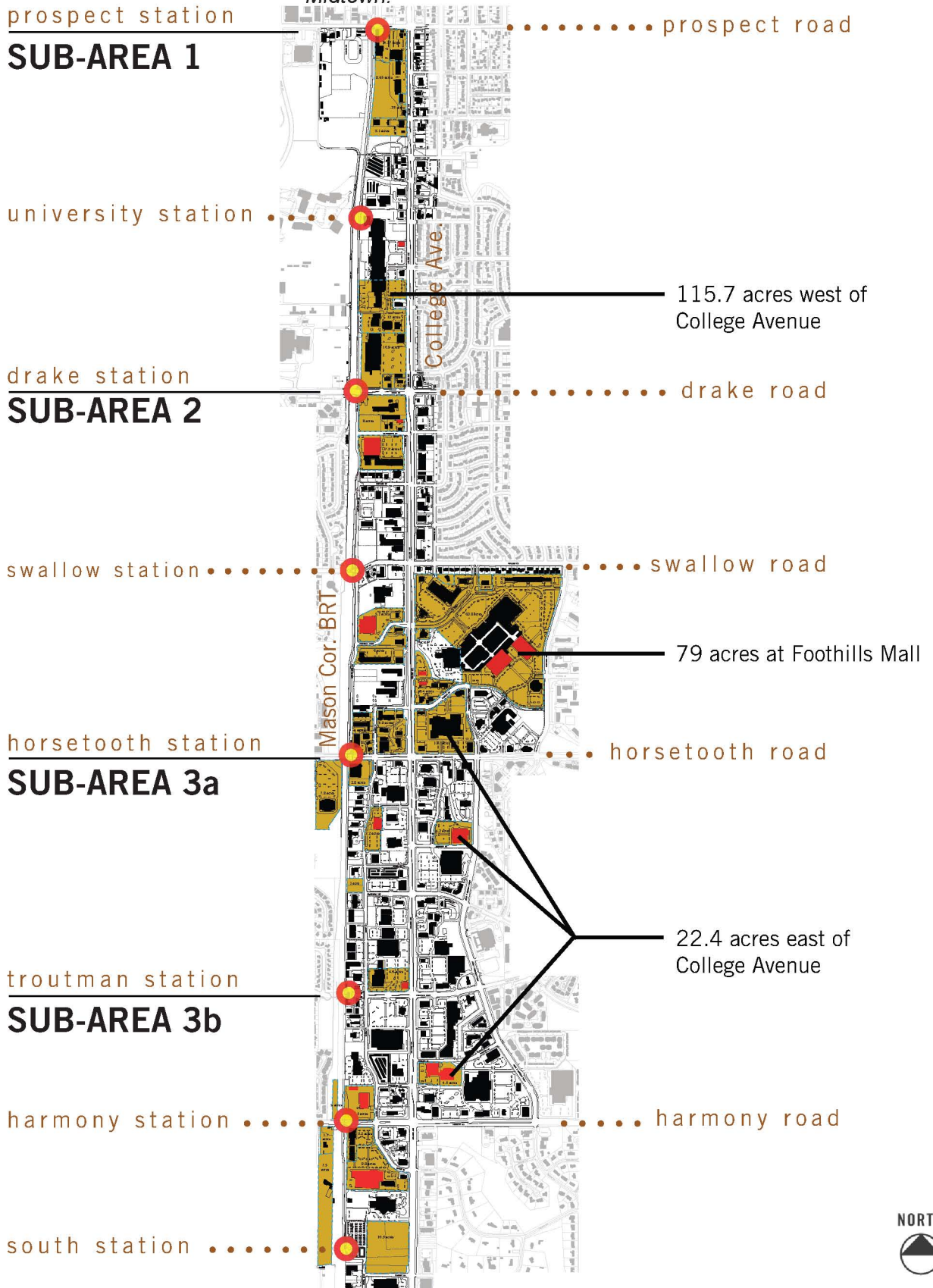


Large vacancies such as the former Walmart provide opportunities for new housing and mixed-use development in Midtown.

OPPORTUNITY SITES

2 mason corridor

The consultant team identified many sites with redevelopment potential over the next ten years. The abundance of relatively large sites under consolidated ownership present a good opportunity for Midtown.



Sub-Areas:

Midtown naturally divides into three distinct districts, based on age of development, physical layout, and market orientation. Moving southward from Downtown, South College Avenue forms a virtual timeline of development.

Sub-Area 1: The first mile, from Prospect Road to Drake Road, is generally populated with the oldest developments; many are at or near the end of their initial lifecycle. The successful redevelopment of University Town Center is positive evidence that a natural recycling of aging development is already taking place in Fort Collins.

Sub-Area 2: The middle mile, between Drake and Horsetooth roads, was largely developed in the 1970s and is dominated by Foothills Mall to the east and auto dealerships to the west. Based on the general age of its developments and changes in the retail department store industry, this middle sub-area of Midtown is rich with sites ideal for redevelopment.

Sub-Areas 3: The southernmost mile and a half, extending from Horsetooth Road and past the intersection with Harmony Road, is the most recently developed area and, as a consequence, the most stable - with key exceptions such as the former Walmart site.



A mix of uses, proximity to CSU, and easy access to public transit make Midtown an ideal location for housing.

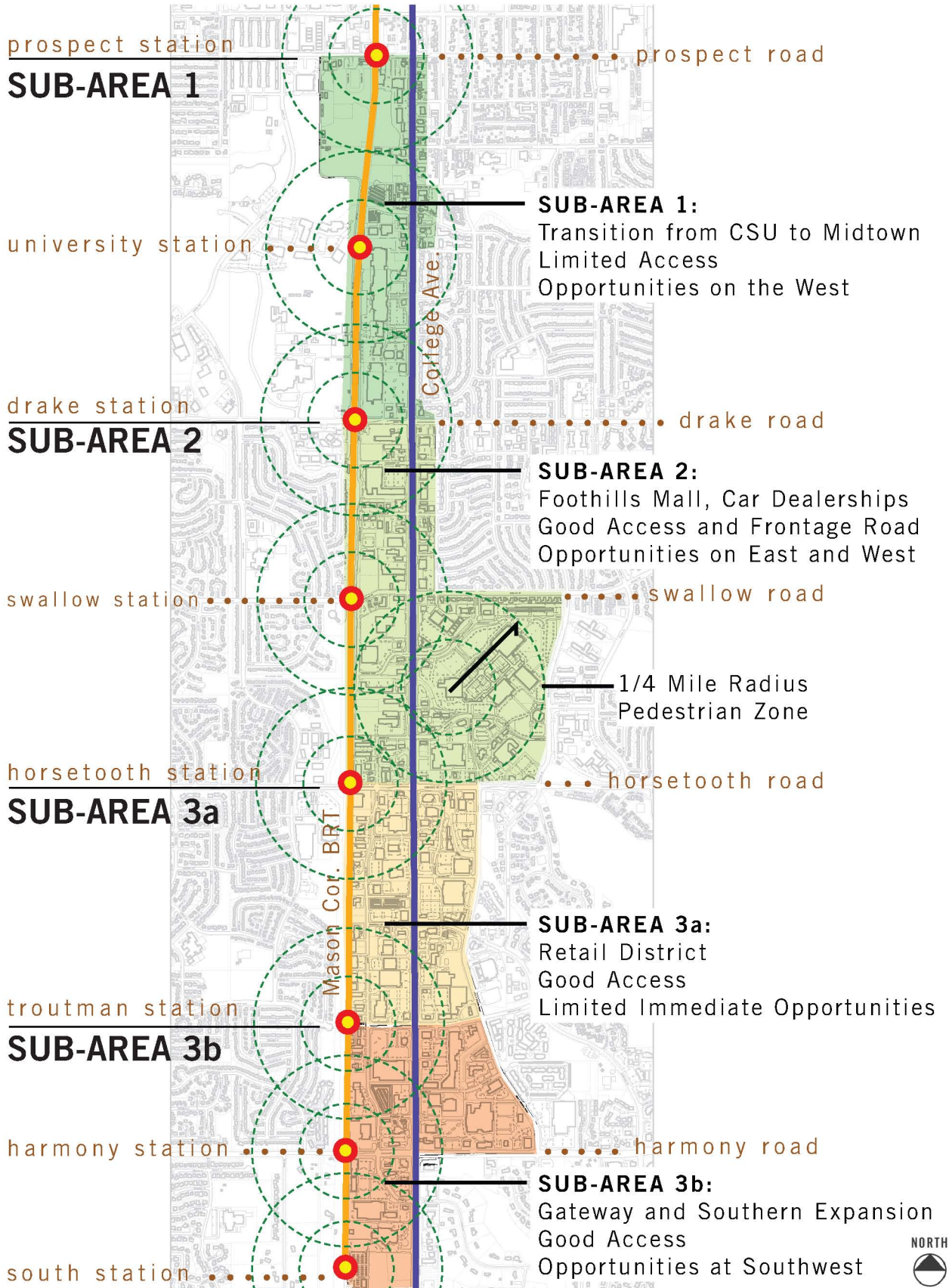


Revitalizing Foothills Mall as the regional shopping destination is key to the economic health of Fort Collins.



The Mason Corridor BRT system will provide a convenient alternative to the car while also providing an incentive for transit-oriented housing and commercial uses.

BRT stations on the Mason Corridor will promote distinct walkable zones within Midtown, especially for student and other transit-oriented multi-family housing and related commercial development. In turn, new development will support the BRT with increased ridership.



Access and Address:

The Sub-Areas' varied physical layouts also informed the Study's recommendations and can suggest the character of likely development.

Sub-Area 1: The northernmost mile is dominated by College Avenue, as there is little other access to properties between Prospect Avenue and Drake Road.

Sub-Area 2: The segment between Drake and Horsetooth roads is well served by secondary access from McClelland Drive and JFK Parkway, although access through and around Foothills Mall is not good. The middle mile also features a frontage road on the west side of College Avenue that may serve to buffer future development from through traffic.

Sub-Areas 3: The southernmost mile and a half are very well served by Mason Street and JFK Parkway, which both provide excellent alternative access to College Avenue from Harmony Road and the communities and neighborhoods to the south. This robust access system and the sub-area's relatively recent development indicate that much of the southern segment will function well for the existing mix of national retailers for some time.



Construction of the BRT will create new opportunities for the "backside" of West College Avenue properties.



A well-planned boulevard can create identity for an entire city.

"Les Grand Boulevards" - Renoir 1875



College Avenue has the basic form and attributes to be transformed into an iconic boulevard.

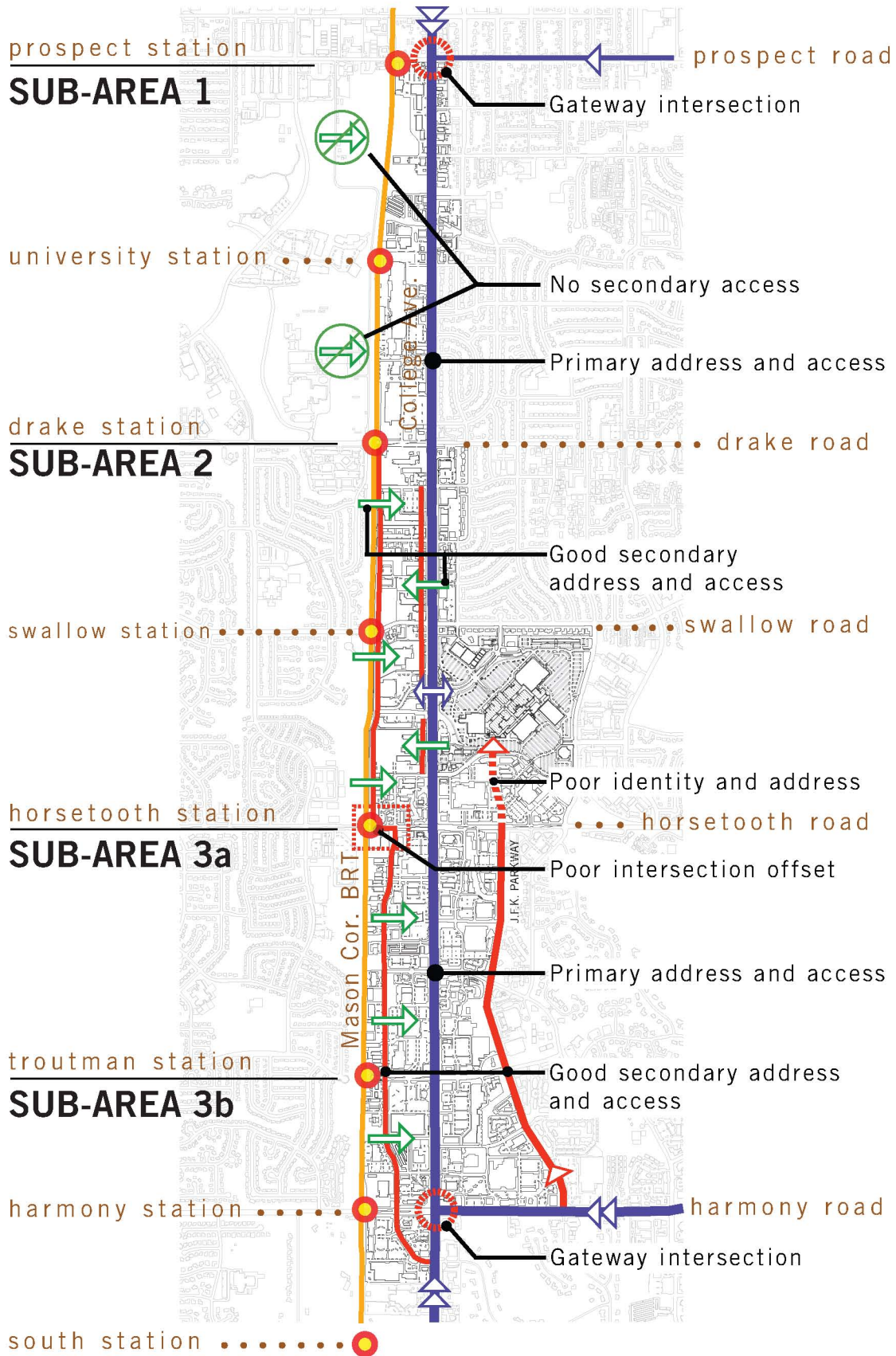


An enhanced frontage road can provide a slower, safer experience for pedestrians, creating a more appropriate address for residential and commercial uses along College Avenue as seen on Octavia Boulevard in San Francisco.

ACCESS AND ADDRESS

2 access and address

Midtown has a mix of good and poor addresses for redevelopment. College Avenue can become an iconic boulevard for Fort Collins.



Planning Concepts:

Paramount to adding development and new uses to the Corridor are public improvements to create a well-connected, pedestrian-oriented environment of streets and open space. These improvements can lead to long-term flexibility for development and an identifiable character for the Corridor that reflects and enhances the community. Overarching recommendations include: planning to improve access; enhancing the marketability of Mason Street and McClelland Drive addresses; and creating character and a sense of place by encouraging the redevelopment of large blocks in a manner that increases east-west and north-south accessibility and emphasizes a human scale form.

Specific Study recommendations to achieve this are:

- Develop, over time, additional north-south accessibility, as redevelopment occurs, providing a pedestrian and bike-friendly alternative to College Avenue.
 - back should be addressed subsequent to this study during implementation and future design studies.
- Create periodic open spaces that connect through from College Avenue to Mason Street, McClelland Drive, and the BRT to the west.
 - Depending on location and circumstance, these open spaces may be vehicular slow-streets or pedestrian-only, and may remain privately maintained or become public rights-of-way. This pattern of open space will break down the size of large parcels, create additional frontage for development, facilitate phased, market-responsive construction, and lead to an enhanced public realm of neighborhood streets, parks, and plazas.
- Replace, over time, the pattern of uniform and linear strip center development with a series of interconnected development nodes that feature defining open-space elements, such as plazas and small parks.
- New buildings should define the boulevard and public space by being built to their edge.
- Create a north-south pedestrian and bike-access route adjacent to the BRT between Prospect and Drake roads, (east of the railroad right-of-way) so future residents can reach the BRT and other neighborhoods without using College Avenue.
- Improve frontage roads on the west side of College Avenue with landscaping, lighting, and pull-in parking to create a slow-street address for new neighborhood commercial and residential uses. Pedestrian crossings at cross streets should also be improved. Businesses and property owners in the study area noted the need to balance store visibility with landscape enhancements as a specific action essential to the continued success of the corridor. This point of feedback should be addressed subsequent to this study during implementation and future design studies.
- Re-align Mason Street and/or McClelland Avenue at Horsetooth Road to eliminate the cumbersome offset of these two streets.
- Continue streetscape improvements on Mason Street and McClelland Drive. These streets should be planned as a new ‘front door’ for residential and mixed-use development facing west, away from College Avenue. These streets should be planned as a new front door for residential, mixed-use, and commercial development. Work with existing business owners to find opportunities to open business onto Mason, McClelland, and the BRT, thereby creating two front doors for properties that span between College Avenue and Mason or McClelland. Service areas should be designed to face sides streets wherever possible.
- Consider building entryway features - such as special landscape, sign monuments, and lighting - where College Avenue intersects with Harmony and Prospect roads, each being a major entry point to Fort Collins from I-25. Also consider Corridor-wide signage and identity programs for public streets to help unify the Midtown district.
- Work with CDOT to improve College Avenue: improve and enhance landscaping, lighting, and crosswalks for consistency, including areas of pedestrian refuge and pedestrian-friendly signalization. This is especially important at key intersections to facilitate safe and comfortable east-west access across College Avenue.
- Improve the major east-west roads that have Mason Corridor BRT stops. Consider making these streets “green connections” to encourage pedestrian and bike access to College Avenue from the BRT.

PLANNING CONCEPTS

2 planning concepts

Three proto-typical Corridor opportunity sites, plus Foothills Mall, have been studied in greater detail to test new planning concepts and development standards.

prospect station

SUB-AREA 1

university station

drake station

SUB-AREA 2

horsetooth station

SUB-AREA 3a

troutman station

SUB-AREA 3b

harmony station

south station



prospect road

Create public realm and reduce block size

Leverage new development with BRT

Improve and enhance College Avenue as an iconic boulevard

drake road

Improve and enhance frontage road address

Enhance east-west access across College Avenue

swallow road

Foothills Mall

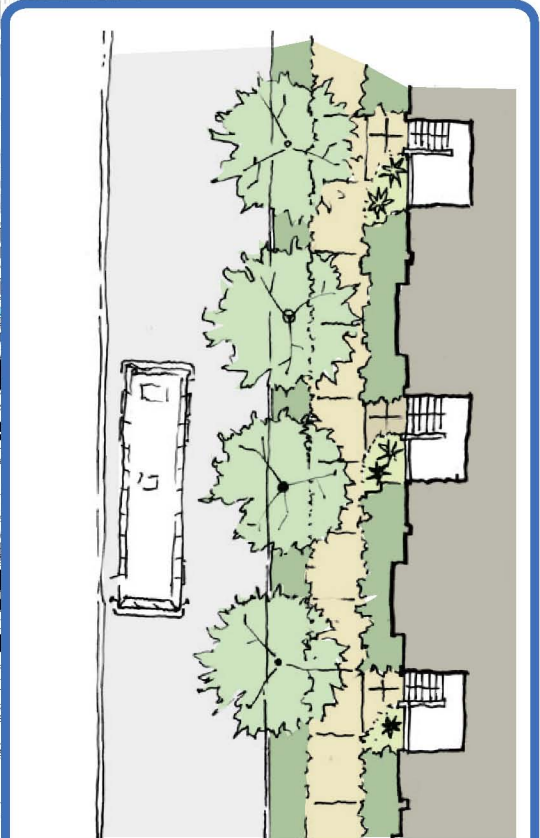
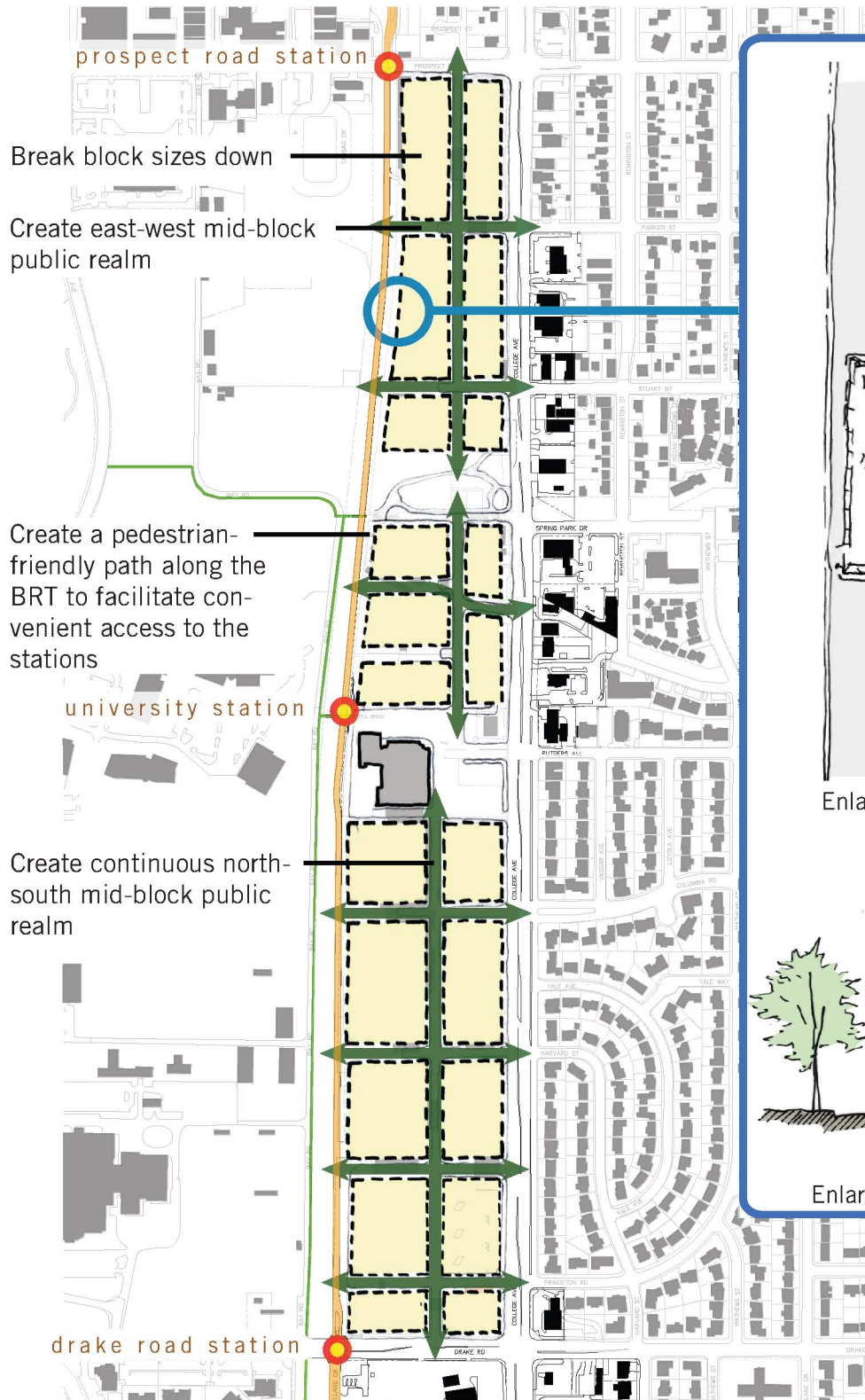
horsetooth road

Improve and enhance westside address

harmony road



Smaller block sizes with pedestrian-friendly streetscapes will encourage residents to use cars less, walk more, and utilize the BRT. Smaller blocks also increase both frontage for development and the ability to phase construction to meet market demand.



Enlarged Greenway Plan



Enlarged Greenway Section

FRONTAGE ROAD

2 planning concepts

An enhanced frontage road can provide a slower, safer experience for pedestrians and will create a more appropriate address for residential and commercial uses along College Avenue.



The frontage road allows efficient through traffic on College Avenue

The frontage road creates a buffer from heavy traffic on College Avenue for commercial and residential uses

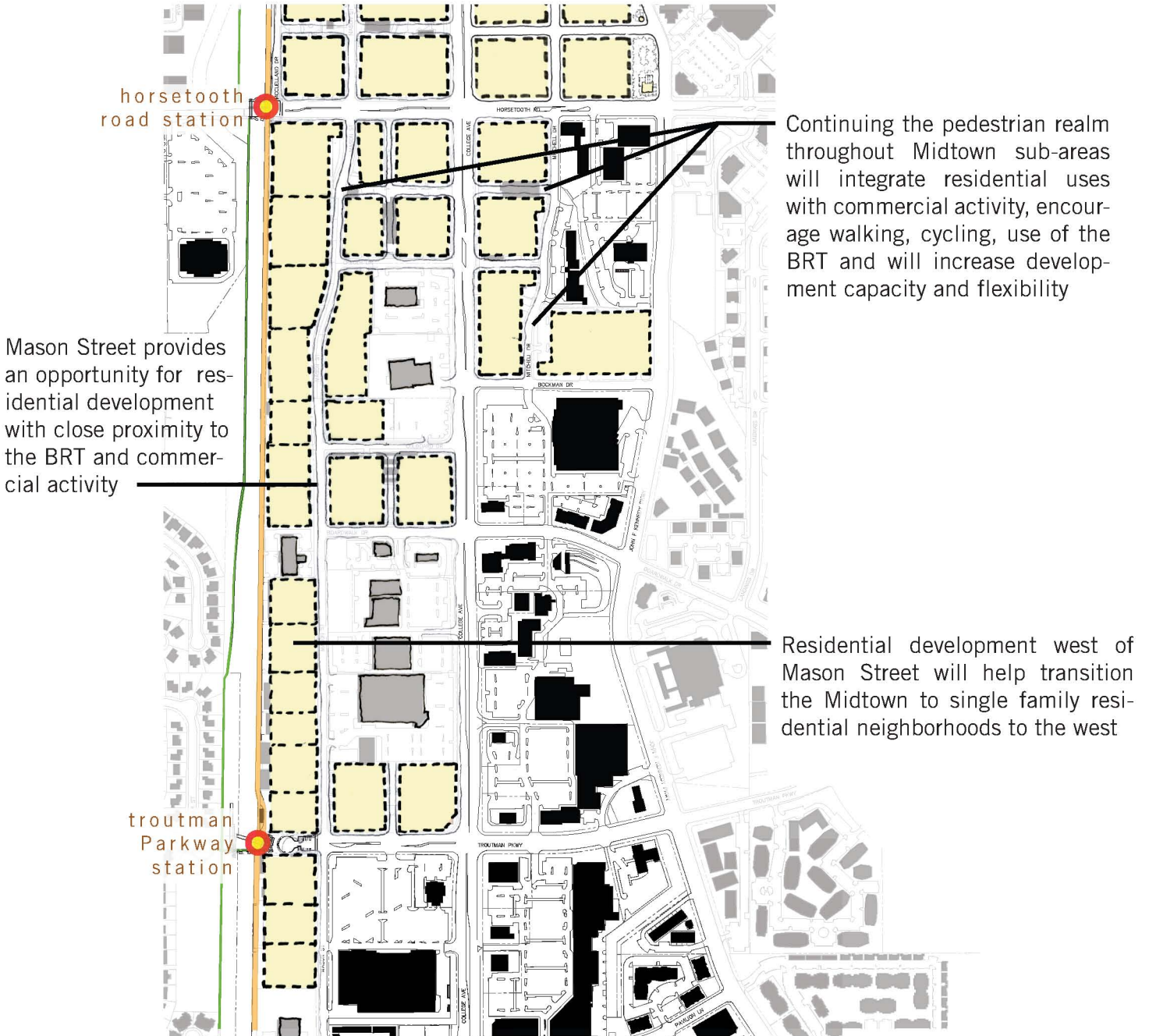
Foothills Mall - See Section 3

WESTSIDE ADDRESS

SUB-AREA 3A

Residential development along Mason Street will be ideally positioned to benefit from close proximity to established commercial uses, the BRT, and bike routes to the west.

(Note that Sub-Area 3 is shown in two segments: A and B)



Mason Street provides an opportunity for residential development with close proximity to the BRT and commercial activity

Continuing the pedestrian realm throughout Midtown sub-areas will integrate residential uses with commercial activity, encourage walking, cycling, use of the BRT and will increase development capacity and flexibility

Residential development west of Mason Street will help transition the Midtown to single family residential neighborhoods to the west

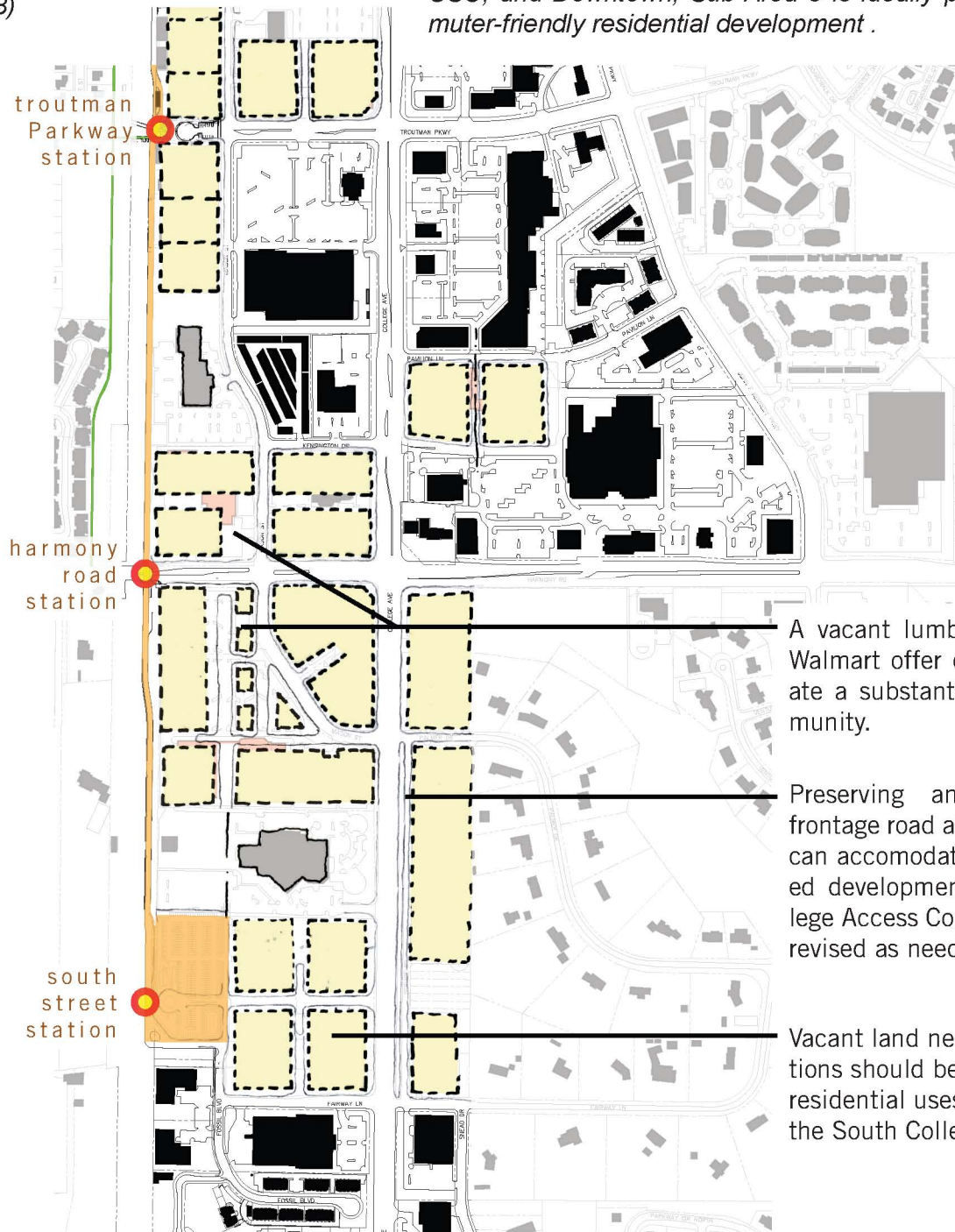
SUB-AREA 3B

(Note that Sub-Area 3 is shown in two segments: A and B)

HARMONY GATEWAY

2 planning concepts

With three BRT stations and direct access to the I-25, Loveland, CSU, and Downtown, Sub-Area 3 is ideally positioned as a commuter-friendly residential development.



A vacant lumber mill and former Walmart offer enough land to create a substantial residential community.

Preserving and enhancing the frontage road along College Avenue can accommodate pedestrian-oriented development. The South College Access Control Plan should be revised as needed.

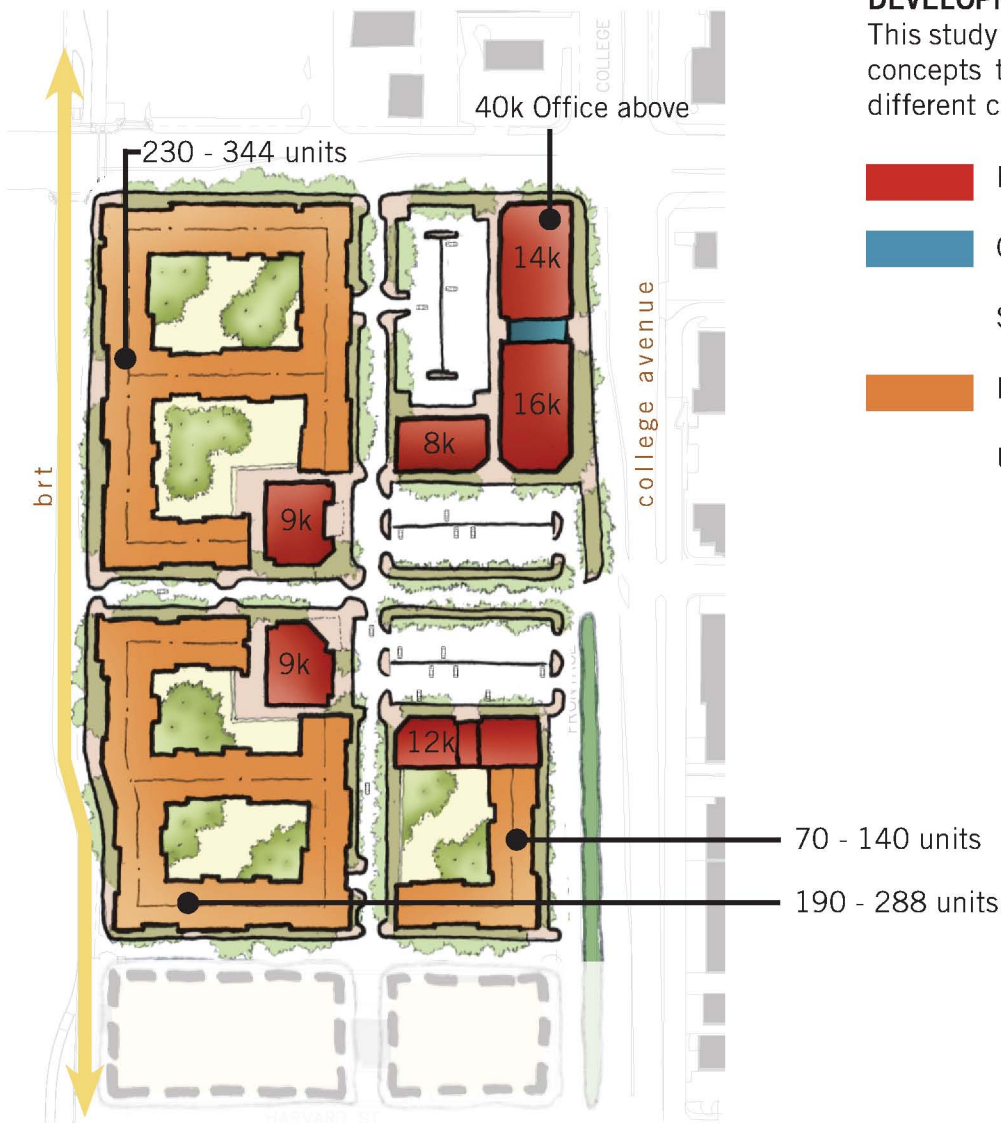
Vacant land near BRT transit stations should be considered for residential uses consistent with the South College Corridor Plan.

DEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATED:

This study is illustrative of broad planning concepts that can be achieved in many different configurations and phases.

	Retail:	68,000 sf
	Office:	40,000 sf
	Surface Pkg.:	450 spaces
	Housing:	490 - 770 units
	Units / Acre:	32 - 50

NORTH

**Prototype A:**

Prototype A illustrates the redevelopment of a standard strip center into a more urban mixed-use development.

The mixed-use environment encourages pedestrian activity and an active street life. Uses can be integrated either in vertical mixed-use buildings or by clustering a variety of single-use buildings within a convenient walking distance.

The housing illustrated in this potential concept locates residential parking half a level below grade under the

housing. This configuration provides additional privacy for first-level tenants by slightly elevating their units above the sidewalk. Convenient surface parking is meanwhile reserved for the retail development.

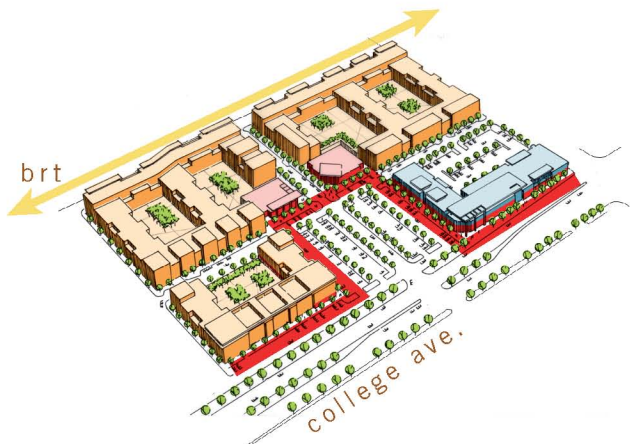
The frontage road allows a unique opportunity to buffer the housing with a slow-moving street that is safe for pedestrian and bike use, thereby improving the residential and retail address and adding value to the development.

COMMERCIAL ACCESS:

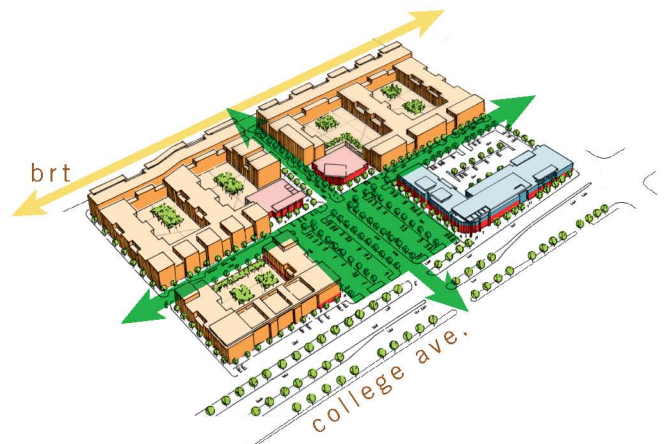
Commercial uses have been organized around a central parking field that preserves important sightlines from College Avenue. The pattern begins to create a series of defined development nodes along College Avenue. These nodes will create distinct places along the corridor, enhancing the sense of character and identity for the overall sub-area.

ACCESS AND OPEN SPACE:

The two internal streets organize vehicular and pedestrian movement through the site. Protected from the fast-moving traffic on College Avenue, these internal streets can accommodate an active street life, facilitate phased development, and will connect to other Midtown projects over time.



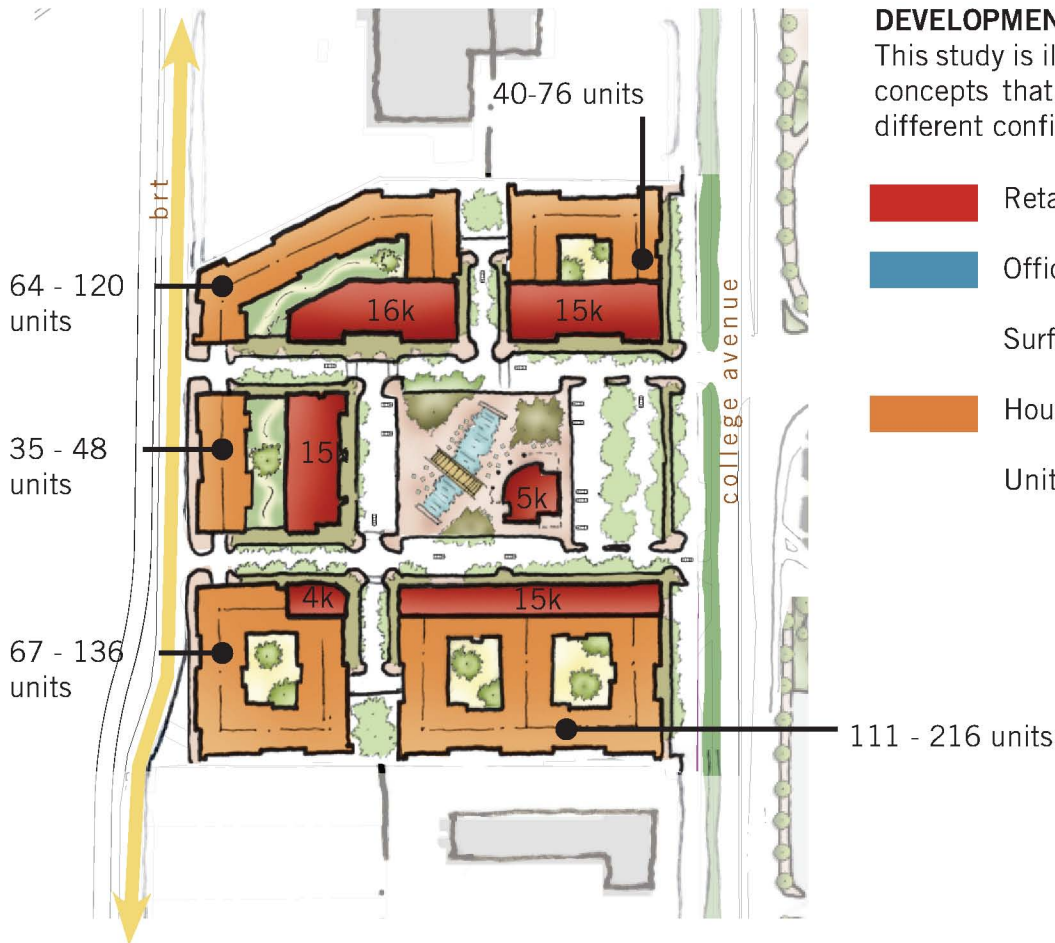
Commercial Access



Access and Open Space



PROTOTYPE B



DEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATED:

This study is illustrative of broad planning concepts that can be achieved in many different configurations and phases.

	Retail:	70,000 sf
	Office:	0 sf
	Surface Pkg.:	315 spaces
	Housing:	317 - 596 units
	Units / Acre:	28-53

NORTH



Prototype B:

Prototype B illustrates a redevelopment option organized around a small central park. The park creates a shared amenity for both the residential and retail users, adding value to the immediate development as well as to the overall neighborhood.

The design organizes the site with a street grid, creating two east-west connections between College Avenue and the BRT. The north-south street connects to development that may occur on adjacent sites.

Mixed-use is achieved through a combination of vertically integrated, mixed-use structures and adjacent single-use buildings. The retail and residential address on College Avenue is made possible by the frontage road.

A canal is shown day lighted and landscaped to add a natural amenity to the park. When possible it is best to leverage natural amenities to create a distinct place and destination.

COMMERCIAL ACCESS:

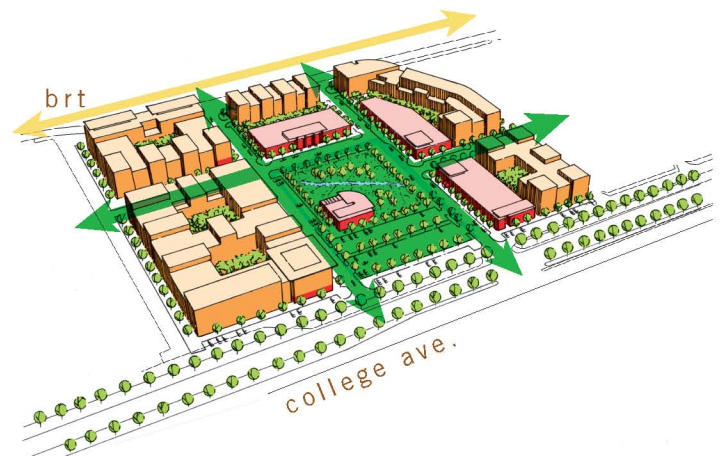
Prototype B captures important sight lines from College Avenue and features a village square with pedestrian-oriented shops connected by a streetscape environment. The park creates a central address and identity for the commercial activity.

ACCESS AND OPEN SPACE:

Amenities such as the proposed park can benefit the immediate site as well as the larger emerging neighborhood. Strong connectivity between developments, through a street grid, or paseos, make amenities available to near-by properties. This synergy can increase value and provide a catalyst for more development.



Commercial Access



Access and Open Space



**DEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATED:**

This study is illustrative of broad planning concepts that can be achieved in many different configurations and phases.

	Retail:	40,000 sf
	Office:	0 sf
	Surface Pkg.:	206 spaces
	Housing:	540 - 600 units
	Units / Acre:	40-46

NORTH

**Prototype C:**

Prototype C illustrates a redevelopment option for a site with minimal frontage on College Avenue. The retail activity has been reduced and consolidated into a pedestrian-friendly mixed-used framework of streets and dispersed parking. Residential uses have been expanded on the site to take advantage of the Midtown location.

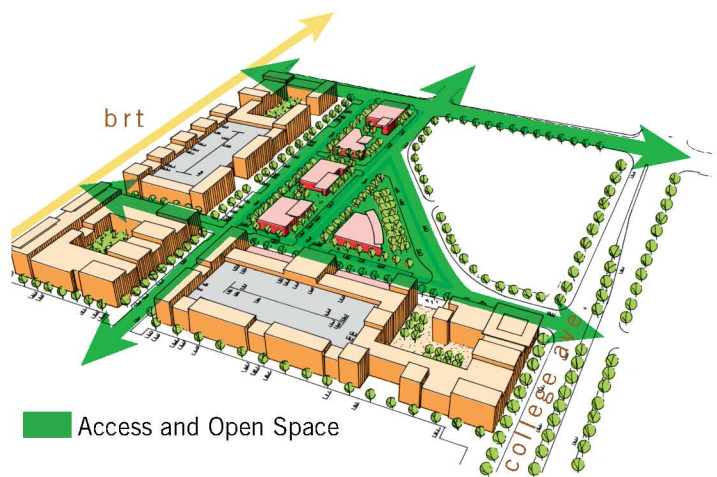
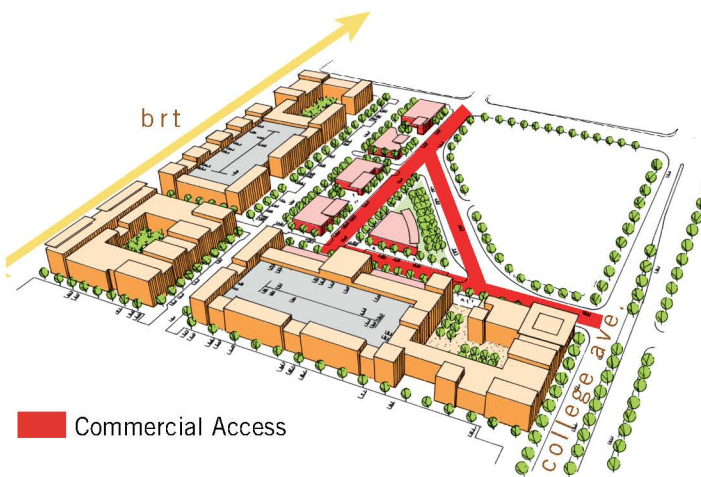
A Midtown location affords residents the opportunity to live near work, play, conveniently shop, and enjoy alternative means of transit such as the BRT. Access to different areas of the city creates an attractive address for people with a variety of needs, such as students, the workforce, and retirees.

COMMERCIAL ACCESS:

Two streets are provided for retail uses. These intersecting streets preserve sitelines from the major arterials and frame a landscaped plaza. The retail is intended to be a series of pavilions in a park-like environment oriented toward the street. Retail parking has been distributed along pedestrian-friendly landscaped streets to avoid large parking fields.

ACCESS AND OPEN SPACE:

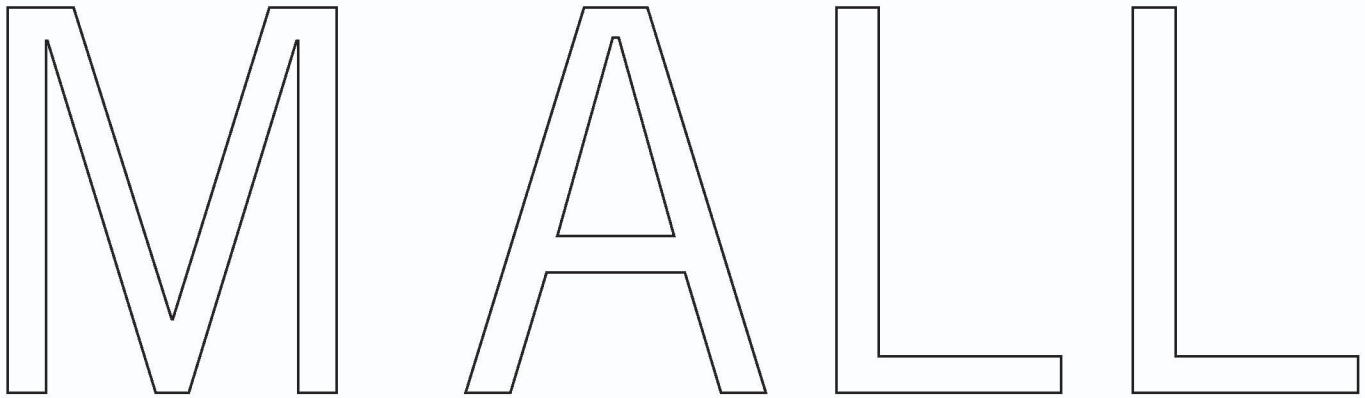
On the west, a quiet residential street is aligned with a possible connection to a BRT station. The pavilion arrangement of the north-south retail creates permeability in the east-west direction providing greater connectivity to the central landscape, plaza area. Parking for residential uses is assumed to be structured. There is also potential to daylight an existing creek to create an attractive natural amenity.



FOOTHILLS

Foothills Mall was once the dominant regional retail center for northern Colorado. Should the mall be saved? Can it be saved and how? Using a public-private partnership, it may be possible to reverse the decline of the Mall and create an enduring regional retail and entertainment destination.





DISCUSSION:

THE MALL TODAY

MALL PLANNING SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1

SCENARIO 2

MOVING FORWARD

The Mall Today:

Historically, Foothills Mall has been a regional retail destination and an important component of Fort Collins' lifestyle and economy. Over time, this position has eroded as two key department store anchors and additional in-line mall tenants have left and overall retail sales have declined.

Three questions arise:

Should the Mall be saved?

- Yes. Community members and industry sources contacted to date believe the Mall should be saved in some fashion. While the meaning of "saving the Mall" is not precise, the majority of Fort Collins residents contacted believe that Fort Collins should remain a regional retail destination, since shoppers continue to desire the department, apparel, and specialty stores that Foothills Mall has historically provided. In addition to shopping convenience and lifestyle benefits, there are significant direct and indirect economic benefits to the city and the larger business community in retaining a regional shopping center.

Can the Mall be saved?

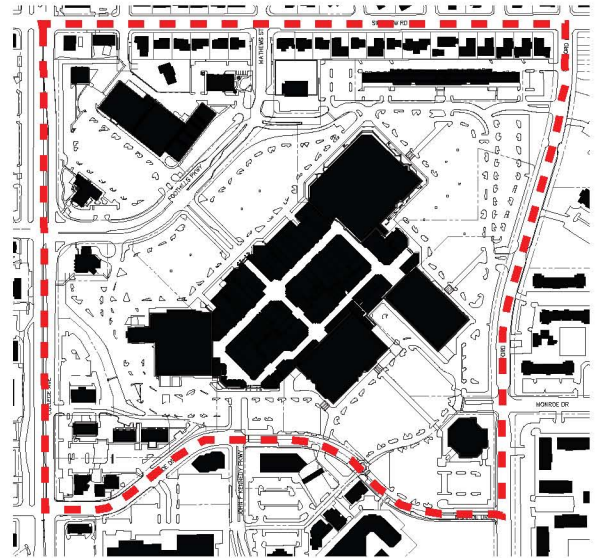
- Yes, it is possible, but challenging, the Mall's condition is precarious and action is required soon. Modest improvements are unlikely to achieve long term success; the best approach for long term viability and improvement is through significant redevelopment.

How can the Mall be saved?

Saving the Mall will not be easy and will require a well coordinated joint effort by the City and the Mall owner. A public-private partnership leading to significant re-investment will be necessary to improve the property and to address existing and future competition, as highlighted by the following challenges and opportunities:

- In the region, there remains a market for a critical mass of traditional department and complementary apparel and specialty stores, several of which are already located at the Mall. Competition to meet this demand, however, has resulted in the emergence of rival retail locations in the northern Colorado area, significantly reducing Foothills Mall's previously dominant position as a regional retail destination.

- Although Mall sales have declined and vacancies increased in recent years, Sears and Macy's do not have plans to close their Foothills Mall stores. This is good news, as these anchor stores are needed for the Mall to remain viable. It is important to note these department stores own their buildings and the adjacent surface parking lots, and have approval rights over any renovations or significant changes to the Mall.

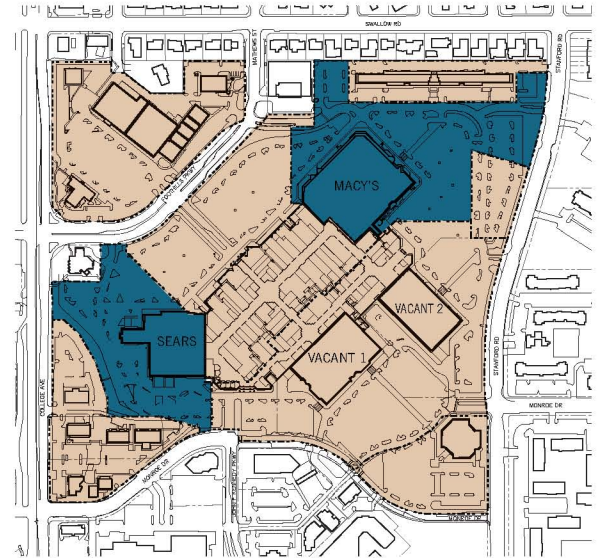


The Foothills Mall and associated development are situated on an 80 acre-site.

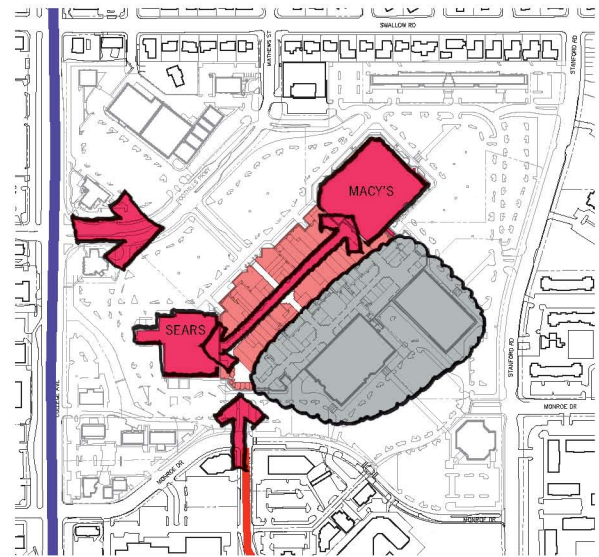


For purposes of scale comparison the 80-acre mall site is overlaid on Historic Downtown Fort Collins.

- Portions of the Mall, such as the former J C Penney, Mervyn's, and the adjoining area of shops, are dysfunctional and should be demolished and replaced with new retail space designed for the current market.
- Some large-format retailers remain interested in establishing stores in the region, and will expand and enhance the site's offerings if they choose to locate at Foothills Mall. Alternatively, if located elsewhere, they will contribute to the Mall's further decline.
- Foothills Mall has an established, in-town address in the heart of the Midtown Corridor; this can be a competitive advantage over potentially competing regional retail sites.
- Although dated and in need of an upgrade, the Mall's indoor environment is unique in the region and also represents a possible competitive advantage.
- The Mall site can be enhanced with a more diversified tenant mix including restaurants, and entertainment uses, including possibly a cinema.
- The Mall properties were consolidated under ownership by General Growth with the purchase of the Mervyn's and JC Penney buildings and adjacent parking. This consolidation facilitates investment and redevelopment options, as it provides adequate site area for phasing in new construction while maintaining continuous retail operations.
- While Foothills Mall currently remains open, its status is precarious. A number of key retailers have left, sales have declined, and vacancy levels have risen every year since 2005. For many retailers, the region can support only one location, making competition between shopping centers intense. The implication for the redevelopment of Foothills Mall is crucial: if an additional department store leaves, it is very unlikely to come back.
- For the Mall to succeed, there needs to be a minimum number of anchor uses, such as department stores, and a critical number of adjoining shops. Due to consolidation in the department store industry, the City and mall owner should attempt to identify and explore alternative anchor uses such as cinemas and other destination uses. Three anchoring uses and at least 300,000 square feet of mall shops would provide a good program to ensure a successful redevelopment.



Mall ownership is largely consolidated (as shown in brown), with the exception of the Sears and Macy's department stores (shown in blue).



The viable Macy's - Sears axis should be preserved and enhanced while the rear portion of the mall should be demolished and reconfigured.

Of these factors, retention of existing tenants and department stores is the most critical and urgent first step. To this end, both the City and mall owner should instill confidence among tenants and department stores, communicating the plan to redevelop, and by beginning the first steps of redevelopment as soon as possible. In order to retain the Mall's key stores, any redevelopment plan must allow for their continuous operation. This can include relocating the stores to new, improved locations within the mall.

Planning Scenarios:

Two alternative scenarios have been prepared that frame the site's opportunities and challenges, and allow for fluid and flexible redevelopment over many years. Both scenarios take an incremental approach: to first stabilize and save the Mall, then introduce key anchor tenants and additional retail that can ultimately lead to an expanded and diverse mixed-use development.

Renovation

Before



Prior to renovation this mall turned its back to the exterior environment.



This mall featured low ceilings and artificial light.

After



Plazas and an attractive exterior create a sense of arrival and place.



The renovation dramatically improved the retail experience for customers to stroll, explore, and visit stores.

Scenarios One and Two share many features and call for roughly equal amounts of retail space to meet the potential demand at the Foothills location. While they will be similarly affected by national and regional economic conditions, the scenarios represent two distinct and predominant trends in retail design. Accordingly, the scenarios differ substantially in their physical design and estimated cost: Scenario One is based on retaining an interior mall environment combined with added exterior shopping and dining areas, while Scenario Two results in an entirely open-air shopping district. Both scenarios call for retaining surface parking at decreased rates and for an initial focus on retail uses, while at the same time planning for the long-term conversion of surface parking lots to denser mixed-use development with structured parking.

Open-Air



An open-air mall permits greater flexibility for incorporating mixed-use buildings.



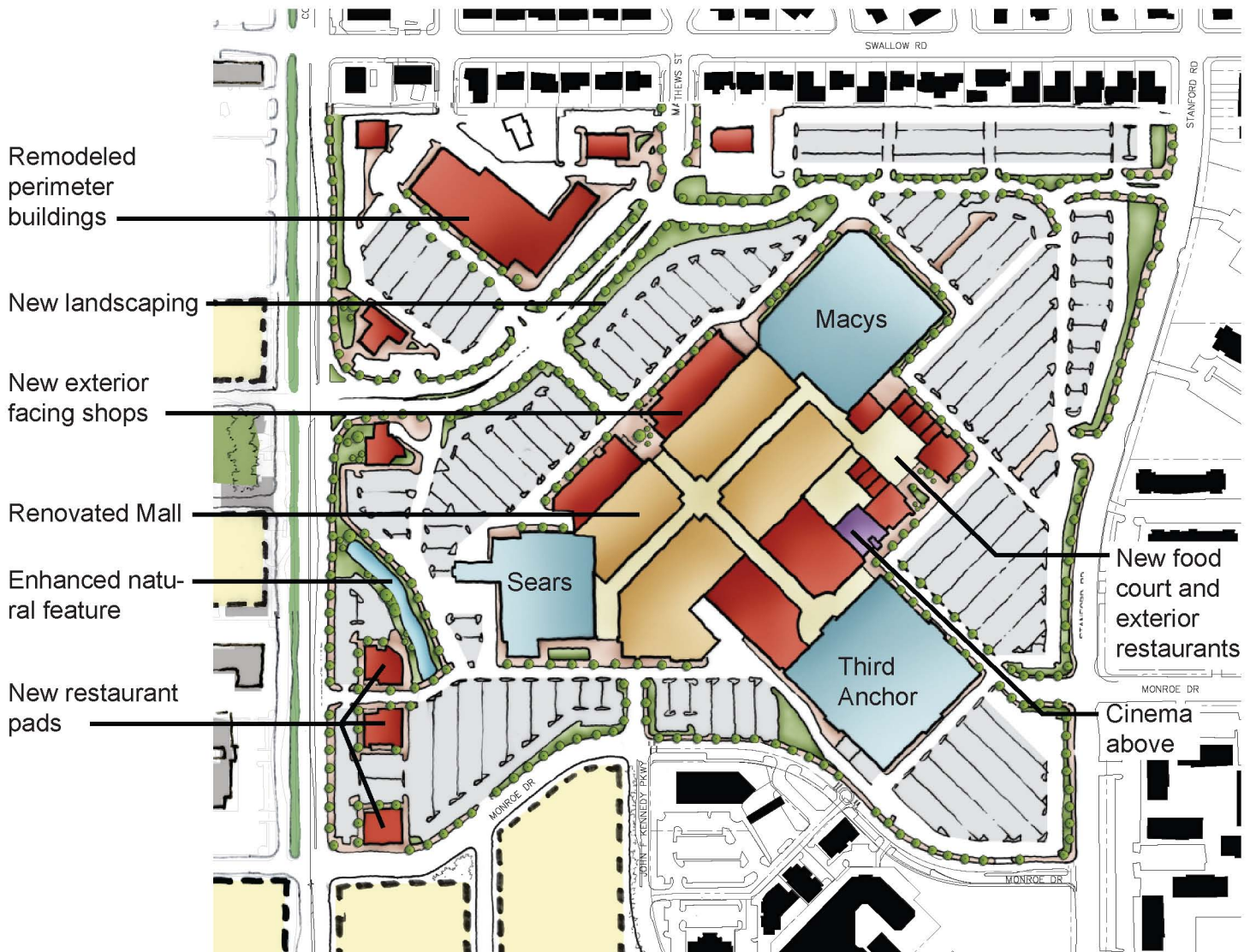
Open-air malls can integrate outdoor markets and music into their retail environment.



Weather conditions will be addressed to maintain an acceptable level of customer comfort in outdoor areas.



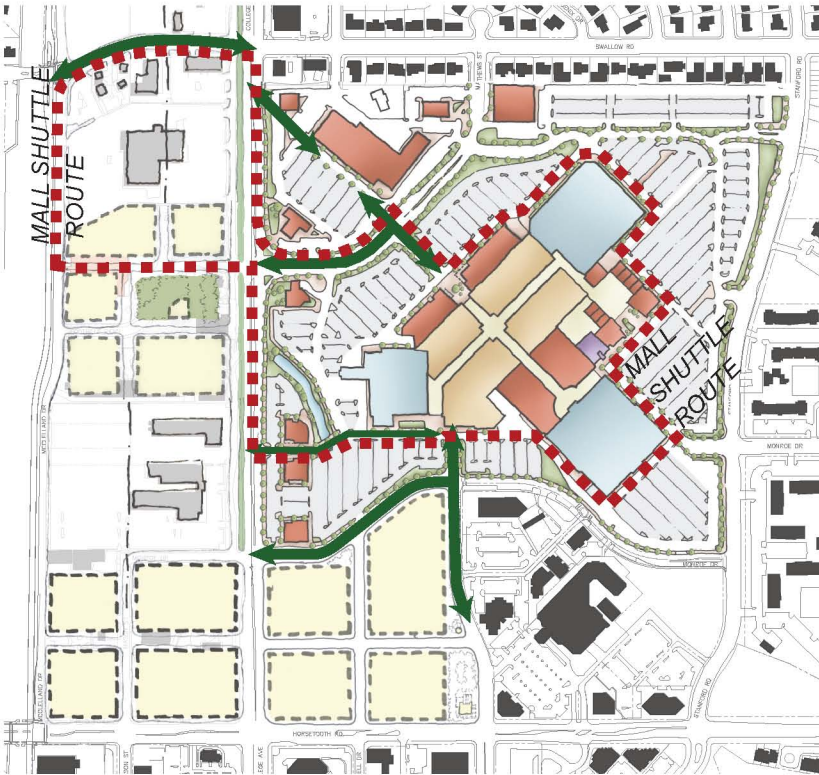
The open-air mall includes more street environments, such as are found in a traditional downtown.



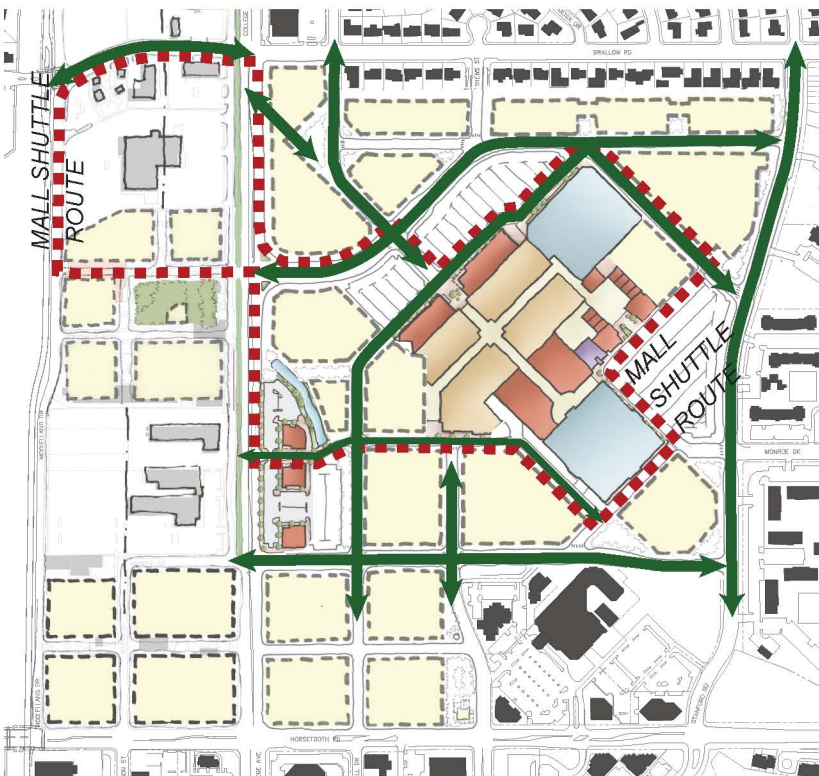
Scenario 1: A new department store, cinema, and food court will create a new front door to the mall on the southwest side.

Scenario One: Expanded Mall and Retail-Entertainment District

- Retains the best-functioning portion of the Mall, the corridor directly connecting Sears and Macy's; this scenario would include a significant renovation to improve and update lighting, steps and ramps, flooring, and amenities, and the potential to add skylights.
- Demolishes the former JC Penney and Mervyn's buildings along with adjacent, poorly configured mall areas.
- Builds a new food court and restaurant wing featuring exterior and interior dining areas, family restrooms, a sky-lighted great hall, and a plaza.
- Adds a fashion department store and new Mall shops leading to it.
- Constructs a state-of-the-art cinema on a second level above the Mall and food court.



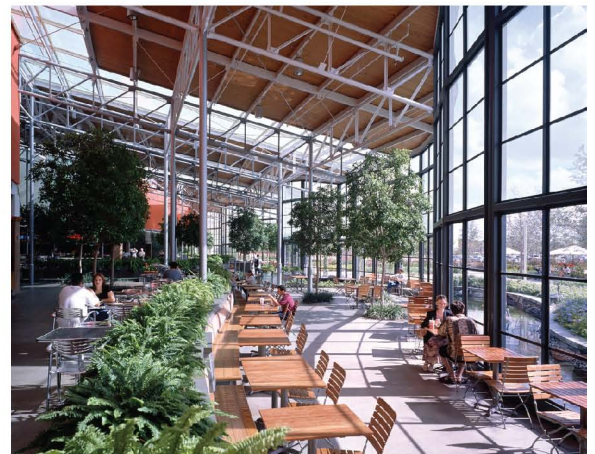
Scenario 1 improves pedestrian, bike, and vehicle connections from College Avenue and surrounding neighborhoods.



In Scenario 1, future development could see continued improvements to pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, as well as create opportunities for added uses and density.

- Develops new retail space for outdoor “life-style” tenants facing north toward College Avenue.
- Improves the College Avenue frontage with new restaurants and improved access to the Mall.
- Extensively renovates the retail buildings north of Foothills Parkway, leaving open the possibility of further redevelopment in the future.
- Retains key existing tenants and adds new tenants to increase variety and to align store offerings with community needs and market demand.
- Allows for future development of surface parking lots with structured parking and additional uses such as housing and office.

Scenario One is less expensive than Scenario Two and follows a more incremental development program. Initial renovations to stabilize the Mall’s performance and retain key tenants could be started soon and would be incorporated into the final redevelopment. By adding exterior plazas and tenants to the existing interior mall, Scenario One significantly alters the look, feel, and character of Foothills Mall and leaves open the possibility for future mixed-use development.



Scenario 1: Renovate and expand the Mall’s existing interior.

Improve
circulation to
and through
Mall property

Cinema

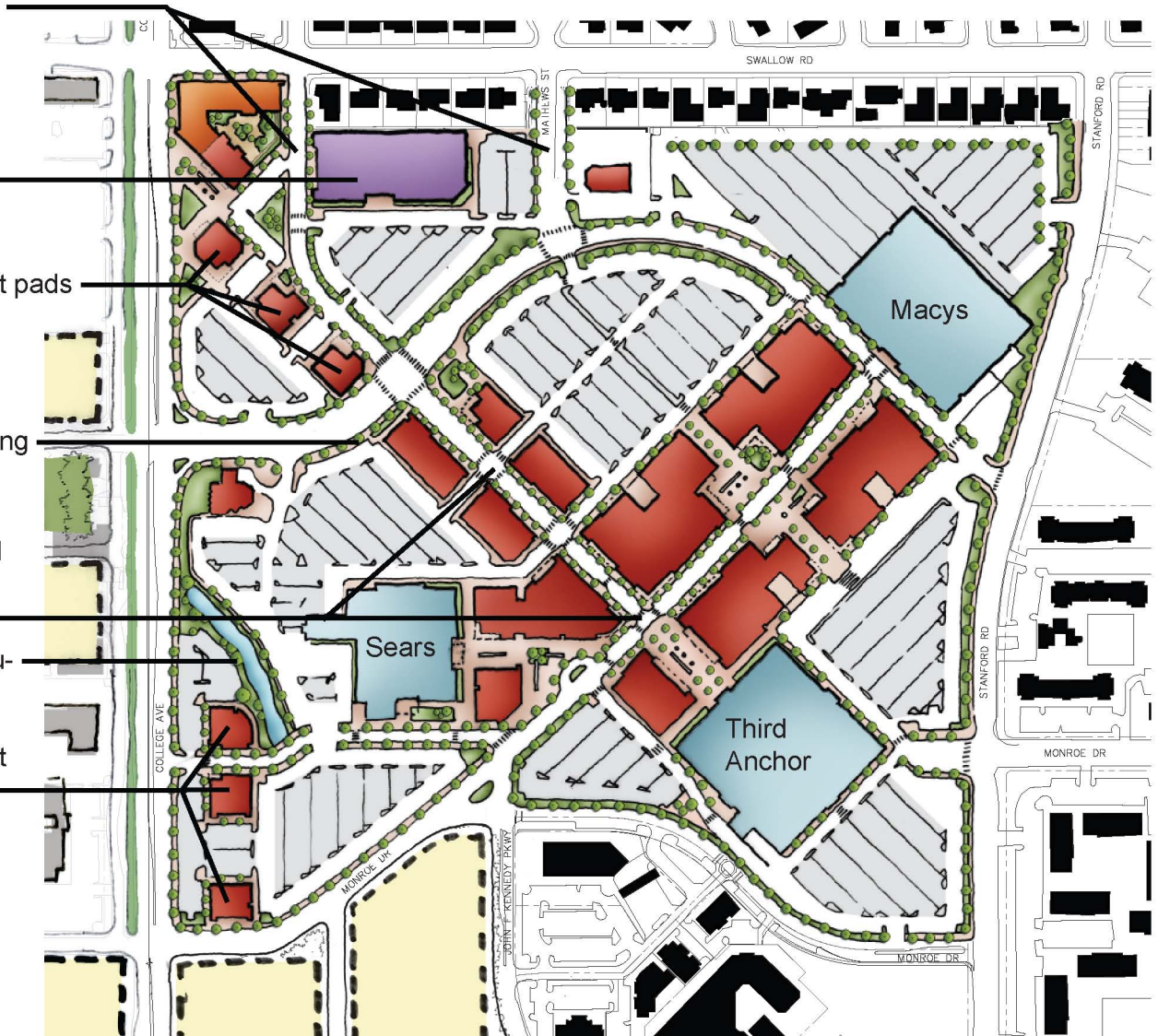
New restaurant pads

New landscaping

Street-oriented
open-air mall
shops

Enhanced natu-
ral feature

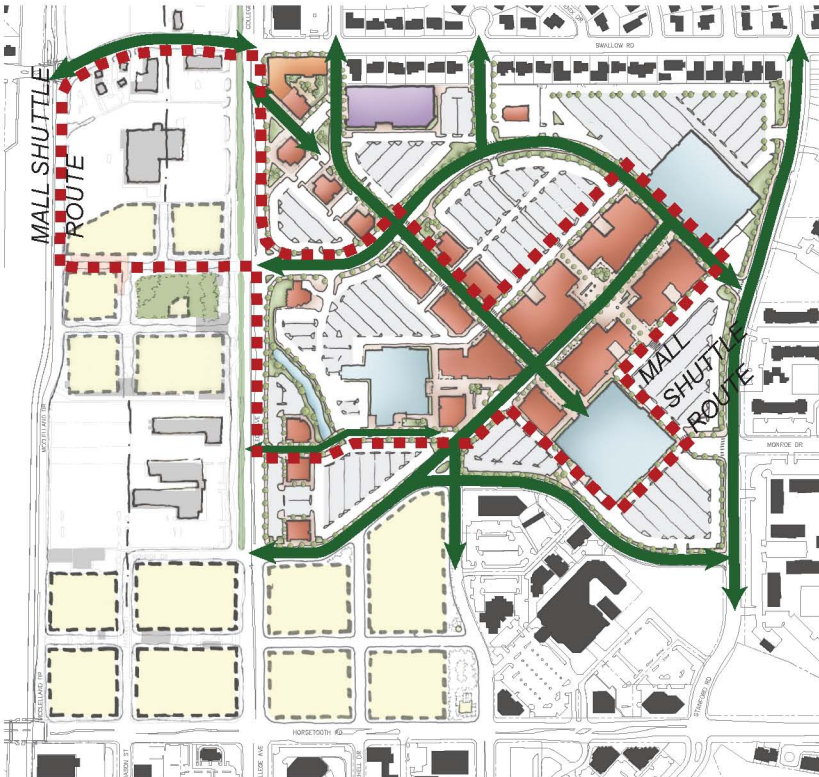
New restaurant
pads



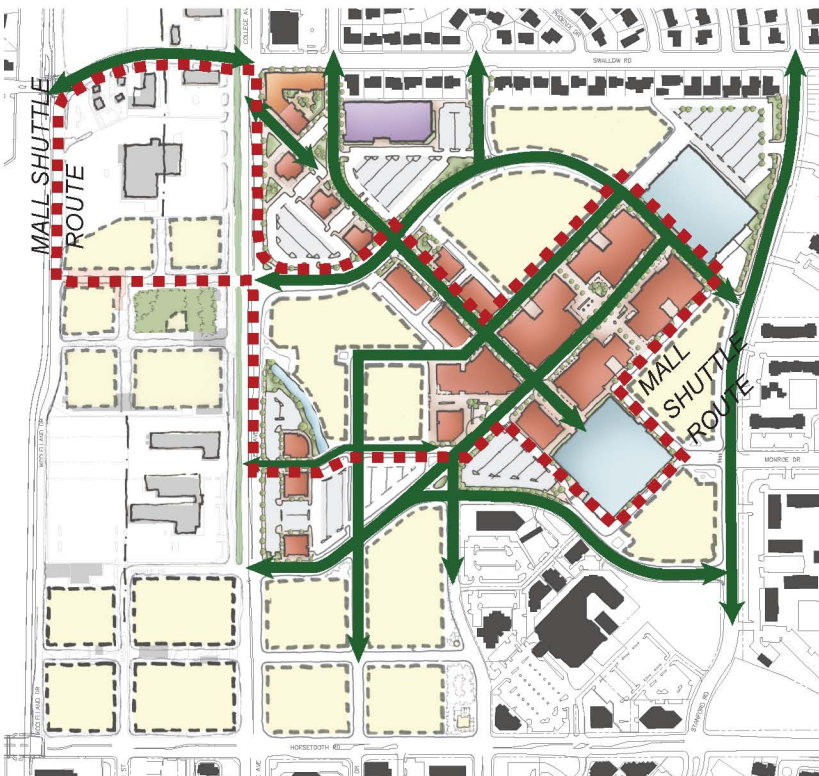
Scenario 2: The Mall would be rebuilt entirely as an open-air mall. Construction of the new mall would occur in phases in order to maintain operation of the mall throughout the process.

Scenario Two: Open-Air Shopping and Entertainment District

- Includes phased construction that allows continuous operation of key tenants, including Sears and Macy's, while ultimately replacing every building on site except for Sears.
- Phase One adds a new Macy's to the southeast of the current Macy's, and constructs one side of a future shopping street where the former Mervyn's and JC Penney stand today.
- In Phase Two, Macy's and key tenants move to their new locations and the original Macy's and Mall are demolished, making way for the remainder of the shopping streets to be constructed.
- Adds a fashion department store.
- Adds a state-of-the-art cinema and restaurants at College Avenue and Swallow Road.



Scenario 2 is a more aggressive approach to integrating the Mall site with the existing city fabric.



Future development could continue to improve pedestrian and vehicular connectivity and create opportunities for added uses and density.

- Develops a grid of pedestrian-oriented shopping streets that connect to surrounding city streets, improving access and circulation, and leading to a more traditional street-oriented form of development.
- Improves the College Avenue frontage with new restaurants and improved access to the Mall.
- Retains key existing tenants and adds new tenants to increase variety and align store offerings with community needs.
- Plans for future development of surface parking lots with structured parking and additional uses, such as housing and office, that will build upon the open street grid and pedestrian-oriented environment initiated in the early phases.

Scenario Two is estimated to be more expensive and more comprehensive than Scenario One. This scenario also requires an earlier commitment to a larger investment, and a longer period before improvements are visible and in use. Since the existing Mall would ultimately be demolished, it would be impractical to extensively remodel the Mall as an immediate first phase. This means opening the first portion of the improved Foothills Mall would be delayed relative to Scenario One.



Scenario 2: Rebuild completely as a open-air mall.

Which Scenario?

The redevelopment of Foothills Mall will result from the ongoing collaboration of the City, the Mall owner, Macy's, Sears, and as-yet-unsecured new anchors. The course of redevelopment will be fluid and dynamic, based on this variety of interests and the influence of the larger regional and national economies. Both scenarios reposition the Foothills Mall site to remain viable, endure, and prosper for many years by including a minimum of three anchor uses and at least 300,000 square feet of adjoining shops. Scenario One is more suited to incremental phasing that can capitalize on opportunities as they arise, such as the introduction of a department store or key tenant. Scenario Two offers an outdoor shopping environment that may appeal to certain anchors and tenants; however, it requires a higher initial commitment to its execution and is estimated to be fifty percent more expensive to complete.

While the community has advocates for both scenarios, the majority of those participating in the Study have shown a preference for retaining an indoor mall as in Scenario One. Scenario One also offers both indoor and outdoor venues, which is an advantage for leasing to a variety of tenant types.

Financial Considerations:

The total area of the Mall, under either Scenario, is only modestly greater than the existing mall when in full operation. This small increase in income-producing space is not sufficient to financially support the contemplated redevelopment of the entire mall. Without significant redevelopment, however, Foothills Mall will continue to decline. Therefore, based on the initial financial feasibility study and in order to be a regional retail destination in an increasingly competitive market, public investment will be required for the redevelopment of Foothills Mall.

Since both Scenario One and Two have roughly equal amounts of income-producing space and are estimated to generate nearly equal revenue to both the developer and the City, the more expensive Scenario Two would require significantly more public investment.

The property owner will be expected to utilize creative development and financing methods to help make the redevelopment financially feasible. It is also recommended that the City utilize tax increment financing, as enabled by Colorado urban renewal law, to finance eligible public costs.

Scenario One based on its lower cost, shorter schedule, and greater flexibility, is the recommended initial course for redevelopment.



It remains possible for Foothills Mall to regain its stature as a regional retail destination.



The implementation of either mall scenario, in addition to redevelopment in the Corridor, will lead to the transformation of Midtown over time.

Implementation Strategy:

The recommended actions to help achieve the redevelopment envisioned by the Midtown Study include additional design and planning efforts, financial feasibility analysis, and further refinement of public financing options as detailed below:

A1. Implement Other Midtown Corridor Redevelopment Opportunities

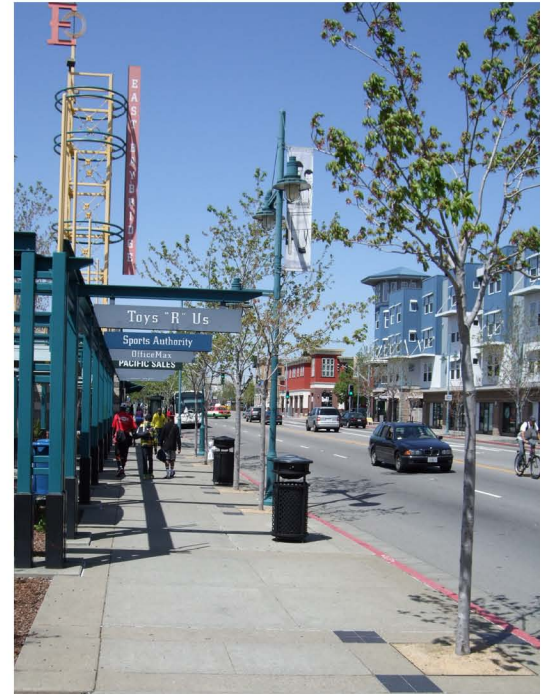
The Midtown Corridor provides a wide array of opportunities to reuse, remodel, reposition, and redevelop multiple sites. The opportunities include additional retail, office, housing, and mixed-use projects as illustrated in the concept prototypes. Actual development will vary depending on market conditions, property owner interest, financial capabilities, and time horizons. A broad spectrum of change will occur on the Corridor spanning from the reuse or remodel of existing buildings to the demolition and redevelopment of entire blocks. A commensurate spectrum of regulatory, financing, and economic development incentives will, therefore, be beneficial.

- Encourage the formation of business and property marketing and management organizations such as the newly formed South Fort Collins Business Association.
- Prepare an Existing Conditions Report for the Midtown Study area (excluding the Prospect South and Foothills Mall area previously addressed). This study should evaluate the statutory requirements for a finding of blight to establish the basis for the formation of an Urban Renewal Authority in a portion of the study area.
- Allocate responsibilities for the costs of district improvements based on benefits received between the city-wide, area-wide, and project-specific interests.
- Develop a Midtown Corridor financing approach that balances funding for area-wide improvements and project-specific funding needs.

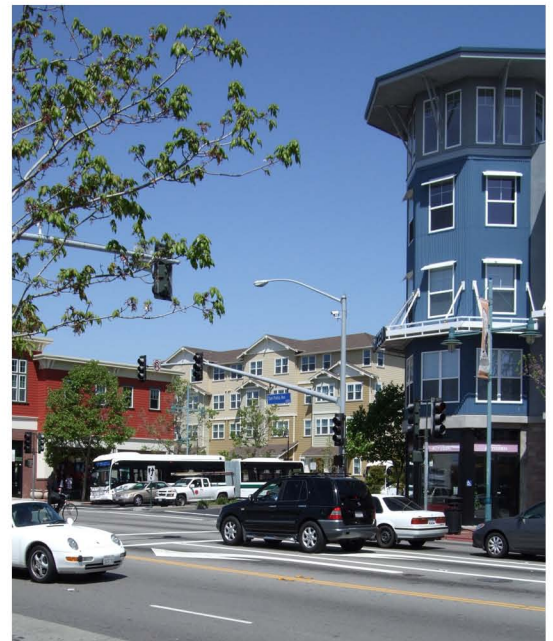
Consider pros and cons of using TIF for area-wide improvements.

Work with area property owners to develop public-private financing programs for implementing recommended Midtown Corridor infrastructure and design improvements. This could include the formation of area-wide improvement districts (e.g. GID or BID) or other approaches.

- Work with existing area property owners, interested developers, and business associations to identify, refine, and implement catalyst projects. This dialogue will help to identify a range of projects from reuse and remodel to full redevelopment, and to identify ways that every project can help to achieve the recommend planning concepts.



Human scaled elements can maintain the street edge and pedestrian environment where surface parking might occur along the boulevard, as seen on San Pablo Avenue in Emeryville, California.



Streetscape improvements in combination with comprehensive design standards can transform a non-descript arterial into a vibrant mixed-use boulevard, such as San Pablo Boulevard in Emeryville, California.

- Pursue corridor redevelopment strategies parallel to mall redevelopment.

A2. Here-to-There Strategies

The redevelopment process is incremental and will occur over an extended period of time. The Study provides a long-term vision as well as examples of the types of catalyst projects that can help guide the way. Each property and ownership is different and not every project will be able to achieve the ultimate goal immediately. Therefore, a series of strategies should be developed to assist property owners in making incremental improvements consistent and compatible with the redevelopment vision of the area.

- Identify strategies to encourage incremental redevelopment, and test these strategies in focused catalytic geographic areas along the Corridor.
- Evaluate existing zoning and building codes to remove impediments for incremental investments, including the reuse or remodel of existing buildings that fit with the recommend planning concepts.

A3. Design and Identify College Avenue Boulevard Improvements

Integrate transportation, urban design, and landscape along College Avenue to create an enhanced and unique design that reflects and identifies the emerging Midtown district. Revisions and improvements leading to a functional, safe, and identifiable boulevard for pedestrians, cars, and bicycles may include:

- Improve and enhance landscaping medians and crosswalks for consistency, including areas of pedestrian refuge and pedestrian-friendly signalization. This is especially important at key intersections to facilitate safe and comfortable east-west access across College Avenue.
- Evaluate frontage road improvements such as lane-width reduction, addition of pull-in parking, landscaping, lighting, bulb-outs at pedestrian crossings, intersection improvements to slow frontage road and College-to-frontage road traffic, and other similar measures to increase vehicular and pedestrian safety, and to create a well-landscaped slow-street ambiance along the frontage road.
- Create identity through the strategic use of design guidelines, gateway features, way-finding, and similar

programs to brand and identify College Avenue as the main functional and iconic boulevard for Fort Collins within Midtown.

- Elevate the status of Midtown as a distinct and important district within the city (CSU and Downtown being other primary districts).
- Create special identifying gateway features at the intersections of College with Harmony and Prospect roads - the primary connections to I-25 and the larger region.
- Review and amend existing City documents such as the Transportation Master Plan, Master Street Plan, Streetscape Design Standards and Guidelines, Bicycle Plan, Pedestrian Plan, and others as needed.
- Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and amend the Access Control Plan as needed.

A4. Enhance Transportation Planning and Design Standards for Midtown

Complete an integrated transportation, urban design, and landscape study of key secondary public right-of-ways in the Midtown study area to create appropriate improvements for the emerging district.

- Modify and refine the street cross-sections of Mason Street and McClelland Drive to improve district circulation and create a distinct character that will improve their identities as commercial and residential addresses.
- Evaluate and revise sidewalk, landscape, lighting, sign, and way-finding standards to reflect the increased prominence of secondary streets as development occurs.
- Study JFK Parkway between Horsetooth Road and Monroe Drive to enhance its identity and function. This southern gateway to Foothills Mall will become more prominent with the redevelopment of the Mall and adjacent properties. It can be improved by introducing a street design with less landscaping and a more traditional sidewalk and streetscape cross-section.
- Work with adjacent property owners to study the possible realignment of the Mason Street and McClelland Drive intersection at Horsetooth Road. The current alignment of these two important access roads in Midtown will increasingly become a bottleneck as Midtown is redeveloped.
- Review and amend existing City documents such as the Transportation Master Plan, Master Street Plan, Streetscape Design Standards and Guidelines, Bicycle Plan, Pedestrian Plan, and others as needed.

A5. Amend Transit-Oriented Development Overlay District for Midtown

Evaluate and revise the existing zoning to promote and implement elements of the Midtown Study.

- Revise the TOD zoning bonus for vertical mixed-use development to allow for horizontal mixed-use under prescribed design standards.
- Revise existing incentives, design guidelines, and requirements to facilitate the recommended pattern of development (block size), circulation, and active street uses within Midtown. Specific goals include: (1) develop a frontage facing west toward the BRT, (2) reduce block sizes, and (3) create a network of intervening public spaces and active street fronts.
- Consider elements such as: building massing, footprints, setbacks and heights; open space location, configuration, and access; landscape, lighting and sign standards; and density and types of commercial and residential uses.

A6. Continue Foothills Mall Preliminary Redevelopment

The redevelopment of Foothills Mall is critical for the overall success of Midtown. The City can continue to move the redevelopment forward.

- Develop a partnership with the Foothills Mall owner, General Growth Properties, by increasing communications and formalizing redevelopment roles and responsibilities.
- Solicit the interest of potential department stores and other anchor tenants in Mall redevelopment plans.
- Refine the site plan design and develop a concept lease plan for the preferred Foothills Mall redevelopment concept.
- Engage a civil engineer to refine the redevelopment cost estimates for the proposed site plan.

- Develop a public-private partnership between the City and the Mall owner/developer to pay for identified funding gaps in the recommended redevelopment concept.

Establish a Foothills Mall urban renewal plan area to allow the investment of property tax increment toward eligible redevelopment costs.

Request that the developer establish a Title 32 Metro District and impose a public improvement fee (PIF) to provide an equitable contribution to the public financing plan.

A7. Coordinate the Midtown Corridor Findings with Plan Fort Collins

The Midtown Corridor Study recommendations should be reviewed and considered as input to the redevelopment policies and strategies in the ongoing City Plan Update.

- Utilize the recommended planning concepts of this document as a companion to Plan Fort Collins
- Evaluate the ability of the study redevelopment concepts to translate to other Targeted Redevelopment Areas in the City.



Public outreach and consensus building will remain an important part of Midtown planning.

Next Step	Responsibility	Role	Action	Partners	Time Frame
A1. Corridor Redevelopment Strategies	Economic Health	Lead	Encourage the development of business associations	SFCBA	Immediate
	Planning, Development & Transportation	Support	Prepare an existing conditions report for the Study area		Immediate
			Allocate responsibility for district improvements		Immediate
			Develop public-private financing programs to provide incentives for development		Immediate
			Pursue corridor redevelopment strategies parallel to mall redevelopment		Immediate
			Identify catalyst projects		Immediate
A2. Here to There Strategies	Planning, Development & Transportation	Lead	Identify strategies to encourage incremental redevelopment	SFCBA	Short
	Economic Health	Support	Identify and remove impediments to incremental investment		Short
A3. College Avenue Boulevard Improvements	Planning, Development & Transportation	Lead	Design improved, enhanced and consistent landscaping and pedestrian crossings	CDOT	Short
	Economic Health	Support	Evaluate frontage roads as an asset		Short
			Create identity through design guidelines and wayfinding		Medium
			Elevate overall status of Midtown		Medium
			Create special identifying gateway features		Medium
			Review and amend existing City documents as necessary		Short
A4. Transportation Planning & Design Standards	Planning, Development & Transportation	Lead	Modify and refine street cross-sections for secondary streets in the area	SFCBA	Short
			Evaluate and revise design standards for secondary streets in the area		Short
			Study JFK Parkway between Horsetooth Road and Monroe Drive		Short
			Study the realignment of Mason Street and McClelland Drive intersection		Short
			Review and amend existing City documents as necessary		Short
			Work with CDOT and amend Access Control Plan as needed		Short
A5. Zoning/Design	Planning, Development & Transportation	Lead	Revise overlay district to encourage and implement study recommendations		Immediate
	Economic Health	Support	Revise overlay district incentives to encourage redevelopment consistent with study recommendations		Immediate
			Prepare design guidelines that reward quality development		Immediate
A6. Mall Redevelopment	Economic Health	Lead	Partner with property owner	GGP	Immediate
			Determine anchor store and tenant interest		Immediate
			Gain support and approval of existing anchor department stores		
			Refine site plan and create a concept lease plan		Immediate
	Refine cost analysis	Immediate			
Urban Renewal Authority	Support	Develop public-private partnership and refine financial analysis	Immediate		
A7. Coordinate with Plan Fort Collins	Planning, Development & Transportation	Lead	Utilize the recommended planning concepts of this document as a companion to Plan Fort Collins		Short
	Utilities Economic Health	Support Support	Evaluate applying Midtown planning concepts in other Targeted Redevelopment Areas		Short

Midtown at Large:

Taken together, the Study's initial recommendations result in an ambitious and comprehensive transformation of Midtown from a linear strip of disconnected retail and commercial sites and a stand-alone mall into a series of interconnected sub-areas that feature a full mix of uses and residents in a well-landscaped, pedestrian-oriented environment. If planned and developed thoughtfully, Midtown can reflect and enhance the culture and place of Fort Collins to a greater extent than it does today. The Study provides market development forecasting, as well as planning and development concepts to help guide the vision for Midtown. While many stakeholders and residents have contributed to the Study to date, additional voices and partners are needed, both to ensure that the community's aspirations for Midtown are met and to promote the private and public investment that will be needed to transform Midtown into a vibrant mixed-use district.



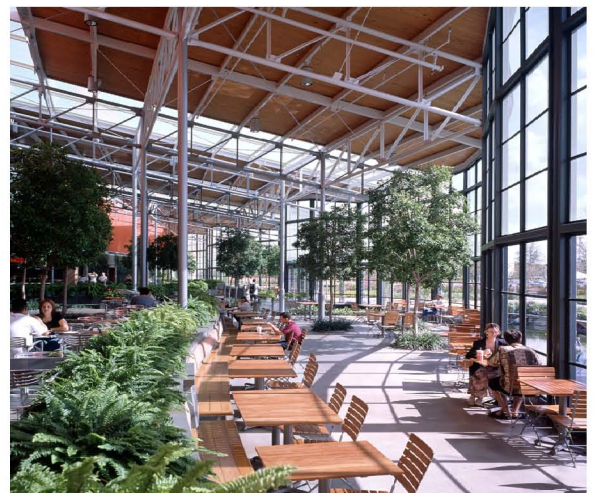
New neighborhoods.



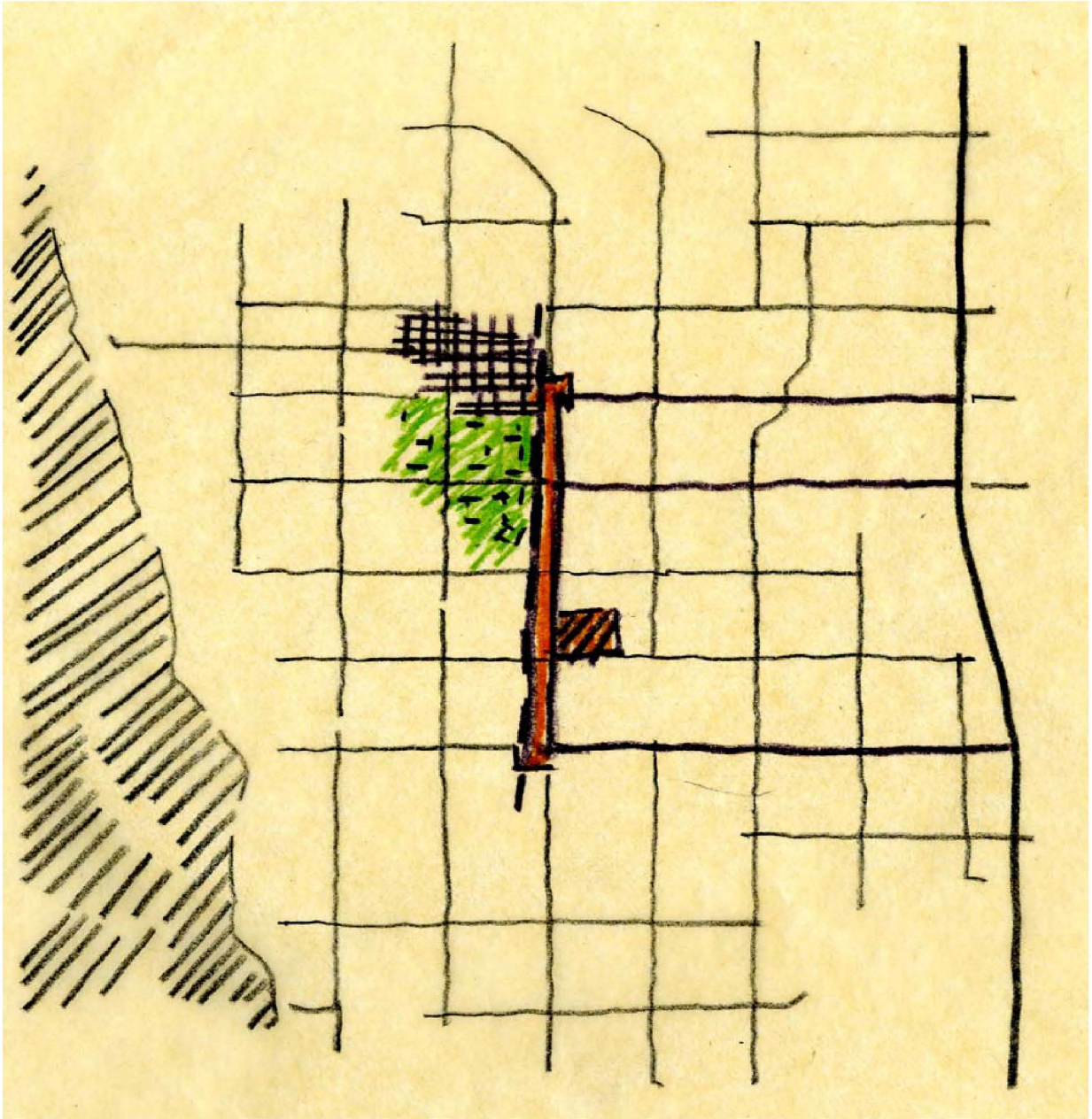
Life on the street.



Design standards eliminating setbacks and requiring active street fronts can help transform College Avenue into a mixed-use boulevard.



Renew the Mall.



Fort Collins, 2010

Anthony Grand, **ELS**