Harmony Corridor Plan

An Element of the City of Fort Collins Comprehensive Plan

February 7, 2006

City of Fort Collins

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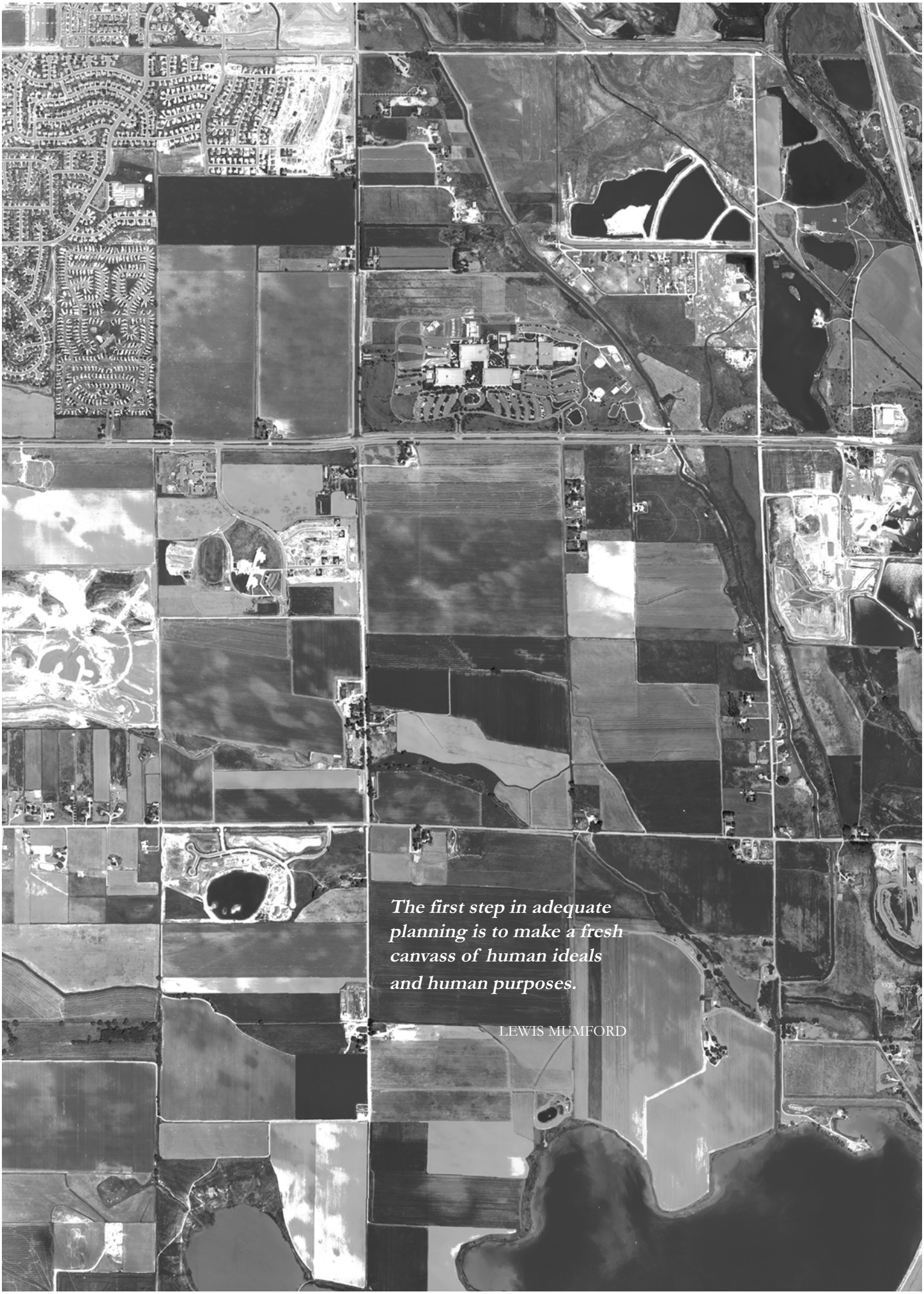

The first step in adequate planning is to make a fresh canvass of human ideals and human purposes.

LEWIS MUMFORD

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INTRODUCTION

Genuine planning is an attempt,
not arbitrarily to displace reality,
but to clarify it and to grasp firmly
all the elements necessary to bring
the geographic and economic facts
in harmony with human purpose.

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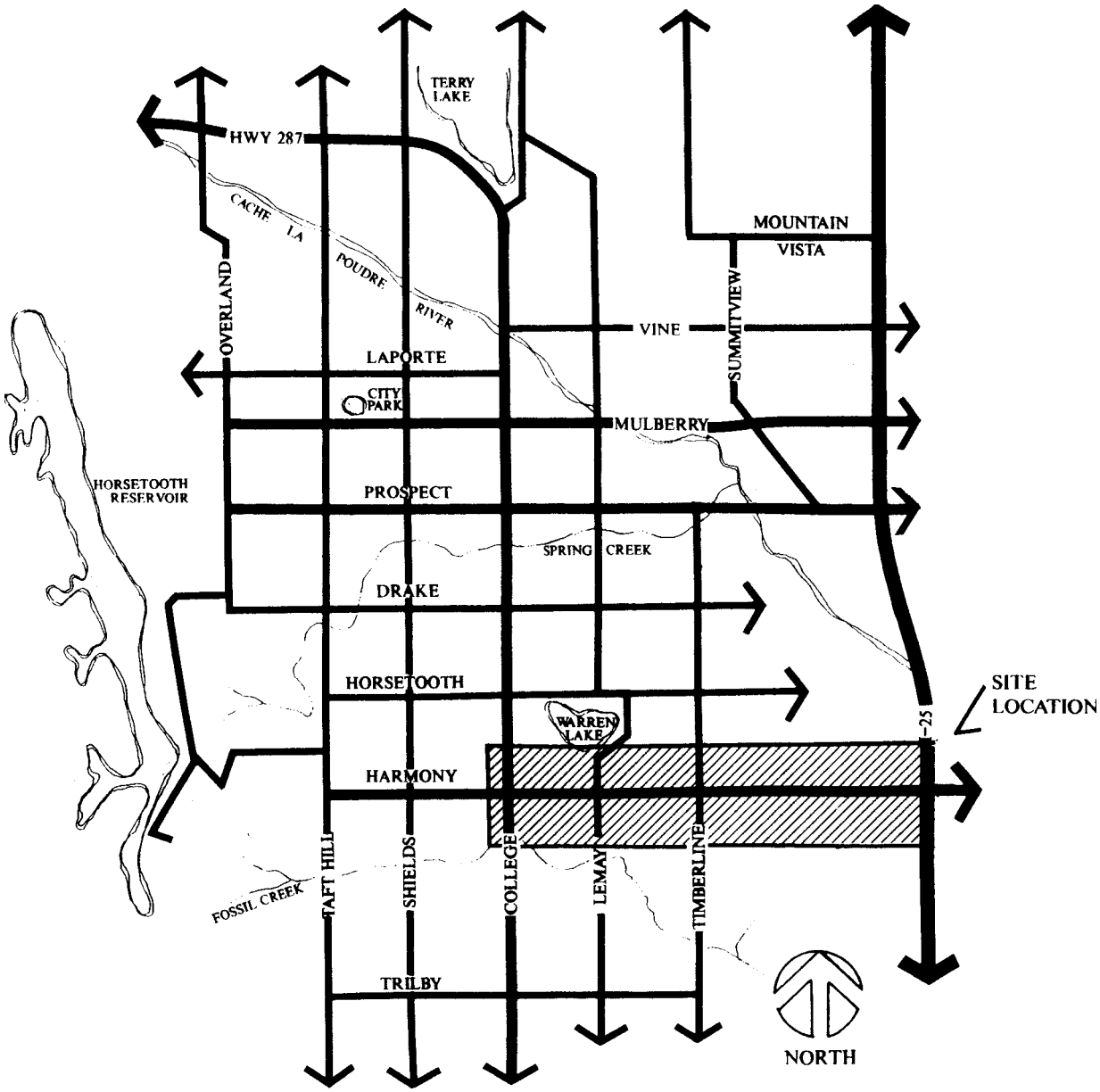
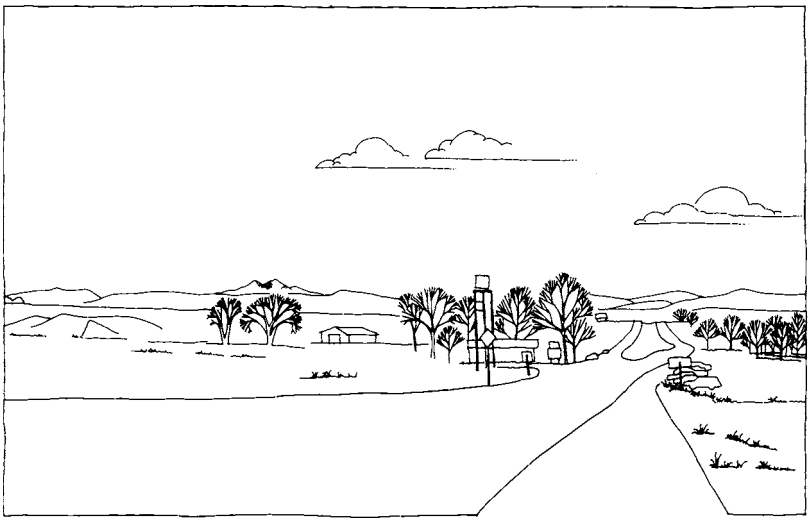
City of Fort Collins
Orientation Map



THE HARMONY CORRIDOR

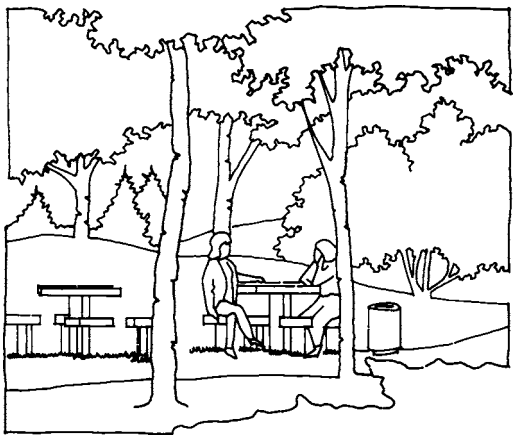
The Harmony Corridor planning area extends for five miles, from the I-25 interchange to the Burlington-Northern railroad tracks located west of College Avenue. The area extends approximately one-half mile north and south of Harmony Road. Over 7,000 people live and work in the corridor. Linking I-25 to U.S. Highway 287, Harmony Road carries approximately 28,000 vehicles to and from Fort Collins each day. It is anticipated that this figure will grow to 35,000 by the time the corridor is fully developed. The I-25/Harmony Road interchange is the most southerly entrance point to Fort Collins and a primary route for commuters and travelers going to and from the Denver metropolitan area. Most of the people visiting Fort Collins for the first time enter the city through this corridor.

Key physical features of the corridor include: close proximity to the Poudre River, lakes wetlands and associated wildlife habitat as well as spectacular views of Longs Peak and the Front Range. With approximately one-half of the corridor already developed, the visual quality of the area is exceptional. An unusually wide right-of-way and spacious median provide an excellent opportunity to develop a well landscaped parkway. Harmony Road has the potential to become one of the most attractive entryway corridors in northern Colorado.



View from the I-25 interchange looking west.

Hewlett-Packard employees relax in a shaded courtyard.



In terms of development potential, the Harmony Corridor is unrivaled in the Fort Collins area. The corridor has nearly 2000 acres of land available for business, industrial, and residential development, with relatively few development constraints. Uniquely situated between I-25 and U.S. Highway 287, the corridor has excellent community and regional access. Close proximity to housing, schools, shopping and recreation facilities makes the corridor an obvious choice for business or industry seeking to locate in northern Colorado. The fact that most of the developable land has not been subdivided into small parcels is an additional advantage for attracting large scale business/industrial land uses. Highly respected companies like Hewlett-Packard, Comlinear, ESAB and Mountain Crest Hospital have chosen to locate and/or expand their facilities in the corridor.

Along with its attractive physical features and tremendous development potential, the corridor has another vital attribute — the dedication and creative energies of its residents and business people. Property owners in the corridor have been instrumental in organizing this planning effort and have been closely involved throughout the planning process.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

With one-half of the corridor already developed and another one fourth planned, Harmony Corridor faces a turning point. While continued business and industrial development looks promising, the corridor and the community are facing many challenges. How can we attract the kinds of business and industry that will provide a strong economic base and be compatible with community values? How do we ensure a continuation of wide setbacks, attractive landscaping and other amenities that enhance the quality of life for people who live and work in the corridor? The Cache la Poudre River floodplain, numerous lakes, wetlands and spectacular mountain views combine to create an impressive and scenic gateway at the I-25 interchange. The gateway area offers unique opportunities and challenges the community to discover creative ways to balance development potential with natural resource assets. The Harmony Corridor Plan is a response to these community wide issues. Since the corridor is currently a very healthy and vital segment of our community, the Plan emphasizes the need to take advantage of its assets for our future.

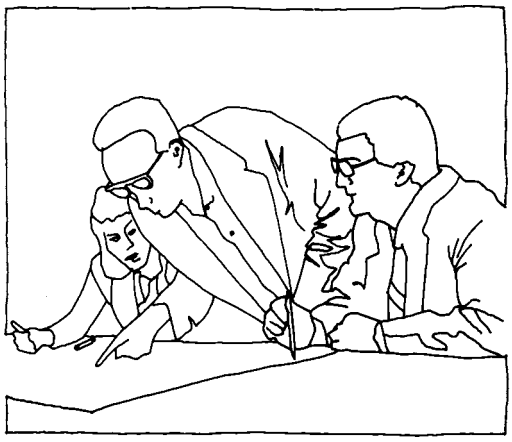
The Plan focuses on encouraging a land use pattern and urban design framework that protects community values and at the same time recognizes the need for flexibility in response to market demand. Taking advantage of the corridor's unique physical and cultural features, the Plan seeks to create a "vision" for Harmony Corridor that is dynamic, diverse, economically successful, environmentally sound and uniquely attractive.

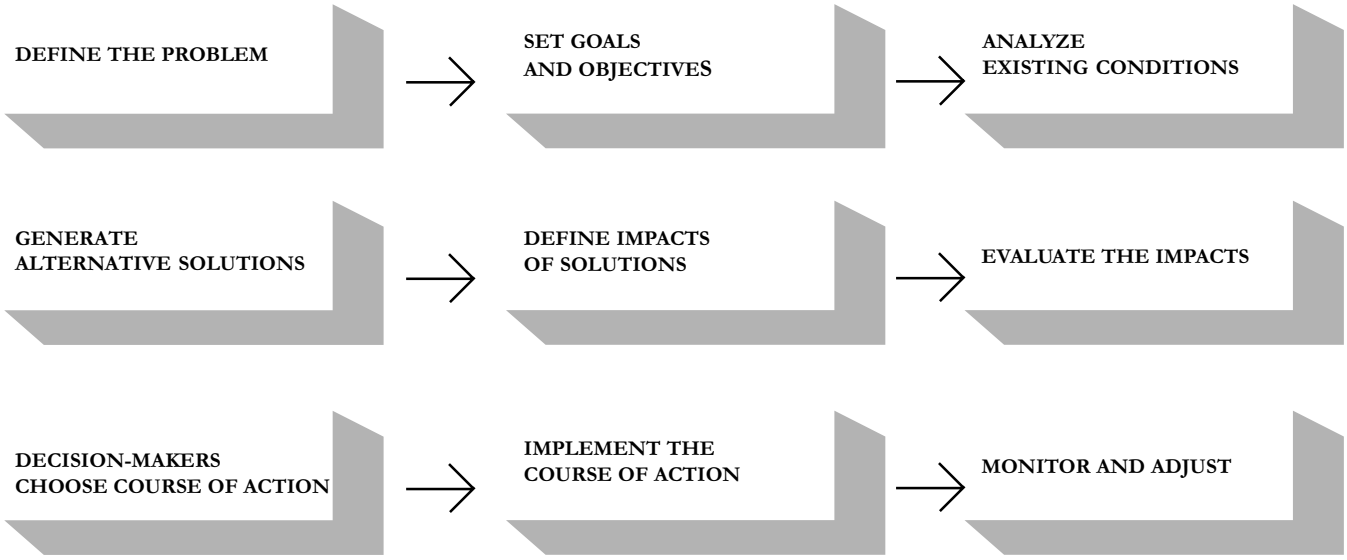
THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Harmony Corridor planning process involved two parallel work efforts – a technical planning effort and a public participation process. The technical planning effort analyzed existing conditions and opportunities, defined focus areas and generated alternative approaches which led to the planning and urban design recommendations of the Plan. At the same time, a public participation process attempted to identify all potentially affected interests and work with them using a number of different techniques designed to inform as well as solicit ideas. Advisory committees, public open houses, presentations to boards and commissions, as well as numerous meetings with special interest groups and individuals have all been used to get comments and ideas, many of which have helped shape the Plan.

A group deserving special recognition is the steering committee, a group of volunteers representing people owning property frontage along Harmony Road. Staff has welcomed the interest and enthusiasm demonstrated by this group throughout the process. The role of the steering committee was to help staff understand the values and concerns of the landowners that will be most directly affected by the Plan. The Plan is richer as a result of their dedication and responsiveness.

Citizen values, ideas and concerns were recorded at public open houses.





Technical Planning Process Diagram

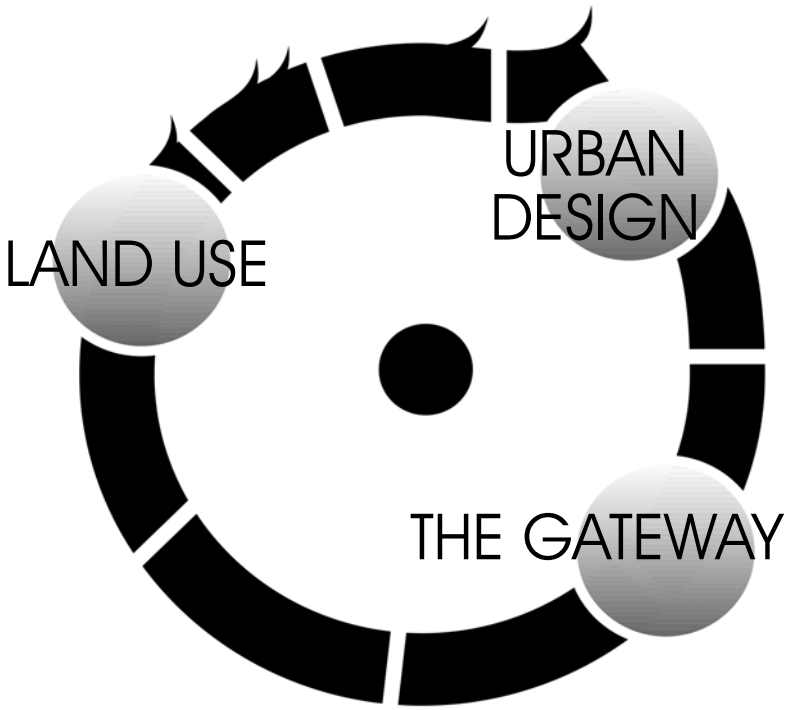
PLAN REVISION PROCESS

On July 5, 1994, City Council directed City Staff to review the Plan and identify and suggest needed amendments that would strengthen the "vision" of the Corridor that it become a major employment center in northern Colorado attracting a variety of businesses and industries serving local as well as regional markets. City staff and the Planning and Zoning Board, aided by an ad hoc advisory committee, intensively reviewed the document and recommended changes to the *Harmony Corridor Plan*, together with implementation regulations. These changes were adopted by City Council on January 3, 1995 and the changes have been incorporated herein.

THE PLAN

The next chapter describes physical and cultural existing conditions in the corridor. Analysis of existing conditions helped define the three focus areas of the Plan – LAND USE, URBAN DESIGN and THE GATEWAY. Each focus area is elaborated on independently. Issues are described, problems and opportunities defined and alternative directions for the future are analyzed. The discussion of each focus area concludes with a plan in the form of a goal statement, policies and implementation actions. Maps and graphic illustrations are used to supplement the text and clarify its intent. Design guidelines for new development in the corridor, one of the primary implementation mechanisms proposed in the Plan, have been developed and are available under separate cover.

The three focus areas together create a comprehensive "vision" for the Harmony Corridor of the future. In order for the full potential of the corridor to be realized, both the City and the private sector need to make a commitment to implementation. It is envisioned that the implementation actions spelled out in this Plan will be underway within the next five years.



IMPLEMENTATION

A series of recommended implementation actions are contained at the conclusion of each focus area discussion. Actions include several public improvement projects that require additional planning and design work. Sources of funding for construction and maintenance need to be identified. Strategies for attracting targeted industries need to be developed.

Coordination efforts with other City departments, Larimer County, the Town of Timnath and the State Division of Highways should be continued. Phase two planning of the I-25 interchange area is critical if we want to maximize the potential of this scenic gateway before development pressures eliminate options for the future. Important opportunities may be missed if the City does not play an active role in intergovernmental coordination and master planning this scenic and environmentally sensitive area.

This Plan recommends that the City assign staff to work on implementation tasks, giving priority to opportunities that may be missed if action is delayed. The *Harmony Corridor Plan* is a starting point. Effective implementation actions can turn the "vision" created by this Plan into reality for residents in the community now and for future generations. The majesty of Longs Peak and the Front Range depicted on the cover is one of the few elements of the corridor that is not expected to change in the foreseeable future. With this spectacular view as an inspiration, how can we do less than strive for excellence?

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EXISTING CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

All good planning must begin with a survey of actual resources: the landscape, the people, the work-a-day activities in a community. Good planning does not begin with an abstract and arbitrary scheme that it seeks to impose on a community; it begins with a knowledge of existing conditions and opportunities.

LEWIS MUMFORD

INTRODUCTION

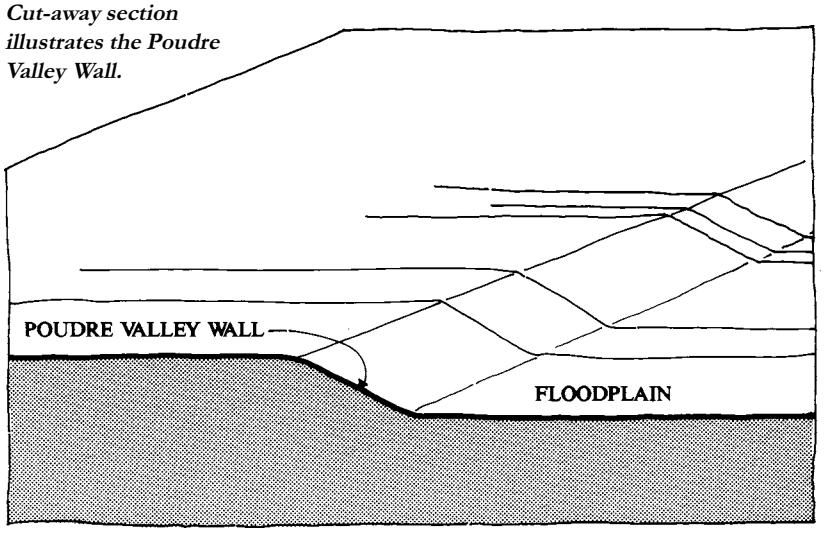
The technical portion of the planning process began by documenting physical and cultural existing conditions. This chapter provides information about the corridor and highlights special opportunities. Maps located at the end of the chapter provide graphic illustration.

LANDFORM AND NATURAL RESOURCES

LANDFORM

The Harmony Corridor contains three dominant topographic features: the floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River, bluffs known as the Poudre River Valley Wall at the edge of the floodplain and rolling plains beyond. Longs Peak, the Front Range and the foothills are highly visible and constitute a dramatic backdrop for the corridor landscape.

Cut-away section illustrates the Poudre Valley Wall.



The elevation of the study area ranges from approximately 4,850 feet at the top of the bluffs located west of I-25 to approximately 5,025 feet near College Avenue. Formed by down-cutting action of the Poudre River as it meandered within its floodplain, the bluffs represent the only dramatic change in elevation within the study area. The elevation drops 50 feet in 550 feet resulting in an average 9% slope. At the bottom of the slope the topography levels out on to the Cache la Poudre River floodplain. See Map 1.

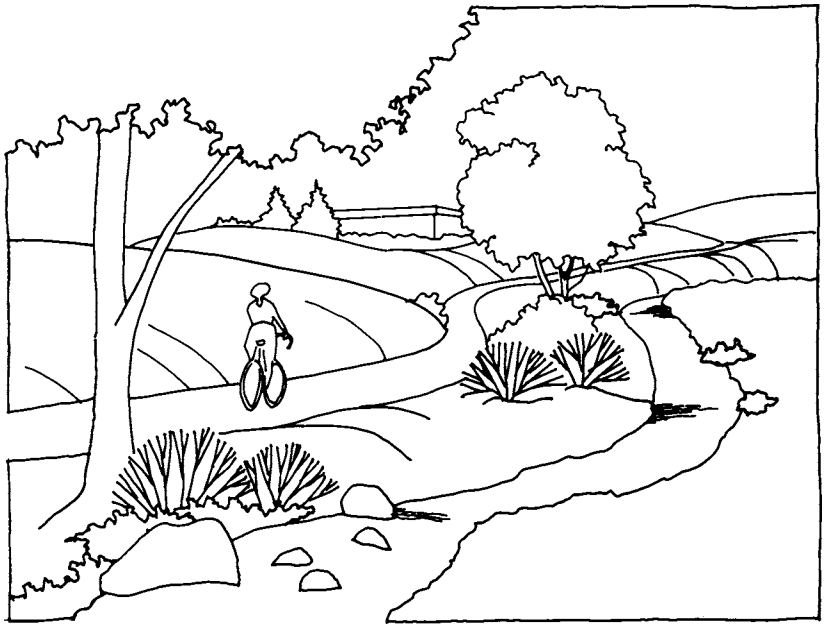
Draining approximately 1,900 square miles, the Cache la Poudre River is the largest river on the northern Colorado Front Range. The river and its associate vegetation and wildlife habitat is a valuable natural resource that offers unique recreational and educational opportunities. Along with these assets the river poses some development constraints. Generally speaking, no development is allowed within the designated floodway. Land area between the floodway and the 100-year floodplain offers some development potential if flood proofing is addressed.

DRAINAGE BASINS AND IRRIGATION CANALS

Three drainage basins occur within the study area. The Mail Creek and McClelland Drainage basins drain the western and southern portions of the study area to Mail Creek and McClelland Creek respectively. See Map 1. The Fox Meadows Basin is located in

the northeast portion of the study area and drains to the Fossil Creek Reservoir Inlet Ditch and then to the Cache la Poudre River. As development occurs, surface run-off increases, resulting in stormwater being diverted into a series of swales, detention ponds, channels, irrigation ditches and/or streams until ultimately the flows reach the Cache la Poudre River. The study area is laced with this network of drainageways and irrigation canals. Stream bank erosion and water quality issues are concerns in all three basins, but are especially critical in the McClelland and Mail Creek Basins, since both Mail Creek and Fossil Creek have experienced flooding, bank erosion and stream degradation.

Four major irrigation canals intersect the study area. Water in these irrigation canals has been diverted from the Cache la Poudre River at some point upstream from the corridor. Historically the water has been used for agricultural purposes and is allotted to area farmers through a complex system of water rights. As Fort Collins becomes more urbanized the need for irrigation canals will diminish, however, the major irrigation canals in the study area are likely to remain viable for a number of years. While the canals and their associated laterals can represent development constraints, they also can become recreational and visual amenities.



Irrigation canals and drainageways provide opportunities for recreational amenities.

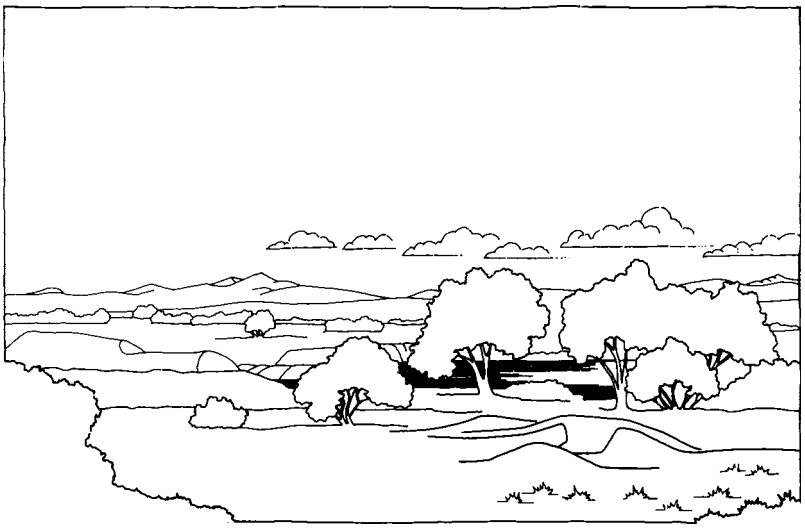
NATURAL RESOURCES

Fort Collins has always valued local natural environments as evidenced in the City's GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (1977), the LAND USE POLICIES PLAN (1979) and the LAND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM (1982). All of these documents contain directives pertaining to the conservation and protection of natural environments. In 1988, the City Council endorsed wetland and wildlife habitat maps that define the location and relative importance of natural areas within the city's urban growth area. See Maps 2 and 3. By increasing awareness of these areas, the maps reaffirmed the City's commitment to conserving important wetland and wildlife habitats for their economic, social, and aesthetic benefits.

THE GATEWAY

The most significant natural areas in the Harmony Corridor are associated with the Cache la Poudre River and located near I-25. This area has been termed the "gateway" because it is the first point of entry to Fort Collins from the south. Several lakes, wetlands and associated riparian vegetation are found on both sides of I-25 in the floodplain of the river. Most of the lakes and wetlands are a result of gravel mining operations that have and continue to alter the natural environment. With creative management and appropriate reclamation practices, these areas have the potential to become recreational, educational and scenic resources for the community. In addition, wetland areas like these may act as filtering systems for stormwater run off, preventing pollutants from entering the river. The potential value of these natural areas should not be underestimated. The fact that the area is located at the gateway to Fort Collins intensifies its importance.

Gateway view showing cottonwood trees and gravel mining operations.



In 1989, Fort Collins completed a feasibility study regarding the possibility of designating a National Recreation Area along the Cache la Poudre River. Although City Council chose not to pursue NRA designation it did make a commitment to implementing an exemplary and comprehensive river management program. This river management program may affect the future of the gateway area.

GRAVEL RESOURCES

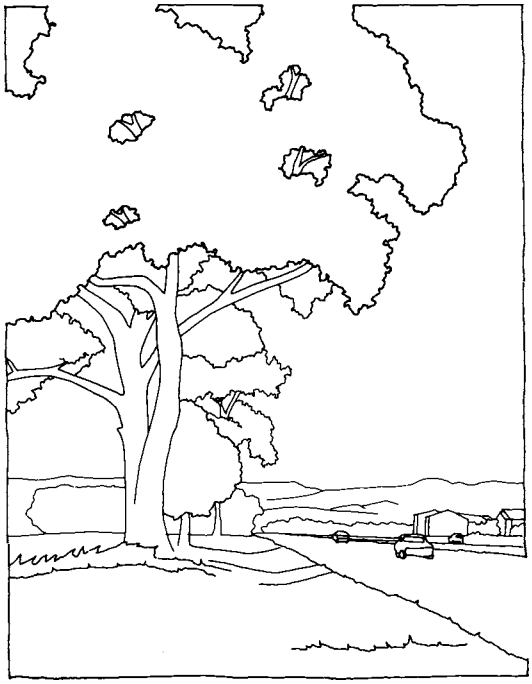
The land area between the Cache la Poudre River and the Poudre Valley Wall located just east of Hewlett-Packard is underlain with gravel deposits classified as F1 by the Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Geologic Survey. This classification means that the resource is a floodplain deposit and is composed of relatively clean and sound gravel. The overburden ranges from 2-9 feet and the depth of gravel ranges from 8-24 feet. Roughly one-third of the area has been or is in the process of being mined.

MATURE TREES

Mature trees, both evergreen and deciduous, are important natural resources throughout the study area. Besides their importance as wildlife habitat, tree masses provide scale, frame views and add visual interest to the landscape. The corridor is fortunate to have significant numbers of mature trees. Most of them are visible from Harmony Road.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Air quality and water quality are two critical environmental questions which affect the Harmony Corridor. In 1989, the community took important steps toward addressing these issues comprehensively. The City's Natural Resource Division began working on a comprehensive environmental management plan that will focus on a variety of environmental concerns, including air quality. At the same time the City's Transportation Division started work on a comprehensive transportation plan that relates directly to air quality issues. These two divisions and the community are working together in a participatory process to establish the best way to balance the trade-offs and address the air quality problem in this community. At the same time the Stormwater Utility is studying the issue of stormwater runoff and water quality.



Mature trees along Harmony Road frame views and add visual interest to the corridor.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

ELECTRICAL

The City provides electrical service within the incorporated city limits. As areas are annexed the City assumes service. Portions of the corridor still in the county receive electrical service from either the Public Service Company of Colorado (PSCO) or the Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association (REA). Conversion from an existing electric utility to City electric utility service is done at no cost to the customer. The City is committed to providing electrical service underground rather than through overhead power lines.

Street lighting along Harmony Road will be installed as development and street improvements occur. Standard lighting for arterial streets uses 30 foot poles, with extended arm, cobra-head type fixtures. It is anticipated that in general, light poles along Harmony Road will be placed at the edge of the roadway in an alternating pattern, approximately 175 feet on center. The light source will be 400 watt high pressure sodium bulbs.

Funding for standard lighting comes from development fees and lighting district assessments. Lighting is installed along entire improvement areas, and costs are recaptured from undeveloped areas at the time of development.

WATER AND WASTEWATER

It is anticipated that most of the Harmony Corridor will be serviced by the City's Water and Wastewater Utility, although the Fort Collin/Loveland Water District will continue to provide service to developed areas near College Avenue. The City's system of existing and proposed water and sanitary sewer mains is shown on Maps 4 and 5. Currently water service is provided through a series of relatively small water lines. As growth in the corridor continues, a major transmission line will be needed to provide service. The City Water Utility has completed the conceptual design and route selection for the Harmony Transmission Main, which extends between Shields Street and County Road 9.

Currently, wastewater service at the extreme eastern edge of the corridor would require a force main and pump station. However, the Wastewater Treatment Master Plan completed in 1990 calls for construction of a new wastewater treatment plant downstream. This would allow the eastern part of the Harmony Corridor to be served by gravity flow. The new wastewater treatment facility would not be on line before 1999.

The extension of water mains and sanitary sewers which are in or near the existing water distribution and wastewater collection systems is dependent upon many factors. In most cases, new development and the associated increases in water demand and wastewater flows are the primary reasons for these improvements. The installation and the cost of water mains and sanitary sewers to serve new developments are the responsibility of the developer. When the City requires improvements to serve areas beyond the immediate development, the City pays for oversizing.

STORMWATER UTILITY

The City's Stormwater Utility is a special purpose division within the City that protects the public's health, safety and welfare through effective stormwater management. Its responsibilities include flood control, development plan review, construction, operation and maintenance of stormwater facilities and long range

planning. Regional drainage facilities identified in the master storm drainage plans for the Harmony Corridor include a major drainage channel to carry flows from the Fossil Creek Reservoir Inlet to the old quarry just east of County Road 7. The concept plan indicates that the channel would be visible from Harmony Road.

Although the Stormwater Utility currently does not regulate stormwater quality, it is moving in that direction. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an agency of the Federal government, published regulations in 1990. These regulations emphasize best management practices to control the pollutant source and apply to all municipalities in the United States. Fort Collins has already initiated activities in regard to these regulations.

The Stormwater Utility has started to inform the public about stormwater quality, inventory the City's storm drainage system and monitor water quality in local streams and major outfalls. In addition, the utility is conducting research at two recently developed commercial projects in Fort Collins. The two pilot projects use state of the art technology to monitor and improve the quality of stormwater runoff before it leaves the site. The utility is in the process of developing erosion control criteria for construction activities in the Fort Collins area and is collecting information to initiate a water quality management plan for the Mail Creek and Fossil Creek drainage basins. All of these advance planning measures combined will enable the utility to determine the magnitude of the problem and the best way to effectively manage stormwater quality in Fort Collins.

TRANSPORTATION

TRAFFIC AND ACCESS

Harmony Road's importance as a transportation corridor for the City of Fort Collins cannot be overestimated. Carrying in excess of 28,000 vehicles to and from Fort Collins each day, Harmony Road is one of the community's major transportation links to Denver and other communities along the Front Range. In response to increasing development pressure and in recognition of the importance of Harmony Road as a gateway corridor and major arterial street, the Harmony Road Access Plan was adopted in 1989. In this intergovernmental agreement the City, the State Division Highways and Larimer County agreed to access points and future signal locations between Boardwalk Drive and I-25. Future access for development along Harmony Road must be in conformance with the Access Plan. See Map 6. Any change to access location or access type from those identified in the Access Plan requires an amendment.

Traffic counts for Harmony Road were taken in the fall of 1989. Currently all intersections operate at level of service "C" or better, meaning that the highway is operating below its maximum capacity and is providing acceptable levels of service. It is anticipated that when the corridor is built out, traffic volumes on Harmony Road will approach 30,000 vehicles a day. It is anticipated that Harmony Road will eventually be widened to three travel lanes in each direction to maintain acceptable levels of service.

At the present time the State Division of Highways controls the speed limit along Harmony Road. It varies from 55 MPH near I-25 to 40 MPH closer to College Avenue. It is expected that when the corridor is fully developed, the speed limit will be reduced to 40-45 MPH. How and when the speed limit will change is dependent on a variety of factors, including traffic volume and safety.

STATE VERSUS LOCAL CONTROL

Since Harmony Road is a state highway, decisions regarding roadway improvements, future widening, landscaping in the right-of-way and maintenance are decisions made by the State Division of Highways. The goals and objectives of the State may not always parallel those of the community. In recent years, City staff has maintained a good working relationship with the Division of Highways, and has been able to negotiate acceptable solutions when State and local goals have varied. A good example of this cooperative spirit is the Harmony Road Access Plan.

While the Access Plan will provide a basis for agreement on transportation issues for years to come, it is likely that as the corridor continues to urbanize, the State and City will differ on issues relating to the visual quality of the roadway. Although plans for future widening of Harmony Road are not finalized, indications are that the State plans to widen the roadway to the center rather that to the outside and greatly reduce or eliminate the median. In regard to landscaping, the Division of Highways has a policy that discourages planting trees in the right-of-way and/or the median.

In recent years Harmony Road has functioned more as a local arterial street and less as a state highway. Recognizing this trend, the State has indicated a desire to work toward placing Harmony Road under local control.

LAND USE PLANNING

For the past ten years, the City has promoted a mixed land use concept in Fort Collins because of the associated social, economic and environmental benefits. One of the most important reasons for mixing land uses relates to transportation. Locating employment centers, shopping centers, recreational opportunities and residential areas in close proximity to each other shortens the distance people need to drive to

work, shop and play. It also encourages alternative modes to transportation such as walking and bicycling. Besides the convenience and associated lifestyle benefits, mixed land use, by shortening trip length and eliminating some trips altogether, can have a positive effect on air quality.

The present trend of large employers to develop in "campus-like" settings is evident along Harmony Road. While these settings are visually attractive and offer recreational benefits for employees, this kind of low density development makes efficient transit service difficult.

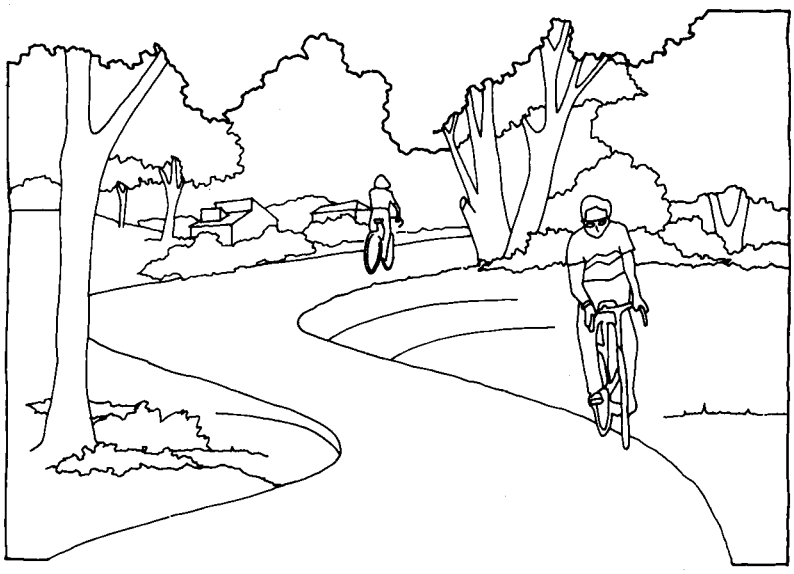
ALTERNATIVE MODES

While land use planning attempts to provide opportunities to work, shop and play close to home, the lack of pedestrian linkages, bikeways and safe crossings along Harmony Road make it difficult to walk or use a bicycle as an alternative mode of transportation. Sidewalks are built as development occurs. Signalized intersections and crosswalks are added as traffic volumes increase. As the corridor gets closer to complete build out, pedestrian linkages will be more complete and useful.

At the present time, Harmony Road does not have a designated bike lane. Some bicycle commuters use the road shoulder; however, the shoulder does not exist in all locations. The speed and proximity of passing vehicles can be dangerous for bicyclists.

Public transit does not serve the corridor now but may be available in the future, as employment opportunities increase. Low density development makes it difficult to provide transit service cost effectively. The Transit Development Program, a 5-year strategic plan adopted by City Council in 1990, focuses on serving transit dependent populations, including the elderly, people with low incomes, the disabled and students. Demographics show that the highest concentrations of transit dependent people live in the northwest portion of the city. Focusing of limited resources has resulted in the elimination of transit service along Harmony Road east of College Avenue for the short term future.

Mixed land uses encourage alternative modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling.



Some commuters that use I-25 to travel to other cities to work have started car pooling. Currently, people park their cars on the north side of Harmony Road just west of the I-25 interchange and travel with other people commuting to the same location. Commuter Pool is a ride share/car pool program operated by the City which currently serves this area and could provide service to local employees as well as those who drive to Denver.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Another factor affecting the future of transportation in the Harmony Corridor will be the Fort Collins Area Transportation Plan expected to be complete in 1991. The Plan will identify all transportation systems needs and evaluate the social, economic and environmental impacts of alternative land use and transportation models. The goal of the Plan is to establish transportation policies, facilities and implementation schedules that will guide the future development of this community through the year 2010. The Plan will identify future street needs, identify new street locations, create opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian travel and determine the role of transit in our community.

LAND USE/ZONING

EXISTING LAND USE

Harmony Corridor contains approximately 3,090 acres and is 37% developed. It already contains a wide variety of land uses. See Maps 7A and 7B. The Chart on the next page summarizes some land use statistics that help describe the corridor.

Residential land uses occupy the largest amount of developed property. There are approximately 2,322 dwelling units in the planning area for a total population of approximately 6,150 residents. Although the residential areas are single family oriented, there is significant multi-family development. The corridor also contains two large mobile home parks. Single family lots range from approximately 6,300 square feet to nearly an acre in size and home prices vary considerably from $55,000, to over $350,000 in current dollars. Almost all of the residential areas were constructed within the last decade, with the exception of Fairway Estates located south of Harmony Road near College Avenue, which has existed for more than twenty-five years.

Industrial uses occur at dispersed locations in the corridor area. The uses are predominantly research, manufacturing and office/warehouse. With the exception of Hewlett-Packard, the major users are located in Golden Meadows and Oakridge industrial parks. Collectively these industrial developments represent a significant portion of the community's employment base.

Only a small portion of the corridor is currently developed as retail and is found clustered near College Avenue, in the vicinity of Boardwalk Drive and near the I-25 interchange. A community/regional shopping center at Boardwalk Drive includes a PACE Membership Club Warehouse. A grocery store and a builders supply store are planned to be part of the same center. There is a scattering of office space occurring mainly between Boardwalk Drive and Timberline Road in two major centers: Boardwalk Office Park and Oakridge Business Park.

Other notable land uses include: Mountain Crest Hospital, a private psychiatric hospital; several churches; Harmony Cemetery; Werner Elementary School; as well as Landings and Golden Meadows Parks.

The variety of land uses and amenities already existing in the corridor, combined with the fact that the corridor has large, vacant, fully-serviced tracts of land for development, makes it unique in Fort Collins.

HARMONY CORRIDOR LAND USE STATISTICS

Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total
Residential	481	16%
Industrial	190	6%
Institutional	53	2%
Retail/Office	69	2%
Right-of-Way	341	11%
Undeveloped	1,956	63%
Total Land Area	3,090	100%

ANNEXATION

Only 60% of the study area is currently within the city limits. See Map 8. Properties adjacent to city limits and eligible for annexation are required to annex prior to development, while properties located within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) and not eligible for annexation are required to go through a City-County joint review process. Both the City and the County encourage developers to annex prior to development to ensure that urban level development standards are maintained. Properties located east of I-25 are outside of the UGA and would develop under County regulations.

ZONING

Of the property located within city limits; 43% is zoned residential; 25% is zoned industrial; 16% is zoned for retail/office; 5% is zoned for mobile homes; and 11% is zoned transitional. See Map 8. Properties located in unincorporated Larimer County have a combination of farming, commercial and industrial zoning designations.

It is important to note that most of the properties within the city limits and currently undeveloped have a PUD condition attached to the zoning designation. This does two things: 1) Properties will be developed as planned unit developments (PUD) and reviewed under the criteria of the LAND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM (LDGS). 2) Developers will be allowed to propose a wider range of land uses than otherwise permitted under the zoning classification. When properties are annexed into the city, the City Council has typically attached a PUD condition to the zoning. In effect, most of the currently undeveloped property within the corridor will eventually be planned and developed under the criteria of the LDGS. The guidance system gives landowners considerable flexibility in developing their property as long as the project conforms to certain criteria designed to protect and improve the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the people of Fort Collins.

The City's GOALS AND OBJECTIVES and the LAND USE POLICIES PLAN encourage mixed land use for the social, economic and environmental benefits associated with it. Locating employment centers, shopping centers, recreational opportunities and residential areas in close proximity to each other encourages people to drive less and walk or use bicycles more. The LAND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM is a development review system designed to implement the City's land use goals, objectives and policies. Under this system, the development potential of any particular site is evaluated on its own merits – size, shape, location, natural features, site development concept and its effect on surrounding land uses – rather than according to a predetermined zoning district classification. This performance zoning system, developed and used extensively in Fort Collins for the past decade, has achieved national recognition as a creative and effective land use management tool.

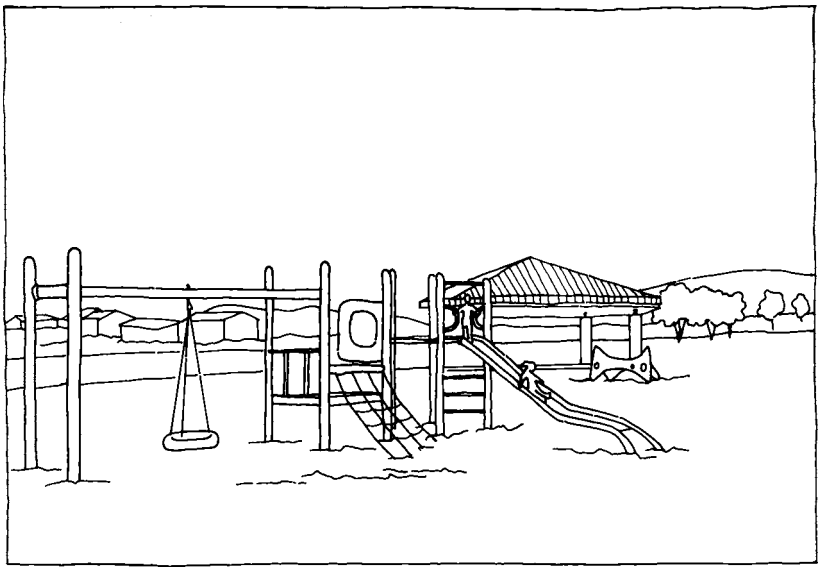
LARIMER COUNTY

Larimer County adopted a comprehensive land use plan in 1988. Land areas in the Harmony Corridor, but outside of the Fort Collins city limits are categorized in the plan. Properties west of I-25 are designated "Municipal Expansion Area/Urban Development Area" meaning that future municipal boundaries are expected to expand to include these areas. Properties east of I-25 are designated "Rural" meaning that "these areas are protected for agricultural uses and other low intensity uses requiring large land areas and low service needs." The Larimer County Zoning Ordinance, however, indicates that these areas (east of I-25), are zoned C-Commercial and I-Industrial. These zoning district designations allow a much wider array of land uses.

PLANNED RECREATION FACILITIES

The City has already purchased 100 acres of land including Portner Reservoir, to develop Fossil Creek Community Park. In addition, the City's 1989 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN recommends that a community park be developed to serve the southeast portion of the community. A tentative location for this park is near the Cache la Poudre River northeast of the study area. The historic Strauss Cabin, combined with the natural setting of the Cache la Poudre River, make this area an ideal location. The master plan also projects that an additional 18-hole golf course will be needed by the community by the year 2000. The natural features of this site would provide an attractive setting for a golf course.

Landing's Park provides recreational opportunities for neighborhood residents.



The City's proposed recreational trail system intersects and surrounds the study area. At this time only a general location for the trail has been defined. As development occurs, more specific trail locations will be selected and easements for the trail will be acquired through dedication and/or purchase. Acquisition of open space in the foothills, along the Cache la Poudre River and in the Fossil Creek floodplain is emphasized in the City's PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN. Since part of the study area lies within the floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River, there may be potential for open space acquisition as well as park and trail development in this scenic corridor.

Neighborhood parks are acquired and developed when funds become available through parkland fees paid by residential development. Community parks are usually funded through bond issues or special sales taxes, after population in the vicinity grows and demand for the facility increases. The City uses Colorado lottery funds for acquiring and developing trails and open space. The City is committed to completing as much open space and trail development as lottery funds will finance.

CULTURAL SERVICES

Currently all cultural services offered by the City – Lincoln Center, the museum and the public library, are located near downtown. It is likely that additional facilities, such as a branch library to serve the south part of Fort Collins, will be needed at some point in the future.

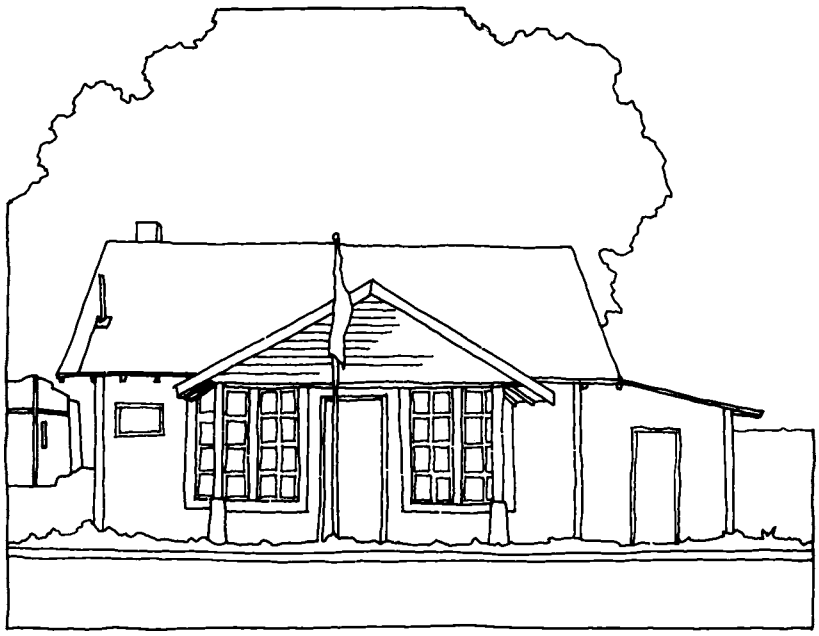
HISTORICAL RESOURCES

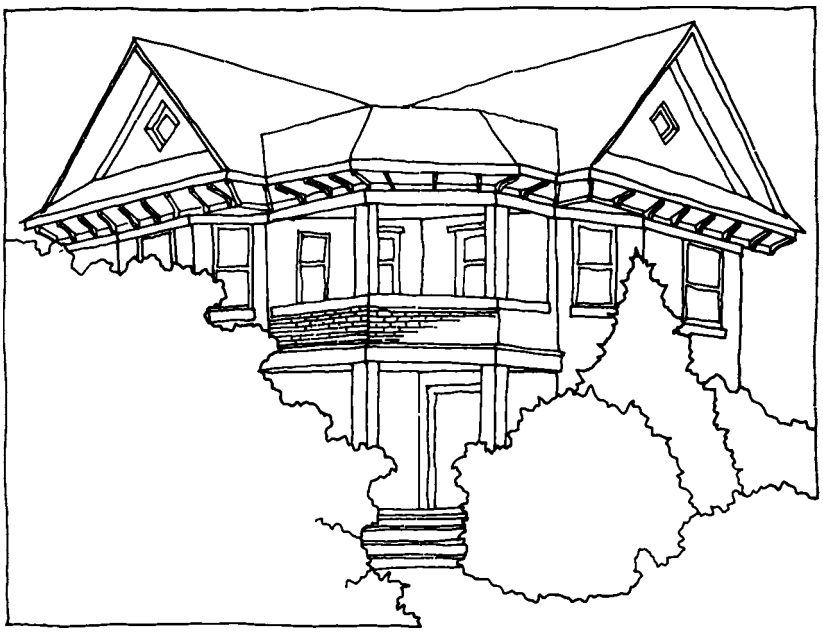
Before there was a Harmony Road there was a small agricultural community named "Harmony". The Settlement was established as early as 1870. Farming was the mainstay of the community with over 4000 acres being cultivated in 1881. Crops included fruit trees, small fruits, grasses, wheat, corn, barley, oats, and timothy. Names of local farmers such as McNally, Brown, Preston, Baxter, Brockway and Webster suggest predominantly English and Scottish heritage.

The "Harmony Store", a grocery store, post office and eventually a gas station, was the center of town. Located at the northwest corner where Timberline Road and Harmony Road intersect, the building still exists today. The original school, located west of Harmony Cemetery, was eventually replaced by a newer school which still exists at the northeast corner of the same intersection. There was a stockyard north of Harmony Road along the Union Pacific railroad tracks and a grain elevator on the south side. Several historic residences still exist.

Some of the historic buildings and sites in the corridor are potentially eligible for the National Register by virtue of their architecture, the people who lived in them, or because of their association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. See Map 9. Some of the more significant buildings and sites are depicted on the following pages.

Harmony Store-Located at the northwest corner of Timberline Road and Harmony Road, the old Harmony Store served as a grocery store, post office and town center for early residents of Harmony.

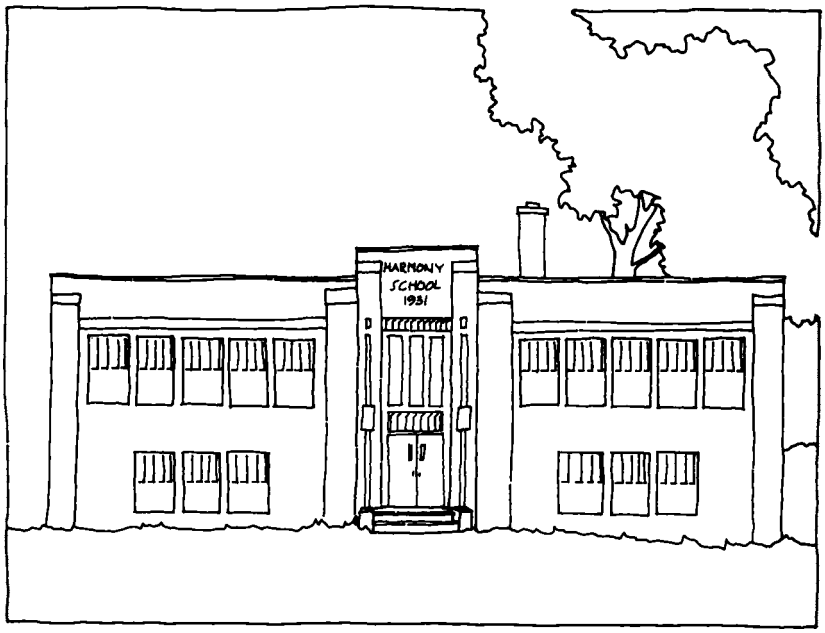




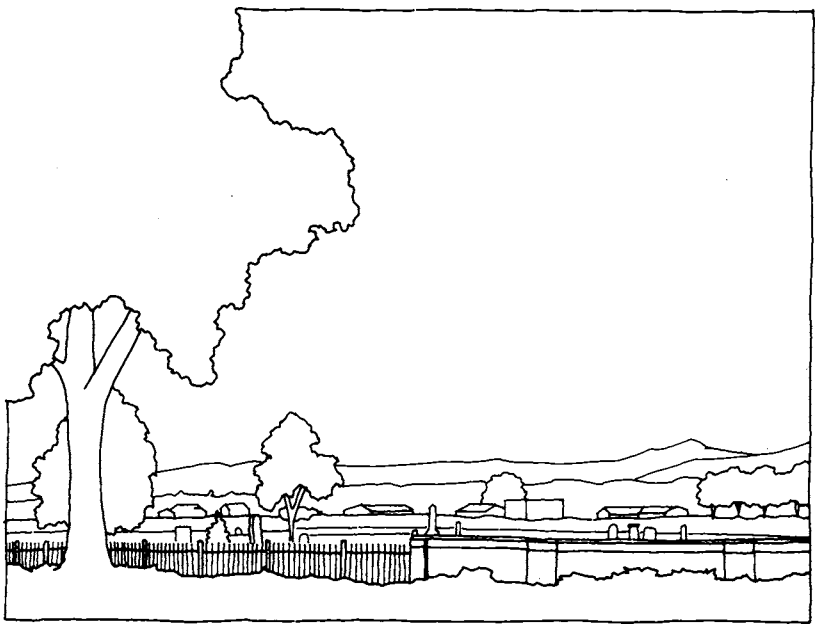
Brownell House-Built circa 1890, this two-story brick house located at 3105 East Harmony Road is architecturally significant because it is distinctively characteristic of the type, period and method of construction of the American Queen Anne Style.

Preston Farm-Benjamin Preston, Jr. was an immigrant who came to the area in the 1860's, started with very little and eventually became a respected farmer and somewhat of an agricultural innovator. The Preston Farm is significant because of Mr. Preston's prominent role in local history, the elaborate and essentially unaltered Victorian frame house and because it is a complete working farm associated with the history of this area.

Harmony School-Built in 1931 during the depression, this building is a good example of art moderne.



Harmony Road Cemetery- This original cemetery is an important part of the community's heritage. It has been tastefully renovated and is maintained by Oakridge, the business/industrial park located adjacent to it.



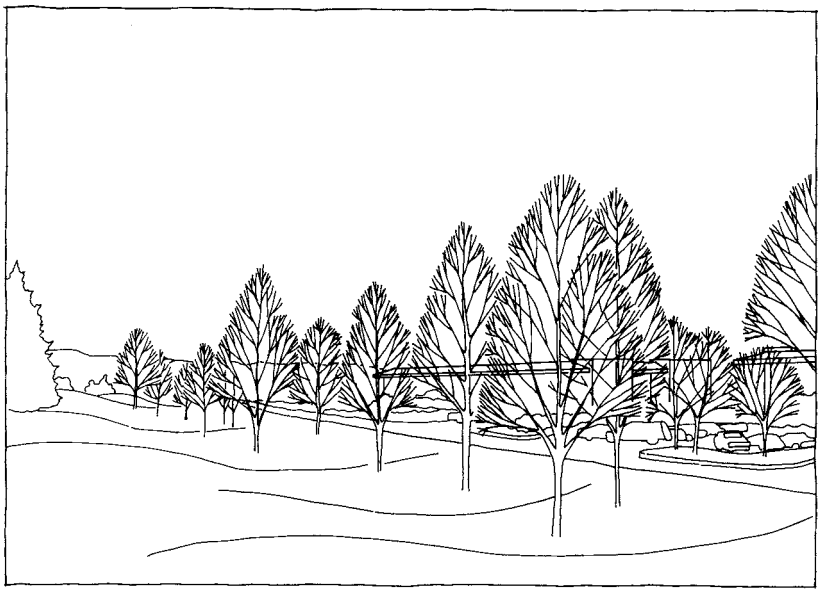
VISUAL ANALYSIS

Visual analysis is a complex concept. Photography and field investigations were used to analyze the visual quality of the Harmony Corridor as perceived by a motorist driving along Harmony Road from I-25 to College Avenue. Three factors combine to create the perceived visual quality of the corridor: quality and maintenance of the built environment, visual orderliness and vegetation. Long range views to Longs Peak and the Front Range are evident throughout the corridor and also play an important role in the overall visual quality.

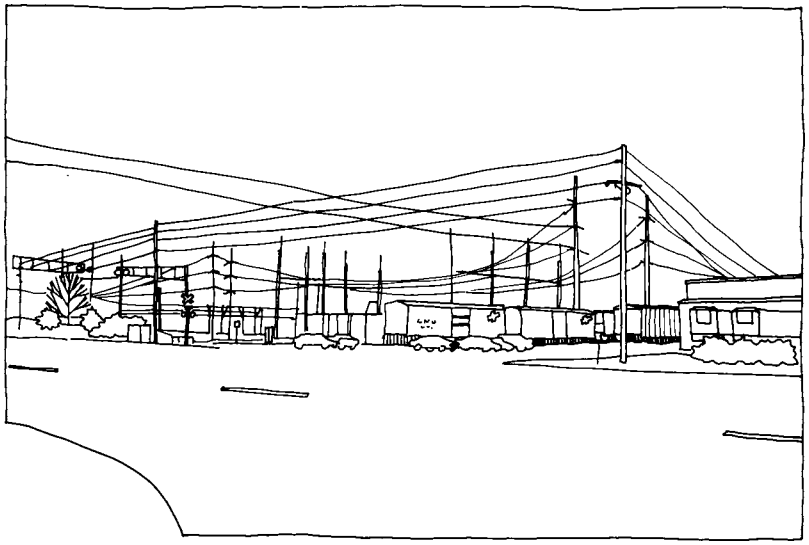
The gateway to the corridor at the I-25 interchange has many positive visual attributes. Riparian vegetation identifies the river's meandering path. The natural scenic qualities of the river, the floodplain, wetlands and associated vegetation is enhanced by the dramatic backdrop of Longs Peak and the Front Range. Existing development located immediately west of I-25 detracts from the scenic qualities of this entry. The commercial buildings rate low in both architectural quality and visual orderliness. Significant vegetation helps soften the general appearance.

Masses of cottonwood trees and lakes located along the north side of the road add to the visual richness of the gateway area. Traveling to the top of the ridge and out of the floodplain, the landscape character of the corridor changes to a mixture of agricultural fields and high quality business/industrial development. The Hewlett-Packard facility located just at the top of the ridge is particularly impressive with its wide setback and handsomely landscaped grounds. This development along with several others in the corridor have set a precedent of wide setbacks and naturalistic berming along Harmony Road. The overall effect is spacious, uncluttered and very attractive. Masses of mature trees are interspersed throughout the corridor framing views and providing visual diversity. Overhead power lines are noticeable along most of Harmony Road, predominantly on the north side. It is anticipated that most of these lines will go underground as land is annexed and the area is served by City of Fort Collins Light and Power.

Hewlett-Packard facility located at the top of the ridge.



Traveling further west, development increases, the type of development becomes more diverse and the overall visual quality decreases. The area around the Union Pacific railroad tracks located at about the midpoint of the study area is problematic because of visual clutter created by warehouse-type structures, railroad and traffic control devices, overhead power lines and signage. On the positive side, Oakridge and Golden Meadows business parks located just west of the railroad tracks are further examples of high quality business/industrial development and landscape sophistication, helping to set the tone for future development in the corridor.



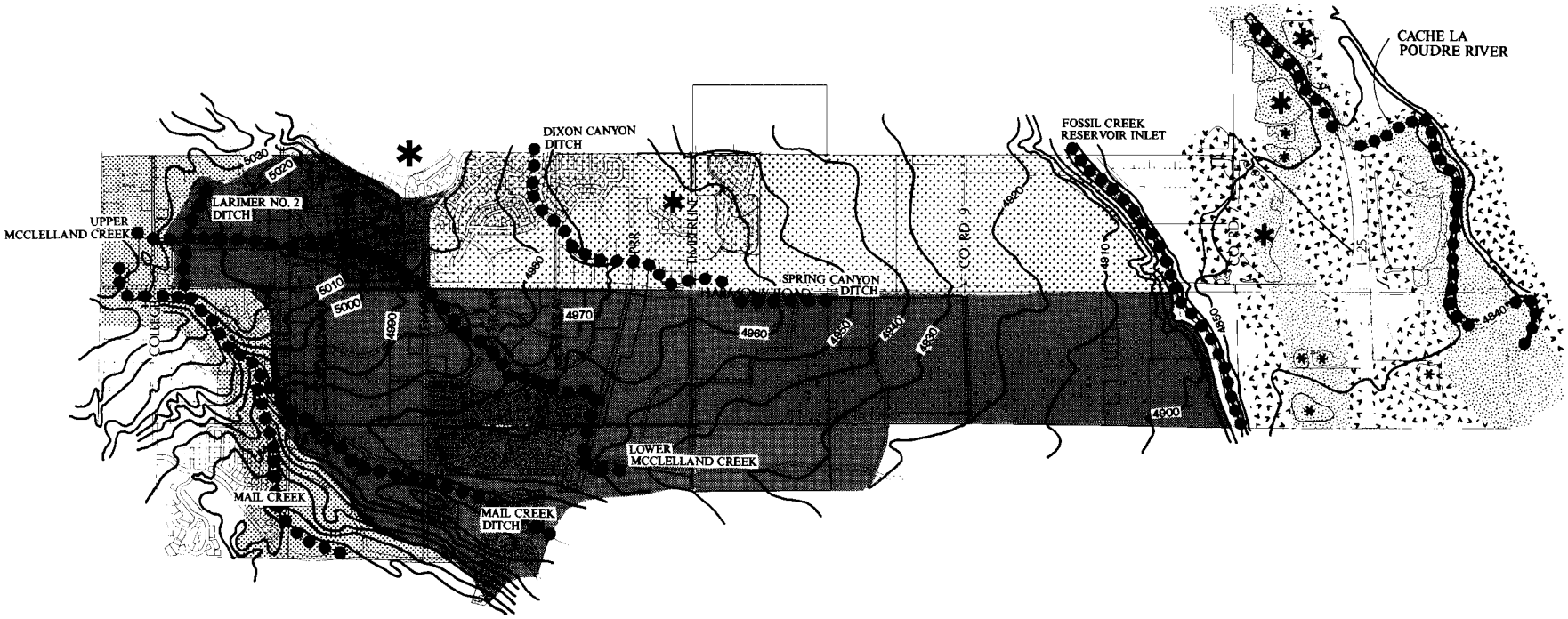
Visual clutter near the Union Pacific railroad tracks detracts from the attractiveness of the corridor.

As one approaches College Avenue, setbacks become much narrower and are nonexistent in some areas, the quality of development decreases, the median ends and there is less vegetation at eye level to soften the visual clutter and intense development. This area is however, not without positive aspects. Recent developments located on the west side of the College Avenue intersection have provided wider setbacks and generous amounts of plant material to help soften the appearance of the intersection. Riparian vegetation along Mail Creek and an abundance of mature trees associated with the Pioneer Mobile Home Park are significant natural amenities which will become even more valuable as this area redevelops over time.

HARMONY CORRIDOR: THE PLAN

Analyzing existing conditions in the corridor led to the identification of potential problems and also revealed a myriad of opportunities. The corridor has large tracts of fully serviced land available for development. We have an opportunity to attract the kinds of business and industry we want for the corridor, instead of just reacting to what comes. The visual appearance of the corridor is linked to its livability and is also important economically. We have an opportunity to affect how the corridor will look in the future. The gateway area, located in the floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River is largely undeveloped. We have an opportunity to successfully balance natural resource assets and economic development at this important gateway entrance.

Three focus areas are defined in the Plan – LAND USE, URBAN DESIGN and THE GATEWAY. In each focus area issues are delineated and potential problems are identified. Alternative approaches for solving the problems and for taking advantage of the opportunities were generated and analyzed, resulting in recommended courses of action. The *Harmony Corridor Plan* is a projection of the corridor's future, indicating ways to resolve conflicts and take advantage of unique opportunities.



FOX MEADOWS BASIN

MAIL CREEK BASIN

MCCLELLAND BASIN

FLOODWAY

FLOODPLAIN

LAKE, POND OR OTHER WATER BODY

10′ CONTOUR LINES

MAJOR WATER COURSES

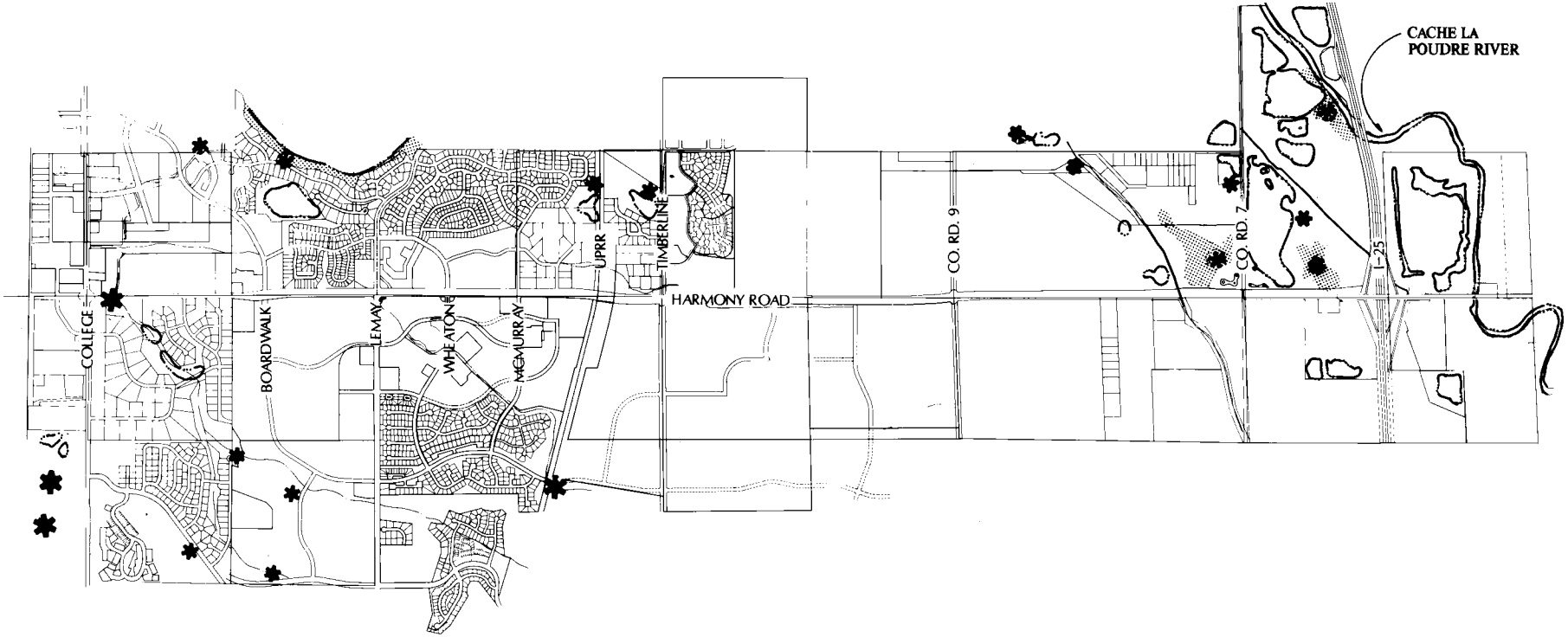
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

LANDFORM/ DRAINAGE

MAP 1



STREAM, RIVER OR LAKE

WETLAND AREA

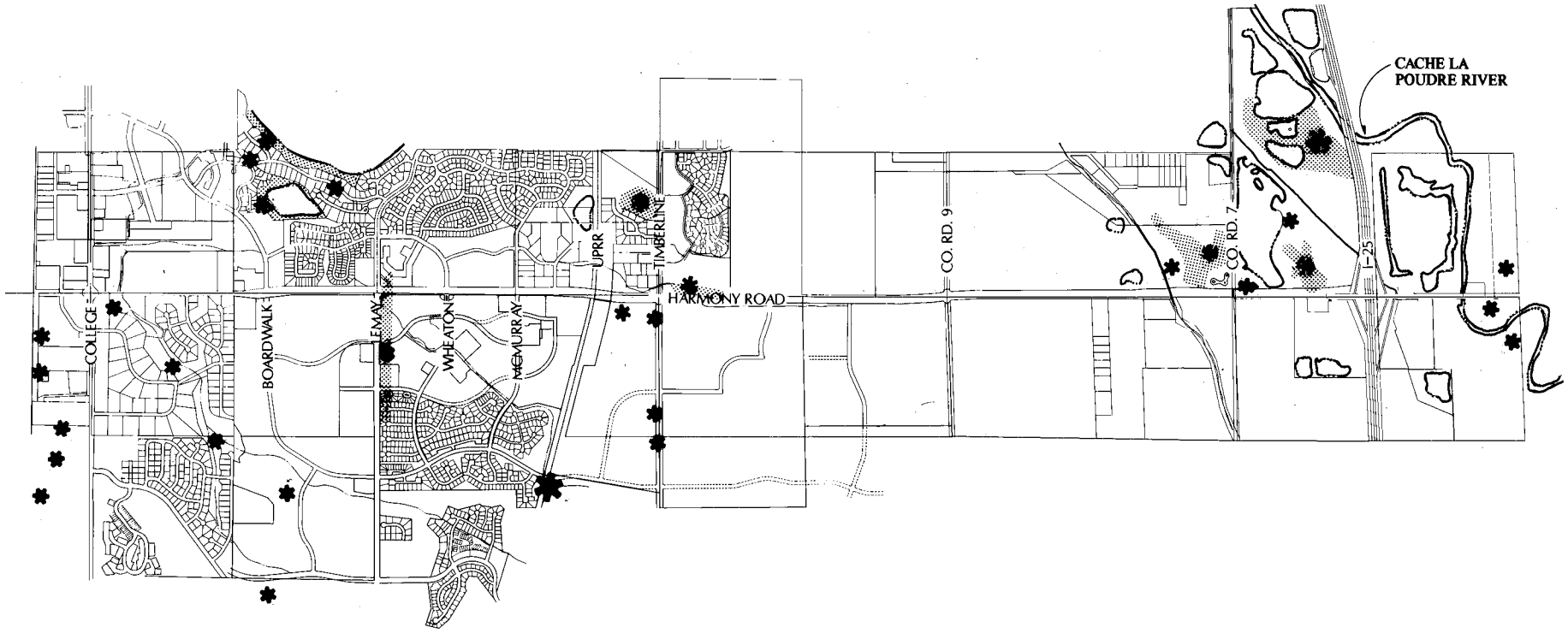
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

WETLAND AREAS

MAP 2



STREAM, RIVER OR LAKE

WILDLIFE SENSITIVE AREA

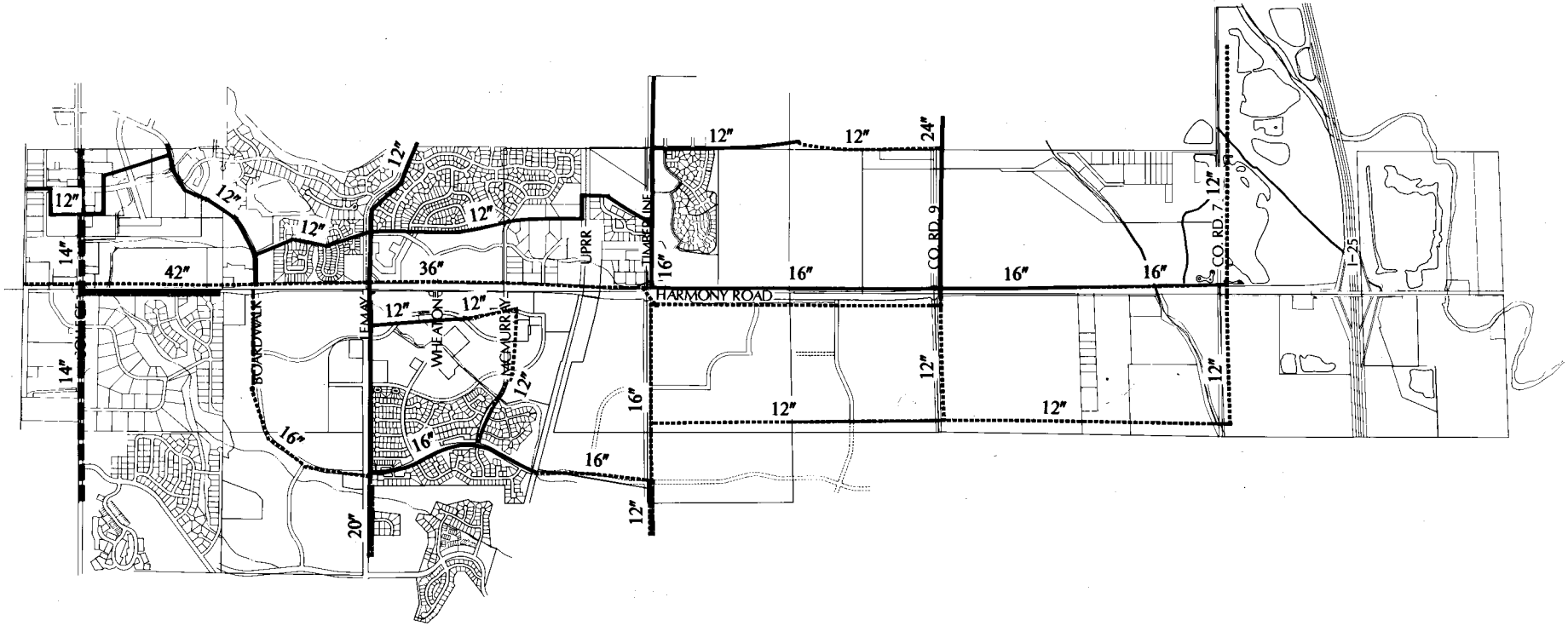
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

WILDLIFE HABITAT AREAS

MAP 3



PROPOSED CITY WATER MAINS

EXISTING CITY WATER MAINS

PROPOSED DISTRICT WATER MAINS

EXISTING DISTRICT WATER MAINS

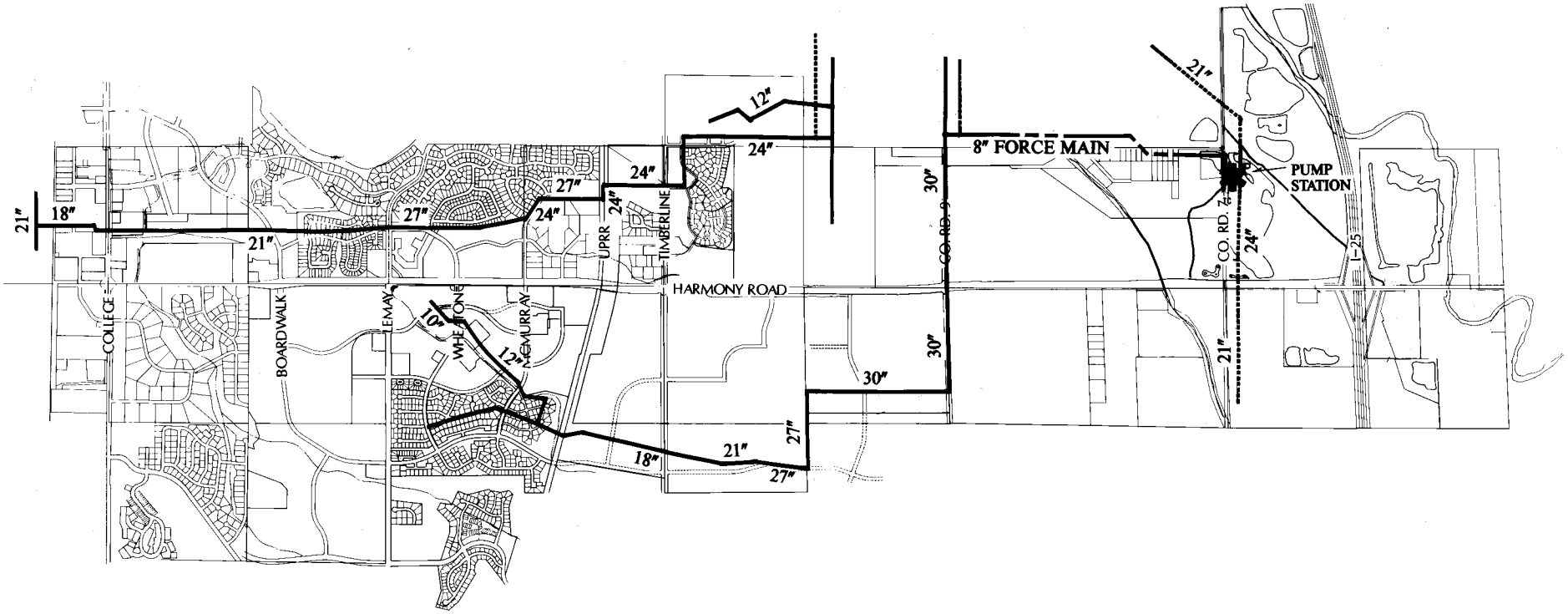
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

WATER

MAP 4



EXISTING CITY SEWER LINES

PROPOSED CITY SEWER LINES

FORCE MAINLINE

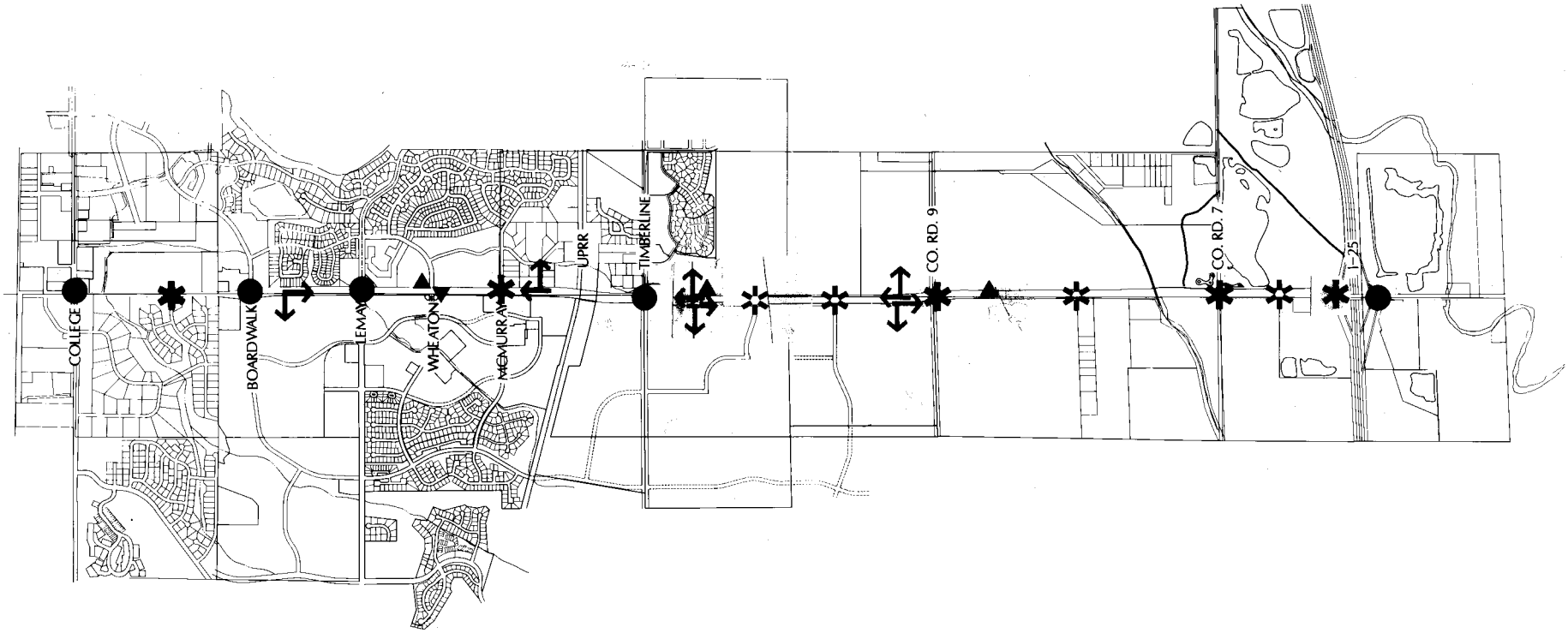
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

SANITARY SEWER

MAP 5



EXISTING SIGNAL

KNOWN FUTURE SIGNAL

POTENTIAL SIGNAL

RIGHT IN/ RIGHT OUT ONLY

LIMITED LEFT

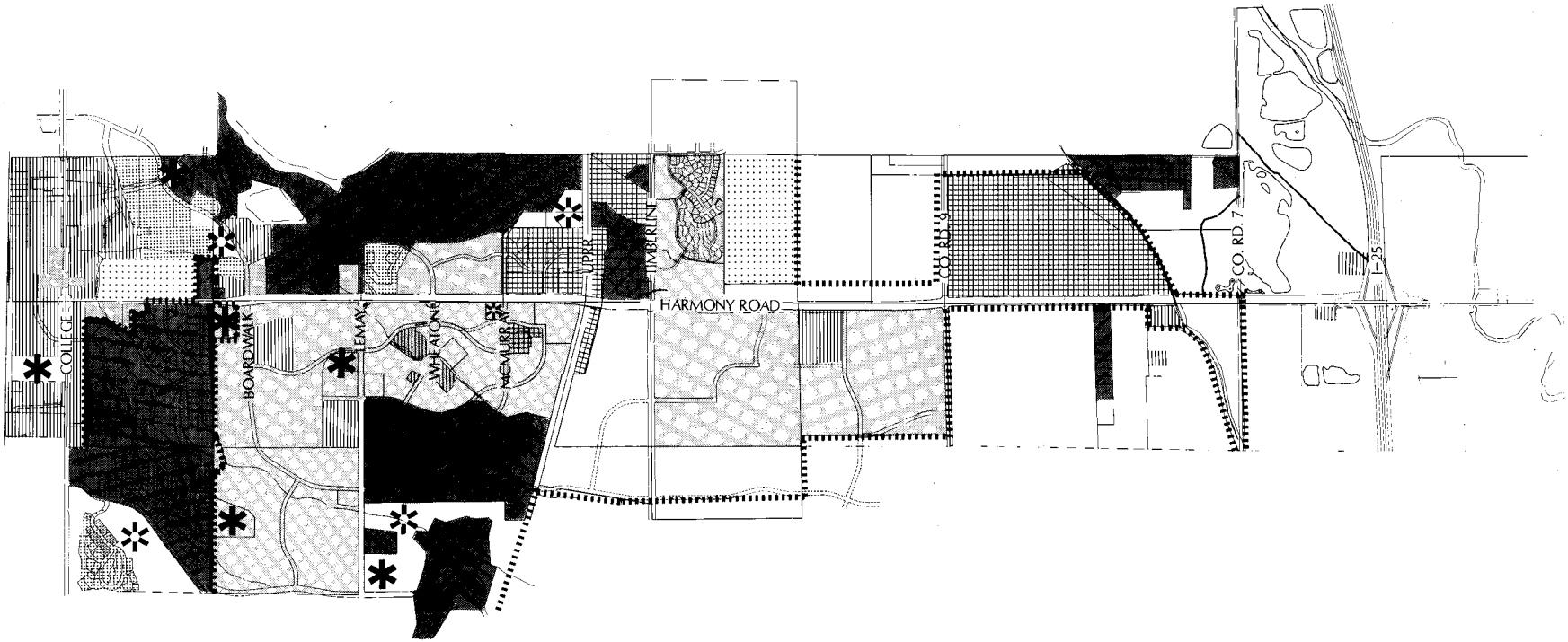
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

ACCESS PLAN

MAP 6



COMMERCIAL/OFFICE

INDUSTRIAL

SINGLE FAMILY

MULTI FAMILY

MOBILE HOME

UNPLANNED

APPROVED MASTER PLAN AREA

CHURCH/SCHOOL/PUBLIC

OPEN SPACE/PARKS

CITY LIMITS

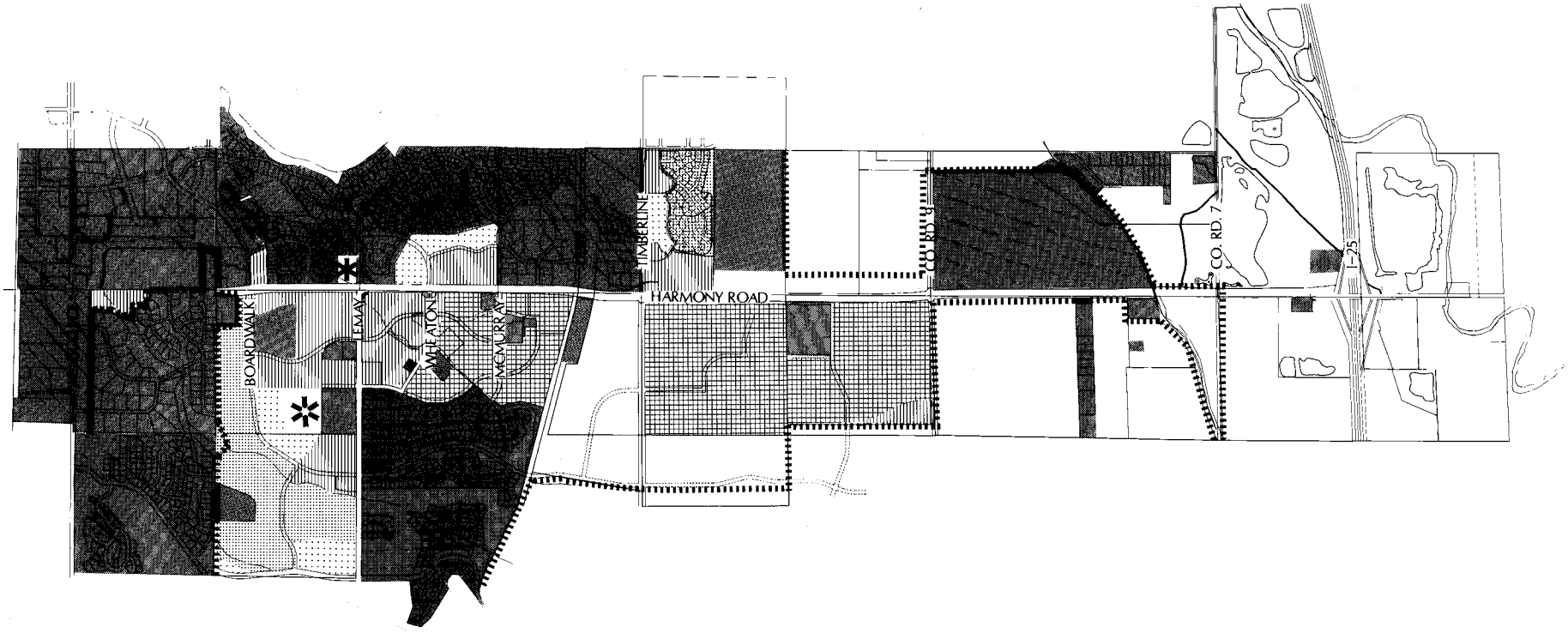
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

LAND USE - EXISTING

MAP 7A



EXISTING LAND USES
COMMERCIAL/OFFICE
INDUSTRIAL
SINGLE FAMILY
MULTI FAMILY

UNPLANNED
CHURCH/SCHOOL/PUBLIC
OPEN SPACE/PARKS
CITY LIMITS

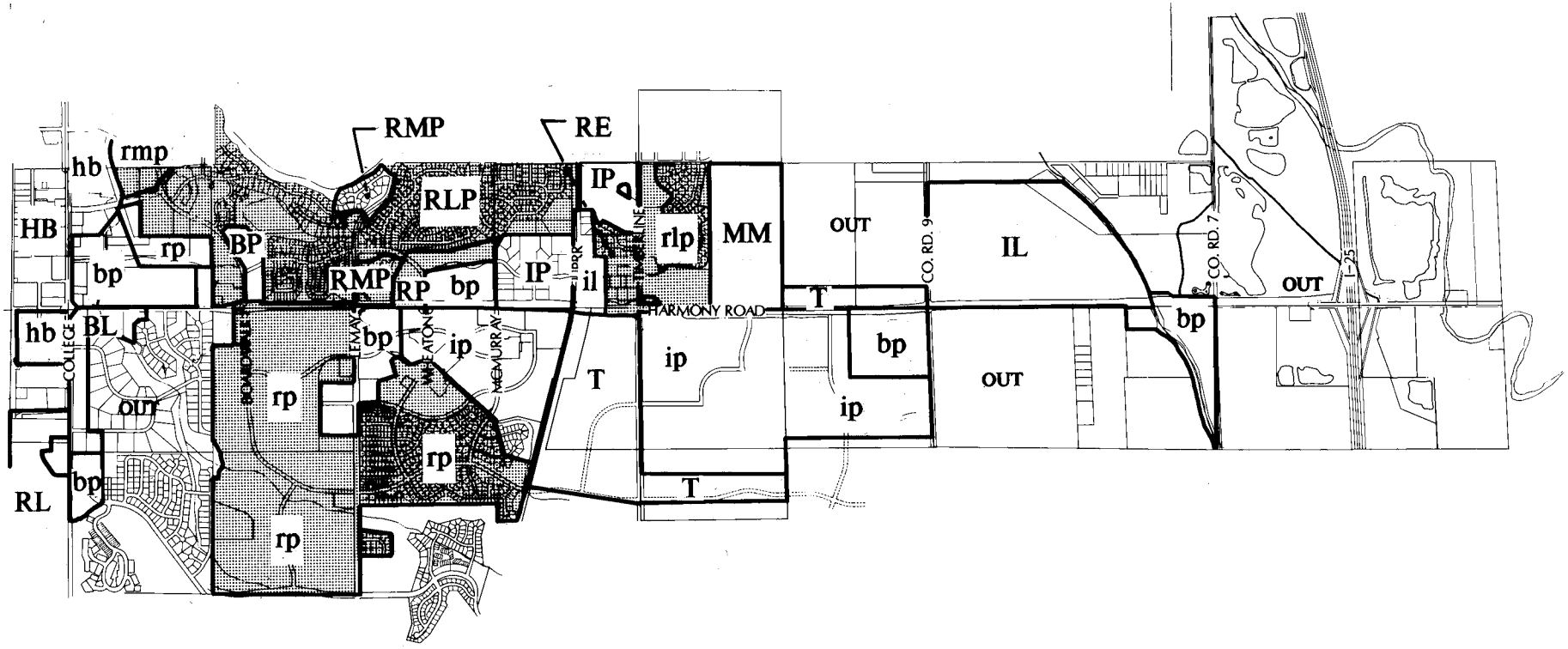
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

LAND USE - APPROVED MASTER PLAN AREAS

MAP 7B



HB	HIGHWAY BUSINESS
BP	PLANNED BUSINESS
IL	LIMITED INDUSTRIAL
IP	INDUSTRIAL PARK
T	TRANSITION

RP	PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
RL	LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
RLP	LOW DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
RMP	MEDIUM DENSITY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
RE	ESTATE RESIDENTIAL

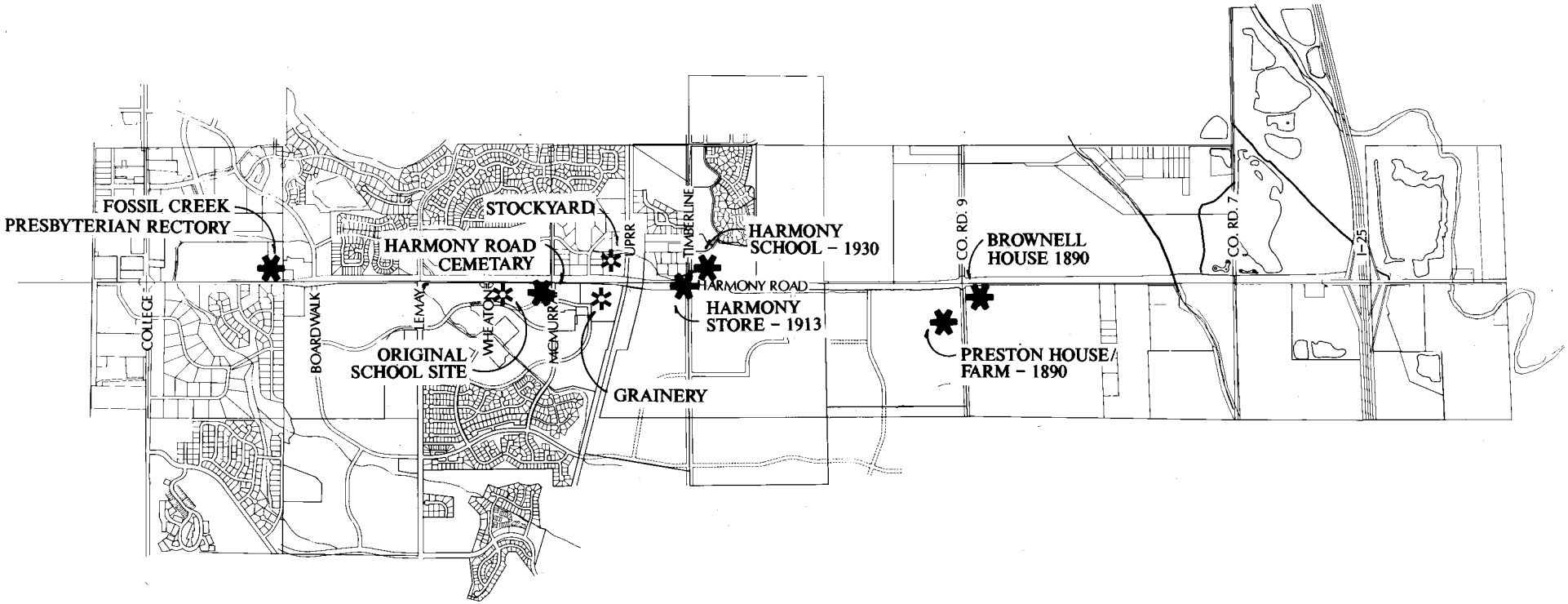
NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

ZONING

MAP 8



EXISTING HISTORIC STRUCTURE

HISTORIC SITES WHERE TRAIL MARKERS MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE

NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

HISTORIC RESOURCES

MAP 9

3
LAND USE

The final test of an economic system is not the tons of iron, the tanks of oil, or miles of textiles it produces. The final test lies in its ultimate products – the sort of men and women it nurtures and the order and beauty and sanity of their communities.

LEWIS MUMFORD

INTRODUCTION

The national image enjoyed by Fort Collins as an excellent place to live and do business is well deserved. Few cities in the nation have a more spectacular setting, a more qualified work force, or a more pleasing climate. The Harmony Corridor represents a key opportunity to maintain and enhance the community's positive image and quality of life.

As the Harmony Corridor emerges as a focus of development activity in southeast Fort Collins, this is an opportune time to look at current development trends and determine what specific future land uses would be most desirable to complement other development in the area.

ISSUES

The issues surrounding future land use in the Harmony Corridor appear to focus on the need to manage development to achieve a level of quality consistent with the economic, environmental, visual and other "quality of life" objectives of the community; while guiding the corridor to become a major business center in northern Colorado that attracts desirable industries and businesses and, at the same time, provides effective transitions from residential neighborhoods.

Another important issue is the concern that the Harmony Corridor should not develop as a typical commercial "strip" with frequent curb cuts, inadequate landscaping, and highly fragmented development lacking coordinated site planning.

Finally, the corridor offers unique opportunities to attract desirable industries and uses that can provide long-term economic stability for the community. Fort Collins has the opportunity to choose which industries are important for its future. These choices will set the direction for the community's economy for the next forty years. In this regard, the issue appears to focus on the need for more predictability in guiding industries and businesses choosing to locate in the corridor area.

CURRENT LAND USE POLLICIES AND REGULATIONS

The City's LAND USE POLICIES PLAN and LAND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM (LDGS) are the two documents which have been used most frequently to guide the planning and development of the corridor for the past ten years. The LAND USE POLILCIES PLAN (1979), an element of the City's COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, is the official statement of long range planning policy regarding a broad variety of land use planning issues including growth management,

environmental protection, and locational policies for specific land use classifications. The LAND USE POLICIES PLAN does not dictate specific kinds or specific locations of land uses that could occur in the community, but does provide general guidance, with special emphasis that development be well-designed and mitigate any negative impacts before they be allowed to develop.

Once the *Harmony Corridor Plan* is adopted, it will serve as an element of the COMPREHENSIVE PLAN and will supplement the LAND USE POLICIES PLAN for this section of the community.

The LDGS, on the other hand, is not a Plan. It is a land use regulatory mechanism, like zoning, which is used to implement the goals, objectives and policies of the LAND USE POLICIES PLAN and the COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

The LAND USE POLILCIES PLAN promotes the maximum utilization of land within the corridor, higher density development, phased growth, a mix of uses and concentrated building activity. The availability of public facilities, including streets, sewer, water, natural gas, and electricity, establishes the corridor as a preferred location for intense urban activity including a mix of residential, industrial, commercial and recreational uses. Properly designed, multiple use developments make sense from both a public and private standpoint. People can and should have the opportunity to live near where they work, where they shop where they go out to eat, and where they find recreation. The auto becomes less necessary, thereby relieving the transportation system and reducing air pollution. Directing growth to those areas of the community where utilities are already in place, saves money and makes more efficient use of the existing public investment in infrastructure improvements.

The adopted LAND USE POLICIES PLAN also encourages a variety of retail activity in the corridor, including community and regional shopping centers. Only neighborhood scale shopping centers are allowed in residential areas. Strip commercial development is discouraged in the LAND USE POLLICIES PLAN in favor of compact shopping centers.

Transitional land uses or areas are also provided for in the Plan to be located between residential and commercial areas. All residential areas are encouraged to include a mix of single family and multi-family dwelling units of differing types and densities. Other uses such as parks and schools are also expected to develop in the future to serve the expanding residential areas.

Since the late 1970's, development in the Harmony Corridor has been especially attractive and sensitive to the unique characteristics and importance of the area. The decision by Hewlett-Packard to locate in this corridor has had the positive effect of attracting other light industries and office users. The quality of recent commercial and

residential development in the area has also been very good. The challenge at hand is to determine if any additional land use policies are needed which could improve upon, reinforce and enhance the pattern of land use occurring within the corridor.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

Both the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Board have the responsibility and the authority to undertake the preparation of long range plans and policies. This planning effort offers an opportunity to establish a refined vision for the corridor. It includes creating a desirable living and working environment for future inhabitants, an exciting gateway into the community, as well as an important center for business and commerce.

The land use plan for the Harmony Corridor is intended to improve upon, reinforce and enhance the City's COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. It offers a vision of a future that many people and interests can identify with and seek to implement.

THE PROCESS

Several different land use alternatives were considered before finally arriving at the recommended one. These alternatives ranged considerably in intensity of development, character and practicality. They were reviewed by the property owners in the study area and the general public. The recommended land use plan was synthesized by staff based on several months of public review and comment at a variety of forums.

The land use plan is depicted on Map 10. The intent of the land use plan and map is to provide for an orderly, efficient and attractive transition of vacant rural land to urban use; and to:

(a) Maximize the use of existing services and facilities (streets and utilities).

(b) Promote the development of the corridor as a high quality, self-contained and compact business center.

(c) Provide for the location of industry and business in the city by identify ing prime locations for such uses.

(d) Provide shopping and service areas convenient to both residents and employees of the corridor.

(e) Provide for a variety of housing types.

(f) Preserve and protect existing residential neighborhoods from intrusive or disruptive development.

THE VISION

The vision for the corridor area is that it become a major business center in northern Colorado attracting a variety of businesses and industries serving local as well as regional markets. It should also include a mixture of land uses including open space, residential, office, recreational, and retail activities.

The focus of most development activity, especially commercial, should be at the major street intersections. The intensity of land use should decrease as distance from Harmony Road increases and as the distance from the major intersections increases. To promote pedestrian, bicycle and transit use, development in the area should be compact. Buildings, spaces and street frontages should be well-designed and of high quality materials and workmanship.

Business and industry provide the major economic focus of the corridor area. The land use mix also includes a variety of commercial uses to meet tenant and neighborhood resident needs.

Community and regional commercial activities are introduced in well-planned shopping centers or industrial parks, designed to draw shoppers from the surrounding community and region.

Free-standing highway related commercial (convenience stores, fast-food restaurants, gas stations and the like) are not permitted to locate outside of planned shopping centers or industrial parks. Only neighborhood scale shopping centers are allowed in residential areas.

Hotels to serve business tenants within the park will grow in importance. These hotels will be sited near major industrial parks, and in most cases be visible from Harmony Road.

Low intensity retail, restaurants, day care facilities, health clubs, personal service shops, business services (print shops, office supply, etc.), banks and other similar commercial activity is concentrated in attractively designed centers and integrated into planned industrial parks.

Buffer areas (transitional land uses, linear greenbelts, or other urban design elements) are provided to serve as cushions between the adjacent residential neighborhoods and the commercial areas. The existing, low density residential uses in the surrounding neighborhoods are maintained and enhanced. As business activity expands, new housing stock of a mix of types and densities is introduced as integral parts of the business and industrial parks.

LAND USE PLAN

GOAL STATEMENT

Encourage and support mixed land use development in the Harmony Corridor while discouraging "strip commercial" development and promoting the vitality and livability of existing residential neighborhoods.

POLICIES

LU-1 Strive for excellence and high quality in the design and construction of buildings, open spaces, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and streetscapes by establishing and enforcing design guidelines specific to the corridor area.

An important part of the *Harmony Corridor Plan* is the desire to continue the high standard of quality established by recent development projects in the corridor area. One way that this can be accomplished is through the development and implementation of design guidelines specific to the corridor itself. These guidelines should be adopted as a part of the criteria that the City uses to review development of the corridor area. These guidelines should address the following issues:

Streetscapes, including fencing and screening.
Landscaping.
Street and parking lot lighting.
Building setbacks.
Architectural design and materials.
Pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation.

LU-2 Locate all industries and businesses in the "Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Employment Activity Centers" in the areas of the Harmony Corridor designated for such uses on Map 10. Secondary supporting uses will also be permitted in these Activity Centers, but shall occupy no more than 25 percent (25%) of the total gross area of the Overall Development Plan or Planned Unit Development, as applicable.

The Harmony Corridor offers an opportunity for creating a major business and industrial center in northern Colorado, due to its desirable location, accessibility, available infrastructure, and land ownership pattern. Attracting desirable industries and businesses into the community, and in particular, the Harmony Corridor, achieves an important public purpose because it promotes primary and secondary jobs and generally enhances the local economy.

Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Employment Activity Centers are locations where industrial uses and/or office or institutional type land uses are planned to locate in the future in business park settings. Base industries are firms that produce goods and services which are produced for export outside the city, and thereby import income into the city. Typical business functions include research facilities, testing laboratories, offices and other facilities for research and development; industrial uses; hospitals, clinics, nursing and personal care facilities; regional, vocational, business or private schools and universities; finance, insurance and real estate services; professional offices; and other uses of similar character, as determined by the Planning and Zoning Board.

Secondary uses include hotels/motels; sit-down restaurants; neighborhood convenience shopping centers; childcare centers; athletic clubs; and, a mix of single family and multi-family housing. If single family housing is provided, at least a generally equivalent number of multi-family dwelling units must also be provided. "Multi-family" shall mean attached single family dwellings, 2-familly dwellings or multi-family dwellings.

Secondary uses shall be integrated both in function and in appearance with an office (or business) park, unless a special exemption is granted by the Planning and Zoning Board. In order for such an exemption to be granted, the applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Board that the granting of the exemption would neither be detrimental to the public good nor impact the intent and purposes of the foregoing requirement and that by reason of exceptional narrowness, small parcel size, or other special condition peculiar to a site, undue hardship would be caused by the strict application of this requirement.

The essence of the Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Employment Activity Center is a combination of different types of land uses along with urban design elements that reduce dependence on the private automobile, encourage the utilization of alternative transportation modes, and ensure an attractive appearance.

LU-3 Provide for the advance planning of large, undeveloped properties in the corridor area.

Coordinated planning of large parcels of land in the corridor area can generally provide greater opportunity for more innovation and variation in design, increase efficiency in utility services, and accomplish many more of the policies and objectives of the community than does a more piecemeal approach to development planning.

LU-4 Locate a broader range of land uses in the areas of the Harmony Corridor known as Mixed-Use Activity Centers as shown on Map 10.

Mixed-Use Activity Centers are areas where a broader range of land uses may locate. The Mixed-Use Activity Center permits, in addition to the uses listed in the "Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Employment Activity Center," a range of retail and commercial uses to occur in shopping centers. If single-family housing is provided, at least a generally equivalent number of multi-family dwelling units must also be provided. Neighborhood service centers, community shopping centers, and regional shopping centers, and a lifestyle shopping center shall be limited to those locations shown on Map 10.

The essence of the Mixed-Use Activity Center is a combination of different types of land uses along with urban design elements that reduce dependence on the private automobile, encourage the utilization of alternative transportation modes, and ensure an attractive appearance.

LU-5 All retail and commercial land uses, except those permitted as secondary uses in the Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Employment Activity Centers, shall be located in shopping centers. All shopping centers, except neighborhood convenience shopping centers, shall be limited to the locations show on Map 10. Neighborhood convenience shopping centers shall also be permitted in the Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Employment Activity Center as described in LU-2.

The Plan allows for a broad range of retail uses to occur in shopping centers which satisfy the consumer demands of residents and employees who live and work in adjacent neighborhoods, as well as from the community or region. Coordinated planning of a "center" rather than isolated individual uses is the most effective means of avoiding the "strip" type of development.

The scale and design of the shopping centers should be compatible with neighboring uses. Shopping centers can and should play an important role in the identity, character and social interaction of surrounding neighborhoods. They should be easily accessible to existing or planned segments of public transit. Adequate auto accessibility, especially for community and regional shopping centers, is important. Shopping centers should have a physical environment that is conducive to pedestrian and bicycle travel.

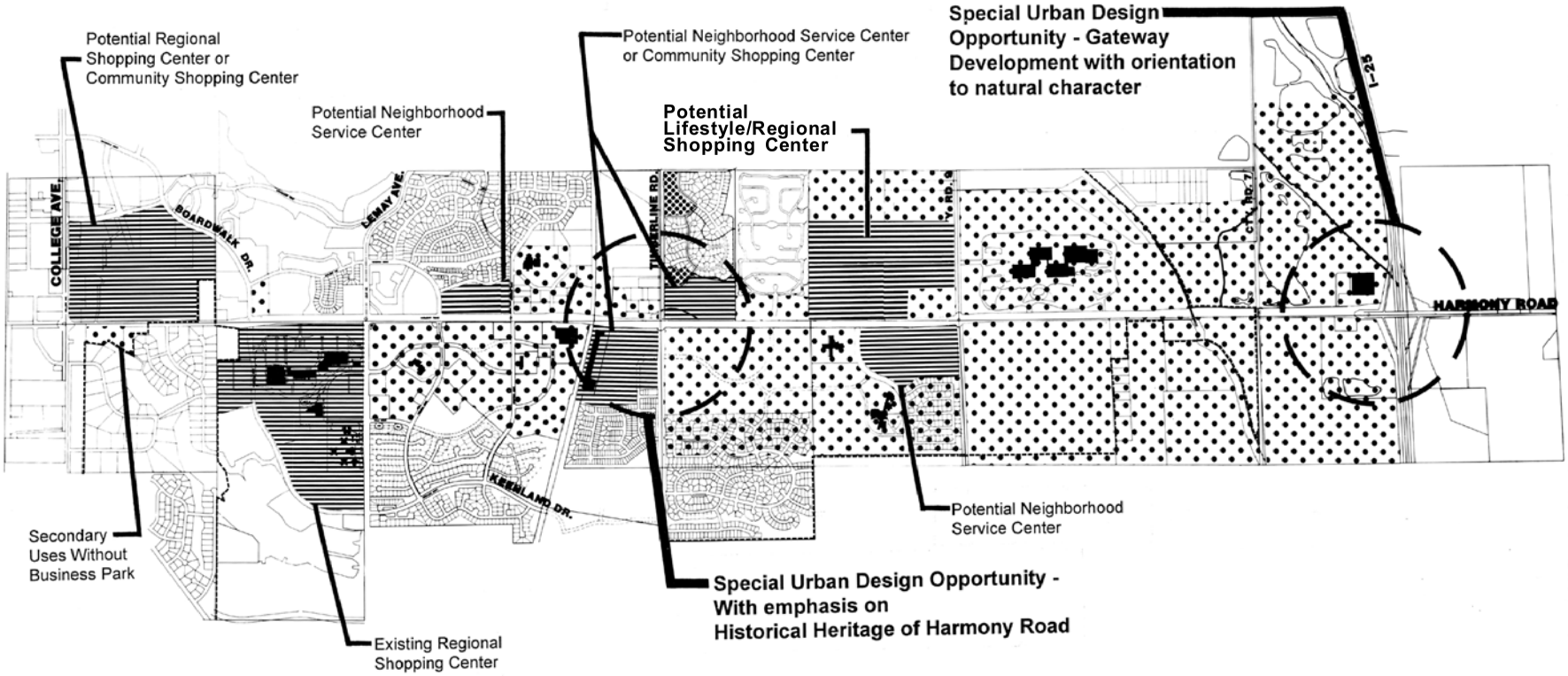
LU-6 Recognize the importance of the continued livability and stability of existing residential neighborhoods as a means to expanding future economic opportunities in the corridor.

The corridor area contains existing residential areas whose existence contributes to the future economic health of the corridor area. Future development in the corridor should be sensitive to these areas.

LU-7 Preserve a transition or cushion of lower intensity uses or open space between existing residential neighborhoods and the more intense industrial/commercial areas.

An important goal of the *Harmony Corridor Plan* is to provide a harmonious relationship between land uses and to protect the character of new and existing residential neighborhoods against intrusive and disruptive development. Open space, setbacks, landscaping, physical barriers and appropriate land use transitions can be effective was to provide a cushion between different uses. The following are generally considered to be appropriate transitional land uses:

low intensity professional offices
multi-family housing
churches
childcare centers; and
nursing homes and/or elderly retirement homes.



Harmony Activity Centers

Basic Industrial and Non-Retail Activity Center

Mixed Use Activity Center

Potential Shopping Center Locations Outside of Activity Center

Neighborhood Convenience Center

NORTH

1500′ 0′ 3000′ 6000′

HARMONY CORRIDOR PLAN

LAND USE PLAN

MAP 10

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following actions need to be taken by the City to ensure that the land use section of the Plan is implemented over the years to come.

1. The City Council and the Planning and Zoning Board should adopt the Plan.

2. The City should annex all unincorporated areas within the Harmony Corridor, in accordance with the parameters of the Urban Growth Agreement.

3. The City should adopt design standards and guidelines which reinforce the distinctiveness and quality of the corridor area.

4. When reviewing new development proposals in the corridor, the City shall evaluate such proposals according to the standards and guidelines adopted as part of the *Harmony Corridor Plan*. The *Harmony Corridor Standards and Guidelines* are in addition to existing development regulations that apply to specific development proposals.

5. The City should prepare design guidelines which further elaborate on the effective use of design measures for buffering between residential and non-residential land uses.

6. The City should establish means of effectively encouraging industries and businesses to locate in the Harmony Corridor.

7. The City should consider adopting a "superblock" planning requirement which assures the coordinated planning of large parcels of land.

8. The City should explore local landmark district designation of existing historic structures.

9. The City should study the distribution of basic industrial and non-retail jobs as part of the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The planning effort should also determine the relative importance of the Harmony Corridor in achieving community-wide employment objectives. And, based on the results of the study, the City should prepare incentives and/or regulations to assure implementation of the employment objectives in the Harmony Corridor. Revise policies of the Plan as needed.

10. The City of Fort Collins, Larimer County and the Town of Timnath should join efforts to plan for the appropriate development of Harmony Road east of I-25 compatible with the ***Harmony Corridor Plan.***

11. Pioneer Mobile Home Park, located on the northeast corner of Harmony Road and College Avenue, is home for many low-income families and elderly persons on fixed incomes. Although the Plan indicates future redevelopment of the site, the displacement of persons in the neighborhood should be carefully planned and sensitive to the particular needs of the residents.

12. The "Harmony Bikeway Study" (currently underway) should be prepared to reinforce the goals and vision of the *Harmony Corridor Plan*, as well as the City's overall transportation objectives.

4
URBAN DESIGN

The success of a work of design may be soundly evaluated only by its overall long-term effect on the healthy, happy survival of humans. Any other evaluation of architecture, landscape architecture, or city planning makes little if any sense.

NORMAN NEWTON

INTRODUCTION

Urban design encompasses a wide variety of topics having to do with the physical environment in an urban setting. Existing development, open space, pedestrian and vehicular linkages, historic buildings and places, trees and other natural features all combine to create a sense of place. The challenge for the *Harmony Corridor Plan* is to take all of these diverse urban design elements and shape them, so that the resulting sense of place enhances the quality of life for people who live and work in the corridor.

ISSUES

VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS

As one enters the corridor from the east, the landscape character along Harmony Road is a unique blend of rural scenery and high quality, campus-like office and industrial development. Moving further west and closer to fully urbanized areas, the variety of land uses becomes more diverse and includes commercial businesses. The landscape character changes from a wide floodplain, dominated by spectacular views of the Front Range to a predominantly paved urban environment near College Avenue. It is probable that the diversity of land uses and architectural styles will continue to increase.

As Harmony Road continues to develop, an urban design character will be established. It can become like many other communities and be visually cluttered with a wide variety of land uses, architectural styles and landscapes or it can be a well-planned corridor with a cohesive landscape design theme that capitalizes on its strengths and down plays it weaknesses. One purpose of the *Harmony Corridor Plan* is to create an urban design framework that can unify the visual diversity into a cohesive whole. Building on the area's natural scenic qualities, the Plan seeks to create a vision of what the Harmony Road of the future will look like.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Harmony Corridor represents an opportunity for this community to make a positive first impression and demonstrate that Fort Collins is a great place to live, work and play. Harmony Corridor already has many positive locational and site development characteristics, such as good community/regional access and large fully serviced tracts of undeveloped land. A uniquely attractive and well-planned landscape character can reinforce these positive qualities and give Fort Collins an edge when competing against other communities for quality business and industrial development.

This vision for Harmony Corridor goes beyond establishing an attractive landscape and attempts to create an image for the corridor that is consistent with the progressive and dynamic development occurring there. Changing the name of Harmony Road to Harmony Parkway is one example. Specially designed and well-coordinated public signage, lighting and other visible infrastructure can further enhance a quality image for the corridor.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN ISSUES

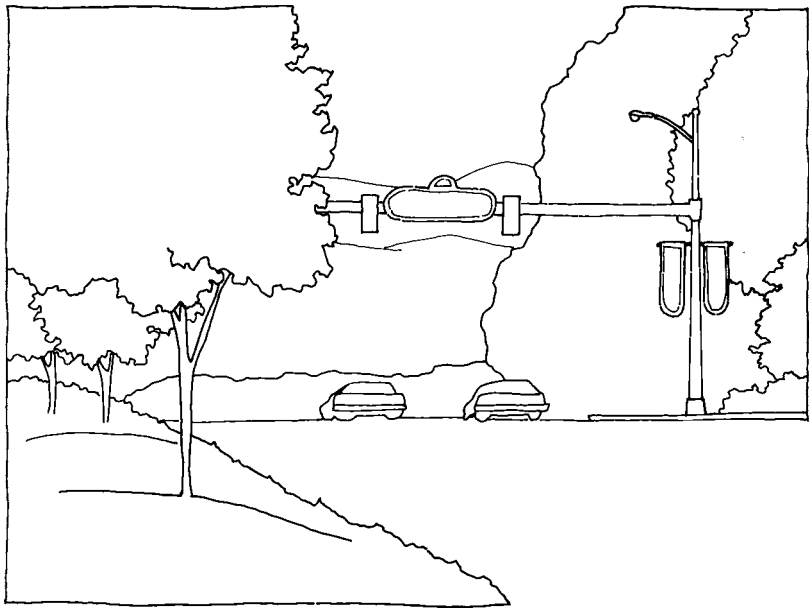
In order for the Harmony Corridor urban design concept to be successful, it needs to overcome constraints and take advantage of opportunities. The biggest challenge is to develop and implement a landscape plan that can successfully integrate the many different existing landscape characters into a cohesive whole.

Several existing developments have already set high standards for landscape design. The wide setbacks, rolling berms and groves of trees that typify the landscape frontage at Hewlett-Packard, Mountain Crest Hospital and Oakridge create a sense of spaciousness and environmental quality. The urban design plan for the corridor should complement these successful landscapes.

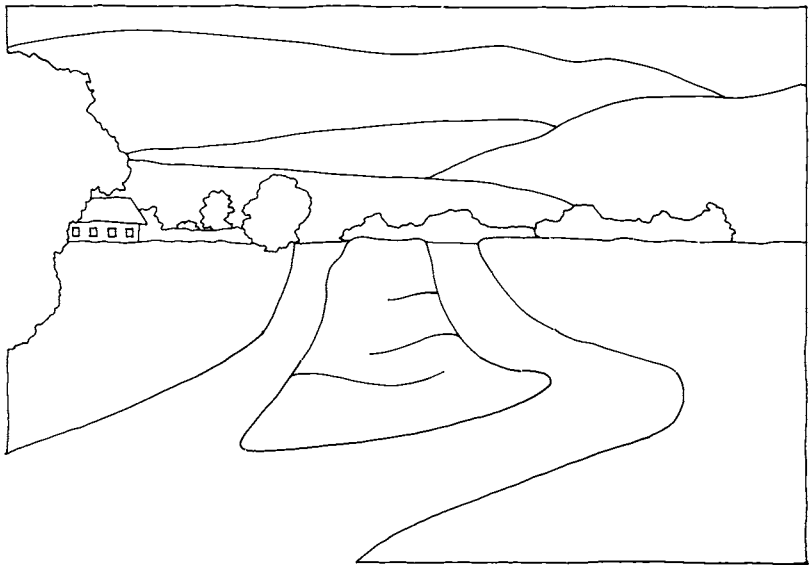
While landscape continuity is essential, other landscape characteristics are also important. Selecting plant material that is hardy, disease resistant and relatively easy to maintain increases the chances for success. Plant materials that create visual interest and seasonal variety make the landscape more appealing and should be emphasized in the plan. Existing trees should be preserved for the spatial character they establish and the historical heritage they represent.

WATER CONSERVATION

Water conservation is an environmental issue which will become increasingly important in the future. The landscape design concept for Harmony Road needs to recognize this trend and respond by utilizing xeriscape techniques.



Specially designed and well coordinated public signage can contribute to a quality image for the corridor.



The spacious median is important to the visual quality of the corridor.

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR LINKAGES

Other factors that contribute to the urban design character of the corridor include the design of streets, sidewalks and trail systems. Roadway geometrics and design detail influence the visual appearance of a streetscape. In the Harmony Corridor it is especially important to consider future roadway geometrics for Harmony Road.

The fact that Harmony Road is a state highway complicates the issue. The City and State agree that eventually Harmony Road will need to be widened to accommodate three travel lanes in each direction. Indications are that the State intends to widen the roadway to the inside, greatly reducing the width of the median or, in some cases, eliminating it entirely. Landscaping in the median also must be coordinated with the State Division of Highways and designed to their standards. At the preset time, these standards do not allow planing trees in the median. The need for curb, gutter, and splash blocks in the future also needs to be examined. In order to successfully implement a meaningful urban design concept, the City must work with the State toward a common vision for the future.

Transportation planning in the corridor should respond to the needs of motorists, commuters, bicyclists and pedestrians. Well-planned and sensitively designed trail systems serving bicyclists and pedestrians can contribute to the visual attractiveness of the area, help create a sense of place and enhance the quality of life for people who live and work in the Harmony Corridor.

HISTORICAL HERITAGE

The historical heritage associated with the original community of Harmony is one of the interesting facts that make the Harmony Corridor unique. The colorful personalities associated with that era and their labor which created irrigated farmland, built charming Victorian houses, established a church, school and cemetery should not be forgotten. The persistence and hard work of these early pioneers played an important role in the evolution of the corridor.

Even though historic farmhouses and other buildings in the corridor may eventually be replaced by more modern structures, the historical heritage they represent can be preserved in a variety of ways. Encouraging property owners

to have the historical significance of their structures documented is important. One of the future neighborhood parks in the corridor could be named "Harmony Park" and emphasize a historical theme. Historical markers along trail systems could enhance this concept. The Harmony Corridor urban design plan should capitalize on these opportunities to preserve the past for the benefit of future generations.

COORDINATION WITH UTILITIES

Utility systems in the corridor can affect the visual quality of the corridor in a variety of ways. The City's Water and Wastewater Utility has completed the conceptual design and route selection for a major water transmission main in the corridor. Utility engineers and planners will need to balance the needs of the utility with the aesthetic purposes of the urban design plan. A 40-foot wide drainage channel designed to carry stormwater flows from the Hewlett-Packard site to the lake east of County Road 7 is another example of utility systems affecting the visual appearance of the streetscape. Communication and coordination are key factors in resolving conflicts before they become problems. In most cases the needs of the utility can be met without sacrificing visual aesthetics if the systems are carefully planned with the corridor landscape design objectives in mind.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGN CONCEPTS

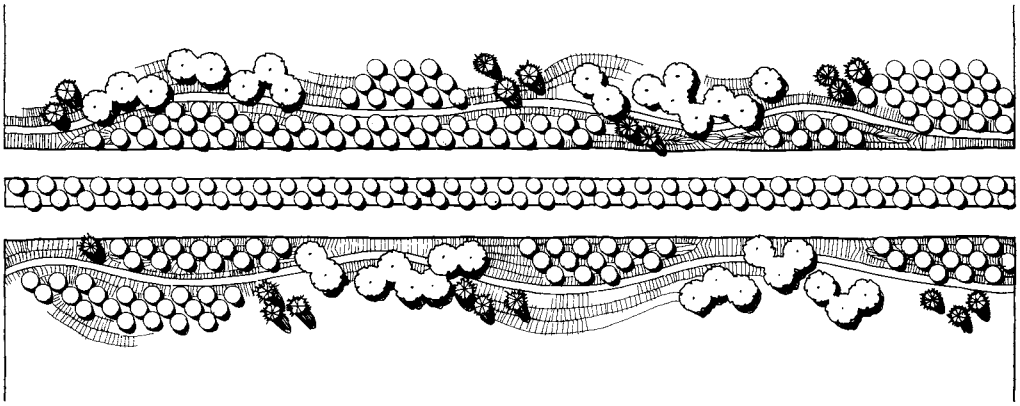
The design process began with a visual analysis of the corridor, detailed in Chapter 2, followed by the generation of three alternative urban design concepts – Harmony Orchard, Harmony Rhythm, and Harmony Oaks. The basic elements of each design concept are described below.

HARMONY ORCHARD

In this design concept, ornamental trees are planted in a grid pattern to create an orchard effect along Harmony Road from I-25 and to College Avenue. The tree grid is continuous in the median and occurs randomly along the road edges skipping properties that are already developed. Developers are encouraged to plant evergreens and tall deciduous canopy trees to act as a backdrop for the orchard. Species of orchard trees are selected for hardiness and disease resistance, as well as for spring and fall color.

The median and adjacent properties are graded to continue the rolling berms already becoming a hallmark of Harmony Road. A meandering bike trail parallels both sides of the street and connects to existing bike trails. The ground plain is planted with a bluegrass, brome and fescue mix to provide turf

Plan view of the Harmony Orchard design concept.

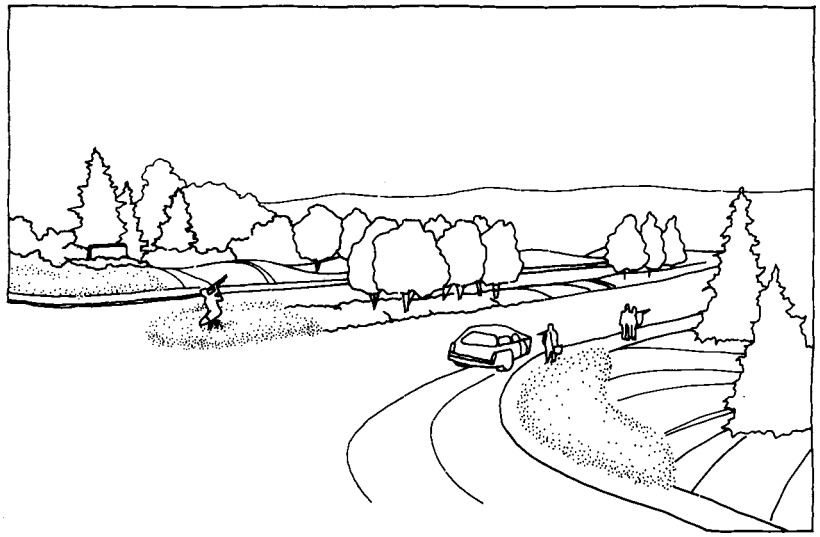


that is green during the growing season and still conserves significant amounts of water over conventional bluegrass. The mowing height is six inches, in keeping with an orchard theme. Thousands of daffodils are naturalized all along the median creating a spectacular flower display in early spring. Low stone walls are encouraged as an architectural design element at intersections and anywhere retaining walls or low screen walls are needed. Distinctive lighting and sign graphics are used to further build on the design concept.

HARMONY RHYTHM

A repetition of plant material and sculpture combine to create a rhythm along Harmony Road that the viewer perceives whether he is entering Fort Collins for the first time or is a resident taking advantage of the bike trail system paralleling the road. A narrow range of plant material is selected to provide seasonal interest. For example "Burning Bush" might be selected as a shrub that is repeated in the landscape of new developments, resulting in a dramatic display of glowing red shrubs during that few weeks in the fall when that shrub turns color. Other trees, shrubs and perennials are selected to provide similar effects all through the growing season.

Sculpture is promoted along the corridor making a statement about Fort Collins' interest in the arts. Occurring at intersections and at prominent points along the trail system, sculptural elements could be individually unique or work together around a common theme.

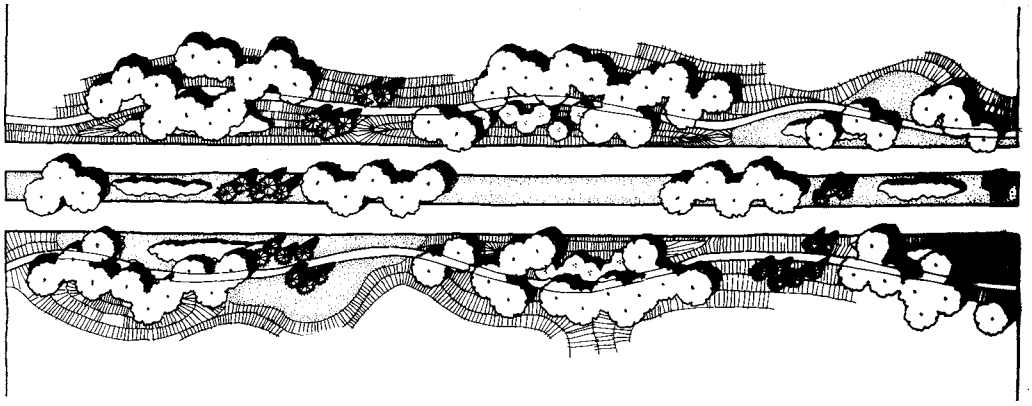


Perspective view of the Harmony Rhythm design concept.

HARMONY OAKS

The Harmony Oaks concept is characterized by wide setbacks, naturalistic berming, a meandering sidewalk, and groves of oak trees alternating with wildflower meadows. Oaks have been selected as the dominant tree species for several reasons. Two types of trees are native to Colorado: Coniferous species usually associated with higher elevations, and deciduous species found along streams. One of the few deciduous hardwood trees native to Colorado is the Gambel Oak. This combined with the oak's reputation for longevity, hardiness, disease resistance, low water demand, fall coloring, and attractive appearance led to the conclusion that the Gambel Oak along with other oaks known to thrive in this climate would be the best tree to dominate in the corridor landscape. Although the oaks are combined with a substantial number of other tree species to avoid a mono-culture, they are planted in sufficient quantities to have a unifying effect. The oak's rugged appearance makes it ideally suited to the informal naturalistic landscape emerging along Harmony Road. Drifts of pines occur randomly to provide winter interest and add to the naturalistic forested effect.

Plan view of the Harmony Oaks design concept.



Starting at I-25 and continuing to College Avenue, wildflowers are planted in the median and intermittently along the edges of the road. The continuity of the wildflowers provides a colorful welcome mat for people coming to Fort Collins via Harmony Road. Along both sides of the road, an extra-wide sidewalk meanders through berms providing the pedestrian and bicyclist with alternate experiences of wildflower meadow and oak forest. Low stone walls, special signage and flags sporting a unique logo that ties in with the Harmony Oaks design theme are used at intersections to strengthen the design concept.

EVALUATING THE DESIGN CONCEPTS

Each concept was evaluated against the following criteria:

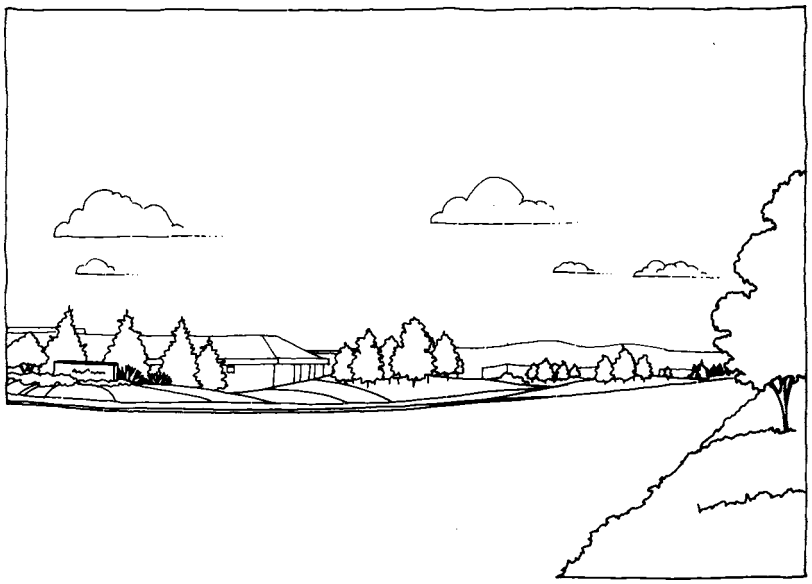
- Ability to unify the corridor.
- General attractiveness.
- Seasonal variety.
- Ease of implementation.
- Construction cost.
- Maintenance cost.
- Water conservation.
- Landowner values.
- General public values.

All three alternatives along with supporting graphics were displayed at a series of public open houses. Staff held numerous meetings with affected interests and work sessions with boards and commissions. The feedback overwhelmingly supported the Harmony Oaks urban design concept over the other concepts.

In the final analysis, the Harmony Orchard concept was rejected because of the difficulty of implementation, high costs and lack of support from the landowners and general public. Although the Harmony Rhythm design concept scored high when evaluated against the criteria, it was also eliminated because of high installation costs and lack of landowner support. The Harmony Oaks alternative was selected as the urban design concept with the most potential.

A dominant tree species combined with a narrow plant palette will be very effective in unifying the corridor over time, while the use of wildflowers can provide a dramatic unifying effect in a much shorter time frame. The combination of plant material, rolling berms and meandering trail system will create a pleasant and attractive setting for future development and at the same time complement existing developments. The naturalistic, informal design will provide developers with needed flexibility and the cost of implementation and maintenance will be equal to or less than the typical landscape currently proposed for Harmony Road.

The Harmony Oaks concept emphasizes xeriscape, a term for water conservation through appropriate landscaping, in two ways. The plant palettes will consist of a variety of low to moderate water demand plant materials, and the recommended turf and wildflower ground covers will consume significantly less water than traditional blue grass turf.



Perspective view of the Harmony Oaks design concept.

URBAN DESIGN PLAN

GOAL STATEMENT

Guide development in the corridor so that collectively a perceivable, unified urban design theme and landscape character is created along Harmony Road. Utilize urban design principals to ensure that Harmony Corridor continues to be a great place to live, work and play.

POLICIES

UD-1 Implement the Harmony Oaks design concept through design standards and guidelines for private and public sector development projects.

UD-2 Promote water conservation by providing design guidelines that encourage xeriscape landscape techniques.

UD-3 Establish a well-planned and attractive gateway entrance to the community at the I-25 interchange, emphasizing the natural scenic qualities of the area.

UD-4 Promote the development of an extensive recreational trail that connects to the city-wide trail system.

UD-5 Promote the development of a commuter bikeway system that supports bicycling as an alternative mode of transportation in the corridor.

UD-6 Coordinate the long range planning efforts of other City departments and governmental agencies with the goals and objectives of the *Harmony Corridor Plan*.

UD-7 Support efforts to preserve the historical heritage associated with the original community of "Harmony".

UD-8 Adopt design guidelines and standards for retail development in the corridor to create better neighborhoods by promoting safe, pleasant walking and bicycling environments, more lively commercial centers, convenient transit access, and human scale design.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following implementation actions are intended as a guide for implementing the urban design section of the Plan.

1. DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Planning and Zoning Board and the City Council should adopt the Plan along with design standards and guidelines for new development. The design standards and guidelines will set expectations for private and public sector improvements along Harmony Road. (Design standards and guidelines are available under separate cover.)

2. RECREATIONAL TRAIL/BICYCLE COMMUTER SYSTEMS

The City should develop a master plan for a recreational trail system and for a commuter bicycle system to serve bicyclists and pedestrians in the corridor. Additional field investigations and coordination efforts are needed to develop a strategy for implementing effective systems for commuting and recreation. Analyzing cost/benefit relationships and developing appropriate funding mechanisms are a part of this work effort.

3. WILDFLOWER RESEARCH

For wildflowers to be done well and create a spectacular seasonal display, careful planning is required. The City should establish test plots along Harmony Road to determine the most appropriate seed mix and best maintenance practices. Ideally the test plots would be monitored for three years before large areas are seeded.

4. SPECIAL SIGNAGE

The City should develop a coordinated public signage system to enhance the Harmony Oaks theme. Special colors and unique Harmony Road design detail for public signage, traffic control devices and light standards along Harmony Road are envisioned. A funding mechanism needs to be developed.

5. NAME CHANGE

The City should change the name of Harmony Road to Harmony Parkway, which is more in character with the future vision of the Harmony Corridor.

6. COORDINATION WITH THE STATE DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS

The City should work with the State Division of Highways to answer questions about the future operation and physical appearance of Harmony Road. January 1993 should be set as a target date to resolve the following issues:

Ownership of Harmony Road.
Future widening.
Curb, gutter, and splash block detailing.
Planting in the median.
Future interchange design and construction.
Frontage roads.
Bicycle commuting along Harmony Road.
Car-pooling at I-25.

7. LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE MEDIAN

The City should complete a design development plan for the median that addresses curb, gutter, splash block, plant material, and irrigation. Establishing a funding source for construction and maintenance of the median landscape is part of this work effort.

8. LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE I-25 INTERCHANGE

The City should design and implement a well-integrated landscape plan for the I-25 interchange at Harmony Road. Creative use of plant material and carefully designed entry feature should introduce the Harmony Oaks concept to motorists leaving I-25 and entering Fort Collins. Landscaping the interchange should also present a positive first impression to motorists continuing on the interstate. The Plan needs to be integrated with the gateway planning effort described in Chapter 5.

9. COLLEGE AVENUE/HARMONY ROAD INTERSECTION PLAN

The City should develop a conceptual design plan for the College Avenue/Harmony Road intersection along with a specific implementation strategy. In addition to being the west gateway to the Harmony Corridor, this intersection is a major gateway to Fort Collins from the south. The importance of this intersection should be reflected in its appearance. Landscape elements on each corner can be coordinated to achieve

a well designed urban intersection that creates an impressive gateway to Fort Collins from the south and at the same time introduces the Harmony Oaks design concept for motorists entering the Harmony Corridor. This intersection is an ideal location for a special signage demonstration project.

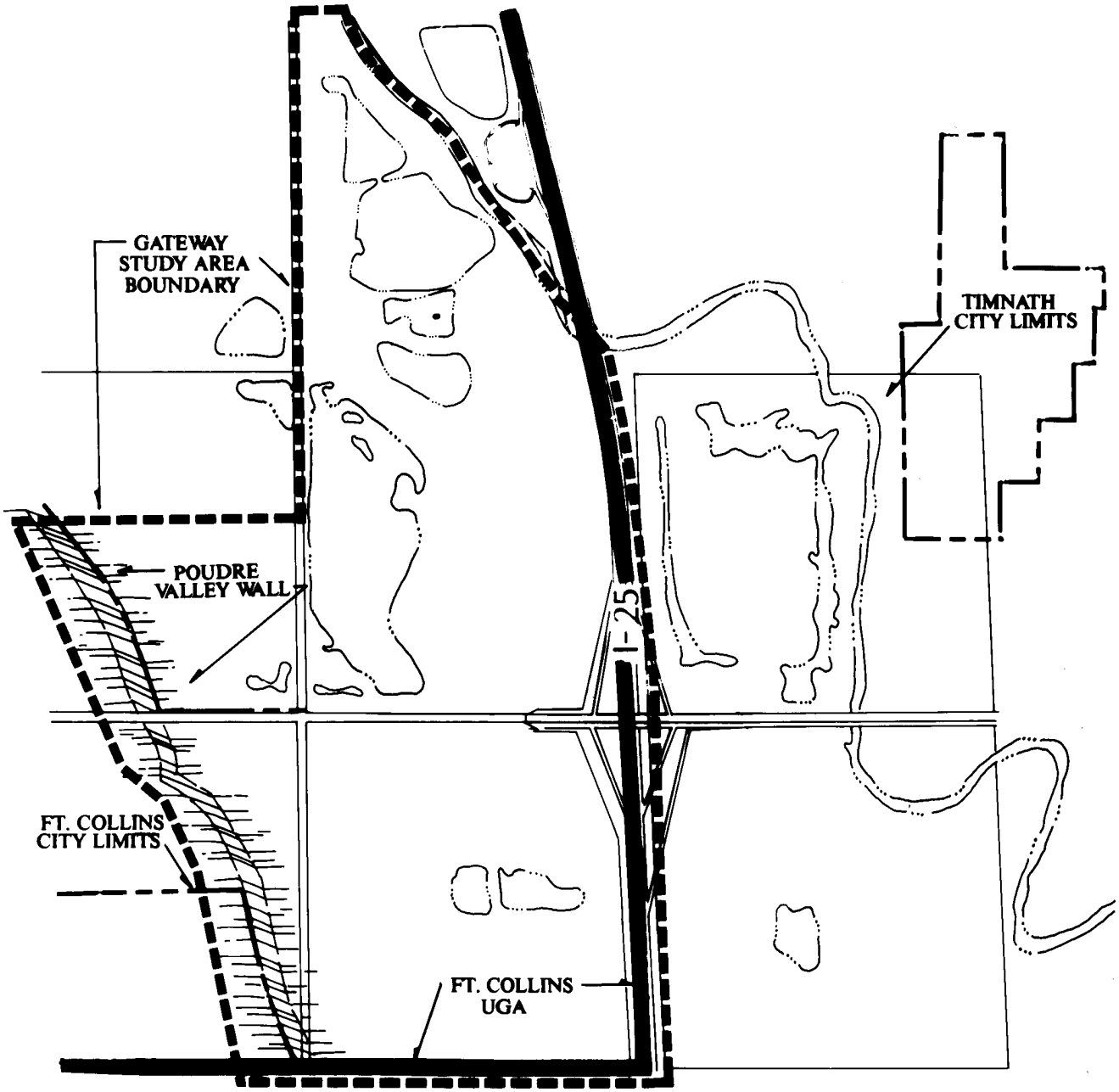
10. HISTORIC INTERPRETATION

Opportunities for historic interpretation of the historic "Harmony" community should be explored as part of any future bicycle planning efforts in the corridor.

5
ALTERNATIVE GATEWAY CONCEPTS

The psychology of arrival is more important than you think. If it is not obvious where to park, if there is no room to park when you get there, if you stumble into the back door looking for the front entrance, or if the entrance is badly lighted, you will have subjected your guests to a series of annoyances which will linger long in their subconscious. No matter how warm your hearth or how beautiful your view, the overall effect will be dimmed by these first irritations.

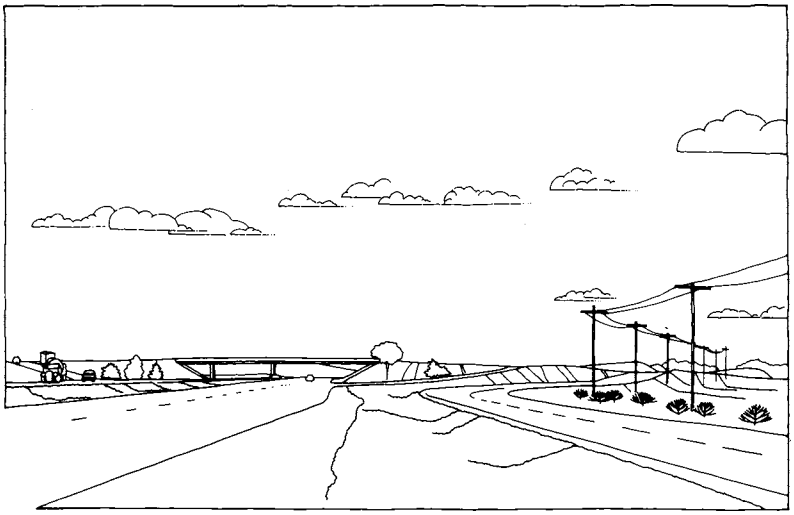
THOMAS D. CHURCH


GATEWAY
STUDY AREA
BOUNDARY
TIMNATH
CITY LIMITS
POUDRE
VALLEY WALL
I-25
FT. COLLINS
CITY LIMITS
FT. COLLINS
UGA

INTRODUCTION

The gateway area located between I-25 and the bluffs east of Hewlett-Packard has many unique physical qualities including open water, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and spectacular mountain views. The area is underlain with high quality gravel resources. Past, present, and future mining operations have changed and will continue to change the character of the landscape. Most of the area lies within the 100-year floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River and significant portions are located in the floodway. These physical conditions create a variety of development constraints and at the same time offer many recreational and educational opportunities.

Located at the crossroads of an interstate highway and a state highway, this major gateway entrance to Fort Collins has a great deal of development potential despite the constraints mentioned above. The commercial development that already exists in the gateway, as well as the kinds of development that interchange locations typically attract, do not mesh well with the scenic and natural resource values of the area. This combination of circumstances challenges the community to find a way to balance natural resource assets with economic development.



View of the I-25 interchange at Harmony Road looking north.

ISSUES

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

The gateway area is literally the "Front Door" to this community. The psychology of arrival is important. If a newcomer's first impression is marred by sights and sounds that are distasteful, those irritations will linger no matter how wonderful the rest of the visit to Fort Collins might be. How this area is planned makes a statement about the people of this community – what our values are and the pride we take in our community. This is why it is important to establish a particularly well-planned and attractive gateway entry.

From an economic standpoint, a positive first impression can encourage quality

development to locate in the Harmony Corridor versus other Front Range communities. Quality development can create jobs and generate tax revenues that pay for a variety of public services. A favorable first impression can give Fort Collins an edge and help put the community in the driver's seat when it comes to selecting business and industry that is consistent with local values, as opposed to merely reacting to development when it comes.

SCENIC RESOURCE VALUE

The setting, being located in the floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River, is what makes the gateway area unique in the Harmony Corridor and significant in the community. The area is bounded by I-25 on the east, and the bluffs on the west. The bluffs, known as the Poudre River Valley Wall, area a result of the river's down-cutting action as it meandered and migrated within its floodplain for thousands of years. The bluffs are a dominant visual element that identifies the river's floodplain while mature riparian vegetation seen in the distance defines the meandering path of the river. The resulting visual quality of this area is significant. Standing in the gateway area, one can see the whole spectrum of local ecosystems, from snow capped peaks in the far distance, to forested mountaintops, to chaparral foothills, to grass covered plains, down to the wetlands and the riparian vegetation associated with the river valley. To have such a sweeping vista at the front door to our community can be a valuable asset.

THE FLOODPLAIN

The 100-year floodplain is the most significant development constraint in the gateway area. Most of the property in the gateway area lies within the 100-year floodplain, and significant portions of the area are within the floodway. Land located in the 100-year floodplain has a one per cent chance of flooding in a given year. The floodway is the land area that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface more than six inches. Under current policies, no development is allowed within the floodway. The areas between the floodway and the 100-year floodplain have some potential for development if flood-proofing is addressed. Since serious land development restrictions are associated with the floodplain and natural resource areas, the gateway is an excellent resource for alternate, less intensive land uses. The river and its floodplain along with associated wetlands and wildlife habitat is an integrated system. The ability to manage floodplain lands for appropriate uses is important to the river's natural resource value.

WATER QUALITY CONSIDERATIONS

Wetlands have historically been considered to have little value and generally good for nothing unless they could be filled and put to productive use. Only recently have wetlands come to be appreciated for the vital role they play. Besides providing wildlife habitat, wetlands have a unique capability to filter and enhance water quality. Located at the edge between land and water, the plant and animal life found in the saturated soil conditions of wetlands creates an environment that naturally breaks pollutants down into harmless substances. Portions of the gateway area hold potential for being utilized to clean up stormwater run-off before it reaches the Cache la Poudre River.

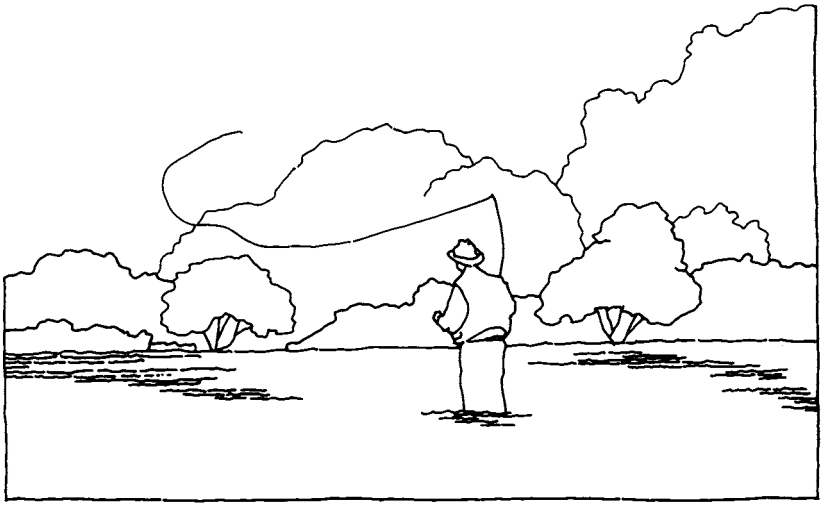
GRAVEL RESOURCES

Gravel mining operations will affect the future of this area. Parts of the gateway have already been mined, parts are currently being mined and still other areas have gravel resources that could be mined in the future. All of these areas are presently outside of the city limits. Larimer County has a permit process for extraction of mineral resources that requires provisions for safety during the extraction operations and for reclamation. Both the City and County encourage the removal of gravel resources prior to development. There has been a recent trend in other areas of the community for property owners to donate land to the City after the gravel resources are depleted. This practice has advantages for the owner and provides opportunities for the City to acquire open space at minimal cost.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Parks and Recreation Department has developed a rating system used to evaluate property in order to determine whether or not acquisition of the property fulfills the City's objectives in regards to open space. Scenic qualities of the site combined with development limitations make land in the gateway area a viable candidate for public acquisition. Close proximity to the Strauss Cabin and the Northern Colorado Nature Center is important and the ease of accessibility is also a plus. The rating system also prioritizes acquisition of land based on development pressure, meaning that land most likely to be developed should be acquired first. The fact that there are man-made structures on the site and an interstate highway is located adjacent to the property are negative factors when evaluating the area as public open space.

In addition to the property's value as open space, the area also provides opportunities for various forms of both active and passive recreation. A series of old quarries and lakes associated with gravel mining operations provide opportunities for fishing, swimming, boating and skating in winter. Quarries, lakes, wetlands, the river, and scenic views combine to make the area ideally suited for bicycling, leisurely hiking and cross country skiing. Opportunities for viewing wildlife and bird watching are



The Cache la Poudre River and numerous lakes in the gateway area could provide opportunities for recreational fishing.

good and could be enhanced further. Existing groves of cottonwood trees add to the visual interest and create sheltered areas for picnicking. The area may also hold potential for more active recreational uses such as golfing, field sports, and camping.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE VALUE

Resources for learning about history and the environment are abundant in the gateway area. The Cache la Poudre River floodplain with the Front Range as a highly visible backdrop creates an opportunity to learn about Colorado landforms and ecological systems. A diversity of vegetation and wildlife habitat is there to be observed. In addition, there are opportunities to learn about mining operations and reclamation as well as drainage basins, stream flows, and water quality.

There are a variety of ways to take advantage of these educational opportunities. Preserving all or part of the area as open space and providing an interpretive center is one example. Simply providing interpretive markers along a bike trail system would be another way to increase environmental awareness.

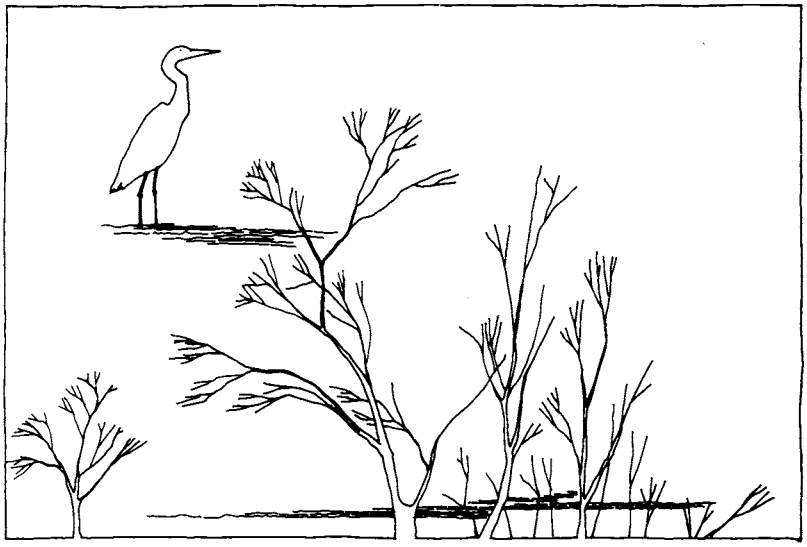
WILDLIFE HABITAT VALUE

Significant portions of the gateway area have been identified as having wetland, wildlife or vegetative interest. These areas include the open water created by old quarries left from mining operations, wetlands, groves of cottonwood trees and the riparian habitat along the river itself. (See Maps 2 and 3) The result of the habitat is a significant community of wildlife species, which include birds, mammals, reptiles and fish. Bald eagle, great blue heron, horned owl and peregrine falcon are important bird species known to occur along the river. Mule deer and whitetail deer are also commonly found along the river corridor.

OTHER FACTORS

A variety of other influences, beyond the physical ones, affect how land use decisions are made. Property ownership and land values are also key factors. There are approximately 6 different landowners represented in the area. Properties have been bought and sold with the expectation that highway business and/or other types of development would occur here in the future. The result has been an increase in land values.

Governmental jurisdictions in the gateway are overlapping and complicated. While the gateway planning area is within the City's Urban Growth Area boundary, only a small part of the area is currently within the city limits. The governmental jurisdictions and the development review procedures and processes are defined in the Intergovernmental Agreement for the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area. Generally speaking the City's jurisdiction applies to properties within the city limits and those eligible for annexation. A joint review procedure has been established for property outside city limits but within the UGA. The County has jurisdiction over properties located east of I-25. The Larimer County Land Use Plan has designated this area as "Rural" meaning that it should be protected for agricultural use or other low intensity uses, however the County zoning ordinance contradicts this designation. Property at the southeast corner of the I-25/Harmony Road intersection is zoned C-Commercial, which allows a wide range of land uses including highway commercial. Significant portions of the gateway area are state highway right-of-way and subject to rules and regulations of the State Division of Highways. Planning and development of the gateway area will require special coordination efforts.



Blue herons are commonly seen near the Cache la Poudre River.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

THE NULL ALTERNATIVE

If the governmental agencies, which have jurisdiction over land in and adjacent to the gateway area continue to operate under current policies, we can make some predictions about the future of this area. The following development scenario is based on current trends and development patterns of interchange locations in other communities.

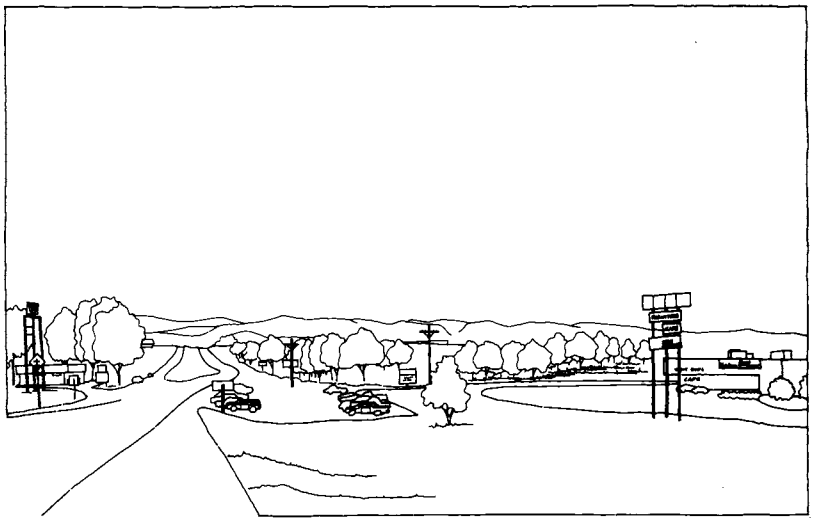
Properties on the east side of the interstate would develop under County regulations. The area north of Harmony Road but east of I-25 is currently being mined for gravel resources. It is anticipated that the area will be mined for at least ten more years before the gravel resources are depleted. The landowner's plans for the future of the property after the resources are removed are not determined. The land is zoned for agricultural use, but could conceivably be rezoned to allowed commercial or industrial land uses.

Land located south of Harmony Road and east of I-25 is zoned C-Commercial in the county. This zoning district allows a variety of highway business uses such as gas stations, fast food restaurants and motels. Large-scale commercial uses such as automobile sales, mobile home sales and storage warehouses are also permitted.

Land on the west side of I-25 is within the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area (UGA) and is subject to Larimer County land use regulations and to the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area Intergovernmental Agreement. Development proposals on land not eligible for annexation, would be reviewed by the Urban Growth Area Review Board, with representatives from both Larimer County and Fort Collins. This board makes a recommendation to the Larimer County Board of Commissioners.

Land that is eligible for annexation must annex prior to development. Property is zoned at the time of annexation. The City Council typically places a planned unit development condition on the zoning, meaning that development of the property must satisfy the criteria of the LAND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM (LDGS). Under existing City or County regulations, we can reasonably anticipate a mixture of land uses that would include highway business oriented uses near the interstate, more commercial development along Harmony Road and office and/or industrial land uses both north and south of Harmony Road. The prominence of the interstate highway coupled with floodplain restrictions make residential uses unlikely in this area, although it is a possibility for land areas closer to the bluffs.

Development in the floodway is not allowed, however, developers may propose to realign the floodway, narrow its dimension by channelizing it and generally change the character of the landscape to create more developable land as long as capacity and flow requirements are met. Filling in areas of the floodplain is also acceptable and creates more developable land. The wetlands located on the north side of Harmony Road are protected by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers will sometimes grant permits to fill wetland areas if wetlands of equal value are being created elsewhere.

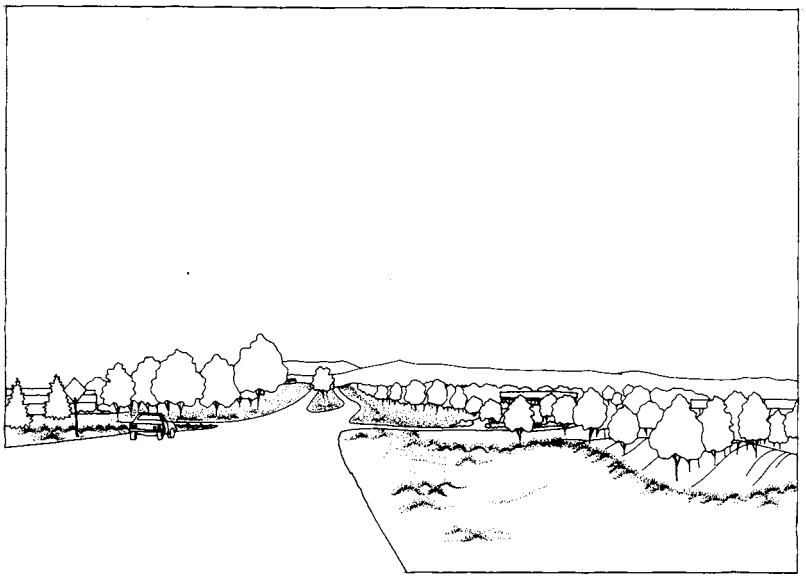


Existing commercial development in the gateway.

Although the constraints caused by the floodplain and wetlands will make development more expensive in this area, positive locational aspects of the site coupled with a lower initial land cost will probably make it cost effective to eventually develop most of the land in the gateway area west of Harmony Road. The lakes and some of the more mature vegetation would probably be retained. A substantial number of the cottonwood trees are likely to be lost because of the fill necessary to develop the land.

Through the LAND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE SYSTEM review process, staff can encourage open space, public access and trail systems, but it would be difficult to create effective open space networks and trail systems without a conceptual master plan for the gateway area. This scenario is filled with unknowns. The only certainty is that the gateway area will continue to change.

Since the area is still largely undeveloped, we have an opportunity to affect the future of this gateway to our community. Two alternative approaches were developed. Alternative A assumes urban level development and emphasizes design guidelines and intergovernmental coordination, while Alternative B controls the future of the area through acquisition and emphasizes recreational and educational opportunities.



Alternative A proposes development that is well integrated into the natural setting of the gateway area.

ALTERNATIVE A

This development scenario places certain development restrictions upon the property, in order to take advantage of some of the recreational, educational and aesthetic opportunities the gateway offers. In exchange for having to comply with additional land use and/or design restrictions, developers gain the advantage of more predictability and the economic edge provided by a spacious and well-planned gateway.

The intent is to create a gateway entrance that integrates quality development with the natural characteristics of the existing landscape. Wetlands, lakes and floodway areas are left undeveloped and become the focus of an elaborate open space network. The open space areas are laced with an extensive system of trails. The character of the gateway area as a whole is naturalistic with heavy emphasis on native plants and wildlife habitat. The challenge for development is to blend into the natural scheme of things with as little visual disruption as possible.

Although more work is required to determine how this development scenario could be implemented, the following is suggested as a starting point for discussion purposes. Light industrial and office uses are encouraged. Commercial land uses are discouraged unless they can be shown to blend unobtrusively into the naturalistic setting. Setbacks would be in the magnitude of 80-100 feet from the right-of-way, creating a significant greenbelt around the interchange. Both the architecture and landscape plans would be subject to design standards and guidelines that emphasize the naturalistic character of the gateway area.

Open space and a trail system associated with the floodway, wetlands and lakes would be for public use. Ownership, maintenance and liability issues would have to be negotiated. Retaining significant amounts of open space may require the expenditure of public funds or a re-investment of tax dollars created by the development. Property owners may be willing to dedicate some non-developable land to the City as open space.

The primary goal of Alternative A is to preserve the naturalistic character of the landscape and ensure that development projects are well integrated and contribute to the visual quality of the gateway area.

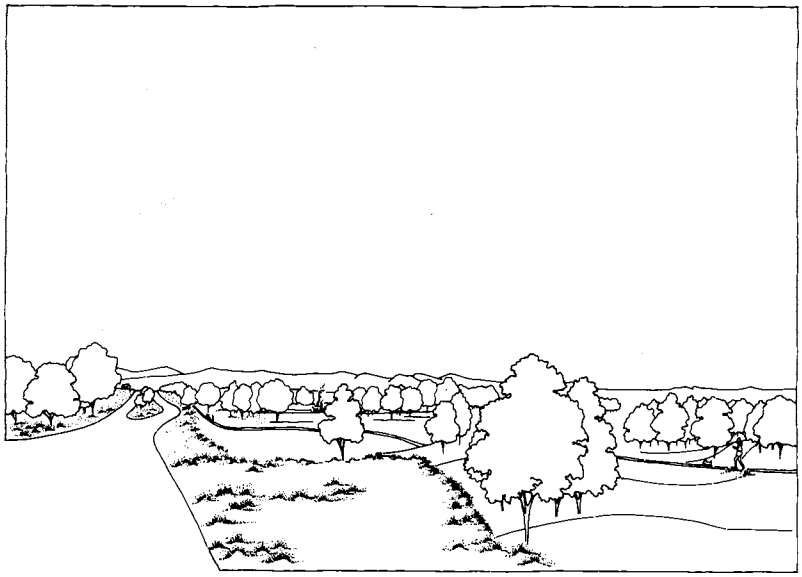
ALTERNATIVE B

This crossroads is not only a gateway to the Harmony Corridor and to Fort Collins, it is also where the Cache la Poudre River and the edge of the Urban Growth Area boundary intersect. How this area is planned and developed will impact the value of the river as a natural resource. This alternative recommends public acquisition of the gateway area for open space. Publicly owned open space at this location serves several purposes. It offers opportunities for unstructured recreation such as hiking, biking, jogging, or fishing and provides opportunities to relax and enjoy nature. The Cache la Poudre River floodplain, wetlands and wildlife habitats are environmentally sensitive areas the open space would protect. Public awareness of the river and its floodplain would be enhanced and educational programs could extend this awareness to learning about a variety of environmental issues. Lastly, having scenic open space at the front door to our community speaks loud and clear about the community's values and emphasizes our appreciation and concern for the natural environment.

Although the area is largely undeveloped, there is some highly visible commercial development which exists just west of the interchange. This scenario proposes purchase of the commercial developments. The cost of eventually removing the structures is added to the acquisition cost. The total cost for acquiring the land at fair market value plus the cost of removing the commercial structures is estimated to be in the magnitude of 3.6 million dollars.

This scenario takes maximum advantage of the recreational, educational and aesthetic opportunities offered by the gateway area. It would be fair to the landowners as well as to the public. This solution is less complex than Alternative A, requires less coordination and therefore would be easier to implement. Unfortunately the price tag associated with this solution is high.

Alternative B proposes purchase of the gateway area for public open space.



LOCAL VALUES

Alternatives A and B only scratch the surface of a multitude of possibilities for the gateway area. The alternatives were used to clarify distinct directions and courses of action. Both options, along with the "null" alternative were displayed at a series of public open houses. Staff held numerous meetings with affected interests and work sessions with boards and commissions. The feedback overwhelmingly supported Alternative A. Responses indicated that people are not totally comfortable with the ability of existing City policies to coordinate and guide development in this area. They are concerned that natural resource value will be lost and important opportunities will be missed if we do not put forth a conscious effort to coordinate and plan this area with community values in mind.

Staff has studied the natural and scenic resource value of the gateway area, and speculated on the types of recreational and educational opportunities that the area can provide. The citizen participation component of the planning process has helped determine a direction. Additional work is required to develop a strategy for shaping the future of this important segment of the community. The vision described in Alternative A is the starting point for the next work phase.

THE GATEWAY PLAN

GOAL STATEMENT

Shape the future of the gateway area, so that scenic qualities are emphasized and natural resources are protected. Enable the community to take advantage of recreational and educational opportunities associated with the Cache la Poudre River, lakes and wetlands.

POLICIES

GW-1 Establish a well-planned and attractive gateway entrance to Fort Collins at the I-25 interchange, emphasizing the natural scenic qualities of the area.

GW-2 Protect and enhance the natural resource value of the Cache la Poudre River.

GW-3 Encourage master planning efforts in the gateway area.

GW-4 Establish design guidelines for development in the gateway area that emphasize scenic and natural resource values.

GW-5 Discourage development from encroaching upon the bluffs that define the edge of the floodplain.

GW-6 Create networks of open space and trail systems, that incorporate wetlands and wildlife habitat.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following actions need to be taken by the City to ensure that the gateway section of the Plan is implemented.

1. PLAN ADOPTION

The Planning and Zoning Board and City Council should adopt the Plan.

2. GATEWAY PLANNING PHASE TWO

The City should continue the gateway planning effort through the following research, design, coordination and citizen participation activities:

RESEARCH

- Analyze both short term and long term costs associated with development in the floodplain.

- Research funding sources for acquisition of open space

- Investigate what implications gravel mining operations have on future development of the area:

  State statutes.
  Reclamation standards and practices.
  Value of mineral rights.
  Ownership of mineral rights.
  Time frame for extracting gravel resources.
  Development restrictions for mined land.
  Open water and wetlands.
  Water rights.

- Investigate how the area can be serviced with water and sanitary sewer.

- Explore the potential for using wetlands in the gateway as stormwater filtering systems.

- Analyze the need for and best layout for frontage roads.

- Investigate how car-pooling can be provided for in future development plans.

- Investigate economic development opportunities.

DESIGN

- Develop design guidelines for development in the gateway.
- Design a gateway entry feature and develop a funding mechanism.
- Develop a conceptual plan for an open space network and recreational trail system.

COORDINATION

- Coordinate with the City's river management program.
- Coordinate with the Natural Resources Department both in regards to the environmental management plan and the prioritization of wetlands.
- Coordinate with the long range planning efforts of other City departments – Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Utilities.
- Coordinate with Larimer County and the Town of Timnath, in regards to existing plans and policies and expectations for the future.
- Coordinate with the State Division of Highways in regards to future design of the interchange, frontage roads, and landscaping in the highway right-of-way.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

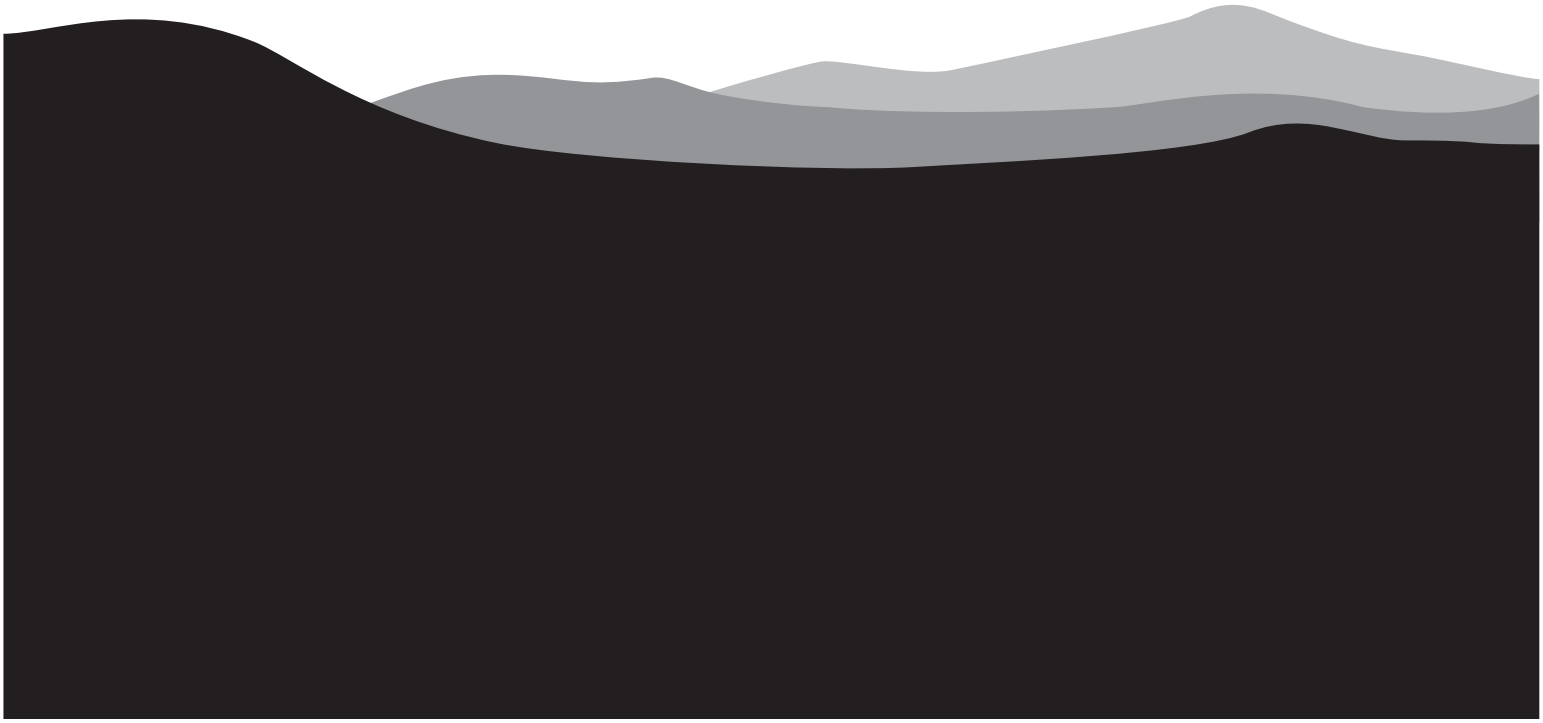
- Work directly with landowners to understand their values and plans for the future.
- Develop a systematic process for developing informed consent.
- Identify potentially affected interests.
- Identify the issues.
- Determine citizen participation objectives and select techniques to achieve the objectives.
- Develop substantial effective agreement on a course of action.

ADOPTING ORDINANCE AND RESOLUTIONS

- Resolution PZ 91-4 of the Planning and Zoning Board of the City of Fort Collins approving the City of Fort Collins *Harmony Corridor Plan* and recommending its inclusion as an element of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Fort Collins.

- Resolution 91-42 of the Council of the City of Fort Collins approving the City of Fort Collins *Harmony Corridor Plan* and including it as an element of *City Plan,* the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Fort Collins.

- Ordinance No. 187, 1994 of the Council of the City of Fort Collins amending the *Harmony Corridor Plan* and the *Harmony Corridor Standards and Guidelines*.

- Resolution 2003-086 of the Council of the City of Fort Collins amending the *Harmony Corridor Plan*.

The full text of these resolutions and ordinances are available for inspection from the City Clerk's office.