

East Mulberry Area Existing Conditions Document

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Introduction

To better understand some of the existing conditions within the East Mulberry Area, staff from several working groups, in partnership with outside agencies (Larimer County, Poudre Fire Authority, State Patrol and others) have compiled this document. This document is meant to be a starting point for discussion during Phase 1 Visioning Sessions and to help stakeholders better understand conditions within the area. The existing conditions summary has been grouped into the following categories:

- **Focus Area #1: Infrastructure**
- **Focus Area #2: Urban Design & Land Use**
- **Focus Area #3: Community Services**
- **Focus Area #4: Social & Economic Sustainability**

These focus areas have been grouped by topic as several of them are interrelated. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of conditions within the area. We look forward to engaging with those who live, work and utilize services within the area throughout the plan-making process.

What is the East Mulberry Plan?

The East Mulberry Plan is meant to be a major update to the existing East Mulberry Corridor Plan that was created in 2002. This process is a collaborative effort led by a team of staff and partners from City staff from various teams, including Planning, Development & Transportation, Finance, Utilities, Police Services, Parks and Natural Areas. Partners also include Larimer County staff, other utility providers and community stakeholders, among others. The original plan was called the “East Mulberry Corridor Plan,” with a focus on the East Mulberry Street corridor and the areas to the north and south. The new plan, now known as the “East Mulberry Plan” will still focus on East Mulberry Street, however the areas to the north and south will be a greater focus on the Visioning and policy-making processes. In this document, the “East Mulberry Area” is the study area for the plan, which has been expanded slightly from the original East Mulberry Corridor Plan study area.

This process aims to create a shared vision for the East Mulberry Area, including business areas and residential areas. This vision will

City staff will focus on building relationships and mutual understanding throughout this process. Staff will do that by keeping residents and business-owners informed throughout the process, by creating an iterative and transparent visioning process, and by being honest where policy decisions reflect community input and where compromises were made. That effort will not stop when the plan is finished.

The 2002 and “Big Changes” Since

Several changes have occurred since the existing East Mulberry Corridor Plan was created in 2002. First, the population of the study area and of the surrounding region has grown significantly. Development pressure has also increased in Fort Collins and across the Front Range. The East Mulberry Area has continued to redevelop over time and incremental annexation has occurred throughout the corridor.

- Some principles and policies were realized within the plan and some were not. An example of some of those that were realized include a focus on preservation of Industrial and Commercial land uses, preservation of attainable housing and enhanced buffers along important natural areas, including the Cooper Slough and Dry Creek.

- Since 2002, the area around East Mulberry has seen a lot of growth and future investment is likely to occur through both proposed and approved developments. Montava has been approved as a project and will be located to the north. The Greenfields development area has been annexed into the City of Fort Collins and as of June, 2021, is in the City's Development Review process. There have been improvements along I-25 just to the north and a new bridge over the river near Lemay and East Mulberry.
- Because the area is likely to continue to change, the plan update process will help to create a cohesive vision utilizing engagement from community members, City staff and others to help guide change into the future.

History of the Area

State Highway (SH) 14 began as a dirt road surrounded by farms and ranches, stretching from Fort Collins east beyond Ault and west to the Poudre Canyon. The highway later became East Lincoln Avenue. The SH 14 Bypass was created in the 1950s and soon became more traveled than the older East Lincoln Avenue. By 1957 it was no longer a bypass but relabeled as SH14. Much of the development in this area occurred under County jurisdiction in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Greeley water transmission line that ran diagonal northwest to southeast along East Lincoln Avenue/Summit View Drive helped to shape the area. Many of the early businesses and homes were built on this diagonal to tap into the line for a steady water supply. Only later did the City of Fort Collins and other utility companies provide water to developing areas east of city limits.

The Fort Collins Downtown Airport (originally named "Airpark" and now "Airport") was constructed during the spring and summer of 1966 and opened the following fall with a 2,700ft runway and ten "T" hangars, housing about 25-30 planes. The thirty stockholders who financed the airport also built the industrial park to the southwest.

East Mulberry remains an important gateway into the City of Fort Collins and is the closest access to downtown and Colorado State University campus from I-25. It is also a Scenic Byway and gateway to the Poudre Canyon.

As Fort Collins began to grow more rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s, talks began to create a more formal agreement between the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County to establish an urban boundary. An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) was formed in 1980 to establish the urban growth boundary, known as the Growth Management Area (GMA). The GMA established the area within which the City would agree to eventually annex and serve with City services while leaving rural areas to be serviced by Larimer County. In 2018, the East Mulberry Area was fully surrounded by city limits and an enclave of unincorporated Larimer County along Mulberry Street was formed.

What is an enclave and what is annexation?

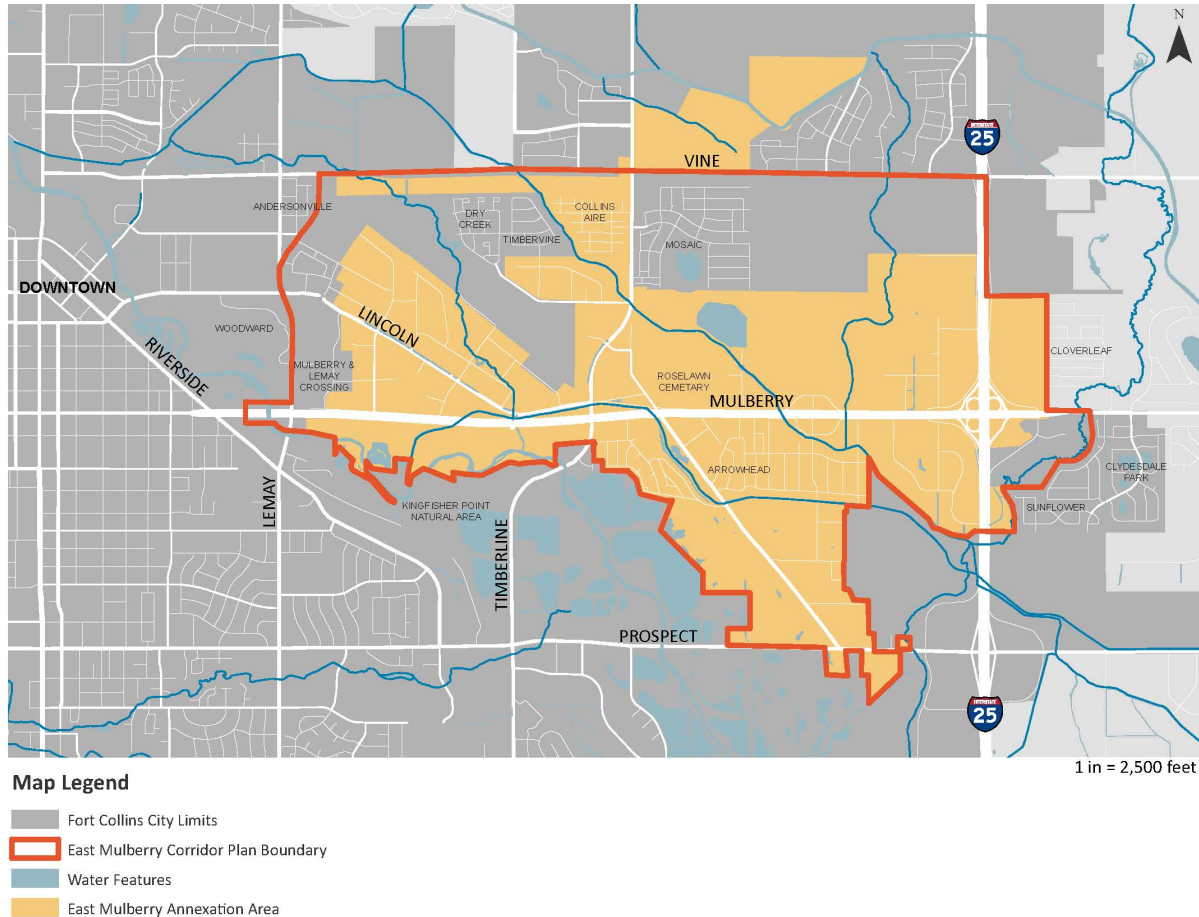
An enclave is a property, or group of properties, that are in unincorporated Larimer County but, due to urban growth and development are now surrounded by the City of Fort Collins municipal boundary.

Annexation is used to bring urbanized areas into the urban service jurisdiction of the City of Fort Collins.

Within the GMA, the City and County have agreed that growth and development should be at an urban level and that the City, and/or special districts, are best able to provide urban level public services. Under the agreement

between City and County, with regard to land located within the GMA, the City has agreed to pursue the annexation of enclaves as those areas become eligible according to state law.

Study Area Map



Why are we doing this now?

Because the area is now eligible for annexation, City staff are analyzing the area for the impacts of possible future annexation and pursuing a community engagement effort that will help to guide the vision of the area into the future. The area is unique in several ways:

- It is the largest concentration of independent and industrial businesses in Northern Colorado.
- It is a mixed-use area hosting industrial, commercial/retail, and residential uses.
- It is a gateway to Downtown, the Poudre Canyon, and is a designated Scenic Byway.
- It is a unique confluence of natural areas, floodways, and multiple jurisdictions and agencies providing services.

Because the plan was adopted in 2002, several things have changed since then. It is time to update the plan to help guide the future of the area. This plan update will remain a jointly adopted plan between Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins.

Helps us to identify biggest challenges and opportunities

Within the East Mulberry area, we know there are various challenges and opportunities. Through the Existing Conditions document, we have set out to identify those challenges and opportunities and align them with those identified by business owners, residents and others within the area. Through our public engagement effort, we will dive into these challenges and opportunities and focus our efforts on setting strategies and policies to tackle the biggest challenges and harness the greatest opportunities within the area. The Existing Conditions document is only the beginning of the conversation. We welcome and need others to participate in this conversation as well.

2002 EMCP and previous engagement

- [Link to the existing plan](#)

What we've heard (2001 and 2018)

In preparation for the original EMCP, City staff conducted a survey of business owners and residents within the area based on 18 different topics ranging from infrastructure to services and employment. Of the 100 individuals who responded to the survey, here is a quick summary of the most important topics identified:

Topic	Importance
Better Overall Appearance	Over 70% of respondents "very important" or "important"
Improving Traffic Flow	Over 70% of respondents "very important" or "important"
Improve Streets	Over 60% of respondents "very important" or "important"
Better Police Services	Nearly 60% of respondents "very important" or "important"
Better Storm Drainage	Nearly 60% of respondents "very important" or "important"

Focus Group Conversations – Summer, 2020

In the summer of 2020, City staff gathered a group of businesses from various sectors within the East Mulberry Area to learn more about what the big opportunities and constraints are within the area related to various topics. Much of the concerns and opportunities were similar to outcomes from the 2001 and 2018 surveys:

- Street conditions remained a concern, especially related to increased traffic along East Mulberry and access from the frontage roads.
- Safety concerns remain. A sense of a lack of law enforcement coverage within the area.
- Increased sales tax was a concern for retailers within the area.
- Increased code standards for redevelopment and nuisance/screening was both of concern and welcome to increase the aesthetic quality of the area.

Basic Demographics

Data Year	Category	Fort Collins	East Mulberry Area
2017	Population	167,500	2,815
2017	Housing Units	68,265	1,149
2017	Median Age	29.2	32.2
2017	% High School Graduate or Higher	96.4%	88.2%
2017	Median Household Income	\$60,110	\$49,434
2019	Size (sq. mi.)	57.16	3.38

Race/Ethnicity – Fort Collins compared to the East Mulberry Area

Data Year	Race & Ethnicity	Fort Collins	East Mulberry Area
2017	White	88.9%	77.8%
2017	Asian	3.1%	1.4%
2017	Black	1.6%	3.3%
2017	Other	2.7%	17.4%
2017	Hispanic/Latino	11.7%	28.7%

What does this mean for the East Mulberry Plan?

- Building Community through Listening, Dialoging and Understanding
- Planning for the impacts of future growth
- Providing more inclusive and accessible outreach and engagement opportunities
- Focusing on equity, inclusion and mitigating displacement where possible

Focus Area #1: Infrastructure

Within this plan, infrastructure refers to several facets of the built environment. These include asphalt/drive-lane condition, presence of sidewalks, presence of bike lanes, stormwater management, and electrical service equipment.

Streets

Streets are often a big topic during annexations. The City of Fort Collins streets and maintenance are paid for through general fund dollars and are spread across the entire City. Some streets are maintained by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) including East Mulberry outside of City limits. Some streets within the East Mulberry area are maintained through Special Improvement Districts whereby business owners or residents tax themselves and the money is managed and applied to the specified tax district. These are expected to remain in place upon annexation.

- There are about 46 total lane miles within the E Mulberry Area. Within that, the roads have been classified in the following categories based on surface condition:

Condition	Amount	Description
Excellent to Good	47%	good asphalt surface condition, including few major cracks or potholes
Fair to Poor	37%	larger cracks and may have chips that have become potholes over time
Failing	16%	large cracks and potholes. Generally, these streets must be completely rebuilt to be considered functional

- Surface condition is only one component of what the City calls, “Complete Streets” which include sidewalks, curb and gutter, bike lanes, and proper markings, among other details depending on the street type. Below are a few points regarding East Mulberry street components:
 - About 15% of streets within the East Mulberry area have sidewalks. This excludes E Mulberry as it was not included in the calculation.
 - 50% of streets have pavement markings (lane and bike lane/shoulder demarcation).
 - Currently, only about 34% of streets have full curb and gutter

Stormwater

Stormwater infrastructure is comprised of several components, including street gutters, storm drains, open channels, underground culverts, regional and on-site detention areas, among others. Stormwater infrastructure is built using several funding mechanisms, including Capital Projects funds, private funding through development projects and sometimes State and Federal funding. Within the East Mulberry area, stagnant water and flooding are significant concerns. Following is some information regarding the existing system and some information regarding a potential capital improvement project for the future:

- Unlike streets, the stormwater system within the East Mulberry area has not yet been inspected or evaluated. For the existing stormwater system to be evaluated, it will need to be flushed of sediment and debris and inspected. Public stormwater infrastructure within the area is currently not being maintained. Analysis is underway to understand what will be needed to undergo this work. Once an inspection of the system has been conducted, a more thorough analysis can be done to understand what improvements need to be made to create a more functional stormwater system in the area.
- A capital improvement project is planned within the area to channel the Dry Creek floodway. This project would only be added to the capital improvement project list upon annexation of the area. Here are links to that project and other floodplain information:
 - [Floodplain Maps and Document](#)
 - [Floodplain Masterplan Priorities](#)

Electric Infrastructure

Much of the East Mulberry area is currently served by Poudre Valley REA and Xcel Energy. Most of this infrastructure is above ground, including poles and wiring. Most of the electrical infrastructure within Fort Collins city limits is underground. Upon annexation, Fort Collins utilities would begin the process of acquiring assets from other utilities and would eventually update and move the infrastructure underground.

Where we are headed

The City of Fort Collins is primarily an urban service provider compared to the more rural-based services provided by Larimer County. Because the East Mulberry area has urbanized over time within Larimer County, much of the infrastructure serving that area has not been maintained to urban standards. More analysis will need to be conducted to understand the financial impacts of providing services to the area, a timeline for addressing deficiencies and financial mechanisms for improvements.

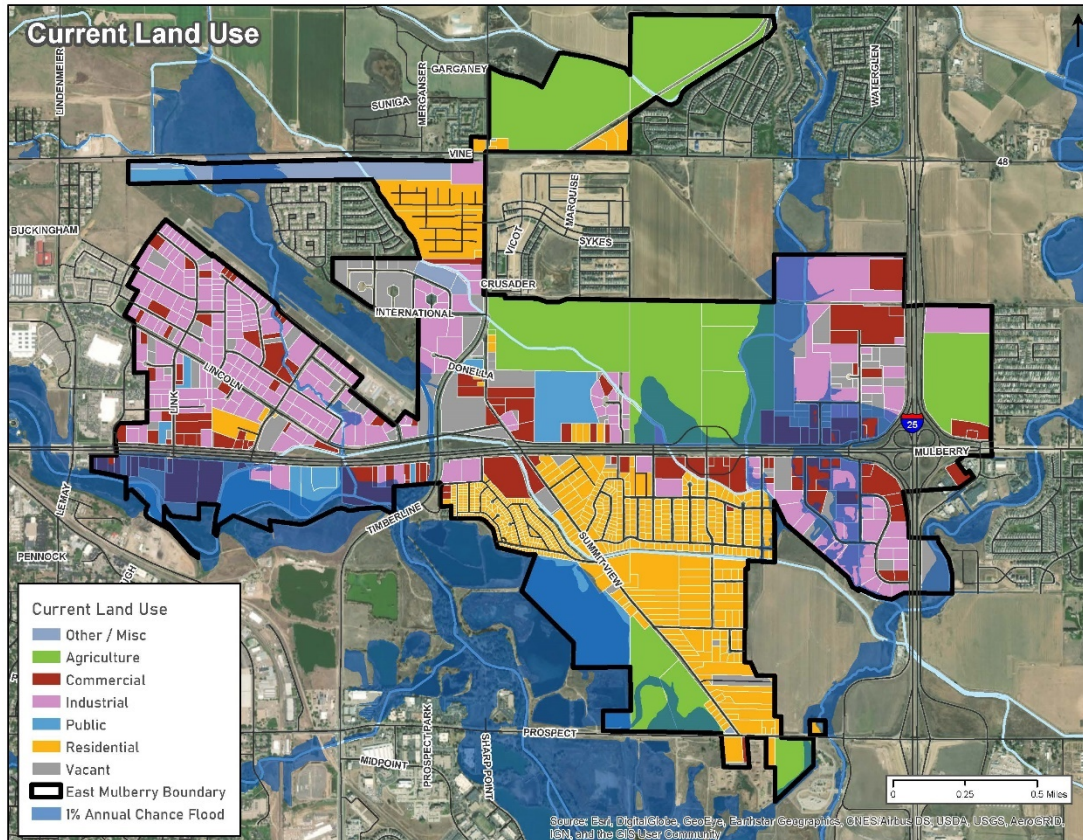
What Does it Mean for the EMP?

- Exploring key considerations between Affordability and Improvements in the Visioning phase
- Explore options for interim conditions for pedestrian access and road improvements
- Continue to work closely with the County as development proposals come forward ahead of potential annexation
- Crafting street cross sections that balance transportation, aesthetic improvements, and public/private sector costs.

Focus Area #2: Urban Design and Land Use

Much of the area developed within the 1950s and 1960s, however several “subdistricts” can be seen throughout the area. This is most notable between commercial-focused areas near the I-25 interchange, residential neighborhoods near Summit View Drive and industrial areas surrounding the old airport. Few institutional or publicly-owned land uses such as parks, schools, and hospitals can be found in the study area. Several exceptions include several natural areas adjacent to the Poudre River south of Mulberry Street and the Rose lawn

Cemetery, which is maintained by City of Fort Collins Parks Department.



- East Mulberry is notable for the amount of land dedicated to industrial land uses. Approximately 25% of land within the enclave is for industrial activities and users, compared to approximately 4% within Fort Collins city limits.
- Outside industrial land uses, the corridor is also home to many other types of development, including areas for agriculture, retail, and residential development of various intensity. Several large parcels also remain available for future development.

Where we are headed

As development has occurred within Fort Collins, City staff has prioritized the preservation of Industrial zone districts as there is limited land available for those uses. This is likely to be true within the East Mulberry Area even if annexation occurs in the future. Visioning sessions with community members and City staff may reveal needs to update Land Use Code policies within the Industrial zone district to accommodate uses not previously found in Industrial areas currently within city limits. “Subareas” may be identified through visioning sessions where special design standards could be added to enhance existing character and accommodate usability of the area. Lastly, visioning sessions may reveal trade-offs and policy compromises to be discussed by city staff to allow for interim infrastructure conditions for existing businesses upon expansion or where a change of use occurs in an existing building.

What does it mean for the EMP?

- Finding the appropriate design standards and review process that reflects the unique development constraints found within the E. Mulberry Area.
- Exploring subdistricts during community visioning sessions and design standards to support unique character of those areas.
- Balance affordability, predictability and function in policy formation

Focus Area #3: Community Services

The Community Services section is rather broad, consisting of police and fire services, parks and recreation, and natural areas and features. Each of these topics is affected differently by annexation.

Police and Fire Coverage

- This area is currently served by Larimer County Sheriff's Department with some assistance from Fort Collins Police Services when necessary. East Mulberry Street is currently patrolled by Colorado State Patrol.
- Any area that is annexed into city limits will be immediately served by Fort Collins Police Services.
- Five-year annual average number of law enforcement incidents was **7,002** within this area. Combined with motor vehicle collisions from Colorado State Patrol, the average is **7,175**.
- This compares to an average across existing FCPS districts of **8,393** incidents. Therefore, this area would essentially be comparable to adding another FCPS district to the service load within the City.
- Poudre Fire Authority will continue to serve the area from existing stations.
- This area is served primarily by PFA Station 6 (2511 Donnella Court) and Station 1 (505 Peterson Street). New stations are possible based upon growth in Timnath and for the Montava development area; they would likely be located near East State Highway 14/Larimer County Road 5 and near Mountain Vista Drive/N. Timberline Road.

Parks and Recreation

- Because this area developed within Larimer County before many standards were developed, there are very few easily accessible parks within the area. There are some trail facilities planned into the future to allow for great accessibility to different parts of town, and parks may be planned as development occurs.
- A neighborhood park is planned for the Mosaic neighborhood and another park may be planned for the Greenfields development. No other parks are currently planned within the area.

Natural Areas and Features

- The Poudre Trail currently runs adjacent to this area. Other trails are planned for this area and land is generally acquired during development or redevelopment processes. More information can be found within the new [Parks and Recreation Masterplan](#).
- Dry Creek runs through the industrial and Airpark area and often causes flooding issues during rain events. Stormwater staff and Capital Projects staff have a project planned within this area, however annexation must occur before the project is added to the capital projects list. Plans to control flow through this area and enhance the natural features of the creek may occur in the future.

- The Cooper Slough also runs through this area within the eastern portion of the enclave. There is currently a natural buffer agreement between the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County to protect this natural feature when development occurs. Enhancement of this area could occur upon annexation.

Where we are headed

It is important to protect natural resources not only for the health of local ecosystems; it is also important to protect and manage them for the well-being and co-existence of the built environment. More analysis and coordination is needed between City staff and Larimer County staff to determine new natural buffer standards for development and future restoration projects.

What does it mean for the EMP?

- Determine expectations for “community policing” and coordination with area business-owners and residents through the Visioning process.
- Identify areas that could be used for “pocket parks” or pedestrian access areas in future development areas.
- Update maps and existing natural features inventory to determine level of significance of natural features.

Focus Area #4: Social and Economic Sustainability

The East Mulberry Area has one of the largest concentrations of industrial businesses in Northern Colorado. There is a wide variety of businesses in the area, from small local shops serving the immediate area to larger national chains and distribution centers.. City staff is very interested in understanding the unique needs of area businesses that span various sectors and how to support their stability into the future.

Where we are today

- There are over 500 businesses within the area.
- According to recent information from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), businesses within the area employ about 7,000 people. The average number of employees per business is about 13.

Percent of Industry by Type

Percent of industry	Industry Type (QCEW)
18.30%	Total Manufacturing
16.38%	Construction
11.37%	Wholesale Trade
10.60%	Other Services (except Public Administration)
8.48%	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
7.13%	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
6.94%	Retail Trade
3.85%	Accommodation and Food Services
3.47%	Retail Trade (other)
3.08%	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
2.70%	All transportation and warehousing

2.31%	Health Care and Social Assistance
1.16%	Finance and Insurance
0.96%	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
0.77%	Utilities
0.77%	Educational Services
0.58%	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
0.58%	Information
0.19%	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
0.19%	Management of Companies and Enterprises
0.19%	Public Administration

Where we are headed

The East Mulberry Area has traditionally been a more affordable area within Northern Colorado to start a manufacturing, service-based or retail business. Maintaining this affordability is a priority for City staff. At the same time, this affordability will need to be balanced with functionality, safety, predictability, and aesthetic quality. City staff will seek to find a balance through the Visioning process and incorporate all voices and needs in decision-making and policy formation.

What does it mean for the EMP?

- Understand concerns and opportunities for business support and ways to mitigate negative effects City standards, interim conditions for business expansions or “change of use” applications.
- Through visioning, understand the priorities for businesses related to functionality, ease of access and aesthetic priorities.
- Understand land use priorities for business-owners to support future expansion and mitigate displacement factors.

Conclusion

The East Mulberry Area has several challenges, especially related to infrastructure, safety, and overall predictability. At the same time, several major opportunities exist for this area to create a functional aesthetic that embraces the unique character of the area.