



Old Town Neighborhoods Plan **Frequently Asked Questions and Responses**

1. What is the background on the original Eastside and Westside Neighborhood Plans?

The *East Side Neighborhood Plan* was the first subarea or neighborhood plan developed by the City, adopted in 1986. The *West Side Neighborhood Plan* was adopted a few years later in 1989. These neighborhood plans included initial vision, policies and implementation strategies, in response to concerns, issues, and pressures at that time. They led to rezoning with new development regulations and other implementation over the years. However, since adoption, these plans have never been updated.

As the East Side and West Side plans both approach nearly 30 years in service, conditions have changed in and around the neighborhoods, and extensive new information needs to be incorporated into the Plans for them to remain useful. This project needs to explore issues, clarify the vision, update the City's policy approach toward the next 10-20 years, and identify needed actions to implement the updated plans.

2. What is the purpose of the Old Town Neighborhoods Plan (OTNP)?

The purpose of updating the original *East Side and West Side Neighborhood Plans* is to revisit the original visions, policy directives, and implementation actions in the existing documents and revise these elements based on emerging issues and trends. As part of this new update process, the current plans for both the east side and west side areas are proposed to be combined into a single consolidated plan document and process, referred to as the "*Old Town Neighborhoods Plan (OTNP, or project)*".

The Old Town Neighborhoods are a composite of two individual neighborhoods centered on both sides of College Avenue, between Colorado State University and the Downtown. The neighborhoods are diverse, with a range of existing character and contexts. These conditions help shape development and may influence its perceived compatibility. Understanding neighborhood characteristics, including physical conditions and dynamic aspects such as past and future changes, are an important part of this update process.

While the new approach reflects a single plan, the planning process and evaluation of both neighborhoods will not be compromised in the depth of analysis. The proposed effort will provide more efficiency of resources, effective community engagement and opportunity for collaboration of stakeholders and desired outcomes. Outcomes of this project will include more awareness and agreement about the acceptable levels and kinds of change that are appropriate in the OTNP area, and ultimately a clarified strategy for implementing Plan action items and more compatible development projects over time.

3. What will the OTNP include?

The ONTP will combine and update the vision and framework of both the East Side Neighborhood Plan and the West Side Neighborhood Plan under the umbrella of one subarea planning document. The plan will coordinate with efforts to create new Design Guidelines for the Old Town Neighborhoods and with the update to the Downtown Plan in 2015. The OTNP study area boundaries have been altered from the original East Side and West Side boundaries by removing the commercial areas along Riverside Avenue and the Community Commercial areas near Laurel and College – these areas will be included in the updated Downtown Plan. The plan will include an evaluation of the Mulberry Street and Shields Street corridors through the study area. The plan will be comprised of five phases that will evaluate existing and future conditions, update the neighborhood vision, evaluate corridor options and develop a framework plan, develop policies and strategies, and implementation strategies and action plan recommendations.

4. What area will the Plan include?

The Old Town Neighborhoods Plan area including both the East Side and West Side areas and bounded by the Neighborhood Conservation Low-Density, Neighborhood Conservation Medium-Density, Neighborhood Conservation Buffer, and Community Commercial Zoning Districts, flanking the Downtown (see Map).



5. What is the planning process and schedule for this project?

The OTNP will be developed through four distinct phases: (1) Develop background assessment of existing conditions, issues, analysis, and community engagement process; (2) reaffirm the plan vision and land use framework; (3) reaffirm policies and develop strategies to address issues; and (4) develop an implementation action plan and new document.

The OTNP is scheduled to be completed and presented to City Council for adoption in March 2016. The anticipated schedule for task completion is as follows:

Jan. – Feb. 2015 Project Mobilization
Mar. – Apr. 2015 Existing and Future Conditions
May – June 2015 Plan Vision
Jul. – Sept. 2015 Framework
Oct. 2014 – Nov. 2015 Strategies, Plan Implementation
Nov. 2013 – Dec. 2015 Preparation of Final Plan
February 2016 Adoption Process - Boards and Commission Hearings
March 2016 City Council Hearing

6. Is the Plan intending to integrate sustainability methods into the process?

Yes, sustainability will be a key theme for the project. In practice, this will mean evaluating the vision, alternatives and strategies against Triple Bottom Line analysis as part of a sustainability assessment tool framework. The process will use a systems approach to identify connected relationships between plan components, and provide an analysis of environmental, economic, and social considerations to identify community benefits and tradeoffs.

7. How will the Plan address the fringe or transition areas including the Community Commercial (CC), Neighborhood Conservation Buffer (NCB), and Low Density Mixed-use Neighborhoods zoned areas adjacent to College Avenue, Remington Street and Mulberry Street?

A lot of focus of this effort will be on the fringe areas including the NCB, LMN and CC zoning, especially multi-family impacts. In 2013 as part of the Character Study, new standards were developed and adopted for the NCL and NCM single-family residential areas. We are not sure at this early stage in the planning process if these existing compatibility standards need to be revised. For the fringe areas, we will determine the appropriate density and design compatibility, which may lead to developing new standards.

8. Why is the City developing new neighborhood design guidelines, and why ahead of determining Plan implementation strategies, the timing seems off?

As part of the original *East Side Neighborhood and West Side Neighborhood Plans* implementation recommendations, neighborhood design guidelines were developed in 1996. In 2013 the adopted Neighborhood Character Study included an action to update these original design guidelines for the Old Town Neighborhoods. The current work program for updating the existing Neighborhood Plans also includes the concurrent project to update the 1996 Design Guidelines using the same public outreach process and consultants to maximize efficiencies of resources and schedules in 2015.

The 1996 Design Guidelines are outdated, and as a result used infrequently. In conjunction with this planning process, new design guidelines and pattern book will be developed as a voluntary document reflecting the character and context of the neighborhoods. Many residents expressed a strong interest in providing design handbooks or guidelines to educate property owners, architects and builders about compatible, context-sensitive design in the neighborhoods. Interest was primarily in applying design guidelines as voluntary or linked to incentives rather than as requirements.

While the new design guidelines in fact represent an implementation strategy, most of the information and final products will be developed during the second half of the planning process and be more in sync with the sequence of Plan components.

9. Is the Downtown Plan being updated this year as well, and how will that process be coordinated with the OTNP?

The Downtown Plan will be updated concurrently with the Old Town Neighborhoods Plan as a separate planning effort. While the OTNP addresses the residential areas surrounding downtown, the Downtown Plan will establish a new vision and updated policy direction for the city's commercial core. Topics that will be addressed include arts and culture, downtown management, energy and environment, market and economy, transportation and parking, and urban design. The Downtown Plan update will be closely coordinated with the OTNP, as there are many issues and opportunities that relate to both areas. Public outreach for both projects will also be coordinated and share events where possible throughout the two planning processes.

10. What criteria were used in determining who will be included in the Eastside and Westside Neighborhood Stakeholder Groups, and how will other community interests be involved in process?

The neighborhood stakeholder groups will include residents, property owners, employees, and business owners with an address in the Eastside and Westside Neighborhoods. The intent is to provide opportunity for discussion and feedback from people who have a direct neighborhood interest.

As part of the open community engagement process, all interests will be included and heard. For example, community business interests that may work in area, but not necessarily have an actual address in neighborhoods have expressed desire to be involved in process. Staff is meeting with various groups such as the Chamber of Commerce - Local Legislative Affairs Committee, and Fort Collins Board of Realtors. A separate community stakeholder group may be established if there is enough interest beyond regularly scheduled meetings.