

The Northwest Subarea planning team has been hard at work studying the many ideas raised at our last meeting in December 2005.

This booklet is designed to update you on the progress to date on the land use and design recommendations for the plan and, most importantly, to get your comments. This booklet is also set up to serve as a workbook to be used during the meeting being held February 16, 2006. Please plan to attend that upcoming meeting!

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This Bulletin contains a comment form. Please fill it out and return it or bring it to the February 16 meeting.



## About the Northwest Subarea Plan

The Northwest Subarea Plan is a joint planning effort of Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins. The intent is to create a more detailed plan for this area's future.

Since 1980, all the land in the Northwest Subarea has been within Fort Collins' Growth Management Area (GMA). Because the land is within the city's GMA it is considered part of the city's planning area and so the county's comprehensive plan does not address land uses within the area. Lands in the Subarea are included in *City Plan*, which provides general guidance for future land uses in the area. Including this area in *City Plan* does not mean all the properties are within city limits or will ever be within city limits.

The Northwest Subarea Plan will offer a finer level of detail and guidance for how future development of the area should occur. The subarea plan will also address:

- How new development can be compatible with existing neighborhoods and how to protect the neighborhood character;
- Improving travel - whether by bicycle, on foot, or by car;
- New trails and open space;
- Where businesses may be appropriate; and
- Which neighborhoods need improved services or utilities, such as water or sewer.

## Want to learn more?

**Visit the project website at:**  
[www.fcgov.com/advanceplanning](http://www.fcgov.com/advanceplanning)

The following information is available for you to view:

- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions;
- A summary of existing conditions in the Subarea;
- Maps of the area;
- A summary of key issues for the plan to address; and
- Summaries of comments received at prior public workshops and meetings.

### Or contact us directly!

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## The Planning Process



Mark your calendar!  
Please attend the next  
community workshop -  
February 16, 2006  
at Lincoln Junior High,  
6:30- 8:30 p.m.

The planning process for the Northwest Subarea Plan has enjoyed a high level of public involvement since mid-2005. Residents, property owners, businesses, and other interested parties have participated in several ways:

- Interviews and discussions with the planning team.
- Returning comment forms from the Summer 2005 Bulletin mailed to all property owners (66 comment forms received).
- Attending the first “kick-off” meetings held in September, 2005, designed to share background information on the plan and hear feedback and ideas from the community for what the plan should accomplish (over 200 participants).
- Reading information posted on the website: [www.fcgov.com/advanceplanning](http://www.fcgov.com/advanceplanning), and sending email and suggestions to the planning team.
- Attending the December, 2005 workshop (over 50 participants). Attendees gave valuable ideas about:
  - 1) A Character Preference Survey--designed to express preferences of housing, non-residential buildings, streets, trails, parks, fencing, and landscaping types.
  - 2) Mapping Exercise to identify potential trails, land uses, open space, views, and other important features of the area.

Thank you for participating!

## Key Directions for the Plan

**The planning team generated the following directions or broad goals for the Northwest Subarea based on community input.**

- 1. Retain connected open spaces.**
- 2. As new growth and development occurs, it should fit the diverse mix of building designs and natural setting characteristics of the area.**
- 3. As new growth occurs, it should safeguard natural features and habitat areas.**
- 4. Preserve “assets” such as historic structures, prominent foothills views, and small farms.**
- 5. Work to develop a connected system of trails and access to a diverse array of recreational opportunities.**
- 6. Maintain a local roadway system that is in keeping with the character of the Northwest Subarea.**

Which themes do you think best represent the Northwest Subarea:

- Horses and equestrians
- County neighborhoods
- Views
- Historical farms and home sites
- Access to nature and natural areas
- Diverse neighborhoods and residents
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Are these directions on the right track? Are any important big ideas missing? Please fill in the comment form!

### What is in a name?

What should the community call this “subarea”? Is “Northwest Subarea” an appropriately descriptive name, or should the community define a name that better reflects the identity of the area? What are the areas' common attributes or sense of place? The Northwest Fort Collins Forum has suggested:

“Naturally Northwest Fort Collins Diverse Neighborhoods that Value Heritage, Wildlife, Vistas, Parks, and Trails.”

Do you agree? What names/themes might you suggest?

### Other News in the Neighborhood

*Northwest Fort Collins Forum, a group of concerned residents, prepared recommendations for the Northwest Subarea in a report entitled, “Experience Country Close Up Northwest Fort Collins” (January 2006). The Northwest Fort Collins Forum recommends that many of the agricultural or vacant lands in the area be conserved as open space or natural areas, or continued for agriculture. It also supports additional trails, parks, equestrian facilities, wildlife conservation, and that the plan define a “sense of place” for the area. For more information about the NW Forum, e-mail: [nwfortcollins@yahoo.com](mailto:nwfortcollins@yahoo.com)*

# Key Choices for the Plan

The following pages address some key choices for open space and recreation, land use, trails, utilities, and transportation.

- **Conserve high priority lands in the area for natural areas, wildlife, views, and recreation. (Note: the “choices” map on page 9 identifies some high priority areas, including lands near the Foothills and the Poudre River).**
- **Retain a system of connected open space throughout the area using a variety of means, including acquisition, easements, willing donors, or set asides as part of development projects.**
- **Balance property owner rights with the community’s desire for conservation.**



## Considerations

Residents have expressed strong interest in conserving many of the remaining undeveloped or agricultural properties as open space to maintain the area's vistas and open “country” qualities. Open space can also help achieve a separation between Fort Collins and LaPorte to the north, provide space for wildlife, conserve views and the historic heritage of the area, and reduce the costs for infrastructure to serve development. On the other hand, the subarea is within the City of Fort Collins Growth Management Area, one of the areas within Larimer County where some growth and development is expected to occur over time because services and utilities are available. Most lands are zoned for residential development and property owners likely have certain expectations of how they can develop their property. While conservation of some vacant lands may be an option, the city and county cannot mandate open space conservation and the cost of acquiring land makes it prohibitive for the city and county to conserve all vacant lands in the area.

## Mechanisms to Conserve Open Space

Several conservation options are available, including:

- The city can purchase land as public open space (at a cost of approximately \$5,000 to \$15,000 per acre, depending on whether water rights are attached, plus the cost of maintaining it over the long term). The county does not typically acquire open space lands within a Growth Management Area. For the city to buy land, the proposed property would need to be a city-wide priority and meet city criteria.
- The city can work with landowners to establish conservation easements to conserve land as private open space (at a lesser cost to the city; landowner maintains the property and city monitor the land).
- The city can accept donations from willing landowners (with city or landowner maintaining the land over the long-term; landowner assumes the cost of donating the land or conservation easement).
- Residents or land trusts can approach landowners to negotiate conservation easements. The planning team has prepared a “Guide to Land Preservation Initiatives” that is available on the project website to assist residents with local initiatives.
- The city and county can mandate clustered development patterns so that if properties do develop some portion of the land is set aside as private open space.

*As of 2005, the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program has conserved over 33,000 acres of land. To be considered for this program, properties should appear in the city's Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan, designated as potential natural area or community separator. For properties not designated on the plan, the city generally evaluates the property using the following criteria:*

- *It should have natural resource values (such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, or other intrinsic values).*
- *It should be part of a connected system of open space.*
- *It should have community-wide public benefit (e.g., is accessible through views or public right of way, and is not only of benefit to a select group of neighbors).*

Do you agree with the properties that are designated as future potential open space on the “Trails, Recreation, and Open Space Choices” map on page 9? How do you think the community should acquire or protect open space in the Northwest Subarea?



## 4 Parks and Recreation Draft Goals

- **Encourage a developer-provided new park north of Vine Drive.**
- **Support private initiatives to build equestrian facilities.**

### Park Considerations

The Northwest Subarea has limited options for developing new parks. Most of the Subarea is within the unincorporated county, and the county does not typically develop or manage neighborhood parks. Areas within city limits and south of Vine Drive and east of Taft Hill are within the service areas of City Park and Huidekooper Park. Lee Martinez Park serves residents east of Shields Drive.

Do you support showing a future developer-provided park north of Vine Drive? If you live north of Vine Drive, would you be willing to pay a fee to help pay for a new park?

### Mechanisms to Acquire Land and Build Parks

Options to develop and build a new private park north of Vine Drive include:

- Residents can organize and negotiate with a developer to build a private park as part of a new development.
- City and county can determine if county residents in this area are willing to tax themselves to purchase land, and build and maintain a private park.
- If any new residential developments generate city parkland fees they will be used for improvements at Huidekooper Park or City Park.



## Potential Land Use Choices



### Future Land Use Considerations

Some future development is likely to occur in the Northwest Subarea. Most of the area is currently zoned and planned for very low or low density residential development (on City's Structure Plan map and existing city/county zoning). While residents have indicated interest in keeping vacant and agricultural properties "open," it likely is not be possible to conserve all lands. The city and county cannot prevent landowners from exercising certain development rights, and public agencies are not willing to buy all land for open space. The Subarea Plan is an opportunity to identify and refine acceptable development patterns that might occur on properties if conservation is not practicable.

This section discusses the range of choices for the area that are realistic and balance resident and property owners' interests. The choices consider existing zoning, land use plans, and other factors (such as open space priorities). The choices mostly convey different development patterns. For instance, a Rural Residential development would allow homes on larger lots throughout a property, whereas a Rural Residential Cluster might mean that residential development will occur on 20% of the property where the remaining 80% is left as open space. While clusters result in a more compact development pattern on the developed portion, they are the best way to ensure that areas of open space remain on properties that are developed in the future. Generally, the choices on the following pages show lower intensity of uses toward the foothills, and more urban uses near or within city limits; this is consistent with current city and county zoning for the area.

### Draft Goals for Future Land Use

- **Any new development will generally be low intensity residential development, with lowest intensity near foothills.**
- **Allow only small-scale commercial development; no large retail.**
- **Limit building footprint sizes for other non-residential structures (e.g., recreation facilities, churches, etc.)**
- **Allow new small businesses if they fit the character of the area.**
- **Continue to allow existing legal small businesses.**

## Potential Types of Development



### Rural Residential

Housing at a maximum density of 1 du/2.29 acres, with lot sizes generally averaging 2.29 acres and little or no common open space.



### Rural Residential Cluster

Housing at a density of 1 du/2.29 acre gross density, with 80% of land conserved as open space and building lots with an average size of 0.3 acres (lot sizes similar to Dean Acres).



### Urban Estate Residential

Housing at a density of 2 du/acre gross density, similar to Poudre Overlook. Little common open space.



### Urban Estate Residential Cluster

Housing with 2 du/acre gross density, with 50% of land conserved as open space and residential building lots no smaller than 0.2 acres.



### Low Density Neighborhood

Housing up to 8 du/acre of residential development but with no minimum lot size. Could also include neighborhood services.

### Live/Work and Limited Commercial

Could allow offices, live-work, or other small scale non-residential uses mixed with residential, including expanded home occupations.



### Neighborhood Center

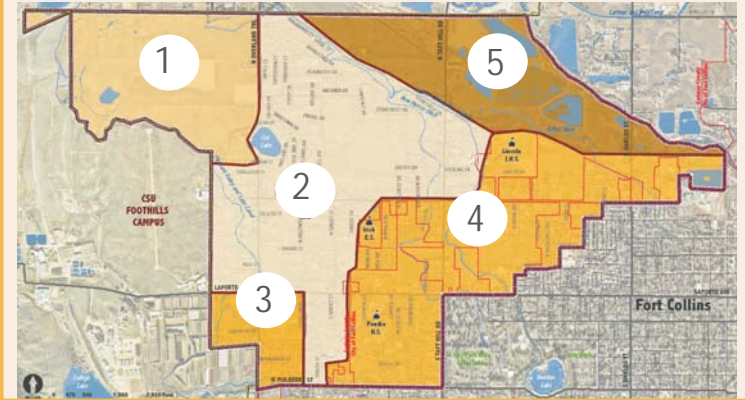
Could allow retail services no larger than 5 acres (e.g., small garden center, small retail,



## Distinct Parts of the Northwest Subarea

The Northwest Subarea has five distinct areas where different development choices are possible. They are:

- 1. West of Overland Trail/Foothills**
- 2. County Neighborhoods**
- 3. CSU Foothills Campus Gateway**
- 4. Urban Neighborhoods**
- 5. River/Bluff**



### Area 1: West of Overland Trail/Foothills

This area is zoned FA-1 which allows farming or 2.29 acre minimum lots for residential development. It is designated for Urban Estate on the Structure Plan, which allows up to 2 units per acre (du/ac).

The private properties in this area are currently pasture land and horse stables. In addition, the city recently purchased a 150+ acre open space parcel just west of the Poudre Overlook subdivision. Meeting participants have noted this area is important for wildlife, views, and other natural qualities, including wetlands.

### Area 2: County Neighborhoods

Most of this area is currently zoned FA which allows densities of 2 du/ac. (i.e., approximately 500 new residential units). Some smaller properties are zoned for industrial or commercial uses. The city's Structure Plan designates all lands in this area for Urban Estate development, which also allows 2 du/ac. Potentially developable lands north Vine Drive are being farmed or are currently vacant.

Residents and meeting participants are interested in continuing farming in this area and note the land's value for wildlife, and historic farmhouses. They are also interested in a park or open space on vacant properties.

### Area 3: CSU Foothills Campus Gateway

This area is planned for Urban Estate, but it is one area where residents and other participants seem to generally support some non-residential development near the intersection of Laporte and N. Overland Trail.

## Area 4: Urban Neighborhoods

Much of this area is developed as urban density neighborhoods (i.e., with density greater than 1 u/ac) and is either within the city limits or adjacent to city limits where vacant lands may annex over time. Vacant lands in the area are primarily zoned for low density neighborhoods, up to 8 u/ac. with attached units. Several large vacant or agricultural parcels are located here. These vacant properties are important for stormwater management and wildlife grazing, but are also close to urban facilities and services, including parks, schools, and city water and sewer.

## Area 5: Bluffs/River

This area is zoned FA and is planned as Urban Estate residential, allowing 2 u/ac. Lands along the river and bottom of the bluff are currently being mined, and little land will be available for development when mining is complete. Much of the land is within the 100 year floodplain of the Poudre River which precludes residential development. This is important land for future trails, water storage, and natural areas restoration.

## Land Use Choices for Each Area

The maps on the right-hand page correspond with the land use choices listed for each area below. For instance, Area 1, “A - Rural Open Lands” corresponds with that land use on map A. Please consider which combination of land use choices would be best for the Northwest Subarea.

### Area 1: West of Overland Trail

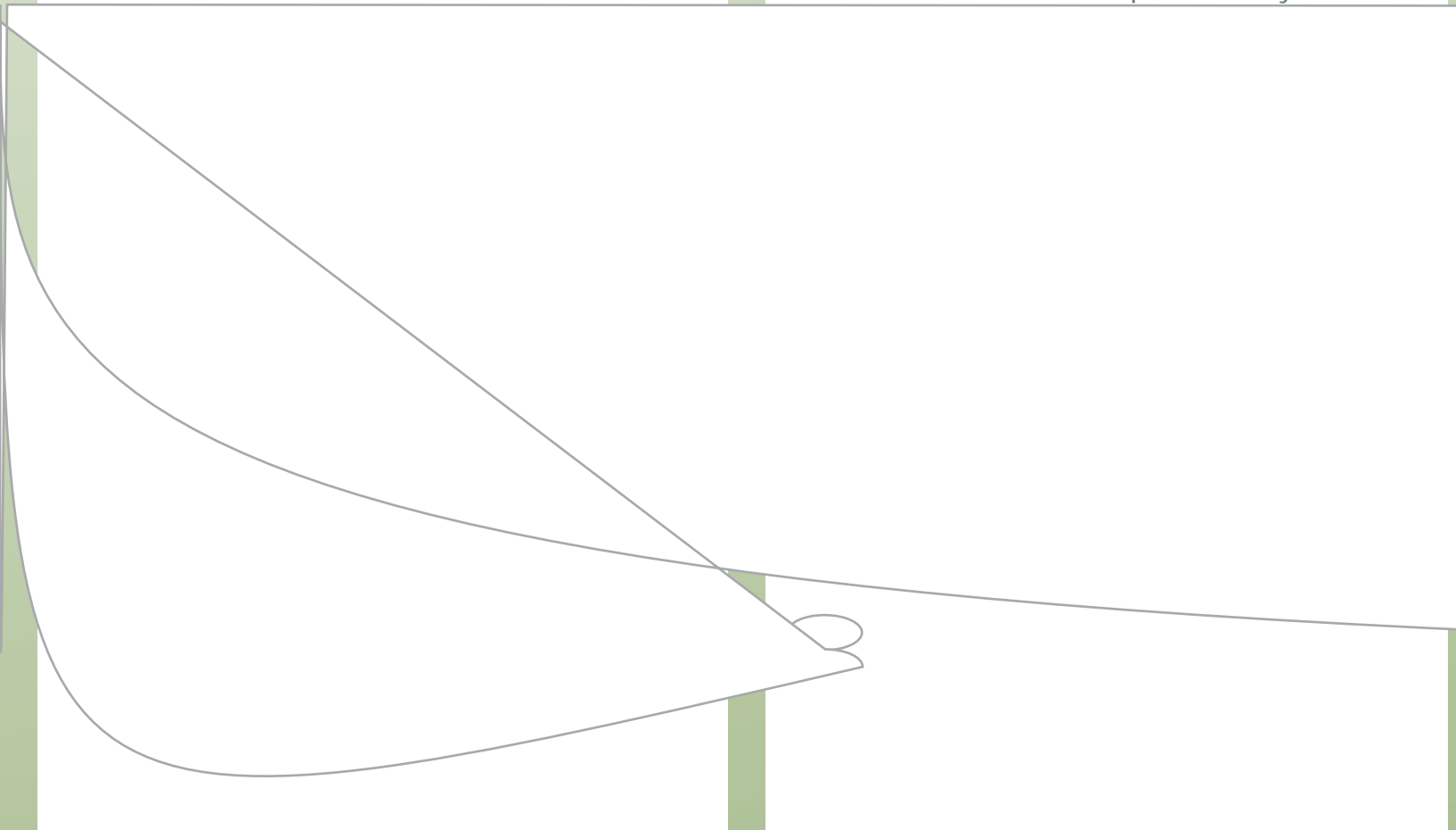
*Note: Land in this area is a priority for open space conservation. In the event that the city can not acquire the land for natural areas, or if open space is otherwise not feasible, choices for residential development include:*

- A Rural Residential Cluster with 80% open space
- B Rural Residential
- C Urban Estate Residential Cluster with 50% open space

### Area 2: County Neighborhoods

- A Urban Estate Cluster with 50% open space
- B/C Urban Estate Residential

### Area 3: CSU Foothills Campus Gateway



# Alternative Land Use Choices

Larger color maps are on the project website.

Additional retail sites could be addressed after this round of the plan. Do you think other options are appropriate for small retail uses?

## LEGEND

RR  
UE  
LMN  
NC  
LW

RR-C = RR Cluster  
UE-C = UE Cluster



## Goals

- **Provide multi-purpose trail connections from neighborhoods and schools to Foothills and Poudre River Trail.**
- **Establish future trail locations with property owner willingness and public acquisition, or as part of future developments.**
- **Provide local neighborhood connectors that (a) are safe routes for travel between schools, parks, natural areas, and homes, and (b) connect to other major destinations within the community, including CSU and Downtown.**
- **Provide local recreation trails that are the proper size and design for different areas.**
- **Limit impacts on neighboring properties through proper design and screening.**

## Trails Considerations

Many residents are interested in providing additional trails in the area to (a) connect to existing major recreation destinations, including the Poudre Trail and the Foothills Trail, (b) provide places for equestrians, and (c) provide a safe network for pedestrians and bicycles to travel to and from destinations such as schools, shopping, and home. Some residents are concerned about potential impacts on neighboring properties and want to ensure that the city and county do not condemn property to acquire trails.

The county does build and maintain trails as part of regional recreation facilities and could possibly have a role in providing connections to the Foothills Trail. CSU has expressed some willingness to support a trail connection along Laporte Avenue, but has concerns about security of campus facilities. The city's trails focus is on multi-purpose trails that are part of a community-wide system. Potential smaller local connections (shown on the map on page 9) will be a function of the transportation network and would be provided either through developments or local initiatives.

## Mechanisms to Establish/Maintain Public Trails

Several options for public trails are available, including:

- Focus on the major community multi-purpose trail connections for city acquisition, construction, and maintenance (i.e., to connect to the Poudre River Trail and the Foothills Trail).
- City and/or county requires local neighborhood connections (for bicycles and pedestrians) as part of future developments.
- Residents can work directly with landowners to negotiate easements for local recreation trails (e.g., footpaths) and apply for grants.
- Clustered developments can establish local recreation trails on open space portions of properties. Typically, these would be private trails for the use of residents, but neighbors could negotiate with developers to provide connections and access.



## Trail Benefits

*Fort Collins and county residents widely use the region's trails for recreation and transportation purposes. Trails provide safe routes for travel off-streets for pedestrians, bicycles, and equestrians to travel between destinations and have many health, and other community benefits. Generally trails increase the value of nearby properties because residents view them as an amenity.*



## Trail Financial Costs

*Multi-purpose trails cost between \$300-350,000 per mile to acquire land and build. That cost increases to \$700,000 with an underpass. Gravel paths cost \$75,000 per mile. It costs \$12,000 per year per mile to maintain a multi-purpose trail.*

## Questions to Consider

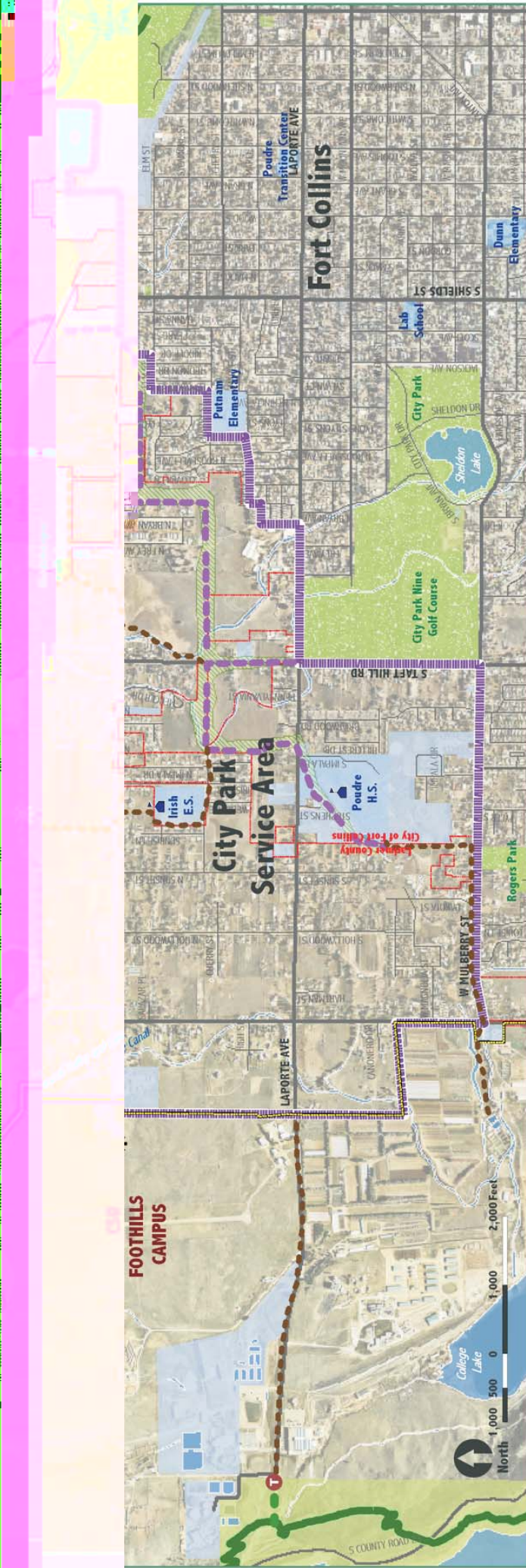
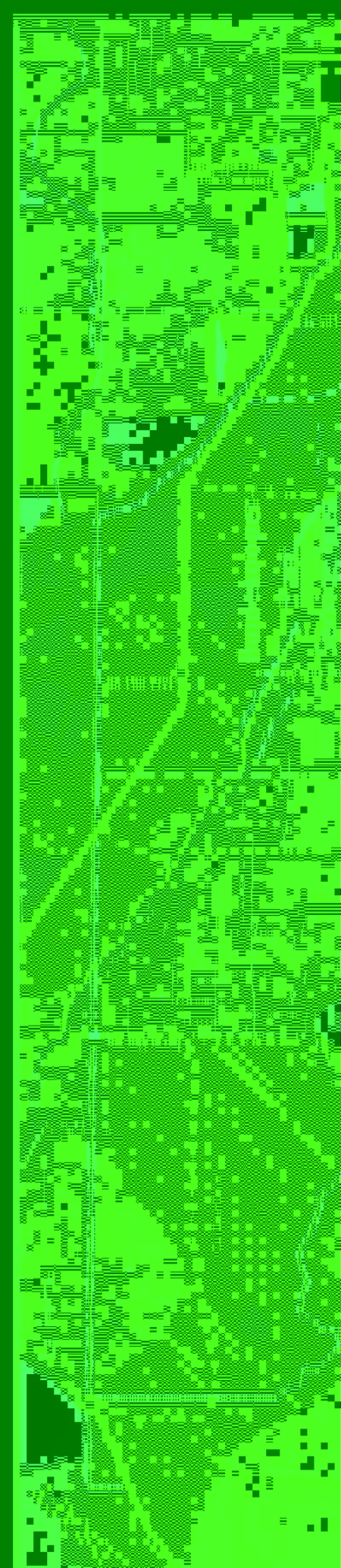
Do you support the multi-purpose trails and local connections shown on the "Trails, Recreation, and Open Space Choices" map on page 9?

Which trail connections are important to you?

Would you recommend additional multi-purpose (e.g., paved trails) or local connections that are not shown on the map?

What do you propose is the best way for residents or the city or county to achieve these trails?





# TRAILS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE CHOICES

## Legend

- Planning Area
- City Limits
- GMA Boundary
- Rivers, Streams, and Ditches
- Streets
- Existing Multi-Purpose Trails
- Trailhead with Parking
- Open Space
- Potential Multi-Purpose (Community) Trails
- Potential Soldier Creek Trail
- Potential Local Neighborhood Connections (Neighborhood Initiated)
- Potential Developer-Provided Park
- Future Underpass

\* Note: the CSU Master Plan does not allow trails or access except on Laporte Avenue.





### Transportation Goals

- **Allow flexibility, consistent with code/standards, to provide local neighborhood connections (bike and pedestrian) as alternatives to locally connected streets.**
- **Continue to allow flexibility to modify street standards for lower density developments to fit the character of the area.**



### Considerations

The “Transportation Choices” map reflects the City's Master Street Plan (MSP) and indicates arterial and collector streets with proposed improvements over time. The choices map considers one new local/collector street connection in the city between Laporte and Vine Drive (north of City Park) to better connect the street system at half-mile spacings.

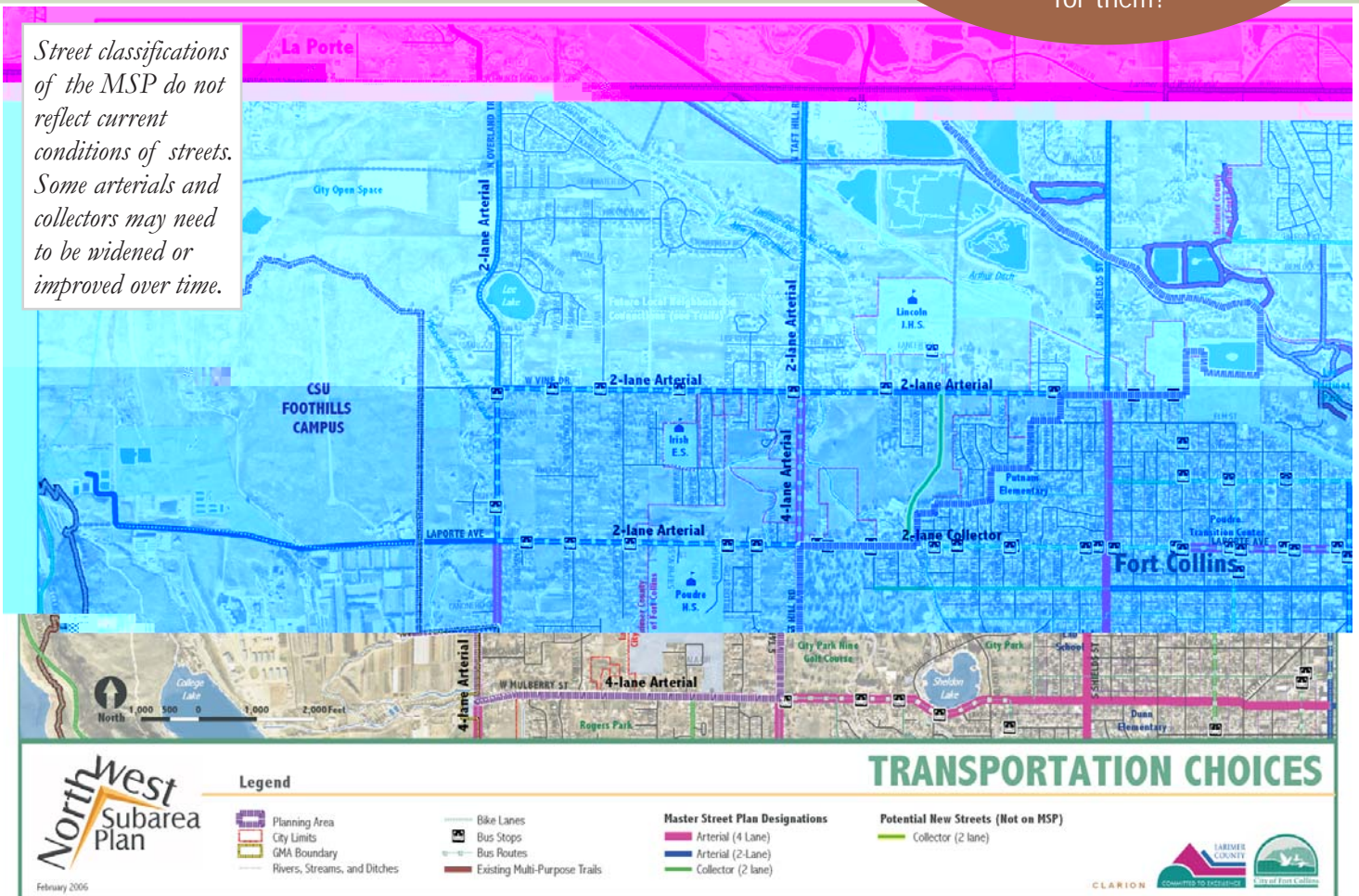
Local street connections to existing subdivisions are not shown on the “choices” map, but may occur in the future as needed. Street connections may be avoided in some cases if alternative local pedestrian and bicycle connections are provided in new neighborhoods (i.e., typically an 8-foot concrete path). Local developments are required to make improvements on internal and adjacent streets.

### Services and Utilities

What are needs for improved services or utilities in the subarea? To date, the city and county have not heard many concerns from participants, but the following issues are on the table:

- Some residents and businesses have noted a need for improved water lines (to improve pressure and quality).
- Some neighborhoods may need to connect to sewer systems in the future because of failing septic systems.
- Residents and others have noted an interest in working with Xcel Energy to bury electric lines in the county. City electric lines within city limits are buried.
- A Stormwater Master Plan should be done for the North Basin (north of Vine Drive).

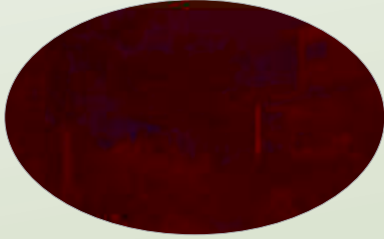
What other services does your neighborhood need?  
If your neighborhood or business is in the county and is requesting improved services or utilities, would your neighborhood be willing to form a Local Improvement District to pay for them?



# / Design Recommendations 11

The planning team is preparing a set of Design Guidelines for the plan that will apply to *new* development. While guidelines are recommendations rather than requirements, they are language that can serve as the foundation for formal standards that would add teeth to current code requirements. The design recommendations being created as part of this process will help inform both the developers who propose *new* developments, and the city and county staff who review those proposals, as to how new development should occur to best suit the character of the area. These guidelines will address both residential and non-residential developments as well as various landscape elements such as lighting, fencing, signs, and landscaping. The goal of these guidelines is to help preserve the area's character as future development projects take place.

## PREFERRED



## NOT THIS!



## Residential

### Desired Neighborhood Character:

- Variety of housing designs, colors, and lots sizes.
- Larger setbacks and areas of open space.
- Modest homes in line with the scale and character of existing residences.
- Diverse range of housing types and prices.
- Rural style homes and lots with plenty of natural/informal landscaping.
- Interspersed agriculturally-based uses or businesses, including horse properties.

### What will the Design Guidelines Include?

Design recommendations for new residential developments will protect the character of the area through encouraging design for: larger setbacks, more variety, smaller street-facing garages, more open space in clustered developments, and shorter building heights to preserve views, taking into consideration current code requirements.

## Non-Residential

### Desired Non-Residential Character:

- Agricultural or farm based businesses which offer open areas, have few permanent structures, and generate little traffic.
- Small-scale retail activities that “fit” the neighborhood.
- Buildings designed with a modest, rustic appeal.
- Minimal pavement/parking areas, particularly at the front of buildings.

### What will the Design Guidelines Include?

Design recommendations for new non-residential developments will protect the character of the area in designs for: business signs and lighting, building footprints, and building designs (e.g. using natural materials for a more rural feel).

## THIS!



## NOT THIS!



## Landscape

## THIS!



### Desired Landscape Character:

- Ranch-style fencing that is more open.
- Natural, informal style of landscaping.

### What will the Design Guidelines Include?

Design recommendations for landscape elements will encourage design for: open fencing made of natural materials and informal landscaping treatments.

## NOT THIS!





Draft Goal

