

Commercial Buildings and Site Design

Guiding Principle:

Create clearer building and site design standards that promote transit use, walking, and rolling along roads with frequent bus service.

What we've heard from the community so far on this topic:

All these gigantic parking lots along College drive me crazy. They're always 20% full at most. Build apartments and townhomes lining College with the big boxes behind. Housing is occupied at night and retail during the day. Let them share lots.

We need more areas like this. Small commercial locations located within walkable neighborhoods. Who doesn't want to walk down the block to their neighborhood cafe?



Please encourage more community commercial at major intersections. I would like to see less parking, more housing, and a more pedestrian friendly design, but these two malls north of Drake provide an easy place for many people in the surrounding neighborhoods to access via bike or foot.

The satellite image (of the city) tells the whole story. Sprawling parking lots mean wasted space, hot pavement, and a hostile environment for people.

There's simply too much parking and fewer commercial spaces/housing around our south transit center.

Businesses need parking to succeed because we drive cars to get around. Zoning should encourage right-sizing of parking, not over-sized and certainly not undersized, so that businesses can succeed. By having the majority of the population as their customers, businesses should decide this, within some wide constraints.

This is an excellent example for how to make a strip mall more compatible for pedestrians. All that has been done here is to move the storefront up to the curb. The parking still exists but is tucked behind the building. This encourages pedestrian access.



This parking lot is never close to halfway full. Another example of poor land use with big box stores with large parking areas that detract from the character of our city.



There is a lot of strict residential space in this city, if our neighborhoods allowed corner stores and more mixed use development it would be better for everyone.

What needs an update:

This topic is all about how commercial building and site design requirements can support more user-friendly, mixed-use spaces that are walkable and aligned with the 15-minute city concept—where everything you need is close by. The goal is to make sure both businesses and the community can thrive together.



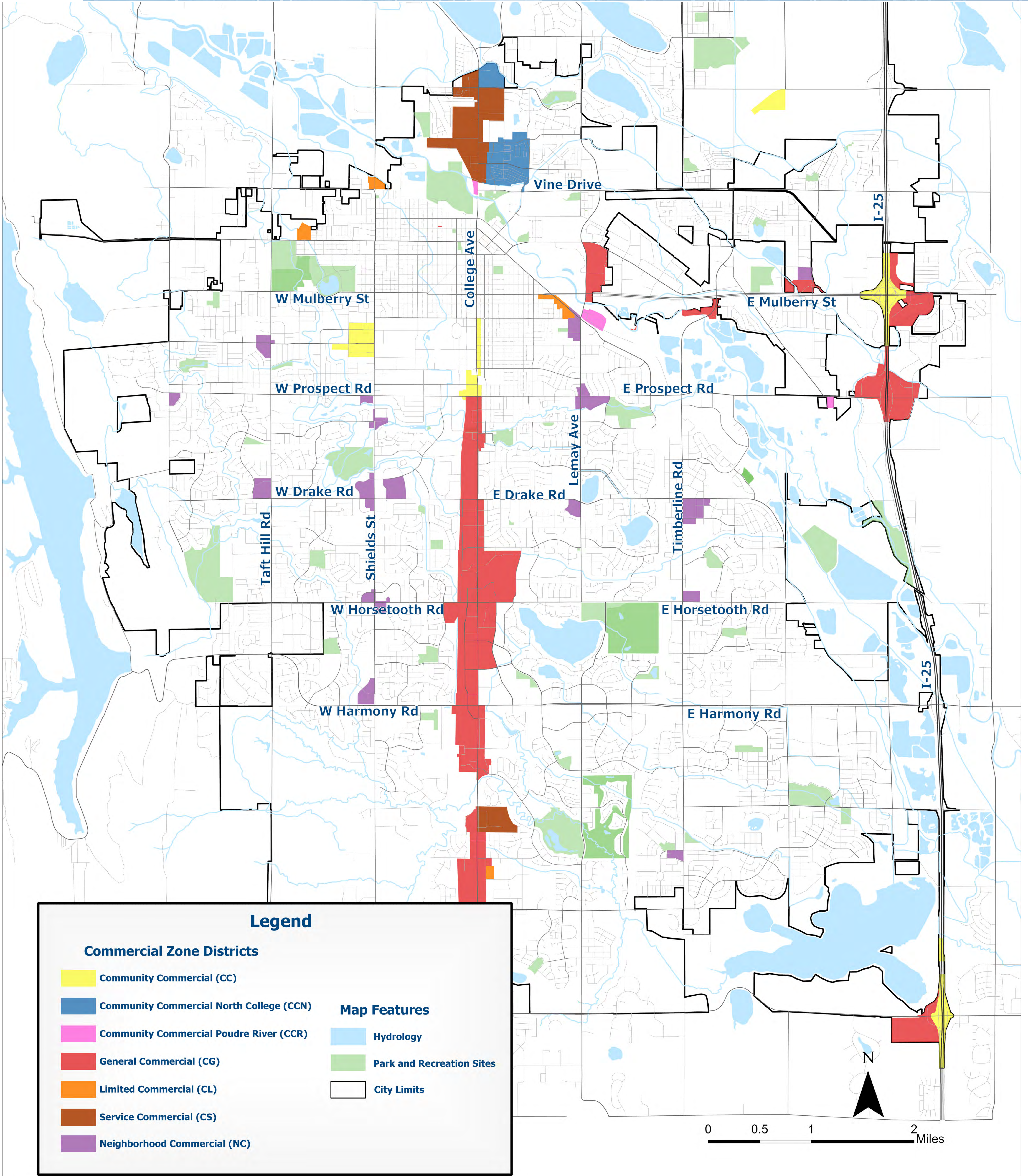
The current Land Use Code needs to be updated to create more walkable, less car-centric spaces by revising parking standards and adding form standards for commercial buildings. This will reduce the emphasis on vehicle storage and prioritize pedestrian-friendly design, multi-modal connections, and easier access to transit. By improving these standards, we can foster better design, more predictability, and stronger connections between residential and commercial areas, as well as transit stations.

Possible code changes:

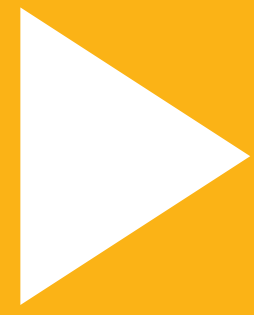
- Consider adjusting the required parking ratios, minimums, and maximums for certain nonresidential uses.
- Clean up and augment design standards in Article 5 of the Land Use Code which includes building placement and site design, building standards, circulation and connectivity standards, bus stop design standards, etc. – standards that influence the pedestrian, multi-modal, and transit experience.
- Add nonresidential building types into the Land Use Code to accompany the residential building types that were added to the Land Use Code in May 2024.

Building design and site design, particularly when it comes to parking, are closely connected in shaping the pedestrian experience. The layout and configuration of a site, including the placement and amount of parking, directly impact how accessible and inviting a space feels for pedestrians. If parking is placed in front of buildings or dominates the landscape, it can create a car-centric environment that discourages walking and creates disjointed connections between residential, commercial, and transit areas. In contrast, well-designed site layouts with strategic parking placement and pedestrian pathways can create smoother transitions and more inviting spaces for people to move through.

Commercial Zoning Map



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What can we do to improve parking lots in future commercial developments?

How parking works now:

Under the current Land Use Code, there are parking requirements for non-residential uses. Nonresidential uses are required to provide a minimum number of parking spaces and are limited to a maximum number of parking spaces.

Land Use	Min. Spaces*	Max. Spaces*
Shopping Center	2	5
General Office	1	3
Retail	2	4
Standard restaurants and bars	5	10
Fast food restaurants	7	15
Grocery Store	3	6

*These spaces are per 1,000 square feet of building footprint.

Maintain the current nonresidential parking requirements without change.

Lower or eliminate the minimum nonresidential parking requirements.

Lower the maximum nonresidential parking requirements.

Eliminate minimum AND lower maximum nonresidential parking requirements.

Types of Development in Transit Areas (TOD)

Guiding Principle:

Enable more housing and mixed-use buildings, especially along roads with frequent bus service.

What we've heard from the community so far on this topic:

Please encourage or require all new developments near MAX bus stops to provide a pedestrian walkway connecting the stop to the main street. Asking pedestrians to walk an extra half mile to reach a stop does not encourage riders to use the service.

I like this small-scale commercial with some units fronting onto alley.



Drive through restaurants enable car dependency and this particular example frequently causes traffic to block a lane of a public road. Discourage construction of new drive-through restaurants and encourage small-scale restaurants in neighborhoods.

We should have housing, walkable commercial, or campus destinations at these stops, not mostly empty parking lots.

Most of the neighborhoods and businesses along the transit line are not connected to the transit line because of all the vacant parking lots.



I live in this neighborhood and it's a real shame that the only business neighboring all of these houses is a motor vehicle repair shop. Not only is it loud, but it doesn't support the residents living here. Commercial businesses in neighborhoods should provide services that people use daily and weekly, not annually (if ever). I would love to be able to walk here and buy food, for example.

This is a prime location for infill housing development. Along a rapid transit corridor, in walking distance of grocery and retail, and currently underutilized. What can be done in the LUC to incentivize redevelopment of parcels like this one?



I've lived here for two years, near this intersection, and just learned these businesses exist. They're so far setback from the road by the sea of parking that I literally didn't know they were there. I wish we could use our land use code to put businesses at the front/on the street and put parking in the back.



Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay

The TOD Overlay zone, introduced in 2007 and updated in 2013, aims to encourage development near transit stations, like the MAX Bus Rapid Transit along the Mason Corridor. It encourages mixed-use buildings, so people can walk to shops and services from homes and transit stations.

The TOD Overlay allows buildings to be up to 7 stories tall if they utilize all available incentives, such as including mixed-use spaces, structured parking, or affordable housing. This is a 3-story increase over the General Commercial zone's 4-story limit.

What needs an update:

Challenges in South of Prospect Area

While the TOD has led to more mixed-use projects north of Prospect, the area south of Prospect has mostly stayed low-density, suburban, and doesn't fully align with the TOD's vision for higher-density development.

Auto-Centric Uses in the TOD Overlay Area

Many parts of the TOD Overlay still allow auto-centric uses like gas stations, drive-thru restaurants, and car washes, which don't fit the TOD's goal of promoting higher-density, transit-friendly development.



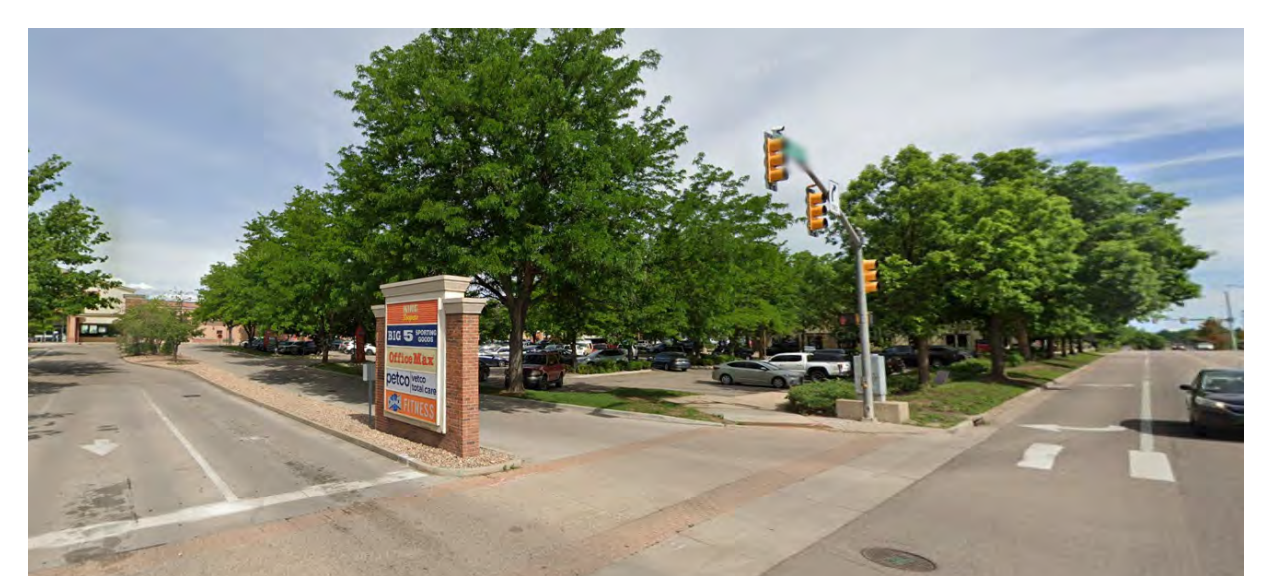
Parking Lots



Gas Stations



Banks & Credit Unions



Parking between the road & businesses

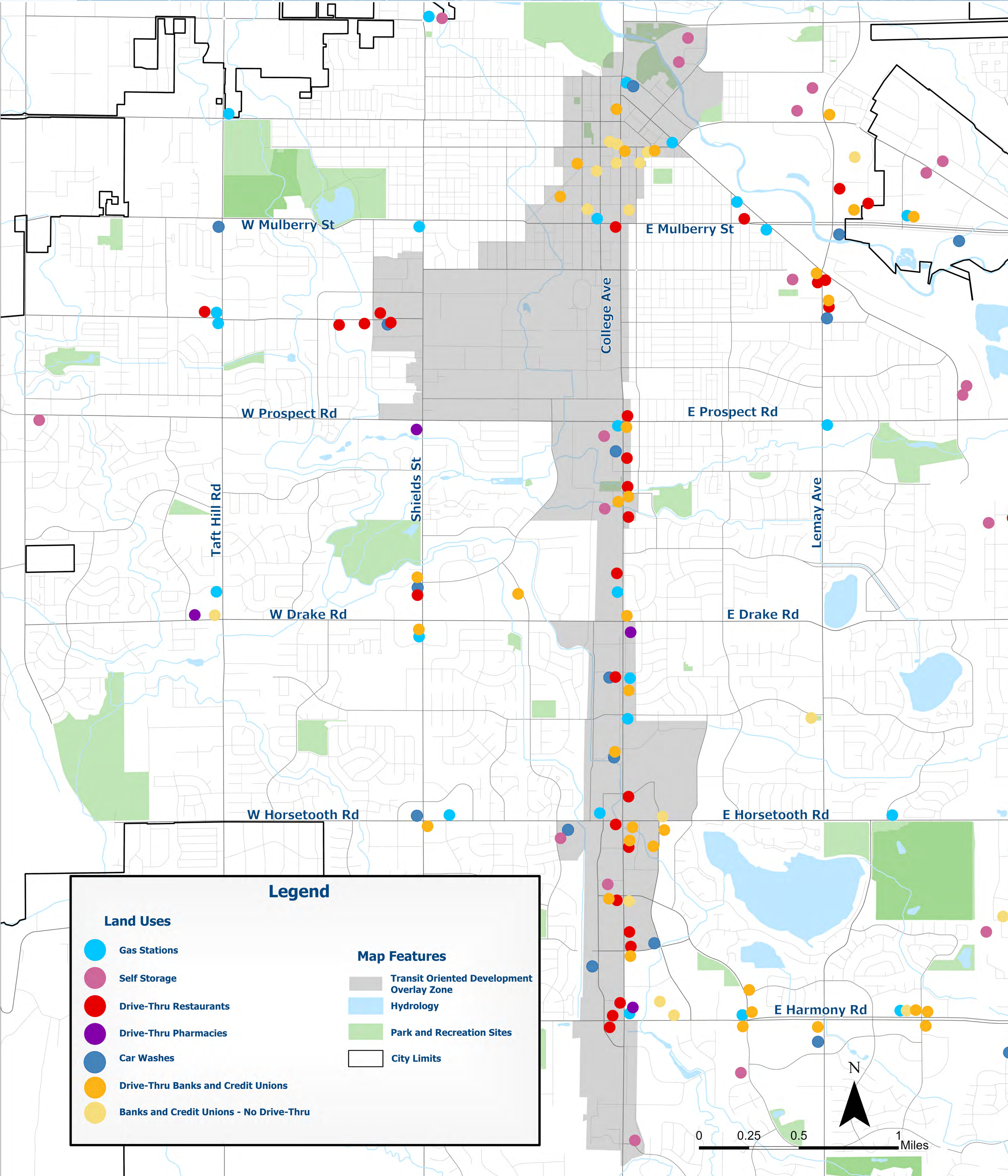


Drive-Thru Restaurants

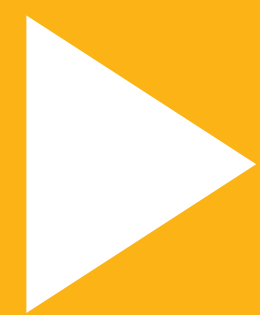


Frontage Road & low density

Transit-Oriented Development Map



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Would you like to see MORE of these uses in the TOD in the future?

We heard from the community that there is a desire for more walkable places and less auto-centric uses. Please consider whether these uses should be permitted more or less in the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay zone in the future? This would not mean the removal of existing businesses; but instead, would **prevent additional new construction** of these uses in the future if they were proposed.

gas stations



self-storage



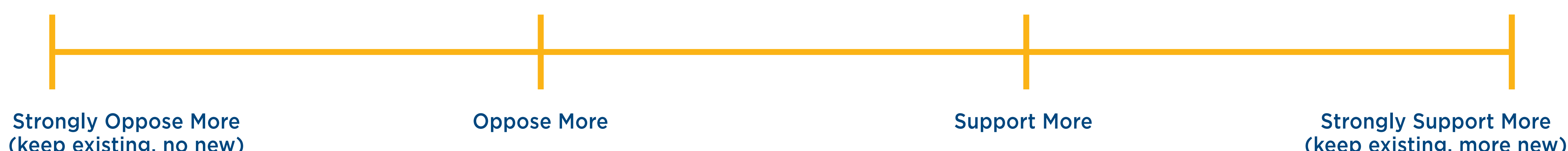
drive-thru restaurants



drive-thru pharmacies



car washes



drive-thru banks & credit unions



banks & credit unions



stand-alone parking lots



Harmony Corridor and Employment Zoning

Guiding Principle:

Create resilient commercial and employment centers that are adaptable to future needs.

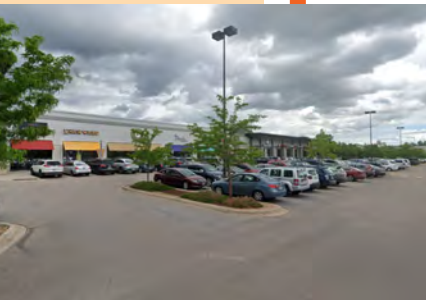
What we've heard from the community so far on this topic:

These big box stores and parking wastelands are on their way to becoming suburban blight over the next few decades. While the core of this shopping area is decent, the surrounding area is already inhospitable and should be considered for redevelopment with access to nearby residential.

Commercial along the street behind a sidewalk with parking in the back and even a roundabout. Though not perfect, this is much closer to how retail along larger streets should look.



This area has the opportunity to be great. If the sea of parking could be reduced to 25% of what it is today and the excess replaced with dense infill housing development, this area would be awesome to live in/near.



I don't like having no sidewalk leading to strip mall (through parking lot).

Why is this zoned as Urban Estate? It's on a prime intersection/transit corridor close to jobs. Rezone this and allow mixed-use. It could be a cool opportunity for a new walkable spot along a future transit line.

Raising up this section of the street in front of Safeway makes people drive much slower through here and makes it so much more comfortable to walk out here. This is so much better than the Safeway on horsetooth and every king soopers I've seen. All shopping centers should have designs like this.

Way too much parking. This development could have incorporated a street grid to better distribute the parking. Instead, it's a sea of parking lots, and it'll be that way when future development is added nearby.



The narrow sidewalks along Lemay are a nightmare for pedestrians, especially people with small children or wheelchairs.



What needs an update:

The Harmony Corridor Zone District limits non-employment uses in certain areas, which may no longer meet the community's needs, especially for mixed-use spaces or multi-modal corridors that support various transportation options.

Established in 2006, the Harmony Corridor Zone District aimed to prevent big-box retail and attract office parks with high-paying jobs on what was mostly agricultural land. Its focus was on developing a mixed-use area with a strong employment base, including shops and housing for workers.

To maintain this vision, the zone district set aside spaces for shopping centers, and placed strong restrictions on the remaining spaces: 75% or more of the land could only be used for land uses that provide higher paying jobs like medical centers and office parks. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for office space has dropped as remote and hybrid work has become more common. The current rules may no longer align with the way office environments function and could be hindering the creation of 15-minute places, where daily needs are within walking, biking, or rolling distance. Public input suggests that requiring building types that allow for flexible use of tenant spaces may better meet evolving needs.

Possible code changes:

Adjust the primary/secondary use ratio to allow for a greater mix of uses, including housing.

Adjust primary use requirements in mixed-use buildings

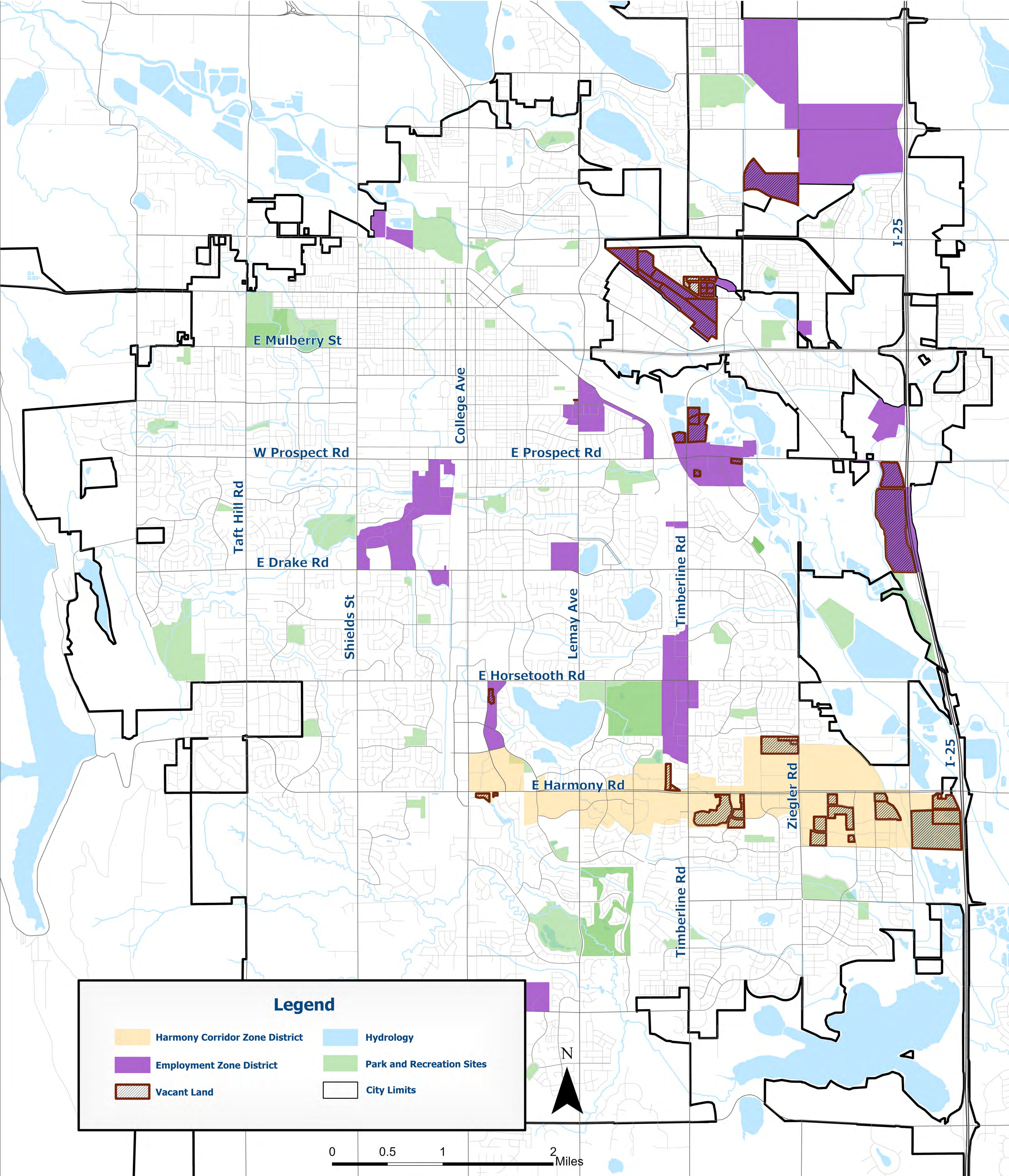
Currently, the Land Use Code already allows for mixed-use development in the Harmony Corridor zone. However, the secondary use must occupy the entire ground floor of the building. Oftentimes, this ground floor space can be challenging to lease as office or another primary use. Instead, consider allowing just a portion of the required primary use to 25% of the leasable area of any individual floor (ground or other).

Allow more secondary uses as part of a multi-story, mixed-use development.

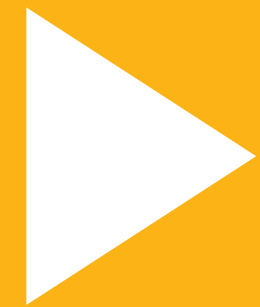
Currently, a standard restaurant would be considered a secondary use. Therefore, a building that had a ground floor restaurant with upper floors of residential would not meet the allowable primary/secondary use ratios.

Allow stand-alone secondary uses to be developed if they are replacing an existing surface parking lot.

Harmony Corridor & Employment Zoning Map



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The future of Harmony Corridor and the Employment Zone District

Please vote on the spectrum below from preserving the employment base (primary uses) as it is today to allowing more flexibility in land uses in the Harmony Corridor and Employment Zone District.

Primary Uses:

Offices, financial services & clinics
Long term care facility
Medical centers/clinics
Light industrial
Mixed-use Dwellings
And Others

Secondary Uses:

Residential uses (with some exceptions)
Convenience shopping centers
Standard restaurants
Limited indoor recreation use and facility
Child Care Centers
And Others

Strongly Preserve Employment Base

Keep the primary focus on office spaces and employment-driven development, limiting non-employment uses. (75% employment/25% non-employment)

Preserve Employment Focus, Allow 50/50 Flexibility

Maintain the employment base but allow a more balanced mix of 50% employment uses and 50% non-employment uses like mixed-use spaces, retail, or housing.

Shift Toward More Flexibility

Give more freedom for a variety of uses, including mixed-use developments, retail, housing, and community services, to meet evolving needs with less focus on maintaining the employment base.

Fully Shift to Mixed-Use, Multi-Modal Focus

Move away from the employment-centric vision and prioritize a flexible district with a full range of uses, including residential, commercial, and community spaces, without regulating the balance between employment and non-employment uses.

Do you think the Employment zone and Harmony Corridor should have more housing development in the future?

What types of commercial spaces or retail businesses would you like to see more of in the Employment zone and Harmony Corridor?

How do you envision the Employment zone and Harmony Corridor in 10-15 years?

Development Review Process Changes

Guiding Principle:

Improve predictability of the Land Use Code, especially to support small business owners.

What we've heard from the community so far on this topic:

Consider how to encourage small businesses to open without putting enormous costs on their shoulders, such as the cost of installing city sidewalks or repairing off-site infrastructure.

Because developers are juggling requirements from different City departments, it would help to create a single point of contact who can expedite decisions and coordinate across departments.

Create a program for small business owners to move into a building, comply with essential codes, and then start operating, gradually becoming compliant with the entirety of the Code.

The review process is long, expensive, and sometimes unpredictable. Developers need cost and schedule predictability.

Explore lessons learned from comparable municipalities, such as Boise, Austin, and Portland, to help resolve issues efficiently.

The number of review cycles should be determined by the complexity of the project. For example, reuse projects don't need multiple rounds of review.

Many small business owners get overwhelmed by Conceptual Review, become discouraged, and abandon their project.

Update employment zones to attract additional businesses to the City and create spaces that allow for entrepreneurial ideas and exploration.

Empower City staff to provide straightforward answers, think outside the box, and help small business owners achieve their vision.

Small Business Concentrations:

Overall small business concentration is relatively evenly distributed throughout the City of Fort Collins, with only a few notable exceptions of higher and lower concentration areas. Small businesses are considered those with 50 employees or less.

Higher Concentration: Old Town

Old Town has by far the highest concentration of small businesses in Fort Collins. Old Town square and the surrounding area contain a significantly higher concentration of small businesses than any other community center, shopping center, or location within Fort Collins. Other shopping centers and community areas also have small business presences; however Old Town and the surrounding area is the only one that stands out among the rest with a much higher concentration of small businesses.

Higher Concentration: College Avenue Mid-Town

There are a significant number of small businesses concentrated with proximity to College Avenue between Prospect and Harmony. These businesses are all built with direct access and proximity to College Avenue. College Avenue sees a higher proximity of small businesses activity directly along/next to the road than other similar road stretches such as Harmony Road.

Small Business in Fort Collins:

- Number of Businesses in Fort Collins: **7,000**
- Number of Small Businesses in Fort Collins: **6,700**
- Number of Jobs: **120,000**
- Number of People Employed by a Small Business: **30,000**
- Total Labor Force Participation Rate: **71%**



Downtown Businesses



Downtown Businesses



Mid-Town Businesses



Mid-Town Businesses

What needs an update:

The process for making minor changes or changing the use of a property needs to strike a careful balance. On one hand, we want to make sure that safety improvements and upgrades are made to support community goals. On the other hand, we don't want to make the process excessively difficult or expensive, especially for small businesses or startups that often move into older buildings.

Right now, the process can be unclear for people just starting out. Many don't know early on what kind of upgrades or costs they might face when they're trying to change the use of a space or finish it for a new tenant. For some small business owners, it can feel like the process is all or nothing—either they have to do everything or they can't make the changes they need, which can make it hard for them to move forward.

Current Process - Small Business Change of Use Examples:

Example 1: Minor Changes



BEFORE



AFTER

- The exterior changes required a Minor Amendment to the existing site plan.
- To approve the project, the City required the following upgrades:
- Slats on the fencing around the yard to be spaced wide enough that the historic building was still visible from the public right-of-way
 - A shorter fence than was originally proposed
 - A ring of mulch around the existing tree with a radius of 3 feet
 - On-site bicycle parking

- The applicant requested to:
- Change the use from an office to taproom
 - Provide outdoor seating
 - Remove the sloped walk deck and install new stairs
 - Add a new 4-foot tall fence to enclose the yard
 - Add a new flagstone walkway from the public sidewalk to the building
 - Add crusher fines paving for the seating area.

What triggered the Development Review?

Example 2: Major Changes

- The applicant requested to:
- Annex a property into the city limits
 - Redevelop an existing building into a microbrewery and taproom
 - Add an outdoor food truck area
 - Demolish one house to build a parking lot
 - Change the use of one existing house to an office

What triggered the Development Review?

The change in the site's use to a brewery, the removal of housing, and the need for annexation triggered a Major Amendment review for the project.

- To approve the project, the City required the following upgrades:
- No required on-site parking, but 7-14 spaces recommended, with one van-accessible handicapped space.
 - Parking lot set back at least 15 feet from the property line, designed to prevent cars from blocking entry/exit, with adequate space for vehicles.
 - Landscaping with tree islands and low-water-use plants in and around the parking lot, and along the perimeter; trees in the parkway along the street.
 - Screening for outdoor storage, including brewery operations.
 - Thirteen bicycle parking spaces and a trash enclosure.
 - Ecological Characterization Study for the ditch and wetlands, with no development within 50 feet of the irrigation canal (Natural Habitat Buffer Zone) and no light spill into this area.
 - Add sidewalks along street frontage.
 - Walkway connecting the main entrance to the public sidewalk, avoiding vehicle areas.
 - Dedication of right-of-way for public sidewalks and easements for underground utilities.
 - Mitigate or replace trees removed from the site and protect existing trees during construction.
 - Show change in impervious areas from the project, and provide on-site stormwater treatment and detention to prevent contamination and minimize flooding during storm events.

Please note: this is not an extensive list of everything that was required by all City departments.



BEFORE



AFTER

How we might change the code to address this issue:

These options are still under consideration. The goal is to design an approach that makes requirements clear from the beginning and is commensurate with the impact of the proposed changes.

Graduated Approach concept:

Required upgrades are limited to a percentage of the cost of the project and/or applied over time.

This idea helps small businesses by making required upgrades more manageable. Instead of paying for all necessary improvements upfront, businesses would only need to cover a percentage of the cost or spread the upgrades over time.

Reduce the amount of change of use applications required:

Consider capturing improvements or enhancements when a site is fully redeveloping. If no site changes are occurring or intensity of the site is not greatly increasing, consider not requiring upgrades. This assumes sites will eventually achieve total redevelopment in the future.

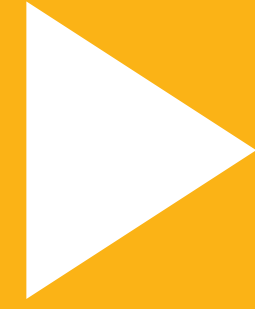
Right now, businesses often have to apply for permission to change how a building is used, even for minor adjustments. This proposal suggests simplifying that process by reducing the number of times a business needs to apply for changes, especially if the building isn't being significantly altered or expanded.

Improvement Plan concept:

Developing improvement plans for commercial centers that can be implemented in steps or phases while allowing short-term change of uses to continue occurring on a frequent basis.

This approach allows commercial centers to upgrade gradually over time rather than all at once. Changes can be made in phases, ensuring the center evolves and improves continuously. This method supports long-term growth and sustainability without relying on tenant turnover, enabling the commercial center to enhance its overall appeal and functionality over time.

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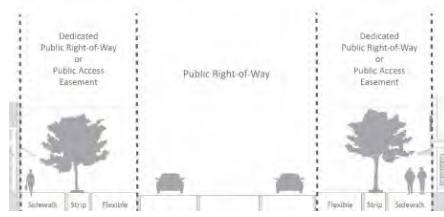


Given the site improvements we could enforce with a change of use, which to you are the most important?



Sidewalk Upgrades

Improvements to sidewalks that may include widening, resurfacing, or adding new features to make walking safer and more accessible.



Right-Of-Way Dedication

The process of setting aside land for public use, such as streets, sidewalks, or utilities, to improve access and infrastructure.



Bike Parking

Installation of designated areas for safely storing bicycles, promoting biking as an alternative mode of transportation.



Street Trees & Tree Lawn

Planting and maintaining trees along streets and in tree lawns (landscaped strip of land between the sidewalk and the street) to improve aesthetics and air quality.



Replace Missing Landscape

Replanting or restoring areas where landscaping is currently absent to enhance the visual appeal and environmental benefits of the site.



Trash & Recycling Enclosure

Providing designated, enclosed spaces for trash and recycling bins to keep areas neat and ensure proper waste management.



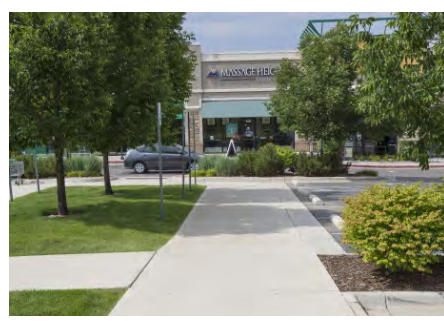
New Landscaping/Tree Canopy

Adding new plants, trees, and green spaces to enhance the visual appeal, environmental quality, and overall atmosphere of the site.



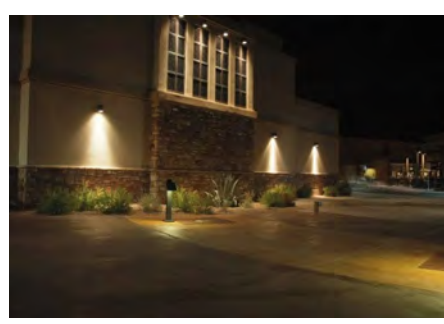
Interior Parking Lot Landscaping

Installing trees, shrubs, or green spaces within parking lots to improve air quality, reduce heat, and create a more pleasant environment.



Connecting Walkway

Creating pedestrian pathways that link different parts of the site or connect the site to nearby areas, making walking more convenient and safe.



Lighting Upgrades

Installing light systems designed to protect night skies and the health and safety of residents and ecosystems.



Stormwater Improvements

Implementing systems to manage and reduce stormwater runoff, such as rain gardens or permeable pavements, to prevent flooding and improve water quality.



Water Quality & LID (Low Impact Development)

Using environmentally friendly stormwater management technique that seeks to mimic natural systems, primarily through gardens and landscaping, while also offering a functional stormwater run-off system.