Riverdale Road Corridor Plan

April 2005

ADAMS COUNTY

COLORADO

ADOPTED AS AN AMENDMENT TO THE
ADAMS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY THE
ADAMS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ON
APRIL 28, 2005
PRJ2005-00024

AND RATIFIED BY THE

ADAMS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY 16, 2005

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The Riverdale Road Corridor Plan was developed by the Adams County Planning and Development Department with help from various referral agencies and individuals listed here and in Section VII. The Plan, as an amendment to the Adams County Comprehensive Plan, discusses issues specific to the South Platte River Valley. This plan also includes policies and implementation strategies intended to be used to evaluate specific development proposals within the unincorporated areas of Adams County. It is suggested as a guide for other agencies as they review other development proposals that may affect the corridor.

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I. Introduction

- The Riverdale Road Corridor Plan documents Adams County's effort to preserve the South Platte River valley for future generations. Its intent is to prevent urban growth and development from spoiling the natural and scenic beauty of this unique area of Adams County by providing a vision and implementation policies to guide future development and conservation efforts in the corridor.

This plan is to be used by Adams County:

1. To guide development within the corridor.
2. As a basis and guide to review development proposals and create development agreements between Adams County and property owners in the corridor.
3. To coordinate development in the corridor among the cities of Thornton, Brighton, Commerce City and Adams County.
4. To achieve greater predictability regarding development in the corridor and achieve a balance between preservation of natural resources and appropriate development.
5. To guide capital investment in infrastructure and public facilities in the corridor.
6. To create trail connections between existing and future parks and neighborhoods.

The plan is laid out as follows.

- Existing policies toward the corridor are presented in Section II.
- A brief history of the corridor is provided in Section III.
- Potential opportunities and constraints within the Riverdale Road corridor have been identified and are detailed in Section IV.
- Section V outlines existing preservation programs applicable to the corridor.
- Goals, objectives, and actions the County will take to address these issues are detailed in Section VI.

II. Relationship to existing County Plans

A. *Adams County Comprehensive Plan*

A Comprehensive Plan is a statement of policies that address issues important to a community including growth, development, land use, open space, transportation, and economic development. Important characteristics of a comprehensive plan are that it is advisory in nature and long range in focus. The Adams County Comprehensive Plan has long recognized the importance of preserving the Riverdale Road Corridor. Language in the Comprehensive Plan describes Riverdale Road as an important roadway in terms of its scenic value as well as its transportation role. Specific policies and strategies related to the corridor in the Comprehensive Plan are:

Policy: Actively encourage the continuation of agriculture and agricultural production as viable economic activities within the Platte River Corridor.

Strategies:

1. Review permitted uses in this corridor to allow not only agricultural operations, but also commercial and industrial uses directly related to or dependent on agriculture—such as food processing and agricultural products and equipment, and any other uses that support or complement the operational efficiency and productivity of agricultural uses.

2. Take steps to limit activities that interfere with ongoing agricultural operations by, for example, restricting non-rural commercial uses and small-lot (less than 35 acres) residential uses adjacent to agriculture uses.

Policy: Preserve the rural character of Riverdale Road.

Strategies:

1. Limit future widening of Riverdale Road in order to discourage additional vehicular traffic use.

2. Limit the creation of new vehicular access points directly onto Riverdale Road; instead, encourage new developments to use alternative access ways, shared driveways, or access from existing side streets.

B. *South Platte River Heritage Plan*

The Board of County Commissioners adopted the South Platte River Heritage Plan on February 1, 1999. A steering committee of interested citizens, representatives of the Adams County cities and staff from the county and cities developed the South Platte River Heritage Plan. Barr Lake State Park, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Metro Wastewater Reclamation District, Urban Drainage, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory also participated in the planning process.

Purpose of the Heritage Plan

The South Platte River Heritage Corridor Plan provides a strategic framework for preserving and enhancing the natural, cultural, and recreational qualities of the river corridor through Adams County. The project focuses on a 17-mile stretch of the South Platte from Commerce City to Brighton (the Denver City limits to the Weld County line) and seeks to protect and restore its special qualities.

Goals of the South Platte River Heritage Plan

1. Complete the S. Platte River Trail System and connect to the adjacent trail systems.
2. Demonstrate the Potential for multi-purpose Gravel Mine Restoration.
3. Gateway enhancements and stream corridor improvements to change the public image.
4. Protect natural lands and wildlife habitat and establish a riparian buffer along the river.
5. Preserve the rural character and key agricultural properties.
6. Expand recreational opportunities, especially at the Adams County Regional Park.
7. Develop environmental education and interpretation programs.
8. Foster community stewardship programs: Engage people in caring for the river.

III. Corridor Story

The history of the Riverdale Road corridor begins with the ancient inhabitants of Adams County. Ute tribes used a trail along the South Platte River for travel, hunting, and commerce before Europeans ever set foot on this continent.

When Europeans later came to the area, the South Platte became a vital lifeline. It was used for drinking water, irrigation, trade, and transportation. The first Europeans to inhabit the area were trappers and traders. Part of the Trappers Trail ran along the east side of the South Platte in the 1830's and 40's. This 425 mile long trail connected a string of trading forts between Laramie on the North Platte River and Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River.

Around 1832, Louis Vasquez established Fort Convenience somewhere near the confluence of the South Platte River and Clear Creek in what is now Adams County. The fort was little more than a crude dwelling made of cottonwood logs and adobe with a trading store, a shop, and an enclosed corral. It was probably little more than a rest stop, a place to buy food and provisions, and it ceased being of any economic value after 1834 with the construction of Fort Vasquez up the river in present day Platteville. Primarily immigrants from the east later used the trail.

One group of immigrants who used the trail during the 1840's was a company of 43 Mormons from Mississippi. They were moving west to the Rocky Mountains after being expelled from their homes in Illinois. Rather than spend the winter on the high plains of Wyoming, the Mississippi group was escorted south along the Trapper's Trail to the Arkansas River where they established a winter colony just east of Fort Pueblo. Although temporary, this became the first Anglo-American settlement in Colorado to house American culture. Through the winter months 230 other Mormons joined the colony residents. These were part of a Battalion under Stephen W. Kearny who, while marching to California via the Santa Fe Trail, became to ill to complete the march and were ordered to Pueblo to rest and await orders. On August 17, 1846, while at Pueblo, Margaret, wife of William Kartchner, gave birth to Sarah Emma. Sarah is recorded as the first Anglo child born to American parents in Colorado.

The famous Overland Trail also traversed this area. The Overland Trail ran westward from Atchison, Kansas, following the Oregon Trail more or less. At Julesburg, Colorado, it essentially left the Oregon Trail, paralleling the South Platte River to Latham (present day Greeley) and then on to the Cherry Creek settlement of Denver. Sometimes confused with the "Oregon" or "California" Trail, which actually followed the North Platte Valley from Nebraska through Wyoming, the Overland Trail refers specifically to that portion of the mail and passenger route, established in 1862, that avoided the Indian uprisings that were occurring on the Oregon Trail farther north through central Wyoming along the Sweetwater-South Pass route. In July 1862, the US Post Office

Department ordered the Overland Stage Company to officially relocate from the central Wyoming route to a route that had been known, in part, as the Cherokee Trail. Not just a cutoff or a detour, it became for a while the only emigrant route on which the US Government would allow travel, and consequently was the principal corridor to the west from 1862 to 1868. Pierson Ranch and Stage Station, or Fifteen Mile House, just north of present day Henderson was the last stop on the Overland before Denver. Stagecoaches ran the Overland Trail until 1869 when the opening of the transcontinental railroad brought service to an abrupt end. (Courtesy of Overland Trail.com)

The first public stockyard in Colorado was founded in 1858 on Henderson's Island near present day Henderson. Jonas and Samuel Brantner established the first irrigation ditch on the South Platte River in 1860. By 1872, Brantner Ditch had been extended to a total of six miles in length and was critical to supporting farms in the area. Many historic structures from the later part of the 18th century can be found throughout the corridor today.

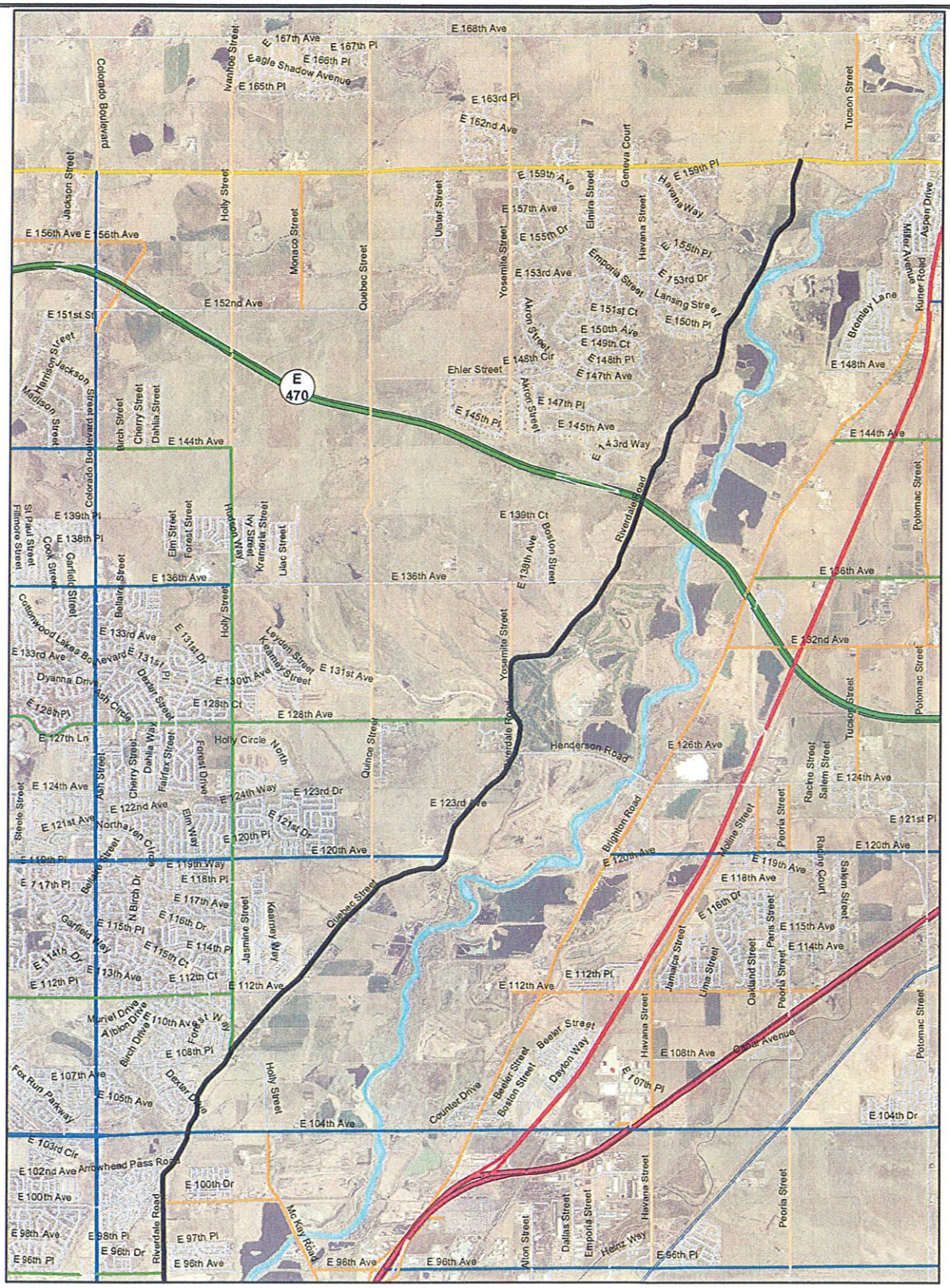
After the rise of the automobile, the trail route became Wolpert Road, as the dirt road lead to the Wolpert Ranch. Road petition histories show that Riverdale was established in three phases: in 1873 from 124th Avenue to 136th Avenue, in 1875 from 104th Avenue to 124th Avenue, and in 1881 from 136th Avenue to Highway 7. Riverdale was not paved until the early 1950's.

The Colorado Historical Society has identified three historic sites within the Riverdale Road corridor. They are the Lower Clear Creek Canal, the Brantner Ditch, and the Schneider Dairy Barn at 11981 Riverdale Road. They may be other unidentified resources with the corridor, as no comprehensive cultural resource survey of this area has ever been conducted.

IV. Opportunities and Constraints

A. *Corridor Description*

Riverdale Road is currently a 2-lane facility with 11-foot travel lanes. Most of the road has a gravel shoulder, no curbs, and drainage ditches. The Right-of-Way varies in width depending on location. The Riverdale Road corridor stretches about ten miles along the west side of the South Platte River from Colorado Boulevard, at 90th Avenue, north to State Highway 7. At different points, it runs along the Colorado Agricultural Ditch, the Lower Clear Creek Ditch, and the Brantner Ditch. Riverdale Road varies in distance from the South Platte River from 100 feet to almost 1.5 miles as they both meander northwards. The corridor borders or contains urbanized areas on the south and broad natural areas to the north. Map 1, on the next page, gives an aerial view of the corridor and the surrounding area. Since much of the area south of 104th Avenue is either already developed or designated within the City of Thornton Growth Area, this plan is focused on the Riverdale Road corridor north of 104th Avenue only. The policies defined in the Corridor Plan apply to the specific set of parcels delineated in Map 2 on page 10. Any new regulations, design standards, or overlay zoning applied to these parcels will require amendment of the Adams County Zoning and Subdivision Regulations through the appropriate public process.



Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River

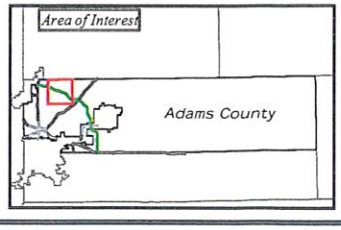
Road Classification

- Local
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Nascent Arterial
- State Highway 7
- State Highway 2
- US Highway
- Freeway
- Tollway

Map 1 - 2004 Aerial View of Corridor

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

1 inch equals 5,600 feet



ADAMS COUNTY COLORADO

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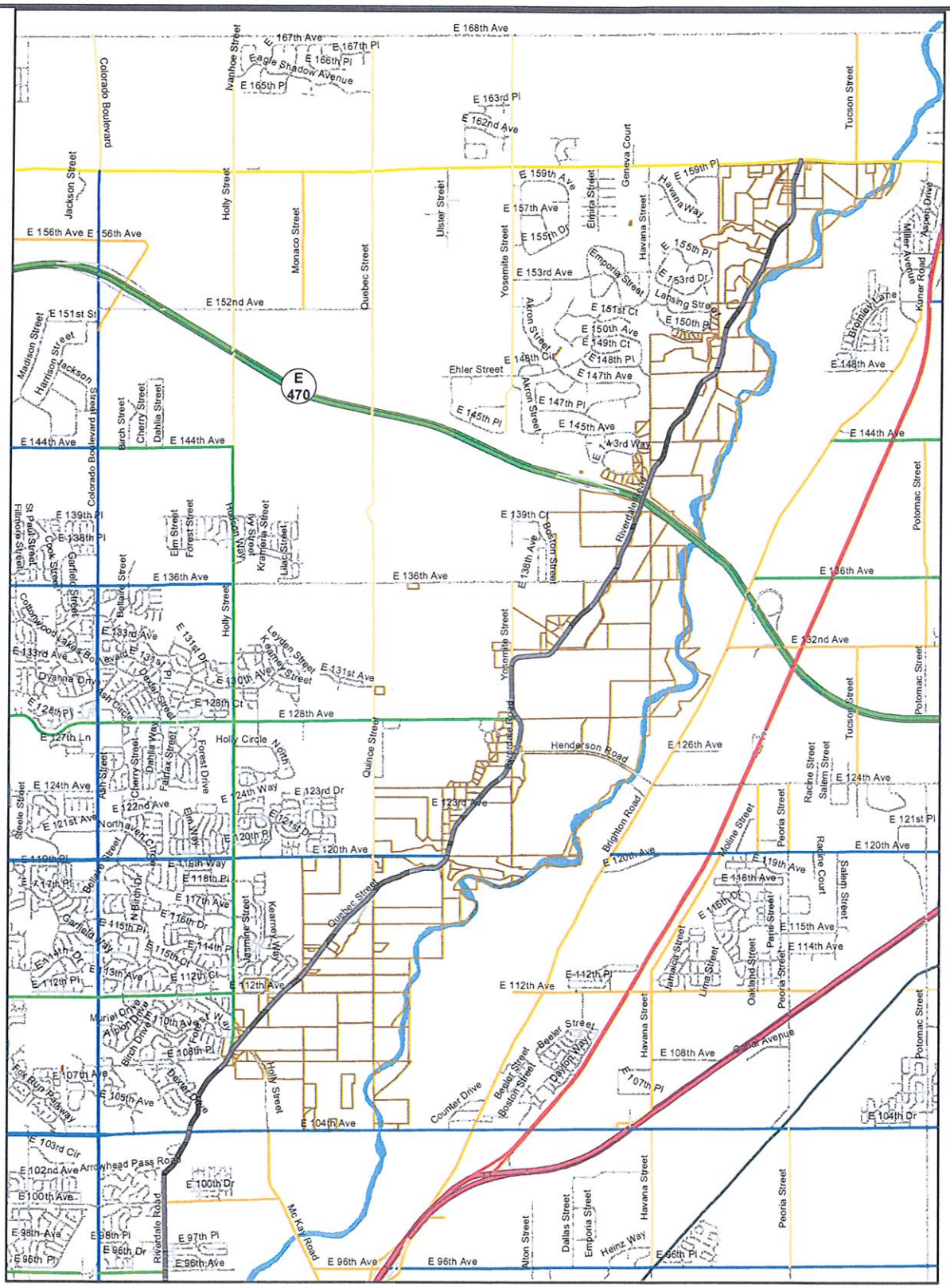

Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River
- Property Covered by Plan

Road Classification

- Local
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Nascent Arterial
- State Highway 7
- State Highway 2
- US Highway
- Freeway
- Tollway

Map 2 - Property Covered by Plan

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

1 inch equals 5,596 feet

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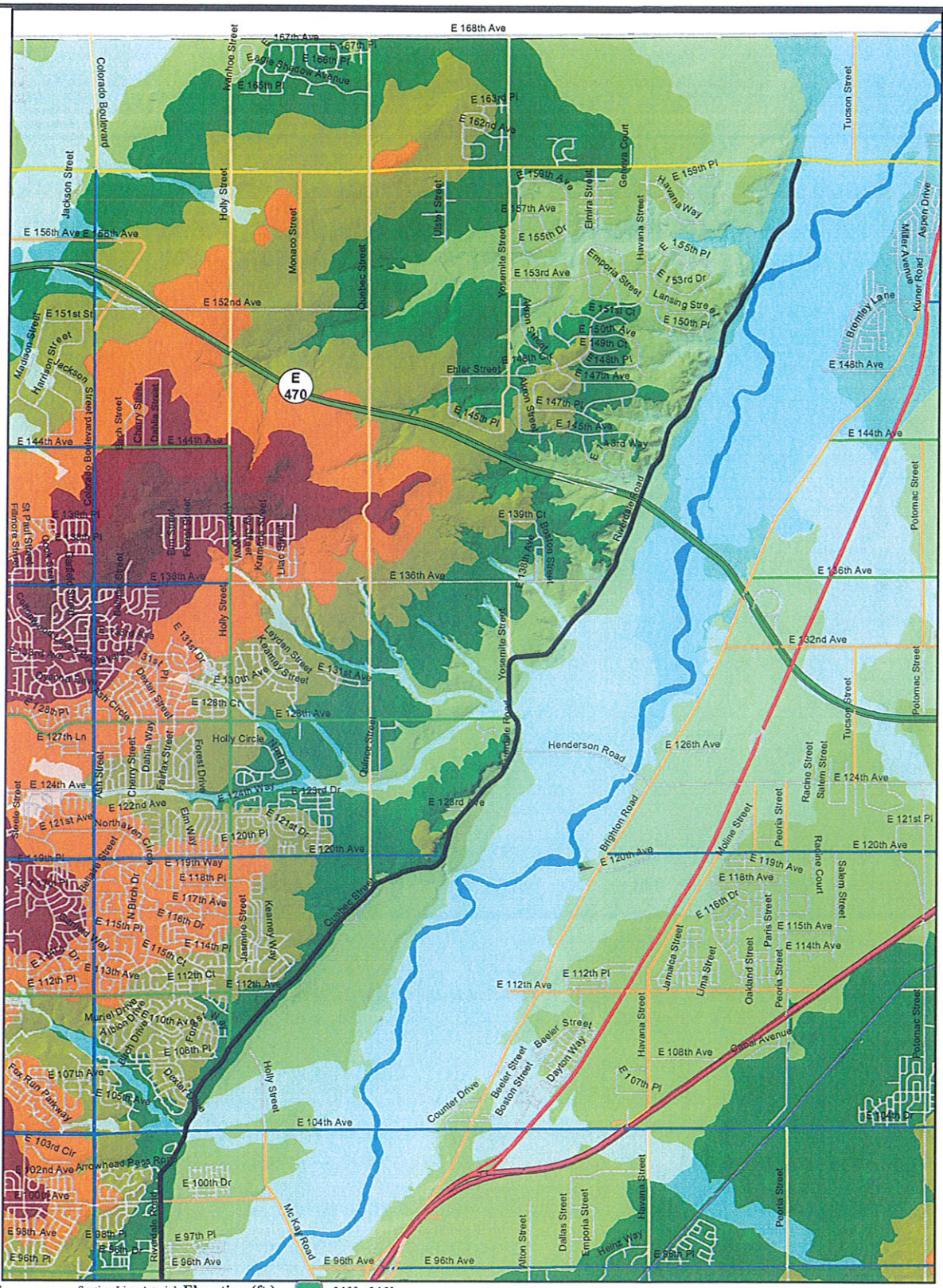
B. *Existing Conditions*

1. Natural

The corridor generally lies in the floodplain of the South Platte River Basin. It traverses natural areas and farmlands. Much of the corridor is bordered on the west by a series of bluffs overlooking the valley. Vegetation in the corridor encompasses riparian habitat, shrub land, cottonwood stands, pastureland, and farmland. Map 3 on the following page shows the topography of the corridor along with the flood plain of the South Platte River. It should be noted that construction of structures is highly restricted in the floodplain.

Mule deer, whitetail deer, bald eagles, golden eagles, great blue herons, wild turkey, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and various reptiles, amphibians, waterfowl and other wildlife, live in or near the riparian habitat along the South Platte River. The Colorado Division of Wildlife recommends the South Platte River and the associated riparian habitat remain undisturbed to the greatest extent possible. Minimizing disturbance in the riparian area will provide the most valuable wildlife habitat, most effectively maintain animal movement corridors, and minimize the possibility of human-wildlife conflicts.



Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River
- Floodplain

Road Classification

- Local
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Nascent Arterial
- State Highway 7
- State Highway 2
- US Highway
- Freeway
- Tollway

Elevation (ft.)

- 5,350 - 5,400
- 5,300 - 5,350
- 5,250 - 5,300
- 5,200 - 5,250
- 5,150 - 5,200
- 5,100 - 5,150
- 5,050 - 5,100
- 5,000 - 5,050
- 4,950 - 5,000

Map 3 - Flood Plain and Elevation

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

1 inch equals 5,597 feet

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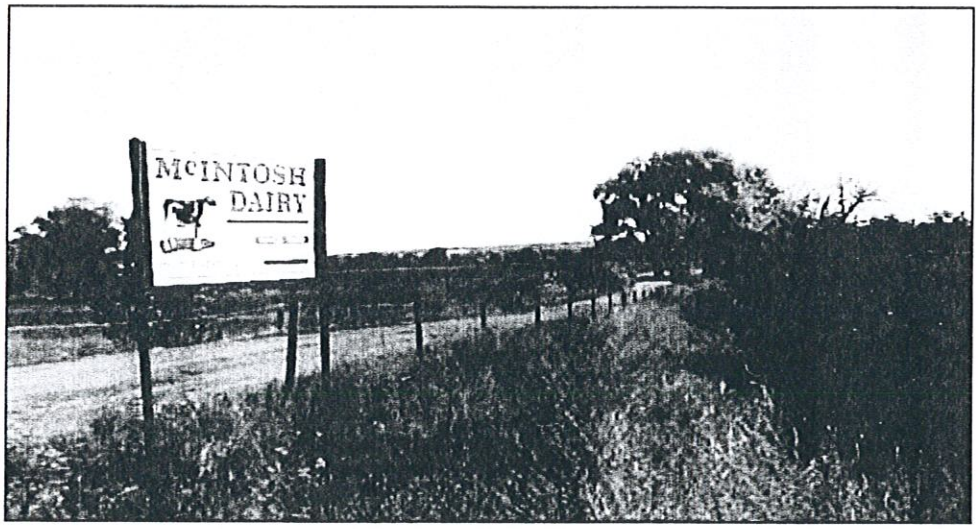
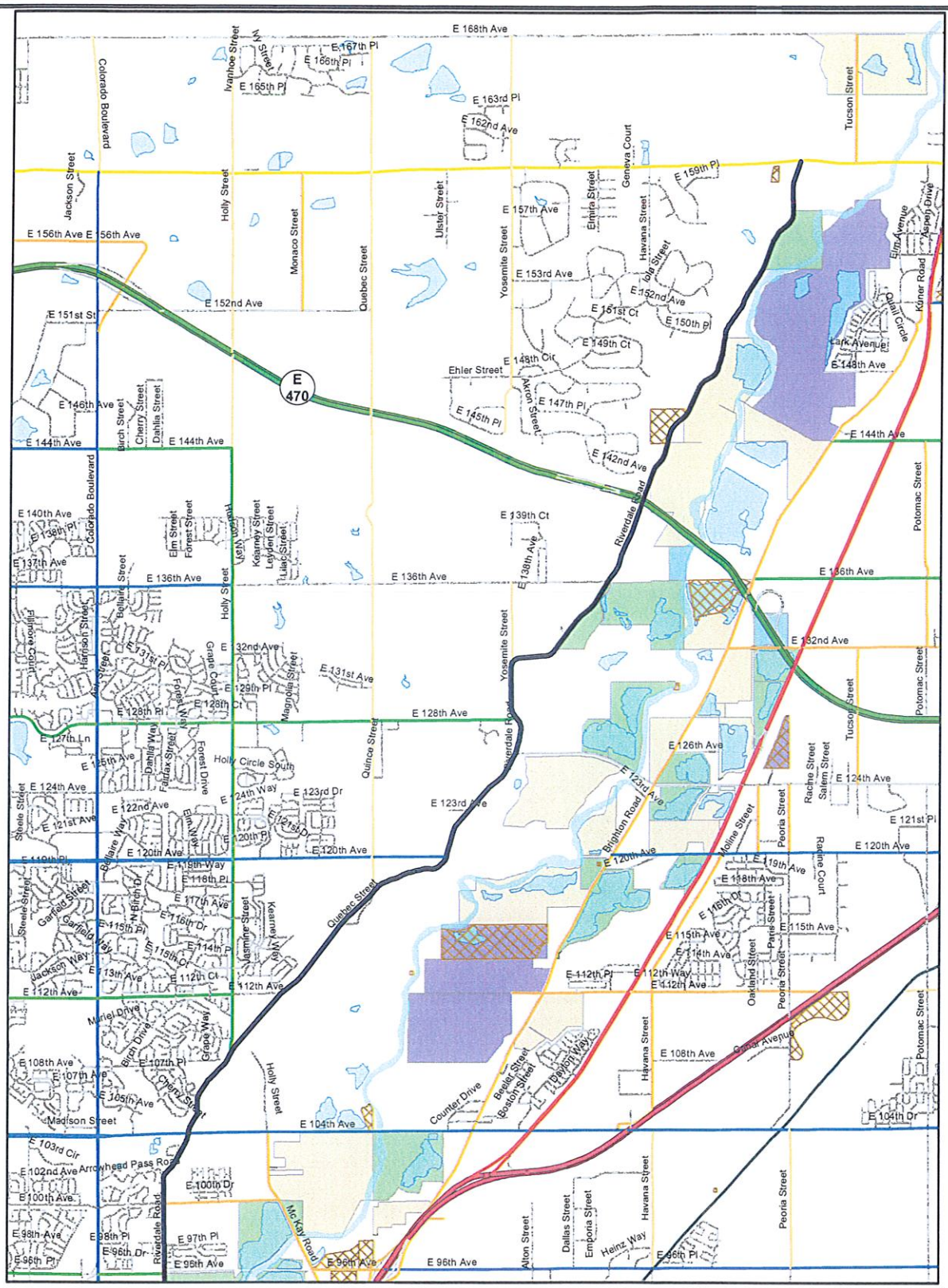
2. Economic

Economic activity within the corridor consists primarily of farming and mineral extraction. Hunting has historically been an active use of the valley. The wildlife along the river attracts deer and turkey hunters, but there are many waterfowl hunters pursuing the ducks and geese that are attracted to open water along the South Platte River. Hunting leases and associated support businesses contribute to the Adams County economy. Access to hunting areas should be retained in the future.

Aggregate mining sites exist throughout the South Platte River corridor; some are actively mined, others are in various states of reclamation. Still other sites in the corridor have been designated as future mining areas. Raw water storage has become very profitable to mining companies in recent years and has become a major reuse of mining sites. Map 4 on the next page shows the location of current and future gravel mines, as well as landfills.





Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River
- Lakes

Road Classification

- Local
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Nascent Arterial
- State Highway 7
- State Highway 2
- US Highway
- Freeway
- Tollway

Mines

- Active
- Annexed Pits
- Permit Lapsed
- Reclaimed
- Landfills

Map 4 - Landfills and Gravel Mines

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

1 inch equals 5,591 feet

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C. *Land Use and Zoning*

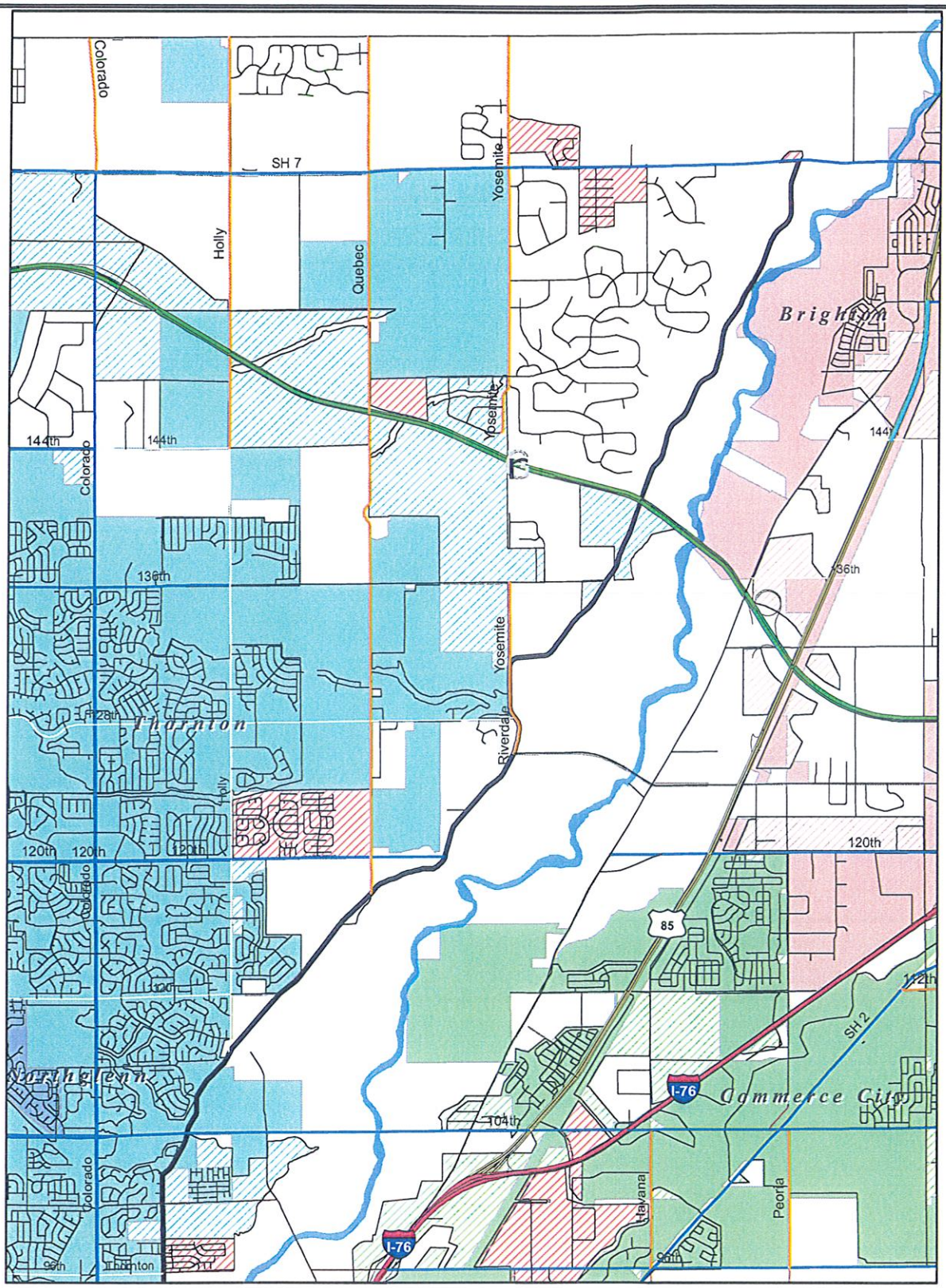
Maps on the following pages depict existing land uses in the Corridor, existing Adams County zoning, and political boundaries.

1. Municipalities

The communities of Brighton, Commerce City and Thornton all have an interest in the Corridor. Map 5, on the next page, shows these cities' municipal boundaries as of early 2005. Some of the zoning, current and future land use in the corridor is already determined by these cities. The map also shows the MetroVision Urban Growth Boundary/Area for these cities as provided by the Denver Regional Council of Governments in March 2004.

2. Current Land Use

Land uses in the corridor are generally less intense than in more urban areas of the county. Public uses and agriculture dominate the landscape along with a smattering of residential, commercial, and industrial parcels. Map 6 on page 17 shows the land uses in and around the corridor as of mid-2004.



Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River

Municipal Urban Growth Boundaries

- Adams County
- Brighton
- Commerce City
- Thornton

Roads

- Ramp
- Private
- Local
- Minor Arterial
- Rural Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Freeway
- Expressway
- Tollway

Map 5 - Municipal Boundaries

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

1 inch equals 5,602 feet

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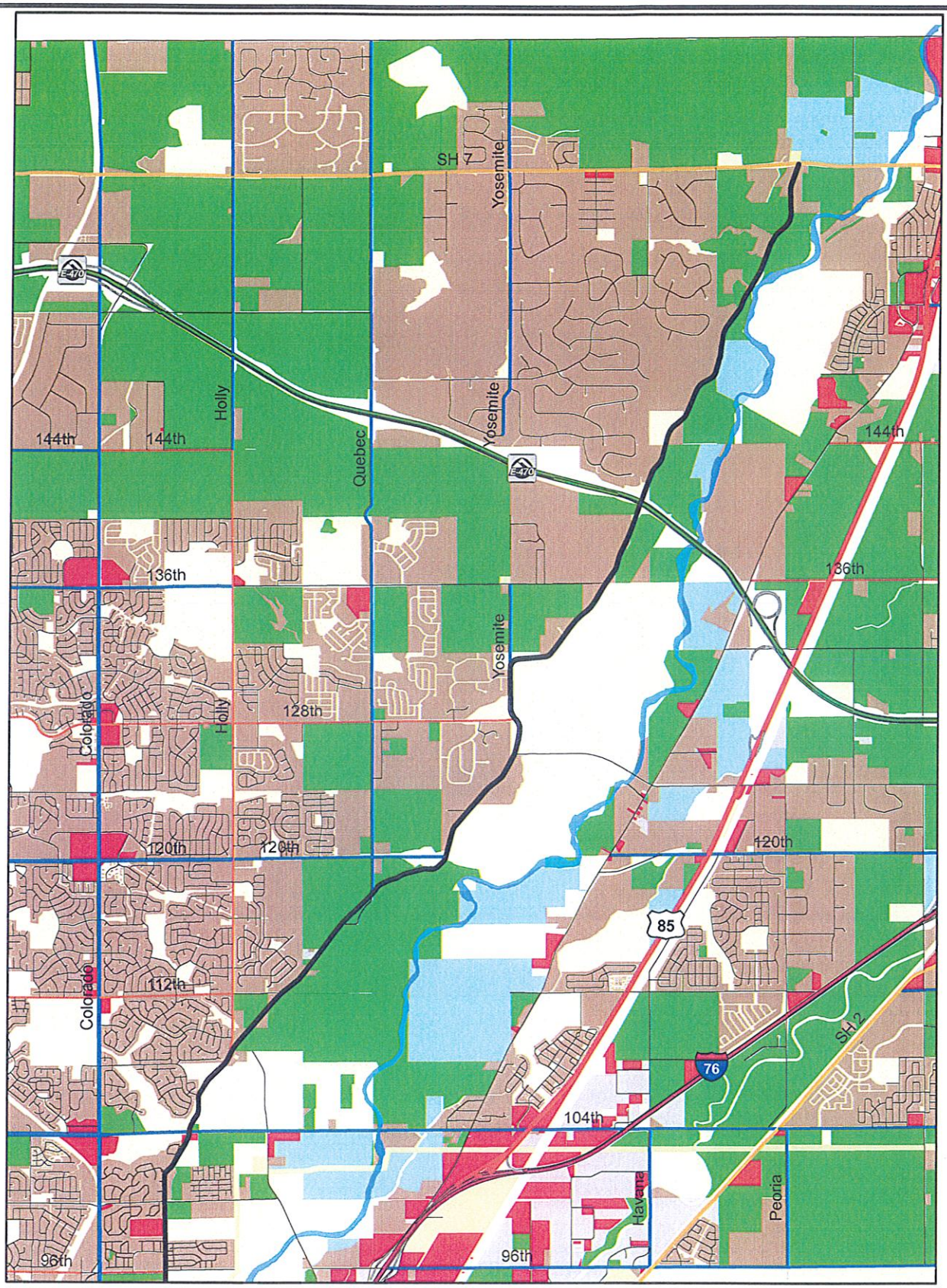

Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River

Current Landuse

- Agricultural
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Producing Mine
- State Assessed
- Exempt

Road Classification

- Private
- Local
- Minor
- Major
- State Hwy
- US Hwy
- Interstate
- Tollway
- Ramp

Map 6 - Current Landuse

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

1 inch equals 5,621 feet

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3. Current Zoning

In the unincorporated areas of this corridor, the majority of which is agricultural in nature, the following zone districts are found:

ZONE	Definition	ZONE	Definition
A-1	Agricultural – 1	PUD	Planned Unit Development
A-2	Agricultural – 2	PUD(P)	Planned Unit Development (P)
A-3	Agricultural – 3	RE	Residential Estate
*C-2	Commercial – 2	*R-3	Residential - 3

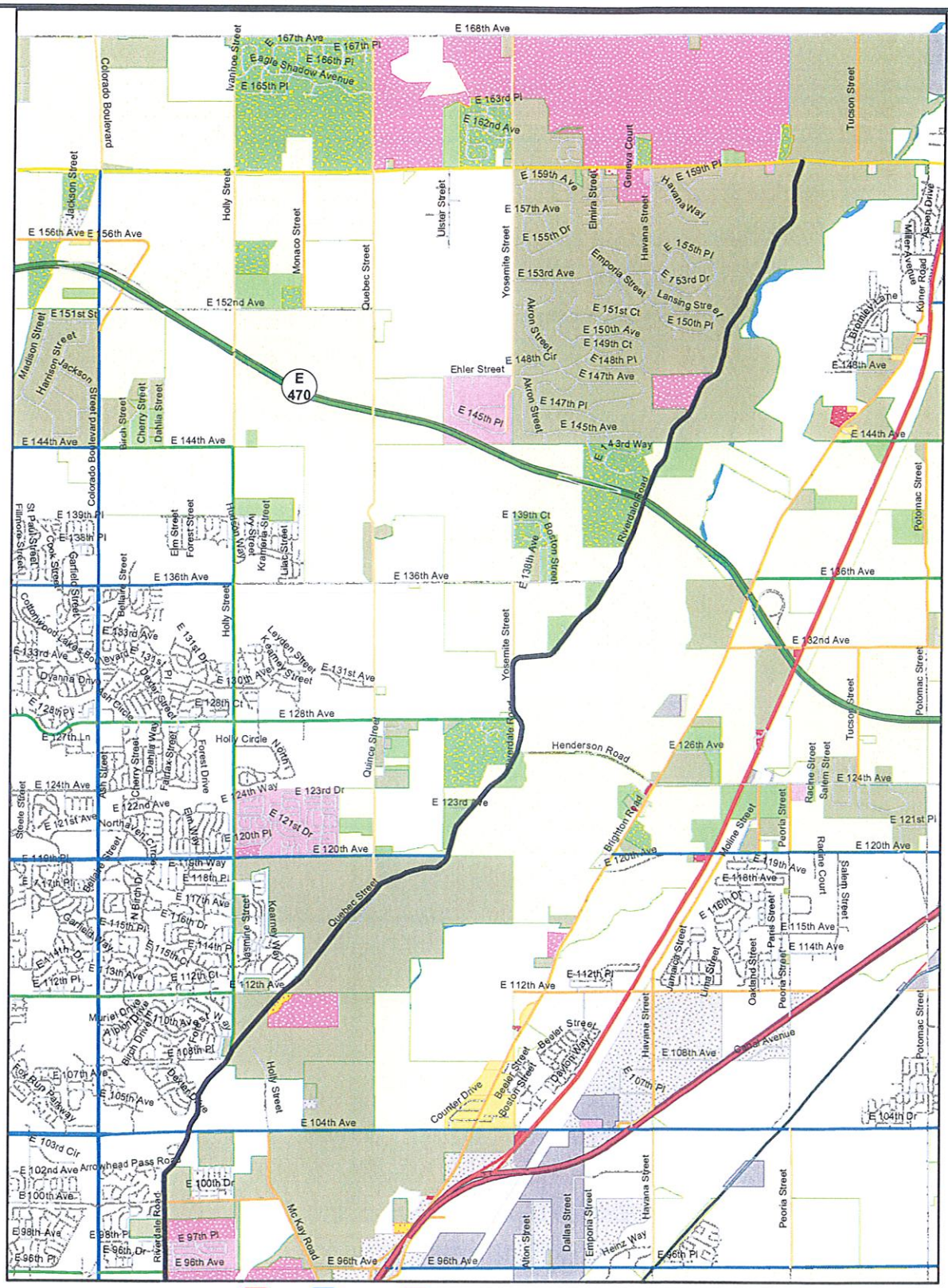
*very low percentage of the corridor area

Map 7 portrays zone districts in 2005 on page 19. By regulating land uses and developments, the density can be designed to fit the preservation objective and rural character of the corridor.

a. Mineral Conservation Overlay District

Map 8 on page 20 shows areas designated as Mineral Conservation Overlay. The Zone District Regulations define the purpose of this district as such:

> The purpose of this district is to establish reasonable and uniform limitations, safeguards, and controls for the conservation and wise utilization of natural resources and for rehabilitation of excavated land. Land within this classification is designated as containing commercial mineral deposits in sufficient size parcels and in areas where extraction and rehabilitation can be undertaken while still protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the area and the County. In cases where the location of the district or use abuts other zoning or use of land, structures, excavation, and rehabilitation may be restricted to be compatible with and protect the adjoining area.



Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River

Road Classification

- Local
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Nascent Arterial
- State Highway 7
- State Highway 2
- US Highway
- Freeway
- Tollway

Zoning

- A-1
- A-2
- A-3
- CO
- C-0
- C-1
- C-2
- C-3
- C-4
- C-5
- I-1
- I-2
- I-3
- AV
- DIA
- PL
- P-U-D
- P-U-D(P)
- M-H
- R-1-A
- R-1-C
- R-2
- R-3
- R-4
- R-E

Map 7 - Current Zoning

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

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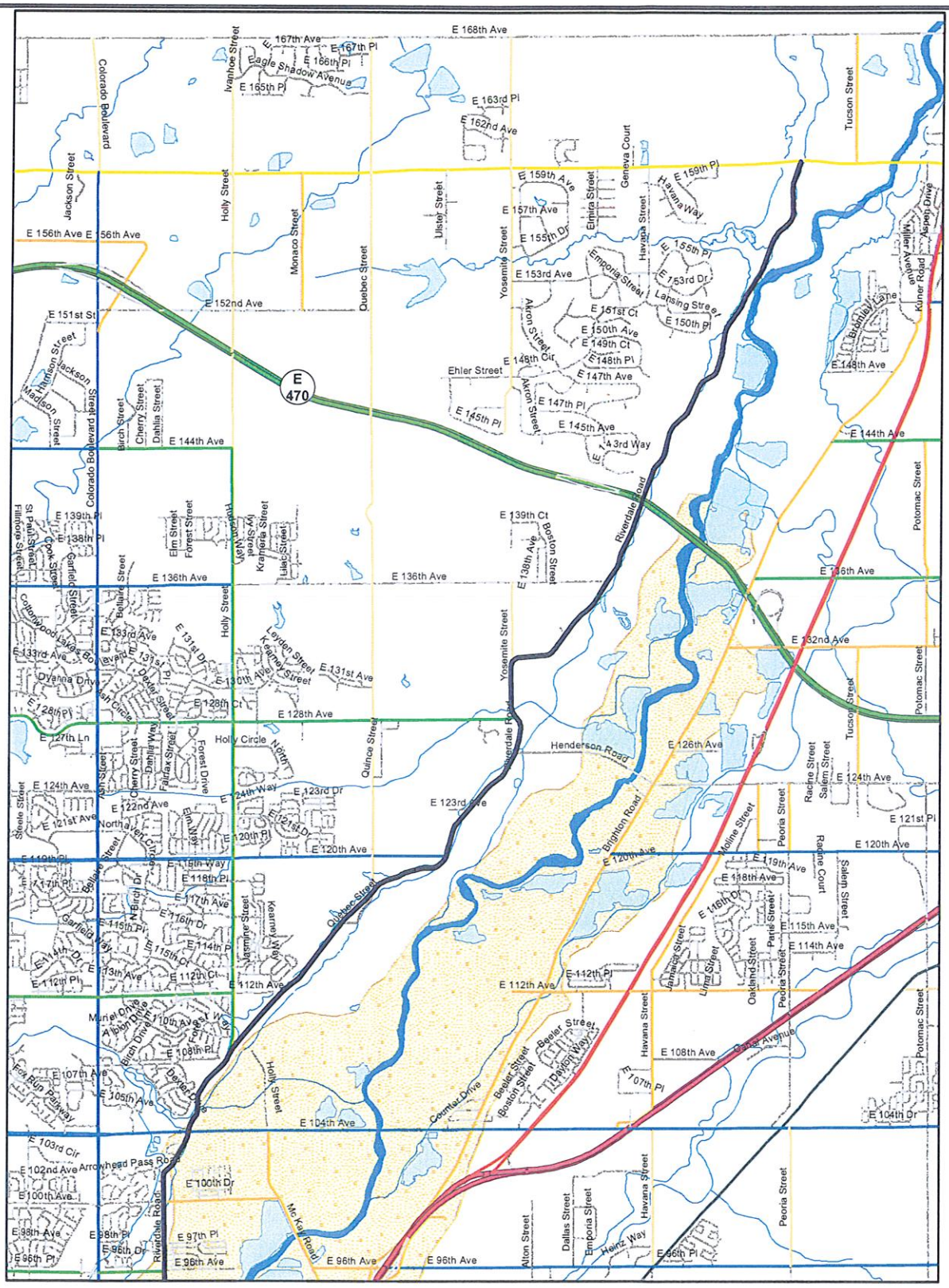

Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- Creeks
- South Platte River
- Mineral Overlay

Road Classification

- Local
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Section Line Arterial
- Nascent Arterial
- State Highway 7
- State Highway 2
- US Highway
- Freeway
- Tollway

Map 8 - Mineral Conservation Overlay Zone

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

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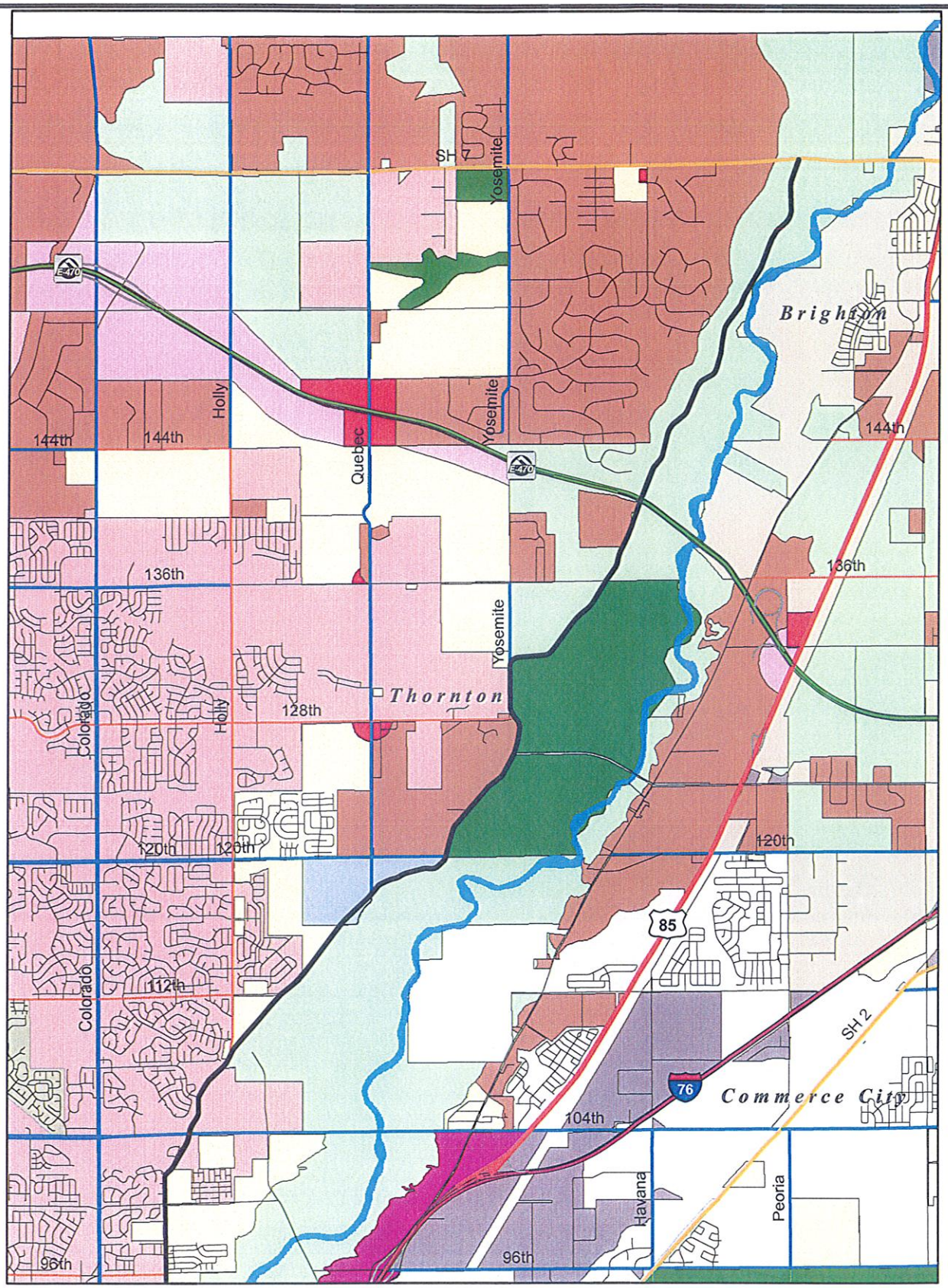

Legend

- Riverdale Rd
- South Platte River

Road Classification

- Private
- Local
- Minor
- Major
- State Hwy
- US Hwy
- Interstate
- Tollway
- Ramp

Future Landuse

- Residential
- Estate Residential
- Activity Center
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Low Intensity Mixed Use
- Mixed Use/Employment
- Parks and Open Space
- Public

Map 9 - Future Landuse

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 Miles

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4. Future Land Use

The primary influence on the future land use in the Corridor is the 2004 Adams County Comprehensive Plan. On the previous page, Map 9 shows future land use designations from the Comprehensive Plan. Apart from some residential uses south of 104th Avenue, the area between Riverdale Road and the South Platte River has been designated for agriculture and open space.

Municipal Comprehensive Plans will also have an influence on future uses in the Corridor. The southern portion of the Corridor lies equally within the Urban Growth Areas of Commerce City and the City of Thornton. The northern portion is influenced in part by the City of Brighton. Cooperation between the cities and the County to coordinate future planning efforts is essential to the future well being of the Corridor.

D. *Transportation*

Riverdale Road is classified as a Rural Collector Street by Adams County Public Works. Its primary purpose is to collect and distribute traffic between local streets and arterials, such as 104th Avenue, 136th Avenue, Holly Street, Quebec Street, Yosemite Street and Highway 7. According to its definition as a collector, it has limited access (see below). There is great opportunity to use each major access as a gateway to announce and delineate the area by providing signage, art, and interpretive pullouts to guide the public through this scenic area.

1. Access Control

A collector street is designed as a main interior street that typically has stop signs on side streets and traffic signals at arterials. Collector streets have limited access and spacing:

- Collectors shall intersect other collectors not closer than 330 feet (minor) and 660 feet (major) from each other.
- On minor collectors with an ultimate projected traffic volume of less than 2500 vph (Vehicles Per Hour), intersection spacing may be 250 feet.
- In urban and developing areas where higher traffic volumes are present or growth is expected in the future, access spacing shall be at 1700-foot intervals. Spacing of all major intersecting public streets, roads, highways and other major accesses should be on a minimum of 600-foot intervals.

Emergency Services providers were contacted in regards to the spacing of accesses along Riverdale and Brighton Roads. Their assessment of the distances between accesses was to say they are limited currently within the corridor; further access closings may jeopardize operational efficiency and may cause additional delay and safety issues for corridor residents.

2. Transportation Plans and Roadway Improvements

Riverdale Road is an important roadway, both in terms of its scenic value as well as its transportation role. The County looks to preserve the rural character of the roadway by limiting direct access and general road improvements that would encourage additional traffic onto the roadway. Future widening of Riverdale Road should be strictly limited. Also, improvements varying from the traditional rural character of the road are discouraged by Adams County. Changes discouraged include traffic signalization, roundabouts or traffic circles, and major alignment modifications.

3. Scenic Byway Designation

In response to potential current and future development throughout the County and specific strategies set forth in the Adams County Comprehensive Plan, this policy is intended to preserve Adams County's most important corridors in terms of open space, environmentally sensitive areas, and wildlife corridors and habitats. This policy sets forth the criteria for the designation of roads as County Scenic Byways based upon their scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, and/or natural intrinsic qualities. To be designated as a County Scenic Byway, a road must significantly meet criteria for at least one of the above six intrinsic qualities.

A County Scenic Byway means a road or highway under local ownership that has been designated by the County through resolution or some other official declaration for its scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, or natural qualities. An Official Resolution is an action taken by the Adams County Board of County Commissioners or that of an individual, board, committee, or metro district acting on behalf of the County for the inclusion of a corridor into the Adams County Scenic Byway Program.

The Adams County Scenic Byway Program Policy is as follows:

- These policy and procedures apply to any individual, board, committee, or metro district electing to participate in the Adams County Scenic Byway Program by seeking to have a road or highway designated as a County Scenic Byway.
- Road or highways considered for County Scenic Byway designation should safely accommodate, wherever feasible, bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- A corridor management plan must be submitted in order for any road or highway to be considered for the County Scenic Byway designation.

4. Trails

The Corridor Plan advocates and serves to coordinate the development of a network of trails throughout the Riverdale Road corridor. Future desired trail connections and extensions are outlined in the South Platte River Heritage Plan and further delineated in the Major Drainageway Planning study for the South Platte River in Adams County.

Hike/bike trails can impact wildlife in two basic ways: replacement of habitat by trail construction and disturbance of wildlife by people using the trail. The removal of grass, trees, shrubs and other vegetation when a trail is constructed can cause significant impacts to habitat. People passing on a trail may cause wildlife, especially birds, to avoid the trail area. For these reasons, the Colorado Department of Wildlife recommends trails be placed along the outer edges of riparian habitat areas, or avoid these areas altogether.

V. Natural Resource Protection Programs

Adams County already has many programs in place to protect valuable natural resources in the Riverdale Road corridor. They are outlined in this section.

A. *South Platte River Heritage Plan*

The main objective of the South Platte Heritage Corridor Plan is "to create a collective, community vision for the corridor." Plan objectives are:

Resource Lands

Natural Areas

- Protect important wildlife habitat and movement areas in the corridor and its tributaries
- Protect important ecological areas

Agricultural Lands

- Protect high-quality agricultural lands

The Bluffs

- Protect undeveloped portions of the bluffs

Floodplain

- Protect, in as natural a state as possible, the floodplain of the South Platte River for flood storage and conveyance

Viewsheds

- Preserve natural and rural vistas, including culturally and historically significant areas

Gravel Resources/ Water Resources/ Restoration Areas

- Restore and enhance degraded portions of the South Platte River
- Encourage existing and future mining operations to reclaim lands during and after mining to create habitat, restore vegetation, contribute to flood retention and/or provide for recreational opportunities
- Encourage water storage facilities to be multipurpose (water storage, recreation (such as fishing), and habitat restoration

Trails and Recreation

- Provide linkages from neighboring communities to the South Platte River and complete the River Trail system
- Provide a mix of recreation activities that balance recreation with retaining natural qualities of the corridor

Environmental Education and Community Stewardship

- Encourage volunteer/ community/ school participation and local stewardship
- Provide opportunities for environmental education

Partnerships/ Coordination/ Cooperation

- Identify a clear implementation strategy with funding sources and specific projects, including a successful GOCO legacy grant application
- Coordinate with the Adams County Open Space Plan and the Comprehensive Plan
- Integrate ongoing projects related to water quality enhancement, flood control, transportation, infrastructure and environmental protection and restoration for maximum community benefit and build partnerships among agencies and municipalities

Implementation and Management

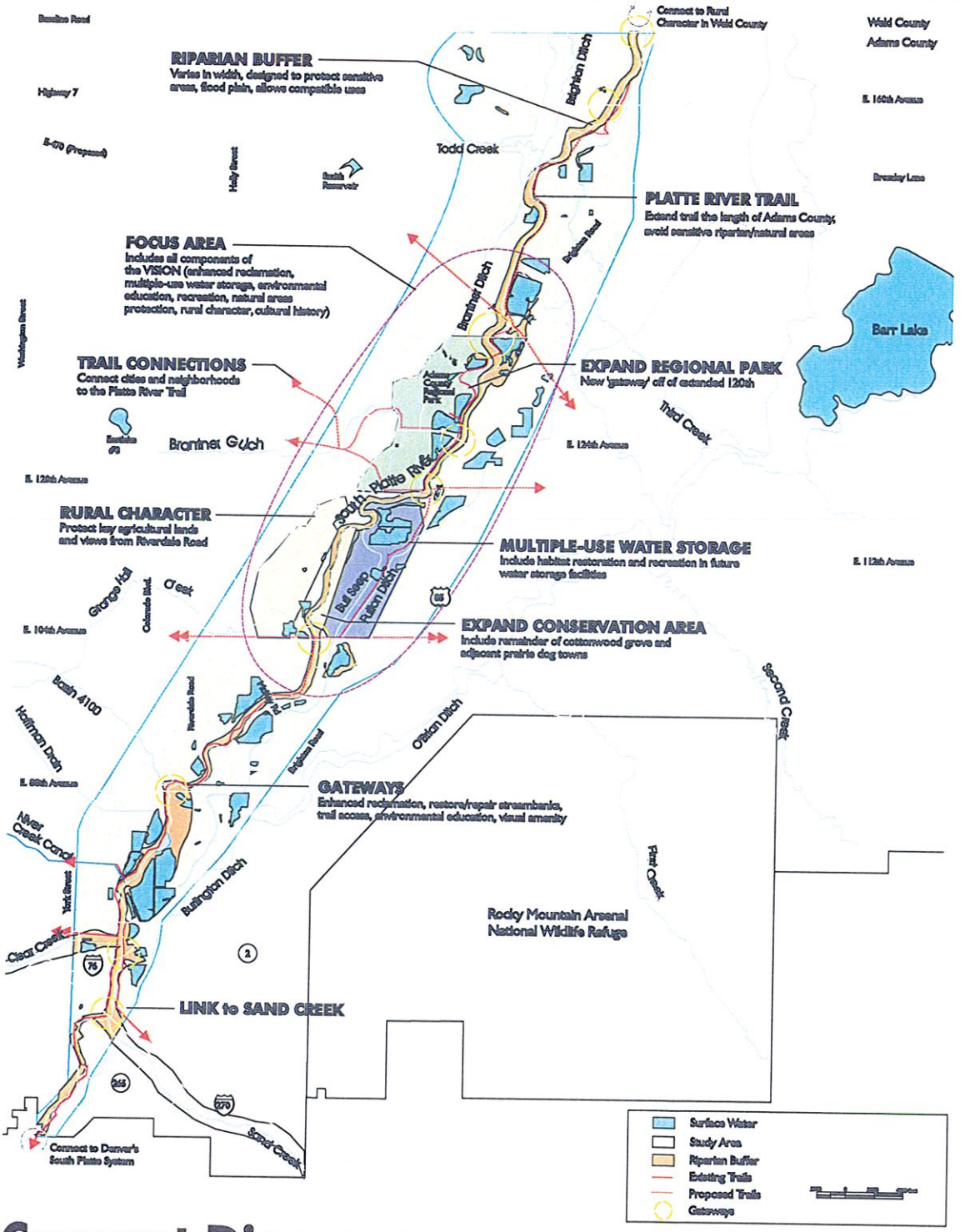
- Employ a series of creative land protection strategies that benefit landowners, the County and the community at-large
- Provide for long-term management and maintenance of the corridor

On the following page is the Concept Plan Map from the South Platte River Heritage Corridor Plan.

B. *Conservation Easements*

Adams County actively seeks to negotiate or purchase conservation easements on properties with significant value for open space or wildlife habitat. The easements preclude further development on the property and are held by the County in perpetuity.

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER HERITAGE PLAN



Concept Diagram

Adams County Parks and Community Resources
Adams County Commissioners: Martin A. Flores Ted Strickland Elaine T. Valente
Conservation Partners/ENO Resources Corporation

June 16, 1997

C. *Natural Resource Conservation Overlay*

The purpose of the Natural Resources Conservation Overlay is to:

1. Provide for the protection of natural, wildlife, agricultural, and cultural resources, which are an essential component of the community's economic base and establish the character of the community; and
2. Preserve and enhance the quality of life that Adams County residents enjoy.

The NRCO establishes a maximum density calculation for all parcels within the Overlay. For lands located within the NRCO District, the density calculations are based on the net available land as determine by applying a Natural Resource Protection Factor to the protected resource area and subtracting the resulting land area from the total area of the property.

The Protection Factors for the Natural Resource Conservation Overlay are as follows:

1) 100-Year Floodplains: 1.0
2) Riparian Areas: 1.5
3) Wetlands: 2.0
4) Lakes/Reservoirs: 1.5
5) Hydric Soils: .7

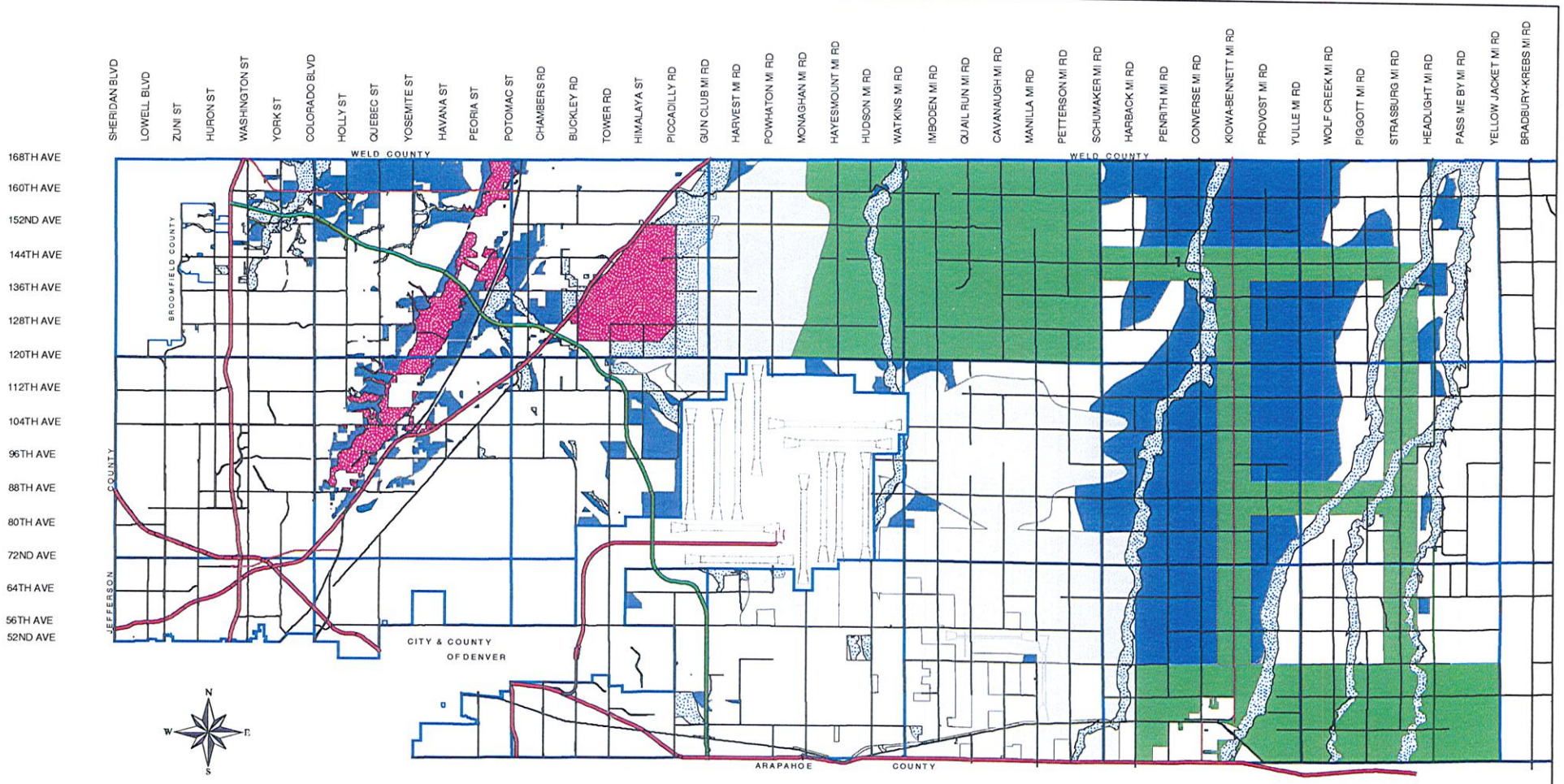
The Natural Resource Conservation Overlay is shown in blue on the Transfer of Development Rights Map on the following page.

D. *Transfer of Development Rights*

The objectives of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program are to provide an opportunity for the following:

1. Preservation of important open space, important wildlife, important farmland, or floodplain areas in the County.
2. A method for developing real property in the agricultural area, which is an alternative to the creation and proliferation of 35-acre parcels.
3. Provision of opportunities for landowners to develop their property in a manner that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

TDR can advance the preservation of the corridor by preventing farmland and floodplain areas from being developed at an urban scale while still providing an economic benefit to the landowners. A map of the TDR program is shown on the following page.



Transfer of Development Rights Program

- Airport Influence Zone
- Important Farmland
- Natural Resource Conservation Overlay
- South Platte Floodplain / Barr Lake Buffer
- Receiving Area

Map Prepared:
February 2005

Adams County Department of Planning and Development
12200 N. Pecos St., Westminster, Colorado 80234
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ADAMS COUNTY
COLORADO

Disclaimer:
Although every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided on this map, Adams County cannot be responsible for consequences resulting from omissions or errors in the information and graphic representations made herein. Users should consult with the Adams County Planning Department to ascertain whether any modifications have been made since the publication of this material.

VI. Corridor Plan Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

This section sets forth Adams County's official policy toward the Riverdale Road Corridor. Four general goals are stated, followed by broad objectives with specific strategies for implementation. These strategies will form the basis for future regulatory measures needed to enforce policy.

1.Limit development

- Limit rezoning:
  - Agriculture should be the primary land use- create "Right to Farm" ordinance.
  - New uses should maintain a scale and density compatible with adjacent uses.
  - No change should be made through zoning or any other public action that would adversely affect a stable, established, rural residential area.
  - Consider Overlay zoning for corridor.
- Acquire valuable open space property.
- Acquire development rights:
  - Transfer of Development Rights
  - Conservation easements
- Utilize 1041 permitting powers regarding flood hazard areas, historic archaeological resources, and significant wildlife area habitats.
- Revise Intergovernmental Agreements between the County and the Cities.

2.Corridor preservation

- Limit urban or suburban scale development:
  - Non-agricultural development should be buffered from adjacent residential development by open space, landscaping, and/or screening.
  - Prevent the loss of irrigated or prime farmland.
  - Minimize negative impacts of new development on existing farming operations.
  - Preserve existing hunting access.
- Do not allow additional access points to Riverdale Road.
- Preserve trees and vegetation:
  - Utilize noxious weed control programs.
  - Encourage revegetation with native trees, shrubs and grasses in a mixed landscape.
- Preserve and enhance historic structures.
- Preserve farmland.
- Foster community stewardship:
  - Create a "friends of the corridor" group.
  - Engage people to care for the river.

◈Develop a scenic corridor management plan that includes the mapping of the scenic viewshed along the scenic roadway, describes the notable scenic features contributing to the uniqueness and importance of the scenic roadway and identifies the necessary improvements and management tools to achieve long term preservation.

3.Development Design Guidelines

◈Bluff or view protection:

- ➢ Build below ridgelines.
- ➢ Consider creating a scenic corridor district where the viewshed's boundary serves as the district's limits. Development would be permitted within the district provided there is no visual intrusion on the viewshed. The zoning ordinance would contain goals and policies requiring all development to be sited in the least-visible location of the viewshed, preferably along the periphery of a site or where a natural feature can provide screening. If that is not possible, then the development would be required to be designed in a way to appear as if it had been part of the viewshed for some time.
- ➢ Consider a special height/mass restriction in the corridor to control the height, bulk, setback of structures, floor area ratio, and number of stories within the district for the purpose of preserving views along the corridor.
- ➢ Add a Riverdale Bluff category to the Transfer of Development Rights program to encourage preservation by the private sector.

◈Encourage natural drainage swales.
◈Utilize natural materials and muted colors in new construction.
◈Establish landscape guidelines.
◈Prevent over-lighting, light pollution, up-lighting, etc.

4.Corridor enhancement

◈ Install signage for:

- ➢ Historic sites
- ➢ Natural amenities

◈ Create gateway monuments.
◈ Expand and connect trails.
◈ Enhance parks:

- ➢ Expand recreational opportunities.
- ➢ Develop environmental education and interpretive programs.

VII. Community Participation

A draft of the Corridor plan was sent to the stakeholders listed below for review and comment.

Stakeholders

- **Property owners and residents in the corridor**
  - Riverdale Farms Neighborhood Association
- **Adams County**
  - Department of Planning and Development
  - Department of Public Works
  - Department of Parks
  - Riverdale Golf Course
- **Others**
  - City of Brighton
  - City of Commerce City
  - City of Thornton
  - Weld County
  - Colorado Division of Wildlife
  - Colorado Geological Survey
  - CDPHE- Water Quality Protection Section
  - Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology
  - Colorado Division of Water Resources
  - Colorado Historical Society
  - Urban Drainage and Flood Control District
  - DRCOG
  - U.S. Geological Survey
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Brantner Ditch Company
  - Colorado Agricultural Ditch Company
  - Lower Clear Creek Ditch Company
  - West Adams Soil Conservation District
- **Emergency Services**
  - Adams County Sheriff
  - Thornton Police Department
  - Commerce City Police Department
  - Brighton Police Department
  - Brighton Fire Protection District
  - South Adams County Fire District
  - North Metro Fire District
  - City of Thornton Fire Department

Notice of a public meeting on the Plan was sent to all property owners in the corridor. This meeting was held on March 10, 2005 with an attendance of over sixty residents. A draft of the Plan was presented at the meeting and input was taken from attendees. Comments and concerns were brought forward at this meeting included complaints about trash, traffic volume and speed, negative impacts from mining, concern about the continuous expansion of Thornton's urban area, concerns about crime and vandalism, and great interest in forming a neighborhood association in the corridor.

Comments received from the public meeting and initial referrals were incorporated into the Plan as appropriate. A follow-up letter to residents was also sent out by the Planning and Development Department providing answers to some of the questions asked by residents.

A public hearing will be held on the plan before the Planning Commission April 28, 2005.