

Meeting Date: September 26, 2022

Planner: Mike Sutherland, AICP Deputy Director of Community Development

APPLICATION SUMMARY:

Project Name: River Park

Case Number: MDP22-0002

Application type: Conceptual Master Development Plan

Location: Southwest corner, W. Mineral Avenue and S. Santa Fe Drive

Size of Property: 33.34 acres

Zoning: Commercial Mixed (CM) / Planned Overlay District (PL-O)

Applicant: Tina Hippeli, Development Manager, Evergreen Devco Inc.

Applicant's Representative: Tyler Carlson, Managing Principal, Evergreen Devco, Inc.
Carolyn White, Shareholder, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

Owner: Evergreen-Mineral & Santa Fe, LLC

Applicant Request: Approval of the RiverPark conceptual master development plan, allowing the owner to develop the property in conformance with the plan and the CM zoning district.

PROCESS

Pre-Application Meeting

January 13, 2022 – Administrative

May 24, 2022 – First neighborhood meeting

Master Development Plan (Conceptual)

April 22, 2022 – Application completed for initial referral

June 1, 2022 – First review comments due to applicant

June 29, 2022 – Second neighborhood meeting

July 15, 2022 – Revisions received for second referral

August 15, 2022 – Second review comments due to applicant

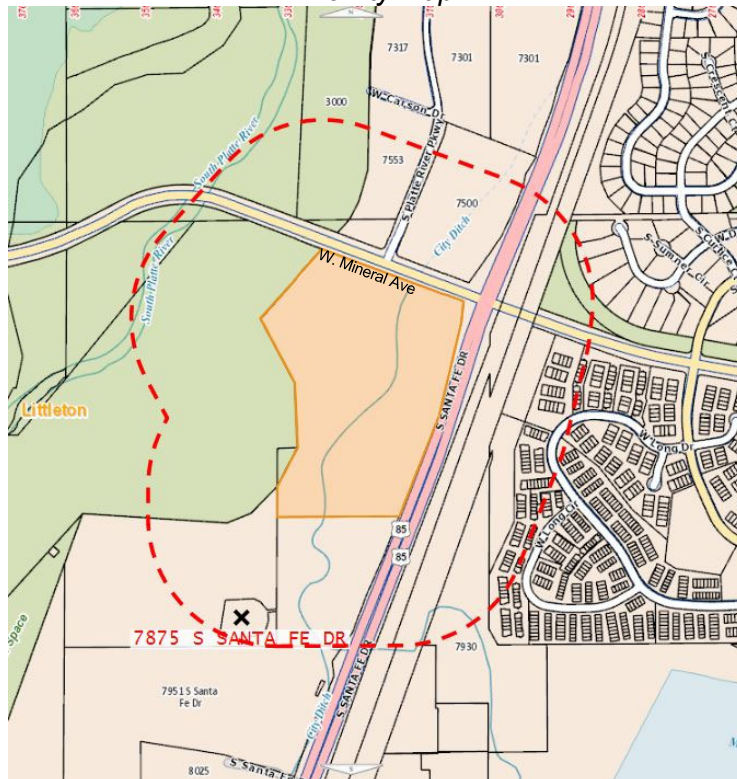
August 23, 2022 – Final revisions received for third referral

- September 26, 2022 – Public hearing at planning commission

LOCATION

The 33.34-acre site is located at the southwest corner of W. Mineral Avenue and S. Santa Fe Drive. The vicinity map below shows the location of the subject property (highlighted) and the notification boundary in a red dashed line. Staff notified the SouthPark #2 HOA of the application, as well as individual property owners within the notification boundary. In total, staff sent 98 notification cards to property owners and residents within the notification boundary.

Vicinity Map



PROPERTY AND APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Timeline

- 1973 *Small portions of this property were annexed into the City of Littleton from Arapahoe County by Ordinances 1973-13 and 1973-18.*
- 1985 *The majority of this property was annexed into the City of Littleton from Arapahoe County by Ordinance 1985-7. The annexation included a recorded annexation agreement (recorded April 26, 1985 at reception number 2525484).*
- 1985 *April 2, Council approved the Santa Fe Park planned development plan.*
- 1993 *June 15, Council approved the First Amendment to the Santa Fe Park planned development plan allowing an outdoor golf driving range on a portion of the subject property.*
- 2017 *December 11, Planning Commission approved a use by special exception to allow modification of the Jackass Gulch floodplain on the property. December 14, staff approved the Santa Fe Park North Subdivision Exemption subdividing the subject property as Parcel 1. December 15, Broken Hill 2, LLC (now Evergreen-Mineral & Santa Fe, LLC) purchases the property.*
- 2018 *November 7, staff receives a complete application for the Second Amendment to the Santa Fe Park Planned Development Plan to shift residential land uses to the west side of the property, add assisted living uses, revise development standards, and allow additional drive-up uses*
- 2021 *January 11, Planning commission recommended approval of the Second Amendment to the Santa Fe Park Planned Development Plan*
- 2021 *May 4, city council denies the Second Amendment to the Santa Fe Park Planned Development Plan. October 28, city rezones property from PD-C to CM / PL-O.*

The property is currently used for agricultural purposes and contains a single-family residence and several agricultural accessory buildings. To the north of the property are the Littleton / Mineral Avenue Light Rail Station owned and operated by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and a 7-Eleven gas station and convenience store. On the west side of the site is South Platte Park including wetlands, the river and nature trails. On the south side of the property is the Toll Brothers property, which is currently used for agricultural purposes, but an administrative SDP has been submitted for 260 single family attached homes. On the east side of the property is S. Santa Fe Dr. and SouthPark's townhome neighborhood. Northeast of the property is the Southbridge single-family residential neighborhood. The aerial map below shows the property and its surroundings.

Aerial Map



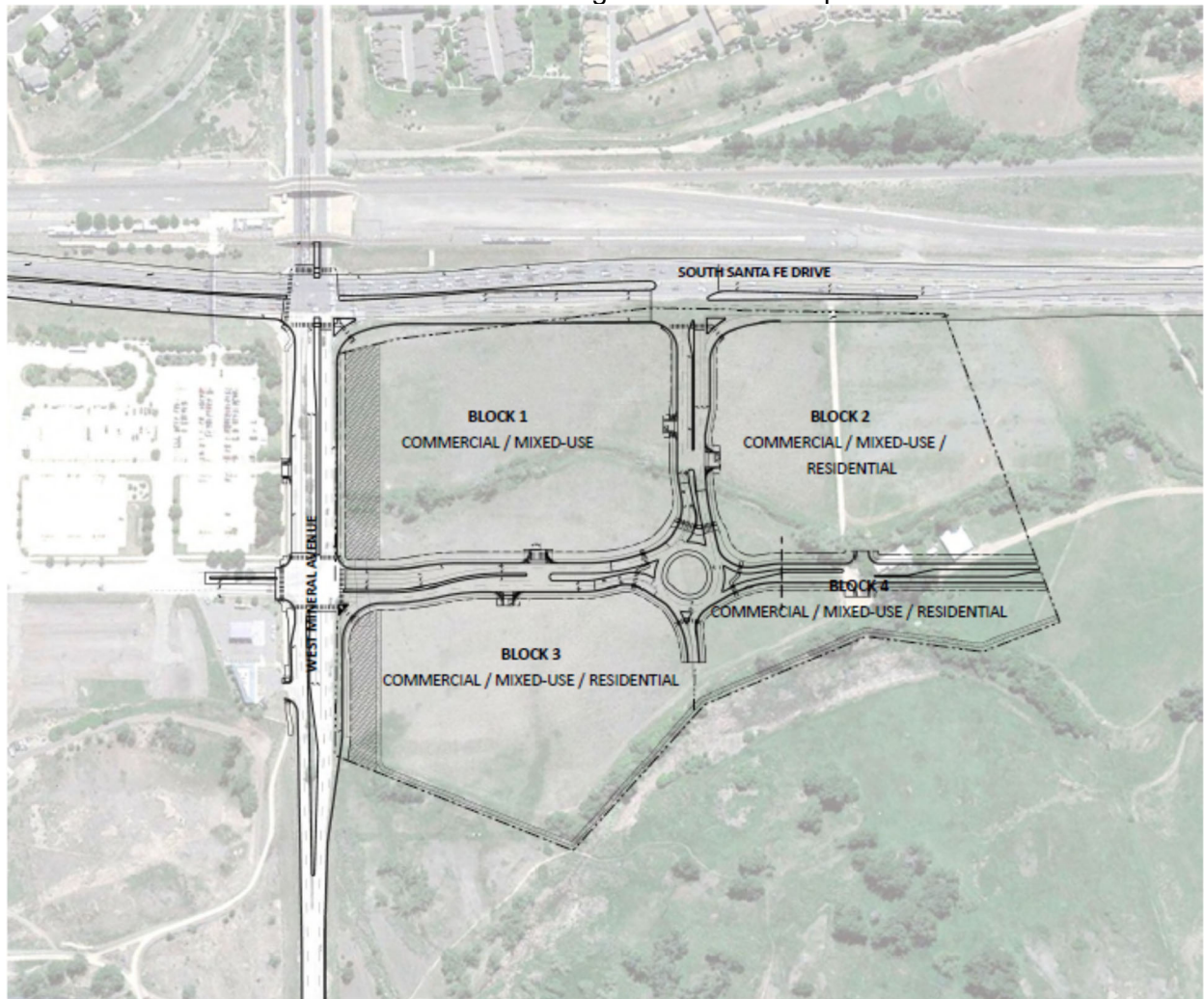
The property contains a portion of the Englewood city ditch, an open-channel water supply system owned and operated by the City of Englewood. The property has an existing curb cut to S. Santa Fe Dr. to serve the residence and two curb cuts to W. Mineral Ave., one aligning with South Platte River Parkway and the other in near alignment with the light rail station access. There are no public roads on the property; however, the property contains private dirt roadways for agricultural use.

The property's topography falls from the east to the west and there are several large trees growing along the city ditch, around the existing residence, and near South Platte Park. On the west side of South Platte Park, there is an existing soft-surface trail with an underpass of W. Mineral Ave. connecting to the Mary Carter Greenway and Carson Nature Center on the north side of W. Mineral Ave. The northwest side of the property is part of the Jackass Gulch floodplain designated by Mile High Flood District.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The applicant requests approval of a conceptual master development plan (MDP) to utilize the underlying CM zoning of the property. This conceptual MDP envisions phased development in four large blocks, two on the east side of S. Platte River Parkway, and two on the west side of S. Platte River Parkway.

Sheet 4 of the MDP Showing Blocks and Anticipated Uses



If this MDP is approved, the city may accept site plan applications for new development projects that are consistent with the information shown on the conceptual plan. Application details are available for viewing on the city's Development Activity List.

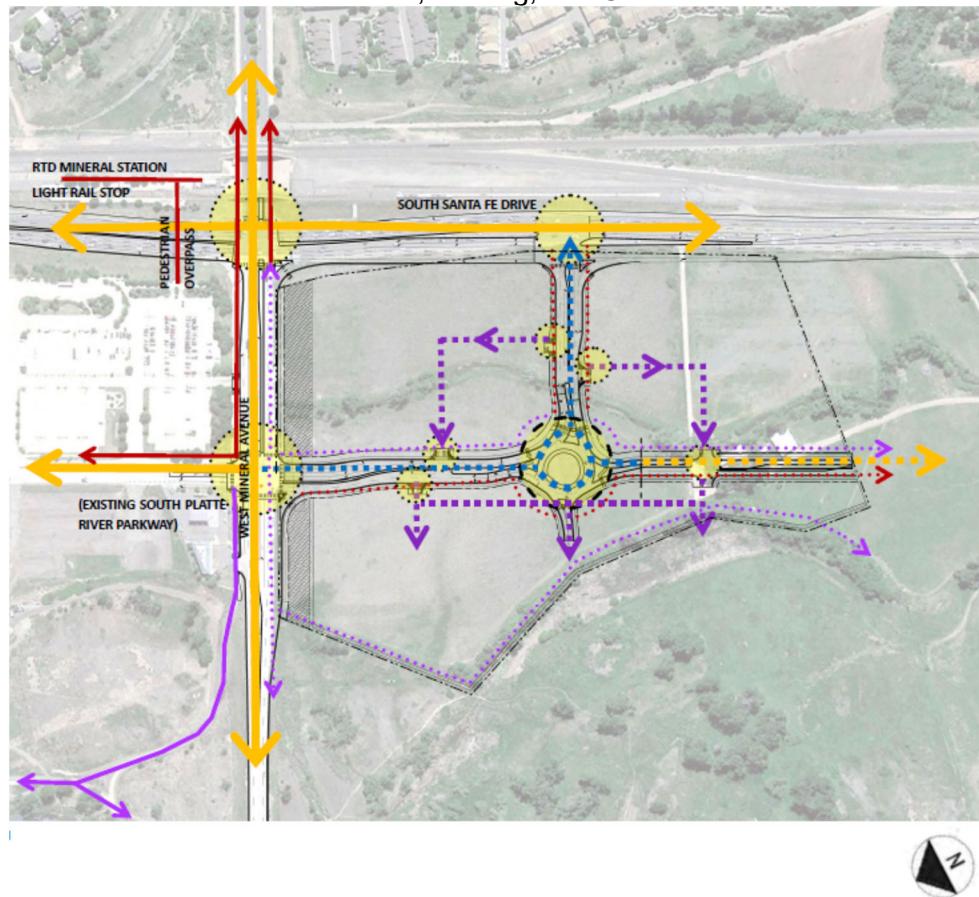
STAFF ANALYSIS

There are three decision criteria listed in the Littleton City Code (LCC) for conceptual master development plans. This section of the staff report will list each individual decision criteria and present staff's analysis of how, in staff's opinion, the plan either is sufficient or insufficient in terms of meeting the decision criteria. This analysis is the city staff's opinion and does not in any way bind the planning commission's final decision, but should be weighed as one part of testimony given at the public hearing to determine the factual analysis of the decision criteria.

Decision Criteria 1: Layout. The development is laid out in an efficient manner relative to its context and location (natural and built environments) and designed to achieve the aims of a compact, highly

walkable environment. Three of the key locational features of this particular property are: 1) its location at the intersection of W. Mineral Avenue and S. Santa Fe Drive; 2) its proximity to the Mineral Avenue light rail station, and 3) its proximity to South Platte Park. Sheet five of the proposed MDP is important in analyzing the efficiency of the plan and how it relates to a compact, highly walkable environment.

Vehicular Access, Parking, and Circulation Plan



Since the site is located at one of Littleton's busiest vehicular intersections, the roadway network must not only move through the site efficiently, but also help reduce traffic congestion at the intersection and provide opportunity for successful commercial development. The proposed RiverPark MDP demonstrates an efficient land use and vehicular layout because it shows a "quadrant road" system which reduces traffic congestion at the W. Mineral Avenue and S. Santa Fe Drive intersection by removing some or all left-turn movements from the intersection and increases vehicular access to the site by providing a full-movement, signalized access to S. Santa Fe Drive. The roadway network shown in the proposed RiverPark MDP provides connectivity to the north (Mineral Avenue light rail station, Aspen Grove, and Carson Nature Center), and to the south (Toll Property and Littleton Equine Medical Center).

In order to be efficient, the lot layout and land uses must be designed to take full advantage of the proposed roadway network. Staff believes the blocks and land uses described in the RiverPark MDP are efficient in their layout. As shown on sheet four (see page five of the staff report), all blocks allow commercial and mixed-use development and blocks two, three, and four allow residential (multi-family use). The largest blocks (blocks one, two, and three) have the greatest exposure to either S. Santa Fe Drive or W. Mineral Avenue and provide opportunity for significant commercial

development.

Regarding a compact, highly walkable environment, the proposed roadway network provides sidewalks. On the east side of S. Platte River Parkway, is a “shared use path” which will provide dedicated bicycle and pedestrian paths connecting the Toll Brothers property through RiverPark to Mineral Station. In addition, RiverPark will provide a trail on the western boundary and pedestrian connections to Toll Brothers and South Platte Park. Although details must be provided through future site plans, the notes on sheet four describe walkability within each block. In staff’s opinion, the proposed RiverPark MDP sufficiently meets the decision criteria for layout.

Decision Criteria 2: *Quality Design*. The design of buildings, circulation, hardscape, and landscape areas help to establish functionality, visual interest, aesthetic appeal, and a unique identity for the development including human-scale amenities, integration of civic spaces for public interaction, and protection from the environmental elements.

Architecturally, the RiverPark design theme is a “modern agrarian or contemporary agrarian” motif described on sheets four and in illustratives on sheet seven. Although very general and conceptual in nature, the level of quality and architecture described in the proposed MDP give city staff and future site plan applicants sufficient guidance and direction to apply the design and architectural requirements of the Littleton City Code.

Commercial Design Illustrative



Residential Massing Illustrative



Regarding the design of circulation, hardscape, and landscape areas, the proposed RiverPark MDP establishes a commitment to providing an open space amenity area for pedestrian gathering and use in each block (see the fourth bullet under the description on sheet three). Sheet five (see page six of the staff report) shows a rough internal circulation plan with vehicular access to each block. A note on sheet five gives direction to the location of parking lots either on the side or behind buildings, unless otherwise buffered in accordance with the LCC.

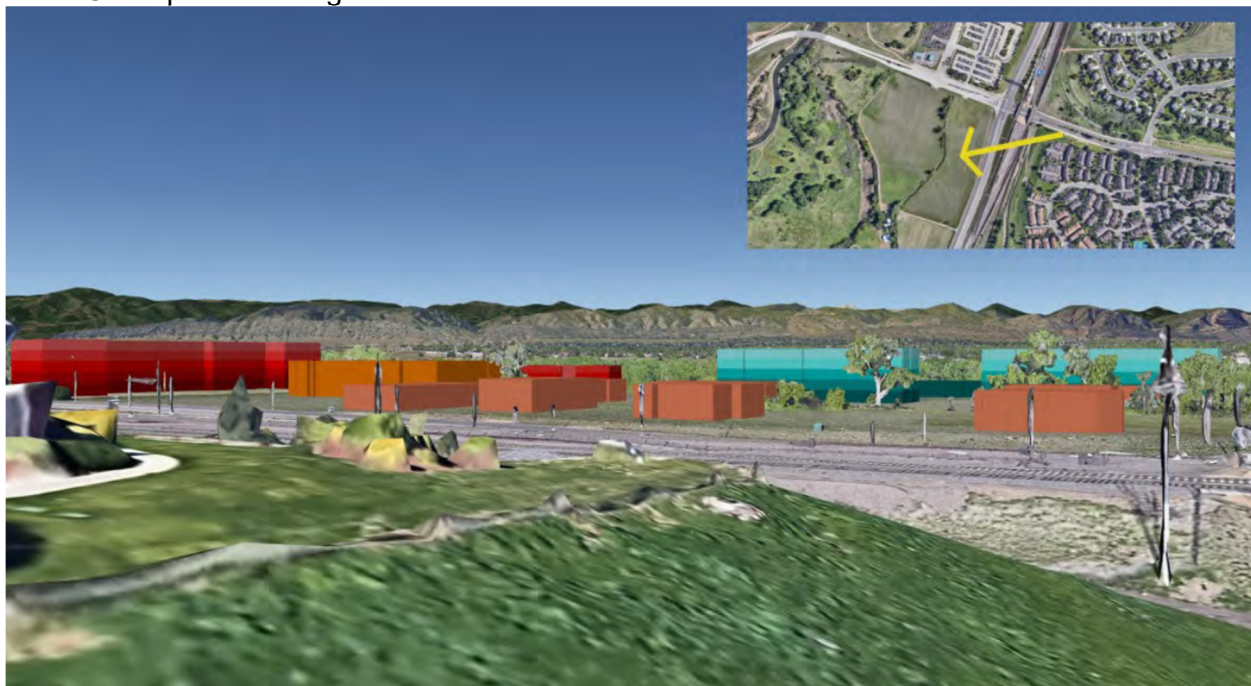
The city, South Suburban Parks and Recreation District, and the applicant worked together on an appropriate edge treatment between future RiverPark developments within blocks three and four and the South Platte Park to the west. The boundary treatment, consisting of required landscape areas and building setbacks, is described on the left side of sheet three. With the mutual agreement of these parties, the western boundary will provide functionality, visual interest, and unique identity at the western perimeter, which go beyond the setback requirements of both the 1985 planned development and the LCC. In staff’s opinion, the proposed MDP is sufficient to meet the quality design decision criteria.

Decision Criteria 3: Zoning District Conformance. The plan demonstrates compliance with the applicable zoning district and design principles.

Compliance with the LCC and the Unified Land Use Code are noted several times in the proposed RiverPark MDP. The development data shown on sheet four most directly addresses how the development will comply with the Commercial Mixed zoning district and any additional restrictions provided through the MDP.

Most significantly, the MDP will limit the height of commercial and mixed-use buildings from 80 feet allowed within the district (91 feet with sustainability incentives) to 65 feet maximum. The applicant provided a conceptual massing and height illustrative in the MDP on sheet seven

Conceptual Massing Illustrative as Shown from Mineral Avenue East of Santa Fe Drive



The development data on sheet four contains some errors in the maximum density for mixed-use and residential development that were corrected in the LCC shortly after the final review of this development. Mixed use developments have a maximum density of 60 dwelling units per gross acre (instead of 85 as shown in the MDP), and residential developments have a maximum density of 62 dwelling units per gross acre (instead of 75 shown in the MDP). In order to eliminate any confusion, these density numbers should be corrected in the MDP and appropriate conditions appear in the proposed resolution. With the conditions shown in the proposed resolution, the proposed MDP is sufficient to meet the zoning district conformance decision criteria.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON REGIONAL TRAFFIC AND THE QUADRANT ROADWAY

The adjacent intersection of Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive is one of the most congested intersections in the city and the region, and often creates significant delays for travelers, particularly during the morning or evening rush, or when the adjacent roadway network, including C-470, has obstructive construction or an incident occurs that diverts traffic. Development of this property and properties to the south will generate additional traffic for Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive. One

of the key challenges for development of these properties is the effective mitigation of additional traffic generated to the already congested intersection of these roadways and other roadways and intersections in the area.

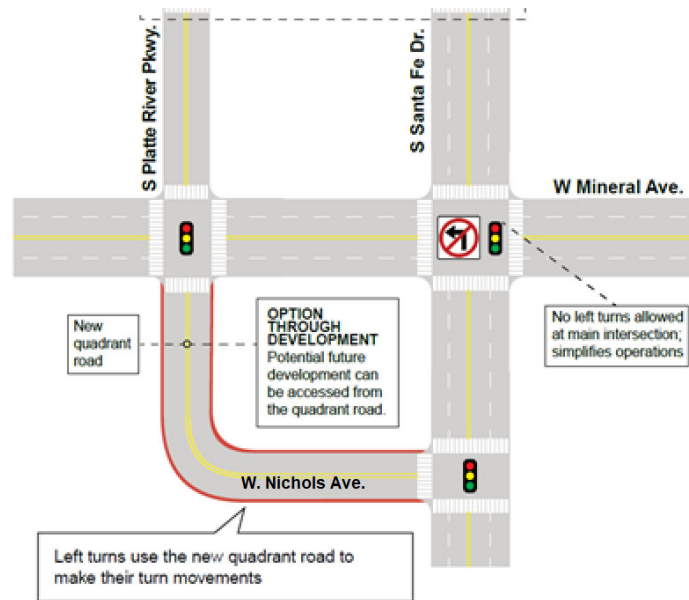
Given the existing traffic challenges and expectation of more growth of the surrounding communities and additional congestion in the future, the city has undertaken a study to identify solutions to relieve congestion and improve safety for the intersection. After evaluating several options, a quadrant road (“quad road”) solution has been identified as a configuration to improve traffic flow at the intersection of Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive that can be implemented within the next few years. The applicant worked with staff and the city’s traffic consultant to design a quad road concept within the proposed MDP. This design helps address the regional traffic conditions and development related impacts on the existing roadway network.

In addition to this intersection specific study by the city, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), in partnership with Arapahoe County, Denver, Douglas County, Englewood, Littleton, and Sheridan, is currently conducting a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study for an 11-mile stretch of Santa Fe Drive between C-470 and the junction of Alameda Drive and I-25. This PEL Study referred to as the Santa Fe Drive Action Plan will identify transportation issues and environmental concerns on the Santa Fe Drive corridor and develop short- and long-term alternatives that create a clear vision for the transportation functions in the corridor. The primary objective of the PEL process is to assess transportation needs and priorities. In all types of PELs, the goal is to gather enough detail so that the information developed can be utilized in future planning or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies. As a result, even though the Santa Fe Drive Action Plan will include an evaluation and likely recommendations for potential future measures to address the safety and congestion issues at the Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive intersection, the final report is not expected to identify a specific project for the intersection.

One long-term (20+ years) alternative for the intersection of Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive could include a recommendation for a grade-separated interchange at the intersection. This option would require additional right-of-way at the intersection and would require modifications to the Nichols Avenue access. The applicant has expressed concerns about the impacts of these future improvements as they relate to the property; however, the city has an obligation to balance regional transportation needs with site specific impacts. The quad road design is one example of this.

Conceptual Quad Road

The basic premise of a quad road is to prohibit left-turning movements at the principal intersection and shift these movements to the quad road through a system of coordinated traffic signals. Left-turn movements often cause the most delays at an intersection resulting in long queues and increased potential for crashes. More information regarding the [function of a quad road](#) may be viewed through the hyperlink.



In the applicant's proposal, a portion of Platte River Parkway and Nichols Avenue will serve as a quad road. Instead of turning left at Mineral Avenue, a northbound traveler on Santa Fe Drive will turn left on Nichols Avenue, follow the quad road to the new south extension of the Platte River Parkway and make another left onto Mineral Avenue. Without the quad road system, the developer would not be allowed to have a full-movement signalized intersection on Santa Fe Drive. Instead, Nichols Avenue would be limited to a right-in/right-out movement and any northbound vehicles on Santa Fe Drive headed to the development would be required to turn left onto Mineral Avenue and left again at Platte River Parkway to enter the site. Without mitigation, such a movement would likely overburden the westbound left turn lane from Mineral Avenue to Platte River Parkway and result in more congestion in the area, with the potential for back-ups into the Santa Fe Drive/Mineral Avenue intersection.

The quad road provides the only access points to Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive. In the future, Platte River Parkway will connect to Phillips Avenue, which will provide another full-movement intersection with Santa Fe Drive near Dad Clark Gulch on the South Santa Fe Park southern property. Without the quad road and signalized full-movement access to Santa Fe Drive at Nichols Avenue, the development would likely need to construct this southern Phillips Avenue access to Santa Fe Drive and the associated roadway extensions to accommodate site-generated traffic, which is outside of this property's boundary.

Traffic Analysis & Mitigation

To determine how the quad road and other associated roadway improvements are expected to mitigate the increased traffic associated with the development of the property, staff and the applicant worked together to understand how development of the property will affect traffic in the area. The traffic report supplied by the applicant in a previous application is a comprehensive and complete report that includes the traffic analysis and discussion sections requested by the city. The analysis included an evaluation of future near-term and long-term conditions for the background regional traffic and for the future development site-generated trips for comparison. The future conditions considered not only trips related to the RiverPark development, but also for the South Santa Fe Park property to the immediate south, as well as redevelopment of the Littleton Equine Medical Center.

The city worked with CDOT and other stakeholders on an intersection safety and congestion study to identify an approach to addressing the growing regional traffic in the area along Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive. This report, prepared by HDR in November 2019, provided information utilized in the development traffic study for consistency, such as traffic volumes and roadway configurations, and performed a detailed analysis to determine a recommended solution to the regional traffic issues. As a result of that work, an interim solution consisting of constructing a quad road through the development property and removing the left turn movements at the Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive intersection was recognized as the preferred approach. However, with the development traffic study being conducted at the same time as the regional intersection study, two distinct differences occurred between the reports.

One of these differences was that certain assumptions had to be included in the development traffic study, such as whether the quad road implementation would be phased over time or built to completion all at once. Based on initial feedback from CDOT, the decision was made for the development traffic study to conduct an evaluation that assumed a phased approach, where initially the left turn movements on Mineral Avenue to Santa Fe Drive would be retained and the quad road would not have full access to Santa Fe Drive. This assumption is represented in the analysis as the near-term (Year 2025) conditions where a partial access configuration is evaluated for the quad road (Nichols Avenue) at Santa Fe Drive, while the long-term (Year 2040) conditions evaluated a full access configuration to accommodate an alternative route for all the left turns previously at the Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive intersection. Subsequently, CDOT and the city determined that the quad road should be built in one complete phase, in other words removing all left turn movements at the Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive intersection and providing full access for Nichols Avenue onto Santa Fe Drive. While this is not the exact analysis that was included in the development traffic study, staff believes the conditions included in the development traffic study provides an adequate evaluation to understand the extent to which the development traffic will impact the future roadway configuration and need to be mitigated.

The other difference between the two studies was that two different traffic modelling software programs were utilized. The analysis for the development traffic report conducted by HKS was based on the Synchro program, which is traditionally used to conduct traffic impact studies and evaluates intersections as isolated systems. As a result, the traffic operation results reported by Synchro do not take into consideration closely spaced intersections operating with coordinated signal timing, or the impact the operations at one intersection can have on an adjacent intersection. Conversely, the analysis completed by HDR for the regional intersection study used a more robust and dynamic model called VISSIM, which treats the entire study area as a connected and coordinated network, resulting in a more accurate representation of the expected conditions. The contrast is revealed in the difference between the results reported by the two studies, where the regional intersection analysis shows much improved operations because of implementation of the quad road design, while the development traffic analysis identifies better operations but still some congested conditions. Again, staff believes the results from the development traffic study provide enough of an indication of the impact expected due to the RiverPark and South Santa Fe Park land uses for purposes of identifying mitigation and responsibility.

Transportation Next Steps

As discussed in the above sections, analyzing traffic aspects of this project in consideration with improvements to the adjacent intersection of Santa Fe Drive and Mineral Avenue were extremely complex. Significant efforts have been put forth from the applicant's consulting team, city staff, and the city's consultant to model various scenarios, evaluate associated impacts and coordinate with

CDOT. Construction of the quad road will serve as both a regional and private development traffic solution. The city has received a federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) grant to help fund the design and construction of the quad road. While the City intends to pursue construction of the quad road as a regional improvement, approval of the MDP will further facilitate coordination with the applicant in the form of other infrastructure improvements, including installation of subsurface utilities such as sewer and water mains, stormwater culverts, and sidewalks/trails. While the development traffic study outlined the parameters of development related impacts, specific details regarding cost participation for the quad road and other infrastructure will be contained within a future Subdivision Improvement Agreement (SIA) to be considered concurrently with a preliminary plat and final plat application, expected in the near future.

Due to requirements associated with TIP funding, the city is required to be the lead agency on the design and construction of the quad road. Project design began in the second quarter of 2021, with construction targeted to start in the second quarter of 2023 and anticipated to be completed by early 2025.

NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH AND PUBLIC NOTICE

The applicant held two virtual neighborhood meetings, one before the formal application on May 24, 2022 and one before the second submittal on June 29, 2022. In addition to the neighborhood meetings, at least ten days prior to the public hearing the property was posted with two large signs, a newspaper notice was published in the Denver Post, and postcards were sent to property owners and addresses within a 700-foot notice boundary as required by the LCC. The SouthPark Neighborhood Association #2 was part of the postcard notification and the only homeowners association within the notification boundary.

OUTSIDE REFERRAL AGENCIES

Staff sent referrals to 17 outside referral agencies. Staff and the applicant worked cooperatively with each agency providing comments on the proposed MDP and satisfactorily resolved all comments made.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the attached resolution which contains the following conditions as noted in the staff analysis:

1. In the development data on sheet four, the density of mixed-use development shall be corrected from 85 DU/Acre Max with Sustainability increases to 60 DU/Acre Max with Sustainability increases; and
2. In the development data on sheet four, the density of residential development shall be corrected from 75 DU/Acre Max with Sustainability increases to 62 DU/Acre Max with Sustainability increases.

The applicant has been advised of the conditions and has no objections.

ALTERNATIVES AND NEXT STEPS

Planning commission may approve, approve with conditions, or deny the MDP application. If denied, the property owner may develop in accordance with the 1985 planned development or reapply for a MDP in one year. Decisions of the planning commission may be appealed to city council within 30 calendar days.

If approved, it is expected that the property owner will apply for a preliminary and final plat to dedicate roadways and establish infrastructure by the end of this year. The property owner may also apply for site plans concurrently or in the future.