

DRAFT Mineral Station Area Framework Plan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

- *Community Engagement*
- *Additional Planning Resources*
- *History of Plan*
- *Acknowledgements*

II. South Santa Fe Drive Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

III. Existing Conditions

- *Mineral Light Rail Station*
- *Extension of SW Light Rail Line*
- *Description of Study Area*
- *Market Assessment*
- *Intersection of South Santa Fe and Mineral*
- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure*
- *Existing Strengths and Challenges*

IV. Transportation

- *Goals*
- *Action Steps*

V. Recreation, Open Space, Parks and Trails

- *Goals*
- *Action Steps*

VI. Character and Design

- *Goals*
- *Action Steps*

VII. Land Use

- *Goals*
- *Action Steps*

Appendices

- Mineral Station Market Assessment, May 2016
- Mineral Light Rail Station 2016 Community Engagement Overview (presented to Planning Commission in November 2016)

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Mineral Station Framework Plan is intended to provide direction to the city's efforts to improve South Santa Fe Drive (US 85) and the Santa Fe and Mineral Avenue intersection, and to guide future planning and decision-making for this area of the city. Future decision-making in this area of the city has the potential to enhance the fiscal health and sustainability of the city, and to continue to strengthen the city's sense of community and its livability.

The Littleton Mineral Light Rail Station (Mineral Station) serves the Southwest Light Rail Corridor for the Denver metro area Regional Transportation District (RTD). The station opened in 2000, and is one of the busiest and most utilized stations within the RTD entire system. Mineral Station is located at the intersection of South Santa Fe Drive (US 85) and Mineral Avenue, which is also one of the busiest vehicular intersections in Littleton. Additionally, the Mary Carter Greenway regional trail system, and main entrance into the South Platte Park's Carson Nature Center is accessed through the station property.

The framework plan's study area includes the Mineral Station property, and also includes approximately one-half mile around the light rail station: roughly bounded by the north end of Aspen Grove on the north, the South Platte River on the west, Dad Clark Gulch on the south and roughly Prince Street on the east. Existing uses within the area include the park-n-ride, light rail station, recreational trails, parks, open space, well established residential neighborhoods, and commercial uses. There also is an approximately 110 acre mostly undeveloped private property south of Mineral Avenue.

The plan's chapters outline the city initiated Planning Environmental Linkage (PEL) process and timeline for creating a plan for South Santa Fe Drive improvements (this will include improving the intersection of Santa Fe and Mineral Avenue); identifies existing conditions (both assets and challenges) of the study area; and articulates the community's goals with actionable steps (based on community engagement for the Mineral Station planning process, 2015-2016) in the categories of: transportation and circulation; recreation, open space, parks and trails; character and design; and, land use.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2013, Littleton received a grant to create master plans for its two light rail stations, the Downtown Littleton Station and the Mineral Avenue Station. In 2015, the city hired the firm of Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) to assist with these master planning projects.

Mineral Avenue Station was to start first. Two main tasks were to be part of the project – undertake a market assessment of the Mineral Station, and ensure the project and content of the master plan is vetted through a thorough community engagement process.

Through the community engagement process, a series of public open houses and meetings (including options for on-line community input as well), were held between March and August, 2016. PUMA began a working document to form the basis for a Mineral Station Area Master Plan.

In November, 2016, Littleton’s Community Development staff presented an overview to Planning Commission on all of the community comments provided on the project to date. During this study session with Planning Commission, commissioners reiterated to staff to ensure the content of the plan took direction from the community input. The main themes of the community input included the following:

- ✓ There was agreement that traffic and parking were major concerns (primarily the traffic congestion at the intersection of Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive, and about lack of parking at the park-n-ride at the Mineral Light Rail station, which is generally full by 7am each weekday).
- ✓ There also was majority agreement that recreation access, the South Platte Park and the Mary Carter Greenway, were very important community assets. The recreational connections, the park and regional trail are of utmost importance to the community - from east of the railroad to the western neighborhoods bordering the park.
- ✓ Differences of opinion and ideas were vast regarding future land uses and possible densities.

Public comments indicated it was difficult for community members to provide constructive input for future development and redevelopment within the station area. These comments further expressed concern that without a clear understanding of the future traffic and parking impacts (how would a road expansion of the intersection of Mineral and Santa Fe impact the light rail station, and how would an expansion of the light rail line to Lucent impact parking needs at the Mineral Station), it was hard to provide constructive input for a master plan.

As a result, it became apparent that creation of a master plan for the Mineral Station property was premature. In December, 2017, Littleton City Council directed staff to use the 2016 community engagement data as a baseline to create a framework plan that Littleton can use to guide the upcoming PEL project for South Santa Fe Drive, and for future decision-making for this part of the city.

NOTE: The Mineral Light Rail Station 2016 Community Engagement Overview (presented to Planning Commission in November 2016) is provided as an attachment / appendix.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING RESOURCES

Several additional planning resources are in place to be consulted in coordination with the city’s efforts to improve South Santa Fe Drive (including the Santa Fe and Mineral Avenue intersection), and for

future planning and decision-making in this area of Littleton. A general overview of each resource is listed below.

DRCOG Metro Vision Plan, 2017

The counties and municipalities of the Denver region have been advancing a shared aspirational vision of the future of the metro area for more than 60 years. Working together to make life better for local communities and residents, that vision has taken various forms over the years—most recently as a regional plan known as Metro Vision. The DRCOG Board of Directors adopted the first Metro Vision plan in 1997 (and most recently adopted an update in 2017), and has continued the dialogue about how best to achieve the plan’s evolving vision ever since. The plan anticipates that individual communities will contribute to Metro Vision outcomes and objectives through different pathways and at different speeds for collective impact. Six core principles have shaped the role of Metro Vision:

- ❖ Metro Vision protects and enhances the region’s quality of life.

Metro Vision’s most basic purpose is to safeguard for future generations the region’s many desirable qualities, including beautiful landscapes, diverse and livable communities, cultural and entertainment facilities, and employment and educational opportunities.

- ❖ Metro Vision is aspirational, long-range and regional in focus.

Metro Vision’s planning horizon extends 20 years and beyond to help the region address future concerns, while considering current priorities, too. The plan expresses a high-level, regional perspective on how the region as a whole can fulfill the vision of Metro Vision.

- ❖ Metro Vision offers ideas for local implementation.

Local governments can use Metro Vision as they make decisions about land use, transportation planning and a range of related issues. Metro Vision also helps local governments coordinate their efforts with one another and other organizations.

- ❖ Metro Vision respects local plans.

The region’s local governments developed Metro Vision, working collaboratively through DRCOG. The plan doesn’t replace the vision of any individual community, rather, it is a Introduction Metro Vision 2 Jan. 18, 2017 framework for addressing common issues. Metro Vision is sensitive to the decisions local governments make in determining when, where and how growth will occur. Metro Vision also recognizes that each community has its own view of the future related to its unique characteristics.

- ❖ Metro Vision encourages communities to work together.

Many of the effects associated with growth—such as traffic, air quality and housing costs—don’t recognize jurisdictional boundaries and local governments must work collaboratively to address them. Metro Vision provides the framework for coordinated regionwide efforts; DRCOG provides the forum.

- ❖ Metro Vision is dynamic and flexible.

Metro Vision reflects contemporary perspectives on the future of the region and is updated as conditions and priorities change. The DRCOG Board makes minor revisions to the plan annually and major updates as needed.

Applying the Metro Vision Principles in Practice guides DRCOG's work and establishes shared expectations with our region's many and various planning partners. Metro Vision has historically informed other DRCOG planning processes such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Any implementation of Metro Vision through future project or funding criteria will be applied in a holistic manner by considering the diversity of community values and the unique ways jurisdictions contribute to the vibrancy of the region.

South Platte Park Management Plan, 2017

This plan describes operational guidelines for the management of the Park in keeping with the Master Plan goals and objectives. Its focus is on resource and visitor management as well as interpretation and education. Several areas within the South Platte Park are designated as preserved and protected Wildlife Areas. "Wildlife Areas" are defined as those areas documented through studies and observations of primary importance in providing habitat (food, water, shelter, and space) for a diversity of plants and animals. They are important for resting, reproduction, forage, and refuge from human activity, especially for species sensitive to disturbance". The East Trail runs parallel to the South Platte River between Mineral Avenue and the Wolhurst Mobile Home Park just west of the undeveloped private property (south of Mineral Avenue). The area provides "riparian habitat with a remnant cottonwood forest testifying to the South Platte River's historic meandering. It provides nesting habitat for owls, ducks, rails, and a variety of songbirds. It is a prime migration area for songbirds such as, warblers, thrushes, and flycatchers. It is one of the Park's core areas of activity for deer and coyote."

City of Littleton Citywide Plan, 2014

The 2014 Citywide Plan articulates the goals of the community: to foster a vibrant and evolving community; to expand upon Littleton's most valuable outdoor resources; to enhance local, regional and global resources (physical, social and technological); and to maintain and expand upon the characteristics that make Littleton an authentic and distinctive community.

Mineral Station Area ULI Technical Advisory Panel, 2014

The 2014 Mineral Station Area Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) built upon the 2006 ULI Study for Mineral Station, and has several recommendations also consistent with the 2014 Citywide Plan. The panel recommended that internal streets should be "complete streets" meaning streets that are designed for pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and automobiles. A major recommendation of this plan is "that surface parking lots be designed as land banks for future development and that buildings be designed for future parking above them or for stacked parking in adjacent structures. For the RTD park and ride site the panel recommended "a mixed-use town center that includes

underground and structured parking, upscale rental or for-sale housing, a hotel, retail and office space, and a town square or gathering place.” Finally, “the panel recommended that the City, RTD, and developers explore, create, and implement a shared parking strategy” to provide for a mix of uses and for the daily transit users that drive to the park and ride.

South Platte River Corridor Vision, 2013

The South Platte River Corridor Vision plan studied the entire length of the South Platte River that is within the city limits of Littleton. The portion of the river adjacent to the study area is described as “the corridor’s greatest opportunity to successfully implement a model of land development that protects the River corridor while embracing it as a resource that adds value and richness to the entire development parcel.” The plan recognizes the economic development potential of the river by encouraging commercial and residential uses that are compatible with the river corridor.

The plan describes the importance of the light rail stations as “significant city-shaping elements that should be connected to the River corridor by safe, direct and pleasant bike and pedestrian routes if at all possible. The synergy between these important nodes and the South Platte corridor provides huge benefits in terms of usership, quality of life, economic development potential, and alternate modes of transportation”. The plan identifies the existing trails along the corridor and states that future development plans “should take advantage of existing trail corridors, especially the existing drainage way and underpass between Mineral Avenue and C-470” which is known as the “Dad Clark” gulch that connects to the McLellen Reservoir. The plan goes on to describe how “a partnership might be formed with the developer to offer incentives for river-friendly mixed use development that takes advantage of the transit stop at Mineral, and that also protects some portion of the site as a buffer to South Platte Park”. The plan also recommends improved directional signage for cyclists and pedestrians between the Aspen Grove Shopping Center, the RTD light rail stop, and the South Platte River. Part of this recommendation includes planning for high utilization of bikes and pedestrians between the light rail station and the northeastern corner of the undeveloped private property south of Mineral Avenue. Finally the plan states the City of Littleton should “consider at least one bridge or underpass across Mineral Avenue to provide a safe, grade-separated route between these important areas to strengthen the transit-oriented development (TOD) potential for the northern edge of the Ensor Property.”

South Santa Fe Corridor Plan, 2000

Although this plan was created almost two decades ago, it is still relevant and currently utilized. The plan goals relevant to Mineral Station include: achieve a high quality and consistent urban design, unique to the character of Littleton; provide access and circulation that promotes safety and optimizes development and redevelopment opportunities; develop the Santa Fe corridor as a high-quality, employment based land use area within the City; and, promote TOD within 1/4 mile radius of the Mineral Avenue Station.

HISTORY OF PLAN

The following provides an overview from 2013 to present, on the progression and steps that have occurred for the creation of the framework plan.

- ❖ In 2013, the city received a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant through the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) for station area master planning at both the Mineral and the Downtown Littleton light rail stations. The grant required the focus of the study areas and resulting master plans to be a guide for future development and redevelopment of the station areas using transit oriented development (TOD) principles. The intent of the project was to establish master plans for these areas.
- ❖ The FTA grant awarded for the Mineral Light Rail Station planning was \$75,000 with a \$18,750 match by the city.
- ❖ In 2014, a contract between RTD and the city was established for the two station areas planning projects. During the same timeframe, an Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel was convened to assess the Mineral Light Rail station. The recommendation of this panel was to add a parking structure to the station to “free up land for high quality urban development to include residential and retail.”
- ❖ In 2015, the city bid the project and hired the firm of Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) and their sub-consultants for the projects. The Mineral Station Area master planning was to start first.
- ❖ In 2016, PUMA began the Mineral Light Rail Station Master Plan project. Two main tasks that were to be part of the project – undertake a market assessment of the Mineral Station, and ensure the project and content of the plan is vetted through a thorough community engagement process.
- ❖ The Mineral Station Area Market Assessment was completed by PUMA in May 2016. It provided analysis of the area for future development and redevelopment. One of the main outcomes of this analysis indicated that there was not the market pressure for redevelopment of the Mineral Station Light Rail property in this market cycle.
- ❖ The community engagement process included formation of a steering committee with representatives from RTD, DRCOG, City Council, Planning Commission, Wolhurst Landing residential neighborhood, Aspen Grove shopping center, Littleton Equine Center, and South Suburban Parks and Recreation District. Two open houses and two community public meetings were held between March and August 2016, and community input also was received via on-line. PUMA began a working document to form the basis for a Mineral Station Area Master Plan.
- ❖ Littleton’s Community Development staff presented an overview to Planning Commission on all of the community comments provided on the project to date, in November 2016. During this study session with Planning Commission, commissioners reiterated to staff to ensure the content of the plan took direction from the community input.
- ❖ Littleton Community Development staff began to assess the working document against community input. Public comments indicated it was difficult for community members to provide constructive input for future development and redevelopment within the station area, without a clear understanding of the future traffic and parking impacts (how would a road expansion of the intersection of Mineral and Santa Fe impact the light rail station, and how

would an expansion of the light rail line to Lucent impact parking needs at the Mineral Station). The scope of the working document was unable to address the underlying issues of community concern around traffic and parking.

- ❖ In early 2017, RTD underwent an audit of the FTA grant funding program. The city had several meetings with RTD, and in early October, 2017, RTD informed the City that they have revised their contractual procedures. As a result RTD must establish a new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the Mineral Light Rail Station Area planning project, and will fund the awarded grant amount for the planning project with non-federal funds. The city and RTD anticipate a new IGA will be finalized by the first quarter of 2018.
- ❖ At the December 12, 2017 study session, Littleton City Council decided it was premature to establish a master plan for directing future development and redevelopment of the station area property without a better understanding of how future solutions for the traffic and parking issues will impact the Mineral Station property (*how will a road expansion of the intersection of Mineral and Santa Fe impact the Mineral Station property and current light rail station configuration; and, how will an extension of the light rail line to Lucent impact parking needs at Mineral Station*).
 - ✓ There are other significant processes getting underway for determining these answers. As an example, the City is initiating a “Planning and Environmental Linkage” (PEL) study with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and other stakeholders for South Santa Fe (Hwy 85) Drive and including the Santa Fe and Mineral Avenue intersection. The ultimate design of the interchange and resulting “footprint” will likely impact the property in size and configuration. Additionally, RTD is continuing to pursue the extension of the light rail line from the Mineral Avenue Station to a proposed Lucent Station. This extension and timeframe will influence the future parking needs at the Mineral Station. The South Santa Fe PEL project will have to consider the future impacts and timing of the Lucent extension.
 - ✓ As a result, Littleton City Council directed staff to use the planning process and community input gathered thus far, to create a framework plan with actionable steps that can be used to guide the upcoming PEL project for South Santa Fe Drive, and for future decision-making for this part of the city with respect to transportation, recreation/parks, open space and trails, land uses, and character and design.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The framework plan would like to acknowledge the prior efforts of the city and the community’s input to discuss creating a master plan for the Mineral Avenue Light Rail Station. This includes the previous work completed by the consultant firm, Progressive Urban Management Associates and their sub-consultants: DIG Studio, Starboard Reality, Felsburg Holt & Ullevig (FHU), PlaceMatters, Stream Design, and Walker Parking.

The Mineral Station Market Assessment was completed by PUMA in 2016, and the community engagement from 2016 established the foundation/baseline for the framework plan.

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Chapter 2

SOUTH SANTA FE DRIVE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES (PEL) STUDY

Traffic and parking were the two issues most consistently and emphatically voiced during the 2016 community engagement process. Possible responses to these issues, such as reconfiguration of the intersection of South Santa Fe Drive with West Mineral Avenue, could affect the location and configuration of the Mineral Light Rail Station platform, the location of the pedestrian bridge across South Santa Fe Drive servicing the station, the boundaries of the surface parking lots, the location of the bussing connections, and connection to the adjacent retail and regional trail system. These or any other changes to the station have to be determined before planning for the future of the station area can proceed. To help identify and determine the necessary changes, the City has embarked on a planning process that will identify existing and future concerns and constraints along the South Santa Fe Drive (US 85) corridor. Included in those concerns and constraints will be those associated with transit, such as the traffic and parking issues associated with the Mineral Station. Once these have been identified, the PEL will provide necessary direction for addressing them. Working on the PEL study in partnership with the other cities along the South Santa Fe Drive corridor from north of C-470 to I-25, i.e. Sheridan, Englewood, and Denver, Littleton is embarking on a program that will establish the future character and needs of South Santa Fe Drive and will provide the information necessary to proceed with further planning for the station area.

A PEL study is the first step in a collaborative approach to transportation decision-making; it considers a community's transportation, environmental, and economic goals early in the planning stage and sets the stage for project development, design, and construction. This effort usually occurs before any identification of project construction funding, and before classification of specific problems and solutions. A PEL study is intended to lead to better decision-making and reduce duplication and conflict of efforts in the planning and implementation of future transportation and land development projects.

South Santa Fe Drive is a major regional transportation corridor in the Denver metropolitan area, carrying over 50,000 vehicles a day through Littleton, with a mix of local and commuter traffic combined with a substantial percentage of truck traffic. Over the last few decades, the southwest metro area has grown up around and along South Santa Fe Drive, which remains the area's major north/south connection between residences and businesses to the south and I-25, the 6th Avenue Freeway, and Downtown Denver to the north. At the same time, the character of South Santa Fe Drive has changed, with new retail, restaurants, and housing in areas previously occupied by old motels, trailer parks, service retail, and outdoor storage yards. New development, such as the Sterling Ranch community in Douglas County, will continue to add to the "background" traffic on South Santa Fe Drive. The traffic generated by Sterling Ranch and other new development south and west has, and will continue to have, both positive and negative impacts on Littleton. While the traffic on South Santa Fe Drive adds to already increased levels of congestion and the impacts associated with dense traffic throughout the day, the corridor is also a generator of economic development, job creation, and housing opportunities.

The first objective for the PEL study is to understand the communities along the South Santa Fe Drive corridor, how the transportation system currently functions, how the corridor impacts communities, and what can be improved now and in the future. The task of the Mineral Station Framework Plan is to

provide the City's considerations for the study area so that these needs and desires can be incorporated into the PEL process.

The PEL study may develop a series of alternatives that address the issues along the South Santa Fe Drive corridor. If the study develops alternatives, the ability of these alternatives to meet the corridor's needs will be evaluated and considered, along with their effects on the communities and environment. No matter what specific planning process is followed, it will incorporate key components such as accessibility and multi-modal planning for bikes and pedestrians.

After the PEL study is complete, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and local agencies will have a shared list of projects and an implementation strategy. That list and plan will be used to identify funding for design and implementation. The list of projects will serve as a bucket-list of improvements that will be implemented over time. While implementation of projects in the highest priority locations will come first, the goal is to eventually implement all of the projects identified by the PEL study as conditions warrant and funding becomes available.

At the time of this plan, Littleton and the other communities are laying the groundwork for the Santa Fe Drive Corridor PEL study. The study is projected to get underway in 2018 and be approximately an 18 month process.

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Study Area

Chapter 3

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The study area for the Mineral Station Framework Plan is in southwest Littleton, north of C-470, surrounding the intersection of South Santa Fe Drive (US 85) and Mineral Avenue, and extending one-half mile, or an estimated 10 minute walk, from the light rail platform. With its ready access to a diversity of transportation modes, the study area has convenient access to and from the surrounding areas, the region, and Denver International Airport.

MINERAL LIGHT RAIL STATION

Operated by the Regional Transportation District (RTD), the Mineral Light Rail Station opened in 2000 as the southern terminus of the Southwest line. The station is served by the C and D lines, which both connect to all other lines and head to Union Station and the center of Downtown Denver, respectively.

In addition to the C and D light rail lines, there are also five RTD bus routes (77, 85, 401, 402L, and 403) that serve Mineral Station. Routes 77 and 85 run west from Mineral Station along two different corridors, both terminating at the Ken Caryl Ranch bus service Park-n-Ride. The others run east, primarily serving Highlands Ranch. Route 401 terminates near Broadway and Highlands Ranch Parkway where there is a bus service Park-n-Ride. Route 402L terminates at Park Meadows Mall (with limited service running all the way to Mineral Station). Route 403 terminates at RTD's Lincoln Station, where the E and F light rail routes operate.

Mineral Station Park-N-Ride is one of the busiest in the RTD system. The 1,200 space parking lot reaches capacity Monday through Friday by 7:00 am. Because this is an end-of-the-line station, it attracts transit riders from a large, 10-mile-drive-distance radius, with concentrations of riders in Littleton, Highlands Ranch to the south and southeast, and Ken Caryl/Columbine to the west. RTD will allow individuals to reserve a parking space (15% of the 1,200) until 10:00 am each morning; after 10:00, these spaces then become first come, first served. Currently there is a one-year wait for these reserved spaces.

EXTENSION OF THE SOUTHWEST LIGHT RAIL LINE

While RTD has acquired all of the land and right-of-way needed for a planned 2.5 mile extension of the Southwest rail lines to a new Park-N-Ride at Lucent Boulevard at C-470 in Highlands Ranch, cost overruns on the construction of other projects approved as part of the FastTracks transit expansion program have necessitated an indefinite delay in the construction of that extension while RTD seeks other funding for the project.

The proposed Park-N-Ride at C-470 and Lucent Boulevard would potentially include another 1,000 parking spaces. While this project might alleviate some parking demand at the Mineral Station Park-N-Ride, many users of the Mineral station live west of or close to the study area and might find continue to find the Mineral Station more convenient. Although some parking spaces might be vacated by riders

shifting to a new station, other users, including new riders from Sterling Ranch and other new developments, might quickly claim them.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

At the time of this plan, the primary land use in the study area is the surface parking at the Mineral Light Rail Station Park-N-Ride. Additionally, land uses in the study area include open space, agriculture, park, residential, and retail. Two major arterial streets, South Santa Fe and Mineral, connect to the surrounding areas. In addition to being the primary north/south connection for the southwest section of Metropolitan Denver, South Santa Fe is also a federal highway (US 85) that connects with I-25 to the south at Castle Rock and to the north at Alameda Avenue and connects to Downtown Denver at Speer Boulevard. Parallel to and to the east of South Santa Fe Drive are two tracks for RTD's Southwest (C and D) light rail lines and a double-tracked, consolidated mainline freight corridor operated jointly by the Burlington Northern South Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP) railroads.

The combination of two heavy rail and two light rail lines and four⁺ lanes of South Santa Fe Drive creates a major barrier between the station and the neighborhoods to the east. Similarly, the river and the park create a major barrier between the study area and the neighborhoods to the west.

The adjacency of the station to South Platte River, nature center, park, and trail makes the station unique in the region and provides a unique opportunity for any future development at the station and in the larger study area.

WEST OF THE STATION PLATFORM

The portion of the study area west of the light rail station platform is comprised largely of the existing Park-N-Ride, South Platte Park, Mary Carter Greenway, and the Carson Nature Center. The RTD Park-N-Ride sits on two parcels of land totaling 17 acres. The main 12-acre parcel is located at the northwest corner of Mineral Avenue and South Santa Fe Drive. The five-acre parcel (dirt parking lot) is located directly west of the 12-acre property on the west side of South Platte River Parkway. The zoning of the 12-acre parcel is zoned PD-C (Planned Development Commercial) and the 5-acre parcel PD-I (Planned Development Industrial). Both parcels may require rezoning or amending their current zoning if a use other than transit parking were to be considered.

The north-flowing South Platte River and the park and open space associated with the river provide publicly accessible riverfront open space along the western edge of the study area. South Platte Park is a 650-acre park along the river that is managed by South Suburban Park and Recreation. The highly-utilized Mary Carter Greenway Trail extends along the river and provides connections to over 1500 miles of off-street multi-use trails in the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) 9-county region. The Greenway is the primary gateway to the South Platte riverfront and the regional trail network. It is a well-used segment of the regional network, with over 1,500 users per day on a busy summer weekend. Mary Carter is a paved multi-use trail that follows the South Platte River for 8 miles from Chatfield State Park on the south to Englewood on the north, where it becomes the South Platte River Trail and then intersects with other regional multi-use trails.

NORTH OF THE STATION PLATFORM

On the north side of the study area are Aspen Grove Shopping Center and the 280-unit Berkshire Aspen Grove residential apartments. Immediately north of the study area is the Wolhurst Landing residential neighborhood, which has access from a continuation of South Bryant Street through the north end of the Aspen Grove Shopping Center.

The Aspen Grove Shopping Center, which was designed as a “lifestyle” shopping center, opened in 2000 and includes 266,970 square feet of restaurant/retail space and 1,318 surface parking spaces on 25 acres. Aspen Grove has a regional draw, with an Apple store and the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema as its regional anchors, but it also includes neighborhood uses such as restaurants, Starbucks, Williams Sonoma, Gap, Tattered Cover book store, bicycle shop, clothing stores, and household goods stores. The center does not include some of the typical neighborhood uses such as a grocery store, pharmacy, or hardware store.

The architecture of the Aspen Grove shopping center exemplifies the “rural vernacular” form called for in the South Platte River Corridor Development Design Guidelines. In contrast, Wolhurst Landing was developed prior to the design guidelines and its architecture is not consistent with the rural vernacular form.

Also exemplifying the rural vernacular form, the Berkshire Aspen Grove Apartments were located and designed to minimize their impact on the Carson Nature Center and the Mary Carter Greenway. The apartment complex is separated from the trail by a buffer area, is fenced to control access to the trail, is set back from its west property line, and has a centralized pedestrian entrance to the park and trail that takes advantage of the existing pedestrian access to the Nature Center.

EAST OF THE STATION PLATFORM

On the east side of the study area, South Park and Jackass Hill are well maintained, desirable residential neighborhoods. However, even though these neighborhoods are relatively close to the station, their disconnected street patterns limit access to the west to the sidewalks along Mineral Avenue or an informal pedestrian path that descends Jackass Hill and increase the walking time beyond the desired 10-minutes. Light industrial and manufacturing uses are concentrated to the southeast at West County Line Road and SouthPark Circle, with uses including light industrial facilities, warehouses/flex space, and hotels. The Highline Canal regional trail runs through the SouthPark and Jackass Hill neighborhoods and has multiple links to the regional trail system.

SOUTH OF THE STATION PLATFORM

To the south of Mineral is a 110-acre parcel that extends from South Santa Fe Drive to South Platte Park and is primarily undeveloped. Adjoining the southeast end of that parcel is the Littleton Equine Medical Center, a well-established horse hospital that dates back to when Littleton was home to the Centennial Race track and that serves clients from throughout the Intermountain West. Just beyond the south

boundary of the study area is the Wolhurst Adult Mobile Home Community, which has its access at County Line Road and South Santa Fe.

The 110-acre property south of Mineral Avenue is currently undeveloped but has planned development (PD) zoning that was approved in 1983. Known as the South Santa Fe Park, the approved Planned Development allows a maximum of approximately 775 residential dwelling units and approximately 1 million square feet of retail and office space. The property consists of two adjacent parcels, one 33-acre parcel immediately south of Mineral Avenue, and a second 77-acre parcel south of it.

AREAS SURROUNDING THE STUDY AREA

The study area is impacted by new development in surrounding areas. Designed in the rural vernacular form called for by the South Platte River Corridor Development Design Guidelines, the Breckenridge Brewery campus immediately north of Wolhurst Landing includes the brewery, Farm House restaurant, Angelo's Taverna, Carboy Winery, and headquarters of the Designs by Sundown landscape company. Farther north, significant improvements have been made at Hudson Gardens, inviting more year-round activity. Six miles south of the study area, Sterling Ranch is anticipating a 20-year build-out of 12,050 new homes and 31,000 new residents. The primary north/south connection for those new residents will be South Santa Fe and the closest light rail station will be Mineral. To the southeast, the SouthPark mixed-use business park and its Hilltop Business Center continue to grow and attract new development. All of this new development will increase the potential market, add to the volume of traffic on South Santa Fe and Mineral, and increase the potential ridership on the Southwest light rail line and RTD buses. It will also increase the need for parking and the use of the park and trail system.

MINERAL STATION MARKET ASSESSMENT

The Mineral Station Area Market Assessment was created in 2016 by Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) for the City of Littleton. The Market Assessment includes a description of the context for the local and regional market areas; an analysis of the demographic, housing, employment, and retail sectors; and an analysis of development opportunities given two market scenarios. The analysis concluded that there is not sufficient market pressure for redevelopment of the Mineral Station property in this market cycle.

PUMA assessed both a Market Driven Scenario and a Value Capture Scenario:

- ❖ The Market-Driven Scenario forecasts what the private sector is most likely to deliver under existing market conditions, and given the existing entitlements for the Study Area properties.
- ❖ The Value Capture Scenario looks at opportunities identified for which the Study Area has distinctive transit and recreational attributes that could enhance its value in the marketplace, but which would most likely require significant public vision and involvement to achieve.

NOTE: The full market assessment is provided as an attachment / appendix.

INTERSECTION OF SOUTH SANTA FE AND MINERAL

During peak periods, the intersection of Mineral Avenue and South Santa Fe operates at a Level of Service F. Mineral Avenue carries approximately 25,000 vehicles per day and South Santa Fe approximately 51,000 vehicles per day. The City of Littleton is currently working with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the affected jurisdictions on a Planning Environmental Linkage Study (PEL) study for South Santa Fe north of C-470. In addition to the current PEL study for South Santa Fe north of C-470, CDOT is conducting a PEL study for South Santa Fe (US 85) south of Littleton to Titan Road and the Sterling Ranch development.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the broader neighborhood is generally poor with limited bike lanes, few crosswalks, stretches with no sidewalks and others with disconnected sidewalks. Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity from the Jackass Hill neighborhood across South Santa Fe Drive is a challenge with only one formal connection to the station via Mineral Avenue and the existing pedestrian bridge over South Santa Fe Drive.

EXISTING STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

In reviewing the existing conditions and the ideas gathered during the community engagement process, the following appear to be the primary strengths and challenges of the study area:

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STUDY AREA

1. RIVER, PARK AND TRAILS - Unique access to the river, open space, nature center, and regional trails
2. LOCATION – Southwestern gateway to the city
3. NEIGHBORHOODS - Desirable, well established residential neighborhoods
4. VIEWS - Views of the river valley, park, and mountains
5. ACCESS - Convenient multi-modal regional access
6. ASPEN GROVE - Aspen Grove shopping center and apartments
7. CHARACTER - Established, unique design character and adopted design guidelines

CHALLENGES IN THE STUDY AREA

1. TRAFFIC - Existing and projected traffic congestion and noise
2. PARKING - Existing and projected parking shortage
3. BARRIERS - Barriers created by the railroad/light rail/South Santa Fe corridor on the east and by the river/park on the west,
4. CONNECTIVITY – Limited, indirect, uninviting, and unsafe connections
5. SAFETY -Safety issues, particularly for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists and for transit riders who use the Park-N-Ride lots



Transportation Map

Chapter 4

TRANSPORTATION

Community engagement affirmed that traffic congestion on South Santa Fe Drive and West Mineral Avenue, and parking at the Mineral Station, are issues that need to be addressed by the Mineral Station Framework Plan.

The City is initiating a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and other stakeholders for South Santa Fe Drive (US 85) corridor between C-470 and I-25. This study will include an assessment of the South Santa Fe Drive and West Mineral Avenue intersection, resulting in a recommended alternative to address the congestion, likely in the form of an interchange. From this finding, a design of the interchange and resulting “footprint” can be identified as to the impact to the Mineral Station property in size and configuration. Additionally, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) is continuing to pursue the extension of the light rail line from the Mineral Station to a proposed Lucent Boulevard Station. This extension and timeframe will influence the future parking needs at the Mineral Station. The South Santa Fe Drive PEL project will have to consider the future impacts and timing of the extension to Lucent Boulevard.

The following goals will be utilized in consultation with the PEL study and actions steps proposed for any decision making that will impact this area of the City.

GOALS

1. ADJOINING PROPERTY: Protect the character, livability, and desirability of properties along both South Santa Fe Drive and West Mineral Avenue.
3. VIEWS: Protect views of the river valley, park, and mountains.
5. MULTI-MODAL: Protect, expand, and improve access to and use of regional multi-modal transportation alternatives.
6. TRAFFIC: Mitigate the negative impacts of existing and projected traffic volume and congestion in the study area.
7. PARKING: Balance the need for parking with the desire to encourage people to use transportation alternatives and to make more efficient use of property.
8. CHARACTER: Protect and expand upon the established design character of the City and the study area.
9. BARRIERS: To the extent possible, mitigate South Santa Fe Drive and rail lines as barriers between the neighborhoods to the east and to the west.
10. CONNECTIVITY: Improve multimodal connectivity and connectivity between the station and the property to the south of West Mineral Avenue and throughout the study area.
11. SAFETY: Improve public safety in the study area.

ACTION STEPS

1. **TRAFFIC MITIGATION:** Continue to establish regional partnerships with CDOT, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), and other jurisdictions to help mitigate traffic concerns along South Santa Fe Drive.
2. **ACCESS AND CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS:** Establish a comprehensive program for improving vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access and circulation to and from the light rail station, across the intersection of South Santa Fe Drive and West Mineral Avenue, between the study area and adjacent neighborhoods, and within the study area.
3. **WALKABLE:** Establish a more walkable and bicycle-friendly environment throughout the study area, particularly from the Mineral Station platform to the overflow parking lot west of South Platte Parkway.
4. **LIGHT RAIL EXPANSION:** Work with RTD, Douglas County, and the Highlands Ranch Metro District to secure funding for the expansion of the Southwest line to Lucent Boulevard and the provision of parking at that station.
5. **PARKING:** In coordination with an expansion of the Light Rail System to Lucent Boulevard, create a plan for adequate parking to be provided at the Mineral Light Rail Station, to meet Littleton's needs.
6. **PARK AND TRAIL CONNECTIONS:** Work with South Suburban Parks and Recreation (SSPR) to establish a program for improving connections to the South Platte Park, Carson Nature Center, and the Mary Carter Greenway.
7. **SAFETY:** Establish a program for providing and maintaining additional street, sidewalk, intersection, street crossing, trail, streetscape, lighting, parking, and traffic calming improvements that enhance the safety of multi-modal connections throughout the study area.
8. **ASPEN GROVE:** Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Mineral Avenue Station and the Aspen Grove Shopping Center.
9. **SHELTER:** At the Mineral Station platform, add shelters for pedestrians and rail passengers to use during inclement weather.
10. **CONNECTIVITY:** If the relocation of the pedestrian bridge across South Santa Fe Drive is being studied, a new location should consider a larger circulation plan, including a program to improve pedestrian access to Aspen Grove and improve connection to the residential neighborhoods to the east of South Santa Fe Drive and the railroad.
11. **DRCOG AND OTHER AREA RESOURCES:** Work with DRCOG and other area resources for future funding to provide transportation solutions in the study area.



Open Space Map

CHAPTER 5

RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND TRAILS

Community engagement affirmed that the natural and recreation resources in the study area are among its most significant assets.

The South Platte River, South Platte Park, and the Mary Carter Greenway Trail, all of which are in the study area, are important community and regional assets. The west Park-N-Ride lot adjoins South Platte Park, the Carson Nature Center, and Mary Carter Greenway and all three of these resources extend north and south from the Park-N-Ride lot and occupy the western edge of the study area. Given that the Park-N-Ride lots span both sides of South Platte River Parkway and extend to West Carson Drive, the Mineral Station serves as the primary gateway to the Carson Nature Center and to the Mary Carter Greenway. The proximity of the Mineral Station and the entire study area to these key recreational amenities provides an opportunity for the future of the station area that is unique to all of the other stations in the RTD rail system. No other station has this unique combination of natural and recreational assets.

The following goals and actions steps are to be consulted in the PEL study and with all other decisionmaking that will impact this area of the city.

GOALS

1. SOUTH PLATTE RIVER – Protect and enhance the river corridor.
2. SOUTH PLATTE PARK – Ensure the vision of the South Platte Park Management Plan is maintained with future decisionmaking in this area of the city.
3. MARY CARTER GREENWAY – Enhance and maintain this recreational amenity for the city and region.
4. RECREATION – Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities within the study area.
5. OPEN SPACE -- Protect the open space areas and natural resources within the study area.
6. CONNECTIVITY – Improve pedestrian and bicycle trails connectivity from the residential neighborhoods throughout the study area.
7. BARRIERS – To the extent possible, mitigate South Santa Fe Drive and rail lines as barriers between the neighborhoods to the east and to the west.

ACTION STEPS

1. NATURAL AREAS: Coordinate with South Suburban Parks and Recreation (SSPR) to allow safe and appropriate access to surrounding open space and natural resources, including the South Platte Park, Mary Carter Greenway and South Platte River.
2. TRAIL CONNECTIONS: Improve existing trails and connections from the adjacent residential neighborhoods to the South Platte Park and Mary Carter Greenway trail system.

3. MINERAL STATION TO ADJACENT RECREATIONAL AMENITIES: Improve the trail connections into the Mineral Station, and from the station to the Carson Nature Center and Mary Carter Greenway.
4. CROSSWALK ENHANCEMENT: Improve the intersection of Carson Drive and South Platte Parkway with enhanced crosswalks for pedestrians and bicyclists.
5. PROTECT: Continue to protect the south Platte Park's natural resources.
6. LOCATION: Ensure future decisionmaking for the Mineral Station highlights its location and adjacency to the South Platte Park and South Platte River.

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CHAPTER 6

CHARACTER AND DESIGN

Community engagement affirmed character and design are important to ensure that the identify of this area of the city is enhanced and maintained over time.

The city adopted development design principles for this area of Littleton in 2000 (South Platte River Corridor Development Design Objectives) and these objectives are in place to ensure character is maintained with any future development and/or redevelopment in the study area.

The following goals and actions steps are to be consulted in the PEL study and with all other decision-making that will impact this area of the city.

GOALS

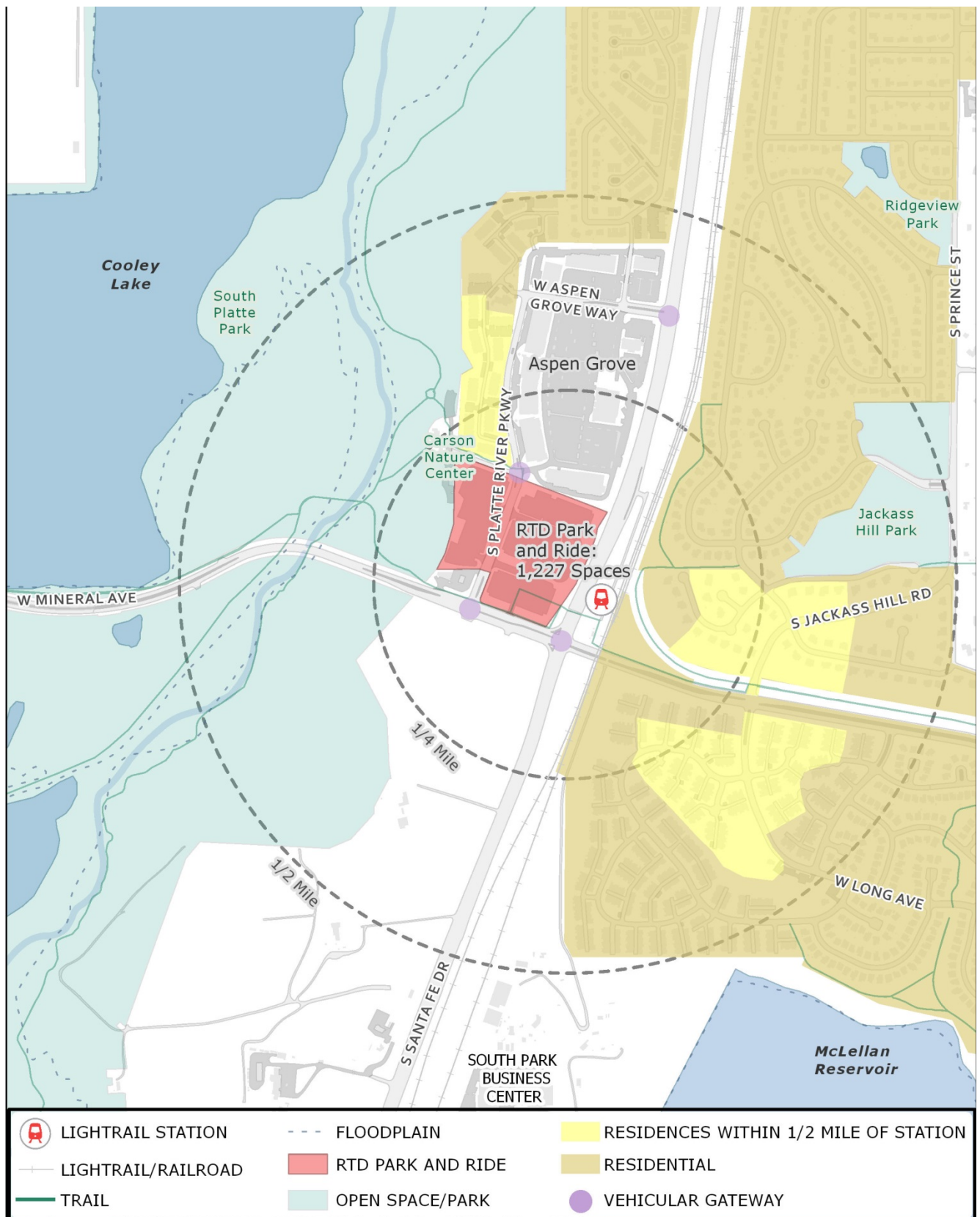
1. NEIGHBORHOODS - Preserve and enhance the character, livability, and desirability of the existing residential neighborhoods.
2. CHARACTER – Protect and extend the established design character of the city and of the study area.
3. ASSETS – Preserve the natural assets in the study area, including the South Platte River, the park, the Mary Carter Greenway, and the views of the river valley, park, and mountains.
4. ADJOINING PROPERTY: Protect and enhance the character, livability, and desirability of properties along both South Santa Fe and Mineral Avenue.
5. VIEWS -- Protect views of the river valley, park, and mountains.
6. BARRIERS – To the extent possible, mitigate South Santa Fe and the rail lines as barriers between the neighborhoods to the east and the area to the west.
7. CONNECTIVITY – Improve connectivity throughout the study area and with surrounding areas.
8. SAFETY – Improve public safety in the study area.

ACTION STEPS

1. NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN: Follow the recommendations of the adopted South Neighborhood Plan. If necessary, update and expand the neighborhood plan.
2. DESIGN: Apply the adopted design objectives (South Platte River Corridor Development Design Objectives) to all new development. Ensure this area of the city retains its character as a southern gateway into Littleton.
3. VIEWS: Ensure future decisionmaking includes protection of views of the river valley, park, and mountains.
4. CHARACTER: Ensure future decisionmaking enhances the livability and desirability of the study area.

5. **WAYFINDING:** Establish a program for providing and maintaining way-finding signage and pedestrian-level signage at key locations in order to improve orientation and help create a cohesive identity for the study area.
6. **BARRIERS** – Design inviting connections across the barriers. Inviting connections are comfortable, physically attractive, safe, and intuitive.
7. **STREETSCAPE:** Add more streetscape amenities, such as enhanced sidewalks, bikeways and crosswalks, and landscaping, such as street trees and greenery throughout the study area, including South Platte Parkway at Mineral Station.
8. **SAFETY:** Design streetscape, parking lots, crosswalks, and other infrastructure to improve safety within the study area.

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Land Use Map

CHAPTER 7

LAND USE

Community engagement affirmed land use decisions have influence on the study area.

Existing land uses surrounding the Mineral Station are well established and include recreation (west), commercial (immediately to the north), and residential neighborhoods to the north, south, east and west. There also is an approximately 110 acre predominately undeveloped private property south of Mineral.

A market assessment of the study area was conducted in 2016 by PUMA. The assessment includes a description of the context for the local and regional market areas; an analysis of the demographic, housing, employment, and retail sectors; and an analysis of development opportunities given two market scenarios. The assessment identified both a Market Driven Scenario and a Value Capture Scenario:

- The Market-Driven Scenario forecasts what the private sector is most likely to deliver under existing market conditions, and given the existing entitlements for the study area properties.
- The Value Capture Scenario looks at opportunities identified for which the study area has distinctive transit and recreational attributes that could enhance its value in the marketplace, but which would most likely require significant public vision and involvement to achieve.

The analysis concluded that there is not sufficient market pressure for redevelopment of the Mineral Station property in this market cycle. Differences of opinions and ideas were vast regarding future land uses and possible densities during the 2016 community engagement process.

The following goals and actions steps are to be consulted in the PEL study and with all other decisionmaking that will impact this area of the city.

GOALS

1. NEIGHBORHOODS -- Preserve and enhance the character, livability, and desirability of the residential neighborhoods
2. ADJOINING PROPERTY -- Protect the character, livability, and desirability of properties along both South Santa Fe and Mineral Avenue.
3. VIEWS -- Protect views of the river valley, park, and mountains.
4. ASSETS -- Preserve the natural assets in the study area, including the South Platte River, the park, the Mary Carter Greenway, and the views of the river valley, park, and mountains.
5. BARRIERS -- To the extent possible, mitigate South Santa Fe and the rail lines as barriers between the neighborhoods to the east and the area to the west.

ACTION STEPS

1. NEIGHBORHOODS: Continue to support the existing residential neighborhoods.
2. COMMERCIAL: Support Aspen Grove as a commercial hub for Mineral Station.
3. ASSETS: Ensure land use decisions enhance the area's greatest assets – South Platte Park and Carson Nature Center, South Platte River and the Mary Carter Greenway.
4. TRANSITIONS: Ensure appropriate transitions are provided between different land uses.
5. CHARACTER: Continue to maintain views to the river, park and mountains within the study area.
6. VALUE CAPTURE: Consider “value capture” scenario opportunities in future decisionmaking.
7. BEST PRACTICES: It is recommended that future decisionmaking follow the “Certified Healthy Program,” to ensure the study area continues as a key southern gateway into Littleton. The “Certified Healthy Program” is organized around the following six elements:
 - a. *Context and community: access to healthy resources*
 - b. *Safety – physical, emotional and cyber security*
 - c. *Site: natural systems, pedestrian scale, landscape*
 - d. *Buildings: healthy materials, access to air, light and water*
 - e. *Operations/Interiors: access to healthy options*
 - f. *Programming: assistance and advice for healthy activities*