

3.0

Focus Areas

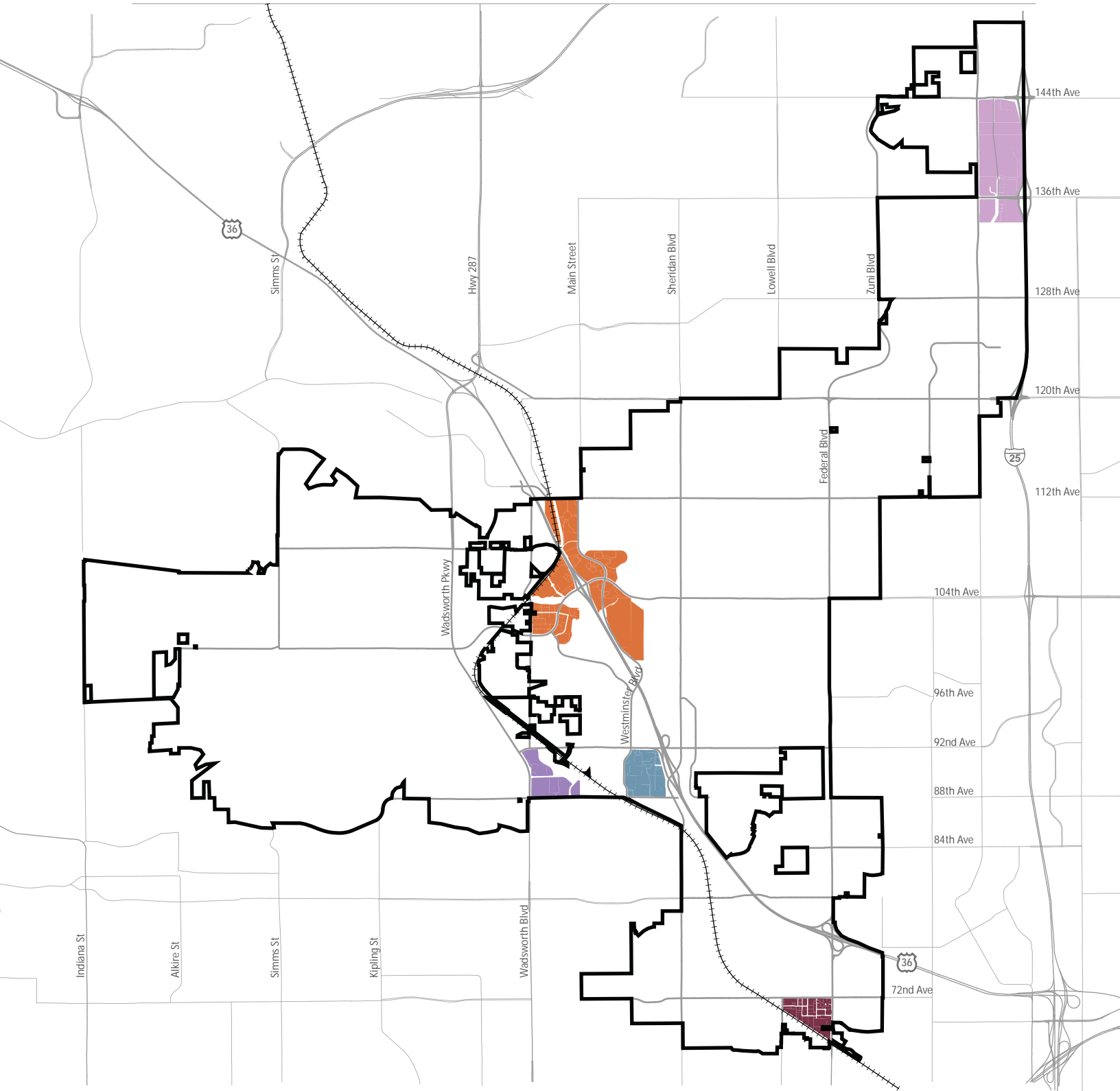







Five focus areas are identified in the Comprehensive Plan. These areas have the greatest potential for growth and change over the next 20 years. The focus areas comprise both new and existing activity centers near major crossroads and transit stations—locations that will serve as key opportunities for gateway development, establishing a strong city identity and fostering economic vitality. This section provides a description of the city’s overall vision and land use intent for each focus area, with specific goals and policies delineated for each area.

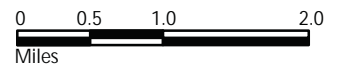
Overview

The Comprehensive Plan describes the city's overall intent and vision for the five focus areas. A more detailed policy and urban design concept for each focus area will be developed as an individual specific plan. Once a Focus Area plan is adopted by City Council, it will be incorporated by reference in the Comprehensive Plan and will serve as the primary land use regulation for the Focus Area. Until a plan is adopted, the goals and policies in this chapter will serve as a guide for new development.

Figure 3-1: Focus Areas



-  Downtown Westminster Focus Area
-  Westminster Station Focus Area
-  North I-25 Focus Area
-  Church Ranch Focus Area
-  Brookhill Focus Area



3.1 DOWNTOWN WESTMINSTER FOCUS AREA

Downtown Westminster is a 105-acre area that constitutes the site of the former Westminster Mall. The area is bounded by Sheridan Boulevard/US 36 and Harlan Street to the east and west, and 92nd and 88th avenues to the north and south. Approximately 95 percent of the site is owned by the Westminster Economic Development Authority (WEDA), which worked to purchase the mall after years of significant vacancy and neglect. Although a few individual buildings remain, most of the mall structures were demolished by the end of 2012 in order to ready the site for redevelopment.



Left: Looking southwest into the site from the northeast corner. Middle: Cottonwoods and Allen Ditch along 88th Avenue. Right: Existing JCPenneys building at the south end of the focus area.

The site is strategically located in the heart of Westminster just 10 miles from Denver's central business district and 15 miles to Boulder. Development in the immediate area is primarily commercial, with some office and industrial flex space to the west. Residential development borders the area to the north, with US 36 and Sheridan Boulevard creating the eastern edge. Also bordering the site to the east is one of the most active RTD park-and-ride bus facilities within RTD's service area. A future RTD FasTracks commuter rail station is planned to the south of the site across 88th Avenue and just east of the Harlan Street alignment. Almost the entire focus area is located within a 10-minute walk of the planned station.

Westminster Mall was once a significant regional and citywide destination as well as an important gathering place for the Westminster community. In keeping with its original role as a community and regional destination, the City of Westminster envisions the focus area as a new downtown and regional hub (Figure 3-2). As adopted in the Downtown Specific Plan, a high intensity mix of office, retail, residential and hotel uses will serve as the foundation for activity, to be enhanced by an interconnected network of plazas, parks and linear greens. A safe, walkable pedestrian environment will be emphasized along with clear navigation for bicyclists, vehicles and transit throughout the downtown area. A new street grid enhancing connectivity will be implemented, with maximized views to the mountains and downtown Denver. Finally, access and connectivity to existing and future transit will ensure that employment and residential uses are connected to the larger metropolitan area.



Figure 3-2: Downtown Specific Plan Illustrative Concept







GOALS

- F-G-1** Establish the Downtown Westminster Focus Area as the city's new downtown.
- F-G-2** Create a vibrant destination that serves as a cultural center for the community and as a regional hub and destination.

POLICIES

- F-P-1** Foster a synergistic mix of uses that will support transit and an active environment for retail, office and residential uses. Ensure land uses are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Diagram and Downtown Specific Plan Regulating Plan.
- F-P-2** Encourage a vertical mix of uses throughout the focus area, with ground floor commercial uses and office, residential or hotel uses on upper floors.
- F-P-3** Ensure all development presents an “active frontage” to the street edge, with ample window area, frequent entries and enhanced façade articulation.
- F-P-4** Develop a vibrant public realm with a variety of experiences, public spaces and parks. Various plazas and parks should be designed as unique spaces that create distinct settings and environments throughout the area.
- F-P-5** Provide ample public and green space that will accommodate the needs of new residents, provide venues for community events and gathering, and establish identity for the downtown area.
- F-P-6** Design the street grid to foster connectivity for all modes of travel, with an emphasis on safe and comfortable pedestrian circulation.
- F-P-7** Facilitate direct, convenient access to transit with enhanced pedestrian crossings and connections.
- F-P-8** Ensure the downtown area is easy to access by all modes of transportation. Parking should be easy to find and allow visitors to park once and walk to key activity nodes.
- F-P-9** Enhance and complete trail connections to and within the downtown area, such as the Allen Ditch Trail and US 36 Commuter Bike Trail.





3.2 WESTMINSTER STATION FOCUS AREA

The Westminster Station Focus Area is strategically located in the northwest portion of the greater Denver metro area, just a half-mile south of the US 36 and Federal Boulevard interchange. The 135-acre focus area is anchored by the future RTD FasTracks commuter rail station (Westminster Station), which will provide impetus for transit-supportive mixed-use development within the focus area when it opens in 2016. The 37.5-acre Little Dry Creek Park and Open Space is planned for the southern portion of the focus area, providing a key amenity for the surrounding South Westminster community. The park will also provide connectivity to the regional trail network via Little Dry Creek Trail, which is part of the planned Refuge to Refuge Trail connecting the Rocky Mountain Arsenal and Rocky Flats National Wildlife refuges.

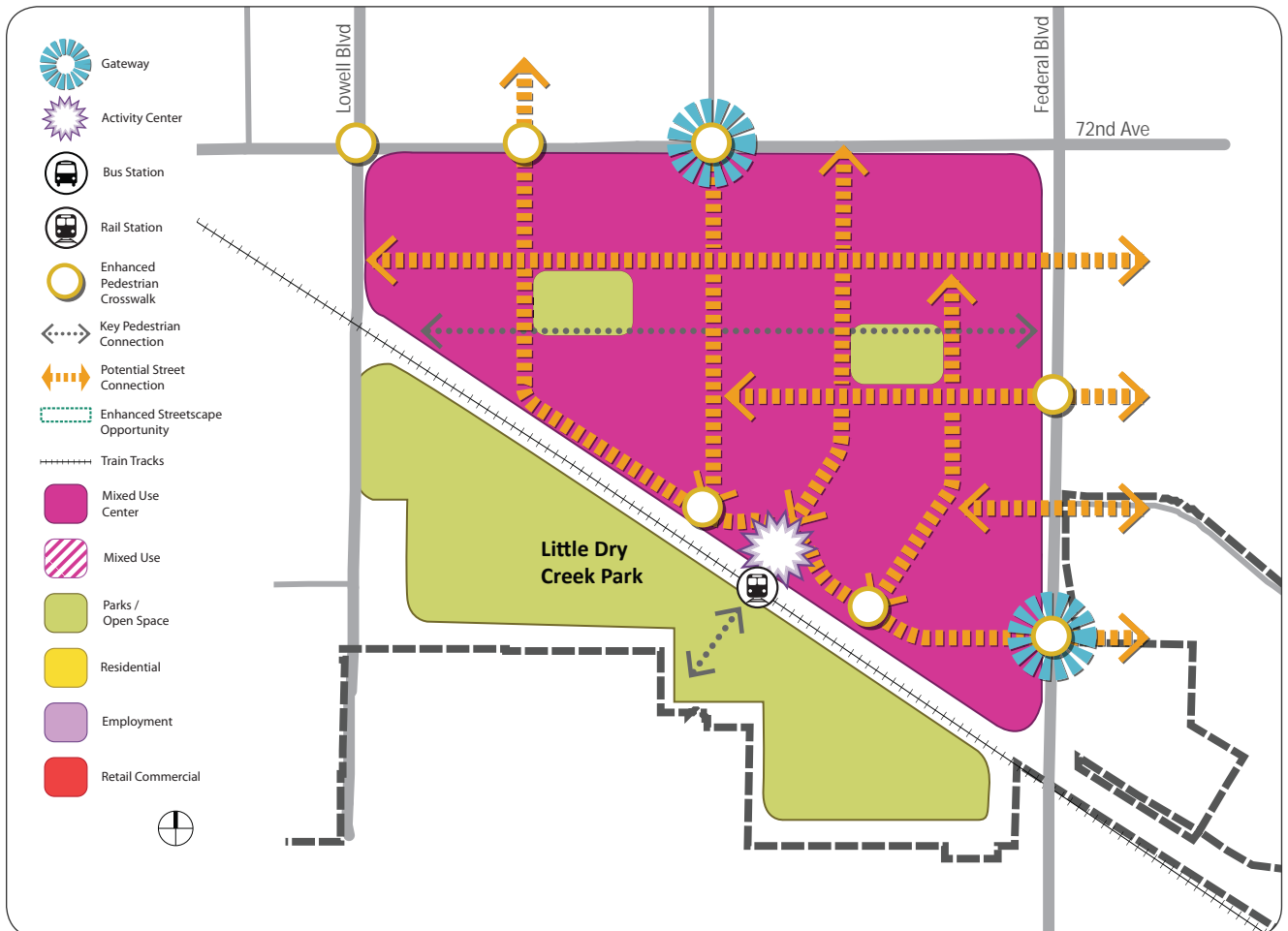


Westminster Station is envisioned as a vibrant district that will act as a node of energy and activity around the station (Figure 3-3). The focus area will comprise a mix of higher intensity retail, office and residential development with an emphasis on active ground floor uses along key connections to the station. A walkable, pedestrian-oriented public realm and appropriately-sized street grid is envisioned to complement this higher intensity of development. Connections to surrounding streets and development, access and circulation by multiple modes, and an attractive, varied public realm are all emphasized. Planning for the focus area is underway, and has included an initial concept approved by City Council in 2011, public outreach in 2012 and 2015, and a cohesive station area specific plan that is anticipated to be complete in 2016.

Above, existing views within the site, including, from the top, the view looking south down Hooker Street, development along 72nd Avenue, and industrial and commercial developments in the district. To the right, the view from above shows the extensive open space area that will be located just south of the district.



Figure 3-3: Westminster Station Focus Area Illustrative Concept





Above, an illustrative view of the station looking south into the planned Little Dry Creek Drainage and Open Space. Transit riders will need to cross south through the tunnel in order to access the train ticketing and platform. Below, an illustrative view of the north transit plaza that will become a community gathering and event space.



Above, an illustrative view showing conceptual development facing onto the north plaza and along Westminster Station Drive and Hooker Street. Below, an illustrative view showing the relationship of the north and south plaza areas.



Access to both rail and bus transit will be an important component of the Station Area's success.

GOALS

- F-G-3** Establish a vibrant, mixed-use district that acts as a neighborhood and community destination.
- F-G-4** Provide a multimodal circulation network that prioritizes access to transit and connectivity throughout the focus area.
- F-G-5** Create a well-defined, engaging public realm.

POLICIES

- F-P-10** Foster a mix of retail, office and residential uses within the station area, with the highest intensity of use located adjacent to the station.
- F-P-11** Ensure development is designed to foster an active ground floor pedestrian environment, particularly along key connections to the station.
- F-P-12** Provide a range of public spaces, parks and plazas to serve the district and foster community gathering and events.
- F-P-13** Integrate the station into the design and function of the public realm with a station plaza and event space.
- F-P-14** Design the station and platform elements to create a distinctive landmark within the Little Dry Creek Park and Westminster Station Area.
- F-P-15** Provide safe and comfortable connections to the station and to the Little Dry Creek Park.
- F-P-16** Improve internal circulation with a connected street grid. Emphasize connectivity to surrounding streets where possible.
- F-P-17** Emphasize access to the transit station for all modes of travel. Provide adequate parking facilities for vehicles and bicyclists and ensure pedestrian crossings are safe and well-defined.
- F-P-18** Establish clear gateways into the site off of Federal Boulevard and 72nd Avenue designed to attract users to the site and create a unique identity.
- F-P-19** Use streetscape design, public art and wayfinding elements to create a distinct identity for the area.



3.3 NORTH I-25 FOCUS AREA

The North I-25 Focus Area comprises approximately 250 acres of primarily vacant land between 144th and 136th avenues to the north and south, and I-25 and Huron Street to the east and west. This focus area is located within an area of rapid transition both within Westminster and to the north and east in Broomfield and Thornton. Recent development in Westminster includes the Orchard Town Center—a primarily retail-oriented activity center just to the north and the new St. Anthony’s North Medical Center at the northeast portion of the site. Development to the east in Thornton includes a mix of large format retail commercial uses. To the north in Broomfield near Highway 7 and I-25, planned development includes substantial employment and residential uses.

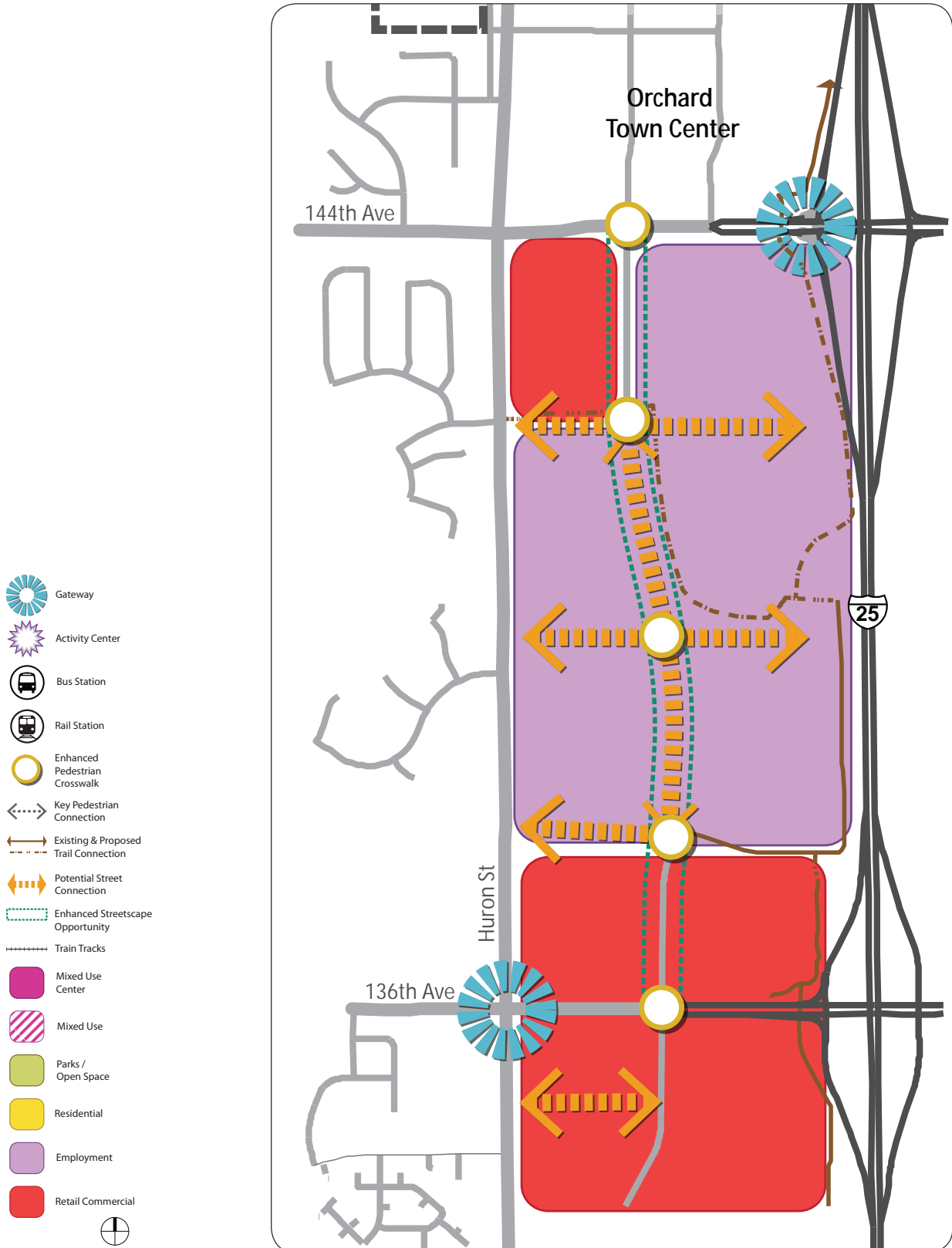


New development is underway in the focus area with the 350,000-square-foot expansion of St. Anthony’s. Future uses will benefit from freeway access and new infrastructure along I-25.

The City of Westminster has long envisioned the North I-25 Focus Area as a key employment hub and major gateway into the city (Figure 3-4). The Comprehensive Plan looks to establish a district of higher-intensity office and research and development (R&D) uses that maximizes employment densities in the area, brings daytime populations to further energize the Orchard Town Center and complements the growing medical office uses already established in the area. Development would benefit from significant visibility along the I-25 corridor—a key asset for office uses. Additionally, the convenient access from I-25 with two recently constructed major interchanges at 136th and 144th avenues—provides additional opportunity for expanded retail commercial use adjacent to these streets. Finally, an interconnected street grid is planned, focused on the north-south Orchard Parkway that will create a distinctive address and an enhanced public realm to benefit new development. Buildings will also be oriented to create a strong presence along I-25 and Huron Street.

Planned infrastructure improvements will also provide opportunities for an enhanced setting and environment for development in the focus area. The McKay Drainageway project will improve stormwater management for the area and include a new trail along with a three-acre lake adjacent to I-25.

Figure 3-4: North I-25 Focus Area Illustrative Concept





GOALS

- F-G-6** Develop a regional employment center within the North I-25 Focus Area.
- F-G-7** Foster a cohesive high quality development character and identity for the area.
- F-G-8** Build on existing synergies in the area to attract a range of businesses.



POLICIES

- F-P-20** Establish an employment district with a range of office and research and development uses.
- F-P-21** Facilitate multimodal connectivity between the Orchard Town Center and surrounding commercial development to support the day time population.
- F-P-22** Extend Orchard Parkway through the focus area as the central spine of activity. Ensure development provides an active frontage along this street. Development should also be oriented to I-25 and Huron Street, with parking located away from public view.
- F-P-23** Locate taller buildings closer to the freeway, oriented and spaced to maximize views into the district.
- F-P-24** Provide safe, enhanced pedestrian crossings of Orchard Parkway and 144th Avenue to facilitate connectivity between activity nodes.
- F-P-25** Incorporate open space and landscape features as integral elements of the development.
- F-P-26** Establish a distinctive streetscape and site design throughout the area that creates identity through key elements like street lighting, landscape and public art.
- F-P-27** Provide trail connections to existing trail systems, including the McKay Creek Trail, Quail Creek Trail and Big Dry Creek Trail.



The Orchard Town Center retail and residential uses just north of the focus area will be a key amenity for employment uses.



Church Ranch is already a well-established district with highly visible landmark developments like the Westin in the Westminster Promenade and Circle Point offices.

3.4 CHURCH RANCH FOCUS AREA

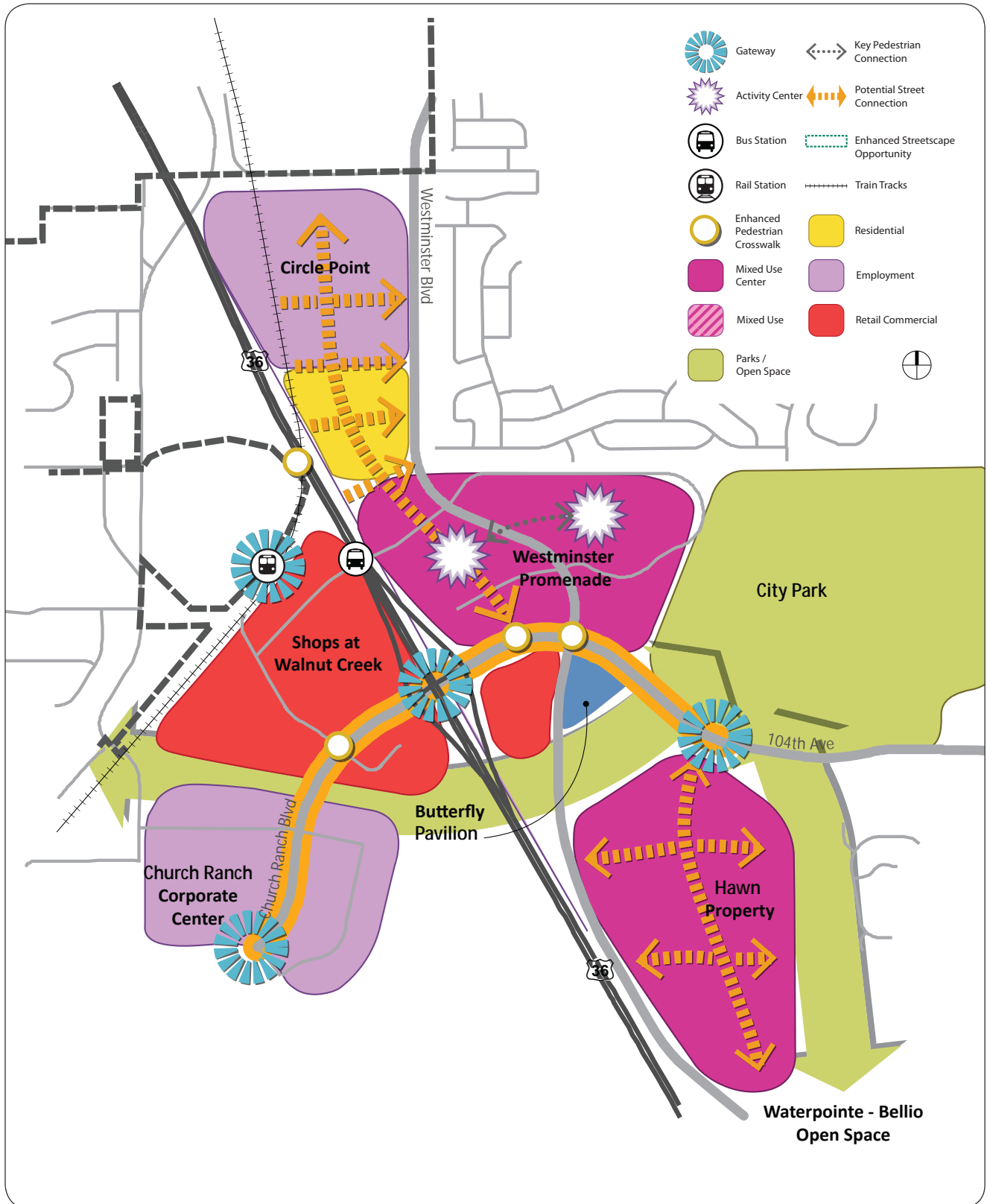
The Church Ranch Focus Area has one of the most strategic locations in the city as well as significant opportunities for new development and intensification in the city. Located along the eastern side of US 36, the focus area extends over 150 acres to the north of Church Ranch Boulevard, including the Westminster Promenade and Circle Point developments, and over 130 acres to the south, including the vacant 103-acre Hawn property along Westminster Boulevard. Just 12 miles north of Denver’s central business district and 13 miles south of Boulder, the area is home to an RTD Park-and-Ride facility and adjacent to a future planned RTD FasTracks commuter rail station. The focus area is also located adjacent to major public and cultural facilities—in particular the City Park Recreation and Fitness Center within City Park, Big Dry Creek trail and open space, and the Butterfly Pavilion, which welcomes 300,000 visitors a year from all over the Denver metro area. Additionally, the area is a major hospitality hub, with almost 1,000 hotel rooms in five hotels located on both sides of US 36.

The Church Ranch Focus Area will build on its established role as a regional and citywide destination, acting as a gateway into Westminster from US 36 (Figure 3-5). At the heart of this area is the 77-acre Westminster Promenade district, where major entertainment uses including a theater, restaurants, hotel and ice center are located. This district is envisioned as a mixed-use activity center with residential and employment uses that will complement retail and entertainment uses. South of the Westminster Promenade and Church Ranch Boulevard, new higher-intensity office and mixed-use development is envisioned for the vacant 103-acre Hawn property, which is one of the city’s last major opportunities to capture employment growth along the US 36 corridor that would directly front onto this key regional transportation corridor. Supportive hotel, retail commercial and residential development may also be located in this area to complement the office district. Master plans for both the Westminster Promenade district and Hawn property will be approved prior to development.

The anticipated office and residential uses will activate the Church Ranch Focus Area with both day and night populations, supporting a wide range of shopping, dining and entertainment uses. Additionally, access to transit and amenities (from City Park to the Shops at Walnut Creek), major hotels and nearby variety of housing types from high-end single family homes to multifamily apartments will attract both employers and workers. Additionally, the Church Ranch Business Park just to the west of the focus area, with its complementary flex and light industrial space will provide additional support and synergy for business development.



Figure 3-5: Church Ranch Focus Area Illustrative Concept





New development in the focus area will capitalize on the area's existing amenities and infrastructure like the Westminster Promenade lake, Shops at Walnut Creek and Westminster Boulevard pedestrian bridge.

GOALS

- F-G-9** Create an active, mixed-use district that supports high-intensity employment along US 36.
- F-G-10** Define the Church Ranch area as a key gateway into the city.
- F-G-11** Establish a cohesive identity for the district with clear transitions and gateways.

POLICIES

- F-P-28** Develop and approve master plans for areas designated as Mixed Use Center prior to development approval. At minimum, these plans should identify street connections and relationships to surrounding development and destinations, land uses, densities and intensities, urban design standards and guidelines, and site infrastructure.
 - Ensure the master plan for the Westminster Promenade Mixed Use Center area includes a mix of uses, including retail, entertainment, hotel, office and residential development. This area should act as the heart of the focus area with the highest intensity of development. A vertical mix of uses should be emphasized, with retail at the ground floor and residential, office and hotel uses on upper floors.
 - Ensure the master plan for the vacant 103-acre Mixed Use Center “South End” property establishes a high-intensity office and mixed-use node. The master plan should maximize office uses, particularly where access and visibility to US 36 are the greatest. Hotel, retail commercial and residential uses shall be secondary and located to support a high intensity office district.
- F-P-29** Locate higher intensity employment uses to the north of the Westminster Promenade district, building on the office uses already established in Circle Point.
- F-P-30** Facilitate access to transit within the Westminster Promenade district, providing clear paths to local and regional bus stops and facilities.
- F-P-31** Ensure new development is integrated with open space, parks and trails. The pedestrian and bicycle network should be evaluated to ensure that the connections to activity nodes from trail and recreation facilities are seamless.



- F-P-32** Provide more frequent and enhanced pedestrian crossings throughout the district to reduce the perception of Westminster Boulevard and Church Ranch Boulevard as barriers.
- Utilize special paving, artwork and pedestrian refuges to make crossings more visually attractive.
 - Provide more direct pathways and signage from the hotel district south of Church Ranch Boulevard.
- F-P-33** Integrate higher density residential uses into the focus area in close proximity to the RTD Church Ranch Park-and-Ride.
- F-P-34** Develop a distinctive streetscape scheme for the Church Ranch Focus Area that signifies a clear entry into the district and enforces placemaking and identity along 104th Avenue, Church Ranch Boulevard and Westminster Boulevard.
- F-P-35** Develop a cohesive signage and wayfinding scheme for the focus area, including west of US 36, that clearly demarcates transitions, entrances and primary circulation areas.
- F-P-36** Enhance area identity through creative methods, such as marketing materials, district maps and public events.



Church Ranch is envisioned to continue its role as a major destination for entertainment and shopping.

3.5 BROOKHILL FOCUS AREA

The Brookhill Focus Area encompasses just over 80 acres of retail development on the east side of Wadsworth Boulevard. The site is bounded by 92nd Avenue to the north, 88th Avenue to the south and multifamily residential development to the east. The 3.2-acre Westglenn Park acts as an anchor on the eastern side of the site, adjacent to the residential development. The retail shopping center that constitutes the Brookhill Focus Area was built in the late 1980s. The center is primarily comprised of mid- and large-box retail storefronts, many of which are vacant or suffering from frequent turnover.



The existing Brookhill Shopping Center is comprised of mostly mid- and large-box anchor spaces, some of which have more recently suffered from long vacancies.



Because of the site's visibility and prime location within the city, it is envisioned as a mixed-use neighborhood center with a range of commercial and residential uses (Figure 3-6). Building on proximity to the future downtown Westminster less than a mile to the east, the area could become a high-profile western gateway into the downtown area. As a result, planning for this area may encompass more than the existing Brookhill site as shown in Figure 3-6. Sites adjacent to the development to the east and west could be incorporated into a larger planning area.

Improvements to the site would include a gridded street network with walkable block sizes, a pedestrian-oriented public realm centered on Westglenn Park and along 90th Avenue. Additionally, connectivity to the neighboring residential development, as well as to downtown Westminster and the Westminster Center Park-and-Ride and future commuter rail station would be emphasized for all modes of travel. Extension of the Allen Ditch Trail along the BNSF rail corridor would help facilitate these connections.



Figure 3-6: Brookhill Focus Area Illustrative Concept



GOALS

- F-G-12** Develop a new neighborhood center with a mix of commercial and residential uses.
- F-G-13** Foster a cohesive, high quality development character and identity for the area.
- F-G-14** Build on existing synergies in the area to attract a range of businesses.

POLICIES

- F-P-37** Locate a mix of retail, services, office and residential uses in the Focus Area, establishing a clear node of activity with a higher intensity of development.
- F-P-38** Establish a gridded street network with blocks sized for walkability.
- F-P-39** Incorporate Westglenn Park as an integral part of the neighborhood design and experience.
 - Orient development to face onto the park.
 - Connect pedestrian paths and bicycle routes to the park facility.
- F-P-40** Encourage new development to orient to 90th Avenue to take advantage of the existing enhanced streetscape.
- F-P-41** Develop an enhanced public realm that creates an identity for the neighborhood and incorporates a range of green, public and plaza spaces. The public realm network should be integrated with the existing Westglenn Park.
- F-P-42** Locate additional adequate park space to serve new residents.
- F-P-43** Provide enhanced pedestrian connections between the existing residential development and neighborhood activity center.
- F-P-44** Facilitate connectivity to downtown Westminster for all modes of travel. Completion of the Allen Ditch Trail should be a priority.
- F-P-45** Work with the City of Arvada to improve streetscape character along Wadsworth Parkway/Wadsworth Boulevard and to create a distinctive gateway into both cities at 92nd Avenue.