

5.4 Land Use

This section discusses how land is used in the study area today and discusses why land use is important to the project. It also explains how the project alternatives could impact the land use patterns.

5.4.1 What is land use and why is it important to this project?

Land use is the way land is developed and is used for various activities, such as commerce, recreation, or transportation. Land use is important to this project because decisions regarding land use and transportation affect one another. CDOT recognizes that the planning and construction of highways can affect existing and proposed land uses.

5.4.2 Have there been changes to land use in the study area or to the analysis process since the release of the 2008 Draft EIS?

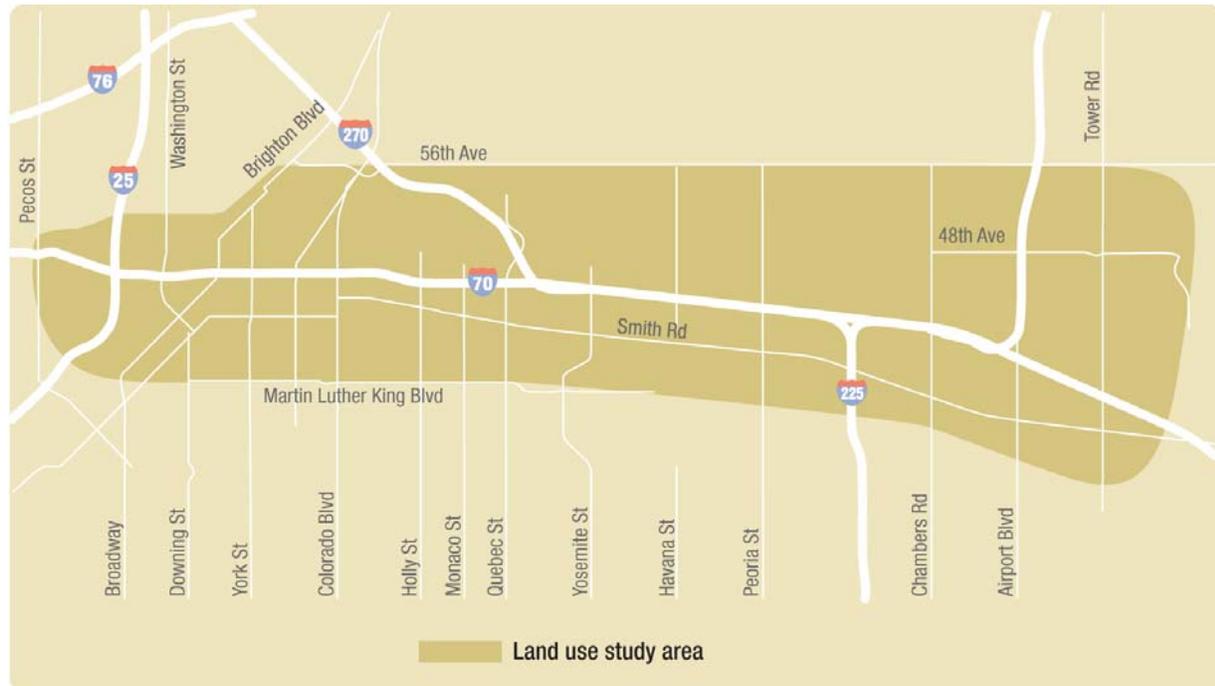
Land use is dynamic and frequently changes because of economic forces, local and regional planning, and population growth/decline. Developing areas, such as the Stapleton and Gateway Neighborhoods, consisted largely of vacant and rural land when the 2008 Draft EIS was released. These areas have experienced notable changes in land use, progressing from vacant parcels to commercial and residential land use.

As a result of these land use changes, the process to determine existing land use conditions has been modified to include new land use categories and consolidate categories previously included in the 2008 Draft EIS.

The updated and completed local area and regional planning documents since the 2008 Draft EIS are discussed in Section 5.4.4.

5.4.3 What study area and evaluation process were used to analyze land use?

The study area used in this analysis is the same as the 2008 Draft EIS study area, as shown in Exhibit 5.4-1.

Exhibit 5.4-1. Land use study area

To determine potential effects of the proposed project on land use within the study area, the project team collected and mapped existing land use data from Denver, Adams County, the City of Aurora, and the City of Commerce City. To compare various land uses in each of the local cities and counties, land use data are simplified into the following seven general land use categories:

- **Residential.** Any property with one or more permanent residents; includes single- and multi-family residences, owner and renter occupied.
- **Commercial.** Any property containing a business relating to or selling goods or services.
- **Industrial.** Any property used for the manufacturing of goods for distribution.
- **Governmental/institutional.** Any publicly owned property that provides a service to the community, such as schools, churches, fire stations, libraries, and hospitals.
- **Parks/open space.** Any property privately or publicly owned that is open to the public as green space; includes golf courses, cemeteries, named parks, and greenways.

- **Transportation/right of way.** Any property used specifically to allow for the movement of people or goods; includes railroad and highway corridors.
- **Vacant.** Any property currently undeveloped.

Local and regional land use and transportation plans in the study area were identified and then reviewed to determine if the potential effects from the project alternatives are consistent with the plans.

Effects to land use occur if project alternatives directly change how land is used or if project implementation induces enough anticipated or unanticipated development that land use patterns change. Direct changes in land use occur through project acquisition of right of way. Induced development is possible when alternatives require highway access points where there currently are none. Another type of induced development is when new highway access points are planned for low-density or undeveloped areas, as these areas are more susceptible to new growth brought on by project implementation. A distinction is made between planned and unplanned growth because land use change is not inherently negative when it is planned for and anticipated.

5.4.4 What land use and transportation plans are considered?

To determine the consistency of the project alternatives with land use plans in the study area, the project team identified and reviewed the following plans.

2035 Statewide Transportation Plan

The *2035 Statewide Transportation Plan* (CDOT, 2008), amended in 2011, identifies visions and goals for various transportation corridors throughout the state based on regional planning organization documents, such as the 2035 MVRTP (DRCOG, 2011). According to CDOT's Moving Colorado website, the vision of the I-70 East corridor recognizes that future improvements would "... increase mobility as well as maintain system quality, improve safety, and reduce environmental impact" (CDOT, 2012c).



The goals for the I-70 East corridor are consistent with the project alternatives, which are to increase travel reliability and improve mobility, support urban development within the Denver region's urban growth boundary/area, serve the urban centers in the corridor, and eliminate design deficiencies.

2035 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan

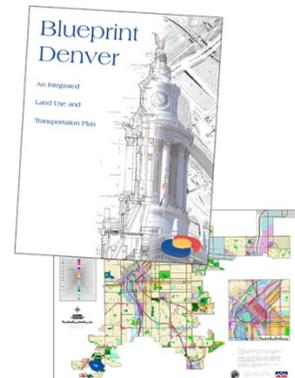
The 2035 MVRTP, updated 2011, developed multi-modal corridor visions for freeways to help guide the definition, prioritization, and design attributes of future transportation projects. The transportation vision for the I-70 East corridor is “... to serve as a multi-modal interstate freeway and rapid transit corridor serving regional and statewide trips. Future improvements will primarily increase mobility as well as maintain system quality, improve safety, and reduce environmental impact” (DRCOG, 2011, appendix p. 151).



The primary goals and objectives related to land use for the I-70 East corridor were incorporated into the *2035 Statewide Transportation Plan*, which include eliminating design deficiencies, improving existing facilities and travel demand management, supporting urban development within the Denver region’s urban growth boundary/area, and serving the urban centers in the corridor.

Blueprint Denver and Areas of Change Map Update

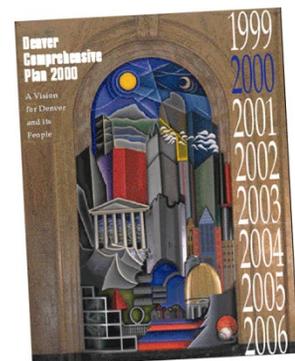
Blueprint Denver (Denver, 2002a) identifies “Areas of Stability” and “Areas of Change.” According to the document, the “... purpose of Areas of Change is to channel growth where it will be beneficial and can best improve access to jobs, housing, and services with fewer and shorter auto trips. Areas of Change are parts of the city where most people agree that development or redevelopment would be beneficial” (2002a, p.127). *Blueprint Denver* identifies three large Areas of Change in the study area that are all traversed by I-70, and include large portions of the Elyria and Swansea, Stapleton, and Gateway Neighborhoods.



Plan priorities for roadway and other infrastructure identified in the document call for the elimination of gaps and infrastructure mismatches with development and redevelopment in Areas of Change. Denver updated the Areas of Change map in 2009.

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000

The *Comprehensive Plan 2000* (Denver, 2000) recommends the strategy to “... enhance existing business centers and establish new business centers in a manner that offers a variety of high-quality uses that support Denver’s business environment, complements neighboring residential areas, generates public revenue, and creates jobs” (Denver, 2000, p. 135). A top priority of this strategy includes solidifying the business identity of northeast Denver as a “new, high-quality, high-technology” business location linked to the redevelopment of Stapleton, Gateway, and the I-70 corridor, among others. The plan also



recommends expediting public transportation development and other infrastructure improvements to reinforce linkages within the area, between DIA and downtown, and throughout the region.

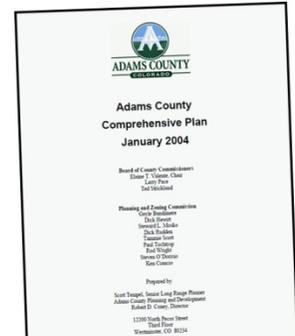
City of Aurora Comprehensive Plan 2009

The *City of Aurora Comprehensive Plan 2009* (City of Aurora, 2010) identifies nine strategic areas in the city that are critical to the city's economy and identity. Each strategic area has its own mix of uses and unique physical characteristics, and requires specific strategies to affect the City's vision for the area. The only strategic area of the comprehensive plan in the study area is the northern portion of the I-225 corridor and city center. As a strategic area, the plan recognizes the changing land use patterns and recommends strategies to manage this change.



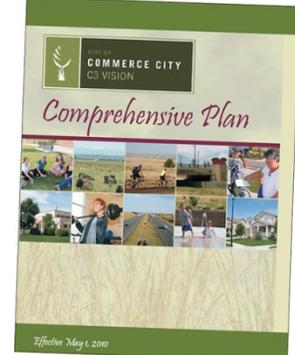
Adams County Comprehensive Plan

The *Adams County Comprehensive Plan* (Adams County, 2004) covers the areas of Adams County not within the planning jurisdiction of the City of Aurora. The horizon year of the plan is 2025. The plan was reviewed, but did not address land use along I-70 in the study area.



Commerce City C3 Vision Comprehensive Plan

The *Commerce City C3 Vision Comprehensive Plan* (City of Commerce City, 2010) addresses land use and growth in the city of Commerce City through 2035, but does not address land use along the I-70 corridor.



Other area plans reviewed

Neighborhood assessments, approved site development plans, and transit-oriented development station area plans in the study area also were reviewed, as listed in Section 5.4, Land Use and Zoning, of the 2008 Draft EIS. The following plans have been initiated since the 2008 Draft EIS, and were reviewed for consistency in incorporating the goals and objectives of *Blueprint Denver* and Aurora's *Comprehensive Plan 2009*. They are meant to assist city agencies in making planning and public investment decisions:

- *38th & Blake Station Area Plan* (Denver Community Planning and Development Office, 2009b)
- *Context-Sensitive Solutions, Brighton Boulevard* (Denver Public Works Policy/Planning and Community Planning and Development, 2011b)

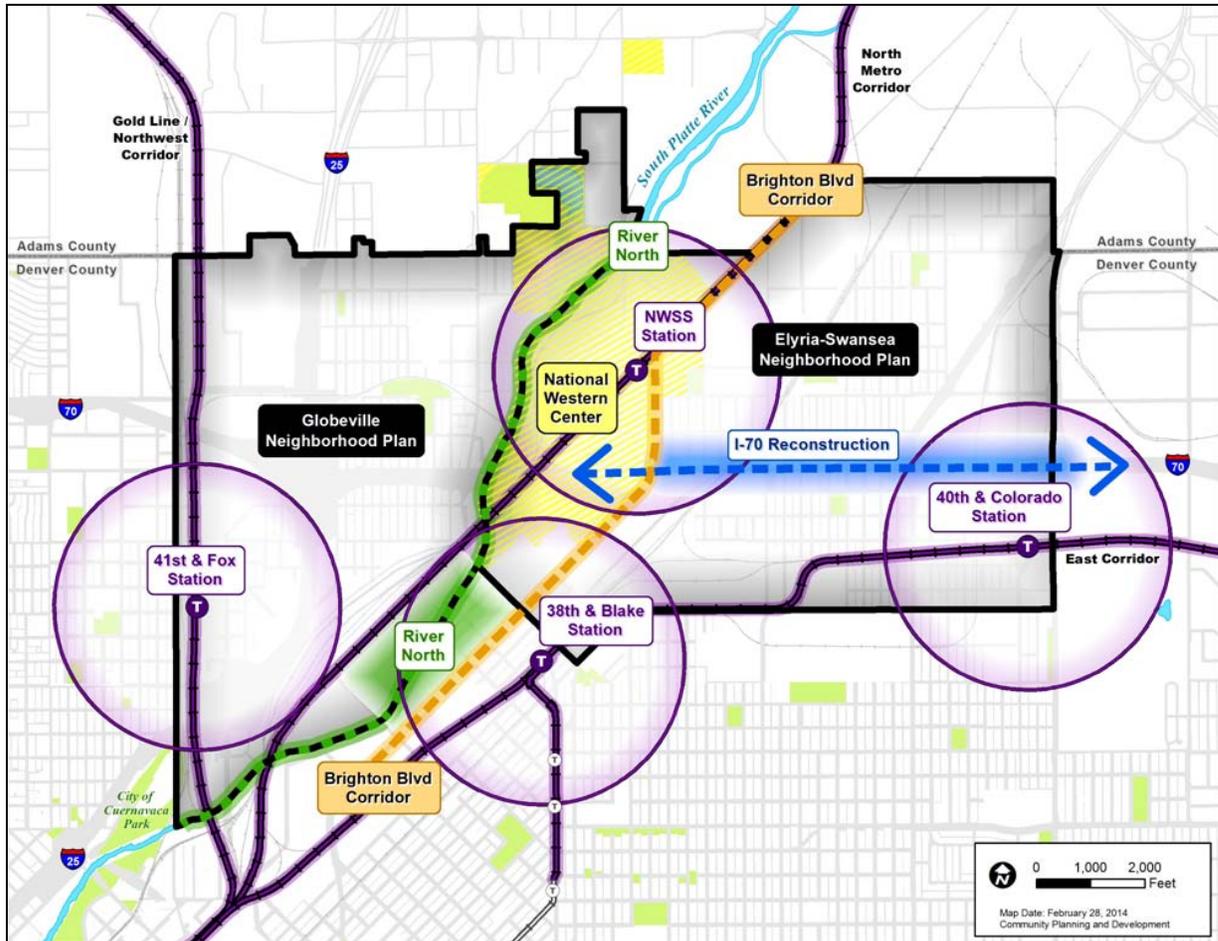
- *River North Greenway Master Plan* (Greenway Foundation, 2009)
- *River North Plan* (Denver Public Works Policy/Planning and Community Planning and Development, 2003)
- *River Vision Implementation Plan (RVIP)* (Greenway Foundation, 2011)
- *Brighton Boulevard Corridor (Denver Public Works Policy/Planning, ongoing)*
 - *Brighton Boulevard Parking & Access*
- *Globeville Elyria Swansea Neighborhoods Plan* (Denver Community Planning and Development, ongoing)
 - *Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood Plan*
 - *Colorado Boulevard Station Area Plan*
 - *National Western Stock Show Station Area Plan*
 - *Globeville Neighborhood Plan*
- *South Platte Corridor Study* (Denver Community Planning and Development, ongoing)
- *Heron Pond Master Plan* (Denver Parks and Recreation, ongoing)
- *Globeville-Utah Junction Watershed Outfall Systems Plan* (Denver Public Works, ongoing)
- *Northeast Downtown Next Steps Study* (Denver Public Works, ongoing)
- *Airport City Denver* (Denver International Airport, ongoing)

5.4.5 How is this project related to the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative?

The North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative is an effort which began in early 2013 to ensure coordination and integrated planning among six redevelopment projects in the north Denver area. These projects represent a unique opportunity to rebuild a connected community and a vibrant gateway to Downtown Denver. I-70 East is one of the six redevelopment projects, and the other five projects (See Exhibit 5.4-2) include:

- Neighborhood Plans (Globeville Neighborhood and Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood)
- National Western Stock Show
- Brighton Boulevard Corridor Redevelopment
- River North (RiNo)
- RTD Station Development

Exhibit 5.4-2. North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative Projects



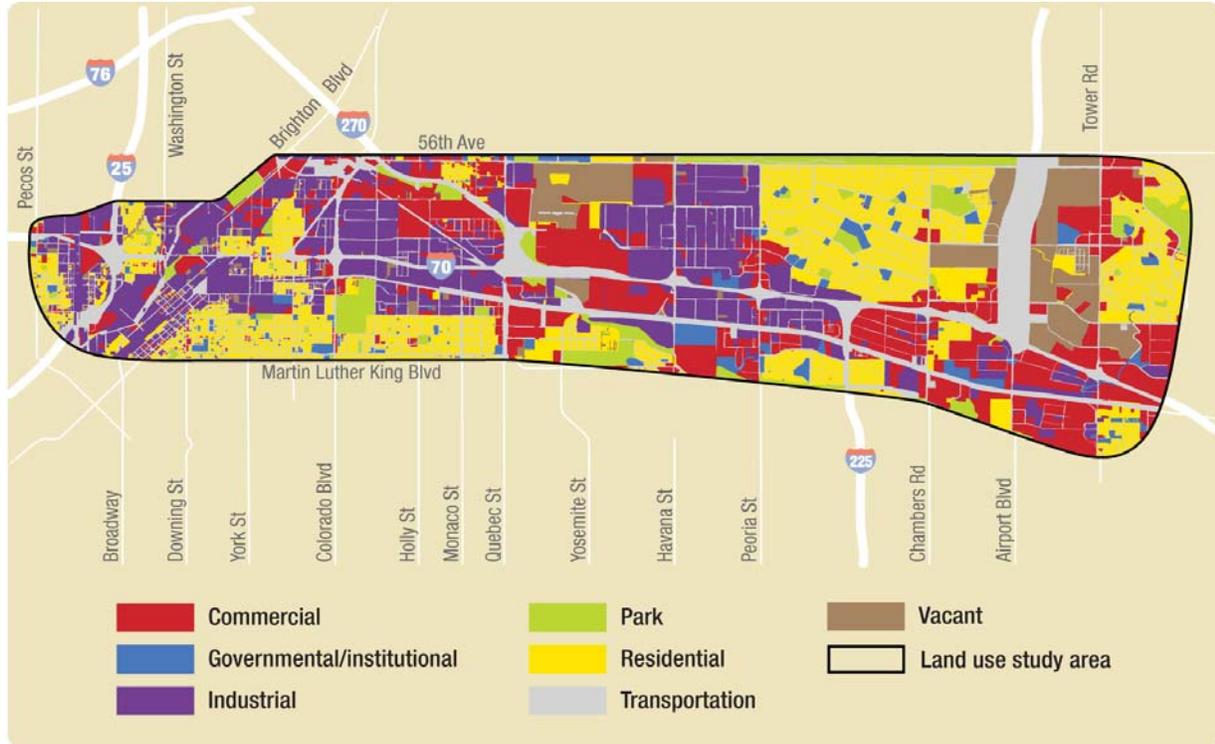
Source: Denver Office of Community Planning and Development, February 2014

5.4.6 What are the existing and proposed future land uses in the study area?

The existing land use in the study area is a mix of established residential, commercial, and industrial development interspersed with government/institutional properties and parks/open space, as shown in Exhibit 5.4-3 and summarized by category in Exhibit 5.4-4.

Future land use conditions are anticipated to be a mix of land development types consistent and similar to the existing conditions.

Exhibit 5.4-3. Existing land use



Source: Denver Community Planning and Development Office, 2012a, 2012b; City of Aurora, 2012c; M. Grondalski (Adams County), personal communication, August 27, 2012

Exhibit 5.4-4. Summary of existing land use (acres) in study area

Existing Land Use	Study Area	
	Acres	Percentage
Commercial	5,672.0	19.9
Government/institutional	2,665.0	9.4
Industrial	5,656.5	19.9
Park	5,150.2	18.1
Residential	6,058.4	21.3
Transportation	1,561.2	5.4
Vacant	1,697.9	6.0
Total	28,461.2	100.0

Source: Denver Community Planning and Development Office, 2012a, 2012b; City of Aurora, 2012c; M. Grondalski (Adams County), personal communication, August 27, 2012

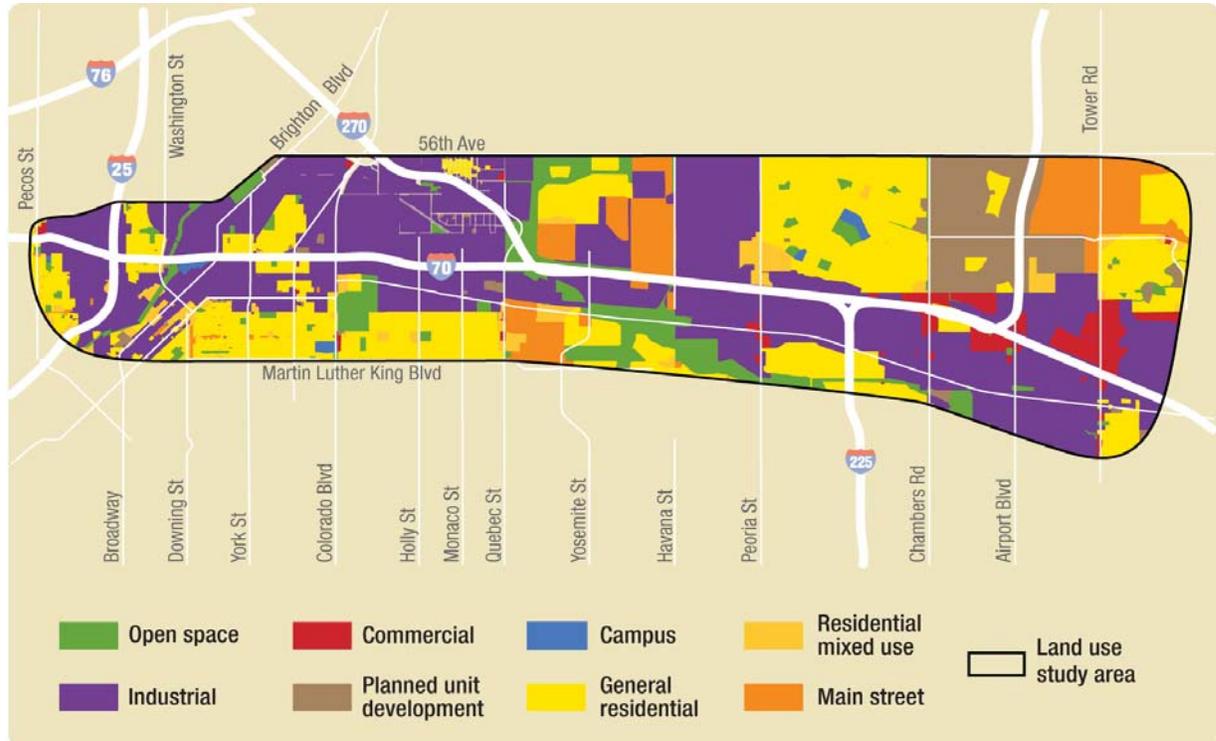
5.4.7 Are existing and future planned land uses consistent with existing zoning?

Existing land use is consistent with current zoning rules. Changes to land use in the future would comply with the local government zoning designations. Zoning data for the study area are shown on Exhibit 5.4-5.

What is zoning?

Zoning is a tool used in land use planning to delineate districts and establish regulations governing the use, placement, spacing, and size of land and buildings.

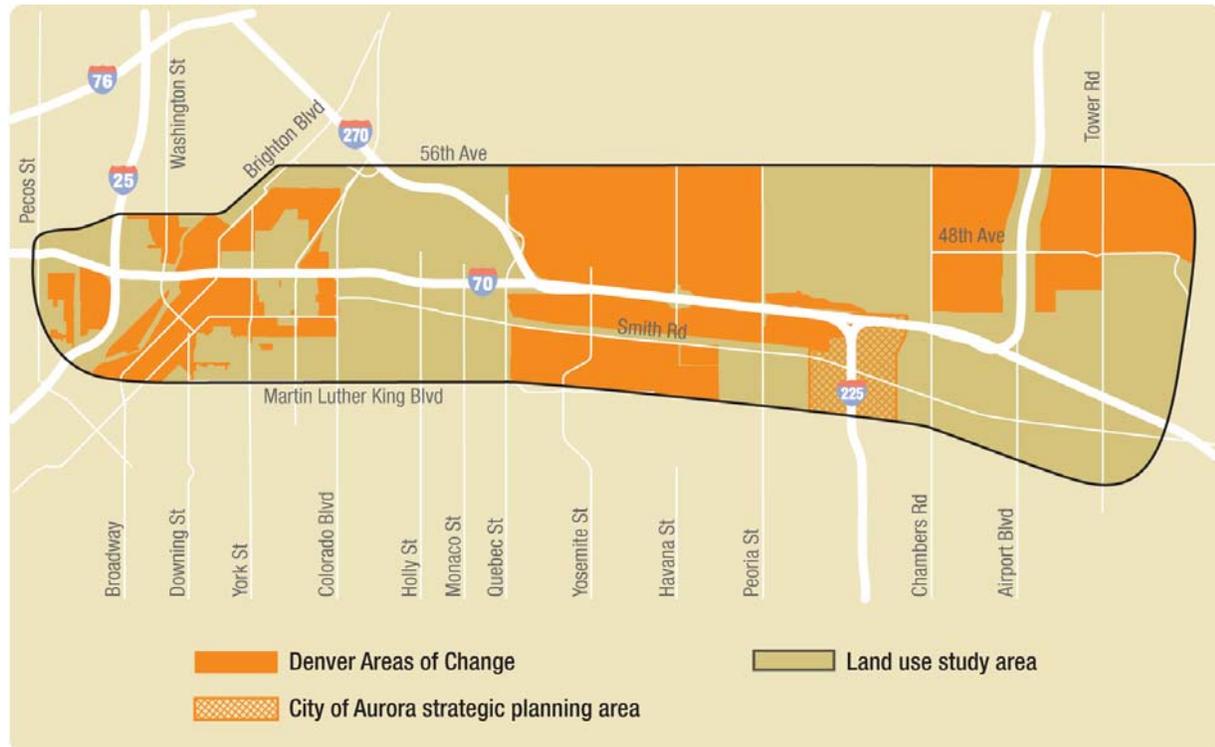
Exhibit 5.4-5. Existing zoning



Source: Denver, 2012c; City of Aurora, 2012c; M. Grondalski (Adams County), personal communication, August 27, 2012

5.4.8 How do local agencies account for future land use change?

As previously mentioned, growth is not inherently detrimental when it is planned for and anticipated. Denver’s *Blueprint Denver* plans for land use change by identifying Areas of Change. Areas of Change “... represent those parts of the city where change is either underway or desirable” (Denver, 2002a, p.17) and would benefit from increased population, economic activity, and investment. Three large Areas of Change are located within the study area and are linked by I-70. The City of Aurora’s *Comprehensive Plan 2009* discusses strategic areas that are critical to the city’s economy and identity. Exhibit 5.4-6 shows Denver’s Areas of Change and the City of Aurora’s strategic planning area.

Exhibit 5.4-6. Planned Areas of Change and strategic area

Source: Denver, 2002a; Fregonese and Calthorpe, Inc., 2002, Denver Community Planning and Development Office, 2012d; City of Aurora, 2010

5.4.9 How do the project alternatives potentially affect land use in the study area?

All of the project alternatives directly affect land use in the study area through right-of-way acquisition. Exhibit 5.4-7 summarizes each of the project alternatives' conversion of existing land use type into a transportation use.

Exhibit 5.4-7. Summary of land use change (acres)

Alternative	Land Use Category					
	Commercial	Government/ Institutional	Industrial	Residential	Vacant	Total Acres
No-Action Alternative, North Option	1.9	0.4	0.8	0.9	—	4.0
No-Action Alternative, South Option	1.3	—	3.7	1.0	—	6.0
Revised Viaduct Alternative, North Option	30.8	1.6	40.3	3.5	0.1	76.2
Revised Viaduct Alternative, South Option	28.9	0.8	43.9	3.9	0.1	77.5
Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Basic Option	36.0	1.9	44.2	6.7	0.1	88.9
Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Modified Option	36.0	1.9	44.2	6.9	0.1	89.4
Managed Lanes Option (Option to Build Alternatives)*	0.9	—	13.6	0.2	—	14.7

*The acreage listed for Managed Lanes Option represents impacted areas in addition to what is listed for each of the Build Alternatives.

No existing park will be changed to a transportation use by any of the project alternatives.

5.4.10 Are the project alternatives consistent with local and regional plans?

In general, the project alternatives are consistent with local and regional plans. Conflicts exist with all of the project alternatives when residential and/or business property acquisition is necessary. Neighborhood cohesion is a common theme in local area plans, specifically the *Elyria/Swansea Neighborhood Assessment*. The assessment identified fears from neighborhood residents that expansion of I-70 could remove homes or existing access points (Denver Community Planning and Development Office, 2003a, p. 29). As previously noted, a new neighborhood plan has been initiated by Denver in January 2013 for the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood. This planning process is part of the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative.

No-Action Alternative

Direct changes to land use are similar for both of the Expansion Options of the No-Action Alternative, so they are discussed together. The No-Action Alternative includes options to expand

the roadway either to the north or to the south. Both of these options are inconsistent with regional and local area plans in the following ways:

Strategies in DRCOG's 2035 MVRTTP call to "... expand capacity of existing regional roadways in the most critically congested corridors," and to "... encourage transportation projects that support the growth of housing and employment within designated urban centers" (DRCOG, 2011, pp. 42–43). The No-Action Alternative does not support the strategies of the MVRTTP, since it does not expand the capacity of I-70.

A major element of *Blueprint Denver* is the concept of Areas of Change. The purpose of Areas of Change is to channel growth where it will be beneficial and "... increase economic activity in the area to benefit existing residents and businesses, and where necessary, provide the stimulus to redevelop" (Denver, 2002a, p. 127). The No-Action Alternative does not accommodate opportunities for redevelopment, since it does not provide alternate transportation choices as identified in *Blueprint Denver*.

Recommendations in the *Elyria/Swansea Neighborhood Assessment* call for stabilizing residential areas and establishing buffers next to non-residential uses. The plan acknowledges that *Blueprint Denver* identifies the area as an Area of Change. The No-Action Alternative increases the footprint and presence of I-70 in the neighborhood and would not stabilize or provide a buffer between the existing transportation corridor and residential uses.

The No-Action Alternative does not include new access points, so it is not expected to induce development in the study area.

Revised Viaduct Alternative

Direct changes to land use are similar for both of the Expansion Options of the Revised Viaduct Alternative, so they are discussed together. The Revised Viaduct Alternative, and its associated options, are consistent with regional and local plans because it would improve mobility and the connection between existing and developing urban centers by adding highway capacity.

The alternative removes the York Street interchange, which would improve mobility on I-70. The removal of the interchange is not likely to affect access to the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood because the adjacent interchanges of Brighton Boulevard and Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard would be

improved. With the Revised Viaduct Alternative, the improved Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange does not provide direct access from westbound I-70 to Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard or from Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard to eastbound I-70. Access at Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard is provided by a split-diamond interchange.

The alternative consolidates the existing slip ramp interchange system of Dahlia Street, Holly Street, and Monaco Street to one interchange at Holly Street. This modified interchange would alleviate congestion at the adjacent interchanges of Colorado Boulevard and Quebec Street. The modified interchange would not degrade mobility on I-70 and is not likely to affect access to the Northeast Park Hill Neighborhood. The Revised Viaduct Alternative, therefore, is not expected to cause access-related land use changes.

The improved mobility on I-70 would bolster the economic and social success of developing urban centers, such as Stapleton and the Gateway District, as well as redevelopment opportunities in existing neighborhoods, such as Elyria and Swansea.

The Revised Viaduct Alternative is not anticipated to induce development or cause unforeseen land use changes (beyond areas identified in *Blueprint Denver* Areas of Change) through improving mobility.

Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Basic Option

The Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Basic Option builds a cover over I-70 between Columbine Street and Clayton Street with a potential urban landscape. The landscape may add park/open space land use to the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood. This alternative is consistent with regional and local planning documents in that the proposed changes would improve mobility on I-70 and bolster redevelopment opportunities in a *Blueprint Denver* Area of Change.

This alternative option removes the York Street interchange, which would improve mobility on I-70. The removal of the interchange is not likely to affect access to the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood because the adjacent interchanges of Brighton Boulevard and Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard would be improved. Highway access with the Basic Option is provided through a split-diamond interchange at Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard.

The alternative consolidates the existing slip ramp interchange system of Dahlia Street, Holly Street, and Monaco Street to one

interchange at Holly Street. This modified interchange would alleviate congestion at the adjacent interchanges of Colorado Boulevard and Quebec Street. The modified interchange would not degrade mobility on I-70 and is not likely to affect access to the Northeast Park Hill Neighborhood. The Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Basic Option, therefore, is not expected to cause access-related land use changes.

The Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Basic Option is not anticipated to induce development or cause unforeseen land use changes (beyond areas identified in *Blueprint Denver* Areas of Change) through improving mobility.

Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Modified Option

The Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Modified Option includes the same improvements as the Basic Option. The Modified Option would also remove the Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange to include an additional cover over I-70 in that area. Colorado Boulevard would become a full interchange with the Modified Option. Between Clayton Street and Columbine Street, 46th Avenue would be removed to allow for a seamless connection between Swansea Elementary School and the cover over I-70. North-south vehicular connectivity across the highway at Josephine Street will be eliminated and replaced with a bicycle/pedestrian bridge. Additional north-south connectivity across the highway will be provided at Milwaukee Street.

The removal of highway access at York Street and Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard and changes in continuity along 46th Avenue may affect access to the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhood. The loss of convenient highway access could cause access-related land use changes for commercial and industrial properties in the neighborhood. The Modified Option would require traffic to use the improved interchanges of Brighton Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard.

The Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, Modified Option is not anticipated to induce development or cause unforeseen land use changes (beyond areas identified in *Blueprint Denver* Areas of Change) through improving mobility. However, an opportunity for redevelopment along Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard is present with the second cover that is aligned with Denver planning efforts.

Managed Lanes Option

Both of the Build Alternatives include a Managed Lanes Option, which is consistent with regional and local plans. It improves

highway capacity, which in turn improves mobility and the connection between existing and developing urban centers. The Managed Lanes Option requires approximately 14.7 additional acres of right of way than the General-Purpose Lane Option of the Build Alternatives, however, the land use changes induced by the Managed Lanes Option would be similar to those described for the General-Purpose Lane Option of both Build Alternatives, as previously described.

5.4.11 How are land use changes by the project alternatives mitigated?

Continued coordination with local jurisdictions will occur to ensure compatibility with land use plans and to address any inconsistency that may arise due to the project alternatives. Land use changes that result in the relocation or displacement of existing occupants due to right-of-way acquisition are addressed in Section 5.5, Relocations and Displacements. Exhibit 5.4-8 shows a summary of the impacts and mitigations relating to land use.

Exhibit 5.4-8. Summary of land use impacts and mitigation

Alternative	Impacts and/or Benefits	Mitigation Measures Applicable to All Alternatives
No-Action Alternative	4.0 acres to 6.0 acres converted to transportation use	Continue to coordinate with local jurisdictions to ensure compatibility with land use plans and to address any inconsistency that may arise due to the project alternatives
Revised Viaduct Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 76.2 acres to 77.5 acres converted to transportation use • If the Managed Lanes Option is selected with this alternative, an additional 14.7 acres would be required, resulting in 91.2 acres to 92.5 acres converted to transportation use 	
Partial Cover Lowered Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88.9 acres to 89.4 acres converted to transportation use • If the Managed Lanes Option is selected with this alternative, an additional 14.7 acres would be required, resulting in 103.6 acres to 103.7 acres converted to transportation use 	

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