

# **Gunbarrel Community Center Plan**

**Final Plan**

Adopted April 1, 2004  
Amended May 16, 2006

City of Boulder, Colorado

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## **Gunbarrel Community Center Plan Working Group members:**

Tom Harrington, property owner  
Steve Hirsch, property owner  
Paul Klamer, Gunbarrel Community Association  
Joe Lukas, property owner  
Terry O'Connor/Frank Marceau, property owner  
Chuck Simmons, Gunbarrel Community Association  
Jim Swanson, property owner  
Michael Tagliola, property owner  
Mike Walsh, Gunbarrel Community Association

## **Staff:**

### *Planning and Development Services*

Peter Pollock  
Ruth McHeyser  
Bev Johnson  
Michelle Allen  
Steve Durian  
Mike Randall  
Vanessa Bonner

### *Transportation Division of Public Works*

Bill Cowern  
Micki Kaplan  
Marni Ratzel

### *Parks and Recreation*

Cate Bradley

### *Library*

Susan Hartman

### *Boulder County*

Pete Fogg  
Denise Grimm  
Scott Robson

## **Consultants:**

Erik Hartronft, DTJ Design, Inc.  
Tom Thorpe, DTJ Design, Inc.  
Lee Payne, DTJ Design, Inc.  
Marilee Utter, Citiventure Associates  
Bill Cunningham, Leland Consulting Group  
Bill Fox, Fox-Higgins Transportation Group

# Executive Summary

## Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan is to provide a blueprint for the Gunbarrel commercial area that will result in a viable and vibrant, easily accessible, pedestrian-oriented center to serve the Gunbarrel subcommunity.

The primary objective of the planning process is to develop an area plan for the Gunbarrel community center that addresses: 1) land use issues (especially the potential for additional retail uses, attached housing, and mixed use); and 2) local and regional transportation issues (primarily access to the commercial area and circulation patterns including trail, pedestrian, and bikeway connections).

The following are the overall goals for the project:

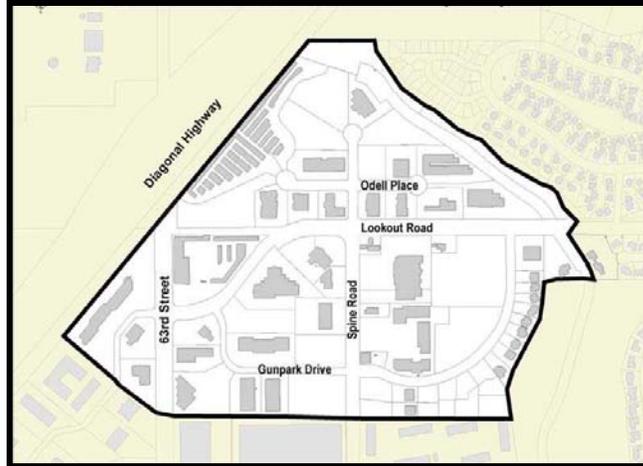
- *Provide opportunities for developing a viable, easily accessible, pedestrian-oriented retail town center of appropriate scale to serve the Gunbarrel subcommunity, outlying subdivisions and employment centers.*
- *Provide safe and convenient vehicular and non-vehicular connections between the commercial center and the surrounding area and within the center itself.*
- *Provide a commercial center with a unique identity that is the heart of social and cultural activity in the subcommunity and supports day and evening activity seven days a week.*

## Background

During the summer of 2002, at the request of several residents in the Gunbarrel area, the Planning Department put together an ad-hoc committee on the future of a development project proposed on the large vacant parcel located in the Regional Business – Developing (RB-D) zone district at Lookout and Gunpark roads. Concerns had been expressed about the proposal and whether it was taking full advantage of the retail market and whether the residential use proposed would displace future retail use in the commercial area. Staff initiated discussions about the possibility of doing further planning work for the broader commercial area of Gunbarrel. These series of discussions led to the Gunbarrel Community Center planning process.

## Context

The Gunbarrel Community Center is defined as the area surrounding and including the existing commercial center. The intersection of Lookout and Spine roads defines the geographic center of the study area (see Figure 1 on the following page).



*Figure 1: Gunbarrel Community Center Plan Study Area*

Lands within the study area are currently a mix of light industrial and commercial uses. There are no residential uses in the study area although the regional business zoning district affecting several of the properties allows for residential use.

The existing transportation network is characterized by large, “superblocks” more than 600 feet long which gives the area a suburban, car-oriented character. Although there is an existing network of bike facilities, some existing transit service, and some sidewalks in the study area, there are insufficient trail and path connections linking the commercial/industrial area to the outlying residential areas. There is also insufficient access to bus services along the Diagonal Highway.

In September 2002, a residential and retail market analysis was completed for the Gunbarrel Community Center to ascertain the current and future retail and residential market demand in the Gunbarrel area. The study was focused on a proposed mixed use project at Lookout and Gunpark roads but looked at retail and residential demand for a larger market area. The primary conclusions of the market analysis were as follows:

- There is substantial long-term demand for residential development in the area, with strong demand for both rental and for-sale attached housing products. (+1500 rental and 5400 for-sale units)
- There is significant long-term demand for new retail space in the area. (+140,000-190,000 square feet)
- A residential component within the proposed project at Gunpark and Lookout roads [or within the study area] will help to build critical mass and support retail absorption.

## **Concept**

The land use plan for the Gunbarrel Community Center is to provide a rich and thriving retail center by: 1) expanding the amount of retail use in the area; 2) adding new residents in close proximity to the retail core; 3) creating more usable public spaces; and 4) improving access to and from the center.

The basic concept for the center is to create a denser, mixed use retail core. The retail core will serve as the heart of the community center and provide specialty and convenience retail uses, attached housing, and some office use. Spine Road between Lookout and Gunpark roads will be the “Main Street” for the retail area and provide a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented, gathering area for the subcommunity. The public right-of-way will allow storefront access by pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles in a way that is compatible with the pedestrian oriented character of the street.

The community retail district to the north of Lookout Road will provide easily accessible retail services to the neighborhood such as hardware stores, drug stores, auto parts stores, restaurants, and dry cleaners.

A future road and multi-use path connection along an existing drainage ditch from the community retail district to the retail core will link the two areas together. This connection will be adjacent to a future neighborhood park which will provide park services such as grassy areas, benches, tot lots, and landscaping.

An important objective of the plan is to break up the large superblocks and make access to and visibility of individual retail shops easier for cars, bikes and pedestrians. Smaller blocks combined with interesting, pedestrian-scaled architecture will also encourage walking, biking and active transportation.

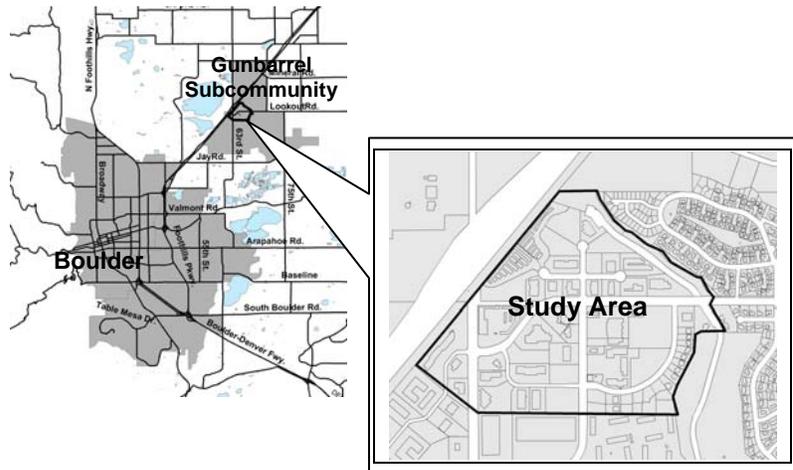
### ***Transportation Improvements***

Recommended transportation improvements include changes to: 1) improve accessibility around the retail core, 2) link the existing and residential areas to the retail core, 3) improve the pedestrian environment, 4) improve access to transit services, and 5) encourage walking and biking as viable transportation options.

# Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan is to provide a blueprint for the Gunbarrel commercial area (see figure 2 below) that will result in a viable and vibrant, easily accessible, pedestrian-oriented commercial village center to serve the Gunbarrel subcommunity. The area plan addresses land use issues (especially the potential for additional retail uses, attached housing, and mixed use); and local and regional transportation issues (including access to the commercial area and circulation patterns including trail, pedestrian, and bikeway connections).



*Figure 2: Location of the Gunbarrel Community Center planning area*

## Background

During the summer of 2002, at the request of several residents in the Gunbarrel area, the Planning Department put together an ad-hoc committee on the future of a development project proposed on a large vacant parcel located in the Regional Business – Developing (RB-D) zone district at Lookout and Gunpark roads. Concerns had been expressed about the proposal and about proposed changes that would encourage more mixed use development in the RB-D zoning district. Other issues identified were:

- What land uses and density would be proposed for the vacant parcel on Spine Road north of Lookout Road?
- How does the Jobs/Housing Project influence potential changes in Gunbarrel?
- What are the implications of the residential and retail market analysis completed for the development proposed in the RB-D zone?
- How will regional transportation discussions regarding a potential rail transit center between Longmont and Boulder affect Gunbarrel?

One of the concerns identified was the need to better assess whether the proposed development in the RB-D zone was taking full advantage of the retail market and whether the residential use proposed would displace future retail in the commercial area. Staff initiated discussions with some of the neighborhood representatives and property owners about the possibility of doing further planning work for the broader commercial area of Gunbarrel. These initial discussions led to the Gunbarrel Community Center planning process described below.

## **Planning Process**

The first step in the planning process was to identify the issues, concerns, and opportunities through open discussions among property owners, neighborhood representatives, city and county staff, and a representative-working group (to be known as Gunbarrel Community Center Plan Working Group). The city hired an urban design firm to develop conceptual plans, which addressed the issues, concerns, and opportunities presented. Opportunities were provided for neighborhood input, prior to the refinement of the plan by the urban design firm and the representative group.

The process consisted of the following public meetings:

- Community Meeting (1): February 26, 2003
- Working Group Meetings:
  - March 12, 2003
  - March 25, 2003
  - June 11, 2003
- Community Meeting (2): July 23, 2003
- Final Work Group Meeting: August 6, 2003
- Boulder County Planning Commission: August 20, 2003
- Board of County Commissioners: August 26, 2003
- Planning Board
  - September 4, 2003
  - October 16, 2003
  - March 4, 2004
  - April 1, 2004
- City Council
  - January 13, 2004 (Study Session)
  - February 3, 2004
  - March 16, 2004

Below is a summary of the steps in the process and the roles that each of the participants played in the process:

### **Phase 1: Project Scoping (January – February 2003)**

1. Formalize Working Group
2. Hire Urban and Development Consultants
3. Community Meeting (1)

**Phase 2: Development of Options (March – May 2003)**

1. Working Group Meetings
2. Property Owner Meetings

**Phase 3: Plan Refinement (June – August 2003)**

1. Revise plan options
2. Working Group Meeting (June 11)
3. Community Meeting (2)
4. Final Working Group Meeting
5. Final plan revisions

**Phase 4: Review and Adoption (August – March 2004)**

1. Referral to County
2. Planning Board hearing
3. City Council hearing

## **Roles**

City and county staff - Provided staff expertise, resources, and information as needed to support the process, represent city and county policies and interests relating to development of the area, and recommend a “best fit” option for Planning Board and City Council adoption.

Landowners - Property owners, both from in and around the planning area, represented their respective interests.

Neighborhood representatives - Represented and provided input on neighborhood concerns and interests relative to development of the area plan.

Urban design consultant - Developed area plan options; reported on the larger community’s review of these options; and developed the “best fit” option to be brought forward for adoption by the Planning Board and City Council after a referral to the county.

Economic consultants – Assisted with development and implementation issues by updating and refining the market data, estimating growth rates, advising on the feasibility of community center designs from a tenancing and development point of view, and developed implementation strategies.

Transportation consultant – Prepared a traffic study for the community center plan and advised on transportation issues.

## **Relationship to other City Plans and Processes**

### ***Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan***

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan provides the broad context and overall city policies for more detailed planning which occurs through subcommunity and area plans as well as city master plans. Area plans help bridge the gap between the broad policies of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan and site-specific development applications for a particular area of the city or valley.

### ***City Master Plans***

City departmental master plans are developed by city departments (in conjunction with the public) to address future public improvements city-wide. Master plans are adopted by City Council and form the basis for the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which lists the city's public improvement schedule for the coming six years. A subcommunity or area plan refines comprehensive plan policies and makes recommendations for ways to carry out master plan goals and recommends specific public improvements such as street improvements, parks, libraries, and bicycle/pedestrian connections. These recommendations are based upon adopted master plan standards, or recommendations in master plans.

### ***Development Review***

Development Review (including Site and Use Review) is the city process to review developments that are over a certain parcel or building size; involve variations from minimum code requirements such as height, open space, or landscaping; or involve certain uses. The purpose of these review processes is to allow the community to review the characteristics of proposed developments to ensure that they will contribute positively to the quality of the community and minimize negative impacts to the surrounding area. Projects going through site or use review that are within the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan study area will be subject to conformance with the adopted plan.

### ***By-Right Development***

Many development projects are able to obtain building permits without going through the development review process. These projects are referred to as by-right development. By-right projects meet all pertinent zoning and land use standards in the code and are not required to go through the land development or discretionary review process.

## **Planning Horizon and Plan Amendment Process**

The planning horizon for the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan is equivalent to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan horizon of 15 years. It is anticipated that the plan will be revised every five years, updated as needed, and monitored annually. Amendments to the plan require Planning Board and City Council adoption.

## **City-Wide Goals and Objectives**

***Goal: Provide opportunities for developing a viable, easily accessible, pedestrian-oriented retail town center of appropriate scale to serve the Gunbarrel subcommunity, outlying subdivisions and employment centers.***

### ***Objectives:***

- Create a pedestrian-friendly and community-oriented retail district with an identifiable “main street.”
- Provide a variety of public and civic uses to meet the needs of the subcommunity and add vitality to the commercial center.
- Provide a central public open space area that will be a focus of the village center and encourage community-wide activities.
- Provide opportunities for adding more housing to the commercial area of a size, character, and density that will help support the retail uses and bring day and evening activity into the commercial center.
- Provide an appropriate mix of housing densities and types that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods and provides affordable housing to workers in the area.

***Goal: Provide safe and convenient vehicular and non-vehicular connections between the commercial center and the surrounding area and within the center itself.***

### ***Objectives:***

- Break up the large “superblocks” in the study area to provide better access to retail uses, improve the pedestrian experience, provide better links between the retail and residential uses within the center, and to link retail areas.
- Improve and provide adequate access to public transit.
- Encourage walking and biking as viable transportation options.
- Improve off-road transportation linkages from the outlying residential and non-residential neighborhoods to the commercial center.
- Provide linkages from the commercial center to existing and planned regional transportation networks.
- Provide public parking that is easily accessible and conveniently located to serve the retail uses.
- Provide adequate, appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

***Goal: Provide a commercial center with a unique identity that is the heart of social and cultural activity in the subcommunity and supports day and evening activity seven days a week.***

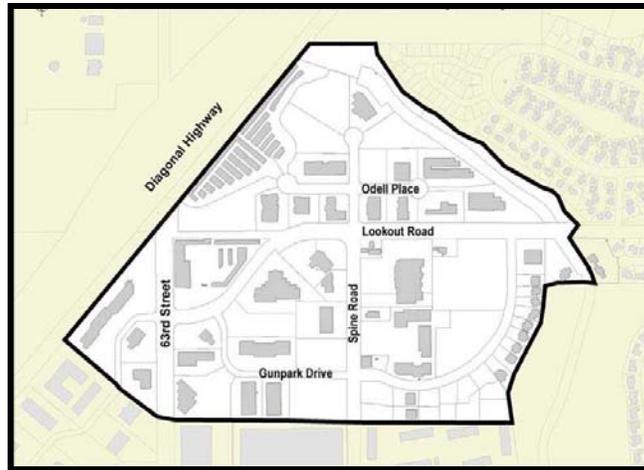
***Objectives:***

- Enrich the area's image by creating a more consistent development pattern that brings visual order to the area and provides for a more human-scale, pedestrian friendly environment.
- Describe the community character and pattern of land use that give the commercial center a unique identity.
- Provide public right-of-way improvements that enhance the character of the commercial center and make it easy and enjoyable to walk or bike around the center.
- Enhance the major gateways into the commercial center to distinguish the character of the center and draw people into the area.

# Existing Conditions and Issues

## Context

The Gunbarrel Community Center is defined as the area surrounding and including the existing commercial center. The intersection of Lookout and Spine roads defines the geographic center of the study area (see Figure 3 below).



*Figure 3: Gunbarrel Community Center Plan Study Area*

Gunbarrel is physically separated from the major portion of Boulder and connected primarily by the Diagonal Highway. Land surrounding the subcommunity is in *Area III: Rural Preservation* as designated in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan. Much of the Area III properties surrounding the subcommunity are owned by the city or county and managed as open space.

The study area and much of the property around it are within Boulder’s city limits. A majority of the residential areas to the east and south of the study area, however, are not annexed to the city and are under the jurisdiction of Boulder County.

## Gunbarrel’s History

The formation and annexation of Gunbarrel was an outgrowth of Boulder’s growth management discussions of the 1960’s. In the early 1960’s the city began addressing the issue of the delivery of urban services to development outside the city limits and within the Boulder Valley. Boulder’s “service area” was defined as the area that the city could provide sewer services by utilizing a gravity flow system.

As a result of these planning efforts, two documents were adopted: “Boulder’s Fringe Area Objectives” (1964) and “The Service Area Concept: A Program for Boulder’s Planned Development” (1965), often referred to as “the Spokes of the Wheel.” The assumption for the plans was that growth was both inevitable and unstoppable. By providing service outside of the city

limits, the city could help prevent the formation of special districts that deliver water and sanitation services. Therefore, the plans concluded, the city should guide growth in the fringe areas, to prevent disorderly sprawl, through contracts for water and sewer service outside of the city's boundaries.

The objective as described in the plans was to extend services along three major arteries (or "spokes") radiating from the center of Boulder to the north (the Diagonal Highway), south (South Broadway), and east (Arapahoe Avenue), with development occurring along the rim. This would allow development to begin from the outer reaches of the city's service area and to work inwards towards the city, while allowing development adjacent to the city to work outward.

Gunbarrel became the first effort to implement the "Spokes of the Wheel" policy when, in 1963, the City of Boulder contracted with the Boulder Valley Water and Sanitation District (BVWSD) to provide water and sewer service on Gunbarrel Hill. The first ordinance agreement between the two stated "that it is the desire of the City and of the Distributor that the Distributor's service area (Gunbarrel) be annexed to the City of Boulder as soon as practical after the area or any part thereof becomes eligible for annexation."

The "Spokes of the Wheel" plan was never fully implemented, as the voters put an end to the construction of the third spoke by repealing an ordinance approving an out-of-city utility connection going down Broadway and Highway 93 towards Eldorado Springs and the Jefferson County line.

The Gunbarrel area shared in the mid-60's through mid-70's the growth boom that the City of Boulder experienced. The area was ideally located to serve the new IBM plant that quickly became the largest private sector employer in Boulder County. Spin-off businesses and a growing Gunbarrel commercial development provided additional employment and services for the growing subcommunity. Much of the industrial, commercial and residential growth occurred in the county during this period.

In November of 1975, the City Council approved a policy resolution regarding the future annexation of Gunbarrel. It stated that:

*Section 1: The best interests of the Boulder Valley and the City of Boulder are not served by the creation of additional incorporated cities or quasi-municipal entities within the Comprehensive Plan area.*

*Section 2: The City must extend its boundaries to annex the area known as Gunbarrel when and if the circumstances are appropriate.*

In December of 1976, the city completed the purchase and annexation of the open space that could provide the contiguity required for annexation of Gunbarrel. By April of 1977, IBM and the commercial and industrial area of Gunbarrel had for the most part been annexed.

## Gunbarrel Today

The Gunbarrel Subcommunity is characterized by a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. The commercial and industrial portions of the subcommunity are annexed to the city. Aside from a handful of residential neighborhoods adjacent to the commercial and industrial areas, the majority of residential properties in the subcommunity are in unincorporated Boulder County.

The subcommunity is unique because of the shared jurisdiction of planning and service provision among the county, the city, the Gunbarrel Public Improvement District and other special districts. In the unincorporated area, a variety of arrangements for service provision exist. Some services, such as road maintenance, flood control, and law enforcement, are primarily provided by the county. Area residents taxed themselves through the Gunbarrel Public Improvement District to pay for open space acquisitions, and major roadway improvements.

### *Current Land Use and Zoning in the Study Area*

Lands within the study area are currently a mix of light industrial<sup>1</sup> and commercial uses (see figures 4 and 5 below). There are no residential uses in the study area although the regional business zoning district affecting several of the properties allows for residential use. Industrial uses largely include a mixture of technical office, small manufacturing, self-storage, and school uses.

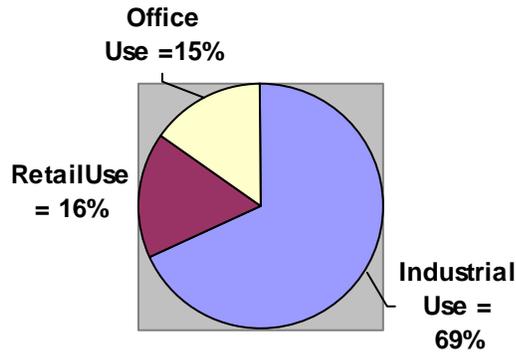


**Figure 4: Existing Land Uses in and around the Study Area**

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<sup>1</sup> *Light Industrial* land uses are primarily research and development, light manufacturing, and other intensive employment uses.

**Figure 5: Existing Land Uses in the Study Area by Percentage of Total Building Square Footage**



King Soopers grocery store is the largest retailer in the district and is located at one of the most visible and accessible intersections in the district at Lookout and Spine roads. The only other existing retail uses in the subcommunity are located directly south and southwest of King Soopers. The existing shopping centers include a post office, small restaurant, real estate offices, and other specialty retail uses.



**Employment**

Gunbarrel is considered a primary employment center for the city. The estimated employment population in the study area is approximately 2,300 jobs. This compares to about 12,800 jobs within the subcommunity and 93,500 jobs city-wide.

	Study Area	Gunbarrel Subcommunity Area I	Gunbarrel Subcommunity Areas I and II	City-wide
Population	0	2300	9800	101,600
Dwelling Units	0	1000	4800	48,700
Jobs	2,300	12,200	12,800	93,500

Most of the businesses operating in the Gunbarrel subcommunity fall within the general industrial or manufacturing sectors with several of Boulder’s largest industrial businesses located in Gunbarrel including IBM, Celestial Seasonings, and Valley Lab.

***Current Vacancies***

Several key sites are currently vacant or unoccupied by any business. The site at the northeast corner of 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lookout Road (where Hugh M. Woods lumberyard was once located) is now vacant (see photograph to the right). Up until the end of 2001, Hugh M. Woods was a major retailer in the district. The site is located at a key entryway point into the commercial district and is important for its accessibility, size, and visibility.



A vacant site at Gunpark and Lookout roads (see photograph to the left) is located directly east and south east of King Soopers. This large, 10-acre site is currently zoned for a regional business use which would allow a mixture of retail, office and residential uses.

The sites surrounding the Front Range Community College at the north end of Spine Road are also currently vacant. These sites are currently zoned for a general industrial use.

There are four smaller vacant sites located along Gunpark Drive that are currently zoned for a regional business use.

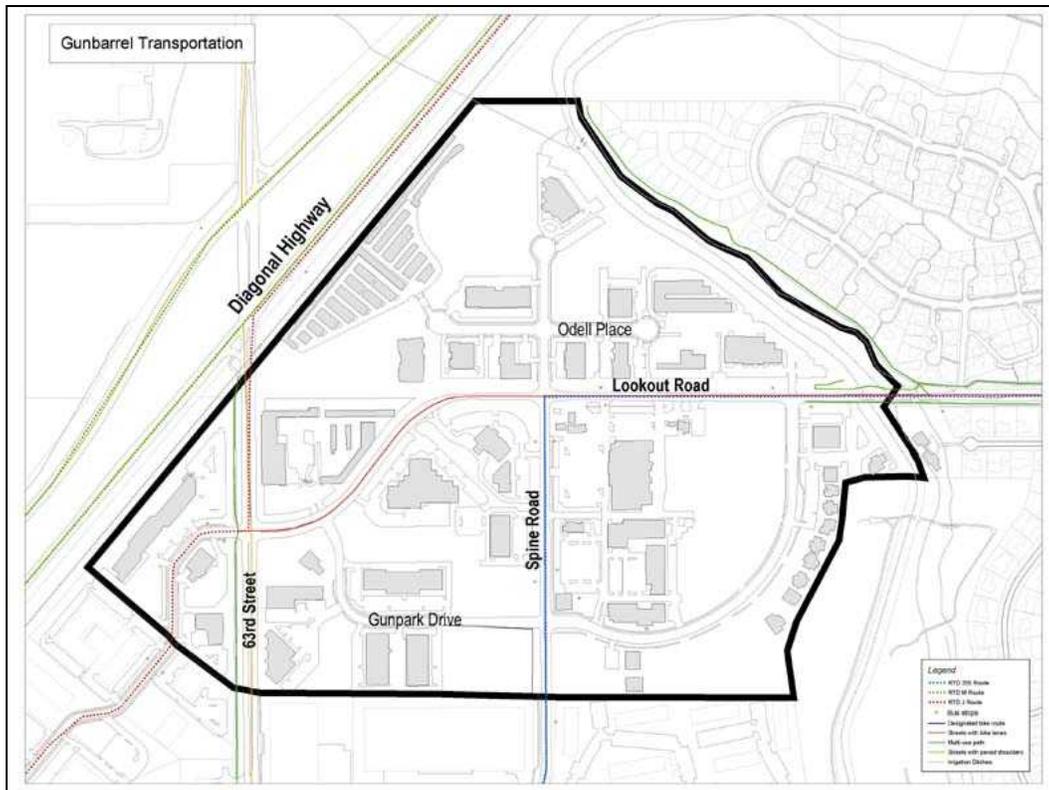
The following chart shows the total amount of vacant land acreage by the two zoning districts in the study area:

Zoning Designation	Vacant Acres
General Industrial	8.2
Regional Business	11.7

The current industrial vacancy rate within Gunbarrel is estimated at 15-20%. This is up from an estimated rate of approximately 5% from the mid-1990’s to 2001 and is similar to the average vacancy rate in the 1980’s.

## Current Transportation Network

There are three primary roadways into and out of the study area including 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Lookout Road, and Spine Road. The busiest entryway to the Community Center is at 63<sup>rd</sup> St. and the Diagonal Highway (see Figure 6 below). This intersection receives the most average daily and peak hour traffic of any other intersection in Gunbarrel. The most visible intersection to the Community Center is at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lookout Road which serves as a *de facto* gateway to the commercial area.



**Figure 6: Existing Transportation Network**

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) currently provides bus service to the Gunbarrel area and along the Diagonal Highway with the “J”, “M” and #205 bus routes. There currently are no pedestrian facilities, and few, if any transit amenities at the bus stops on the Diagonal Highway. The lack of transit and pedestrian facilities creates an impediment for Gunbarrel residents to access transit on the Diagonal Highway.

An existing network of bike facilities in the study area provides bicycle access to the study area



from the residential areas to the south. However, there are some deficiencies which limit non-motorized vehicle access from the unincorporated residential areas to the east.

A private golf course and a major water supply channel run north to south along the length of the subcommunity and bisect the commercial and industrial areas on the west from the residential areas on the east. Consequently, there are insufficient trail and path connections linking the two portions of the subcommunity. In addition, the Diagonal Highway acts as a major barrier to non-motorized vehicle access to the park facilities at the Boulder Reservoir from the industrial and commercial land uses. The highway also prevents easy access to the commercial center for employees at the IBM facility to the north.

### ***Parks and Recreation Facilities***

Three city neighborhood park sites are located in the subcommunity. Eaton Park is a 23 acre neighborhood park located south of the study area off of Nautilus Drive, north of the county-owned Twin Lakes. It provides a small landscaped green space with seating, a picnic shelter and a challenging bicycle course as well as a large natural area and trail system. It serves the residential areas within ½ mile of the park site, which includes the majority of the study area south of Lookout Rd.

Tom Watson Park is a 32 acre neighborhood park located off 63<sup>rd</sup> St. immediately west of the IBM facility and north of the Diagonal Highway. Features at Watson Park include ballfields, tennis courts, volleyball courts, basketball courts, a picnic shelter, open grass fields parking, and a recently renovated and expanded children's playground. The northern portion of the Gunbarrel study area lies just outside the service area radius of Watson Park, although bicycle and pedestrian access to the park could be improved with an underpass under the Diagonal Highway.

Heatherwood Park is an undeveloped five acre site located adjacent to the Heatherwood School outside of the study area.

Boulder Reservoir and Coot Lake are located to the north of the Diagonal Highway and offer substantial recreational amenities to the residents and workers in the Gunbarrel Subcommunity, including boating, fishing, swimming, wildlife viewing and trail systems. Current access to the reservoir by trail or road is somewhat indirect because of the major highway separating the facilities from the rest of the subcommunity. Construction of an underpass at Highway 119 would improve access to these sites.

Most residential neighborhoods in the subcommunity are also served by private HOA parks, many of which include typical neighborhood park amenities such as playgrounds, picnic tables, basketball courts, etc.

### ***Open Space***

The subcommunity is surrounded by open space owned by either the city or the county.

### *Fire Services*

City properties throughout most of Gunbarrel have adequate fire services according to current master plan standards. Fire station #6 at 5145 North 63<sup>rd</sup> Street serves most of the area to the south of Lookout Road with a four minute response time. Properties to the north of Lookout Road including IBM and the Gunbarrel North subdivision are outside of the six minute response time service standard for the city. Properties in the county are served by the Boulder Rural Fire Protection District.

### *Libraries*

There are no library services located in Gunbarrel today.

## **Future Growth Potential under Current Conditions**

### *Jobs to Population Balance*

Today, there are more jobs than housing for workers in the Boulder Valley and the trend is likely to increase significantly under current zoning. For this reason, the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) jobs: population balance policy states that “the city and county agree that the current ratio within the Boulder Valley exceeds an appropriate ratio... and that a worsening of that ratio... will lead to greater regional traffic congestion, affordable housing shortfalls, and other negative impacts on the community as a whole...” (BVCP Policy 1.19). To implement this policy, City Council adopted Resolution # 922 that directs city staff to explore possible changes to the city’s commercial and industrial areas that would reduce the projected imbalance while also furthering the city’s economic, environmental, transportation and housing goals by:

- 1) Encouraging mixed use development in certain commercial and industrial areas;
- 2) Adding housing through mixed use development and limiting the amount of new office development in commercial areas;
- 3) Preserving service commercial uses in selected areas;
- 4) Developing appropriate maximum Floor Area Ratios (FARs) in commercial zones; and
- 5) Identifying ways to preserve and strengthen the city’s retail areas.

Several of the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan recommendations serve to implement this direction and to improve the center’s existing and projected jobs to population ratio; specifically, those related to encouraging more mixed use development and adding housing in areas that had previously been anticipated for industrial development. Below are an assessment of the center’s existing jobs to population ratio and a comparison of the projected ratio under current zoning and current trends at build-out to the ratio under the proposed plan at build-out.

Gunbarrel is considered one of Boulder’s major employment centers. The number of jobs available in the subcommunity, therefore, far outnumber the amount of current housing available

to workers in the area. In 2003, the estimated number of jobs in the Gunbarrel subcommunity was approximately 12,840 while the population was approximately 9,780 resulting in a jobs to population ratio of approximately 1.3. This compares to a jobs to population ratio of 0.92:1 in the Boulder Valley. (an area is typically considered “balanced” at a .65:1 ratio since approximately 65% of the population usually works). At build-out, the plan represents an improved projected jobs to population ratio compared to current trends.

**Figure 7: Jobs/Population Balance in the Gunbarrel Subcommunity**

<b>Today (2002)</b>	<b>12,840 / 9780 (1.3)</b>
<b>Current Trends 2025</b>	<b>20,880 / 10,390 (2.0)</b>
<b>Plan 2025</b>	<b>18,340 / 11,170 (1.6)</b>

## **Retail and Residential Market Analysis**

In September 2002, a residential and retail market analysis was completed for the Gunbarrel commercial center by Leland Consulting Group. The market analysis was in response to concerns raised about a proposal for the development of the 10 acre vacant site along Gunpark Dr. just south of Lookout Road for a mixed use project. The development proposal raised the issue of how to create a stronger retail town center in Gunbarrel with more specialty retail uses. Questions were also raised concerning the feasibility of multifamily housing in the commercial center.

Leland Consulting Group and Citiventure Associates were retained by the city to conduct residential and commercial retail market analyses and provide development programming recommendations for the area. In completing the analyses, the consultant group obtained and analyzed secondary market and economic information to supplement primary data obtained through previous work completed in the market area, as well as meetings, and interviews with city and county planners, local real estate brokers, and other experts on local and regional market conditions.

The following is a summary of the findings in the market analysis:

### ***Gunbarrel Area Strengths***

#### Gunbarrel Neighborhood

- There is a growing and affluent “captive audience” of daytime employees, primarily from local high-tech businesses.
- There is an established affluent residential population currently dissatisfied with existing retail offerings in Gunbarrel.

### Study Area

- The study area is centrally located within Gunbarrel.
- There is reasonably good access and visibility along Lookout Road which is a critical local access road to the commercial area.
- The surrounding natural environment is aesthetically pleasing with ground floor views of the Rocky Mountains.

### ***Gunbarrel Area Weaknesses***

#### Gunbarrel Neighborhood

- The residential development in the trade area is generally low-density with limited “rooftops” or potential shoppers.
- Limited pedestrian access to the commercial center reduces the viability.

#### Study Area

- There is poor visibility of the commercial center from Highway 119 (Diagonal Highway).
- There is disadvantageous access to and visibility of the 10 acre vacant site at Gunpark and Lookout roads.
- The existing terrain and building design in the area impedes visibility and connectivity throughout the surrounding development.
- The 10 acre vacant parcel is not a favorable drive-by location for non-Gunbarrel residents and employees.

### ***Trade Area Definition***

A trade area was selected to include local concentrations of housing and employment that would constitute the most likely sources of demand (as well as the most direct competition). The trade area included Gunbarrel, Niwot, and outlying unincorporated Boulder County areas, and was bounded by Oxford Road on the north; 95<sup>th</sup> Street on the east; Highway 7 on the south; and US 36 on the west.

### ***Conclusions***

The conclusions of the market analysis were as follows:

#### Residential

- There is substantial long-term demand for residential development in the Trade Area, with strong demand for both rental and for-sale attached housing products. (+1500 rental and 5400 for-sale units)
- The near-term rental demand is likely limited to affordable products, with longer-term demand likely for higher rent luxury units.

## Retail

- There is significant long-term demand for new retail space in the Trade Area. (+140,000-190,000 square feet)
- The majority of this future retail demand will be convenience-oriented or geared for the purchase of everyday household items and services.
- Additional demand for specialty retail could also be captured.

## ***Market Study Recommendations***

### Residential

- A residential component within the development project at Gunpark and Lookout roads will help to build critical mass and support retail absorption.
- Residential development is a logical interim use for space that may one day be developed as retail.

### Retail

- Assuming high quality development and “Town Center” or community-oriented retail character is desirable, the initial offering of retail space should be kept to a minimum (40,000 square feet or less), because near-term demand is dominated by convenience retail which could potentially harm the long-term prospects of a town center concept.
- Because long-term demand for specialty retail is potentially higher, zoning, site design, and architecture should all anticipate its future expansion.

# Concept

## Land Uses

The land use plan for the Gunbarrel Community Center is intended to provide a rich and thriving retail center by: expanding the amount of retail use in the area; adding new residents in close proximity to the retail core; creating more usable public spaces; and improving access to and from the center (see Figure 7 on the following page).

The basic concept for the center is to create a denser, mixed use retail core as shown on the map below. The retail core will serve as the heart of the community center and provide specialty and convenience retail uses, attached housing, and some office use. Spine Road between Lookout and Gunpark roads will be the “Main Street” for the retail area and provide a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented, gathering area for the subcommunity. It will be linked to a secondary street one block to the east.

**“Main Street” development refers to areas patterned after historic commercial centers designed specifically to enhance the pedestrian environment and create a sense of community with buildings built up to the street, wide sidewalks, 1<sup>st</sup> floor retail storefronts, and pedestrian-scale architecture.**

Other land use districts surrounding the retail core will provide employment, housing and community retail uses and will be linked to the retail core with streets and multi-use paths.

The community retail district to the north of Lookout Road will provide easily accessible, non-specialty retail services to the neighborhood such as hardware stores, drug stores, auto parts stores, restaurants, and dry cleaners. The former Hugh M. Woods site is the most visible site from the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street entrance to Gunbarrel. This site will be designed to attract shoppers to the Community Center and offer a pleasing shopping environment.

A future road and multi-use connection along an existing drainage ditch from the community retail district to the retail core will link the two areas together. This connection would be adjacent to a potential urban park which may provide amenities such as grassy areas, benches, and a children’s play area.

A vital aspect of the plan is the provision of a site for a potential transit center. This site would be designed as a transit-oriented development and include transit services, parking and some housing and retail uses.

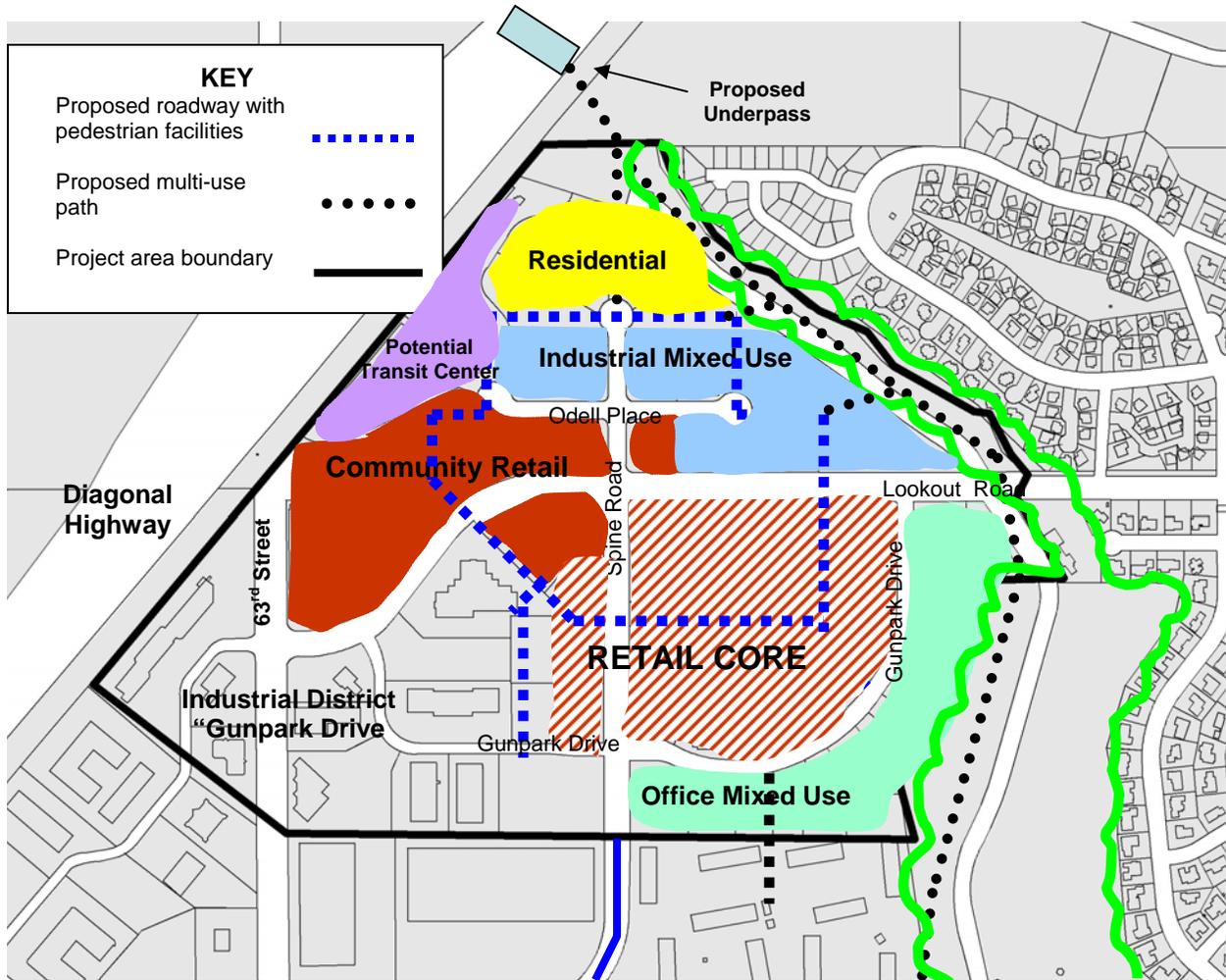


Figure 7: Land Use Concept

## Character

### *Retail Core District*

The retail core is the central gathering spot for the community. This area will be characterized by a higher intensity and variety of uses than the other districts around it and contain a wide range of retail, office, public, and residential uses in close proximity to each other. The retail core should provide a variety of additional or improved retail services to those currently available and contribute positively to the urban design of the area. Smaller specialty retail uses will predominate and primarily serve the subcommunity and outlying residential areas. There will be a conversion over time of the character of the retail core from an auto-oriented strip center to a pedestrian-oriented, “Main Street” community center.

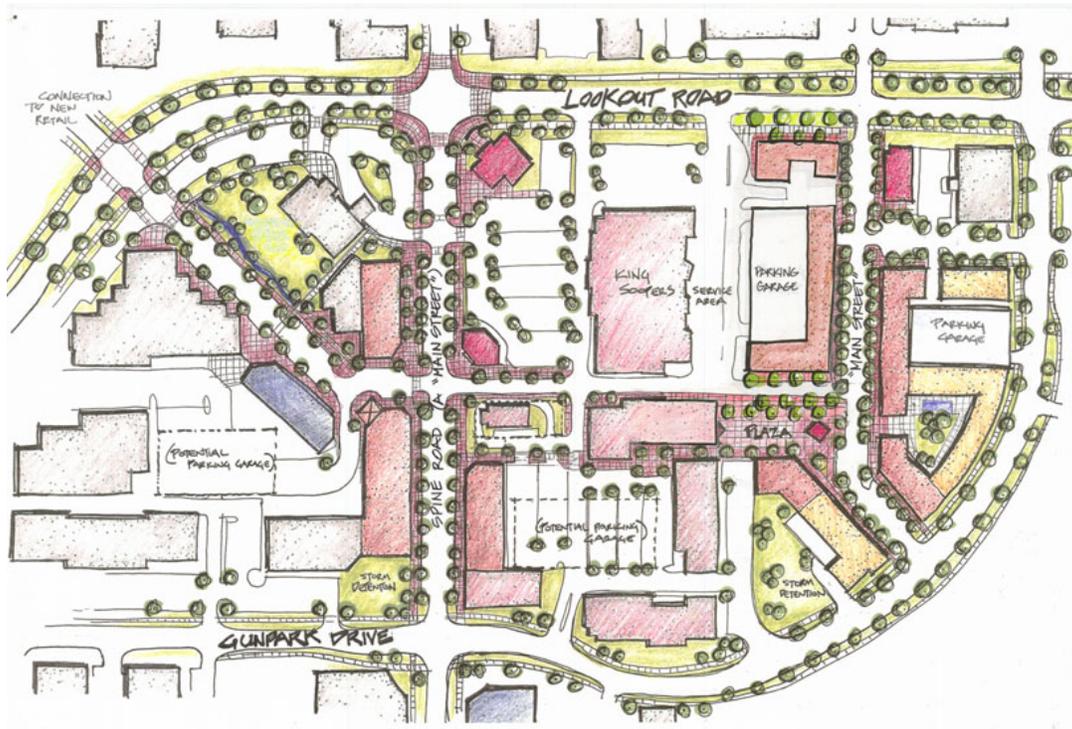
The district will emphasize the pedestrian environment through the design, massing, and placement of the buildings and the streetscape design. A new transportation network is intended to break up the super blocks and promote a walkable and bikable environment. New residential development in the retail core will be of a size, density, and character that support the retail uses.

Retail uses will be located on the first floor of the buildings lining the main pedestrian streets with office and residential above. There may be a variety of building heights ranging from one to an occasional four stories but with a massing that minimizes the perceived height along the pedestrian corridors and invites the larger community into the retail core. At a minimum, the fourth story of all buildings will be set back at least twenty feet from all roads. No more than 25% of a single building coverage may be above three stories tall. Four-story buildings may be considered but only if the project meets all of the following conditions:

- All buildings along the pedestrian corridor have architectural features which break up the massing such as staggered storefronts and building entrances, balconies, setbacks, variation in building materials and pedestrian seating areas on the ground level; and
- The project provides a significant amount of public amenities which will enhance the public areas and support a lively community center; and
- There is no request for open space reduction.

Four-story building proposals require referral to the County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners for their comments on the design of the site.

Residential development in the retail core should provide a variety of housing types to meet the needs of the subcommunity and the greater Boulder Valley. Housing development should be designed in a way that invites the larger community into the retail and public spaces.



*Figure 8: Illustrative development pattern in the retail core*

**“Main Street”**

– Spine Road and the new street east of Spine Road on the vacant parcel at Gunpark and Lookout roads

Spine Road is the heart of the community center and retail core. Redevelopment will occur in a pedestrian-oriented pattern, with buildings built up to the street along both sides of the street. Retail uses will be located on the first floor; and residential and office uses above the first floor. Street-front buildings will be designed to avoid a canyon-like feeling along the pedestrian corridor by breaking up overall massing, varying the store-front design, limiting building height to three stories, and stepping the third story back from the street. Redevelopment of the north corner properties at Spine and Lookout roads will be encouraged to provide an architectural feature to mark the entry to the retail core.

The streetscape design will support an inviting pedestrian and shopping environment with grated trees, wide walkways, seating areas, bike racks, and planters. The public right-of-way will allow storefront access by pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles in a way that is compatible with the pedestrian-oriented character of the street. On-street parallel parking and bike lanes will be provided in order to afford direct access and visibility to the retail uses and create a separation between pedestrians and moving cars.



CORE AREA RETAIL

*Figure 9: Illustrative character of the retail core*

### ***Gunpark Drive***

Gunpark Drive provides a transition from the higher intensity uses in the retail core to the less intense Transitional Business district to the south and east. Building scale and massing will be controlled along Gunpark Drive to provide a smooth transition between the higher intensities in the retail core and the less intense mixed use office (transitional business) district to the south and east.

Gunpark Drive will continue to allow on-street parking to provide access to the residential and business uses on either side of the street.

The pedestrian environment along Gunpark Drive will be enhanced by breaking up the existing super block to blocks or building masses of no more than 150 to 200 ft. long. Detached sidewalks and tree lawns on both sides of Gunpark Drive will be required.

### ***Mixed Use Industrial/Residential District***

This area will be characterized by a mix of residential and compatible light industrial uses. It is intended to provide a transition between the more intense commercial areas and the established residential areas to the northeast. Development in this area would be less intense than in the retail areas with mainly 2-3 story buildings. The development in this area would be pedestrian-oriented, with minimal building setbacks, parking to the rear of or underneath the buildings, detached sidewalks and tree lawns. The first floor or street front uses would be predominantly industrial in character while the uses above the first floor may include industrial, residential, or limited office uses.

### ***Community Retail District***

The community retail area is the most visible area in the Community Center from the Diagonal Highway. It is primarily intended as a retail center serving residents within the subcommunity and the outlying areas. The uses in this area will be easily accessible by automobile and cater to the convenient shopping of household goods. Buildings will be primarily 1-2 stories with a larger floor area than in the retail core to provide space for medium and large retailers. Easily accessible restaurants and movie theaters would also be supported in this area.

### ***Lookout Road***

Lookout Road serves both as a main arterial road for the subcommunity as well as a gateway to the community center. The roadway will be designed to accommodate the movement of large volumes of traffic into and out of the center as well as bike lanes and gateway enhancements. For this reason, on-street parking will not be provided. Landscaped gateway enhancements will be provided at the intersection of Lookout Road and 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and at the east entrance to the Community Center along Lookout Road.

The streetscape design will also include a more inviting pedestrian environment with wide tree lawns (minimum 8 feet) and detached sidewalks. Pedestrian crossings will be improved to allow easy and safe access from the mixed use area north of Lookout Road the retail core.

One to two story buildings will be built up to the street in the commercial and mixed use areas, with the most intensity encouraged at the corner of Spine and Lookout roads to create an entry mark to the “Main Street” shopping district along Spine Road.

### ***Transitional Business District***

This area is characterized by a mix of small-scale office uses and some service and personal service uses. This district is intended to provide a visual transition between the higher intensity uses of the retail core and the adjacent residential neighborhoods. The existing character of the district would largely remain the same with some additional lodging and residential uses expected to be added over time.

Stronger landscape buffers will be encouraged with redevelopment of the properties to screen parking lots from the street and sidewalk. A pedestrian environment will be encouraged with detached sidewalks and wide tree lawns.

### ***Industrial District or “Gunpark Drive West”***

The Industrial district will largely remain the same in terms of the allowed scale and uses. The area is characterized by large, industrial and office buildings with wide set backs from the street. It is anticipated that future growth in the Industrial area will result in larger buildings over time.

Due to the existing and planned land uses, the area will remain a predominantly auto-oriented district. Detached sidewalks and tree lawns will be required with further development in the area to improve the pedestrian environment.

## **Parks and Public Uses**

A potential urban park is proposed for the study area. The park would serve as a focal point and gathering area for the Community Center. The preferred site that was identified during the planning process is at the southwest corner of Spine and Lookout roads. However, the final site of a new park will be determined through further evaluation by the Planning Department and the Parks and Recreation Department and through negotiations with the landowners and business representatives of the site.



***Figure 10: Illustrative character of an urban park***

Depending upon the final size and location of the park, possible amenities include the following:

- Large grassy play areas to accommodate various outdoor games and events
- Specialized game areas such as bocce courts or board game tables
- Benches and picnic tables
- Children’s play areas

***Recommendations:***

- The City Planning Department will initiate negotiations with the land and business owners of a proposed park site to determine the feasibility of park land acquisition in a selected location.
- The City Planning Department will work to identify public and/or private funding sources for the development of a future urban park in the Community Center and for on-going park maintenance.

# **Transportation Network Plan**

The Gunbarrel Transportation Network Plan identifies the desired future transportation network in the community center for all modes of travel. The network plan will help land owners, developers, the city, and other governmental jurisdictions plan for the connections needed in this area. (See figures 11 and 12 for street, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements.)

One of the major goals of the plan is to improve the multi-modal transportation connections into, out of and within the Community Center. Transportation improvements are vital to the success of a retail center. Without good visibility and convenient access by bus, car, bicycle, and foot, the retail services will suffer as many shoppers will choose to go to other shopping locations that are more easily accessible.

An important objective of the plan is to break up the large superblocks and make access to and visibility of individual retail shops easier for cars, bikes and pedestrians. Smaller blocks combined with interesting, pedestrian-scaled architecture will also encourage more walking and biking.

An improved pedestrian environment and good connections are important to the success of the retail centers. Improved pedestrian crossings are planned for several intersections on Lookout Road to facilitate access to the retail core from the residential areas to the north of Lookout Road. An improved crossing is also planned to connect the new retail center at the community retail district to the retail core. Improvements are planned for the existing ditch channel as shown in figure 11 to provide a pleasant multi-use connection between the two retail centers.

## ***Traffic Volume***

Increased traffic congestion is a major concern for residents in the subcommunity. A traffic study performed for the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan shows that traffic congestion will worsen with growth under the current land use and zoning pattern. The changes shown in this plan will result in similar growth in overall traffic congestion but will show improvements during the peak hours of the day (rush hour). The conversion of potential industrial uses to residential uses as shown in the plan will result in less congestion during the morning and evening rush hours because residential and retail land uses are less intensive during peak periods compared to office and industrial land uses. Adding more housing close to a job center will result in fewer and shorter vehicle trips occur on roads during peak hours. In addition, improved street connections and bicycle facilities as shown on the plan will also help to relieve some congestion on Lookout Road and 63<sup>rd</sup> Street.

## ***Potential Transit Center***

The potential transit center site as shown in figures 11 and 12 is conceptual in nature and should not be considered a proposed location. The US 36 EIS project, a regional planning effort conducted by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), is currently underway to evaluate commuter rail service between

Boulder and Denver and Boulder and Longmont. The final US 36 EIS will recommend rail and transit oriented development (TOD) locations for the entire US 36 corridor including rail stations between Denver and Boulder. The US 36 EIS is planned for completion in 2005.

## **Transportation Improvements**

See figures 11 and 12 for the location of the planned transportation improvements. The following improvements are shown on the maps:

### *Street and Transit Improvements*

- New and existing streets
- Intersection improvements
- Gateway enhancements
- Existing and planned transit stop locations and improvements
- Existing and planned transit routes

### *Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements*

- Existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle paths
- Designated on-street bicycle lanes and routes
- Enhanced pedestrian crossings
- Pedestrian and bicycle underpasses
- Bicycle racks and parking for improved accessibility to retail core destinations

### *Recommendations*

#### Streets

- Design the new street connections north of Lookout Rd. according to residential street standards with 5 foot detached sidewalks, eight foot landscape strips, and on-street parallel parking.
- Design Spine Road north of Lookout Road according to collector street standards with 5 foot detached sidewalks, 8 foot landscape strips, on-street bike lane, and on-street parallel parking.
- Design Spine Road south of Lookout Road as an urban street with a “Main Street” character including 12-15 foot sidewalks, large maturing trees in tree grates, parallel parking, and on-street bike lanes.
- Generally, design new streets in the Retail Core as urban streets with large maturing trees in tree grates and on-street parking.
- Implement the new diagonal connection between Spine Road and Lookout Road in three phases: 1) Staff will negotiate with property owners to obtain an off-road, multi-use path easement along the existing ditch, 2) Staff will work with property owners to connect the existing parking lots to improve internal vehicular movement, and 3) When major redevelopment of the properties adjacent to the

channel is proposed by the landowners, staff will work with the landowners to develop a new street alignment connecting Spine and Lookout roads.

- Design Lookout Road to accommodate the movement of large volumes of traffic into and out of the center and include bike lanes, 8 foot wide landscape strips, detached 5 foot wide sidewalks, and gateway enhancements. On-street parking will not be provided.
- Continue to evaluate the need for a new traffic signal at Lookout Road and Idylwyld Trail every two years.
- Upgrade all existing streets and streetscapes to the current standards with major redevelopment of a site.

### Transit

#### Short Term:

- Improve pedestrian access from the retail core to the bus stops on the Diagonal Highway.
- Coordinate with RTD to relocate bus stops on the Diagonal Highway to make northbound and southbound stops closer together and to provide easier access to the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection.

#### Medium to Long Term:

- Add basic transit amenities such as transit boarding pads, sidewalks connecting the bus stop to the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection, shelters and improved night lighting at bus stops along the Diagonal Highway in coordination with RTD, Boulder County, and the Colorado Department of Transportation.
- Support coordination between regional and local trails efforts to fund and construct an underpass in North Gunbarrel on the Diagonal Highway to facilitate access to transit on the Diagonal Highway. Consider adding bus stops and bus stop amenities at this location in conjunction with the underpass project.
- If it is determined that Gunbarrel will be the location for a future rail station, consider adding a nearby park and ride facility in conjunction with the rail station.
- Consider queue jump operational improvements at the Diagonal Highway at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection in order to improve bus transit operations.

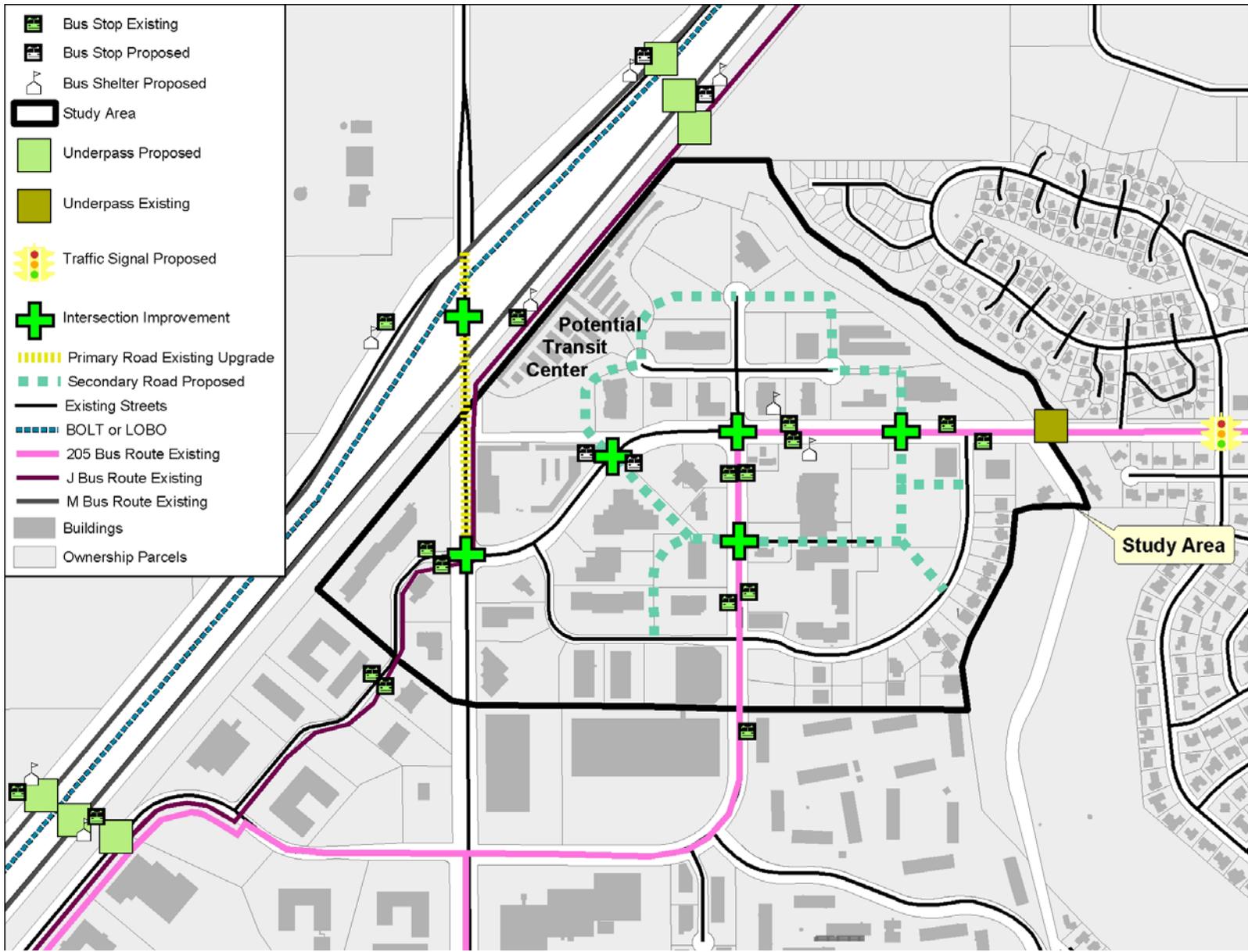


Figure 11: Street and Transit Improvements

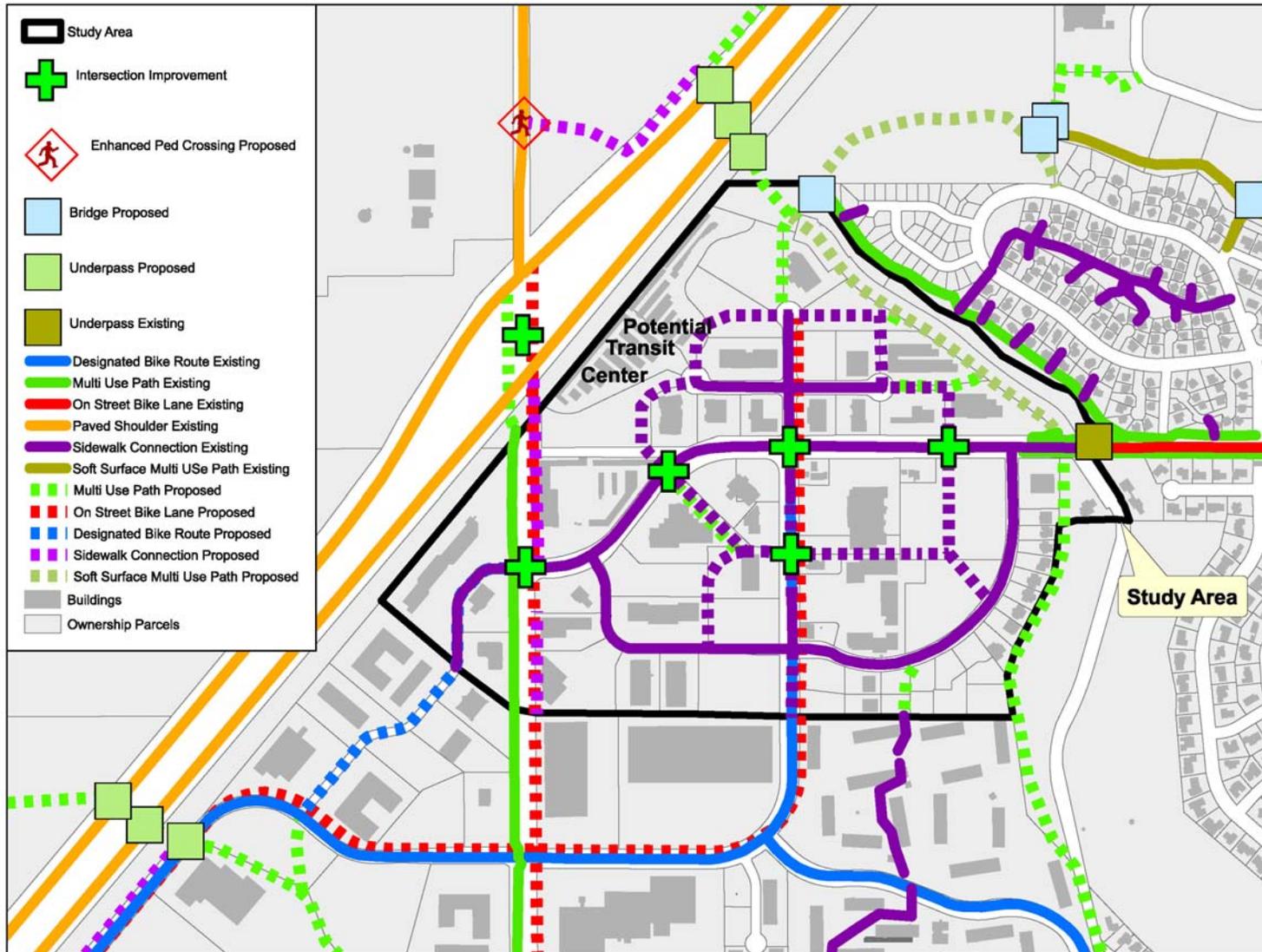


Figure 12: Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

## Pedestrian and Bicycle

- Promote an inviting pedestrian environment along all street connections within the study area by providing 8 foot landscape strips, detached sidewalks and large maturing street trees outside the retail core.
- Improve the pedestrian environment along Gunpark Drive by providing detached sidewalks and 8 foot landscape strips on both sides of the street. Continue to allow parallel parking along Gunpark Drive.
- Require street amenities such as benches, planters, waste receptacles, and bike racks in the right-of-way and all designated pedestrian areas throughout the retail core.
- Work with landowners to develop a multi-use path along the existing channel as a first phase in connecting Lookout and Spine roads in this location. (See phasing in Street Recommendations.)
- Design and construct safe crossings at the intersection improvement areas as noted on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements map in Figure 12.
- Construct a bicycle and pedestrian underpass under the Diagonal Highway north and southwest of the study area as shown in Figure 12.
- Evaluate the need for pedestrian-activated signals or streetlights at the intersection improvement areas as noted in figures 11 and 12.
- Design and construct gateway enhancements at the intersection of 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lookout Road and along Lookout Road near the east entrance to the study area as shown in Figure 11. Gateway enhancements may include architectural features on corner buildings or special landscaping or hardscaping at the corners or in the public right-of-way to create a welcoming entryway to the center.
- Design and construct multi-use paths to be consistent with the City of Boulder Design and Construction Standards. All paths shall have a minimum width of 10 feet and be paved in concrete. Pathways that are not within a roadway right-of-way should be placed in a pathway easement.
- Design and install bicycle lanes to be consistent with the city's bike lane standards.

## **Implementation**

Over time, the plan and the planned improvements will be integrated into the Boulder Valley Transportation Master Plan and the Capital Improvements Program. The recommendations and requirements of the network plan will be implemented through new development, redevelopment, and through transportation projects undertaken by the city as well as other jurisdictions.

### *Travel Demand Management*

Travel demand management strategies are currently being developed by the city of Boulder. The components of the Gunbarrel Transportation Network Plan implementation will incorporate

those travel demand management strategies to best meet the needs identified in the city Transportation Master Plan and related policies.

The network plan will be implemented through the following actions:

- Adoption of the network plan by Planning Board and City Council.
- Adoption of development or redevelopment triggers for network plan compliance.
- Identification of appropriate funding mechanisms for improvements.
- Construction of capital improvements as part of the Capital Improvements Program.
- Dedication and acquisition of rights-of-way.
- Construction of on-site and off-site improvements by property owners as appropriate when parcels develop or redevelop.

## **Transportation Network Plan Amendment Process**

The Gunbarrel Transportation Network Plan is intended to be specific enough and yet flexible enough to have application for the foreseeable future in this portion of Boulder. However, if the need arises, this section describes a two-tiered approach to modify the network plan.

**Administrative Adjustments** to the implementation of the network plan can be completed at the staff level after review and agreement by Planning, Transportation, and Development Review staffs as appropriate. For example, staff may authorize the administrative adjustment to the alignment of a connection illustrated on figures 11 and 12 when the requested adjustment meets all of the following criteria:

- The adjustment results in a lateral shift in alignment of less than 50 feet in properties that are 5 acres in size or less, or less than 100 feet in properties that between 5 and 10 acres in size, or less than 150 feet in properties that are 10 acres or more in size.
- The adjustment has no adverse impacts on surrounding properties.

Plan Amendments represent modifications to the network plan document or modifications to the map based component of the plan that propose a change in connectivity that exceeds the alignment flexibility thresholds detailed above. Plan amendments require review and recommendation by the Transportation Advisory Board and a decision by the Planning Board, subject to City Council call-up. The approving authority will consider the following when reviewing a proposed plan amendment:

- Change of circumstance
- Physical hardship
- Practical hardship
- Equivalency

## **Policies Needed to Support the Transportation Network Plan**

The following lists the policies that support the implementation of the network plan:

### **1. Connectivity to the City-wide Multi-modal Transportation System**

Policy: The multi-modal transportation facilities illustrated in figures 11 and 12 that connect from the Gunbarrel Community Center to the surrounding transportation network should be prioritized, programmed and implemented by the city of Boulder as part of the Boulder Valley Transportation Master Plan and Capital Improvements Program process.

### **2. Coordination of the Network Plan Improvements**

Policy: The development of the Gunbarrel Transportation Network Plan improvements shall be coordinated to facilitate safe and efficient multi-modal mobility within and around the area.

### **3. Flexibility of Connection Location Regarding Development or Redevelopment**

Policy: The multi-modal improvements illustrated on the network plan maps (figures 11 and 12) are intended to define the needed connectivity in that area. The alignments of these connections are specific to the area shown but are not intended to be precise, so long as the connection illustrated is created in a manner that facilitates efficient travel. The intent of the network plan is to maintain flexibility in the implementation of these connections so as to not hinder redevelopment potential of a parcel or parcels. The development or redevelopment proposals should illustrate that the intended connectivity is achieved. If the connection illustrated on the network plan maps can not be made where shown, the alignment may be varied as follows:

- Development or redevelopment parcels that are 10 acres in size or less must achieve the connection within 50 feet on either side of the alignment illustrated on the network plan maps.
- Development or redevelopment parcels that are more than 10 acres in size must achieve the connection within 100 feet on either side of the alignment illustrated on the network plan maps.

### **4. Right-of-Way Dedication and Acquisition**

Policy: Necessary rights-of-way or easements for the transportation facility improvements identified on the network plan will be reserved, dedicated to, or acquired by the city as parcels apply for development or redevelopment as a condition of approval. The city of Boulder may need

to acquire the necessary rights-of-way or easement for projects to be constructed by the city.

**5. Coordination with the Boulder Valley Transportation Master Plan**

Policy: The goals, objectives, and multi-modal connections identified in this network plan should be incorporated into future updates of the Transportation Master Plan to facilitate their prioritization and implementation.

**6. Consistency with the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan**

Policy: The transportation system anticipated by the network plan is intended to be consistent with and facilitate the potential future land uses in the area as envisioned in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan. The network plan action items serve to implement comprehensive plan transportation policies regarding multi-modal strategies and investments, accessibility, reduction of single occupancy auto trips, and transportation impacts.

**7. Development or Redevelopment Compliance with Boulder’s City-wide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program.**

Policy: The city of Boulder will develop a Transportation Demand Management Program (TDM program) for implementation throughout the city. This TDM program will offer various transportation options to the single occupancy vehicle (SOV). It will give people the flexibility to find a transportation option that works for them – part of the time or all of the time. The program will attempt to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips and the resulting congestion, pollution, increased parking and reduced open space.

The city-wide TDM program, when finalized, will likely have application in the Gunbarrel Transportation Network Plan area and may be incorporated into the network plan.

# **Plan Implementation**

The plan outlined in this document portrays a new face for the Gunbarrel Community Center. It respects the unique character of the Gunbarrel neighborhood, takes a fresh look at what the character of the commercial district could be, and then addresses the obstacles that have precluded the private development of a charming and vibrant town center.

The implementation of these concepts depends on investment from both the private and public sectors. A brief overview of the area's development characteristics and challenges explains why this is necessary.

## **Development Background**

The Gunbarrel Community Center is a commercial area surrounded by well-established, upper-income, low-density residential areas. The commercial identity of the area is tied to the many high tech users that settled here over the last 25 years or so, and built a number of office and industrial buildings to house a growing workforce. The original building forms were primarily utilitarian, suburban, and auto-oriented. Access into the area reflects this industrial heritage with access off the Diagonal highway, but with no need to be immediately adjacent or visible from it.

Current users range from large employers such as IBM to small widget manufacturers. A significant number of buildings are owner-occupied, and have been for a number of years. Many property owners have substantial equity in their real estate and often, nearly fully-depreciated buildings. Land ownership reflects the area's entrepreneurial roots and stable occupancy; it is quite dispersed with only a few large parcels under single ownership.

A limited amount of adaptive reuse and infill has occurred over time, somewhat diversifying the business base and attracting professionals seeking to be close to the executive housing stock and removed from the Boulder congestion. Reflecting the employee base that the area has retained, a certain amount of daytime service retail has also come into the area. Retail appealing to the residential areas is auto-oriented and generally clustered around the King Soopers grocery store at Lookout and Spine roads. Close proximity to the Diagonal Highway has helped the grocery anchor, but lack of direct access and visibility has hurt the viability of other retailers. As a result, tenant turnover tends to be high despite modest rents.

Today, both the office and industrial markets are depressed for the third year in a row and vacancy in the area hovers in the 15-20% range. Business and landowners are, for the first time perhaps, seeing a need for the area to take on a different character so it can support other uses. Landowners of a few larger parcels are considering new development concepts, and owners of vacant buildings are considering opportunities to fill their space with non-traditional Gunbarrel tenants.

## **Development Opportunities and Challenges**

The market study of the area completed by Leland Consulting Group in the summer of 2002 indicated strong demand for rental or ownership multifamily housing. Affordable housing showed the highest demand, but products at almost any price point could be successful. Additional retail could be supported by the existing market, and would grow with the residential base over time. The immediate retail demand was for larger “boxes” that would draw from traffic off the Diagonal Highway as well as Gunbarrel residents. Large box retail, however, would be difficult to accommodate in the Gunbarrel area given current parcel sizes, physical configuration, and community vision for the area. The market study also found that if properly designed, a more village-like retail center could support additional restaurants and specialty stores that had previously not been attracted to the area. This affords some interesting possibilities to the area residents, property-owners, and the City of Boulder if the development obstacles can be overcome.

Obstacles to realizing these opportunities and opening new markets are:

1. Zoning preventing residential and mixed-use development
2. No critical mass of retail activity clustered within easy walking distance
3. Isolation from the residential population and large employers
4. Inadequate pedestrian connections within the area
5. Low level of surrounding residential density
6. Few available land assemblages
7. Poor highway access and visibility
8. Identity as an industrial/service retail area

The Gunbarrel Community Center Plan considered these issues and answers many of them. It outlines a potent strategy to enhance the viability of the Community Center area over time. Because of the number and types of obstacles to be addressed, however, successful implementation will require the participation and support of both the public sector and private investors.

## **Implementation Actions and Priorities**

The Gunbarrel Community Center will evolve with the market and the actions of the property and business owners, developers and community. Some key steps are necessary in the short run, however, to make the vision outlined in this plan even possible. The responsibility of the public sector will be to first make the appropriate land use and zoning changes to allow private sector redevelopment to occur. It will also be the responsibility of the city to identify sources of revenue that can be specifically targeted at the public improvements in the Gunbarrel Community Center. Principal activities for the first year are identified, and the evolution of the development estimated for the following periods. The following chart outlines the actions that the public and private sectors will need to take to implement the plan:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	COST	TIMING
<p><b>1. Adjust land use and zoning to allow new and redevelopment and permit a broader range of uses.</b></p>	<p>Planning - Lead</p> <p>Supporting department: City Attorney's Office</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Immediately</p>
<p><b>2. Determine costs of and prioritize public improvements.</b></p>	<p>Planning – Lead</p> <p>Supporting departments: Transportation, Parks and Recreation</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
<p><b>3. Determine methods of public and/or private financing.</b></p>	<p>Planning – Lead</p> <p>Supporting departments: Finance, City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation, City Attorney's Office, Transportation</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
<p><b>4. Advocate and support formation of a Gunbarrel alliance.</b></p> <p>- a not-for-profit entity comprised principally of Gunbarrel businesses and property owners, to lead planning initiatives, advocate for and market the area.</p>	<p>Private sector – Lead</p> <p>With support from the following city departments: Planning, City Manager's Office</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
<p><b>5. Form the appropriate type of Special District with both city and Gunbarrel property owner representation to fund infrastructure improvements on a public/private basis.</b></p>	<p>Public/Private sector joint lead</p> <p>City departments: Planning, City Managers Office, City Attorneys Office</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>

<p><b>6. Participate in the RTD rail feasibility study for the US 36/Diagonal Hwy. corridor</b></p>	<p>Public sector City departments: Transportation, Planning</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
<p><b>7. Determine priority projects, public-private financing methods to be used for infrastructure investments.</b></p>	<p>Public/Private sector joint lead City departments: Planning, City Managers Office, Transportation, Utilities</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>2-5 years</p>
<p><b>8. Work with the land and business owners of a proposed park site to obtain park lands.</b></p>	<p>Planning - Lead Supporting departments: City Attorney's Office, City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>2-5 years</p>
<p><b>9. Jointly encourage and support development projects that conform to the plan.</b></p>	<p>Public/Private sector joint lead Supporting departments: Planning, City Managers Office</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p><b>10. Identify and recruit desired users to Gunbarrel.</b></p>	<p>Private sector lead</p>		<p>On-going</p>

## **Roles of the Public and Private Sectors**

Implementation of the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan will occur over a long period of time through a combination of actions from both the public and private sectors. Following the immediate actions outlined above to create some regulatory and physical infrastructure changes, the real visioning, actual building development, and day-to-day marketing of the area will be done privately, not by the city. With multiple land owners and businesses involved, it will be many individual actions that will change the area over the next decade. The formation of the a Gunbarrel Business Alliance is fundamentally important to keep the many private owners briefed on the Community Center Plan, and working collaboratively for a neighborhood benefit as well as their individual self-interest.

## **Potential Sources for Public or Private Financing**

Both the private and public sectors will be key players in funding infrastructure improvements. While many traditional public-financing techniques will likely be used, the city's participation will, to a large extent, be triggered by the promised participation of the private sector. A logical and expeditious approach is to support formation of a special district authorized to make property assessments. (There are several different types of districts that should be reviewed and considered in this effort. Business Improvement Districts, Special Improvement Districts, General Improvement Districts and others each have unique powers and characteristics. The decision would be made based on the role and function of the new entity, and would likely involve both the city and Gunbarrel Business Alliance members.) Once formed, the district governing body would decide which projects to fund, in what priority, and the type and terms of the project funding.

The financial situation facing the public sector today makes private sector leverage an increasingly common criteria for allocation of scarce resources. Implementation of the plan will involve identification of substantial public funding needs; but it can only be successful if it is matched on some formula with private participation and funding. Potential funding sources that will be explored further include the following:

### **1. Dedicated taxes or fees**

The City earmarks sales tax revenues above a certain amount toward improvements in the Gunbarrel Community Center. Developments that generate increases in sales and property tax would be eligible to have a portion of the increment used to pay for qualified public infrastructure on their project if it conforms to the plan. Sales taxes are just one source of public revenue that could be recaptured by Gunbarrel. Business to business, business use, and construction use taxes from Gunbarrel development could be partially dedicated for uses such as street improvements, park acquisition and maintenance, or library services.

### **2. Improvement District**

An improvement district agrees to do a property tax assessment on its members to match city funding at some percentage (perhaps 25%) of the cost of desired infrastructure improvements as determined by public and private members on the special district board. The city is then responsible for funding the other 75%, and building the project as usual. But the project is expedited because of the private sector participation.

### **3. Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)**

CDOT funds for eligible projects should be pursued for street improvements and gateway enhancements. Funding is more likely when leveraged with both private and local government matches at some level.

#### **4. Regional Transportation District**

RTD funding may be available for future transit stop improvements.

#### **5. Federal Transit Agency (FTA)**

If a rail or transit station is secured, FTA should be approached for funds for planning the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) around the station, elements that enhance ridership, and better bike and pedestrian connections to the TOD area.

#### **6. Boulder County Trails funds**

Funds may be available for future multi-use paths into and out of the Community Center.

#### **7. Grants**

Foundations both locally and nationally should be approached for assistance. Green space or urban park acquisition or enhancement is of interest to several organizations, and the gateway enhancements could also fall into this category.

#### **8. Philanthropic Gifts**

Parks, libraries and other civic uses are prime opportunities to involve philanthropic giving. Naming opportunities are sometimes available and attractive to donors. In every case, however, the importance of the project to the community must be established, its maintenance accounted for, and the other funding sources committed.

## **Park and Library Amenities**

### ***Urban Park***

There is currently no public funding identified to support the acquisition or development of any additional public park sites in the Gunbarrel Subcommunity. Potential acquisition and development of an urban park in the Community Center will require both negotiation with existing landowners and tenants as well as a funding source to generate the appropriate revenue for purchase, development, and long-term maintenance. Assuming funding sources are identified, the Planning Department will initiate negotiations with land and business owners. If negotiations fail, a new location for a park will be explored.

### ***Library***

Although a small library facility in Gunbarrel would be a desirable amenity to both city and non-city residents, the city is currently unable to fund the construction and operating costs of a library that would serve primarily unincorporated residents. The county would have to be a major partner in financing such a facility, particularly since the service would draw residents from

other unincorporated residential areas like Niwot. A Gunbarrel library is in the city's long-range library capital facilities plan, but stipulates that such a facility will be needed if and when the unincorporated residential areas are annexed into the city. At such a time, the city would negotiate the financing of the facility and its operations as part of an annexation fee and agreement plan.

For several years, the concept of a regional library tax (a countywide tax) has been discussed among the municipal libraries in Boulder County. The 2003 Colorado Legislature passed a new section to the state library law - which allows the formation of Regional Library Authorities (modeled after Regional Housing Authority legislation); and if this concept moves forward and, if the county agrees to be a participant, Gunbarrel residents would be taxed for library services, along with everyone else within the boundaries of the Regional Library Authorities. Depending on the tax increment that is approved, funds could be available to pay for the construction and operation of a library facility in Gunbarrel.

Another possible solution for funding a library in Gunbarrel is for the residents to form a special taxing district and vote to assess themselves for development and operation of a library. They could own and operate their own facility or contract with the Boulder or Longmont library to for the long-term operation. The town of Nederland and residents in the surrounding area did just that in November, 2002 and now collect property tax revenues that are earmarked specifically to operate the Nederland Library District.

## **Proposed Land Uses**

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use map provides a sketch plan of the desired land use pattern in the Boulder Valley. Zoning regulates the location, amount, quality, and types of land uses and is one tool used to implement a comprehensive plan. Changes to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map will be one of the first steps in implementing the vision established in the Gunbarrel Community Center Plan and necessary changes to zoning will follow.

The map below summarizes the recommended Comprehensive Plan Land Use designations and they are described below.

**Performance Industrial** - Primarily research and development, light manufacturing, large scale printing and publishing, electronics, or other intensive employment uses. Performance industrial uses require high-quality site plans and must meet performance criteria for how on-site and off-site impacts are handled.

Example uses: Research and development, light manufacturing, technical offices, and other types of industrial uses that exist in the study area today.

**Industrial / Residential Mixed Use-** Areas where housing is compatible with and appropriate to the industrial character of the area will be encouraged.

Example uses: Light manufacturing, service industrial, motor vehicle services, small theatres, art studio spaces, technical offices, computer design facilities, telecommunications, recording facilities, printers, publishers, recreational facilities, government facilities, live-work, and attached dwelling units.



*Figure 13: Proposed Land Uses*

**Community Business** – is defined as the focal point for commercial activity serving a subcommunity. These areas are designated to serve the daily convenience shopping and service needs of the local population, and are generally less than 150,000 to 200,000 square feet in area. Offices within the Community Business areas should be offices designated specifically for residents of the subcommunity. Where feasible, multiple uses will be encouraged within these centers.

Example uses: restaurants, personal services, large or small retail, banks, hotels, motels, medical or dental offices, recreational facilities, schools, day care, art studios, and professional offices.

**Mixed Use Business** – Areas where business uses will predominate in the area overall, although housing and public uses supporting housing will be encouraged.

Example uses: specialty retail, restaurants, personal services, banks, medical or dental offices, recreational facilities, dwelling units, art studios, and professional offices.

**Transitional Business** – This area will be zoned for less intensive business uses than in the Community Business area, and provide a transition to residential areas.

Example uses: temporary lodging, offices, residential, medical clinics, recreational facilities, auto rental, churches, and day care.

## **Zoning**

In some areas, rezoning will be required to implement these comprehensive plan land use designations. The most significant changes in zoning will occur north of Lookout Road where the existing zoning is industrial, but the vision for the future is for community retail and mixed use industrial with housing. Due to the number of existing businesses in this area, the city is committed to ensuring that these existing uses can continue to thrive. The city's regulations currently allow nonconforming uses to remain or change to another nonconforming use of similar impacts and expand up to 10% through a review process.