CHAPTER 1:

BACKGROUND
SECTION 1.1:  
INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The town of Eastlake was originally settled as a railway village in the early 20th century. The historic town was founded in 1911 and was incorporated into the City of Thornton in 1990. At the time of annexation, the Eastlake Master Plan was adopted by the Thornton City Council, establishing proposed land uses and proposed infrastructure improvements for the area. In 2003, the city of Thornton approved the Eastlake Subarea Plan to respond to changes to the character of the area surrounding the town of Eastlake since 1990. The 2017 Subarea Plan retains many of the recommendations of the 2003 Subarea Plan; however, it focuses on Old Town Eastlake, rather than the broader Eastlake Neighborhood.

The 2017 Eastlake Subarea Plan is an update to the 2003 plan of the same name. The plan was updated to reflect changes in the area over the fourteen intervening years and to provide guidance on development and capital improvements in the future.

Figure 1.1: Site map with walk radius from station

REASONS FOR THE PLAN UPDATE

The 2003 plan has served the area well and large portions are still relevant and will be retained in this 2017 update. The 2017 plan update is being undertaken for the following reasons:

- Eastlake is now the temporary end of line for the North Metro Transit line which is due to open in 2018. The station area planning being undertaken by RTD needs to...
be coordinated with planning in existing Old Town Eastlake, particularly along First Street.

- Growth pressures that will result from the construction of the station are inevitable and need to be addressed in a way that does not compromise the existing small town character of the area.

- Other planning has been done for the area, in particular the 2015 Eastlake at 124th Station Area Master Plan (STAMP) and it is necessary to ensure all the planning recommendations are consistent.

- Many of the recommendations from the 2003 plan have been completed and new recommendations that are pertinent to the current situation are needed.

**2017 SUBAREA PLAN PROJECT AREA**

The 2017 plan focuses on Old Town Eastlake, located just east of the Eastlake at 124th Station on the North Metro line. The project area is bounded by First Street to the west, Birch Street to the north, York Street to the east and 124th Avenue to the south. In addition to the parcels bounded by the streets above, the study area includes three

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**FASTRACKS & EASTLAKE STATION**

At the time of the 2003 Subarea Plan, the FasTracks proposal to extend the North Metro commuter rail through Eastlake had not yet been approved by voters and the project had an indefinite timeline. FasTracks is a regional public transportation expansion plan that spans light rail, commuter rail and express bus service. In November 2004, voters approved a ballot measure to fund FasTracks through a regionwide sales tax increase. Initially the North Metro Line was scheduled to be completed in 2015. However in 2008, due to funding constraints, this was postponed to 2034 or later. In 2013, RTD signed an agreement with a private contractor to complete the line to Eastlake at 124th station by 2018. The remainder of the line to Highway 7 is not currently funded in the short term and is not anticipated to be completed before 2040. Therefore, Eastlake will be the temporary end of line for the foreseeable future.
commercial parcels to the east of York Street and north of 124th Avenue, as well as two parcels south of 124th, which are an active farmstead and a city-owned parcel.

This project area is smaller and more focused than the 2003 plan which included a larger area comprising newer residential areas to the east and vacant parcels to the west of the railway line. The 2015 STAMP studied and provided detailed proposals for this larger area, with particular attention paid to the parcels west of the tracks. The 2017 Subarea Plan focuses on Old Town Eastlake because this area was deemed to have a distinct small town character, different from the surrounding area. For some of the broader transportation circulation recommendations, both the 2015 and 2017 plan extends to a wider area.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE 2003 SUBAREA PLAN

While most of the 2003 plan will remain intact, a few key changes will be seen throughout the document. These changes are:

• The 2017 subarea boundary only covers Old Town Eastlake and thus all recommendations will pertain to this new study area except for some broader circulation elements.

• Recommendations that have been previously achieved or are no longer feasible have been removed.

• Recommendations from related plans (see related plans summary) are integrated into the plan as well as new recommendations vetted by the working team, Advisory Committee, City Council and public process.

• New illustrations and diagrams provide additional clarity to the Subarea Plan.

ORGANIZATION OF SUBAREA PLAN

The Eastlake Subarea Plan is organized into five sections, containing related chapters with topical goals and recommendations.

The Plan starts with Chapter One: Background, which includes an overview of the Plan, followed by a discussion of the history of the Eastlake Subarea, as well as an overview of the planning process and public outreach efforts that informed this plan update.

Chapter Two: Goals & Guiding Principles provides goals for the Plan as well as a detailed description of the Guiding Principles and their influence on the recommendations.

Chapter Three: Plan Components covers the bulk of the Subarea Plan and is comprised of recommendations bridging five categories:

1. Land Use
2. Infrastructure
3. Parks, Open Space and Trails
4. Historic Recognition and Urban Design

5. Funding, Financing and Community Vitality

**Chapter Four: Design Guidelines** provides urban design guidelines for the Eastlake Subarea, pertaining to residential and mixed use development, as well as guidelines on streetscapes and architectural character.

**Chapter Five: Implementation** is a compilation of all the plan recommendations and illustrates how the goals of the Subarea Plan will be realized.

The **Appendices** provide additional background information on the Plan, as summarized below:

1. **Community Outreach**, City of Thornton and Design Workshop
2. **Linkage Design Principles**, Valerian LLC
3. **Parking Management Study, Phase I**, Desman Design Management
4. **Parking Management Study, Phase II**, Desman Design Management
5. **Eastlake Market Study**, ArLand Land Use Economics

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**Figure 1.3: Plan Organization Diagram**
RELATED PLANNING INITIATIVES

Eastlake and the surrounding area has been the focus of a number of planning efforts. These are as follows:

2009
Eastlake Station Area Master Plan (STAMP)

Adopted by Council February 24, 2009. Plan covered areas west of the station and was superseded by the 2015 STAMP.

2003
Eastlake Subarea Plan

Subarea Plan for Old Town Eastlake and the surrounding area adopted by Council May 27, 2003. Updated by the 2017 Subarea Plan. Many of the recommendations from the 2003 Plan have been completed. Appendix 6 includes a comprehensive summary of the 2003 recommendations and their status.

2015
Eastlake at 124th Station Area Master Plan (STAMP) & Open Lands Plan

Approved by Council October 27, 2015. Updated the 2009 STAMP and focused on the west side of the station. Also included recommendations for the Grain Elevator area and the city-owned open lands along the railway line.

Related Planning Initiatives

Eastlake and the surrounding area has been the focus of a number of planning efforts. These are as follows:
SECTION 1.2:
PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

PLANNING PROCESS

The project team initiated work in January 2016 and developed the content of the plan through a series of six phases, as described here and in Figure 1.4 below.

Phase 1: Project Initiation

The initial phase for the project consisted of coordination meetings between the consultant team and the internal team at the city of Thornton to set initial goals and develop the project schedule. Phase 1 also included 12 individual, hour-long stakeholder interviews to better understand the community’s character, opportunities and constraints. The stakeholders consisted of business owners, residents, property owners, city officials and community influencers, such as a local pastor.
**Phase 2: Analysis & Research**

To better understand the neighborhood and the physical context, the project team conducted extensive research and analysis. This included synthesis of previous and related plans, a market study completed by ArLand Land Use Economics, and a comprehensive review of the 2003 plan to ascertain which recommendations were completed, which had yet to be completed and which were no longer relevant.

**Phase 3: Vision & Goals**

With a solid foundation of research and community engagement, the working team met with the technical advisory committee to formalize a vision and goals for the project. These goals aligned closely with the 2003 Subarea Plan. This phase also included analysis of similar communities in the Front Range to contextualize Eastlake and how the town might be impacted by the new commuter rail station. During this phase, the first community meeting centered on questions of community identity. The project team conducted a visual preference survey with the community to work toward a vision of Old Town Eastlake.

**Phase 4: Plan Alternatives**

The fourth phase delved into possible recommendations and how these could impact land use and development in the area. This phase included studies of how the development assumptions from the market report might impact land use in Eastlake as well as ideas on how to alleviate the increased parking demand in the area due to the commuter rail line station. These alternatives were presented and discussed with the public, advisory committee and City Council. The project team also hosted a Developers’ Forum, inviting experts from the Denver Metro region with experience implementing projects in similar context as Old Town Eastlake to reflect on the potential opportunities and constraints from a developer’s perspective.

**Phase 5: Preferred Plan**

Based on feedback on the alternatives, the final document began to take form pending revisions based on input from the Advisory Committee and direction from City Council. The preferred direction for the plan was then presented to the public at the third community meeting. Illustrations and diagrams were created to communicate the principal ideas in the plan and to provide a graphic explanation.

**Phase 6: Plan Adoption**

The final plan was adopted by City Council on February 28th, 2017.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting / Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Stakeholder        | March 15/16, 2016     | • Project introduction  
| Interviews         |                       | • Key issues  
|                    |                       | • Community identity                                                       |
| Visual Survey      | March 22, 2016        | • Site observation                                                   |
| Advisory Committee | April 1, 2016         | • Key issues  
| No. 1              |                       | • Project vision and goals                                             |
| Community          | April 28, 2016        | • Project overview  
| Meeting No.1       |                       | • Visual preference survey   
|                    |                       | • Project vision & goals                                               |
| Developers’ Forum  | June 16, 2016         | • Project overview  
|                    |                       | • Development opportunities & constraints                             |
| Advisory Committee | June 17, 2016         | • Initial concepts  
| No. 2              |                       | • Project vision & goals                                               |
| Council Briefing   | August 16, 2016       | • Project vision  
| No. 1              |                       | • Initial concepts                                                       |
| Community          | August 22, 2016       | • Opportunities & constraints  
| Meeting No. 2      |                       | • Precedent studies  
|                    |                       | • Initial concepts                                                       |
| Advisory Committee | September 2, 2016     | • Feedback from community meeting  
| No. 3              |                       | • Reevaluation of concepts                                              |
| Project Area       | September 19, 2016    | • “Listening Tour” with residents  
| Neighborhood       |                       | • Concepts & recommendations   
| Meeting            |                       | • Breakout groups for discussion                                         |
| Council Briefing   | October 18, 2016      | • Feedback from local community  
| No. 2              |                       | • Revised concepts                                                        |
| Community          | November 17, 2016     | • Parking alternatives  
| Meeting No. 3      |                       | • Revised concepts                                                        |
| Council Public     | February 28, 2017     | • Consideration of final plan                                         |
| Hearing            |                       |                                                                      |

Figure 1.5: Public Process and Community Engagement Activities

Figure 1.6: Community Meeting One Mile Radius Mailer Map

Figure 1.7: Neighborhood Meeting Mailer Map
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As part of the planning process, the project team engaged in extensive community outreach. As groundwork for the plan, the project team conducted 12 individual, hour-long stakeholder interviews with a sample group of residents, business owners and community members. These interviews provided information on the history of Eastlake, the neighborhood’s culture, and how the community anticipated it might change in the future. Following the stakeholder interviews, the project team conducted an extensive site walk to document and analyze the urban fabric of the project area.

In addition to the stakeholder interviews, there were three community meetings focused on gaining feedback from the greater Eastlake area over the course of several months. Flyers for these meetings were distributed to members of Old Town as well as residents within a one mile radius of the Eastlake at 124th Station (Figure 1.6). In response to feedback from residents, business owners and property owners in Old Town Eastlake, the project team convened an additional meeting and a listening tour for this group since they are directly affected by the plan. (Figure 1.7). The overall Eastlake community also had the opportunity to provide input on the Eastlake Subarea Plan during the formal public hearing and adoption process. A summary of feedback received at all the community meetings is included in Appendix 1.

STUDIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE 2017 EASTLAKE SUBAREA PLAN

In 2017, the City of Thornton undertook several studies as part of the update and expansion of the 2003 plan, including:

- A market study conducted by ArLand Land Use Economics to look at the local and regional market around Eastlake and the possible impacts of commuter rail and associated development on Old Town Eastlake. 
  *This study is included in Appendix 5.*

- Desman Design Management conducted a parking study to look at the short-term and long-term impacts the station will have on residential parking, as well as a short-term and long-term study of commercial parking within Old Town Eastlake. The management strategies from this study are included in the parking recommendations as well as captured in the appendices.
  *This study is included in Appendices 3 and 4.*

- Partly as an outgrowth of work on the renovation of First Street and a new plaza at the intersection of First Street and Lake Ave., Valerian, a landscape architecture and urban design project, completed a list of “Linkage Design Principles” that provide design ideas on signage and identity features for Old Town Eastlake as well as the greater Eastlake Neighborhood in order to bring more visual continuity and identity to the area.
  *This study is included in Appendix 2.*

- The plan also retains key findings from studies for the 2003 plan, including design guidelines for historic conservation in the historic town of Eastlake created by Winter, Kramer, Jessup, LLC, and a parks and trails plan for the area. The Eastlake Subarea Plan also utilizes data collected by Front Range Research Associates, Inc. in 2000 through a historic building survey of the town of Eastlake.
SECTION 1.3:

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

ORIGIN OF EASTLAKE

The historic town of Eastlake was created on June 22, 1911 when the Eastlake subdivision was recorded at the Adams County Clerk and Recorder’s Office. The Eastlake Investment Company subdivided approximately 31.5 acres of land to create lots and four streets in Eastlake (Figure 1.8). The majority of the lots created by the subdivision were narrow and rectangular, each approximately 25 feet wide by 125 feet deep. Eastlake’s streets were laid out parallel and perpendicular to the railroad rather than on an east/west and north/south grid. This pattern of small lots and a grid street system with alleyways remains today and helps to define the unique character of Eastlake.

The railroad and agricultural history of the area heavily influenced development of the historic town. Built along the Union Pacific Railroad, the historic town of Eastlake had a small train depot for passenger and freight transportation to Greeley and Denver in the early 1900s.

Like the railroad, the historical agricultural uses of the Eastlake area have affected the development of the historic town of Eastlake. The farms that dominated the historic land use of the area took advantage of the town’s proximity to rail service to meet their business needs. The existing Eastlake Farmer’s Cooperative Grain Elevator was built in 1920 by the local Farmer’s Cooperative adjacent to the railroad stop to facilitate the transportation of grain to urbanized areas by rail. Cattle corrals were located along the Union Pacific railroad tracks, as was a pickle factory to process cucumbers grown on surrounding farms.

Historic photo of Lake Ave
Historically, the Eastlake region had a variety of popular recreational attractions for northern Adams County residents. From the early 1900s, the three Eastlake Reservoirs provided water for farming while also providing recreational opportunities such as swimming and fishing for residents of the Eastlake Subarea. Eastlake Reservoir III, located one-half mile to the east of the Town, was a buffalo wallow before the dam was built to create a larger lake.

EARLY GROWTH IN EASTLAKE

Soon after the subdivision of Eastlake, the area’s small town ambiance began to emerge via the construction of several homes, businesses and two churches. Single-family residential development spread out over the majority of the subdivision, with commercial development dominating Lake Avenue and First Street. The homes built in Eastlake during this time were one to one-and-a-half stories in height, of frame construction and limited architectural ornamentation. Accessory structures, such as sheds and garages, were located to the rear of the property. Many of the original residential structures in Eastlake remain, providing an important contribution to the character and the housing stock of the area.

Within a few years of Eastlake’s platting, “a small business district quickly developed along Lake Avenue, which was lined with sturdy frame and brick buildings,” according to the “Eastlake Neighborhood Historic Buildings Survey.” Many of these original commercial buildings still exist. Most of the existing buildings on the south side of Lake Avenue between First and Second Street are original structures. Several of the original commercial buildings along the north side of Lake Avenue, including E.J. Snydal’s grocery store and a two-story pool hall and dance hall were destroyed by a May 1926 fire. The Eastlake Post Office (now relocated) and the Eastlake Frozen Food Lockers were later built on the site of the fire. Another business within the Lake Avenue commercial district was a small hotel, built at the northeast corner of Lake Avenue and Second Street.

The Eastlake First Congregational Church was constructed at Second Street and Birch Avenue in 1915 after being founded by residents of the surrounding agricultural area. A Catholic church was built in 1916 at Third Street and Lake Avenue, which was later purchased by the Masonic Temple. These two institutional buildings, along with the grain elevator adjacent to the railroad tracks, are important architectural reminders of Eastlake’s history.

ANNEXATION BY THE CITY OF THORNTON

After subdivision in 1911, the next major political event to affect Eastlake was annexation by the city of Thornton in 1990. The city of Thornton, incorporated in 1956 in southern Adams County, expanded northward and eventually surrounded the town of Eastlake. In the late-1980s, facing a failing septic system, the town of Eastlake was searching for a neighboring sewer service provider to assist with waste disposal. The city of Thornton and the town of Eastlake entered into an annexation agreement in 1990 to allow Eastlake to be connected to the city’s sewer system, to upgrade the sewer lines and to make roadway and drainage improvements.

Upon annexation of the town of Eastlake, the city of Thornton adopted the “Eastlake Master Plan” as a general guide for land use, transportation and parks and open
space development. The Eastlake Master Plan sought to “encourage the preservation of Eastlake’s small town atmosphere while enhancing the quality of life for its residents.” The Master Plan identified longtime Eastlake community members with a strong conviction to maintain Eastlake’s character, who help to maintain stability in the area. While the Eastlake Master Plan did not include any policies and recommendations directly related to historic preservation, the Master Plan laid the ground work for future planning efforts in Eastlake.

**RECENT EASTLAKE HISTORY**

Adopted in 2003, The Eastlake Subarea Plan continued the goal of preserving and enhancing Old Town Eastlake. The 2003 Subarea Plan contained new zoning districts and Design Guidelines that contributed towards the goal of maintaining the character of Eastlake while encouraging the creation of small town businesses. The 2003 Subarea Plan also recommended improving the infrastructure provided by the Eastlake Water and Sanitation District. Ultimately, with the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money and low-cost loans, Old Town Eastlake residents hooked up to Thornton’s municipal water system in 2005.

More recently, the city has taken additional actions to acquire property in the area for public benefit. The city purchased land on both sides of the Union Pacific right-of-way in 2001, between 124th and 128th Avenues, to provide an open lands area and accommodate the construction of an Eastlake themed “Heritage Trail”. The city also acquired the Eastlake Farmer’s Cooperative Grain Elevator and its associated buildings, and in 2010 was successful with a nomination request for listing these structures on the National and State Register of Historic Places.

**Eastlake’s street grid was developed in alignment with the Union Pacific rail line and demonstrates the classic T-form street arrangement seen in many small farm towns next to railroads.**
Figure 1.8: 1911 Eastlake Platting Map, Adams County
SECTION 1.4:
LOCAL ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY
In 2000, Front Range Research Associates, Inc. undertook a survey of historic structures in the Eastlake Neighborhood on behalf of the city of Thornton’s Business Development Division. The “Eastlake Neighborhood Historic Buildings Survey,” which provides much of the background for this chapter, contains a more detailed account of Eastlake’s history and highlights historically significant structures in the area. Through the survey, two buildings were identified in Eastlake that qualify for the State Historical Landmark Register: Farmer’s Cooperative Grain Elevator and the Eastlake First Congregational Church. In addition to these state-eligible structures, the “Eastlake Neighborhood Historic Buildings Survey” identified several buildings that contribute to the local history of Eastlake, such as residential and commercial structures. See Figure 1.9 for a map showing the buildings that were surveyed. Like the 1990 Eastlake Master Plan, the historic building survey provides valuable background information for the conservation of Eastlake’s unique character.

PLANNING LESSONS FROM EASTLAKE’S HISTORY
An analysis of Eastlake’s history, coupled with data from the historic building survey, helps to define Eastlake’s character and to create a model for future development in the area. As new challenges and opportunities are created by private development, public investment and the passing of time, Eastlake’s railroad, agricultural and small town heritage should serve as the defining feature of conservation and revitalization in the Subarea. As the area has infill opportunities available, both on vacant lots and on developed lots, attention to the historic character of the area as redevelopment occurs will help to ensure that Eastlake remains a unique and authentic place.

EASTLAKE ARCHITECTURE
The town of Eastlake developed over time, allowing an eclectic mix of architectural styles to characterize the area. While buildings constructed more recently represent a variety of architectural styles, the more historic buildings in Eastlake represent the vernacular architecture found in many small agricultural communities in Colorado in the early 1900s. Eastlake’s historic residential architecture includes homes that are one to one-and-a-half stories in height, of frame construction, with concrete foundations. Most residential structures are of simple design, with hipped or gabled roofs and with limited architectural ornamentation. Though most historical homes had porches, many of the original porches have been altered and enclosed.

In keeping with the vernacular agricultural architectural style, historic commercial buildings in Eastlake were constructed with a brick façade, a stepped parapet, and limited architectural ornamentation. While two-story buildings existed historically in Eastlake, all commercial buildings are presently one-story. Significant architectural features used historically in Eastlake have been replicated in recently constructed

Eastlake is architecturally eclectic with a number of time periods represented by the buildings in town. Some architectural characteristics typical of Old Town Eastlake are limited ornamentation, building orientation to the street, and use of traditional materials.
Figure 1.9: Eastlake Neighborhood Historic Buildings Survey

SURVEYED RESOURCES, 2000

EASTLAKE, COLORADO

Not Surveyed
Surveyed
Significant
buildings, such as the Giuliano Office Building completed in 2002 on First Street, south of Lake Avenue.

EASTLAKE URBAN DESIGN

The town of Eastlake plat, recorded in 1911, established the small town character of the area, which is distinct from the typical suburban development that now surrounds it. As was typical for towns established in the early 20th century, Eastlake was originally subdivided into 25 by 125 ft. lots served by alleys and a grid street system. This lot and street configuration created a small town which was accessible to pedestrians, farmers, railroad employees and other Eastlake community members. Although many of the small lots have been consolidated over time to form larger buildable lots, the small town, pedestrian-friendly scale of the area remains. Characteristics such as narrow front set-backs, front doors oriented to the street, ample landscaping and minimized impact of auto-related uses help to maintain Eastlake’s character.

Eastlake is a unique historic area within the relatively young city of Thornton, which has limited historic resources. Although some alteration has occurred over time, the railroad, agricultural and small-town heritage of Eastlake remains important to residents, to property owners and to city officials. Eastlake’s history, and its related impact on the architecture and urban design of the area, provides important background information on the area and establishes the unique Eastlake character. The remainder of the Eastlake Subarea Plan offers goals, policies and recommendations to help conserve the character of Eastlake as private and public investment occur in the area.