

# CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC BACKGROUND

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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 886 lots and four streets in Eastlake (see *Exhibit 2.1: Historic Town of Eastlake Plat.*) The majority of the lots created by the subdivision were narrow and regular, 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.



Eastlake's origins are tied to the railroad and to agriculture.

Development of the historic town of Eastlake has been heavily influenced by the railroad and by agriculture. 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 1900's.

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 Eastlake Subarea took advantage of the town's proximity to rail service to serve their business needs. The existing Farmer's Cooperative Grain Elevator was built in 1920 adjacent to the railroad stop to assist in the transport 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.

Historically, the Eastlake Subarea has provided popular recreational attractions for northern Adams County residents. From the early 1900's, 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.



The former Snyder Family residence, located on Second Street, is indicative of early residential development in Eastlake.

### 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. All of the existing buildings on the south side of Lake Avenue between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street are original structures. Several of the original commercial buildings along the north



Several Eastlake buildings seen above left, including a two-story pool hall and dance hall, were destroyed by fire in 1926. The structures were later replaced by the Eastlake Post Office (seen here as a pizza parlor) and the Eastlake Frozen Food Locker.

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 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.



Built as "Hotel Toohey" in 1916, this structure now serves as a private residence.

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-1980's, 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 long-time 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.

#### **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 *Exhibit 2.2: Surveyed and Significant Buildings* for a graphic depiction of the buildings 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 a large number of infill opportunities available, both on vacant lots and on developed lots with a large portion of undeveloped land, 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 1900's. 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 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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, to farmers, to railroad employees and to 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 character of the area remains. Characteristics such as narrow front setbacks, 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 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. Specific historic conservation and architectural and urban design recommendations intended to conserve and enhance Eastlake's character are discussed at length in Chapter 6.

# EASTLAKE

## ADAMS COUNTY COLORADO

SCALE 1" = 100 FEET



Figure 3. Plat of Eastlake, November 1911. SOURCE: Adams County Clerk and Recorder, Book 1, Page 32.



City of Thornton

## Historic Town of Eastlake Plat

Exhibit 2.1

Eastlake Subarea Plan 2003



# Surveyed and Significant Buildings

## Exhibit 2.2