

# CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION

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The 1990 Eastlake Master Plan called for many street improvements to address traffic circulation and drainage issues in the historic town of Eastlake. Like the Master Plan, the Eastlake Subarea Plan calls for street and other transportation improvements to accommodate vehicular, transit and pedestrian traffic and to address other transportation issues expected in the Eastlake Subarea over time. The Eastlake Subarea Plan approaches transportation improvements from a multi-modal perspective, building on the planned transit stop and other improvements to create a variety of transportation options in the Eastlake Subarea. Recommendations for road and transit improvements are included within this chapter. Recommendations to improve circulation and access for pedestrians are included in Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space and Trails.

The multi-modal transportation goals, policies and recommendations of this chapter help to realize overall goals of the Subarea Plan. Improved circulation and increased transportation options contribute to an upgraded level of service in the Eastlake Subarea. Enhanced transportation access to the Eastlake Neighborhood from surrounding residences and businesses will help to revitalize the Eastlake commercial district while respecting the traditional small town character of the town of Eastlake.

The **transportation goals** of the Eastlake Subarea Plan are:

- 3-A:** To direct vehicular, pedestrian and transit traffic to the commercial core of the town of Eastlake;
- 3-B:** To prevent cut-through access in the residential areas; and
- 3-C:** To realize a multi-modal transportation system.

## **Master Plan Accomplishments**

When the Thornton City Council adopted the Eastlake Master Plan in 1990, no direct street connections existed between the town of Eastlake and nearby major streets such as 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue or Washington Street. This limited vehicular access served to isolate the town of Eastlake from the surrounding area. Other circulation and transportation-related problems, such as limited parking, existed and recommendations were made in the Master Plan to address them. Drainage issues were also a top concern of the Eastlake Master Plan as the design and construction of alleys and streets within Eastlake did not carry storm water away from houses and businesses, contributing to flooding.

After annexing the historic town of Eastlake in 1990, the City of Thornton undertook a series of street improvements as recommended in the Eastlake Master Plan. Many of the proposed street improvements have been

accomplished. A complete list of the street improvements recommended in the Eastlake Master Plan, including what has been done to implement the recommendations, is found in Appendix A: Eastlake Master Plan and Tasks Completed. The following is a summary of the street improvement recommendations that have been implemented since 1990:

- Third Street one-way, southbound from Birch Street to where York Street veers south
- Birch Avenue realigned
- Alleys improved, driveway access to York Street reduced
- 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue extended across the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to Claude Court
- In residential areas, 24-foot road constructed to allow 14-feet on either side of the gutter for parking or landscaping
- Lake Avenue improved to create 10-foot sidewalks, planting areas and parallel parking
- Birch Avenue widened to accommodate increased traffic
- Pedestrian-oriented street lights installed on Lake Avenue

The transportation accomplishments based on recommendations of the Eastlake Master Plan served to increase access to the town of Eastlake, to improve the streetscape of the town and to address drainage problems that existed at the time. Having accomplished these tasks, the Eastlake Subarea Plan recommends additional actions to create a multi-modal traffic system in Eastlake to serve the commercial district, residents and employees of the area.

### **Existing Conditions**

The Eastlake Subarea is fairly well-served by the existing transportation system. Vehicular traffic is able to reach the area via streets and roadways, and existing trails and pedestrian walkways allow pedestrians and bicyclists some access as well. The Eastlake Subarea is not currently served by transit, which prevents the area from enjoying the benefits of a multi-modal transportation system. While the existing transportation system in the Eastlake Subarea is adequate to serve current demand, planned and anticipated development in the area will create the need for additional, multi-modal transportation infrastructure. Private development at the Hunter Douglas site (southwest corner of 128<sup>th</sup> and Lafayette,) at the Thorncreek Shopping Center, and in multifamily apartment complexes, coupled with public investment at the Thornton Infrastructure Maintenance Center and the Adams 12 Five Star Schools Administration Building, will create additional vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit traffic in the Eastlake Subarea. If rail-based transit comes to Eastlake, additional needs and demands will be generated for the Eastlake multi-modal transportation system.

## Policies and Recommendations

### Road Circulation

The improvements proposed and constructed as a result of the Eastlake Master Plan help to promote goals of the Eastlake Subarea Plan by creating connections to the town of Eastlake from the surrounding area, while preventing cut-through traffic through residential areas. However, the existing street network maintains the isolation of Eastlake from neighboring areas, particularly those areas located west of the Eastlake Neighborhood, which are experiencing current development pressure. The proposed road linkages attempt to provide links to surrounding areas, while avoiding routing traffic through Eastlake. The proposed road improvements also anticipate and address demands created by the proposed rail-based transit stop. (For a graphic depiction of the proposed Eastlake Subarea road improvements, see *Exhibit 3.1: Existing and Proposed Transportation System*.)

The **recommendations for road improvements** in the Eastlake Subarea are:

- 3-1:** Extend 126<sup>th</sup> Avenue eastward from Washington Street, bending southward to link with 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
- 3-2:** Extend Lafayette Street southward, crossing 126<sup>th</sup> Avenue and continuing southwest to connect to Washington Center Parkway;
- 3-3:** Realign Claude Court to the west side of the proposed transit center, creating a triangular area for transit parking between the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the east, 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the south and realigned Claude Court on the west;

### Transit

The historic town of Eastlake was settled because of its location along the Union Pacific Railroad. The railroad contributed to the character and to the economic development of Eastlake and remains an important component of the area's heritage. The proposed re-establishment of a rail-based link to downtown Denver from Eastlake could help to restart and to build upon the vitality Eastlake possessed as a rail town in the earlier part of the twentieth century.

In two transit improvement studies undertaken in the Front Range, one focusing on the northern part of the Denver Metro area and the other focusing on the Northern Front Range area, rail-based transit stations are proposed for Eastlake. First, the North Metro Transportation Major Improvement Study (MIS) chose the existing Union Pacific Railroad corridor that runs through Commerce City, Thornton and Northglenn as their preferred alternative for a transit line. This alternative shows six stations in the Thornton/Northglenn area. These are located at 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Welby Road, 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Colorado Boulevard, 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue and York Street, **Eastlake at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Claude Court**, 144<sup>th</sup>

Avenue and York Street, and at 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Colorado Boulevard, with the Eastlake stop a potential end-of-line stop. Funding for the proposed rail-based transit line is proposed to go before Colorado voters in the form of a vote to increase sales tax. If the sales tax increase is approved, the proposed rail-based transit line could be constructed as early as 2013.

A second transportation study, the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Study (NFRTAS) Major Improvement Study (MIS) focuses on the transportation needs from Fort Collins and Greeley south to Denver. One of the locally preferred alternatives for this study is to have a commuter rail line that would start in Fort Collins, move southeast on existing rail lines to I-25 and would link up with the existing Union Pacific Railroad Line. The commuter line would travel south on the Union Pacific track through Thornton, Northglenn and Commerce City to the Denver Union Terminal. This passenger rail line shows one stop in the Thornton area at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Claude Court, in the Eastlake Neighborhood. Further studies are required before funding mechanisms and implementation timelines can be established.

Should either or both proposed transit lines be constructed, Eastlake will be a significant stop that will attract users from throughout the north metro area. Road improvement recommendations included in this chapter seek to minimize the effect of increased traffic upon the neighborhood. With the creation of a transit stop in Eastlake, adequate parking will become a central issue as well. An area for transit parking has been identified in the triangular area created by realigned Claude Court to the west, 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south and the Union Pacific tracks to the east. (See *Exhibit 3.2: Proposed Transit Parking* for a graphic depiction of the proposed transit parking area.) This area is large enough for approximately 1,500 surface parking spaces. In the short-term, this parking area is planned as surface parking for transit users. In the long term, as demand increases for residential, office and retail uses in the Eastlake Neighborhood, the transit parking is expected to be accommodated in a structure as part of a mixed-use development. For a more detailed discussion of parking in the Eastlake Neighborhood, see Chapter 5: Land Use.

Although regional transportation plans call for a rail-based transit stop in Eastlake, political and economic reality may prevent transit from being constructed in the near-term. As Colorado currently faces an economic downturn and other uncertainties, the political will and funding may not become available to allow transit to proceed. Even without transit, however, the Eastlake Subarea is experiencing significant private and public investment. This investment will require upgrades to the Eastlake Subarea's multi-modal transportation system. Therefore, the goals, policies and recommendations of the Eastlake Subarea Plan will remain applicable.

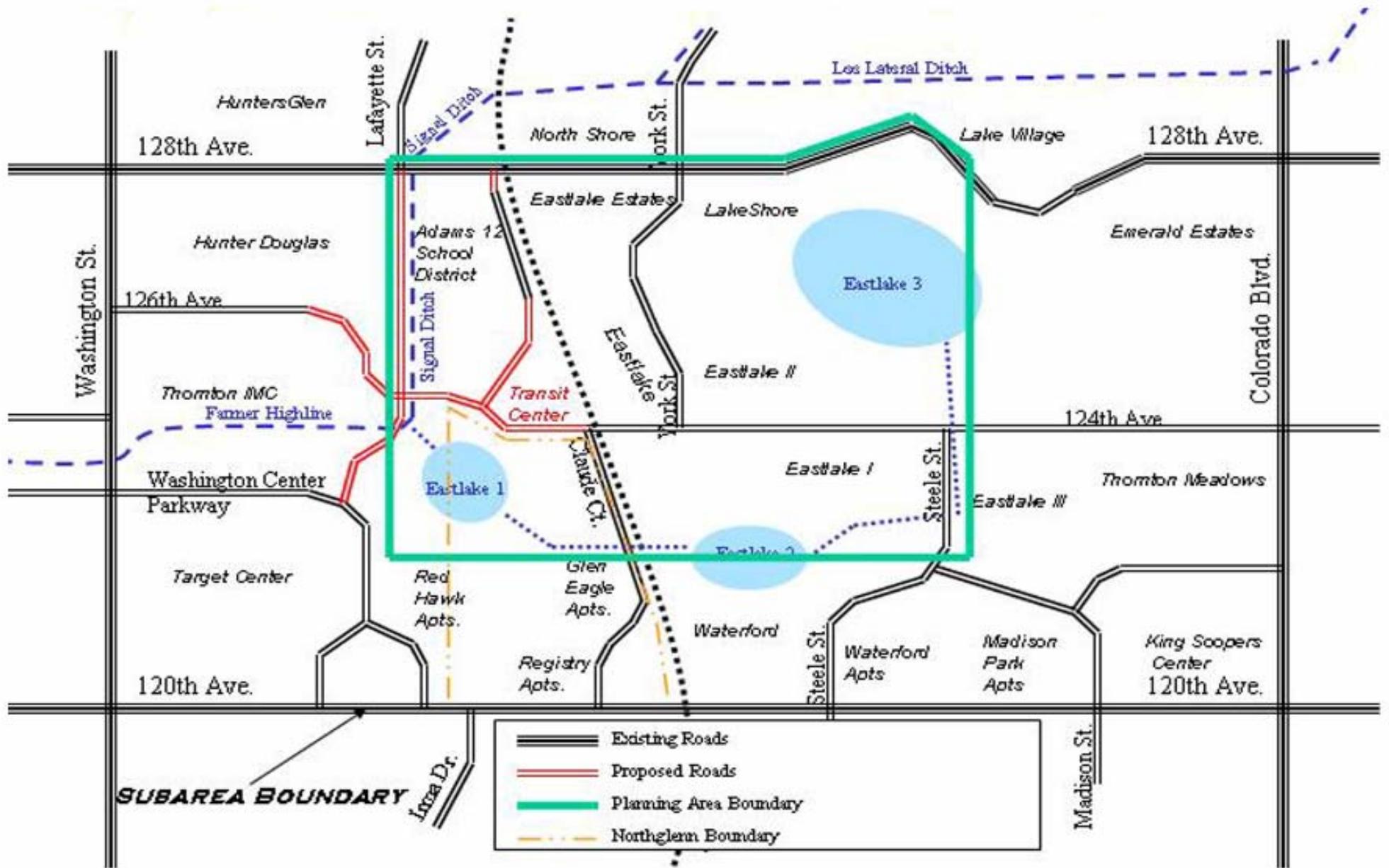
### Pedestrian Circulation and Access

Another component of a multi-modal transportation system, pedestrian circulation and access are important to realizing the goals of the Eastlake Subarea Plan. As the town of Eastlake was built on a traditional, small town model, the Eastlake Neighborhood has many of the characteristics that contribute to a positive pedestrian environment. This pedestrian orientation should be continued and enhanced as the Eastlake Subarea experiences growth and redevelopment. Both formal and informal pedestrian and bicycle passageways serve as vital links between the residential, office, recreation, retail, and transit uses within the Eastlake Subarea.

This chapter of the Eastlake Subarea Plan does not contain specific policies or recommendations to improve and enhance the pedestrian environment of the Subarea. Instead, Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space and Trails and Chapter 6: Historic Conservation and Urban Design, include policies and recommendations intended to affect pedestrian and bicycling conditions.

### **Potential Amendments**

The City of Thornton is in the process of creating the Thornton Transportation Master Plan, which is intended to replace the Thornton Thorough Fare Master Plan. The Thornton Transportation Master Plan may change street and transportation plans in the Eastlake Subarea. When the Master Plan is adopted by the Thornton City Council, it will replace and supercede transportation plans of the Eastlake Subarea Plan.



# 2000 Existing and Proposed Transportation System Exhibit 3.1

North Metro Corridor Thornton - 124<sup>th</sup>/Claude Ct Existing condition



North Metro Corridor Thornton - 124<sup>th</sup>/Claude Ct Simulation



Existing Condition

Thornton's View of Station

