



North Thornton at Highway 7

Station Area Master Plan

Synthesis of Existing Conditions



Opportunities and Constraints

Using this Synthesis

This document is intended to supplement the Existing Conditions Report and provide a synthesis of key opportunities and constraints regarding development within the Study Area. The review of these topics will be used in the project's next steps, informing development of the vision and guiding principles and guiding decision-making for the land use alternatives for the Station Area. Analysis of the Study Area contexts will support and create a direct link between current conditions and future-looking policies and strategies within the final plan.

Opportunities and Constraints

The North Thornton at CO 7 Station is located within predominantly agricultural, low-density residential, and parks and open space land. Large, vacant parcels present the opportunity to plan for large, cohesive transit-supportive development connected through open space and trail systems. Mixed-use development within the study area can create compact live-work-play neighborhoods that support future transit ridership.

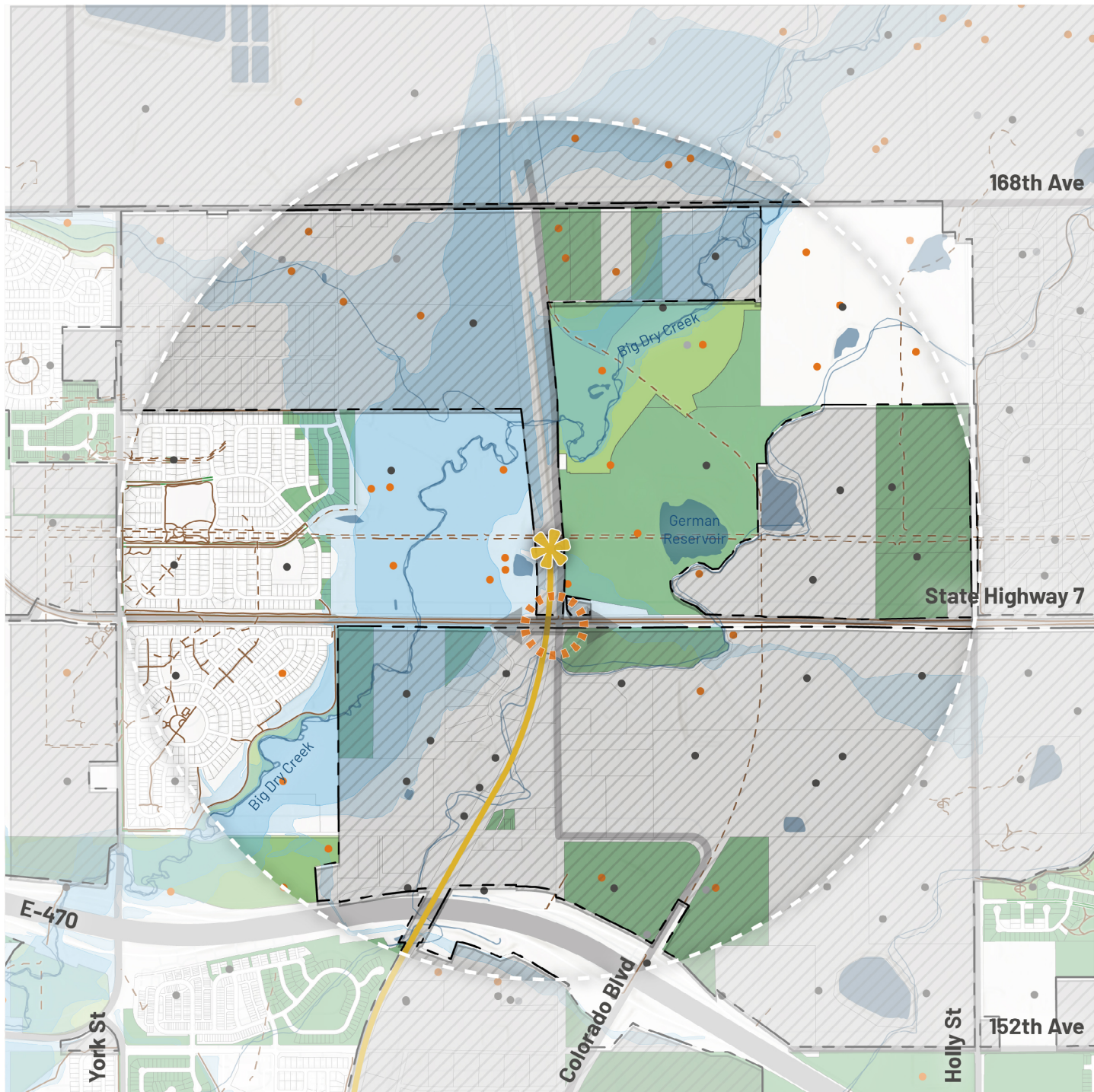
Future transit opportunities include the Brighton to Boulder Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, the interim bus starter service between Brighton to Boulder, and the I-25/CO 7 mobility hub west of the Study Area. Additional future transportation improvements including the realignment of Colorado Boulevard, extension and development of the Big Dry Creek Trail, and CO 7 multimodal improvements will all provide additional connectivity opportunities supportive of station area development.

Because much of the Study Area remains undeveloped, there is a unique opportunity to establish a comprehensive network of low-stress pedestrian and bicycle facilities as development occurs. Future streets and trail connections can be designed to directly connect with planned regional facilities, including the Big Dry Creek Trail, CO 7 multimodal improvements, and future transit investments, creating a cohesive multimodal network without the need for substantial retrofits. The largely undeveloped nature of the station area also presents an opportunity to consider innovative parking management approaches that balance future development needs with transit-supportive, walkable development patterns. Infrastructure and utility improvements are necessary to reduce floodplain issues coupled with pedestrian crossing improvements.

The Study Area is within close proximity to the City of Northglenn's wastewater treatment plant, resulting in restrictions of land use and density within the "Development Corridor" as defined in the settlement agreement in 1992. These restrictions limit density to a maximum of six dwelling units per acre—which severely limits transit-oriented and mixed-use development within the Study Area. Additional constraints on development occur due to floodplain locations, existing oil and gas operations, and large portions of the study area being located outside of City boundaries and within unincorporated Adams County and Weld County. The parcel directly adjacent to the station on the west side is encumbered by a floodplain from the Big Dry Creek, resulting from the existing railroad embankment and undersized culvert under the tracks. Improvements to the floodplain will need to be addressed with station development by RTD.

Despite limits on intense development, the Big Dry Creek corridor provides the opportunity for open space and regional trail connections. The very limited existing residential neighborhoods are low density, requiring new residential development to provide the ridership base for commuter rail. Connectivity is limited within the area with large existing block sizes, physical barriers including the RTD railroad berm, and fragmented trail and bicycle networks. Proposed transit routes, CO 7 BRT, and mobility hub at I-25 are approximately two miles away from the N Line station, creating additional connectivity needs for first- and last-mile connections. Additionally, 160th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard and E-470 ramp are labeled as a high injury and high risk network segments within the study area creating additional safety challenges for roadway users. Infrastructure improvements are necessary for the Study Area including utility extensions, stormwater and floodplain improvements, and roadway improvements. Significant investment and interest is required for development within the Study Area to fully support Transit-Oriented Development.

Figure 1.1 - Opportunities and Constraints in the North Thornton at CO 7 Study Area.



Legend

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|---|---------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------|---|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|
|  | Proposed Station |  | Parcels |  | 0 | 1/4 | 1/2 | 1 | Miles |
|  | N Line |  | Body of Water |  | Arterial Roadway |  | School |  | Major Crossing |
|  | Study Area Boundary |  | Floodplain |  | Trails |  | Active Oil & Gas Facility |  | Abandoned Oil & Gas Facility |
|  | City Boundary |  | Parks and Open Space |  | Planned Trails | | | | |
|  | Adams County |  | Vacant Parcels |  | Bike Lanes | | | | |

Developable Area

Developable Area

Developable parcels within the Study Area were determined through spatial analysis, review of ongoing developments, and physical and economic barriers. Parcels ideal for development, Tier 1, indicated on the map are currently vacant, bordering the station, are within City limits, and environmentally suitable. Other parcels, Tier 2, may be developed but may require more significant investment up front. Tier 3, similar to Tier 2, these parcels may be developed but may require substantial infrastructure investment and annexation into the City. The following sites were identified as primary opportunities for transit-supportive development.

Development of the vacant and undeveloped land immediately surrounding the station area is greatly dependent on the physical factors of the sites themselves. Nearly all of the land west of the station has limited development potential due to the floodplain from Big Dry Creek. This land does not allow for intense development and would require additional coordination across jurisdictions and water districts. Parcels to the east of the station area include an approved Planned Development, the North End Station PD (A), adjacent to the station and a proposed residential community, Flatiron Vistas (B). The Northend Station PD was originally approved in 2009 but no development has begun to date. As no development has occurred, future plans for the site should use the Station Area Master Plan as a guide in resubmittal. The site is designated as TOD within Thornton's Future Land Use Map and support the development for a mix of uses and residential densities, commercial space, and parks and open space along Big Dry Creek. On the other hand, The Flatiron Vistas proposal is designated as Mixed-Use Neighborhood in the Future Land Use Map and zoned for Neighborhood Medium, allowing for a mix of housing options and density ranges. However, development plans submitted call for lower density residential, as the site is limited by the Northglenn Settlement Agreement.

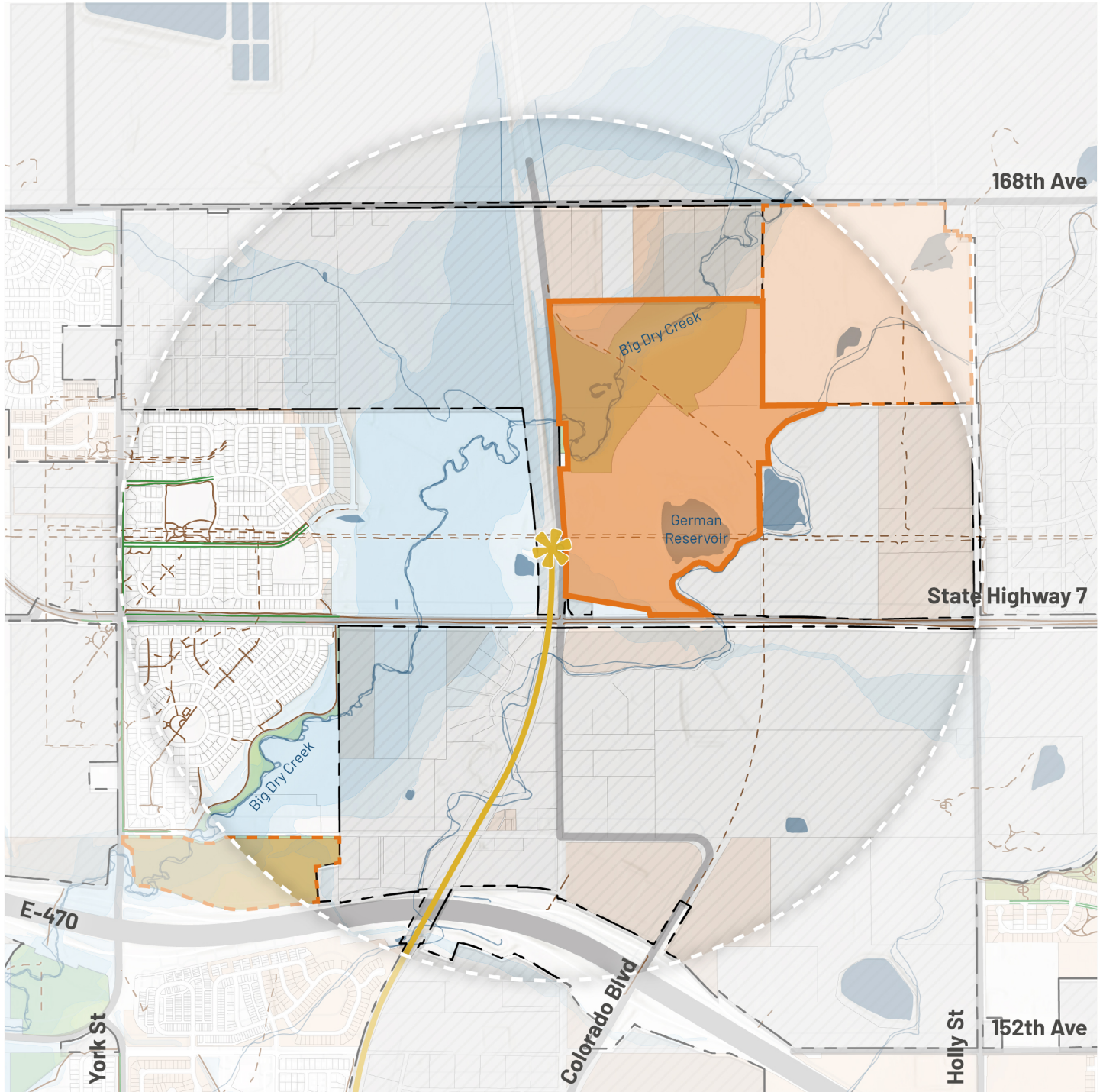
Both developable parcels to the northeast are currently undeveloped, allowing for the integration of transit-oriented development that supports ridership and alignment with the N Line station. Additional opportunities may require more up front investment or have development limitations but can support the transit hub in the future.

The Tier 3 area southeast of the station consists primarily of undeveloped agricultural land within Adams County. Approximately 820 acres are proposed for annexation into the City of Thornton through a landowner-initiated process. The scale and strategic location of this area present a significant opportunity to plan comprehensively for future transit-oriented development, integrating land use, transportation, and infrastructure planning in a manner that supports both the landowner's development vision and the long-term objectives of the station area plan.

Conclusion

Development interest has been shown within the station area over time, through development applications and pre-applications in the parcels directly adjacent to the proposed station and within the Study Areas. Extending the N Line has been prioritized to be completed by 2035, resulting in an immediate need to plan the Station Area. It is important to align development with the City's vision and station development given the regional investment, to maximize ridership and benefit to the community.

Figure 1.2 - Developable Area in the North Thornton at CO 7 Study Area.



Legend

