

Executive Summary

Introduction

C3 Vision Plan is Comprehensive

Planning for the future allows Commerce City to anticipate future needs—to be better prepared than perhaps in the past—to address a growing population, position the community for new jobs and retail, improve the quality of neighborhoods and commercial areas, conserve resources, and provide a quality community for a lifetime.

This *C3 Vision Plan* is the comprehensive plan for the City of Commerce City. In accordance with Colorado Statutes, the *C3 Vision Plan* is an advisory document that sets the policy foundation for the city's decision-making process and regulatory framework. It anticipates long-term future needs (for the year 2035 and beyond), but it also addresses immediate needs. It is designed to guide the growth and development of the city and recommend programs for services and infrastructure. It also establishes a policy framework to help evaluate choices, guide decisions on development proposals, and consider plan amendments.

The Plan lays the foundation for the city to become a more sustainable community—building on and enhancing its diverse economic, cultural, and natural resource assets.

C3 Vision Plan Builds on Previous Plans

This *C3 Vision Plan* builds on the city's previous comprehensive and consolidates sub-area plans (i.e., the 1985 *City Wide Comprehensive Plan*, the *New Lands Plan*, and the *Irondale Comprehensive Plan*).

This *C3 Vision Plan* is community-driven, meaning that residents, property owners, and stakeholders helped shape it. The Plan had the most public participation and outreach of any plan ever produced within Commerce City. Some of the methods and activities are described on pages 10 through 11.



Planning ensures all Commerce City residents enjoy a high quality of life by helping to address the needs of children and seniors in the community.



The Plan's Parts

The Plan is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 2, the C3 Community Vision**, contains the vision and guiding principles, and introduces the concept of sustainability.
- **Chapter 3, Future Land Use Plan**, describes land use in Commerce City, the citywide Future Land Use Plan (purpose, big ideas, and map), the land use categories, and centers.

Chapters 4 to 15 are the Plan's Elements. Each chapter relates to the vision and has goals and policies, implementation strategies, and plan monitoring indicators.

- **Chapter 4, Land Use and Growth**, contains the land use and growth goals and policies to phase growth in an orderly manner, and ensures the desired land use patterns citywide. It also contains detailed descriptions of the five strategic planning areas and their focus areas.
- **Chapter 5, Economic Development**, addresses economic development, employment, and commercial goals.
- **Chapter 6, Fiscal Stability**, focuses on efficient investments, revenue-producing land uses, and balancing revenues and costs.
- **Chapter 7, Housing and Neighborhoods**, concentrates on retaining existing housing stock, mix of housing, and neighborhoods.
- **Chapter 8, Redevelopment and Reinvestment**, addresses infill, renewal, and targeted redevelopment areas.
- **Chapter 9, Transportation**, provides an abbreviated *Transportation Plan*, addressing roadways, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, transit, and the connected network.
- **Chapter 10, Safety and Wellness**, attends to police and fire services, physical activity, and access to health care facilities and healthy foods.
- **Chapter 11, Parks, Open Space, and Recreation**, focuses on needs for current and future generations related to these topics.
- **Chapter 12, Public Facilities and Infrastructure**, addresses coordinating utilities and infrastructure with growth. It also addresses education.
- **Chapter 13, Appearance and Design**, focuses on gateways, commercial and residential design, views, and public gathering spaces.
- **Chapter 14, Cultural Facilities and Tourism**, addresses the city's assets, history, arts, culture, and destination sites.
- **Chapter 15, Environmental Conservation and Stewardship**, discusses sustainability, energy, emissions, waste management, water, air, noise, and hazardous areas.
- **Chapter 16** contains the actions required to implement the Plan, Plan monitoring, and Plan amendment procedures.



The 12 Plan Elements

Related Plans

The city has developed specific plans that contain greater detail than the C3 Vision Plan but inform its policies. See:

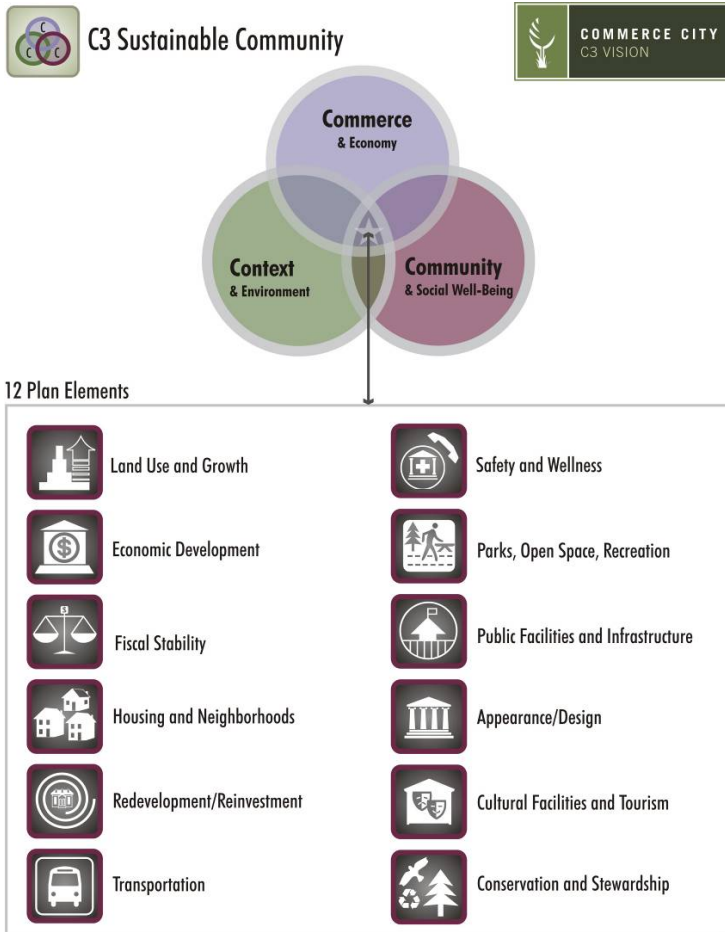
- ✓ The Economic Development Strategic Plan (2010), and
- ✓ The Transportation Plan (2010).

The C3 Community Vision...

The C3 Community Vision sets the stage for the **C3 Vision Plan** and affirms the community's strengths, desires, and ability to become a more sustainable city. It links all of the topics of the Plan together as the overarching set of ideals to guide the city into its future. The Community Vision is carried through by the Guiding Principles linked through the 12 Plan Elements.

C3 Vision Statement:

Commerce City will have a robust economy, drawing on its strength as a business-friendly city. It will have a quality natural and built environment with great neighborhoods, parks, and places in which to live, work, and play safely. The community will celebrate its culture and history, and promote conservation and stewardship of resources for present and future generations.



The Three Cs of Sustainability and the 12 Plan Elements

How does the Plan define Sustainable Community?

A sustainable community is one in which the economic, social, and environmental systems provide a productive, healthy, meaningful life for its residents, as well as affording the opportunity for prosperity. In the long-term, it means meeting the needs of the present, without limiting future opportunities, and addressing:

- ✓ Commerce and Economy
- ✓ Context and Environment
- ✓ Community and Social Well-Being

This concept is further described on pages 14 through 16.

Guiding Principles

The following set of Guiding Principles further supports and reinforces the vision, and sets the stage for each of the Plan Elements in Chapters 4 through 15.



1 LAND USE AND GROWTH

Grow Commerce City in a balanced and compact pattern of neighborhoods and commerce centers, where residents have access to employment, services, and shopping. Promote infill and phase new growth to avoid inefficient and costly leapfrog development.



2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Maintain a strong employment base; help create a jobs/housing balance; define appropriate locations for a range of industry and businesses (including green businesses); and be a home for major corporations.



3 FISCAL STABILITY

Continue as a fiscally stable city by fortifying revenues, while efficiently maintaining and providing services and infrastructure.



4 HOUSING/ NEIGHBORHOODS

Provide multiple types of housing serving a range of current and future residents and incomes in vibrant neighborhoods where people want to live.



5 REDEVELOPMENT/ REINVESTMENT

Promote new centers, while maintaining the integrity of existing districts by continually renewing and reinvesting.



6 TRANSPORTATION

Ensure a quality community by providing efficient, effective, and varied modes of transportation that integrate and connect neighborhoods, the community, and the region.



7 SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Increase the health and well-being of residents through healthy living, access to medical facilities, and public safety and hazard planning.



8 PARKS, OPEN SPACE/ RECREATION

Provide ample and well-distributed parks and recreation facilities, and a connected system of trails and open space, to provide for outdoor recreation, relaxation, and rejuvenation and to protect views.



9 FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure adequate and efficient public facilities and infrastructure for current and future residents and businesses.



10 APPEARANCE AND DESIGN

Enhance the positive image of the city at all gateways, along corridors, and in neighborhoods and commercial districts.



11 CULTURAL/ TOURISM

Become a destination for tourism and visitors, drawing people and businesses to arts, history, culture, sports, commerce, and other attractions.



12 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION/ STEWARDSHIP

Increase recycling, conservation, and the use of renewable energy sources, while reducing energy and resource use overall.

The Future Land Use Plan

Future Land Use Plan Purpose

The Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) guides all future development (infill, redevelopment, or greenfields) in Commerce City, including those areas yet to be annexed into the city. Some existing uses may not be expressly noted but will remain (e.g., mobile home parks). The FLUP provides flexibility to respond to unforeseen opportunities, without having to amend the entire Plan.

Future Land Use Plan Big Ideas

The Future Land Use chapter supports the vision and goals and policies throughout the *C3 Vision Plan*. It mainly promotes the following ideas:

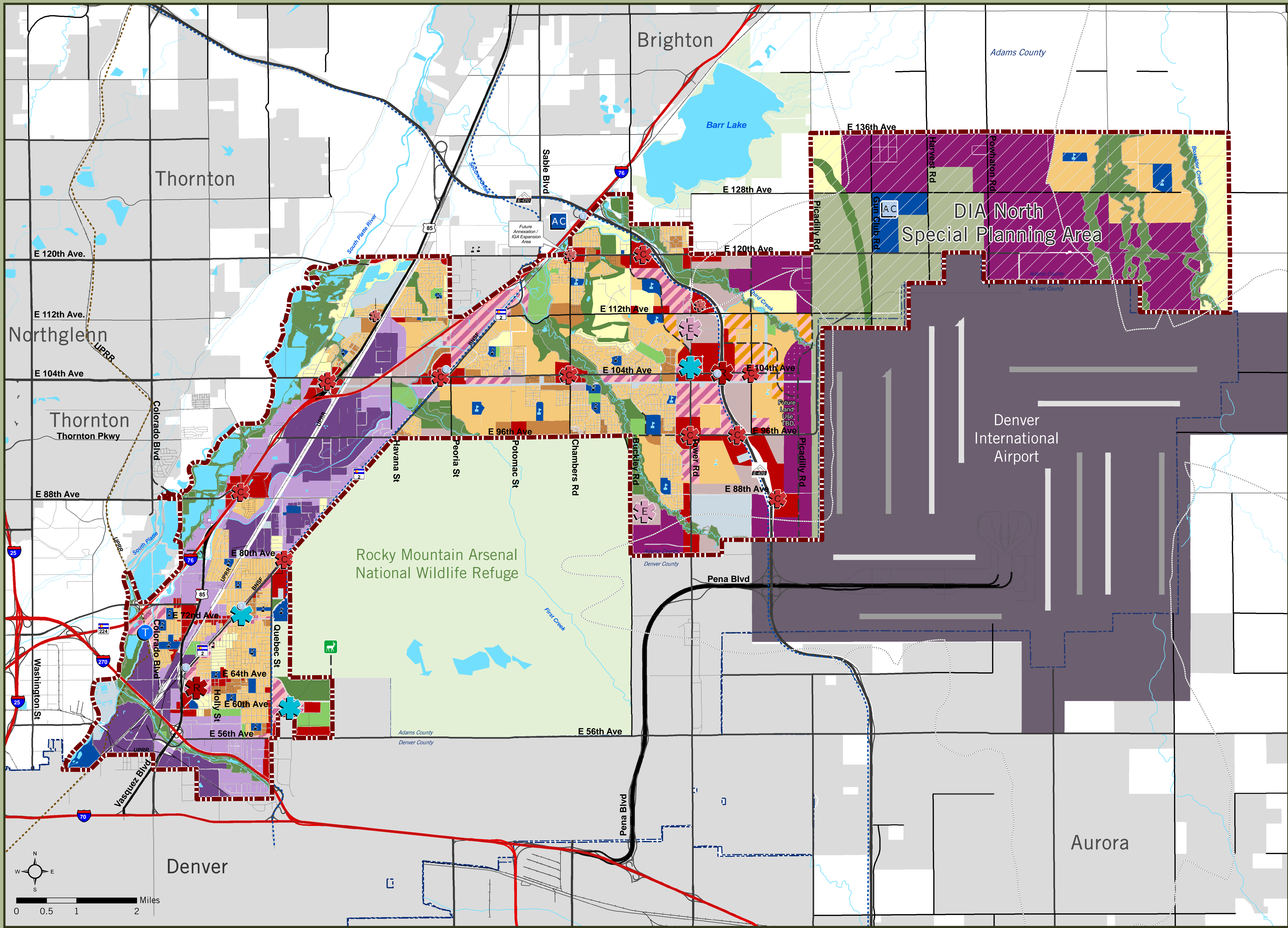
1. **Maintain a balanced mix of land uses** overall (i.e., residential, employment, and commercial uses) to maintain the city's high quality of life, economic prosperity, and fiscal stability.
2. **Design new neighborhoods** so that they are compact, accessible to pedestrians, and transit-supportive.
3. **Establish centers** as the primary locations for jobs, retail uses, and civic activity. (Note: The Plan describes commercial and employment centers beginning on page 38.)
4. **Retain lands for industry** so the city will continue to have jobs and a fiscally-balanced future. The Plan designates a variety of employment and industrial uses throughout the city.
5. **Coordinate land use and transportation** to provide efficient and safe mobility and viable options for multiple modes of transportation.
6. **Provide an overall connected recreational system** of parks, trails, and open space to enhance the livability of the community.
7. **Phase growth in an orderly, compact manner** that is coordinated with the availability and funding for infrastructure and community services.

Using the Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan will be a guide for both the city and developers to help shape future neighborhoods, centers, open space, civic uses, and employment areas over the long-term. It designates strategic commercial centers (e.g., regional and community commercial), but also provides flexibility by including criteria for neighborhood or embedded commercial areas. It also allows for a variety of mixed-uses to develop in the Northern Range and along E-470, in accordance with specific detailed master plans, as long as the Plan's objectives are met. Finally, it presents the key redevelopment areas and corridors. For more information, see:

- Land Use Categories addressing Residential Focus, Commercial Focus, Employment Focus, and Other Activities (pages 27 to 31),
- Other map features description (page 32),
- The commercial centers description (page 38).

Future Land Use Plan



Legend

- IGA Growth Boundary
- County Boundary
- Denver International Airport
- DIA Noise Contours - 60 LDN
- Current Runway
- Future Runway
- National Wildlife Refuge, Barr Lake State Park
- Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Future Roads
- Planned Transit Station
- Possible Transit Station
- Future Transit Line
- Future Light Rail Line
- Future Adams County Government Administrative Complex
- Future Adams County Regional Public Safety Training Center
- Existing School
- Future School Site

Centers

- Activity Center
- Employment Campus / Business Center
- Regional Commercial Center
- Community Commercial Center
- Local Commercial Center

Future Land Use

- Residential - Low
- Residential - Medium
- Residential - High
- Mixed-Use - E-470
- Mixed-Use (Corridor and Commercial)
- Commercial
- Office / Flex
- DIA Technology
- Industrial / Distribution
- General Industrial
- DIA Reserve
- Utility
- Public/State
- Park
- Open Space

Figure 3.2
Source: Adams County Tax Assessor, Adams County GIS, Commerce City GIS, U.S. Census TIGER files, Clarion Associates, 2008
04/29/10 **CLARION, BBC, FHU**

Historic City Focus Areas

This Planning Area includes eight Focus Areas:

- A. Southern Industrial,
- B. Tiffany,
- C. Southern Core/Rose Hill,
- D. Northern Core/Derby/Tichy,
- E. Fairfax/Dupont,
- F. Adams City,
- G. Clermont, and
- H. Prairie Gateway.

Irondale Focus Areas

This Planning Area includes three Focus Areas:

- I. Irondale,
- J. Industrial Enclave, and
- K. South Platte Valley.

Northern Range Focus Areas

This Planning Area includes three Focus Areas:

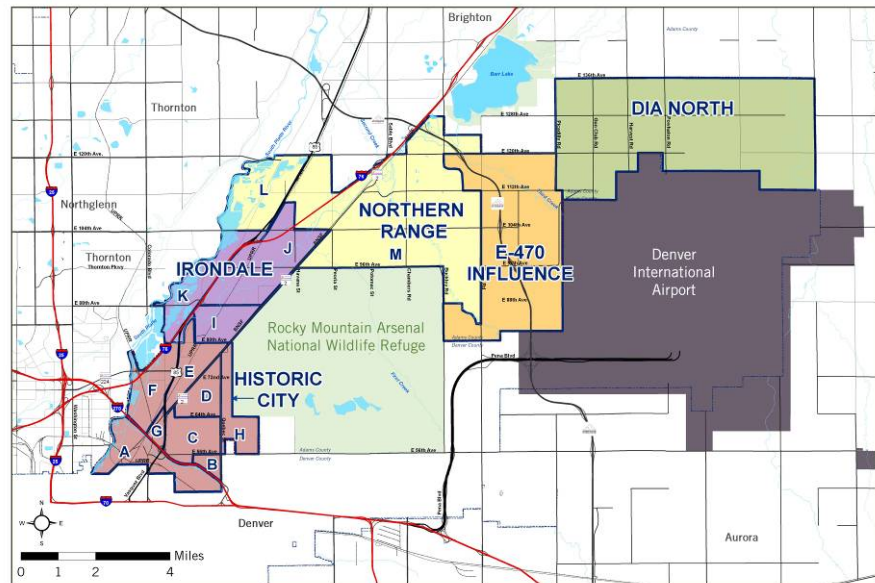
- L. Old Brighton Road/Hazeltine, and
- M. Northern Range.

Strategic Planning Areas

The C3 Vision Plan addresses Commerce City’s physical structure and layout through five Strategic Planning Areas. These five areas include:

1. Historic City,
2. Irondale,
3. Northern Range,
4. E-470 Influence Area, and
5. DIA North.

The Plan includes the five Strategic Planning Areas, because of the expansive size of the city and different needs within each area, and to avoid a “one-size-fits all” approach to planning the city. The vastly diverse city contains it all: older established neighborhoods, heavy industrial areas, new residential neighborhoods, and vacant lands near DIA. The five Strategic Planning Areas are illustrated below and are described on pages 61 through 94 of the Plan.



Five Strategic Planning Areas and Focus Areas

Implementation of the Plan

The Mechanisms to Implement

Chapter 16 addresses implementation of the *C3 Vision Plan*. It includes:

1. Specific Actions, identified in a Priority Action Plan,
2. A Monitoring Program, measuring progress towards achievement of plan goals (i.e., the *Community Score Card*), and
3. Plan Amendments and Updates, described as five-year updates and a clear process for more frequent changes.

While the vision plan contains many long-term and seemingly far-reaching goals and ideals, it also needs to be achievable. The city will implement the Plan using several different approaches:

- Through day-to-day policy decisions;
- With Land Development Code (LDC) amendments;
- Through partnerships and intergovernmental agreements;
- By beginning or carrying on programs; and
- With assessment or improvements to infrastructure and services, such as streets, sidewalks, or parks.

The Priority Actions

Pages 208-211 of the Plan identify the following actions to be completed within six years:



Chapter 4: Land Use and Growth

- Update the LDC and zone districts to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) and categories in Chapter 3. Use the FLUP to guide development patterns and mix of uses.
- Provide incentives for infill development and redevelopment (e.g., streamlined review process, rebated or reduced fees, or relaxed standards to allow for infill).
- Develop annexation criteria for Adams County enclaves. Different criteria may be needed for Historic City, Irondale, Northern Range, and E-470.
- Adopt a Tiered Planning System and phasing criteria, as suggested in Policy 2.2. Monitor jobs-to-housing goals in new growth areas.
- Develop neighborhood plans for residential or mixed-use areas in need of more detailed planning (e.g., Adams City/FasTracks station site and Wembley).



The public process helped determine priority actions for the plan.



The Land Use and Growth chapter provides policies related to land use and growth, and describes five strategic planning areas and focus areas within them.



Chapter 5: Economic Development

- Implement strategies of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- Develop a strategy to attract and enhance opportunities for higher education and post-secondary educational training programs.



Chapter 6: Fiscal Stability

- Prioritize needs in Capital Improvement Program (aligning with the Plan).
- Leverage city resources to utilize state and federal funding sources and grants (including sustainability-related and healthy communities funding).



Rehabilitating and maintaining existing housing increases available housing and improves quality of neighborhoods and housing stock.



Chapter 7: Housing and Neighborhoods

- Explore ways to make code enforcement more proactive to ensure property maintenance and prevent further zoning and municipal code violations.
- Work with all housing agencies to ensure that Commerce City residents are aware of, and have access to, the foreclosure prevention and assistance programs administered by Adams County.
- Explore options to assist households with reducing household energy costs (costs associated with energy consumption, transportation, and utilities).
- Pursue federal programs to build senior housing, including affordable housing with supportive services and senior housing for all income levels. Revise the LDC to allow senior housing in districts consistent with Chapter 4.



Chapter 8: Redevelopment and Reinvestment

- Expand application of Urban Renewal Areas (URAs) tools (including financing) to achieve redevelopment goals, including existing URAs (Prairie Gateway, Derby, and US 85), and potential new URAs (e.g., FasTracks area).
- Explore feasibility of a non-profit, quasi-public entity to oversee infill and redevelopment in neighborhoods that could purchase and rehabilitate structures, or consolidate and sell properties.
- Develop FasTracks station sub-area plan. Modify zoning to achieve an appropriate mix of uses (especially for the T.O.D. site), using a blend of regulations, guidelines, and incentives.
- Explore grants, low-interest loans, and redevelopment corporations to address redevelopment goals and to reduce industrial/residential conflicts.



Chapter 9: Transportation

- Implement improvements to the roadway network based on the 5-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) with priorities as determined by the Transportation Plan.
- Determine potential new sources of funding for transportation improvements (e.g., road impact fees, street fees).
- Coordinate high-priority pedestrian improvement areas with the Transportation Plan CIP. Create a visually-appealing and safe pedestrian experience in prioritized areas.
- Include provision for bus transit priority features along congested transit corridors.



This Plan suggests improving transit access.



Chapter 10: Safety and Wellness

- Use the *Police Strategic Plan* to address needs and response times.
- Explore sharing facilities/sub-stations to serve citizens (e.g., East 103rd Avenue /Walden Fire Station, East 60th Avenue/Monaco Street, and East 112th Avenue and Chambers Road).
- Adopt practices to locate new and redeveloped housing in areas with access to transit. Work to relocate existing bus routes to maximize ridership and access.



Chapter 11: Parks, Open Space and Recreation

- Prioritize implementation recommendations of the *Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs, Services, and Facilities (2007)* including new park development, facilities, and recreation.
- Boost volunteer programs focusing on land restoration and stewardship.



Commerce City surrounds the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge on three sides. The refuge is the largest urban wildlife refuge in the country.



Chapter 12: Public Facilities and Infrastructure

- Annually update the Capital Improvements Plan, considering priorities set forth in the Plan and the annual Action Plan.
- Coordinate with other districts to ensure that adequate schools, power, and other infrastructure can be provided at the time of new development.
- Explore creation of task forces and advisory committees to help further the aims of local government and the Plan.



Reunion fire station.



Commerce City entrance sign.



Chapter 13: Appearance and Design

- Identify gateway and corridor priority areas—south and north city areas.
- Develop overlay districts for gateways and corridors (e.g., E-470, Highway 2) to address corridor improvements, design and appearance, and future development.
- Evaluate and potentially provide small-grant funding for enhancements in commercial districts, small neighborhood improvement projects, and way-finding signage.



Chapter 14: Cultural Facilities and Tourism

- Prepare an Arts and Culture Plan that identifies potential funding sources to increase awareness regarding the city's assets, arts and culture, and tourism.
- Evaluate and prioritize historic resources.



Chapter 15: Environmental Conservation and Stewardship

- Pursue funding; develop a Sustainability Plan and/or Climate Action Plan (with incentives, targets for reduction, strategies, and regulations).
- Perform an audit of the Municipal Code, including LDC and Engineering Standards, to determine barriers to sustainability; amend accordingly.
- Prioritize and adapt indicators for a Community Score Card and Project Review Score Card and begin monitoring program.
- Expand tree preservation standards that exist in the LDC.
- Require buffers between industrial and residential; between residential and the airport; and between housing and high-traffic roadways.