

# LAPORTE AREA PLAN



Larimer County Planning Department  
January 2004

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*cover photo of Lions Park by BHA Design*

## I. Introduction

The community of LaPorte dates from the mid-19th century, and even served as the County Seat for a brief number of years. Today, LaPorte is an unincorporated town of about 2,600 people, with another 700 residing in the surrounding area. Unincorporated Larimer County includes several historic communities and villages, but LaPorte is by far the largest and the most intensively developed. In its physical form and range of services available, it closely resembles several incorporated towns in the region.

### Planning for LaPorte

Larimer County has responsibility and authority for land use decisions in unincorporated Larimer County, according to State Statutes. The unincorporated area is that part of the County outside the city limits of incorporated cities and towns. Since LaPorte is part of the unincorporated area, County decision-making authority includes the LaPorte area.



*Plan Area Vicinity*

The first county-wide land use plan was adopted in 1978, and immediately thereafter, the County Planning Department began work on a area plan for LaPorte. The original *LaPorte Area Plan* was adopted in 1980, followed by a revised *LaPorte Area Land Use Plan* in 1992. The LaPorte Plan Area has remained basically the same since the 1980 plan was developed. The Plan Area Vicinity Map shows the planning area and its relationship to other surrounding planning areas and jurisdictions.

The current 1997 *Larimer County Master Plan* identifies the LaPorte Plan Area as an urban area, and describes the *LaPorte Area Land Use Plan* as the document that provides specific land use policies for the area. Changes to higher intensity urban land uses are appropriate in LaPorte if they are consistent with the *LaPorte Area Plan* and can meet development standards for utilities, roads and similar requirements. At this time, LaPorte is the only designated urban community in the unincorporated area.

Several Boards, Commissions and groups share in the process of making land use and development decisions about LaPorte.

### The Board of County Commissioners

The County Commissioners have final authority on most land use decisions. They make final decisions about individual development requests such as

subdivisions and zoning changes. They also are responsible for adopting land use regulations and zoning. The process for development applications is based on State Statutes and is detailed in the *Larimer County Land Use Code*, which is a regulation adopted by the County Commissioners. The *Land Use Code* includes the zoning for all land in unincorporated Larimer County.

### **The County Planning Commission:**

The County Planning Commission is responsible for developing and adopting the *Larimer County Master Plan* and all its parts, including special area plans such as the *LaPorte Area Plan*. The Planning Commission also reviews and makes recommendations to the County Commissioners about most types of development applications and the content of the *Land Use Code*.

### **LaPorte Area Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC):**

LAPAC is an advisory committee created and appointed by the County Commissioners. It was formed following the adoption of the 1980 *LaPorte Area Plan*, with a charter of advising the County Commissioners and Planning Commission about land use issues in the LaPorte area. LAPAC reviews major development applications in the LaPorte Plan Area, and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission and County Commissioners. LAPAC is closely involved in developing the *LaPorte Area Plan*, and serves as the citizen advisory committee to the staff technical team for the project.

### **Landowners and Citizens**

The landowners and citizens of LaPorte, as well as other interested citizens, play a critical role in the decision-making process about land use and development in the area. Most development is planned and built by individual landowners and their agents. Affected citizens voice their approval or concerns about development through the County development review process. Landowners and citizens also provide critical information about community needs and issues, possible solutions and the area's preferred future. The process of citizen involvement used in developing this Plan is detailed below.

### **Purpose and Need for the *LaPorte Area Plan***

Land use planning is a process of gathering information about land use and development issues and proposing strategies to deal with the issues, both today and into the future. A county master plan, as defined in State Statutes, provides a guide to the physical development of the unincorporated area of the County. The *Larimer County Master Plan* is used by County decision makers as the

basis for reviewing individual private development proposals and also public decisions about open lands, roads, utilities and other public development activities.

An area plan, such as this plan for the LaPorte Plan Area, provides a more detailed look at a specific area, and a more detailed guide to its future development. It is an adopted part of the *Larimer County Master Plan*. An area plan is needed where there are more complex land use and development issues, unique situations and opportunities that are not covered in sufficient depth in the County-wide plan. The *County Master Plan* defines LaPorte as an urban area where higher intensity development is appropriate, but it does not detail the specific land uses that are appropriate for the future.

The LaPorte area has a 25-year history of this more detailed type of land use planning. This Plan is the third area plan that has been developed for the LaPorte area. Plans need to be reviewed and revised periodically, because land use issues and community needs change over time, and new opportunities arise.

Several major physical changes have occurred in LaPorte in the last 10 years. Traffic patterns through town have changed radically with the opening of the LaPorte By-Pass. Sewer line capacity has increased and a new sewer line on Taft Hill Road is an opportunity for that area. New multifamily residential and commercial development has occurred near the center of town. Gravel resources in the area have increased in value and there are several active and proposed mining operations in the LaPorte Plan Area. These and other community issues are explored in the planning process.

### **Community Planning Process**

The purpose of this *LaPorte Area Plan* is to explore and propose strategies for land use and development issues in the LaPorte community, so it is critical to understand community views on the most important issues and potential solutions. The planning process included a series of community input events and opportunities. Meeting announcements were mailed to property owners and residents of the planning area prior to each meeting.

- Community Workshop to identify issues and begin developing the community vision and goals
- Open House for review and comments on three alternative land use scenarios and related implementation strategies
- Open House and Group Discussions for review and comments on a Draft Area Plan

- Open House for review and comments on the Proposed Area Plan
- LAPAC Community Meeting for review and comments on the Proposed Area Plan
- Public Hearings

A dedicated web site was established during the planning process to make draft reports, maps and public meeting notes available. Many comments were received via email through the web site. The public process benefited greatly from detailed press coverage in the *North 40 News* and elsewhere. Finally, the LaPorte Area Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC) served the critical role of liaison between the community and technical planning team, providing insight into community issues and serving as a sounding board for staff proposals.

## II. Community Vision and Goals

A vision describes a possible future that is desired by the community. Goals provide more specific information about the vision and give direction for future planning efforts that would help make the vision a reality. The following Vision and Goals for the *LaPorte Area Plan* are derived from input received at the LaPorte Area Community Workshop that was held at the Cache la Poudre Elementary School April 11, 2002, and from correspondence from citizens who were not able to attend the meeting.

Workshop invitations were sent to LaPorte Area residents, businesses and property owners, asking participants to consider the future of the area: “What do you want LaPorte to be like in 20 years? What do you not want it to be like? What do you want to stay the same?” More than 75 participants provided their ideas about Community Character, Housing, Commercial Development, Transportation, Parks/Recreation/Trails, Environment and Other Issues.

### Vision and Goals Statements

- A. The LaPorte Area will preserve the best of its existing character and atmosphere.
  - A.1. It will maintain its “small town” village core, surrounded by rural areas.
  - A.2. New agricultural uses that are appropriate to the character of existing and planned uses will be encouraged.
  - A.3. Open space will be an important part of planned future development.
  - A.4. The community will preserve its identity as a unique and separate place that is not part of the Fort Collins urban area.
  
- B. Planned growth and responsible development will characterize the area.
  - B.1. Codes and development standards will enhance rather than detract from the rural character of LaPorte.
  - B.2. The rights of private property owners will be honored.
  
- C. The community will take pride in its appearance and enhance its image as a small, pleasant community.
  - C.1. Individuals and community groups will work to enhance community appearance.
  - C.2. The community will honor its history, including the area’s historic farms, structures and sites.
  - C.3. Community involvement and activities will be encouraged and spaces will be available for public activities, festivals and fairs.
  - C.4. The community will work closely with Poudre School District to ensure that the Cache la Poudre schools continue as an important part of LaPorte.

- D. The existing core business area will maintain and enhance its small town character.
  - D.1. Small-scale, local businesses will be encouraged, and new development will be compatible with the small town character of existing uses.
  - D.2. The area will provide a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment.
  - D.3. Limited improvements in landscaping, sidewalks, streetlights and signs will achieve a balance to maintain and enhance the rural character rather than a city atmosphere.
  - D.4. Design will limit pavement and be more natural than typical urban/suburban commercial development.
  
- E. County Road 54G on either end of the community core will present an attractive entrance to the LaPorte area.
  - E.1. New development will preserve the character of the area and be compatible with existing residential uses.
  
- F. The LaPorte Area will continue to provide a mixture of housing that is accessible to all economic levels.
  - F.1. Higher density housing in the community core will be compatible with LaPorte's small town character as opposed to large-scale commercial housing/apartment development.
  
- G. Transportation in the LaPorte area will be safe and efficient, and will provide choices for area residents.
  - G.1. The roadway network will establish parallel roadways for circulation, maintain the efficiency of arterials through access control, and preserve and dedicate right-of-way for potential future expansion of transportation facilities.
  - G.2. Roadway designs (especially in the core area) will provide for pedestrian and bicycle connections.
  - G.3. The Poudre River Trail will be extended through LaPorte to Bellvue, and will provide multi-modal access from the community core to Fort Collins.
  - G.4. The community will continue to work with Transfort to improve bus service.
  - G.5. Development adjacent to the Bypass will preserve the roadway's efficiency and adhere to CDOT's State Highway Access Code by obtaining access from other roadways.
  
- H. The natural environment will continue to be an important part the LaPorte area.
  - H.1. The Poudre River floodplain will be respected, and the River Corridor will be preserved for fish and wildlife habitat.



- H.2. Opportunities for preserving open space will be identified and evaluated by the Larimer County Open Lands Program and other preservation organizations, which will work with willing landowners to protect priority areas.
- H.3. Rural areas and open space will contribute to habitat preservation.
- H.4. Air quality will be maintained or improved and new industrial uses will not be allowed to degrade existing air quality.

### III. Existing Conditions

This section examines some of the primary factors that influence growth and potential change in the LaPorte Area. It looks at current population and land use, zoning, and public facilities and services, as well as the sand and gravel resources that play a large role in future land use, at least in the short term. Current roadway conditions and other transportation issues are examined. The section also considers aesthetic and environmental attributes of the area including wetlands, other natural areas, cultural resources and open lands protection programs.

#### Population

The LaPorte Plan Area is home to about 3,300 people in 1350 housing units. As an unincorporated community, the exact population of the area has not been tracked closely over the years; however, the U.S. Census Bureau adopted a Census Designated Place (CDP) in 2000 for the central portion of the LaPorte Plan Area. A CDP is a statistical area defined by the Census Bureau for a densely settled concentration of population that is not incorporated but which resembles an incorporated place in that it can be identified with a name. With the CDP designation changes in population and housing in the future will be available at a glance. The CDP generally includes the area between the Cache la Poudre River, Taft Hill Road, and the US 287 Bypass.

LaPorte has a demographic profile very much like that of the County overall. In the CDP, the Census counted 1,074 households in the year 2000, averaging two and a half members in each. Almost one-third of households had children under age 18, and 16% had individuals 65 years of age and older, while less than 10% of respondents considered themselves minorities. LaPorte’s median age is slightly older than the County all together; however, the large number of students in a college town like Fort Collins will typically skew the figure.

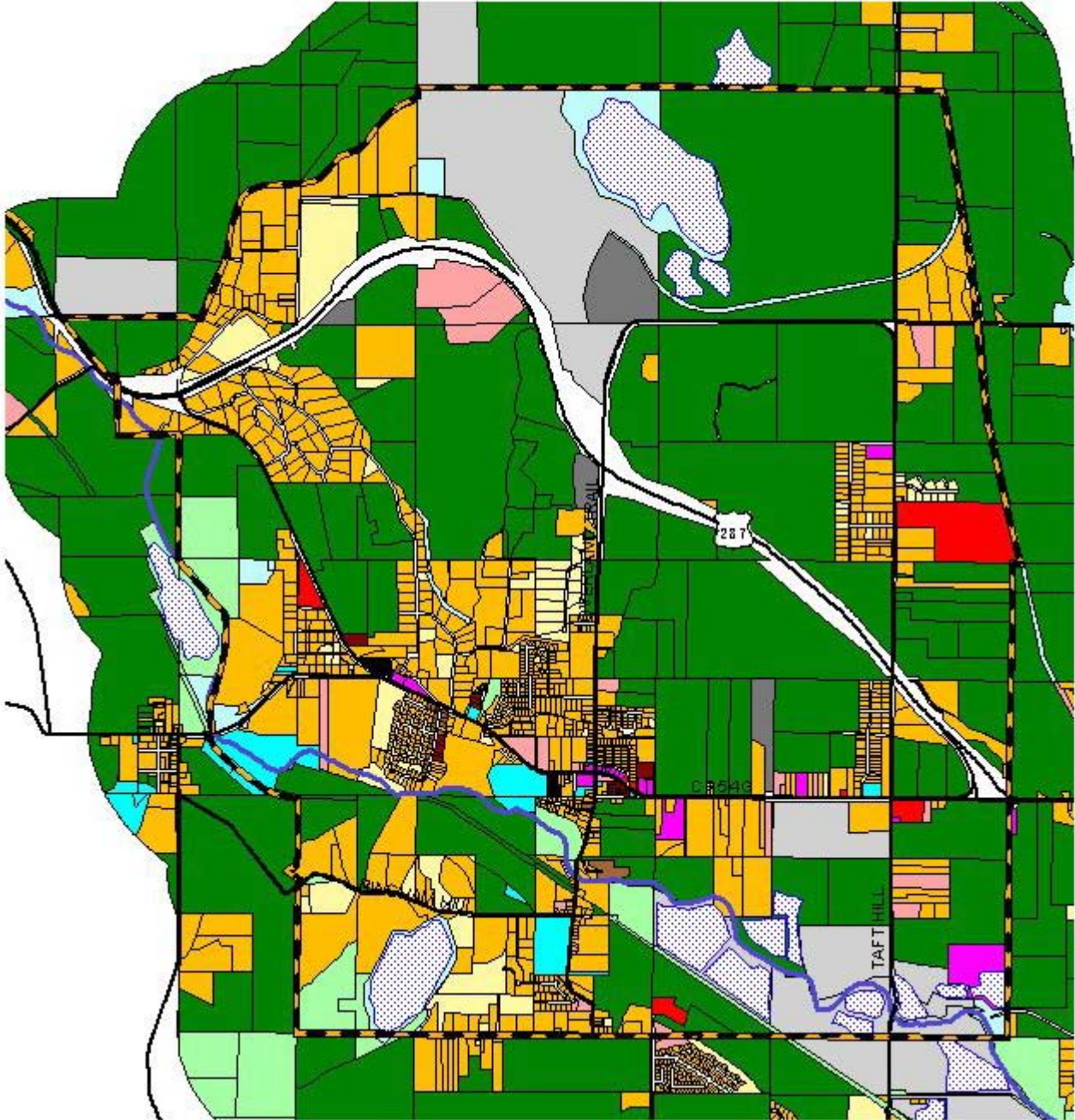
#### Existing Land Use

|                              | Acres       |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Industrial & Mining          | 818         |
| Commercial, Retail & Service | 153         |
| Residential                  | 2350        |
| Utilities                    | 337         |
| Public & Non-Profit          | 112         |
| Parks/Open Space             | 170         |
| Agricultural                 | 3697        |
| <b>Total Plan Area</b>       | <b>8197</b> |

Source: Larimer County Planning Department

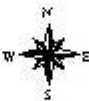
#### Land Use

Land in the LaPorte area is used for a range of activity, from agriculture to residences to heavy industry. Current land use information provides a base-line to evaluate existing and future demand for land, housing, commercial space and public services. The Larimer County Assessor maintains public records which categorize different uses on each parcel. This information was compared to aerial



-  LaPorte Plan Area
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Lakes
- Existing Land Use by Parcel
  -  Agricultural
  -  Parks/Open Space
  -  Public Nonprofit
  -  Utilities
  -  Residential Unimproved
  -  Residential Single Family
  -  Residential Duplex
  -  Residential Multifamily
  -  Residential Mobile Home Park
  -  Residential/Nonresidential Mix
  -  Retail/Service
  -  Commercial
  -  Mining
  -  Industrial

# LaPorte Area Plan Existing Land Use



October 03



photography and previous land use mapping, so that each parcel in the planning area could be represented by the most apparent, predominant current use.

- Industrial/Mining: Holcim’s former cement plant site, lime plant, saw-mills, active gravel pits, inactive pits not in use for agriculture
- Commercial: equipment storage/repair, feed mill, other cold storage (characterized by outdoor activity)
- Retail/Service: grocery, greenhouse, gas station, restaurant, veterinarian, etc. (characterized by customer transactions onsite)
- Mixed Use (Residential/Commercial): mixed use of parcels, e.g. trucking w/on-site home, or home with special exception for commercial woodworking
- Residential Mobile Home Park
- Residential Multifamily (3+ units in a structure)
- Residential Duplex
- Residential Single Family: including multiple structures on one lot if each was of a single family-type (e.g. a house and a mobile home on the same parcel)
- Residential Unimproved: vacant parcels <10 ac (including lots with building restrictions)
- Utilities: water & sewer companies, irrigation ditches, electric substations
- Public & Nonprofit: cemetery, churches, CSU conference center, veterans’ club, schools, other parcels owned by public entities.
- Parks & Open Space: neighborhood parks and lands with public access
- Agriculture: dryland & irrigated cropping, pasture, dairy, fallow ground, farmsteads and large-lot homes.

## Housing

Dwelling units vary from houses on 35-acre or larger tracts to units in apartment buildings; some homes over 100 years old and others newly constructed. Most of the subdivisions are exclusively single-family homes. Multifamily units are located along McConnell Drive in Cotton Willow Estates subdivision, as well as on the east and west sides of the community center. There are two mobile home parks along County Road 54G and many manufactured homes on individual lots throughout the area—20% of housing units in the LaPorte CDP are classified as a “mobile home” by the 2000 Census compared to 6.1% in Larimer County overall.

Housing in LaPorte tends to be more affordable than many places in the region. The median reported value of owner-occupied units in the LaPorte CDP was

\$146,000 in 2000, compared with \$172,000 for all of Larimer County. However, there are also fewer new homes in the area; for example, 44% of housing units in the LaPorte CDP were built in the 1970s compared to 27% of all homes in Larimer County. Recent development activity has tended toward large residential tracts, replacement of mobile homes on existing single-family lots, and new multifamily complexes such as Kintzley Plaza and Colona Condominiums on either side of CR 54G.

**Commerce**

LaPorte’s historic community center is focused on the crossroads of CR 54G (Old U.S. Highway 287) and Overland Trail, the location of a variety of local establishments including a grocery, hardware, gas station, auto repair, restaurants, a pair of bars, post office and fire station, and other retail and service businesses. Commercial uses have become established in a piecemeal fashion among the farms and homes in the Entryway corridor, along CR 54G between the US 287 bypass and the community center, including auto repair, cabinetry, lumber mill, greenhouse, trucking, and warehousing uses. Vern’s Place restaurant and gas station is also a long-standing local business located on CR 54G at the turnoff to Bellvue. On the north, the Holcim (formerly Holnam) cement plant dominated the local landscape from its opening by Ideal Cement Company in 1927, until closing at the end of August, 2002.

Census 2000 counted 2,113 residents of the LaPorte CDP 16 years of age and older, of whom 1,675 (79%) were in the labor force or actively seeking work. Only 1.2% of these residents were unemployed at the time of the census (April 2000), compared to 3.0% in Larimer County overall. Four out of five LaPorte workers commute alone, while one of twenty works at home. As might be expected with the lower average cost of housing, the Census found that median

family income in LaPorte, \$52,500, was lower than Larimer County’s \$58,866, for income earned in 1999.

**General Demographic Characteristics**

|                               | <b>LaPorte CDP</b> | <b>Larimer County</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Population under age 20       | 28%                | 28%                   |
| Population 20-24 years old    | 6%                 | 10%                   |
| Population 65 and older       | 8%                 | 10%                   |
| Median Age                    | 37.1               | 33.2                  |
| Hispanic or Latino            | 8.1%               | 8.3%                  |
| Average Household Size        | 2.51               | 2.52                  |
| Housing Units built 1995-2000 | 9%                 | 19%                   |
| Owner-Occupied Housing        | 67%                | 68%                   |

Source: U.S. Census 2000

In LaPorte’s zip code 80535, the U.S. Census Bureau’s County Business Patterns program reported on 68 establishments with 506 employees in the year 2000, up slightly from 63 establishments with 437 employees in 1998. The largest employers

(other than the now closed Holcim cement plant) do business in industries such as food service, retail and construction. It is important to note that zip code 80535 only covers the area west of CR21—the eastern portion of the LaPorte Plan Area has a Fort Collins address.

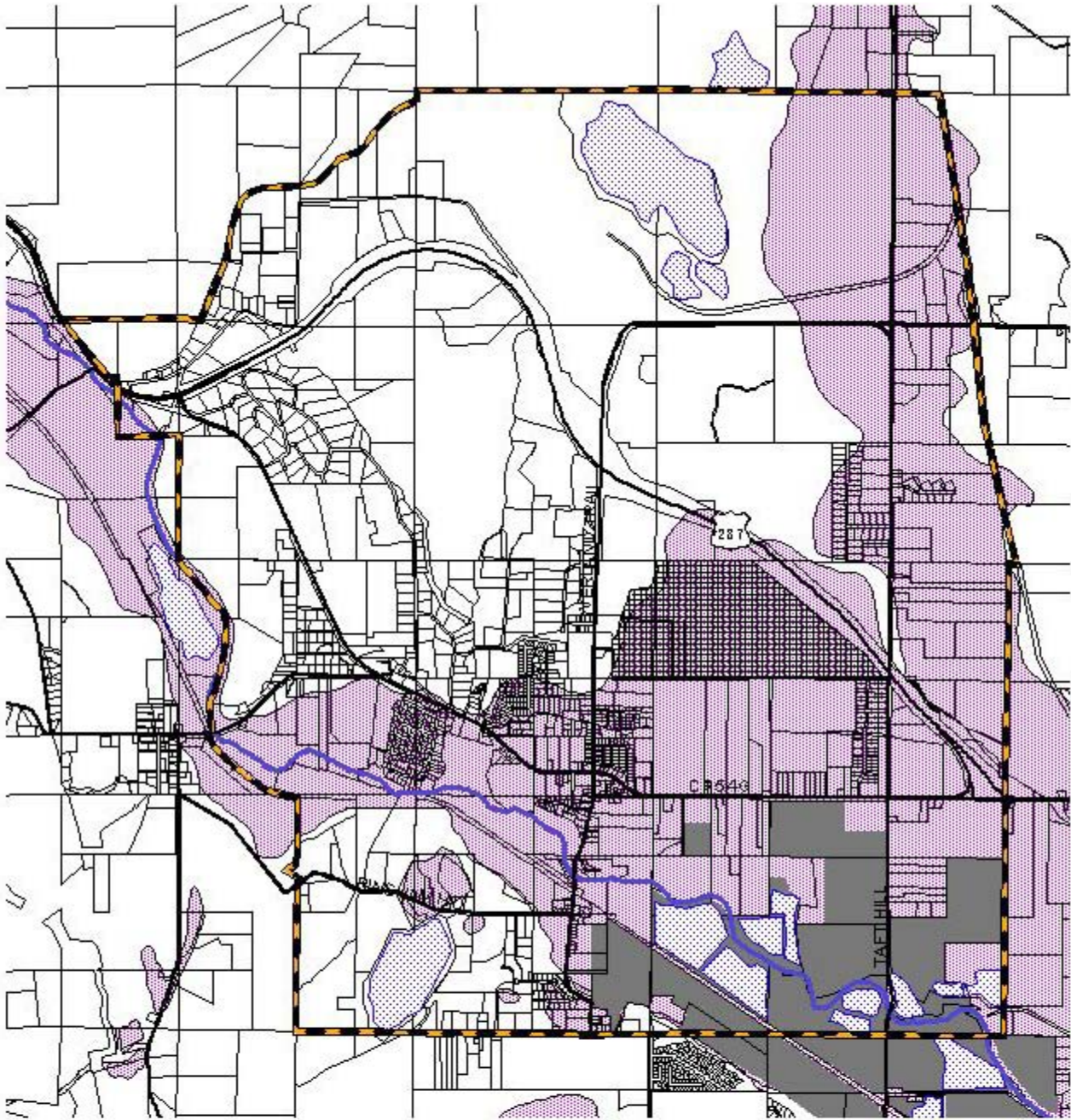
### **Sand and Gravel Mining**

In 1974, the Colorado Geological Survey mapped areas of aggregate (sand and gravel) resources in counties along the Front Range. In the LaPorte Area, aggregate is typically found near the Cache la Poudre River, although there are also lesser quality deposits along Dry Creek and scattered in the foothills. Gravel mining has been predominately located in the vicinity of the Cache la Poudre floodplain, although recent activity has moved farther from the river, particularly along Taft Hill Road.

The Home Office gravel mining complex, now operated by LaFarge West, Inc, is located on either side of Taft Hill Rd where it crosses the Cache la Poudre River, and includes:

- Sterling Pit No. 1, remaining portion is currently being mined;
- Sterling Pit No. 2, portions closest to the river have been mined are in reclamation; however, previous approvals still cover northern portions of the parcels now in agriculture;
- Seaworth Pit, north of the river, is currently being mined;
- North Taft Hill Pit, to be opened after groundwater testing is completed, projected for 2004.
- Overland Ponds Pits, located south of the old Colorado Southern RR right-of-way, immediately south of Sterling Pit No. 1, was approved by the Board of County Commissioners in 2003.

Aggregate Industries U.S. operates the Stegner Pit gravel mine, at the southwest corner of Taft Hill Road and CR 54G, where operations are projected to complete in the near future with reuse for residential development under discussion. Aggregate Industries is also the proposed operator of the Timberline Resources gravel mine, which would be located south of the US 287 bypass, between Taft Hill Rd and Overland Trail. Closest to the community center, the Komer Pit south of CR 54G near the Plantorium was mined by an independent contractor and is now under reclamation.



-  Laporte Plan Area
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Lakes
-  Parcels
- Gravel Mining
  -  Proposed
  -  Existing Permits
  -  Aggregate Resources

# LaPorte Area Plan Sand & Gravel Mining



October 03



## **Zoning**

A large portion of the Plan Area is zoned for residential development, including O-Open, RE-Residential Estate, and FA-Farming, with some existing subdivisions classified for smaller residential lots. Portions of the community center are zoned B-Business and C-Commercial, which permit a variety of retail and service uses; however, in many cases there is little correlation between land use and zoning. Many uses were established and lots divided prior to zoning being established and are now non-conforming under the *Larimer County Land Use Code*. As well, areas of the Entryway corridor along CR 54G west of the U.S. 287 bypass—historically low-density residential and agricultural uses—are zoned for strip business development. These areas typically have a shallow portion of their lots zoned Business or Commercial, leaving little room for modern, flexible site design and adequate parking and access.

## **Public Services and Utilities**

Although unincorporated, the core of the LaPorte community benefits from public services and facilities comparable to those in municipalities of similar size—schools, parks, post office and fire protection.

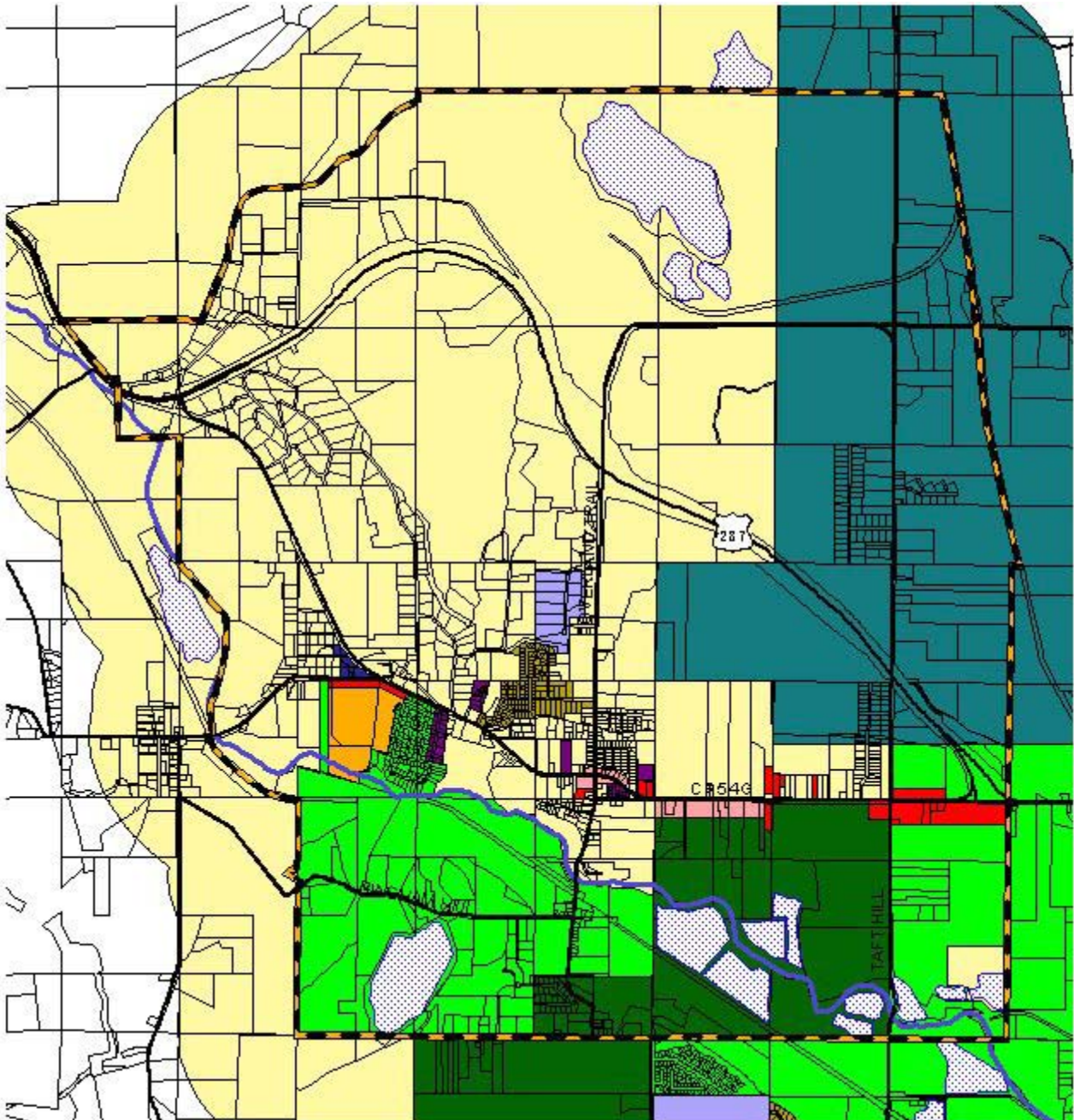
### **Schools**

The Poudre School District's Cache la Poudre (CLP) Elementary and Junior High schools are located on CR 54G just west of the community center. Although the schools are longtime community institutions, the elementary attendance area includes Bellvue and rural areas to the west up Rist and Poudre canyons while the Junior High draws students across an area from Wyoming to the western county line. CLP Elementary had a 2002 enrollment of 460 in grades K-6. CLP Jr. High had a 2002 enrollment of 400 students in grades 7-9. The School District remodeled the elementary school in the 1990s, and is evaluating improvements to computer networking and facilities of the junior high's 1959 building.

### **Fire Protection**

Poudre Fire Authority's Fire Station No. 7 is located on Overland Trail, just north of CR 54G. Built in 1976 and remodeled in 2001, the manned station serves as the Authority's wild land-urban interface response center with specialized equipment on-site.





-  Laporte Plan Area
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Lakes
- Zoning Districts**
-  B-Business
-  C-Commercial
-  FA-Farming
-  FA1-Farming
-  I-Industrial
-  M-Multifamily
-  O-Open
-  R-Residential
-  R1-Residential
-  R2-Residential
-  RE-Rural Estate
-  T-Tourist

# LaPorte Area Plan Zoning



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## Water

Public water is available through the City of Fort Collins and West Fort Collins Water District to developed areas along the extent of CR 54G and in the Plan Area south of the river. The City of Greeley provides service to a very limited number of homes along its pipeline from Bellvue through the LaPorte area. Water is also provided by Northern Colorado Water Association to Colorado Lien, the Holcim plant site and along Taft Hill Rd north of the bypass.

Water providers state that, although there are technical issues in providing adequate water pressure at elevations greater than 5,200 feet, they can generally extend service if a developer is willing to pay for service.

## Sewer

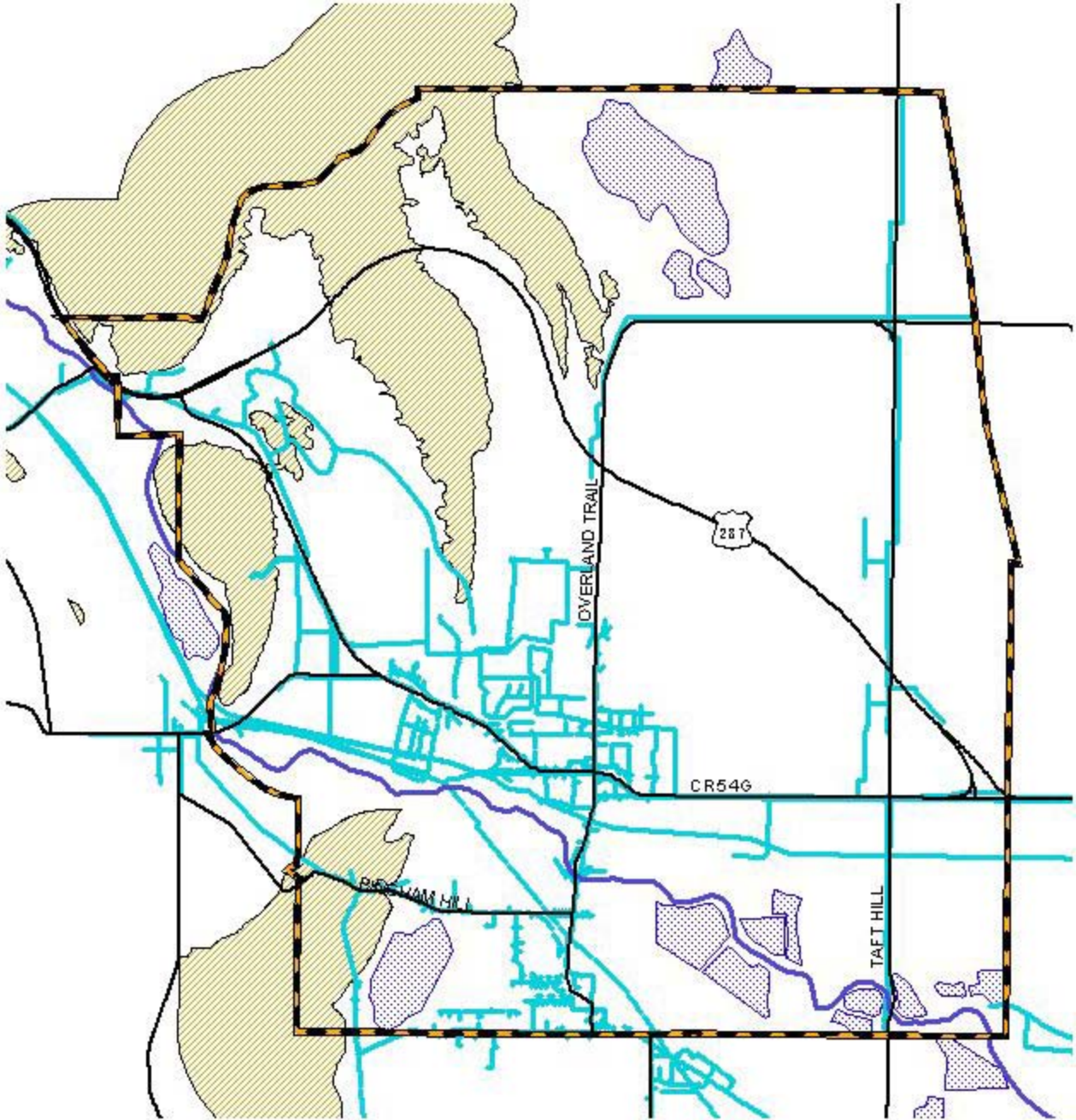
Sewer service provided by the City of Fort Collins is limited to the central area of LaPorte, generally south of Withrow Ridge from Cotton Willow Estates Subdivision on the west to Kintzley Plaza on the east. Adequate public facilities standards in the *Land Use Code* state that a public central wastewater system is the preferred method of sewage collection and treatment where density is greater than one dwelling unit per 10-acres.









A new 15" sewer line was extended under the Poudre River in 2002 north along Taft Hill Rd. This new sewer line brings the potential for higher intensity development to the area of Taft Hill and CR 54G. Most County zoning districts allow a smaller minimum lot size if both public water and sewer is available. For example, in the FA-Farm zoning district, there is a change from 2.29 acres per lot to 0.5 acres per lot.

Extension of the sewer line along Taft Hill Rd might also bring public sewer service to existing small lots in the area which now rely on private septic tanks. Many parcels in the LaPorte area were subdivided in years past relying on on-site (septic) sewage treatment systems, which can lead to problems where soils do not provide adequate percolation or where wells are located too close to drain fields. Today, the *Land Use Code* permits new on-site treatment only on lots over two acres outside of sewer service areas, where the developer demonstrates that it is clearly not feasible to connect to central public sewer.

## Environment

LaPorte can be described as a region of transitions: the transition between urban densities of Fort Collins and the more rural countryside of northern Larimer County, and the transition between prairie grasslands and wooded

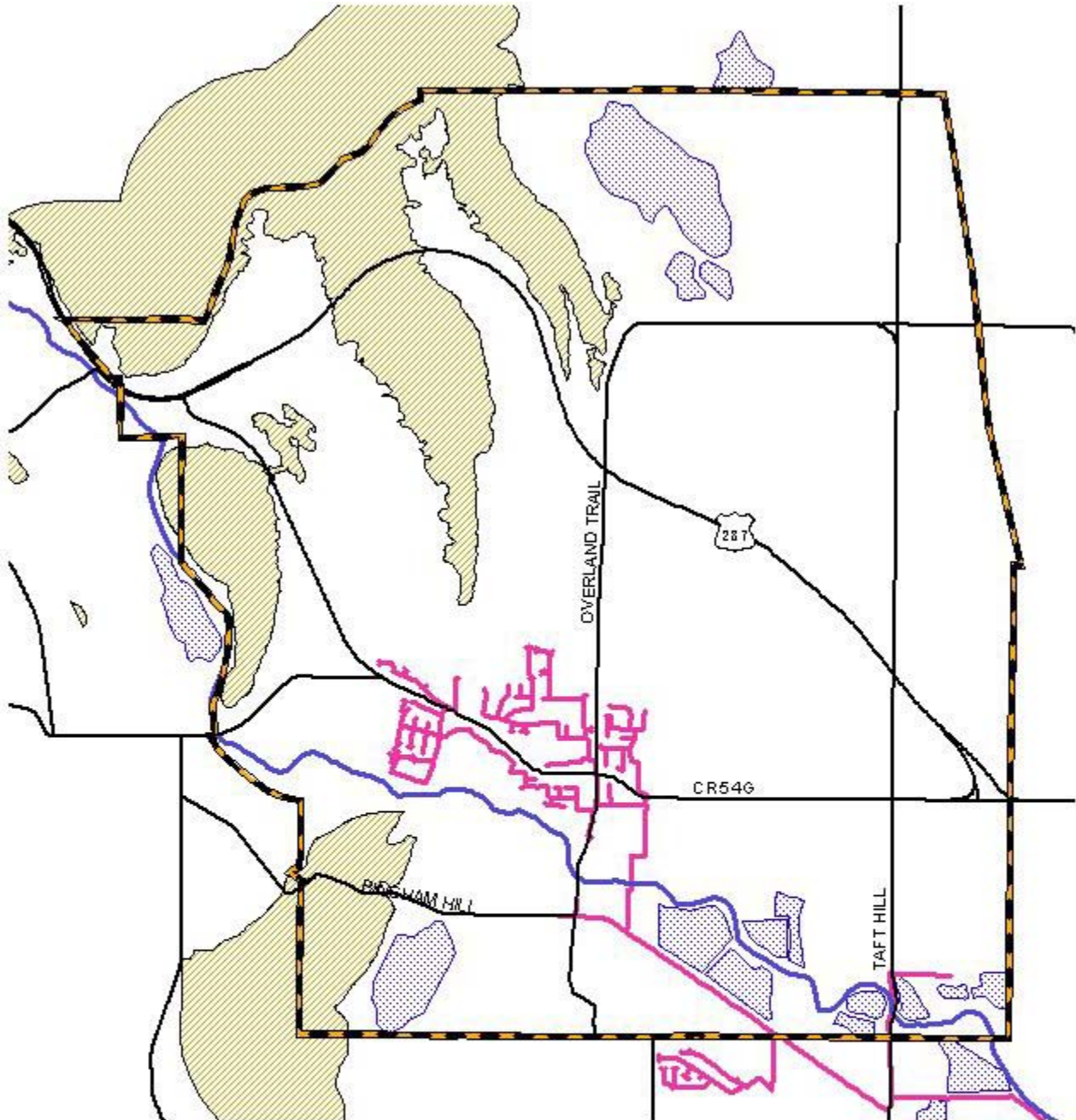







-  LaPorte Plan Area
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Fort Collins Water
-  Greeley Water
-  Northern Colorado Water
-  West Fort Collins Water
-  Lakes
-  Areas Higher than 5200 Foot Elevation

# LaPorte Area Plan Major Water Lines

October 03



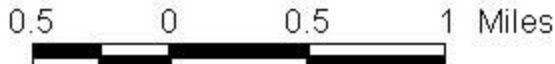


-  LaPorte Plan Area
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Fort Collins Sewer
-  Lakes
-  Areas Higher than 5200 Foot Elevation

# LaPorte Area Plan Sewer Lines



October 03



mountains. While Grasslands and Rocky Mountain pine forests are not unusual when considered separately, the transition zones along the Front Range where typical plant and animal species for each ecosystem occur together are unique.

Following is a discussion of local, cultural and natural landscape features, their classification, and efforts to preserve some of these features even as the population of the LaPorte Area increases.

### Public Lands

There are a number of publicly-owned properties in and adjacent to the LaPorte Area including a lookout site on top of Bingham Hill, foothills properties adjacent to Claymore Lake and Watson Lake, Lions Park in the shady riparian woodland along the Poudre River, and a stretch of a lengthy regional trail along the Poudre.

#### Public Lands

| Name                                           | Area                          | Public access?        | Managing Agency                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lions Park                                     | 21 acres                      | yes                   | Larimer County Parks & Open Lands                               |
| Bingham Park                                   | 2.8 acres                     | yes                   | Larimer County Parks & Open Lands                               |
| Goat Hill/Bellvue Dome (east part Watson Lake) | 63 acres                      | yes                   | Division of Wildlife                                            |
| Hyde Property                                  | 24 acres                      | limited public access | City of Ft. Collins Natural Areas                               |
| Poudre River Trail                             | Taft Hill Road to Watson Lake | yes                   | City of Ft. Collins Parks and Larimer County Parks & Open Lands |
| Reservoir Ridge Natural Area (northern part)   | 40 acres                      | yes                   | City of Ft. Collins Natural Areas                               |

Source: Larimer County Open Lands Dept; City of Fort Collins

The beauty of the land along the Front Range, including its mountain views and the fun of playing in rivers and hills and viewing wildlife, are some of the major reasons that communities like LaPorte are considered desirable places to live. Protecting local open lands ensures that the features that have made LaPorte desirable in the first place will continue to exist, even as development continues. Public lands are a true amenity for residents.

**Wetlands**

A recent internet search has uncovered hundreds of wetland classification systems used by local government agencies around the country (contact Larimer County Planning Department for details). All of them are based to some degree on soil types, hydrology, and presence of certain wetland plant species but it would be impossible to select one correct system for the entire United States. In the case of Larimer County, an experienced research team from Colorado State University (Cooper and Merritt) visited local wetlands greater than 5 acres in size in 1999—including those in the LaPorte Area—and formulated a classification system appropriate for the climate and geography of the northern Front Range. Potential sites were first determined with aerial photos, and soil types were determined from national databases (Natural Resources Conservation Service). Biologists surveyed private property if they had permission, and also made observations from roads and trails. The CSU researchers described seventeen wetland “types”. (Some wetlands have characteristics of more than one type, but only the dominant type is listed).

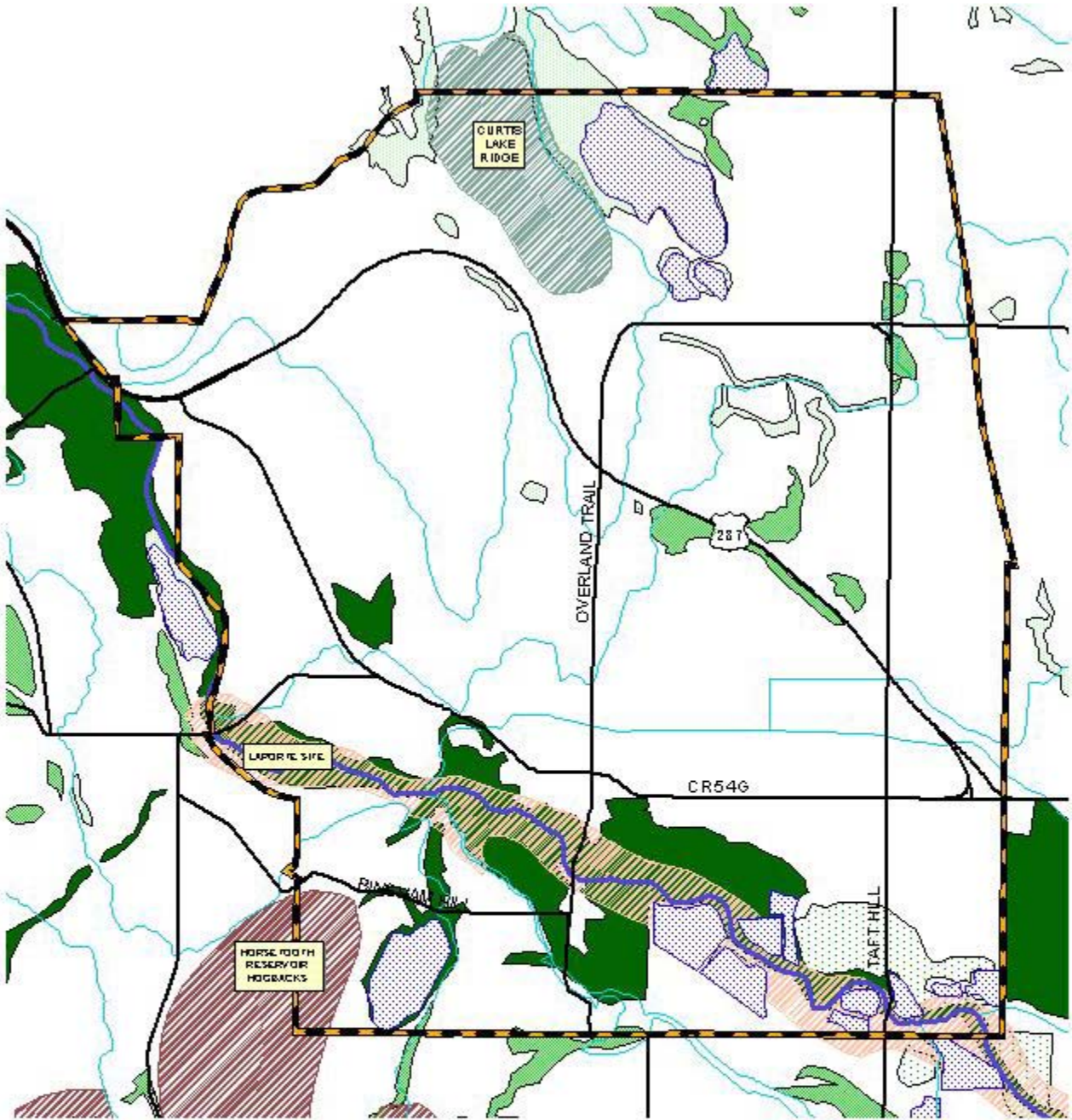
Wetlands were rated on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest). Each rating was an average of three scores:

- (a) importance: Number of functions the wetland provides such as flood storage, bank stability, wildlife habitat, recreation;
- (b) quality: Amount of human disturbance the wetland has sustained and its restoration potential; and
- (c) sensitivity: Resilience to withstand frequent human use. For instance, wetlands that contain known nesting sites for waterfowl would be considered highly sensitive (not resilient) during nesting season.

**Wetlands**

| <b>Wetland Type</b>                            | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| W1 = Riparian forest                           | Plains cottonwood, scrub willow and other native and naturalized trees dominate. Occurs in and adjacent to flowing water                                                                     |
| W6 = Herbaceous wet meadow                     | Grassland with waterlogged soil near surface but without standing water most of the year. Species of rush, sedge, saltgrass, alkaligrass dominate                                            |
| W9 = Herbaceous salt meadow                    | Flooded after heavy precipitation; water-logged within a few centimeters of soil surface for some period during growing season. Species include saltgrass, alkaligrass, kochia, sand spurrey |
| W12 = Palustrine marsh (marshes, swamps, bogs) | Seasonally or perennially inundated wetland with standing water and herbaceous plants adapted to saturated soils. Species of cattail, bulrush, eleocharis                                    |
| W17 = Lacustrine (lakes, ponds)                | Deep, still water but vegetation is not dominated by trees or shrubs                                                                                                                         |

Source: Larimer County Planning Dept.

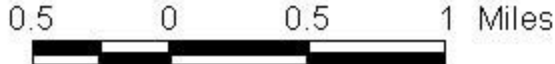


- LaPorte Plan Area
- Cache la Poudre River
- Rivers and Ditches
- Lakes
- CNHP Potential Conservation Area Sites**
- 2: Very High Significance
- 3: High Significance
- 5: General Biodiversity Interest
- Wetlands Ratings**
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

# LaPorte Area Plan Wetlands



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The LaPorte Area has five wetland types: riparian forest, herbaceous wet meadow, herbaceous salt meadow, marsh, and lacustrine. The largest onsite wetland is obviously the Poudre River which has riparian forest (type=W1), plus some associated pockets of deepwater that are surrounded by herbaceous vegetation (type=W17). The Poudre is also the only wetland to be given the highest “4” rating in the LaPorte Area because of the extent of its native cottonwood/willow woodland, its value to wildlife, and because the Poudre is a perennial waterway even during severe drought years (it contained flowing water during the summer of 2002).

The northern Front Range is an arid region (Fort Collins averages 15 inches of precipitation per year). Water, and wetlands, are precious here. Wetlands can act as filters for water impurities, they provide habitat for all wildlife species, and recreation for people. Larimer County is serious about protecting wetlands from possible encroachment or pollution, even as regional development continues.

This protection is accomplished primarily through creating no-development “buffers” around the edges of wetlands. The County’s usual buffer for a wetland larger than 0.5 acre is 100 feet, although this buffer can be reduced or increased depending on conditions such as wetland quality, size of property, and size of proposed development. (See §8.2 of the *Larimer County Land Use Code*, for more details about wetland regulations).

### **Colorado Natural Heritage Program**

In 1996, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) was contracted to identify sites with important ecological value throughout Larimer County, including the LaPorte Area. CNHP biologists reviewed existing data, and then conducted thorough field surveys of private properties when they had permission from landowners. They did not visit all the private properties in LaPorte, so there may be some ecologically valuable sites that remain unidentified. Surveyed areas were ranked according to presence of the following natural resource elements:

- Native Plant Species: Emphasis was on locating native species that CNHP staff know to be rare based on extensive fieldwork throughout Colorado, and on species listed by the Federal government;
- Native Plant Communities: Emphasis was on vegetation where different species were present in unusual associations;
- Wildlife: Emphasis was on locating animals that are listed as threatened or endangered by the federal government, or by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. (The Division has its own listings of species known to be rare or declining, based on knowledge of Division field biologists).



Sites that had a high number of sought-after elements—referred to as “element occurrences” by the CNHP—were mapped as “Potential Conservation Sites.” The boundaries for the Sites included best-case buffers that might ensure protection of plants and animals of interest. CNHP biologists have re-visited some sites since 1996 and local biologists, naturalists, and other interested citizens have also been welcome to notify CNHP whenever they have new information.

Conservation Sites were prioritized and ranked from B1 (highest) to B5 (lowest), according to nationwide Natural Heritage Program methodology. B1 sites “contain the rarest elements or the highest quality occurrences” while B5’s may contain an “element that is rare in Colorado but common elsewhere, or a low quality occurrence of an element” but all of the ranked sites are considered to be important reservoirs of biological diversity. There are no B1 sites in Larimer County.

The LaPorte Area contains the three following Conservation Sites.

**Cache La Poudre-LaPorte site** is ranked B5 (General Biodiversity Interest) and is approximately 3.5 miles long in the Plan Area. Stretches of the river with tall mature trees provide habitat for numerous wildlife species, including raptors such as bald eagle, osprey, and red-tail and Swainson’s hawk, waterfowl species, plus migratory songbirds including species of warblers and vireos (habitat for songbirds is under development pressure throughout the western U.S.), and even large mammals like bear or mountain lion may use the river corridor during dry seasons. The Iowa darter and the Plains topminnow – both are listed by the Division of Wildlife as either State Species of Concern – may live in the foothills region of the Poudre.

**Curtis Lake Ridge** is located entirely within the Holcim (formerly Holnam) cement plant property and is ranked B3 (High Significance). CNHP ranked it mainly because it was known to support one of the largest, known populations of Bell’s twinpod (*Physaria bellii*), a species of mustard that only grows along the northern front range foothills. Presumably the population is still there because the Holcim property is still largely undeveloped. Aside from *P. bellii*, the property is interesting because undeveloped, ungrazed shrub/grasslands near the foothills are increasingly rare along the Front Range.

**Horsetooth Reservoir Hogbacks**, ranked B2 (Very High Significance), extend from LaPorte south along the foothills east and west of Horsetooth Reservoir almost to Devil’s Backbone. Only the northernmost tip of the Site is included in the LaPorte Area. CNHP states that this Site is important in its entirety because it contains a mixture of tallgrass prairie grass species like big

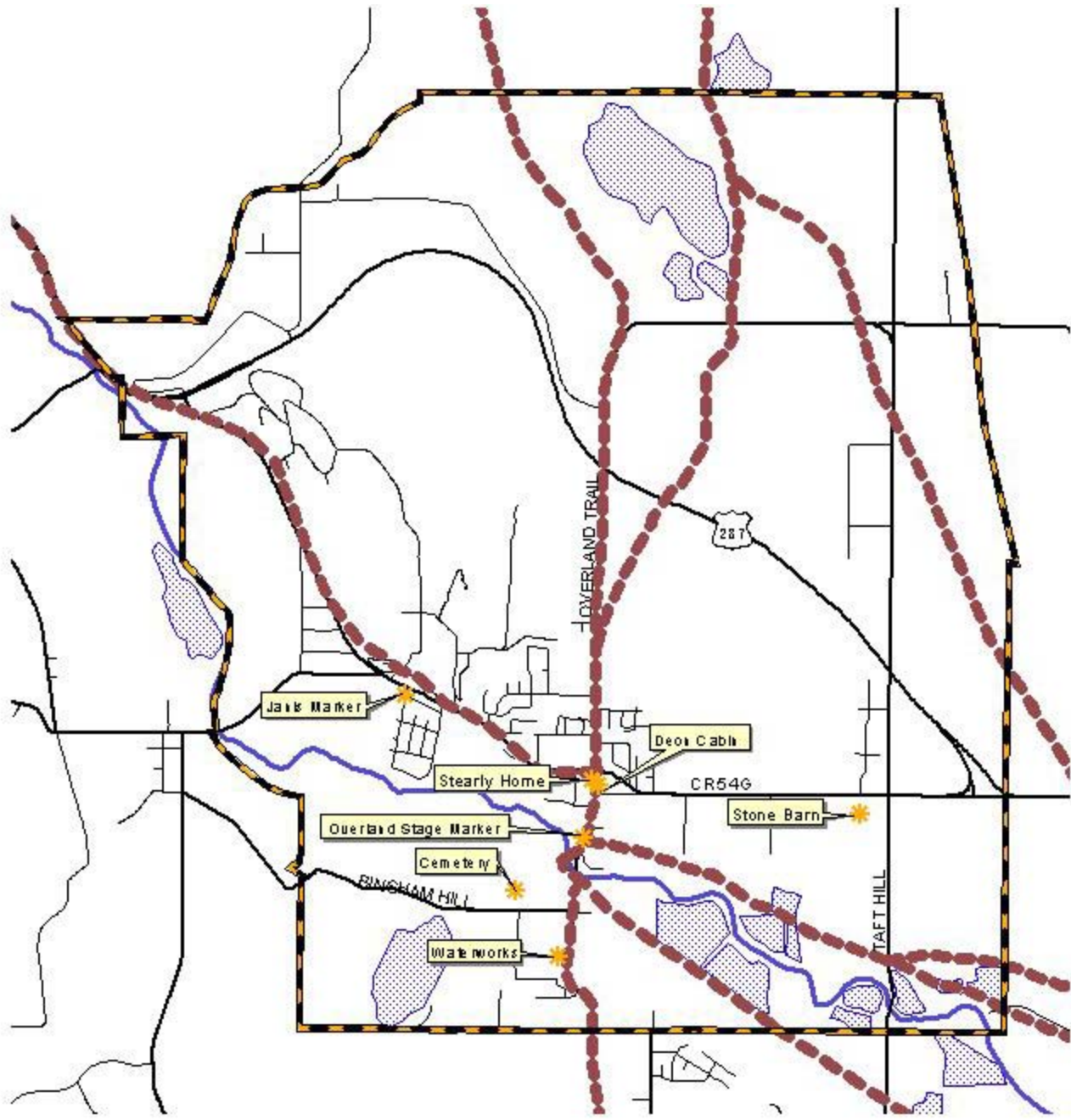
bluestem and little bluestem, plus typical front range mountain shrubs and some ponderosa pine. While this site has had some impacts from development it is still less disturbed than other areas with the same vegetation. The Division of Wildlife shows the northern portion of the Hogbacks—which are included in the LaPorte Area—as mule deer winter concentration range. Predators such as occasional bobcat, mountain lion, and black bear hunt in the foothills region.

### **Cultural Resources**

In 1844, Missouri-born trader and trapper Antoine Janis staked a claim near the site of the original hiding spot for which the Cache la Poudre River is named. He returned during Colorado's gold fever of 1858 and co-founded the Colona Town Company. In 1862, the Overland Stage was rerouted up the Poudre and west over the old Cherokee Trail, with a division station and army post at the newly-designated Larimer County seat. The riverside community, renamed LaPorte, played host to an array of colorful characters, from Horace Greeley and Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to the notorious stage agent Jack Slade, who was later hung by the Vigilantes in the gold fields of Montana.

Much has changed in LaPorte since the rip-roaring frontier days. Camp Collins moved downstream after a June 1864 flood, followed by the county seat five years later. French-Indian residents were expelled to reservations in 1878—founding father Antoine Janis died at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, in 1890, the same year the U.S. Census declared the frontier closed. Few physical reminders of these early settlers remain today. Those that do are primarily on private property and include:

- Deon Cabin, Overland Trail south of the post office, 1858 log cabin built as a saloon, later used as a general store and residence.
- Stegner Stone Barn, CR 54G west of Taft Hill Road, built by pioneer farmer Edson Warren c. 1870.
- Stearly Home and Blacksmith Shop, Overland Trail east of hardware store, 1876 frame house and stone building.
- Fort Collins Waterworks, Overland Trail south of Bingham Hill Rd, 1882 brick buildings owned by the City of Fort Collins.
- Bingham Hill Cemetery, Bingham Hill Rd west of Overland Trail, area originally used as Native American burial grounds.
- Janis Claim DAR Historical Marker, Cotton Willow Estates Subdivision south of CR 54G.
- Overland Stage DAR Historical Marker, north of Lions Park.



-  LaPorte Plan Area
-  Historic Structures
-  Historic Trails
-  Roads
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Lakes

# LaPorte Area Plan Historic Places



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## Drainage

This section examines stormwater drainage in the LaPorte Plan Area, first from the Cache la Poudre and Dry Creek floodplains. This section also looks at overland flooding with a summary of the *LaPorte Master Drainage Plan*, a study of the existing drainage patterns and drainage infrastructure in the vicinity of LaPorte. The *Master Drainage Plan* also looks at the effects of future development of LaPorte as described in this plan. Adoption of the *LaPorte Master Drainage Plan* is expected early in 2004.

### Floodplains

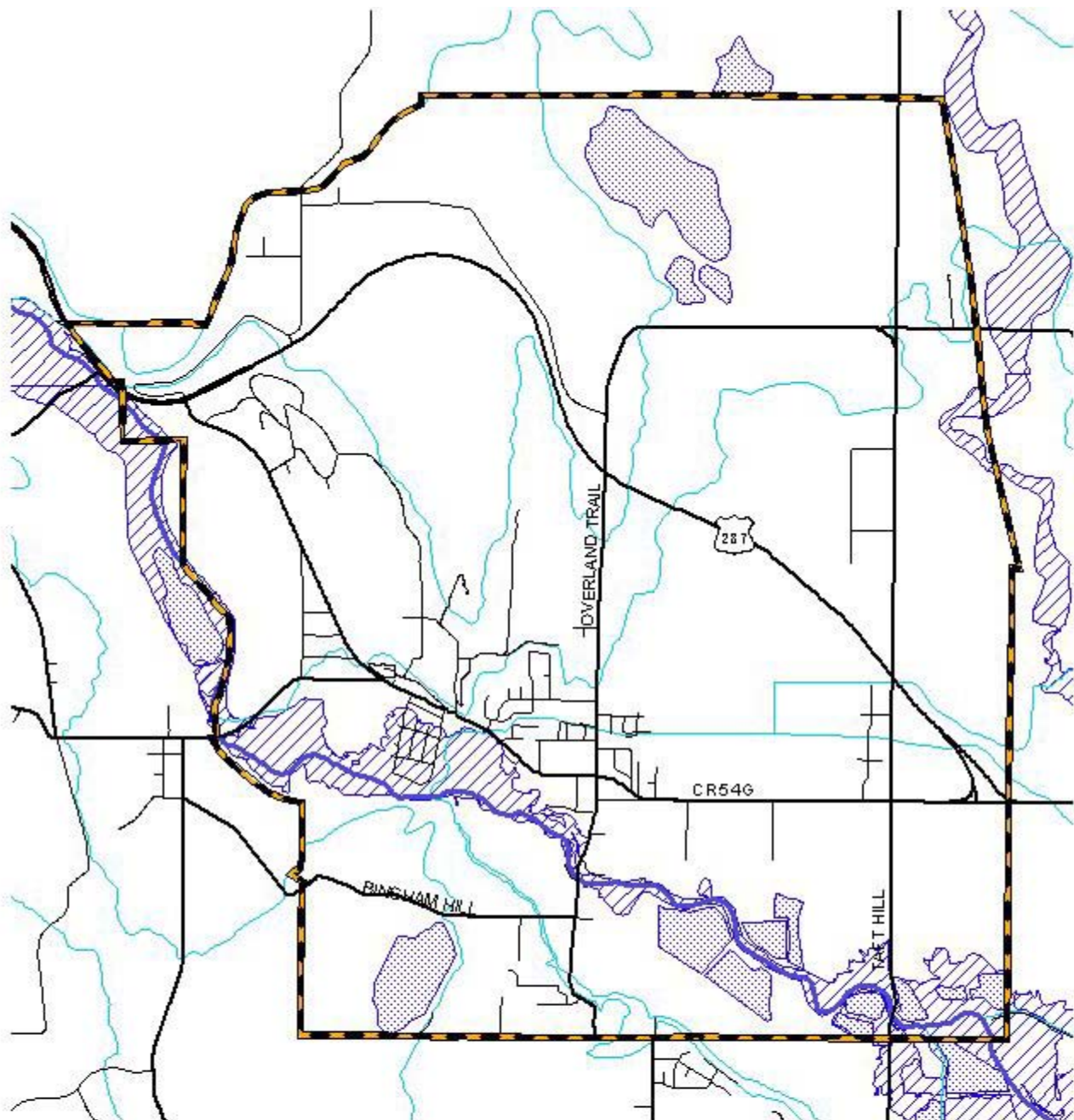
Land adjacent to a body of water that has been or may in the future be covered by flood water is called a floodplain. Within the LaPorte Plan Area, floodplains have been mapped along the Cache la Poudre River, and a portion of Dry Creek in the northeastern portion of the plan area. Floodplain boundaries are designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [for details, see Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Larimer County revised 3/18/1996, available in the Larimer County Engineering Dept.]. FEMA defines a “100-year floodplain” as an area with a 1-percent chance of being inundated by flood waters in any given year.

Larimer County first adopted floodplain regulations in 1975, with some mapping in 1977 and countywide FEMA mapping adopted in 1979. FEMA maps were revised in 1986, and again with the 1996 map series. Although the floodplain’s location can be generally found by scaling off of the maps, actual location of boundaries is determined by elevation on the ground.

The *Larimer County Land Use Code* regulates uses in three overlay zone designations:

- FW: Flood Way, the channel of a river and adjacent area reserved to accommodate the base flood elevation determined by detailed study.
- FF: Flood Fringe, the portion of the 100-year floodplain outside the flood way.
- FH: Flood Hazard Area, delineated where a regulatory Flood Way has not been mapped, as well as areas determined to be subject to a 100-year flood by adopted Larimer County drainage master plans.

Each designation allows land uses which may be more restrictive than underlying zoning. Generally, the floodway is restricted to agricultural and recreational uses with no long-term habitation. Use of property in the flood fringe follows the underlying zoning, although structures must be protected by fill and/or flood proofing. No new building envelopes may be created within the 100-year floodplain.



-  LaPorte Plan Area
-  Streets
-  Cache la Poudre River
-  Rivers and Ditches
-  Lakes
-  100 Year Flood Plain
- 

## LaPorte Area Plan Floodplains



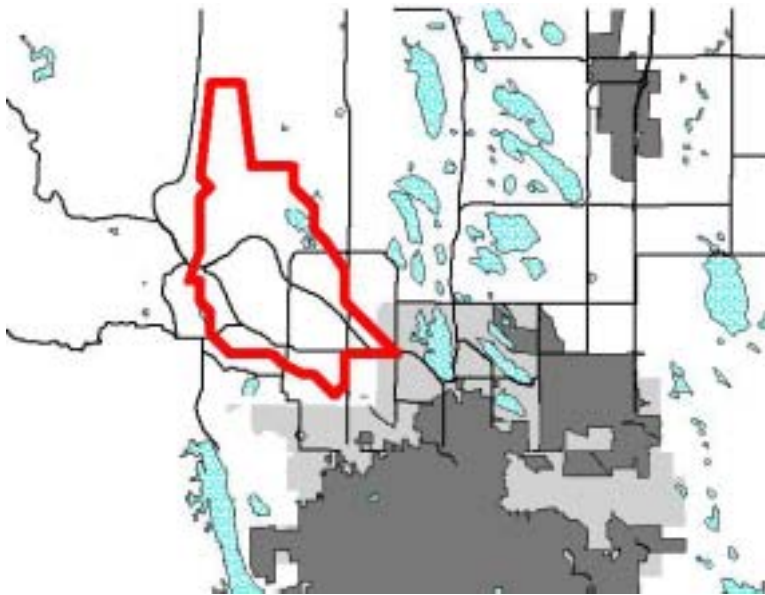
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*Master Drainage Plan*

The *LaPorte Master Drainage Plan* (available in the Larimer County Engineering Dept.) examines the LaPorte Drainage Basin, which takes in a great deal although not all of the LaPorte Plan Area. Generally, the drainage pattern in the area is from Northwest to Southeast with the Cache la Poudre River acting as the receiving body of water. The area is predominately rural, with stormwater conveyance primarily by overland flow and open channel.

The LaPorte Drainage Basin has a history of flooding problems created by stormwater runoff. Many of the problems are due to the fact that the storm drainage infrastructure in the LaPorte area is minimal and consists primarily of small cross culverts, driveway culverts and barrow ditches. Overland stormwater flows are common due to the lack of well-defined drainage pathways within the basins. Comments and observations received during a 2002 open house held for this project indicate shallow flooding of local businesses and residences at various points north of County Road 54G between CR19 and just west of Overland Trail. There were also reports of shallow flooding in several areas of the Cotton Willow Estates subdivision especially those homes near the Cache la Poudre River. There were also observations of flows overtopping CR 54G north of the Cotton Willow Estates Subdivision.



*LaPorte Drainage Basin*

With increased development in the LaPorte area, there has been an increase in public concern about drainage issues. Solutions are needed to address existing drainage problems as well as to prevent additional problems as new development occurs.

**Scope of Study.** The purpose of the drainage study was to identify alternative solutions to storm water problems. The intent was to identify a recommended plan for storm water improvements based on technical, economic, and public acceptance criteria.

In order to accomplish the stated objective, the study involved the following tasks:

1. Collect field data.
2. Collect public comments and assess of public concern.
3. Compile and evaluate existing studies and data for the study area.

4. Delineate the drainage basin and subbasin boundaries.
5. Analyze existing and projected future hydrology for the basin.
6. Prepare preliminary designs and cost estimates for the most feasible alternative improvement scheme.
7. Consistently evaluate the alternatives and recommend the best drainage improvement scheme.
8. Prepare a final report.

The criteria in the Larimer County Stormwater Management Manual were used along with The City of Fort Collins Design Storm. The assumption was made that future development will be required to detain stormwater runoff to release at historic levels. It is further assumed that the irrigation ditches crossing the area will be running full in a 100-year storm event and will not intercept stormwater nor will they import stormwater flows that would be spilled in this area.

Conclusions. Hydrologic results indicated that the LaPorte area would benefit from regional storm water detention. Due to the largely rural nature of the LaPorte area, opportunity still exists for the addition of regional storm water detention in the basins north of CR 54G. Provisions should also be made for the conveyance of stormwater to the Cache la Poudre River. These areas currently contain large areas of undeveloped land that could provide, in the form of swales, overland pathways for stormwater runoff to reach the River. Additionally, future development should be required to detain local stormwater runoff with release at historic rates. The LaPorte area's proximity to the Cache la Poudre River makes it especially important to address stormwater quality, to the extent practicable, with future development.

For this study, only the 100-year return period was analyzed. Using the 100-year flow values from the *Urban Drainage Storm Water Management Manual* (UDSWMM) model, culverts and swales were sized in order to convey runoff from north to south under CR 54G and to the Cache la Poudre River. Concurrent transportation planning for the LaPorte Plan Area was used to identify proposed access points to CR 54G that would also serve as culvert locations.

Using lowest cost as the basis for selection, the recommended improvement plan is as follows:

1. Install large diameter cross culverts at strategic locations along CR 54G. The installation of these pipes would coincide with development. The estimated cost associated with this task is \$2.8 million.
2. All new development will be required to provide stormwater detention, releasing at a 2-year historic rate.
3. All new development will be required to provide stormwater drainage easements.

Proposed Implementation. Larimer County Engineering Staff is exploring the formation of a Stormwater Utility for the LaPorte Area. The purpose of the Utility is to construct, operate and maintain additional stormwater facilities deemed necessary and beneficial to the public's health, safety and welfare. The Stormwater Utility can impose and collect stormwater basin fees and stormwater utility fees.

### **Open Lands Programs**

Larimer County's Parks & Open Lands Department defines the mission of their Open Lands Program as "to preserve and protect significant open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and develop parks and trails for present and future generations. These open lands provide opportunities for leisure, human renewal and protection of our natural and cultural resources".

The County Open Lands Program first received funding in 1995 when Larimer County voters approved the ¼ cent Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax. This tax has enabled the Open Lands Program to purchase land or conservation easements from interested, willing sellers. Between 1995 and December 2001, 13,158 acres of undeveloped land in Larimer County were either placed under conservation easement or purchased outright through efforts of the Open Lands Program, in consultation with the Open Lands Advisory Board, and approval from the Board of County Commissioners. The largest acreages are located:

- a) located between Ft. Collins and Loveland to create some separation between the cities, and prevent the unsightly sprawl seen in other major metropolitan regions. The separator properties were an immediate high priority.
- and
- b) located in the foothills to protect wildlife habitat and the scenic Mountain Backdrop.

By the end of 2001, however, the Open Lands Program was seeking new priorities beyond their successes in the Loveland-Fort Collins region. In order to understand citizens' goals for open space preservation, the Department held public meetings and conducted surveys in late 2000 and into 2001 as part of the development of the 2001 *Open Lands Master Plan*. One of the goals emphasized by citizens and identified in the *Open Lands Master Plan* was to preserve lands that contain "important wildlife habitat, river corridors, wetlands, ridgelines". The Open Lands Program has used the master planning process to



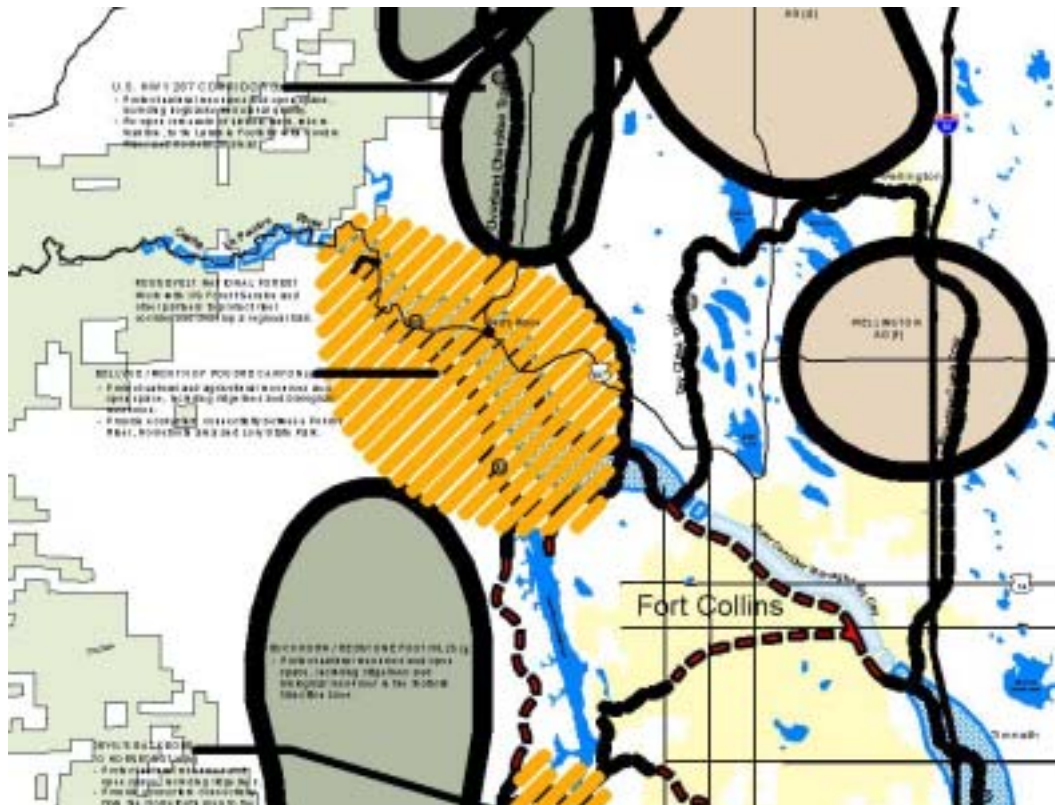
identify priority areas for Larimer County containing these types of features, including the following two regions within the LaPorte Area:

**Bellvue/Mouth of Poudre Canyon:**

- It is located in the transition zone between prairie grasslands and mountainous habitats and supports unusual assortments of plant species and wildlife.
- It includes land surrounding the Cache La Poudre River; extensive development here might affect the critical Poudre watershed.
- It is near large tracts of public open space, including Roosevelt National Forest; preserving additional tracts of land would add to these land holdings and would not create isolated fragments of open space.
- There are gorgeous views of foothills, hogbacks, and mountains.

**Poudre River Corridor:**

- The major, perennial waterway system for Northern Colorado, together with the Big Thompson River .
- It also supplies irrigation water, provides habitat for numerous wildlife species, and its surrounding trees and shrubs provide shade and recreation for people.



*Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan*

These two areas will be high priority preservation regions for the Open Lands Program—in accordance with their Willing Seller policy—preferably in partnership with other local land protection agencies and organizations such as the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO).

The City of Fort Collins also has an open lands protection program, funded through a City voter-approved  $\frac{1}{4}$ -cent sales tax. Their priority regions for protection, called “Conservation Focus Areas” include some areas along the eastern and southern boundaries of the LaPorte Plan Area. Willing buyer/willing seller acquisitions in these areas would protect natural resources, protect land where regional trails are located, and also act as separation properties between LaPorte and northwestern Fort Collins.

## IV. Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map shows the preferred future land use development pattern for the LaPorte Area. This map builds on the land use patterns defined in the previous 1980 and 1992 editions of the *LaPorte Area Plan* and existing uses and zoning, combined with the new conditions and opportunities defined in the previous sections. The Future Land Use Map is intended to serve as a guide to property owners and the County regarding requests for rezoning, special review applications, land divisions and other types of development applications.

The Future Land Use Map is not a zoning map and does not change the existing zoning on each property. Landowners may continue to develop their property according to its current zoning, as is detailed in the *Larimer County Land Use Code*. Zoning is attached to the land, and does not change when property is sold or leased.

In the same way, the Land Use Map and the *LaPorte Area Plan* do not change the ability of landowners to continue existing legal uses, whether they are consistent with the existing zoning or are non-conforming uses. The right to continue an existing legal nonconforming use does not change when the property is leased, bought or sold. Non-conforming uses are those that do not comply with the existing zoning, but legally existed prior to the adoption, revision or amendment of the *Land Use Code*.

### Residential Use Categories

Residential uses in the LaPorte Plan area are divided into two general categories, Rural Residential and Town-Density Residential, based on existing land use patterns and the potential for public utilities. Areas outside of the area with potential public sewer service are generally planned for development densities and intensities that are consistent with existing zoning and/or existing land use patterns. Areas with existing or potential public water and sewer service are planned for higher densities and intensities.

#### Rural Residential

There are two rural residential density categories in the areas without public water and sewer. Standards for new development in the rural residential use areas vary according to the density and intensity of the use and the type of land division process that is used.

#### Residential 1 dwelling unit per 10-35+ acres

This category supports agricultural uses and very large lot single family residential uses. New lots created under this plan will be at least 10 acres, unless approved as a clustered development in which case lots must be at least 2 acres. This category is consistent with existing O-Open and RE-Rural Estate zoning districts. Rural development standards for roads, water, sewer, fire protection and storm water management apply to this area.

#### Residential 1 dwelling unit per 2+acres

This category includes large lot single family residential uses and agricultural uses that will not adversely impact adjacent residential neighborhoods. Lots are a minimum of 100,000 square feet (2.29 acres), unless approved as a clustered development in which case lots must be at least 2 acres. This category is consistent with the existing FA-1 Farming zoning district and existing rural residential development such as Rolling Hills Estates. New subdivisions will have public water and urban level fire protection, but not public sewer service. Streets will be paved but will have a rural cross section (i.e. roadside ditches without sidewalks).

#### Rural Residential Clustered Development

Clustering means that as part of a new residential development, private open areas are provided and dwelling units occupy smaller lots than would otherwise be the case. Benefits for clustered development include protection of important natural areas, avoidance of hazardous areas, provision of desirable open areas, and compatibility with adjacent existing or allowed land uses.

This type of development is encouraged in the Rural Residential Land Use areas. The *Larimer County Land Use Code* details two types of clustered development in rural areas of the County, Conservation Development and Rural Land Plans. Land divisions may be developed in accordance with either of these regulations in the LaPorte Rural Residential areas.

### **Town-Density Residential**

The following town-density residential categories are appropriate for areas served by both public water and sewer. Urban development standards are required for any new development in these areas.

#### Low Density Residential (LDR)

The LDR category provides for single-family residential neighborhoods with a maximum density of 4 dwelling units per acre. These areas may be developed as Planned Land Divisions, using the R-1 Residential zone district (minimum lot

size 10,000 sq. ft.). Developers may also propose a mixed-density development with clustering or a mix of housing types, described below.

#### Medium Density Residential (MDR)

The MDR category provides for single-family and duplex residential neighborhoods with a maximum density of 6 dwelling units per acre. These areas may be developed as Planned Land Divisions, using the R-2 Residential zone district (minimum lot size 7,500 sq. ft. per dwelling unit). Developers may also propose a mixed-density development with clustering or a mix of housing types, described below.

#### Multi-Family Residential (MFR)

The multi-family category provides for multiple-family residential uses and manufactured housing parks with a maximum density of 8 dwelling units per acre, using the M and M-1 Multiple Family zone districts. Developers may also propose a mixed-density development with clustering or a mix of housing types, described below.

#### Mixed-Density Residential Development

Developers and landowners are encouraged to consider providing for a mix of housing types and densities within the town-density residential areas. Total project density is the maximum density for the land use category (i.e. 4 dwelling units per acres in LDR) multiplied by the gross developable residential area of the project. This type of development requires rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district and urban level services.

The following uses may be appropriate in a mixed-density development. (Specific uses will be determined with rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district.)

- Single-family lots of varying sizes
- Duplex lots
- Attached single-family (townhouse) and multi-family structures with six (6) or less dwelling units per structure

### **Non-Residential Use Categories**

Three categories of business and commercial use are described for the LaPorte Area. The Community Business Center and the Neighborhood Business Center categories are designed to provide locations for community and neighborhood scale shopping respectively. In each, uses are assembled together to create attractive, convenient destinations for consumers. The Limited Commercial

category includes opportunities for higher-intensity commercial uses to serve the community, with use and design limits intended to ensure that the areas remain attractive and functional.

#### Community Business Center – (CBC)

The crossroads at 54G and Overland Trail is the heart of the traditional business center of LaPorte. The area currently includes a wide variety of retail and service uses, professional offices, and public/institutional uses. New development in the area will be an extension of the existing business area. The Plan supports in-fill development to create an integrated center that is pedestrian friendly, rather than a strip commercial pattern along CR 54G. New development must use the PD-Planned Development zone district which allows maximum flexibility in project design.

The following uses are appropriate in the Community Business Center area. (Specific uses will be determined with rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district.)

- Uses permitted in the B-Business zone district
- Residential dwelling units on the second and higher floors of non-residential uses
- Drive-in/drive-through uses are permitted as a Special Review use only.

#### Neighborhood Business Center – (NBC)

New Neighborhood Business Center locations are shown adjacent to the Kintzley Plaza and at the intersection of CR 54G and Taft Hill Road. These centers are intended to provide for small-scale, everyday shopping and service needs for the planned adjacent neighborhoods. Any rezoning must use the PD-Planned Development zone district which allows maximum flexibility in project design.

The following uses are appropriate in the Neighborhood Business Center area. (Specific uses will be determined with rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district.)

- Uses permitted in the B-Business zone district

#### Limited Commercial – (LC)

An area immediately west of the CR 54G/LaPorte By-pass intersection is designed for Limited Commercial use. This category includes a set of uses that are commercial and light industrial in nature, but which do not include outdoor storage and are compatible with adjacent low residential density uses and the high visibility of the area from the By-pass. Development of this area will require rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone.

The following uses are appropriate in the Limited Commercial area. (Specific uses will be determined with rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district.)

- Uses allowed in the C-Commercial zone district, except that outdoor display and sales uses, transportation depots, transportation services and truck stops are not allowed.
- Outdoor storage of any type, including outdoor storage of materials, parts, inventory or goods, is not allowed.

### **Entryway Transition Area**

The area adjacent to 54G between the existing town core and Taft Hill Road is identified on the Future Land Use Map as the Entryway Transition Area, with a preferred use of Low Density Residential (2-4 dwelling units per acre). The area currently includes a mix of residential, commercial, trade and light industrial uses. There is a shallow strip of B-Business zoning on the south side of 54G, developed primarily in residential uses. Many of the existing ownership parcels are narrow and deep, with a small frontage on 54G. Issues in the area focus on compatibility between the various existing and potential uses (as allowed by existing zoning) and on traffic conflicts arising from the individual, closely-spaced drives serving each business and residence along 54G.

This Plan proposes a future land use pattern of Low Density Residential, anchored by a new Neighborhood Business Center and Limited Commercial area on the east and an expanded Neighborhood Business Center on the west (including the existing Kintzley Plaza/Plantorium area). The *Transportation Plan* for the area defines specific future access points (intersections) that will be established as the area redevelops. Also through redevelopment, most of the individual drives will eventually be eliminated.

This plan *does not* and is not intended to change the ability of property owners to continue existing legal uses or to use existing zoning. However, it does encourage landowners to consider new development and redevelopment options that would be consistent with the plan and would improve existing or potential conflicts in the area.

- The Low Density Residential LDR land use category allows higher density (i.e. more housing units) than the existing O-Open and FA-1 Farming zoning districts in the area. Some landowners may find an economic incentive to develop this type of residential use, rather than the existing B-Business or C-Commercial zoning they may have on part or all of their property.
- Owners with existing legal non-residential uses or zoning may propose a mixed-use development, using the flexible PD-Planned Development

zone district. This type of development would be appropriate where an integrated mixed-use design could improve existing or potential compatibility and traffic conflict issues. Rather than being locked into a narrow allowed use or zoned location that does not meet current needs, this development option could provide necessary flexibility for a larger residential neighborhood design, incorporating non-residential uses that are supportive to the neighborhood and community as a whole.

### **Community Separator Area**

The LaPorte Plan Area directly abuts the Fort Collins Growth Management Area at LaPorte's eastern and southern edges. With the close proximity of the City, residents of the LaPorte community have expressed concern about merging with Fort Collins and losing their own community identity. The City of Fort Collins has historically been sensitive to this issue and has not contemplated annexation in the LaPorte Plan Area. The greater threat is that the physical, visual "edge" between the two communities might disappear as development continues in the area.

Along County Road 54G on the east, existing zoning and land use patterns are similar on both sides of the Plan Area boundary. The Future Land Use Map concentrates new non-residential uses towards the intersection of 54G and Taft Hill Road, to help prevent a continuous strip of commercial development on 54G. Clustering new residential development away from the eastern edge of the Plan Area will provide additional separation between the two communities through private open space.

### **Cache la Poudre River Corridor**

The Cache la Poudre River flows through the LaPorte Plan Area, creating a corridor of riparian vegetation, wildlife habitat and aesthetic values that are important to the community and region. The area also contains valued sand and gravel resources, as described below. The Corridor area is depicted on the Future Land Use Map as the designated 100-year floodplain, with the understanding that the area of interest is often much wider.

There is a strong desire in the LaPorte community and regionally to preserve the Corridor and its important resources. However, at the current time most of the River Corridor is privately owned. The Larimer County Open Lands program, the Fort Collins Natural Areas program and several non-profit preservation organizations have all identified the area as a high priority for land acquisition from willing landowners. These acquisition efforts provide the best route to



permanent protection of the area. The previous Chapter also describes the several *Land Use Code* requirements that work together to protect the River and its resources. These include floodplain regulations and required buffers for wetlands and wildlife habitat areas.

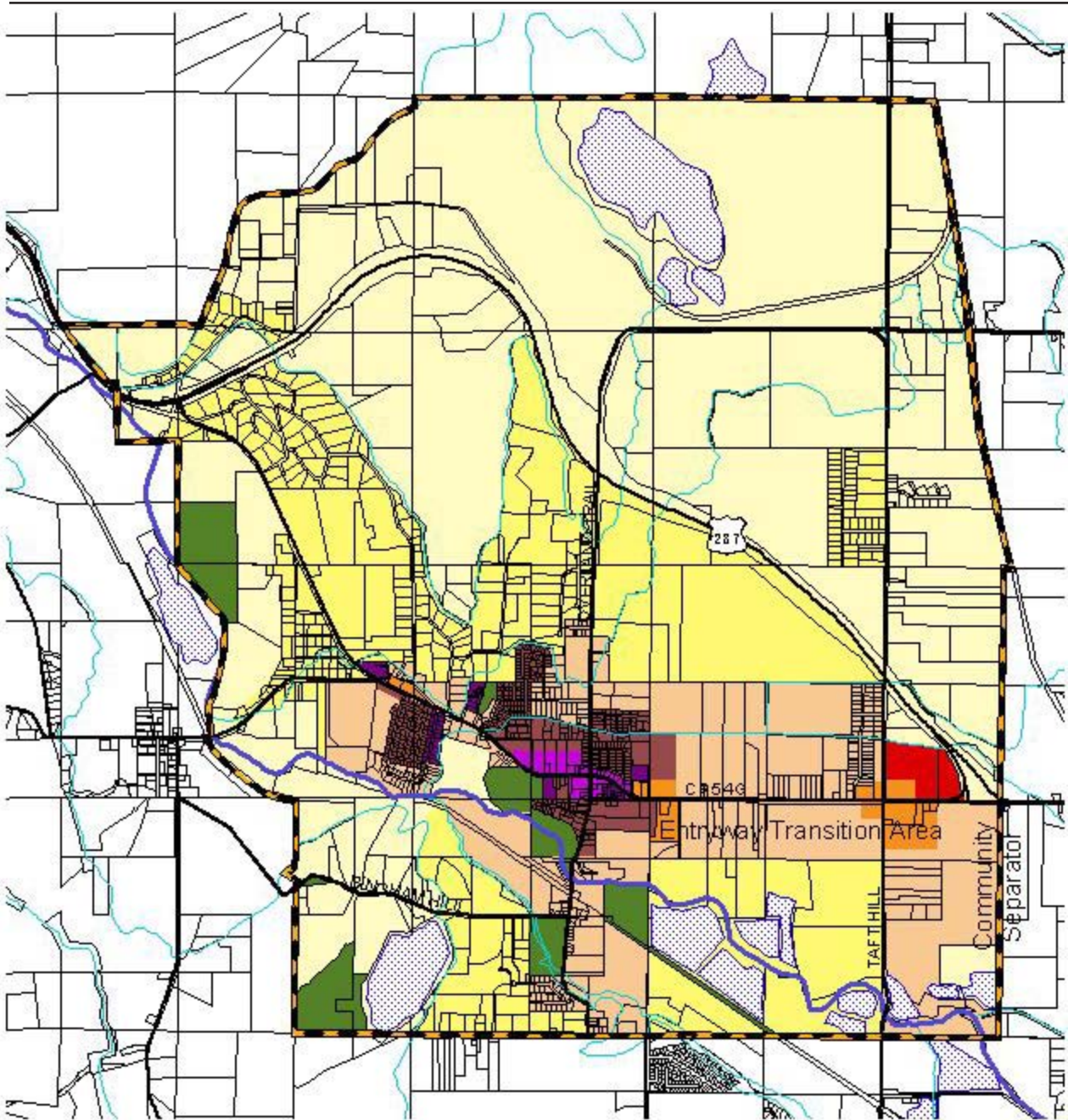
### **Mining as an Interim Use of Land**

A large portion of the LaPorte Plan Area is underlain by sand and gravel deposits, which are mapped in Chapter III. State legislation requires the County to identify and designate “commercial mineral deposits”. The County then is prohibited from approving any use of land which would preclude extraction in these commercial mineral resource areas (See §6.4 of the *Larimer County Master Plan* and §8.13 of the *Land Use Code*).

County Commission approval of a Special Review through the public hearing process is required prior to beginning sand or gravel mining. The purpose of the Special Review is to determine that the use is appropriate for the site and address potential impacts on other uses in the same neighborhood. The Special Review may also impose conditions to mitigate impacts on the environment, surrounding properties, and public services.

Mining, however, is a temporary, interim use of land with a defined beginning and end. An implementation principle of the *Larimer County Master Plan* states that “the County will work with special review applicants to establish appropriate uses and landscapes for reclamation sites. The goal of the reclamation plan shall be to return the site to a use that is a benefit to the community and the landowner.” While the technical aspects of mining and reclamation are regulated by the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Board, the reclamation process should return the land to a beneficial use compatible with those shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Post-mining use in the LaPorte Plan Area has most commonly been agricultural or residential. Recently, several projects have proposed commercial water storage as a long-term use. The appropriateness and feasibility of water storage must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; however, there are significant design and management challenges to fit water storage into residential neighborhoods without creating public hazards or nuisances. Just one example, meandering shorelines of any bodies of water may be one way to mitigate impacts on the character of the community. Independent of the land use after mining—water storage, recreation, wildlife habitat, or other use—final topography should be carefully reconstructed to appear as natural as possible to better blend into the natural environment.



- LaPorte Plan Area
- Cache la Poudre River
- Rivers and Ditches
- Lakes
- Parcels
- Land Use Categories**
- Residential 1 Unit/10-35 Acres
- Residential 1 Unit/2+ Acres
- Low Density Residential 2-4 Units/Acre
- Medium Density Residential 4-6 Units/Acre
- Multi-Family
- Community Business Center
- Neighborhood Business Center
- Limited Commercial
- Schools/Parks/Open Space

# LaPorte Area Plan Future Land Use



October 03



## V. Transportation

Transportation planning for the LaPorte area is provided by several transportation planning agencies and is included in numerous documents. In a regional planning context, the southern portion of the LaPorte Plan Area is included within the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. The MPO has a goal of providing a safe, balanced, multi-modal transportation system that can move people, goods and information quickly and efficiently. The MPO uses its *2025 Regional Transportation Plan* and associated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to prioritize transportation projects within the planning region.

The northern half of the LaPorte Area is within the Upper Front Range Transportation Planning Region and improvement projects related to that area are identified in the *Upper Front Range 2020 Regional Transportation Plan*. The state highway (US287) is controlled by the Colorado Department of Transportation and its improvements are also included in the planning of the *Upper Front Range Regional Plan*.

On a more local level, Larimer County has an adopted *Larimer County Transportation Plan*, which is an element of the *Larimer County Master Plan*. The latest revision to the plan was completed in September 2000, and its goal is similar to the other planning organizations while recognizing that the roadway system is currently (and likely to continue to be) the key element of the transportation system within the County outside city limits. The purpose of the *Transportation Plan* is to coordinate existing zoning and proposed developments with the future transportation needs of the County.

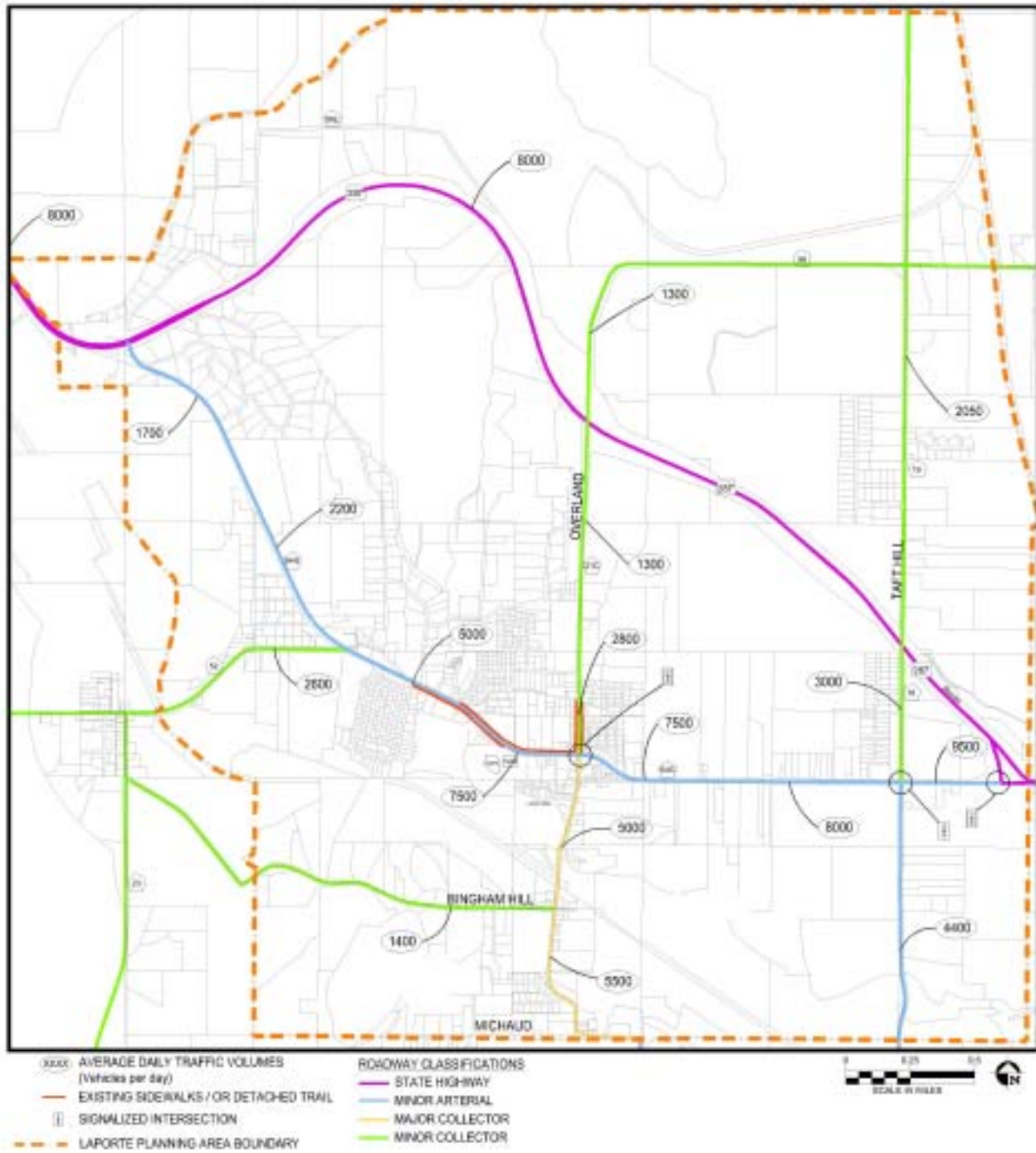
The transportation component of this *LaPorte Area Plan* addresses the transportation needs in response to the proposed land use shown in this Plan. It is essentially a refinement of the roadway portion of the county-wide process to a more targeted area.

### Current Conditions

#### Existing Roadway Network

##### Classifications:

The roadway network in the LaPorte Plan Area, as in the rest of the County, is comprised of a hierarchy of roadways that are defined through functional classification. The type of classification assigned to a roadway is an interplay on the level of which it provides overall mobility versus access to neighboring land



LaPorte Area Plan  
Existing Roadway Network

uses. The following classifications are currently included in the LaPorte Plan Area, and are shown on the existing transportation conditions map:

- **State Highway.** US287 crosses through the LaPorte Plan Area. It is designated as by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) as a Primary Arterial – Urban, and functions as a limited access highway for high speed through traffic.
- **Arterial.** An arterial’s predominant purpose is to provide for the direct traffic movement from one central area to another. Arterials in the LaPorte Plan Area include County Road 54G (from the 287 Bypass on the north to the 287 Bypass on the east) and CR 19, (Taft Hill Road) from CR 54G south towards Fort Collins. Speed limits are generally 45 mph, and ideally access should be consolidated to intersections with collector streets, which are optimally spaced at ½ mile intervals. The County’s access control standards indicate that private direct access shall be permitted only when the property in question has no other reasonable access to the road system.
- **Major Collector.** A major collector gathers surrounding traffic and directs it towards an arterial. The only current major collector in the LaPorte Plan Area is CR21C (Overland Trail) south of CR 54G. The roadway is utilized primarily by residents commuting between Fort Collins and LaPorte.
- **Minor Collector.** The purpose of a minor collector street is to collect and distribute traffic from the local streets and carry it to an arterial street. Collector streets are designed to penetrate and adequately serve the subdivision area. Minor collectors in the LaPorte Plan Area include CR19 (Taft Hill) north of 54G, CR 21C (Overland Trail) north of 54G, CR 50E (Bingham Hill Road), and CR 52E (Rist Canyon Road), and CR 56.
- **Local Road.** All remaining roads in the street system not listed above are considered local roads and/or residential streets. Their purpose addresses accesses to individual lots, and within the LaPorte Plan Area, some of these roads are currently unpaved gravel facilities.

#### Geometrics:

The geometrics of the existing roadway system provide an overall insight into the capability of the system to move traffic. Other than portions of the US 287 bypass that contain a third “climbing” lane, the entire LaPorte Plan Area has a roadway network providing two through lanes (one in each direction). The

existing traffic volumes (see below) do not currently necessitate a four-lane section. There are a few localized areas along 54G in the heart of LaPorte where the roadway contains a center left turn lane. In addition, there are several areas where approaches to intersections contain auxiliary left and/or right turn lanes.

#### Volumes:

Traffic volumes are typically measured as a function of Average Daily Traffic (ADT), which is the number of vehicles that utilize the roadway during the course of a typical day. Higher volumes indicate the relative importance of a roadway in an area, and when compared to capacity estimates can provide basic information on how a road is functioning. Existing ADT in the LaPorte Plan Area varies from 9,500 vehicles along CR 54G east of Taft Hill to just 1,300 vehicles per day along CR 21C (Overland Trail) north of the US 287 Bypass. Local Roads carry even less traffic. In general terms, the threshold for a four-lane facility, while based upon a number of factors, is approximately 15,000 vehicles per day. While no specific turning movement, peak hour counts and traffic analysis were completed, there does not currently appear to be any capacity related problems in the roadway network in the LaPorte Plan Area.

#### **Accident Information**

Roadway and intersection safety was analyzed through the review of five years worth of accident data within the LaPorte Plan Area. The analysis included the determination of accident rates based upon the number of vehicles entering an intersection, and weighed per the severity of the accident (property damage only accidents receive a weighing of 1 while injury accidents receive a weighing of 5 and fatalities receive a weighing of 12). These rates—accident rate per million entering vehicles at a specific location—provide a way to compare various intersections that carry differing amounts of traffic.

The determination of a safety issue at a particular intersection is based upon a number of factors, only one of which is accident history. Based upon the above information, those intersections that would warrant further investigation for determination of safety improvements include two intersections along the US 287 bypass (at the west intersection of CR 54G, and at Overland Trail). Improvements to the former location are included as part of the *Upper Front Range 2020 Regional Transportation Plan*. These types of intersection improvements need to be planned and coordinated with CDOT. The main intersections along CR 54G at Overland Trail and Taft Hill Road have slightly higher accident rates, but they are not identified in the current *Larimer County Transportation Plan* as intersections in need of a safety project.

## **Multi-Modal Mobility**

### Bikes:

Even though unincorporated rural areas rely heavily on motorized vehicles for mobility, the County has in the past ten years been implementing a bikeway system to encourage and facilitate multimodal transportation. These bikeways include designated bike routes, on-street striped bike lanes, and off-road multi-purpose trails. The LaPorte Plan Area does not contain any existing bikeways, and bicyclists currently utilize roadway shoulders for mobility. The proposed Pleasant Valley Trail will provide direct access from the City of Fort Collins Poudre River Trail through the LaPorte area to a trailhead at Watson Lake just north of CR 52E.

### Pedestrians:

The existing system of sidewalks to serve pedestrian needs is limited to the central core area of LaPorte. Sidewalks are located along Overland Trail just north of CR54G, and sporadically along CR 54G between Overland Trail and Cotton Willow Estates subdivision. There is an existing signalized pedestrian crossing of CR 54G at the schools.

### Transit:

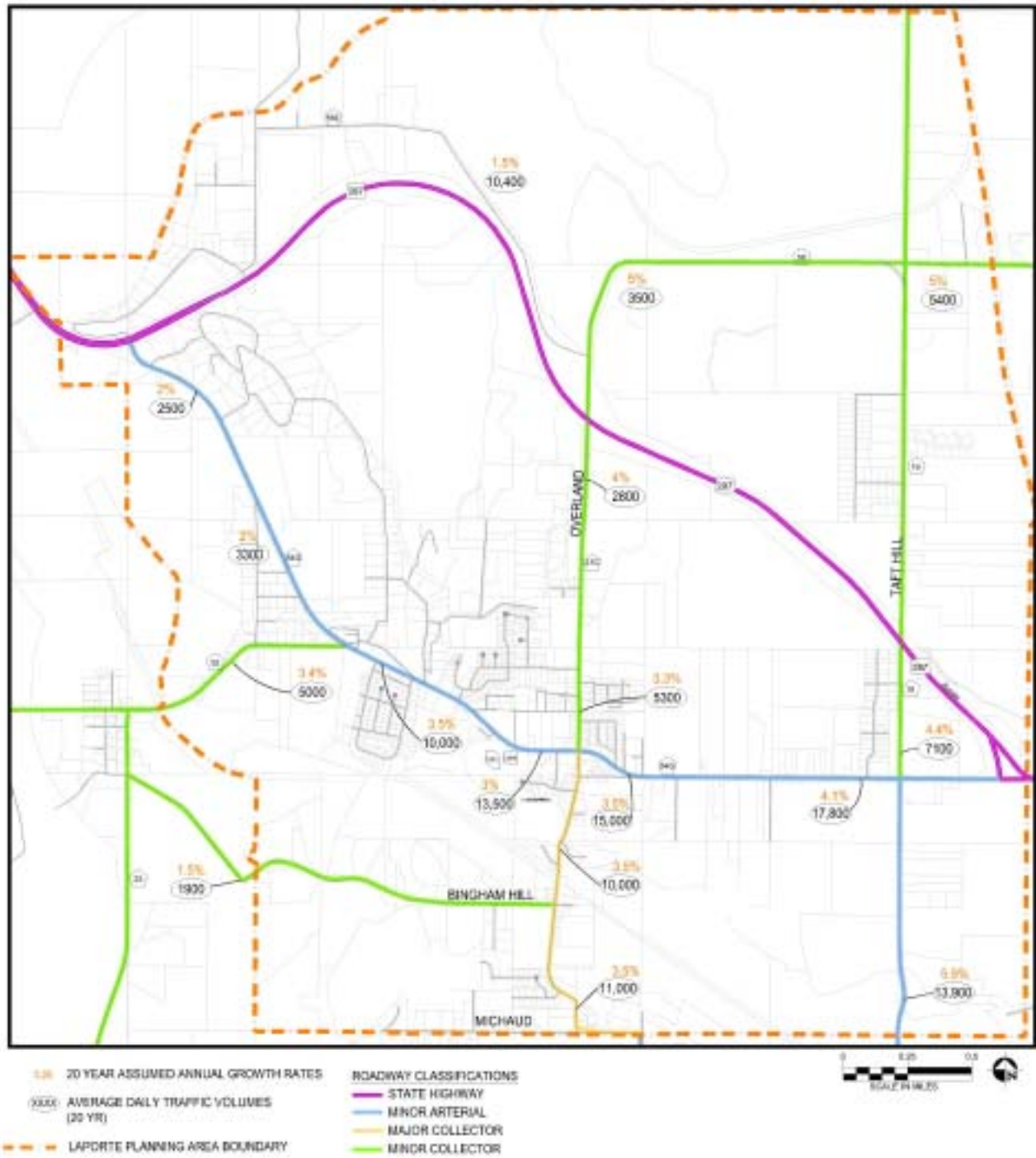
In general, regular transit service in the County outside the urban growth areas is very limited. This includes the LaPorte Plan Area. The transit service that does exist is primarily a demand responsive service such as Dial-A-Ride which serves the elderly, people with disabilities, the developmentally disabled, and social service agencies.

## **Future Conditions**

### **Build-Out Growth in Traffic**

It is important to plan a transportation system that will keep pace with the growth and change that is expected in the LaPorte Plan Area over the next 20-plus year time horizon. Long-range roadway improvement needs were identified by forecasting traffic volumes in the year 2025 and comparing those volumes to existing roadway capacities.

The build-out growth in the traffic in the LaPorte Plan Area is based upon a number of factors. Regional roadway forecasts within the Plan Area were obtained from both the North Front Range MPO and CDOT. Historic annual growth rates over the past ten years were also analyzed. On a more local



## LaPorte Area Plan Projected 20-Year Traffic Growth



basis the difference in trip generation between the current land use and the complete build out of potential land use as described in this updated *LaPorte Area Plan* was used to determine likely additional local traffic. The sum of both regional traffic growth and local traffic growth determines the forecast of future daily traffic volumes on county roads, and is mapped.

It is important to note that these numbers assume a combination of continued regional growth and a localized build-out based upon this updated *LaPorte Area Plan*. It is very difficult to precisely predict the timeframe for future volumes as growth is dependent on a number of factors including changing economic conditions. While the future volumes are labeled a 20-year volume, these volumes may occur earlier or more likely later depending on growth patterns, and the level to which the *LaPorte Area Plan* is implemented.

### **Future Transportation Improvements**

Using the anticipated future daily traffic volumes, and reviewing likely travel patterns for the land uses in the *LaPorte Area Plan*, basic roadway improvement needs were identified, and shown on the Future roadway Improvements map.

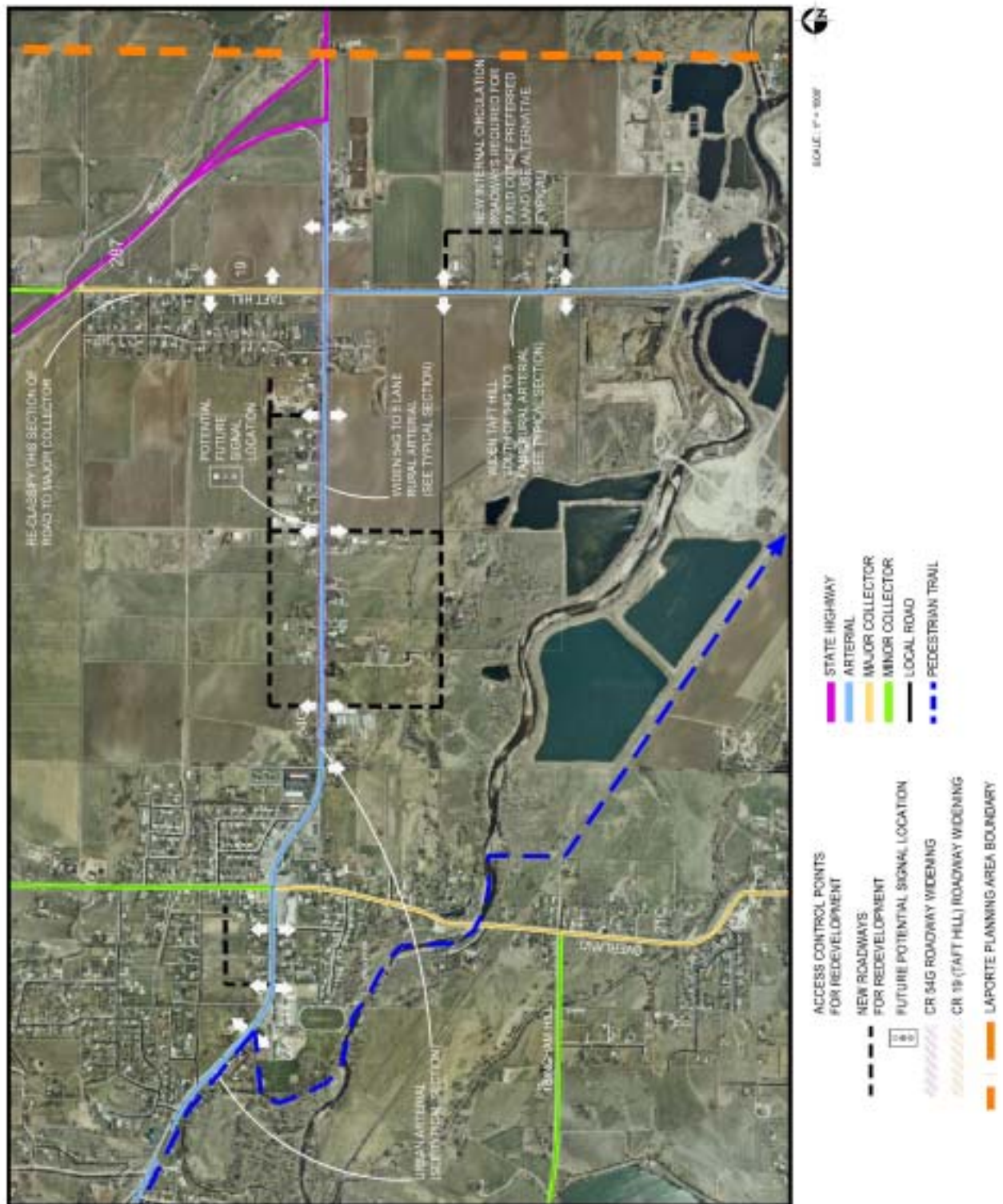
#### Classification Changes:

The section of CR 19 (Taft Hill) roadway between CR 54G and the US287 underpass will warrant re-classification in the future. The level of proposed development, and specifically the presence of neighborhood commercial facilities result in a buildout traffic volume (7,100 for that section) that exceeds the typical allocated volumes for a minor collector. The change in classification from minor to major collector does not alter the required right-of-way (100 ft).

The section of CR 21C (Overland Trail) south of CR 54G will see an average increase in traffic of 3.5% per year. This results in a doubling of the existing traffic over the course of 20 years. The build-out traffic volumes for this stretch of roadway (as high as 11,000 vehicles per day) could warrant a reclassification from a major collector to an arterial. However, the current restrictive horizontal alignment would require a wholesale redesign and in some areas the re-alignment of the roadway to meet arterial design standards. Because this area is not slated for significant redevelopment, this plan recommends the classification to remain the same. Any development that does occur should be required to obtain their portion of a 100 ft right-of-way as standard for a collector roadway (the existing right-of-way is typically 60 ft), and make appropriate improvements to shoulder widths and auxiliary lanes as needed.

#### Roadway Widening:

CR 54G will with anticipated regional growth and full build-out of the land use



## LaPorte Area Plan Future Transportation Improvements

shown in the *LaPorte Area Plan* require widening in the area between the US 287 by-pass, and the eastern portion of downtown LaPorte. This is consistent with the current Larimer County Major Street Inventory “2020 Needs” information for that stretch of road. The functional classification of rural arterial will remain, but the roadway width will need to increase to accommodate a center turn lane and either one or two lanes in each direction, depending on volumes. The County’s standard right-of way width for a rural arterial is 120 ft. The existing right-of-way in this area varies from approximately 60 ft to more than 100 ft; therefore as the adjacent properties develop or re-develop, additional right of way dedication will be required.

The section of roadway along CR 19 (Taft Hill) between CR 54G and north of the Poudre River will need to be widened to accommodate new access points for larger developments. While one travel lane in each direction is adequate, the addition of a center turn lane to that stretch of roadway is important.

#### Speed Control:

Through the course of public input during the creation of this plan, there were several citizen comments concerning traffic speed in the “downtown” LaPorte area. The County does not allow the construction of physical traffic calming measures on mainline county roads (such as vertical deflections, horizontal shifts, or closures), as those are best suited for incorporated urban areas. However, there are several traffic calming features that are inherent to this plan and may be applicable in a general sense to this area as development occurs.

These options include:

- Provide pedestrian improvements (such as the sidewalks shown in this plan),
- Clearly striped bike lanes or shoulders,
- Narrower or re-allocated right of way (such as the urban arterial section shown in this plan,
- Shorter intersection spacing (such as the shorter city blocks shown in this plan), and
- Continued close coordination with law enforcement for the lengthy school zone in the LaPorte area.

Larger developments with internal roadways would also provide opportunities for traffic calming along privately maintained roadways.

#### **Access Control Along CR 54G and CR 19**

The county roadway system needs to be maintained in such a way to provide a functional and adequate level of mobility while still meeting local and private access needs. The functional classification of a roadway indicates the level to

which it is intended to meet regional mobility versus local access interests. Larimer County's Adopted Access Policy provides specifics for the allowable access points and typical intersection spacing for each roadway classification.

This plan recognizes that the Access Policy's limitations placed specifically on the arterial street sections may be too restrictive for the LaPorte Plan Area, but that regulated and controlled access is imperative for the safety of the traveling public. Therefore careful planning is needed to accommodate joint access locations and encourage cross access between neighboring parking lots.

The Future Transportation Improvements map indicates the location of future access points along CR 54G and CR 19 (Taft Hill Road). These access points (intersections) will be established as the area redevelops into the land use shown in previous chapters. The location of access points were chosen for their spacing from one another in order to provide a safe and smooth traffic flow, and for their ability to service as many properties as possible. It is important that as these joint access locations are established, that roadway improvements along CR 54G such as auxiliary turning lanes to the new intersections be completed. It is estimated that with the full buildout of the area based upon the land use shown in the *LaPorte Area Plan*, that one new access location along CR 54G may warrant the installation of a traffic signal.

In the vicinity of the intersection of CR 54G and CR 19 (Taft Hill), the build-out land use includes significant residential developments, and some neighborhood businesses. While the residential component logically will be served by internal roadway systems, a commercial business located at one of the corners may wish to request additional access directly from CR 54G or CR 19. It is important to note that an effective and safe access control plan limits any additional accesses to a right-in right-out only configuration in close proximity to intersections. That limitation would apply at this location. Should an additional access be allowed, it would be the developer's responsibility to provide the County with an adequate plan for limiting left turns (such as raised medians on the approach to the intersection).

In the heart of LaPorte, the joint access locations are spaced to accommodate a standard city block. This reflects the lower speeds in this area than those in the eastern portion of the study area.

Parallel roadways are a key ingredient to a successful access control plan for the area. Once joint access locations are identified, neighboring properties need to be able to utilize the new intersection. The Future Transportation Improvements map indicates the potential location for parallel roadways along CR 54G

and CR 19. These new roadways would carry functional classifications of local residential roads or minor collectors for the larger developments and could provide adequate access to each dwelling unit. Once these roadways are built, then private access of properties to CR 54G or CR 19 would be closed.

### **Multi-Modal Mobility**

#### Bikes and Pedestrians:

The North Front Range MPO developed a regional bicycle / pedestrian plan in 1995 that encompasses the LaPorte Plan Area. In the plan, CR 54G from the edge of Fort Collins through LaPorte is shown with a proposed bikeway.

In addition, the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization has identified CR 54G between the US 287 bypass and Overland Trail (CR 21C) as a "Regionally Significant Corridor". This designation is a key strategy from the 2025 plan, and encourages these corridors to focus on maintaining efficient, multi-modal mobility. The North Front Range Council is looking to place emphasis on planning for and making multi-modal investments in the corridor.

The *LaPorte Area Plan*, which shows some widening and a detached sidewalk/trail in this area is consistent with the MPOs interests. This plan shows a rural arterial typical section to be used along CR 54G. This will provide for both six-foot paved shoulders, and a detached sidewalk for use by pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles. This typical section is intended to be built as the area re-develops.

The Pleasant Valley Trail is slated to be built in 2004, and will connect the end of the City of Fort Collins Poudre River Trail at CR 21C/Poudre River with the Watson Lake Trail head. This multi-modal facility will connect several local neighborhoods with the schools and provide for easy access to Fort Collins.

Pedestrian mobility on a local level in the neighborhoods will be accomplished through the implementation of sidewalks in the more urban type of neighborhoods. Those developments with densities of two units per acre or more will be required to include sidewalks.

#### Transit:

Detailed and comprehensive transit development plans have been completed in the past for the area. Planning for the future continues through other local agencies, and that effort is not duplicated in this plan.

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## Development Review Standards

The County has an adopted and detailed development review procedure for residents wanting to develop or re-develop their properties. This process includes development plan submittals, requirements for Traffic Impact Studies, and adherence to the standards and specifications as outlined in the Larimer County Road Manual. The information in this *LaPorte Area Plan* is not intended to bypass any of these requirements, but rather to supplement and refine the requirements for developments within the Plan Area.

### Typical Sections

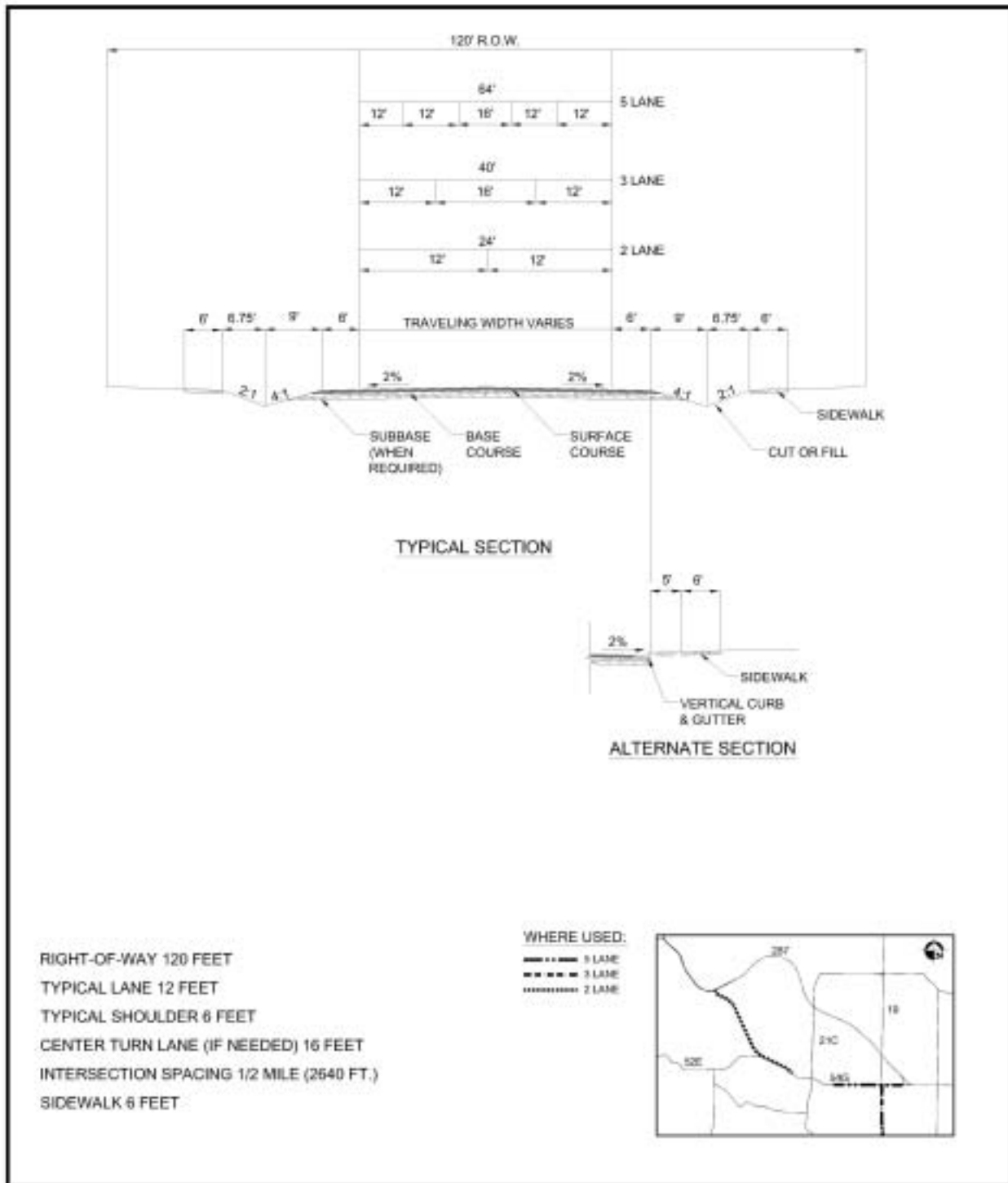
Standard typical sections were developed to be applied in the LaPorte Plan Area. The typical sections are shown by functional classification and are based upon the typical sections in the Larimer County Road Manual.

Refinements of the sections include a required detached sidewalk along the rural arterial section (to be implemented along CR 54G). This walkway can be constructed on the far side of roadway drainage ditches.

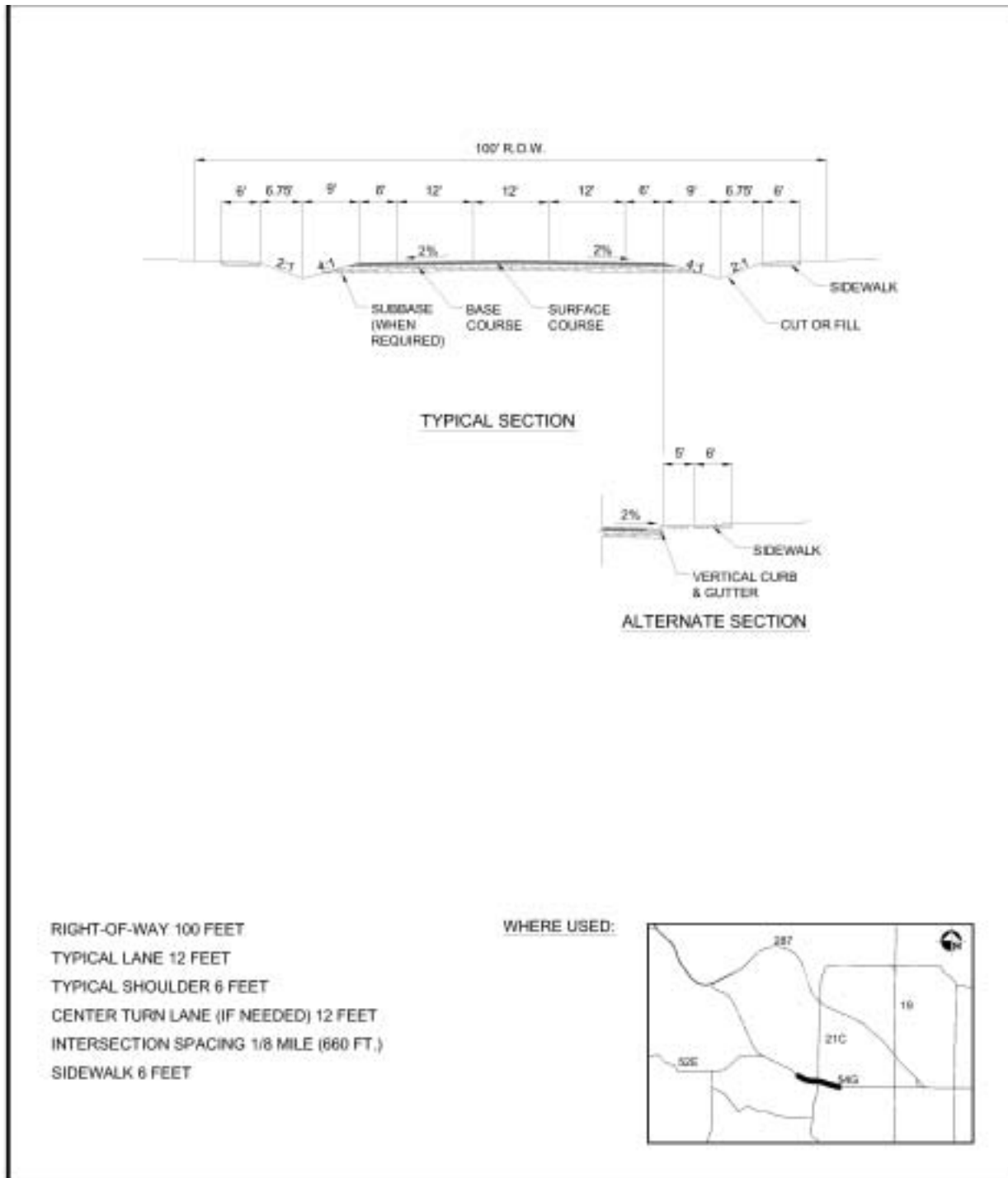
There is also the addition of an urban arterial section with a narrower allowable right-of-way (100ft). This section will be applied in the downtown LaPorte area and will allow for a more “neighborhood feel” in the area that accommodates lower traveling speeds and buildings closer to the roadway.

The Collector classification is currently applied to several County roadways, including CR 19 (Taft Hill) north of CR 54G, and CR 21C (Overland Trail). The required Right of Way for collectors that are maintained by the County is currently, and will continue to be 100 ft. However, there may be some larger developments shown in the *LaPorte Area Plan* with internal circulation systems that include collector roadways. These facilities are expected to be privately maintained and will be allowed to utilize a right of way of 80 ft.

And finally, the local residential street typical section has been revised to show a rural section with roadside drainage and no sidewalk for residential areas with densities less than 2 units per acre, and an “urban” section to be applied for those areas with densities of 2 units per acre or higher. These density specific street sections will allow for the retention of the rural flavor of LaPorte, while accommodating needed neighborhood pedestrian and drainage amenities for higher density areas.

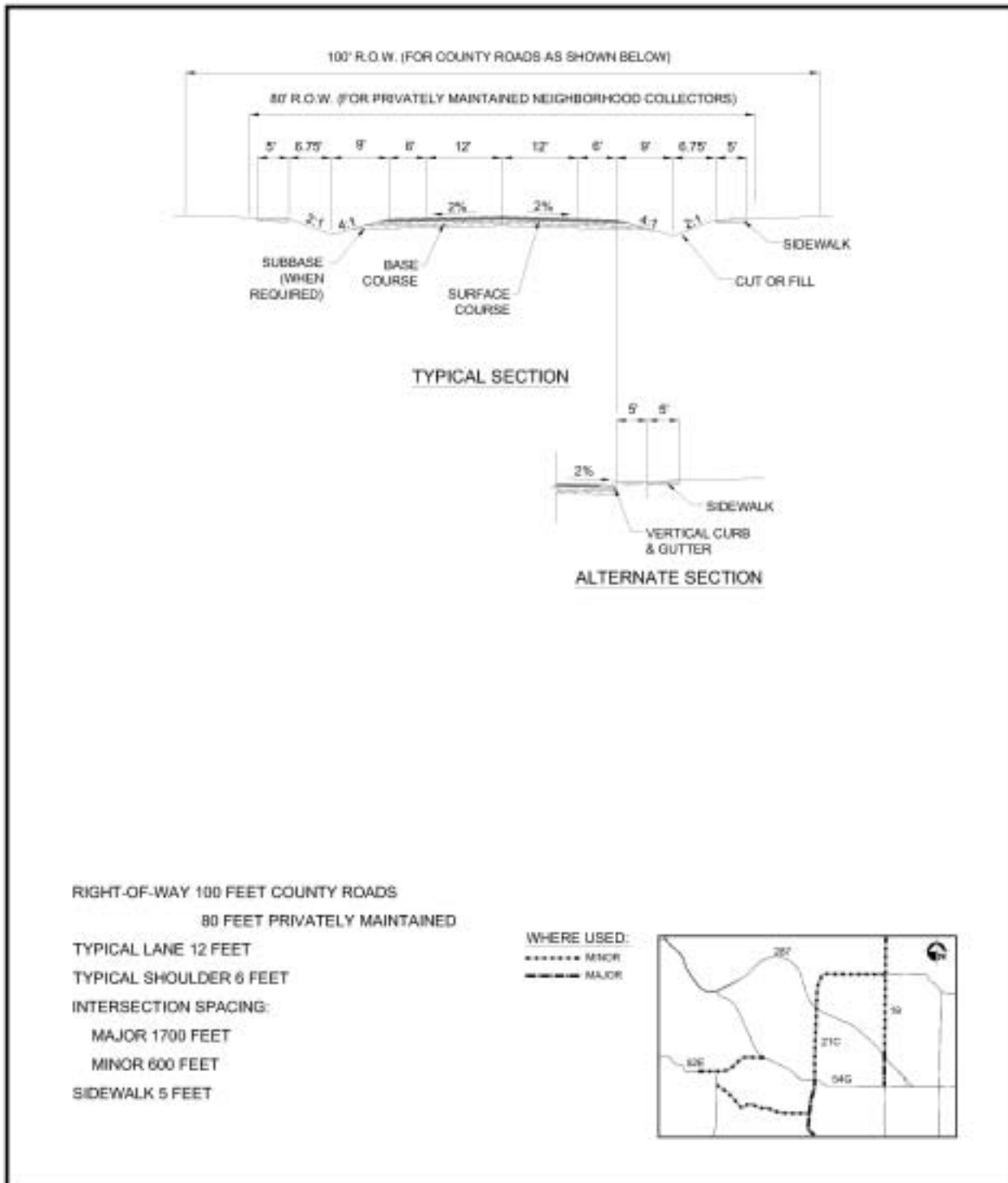


Rural Arterial Typical Section

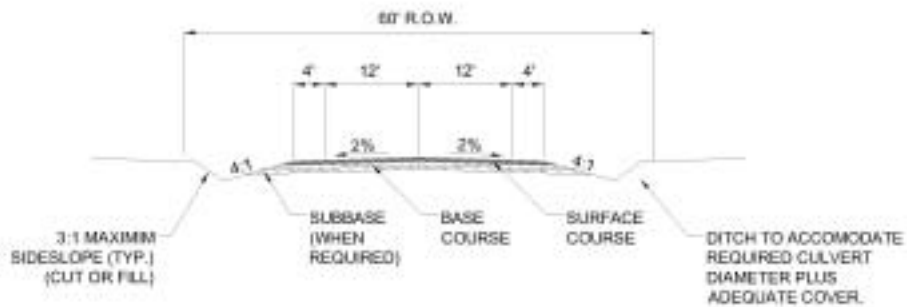


## Urban Arterial Typical Section

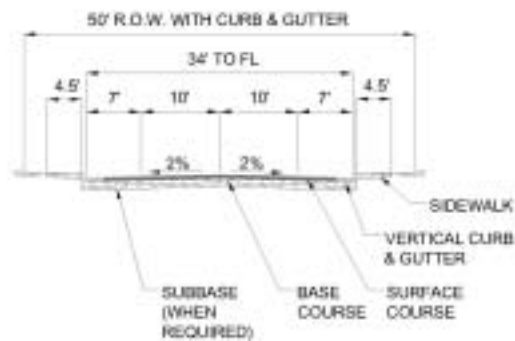




Collector Typical Section



RURAL TYPICAL SECTION



URBAN TYPICAL SECTION

WHERE USED:

RURAL (GRAVEL) RESIDENTIAL 1 UNIT/10-35 ACRES  
 (PAVED) RESIDENTIAL 1 UNIT/2 - <10 ACRES

URBAN LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL 2-4 UNITS/ACRE  
 MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL 4-6 UNITS/ACRE

Local Residential Street Typical Section

## Implementation

The intent of the entire *LaPorte Area Plan* is to provide a guide for future land use changes, development, and/or redevelopment of land in the area. The transportation component provides an overview of the required improvements based upon the build-out of the land use. The improvements will be built over time once they are necessitated as a part of an adjacent or nearby development. Options for the funding of these improvements include:

- County capital improvements project. The County does not currently have a financial plan to provide any extensive transportation improvements in the LaPorte Plan Area. The 20-year need for the widening of CR 54G between the US 287 bypass and CR 21C (Overland Trail) is documented in the current *Larimer County Transportation Plan*, but remains unfunded.
- Developer Paid Improvements. The County does, through its development review process, provide information on required on- and off-site improvements to be completed as a part of the development. These improvement costs are borne by the developer. This is the likely way in which incremental roadway widening will occur. Each development will need to accommodate its increase in traffic and may be required to provide auxiliary acceleration and/or deceleration lanes. Along CR 54G, for instance, left and right turn deceleration lanes may be installed at various access points as development occurs. Upon build-out, these left turn deceleration lanes will become the basis for providing a continuous left turn lane along the corridor.
- Dedication of Right-of-Way. For those parcels that require parallel roadways to accomplish the access control plan, at the very least the dedication of right-of-way for the parallel roadway would be required.
- Creation of Public Improvement Districts. The County has a program for the creation of improvement districts to fund local projects. Homeowner's Associations, groups of local residents, or a developer can establish an improvement district which provides self-generated tax revenue for local public improvements to streets, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, water systems, or parks and recreation areas.
- Fees. The County has at times considered the potential for the collection of fees in lieu of improvements. In this case, a development would provide the County a monetary contribution in lieu of making piecemeal improvements along a roadway. Once several developments have contributed the fee, the entire project can be built all at once.
- Miscellaneous Funding. Some improvements (specifically multi-modal improvements) can be funded through other local, state or federal sources. For example the design and construction of the Pleasant Valley Trail is funded through Great Outdoor Colorado program, which utilizes state lottery earnings for trail projects.

## VI. Development Design

The Future Land Use Map in Chapter IV shows the preferred future land use pattern for the LaPorte Plan Area, and the chapter details the land uses and development types that are appropriate to each of the categories depicted on the Map. The purpose of this chapter is to provide additional detail about the design of new development in the LaPorte Area, in order to achieve the Plan's community vision. These design considerations and requirements are supplemental to requirements of the *Larimer County Land Use Code*. The following design considerations apply to Planned Land Division, Rezoning and Special Review development applications in the LaPorte Plan Area.

### Town-Density Residential Development

#### General Residential Design Considerations

All new residential development should be compatible with existing and planned adjacent neighborhoods and with the natural environment. The development should provide good pedestrian and bicycle access internally, and should connect with existing and planned paths and sidewalks. Pedestrian ways and an interconnected network of open areas within and beyond the project boundaries should be combined where appropriate.

#### Mixed-Density Residential Development

Mixed-density residential development can benefit the community by providing a variety of housing styles to meet a range of housing needs, including increased affordability within part of the development. Smaller lots and multi-family units increase the need for shared open space and recreation areas, and these facilities should be designed to be accessible to the entire development. This type of development requires rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district.

Design elements that should be required with rezoning to PD-Planned Development for residential development:

- Total project density is the maximum density for the land use category (i.e. 4 dwelling units per acres in Low Density Residential areas) multiplied by the gross developable residential area of the project.
- On project edges, lot sizes and housing types must be compatible with existing and planned neighborhoods. In the Community Separator Area, development must be clustered away from the Plan Area edge, in order to provide visual separation between LaPorte and Fort Collins.
- Multiple family and attached single-family structures shall be limited to

six (6) dwelling units each, and 2 stories, in order to maintain the general single-family neighborhood character of the area.

- A neighborhood park or passive or active recreation area of at least one (1) acre must be included as part of any project that is 10 acres or larger, unless an existing park or recreation area that can be used by project residents is located within ¼ mile of the development. Larger residential developments should provide a proportional amount of open area (approximately 10%).

Recommended design element:

- A portion of each development should provide affordable housing that is compatible with and integrated into the over-all design of the development.

## **Non-Residential Development**

### **Community Business Center – (CBC)**

Creating and maintaining an attractive front on CR 54G, making the business area visible and inviting and providing good pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation are the key elements of the CBC area. Maintaining compatibility with existing and planned adjacent residential neighborhoods is also critical. All rezoning in the CBC area will be to the flexible PD-Planned Development zone district.

Design elements that should be required with rezoning in the Community Business Center:

- Access to CR 54G must be consistent with the transportation element of this Plan. Existing access points will be consolidated to the locations shown; where applicable, internal cross access must be provided to adjacent parcels for parking lots and circulatory roadways.
- Parking and service areas are not allowed between new structures and CR 54G.
- Mechanical equipment on the walls or roof facing CR 54G must be adequately screened or camouflaged (i.e. utility meters painted to match the building finish).
- Pedestrian (and bicycle) connections between the sidewalks along adjacent roads and business entrances must be included in the development plan.
- A variable minimum-maximum setback from the edge of the CR 54G right-of-way is allowed, between 10 feet and the 25 feet for new structures. Setbacks from internal roads will be determined at the time

of the rezoning and will be based on the overall project design and providing continuity with adjacent development. Building envelopes rather than setback lines may be used.

- Building height and building location must demonstrate compatibility with adjacent uses, particularly those buildings that are adjacent to planned and existing residential neighborhoods. Building height may not exceed 40 feet.
- Proposed signs must be included as part of the development plan, and must show location, size and design. A wall sign for each business with frontage on CR 54G will be allowed on the building side facing CR 54G in addition to signage oriented toward parking areas. Sign design should maintain and enhance the small town character of the area.

Recommended design elements:

- Features such as outdoor seating and covered porches over business entrances are allowed and encouraged within the setback area adjacent to CR 54G, in order to draw pedestrian traffic into the CBC.
- Focal points, such as street furniture, enhanced landscaping or a community green, should be provided in new developments to accentuate the CBC's position as a destination at the heart of the LaPorte community.

#### Redevelopment in the Community Business Center

Much of the area designated as Community Business Center is currently zoned either B-Business or C-Commercial and developed in a non-residential use consistent with that zoning. Property owners with appropriate zoning who wish to change or expand their business may do so according to the existing zoning and requirements of the *Land Use Code*. The following design considerations are intended to help guide site planning and development where existing buildings or structures are being expanded, but it is understood that not all design elements may be appropriate or feasible on individual properties. Where owners choose to request rezoning to the flexible PD-Planned Development zone, for example to allow more than one structure on a lot, these design elements should be incorporated where feasible into the rezoning.

Design elements for redevelopment areas in the Community Business Center:

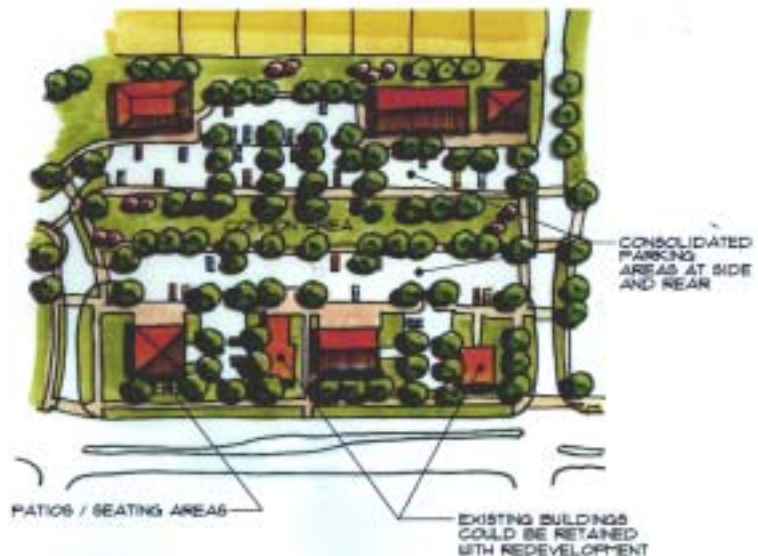
- Access to CR 54G should be consistent with the transportation element of this Plan. Existing access points should be consolidated to the locations shown, where feasible. Internal cross access should be provided to adjacent parcels for parking lots and circulatory roadways where applicable.
- Pedestrian connections along CR 54G and into each business should be provided. This principle could be accomplished as simply as separating



## COMMUNITY CENTER CONCEPT

*The Community Center Concept sketches show possible coordinated redevelopment in a portion of the LaPorte CBC. Existing buildings could be reused and new buildings constructed over time with cross-access to parking, green space and other amenities for local residents, customers and business owners. While each lot should be able to redevelop individually, careful site design will be necessary to best take advantage of the opportunity.*

## Site Design Alternatives



a walkway from the paved parking area along the street frontage, perhaps with moveable planters.

- Where appropriate, required landscaping should be concentrated along CR 54G in order to improve the attractiveness of the entire area and create a “town” rather than highway development atmosphere.
- Where feasible, building additions should be towards the front of the property with parking to the sides and rear of the structure.
- New signage should maintain and enhance the small town character of the area.

### **Neighborhood Business Center – (NBC)**

Development should create an attractive front on CR 54G and Taft Hill Road. Clearly defined, limited access points and good internal circulation for both vehicles and pedestrians are critical. All rezoning in the NBC area will be to the flexible PD-Planned Development zone district.

Design elements that should be required with rezoning in the Neighborhood Business Center Areas:

- Access to CR 54G and Taft Hill Road must be consistent with the transportation element of this Plan. Existing access points will be consolidated to the locations shown; where applicable, internal cross access must be provided to adjacent parcels for parking lots and circulatory roadways.
- Pedestrian (and bicycle) connections between the sidewalks along adjacent roads and business entrances must be included in the development plan (Site Plan or General Development Plan). Internal connections with adjacent residential development must also be shown.
- Mechanical equipment on the walls or roof facing these roads must be adequately screened or camouflaged (i.e. utility meters painted to match the building finish).
- Maximum building height is 40 feet; however a lesser height may be required on individual structures to achieve compatibility with adjacent uses.
- Setbacks from the County Roads are determined by the *Land Use Code*. Setbacks from internal roads will be determined at the time of the rezoning and will be based on the overall project design and providing continuity with adjacent development. Building envelopes rather than setback lines may be used in the PD-Planned Development zone.
- Proposed signs must be included as part of the development plan, and must show location, size and design, and must create an attractive street frontage on the adjacent major roads.



Recommended design elements:

- Parking and service areas are discouraged between structures and adjacent arterial or collector roads.

#### Redevelopment in Neighborhood Business Centers

The NBC category also includes existing businesses including Vern's, Kintzley Plaza and the Plantorium. The existing Neighborhood Business Centers are located at the west and east edges of the LaPorte community and set the tone for the area. Additional development in these areas should include the following design considerations where appropriate. Where owners choose to request rezoning to the flexible PD-Planned Development zone, for example to allow more than one structure on a lot, these design elements will be incorporated where feasible into the rezoning.

Design elements for redevelopment areas:

- Access to CR 54G and Taft Hill Road should be consistent with the transportation element of this Plan. Existing access points should be consolidated to the locations shown, where feasible. Internal cross access should be provided to adjacent parcels for parking lots and circulatory roadways where applicable.
- Pedestrian connections along CR 54G and into each business should be provided. This principle could be accomplished as simply as separating a walkway from the paved parking area along the street frontage, perhaps with moveable planters.
- Where appropriate, required landscaping should be concentrated along CR 54G in order to improve the attractiveness of the entire area and create a "town" rather than highway development atmosphere.
- Where feasible, building additions should be towards the front of the property with parking to the sides and rear of the structure.
- New signs should create an attractive street frontage on the adjacent major roads.

#### **Limited Commercial – (LC)**

This area has high visibility from CR 54G, Taft Hill Rd. and the LaPorte Bypass. As the eastern entryway to the LaPorte community, development should create an attractive front on CR 54G and Taft Hill Road and also consider the view from the Bypass which is elevated in this area. The adjacent intersection with the Bypass creates the potential for traffic conflict and strict adherence to the Transportation requirements of this Plan is critical. Development of this area will require rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone.

Design elements that should be required with rezoning in the Limited Commercial Area:

- Access to CR 54G and Taft Hill Road must be consistent with the transportation element of this Plan. Existing access points will be consolidated to the locations shown; where applicable, internal cross access must be provided to adjacent parcels for parking lots and circulatory roadways.
- Mechanical equipment on the walls or roof facing these roads must be adequately screened or camouflaged (i.e. utility meters painted to match the building finish).
- Setbacks from the County and State Roads are determined by the *Land Use Code*. Setbacks from internal roads will be determined at the time of the rezoning and will be based on the overall project design and providing continuity with adjacent development. Building envelopes rather than setback lines may be used in the PD-Planned Development zone.
- Pedestrian (and bicycle) connections between the sidewalks along adjacent roads and business entrances must be included in the development plan (Site Plan or General Development Plan).
- Maximum building height is 40 feet.
- Maximum building height and building location must consider compatibility with adjacent planned and existing uses.
- Proposed signs must be included as part of the development plan, and must show location, size and design, and must create an attractive street frontage on the adjacent major roads.

Recommended design elements:

- Parking and service areas are discouraged between structures and adjacent arterial or collector roads.

### **Mixed-Use Development**

Mixed-use development is allowed in the Entryway Transition Area where one or more of the parcels in the project have existing legal non-residential uses or existing B-Business or C-Commercial zoning. The purpose of this type of development in the Entryway Area is to allow landowners the flexibility to change the use or relocate existing or potential non-residential uses as part of a larger, integrated residential neighborhood. This type of development requires rezoning to the flexible PD-Planned Development zoning district.

Individual circumstances in this area vary considerably and flexibility is important to any redevelopment situation; therefore, the following design elements for mixed-use development are advisory, not required. However, the overall

project design must demonstrate consistency with the planned Low-Density Residential character of the Entryway Area, and movement away from the current strip-commercial character with its existing conflicts.

Recommended design elements that should be considered with rezoning to PD-Planned Development in the Entryway Transition Area:

- Access must be consistent with the Transportation element of this Plan.
- Design elements for Town-Density Residential Development must be included in the residential portion of the development.
- Where feasible and appropriate, design elements for Neighborhood Business Centers should be applied to the non-residential development areas of the Mixed-Use PD.
- New non-residential uses should be supportive of the residential neighborhood – generally uses allowed in the B-Business zone district.
- The gross area of a mixed-use development should be at least 10 acres.
- Non-residential uses (including required parking and service areas) should support the predominantly residential character of the area and in general should not exceed 10% of the gross project area.
- New non-residential uses should not be developed until at least 50% of the residential uses have been constructed.

## VII. Implementation

Upon adoption, this *LaPorte Area Plan* replaces the 1992 *LaPorte Area Land Use Plan* as part of the *Larimer County Master Plan*. The *Larimer County Master Plan* provides a guide for the physical development of the unincorporated area of Larimer County, and the *Larimer County Land Use Code* provides the regulations that govern development applications and their review process. Adoption of this Plan also amends the *Larimer County Transportation Plan* for the LaPorte Plan Area.

This Chapter explains the relationship of the *LaPorte Area Plan* to the *Land Use Code*, and identifies the actions that are necessary to implement the vision and principles of this Plan as they relate to new development. The Chapter also discusses some additional actions that the LaPorte community may want to pursue to address the wider community vision that is part of the planning process.

### Future Land Use and Zoning

The Future Land Use Map in Chapter IV of this Plan shows the planned future development pattern for the LaPorte Plan Area. This Map is not a zoning map and does not change the existing zoning on any property. Landowners may continue to develop their property according to its current zoning. Adoption of this Plan also does not change the ability of landowners to continue existing legal uses.

The *LaPorte Area Plan* provides a guide for new development applications that involve a proposed land use that may be different than what is allowed by the current zoning for the property. In that case, property owners must request a change in zoning as part of their development application. Changes in zoning must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners. *Land Use Code* §4.4 explains the process for changing zoning and identifies the review criteria for zone changes. In order to approve a change in zoning, the County Commissioners must find (among other conditions) that the proposed change is consistent with the *Master Plan*, in this case the *LaPorte Area Plan*.

The Future Land Use Map identifies five residential and three non-residential land use categories for the LaPorte Plan Area. Each of these categories relates to existing County Zoning Districts, as is described in the land use category descriptions in Chapter IV. The Zoning Districts are further defined in the *Land Use Code*, §4.0 Zoning. The intent is that any future *Land Use Code* text changes approved for these districts would also apply in the LaPorte Plan Area, unless the adopting resolutions for the changes specifically state otherwise.

Some of the use category descriptions in the Future Land Use chapter include additional criteria that will be considered in a rezoning application. For example, the Limited Commercial category specifically states that outdoor storage of any kind is not appropriate. In order to implement this and other similar principles of the *LaPorte Area Plan*, rezoning resolutions will include conditions of approval designed to achieve consistency with the Plan.

Besides defining allowed land use, County Zoning Districts define standards for setbacks, minimum lot size, maximum density in a Conservation Development, maximum building height and maximum sign size. The intent of this Plan is that these standards should apply to all development. The exception to this statement is the PD-Planned Development zone district, which is described below.

### **Interpreting the Future Land Use Map**

Where land use category boundary lines on the Future Land Use Map follow specific parcel lines or existing street rights-of-way, it is intended that the boundaries are site-specifically located and should be treated as rigid boundary locations. Where land use boundary lines show more than one use on a parcel, the specific location of the edge of each land use area is less rigid, and more open to slight adjustment as to how the different land uses, for example, Medium-density Residential and Neighborhood Commercial, relate to each other and the proposed internal road system and other relevant factors.

### **Planned Development PD Zone District**

In addition to the traditional zone districts described above, the *Land Use Code* defines the PD-Planned Development zone district (§4.1.22). The intent of this district is to provide the flexibility needed to accommodate urban level development in Growth Management Areas (defined areas adjacent to municipalities) and in the LaPorte Plan Area.

This zone district provides the mechanism in the LaPorte Plan Area to implement a more flexible integrated design approach to urban development than is allowed by strict adherence to requirements of a single zone district. Examples of development concepts that require the PD-Planned Development zone include Mixed-Density Residential Development and Mixed-Use Development described in the Future Land Use Section.

Rezoning to the PD-Planned Development district will generally require consideration of a “master plan” for the property that defines the general concept and design of the development project including land use, open space or park areas,

internal circulation system, parking and general location of structures. This master plan might take the form a General Development Plan (*Land Use Code* §5.13.3) or a preliminary Site Plan (§6.0), depending on the type of development being proposed. Approval of a request for PD-Planned Development requires a finding that the development proposal is consistent with the *LaPorte Area Plan*. This includes consistency with both the Land Use Section and the design principles contained in the Development Design Section of this Plan.

### **Special Review Applications**

Some land uses may or may not be compatible with uses allowed in a given zoning district depending on the specific location and characteristics of the proposed use; these uses require Special Review approval. Uses allowed by Special Review are not uses by right in the zoning district, but are uses that may be approved by the County Commissioners if the applicant can demonstrate that the proposed use complies with review criteria in *Land Use Code* §4.5.3. One of those criteria is that the use is consistent with the County Master Plan, including the *LaPorte Area Plan*.

### **Land Division in the LaPorte Plan Area**

The *Land Use Code* (§5.2.2) states that any land division (creation of new lots) in the LaPorte Plan Area must be divided as a Planned Land Division, except those parcels that meet the review criteria for a Minor Land Division or a Rural Land Plan (Rural Land Use Process). A Planned Land Division (PLD), much like the PD-Planned Development zone district described above, allows flexibility in the design of urban development. Like the PD zone district, the Planned Land Division process requires compliance with the *LaPorte Area Plan*. It must also comply with the standards and technical requirements of the *Land Use Code* and other applicable regulations.

The Minor Land Division process (§5.4) provides for the timely review of proposed land divisions that do not discernibly impact surrounding properties, environmental resources or public facilities. The Rural Land Use Process (§5.8) provides a voluntary alternative to division into 35 acre tracts. It requires a minimum of 70 acres and has a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 17.5 acres, regardless of the property zoning.

### **Clustered Residential Development**

Clustered residential development is encouraged in the LaPorte Plan Area. Clustered development means that as part of a new land division, private open

areas are provided and dwelling units occupy smaller lots than are required by a zoning district's minimum lot size. In the Town Residential Categories, clustered residential development may be accomplished by rezoning to the PD-Planned Development zone district, as described above.

In the Rural Residential areas, clustered residential development may be proposed in accordance with Conservation Development requirements, standards and guidelines (§5.3). The Rural Land Use Process (§5.8) may also be used to create a clustered residential development pattern. The *Land Use Code* (§5.2.2) should be amended to state that Conservation Development is allowed in the LaPorte Plan Area, and this proposed code amendment is included as a Implementation Action at the end of this section. Until the Code is amended, rural clustered residential development may be approved as a Planned Land Division that mirrors the requirements of a Conservation Development.

### **Transportation Planning and the *Land Use Code***

Upon adoption of the *LaPorte Area Plan*, the *Larimer County Transportation Plan* is also amended for the LaPorte Plan Area. The *Transportation Plan* provides the basis for the Functional Road Classification Map, which identifies classification of each Larimer County Road (arterial, collector or local road). The Functional Road Classification Map is supplementary to the *Land Use Code*.

The *LaPorte Area Plan* Transportation Chapter also addresses access control and establishes standard typical sections for roadways for the LaPorte Plan Area. The development review standards contained in the *LaPorte Area Plan* are intended to supplement existing development review procedures and standards established in the *Land Use Code* and the Larimer County Road Manual. In order to implement the Transportation development review standards contained in the Plan, the standards need to be added to the Supplementary Engineering Regulations in the *Land Use Code* §8.9.1.

### **Action Steps**

Implementation of this Plan requires several specific changes to the *Larimer County Land Use Code*, revision of the Larimer County Functional Road Classification Map, and potentially on-going efforts by LaPorte area residents, business owners, developers and landowners to provide desired local improvements and new facilities to the community.

**Larimer County Land Use Code Amendments**

- Amend §5.2.2 to allow land division by the Conservation Development process in the LaPorte Plan Area.
- Amend §8.9.1 Supplementary Engineering Regulations in order to implement the access control requirements and road design standards of the Transportation Chapter.

**Possible Future Actions**

Throughout the LaPorte planning process, some participants have expressed the need or desire for new community facilities and other community improvements. These are beyond the scope of the *LaPorte Area Plan*, and in many cases, outside the parameters of County government action. However, the ideas and momentum around them should not be lost if there is enough community interest to actively pursue them. The LaPorte Area Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC) provides a forum for discussing desired community improvements and a liaison to the County to explore options for achieving community goals.

The following list includes some of the ideas generated during Plan development, along with possible actions to pursue implementation.

- Improvements to roads, storm drainage and similar facilities in existing developed areas. The County Engineering Department can assist in the creation of improvement districts (requiring a vote of affected landowners) to make desired repairs and improvements.
- Development of a LaPorte community building/recreation center/library. This could involve a completely private, local fund-raising effort, or potentially, creation of a special taxing district (requiring a vote of affected landowners) to generate revenue for development and on-going operation for a specific project.
- Improvements to the community center area such as sidewalks and additional landscaping along the major roads. As described in the Transportation Section, improvements will occur over time through new development. If there is interest in accomplishing improvements beyond this development requirement, it could be a private initiative or could involve creation of a special district. The LaPorte Business Association could help organize this effort.
- Creation of a “design theme or concept” for the community center area, such as unifying signs, awnings, storefronts, etc., perhaps together with a unified marketing approach to advertising local businesses in the area. This could involve potential action by the LaPorte business community. With concurrence of affected owners, additional design concepts could be included in County Design Standards for the area, or could remain through private agreement.



### **Incorporation**

Incorporation (voting to become an Incorporated Town under State Statutes) is another potential route to making desired community changes. This idea was discussed early in the planning process, and there appears to be interest in obtaining more information about this option. The County and the State Department of Local Affairs have assisted community members in exploring the complex issues around incorporation in the past, and will continue the process if there is sufficient interest from LaPorte area residents.

# LAPORTE AREA PLAN

Adopted by the Larimer County Planning Commission

January 21, 2004

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