

# Historic Preservation Plan

Plan Acceptance Date: December 3, 2024



**THORNTON**  
COLORADO

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RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE THORNTON HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN AS A SUPPORTING DOCUMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

WHEREAS, the City adopted the 2020 Comprehensive Plan on July 15, 2020 and amended the Comprehensive Plan effective January 1, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan contains strategies, placemaking guidelines, policies, goals, and overarching vision themes that represent long-term aspirations of the City; and

WHEREAS, the Vision Theme – Cultivating Identity and Image (CII) – outlines Policy CII 3.4 which states “Education and Storytelling. Seek opportunities to educate residents and visitors on the community’s history through the use of programs and events;” and

WHEREAS, the Vision Theme – Cultivating Identity and Image (CII) – outlines Policy CII 3.5 which states “Historic and Cultural Resources. Encourage the addition of properties to the City, State, and National registers. Continue to provide educational resources and other tools to support the recognition, preservation, and interpretation of the city’s historic and cultural resources;” and

WHEREAS, the City Council reviewed best approaches for historic preservation and the requirements to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) at a June 21, 2021 Planning Session and provided staff with guidance to consider historic preservation efforts and revisions to Chapter 19, the City’s Historic Recognition Code; and

WHEREAS, City Development staff at Council’s direction consulted with the State’s Historic Preservation Office on the requirements to become a CLG, including what revisions to Chapter 19 are necessary; and

WHEREAS, City staff used City procurement services to obtain a historic preservation consultant and an outreach consultant to conduct the necessary planning efforts to create the Historic Preservation Plan (HPP); and

WHEREAS, through consultation it was determined that a common practice for city’s applying for CLG status is that they have a historic preservation plan and/or a surveying plan; and

WHEREAS, the acceptance of a HPP would provide guidance on any historic preservation efforts of the City, including the satisfaction of the necessary plan for becoming a CLG; and

WHEREAS, City Development staff and the consultants began preparing the HPP and conducting community outreach for guidance on the HPP’s development starting in January of 2023 and concluding in September of 2024; and



WHEREAS, community engagement included two open community meetings, oral interviews, four topical focus groups, a community survey, and three project advisory group meetings; and

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2024, staff presented the foundational elements of the HPP to the Planning Commission for consideration and feedback; and


WHEREAS, on July 30, 2024, the City Council reviewed the first full draft of the HPP and provided direction to present the HPP for consideration of acceptance; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF THORNTON, COLORADO, AS FOLLOWS:



1. The Thornton Historic Preservation Plan included as Attachment A is hereby accepted as a supporting document to the 2020 Comprehensive Plan.
2. Acceptance of the Thornton Historic Preservation Plan does not constitute historic recognition, as described in the City's Historic Recognition Code, Chapter 19, of any landmark, property, district, neighborhood, or area.

PASSED AND ACCEPTED at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Thornton, Colorado, on December 3, 2024.

CITY OF THORNTON, COLORADO

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Jan Kulmann, Mayor

ATTEST:

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Thornton, having grown as a unique community over almost seven decades, seeks to build public appreciation of its history and identity and encourage the preservation and interpretation of physical elements that reflect its history. Once dubbed the “City of Planned Progress,” the Historic Preservation Plan (HPP or Plan) aims to embody Thornton’s original motto by clearly outlining policy and recommendations that can advance the “planned progress” of a historic preservation program.

Having surpassed its 50th anniversary, Thornton continues to grow into a distinct community as more than a suburb of Denver. A 50th anniversary for a city represents an important marker for historic preservation programs as a typical national qualifier used for what is considered a “historic” structure is whether a building is 50 years old. In approaching its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Thornton continues to look toward the future to address its preservation goals. Starting in 2023, the city began a planning process to determine a framework for creating a historic preservation program resulting in this Historic Preservation Plan (HPP).

The land within Thornton’s current city limits and Future Growth Boundary, as identified in the Thornton Comprehensive Plan, is the official study area for this HPP; annexed land within Thornton’s current city limits is of higher priority than un-annexed land. The “Future Growth Boundary” is defined as “...the line on the Thornton Future Land Use Map that marks the extent of the Future Growth Area which includes all developed and undeveloped land within the area that the city is planning to grow.” This area is located largely in Adams County just north of the City of Denver, with a portion in Weld County to the north. Thornton was incorporated as a home-rule municipality in 1956 and now includes approximately 38 square miles within its current boundaries (i.e., city limits). This is a Colorado landscape with a rich history, evidence of which is still discernible within the modern community.



## The Evolution of Thornton's Landscape

Thornton's own history begins with its development between 1952 and 1964. This occurred within a time known among historic preservationists as the "mid-century modern" era, roughly 1945 to 1969. The area in the city of Thornton that developed beginning in 1952 is known today as "Original Thornton," north of 88th Street (now 88th Avenue). Today, the city owns several properties within the founding neighborhood of Original Thornton including the first purpose-built city hall at 9471 Dorothy Boulevard, built in 1959. Original Thornton remains an intact neighborhood of ranch-style, brick homes and connects the community to the time and place of Thornton's origins.



*Homes under construction in the Original Thornton subdivision.*

Thornton's landscape is also of historic interest. Indigenous Peoples called the region home long before European settlement, most recently Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute tribes. American Indian cultural traditions may also be expressed within Thornton today, which should be identified and incorporated into modern historic preservation programming. Expression of other populations in the landscape should be explored as various historic contexts are examined. Danish, German, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Russian, and other immigrant groups, for example, are all known to contribute to the history of Thornton and Adams County.

European settlement in the Adams County region occurred after Colorado's start in 1858 (with the discovery of gold at the mouth of Little Dry Creek, a tributary to the South Platte River). Gold may have driven initial settlement, but miners had to eat, and farmers and stock growers soon followed. The South Platte Valley in which Thornton is sited became Colorado's richest agricultural region. Railroads and irrigation, both supporting further agricultural growth, arose within only a few years after the end of the United States' Civil War in 1865. Up until the 1940-50s, much of the landscape within Thornton reflected these earlier times. Today, the city owns several properties significant to this heritage, including the Eastlake Farmers' Co-operative Elevator (listed in the National Register), the Rietzenstein Barn and Big Dry Creek open space (listed as a Thornton historic landmark), and the Lambertson Lakes Homestead.



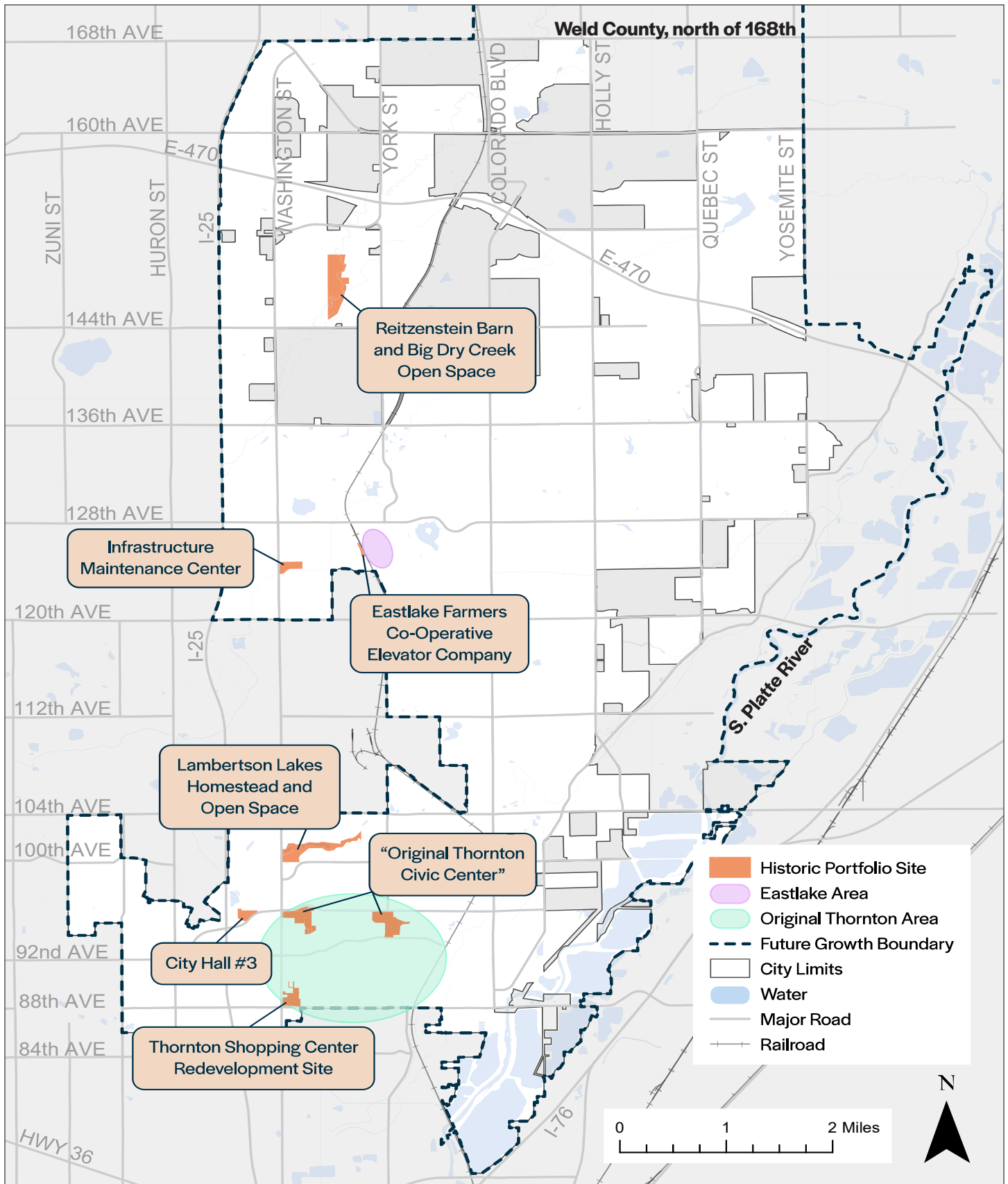
*The Rietzenstein Barn within the Big Dry Creek Open Space was constructed in 1923 and has been well preserved.*

Eastlake itself is a significant reminder of the agricultural landscape where Thornton originated.

The city's formation as a local government in 1956 followed four years of the early development of Original Thornton. At that time, this area was a community of modest brick homes, many occupied by military veterans and their families who were flocking to the Denver area after World War II and the Korean War. Job opportunities for veterans at that time and in that area were plentiful. Thornton's development pattern has followed the earliest suburban form of



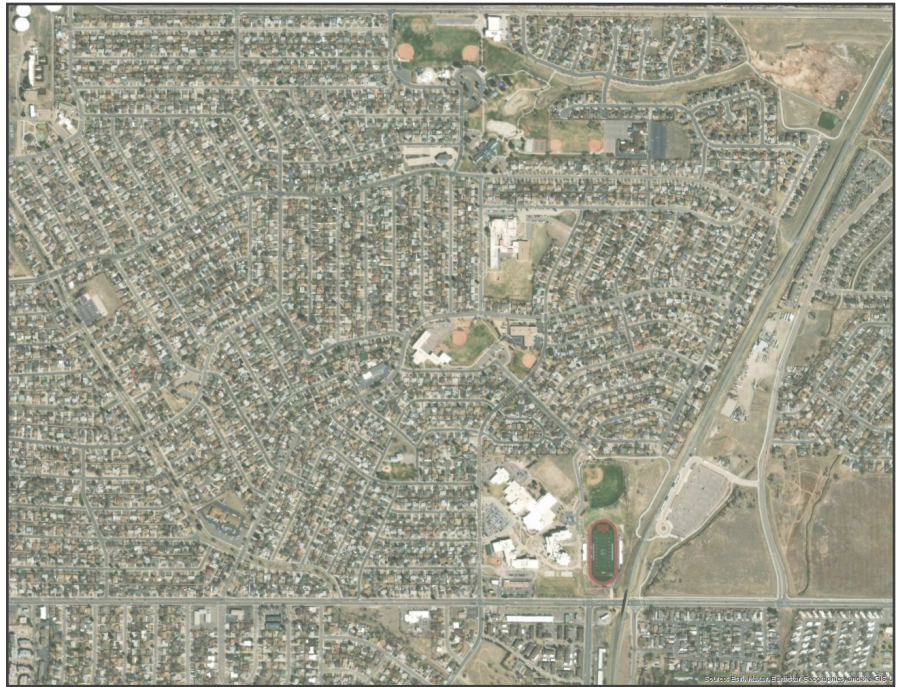
## Map ES.1 - Understanding Thornton's Context and Historic Assets



**Map ES.1** displays the variety of city-owned sites that include many of the potential historic resources that tell the story of Thornton's history, before and after 1956. Further, some of the more distinct areas with regard to Thornton's history, Eastlake and Original Thornton, are also displayed for informational purposes only.

neighborhood development established by developer Sam Hoffman, who led Father and Son Construction (F & S Construction). Many of the successive neighborhoods in Thornton, built by a variety of developers following Hoffman, exhibit the same pattern of curvilinear streets and detached, single-family homes on separate lots. The details of each successive neighborhood have changed over time, reflecting the years in which each was built.

As a city that developed after the development of the automobile, Thornton's commercial spaces reflect the sprawling patterns of car-oriented development typical of mid-century places. For example, Thornton's first commercial center, known as the Thornton Shopping Center, was built as an auto-oriented shopping center. As Thornton continues to develop across a large area of land, scattered nodes of commercial development have occurred. Over time, with city guidance on future investment, these areas can be preserved and oriented not only to the car, but also to neighborhood services and walkability. Preservation could support these various commercial efforts in consideration of long-time businesses and with regard to architecturally and culturally significant buildings deemed important by the community. Moreover, there is space in some of these areas for additional commercial development. Enhancements of these spaces and connections will sustain the city's many neighborhoods as they grow older.



*Aerial photograph of the Original Thornton area, representing the curvilinear street pattern and lot distribution typical of Thornton's first neighborhoods.*

## **Planning Guidance**

The Thornton Comprehensive Plan outlines an extensive vision for the city's future. Much of the needed guidance to create the HPP is derived from the city's Comprehensive Plan. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan vision states, "Thornton's Comprehensive Plan...serves as the long-term vision and road map for the community's future. The Comprehensive Plan is used to guide and align public and private investments in Thornton with the shared vision and values of the community, and to provide policy direction on a variety of topics that affect the quality of life of our community – including housing, transportation, recreational and cultural amenities, employment opportunities, and more. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a foundational tool that guides the community toward its desired outcomes and is meant to be a 'living document' that should be revisited and updated over time to meet the changing conditions and evolving needs of our community."

The Comprehensive Plan guides all other city plans, including the HPP. The Historic Recognition Code (Chapter 19 of the Thornton City Code) also helps to implement the Comprehensive Plan and could similarly be used to implement the HPP.

The following vision for historic preservation has guided the development of this HPP and will continue to help shape decision making as Thornton's historic preservation program evolves.

# Vision Statement

*Historic preservation enables Thornton to cultivate its identity and image by building community awareness of the history and landscape in which Thornton is centered. Successful historic preservation includes fair and inclusive public engagement, conservation of historic resources that support Thornton’s sense of place, and investment in resources and activities that make Thornton’s quality of life unique.*

Five broadly stated goals are embodied in the strategies and recommendations presented in subsequent chapters of this Plan:

<b>Goal 1</b>	Preserve historic places, buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes that contribute to Thornton’s cultural heritage and unique identity.
<b>Goal 2</b>	Recognize and celebrate Thornton’s cultural diversity and the places that support community traditions.
<b>Goal 3</b>	Increase Thornton’s historic preservation staffing capabilities, volunteer base and volunteer recruitment, and grant writing capabilities to bolster historic preservation activities.
<b>Goal 4</b>	Engage Thornton residents in activities that magnify public appreciation for Thornton’s history and historic resources.
<b>Goal 5</b>	Provide affordable, economical, and sustainable development opportunities for Thornton residents and businesses through historic preservation.

## Overview of this Plan

Providing a framework to create a fully functioning historic preservation program for Thornton residents is a primary aim of this Plan. Such a program should make use of the many tools of historic preservation practice. Historic preservation encompasses a wide variety of professions, trades, and areas of study. As a new and developing program in Thornton, it is important to create a baseline understanding of what principles can be used to frame the Plan. Ultimately, a desired result of this Plan is a program design that enables Thornton to qualify as a Certified Local Government (CLG) under state and federal historic preservation rules, as explained in Chapter 3.



Below is a summary of the HPP’s chapters and a brief description of the chapter.

- **Chapter 1** provides the Plan’s **vision and goals** that guided the development of all subsequent chapters. To guide the direction of Thornton’s preservation approach, staff conducted public outreach and engagement throughout the development of the HPP, as described in this chapter.
- **Chapter 2** is an examination of the **historic context** and evolution of historic resources in Thornton. This chapter is not meant to be a formal history for Thornton, but to indicate future research needs. It is intended to spark readers’ imaginations about Thornton’s place in the landscape and history of the Denver region.
- **Chapter 3** provides information on specific **historic preservation programming** for local, state and federal governments. The section below in this Executive Summary provides some of the “key ideas” from that chapter as they could apply to Thornton.
- **Chapter 4** suggests **best practices** regarding land use planning and historic preservation, mainly focused on properties owned by the city or policy areas a local government could impact. The city is the owner of a significant collection of historic and architecturally significant buildings.
- **Chapter 5** describes how to best **engage the public** in a preservation program. During community meetings and focus groups conducted for this HPP, participants expressed the wish to gain and share information about Thornton’s history.
- **Chapter 6** compiles the Plan’s **recommended actions** from various sections of this Plan in an easy-to-read table suggesting priorities and potential partnerships.

## Summary of Recommendations

Following are more details from the HPP’s chapters that contain recommendations – those that describe the strategies to be followed as Thornton builds its historic preservation program.

### Chapter 3: Establishing Thornton’s Historic Preservation Program

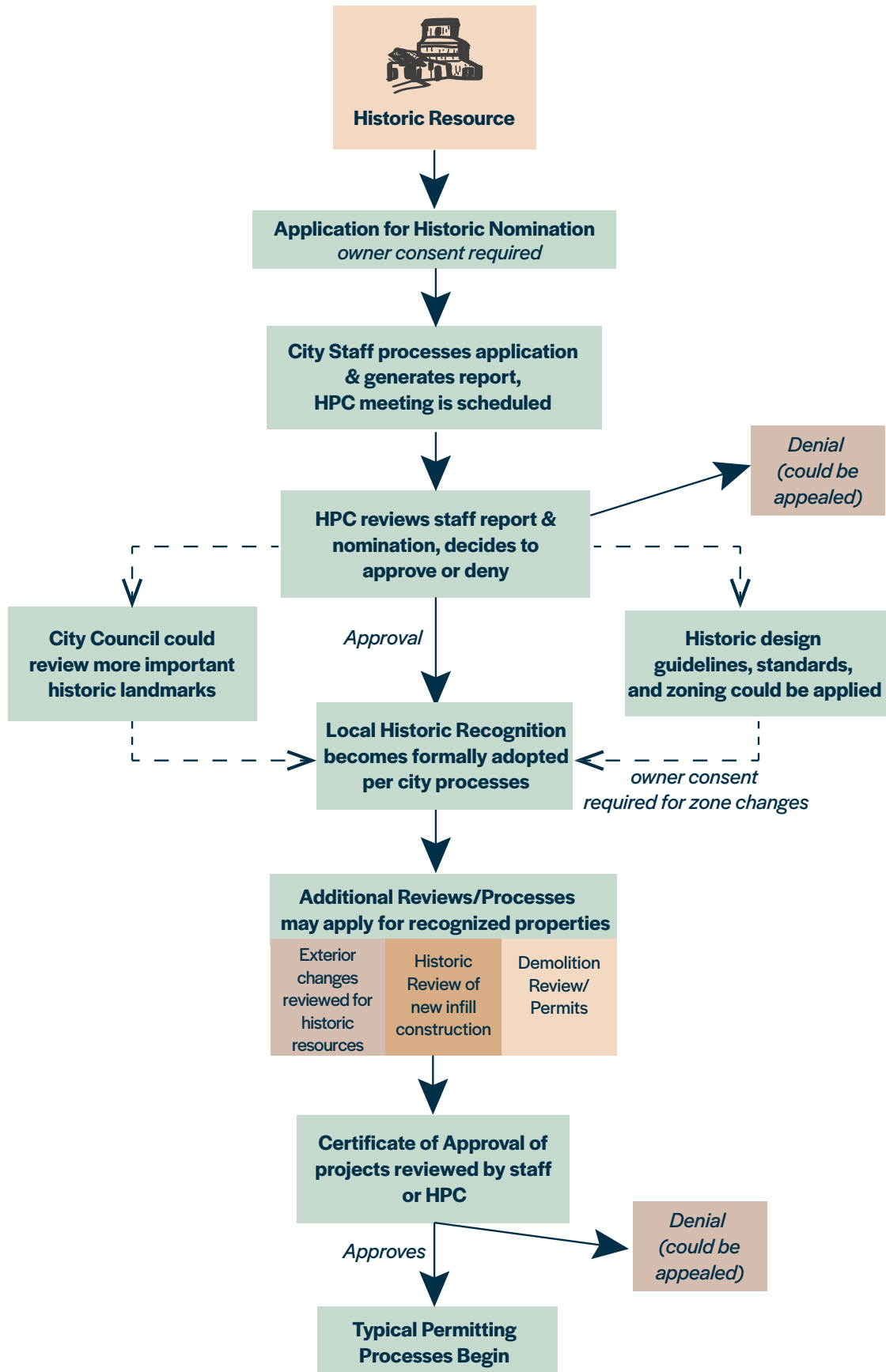
In building its new program, Thornton can rely on a local, state, and national framework for historic preservation found in communities across the United States. It is recommended that the program focus on surveying Original Thornton, re-surveying Eastlake and its surrounding landscape, and a number of other practical steps to build the city’s knowledge of its historic resources and sensitive archaeological areas. A number of places in Thornton may be found to be eligible for the National Register, as determined during research for this Plan (The National Register places no restrictions on what an owner, other than the federal government, may do with their property up to and including destruction, unless the property is involved in a project that receives federal assistance. Reviews of such projects in Colorado are coordinated by History Colorado, the State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO]).

Ultimately, surveys and research may support establishing further recognition of historic resources. To better protect historic resources and to become a Certified Local Government (CLG), described below, changes to the city’s Historic Recognition Code (Chapter 19) would be needed. Such changes are



*Eastlake is a significant reminder of the agricultural landscape where Thornton originated and home to this grain elevator which is listed on the National Register.*

**Figure ES.1 - Possible Format of a Historic Preservation Program**



**Figure ES.1** displays a flow chart of a potential local historic recognition process Thornton could consider. A review process can still be established without a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), but the flow chart would look different. The city's current Historic Recognition Code (Ch. 19) in the City Code has City Council as the final approval of recognition, for example.

recommended in this Plan but would require further consideration by Thornton’s City Council and are considered outside of the creation of this HPP.

#### **Chapter 4: Best Practices in City Planning to Support Historic Preservation**

Recommended initiatives described in this chapter are meant to enhance the historic resources owned by the city and to support neighborhoods and business areas while also preserving the city’s heritage. As the principal owner of a significant portfolio of historic properties, the city should also commit to three best practices in historic preservation:

- (1) Following the ‘Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties’ in undertaking all maintenance and alterations (see page ES.9).
- (2) Compiling thorough information to guide management decisions for Thornton’s historic buildings.
- (3) Organizing historic preservation efforts around professional experts, either internal or external, who could provide support.

#### **Chapter 5: Engaging the Public**

Community involvement in historic preservation efforts is vital. One desired outcome of this Plan would be to engage residents, enable the interpretation of Thornton’s history, and promote education about its heritage. Objectives include:

- (1) Building public appreciation for Thornton’s character of place, its mid-20th-century architecture, and its historic resources in general.
- (2) Providing engaging stories about the people and communities embedded in Thornton’s places and landscapes.
- (3) Providing information to property owners about how to care for their older buildings.



*City of Thornton Infrastructure and Maintenance Center mural representing valuable members of our community.*



*One of the meetings held with stakeholders during the preparation of this plan.*

## Figure ES.2 The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

**STANDARD 1** – A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

**STANDARD 2** – The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

**STANDARD 3** – Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

**STANDARD 4** – Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

**STANDARD 5** – Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

**STANDARD 6** – Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

**STANDARD 7** – Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

**STANDARD 8** – Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

**STANDARD 9** – New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

**STANDARD 10** – New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Further information is available at: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>



## The Key Ideas in this Historic Preservation Plan

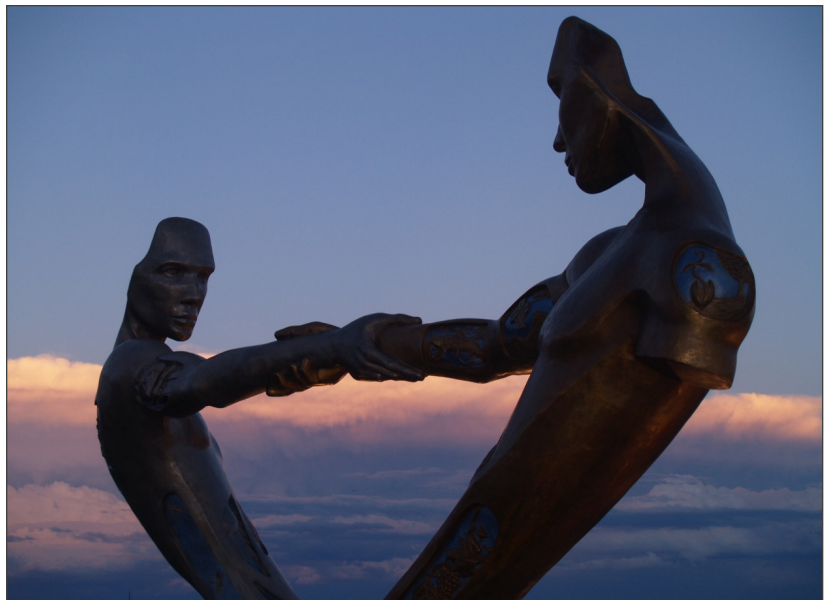
Throughout this Plan are a variety of best practices related to historic preservation and land use planning for the city. While these recommendations are not an all-encompassing list of the actions that can be taken to support historic preservation, they do provide a starting point for historic preservation efforts.

The HPP calls for the following set of key ideas to expand Thornton’s historic preservation efforts into a full-fledged program:

- (1) Establish a survey and nomination program**, in order to know which resources the city should work toward protecting, through National and Colorado State Register nominations and through local ordinance;
- (2) Expand the current historic preservation ordinance** from one that simply provides recognition for historic resources to one that may protect those resources through local project reviews according to local design standards, following “...basic procedures which comprehensively address preservation, but are not so burdensome so as to unduly impede planned growth.”<sup>1</sup>
- (3) Consider a Historic Preservation Commission** to help administer the local project reviews, participate in public educational activities, and work with History Colorado and the State Historic Preservation Office;
- (4) Achieve Certified Local Government status** upon establishment of the preservation ordinance and the preservation commission;
- (5) Seek State Historical Fund grants** to support Thornton’s preservation activities and projects; and
- (6) Increase existing staff capabilities and expand staff capacity where appropriate** to support historic preservation in Thornton.

## Executive Summary Conclusion

Thornton’s progress as a planned residential community before and after 1952 is a unique story that deserves greater awareness from Thornton’s residents. As the sixth largest municipality in Colorado, the history of this modern, still-growing community is a significant part of its identity. Understanding Thornton’s roots as an enduring legacy may also serve to influence the city’s plans for the future, as residents gain knowledge of how Thornton’s settlement pattern, sense of place, and community services grew over time.



*Communis (DiAnne Cooper, c. 2010, Bronze sculpture) outside of Thornton City Hall, i.e., Civic Center.*

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1 “Model Land Use Regulations, Chapter 7, Historical and Archaeological Resource Area Regulations,” p. 2; provided by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History Colorado, Publication #1301b. Available at <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019/1301b.pdf>



Presents

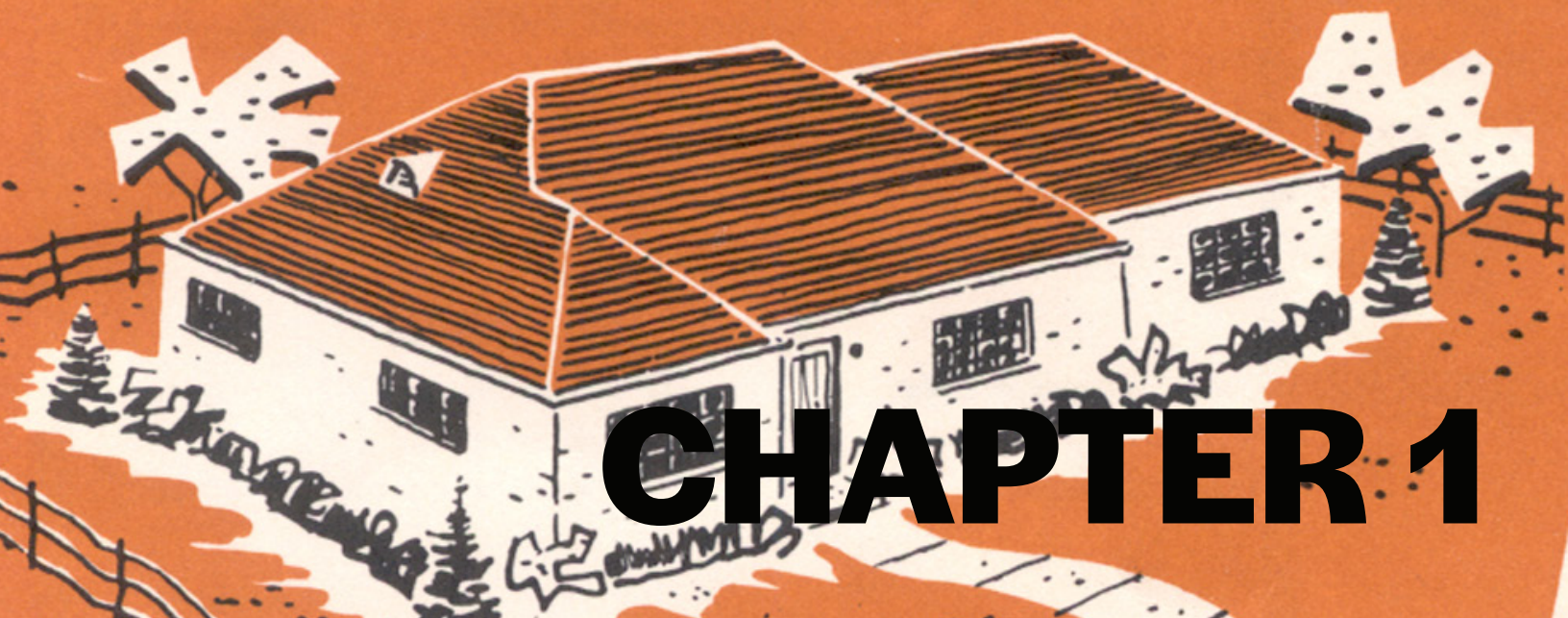
# "THORNTON" COLORADO

at the foot of the rockies



→ *The Newest Community Of*

**HOFFMAN HOMES**



# CHAPTER 1

# **CHAPTER 1. BUILDING A HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM FOR THORNTON**

The purpose of this Historic Preservation Plan (HPP or Plan) is to build the framework for a long-term historic preservation program. The goal is for Thornton to qualify as a Certified Local Government (CLG) under state and federal historic preservation laws and regulations.

This introductory chapter provides a guiding vision for all subsequent chapters and the background and purpose of the Historic Preservation Plan. Linkages to Thornton’s 2020 Comprehensive Plan are also reviewed in consideration of historic preservation. In addition, a summary of community outreach and its influence on the HPP is provided. Community participation supported the development of a vision statement and set of goals and principles for historic preservation as they apply in Thornton. This Plan is intended to apply to both public and private sector initiatives. It also provides the philosophical basis for preservation strategies and recommendations in subsequent chapters.

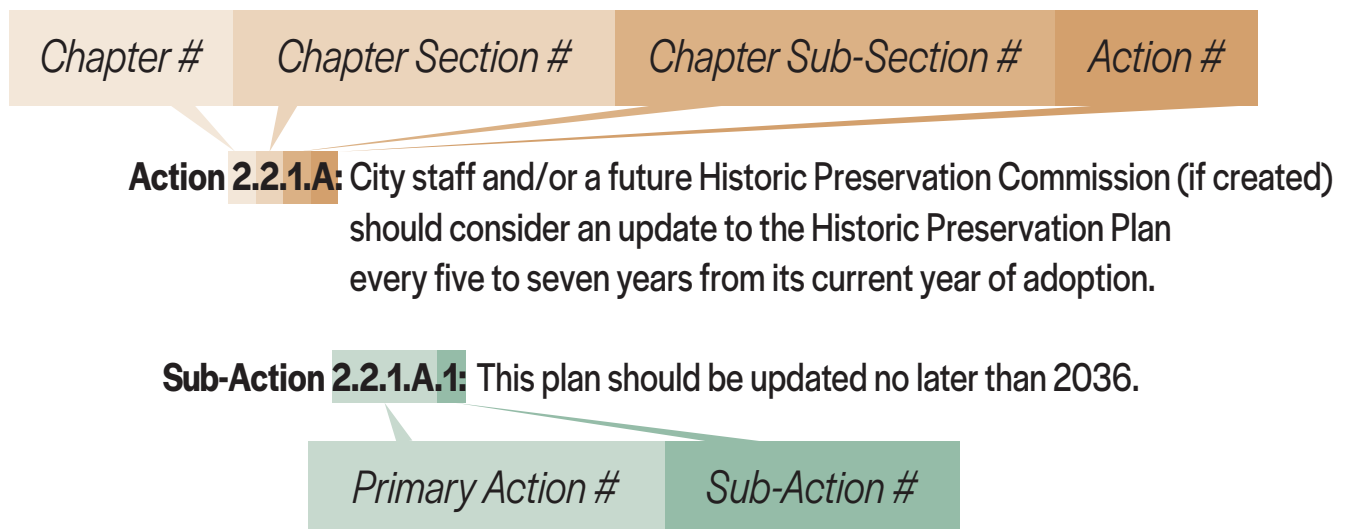


## 1.1 Historic Preservation Plan Format

The HPP is designed such that each chapter builds upon the last:

- Starting with this chapter (Chapter 1), the Plan’s vision and goals guide the development of all subsequent chapters.
- Chapter 2 is an examination of the historic context and evolution of historic resources in Thornton.
- Chapter 3 provides information on specific historic preservation programming.
- Chapter 4 outlines best practices and the nexus between land use planning and historic preservation.
- Chapter 5 describes how to best engage the public to drive the preservation program.
- Chapter 6 summarizes the Plan’s recommended actions compiled from various chapters of this Plan and provides background and explanation.

Recommended actions intended to further the development of a historic preservation program are identified throughout the Plan. Actions are numbered by their chapter and displayed as such:

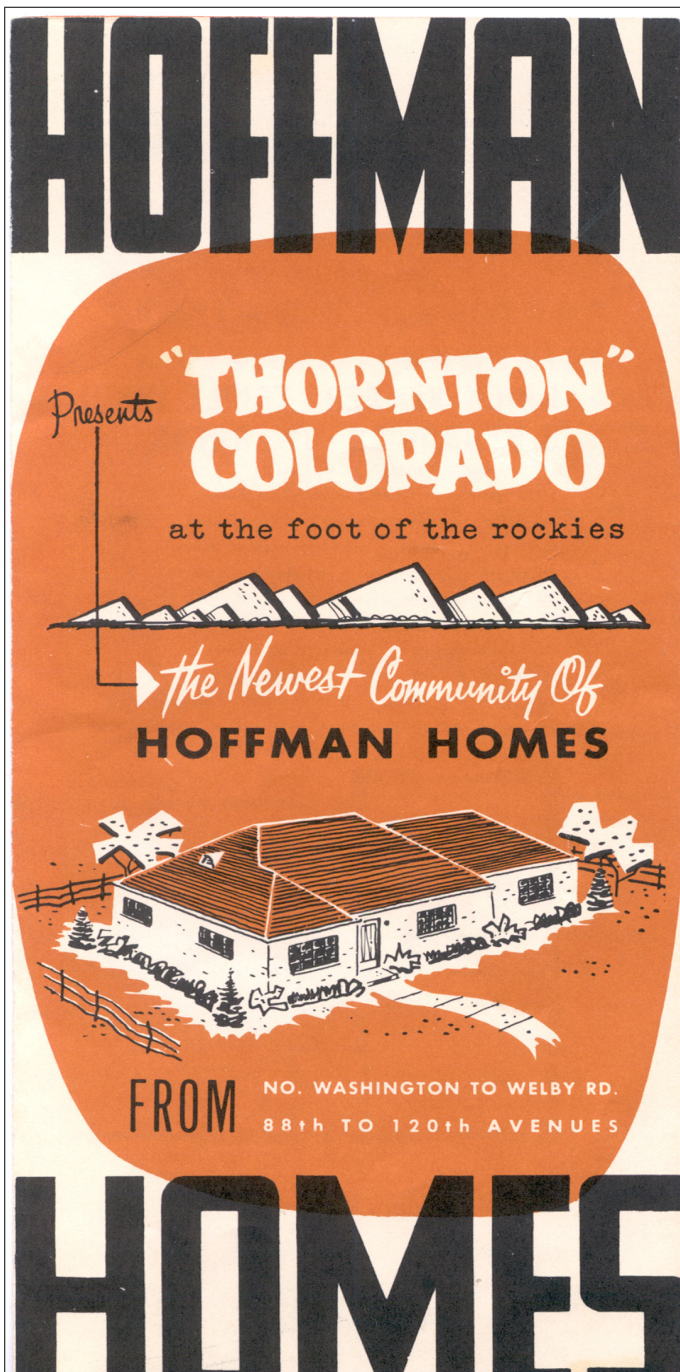


*The graphic above outlines the naming convention of the actions that are proposed throughout the Thornton Historic Preservation Plan, showing how numbers relate to chapters and section numbers throughout the plan.*

Actions in Chapter 3 are considered the highest priority actions. As such, actions that begin with a “3” shall be prioritized over other actions within this Plan. Chapter 6 contains a compiled list of all actions.

## 1.2 Using the Historic Preservation Plan

Like the city’s Comprehensive Plan and other long-range planning documents, the HPP guides City decision making and policy into the future. Specifically, the Plan provides guidance and recommendations to create a historic preservation program for the city of Thornton. Any vision, goals, and actions proposed within this Plan are aspirational, subject to further direction from City Council and, if established in the future, a Historic Preservation Commission.



### 1.3 Developing Thornton's Historic Preservation Approach

Thornton is a young municipality, having been founded only in 1956. However, as reviewed in more detail in Chapter 2 – Thornton's Historic Context, the cultural landscape and history of the region existed well before 1956. The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 encouraged localities to invest in historic preservation programs. It wasn't until 2012 that Thornton adopted a Historic Recognition Code by ordinance, establishing Chapter 19 of the Thornton City Code. Just six years earlier, many of the homes occupying the area known as Original Thornton had crossed the threshold of being 50 years old – the national standard for what constitutes a "historic structure." This context is reviewed in more depth in Chapter 3 – Thornton's Preservation Program.

The city has acquired several key properties that tell the story of Thornton's history before the city's establishment, including Eastlake's remaining grain elevator, the Lambertson homestead (including open space and a small lake), and the Reitzenstein barn, all of which are described further in Chapter 4 – Best Practices in City Planning to Support Historic Preservation. The City Council has recognized the Reitzenstein barn as a local historic landmark in accordance with Chapter 19 of the City Code. Additionally, Thornton's nomination of the Eastlake Farmer's Co-operative Elevator Company site to the National Register of Historic Places was accepted by the National Park Service. The city has also maintained several historic properties within the Original Thornton neighborhood (mostly civic and governmental buildings).

Furthermore, Thornton has developed historic surveying capacity, most notably expressed in the Eastlake Building Survey of 2002 and the Lambertson Homestead Master Plan of 2010. The city's Parks, Recreation, and Community Programs department (TPRCP) has done extensive work regarding parks and open space development, including its Heritage Trails Master Plan which involves historic preservation and citywide programming via trails. This all signifies work to be celebrated in the development of Thornton's approach to preservation.

*Top: Brochures used to advertise the homes for sale in the now "Original Thornton" area.*

*Bottom: A historic photo of the Thornton Days festival and parade (c. 1960s).*





Existing preservation efforts in Thornton have been largely led by City Council, the Thornton Arts, Sciences and Humanities Council (TASHCO), and city staff. This work was not conducted as part of a structured and distinct historic preservation program. In considering Thornton’s preservation approach, this Plan centralizes historic preservation planning efforts and creates a framework for a sustained preservation program.

This Plan considers lessons learned and best practices in preservation. Additionally, the Plan identifies options for programming and planning that can influence citywide preservation efforts, interdepartmental cooperation and capacity building, and robust public engagement –

all through a historic preservation lens. To guide the direction of Thornton’s preservation approach, staff has conducted public outreach and engagement throughout the development of the HPP. The next sections review public engagement, the input provided, and how that has shaped the Plan’s overall vision and goals.

Providing a framework to create a fully functioning historic preservation program for Thornton residents is a primary aim of this Plan. Such a program should make use of the many tools of historic preservation practice. Historic preservation encompasses a wide variety of professions, trades, and areas of study. As a new and developing program in Thornton, it is important to create a baseline understanding of what principles can be used to frame the Plan. Ultimately, a desired result of this Plan is a program design that enables Thornton to qualify as a Certified Local Government (CLG) under state and federal historic preservation rules, as explained in Chapter 3.



A photo from the opening ceremony for Original Thornton.

## 1.4 Thornton’s Historic Preservation Vision

In developing Thornton’s vision for the HPP, the project team incorporated community input and historic preservation principles. This vision is meant to serve as an overarching guide to the goals and actions in the HPP. The following vision has guided the development of this Plan and will continue to help shape decision making as Thornton’s historic preservation program evolves.

### ***Vision Statement***

*Historic preservation enables Thornton to cultivate its identity and image by building community awareness of the history and landscape in which Thornton is centered. Successful historic preservation includes fair and inclusive public engagement, conservation of historic resources that support Thornton’s sense of place, and investment in resources and activities that make Thornton’s quality of life unique.*



## 1.5 Goals for Thornton’s Historic Preservation Program

Five broadly stated goals express how Thornton’s historic assets and character relate to the city’s vision for the future. These goals are embodied in the strategies and recommendations presented in subsequent chapters of this Plan:

<b>Goal 1</b>	Preserve historic places, buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes that contribute to Thornton’s cultural heritage and unique identity.
<b>Goal 2</b>	Recognize and celebrate Thornton’s cultural diversity and the places that support community traditions.
<b>Goal 3</b>	Increase Thornton’s historic preservation staffing capabilities, volunteer base and volunteer recruitment, and grant writing capabilities to bolster historic preservation activities.
<b>Goal 4</b>	Engage Thornton residents in activities that magnify public appreciation for Thornton’s history and historic resources.
<b>Goal 5</b>	Provide affordable, economical, and sustainable development opportunities for Thornton residents and businesses through historic preservation.

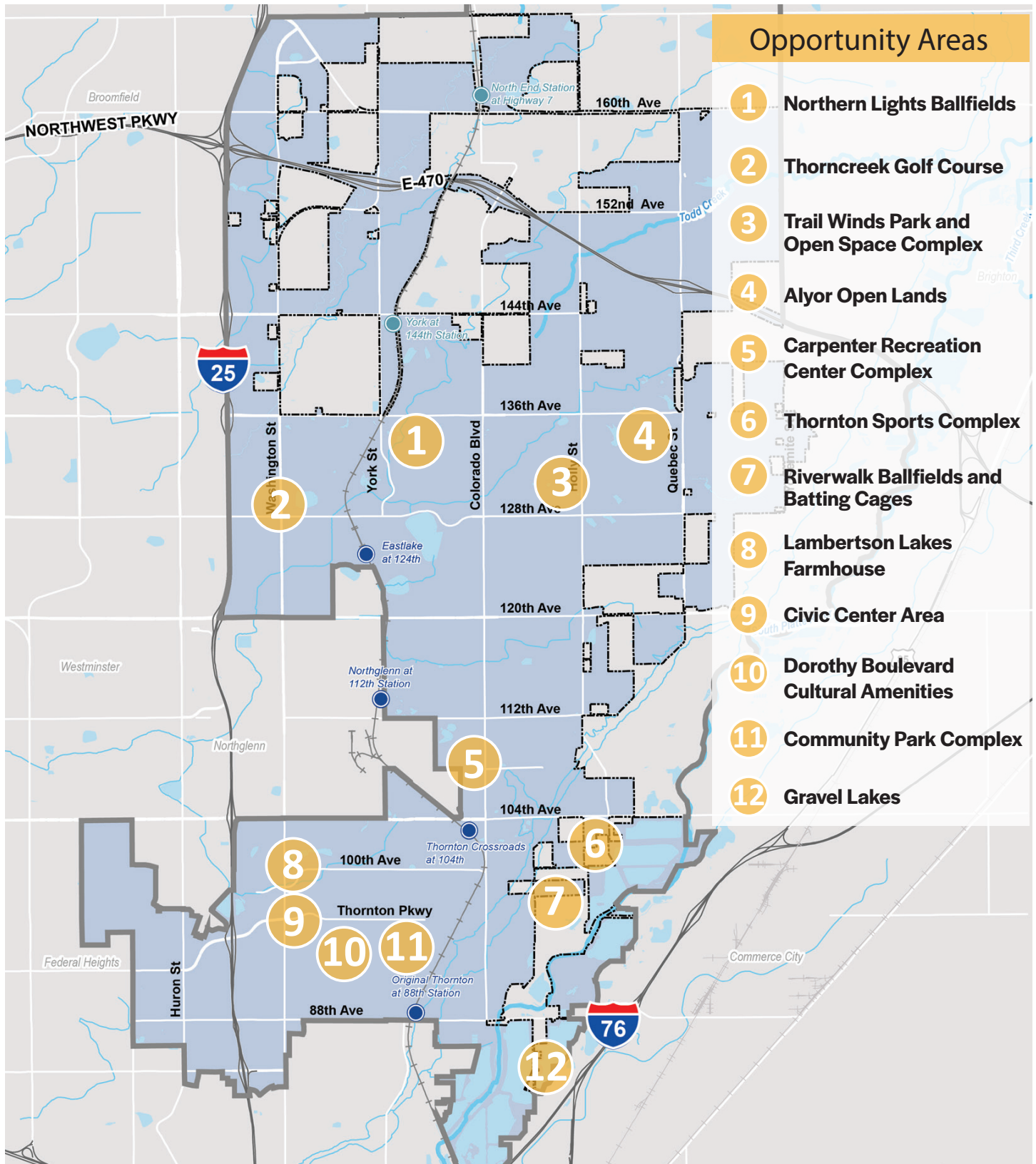
## 1.6 Thornton’s Comprehensive Plan – A Foundation for Historic Preservation

The city’s 2020 Comprehensive Plan guides all other city plans, including “Functional Plans,” “Area Plans,” “Implementation Documents,” and “Reference or Supportive Documents.” The HPP is a “Supporting Document,” supporting the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Historic Recognition Code (Chapter 19 of the Thornton City Code) also helps to implement the Comprehensive Plan and could similarly be used to implement the HPP. To avoid contradiction across Thornton’s long-range plans, staff could consider historic preservation goals when drafting new plans and updating existing plans. Lastly, the HPP and any future updates should be consistent with the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines an extensive vision for the city’s future. Much of the needed guidance to create the HPP is derived from the city’s Comprehensive Plan. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan vision states “Thornton’s Comprehensive Plan...serves as the long-term vision and road map for the community’s future. The Comprehensive Plan is used to guide and align public and private investments in Thornton with the shared vision and values of the community, and to provide policy direction on a variety of topics that affect the quality of life of our community – including housing, transportation, recreational and cultural amenities, employment opportunities, and more. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a foundational tool that guides the community toward its desired outcomes and is meant to be a ‘living document’ that should be revisited and updated over time to meet the changing conditions and evolving needs of our community.”

In addition, there are several vision themes, goals, policies, and strategies within the Comprehensive Plan that support the HPP. Contained within Appendix A is a brief listing of the most relevant Thornton Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies that have framed the HPP and how preservation actions could further implementation and development of the Comprehensive Plan’s vision. Further, the Comprehensive Plan should be used to guide any updates to the HPP, creating the Historic Preservation Commission, amending the Historic Recognition Code, and staff and Council efforts as they relate to historic preservation.

## Map 1.1 - Existing & Future Community Destinations Identified in the Comprehensive Plan



**Map 1.1** highlights key areas identified by community members who participated in the public outreach and development of the Comprehensive Plan. These areas were identified for recreational and cultural amenities by community members and were expanded upon by city staff for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. Several of the “Community Destinations” identified include historic properties considered in the Historic Preservation Plan. The destinations with potential historic value include Lambertson Lakes Homestead (listed as “Farmhouse”), Civic Center Area, Dorothy Boulevard cultural amenities and the Community Park Complex.

## 1.7 Historic Preservation Guiding Principles

Historic preservation, as a field of study, encompasses a wide variety of professions, trades, and disciplines. As a new and developing program in Thornton, it is important to create a baseline understanding of what principles can be used to frame a historic preservation program and its vision, goals, and recommended actions. In addition to the Plan's vision statement and goals, the following principles were used to guide development of the HPP; additionally, these can be used to further develop historic preservation programming:

**Fully identify and document historic buildings, landscapes, and archeological resources.** Appreciate layers of change exhibited by buildings and landscapes that may be historic in their own right, no matter how well related, or unrelated, to the original structure or landscape.

**Emphasize community character and stories, not simply buildings or historic architectural design.** Continue to research Thornton's history and stories and explore every aspect of the community and the people who have settled and lived here while finding the stories that bring places in their entirety to life.

**Study the relationship between the natural and built environment, or a cultural landscape approach.** Observe the relationship between historic resources and the natural landscape in terms of materials, local design, and setting. The "whole" (context or landscape) is greater than the sum of its parts.

**Follow the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.** The Standards are common-sense historic preservation principles in non-technical language promoting best practices that will help conserve Thornton's historic resources. You can review more in Chapter 3 or visit the National Park Service's webpage at the provided link below:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>

**Build public support through various forms of outreach.** Community support is essential in achieving preservation and planning goals.

**Public engagement efforts should occur in a variety of forms and should be inclusive and accessible to all stakeholders.** Education and communication are key.

**Encourage grassroots interests and activity for local preservation initiatives.** Preservation can happen organically from within the community, through voluntary action rather than superimposed regulation.

**Implement a continuing process of using modern best practices.** Best practices should be considered in historic preservation, planning, conservation, and community enhancement.

**Support environmental sustainability through historic preservation and adaptive reuse projects.** New construction can support sustainability goals but existing buildings, especially when appropriately reused, can also support initiatives toward a more sustainable built environment.

**Foster community respect and inclusion through historic preservation.** Historic preservation is multi-dimensional and will benefit from diverse perspectives. Invite and encourage the participation of many voices in community initiatives, respect differing points of view, and maintain an atmosphere of civil discourse.





## 1.8 Public Engagement

Thornton staff conducted a variety of outreach events and stakeholder engagement processes over the course of the Plan’s development (2023-2024). The project team engaged with individuals and groups to gather a broad spectrum of community input. Participants included long-time residents and newer community members, business and non-profit representatives, city staff (existing and retired), and appointed and elected city officials.

The following is a summary of the community outreach conducted and a table outlining specific meetings and dates.



### Oral Interviews of Community Members

In order to guide development of historical context within the Plan, the project team conducted a variety of oral interviews, in-person and remotely. Oral interviews were intended to bolster the city’s existing oral interview archives while providing historical context for the Plan’s development.



### City Council and Board and Commission Presentations

At key stages of the HPP’s development, staff engaged with applicable City boards and commissions and the City Council to garner input and direction on developing the Plan.



### Community Open Houses

City staff held three open houses at the beginning, middle, and end of the HPP’s development. The purposes of the open houses were to provide updates to the general community on the Plan’s progress, to promote efforts of additional public outreach, and to participate in further engagement activities at the meetings. All of the open houses were held in English, with Spanish interpretation.

### HPP Advisory Group

To ensure guidance from Thornton’s community members, the HPP project team created a volunteer

*Captions from top image to bottom: 1) An image of a community focus group regarding Thornton’s Hispanic and Latino community; 2) A photo of Jan Green during an interview regarding the Reitzenstein Barn; 3) A photo of a project focus group regarding Original Thornton; and 4) A photo from second meeting of the project’s Advisory Group.*

group of community members with expressed interest in historic preservation and Thornton’s history at large. Members were engaged through existing engagement networks, using email chains and word of mouth, and engagement specialists to seek targeted outreach. Enrollment was left open to those who were interested in participating but formal recruitment efforts ended in June of 2023. Representation on the Advisory Group consisted of many long-time and newer residents, representatives from all four wards, and was intentionally bilingual (i.e., English interpreted in Spanish) to ensure broader access. The Group met three times to provide feedback and recommendations for the Plan’s development.

**Focus Groups**

City staff led four Focus Groups to garner input on policy recommendations for the Plan. The four focus group topics were divided into two broad categories: geographically specific areas (Original Thornton and Eastlake), and culturally relevant areas (Thornton’s Latino/Hispanic community members and Thornton businesses).

**Table 1.1 - Historic Preservation Plan Community Outreach Events/Actions**

Outreach Activity	Date	Purpose of Outreach
30+ Oral Interviews of Community Members	March 2023 – April 2024	Oral interviews/oral histories
City Commission Presentations; included: Parks & Open Space Advisory Commission (POSAC), Thornton Arts, Sciences and Humanities Council (TASHCO), [former] Building Code Advisory Board (BCAB), Development Permits & Appeals Board (DPAB), & Businesses of Thornton Advisory Commission (BTAC)	March 2023 – September 2024	Presentation; City Commission advertisement, engagement, and review. Fostered development of the Plan.
Preservation Plan Open Houses (x2)	April 2023 & August 2023	Open houses with presentations, community engagement exercises and review of Plan deliverables
Presentation to Adams County Genealogical Society	May 2023	Community presentation & engagement
Advisory Group Meetings	July 2023, January 2024, & September 2024	Deliverable review, engagement exercises, Plan development
Topical Focus Groups	October 2023	Presentation with discussion of Plan development
Community-wide Survey	Winter 2023	Survey and data collection
Planning Commission Presentation	March 5, 2024	Draft content review
City Council Planning Session	July 30, 2024	Full draft review and presentation



## HPP Community Survey Results

To garner a wider array of feedback, the project team conducted a community-wide survey. The survey was made available on the city’s webpage and on the city’s social media sites, at the city’s recreation facilities and civic buildings, through the Plan’s Advisory Group, and via an email list. The survey was advertised in both English and Spanish. Survey responses were taken from the end of October 2023 through January 2, 2024. A total of 89 responses were provided and the survey was advertised citywide via social media, email list, and through flyer distribution at Thornton community facilities.

Responses to the following survey questions were used to help develop the Plan’s vision statement and goals, which are shared earlier in this chapter. For a full summary of the community survey results, refer to Appendix B.

### Question 1 - What neighborhoods or areas in Thornton do you think have a strong history or character?



The image above displays the responses provided to Question 1. This question helps identify specific areas with perceived historic value in Thornton. The words are displayed from right to left, larger words appeared in more of the responses.



A snowy day within the Original Thornton neighborhood, the city’s founding subdivision that led the creation of the fully functional city that Thornton residents know today.



Turkeys are well known in the town of Eastlake. This photo shows the turkeys in the middle of one of Eastlake’s residential streets during a spring morning in 2024.

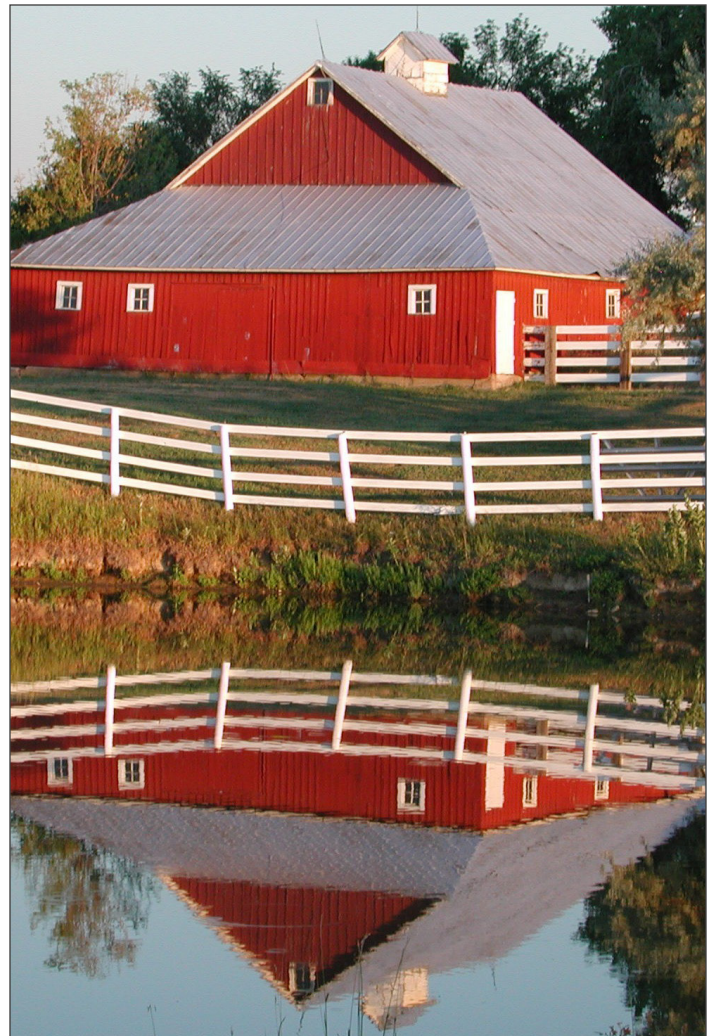
Question 2 - What are some qualities of your neighborhood, historic or not, you would like to see preserved?

<b>parks</b>	<b>open space</b>	<b>trails</b>	<b>Eastlake</b>
<b>houses</b>	<b>lakes</b>	<b>trees</b>	<b>neighborhoods</b>
<b>farms</b>	<b>streets</b>	<b>railroad</b>	<b>“sense of community”</b>
<b>Original Thornton</b>		<b>“small town feel”</b>	<b>green spaces</b>
<b>brick homes</b>	<b>Eastlake Grain Elevator</b>	<b>landscaping</b>	<b>neighborhood upkeep</b>

The image above displays the responses provided to Question 2. By asking respondents to describe important neighborhood qualities, the HPP project team could identify key themes that Thornton’s community members perceive as being associated with Thornton.



People walking alongside the boat house at Carpenter Park, named after Thornton’s long-time Mayor, Margaret W. Carpenter, a potential future historic resource.



A reflection on a pond of the iconic red barn at the Lambertson Lakes Homestead and Open Space, a city-owned historic site with potential for historic programming.



## What do you think are the most important goals of historic preservation?

Respondents were asked to rank their top three (no preferential order) goals for historic preservation. Historic preservation, as a profession, has industry standards (considered more in-depth in the section above, **Historic Preservation Guiding Principles**); these standards helped frame the selections available in this question. Responses were used to help better prioritize Plan goals as they relate to the Thornton community's preferences.

### What do you think are the most important goals of historic preservation?



## 1.9 Chapter Conclusion

Having surpassed its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Thornton continues to grow into a distinct community as more than a suburb of Denver. Dubbed the “City of Planned Progress,” this Plan aims to embody Thornton’s original motto by clearly outlining policy and recommendations that can advance the “planned progress” of a historic preservation program.



THORNTON FIRE DEPT.

# CHAPTER 2

# CHAPTER 2. TOWARD A HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT FOR THORNTON

Thornton’s progress as a municipality since the 1950s is a unique story that deserves greater awareness from Thornton’s residents and visitors. As the sixth largest municipality in the state, the history of this modern, still-growing community is a significant part of its identity. Understanding Thornton’s roots as an enduring legacy may also serve to influence the city’s plans for the future as residents gain knowledge of how Thornton’s settlement pattern, sense of place, and community services grew over time.

In 2023, the City of Thornton began a planning process to support the addition of historic preservation activities and values to its programs and planning, resulting in this Historic Preservation Plan (HPP). This chapter features a set of historic themes to guide the development of detailed knowledge of historic resources in Thornton and their significance.

The historic themes outlined in this chapter provide direction for the development of one or more historic context statements for Thornton. A historic context statement (sometimes simply called a “historic context”) provides a framework for evaluating a given set of historic resources for significance and integrity. It can support future research into Thornton’s development and highlight trends and patterns critical to understanding how the city’s historic resources and landscape have evolved.



## 2.1 Why Are Historic Context Statements Useful?

Historic context statements have two basic purposes. First, they provide the necessary background to support the historic resource surveys recommended in Chapter 3 – Creating Thornton’s Historic Preservation Program. Historic context statements provide foundational materials for historic preservation programming and build public appreciation for local history. Without such foundational materials, it is sometimes difficult to know whether a property is historically significant.

For example, during the planning and research process for this HPP, it was discovered that Thornton’s Infrastructure Maintenance Center (IMC), located at 12450 Washington Street, is a candidate for study. The IMC is a refined, modern style, two-story building constructed by the Mountain Empire Dairymen’s Association circa 1973. The building’s importance, however, lies not in its architectural styling, but in the physical reminder of the former agricultural landscape of the region, where dairying was an important occupation.

Second, for properties eligible for listing in the National and Colorado Registers of Historic Places or for Thornton’s local recognition, a historic context statement provides the basic documentation that accompanies nominations or evaluations for listing. Historic context statements comprise an important element in streamlining the nomination of groups of thematically related properties to the National and State Registers, through use of a Multiple Property Documentation Form.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2 How to Use this Chapter

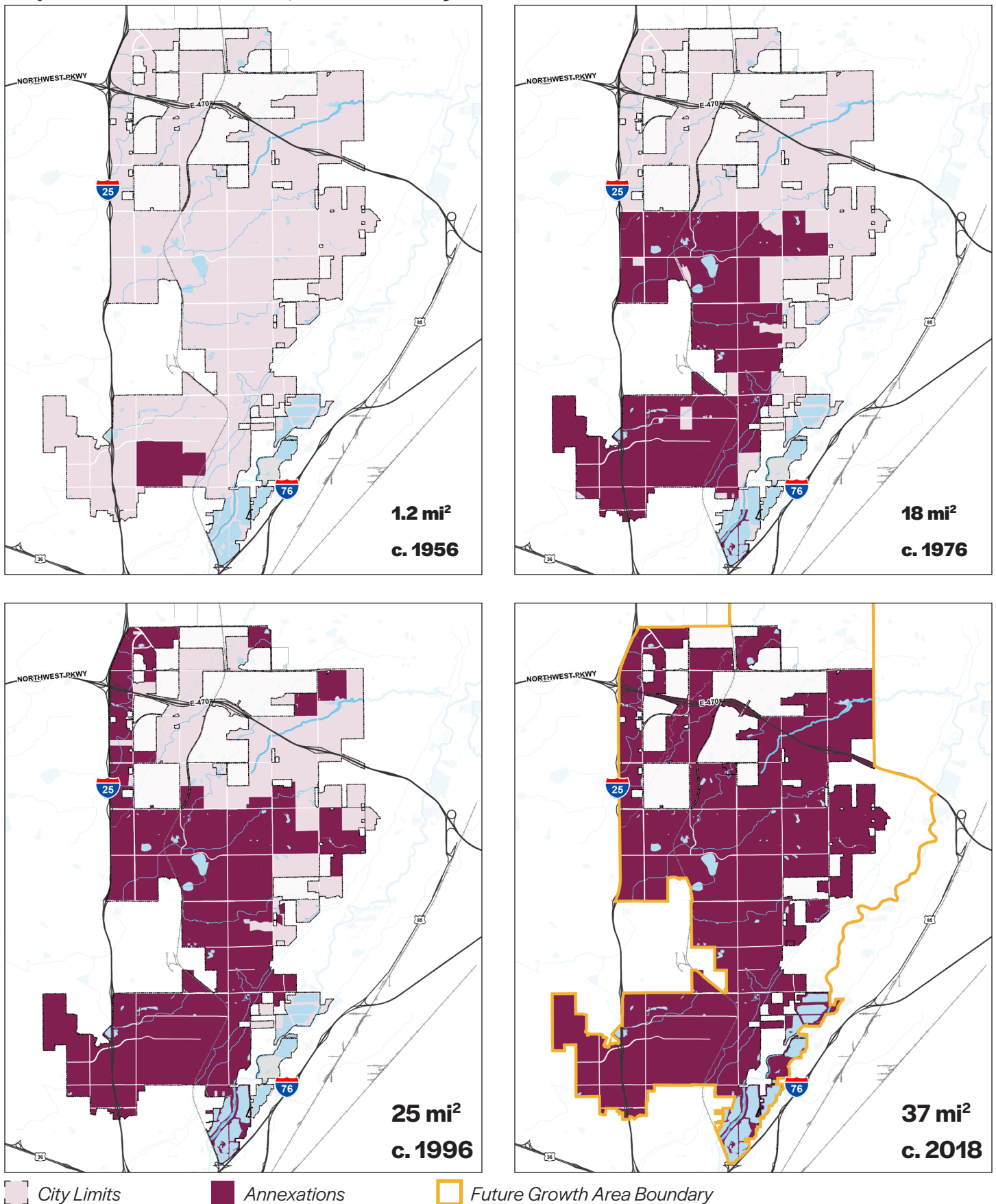
Preparation of one or more historic context statements should be part of Thornton’s early implementation of the HPP. This chapter is designed to provide a starting point for that work.

A preservation program is meant to enhance public appreciation and understanding of a community’s history and identity. Historic context statements help to connect historical events and people with physical places. Existing and future historic context statements are meant to provide useful guides to making those connections and bringing history alive through place-based information. The statements in this chapter serve as a starting point for what is intended to be a more detailed historic context statement(s) for Thornton. In its present form, this chapter should be analyzed when reviewing applications for historic recognition under Chapter 19 of the City Code (or for State or National Register nominations), in preparing for development of more specific historic context statements, historic preservation programming, and for surveying work of historic resources not yet discovered. This chapter, in its current form, is intended to be informative and supportive of other efforts and should not be used exclusively



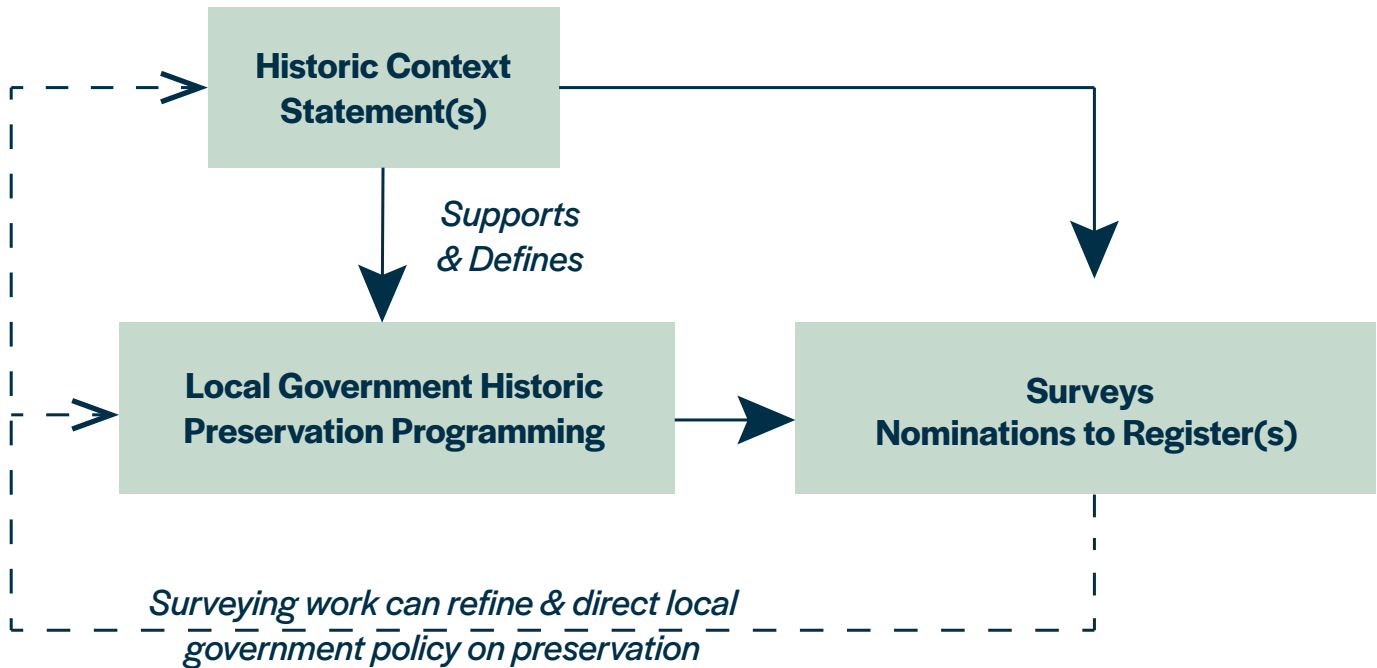
*The top photo is an aerial image of the area that would become Thornton c. 1937; the bottom photo is also an aerial of the newly formed city of Thornton c. 1957.*

## Map 2.1 - Thornton's Growth, Annexations by the Decades



**Map 2.1** shows four major eras of annexations that occurred since Thornton's incorporation in 1956. The four eras displayed are shown as a point in time during the years 1956, 1976, 1996 and 2018. As the decades passed Thornton grew from a small municipality of approximately 1.2 square miles to nearly 38 square miles in 2023.

**Table 2.1 - Historic Context Application**



**Table 2.1** displays how historic context statements could be applied through processes and programming from a local government and to guide surveys and nominations to local, state and federal registers. The table also displays how surveying can further refine a historic context statement.

when determining best practices to employ with regards to preservation of historic resources (described in the HPP or not).

Finally, while this chapter is not meant to be a formal history of Thornton, it intends to spark readers' imaginations about Thornton's place in the landscape and history of the larger Denver metropolitan and Adams County regions.

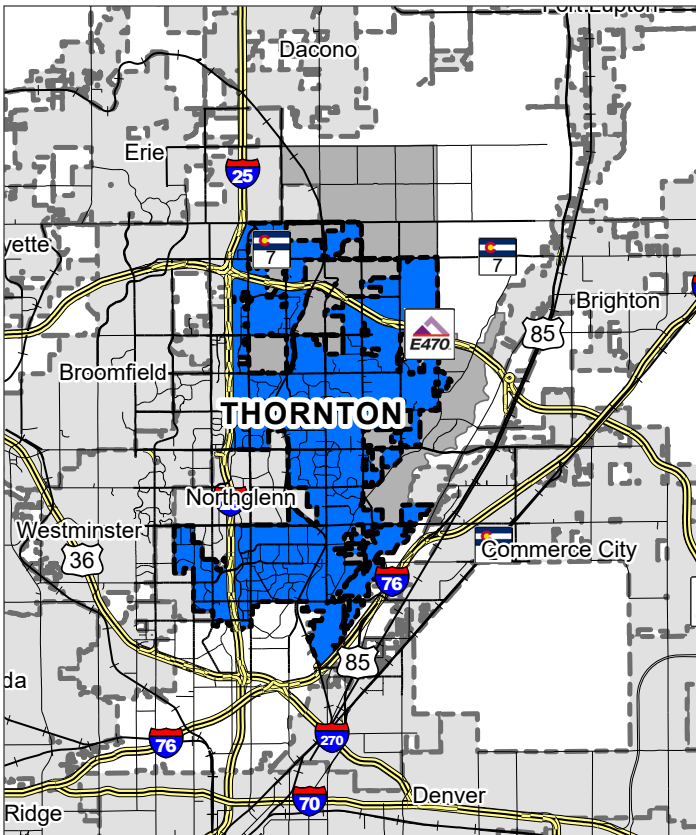
### 2.3 General Background

The land within Thornton's current and Future Growth Boundary, as identified in the Thornton Comprehensive Plan, is the official area for this HPP. This area is located largely in Adams County just north of the City of Denver, with a portion of Weld County to the north. Thornton was incorporated as a home-rule municipality in 1956 and now includes approximately 38 square miles within its current boundaries. This is a Colorado landscape with a rich history, evidence of which is still discernible within the modern community.

The casual telling of Thornton's history usually begins with its development between 1952 and 1964. This time period is known among historic preservationists and architectural historians as part of the "mid-century modern architecture" era, spanning roughly from 1945 to 1969. During this time, development mainly occurred in the southern portion of the city, within and near what is known today as "Original Thornton."

However, researchers constructing historic context statements for Thornton are also encouraged to consider earlier phases of the region's history. Indigenous peoples called this region home long before European settlement, most notably the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute tribes. European settlement in the region that would become Colorado began accelerating in 1858 after the discovery of gold at the mouth of Little Dry Creek, a tributary to the South Platte River. Settlement continued through statehood in 1876. Gold may have driven initial settlement, but with growing demand for food and other resources, farmers and stock growers soon followed. The South Platte Valley became Colorado's richest agricultural region. Railroads and irrigation arose within only a few years after the close of America's Civil War in 1865, supporting further agricultural growth.

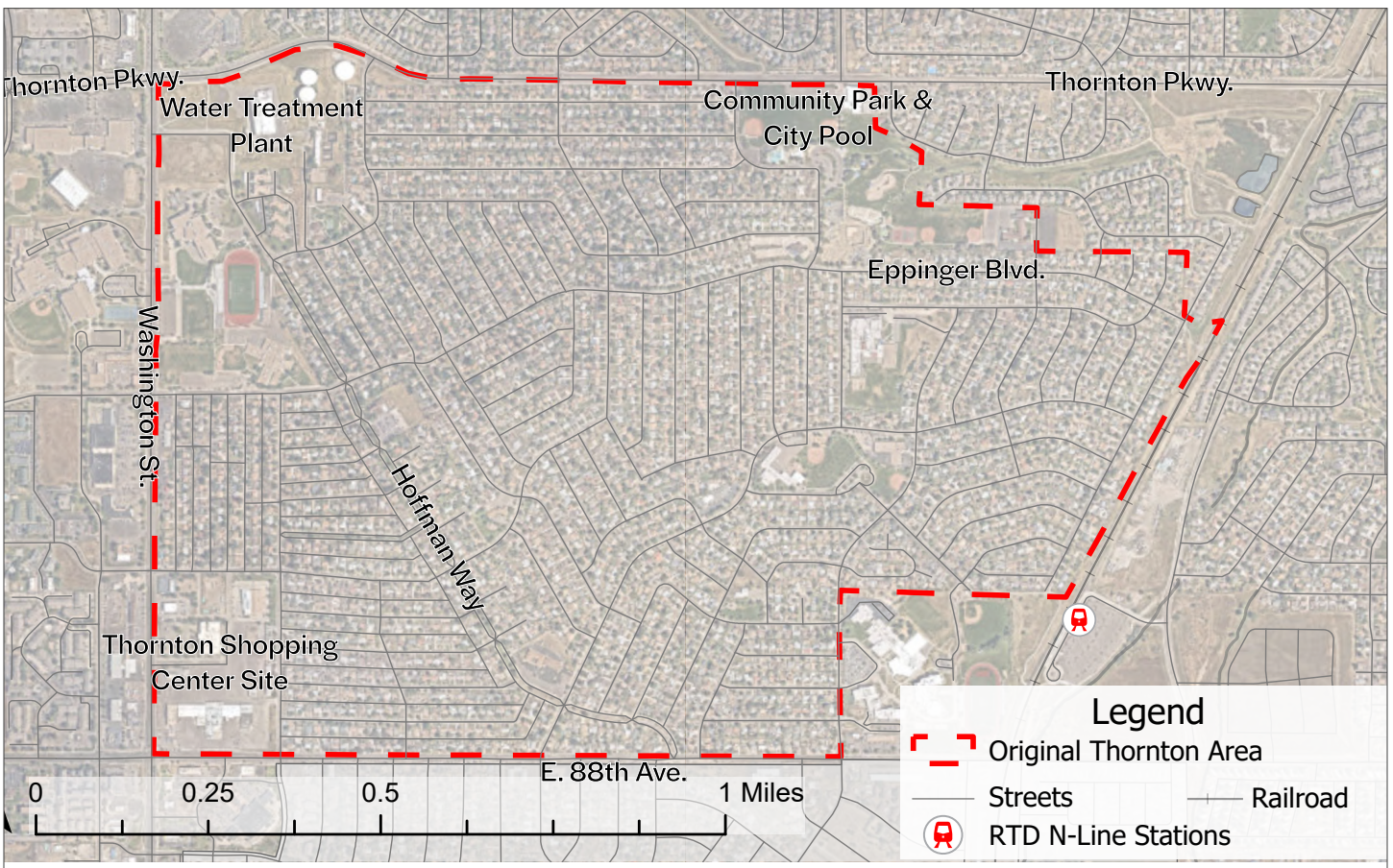




The image above displays a general vicinity map of Thornton.

Much of what is now known as Adams County did not exist before the 1940s, with only Arvada, Brighton, and Westminster having been distinctly organized as municipalities before then. Until the establishment of Thornton as a municipality, life north of what is now Interstate 70 was organized around the agricultural centers of the Front Range, which would have included places like Eastlake. The city's formation as a local government in 1956 followed four years of the early development of Original Thornton. At that time, this area was a community of modest brick homes, many occupied by military veterans and their families who were relocating to the Denver area after World War II and the Korean War. Job opportunities for veterans at that time and in that area were plentiful.

Thornton's development pattern has followed the earliest suburban form of neighborhood development established by developer Sam Hoffman. Many of the successive neighborhoods in Thornton, built by a variety of developers following Hoffman, exhibit the same pattern of curvilinear streets<sup>2</sup> and detached, single-family homes on separate lots. The details of each successive neighborhood have changed over



An aerial image of the area that comprises largely Thornton's original subdivision and city facilities. To some, this area is known as Original Thornton and represents the urban form active in the 1950s, during the founding of the city of Thornton.



time, reflecting the years in which each was built. Thornton neighborhoods may differ in terms of scale, architectural styles, and amenities associated with their own historic context. Gradually, the city has filled in the wide-open spaces associated with earlier years, although remnants of this early landscape are still evident. Special attention should be given to areas that are associated with older agricultural properties, historic agricultural ditches, the town of Eastlake, the South Platte River and other waterways, and the former and existing Union Pacific railroad right-of-way (portions of which now serve the Regional Transit District [RTD] “N Line” Commuter Rail).

## 2.4 Themes to Guide Historic Context Development

There are two basic themes to guide the development of future historic context statements, which are essentially chronological:

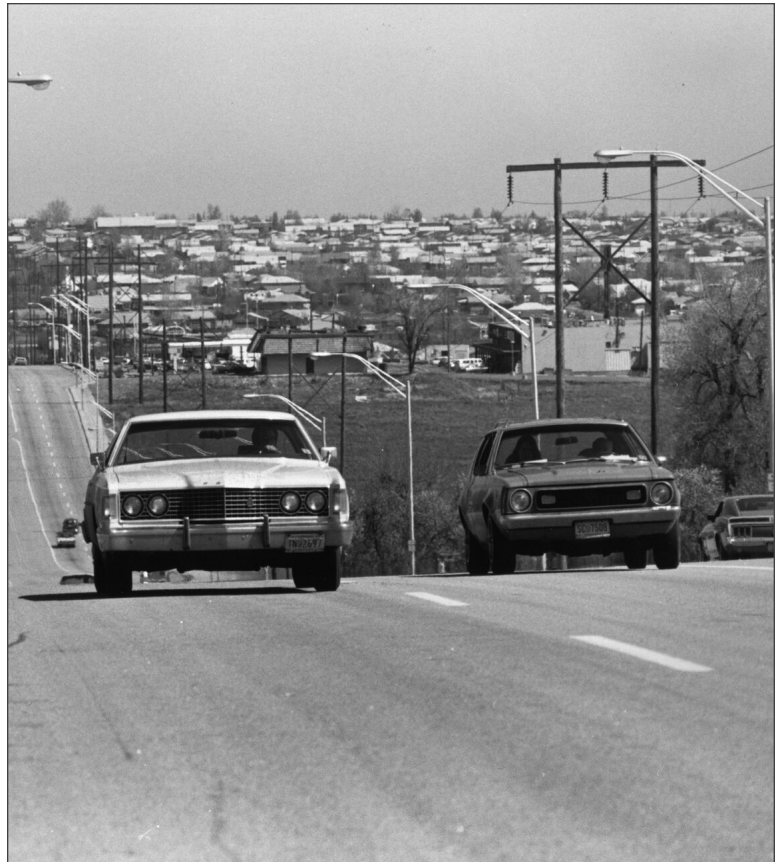
- **Theme 1:** Pre- and Post-Settlement History, through 1952
- **Theme 2:** Post-World War II Residential, Commercial, and Institutional Development, 1952-1974

It is expected that multiple and distinct historic contexts could be developed as sub-themes within each of these two themes. The extent to which sub-themes are to be grouped or split apart will depend on refinement of priorities for surveys set by Thornton as the city begins implementation of this HPP.

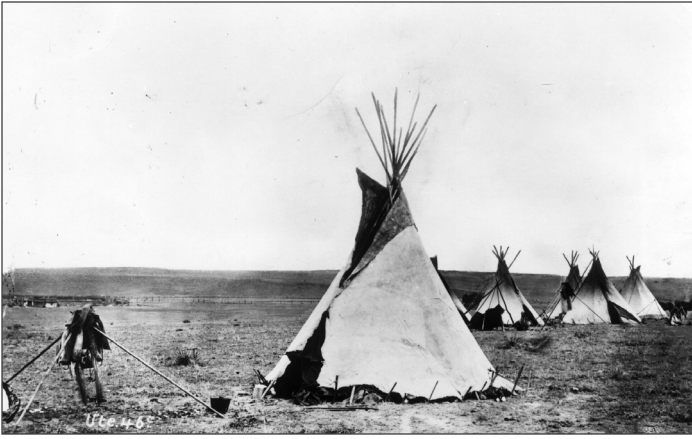
For example, when defining themes for this HPP, mid-century modern (MCM) architecture stood out as a major focus. Later, it was recognized that architectural styles are an expression of the history of post-World War II development, so MCM architecture should be considered a sub-theme of Theme 2. It is possible that a thematic grouping of mid-century modern buildings could be developed once historic context statements for residential, commercial, and institutional development are established.

One sub-theme can be expected to be drawn from both themes: agriculture. Farming and other agricultural uses continue within Thornton’s Future Growth Area and are exhibited on properties within Adams and Weld counties. Further, exploration of land management practices related to agriculture and water management and historic agricultural structures managed by the city of Thornton Agricultural Stewardship Office would also be a place for further research. Many of the still-working farms and undeveloped, agricultural remnants north of East 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue deserve a more thorough survey in order to appropriately recommend proper historic preservation or land conservation practices for these agricultural remnants.

Another subtheme, the indigenous cultural landscape, also embodies both themes. Determining the extent of preservation action needed for pre-settlement evidence of Indigenous Peoples must be accompanied by a high-level archeological survey over the entire study area of Thornton. Such a study would provide research into both Indigenous Peoples (i.e. Native Americans) and landscape features such as changes in historic fauna, as further discussed in the recommendations in Chapter 3. An archeological survey is especially desirable in less-disturbed areas in the northern portion of Thornton, including its Future Growth Area just beyond its current boundaries.



*Automobiles on a four lane road in 1970s Thornton. Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, [X-13776]*



*The photos selected show how the landscape Thornton encompasses has changed between 1870s-1950s.*

*Captions are listed top image to bottom: 1) A Ute Native American camp in the Platte river bottom, representative of what Thornton's landscape could have looked like c. 1874. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collections X-30649; 2) An agricultural worker standing next to an irrigation ditch in the quickly evolving landscape of the Front Range c. 1900-1910. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collections : MCC-1255; 3) A landscape photo from the valley floor during the early days of construction of Thornton, c.1950s.*

Addressing the indigenous cultural landscape, however, should also include participation by current Tribal Nations assisted by their Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and by others with identified interests in Thornton, who may be able to shed light on oral traditions and traditional ecological knowledge associated with historic and cultural use of this landscape. American Indian cultural traditions may also be expressed within Thornton today, which should be identified and incorporated into modern programming. Expression of other populations in the landscape should be explored as various historic contexts are examined. Danish, German, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Russians, and other immigrant groups, for example, are all known to contribute to the history of Thornton and Adams County.

Since Thornton has not been surveyed, there are no clearly identified buildings to be selected from existing surveys, other than those listed in Chapter 4. This makes it especially important that historical context research provides the foundation for decisions regarding refinement to or design of additional sub-themes. Further, historic context statements should be used to advance to preservation decisions and nominations to State and National Registers or local landmark recognition (as described further in Chapter 3). The following sections provide additional information about these two themes, divided by various topics that either cast light on the theme as a whole or may be chosen as sub-themes for further research.

## **2.5 Theme 1: Pre- and Post-Settlement History through 1952**

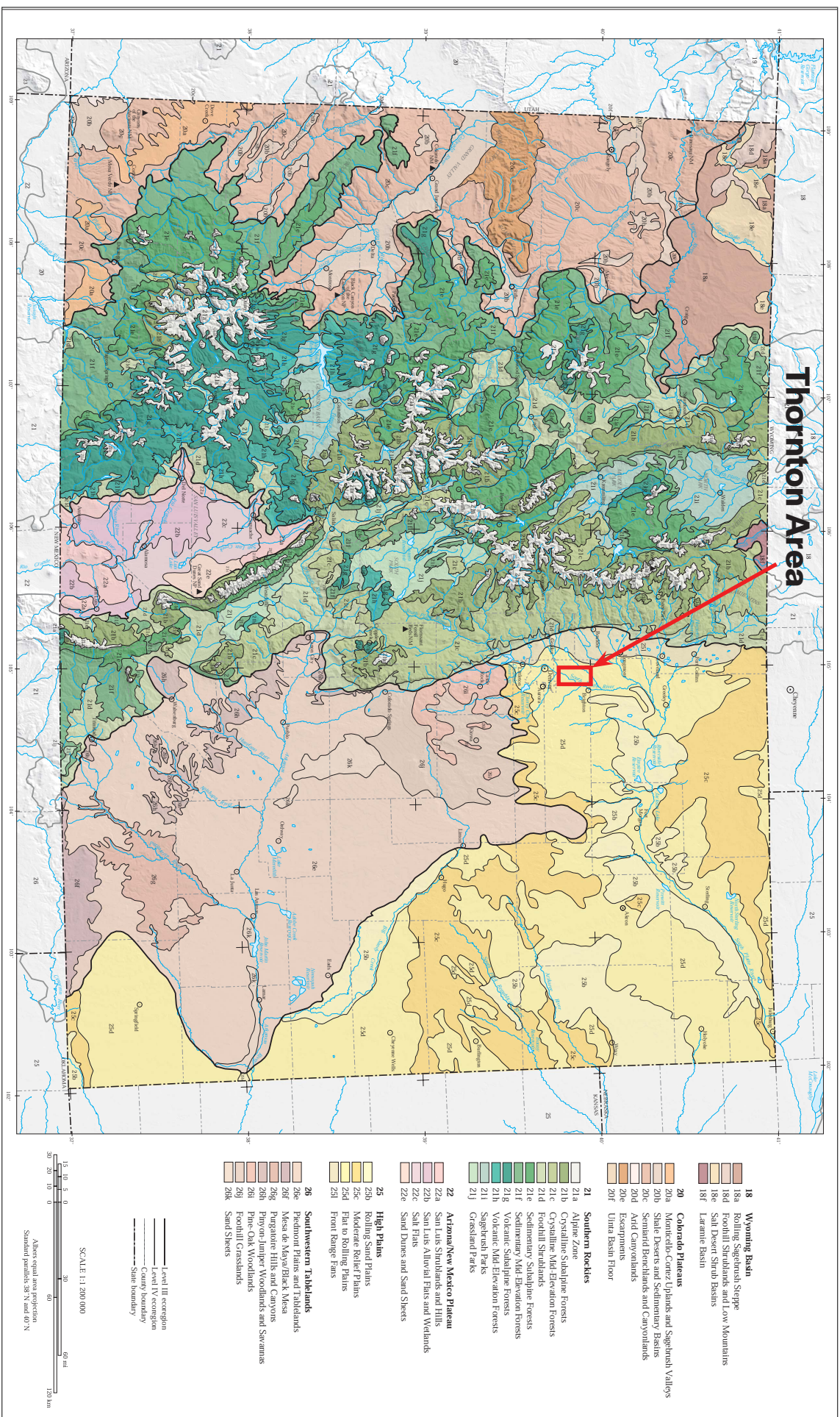
### **2.5.1 The Natural Landscape**

Prior to modern settlement of what is now the State of Colorado, the natural resources of Colorado's Eastern Plains sustained various Indigenous Peoples and influenced settlement and land use patterns.

Ecoregions are areas where ecosystems and the type, quality, and quantity of their environmental resources are similar. As defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has mapped the United States ecoregions, Thornton occupies a portion of Colorado's High Plains ecoregion, specifically the flat to rolling Plains east of the Front Range and north of Denver (Ecoregion 25d; see Maps 2.2 and 2.2.1). According to the EPA, this area is "...more level and less dissected than the adjacent Moderate Relief



**Map 2.2 - Colorado EcoRegions as Defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

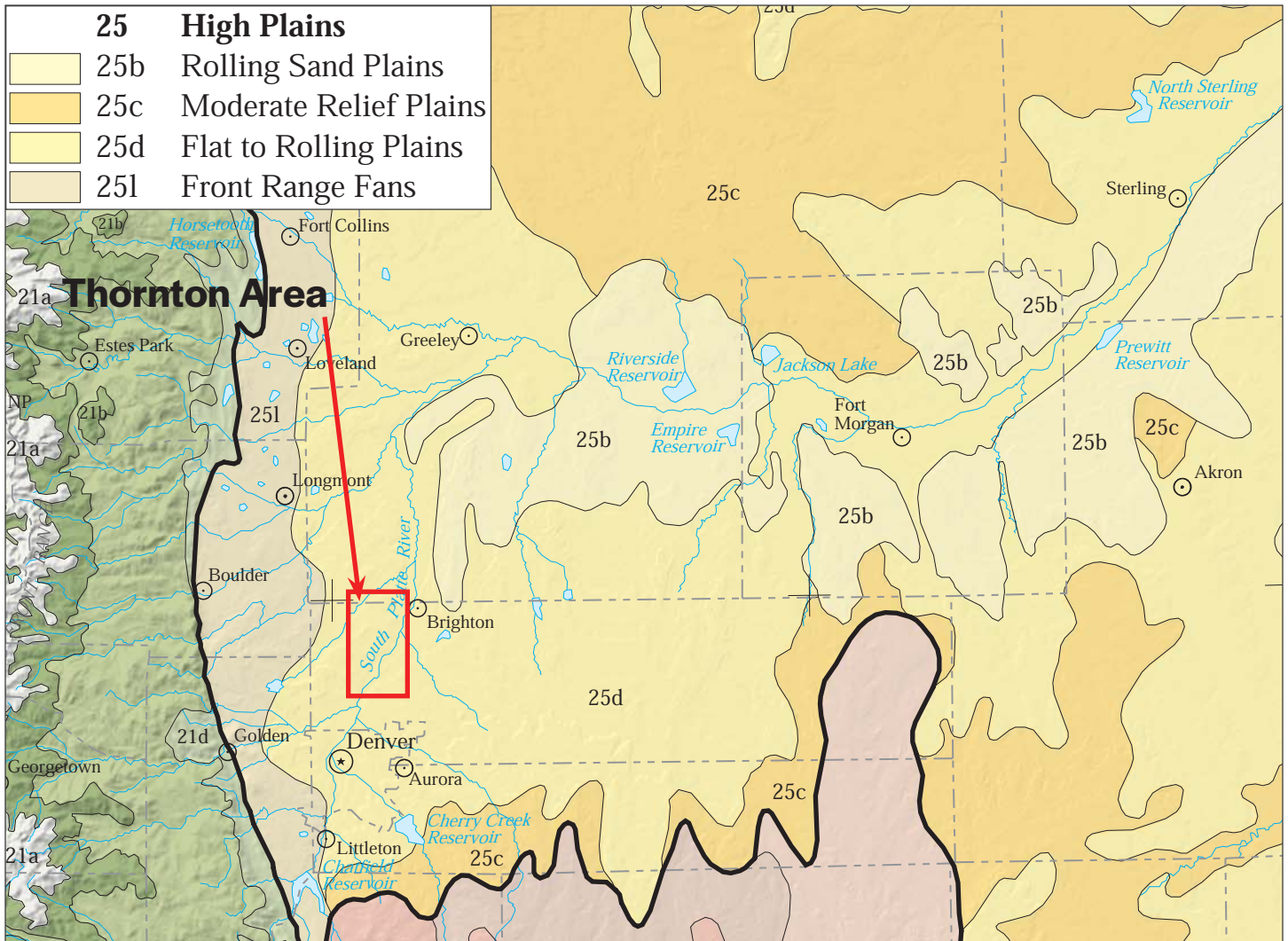


**Map 2.2** is a map that outlines the “Ecoregions” of Colorado as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The majority of the Denver Metro region, including Thornton, is in the “High Plains” region as displayed on this map.

**Source:** Chapman, S.S., Griffith, G.E., Omernik, J.M., Price, A.B., Freeouf, J., and Schrupp, D.L., 2006, Ecoregions of Colorado (color poster with map, descriptive text, summary tables, and photographs): Reston, Virginia, U.S. Geological Survey (map scale 1:1,200,000).

Note: Scale may not be accurate as displayed in this document.





**Map 2.2.1 - Zoomed-in Extents of Ecoregions Map on previous page**

Plains (25c). Soils are generally silty with a veneer of loess [wind-blown soils]. Historically, this ecoregion has seen extensive dryland farming (generally winter wheat and forage crops), with scattered areas of irrigated cropland.”<sup>3</sup>

The federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, in another approach to characterizing natural resources, classifies this region as Colorado’s Loamy Plain. Its fine soils (silt, loam, wind-blown) are prone to drought and erosion, yet well-watered; streams have many tributaries. The combination of grasses, forbs (herbaceous flowering plants), and shrubs that were found here historically provided habitat for large grazing animals – bison, elk, pronghorn, and mule deer. Grazing by these large herbivores, along with climatic and seasonal weather fluctuations, had a major influence on the region’s ecological dynamics. Where natural communities remain relatively intact, deer and pronghorn remain widely distributed; secondary influences of herbivorous species such as prairie dogs and other small rodents, insects, and root-feeding organisms has impacted the vegetation and continues today, supporting such unique wildlife species as burrowing owls.

Historically, it has been theorized, grazing patterns by herds of large, hooved mammals was driven by water distribution, precipitation events, drought events, and fire. These large migrating herds impacted the ecological processes of nutrient and hydrologic cycles, by urination, trampling (incorporation of litter into the soil surface), and breaking of surface crust, increasing water infiltration and availability to support a rich range of warm- and cool-season species. Grazing periods are thought to have been shorter, followed by longer recovery periods.

Recurrent drought has historically impacted the vegetation of this region. Changes in species composition will vary depending upon the duration and severity of the drought cycle, and prior grazing management. Historic fire



An image of what an ordinary day could have looked like in a Plains Native American camp (19th Century, date unknown). Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collections X-32050

frequency (pre-industrial) is estimated at 10-14 years, randomly distributed, and started by lightning at various times throughout the growing season.

The grasslands of eastern Colorado are home to many bird species. The occasional wetland or spring found in the region provides essential seasonal water needed for reproductive habitat by some reptiles and amphibians. Because of a lack of permanent water, fish are not common.

This is an important location for livestock grazing, especially beef cattle, which has been a major influence on recent ecological dynamics. The impact of fire over the past 100 years has been relatively insignificant due to the human control of wildfires and the lack

of acceptance of prescribed fire as a management tool. Livestock management and crop production, coupled with the effects of annual climatic variations, largely dictate the plant communities found here.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.5.2 Indigenous Peoples and the Landscape

Indigenous peoples occupied the larger Front Range region long before European settlement, most recently Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute tribes. In terms of use of the landscape by Indigenous populations, Thornton is in the Northeast Colorado subarea within the Plains region as defined by History Colorado archaeologist Jeffrey L. Eighmy, who remarks, “The number of prehistoric components (even a rough idea) on the Plains is currently unknown, although the number must be large.” (*Colorado Plains Prehistoric Context* by Jeffrey L. Eighmy (1981), p. 2):<sup>5</sup>

*“The subarea is defined largely by the South Platte drainage. Plains Indians typically moved from place to place seasonally. Thornton’s Growth Area is said to have attracted frequent hunting but little long-term habitation, which typically leaves a more pronounced effect in the archeological record. However, the lack of archeological investigation in this region makes this merely a guess – though perhaps well-informed by ecological knowledge of the historic landscape with its lack of reliable water, often-inhospitable weather conditions, and uneven availability of migrating herds. It is thought that early human inhabitants were likely to start fires for various reasons (deliberate or accidental). It is believed that they set fires as a management tool for stimulating grass growth to attract herds of large migratory herbivores.”<sup>6</sup>*

### 2.5.3 Corridors and Other Patterns Shaping the Cultural Landscape

Historic roadways and highways; railroads; the South Platte River and its tributaries; the irrigation system of canals, ditches, and reservoirs; and remaining open spaces are of collective interest as patterns that shaped Thornton to the present day. Each corridor is a point for discussion in historic contexts. Within the current landscape, they still present usable corridors for wildlife movement and recreational trails, which the park system has already recognized with a rich and growing system.



These resources may or may not be determined to be of historical significance and worthy of preservation in their own right. They were generated or changed, however, in each of the “layers” of the landscape associated with its evolution as historical trends and technological patterns changed. These should be assessed as various historic context statements are developed.

For example, one of the major, early routes taken by miners, traders, and settlers traveling to Colorado from the east followed the South Platte River and angled southwesterly to the Denver area. While this historic route along the Platte was predominantly located on the south bank of the river, Thornton’s Riverdale Road now follows what may have been an alternate route reached via a crossing at a traditional ford at Julesburg, many miles downstream (northeast) from Thornton. The original north-south Valley Highway (now Interstate 25) and Washington Street, served the area for decades. Washington remains a major arterial road for the community today. These corridors were among the earliest four-lane highways in Colorado, and indeed nationwide.<sup>7</sup> The Hoffman Ditch, which shaped the design of Original Thornton and remains present underground beneath the open boulevard space of Hoffman Way, is worthy of discussion and assessment under Theme 2, Post-World War II Residential, Commercial, and Governmental Development.



*An aerial image (c. 1940) of northern Denver showing the winding South Platte River and the heavy industry and stockyards that would have influenced the development patterns of modern Thornton. Denver Public Library Special Collections, [Rh-4539]*





### 2.5.4 Early Settlers

Thornton, including its Future Growth Area, was part of the earliest region in the state to be settled by Americans flooding to the West to search for gold. Notable settlement began in the far south of the state as early as 1852, when settlers out of Mexico made their way to the San Luis Valley, southwest of the Front Range. After 1858, the confirmation of gold in what is now the Denver region attracted<sup>8</sup> “Western Expansion,”<sup>9</sup> largely defined by the spread of settlers (many of European descent) of the still expanding United States to the east. Gold and other hard rock minerals in the mountains drove early settlement in such places as Denver and Golden; coal was later discovered in three fields along the Front Range, including the “northern field” around Erie, north of Denver and Thornton.



Colorado was the westernmost part of the Kansas Territory until 1861, when Kansas became the 34<sup>th</sup> state and the Colorado Territory was established. Fifteen years later, in 1876, thanks to population growth, Colorado itself became a state (38<sup>th</sup>). Beginning in 1862, homesteading, mining, and associated development such as railroads and smelting led to a large increase in population, especially after the first railroads arrived in Denver in 1870.



### 2.5.5 Railroad Development

The development of railroads in Colorado had been contemplated well before the Civil War. John C. Fremont’s fourth expedition in 1848 aimed to find a suitable railroad route from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean (via San Francisco) through the Colorado mountains. It took heroic local financing and fierce determination on the part of Denverites to achieve a railroad connection north to Cheyenne - made difficult by the disruptive nature of the Civil War, the completion of the Union Pacific transcontinental railroad a hundred miles to the north of Denver through Wyoming in 1867, and fitful other efforts to find railroad routes. The Colorado



*Captions from top image to bottom: 1) Distant view of the Portland Gold Mining Co. Mine c. 1895. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: X6255.; 2) Top-middle: Two people standing in a sugar beet field, c.1910. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: MCC-1079; 3) The Eastlake Grain Elevator c. 1910 and the larger grain silo that burned in the 1980s. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection : MCC-3867; 4) A Union Pacific train in front of Eastlake, c. 1952. Digital Collection: OP-16430*



A beet dump in nearby Brighton (c. 1910) that would have served the agricultural industries of Adams County.  
Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, [MCC-3207]

Central Railroad Company opened its road in June of 1870. The Kansas Pacific (formerly the Union Pacific Eastern Division) crossed the prairies from Kansas City and opened in August of 1870.

Denver's ultimate designation as Colorado's capital in 1881 assured its preeminent position as an economic driver of the region, aided by its natural location on the traditional north-south travel route following the Front Range. Its real geographic power, however, first lay in its connection to the two railroads – soon followed by a third system to the south and a fourth through the mountains. The RTD N Line serves as one of the more active remnants of this landscape in Thornton in addition to other nearby railroad-freight routes. The N Line opened in 2020 and revived rail passenger service to and from Denver with service originating in Denver's historic Union Station. The station located at the historic town of Eastlake (in Thornton) is the current northern terminus of the N Line route.

### 2.5.6 Front Range Agricultural Development

Soon after Colorado's gold rush began, the Eastern Plains began supporting ranching and dryland farming. As the tenth edition of *A Colorado History* (Ubbelohde, et al.) explains, farming in the arid Front Range was an altogether different experience for settlers from the Eastern part of the US (and later, other countries):

*“Many of the argonauts [gold miners] had left farms in the Midwest to come to the mountains. When their enthusiasm for mining paled, with a practiced eye these typical offspring of an expansive and highly mobile farming frontier surveyed the area for possible signs of agricultural pursuits. Some of them took the plunge. Within a few years they would be joined by agriculturalists...who brought themselves and their families to Colorado specifically to engage in farming. All these people, and many who came after them, embarked on a unique experience. They had ‘so much to unlearn’ from their earlier farming experienced in humid areas that, as one person put it, ‘it is better to abandon all notions and begin anew.’” (p. 198)*

W. L. Vickers, a historian writing in 1880 of the earliest times of Euro-American settlement of the West around Denver and in Colorado, speculated that the first stock growers only discovered the dryland prairies were good for cattle after turning out their oxen to starve in the winter, only to find them fattened by spring. He praised the qualities of the country around Fort Collins, Greeley, and the South Platte Valley for farming of all kinds.

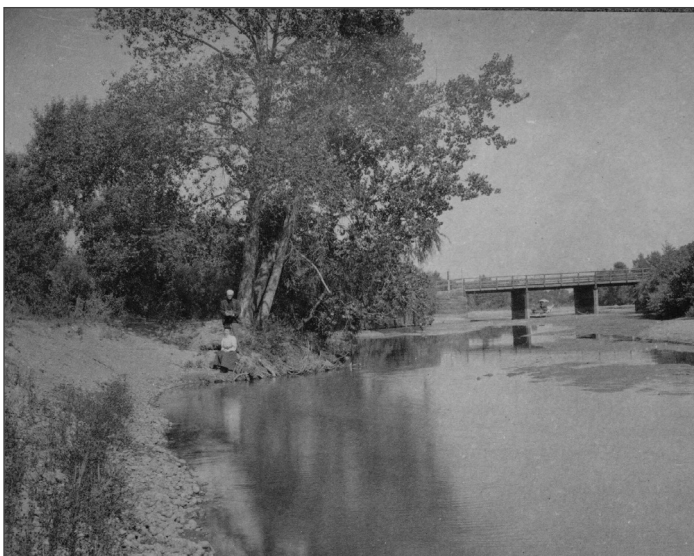
Soon after the Civil War, agriculture was enabled by the building of railroads and military suppression of Indigenous Nations, who, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, were widely resisting the United States' incursion into their lands. As one analyst explained in American Yawp, a web-based history source, “New patterns of American settlement, railroad construction, and material extraction clashed with the vast and cyclical movement [of various Native American groups] across the Great Plains to hunt buffalo, raid enemies, and trade goods.”<sup>10</sup>



“Colony towns” soon followed the opening of the railroads to Denver. These settlements were designed to promote farming, which became more feasible with cooperative ownership and financing, irrigation systems, and large swaths of land fenced from roaming cattle in the beginning era of stock growing. Greeley, Longmont, and Fort Collins (on a former army campsite where no fort ever existed) were all such communities, taking advantage of the best of Colorado’s farming and grazing lands in the South Platte drainage.

All were an improvement on individual homesteading following the Homestead Act of 1862, the first of a series of homesteading acts. In the earliest years of the Colorado Territory, all the way into statehood and the 1880s, the earliest farming efforts faltered, except for the irrigated areas of the South Platte. As *A Colorado History* describes those early years in the context of the renewed farming of the turn of the twentieth century:

*“The most apparent change on the arid plains during the first years of the twentieth century was the renewed interest of homesteaders in conquering the challenges of the Great American Desert. The new assault on the drylands was a much more sober, rational process than that which had occurred in the 1880s. Then, enthusiasm had been buoyed by false hopes about shifting rainbelts and other impossible ideas. Now, as deserted homesteads that had been forsaken during early discouragements were taken up again, there was more understanding of the problems faced. Not all of the original settlers had moved out, of course. Some sturdy souls had managed to sustain themselves through the years of drought. But many of the farms had been left to revert to open range, many of the sodhouses and shanties had begun to tumble and decay. Now the exodus had halted and the land began to fill up again....Significant changes were also taking place in the irrigable valleys of Colorado. The legal structure of the doctrine of prior appropriation had already been gained [in 1866]. Now irrigators called upon the state to allow the creation of ‘district’ irrigation projects. Individual, or even community, efforts, in many cases, were no longer sufficient to construct and maintain the larger projects desired....Many of the privately capitalized irrigation projects built in the 1880s had gone into bankruptcy during the depression of the 1890s. The owners of the lands served by the canals and ditches took over the physical assets of the defunct corporations. Those farmers now desired legislation that would allow them to maintain and expand the systems.” (pp. 257, 259)*



*A couple posing near the South Platte River, alongside Riverdale Road, in the fast changing Denver region c. 1900.*  
Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, [X-18252]

Ranching and dry land farming of wheat were earliest forms of agriculture until the region’s complex system of irrigation ditches began evolving in the 1880s. The ditches ultimately enabled water-hungry agricultural production such as dairy and sugar beets. During this timeframe a succession of ethnic populations was drawn to the region as both farmers and farm laborers, including (but not limited to) Danes, Germans, Italians, Mexicans, and Russians.

After the early irrigation system established on the Culebra River in the San Luis Valley, settled in 1852, irrigation then arose in Colorado in the South Platte Valley. Thus began the “Colorado system” for addressing water rights through prior appropriation in the arid West. The Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area celebrates the vital role that this nearby region of Colorado played in the development of



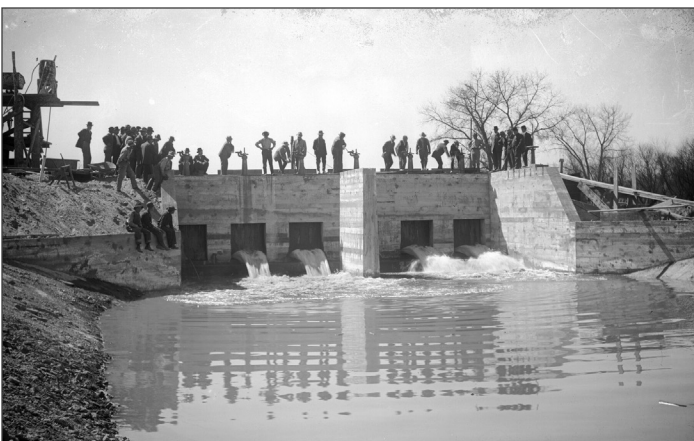
Western water law and the evolution of complex agricultural irrigation systems.<sup>11</sup> Reservoirs were joined to ditches in the South Platte in the 1880s. Thus, the canals, ditches, and reservoirs found in Thornton – preserved in part through the need for water supplies for Thornton’s population – may be some of the earliest in Colorado.



The turn-of-the-century developments in both dryland farming and irrigation of cropland supported development of a farming community in the Thornton area, centered on the small community of Eastlake, that lasted well beyond Thornton’s founding and still is evident today at the main intersection of the former town, at First Street and Lake Avenue. The area was served by a new route of the Union Pacific railroad line extending north out of Denver, in operation as of late 1908. Eastlake itself was founded by two land and irrigation investors, John Frank Church and Andrew Morrison Patten, who combined to form the Eastlake Investment Company and platted the town in 1911 – although a bank, dance hall, and pool hall were in operation before that.



The three lakes that still exist in the landscape around Eastlake were integral to the system Church and Patten worked to bring to this part of Adams County, which should be studied as a part of a cultural landscape study of Eastlake and its surroundings. The water came from Mount Blue Sky (formerly Mt. Evans) via Clear Creek and the Highland Canal. By 1912, the post office opened (the building still remains on Lake Avenue and the post office moved to a new building off of York Street, just north of 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and still operates near Eastlake today. Two grain elevators were built in 1914 and 1920 (Castaneda, pp. 11, 29). The second, the Farmers Co-Operative Elevator, is still in existence, listed in the National Register (see Chapter 4). Surprisingly, given that the track was long abandoned, the rail line is still in operation as a part of RTD’s N Line commuter rail. Just as residents could in the past, they can now ride the railroad back and forth to Denver.



*Captions listed from top image to bottom: 1) Wheat fields in the South Platte Valley c. 1925-1930. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: MCC-3051; 2) Cattle being fed sugar beet pulp, c.1910. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: MCC-1228. 3) A Colorado Front Range irrigation ditch, c. 1925. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection : MCC-3041; 4) Turning of the Burlington Ditch in Adams County c. 1910. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection : MCC-3745*



Sugar beets, long recognized as a potential crop in the area, came into their own at this time – as soon as a sugar factory was constructed in nearby Brighton in 1917, one of as many as thirteen once operated by the Great Western Sugar Company.<sup>12</sup> Crops and livestock farmed in the area, on the bottomlands of the South Platte, continued to include wheat, barley, alfalfa, cattle, and sheep. Farmers – including a variety of immigrant populations such as Italian and Japanese-Americans – grew labor-intensive vegetable crops; some fields remain in production to this day. Alongside the railroad tracks in Eastlake, near the elevators, were a pickle factory, an alfalfa mill, a beet dump, and cattle corrals (Castaneda, pp. 28-29).

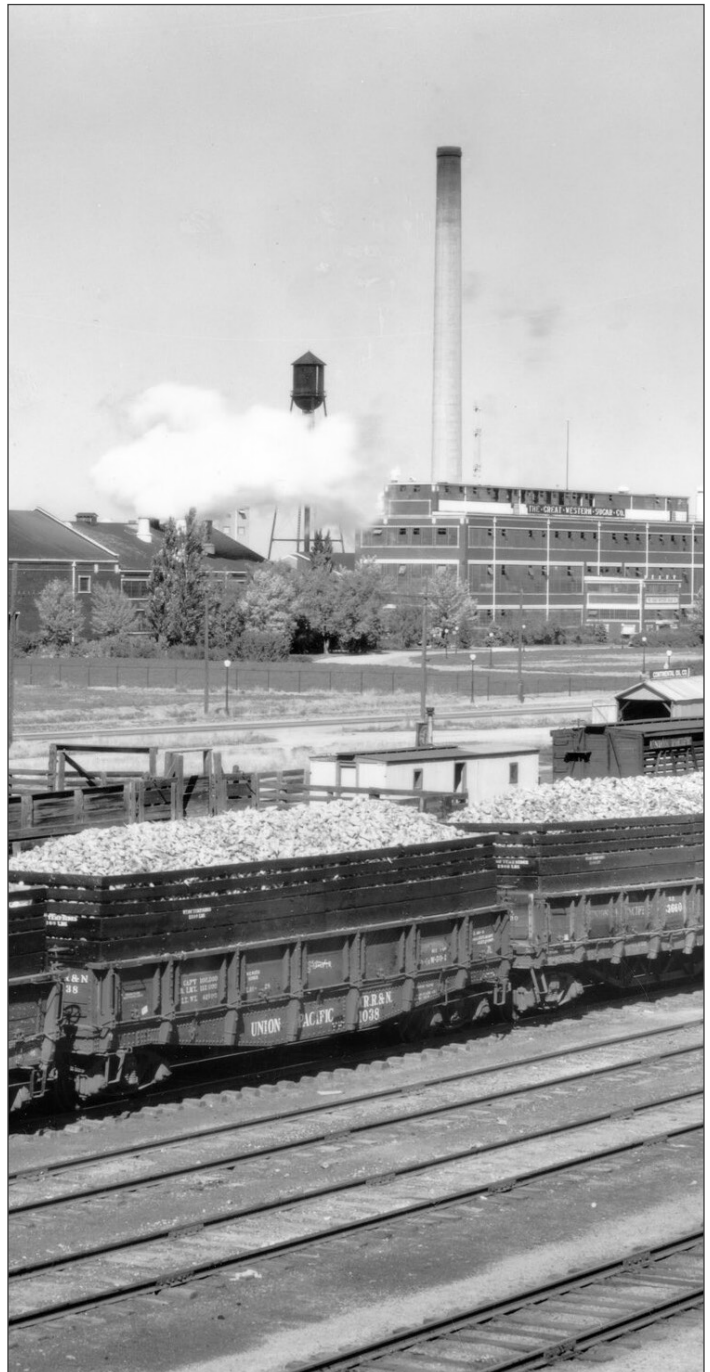
### 2.5.7 Development Patterns in the Front Range Leading Up To and After World War II

Remnants of the agricultural landscape, overtaken by the later, dominant suburban landscape, remain across Thornton. Most notable of these remnants are the ditches and ponds created for water retention systems that today provide important landscape interest for portions of the park system and still support the provision of water to the city of Thornton. Dairying was such a healthy industry regionally that as late as 1973, the Mountain Empire Dairymen’s Association was building its headquarters and regional facility along Washington Avenue north of 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue – the existing Thornton Infrastructure Maintenance Center (IMC) building.

The specific fates of individual farm families may have decided the pace and location of Thornton’s development as it spread across the agricultural landscape, even including the decision of the Eppinger family to sell to Sam Hoffman, allowing him to begin construction of homes in the area now known as Original Thornton.

A few farm structures and features remain within Thornton’s and its Future Growth Area, although they are rapidly being overtaken by the most recent expansions of modern development. Perhaps the most

*Captions listed from top image to bottom: 1) Trains loaded with beets at the Great Western Sugar Company in nearby Brighton, an example of the industries northern Adams County sustained c. 1915-1925. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: MCC-4250; 2) A young laborer in a truck bed with sugar beets overflowing, somewhere in Northern Colorado c. 1910-1927. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: MCC-3210*

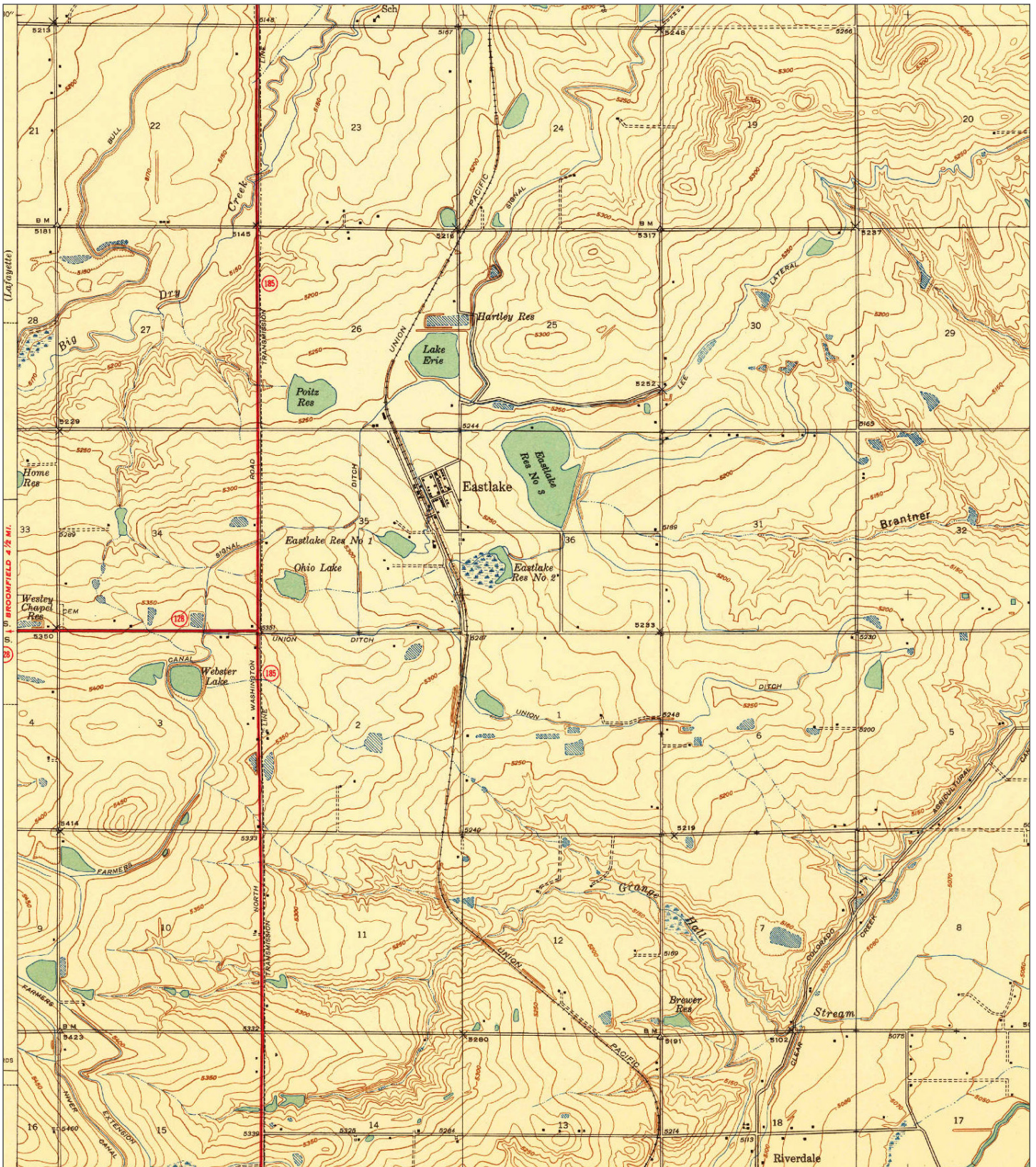




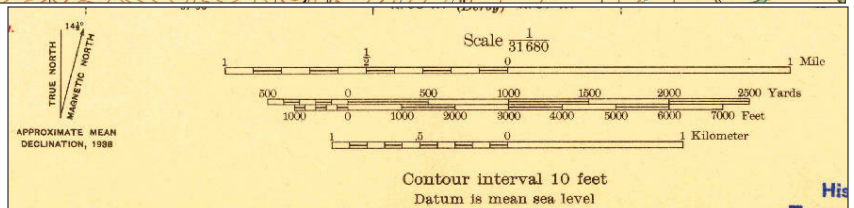
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**Map 2.3 - USGS Map from 1940 of "Eastlake CO,"**

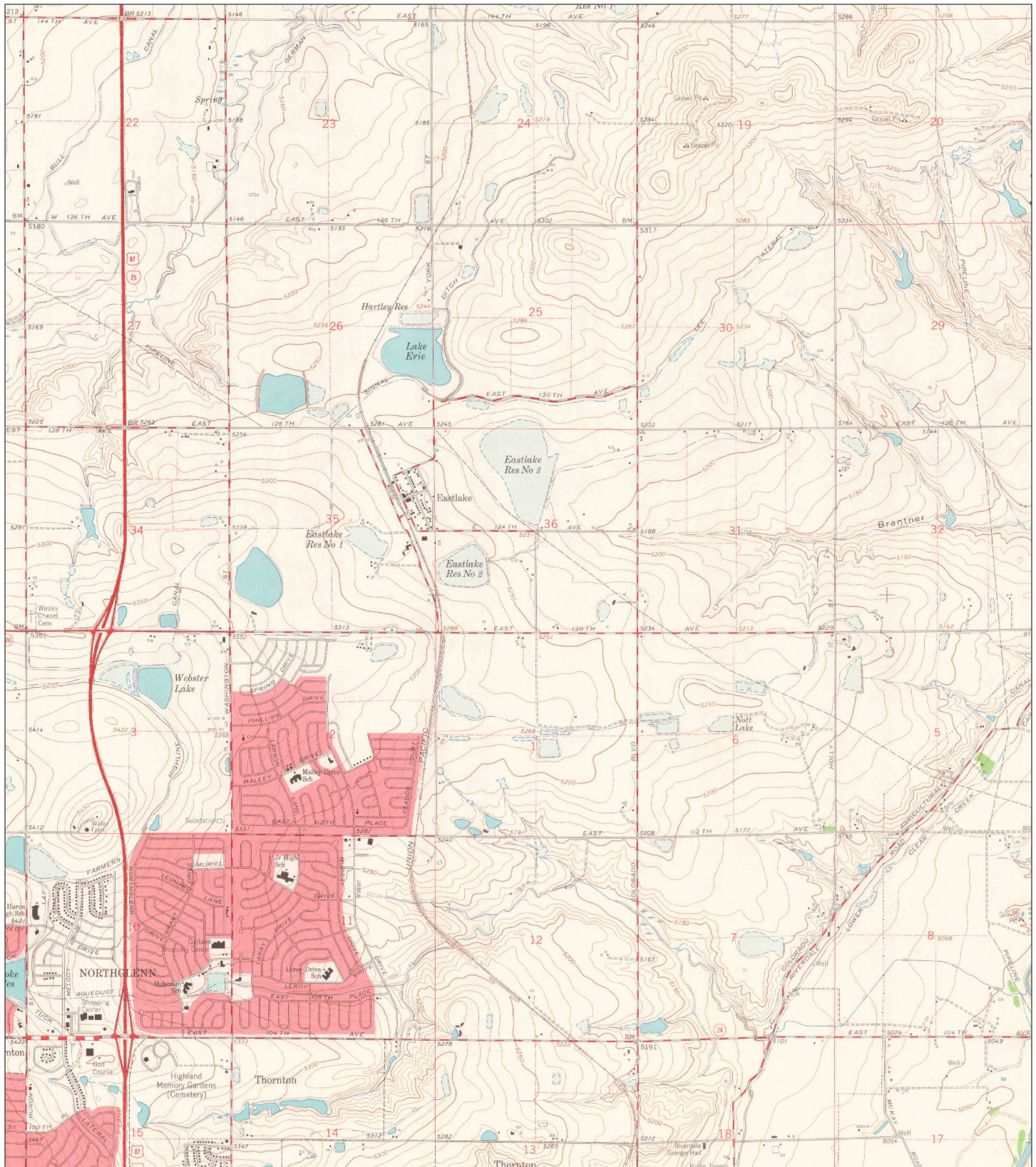


**Map 2.3** displays 1940s Eastlake, which was largely agricultural in nature with reservoirs and farm buildings largely dotting the landscape.

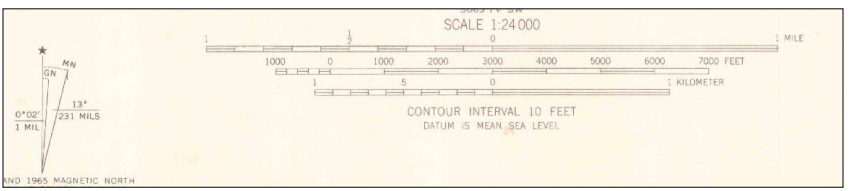




**Map 2.4 - USGS Map from 1965 of “Eastlake CO,”**

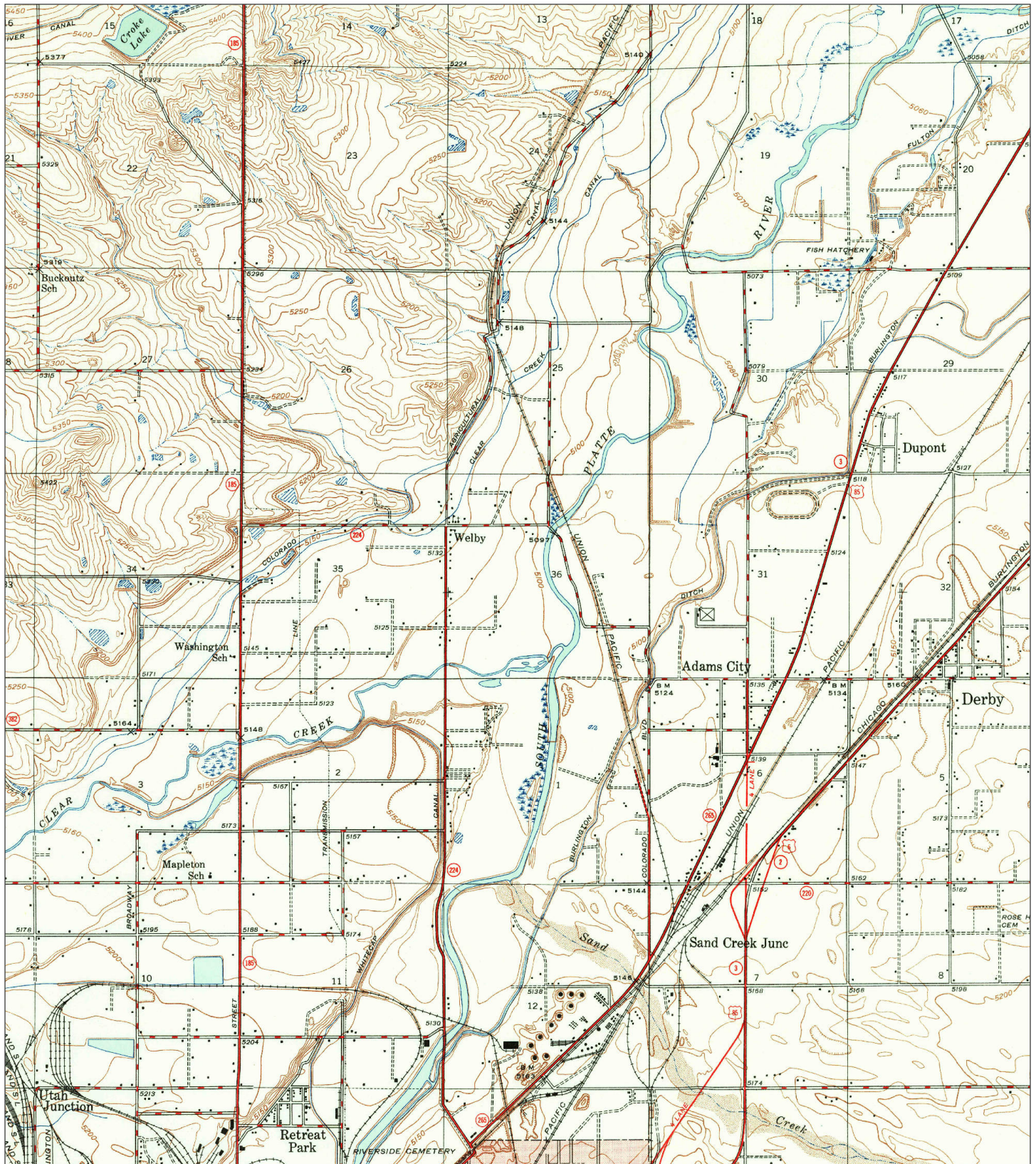


**Map 2.4** displays what was 1960s Eastlake, which was still largely agricultural in nature, but both Northglenn and Thornton have developed to the doorstep of the Eastlake community.

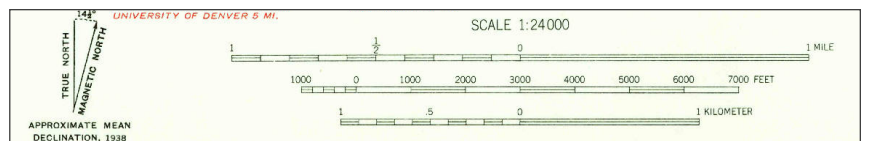




**Map 2.5 - USGS Map from 1937 of "Derby, CO,"**

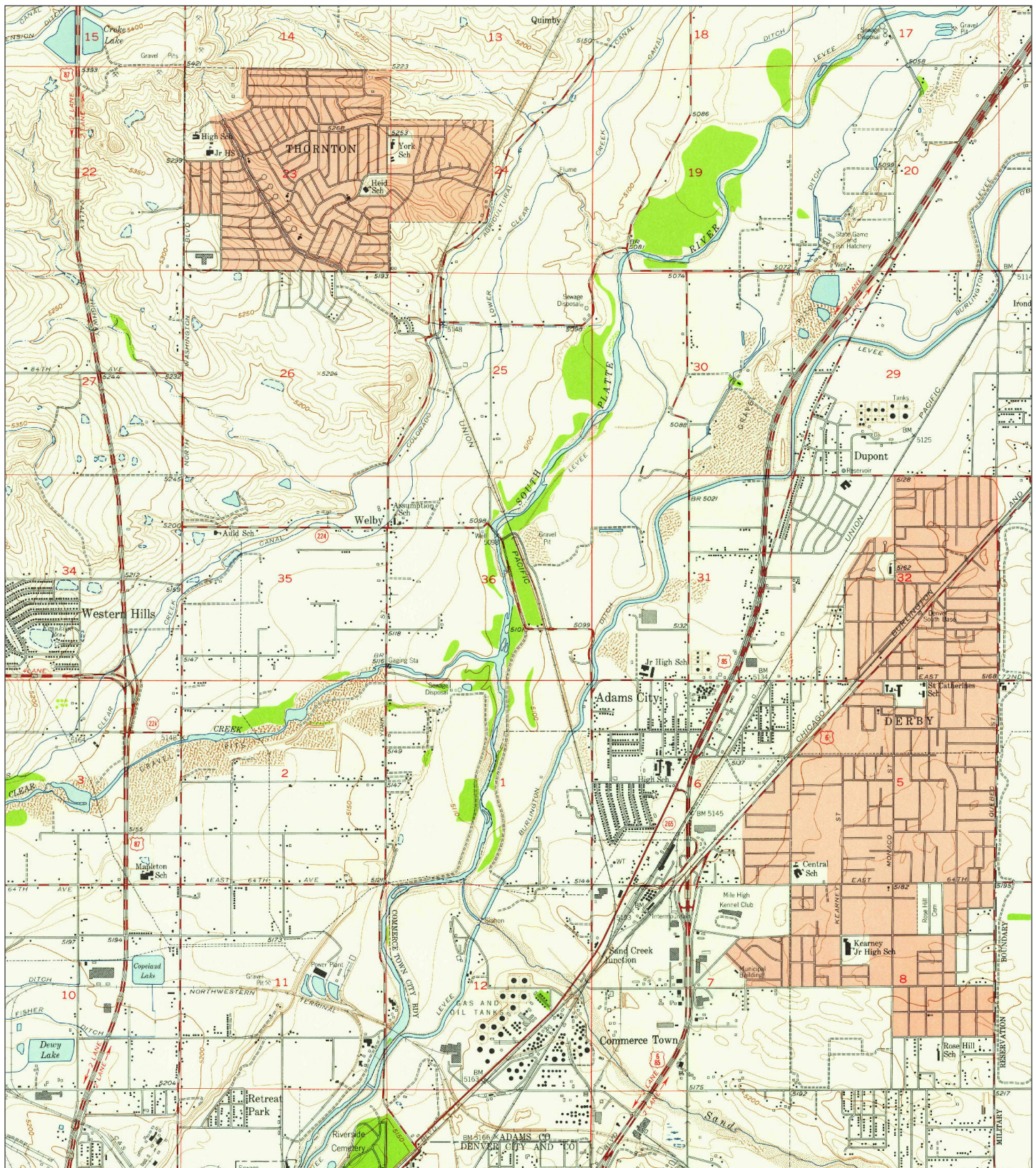


**Map 2.5** displays the portions of Adams County that have evolved into present day Thornton and Commerce City. Also shown is the northern edge of Denver and the South Platte River.

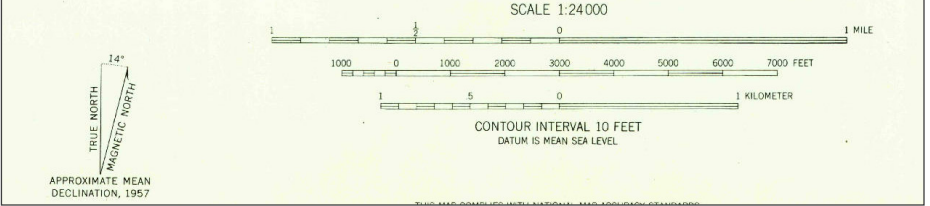




# Map 2.6 - USGS Map from 1957 of "Derby, CO,"



**Map 2.6** displays Thornton at the end of the 1950s, with Commerce City to the east as well as many incorporated and unincorporated areas of Adams County. A significant addition also includes the Valley View Highway.





significant (an assessment awaiting further study) are owned and protected by the City of Thornton. Properties include the Reitzenstein Barn (used by a stock grower) and its surrounding cultural landscape with its splendid view of the Big Dry Creek Ditch, the homes and outbuildings of the Lambertson Homestead and Open Space, and the previously mentioned Eastlake Farmers Co-operative Grain Elevator which remains a striking feature of Eastlake (all described in Chapter 4).

Eastlake (c. 1911) itself served as the nucleus for much of the pre-Thornton community, north of approximately 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and would have been one the largest of the farming communities that served the immediate region. Eastlake is the only known community of this nature still evident in Thornton and its Future Growth Area, and possibly a rare survivor across the entire Denver region (another assessment awaiting further study).



*A view of the landscape in the early days of construction of the “Original Thornton” subdivision, the start of a new city.*



*Likely a view looking south/southeast from within the Rocky Flats in 1979, a site where nuclear weapons and other types of military research occurred and where some of Thornton’s original residents worked for years before 1979. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collection: X-13195*



## 2.6 Theme 2: Post-World War II Residential, Commercial, and Institutional Development, 1952-1974

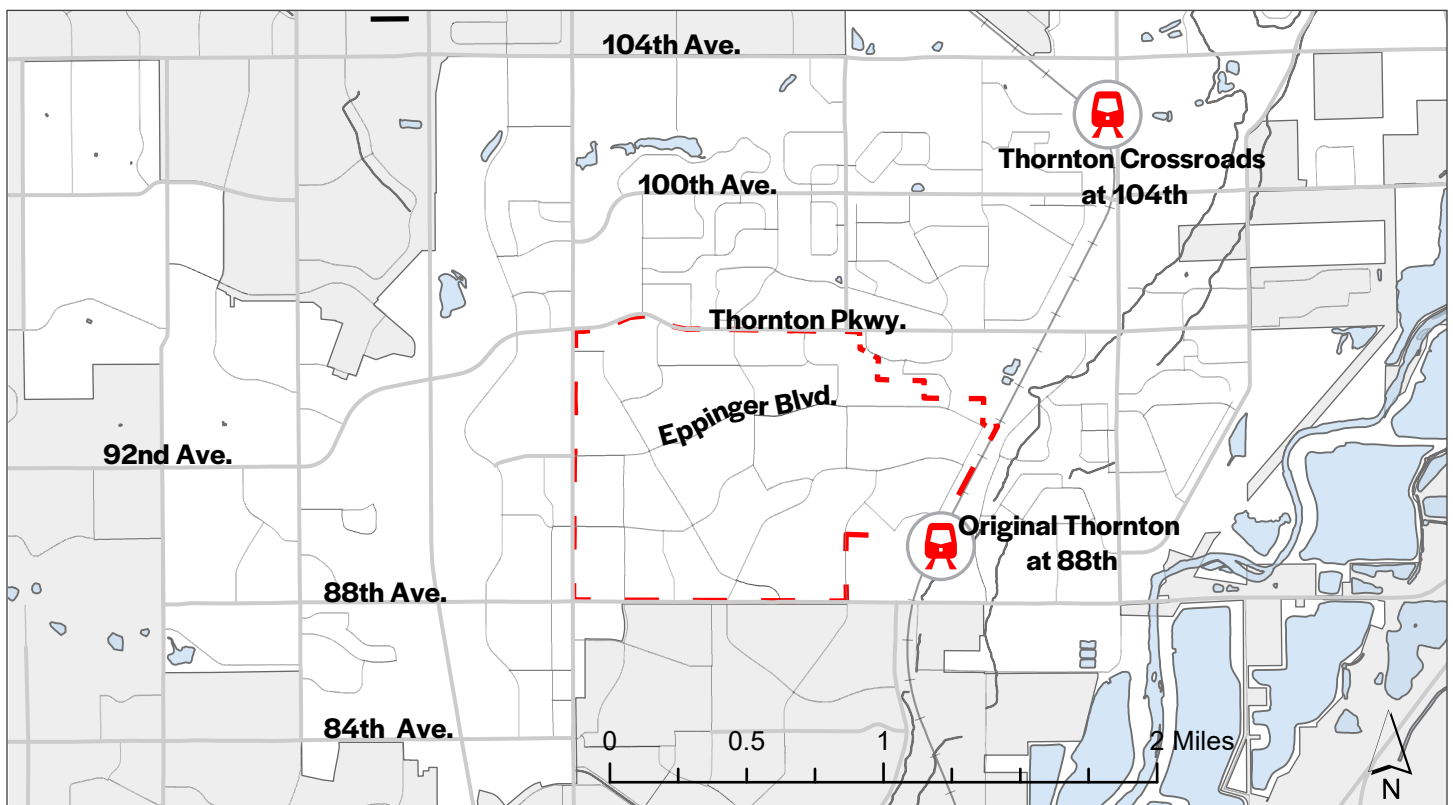
### 2.6.1 “Original Thornton”

Thornton’s early development, between 1952 and 1964, took place within the time period known among preservationists and architectural historians as the “mid-century modern” era, roughly 1945 to 1969. All forms of development – residential, commercial, and institutional (defined to include religious, educational, and governmental) – should be investigated. It is unlikely much industry took place in this landscape but manufacturing to support the agricultural industry is possible, and should be investigated as well.

The decade following the end of World War II had a profound impact on the United States’ culture. Thornton’s development in the context of a significant and rapidly growing metropolitan region of the West illustrates modern thinking of the post-War times about how to house American families and build new communities. Thornton remains an interesting example nationwide of a new town that has successfully evolved into a full-fledged city from 1952 to the present day.

Historians Thomas H. Simmons and R. Laurie Simmons, authors of the comprehensive and authoritative historic context statements in the multiple property listing for “Historic Residential Subdivisions of Metropolitan Denver, 1940-1965,” set the stage for the story that unfolded in north Denver with the rise of the residential planned community of Thornton: “Denver suburbs received \$40 million worth of new construction in 1952, with seven major residential projects creating more than 7,000 houses scheduled for the following year in Adams, Arapaho, and Jefferson counties. The largest of the anticipated developments for 1953 was the 5,000-house planned community of Thornton along north Washington Street a few miles north of the Denver boundary.”<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, however, the enterprising developer of Thornton, Sam Hoffman, managed only to build just about half that number for reasons explained further in this chapter.

**Map 2.7 - Vicinity Map of “Original Thornton” within present day Thornton**



**Map 2.7** displays Thornton at large, displayed with the lighter background. The area known as Original Thornton is encompassed by the general boundary displayed as a dashed line.

Conditions for such development were quite favorable. Among an impressive number of major employers in the Denver area were two quite close to Thornton, Denver's mid-century weapons facilities: the Rocky Flats Plant, a manufacturing complex that supported production of nuclear weapons, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, a factory of other types of weapons and chemicals.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, relatively easy financing for housing was available through federal guarantees and veterans' benefits; highway access to the area was improved through construction of Interstate 25 north out of Denver; and families were growing more rapidly than ever as the middle third of the Baby Boom's eighteen years began to unfold (1946-1964).<sup>15</sup>

Simmons and Simmons describe Thornton's developer Sam Hoffman and the basic approach to Thornton's design as follows:

*"Russian immigrant and homebuilder Samuel Hoffman immigrated to the United States in the 1920s. Early in his career he worked as a plasterer in Detroit, Michigan. After the failure of a 1930s trucking business Hoffman moved to Phoenix, Arizona. There, he turned to real estate as a buyer and seller of homes. In 1947, he started the F & S Construction Company with his son Jack; the company name was an acronym for father and son. Together the men developed a business based on assembly-line construction methods and produced a product appealing to the middle-income market. Hoffman's profit margin was low, and his houses sold quickly. F&S Construction expanded beyond Arizona, selling homes in New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado. In December 1950, Hoffman broke ground for Hoffman Town (now Hoffman Heights) south of Aurora. [In 1952 he also began developing] the planned community of Thornton, Colorado. Samuel Hoffman died in Phoenix, Arizona, in the fall of 1959, and his son-in-law, Sol Dichter, finished the Hoffman projects in the Denver metropolitan area.<sup>16</sup>... Thornton was laid out by blocks in a series of 43 plats ranging in date from 1953 to 1961. The original portion of the community extended from Washington on the west to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the east and from East 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the south to Thornton Parkway on the north. Hoffman Way and Eppinger and Poze Boulevards were the principal circulatory streets. The development generally employed a curvilinear layout with some cul-de-sacs. Most lots appeared to be rectangular.<sup>17</sup> ... The 640-acre site lay on the east side of Interstate 25 northeast of the intersection of Washington Street and East 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue on agricultural land owned by Art and Dorothy Eppinger. Sarajane Anderson, an early resident of the development, recalled her father's comment that "prairie dogs don't even live in that area."<sup>18</sup> ...[In April of 1953, thousands] came to tour the three models: The Arden model was a two-bedroom one-bath home totaling 850 square feet for \$8,350. The Ashley model was 1,150 square feet, with three bedrooms and one-and-a-half baths for \$9,850. A third model, called the Carlton, had three bedrooms, one-and-a-half bathrooms, a dining room, and 1,170 square feet for \$10,250. All of the Hoffman homes were brick, with copper plumbing, central heating, an outdoor clothesline, and large closets. In the summer of 1954, Hoffman Homes introduced a new home model, the Cleveport. At a cost of \$11,000 the brick home contained three bedrooms, an attached carport, and one-and-three-quarters baths. In September 1958 Hoffman Homes advertised three other models: the Imperial, 1,134 square feet on the main floor, all-brick construction, \$11,700 without basement and \$12,500 with basement; the Monarch, more than 1,000 square feet on the main floor, with a full basement, \$10,500; and the Fleetwood, a 1,460-square-foot "luxury home," \$13,250 without basement and \$14,250 with basement.... Homes in Thornton sold mostly to World War II veterans. With a \$532.30 down payment, former GIs could move into the middle range Ashley model with monthly payments of just \$65 a month (including principal, interest, taxes, and insurance [known as PITI] and no closing costs). For non-GIs, a \$1,250 down payment and closing costs were required, with monthly payments of \$67 (PITI)."<sup>19</sup>*



The early days of Thornton under Hoffman's F&S Construction were not peaceful. In 1954, residents angrily challenged the company's decision to build 350 frame homes (as opposed to the brick homes, standard up until this point) as part of a project known more appropriately by the model home, "the Bonnie." Each home was clad with asbestos siding and was constructed as a 988 square-foot structure containing two bedrooms, and a multi-purpose room.<sup>20</sup> Landscaping was not included, and the alkali and clay soil made yard installation difficult; worse, the volcano-derived clay soils had "shrink-swell" characteristics. According to Simmons and Simmons, "By 1957 a small number of house



*A photo of Sam Hoffman and likely Dan Thornton on the left and person unknown on the right, potentially Hoffman's son.*

walls were cracking, floors started sinking, and streets began eroding due to the expansive action of the clay. City officials charged that the main drainage ditch [Hoffman Ditch] for the community was collapsing.... In July 1957, F&S Construction repurchased equity in some Thornton homes 'damaged by unforeseen soil conditions.'<sup>21</sup> A few unhappy residents sued and won in the early 1960s. The development also "...initially lacked paved streets, streetlights, parks, and other services and facilities associated with city living."<sup>22</sup> For this reason, Hoffman also ran into problems obtaining FHA financing, which had to be resolved through high-level political involvement. Ultimately, F&S Construction completed only approximately 2,570 parcels, of which 2,541 are residential.<sup>23</sup> The site of the Original Thornton subdivision was not only poorly served by its troublesome soils, but the topography, natural features, and possibly market trends played into the company's ultimate failure to achieve its vision for 5,000 homes originally planned.

As the community grew, dogs (and sometimes children) ran wild, the few alleys built early in the project remained muddy, and residents burned their trash in backyard pits (for years – they were provided with the houses). The Quonset hut that was the little city's first council room was shared with the used fire truck enterprising volunteers had obtained. Residents voted down the first attempt to incorporate as a city, in 1955, acceding to community leaders' pleas only in a second vote in 1956. The first year's budget was hand-to-mouth. Nevertheless, by 1958, a



*The grand opening ceremony and tour of the Original Thornton model homes before much of the subdivision was completed.*





new city hall and fire station had been built (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of this building, still in use by the city for its Community Connections office).

## 2.6.2 Thornton Begins to Evolve

Thornton, one of six new cities organized in the Denver region in the 1950s, reached a population of 11,353 in 1960, and in that same year was listed as fourteenth among the state's fifteen most populous municipalities.<sup>24</sup> One of Thornton's earliest nicknames was the "Miracle City" as it was largely a community organized originally by volunteers, with no city services or government planned within the original subdivision. Thornton was a grandly conceived concept but at its core was simply an extremely large suburban neighborhood with a few parcels set aside for governmental and church use. The "miracle" was the rapid evolution of the community into a municipality, led by visionary, civic-minded residents.

Thornton was built as an entirely car-oriented community from its inception. Though technically served by a railroad until Union Pacific passenger rail service ended in 1958, Thornton as a community was never organized around it. Eastlake was organized around the railroad and surrounding agricultural industry but was too distant to influence Original Thornton's development patterns in the 1950s. Thus, today, the comparatively large area of Thornton lacks what older communities developed organically: a convenient, central commercial area (a "downtown", "uptown," or "main street"). This is despite the construction of one, and later a second, shopping center at different locations on Washington Street convenient to Original Thornton. With the automobile as the predominant mode of transport, pedestrian access and a single point of services and amenities were no longer certain in the community's evolution. Additional nodes of shopping were introduced as the community grew to the north, subdivision by subdivision, each reflecting the times in which they were built.

Thornton's residents had to bootstrap themselves into organizing a municipal government to gain the services demanded by the growing community. This

*Captions listed from top image to bottom: 1) A family poses outside of a Hoffman Home. 2) A sign being posted by two early supporters of incorporation of Thornton as a city. 3) The Thornton Women's Club in front of the City Pool buildings they led the efforts to fund and build. 4) People enjoying a summer's day at City Pool.*



was driven foremost by a concern for public safety, especially fire and emergency services. Community residents with long-standing memories and respect for Thornton's origins have emphasized the community's development of volunteer first-responder services (fire, emergency medical services, and police). In fact, the city is underwriting a museum to preserve the memory of these early efforts (discussed further in Chapter 4).

Institutional development paralleled governmental organizational efforts, with multiple churches and community groups such as the Thornton Women's Club and recreation association being organized at the same time. Thornton's continuing drive to attain sufficient water to serve its growing population may be of particular interest as a case study of the especially significant story of water rights and development as it evolved in Colorado. Even the construction of I-25 is important in the story of Thornton's development. An interesting local story is the construction of the Thornton Parkway interchange with I-25 in 1985, achieved by determined city leadership in the face of state opposition.

### 2.6.3 Mid-Century Modern (MCM) Design

Thornton's "Mid-Century Modern" or, more simply, "Modern Movement" architectural styles – defined by architectural historians as appearing from approximately 1945 to 1969 – are a manifestation of mid-century American design, which had its roots in 1930s modern architecture and urbanism. The Modernist architectural movement was heavily influenced by German-born American architects Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, both of whom worked in the offices of the internationally influential Swiss architect and city planner Le Corbusier before immigrating to this country. Wisconsin-born architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who began work in 1887 in the offices of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan, was another important influence in Modernism's evolution. The simple brick one-story ranch-style homes built by Hoffman are essentially vernacular adaptations of the prairie style originated by Wright at the turn of the century. Hoehn Architects PC, which surveyed Hoffman Heights in Aurora, explains the style:

*The majority of the resources in Hoffman Heights, constructed between 1950 and 1966, reflect the Modern Movement style of architecture. Although there are many variants of this broadly-defined style, it generally embodies form over function, omission of traditional detailing resulting in little or no building ornamentation, and the use of man-made and natural materials, including brick, stone, wood and concrete, combined with factory-made parts such as anodized aluminum storefront framing systems. The period following World War II was one of renewal and optimism; wartime research was applied to architecture and design, including the use of (then considered) state-of-the-art materials, such as plastic laminates and fiberglass. The architectural form from this period is influenced by regional design considerations, energy conservation considerations, and advances in building technology. In general, character-defining features of this style include low-pitched or flat roofs, wide eave overhangs with exposed roof beams and other structural members, heavy piers supporting gables or roof edges, contrasting wall materials and textures, geometric window shapes and unusual window placements, and the use of ribbon or clerestory windows.<sup>25</sup>*



*Cars and people lined up for the Thornton Days Parade*



*Volunteer firefighters in front of the former US military surplus Quonset hut turned fire department and city hall.*





*Modern photos taken from Original Thornton of homes that exhibit extant architecture, with modern additions and landscaping.*

Interestingly, the earliest streets that Hoffman built in Thornton - straight, with alleys - are an echo of city-building practices of past decades and centuries. The shift to the now-standard curvilinear suburban street design of Original Thornton illustrates a further response to changing designs of the mid-century. Such streets have roots in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century but were not often used until after World War II. This unique feature (i.e. the alleys) of Original Thornton deserves highlighting in its interpretation – a ghost of city-building’s past. The relationship of Original Thornton’s overall design to those of other notable suburban developments deserves full exploration in future research.

Individual buildings across Thornton tell the familiar story of the evolution of architectural design from 1952 onward, including churches, commercial structures, and governmental buildings. An exuberant fan-like canopy on the school built for Mapleton School District No. 1 in 1963 at 8990 York Street may be the most elaborate style identified. It





Students walking under an exuberant fan-like canopy at the Mapleton School District No. 1 building off of York Street.

was designed by Wheeler & Lewis, a prolific architectural firm in the Denver region specializing in school buildings and is documented in the extensive inventory of mid-century modern school buildings in the Denver area.<sup>26</sup>

Other structures, however, also deserve study. For example, a Safeway grocery store built in 1959 in the area reserved for commercial development in Original Thornton still exists today as a health center. The structure may be among the earliest of the “western ranch style design” built by Safeway in many communities across America in the 1960s, identified by its wide sweeping roof.<sup>27</sup> The refined design of the first purpose-built municipal building is by a prominent local architect, Hans Kahn. It remains in community use with a high degree of integrity; see more in Chapter 4. Additionally, multiple churches were built on parcels provided by Hoffman, including the first to employ an A-frame style: the former Presbyterian Church. Built at 9200 Hoffman Way and today occupied by the Legacy Christian congregation, it was completed in 1956 at the cost of \$55,000 and designed by Denver architect

James H. Johnson. Finally, a bowling alley at 8800 Grant Street, today the AMF Sonesta Lanes. The structure includes a semi-circular doorway embellishment and snazzy space-age paint, both recalling mid-century styling, likely built in Thornton’s earlier years. Still others await surveyors’ evaluations.

The brochure used to advertise the Hoffman Homes being constructed in the Original Thornton subdivision. Displayed on this image of the brochure is the “Ashley” model home.

## 2.6.4 Later Thornton Development

Documentation of development patterns and neighborhoods that follow the development of Original Thornton is worth undertaking to guide future surveyors investigating Thornton’s architectural record and overall historical development since 1960. Technically



speaking, surveyors of historic resources are interested in properties that are at least 50 years old (up to 1974 at present writing). Thornton's history should be recorded and curated right up until modern times to organize community planning records through well-funded archival work, despite the 50-year "standard" often associated with historic resources and surveying. Thornton's development, at least through the 1970s, should be included in detail, addressing such critical city land use decisions as seeking stable water supplies and developing the city's system of parks and recreational facilities – some of which may represent important, late-twentieth-century local institutional architecture.

Conditions outside of Thornton's control also affected its development, such as the context for development in the Denver region at large or a drought that occurred for nearly a decade in the 1950s. Each of these particular factors influenced area farmers to shift strategies for farming and, for some, to move out of farming altogether, as evident by the selling of the farms to become neighborhoods of Thornton and its surrounding cities. Recommendations for archival work are contained within this plan. Archival preservation and digital accessibility of Thornton's city records will be a boon to future historians and surveyors of historic resources and will help to secure Thornton's place in the national record of mid-twentieth-century land use planning and growth.



*North Valley Mall, looking south from 84th Ave., which still contains a variety of tenants, including Regis University.*



*A ribbon cutting ceremony for the Interstate 25 Overpass at Thornton Parkway. Pictured in the center are celebrity Jane Russell who helped with opening ceremonies of Original Thornton, former long-time Mayor, Margaret Carpenter (holding the large, gold scissors), and other staff and Thornton leaders who are unidentified.*



## 2.7 Conclusion

Historic context statements, themes, and historical research are key to promoting wider public appreciation of Thornton's history, built resources, and cultural landscape. This chapter provides a start to the good work ahead to build a formal understanding of Thornton's evolution within regional and national contexts. As each site and neighborhood named in the following pages is studied more intensively, more facts and stories will come to light.

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- How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16B-Complete.pdf>)
- Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/upload/standards-guidelines-archeology-historic-preservation.pdf>) (page 4 in the Federal Register version)

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- Hoffman Heights Reconnaissance Survey: Architectural & Historical Survey Report (Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, History Colorado, CLG Project Number 08-09-011, June 2010); and Intensive Survey: Architectural & Historical Survey Report (CLG Project Number CO-11-011, September 2012), both prepared by Hoehn Architects PC for the City of Aurora Historic Sites and Preservation Office. The historic context statement in the first report covers "The Post-World War II Housing Construction Industry"; "Sam Hoffman, Community Builder"; and "Hoffman Town in Aurora, Colorado"; the historic context statement in the second report covers "Community Planning & Development," "Commerce & Trade," and "Architecture."
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## Other Resources

- Hayden, Dolores. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. NY: Vintage Books (Random House), 2003.
- Note that considerable bibliographies are provided in the historic contexts cited for Colorado resource studies,

## Endnotes

1 For more information, see “How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form,” issued by the National Park Service (Bulletin 16B, available at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16B-Complete.pdf>). EXCERPT: A Multiple Property Nomination Form “nominates groups of related significant properties. On it, the themes, trends, and patterns of history shared by the properties are organized into historic contexts and the property types that represent those historic contexts are defined. It may be used to nominate and register thematically related historic properties simultaneously or to establish the registration requirements for properties that may be nominated in the future.... [It] streamlines the method of organizing information collected in surveys and research for registration and preservation planning purposes. The form facilitates the evaluation of individual properties by comparing them with resources that share similar physical characteristics and historical associations. Information common to the group of properties is presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, while information specific to each individual, site, district, structure, or object is placed on an individual registration form. As a management tool, the thematic approach can furnish essential information for historic preservation planning because it evaluates properties on a comparative basis within a given geographical area and because it can be used to establish preservation priorities based on historical significance. (p. 2)

2 Alleys were included in the Original Thornton street design, at first, but were removed from later subdivision filings for Original Thornton.

3 [https://store.usgs.gov/assets/MOD/StoreFiles/Ecoregion/205792\\_co\\_front.pdf](https://store.usgs.gov/assets/MOD/StoreFiles/Ecoregion/205792_co_front.pdf)

4 [https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/67B\\_Loamy\\_Plains\\_PROVISIONAL\\_8-3-17.pdf](https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/67B_Loamy_Plains_PROVISIONAL_8-3-17.pdf); sources eliminated.



5 Although 1981 is decades ago, it appears that little has been published that would change Eighmy's assessment. In 1990, History Colorado established a Multiple Property Documentation Form with the National Register of Historic Places to encompass sites, known and unknown, that are associated with Prehistoric Paleo-Indian Cultures of the Colorado Plains, ca. 11,500-7500 BP. <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/615.pdf>. Included among the sites documented in this form is one from Weld County, <https://www.historycolorado.org/location/jurgens-site>. History Colorado's general web page on Native American history and heritage is found at <https://www.historycolorado.org/native-american-history-heritage>. Another useful general reference is History Colorado's Colorado Encyclopedia entry for the Archaic Period, <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/article/archaic-period-colorado>, which cites three general works on Colorado archaeology published in 1997, 1999, and 2000.

6 [https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/67B\\_Loamy\\_Plains\\_PROVISIONAL\\_8-3-17.pdf](https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/67B_Loamy_Plains_PROVISIONAL_8-3-17.pdf); sources eliminated.

7 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate\\_25\\_in\\_Colorado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_25_in_Colorado)

8 <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/article/colorado-gold-rush#:~:text=In%201807%20explorer%20Zebulon%20M,as%20the%20Pikes%20Peak%20region>. One pre-Denver settlement was named "Auraria" in honor of its golden origins; the name derives from the Latin term aurum, or gold. <https://history.denverlibrary.org/neighborhood-history-guide/auraria-neighborhood-history>

9 For a discussion of the term "Western Expansion," consult <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-westward-expansion/#>.

10 [https://www.americanyawp.com/text/17-conquering-the-west/#identifier\\_10\\_97](https://www.americanyawp.com/text/17-conquering-the-west/#identifier_10_97). See also the National Geographic source cited above. A more extended quote from American Yawp: "The 'Indian wars,' so mythologized in western folklore, were a series of seemingly sporadic, localized, and often brief engagements between U.S. military forces and various Native American groups. More sustained and equally impactful conflicts were economic and cultural. New patterns of American settlement, railroad construction, and material extraction clashed with the vast and cyclical movement across the Great Plains to hunt buffalo, raid enemies, and trade goods. Thomas Jefferson's old dream that Indigenous nations might live isolated in the West was, in the face of American expansion, no longer a viable reality. Political, economic, and even humanitarian concerns intensified American efforts to isolate Native Americans on reservations. Although Indian removal had long been a part of federal Indian policy, following the Civil War the U.S. government redoubled its efforts. If treaties and other forms of persistent coercion would not work, federal officials pushed for more drastic measures: after the Civil War, coordinated military action by celebrity Civil War generals such as William Sherman and William Sheridan exploited and exacerbated local conflicts sparked by illegal business ventures and settler incursions. Against the threat of confinement and the extinction of traditional ways of life, Native Americans battled the American army and the encroaching lines of American settlement." A suggested reference is *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado*, by Elliott West (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1998); and a simplified national/full-century context is available from the Library of Congress at <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/native-american/?>.

11 <https://poudreheritage.org>

12 <https://coloradopreservation.org/2016-list-colorados-most-endangered-places/gws/#:~:text=In%20the%20early%2020th,Colorado%20factory%20began%20in%201916>

13 "Growth of the Metropolitan Area and Post World War II Subdivision Development, 1946-65," historic context statement in the multiple property listing "Historic Residential Subdivisions of Metropolitan Denver, 1940-1965," Section number E, Page 44 (Simmons and Simmons, 2010, henceforth cited here as "Simmons and Simmons" with section and page numbers only; footnotes omitted; also sited in bibliography).

14 "Operated from 1952 to 1992, the [Rocky Flats] complex was under the control of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, succeeded by the Department of Energy in 1977." Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocky\\_Flats\\_Plant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocky_Flats_Plant); and "The U.S government acquired the Arsenal land in 1942 to manufacture chemical warfare agents, including mustard gas and incendiary munitions, for use in World War II. Following the war and through the early 1980s, the facilities continued to be used by the Army. From 1950 to 1952, the Army constructed the North Plants complex to manufacture the nerve agents VX and GB (also called sarin). Rocket fuel was blended on-site for the Titan and Delta missile operations. In an effort to

foster economic growth in the area and maintain the facilities for national security, private companies were encouraged to lease facilities beginning in the mid-1940s. Shell Oil Co. leased the property and manufactured agricultural pesticides in the South Plants complex from 1952 through 1982.” <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/hm/rocky-mountain-arsenal#:~:text=History,be%20used%20by%20the%20Army>

15 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/baby-boomers>

16 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, Page 118. See also, Hoffman Heights Reconnaissance Survey, pp. 17-19 (cited in the bibliography).

17 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, Page 138.

18 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E Pages 136-37.

19 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, page 136.

20 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, page 136.

21 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, pages 137-38.

22 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, page 137.

23 City of Thornton, 2009 grant application for a reconnaissance survey of Original Thornton (not carried out).

24 Simmons and Simmons, Section number E, Page 44.

25 Hoffman Heights Intensive Survey, p. 34 (cited in the bibliography).

26 Colorado’s Mid-Century Schools, 1945-1970, Multiple Property Listing, October 2016, Section number J, Page 141; and Section number E, Page 37. ([https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/MPDF\\_MidCSchools.pdf](https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/MPDF_MidCSchools.pdf))

27 <https://www.andrewturnbull.net/safeway2.html>; and <https://www.groceteria.com/store/national-chains/safeway/safeway-history/4/>.



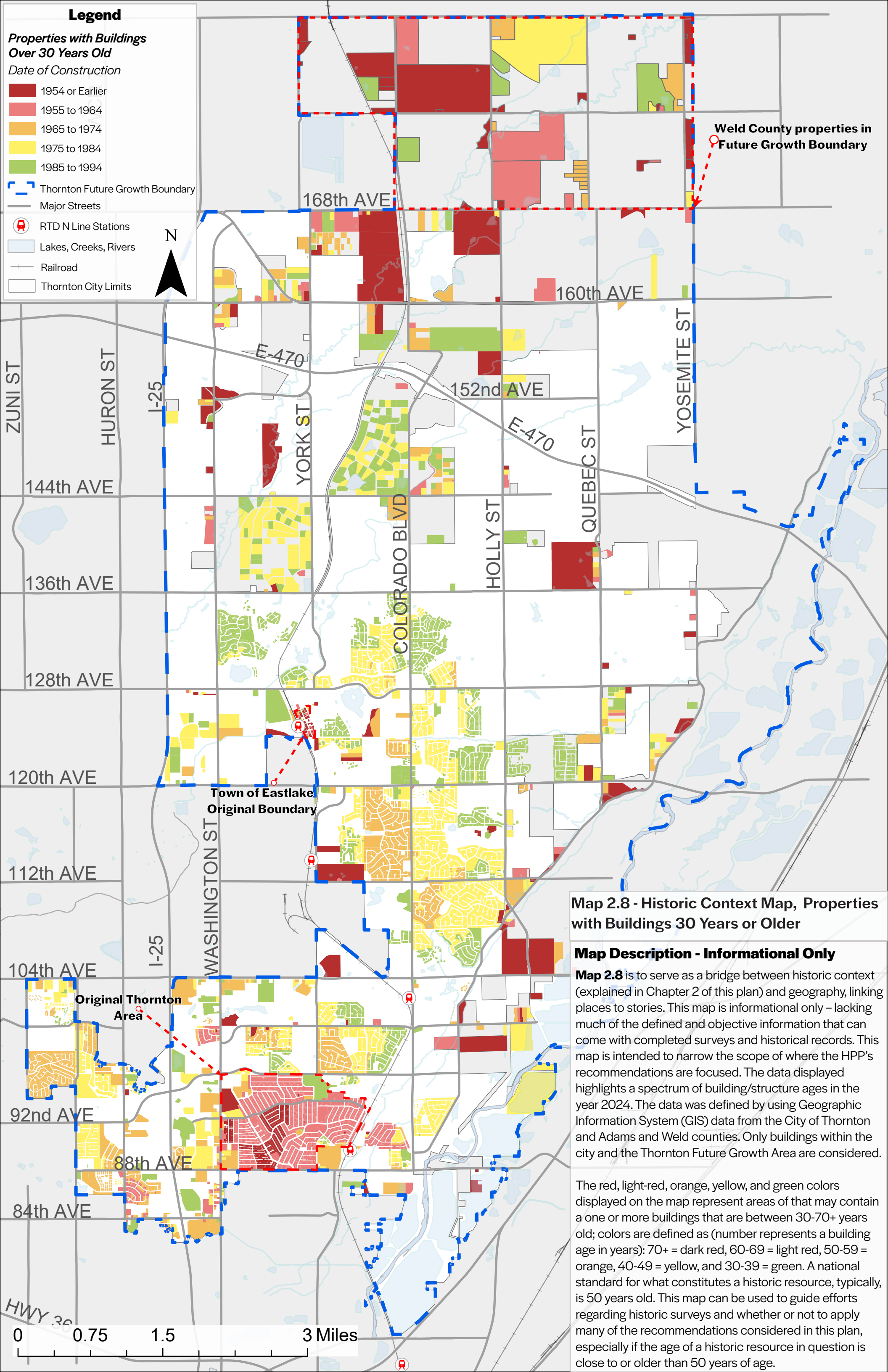
**Legend**

**Properties with Buildings Over 30 Years Old**

**Date of Construction**

- 1954 or Earlier
- 1955 to 1964
- 1965 to 1974
- 1975 to 1984
- 1985 to 1994

- Thornton Future Growth Boundary
- Major Streets
- RTD N Line Stations
- Lakes, Creeks, Rivers
- Railroad
- Thornton City Limits



Weld County properties in Future Growth Boundary

**Map 2.8 - Historic Context Map, Properties with Buildings 30 Years or Older**

**Map Description - Informational Only**

Map 2.8 is to serve as a bridge between historic context (explained in Chapter 2 of this plan) and geography, linking places to stories. This map is informational only – lacking much of the defined and objective information that can come with completed surveys and historical records. This map is intended to narrow the scope of where the HPP’s recommendations are focused. The data displayed highlights a spectrum of building/structure ages in the year 2024. The data was defined by using Geographic Information System (GIS) data from the City of Thornton and Adams and Weld counties. Only buildings within the city and the Thornton Future Growth Area are considered.

The red, light-red, orange, yellow, and green colors displayed on the map represent areas of that may contain a one or more buildings that are between 30-70+ years old; colors are defined as (number represents a building age in years): 70+ = dark red, 60-69 = light red, 50-59 = orange, 40-49 = yellow, and 30-39 = green. A national standard for what constitutes a historic resource, typically, is 50 years old. This map can be used to guide efforts regarding historic surveys and whether or not to apply many of the recommendations considered in this plan, especially if the age of a historic resource in question is close to or older than 50 years of age.





# CHAPTER 3



# CHAPTER 3. ESTABLISHING THORNTON'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Ensuring that Thornton's community at large has a fully functioning historic preservation program is a primary aim of this Historic Preservation Plan (HPP). Such a program should make use of the many tools of historic preservation practice as described in this chapter. Ultimately, one potential result of this HPP is a program that enables Thornton to qualify as a Certified Local Government (CLG) according to state and federal historic preservation requirements, as explained later in this chapter.

While Thornton has a basic process for local recognition of historic resources, adding a dedicated local advisory body and dedicated staffing would encourage wider use of the process. Moreover, attaining CLG status would enable owners of locally landmarked properties, both residential and non-residential, to qualify for state tax benefits and grants for preservation-related activities.

This chapter describes the nationwide system supporting historic preservation at the community level and beyond, explaining the context within which Thornton can situate its desired program. Further, subsequent chapters elaborate on historic preservation's relation to other city planning functions (Chapter 4) and describe the public outreach and events designed to support Thornton community members' opportunities to learn about and enjoy the community's stories and historic resources (Chapter 5).

### 3.1. Background: The Framework for Historic Preservation

Local communities across the United States can participate in a nationwide framework for historic preservation that prescribes close coordination on the part of local, state, and national actors engaging in preservation work. Educating communities about their historic resources and encouraging them to protect those resources falls to local leaders and historic preservation advocates – often supported by technical assistance and grants provided from the state. Key elements of this framework are discussed in the following paragraphs, largely focused on regulatory and local government practices aimed at promoting historic preservation.

#### 3.1.1. The National Historic Preservation Act

The modern nationwide framework for historic preservation began with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (“Act”), which was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966. The Act laid out a significant partnership between the federal and state levels of government for historic preservation. The following subsections further outline key aspects of the National Historic Preservation Act.

#### 3.1.2. The National Register of Historic Places

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established the National Register of Historic Places (“Register”) and required that federal actions or federally-licensed or supported undertakings consider their impacts on historic properties included in the Register. Typically, historic properties on the Register must be 50 years of age or older to qualify for listing. This process is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and was described in the original Act under Section 106, creating the shorthand name for “a Section 106 consultation” (or review) for what is effectively an environmental review procedure as applied to historic properties.

As of January 2024, the NPS’s National Register database lists nearly 99,000 historic properties. There are 1,644 historic properties in Colorado, and Adams County is home to 20 of them. One National Register listing is within the city of Thornton: the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator Company property at 126<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Claude Court.

Only a few years into the National Register’s operation, there were concerns under President Richard Nixon’s Administration that filling out the National Register was taking considerable time. Thus, out of a general concern that historic properties could be lost to adverse federal undertakings before they could be discovered, President Nixon signed Executive Order 11593 in 1971. This Order effectively requires that historic properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register – not just those formally listed – be treated under Section 106 as if they are listed.<sup>1</sup> The Section 106 process is considered later in this chapter.



*A side view of the Eastlake grain elevator, just before construction started on the Eastlake N Line Station.*

#### 3.1.3. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Another key element of the National Historic Preservation Act was the establishment of State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) as designated by each state and the authorization of the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) to help support those SHPOs.<sup>2</sup> In 1976, Congress began funding the HPF with revenue from offshore oil and gas leases.<sup>3</sup>

As time passes, more and more buildings reach the 50-year threshold for historic property nomination. In order to gain a head start on the process of nominations,



SHPOs were strongly encouraged to carry out their first task enumerated in the National Historic Preservation Act, to “...direct and conduct a comprehensive statewide survey of historic properties.” Today, the ongoing expansion of the state surveys is accomplished primarily through state grants provided to organizations and agencies at the local level. A modest amount of grant support is also available from such sources as the NPS, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and foundations at the national, state, and local levels.

SHPOs also field National Register nominations, working with a statewide advisory body to determine whether candidate properties are worthy of review by the NPS for inclusion in the Register. In Colorado, the state advisory body is the State Review Board. Furthermore, SHPOs serve as the starting place for Section 106 consultations and are also administrators of the federal rehabilitation tax credit program (described in more detail below).

SHPOs have an important role to play in connecting federal resources and reviews to the local level. State offices have more intimate knowledge of what is going on in their own communities, and usually maintain a state-level database of all surveyed properties (not just those eligible for or listed in the National Register). Colorado has its own Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, which requires state agencies to undertake reviews similar to those of Section 106 of their impacts on historic resources.<sup>4</sup>

#### **3.1.4. Section 106 Consultation**

Under Section 106, federal agencies, and their grantees and licensees, are required to consider the impacts of their work on historic properties on or eligible for the National Register. This requirement often results in alterations to a project’s design to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on historic resources, which must be thoroughly investigated as part of the process whether or not they are listed in the National Register. Ultimately, an agency is not required to protect historic resources in its project design, but it should thoroughly list any impacts the design will have on those resources. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP, an independent federal agency), also established under the National Historic Preservation Act, administers the final disposition of Section 106 consultations that cannot be resolved through involvement of SHPOs and other government agencies and consulting parties. Only after all consultation is complete may the involved federal agency make its decision.

Many states, including Colorado through the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, require similar reviews for state agencies.<sup>5</sup> History Colorado’s website offers additional resources for both Section 106 and State Register Act review and compliance.<sup>6</sup>

#### **3.1.5. Colorado’s State Historical Fund**

Over time, SHPOs across the nation have developed a wide variety of techniques for encouraging local historic preservation, using both federally distributed funds and other state and local funds. Colorado created the State Historical Fund (SHF), a rather unusual program compared to most states; it is described in History Colorado’s *State Historical Fund Grant Program Guidebook*.<sup>7</sup> When voters approved a constitutional amendment in 1990 that allowed limited gaming in the towns of Cripple Creek, Central City, and Black Hawk (which receive a direct allocation of the annual disbursement of gaming tax revenues for their local historic preservation efforts), they also supported a directive stating that a portion of the gaming tax revenues be used for historic preservation throughout the state. Eligible applicants for SHF funds include both public entities within Colorado, including the City of Thornton, and registered nonprofit organizations.<sup>8</sup>



*History Colorado is the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).  
Source: History Colorado*

SHF grants provide funds for many kinds of preservation projects; projects generally require a cash match contribution toward the project total unless the applicant receives a waiver. Some grants through the Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (OAHP) don't require cash matches for Certified Local Governments (explained below).

SHF grants are available in two categories: noncompetitive and competitive. Noncompetitive grants typically aid in the preparation, planning, and development of future historic preservation and archaeology projects. History Colorado offers six types of noncompetitive SHF grants: Archaeological Assessment, Planning, Emergency, Historic Structure Assessment, Micro, and Survey Plan; the maximum grant award (as of January 2024) is \$15,000 except for the "Micro" grants, which have a maximum of \$5,000. History Colorado accepts these applications year-round and funds them on a rolling basis by fiscal year (July 1–June 30). For full and latest details on the noncompetitive grants, it is best to consult History Colorado's website.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, History Colorado offers two competitive grants, General and Mini, twice a year. Grants vary by request amount, review process, and award announcement date. The required cash match for nonprofit or public owners is 25 percent; projects by private owners (sponsored by local governments or non-profits) require a 50 percent match. "Mini" competitive grants are available up to \$50,000, and "General" grants are available from \$50,001 to \$250,000. The use of competitive grant funds could be applied to planning, physical construction, acquisition of sites, archaeology, surveying and nomination work, education, loan programs, and other programs that meet History Colorado grant goals and requirements. Eligible projects include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- **Planning:** To develop documents to outline future physical work on a site or resource that address potential changes, alternative approaches, preservation of historic materials and finishes, and/or the prevention of loss, damage, and irreversible changes.
- **Physical Work:** For construction related to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction of a historic resource.



*A photo of the town of Black Hawk from which much of Colorado's preservation dollars are derived. Source: History Colorado.*



*The Bradford House in Jefferson County. Source: History Colorado.*



- **Acquisition:** For the purchase of historic and archaeological structures, buildings, sites, objects, and districts resulting in the transfer of a deed.
- **Archaeology:** For the identification, recordation, preservation, and/or interpretation of archaeological resources. This includes work with both archaeological sites and artifact collections.
- **Architectural Survey and Nomination:** For the identification, documentation, evaluation, designation, and/or planning for the protection of historic buildings, structures, sites, and districts.
- **Education:** To provide education or training in historic preservation practices, or education about the preservation or significance of a historic resource in Colorado. Education projects must demonstrate a direct correlation to historic preservation, the built environment, and/or archaeology in Colorado. For projects about a specific resource(s), the resource must be listed in the National Register, State Register, as a local landmark, or have documented eligibility for designation (the resulting final products may include preservation technical guidance, trainings, or workshops; interpretive signage and planning; curricula or lessons; and audio/walking tours).
- **Loan Programs:** The creation and support of loan or sub-grant programs for historic preservation. Projects supported by these programs must comply with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (any interest or principal payments generated by such programs must continue to be used for those purposes).
- **Other Programs:** Consult with History Colorado staff.

### 3.1.6. Certified Local Governments (CLG)

The National Historic Preservation Act has been amended several times over the decades since its passage in 1966. A notable amendment in 1980 was the addition of Certified Local Governments (CLGs) to the national framework, increasing opportunities for the involvement of, and state support for, local governments. In describing its CLG program, Colorado emphasizes that “...a strong local preservation program can increase property values, assist in promoting heritage tourism, and promote community heritage and identity.”<sup>10</sup>

The NPS describes the nationwide program with the following language:

*Across the nation, thousands of diverse communities have taken action to preserve their unique historic character. The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program is the official preservation partnership connecting local, state, and Federal governments to help communities save their irreplaceable historic resources. Through the certification process, communities make a local commitment to historic preservation. This commitment is key to America’s ability to preserve, protect, and increase awareness of our unique cultural heritage across the country.<sup>11</sup>*

Under general guidance from the NPS, the states create their own requirements and programs for communities to earn CLG status and benefits. The NPS also approves applicants’ admittance to the program after being qualified by the SHPO. Each SHPO is required to grant (“sub-grant”) to their state’s CLGs at least 10 percent of their funding from the federal Historic Preservation Fund.<sup>12</sup> In general, CLGs across the nation must:

- Have an active historic preservation commission.
- Maintain an inventory of historic resources.
- Follow state and local laws.
- Serve as the public face for preservation in their community.<sup>13</sup>

Colorado currently has 127 local governments with preservation ordinances; 67 of these are CLGs. Table 3.1 summarized the benefits of Colorado’s CLG program:

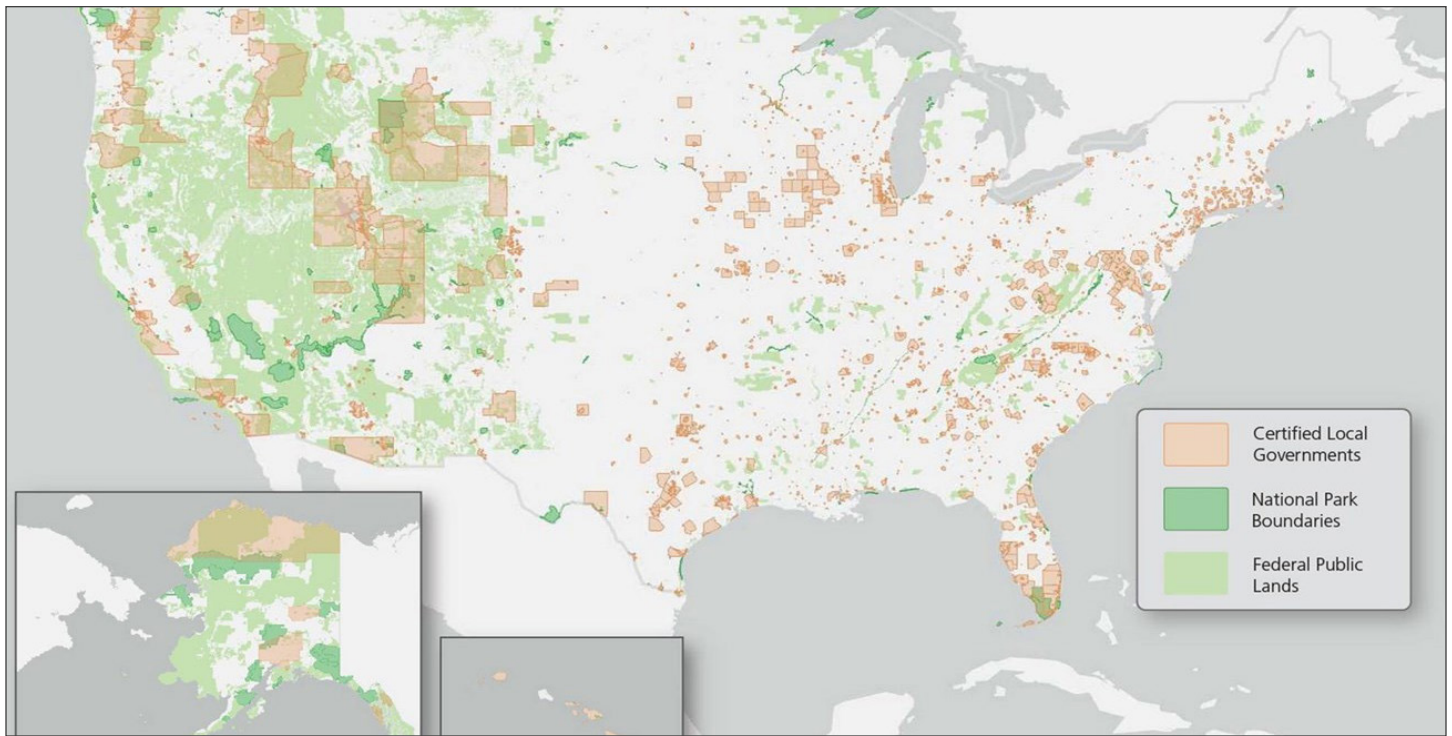


Image of a published map on the National Park Service’s website that contains the Certified Local Government information.  
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/clg/index.htm>

**Table 3.1 . Being a Certified Local Government in Colorado**

Benefits to CLGs in Colorado	Responsibilities of CLGs in Colorado
<p><b>Grants exclusive to CLGs</b> that do not require a cash match, which can be used for survey, planning, nomination, or educational activities that benefit the local governments preservation program. These “match free” grants are typically smaller than the SHF Competitive grants, more in line with the SHF noncompetitive grants, currently capped at \$250,000.</p>	<p><b>Must enact and enforce a local ordinance</b> that provides a legal framework for a preservation program that will achieve the purpose of designating and protecting significant historic buildings, sites, structures, and districts.</p>
<p><b>Technical support</b> from SHPO and NPS staff to advance local preservation objectives.</p>	<p><b>Must create a commission</b> of at least five members who have a demonstrated interest, competence, or knowledge of preservation; the commission must meet at least four times a year. At least one commission member must attend a SHPO-approved educational/training event each year.</p>
<p><b>The ability to join national organizations</b>, such as the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, that provide informational resources and access to a 50-state preservation network.</p>	<p><b>Must maintain a system for survey</b> and inventory of historic properties.</p>
<p><b>CLG-exclusive training and networking</b> opportunities throughout Colorado.</p>	<p><b>Must provide opportunities for public participation</b> in local preservation efforts.</p>
<p><b>The opportunity</b> to participate in the review of tax credit projects.<sup>36</sup></p>	<p><b>Must review and provide comment on National Register nominations</b> submitted for properties within their jurisdiction.<sup>37</sup></p>



Owners of historic properties that have been locally designated by a CLG can also benefit. Even if their properties are not listed in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties or the National Register Historic Places, through sponsorship of their local governments, owners of historic properties can:

- Qualify for the 20 percent State Historic Preservation Tax Credit.
- Gain access to the SHF preservation grant program.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.2. Federal and State Tax Incentives for Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures**

Federal and Colorado tax laws provide tax incentives to encourage private investment in high-quality historic preservation projects. Generally, these incentives are provided for both commercial and residential uses and must be for “qualified rehabilitation expenditures” in qualified historic preservation projects that follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (explained below). Federal and state tax credits for commercial projects can be paired with each other.

As History Colorado defines this tax benefit for historic preservation, “these credits allow taxpayers to reduce, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, the amount of income tax they owe to the government.” Broadly, commercial tax credits may be used by “income producing” properties. Residential tax credits may be used by owner-occupied residences. Further, tax credits may be sold to generate additional cash for qualified historic preservation projects.

The amount of credit that property owners and developers, including nonprofit owners such as religious institutions, can obtain is calculated as a percentage of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures associated with the project:

- A 20 to 30 percent federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) for the rehabilitation of certified historic buildings used for income-producing purposes (the 30 percent is temporary; projects placed in service after April 1, 2021, received a temporary increase of the credit to 30 percent through 2025).
- A Colorado Historic Preservation Tax Credit of 20 to 35 percent for the rehabilitation of historic buildings used for income-producing purposes.
- A Colorado Historic Preservation Tax Credit of 20 to 35 percent for the rehabilitation of historic, owner-occupied residences.

Whether called the HTC, the Preservation Tax Credit, or simply “rehab tax credit,” the process is universal. Only projects with properties officially listed in the National or State Register, not just determined eligible, can qualify for the tax credits – the National Register for federal credits and at least the Colorado State Register for state credits (although in Colorado, historic properties locally landmarked by CLGs can also qualify for state credits). Projects are proposed by property owners or developers, and state and federal reviewers must approve the project’s planning as it affects the historic character of the property in question; sometimes the project’s impacts on its surroundings can be considered, in the case of a historic district. After approval of the tax credit, investment may proceed. In Colorado, projects seeking state credits can sometimes capture expenditures prior to approval, in close cooperation with History Colorado staff. Once the project is complete, the federal and/or state reviewers must approve it; only then can the project return the intended tax credits to its investors.

For some projects, it is possible to syndicate the tax credits. Syndication involves arranging for third-party investors to buy the right to use the tax credits once the project is complete, at a discount. This allows the project to receive funds up front to help finance the project rather than after all investment is complete (this is how nonprofits, which do not file income tax returns, capture the tax benefit).

This explanation is at the most basic level; additional information is provided in the sections below and, for the state credits, History Colorado’s webpage offers a more detailed description of the tax credits. Those attempting to use the state program are encouraged to seek out further information from websites for History Colorado<sup>15</sup> and Colorado Preservation, Inc.<sup>16</sup> For the federal program, the NPS provides an extensive website.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2.1 The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation

When the federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program was first established by Congress in 1976, it was imperative to establish criteria for the NPS, the administrating agency for the program, to judge whether a proposed project would result in the best preservation and tax credits should be awarded. Accordingly, the Secretary of the Interior, who is the chief administrator for the federal agency housing the NPS, issued a set of “Standards for Rehabilitation.”

The **Standards for Rehabilitation (see below)** provide direction in making appropriate choices in planning the repairs, alterations, and additions that may be part of a rehabilitation project. They are codified under Internal Revenue Service rules in 36 CFR Part 67,<sup>18</sup> and are regulatory for the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program as administered by SHPOs and the NPS. They are the standards most often used by local historic preservation commissions nationwide when reviewing projects for historic landmarks or districts.

The NPS explains that the intent of the “Standards” (i.e., the industry shorthand) is to:

*[A]ssist the long-term preservation of a property’s significance through the preservation of historic materials and features. The Standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior of historic buildings. The Standards also encompass related landscape features and the building’s site and environment, as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. To be certified, a rehabilitation project must be determined by the Secretary to be consistent with the historic character of the structure(s) and, where applicable, the district in which it is located. The ...Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.<sup>19</sup>*

Accompanying Guidelines apply the Standards and describe specific treatments that do and do not meet the Standards.<sup>20</sup> They include advice on sustainability and adaptation to cope with flooding and other natural disasters. The Guidelines, however, are not meant to give case-specific advice. The NPS advises that careful planning in any given case “is best accomplished by seeking assistance from qualified historic preservation professionals in the planning stage of the project. Such professionals include architects, architectural historians, historians, archaeologists, and others who are skilled in the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the historic properties.”<sup>21</sup>

**The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation Explained:** The following Standards for Rehabilitation (see pages 3.9-3.10) are the criteria used to determine if a rehabilitation project qualifies as a certified rehabilitation. The intent of the Standards is to assist the long-term preservation of a property’s

significance through the preservation of historic materials and features. The Standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior of historic buildings. The Standards also encompass related landscape features and the building’s site and environment, as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. To be certified, a rehabilitation project must be determined by the Secretary to be consistent with the historic character of the structure(s) and, where applicable, the district in which it is located.



*The Cheeseman Park Pavilion, in Denver, which is on the National Register. Library of Congress Control No. 2015633572*



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The following two pages contain the ten Standards as currently established by the NPS with a precursor statement of “STANDARD #.” After each Standard is an interpretation of that standard from the staff architect for the historic preservation consulting firm who wrote this plan, Heritage Strategies, LLC.

**STANDARD 1 – A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.**

Standard 1 recommends compatible use in the context of adaptive reuse and changes to historic buildings and landscapes. This Standard encourages property owners to find uses that retain and enhance historic character, not detract from it. The work involved in reuse projects should be carefully planned to minimize impacts on historic features, materials, and spaces. The destruction of character-defining features should be avoided.

**STANDARD 2 –The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.**

Standard 2 recommends the retention and preservation of character-defining features. It emphasizes the importance of preserving integrity and as much existing historic fabric as possible. Alterations that repair or modify existing historic fabric are preferable to those that require total removal.

**STANDARD 3 – Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.**

Standard 3 focuses on authenticity and discourages the conjectural restoration of an entire property, feature, or design. It also discourages combining and/or grafting historic features and elements from different properties, and constructing new buildings that appear to be historic. Literal restoration to an historic appearance should only be undertaken when detailed documentation is available and when the significance of the resource warrants restoration. Reconstruction of lost features should not be attempted without adequate documentation.

**STANDARD 4 – Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.**

Standard 4 recognizes that buildings change, and that many of these changes contribute to a building’s historical significance. Understanding a building’s history and development is just as important as understanding its original design, appearance, and function. This point should be kept in mind when considering treatments for buildings that have undergone many changes. Most historic buildings contain a visual record of their own evolution. This evolution can be identified, and changes that are significant to the history of the building should be retained. The opportunity to compare multiple periods of time in the same building lends interest to the structure and helps communicate changes that have occurred within the larger landscape and community context.

**STANDARD 5 – Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.**

Standard 5 recommends preserving the distinctive historic components of a building or landscape that represent its historic character. Workmanship, materials, methods of construction, floor plans, and both ornate and typical details should be identified prior to undertaking work.



**STANDARD 6 – Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.**

Standard 6 encourages property owners to repair historic character-defining features instead of replacing them when historic features are deteriorated or missing. In cases where deterioration makes replacement necessary, new features should closely match historic conditions in all respects. Before any features are altered or removed, property owners are urged to document existing conditions with photography and notes. These records assist future choices that are appropriate to the property's historic character.

**STANDARD 7 – Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.**

Standard 7 warns against using chemical and physical treatments that can permanently damage historic features. Many commercially available treatments are irreversibly damaging. Sandblasting and harsh chemical cleaning, in particular, are extremely harmful to wood and masonry surfaces because they destroy the material's basic physical properties and speed deterioration.

**STANDARD 8 – Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.**

Standard 8 addresses the importance of below-ground prehistoric and historic features. This issue is of most importance when a construction project involves excavation. An assessment of a site's archaeological potential prior to work is recommended. If archaeological resources are present, some type of mitigation should be considered. Solutions should be developed that minimize the need for excavation of previously unexcavated sites.

**STANDARD 9 – New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.**

**STANDARD 10 – New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.**

Standards 9 and 10 are linked by issues of the compatibility and reversibility of additions, alterations, and new construction. Both Standards are intended to 1) minimize the damage to historic fabric caused by building additions, and 2) ensure that new work will be different from, but compatible with, existing historic conditions. Following these Standards will help to protect a building's historic integrity.

In conclusion, the basis for the Standards is the premise that historic resources are more than objects to simply look at; they are sources of historical information. It is important to repeat that the Standards provide a framework for evaluating preservation activities and emphasizes preservation of historic fabric, honesty of historical expression, and the ability to reverse new additions. All decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. The level of craftsmanship, detailing, and quality of materials should be appropriate to the significance of the resource.

**Further information is available at: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>.**

### 3.2.2 The Federal Historic Tax Credit

Annual reports compiled by the NPS on the use of the federal Historic Tax Credit have shown a remarkable impact on communities and the national preservation movement. The most recent report, issued in March of 2024 for the federal fiscal year of 2023, ending September 30 of that year, states that:

*The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Offices, is the nation's most effective program to promote historic preservation and community revitalization through historic rehabilitation. With over 49,000 completed projects since its enactment in 1976, the program has leveraged over \$131.71 billion in private investment in the rehabilitation of historic properties.... Commonly known as the Historic Tax Credit, the program provides a 20% Federal tax credit to property owners who undertake a substantial rehabilitation of a historic building in an income-producing use, while maintaining its historic character.... It generates much needed jobs and economic activity, enhances property values in older communities, creates affordable housing, and augments revenue for Federal, state, and local governments, leveraging many times its cost in private expenditures on historic preservation. This widely recognized program has been instrumental in preserving the historic buildings and places that give our cities, towns, Main Streets, and rural areas their special character and has attracted new private investment to communities small and large throughout the nation.<sup>22</sup>*



*The historic Fruitdale School in Wheatridge that used tax credits in support of conversion to 16 apartments. Source: History Colorado*

In Colorado, the 2023 federal annual report notes that in a five-year cumulative total for Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2019 through 2023, 29 projects were completed in Colorado with nearly \$166 million in Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures (QREs). This means that owners, developers, and investors should have received federal tax credits totaling about \$27 million based on the 20 percent HTC allowance. Those dollars could then be available for further reinvestment in historic preservation or other uses within Colorado, a significant stimulus that can multiply as these dollars flow through Colorado's economy and its local communities.

Since commercial projects often pair federal and state tax incentives as they develop their overall financing plan, the basic reinvestment generated from tax credits could be at least double the federal amount (20 percent of QREs multiplied by two, since both the state

and federal program are each at least 20 percent). The resulting economic impacts across Colorado can be expected to include increases in employment, earned incomes, property values, and taxable sales.



### 3.2.3 Colorado's Preservation Tax Credit

As Preservation Colorado, Inc. (CPI), a Colorado non-profit focused on statewide historic preservation education, training, expertise, and advocacy, explains on their webpage:

*In 2014, the State of Colorado enacted the Colorado Job Creation and Main Street Revitalization Act, bringing an enhanced state historic preservation tax credit to all Colorado communities. The program has been overwhelmingly successful since its launch in July 2015. Since that time, tax credit recipients have used this credit to kick-start 37 commercial projects across the state totaling more than \$121 million, while residential tax credit projects have allowed homeowners to repair and maintain their historic residences. On May 30, 2018, Governor Hickenlooper signed HB1190, a bipartisan bill that extends the Job Creation Main Street Revitalization Act into 2029.<sup>23</sup>*

Colorado's Preservation Tax Credit is available as follows:

- A credit of 20 to 35 percent for the rehabilitation of historic buildings used for income-producing purposes, up to \$1 million per year (\$10 million in aggregate through 2032); and
- A credit of 20 to 35 percent for the rehabilitation of historic, owner-occupied residences, up to \$100,000.

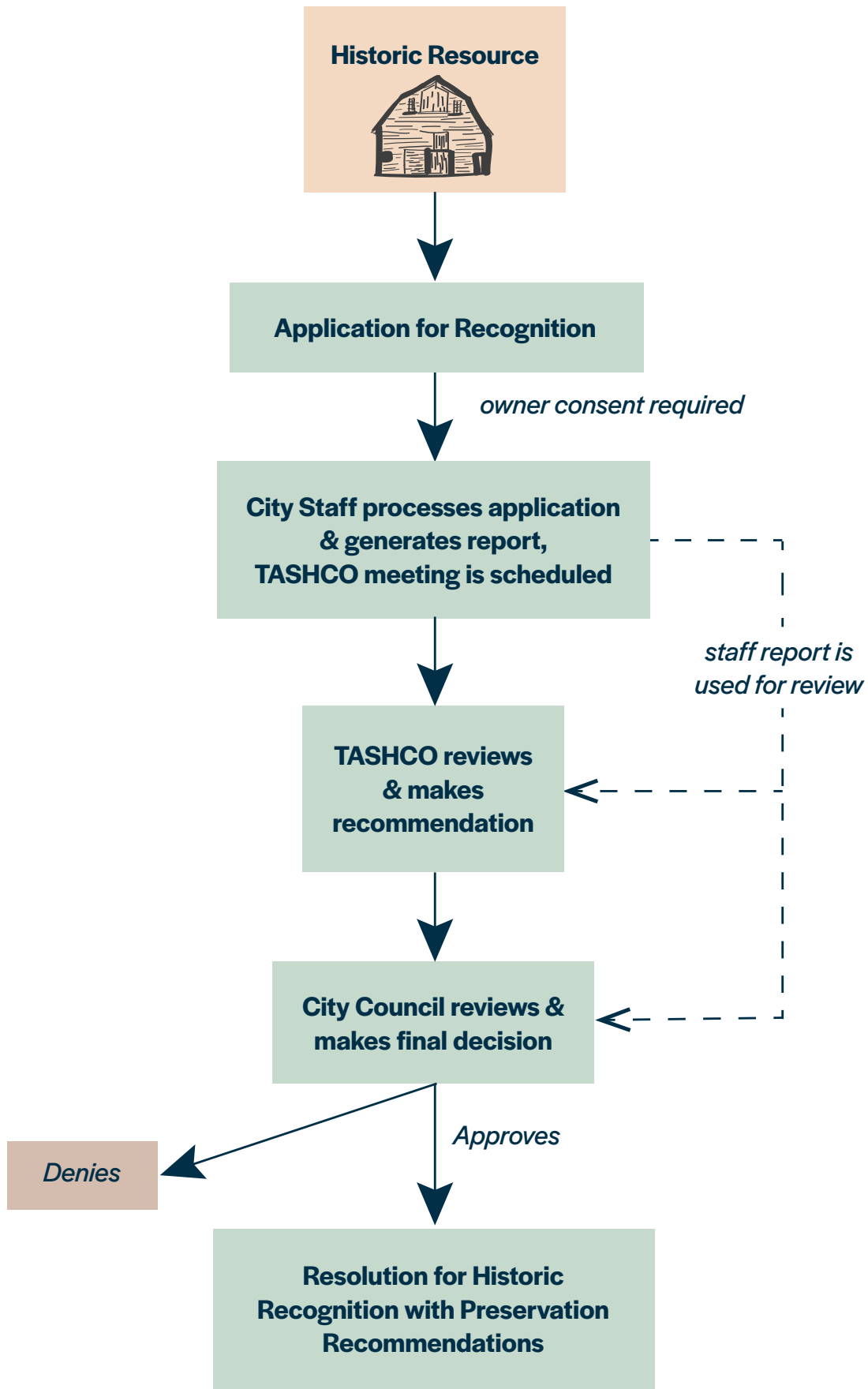
The commercial tax credit is managed by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. The program can award up to \$10 million in credits per year. Half of the money is designated for smaller projects up to \$2 million and the other half of the money is designated for larger projects over \$2 million. Recent legislative changes from House Bill 24-1314 will create a new pool of \$5 million for commercial tax credits that are for commercial projects with at least 50% of the square footage devoted to net new housing that is deed restricted, affordable housing; these funds will be available at least by January 1, 2030 but as soon as 2025.

In establishing the state's program, the Colorado legislature has capped annual use of the commercial tax credit for Large Commercial Projects (\$2 million or more) currently at \$5 million; qualified projects must compete through an annual application process that opens each January. No such limits or competition exists at the federal level. Owners of commercial buildings must establish their eligibility for the program (owner, long-term lease, or purchase agreement/option); buildings must be listed in the State Register or landmarked by a Certified Local Government.<sup>24</sup>

The residential tax credit applies to owner-occupied residential properties, which are eligible for up to \$50,000 in tax credits, \$100,000 starting in 2025. Primary homes, second homes, vacation homes, and other



*Nearby Bromley Farm / Koizuma-Hishinuma Farm in Brighton, which used SHF funds for the project. Source: History Colorado*



**Table 3.2 - Existing Recognition Process in the Historic Recognition Code (Ch. 19) of the City Code**

Table 3.2 displays in a flow chart the current process by which historic properties can be recognized in the city of Thornton. The Thornton Arts, Sciences, & Humanities Council recommends recognitions to City Council who provides the final approval.



properties where the taxpayer is the sole user of the property all fall under the residential credit program, and “owners” include those with long-term leases or purchase agreements/options. Eligible properties must be at least 50 years old and historically designated; starting in 2025 this age will be 30 years old. Other criteria are:

- Listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Listed in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties;
- Locally designated/listed by a Certified Local Government (CLG); or
- Designated as a “contributing property’ in a historic district that is listed in the National Register, State Register, or by a CLG.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.3. Existing Conditions for City Management of Historic Resources

Chapter 19 of the Thornton City Code, titled Historic Recognition, establishes Thornton’s current recognition process. The Historic Recognition Code states in Section 19-15: “Owners of historic landmarks and owners of properties located within a historic district are encouraged to retain the historic characteristics when carrying out any maintenance, repair, construction, alteration, removal, relocation or demolition.” However, there are no administrative or quasi-judicial processes or standards established within Chapter 19 to encourage or require property owners to “...retain the historic characteristics...” of landmarks recognized through Chapter 19.

Community members could request to nominate individual structures or districts per the existing code and voluntarily take on the responsibility to maintain and preserve these historic resources, but there is no formal process for the city to encourage and require such preservation efforts.<sup>26</sup> Under Chapter 19, the city has recognized only the Reitzenstein Barn, a city-owned barn from the early 20th century situated alongside a large undeveloped open space parcel that is just north of East 144th Avenue, between Washington Street and York Street (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed description). Thus, it is important to consider how to encourage the retention of “...the historic characteristics when carrying out any maintenance, repair, construction, alteration, removal, relocation or demolition.”

When the city recognized the historic Reitzenstein Barn it followed the process for “historic designation” as outlined in Section 19-13. However, the processes outlined in Chapter 19 can be simplified to a purely “recognition process.” The final step of the process is an adopted resolution by City Council that recognizes the historic landmark, outlined in Section 19-14. Resolutions are not laws, regulations, standards, or investment, leaving room for improved processes for historic recognition in Thornton.

The first step has the Thornton Arts, Sciences, and Humanities Council (TASHCO) provide the first public review of the application for recognition. In the case of the Reitzenstein Barn, city staff initiated the application, but private property owners could do the same. TASHCO then reviews the application for recognition and provides a

formal recommendation on the application to recognize the historic landmark (think again of the Reitzenstein Barn) for which they can recommend conditions of approval. City Council is given the final approval on adopting, modifying, or denying such recommendations. However, this is the fullest extent of the standards and regulations within Chapter 19. City Council’s final resolution is the only formally approved document that references the recognition as outlined in Chapter 19. This is important to consider because Chapter 19 currently does not include the historic preservation requirements needed to be



*The Reitzenstein Barn, Thornton’s only locally listed historic landmark.*

compliant with achieving CLG status. It also does not provide administrative processes or reliefs to Thornton's community members.

Typically, if a community wishes to preserve historic resources, the local municipality will establish design guidelines or standards that property owners and the local government can use for implementing such preservation efforts. The level of regulatory control established by the jurisdiction is usually determined at the local level when codes such as Chapter 19 are created or amended. Further, it is typical of historic preservation codes to have both staff administration and public body/commission processes outlined, including up to the quasi-judicial level (e.g., something similar to a zone change). An often-concluding step in the historic preservation processes administered by a local government is for proposed projects on historic landmarks or properties to receive what is called a "certificate of appropriateness" (exact naming may differ among local governments). This certificate, issued by the local government, assures that the local preservation standards have been met for owners' proposed changes to a historic landmark or property. Thornton does not currently have such a process.

As noted, such things as design guidelines do not exist for Chapter 19 landmarks. However, for the town of Eastlake that was annexed into Thornton in 1990, design guidelines have been developed and are contained within the 2017 Eastlake Subarea Plan. These guidelines were developed to encourage compatible new construction and the retention of the town's unique historic character. Although property owners are not required to follow these guidelines, Thornton's city planners have successfully guided several new development and redevelopment projects in following the ideas set forth in Eastlake's design guidelines. No official administrative body such as a Historic Preservation Commission exists to help review proposed changes.

### 3.4. Establishing Thornton's Historic Preservation Program

Under Colorado's Local Government Land Use Control Enabling Act of 1974, "Each local government within its respective jurisdiction has the authority to plan for and regulate the use of land by...(c) Preserving areas of historical and archaeological importance."<sup>26</sup> This is the fundamental underpinning for Thornton's power to establish its historic preservation program, as it exists and in future iterations.

This chapter identifies the following set of strategies that could expand Thornton's historic preservation efforts into a full-fledged program, if desired by Council:

**(1) Establish a survey and nomination program**, in order to know which resources the city of Thornton should work toward protecting, through National and Colorado State Register nominations and through local ordinance;

**(2) Expand the current historic preservation ordinance** from one that simply provides recognition for individual historic resources to one that may protect those resources through local project reviews according to local design standards, following "basic procedures which comprehensively address preservation, but are not so burdensome so as to unduly impede planned growth"<sup>27</sup>;

**(3) Consider a Historic Preservation Commission** to help administer the local project reviews, participate in public educational activities, and work with History Colorado and the State Historic Preservation Office;

**(4) Achieve Certified Local Government status** in the ultimate establishment of the preservation ordinance and the preservation commission;

**(5) Seek State Historical Fund grants** to support Thornton's preservation activities and projects; and

**(6) Increase existing staff capabilities and expand staff capacity where appropriate** to support historic preservation in Thornton.



### 3.4.1. Surveying Thornton’s Historic Resources

Surveys of historic resources are among the most enjoyable and satisfying undertakings in the field of historic preservation. Surveyors get to find hidden gems and discover unheralded stories. They learn new dimensions of Colorado’s history as they see the tangible products of that history. They get to add to their knowledge of architectural history, engineering technology, and cultural landscapes in researching their findings and correlating Colorado’s history to the resources being surveyed.

While many, if not most, surveys undertaken across Colorado have been performed by trained professionals, there is always room for new enthusiasts. This is especially true if a jurisdiction or preservation organization is willing to invest in the staffing and/or consultants to provide guidance, make good use of novices and volunteers, and utilize quality digital inventory tools to capture the resulting information effectively. Historic Denver has an ongoing survey program using primarily volunteers called “Discover Denver” that is a national model in the historic preservation field.<sup>28</sup>

The primary resource providing guidance on conducting surveys in Colorado is History Colorado’s *Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Manual: Guidelines for Identification: History and Archaeology*.<sup>29</sup> A simplified digital resource created by History Colorado to enable surveyors to quickly identify major elements of the resources they are inventorying (materials, styles, architectural forms, and special use types) is Colorado’s online Historic Architecture & Engineering Guide.<sup>30</sup> It is intended to complement the Field Guide to Colorado’s Historic Architecture & Engineering. This more detailed reference was published in 2008 and made available in digital form by History Colorado and enables users to create custom notebooks for use in the field; it also can be purchased in book form from online sellers.<sup>31</sup>

#### Actions for Surveying

Surveying a community for historic resources is generally an ongoing process, as each year more buildings pass the usual 50-year standard for adding a resource to the community’s inventory. A high-level review of the entire area of Thornton and its Future Growth Area will help to identify areas most in need of surveying. Below are actions intended to begin survey work as identified during the planning process for the HPP. It is not a comprehensive list of surveys to perform but shall serve as a starting point for City surveying work.

**Action 3.4.1.A:** Design and undertake a phased series of surveys and research to establish and grow Thornton’s inventory of known or suspected historic and archaeological resources. Needs for this are supported by the following sub-actions:

**Sub- Action 3.4.1.A.1:** Complete and update Eastlake’s 2000 survey to include all buildings, the town’s cultural landscape, and its situation within the larger landscape.

**Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.2:** Undertake a survey of Original Thornton including buildings and cultural landscape features.

**Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.3:** Expand the preliminary context statement for Thornton as a whole, created during the planning process for the HPP, into a completed historic context statement to be used by future surveyors and to create a foundation for fact-based historic preservation planning choices.

**Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.4:** Undertake a survey of Thornton’s unannexed Future Growth Area in both Adams and Weld counties, with county consent, to identify and document historic resources and areas that may be sensitive archaeologically.

**Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.5:** Using the guidance provided in Chapter 2, and from any developed or subsequently developed historic contexts, consider additional surveying work within Thornton and its Future Growth Area. Sites and themes identified in Chapters 2 and 4 are considered first priority for expansion of surveying work beyond the actions listed in this subsection.

**Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.6:** Using guidance provided in Chapter 2, as well as other supporting research, consider surveys, historic context statements, or other professional documentation regarding Native Americans who have inhabited and used the landscape Thornton occupies. Attention to the tribes known to the area such as the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Plains Apache, Kiowa, and Ute shall be considered in any research and surveying work.

**Action 3.4.1.B:** Integrate information collected on Thornton’s surveys of its historic and archaeological resources into History Colorado’s digital management system.

**Action 3.4.1.C:** Integrate information collected on Thornton’s surveys of its historic and archaeological resources into the Thornton’s GIS system.

### 3.4.2. Encouraging National and Colorado State Register Nominations

Surveying historic resources, a crucial first step to historic preservation efforts, is only one preservation tool. The next tool often used from the preservation toolbox is the nomination of historic sites or landmarks to a historic register. History Colorado’s web page titled “Survey & Designation” describes this tool’s use in a municipal historic preservation program:

*With the assistance of the SHPO, those sites identified by surveys as Colorado’s most historically and architecturally significant buildings, structures, and sites may be formally listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Properties. Properties listed in the National or State Register may be eligible for investment tax credits for approved rehabilitation projects. Listed properties are also eligible to compete for grants from Colorado’s State Historical Fund.<sup>32</sup>*

The National Register places no restrictions on what an owner, other than the federal government, may do with their property up to and including destruction, unless the property is involved in a project that receives federal assistance (in which case Section 106 review is required, as described above). Reviews of such projects in Colorado are coordinated by History Colorado. Properties that are eligible to be listed on the National Register are equally protected by History Colorado and their project reviews under state law.

There is often much time and expense involved in the research, documentation, and administrative process needed to achieve a listing in the Colorado State and National Registers. Because resources can be determined *eligible* without a formal nomination, owners and communities tend to think twice about pursuing National Register listings, unless they are applying for the state and federal Preservation Tax Credits as described earlier in this chapter. However, the robust research required for a formal National Register nomination is valuable for supporting community interpretation and storytelling (as discussed in Chapter 5) and describing a property’s character, significance, and history.



*First Congregational Church of Eastlake, surveyed in 2000 and then deemed potentially eligible for the State Register.*



Moreover, there is honor in being able to claim the listing. The fact that Eastlake's grain elevator is listed in the National Register is a point of pride for the community, and its status may assist the city in attracting a developer able to make use of state and federal Preservation Tax Credits. Thus, this Plan calls for investigating a number of possibilities for actual nominations to the Colorado and National Registers.

A limitation to National Register nomination, especially for districts and groups of buildings, is the federal requirement for owner consent (50-percent-plus-one in the case of multiple buildings; the State register requires 100% owner consent). However, it is possible to create a National Register nomination for properties linked more by theme than geographic area, using a multiple property documentation form. Such a nomination is tied into a formal historic context statement, which contains the necessary research required for any nomination. Only those buildings where owners have given consent need be included in the initial nomination. Since the proper research already exists with such a nomination approach, other buildings can be nominated later, more easily, if and when their owners agree by simply tying into the existing nomination. This is an especially good approach where many resources linked by similar characteristics are scattered across the landscape – such as Thornton's remaining agricultural properties (an example of a multiple property nomination exists for historic farms and ranches in neighboring Weld County).

History Colorado and the NPS offer extensive resources for writing Colorado and National Register nominations. For the National Register, History Colorado offers a useful, three-page brief for owners of historic properties within proposed historic districts,<sup>33</sup> a web page listing the steps for nomination, and many digital publications to help with nominations.<sup>34</sup>

### **Actions for National and State Register Nominations**

Work on the preliminary context statement for Thornton as described in Chapter 2 has identified at least two buildings that may be eligible for registration: Thornton's second City Hall (i.e., Original Thornton City Hall, now Community Connections) and the dairy cooperative building on north Washington Street, now serving as Thornton's Infrastructure Maintenance Center (IMC). Additional survey work as described in this chapter may yield more possibilities. In addition to surveys, SHF matching grants administered by History Colorado as described earlier in this chapter are available for this work. Actions are listed below in order of highest priority:

**Action 3.4.2.A:** Upon completing surveying work of Eastlake as described in Action 3.4.1. A.1 work with the Eastlake community, if requested, to determine if there is interest in a nomination of a historic district locally or to the Colorado State Register. Eligibility shall be considered prior to nomination of any historic district.



*An early morning photo of the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator, Thornton's only National Register Listing.*

**Action 3.4.2.B:** Nominate the Original Thornton City Hall to the Colorado State Register and, if warranted, to the National Register.

**Action 3.4.2.C:** Upon completing surveying of Original Thornton as described in Action 3.4.1.A.2, work with Original Thornton residents, if requested, to determine if there is interest in a nomination of a historic district locally or to the National Register of Historic Places. Eligibility shall be considered prior to any nomination of any historic district.

**Action 3.4.2.D:** Complete the context statement as described in Action 3.4.1.A.3 and, if warranted and desired, consider the filing of a multiple property documentations form with the Colorado and National Registers for historically significant properties.

**Action 3.4.2.E:** Research and develop nomination materials for the Infrastructure Maintenance Center (IMC), near the intersection of Washington Street and East 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue, to determine its significance to late agricultural development in the region and its potential for community programming.

### **3.4.3. Cooperating with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office**

The office's most recent State Historic Preservation Plan, *The Power of Heritage and Place: A 2020 Action Plan to Advance Historic Preservation in Colorado*, written to qualify for federal support, is an outstanding brief picture of historic preservation as it is practiced by the statewide preservation community. The State Historic Preservation Office is currently updating the plan to serve Colorado through 2030. Existing activities to meet the current plan's six goals (see below) and their accompanying objectives broadly serve Thornton's needs in establishing the historic preservation program described in this chapter:

Thornton can support the State Historic Preservation Plan by participating in the current update, recruiting and training local leaders to grow local preservation voices to support awareness of Thornton's history and historic resources, and establishing a lasting local presence to value historic preservation as a part of city services. History Colorado and Colorado Preservation, Inc. (the statewide nonprofit organization) are at the core of a healthy statewide network available to provide Thornton with the support it needs. Consideration of the State Historic Preservation Plan and its goals and actions should be considered with any update or amendments to Thornton's historic preservation plan.

#### **Actions for Cooperating with the Colorado SHPO**

**Action 3.4.3.A:** Review the Colorado State Historic Preservation Plan and identify how Thornton can employ best practices in supporting its implementation.

**Action 3.4.3.B:** Seek to host regional workshops offered by statewide preservation leaders History Colorado and Colorado Preservation, Inc., as well as other non-profit or educational organizations/institutions.

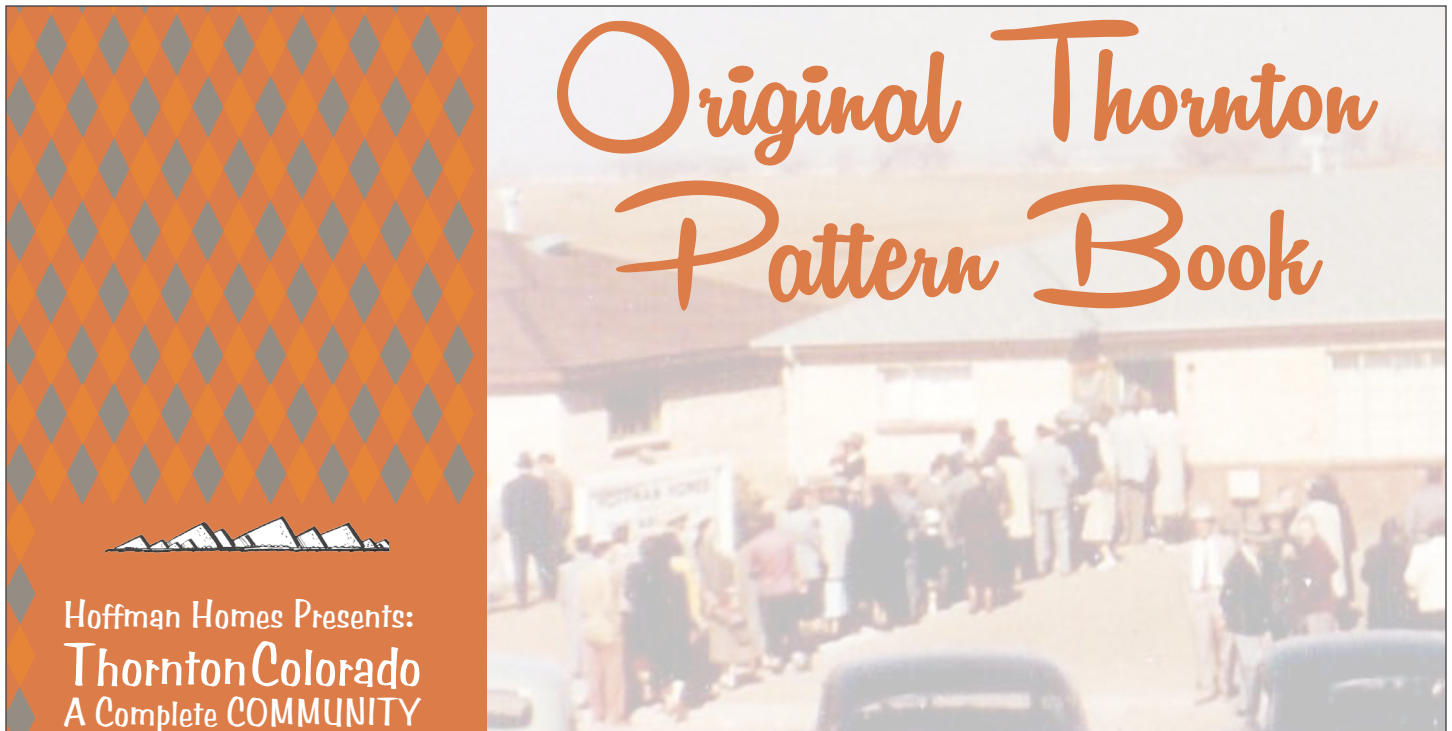
**Action 3.4.3.C:** If Certified Local Government (CLG) status is sought, work with the SHPO to align with requirements to become a CLG.

### **3.4.4. Protecting Local Historic Resources**

Along with developing an inventory of Thornton's historic resources and the means to encourage formal state and national recognition of those deserving it, a complete preservation program for Thornton should establish effective protection of significant local historic resources, such as individual landmarks or districts desired by the community. The work of protecting historic resources is best accomplished through local ordinances, in particular an ordinance that can qualify Thornton as a CLG community.

Local designation of historic resources under a city ordinance is one tool to support a variety of local government policy goals. Goals can include: (1) preventing or moderating inappropriate changes to historic properties (which





*Pictured is a photo of the Original Thornton Pattern Book which serves as an example of historic preservation work that is similar to the actions proposed for surveying. For reference, the town of Eastlake was also surveyed in the year 2000.*

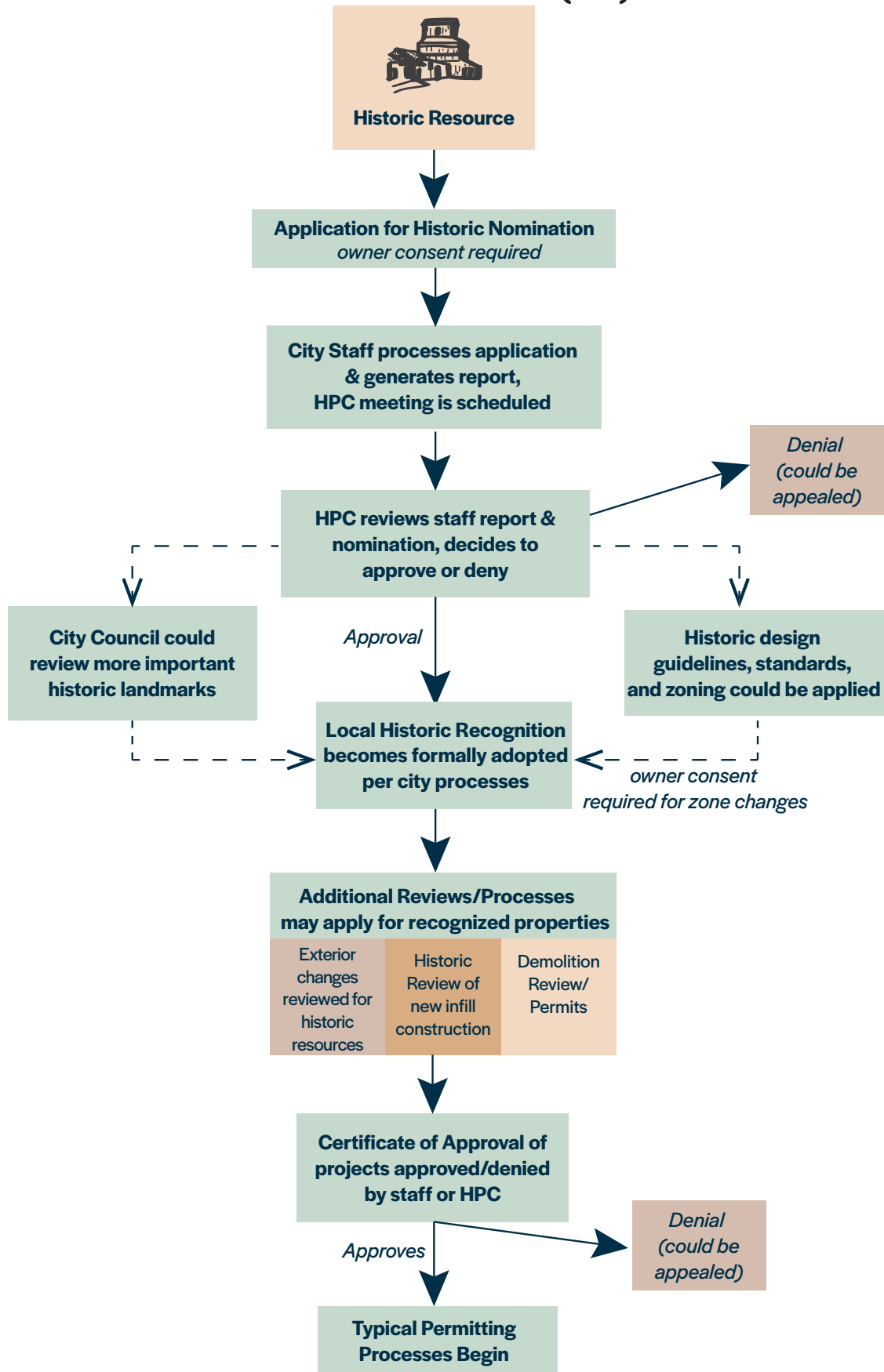
could also include changes that degrade the historic context of surrounding properties in a historic district); (2) assessing whether delaying or preventing demolition of historic properties is feasible and warranted; and (3) reviewing the design of new construction in a historic district or on a property with a historic landmark to assure its compatibility with its surroundings.

Both individual “landmark” properties and historic districts, when nominated and supported by the community members who live in them, should be protected in Thornton. There are two possibilities for establishing protected historic districts:

- **A traditional historic district** is usually accomplished by an overlay zone, which adds regulations for the district, beyond the underlying zoning. This overlay zone can protect a wide array of the district’s features and characteristics, including elements of the public domain managed by the city; and
- **A conservation or cultural historic district.** This technique may also be established as an overlay zone, but it is usually applied only to residential areas, often for those that may not qualify for historic district status. It regulates fewer aspects of the district, often customized to the individual character of the district to be protected with the participation of the neighborhood. Neighborhoods that choose to seek this means of protection usually are less concerned about protecting the individual architectural character of buildings in the district and more concerned about the form and massing of new construction, outbuildings, and additions and changes to the landscape or shared spaces, such as changes to fencing or landscaping. Local examples of this approach include Denver, which recently protected La Alma Lincoln Park as a cultural historic district with its own design guidelines; and unincorporated Boulder County, which employs “neighborhood conservation overlay zones.”<sup>35</sup>

Best practice is to coordinate the “overlay” that identifies the historic or cultural district and then sets certain rules and procedures for review, with the underlying zoning to support the protective intent of the district delineation. Generally, cities can adjust the underlying zoning or create one or more new zoning categories for the district(s) altogether, when it makes sense to meet city goals. Specifically for Thornton, as of the writing of this plan, Eastlake is the only historically relevant area of the city with an underlying zoning that would provide an example of the possibilities described previously in this section. Any other adjustment to base zoning could only occur in the

**Table 3.3 - Possible Format of a Certified Local Government (CLG) Historic Preservation Program**



**Table 3.3** displays a flow chart of a potential recognition process and a design review process of a CLG Community. However, becoming a CLG Community is not the only way, a review process can still be established without an HPC. The city's current Ch. 19 of the City Code could be amended as recommended in this HPP to be closer with CLG standards.



case of an annexation or rezone (under current city land use processes). Thus, the creation of districts would be an entirely new zoning district or overlay zone, a process needing further consideration beyond this Plan. These considerations are addressed in the following chapter on employing city planning and operations to support historic preservation.

Further, archaeology presents a special challenge. Thornton residents are particularly aware of the potential for finding below-ground resources that can add to scientific knowledge of past occupants – including those from long ago (paleontology) – because of the discovery of remains of a rare dinosaur during construction of the new police training facility. Because this was a public project, Thornton had complete control in bringing the construction to a halt in order to recover the *Torosaurus*, a rare, latest Cretaceous dinosaur, now on display for all to enjoy.

In the best of all situations, below-ground resources are best left in-ground, to await the better scientific recovery techniques that will evolve in the decades ahead. Ideally, the city should have some idea where it would be best to avoid ground disturbance. For Thornton to enlist cooperation of private contractors, it would be helpful to undertake two steps. First, the city should conduct a high-level survey to identify undisturbed locations where archaeological and paleontological resources are most likely to be found, which would help property owners plan ahead if alerted by the city during permitting (and only then – such information should be closely held otherwise). And second, the city should establish procedures for what Thornton expects during property development should below-ground resources be discovered anywhere in the city.

The following actions are intended to guide city resources in the efforts of “Protecting Local Historic Resources,” the title of this chapter subsection. It is largely through amending Chapter 19, by city ordinance, that the core components of this plan could be implemented. This is especially true when considering development of historic properties that are not owned by a public entity (like the city or state) but may still have historic merit.

Within the proposed amendments to Chapter 19, as described in this chapter, would be revisions to the public process by which historic landmarks and districts could be reviewed for recognition in Thornton. One aspect of this could be the creation of a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) or changes to an existing Commission. The aim of any commission tasked with administering the amended processes that would be outlined in Chapter 19 would be to: 1) provide a public platform for the community to give input to historic preservation in Thornton; and 2) if the city wanted to become CLG eligible, ensure ongoing conformance with the standards of a CLG community. The final structure of any commission to administer the amended Chapter 19 processes is not yet determined in this Plan and would require City Council approval. Typically, adopted plans like the Comprehensive Plan or this HPP guide staff actions and efforts. The City Council, or any future HPC, can provide input and direction on the creation of those plans but they do not guide the daily operations of implementing the plans. Further, it is not typical of an HPC to be the only responsible party for preservation efforts. As



*Archaeologists and researchers unearth what will become known as “Tiny” the *Torosaurus*, found in 2017 during a City of Thornton construction project.*

outlined in the “Administrative Resources” subsection of this chapter, staff also plays an important role in historic preservation programming.

### **Actions for Establishing and Implementing a Preservation Program in Thornton**

If Council desires to amend Chapter 19 of the City Code, the new historic preservation ordinance should be tailored to the community’s particular interests and concerns. If desired, this should also be done with an eye to qualifying the city as a CLG, as explained earlier in this chapter. Additionally, for many cities, the responsibility of the day-to-day operations of a local government’s preservation efforts is led by a department, division, or specific staff person with historic preservation expertise. Amendments to Chapter 19 could consider changes to the administrative processes as well as items outlined below in the expanded discussion regarding a Historic Preservation Commission.

**Action 3.4.4.A:** Review all city-owned properties for designations under Chapter 19 of the City Code and their priorities in surveying and nomination.

**Action 3.4.4.B:** In order of priority, designate the Original Thornton City Hall, the Eastlake Farmers Cooperative Grain Elevator, and the Lambertson Lakes and Homestead site as local recognized landmarks.

**Action 3.4.4.C:** Upon completion of the Eastlake survey identified in Sub Action 3.4.1.A.1, prepare general guidelines that guide future development to align with the architectural and urban form of Eastlake. Updates to the Linkage Design Principles in the 2017 Eastlake Subarea Plan could be considered.



**Action 3.4.4.D:** Upon completion of the Original Thornton survey identified in Sub Action 3.4.1.A.2, prepare general guidelines that guide future development to align with the architectural and urban form of Original Thornton. Updates to the Original Thornton Pattern Book could be considered.

**Action 3.4.4.E:** Following a general archaeological survey of Thornton, determine inclusion of archaeology in Thornton’s preservation programming.

**Action 3.4.4.F:** Explore programs to protect and restore key city-owned historic resources and support private property owner interest in preserving historic resources through grant funds and other sources of funding.

**Action 3.4.4.G:** If and when desired by Council, revise Chapter 19 of the City Code to enable a process to designate historic resources such as individual landmarks or districts. An overall goal of the Code revisions



*The top photo is of Hoffman Way, in Original Thornton, the bottom picture is of First Street, in Eastlake.*



should be to help preserve historic character and shall contain specified criteria for recognition of a landmark or district. This action include the ability to regulate changes to historic properties, demolition, and/or the design of new construction within historic districts.

**Sub-Action 3.4.4.G.1:** If Chapter 19 of the City Code is amended, implement a design review process for any designated historic districts, landmarks, or historic sites based on historic preservation principles (derived from the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards).

**Action 3.4.4.H:** If and when desired by Council, consider a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to support the provisions of the revised city ordinance (described above), ensuring that the Commission’s membership conforms to requirements to achieve CLG status.

**Sub-Action 3.4.4.H.1:** Establish a routine training program for members of the HPC.

**Sub-Action 3.4.4.H.2:** Establish accountable public processes: set periodic work plans based on this HPP (such as annual, biennial, or as otherwise directed by City Council), organize meeting agendas in part to reflect the work plan, make periodic progress reports before the Thornton City Council, and publish annual reports.

### 3.5. Administrative Resources

The best approach to implementing a successful, local historic preservation program would include local staff capacity (including public, private, and non-profit capacity). This section of the chapter discusses the potential framework for expanding city of Thornton staff capacity. The city’s actions to implement program administration will depend largely on market conditions and future city ordinances regarding preservation.

#### Actions for Enhancing Administrative Resources

**Action 3.5.A:** Develop staff expertise and capacity within the City Development Department to administer a more robust historic preservation program and liaise with a new Historic Preservation Commission. Consider creating a historic preservation planner position to fulfill this role.



*A view from the interior yard of the Lambertson Lakes Homestead property owned by the city of Thornton.*

**Sub-Action 3.5.A.1:** The city should establish the capability to inform private local commercial and residential owners about the possibilities and the process of gaining federal (commercial only) and state (commercial and residential) rehabilitation tax credits as well as other historic preservation incentives.

**Action 3.5.B:** Grow working relationships with regional partners, in particular public, private and non-profit organizations that provide opportunities for achieving preservation goals.

**Action 3.5.C:** Consider the role of other city initiatives and the collaborative role that a historic preservation program could provide in furthering community projects, programs, events, and goals established by City Council.

### **3.6. Chapter Conclusion**

Thornton owns a variety of historic properties, notably the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Grain Elevator property, the Reitzenstein Barn, Original Thornton parks and civic buildings, and the Lambertson Lakes Open Space, including the Lambertson Homestead site all described in the following chapter. To date, only the Reitzenstein Barn has been successfully nominated as a city landmark in accordance with Chapter 19 of the Thornton Code.

A more robust preservation program, established under the guidance of this chapter, would see an expanded listing of recognized landmarks. Once a meaningful level of trust has been established with the community via historic preservation programming, residents and business owners may desire to nominate historic districts and landmarks to become historically recognized in Thornton. In addition, a robust preservation program would support (through staff capacity and financial tools) other city land use, planning, and community engagement initiatives that are related to the areas within the city with historical significance.

The remaining chapters include expansion on topics of community development and programming that relate to historic preservation but are not solely historic preservation initiatives and may require further refinement or coordination outside of this Plan.



## Endnotes

- 1 “A Careful Inventory and Evaluation”: The Origins of Executive Order 11593,” by John H. Sprinkle Jr. *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*, Vol. 8, Numbers 1&2, Winter/Summer 2011. Available at: <https://www.nps.gov/crms/CRMJournal/Winter2011/article3.html#:~:text=President%20Nixon%27s%20most%20significant%20contribution,Section%20106%20of%20the%20National>.
- 2 Today, “SHPO” can mean either the officer or the office, interchangeably; in Colorado, these are respectively the executive director of History Colorado and History Colorado’s State Historic Preservation Office. For more information, visit <https://www.historycolorado.org/state-historic-preservation-office>.
- 3 <https://revenuedata.doi.gov/how-revenue-works/hpf/#:~:text=The%20HPF%20is%20funded%20by,Parks%20Service%20administers%20the%20HPF>.
- 4 <https://www.historycolorado.org/colorado-state-register-historic-properties>
- 5 The State Register Act and procedures are described in Colorado statutes Title 24, Article 80.1 (cited as CRS 24-80.1), available in History Colorado’s Publication #1307, found at <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/1307.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.historycolorado.org/additional-resources-section-106-state-register-act-review-and-compliance>
- 7 [https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2023/State%20Historical%20Fund%20Guidebook\\_2.1.2023.pdf](https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2023/State%20Historical%20Fund%20Guidebook_2.1.2023.pdf), hereinafter cited as “SHF Guidebook.” The program website is at <https://www.historycolorado.org/state-historical-fund>.
- 8 In cooperation with public entities or nonprofits, private owners and for-profit companies may receive SHF funding for preservation projects, if they can make a formal showing of their local government’s support (an application signed by a local elected official or a letter of support from a local elected official; p. 4, SHF Guidebook).
- 9 <https://www.historycolorado.org/preservation-tax-credits>
- 10 <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2022/CLG%20Program%20Overview%20%20%281416a%29%201.7.22.pdf> (henceforth cited as Colorado CLG Overview). Also see <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2018/1581.pdf>.
- 11 <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/certified-local-government-program.htm>
- 12 <https://revenuedata.doi.gov/how-revenue-works/hpf/#:~:text=The%20HPF%20is%20funded%20by,Parks%20Service%20administers%20the%20HPF>.
- 13 Colorado CLG Program Overview, available at <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2022/CLG%20Program%20Overview%20%20%281416a%29%201.7.22.pdf> (henceforth cited as Colorado CLG Overview).
- 14 Colorado CLG Overview.
- 15 <https://www.historycolorado.org/preservation-tax-credits>
- 16 <https://coloradopreservation.org/colorados-historic-preservation-tax-credits/>
- 17 <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/index.htm>
- 18 <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/upload/regs-nps-36-cfr-67.pdf>
- 19 Quoted directly from <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>. The term at the end, “economic and technical feasibility,” is defined and explained in an NPS memo found at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/upload/role-economic-technical-feasibility-applying-standards.pdf>

- 20 <https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/rehab-guidelines/index.htm> (web-based) or <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/treatment-guidelines-2017-part1-preservation-rehabilitation.pdf> (portable document format, for preservation and rehabilitation only). A full list of sources related to the Standards and Guidelines is available at: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/standards.htm>.
- 21 <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>
- 22 <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/upload/report-2023-annual.pdf> (paragraphing eliminated). For access to earlier reports, go to <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/reports-archive.htm>.
- 23 <https://coloradopreservation.org/colorados-historic-preservation-tax-credits/>.
- 24 <https://oedit.colorado.gov/commercial-historic-preservation-tax-credit>.
- 25 <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2021/1322b.pdf>.
- 26 Colorado General Assembly, “Enacting “The Local Government Land Use Control Enabling Act of 1974.” (1974). Session Laws 1951-2000 . 6457.  
<https://scholar.law.colorado.edu/session-laws-1951-2000/645727> “Model Land Use Regulations, Chapter 7, Historical and Archaeological Resource Area Regulations,” p. 2; provided by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History Colorado, Publication #1301b. Available at <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019/1301b.pdf>
- 28 <https://discoverdenver.co/volunteer>.
- 29 <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/1527.pdf>.
- 30 <https://www.historycolorado.org/colorados-historic-architecture-engineering-guide>.
- 31 <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/1625Field.pdf>.
- 32 <https://www.historycolorado.org/how-do-i-nominate-my-property>
- 33 <https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/1516aWeb.pdf>
- 34 <https://www.historycolorado.org/how-do-i-nominate-my-property>
- 35 <https://opendata-bouldercounty.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/bouldercounty::zoning-neighborhood-conservation-overlay-district/about>
- 36 Colorado CLG Overview.
- 37 Colorado CLG Overview.





# CHAPTER 4

# CHAPTER 4. BEST PRACTICES IN CITY PLANNING TO SUPPORT HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation is practiced most effectively when it is integral to community planning and municipal operations, supporting the role that historic resources play in community identity and quality of life. This chapter addresses the alignment of historic preservation strategies with Thornton’s established programs affecting historic resources, including planning, public works, economic development, recreational resources, and housing. Along with the top priorities described in Chapter 3 to establish a historic preservation program for Thornton, aligning existing city programs with historic preservation is anticipated as a key outcome of this Historic Preservation Plan (HPP). This chapter supports all five goals of the HPP as described in Chapter 2, but especially Goals 1 and 5: “Preserve historic places, buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes that contribute to Thornton’s cultural heritage and unique identity,” and “Provide affordable, economical, and sustainable development opportunities for Thornton residents and businesses through historic preservation,” respectively.



## 4.1. Thornton's Comprehensive Plan

Thornton's 2020 Comprehensive Plan, "Thornton Tomorrow Together," provides the foundation for this HPP.<sup>1</sup> Within Chapter 1 of the HPP, the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals, and strategies are reviewed more in-depth to provide the policy guidance that framed the creation of the HPP. Critical to the HPP's success, and to an extent the Comprehensive Plan's success, is the need for clear linkages between the two plans' goals, strategies, and recommendations. This chapter is meant to expand on already identified policies and strategies in the Comprehensive Plan while providing guidance specific to historic preservation efforts.

## 4.2. Enhancing Thornton's Public Realm

The public realm consists of places owned or controlled by any form of government – RTD stations, post offices, streets and streetscapes, open spaces, parks and trails, and public buildings. For the purposes of this chapter, public realm will reference only the land that is owned and/or operated by the city of Thornton.

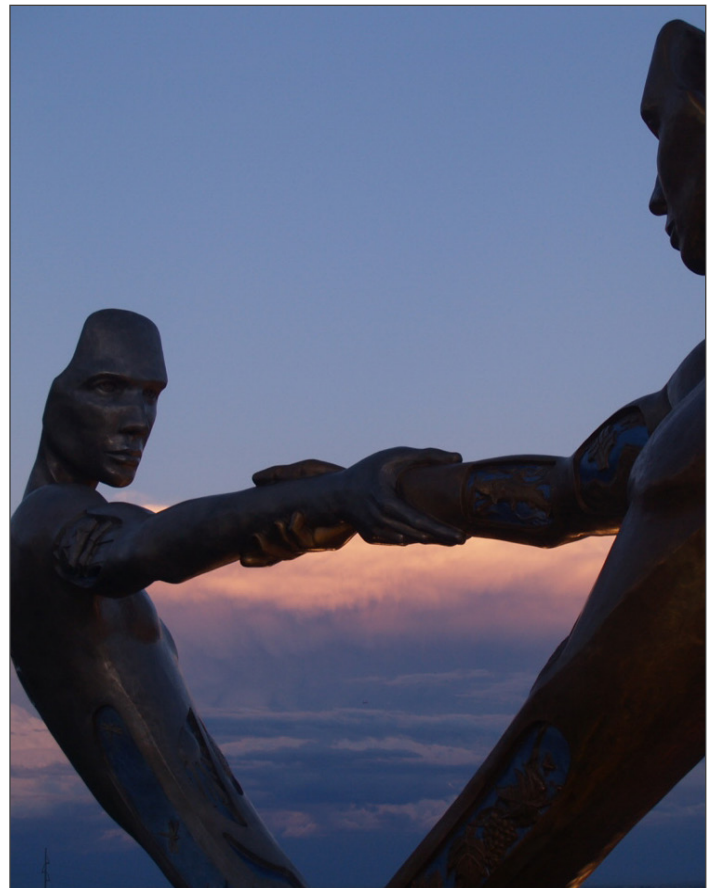
As a maturing city with a current population of over 154,000 (and growing), Thornton has embraced multiple ways to provide attractive public places:

- Through the public realm in general – trees, landscape plantings, and other elements of streetscaping, such as benches, bus stops, and lights;
- By providing parks, trails, diverse recreational opportunities, and community centers supporting the varying needs of Thornton's community;
- Through maintenance, acquisition, and activation of a variety of community buildings (some historic); and
- By supporting arts and culture, most notably through events and classes at the city's community facilities.

All of these spaces and visual and cultural elements affect Thornton's sense of place. A strong sense of place promotes resident interest in seeking historic resources in Thornton. When a city has a unique character and attracts residents to settle, the economy thrives, and its history becomes a part of its identity. Strategy CII-d of the 2020 Thornton Comprehensive Plan recognizes this synergy: "Improve the city's image and identity through recognition of historic



*The Thornton 2020 Comprehensive Plan cover design.*



*Created in 2010, "Communis" is a bronze sculpture that sits atop the hill at the current Thornton Civic Center.*





structures, sites, and districts, as well as streetscape enhancements and public art projects and programs.” The following sections explore Thornton’s public realm in detail.

#### 4.2.1. Streets and Streetscaping

Thornton’s Parks, Recreation, & Community Programs Department (TPRCP) manages the most distinctive part of the streetscape: the landscaping. TPRCP works to keep trees alive in the semi-arid climate of the north Denver region. In addition, the TPRCP department has worked to provide substantial wayfinding signage for the city’s trail and park systems, which in turn promote historic resources. Moreover, the city’s Infrastructure Department provides entrance signs at the city’s borders and street signs which incorporate Thornton’s logo. Given the abnormal boundary of Thornton’s city-limits, the street-sign logo can assist residents and visitors in knowing whether they are or are not within the city, an important function for placemaking.

In historic areas, placemaking features take on greater importance. Not only should residents and visitors be aware of the distinctive buildings in any historic area, but the area’s entire landscape, including trees and plantings in the public right-of-way. Each of these elements deserves focused planning and investment. Interestingly, the vegetated portion of any historic district’s cultural landscape is among the greatest of historic preservation challenges – trees and plantings grow and change, requiring thoughtful long-term management.

Studies of the two historic areas of Original Thornton and Eastlake, as called for in Chapter 3, should consider their entire landscape character, not only including the types of trees and plantings that were established at the time these areas developed, but also those that have been maintained publicly and privately over time. While the TPRCP has a general standard for operation and maintenance of Thornton’s streetscapes, a designated historic district could help establish a unique and customized approach to maintaining/

*Captions listed from top to bottom image: 1) A view of the iconic landscaping found along Hoffman Way, looking north from Poze Blvd. 2) Traffic calming features in Original Thornton, along York St. near the former Thornton Community Garden. 3) The intersection of Lake Ave. and First St., the key intersection of the historic town of Eastlake. 4) Turkeys on a residential street in Eastlake.*





*West Gravel Lakes is one of Thornton's park and recreation offerings. Pictured is a fishing area and lake, looking south toward Denver.*

designing a streetscape based on its historic character. Enhancing the sense of place in a neighborhood designated as a historic district is one incentive for residents to pursue the designation. This helps build local pride and recognition for a special place.

### **Actions for Streets and Streetscaping**

**Action 4.2.1.A:** For any local historic districts designated in Thornton, develop a distinctive street sign (or street sign topper) for use within the district. The city could design signage that is common to all future historic districts within the city, or specifically for each one as it is designated.

**Action 4.2.1.B:** Consider updating, coordinating, and expanding the number of entrance signs displayed along Thornton's perimeter, using a plan to be implemented in phases. Design of the signs should showcase Thornton's commitment to the arts and placemaking, incorporating content that is noticeable, interesting, and interpretive.

**Action 4.2.1.C:** Involve Thornton Parks, Recreation, & Community Programs in long-term planning for identified historic districts to sustain or foster landscapes over time that reinforce the districts' historic character.

### **4.2.2. Parks, Trails, and Community Facilities**

Thornton has high-quality parks, trails, and community centers that support varying needs of community members. All are venues for public engagement, as described in Chapter 5. Thornton's community facilities are notable among recreation planners nationwide. The city is actively working with Rangeview Library District to develop two new innovative library concepts. The first is an Anythink library within the reconstructed recreation facility at the Thornton Community Center, which includes a recreation center, library, and makerspace (as of October 2024, this facility is open). In addition, the city is also partnering with Rangeview to develop a "nature library" on the Aylor Open Lands located at the northwest corner of 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Quebec Street. Anythink's unique concept for this facility is an especially innovative approach that will benefit the Thornton community at large.

Thornton's parks and trails offer a special opportunity for reinforcing historic areas, not only through TPRCP's existing storytelling described in the next chapter, but in their design and investment to fortify the quality of life in historic districts. As with streets and streetscaping described in the previous section, any designated historic district deserves special consideration to ensure that parks, trails, and pedestrian connections to other parks, trails, community gathering places, and neighborhood commercial services are well-designed and maintained. This helps enhance the quality of life and desirability of older neighborhoods.

### **Actions for Parks, Trails, and Community Facilities**

**Action 4.2.2.A:** Involve Thornton Parks, Recreation, & Community Programs in long-term planning

for identified historic districts and landmarks in order to ensure that parks, trails, and pedestrian connections to other parks, trails, community gathering places, and neighborhood services are well-designed and maintained.

**Action 4.2.2.B:** If feasible, conduct an update to the Thornton Heritage Trail Linkage Concept Plan in light of the HPP’s recommended actions in Chapter 4.

### 4.3. Thornton’s Portfolio of Historic Properties

Thornton owns several historic public buildings and spaces, some of which may be rare in the fast-changing Denver Metropolitan area. Preservation of these historic resources is challenging because staff is not widely trained in preservation methods. Additionally, maintenance and public access are challenges regardless of preservation knowledge and training.

As with other elements of Thornton’s public realm, these places offer opportunities to support Thornton’s preservation program (Chapter 3) and the storytelling and engagement discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 5). Below is a review of the general approach to be established by the City in recognizing its ongoing stewardship responsibilities. In addition, the needs and opportunities for sites considered within Thornton’s portfolio of historic properties preliminarily identified during the creation of this HPP.

#### 4.3.1. General Approach

The keys to good facilities management of historic resources, through a preservation lens, are: (1) maintaining a comprehensive understanding of all facilities that require the city’s maintenance, planning, and investment; and (2) identifying historic facilities within the overall facility inventory so that their needs can be tracked and addressed in a timely fashion. Segmenting historic facilities for separate management is not recommended since the city needs to maintain a comprehensive view of all facilities designed to serve the public. However, this HPP addresses only historic resources as other city facilities are considered under other city plans and practices.

As the principal custodian of its historic properties, the city should also commit to three best practices in historic preservation: (1) following the ‘Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties’ (the “Secretary’s Standards”) in undertaking all maintenance and alterations; (2) compiling thorough information to guide management decisions for Thornton’s historic buildings (and when appropriate,



*Captions listed top to bottom image: 1) Once Thornton’s City Hall, the Community Connections building is an enduring site for the community since 1958. 2) The Eastlake at 124th N Line station in the foreground with the Eastlake grain elevator standing in the background.*



archaeological or paleontological sites); and (3) organizing historic preservation efforts around professional experts, either internal or external, who could provide support to facilities managers. One example is the creation of a “historic preservation planner” position. A preservation planner would coordinate implementation of this HPP as well as maintain the city’s surveying and nomination programming. Chapter 3 outlines the HPP’s recommended actions regarding staffing. In addition, Chapter 3 provides the Secretary’s Standards and an associated interpretation of each standard.



*A stormy evening at the Reitzenstein Barn within the Big Dry Creek open space.*

For most buildings discussed below, development of a Historic structure report (HSR) is recommended. In lieu of HSRs, Historic Structure Assessments (HSAs) with preliminary guidelines may be initiated. However, the use of the HSR is standard for all projects funded by the SHPO and therefore will be considered the default report for matters of this plan. These reports are industry standards for historic preservation reuse and rehabilitation projects and often are used in support of federal or state preservation grants. Use of the Secretary’s Standards is assumed within all actions.

Lastly, funds for the following actions could be available from the State Historical Fund (SHF), which is managed by History Colorado. To be eligible for grant funds, a structure will need to be determined eligible for a local, state, or federal historic register and nomination to the eligible register will need to be considered for the strongest grant application. Funds from the SHF (assuming a successful grant application) can pay part or all of the cost of many of the proposed surveying and maintenance actions within this subsection, save for any required match that the grant applicant must provide.

## General Approach Action Items

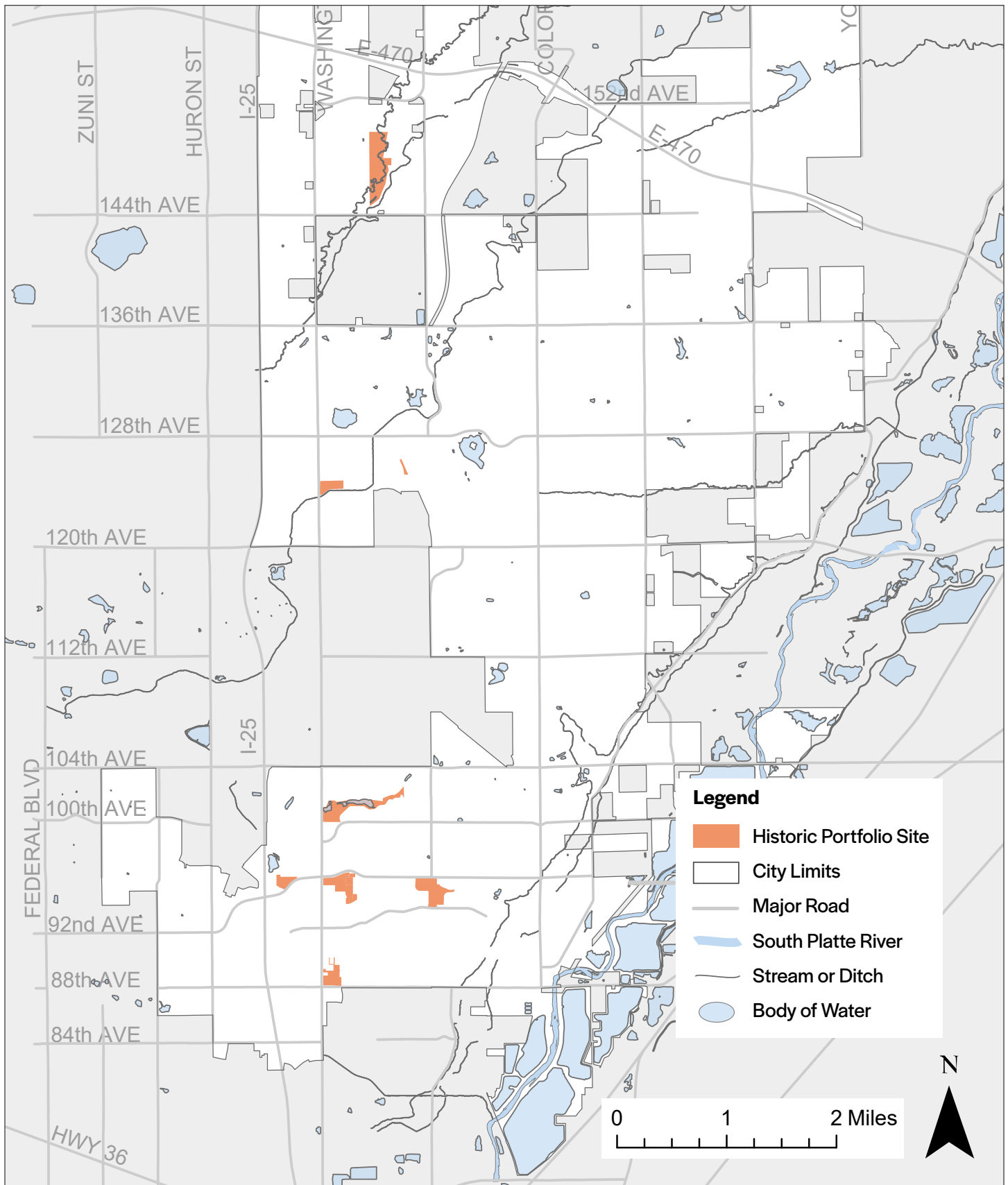
**Action 4.3.1.A:** Coordinate city facility directors to collaborate on designing an ongoing program to inventory historic structures under Thornton’s care, general protocols for ensuring best practices in managing them, and priorities for management actions (e.g., determining which buildings should receive a formal Historic structure report).

**Action 4.3.1.B:** Request city budget for expenses related to studying and maintaining historic structures, subject to City Council approval.

**Sub-Action 4.3.1.B.1:** Consider budget for facility management expenses identified through any assessment or surveying to ensure ongoing maintenance of city historic resources.

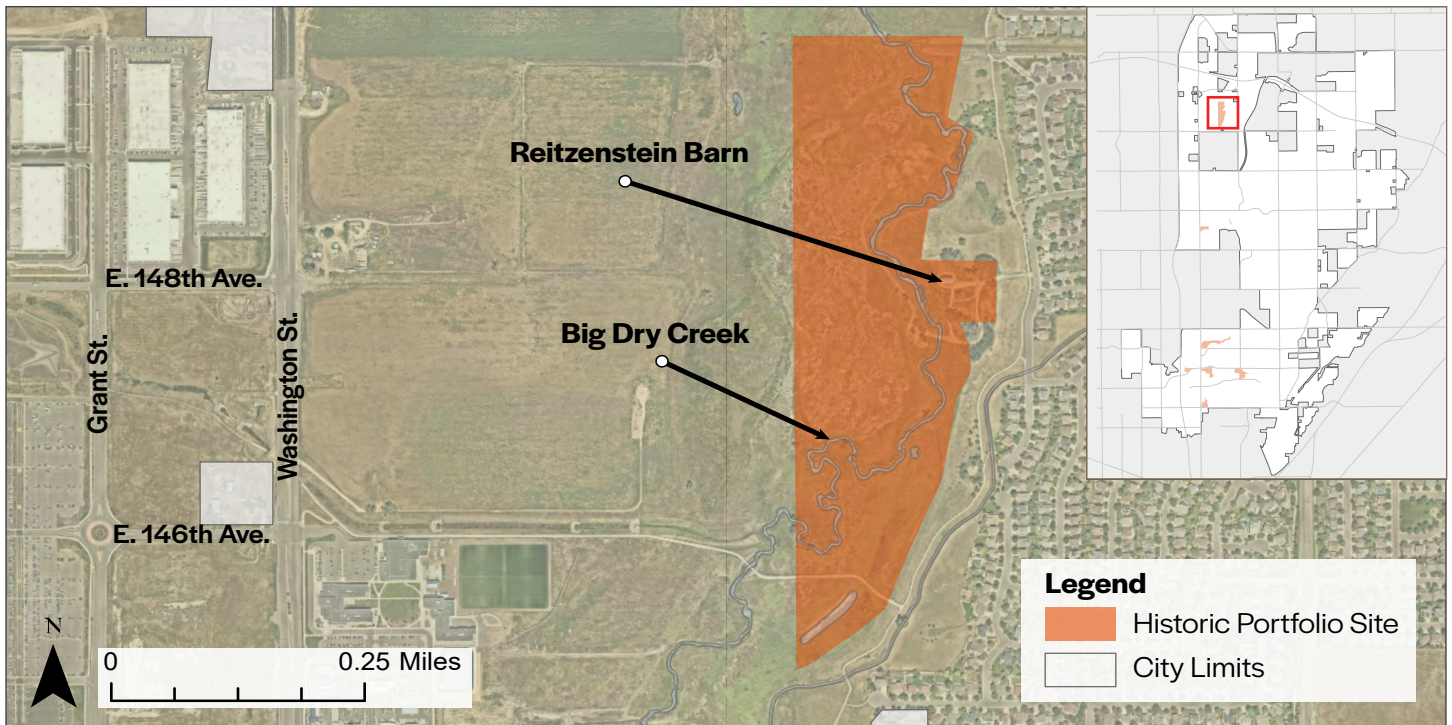
The above actions are proposed to establish dedicated funds for historic preservation. Currently, preservation efforts are limited because they fall under general departmental budgets. Thus, these specific actions request historic preservation funds outside of existing departmental budgets. It is recommended that a historic preservation planner (or lead department) advise relevant city departments on funding needs for special studies and projects related to historic preservation.

### Map 4.1 -Thornton's Portfolio of Historic Properties



**Map 4.1** displays the key historic sites that are owned by the city of Thornton. This map is used for informational purposes only and, other than the Reitzenstein Barn, no sites displayed are officially recognized as historic per Ch. 19 of the City Code. The Eastlake Farmers' Co-Operative Elevator Company site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





Vicinity Map - Reitzenstein Barn

#### 4.3.2. Reitzenstein Barn and Big Dry Creek Open Space

The Reitzenstein Barn, constructed in 1923 as a cattle barn and accompanied by several smaller outbuildings, is located on property acquired by the city for recreational open space, known today as Big Dry Creek Open Space. The land is currently undeveloped for public access except for the portions of the Big Dry Creek Trail that meander through the open space. The barn sits within a spectacular cultural landscape that, even without the farmhouse and other outbuildings, evokes the earlier agricultural prairie landscape that once occupied the entirety of Thornton. It includes the Big Dry Creek, one of the principal arteries of the farm irrigation system connected to Standley Lake, now adapted for the region’s system for managing water supplies and storm runoff. The barn has been well preserved and is a serviceable structure that could be adapted for one or more modern uses. Mature cottonwood trees along the ditch and other landscape features complete the scene. The barn itself was recognized by the city under its current historic recognition ordinance and is the only structure to be afforded this local recognition.

#### Actions for Reitzenstein Barn and Big Dry Creek Open Space

**Action 4.3.2.A:** Develop both a cultural landscape report and a Historic structure report for the Reitzenstein Barn site to provide recommendations regarding the planning for this site, including preservation guidelines.

**Action 4.3.2.B:** If the city updates Chapter 19 of the City Code, amend the landmark resolution of the Reitzenstein Barn to include the associated open space and related structures of the entire cultural landscape under the new ordinance.

**Action 4.3.2.C:** Support Thornton Parks, Recreation & Community Programs in formal planning for preservation of the site. Identify potential adaptive reuses for the barn and design of the open space sensitive to the maintenance of the cultural landscape and opportunities for public education.

**Action 4.3.2.D:** If the city determines that this landscape has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.





*A view of the Reitzenstein Barn with a cottonwood tree in the background and a sign for the Big Dry Creek Open Space.*

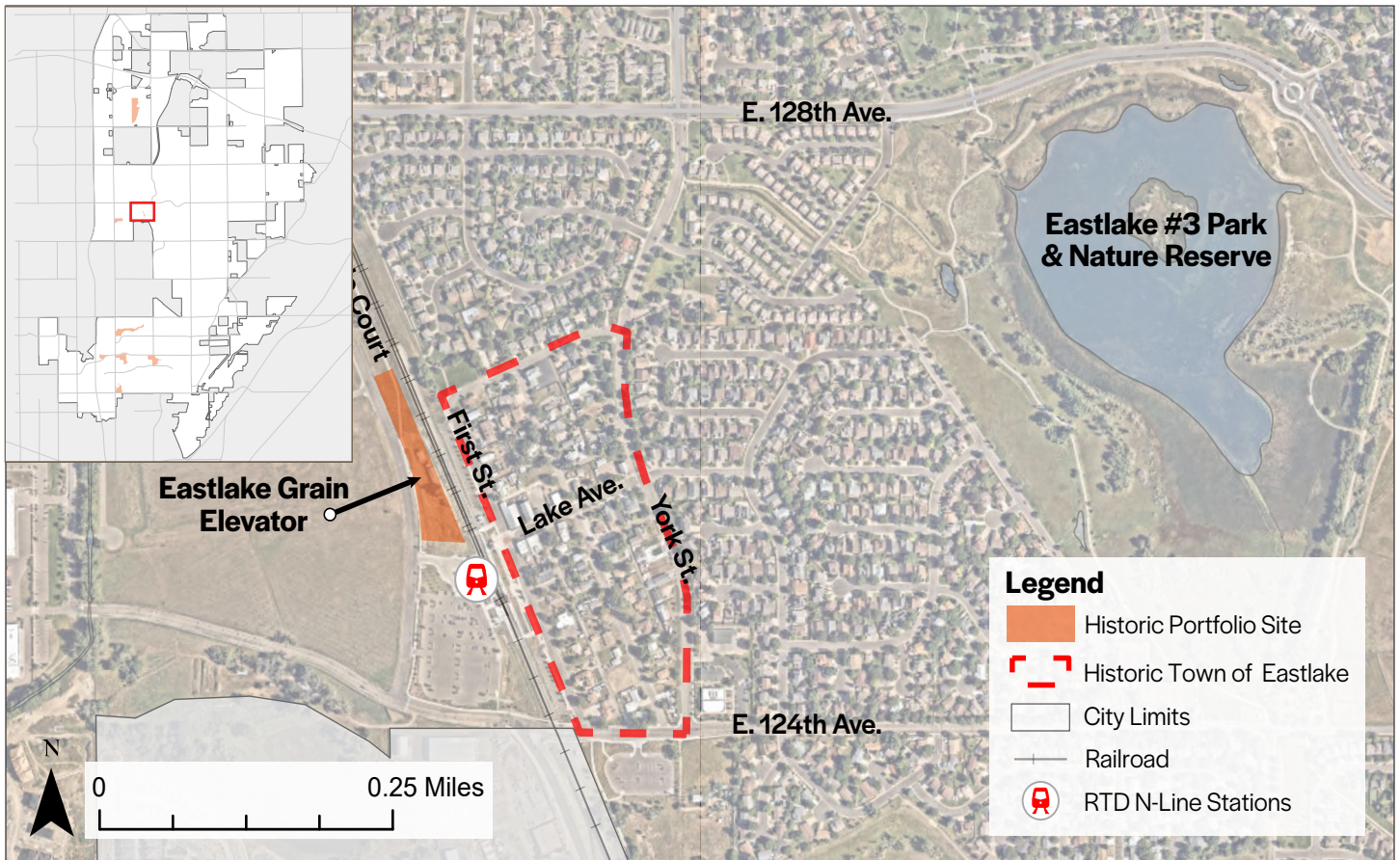


*Large cottonwood trees in the Big Dry Creek Open Space.*



*Picnic tables in front of the Reitzenstein Barn.*





Vicinity Map - Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator Company National Register Site

### 4.3.3. Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator

The Eastlake Farmers’ Co-Operative Elevator was constructed west of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century town of Eastlake, Colorado in 1920. Later, a fireproof building for blacksmithing, an office building, and a larger weigh station were constructed on site. According to History Colorado, the elevator is:

*A well-preserved example of a timber-frame, rural grain elevator standing in stark contrast to encroaching suburban development....[It] is locally significant under Commerce and Industry as an embodiment of High Plains industrial agriculture between 1920 and 1960 in rural Adams County. During this period of improving agricultural technologies and transportation advances, the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator reflects the shifts from rail to truck transportation and from single-grain to multiple-grain storage... [It] is also significant in the area of engineering as a fine example of the economical, widespread contemporary studded elevator construction technique, a specialized response to the introduction of standardized lumber in the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>*

The site was added to the State and National Registers in 2010 but is not recognized under the city’s Historic Recognition Code, Chapter 19. The city’s Economic Development Department has endeavored to attract a private developer for the site, but the City Council has not accepted a proposal for development. Though located beside the RTD commuter-rail station for the N Line, (Eastlake at 124<sup>th</sup> Station), it is a difficult site to adapt to a use that would provide an adequate return on the presumed investment. The actions below are designed to assist the city in marketing the site for development opportunities.



## Actions for the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator

**Action 4.3.3.A:** Complete a current Phase 1 environmental survey to aid prospective developers in need of due-diligence information.

**Action 4.3.3.B:** Perform a Phase 1 archaeological survey of the entire property to determine whether any remaining archaeological resources may be of value for preservation and/or further study.

**Action 4.3.3.C:** Complete a formal Historic structure report covering all buildings on the site and ensure inclusion of ideas for treatment and adaptive use, including more passive uses that preserve the historic context of the site and its architectural features. Ensure consistency and inclusion of previous, related efforts such as the 2017 Eastlake Subarea Plan.

**Action 4.3.3.D:** Consider historic recognition of all above-ground buildings associated with the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any buildings associated with this important site.

**Action 4.3.3.E:** Develop a report on how to raise funds and otherwise pay for development of this site including potential historic preservation grants, tax credits, and other incentives.

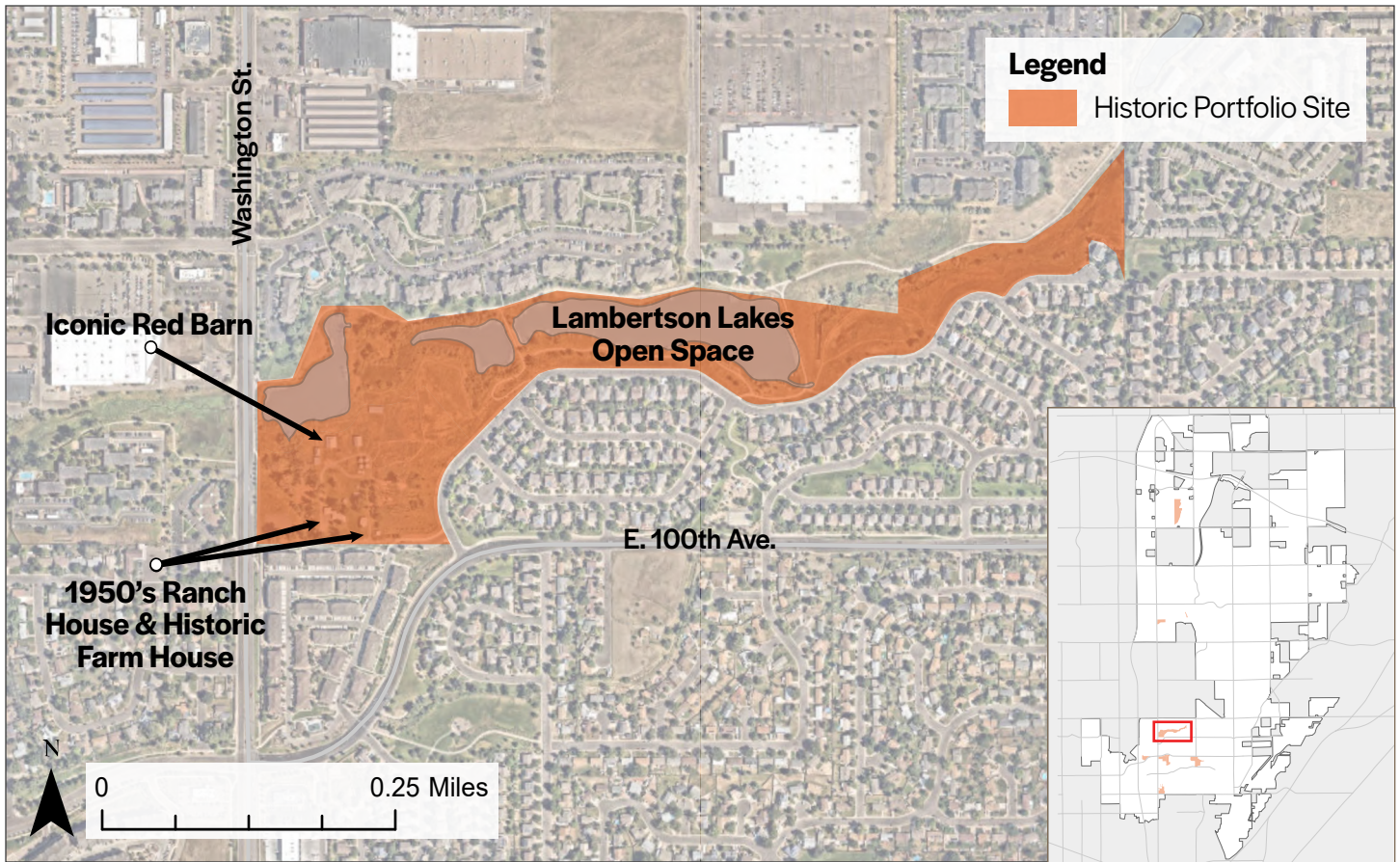


*A view from an Eastlake residential alley with the Eastlake grain elevator in the background.*



*A sunset photo of the Eastlake grain elevator shortly after the construction completed for the N Line station*





*Vicinity Map - Lambertson Lakes Homestead and Open Space*

#### **4.3.4. Lambertson Lakes Homestead and Open Space**

The City acquired the Lambertson Lakes Homestead and Open Space in 2003 from the Lambertson family. This remarkable site is located north of Original Thornton and northeast of Thornton City Hall. The exact date of when the homestead property was established is unclear, but the Homestead Master Plan indicates the Lambertsons purchased the property in the 1920s. The Lambertson family began making larger improvements in the 1930s, adding many of the farm buildings and the white farmhouse to the property. The existing ranch house was built in 1952 for residential use. Further, the irrigation pond and surrounding open space have been developed for park space and trail use.

The site contains several structures including two farm residences, a large red barn, and many other outbuildings, all currently unused. The survival of so many farm outbuildings on a non-operating farm site in the Front Range is thought to be quite rare – indeed, the fact that they remain in place yet today is rare even nationwide as farming and associated technologies have shifted toward specialization and mechanization, and smaller family farms have largely disappeared (see the Historical Structure Assessment in the Lambertson Lakes Homestead Master Plan, 2010, pp. 55-65).



*View of the red barn at the Lambertson Homestead and Open Space site with the reflection off the lake showing in the foreground.*



## Actions for Lambertson Lakes Homestead and Open Space

**Action 4.3.4.A:** Develop a formal historic structures report (or update the HSA in the Lambertson Lakes Master Plan) for all buildings on the Lambertson Lakes Homestead site, with inclusion of preservation guidelines. Such a study should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers.

**Action 4.3.4.B:** Consider historic recognition of the Lambertson Lakes Homestead site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.

**Action 4.3.4.C:** Perform a Phase 1 archaeological survey of the entire Lambertson Lakes Homestead property to determine whether any remaining archaeological resources may be of value for preservation and/or further study.

**Action 4.3.4.D:** If the city determines that the Lambertson Lakes Homestead has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.

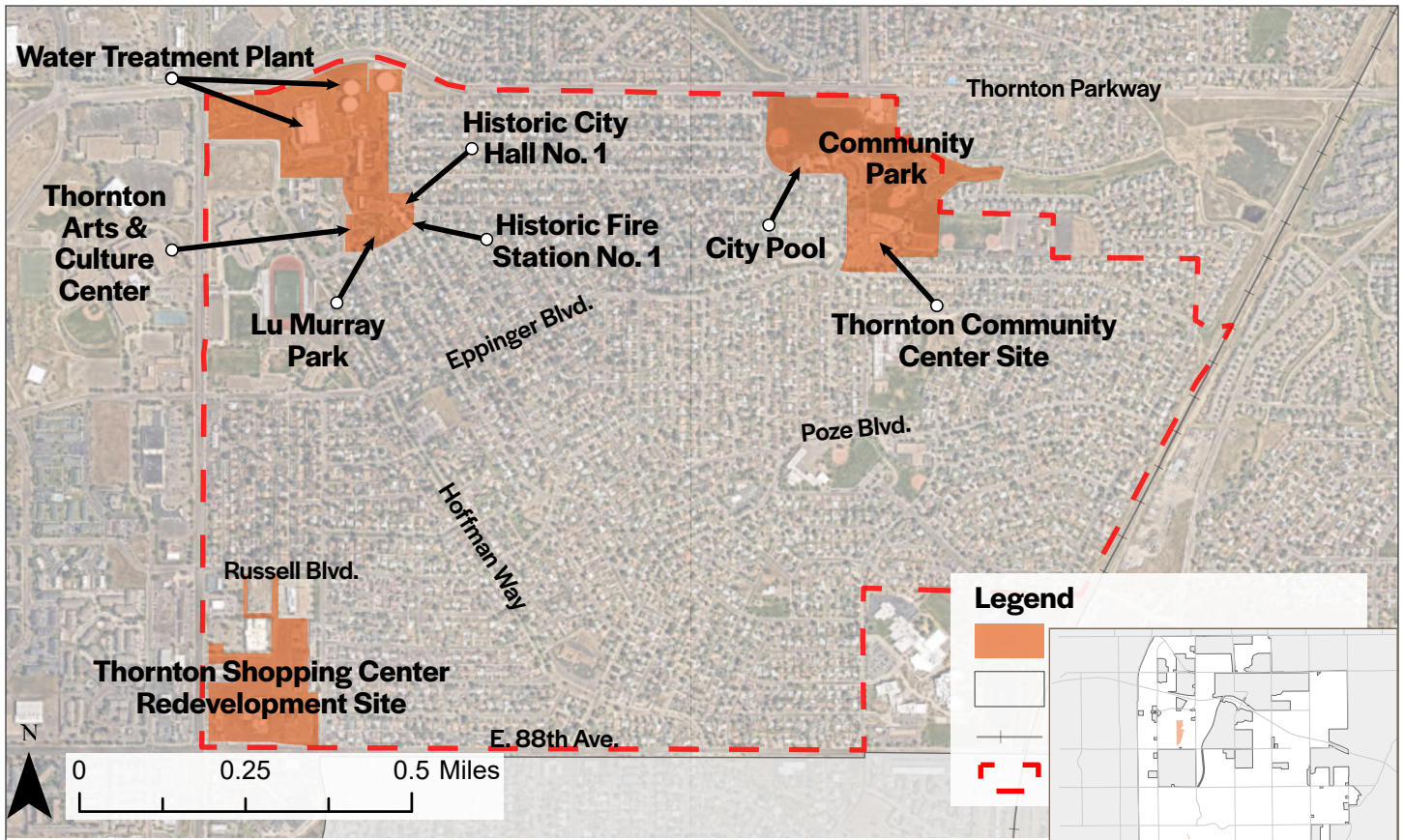


*Top: Looking northwest, this photo shows an aerial image of the entire Lambertson Lakes Homestead site as well as the surrounding neighborhoods, some named after the Lambertson family. The Homestead site includes a variety of agricultural outbuildings, the iconic red barn, a historic farmhouse (moved to the site by the Lambertson family), and a mid-century ranch house. This site serves as a prime example of how Thornton's landscape evolved over time.*

*Below: A view of the heritage trail system that uses the Lambertson Lakes Homestead site as a focal point of Grange Hall Creek Trail. This trail also links community members to other parts of the city, such as to Carpenter Park.*







Vicinity Map - Original Thornton Civic Center No. 1

#### 4.3.5. “Original Thornton Civic Center”

Research for this HPP has identified a historic “Civic Center No. 1” for Thornton, or the “Original Thornton Civic Center.” Residents have known the “Original Thornton Civic Center” in a variety of ways, as many of the buildings and the grounds have been changed over the course of time to suit evolving uses. The site comprises the first City Hall, Fire Station No.1, Lu Murray Park, Thornton Arts & Culture Center, the Community Park and Pool, and the current and original Thornton Water Treatment Plant. In addition, the City owns the former Thornton Shopping Center site but the site is under clean-up and will be sited for redevelopment with most former structures

All of these individual sites connect to tell the story of Thornton’s evolution as a city. For example, the two buildings of the Thornton Arts & Culture Center were originally a church and parsonage, among several churches that were established by new congregations in Thornton’s early years. Additionally, because of the limitations of water availability in the Front Range, the Water Treatment Plant has been important to Thornton’s growth since its early years; it has received extensive renovations and improvements to expand its treatment capacity over the years.

These small details, known to only a select few, indicate a larger need to survey the “Original Thornton Civic Center.” The areas around and a part of the first City Hall – bound by Thornton Parkway (to the north), Dorothy Boulevard (to the south and east), and Hoffman Way (to the west) – are emblematic of Thornton’s growth as a city founded in the mid-twentieth century and deserve further review and consideration for historic preservation programming.

#### First Thornton City Hall and Historic Fire Station No. 1, 9471 Dorothy Boulevard

Thornton’s first true City Hall, located at 9471 Dorothy Boulevard, was believed to be a US military surplus Quonset hut (c.1954). It served both the fire company and City Council at the same time. In fact, the wall of the council’s chamber had a hole to accommodate the fire truck. This temporary structure was used until October of 1958, when the city’s original brick-and-mortar City Hall was completed. Today, that building is home to the city’s Community Connections Division. The building’s multiple meeting rooms are made available for community events by the city,



non-profit organizations, and faith-based organizations. The Quonset hut was ultimately removed from the site in the 1960s with an unknown location at this time.

An example of a mid-century modern municipal building, the original City Hall was the first major construction project undertaken by the newly founded city, announced in February of 1957. The city hired the architectural firm of Murrin and Kasch of Denver and Sterling for the project (later Murrin, Kasch, Kahn & Associates).<sup>3</sup> Within an architectural feasibility study conducted for the city’s ongoing fire museum efforts, the architecture firm Architectural Workshop noted: “Constructed in 1958 for the housing of the fire station, police station, and city council chambers, 9451 Dorothy Blvd was the first civic building in Thornton. Set on a hillside it is a split-level building with mechanical on the lower level, the fire station fronting the street on the main level and police department and city council chamber on the upper level....[It was altered] in 2005 in which an EMS Vehicle Bay to the west side of the main bay, and a fitness center to the north of the council area were added, and upgrades to the kitchen and sleeping quarters were completed. The EMS Vehicle Bay is constructed of masonry walls to match the original

building” (p. 5). Though updated for changing city uses over time, including the EMS addition and a modern canopy structure of sympathetic design over the front door, it remains remarkably intact and continues as a serviceable building.



### Lu Murray Park

The Murray family has been farming in Adams County since 1917. This park at one point may have belonged to the family, giving the park its name. Lu Murray park was created and named before Thornton was incorporated and further survey work is recommended to understand its historic context.



### Thornton Arts & Culture Center

The Thornton Arts and Culture Center (TACC) opened in 2011 but originally served as a church and parsonage built in 1973 and 1963, respectfully. The TACC features a stage, gallery, and event space on the first floor and archival storage and offices in the basement. The building was purchased by the city after it ceased being used as a church, and the church and parsonage were converted. TACC and the adjacent annex (a former parsonage), which opened in 2021 after extensive renovations, host art exhibitions, classes, and community events.



### Thornton Water Treatment Plant

The Thornton Water Treatment Plant serves as a living museum of the evolution of modern municipal water practices. The plant was originally constructed in

*Captions listed from top to bottom image: 1) Modern photo of the fire truck bays at the historic Fire Station No. 1 in Original Thornton. 2) Looking south from above the basketball courts in Lu Murray Park within Original Thornton. 3) An iconic mural painted on water tanks that hold water for use by the Thornton Water Treatment Plant.*



1956 and was later equipped with modern facilities in 2016. Atop the hill where the plant sits are two iconic water tanks decorated with murals of the Colorado Mountains.

### Community Park and Pool

The Community Pool, including the pool house, was constructed in 1956. The project was proposed and funded by the Thornton Women’s Club, and a mosaic is on site to commemorate their efforts. The Volunteer Fire Department helped to build and paint the pool, celebrating the grand opening by throwing Mayor Leary into the pool fully clothed. This site has seen many changes over the years and now is next to the reconstructed Thornton Community Center.

### Actions for “Original Thornton Civic Center” Buildings and Sites

**Action 4.3.5.A:** Conduct a formal historic structure report with preservation guidelines for the First City Hall. Such study should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers.

**Action 4.3.5.B:** Consider historic recognition of the First Thornton City Hall site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.

**Action 4.3.5.C:** If the city determines that the First Thornton City Hall has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.

**Action 4.3.5.D:** Conduct a survey and develop a historic context statement of the civic spaces and buildings within Original Thornton to support future planning efforts for historic preservation. Such a survey should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers. Consider a cultural landscape report for the Original Thornton subdivision.

**Action 4.3.5.E:** Consider including other civic spaces such as churches and schools within the Original Thornton boundaries in any surveying efforts.

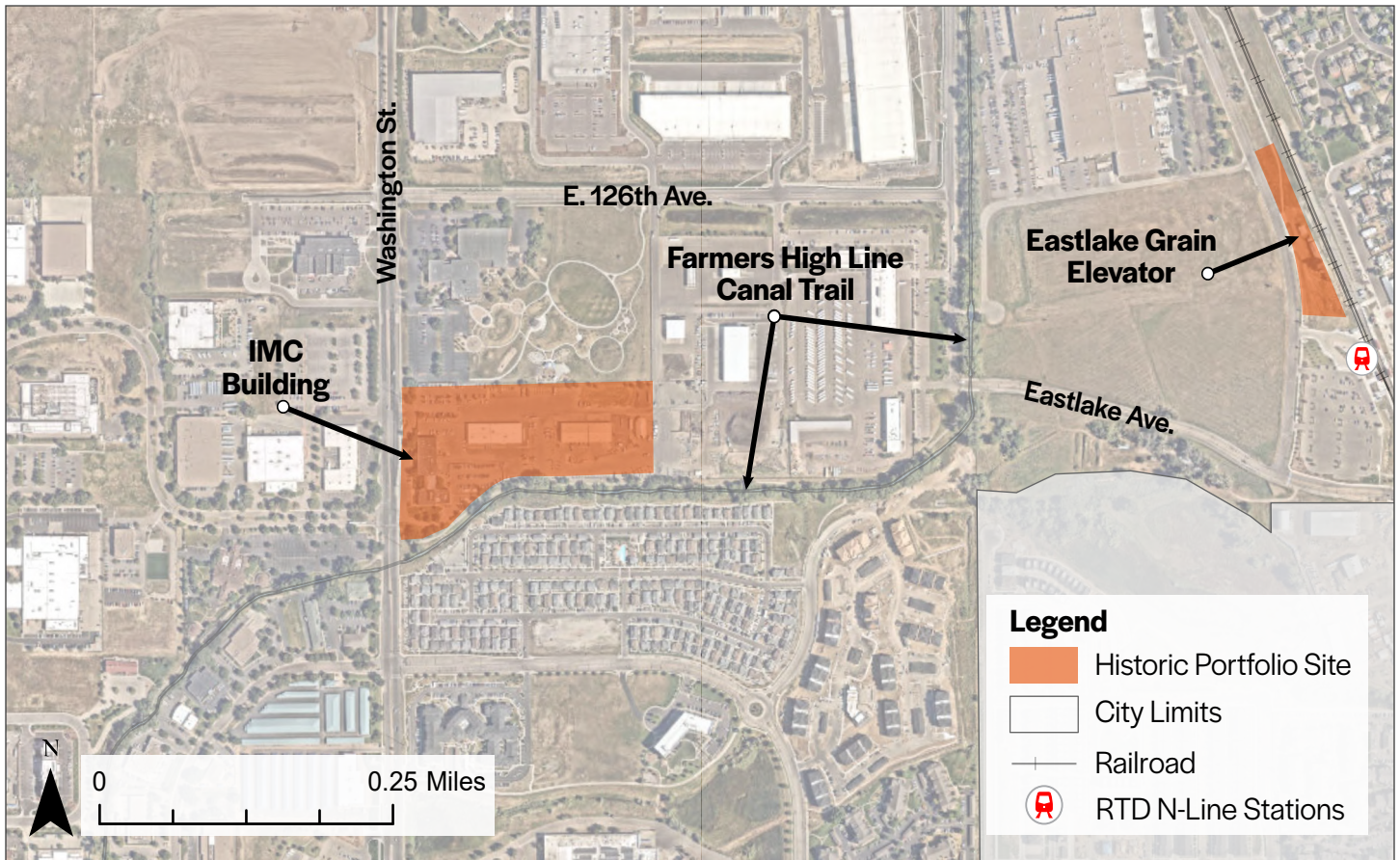
**Action 4.3.5.F:** Consider needed assessments and reports for maintenance of buildings and spaces identified as contributing to Original Thornton’s historic integrity.

**Action 4.3.5.G:** Consider historic recognition of other important Original Thornton historic sites owned by the city. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.



*Captions listed top to bottom image: 1) A mosaic commemorating the Thornton Women’s Club in promoting and developing Thornton’s City Pool. 2) People enjoying a hot summer day at City Pool.*

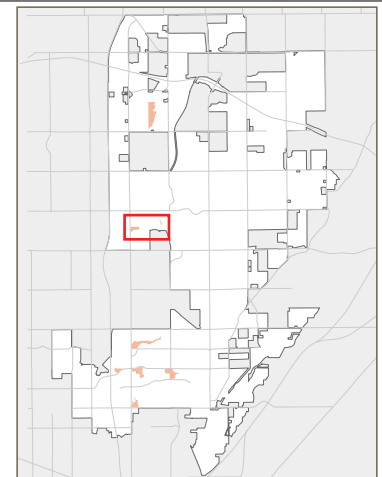




Vicinity Map - Infrastructure Maintenance Center

#### 4.3.6. Infrastructure Maintenance Center

The Infrastructure Maintenance Center (IMC), 12450 Washington Street, is a large, two-story building constructed nearly 50 years ago, making it a candidate for more study. It was built in a refined, late-mid-century modern style for \$1.3 million by the Mountain Empire Dairymen’s Association (MEDA) and designed by the architectural firm CNC/NHPQ Inc. of Greeley (which also built the 1976 Weld County Courthouse Complex). MEDA broke ground for the building on April 28, 1972. The building is an unusual remnant of the Adams County agricultural industries as the Thornton Growth Area is now largely occupied by suburban and urban development, with few remaining agricultural elements. The former dairy complex now houses Infrastructure Department. Except for a large, colorful mural decorating the front wall facing Washington Street with images of the four seasons and children working in scientific professions, there has been little change to the original design.



#### Actions for the Infrastructure Maintenance Center

**Action 4.3.6.A:** Conduct a historic structures report with preservation guidelines for the IMC building. Such a study should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers.

**Action 4.3.6.B:** Consider historic recognition of the IMC site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.

**Action 4.3.6.C:** If the city determines that the IMC Building has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.



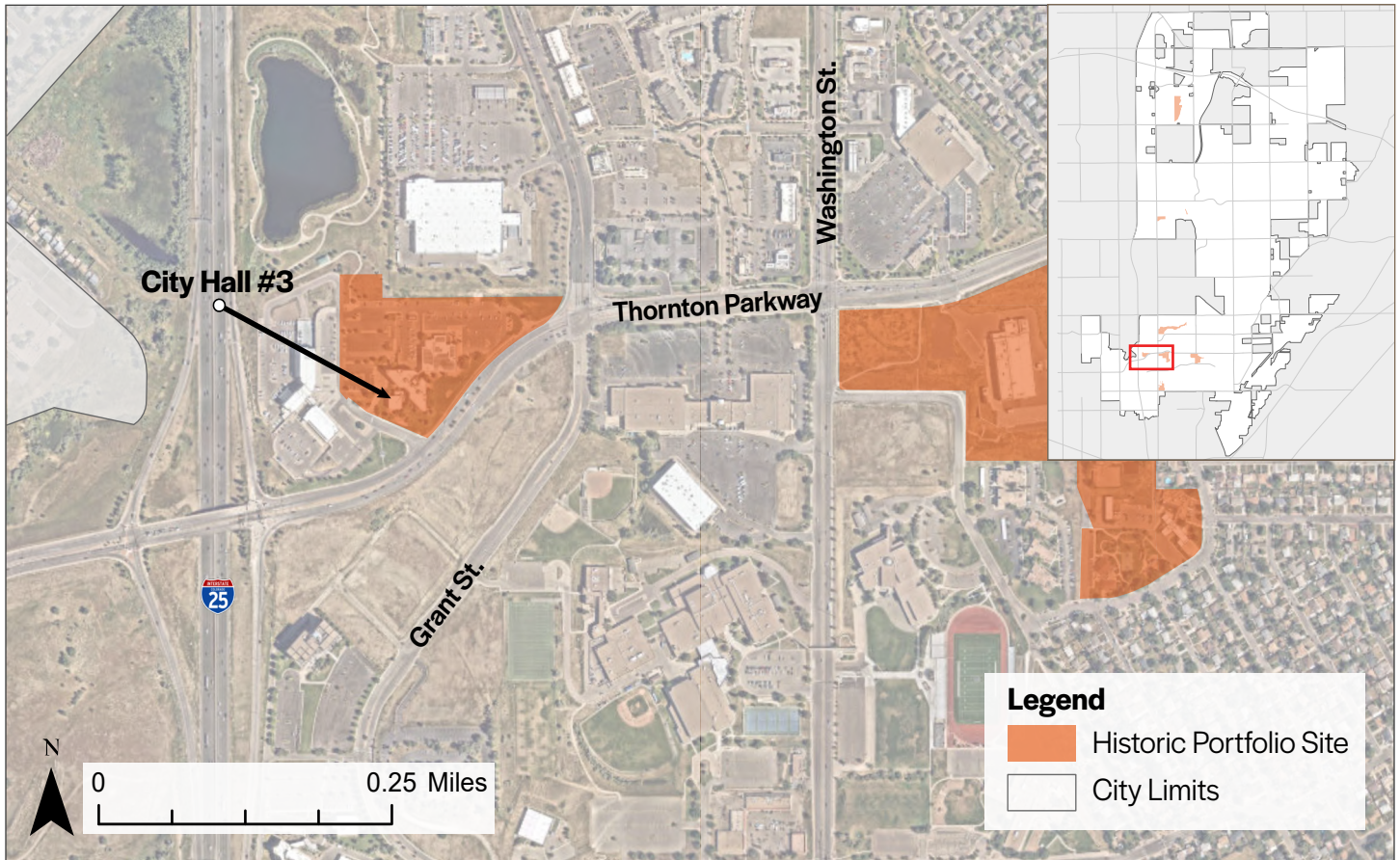


*A mural on the western side of the Infrastructure Maintenance Center.*



*The "Communis" sculpture shown in the photo framing the Thornton City Hall, i.e., City Hall #3.*





Vicinity Map - City Hall #3 (Civic Center)

### 4.3.7. City Hall #3

City Hall # 3, 9500 Civic Center Drive, is Thornton’s third and current City Hall, a purpose-built, iconic structure constructed on a visually prominent site at the northeast corner of Thornton Parkway and I-25. It is part of a municipal campus that includes two more recently-constructed buildings of similar construction and style housing the Thornton Police Department and the Thornton Municipal Court, built after the current City Hall.<sup>4</sup> The buildings were constructed approximately 20 years apart (1983 and 2003, respectively) and reflect late 20th century postmodern trends – a playful asymmetry in the case of the City Hall with an echo of the Brutalism designs of the 1960s in the use of concrete trim for both. Brutalism was often employed for institutional buildings and featured rough concrete. The current City Hall has experienced some alteration, including the addition of a large meeting room for the City Council on the south side, which completed the enclosure of an exterior courtyard-style entryway, and a utilitarian single-story addition on the east side that originally housed the police department. There are some concerns about the longevity of both structures at the current Civic Center complex given the engineering challenges associated with large, tall buildings in a region of extensive shrink-swell soils (specifically bentonite soils).

### Actions for City Hall #3

**Action 4.3.7.A:** Complete a historic structure report with preservation guidelines for both buildings of the Thornton Civic Center Complex, and consider other assessments as needed. Such study should guide any changes made to the buildings in future. Include a review of the history and design of the buildings to assess their significance and quality toward a potential nomination to the State and National Registers.



## 4.4. Strengthening Thornton's Neighborhoods

Historic preservation programs can support Thornton's goal of strengthening its residential neighborhoods. While the roughly 2,500 homes in Original Thornton and the small number of early buildings in Eastlake have been identified as initial candidates for Thornton's proposed new historic preservation program (see Chapter 3), other early neighborhoods are also distinctive with many more nearing the 50-year mark. The primary focus in linking preservation goals to neighborhood goals is encouraging those who already live in historic neighborhoods to remain, and recruiting others who seek the experience of living in such interesting, unique places.

Supporting Thornton's existing neighborhoods addresses two of the goals of this plan:

- **Goal 1:** Preserve historic places, buildings, neighborhoods and landscapes that promote Thornton's cultural heritage and unique identity; and
- **Goal 2:** Recognize and celebrate Thornton's cultural diversity and the places that support community traditions.

Actions suggested in Chapter 5, Engaging the Public in Preservation, are designed to increase the resident appreciation for their neighborhoods.

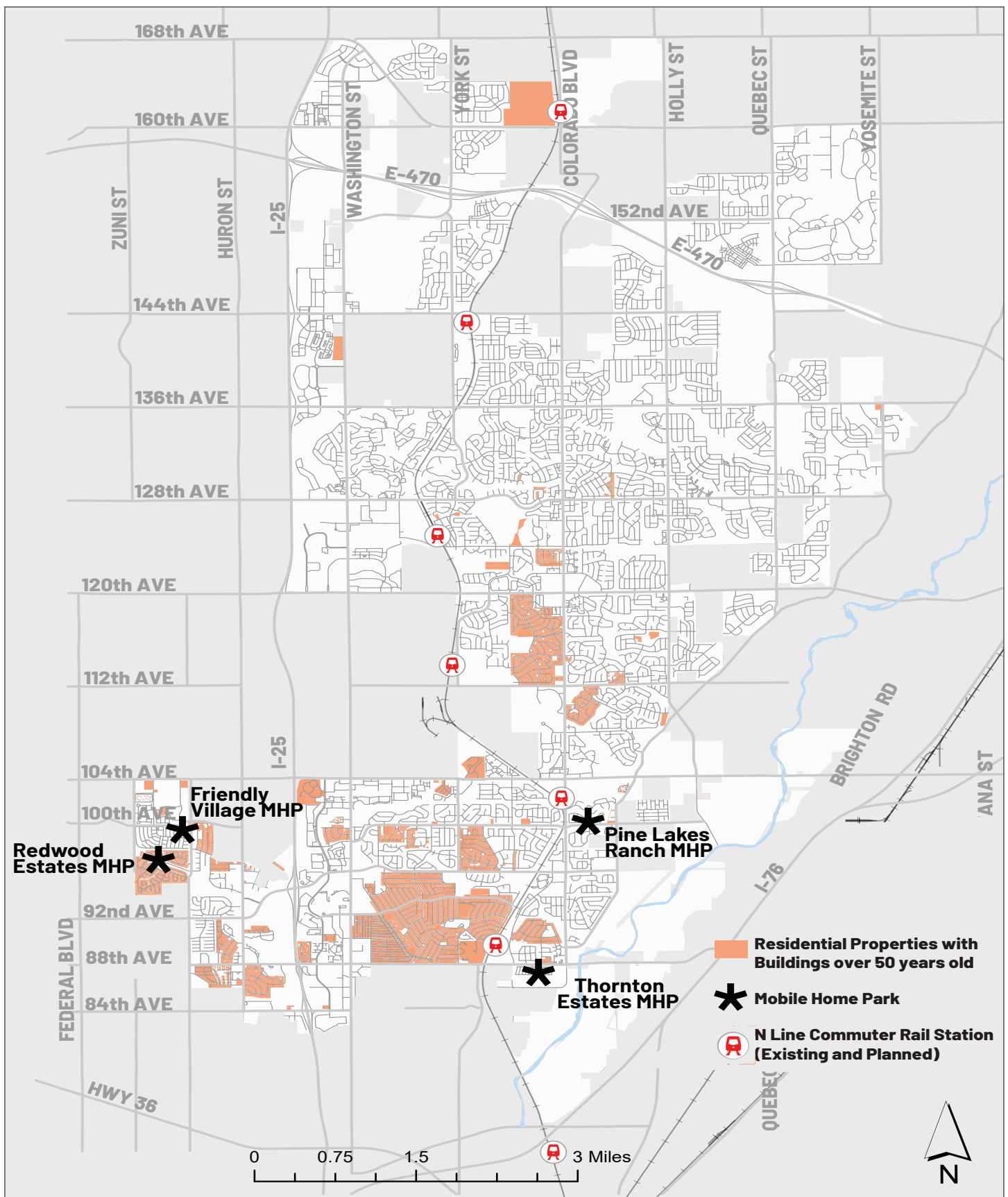
### 4.4.1 Strengthening Thornton's Housing

In general, affordable housing programs focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing through new construction – an increasingly difficult proposition as the cost of new construction increases over time. Just as the greenest building is the one that is already built – a common saying among historic preservationists – the most cost-effective housing is that which is already built.<sup>5</sup> This HPP complements efforts to support affordable housing by identifying ways to protect existing homes that are already affordable, thereby maintaining – and enhancing – the current supply.

*Captions listed from top to bottom image: 1) A photo of a typical Original Thornton home. 2) A view of the N Line train departing north from the Original Thornton at 88th station. 3) A view from the Eastlake at 124th station platform, looking toward Lake Ave. and First St. 4) Typical historic Eastlake homes with flowers in the foreground.*



### Map 4.2 - Location of Residential Properties 50 Years or Older



**Map 4.2** displays properties with a residential designation on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in the Comprehensive Plan that may contain a building or structure that is 50 years of age and within the city-limits of Thornton, including manufactured home parks. This map is used for informational purposes only and does not represent legal recognition of a historically recognized property as permitted by Chapter 19 of the City Code, Historic Recognition.



#### 4.4.2. Support for Existing Older Homes

All buildings require ongoing maintenance; as both the homes and owners age in Thornton, the need to manage and pay for upkeep becomes increasingly important, or the homes become threatened by neglect. Neglect can contribute to an appearance of blight in a neighborhood. Conversely, early intervention is less costly for both owners and those who operate programs to address ongoing maintenance needs.

Thornton makes good use of the federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to support citywide housing rehabilitation for lower-income, owner-occupied homes. Existing home rehabilitation activities are the Help for Homes, Code Compliance Assistance, and Paint-a-Thon programs. All of the rehabilitation services are free to qualified residents. Thornton's historic preservation program could work together with the CDBG program, focusing on historic resources designated locally by the city and/or those listed in the Colorado State Register of Historic Places without necessarily adopting the same income standards as required by the CDBG program. The CDBG program currently has a long-standing, detailed agreement with the Colorado SHPO for pre-approved home rehabilitation projects.

A special challenge across many locations in the city, identified shortly after the developer began building Original Thornton, is shrink-swell soils. Even well-maintained houses can suffer from this problem. These clay-like soils originating from volcanic action can heave enough to break foundations and slab flooring and dislocate sewer and water pipes. The Colorado Geological Survey has put out a handbook to advise homeowners and home buyers.<sup>6</sup>

Public input during the creation of this Plan identified the need to maintain multiple manufactured home communities in Thornton. These homes are often occupied for generations by families who own their home, but who do not own the underlying land – making them vulnerable to decisions by the landowners who may sell their property for other uses. Such developments contribute substantially to Thornton's supply of affordable homes in long-standing, close-knit neighborhoods, with many dating back to 1970 or possibly earlier. In 1970, the city issued 467 manufactured home permits, and in 1971, 457 permits. Hundreds more were noted in a Denver Post story in 1972 titled "Thornton Abuzz with New Building, Population Expected to Double."<sup>7</sup> Colorado has developed a handbook describing several interventions available to the city and manufactured home community residents to ensure that these neighborhoods remain in place.<sup>8</sup>

#### Actions for Support for Existing Older Homes

**Action 4.4.2.A:** Identify ways to expand or supplement Thornton's CDBG program to address any locally designated historic districts (if created) and additional neighborhoods where the housing is reaching the age where additional upkeep may be required. Consider the role tax credits could play for recognized properties eligible for such credits.

**Action 4.4.2.B.** Consider ways to assist property owners from losing historic properties due to lack of maintenance that creates a need for "demolition by neglect" for any locally designated historic resources.

**Action 4.4.2.C:** Develop a historic context statement for Thornton's manufactured home communities and note their significance as one of the nation's most affordable housing types. Surveying of communities older than 50 years old should be given priority. Consider the role regional, state, and federal partners play in preserving them.

#### 4.4.3. Discouraging the Loss of Affordable Older Homes

Donovan Rypkema of PlaceEconomics, an expert in housing and historic preservation, states, "We are tearing down what is affordable and systematically building what is not....Every time a unit of pre-1970 housing is lost, a unit of affordable housing is lost."<sup>9</sup> Demolitions happen for many reasons. In Thornton, homes are generally in good repair, so blight is not one such reason. The programming recommended above will help to ensure that this

continues to be the case. Since Thornton is close to Denver, as homes and home sites in Denver grow ever more expensive, buyers with sufficient funds may view neighborhoods such as Original Thornton as ripe for new, larger, and much more expensive homes. This trend is readily visible across Denver, although specific research has lagged. Even casual observers of Denver neighborhoods built between 1890 and 1960 can see many locations where larger, newer, and more expensive homes have replaced relatively modest, single-family homes of the past.

Nationwide, the supply of housing units that are affordable for low- and moderate-income buyers and renters is at a crisis level. Thornton can get ahead of this trend in the Denver region and serve its residents by seeking ongoing stability for existing neighborhoods. However, to do this properly, the city must design an entire program focused on affordable housing and employ various tools and techniques to discourage demolition, a topic beyond the scope of this plan (but which could be supported by a variety of federal, state, and local programs). Meanwhile, however, a few preservation techniques can help, suggested by the following actions.

### **Actions for Discouraging the Loss of Affordable Older Homes**

**Action 4.4.3.A:** If Thornton has locally designated historic districts in the future, consider the role that certain regulations and/or programs could play in discouraging or preventing demolition of certain historic resources as determined by City Council.

**Action 4.4.3.B:** Consider the role historic preservation funds (locally, or through state or federal grants) can play in supporting existing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) efforts. Aim to supplement unmet needs and expand income allowances not permitted by CDBG funding.

### **4.5. Sustaining Thornton’s Business Areas**

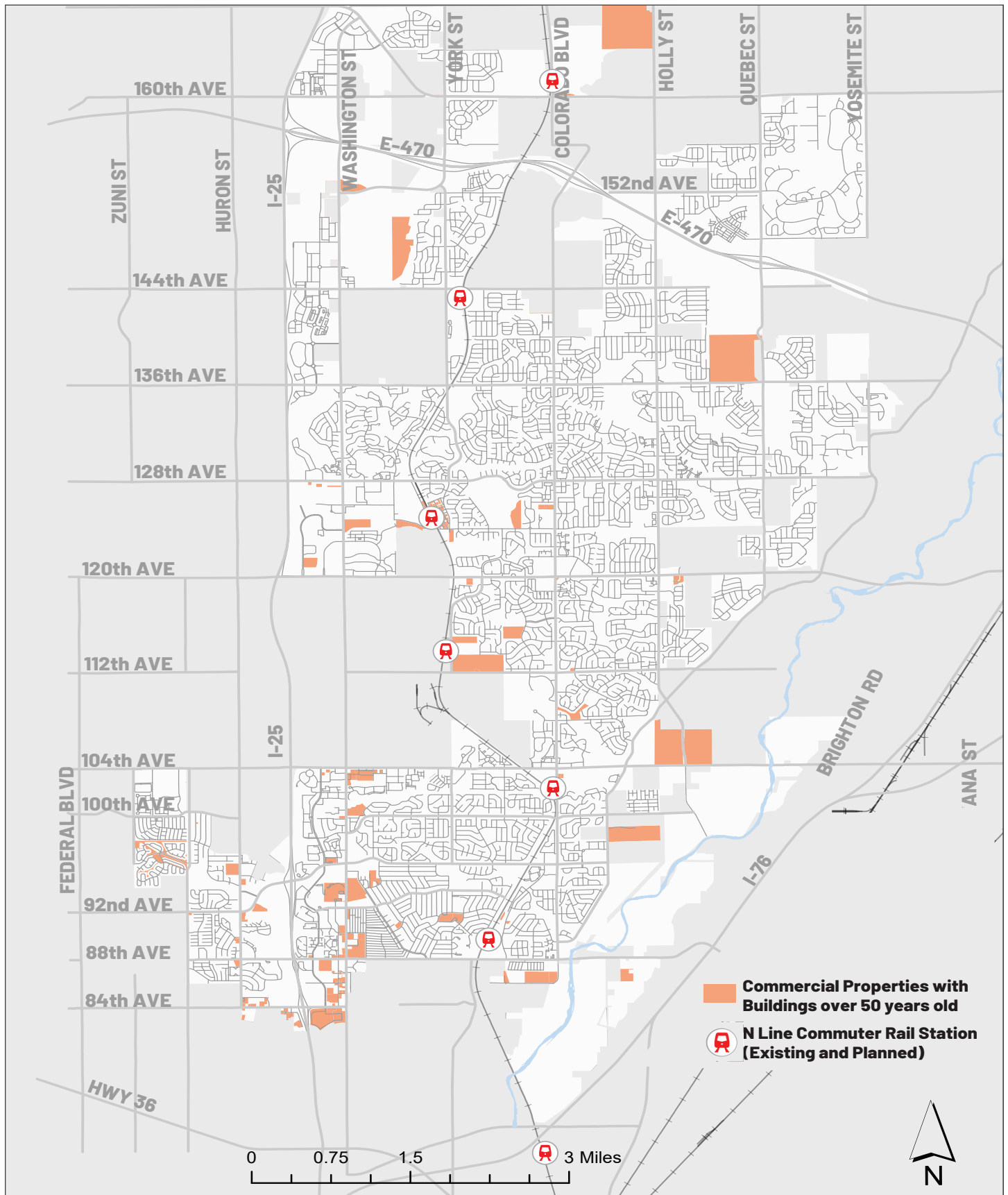
Much of Thornton’s commercial and business development is more recent than the typical 50-year cutoff for considering a building to be historic. A scan of areas that may contain buildings of this age (see Map 4.3) suggests only a small number might be found in any surveying effort. In future or expanded surveying efforts of Thornton’s



*Captions listed from top to bottom image: 1) A sign for a longstanding business in Thornton. 2) A mid-century paint design of a bowling alley in Thornton.*



**Map 4.3 - Commercial Properties, 50 years or Older**



**Map 4.3** displays properties with a commercial or mixed-use designation on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in the Comprehensive Plan that may contain a building or structure that is 50 years of age and within the city limits of Thornton. This map is used for informational purposes only and does not represent legal recognition of a historically recognized property as permitted by Chapter 19 of the City Code, Historic Recognition.

commercial areas, the 30-year threshold identified by Colorado’s SHPO can be applied when considering significance with regard to the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties.

Smaller buildings of any age, however, can be valuable in supporting the diversity of small businesses that contribute to a community’s economic resilience and quality of life. Older, “traditional” businesses (e.g., smaller retail, restaurants, and other services more like those found on traditional main streets) are also of value, as they generally support Thornton’s economic diversity. Historic preservationists view sustaining smaller businesses and their buildings as an imperative for maintaining the economic and social stability and quality of life in older parts of a city so that they remain viable and desirable as they age. Further, surveying and research should not simply be limited to businesses but also other areas of cultural significance or community gathering that are associated with Thornton’s many businesses, schools, neighborhood centers, shopping centers, and other areas of community gathering not explicitly identified in this plan.

More research is needed to identify older and smaller buildings and traditional businesses that may benefit from preservation approaches such as façade rehabilitation, tax incentives, and “Legacy Business” recognition.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, façade rehabilitation grants are available through the City’s Economic Development Department.

As a city that has developed after the arrival of the automobile, Thornton’s commercial spaces reflect the sprawling patterns of car-oriented development typical of mid-century places. Even Thornton’s very first “downtown,” the Thornton Shopping Center, was built as an auto-oriented shopping center. Residents often wish that Thornton had developed with a traditional downtown. As Thornton continues to develop across a large area of land, scattered nodes of commercial development have occurred. Think of these as a string of pearls, just like the city’s parks. Over time, with city guidance on future investment, these areas can be oriented not only to the car, but also to neighborhood services and walkability. Moreover, there is space in some of these areas for additional commercial development.

## **Actions for Sustaining Thornton’s Business Areas**

**Action 4.5.A:** Consider the role historic preservation could play in the development of a “Legacy Business” program focused on businesses with long tenure (serving the community for 30+ years) in Thornton but which may not be located within a building considered to be historic.

**Action 4.5.B:** Survey Thornton’s commercial and neighborhood centers for Mid-Century architecture and early automobile cultural influences that are still reflected in the community today. Survey work should include buildings, streets, landscapes, public gathering places, schools, churches and other areas where community events and gathering have historically occurred.

**Action 4.5.C:** Consider the role historic preservation could play in providing incentives, programs, tax credits, repair programs, and other similar tools that assist with maintenance and repair of Thornton’s historic structures of at least 30+ years of age.

## **4.6. Conclusion**

Historic preservation is not confined to the typical historic resources of National and State Register recognition or local historic district designation. As this chapter demonstrates, its principles can be woven into much of the work a city undertakes to serve its residents – broadly helping to sustain the quality of life and sense of place that makes Thornton a good place to live. The next chapter will explain how to build public appreciation for Thornton’s history and historic resources, to encourage growth of a knowledgeable and enthusiastic constituency that supports the historic preservation approaches recommended in both Chapter 3 and this chapter.



## Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.thorntonco.gov/government/citydevelopment/planning/Pages/2020-Comprehensive-Plan.aspx>
- 2 <https://www.historycolorado.org/location/eastlake-farmers-co-operative-elevator-company>
- 3 Architect Hans Kahn completed the drawing for the original design, built substantially as proposed but for more than the original estimated cost of \$ \$75,957 (Thornton Tribune, Feb. 28, 1957, and Sept. 19, 1957, which has Thornton’s residents voting on \$130,000). Kahn later designed several notable buildings around Denver, including the 1965 BMH-BJ Synagogue, the largest modern orthodox synagogue in Denver, and the 1962 First Christian Church of Loveland. Kahn’s obituary: <https://www.denverpost.com/2015/06/22/hans-kahn-denver-architect-who-fled-nazi-persecution-dies-at-86/> BMH-BJ Synagogue Information: <http://www.thedenversynagogue.org/> First Christian Church of Loveland Information: <https://www.lovedisciples.org/>
- 4 The second City Hall was adapted from a building originally built as a bank in the shopping center associated with Original Thornton; it is currently a church and no longer owned by Thornton.
- 5 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/494514/pdf>
- 6 A Guide to Swelling Soils for Colorado Homebuyers and Homeowners. CGS Special Publication 43, SP-43, by Dave Noe, William “Pat” Rogers, and Candace Jochim, first published in 1997. Available at: <https://coloradogeologicalsurvey.org/2001/28852-swelling-soil-wins-national-award/>
- 7 Marion Smith, Denver Post, September 20, 1972. Research in Thornton’s archives shows contentious discussion of mobile home park zoning beginning in the late 1960s.
- 8 Handbook for Manufactured Home Park Residents: Housing and Shelter. Available at: <https://www.thorntonco.gov/media/file/manufactured-home-handbook>
- 9 “*Older and Historic Buildings: The Solution to the Affordable Housing Crisis, not the Cause.*” Presentation by Donovan Rypkema to the annual meeting of Preservation North Carolina, Durham, NC, October 11, 2023. Available via Vimeo Site, <https://vimeo.com/873473916>.
- 10 A model for such a program is in Denver; see <https://www.denvergov.org/files/assets/public/v/1/economic-development/documents/busdev/business-legacy-program/denver-legacy-business-program-2.pdf>





# CHAPTER 5



# CHAPTER 5. ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN PRESERVATION

This Plan sets the stage for the development of public engagement programs pertaining to the processes and values of historic preservation. All of the preservation program goals identified in Chapter 1 call for broad, on-going community engagement but goals two, three, and four would be impacted the most by public engagement:

**Goal 2:** Recognize and celebrate Thornton’s cultural diversity and the places that support community traditions.

**Goal 3:** Increase Thornton’s historic preservation staffing capabilities, volunteer base and volunteer recruitment, and grant writing capabilities to bolster historic preservation activities.

**Goal 4:** Engage Thornton residents in activities that magnify public appreciation for Thornton’s history and historic resources.

As recommended in Chapter 3, a historic preservation commission (HPC), appointed by City Council, could focus on public engagement while supporting city staff initiatives including surveys of historic resources and grant programs. The HPC could also work with City Council and residents to designate local historic resources if desired. The HPC could also work with staff on developing design guidelines for any designated properties and review demolitions, changes, and additions to designated properties in accordance with Chapter 19 of the City Code, as proposed to be amended in Chapter 3. These latter tasks are not anticipated to be needed for some time, until more surveying, research, and public planning take place.

Thus, one early role for the HPC could be to provide opportunities for public engagement regarding historic preservation. To start, the HPC could engage with existing networks of volunteers and community members for sources of ideas and volunteer help. The city also enjoys several “interpretive resources,” as described below, that could provide further support for the HPC’s work with the public.

## 5.1 Defining Terms and Objectives for Chapter 5

Following is a list of terms used when describing strategies for public engagement:



**Public engagement** is the broadest of the terms used in this Plan. It includes interpretation, community outreach, and many of the programs identified as a part of this chapter.

**Interpretation** is a method of sharing the history and culture of historic resources and sites as well as programs to tell a wide variety of community stories. It not only includes storytelling, but also explains the broad themes of history.

**Community outreach** refers to programs that are meant to provide public education for and collect stories from community residents. Community outreach informs residents about activities that protect historic resources and also enables more information to be collected about community members' history and stories.

**Public participation** involves members of the public in dialogue with public officials about how to make historic preservation activities effective and widely used. For example, a public participation process was used to develop this Plan.

**School-based education** includes public education programs. Classes on local history and historic preservation are especially helpful for students ranging from kindergarten through grade 12 since information learned by younger students may be passed on to their parents. University students may also be interested in conducting additional research on Thornton's historic resources or interning at the city to help build a body of work to support interpretation and historic preservation.

**Oral histories** historical research through the direct interviewing and recording of people's stories about the past as well as current day events. Thornton has several oral histories archived and History Colorado provides resources online.



*Captions listed from top to bottom image: 1) A mural on display at a Thornton community event. 2) Members of the HPP project's Advisory Group discuss Thornton's historic neighborhoods. 3) The inaugural community meeting to promote the development of the HPP.*



## What Is Interpretation?

Interpretation engages and offers learning opportunities to willing audiences. It has been a field of considerable study since the 1950s when the first book on the subject was published for the National Park Service, *Interpreting Our Heritage* by Freeman Tilden.

Tilden's book remains a definitive reference in the field. It defined the practice of interpretation as "...an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information." Tilden's most famous quote describes the objective interpretation: "Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection."

Interpretation uses a wide variety of methods ranging from outdoor exhibit signs to museums, from printed materials to costumed interpreters offering first-person stories. The arts can also be used to provide interpretive programs, from outdoor public art to performances devised by children from oral histories they have conducted with their elders. Almost any gathering, from a parade or festival to a lecture series, can be designed to include interpretation.

**Interpretation is more than presenting facts.** Good interpretation engages the imagination and inspires curiosity while connecting an audience to the resource and the story.



*An interpretive sign highlighting Eastlake history along the Eastlake Heritage Trail Loop.*

### 5.1.1 Objectives for Public Engagement

If public engagement is done well, the public's appreciation for Thornton's history and historic resources, and for historic preservation's role in the community's future, will grow. The community's understanding of their own role as supporters for historic preservation will grow as well. During community meetings and focus groups conducted for this Plan, participants expressed the wish to gain and share information about Thornton's history. The public survey conducted for this Plan provides additional insights on the community's interests.

As indicated in Table 5.1 and by the community survey results conducted for this Plan (see Appendix B for full survey results), community programs and events that celebrate Thornton's cultures and histories were the top choice for potential investment by the city. Thornton's residents were also asked about specific kinds of "educational and/or commemorative tools and actions" they would like to see. Table 5.2 lists the possibilities in order of preference. Two-thirds of respondents' answers were devoted to exhibits and public art interpreting Thornton's history. These top two choices will require a high degree of community engagement and public participation to be successful. Review the tables below for all the answers selected by the survey respondents.

**Table 5.1. Focus for Thornton’s Historic Preservation Program, from survey results in Appendix B**

Question 8: What are your top three preservation efforts that would be the most beneficial for the city of Thornton to consider investing in? (89 respondents, choosing 3 each)

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Programs and events that celebrate Thornton’s cultures and histories	53 %
Adaptive reuse (redevelopment) and preservation of historic structures	49 %
Rehabilitation of historic structures	43 %
Museums for community members to use and visit	39 %
Low-interest loan or grant programs for the preservation of residential structures	28 %
Planning and policy creation to create neighborhood districts for preservation	27 %
Surveying, research, and planning to determine Thornton’s preservation priorities	26 %
Low-interest loan or grant programs for preservation or commercial structures	9 %
Other	9 %
I don’t think we need further financial support for historic preservation in Thornton.	8 %

**Table 5.2. Choices for Public Engagement Tools, from survey results in Appendix B**

Question 10: Which educational and/or commemorative tools and actions would you like to see used more in Thornton? Please select three answers from the choices below. (89 respondents, choosing 3 each)

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Exhibits and public art in historic areas, parks, trails, commercial centers and in neighborhoods interpreting Thornton’s history.	58 %
Provide more neighborhood or community events that focus on Thornton’s local history and culture.	46 %
Digitize and provide online access to information on historic properties and historic documents.	45 %
Provide more educational events about historic places and the history of Thornton.	40 %
Nominate more neighborhoods and individual properties to the National Register of Historic Places or Colorado State Register of Historic Places.	33 %
Provide more information on the appropriate treatment of historic buildings and energy efficiency of and for historic buildings.	21 %
Provide more walking tours of historic neighborhoods, landmarks, and landscapes.	21 %
I don’t think we need further educational or commemorative action to support historic preservation in Thornton.	7 %
Other (please specify)	7 %



Based on survey responses, this Plan offers the following guidance for engaging and educating Thornton’s residents and visitors:

- Build public appreciation for Thornton’s character of place, its mid-20th-century architecture, and its historic resources in general; and
- Provide engaging stories about the people and communities embedded in Thornton’s places and landscapes.

Additional guidance supports Chapter 4’s focus on building Thornton’s historic preservation program overall:

- Elevate public awareness of the preservation process in order to build a constituency to support City programs;
- Teach property owners how to care for their older buildings; and
- Train community residents in the trades involved in caring for older buildings and in the historic preservation process (conducting surveys and research, for example).

## 5.2 Interpretation in Thornton

As a community seeking a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of its heritage, Thornton does not have specific resources devoted to traditional historical interpretation, such as a community museum or historical society operated by the city or local enthusiasts. However, at the time of the writing of this Plan, one museum is in the planning stages, as described below. Moreover, the city’s Arts & Culture program, the work of the Thornton Arts, Sciences & Humanities Council (TASHCO), and other resources described below form the core of possibilities for a collaborative approach to providing public programming to support Thornton’s proposed historic preservation initiative. Additional support could be sought via grants from the State Historical Fund. Lastly, this collaboration can be strengthened if the city decides to establish a Historic Preservation Commission.

### 5.2.1 Potential Interpretive Resources

#### Thornton Arts & Culture

Arts & Culture is a division of the Thornton Parks, Recreation and Community Programs department. The division was established in 2006 to manage the city’s public art process and offer community-based programs and year-round events in partnership with other city departments and nonprofit organizations. Public art has been an important focus that can have a cultural heritage dimension. For example, in 2023, the division received funding from the Denver based Scientific & Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) funding for a “Hispanic History and Heritage Project.” Arts & Culture is also responsible for the web page about Thornton’s history on the City’s website.

The Arts & Culture Division is the lead Thornton agency exploring the feasibility of creating a performing arts center. This possibility, envisioned by City Council and community arts organizations, would offer another venue for gatherings and temporary exhibit space and potential programming to support the HPC in its public engagement role.



*Interpretive signs highlighting the history of the town of Eastlake within the Eastlake Historic Park located off York St., between 3rd St. and Birch Ave.*

## City of Thornton Archives

Few municipalities nationwide have established an archival program for their governmental and community papers. Fortunately, Thornton has such a program, operated by the Arts & Culture Division (see above). The program is housed in the basement of the Arts and Culture Center, an adaptive reuse of a former church (now historic, when considering the “50-year standard” discussed earlier in this Plan). Currently it is strictly archival (documents and artifacts), open to researchers by appointment. Exhibits and other public programs are infrequent, typically requested by city leaders for public ceremonies and anniversaries.

The Arts & Culture Division has archival capacity, currently with a staff vacancy in the associated role. Archival work has been largely recording of oral histories and archiving donations received by community members. Thornton has developed some volunteer capacity for archival work, most of Thornton’s archival collection has been donated to the City for posterity by dedicated community members. The archivist has collaborated with other city departments and the community to support Thornton’s historic initiatives including development and recording of resources assisting with projects like the Ken Freiberg Fire Museum or Lambertson Homestead and Open Space. The archivist was also heavily involved with the development of this Plan.

## The Ken Freiberg Fire Museum in the Carl Nelson Fire Station (proposed as of the time of writing)

In 2022, the city completed a feasibility study for the proposed Ken Freiberg Fire Museum to be installed in the former Fire Station No. 1, originally built as a wing of the city’s first City Hall (see description in Chapter 4). In 2020, the City Council passed a resolution naming the fire station after its first paid Fire Chief, Carl Nelson – who initially served as a volunteer for 20 years. The museum is appropriately named after Ken Freiberg, who organized the Thornton Volunteer Fire Department in 1954 and served in the Department for 28 years. As a volunteer firefighter, Freiberg was instrumental in forming the first organized fire department in the city and served as the first Fire Chief and has been providing foundational support to the museum’s vision.

The story of Thornton’s first responders organizing fire, police, and emergency services in the 1950s for a brand-new community of 2,500 homes is a compelling one. The museum was proposed to the city by enthusiasts, many of whom served in the early fire companies. These community members have organized a collection of memorabilia, including old fire trucks, and offer public access to it via free tours. Further efforts have aided in restoring the roll-up glass door that provides access to the fire bays. The museum will be an ideal venue for educating the public about Thornton’s history. Once established, the city could consider the possibility of occasional exhibits and other programs and events beyond the museum’s initial purpose.

## Thornton Arts, Sciences & Humanities Council (TASHCO)

The Thornton Arts, Sciences and Humanities Council (TASHCO) has existed since 1991. Under the city’s charter, the City Council may select five to 13 members to serve on TASHCO for unlimited four-year terms.



*Caption listed from top to bottom image: 1) A photo of the historic Thornton Fire Station No. 1 before the addition of another bay (c. 1960s). 2) A modern photo of what is now known as The Ken Freiberg Fire Museum in the Carl Nelson Fire Station.*



TASHCO was first organized by the City Council as the local nonprofit channel for funding from the Denver region’s multi-county taxing program to support scientific and cultural facilities (the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, or SCFD), through grant applications made directly and via the Adams County Cultural Council.

Arts & Culture staff serve as liaisons for TASHCO with Thornton City Council. TASHCO members participate in optional subcommittees that meet separately and are created to support such specific initiatives as public art, history projects, and free events. TASHCO’s community programs and projects include the Thornton Arts Academy, OZ Gallery exhibits, Arts in the Park, and two cultural celebration events, Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) and Thornton’s Pride Party.

### **Adams County Historical Society**

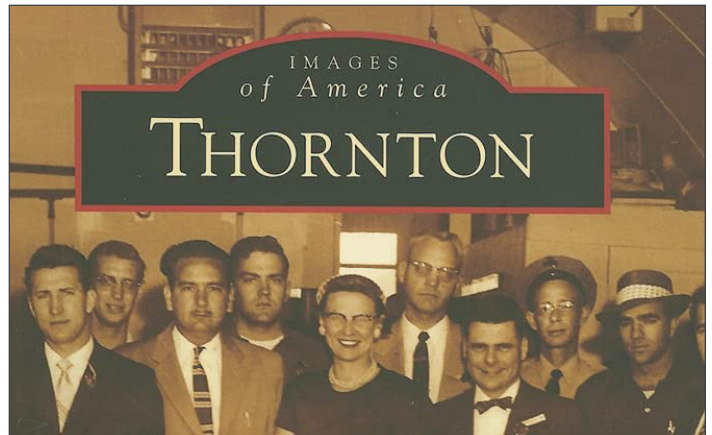
The Adams County Historical Society operates the Adams County Museum on a site next to the Adams County Fairground. According to the society’s website, the museum has “...nine buildings, including a schoolhouse, a firehouse, a Victorian-era house, a gas station, and a blacksmith shop. Hoffman Hall at the museum features a saddle used by President Theodore Roosevelt, a two-story combine harvester, and Colorado’s second-oldest printing press.” The society offers events and shows year-round at this location, including its popular fall Heritage Day, which has often featured themes about different ethnic groups that have settled Adams County.

### **Images of America: Thornton**

This small history book is a popular sales item in Thornton and has done a great deal to raise public awareness of the community’s history since its publication in 2008. Still in print, it was written by journalist and Thornton resident Tonja Dillon Castaneda as a part of Arcadia Publishing’s series of local history books typically based on early photographs. The web page for the book states, “The images showcased in this collection were provided by current community members, the City of Thornton archives, Thornton’s police and fire department leaders, local churches, and families who farmed the area for generations before it became a town. Many of the images have never before been published.”

### **5.2.2 Venues for Interpretation and Events**

In addition to the sites and programs described above, Thornton has a wide variety of public and private venues where community gatherings and space for special exhibits are possible. Some of the operators of these places are capable of organizing programming that would support the City’s role in public engagement. A fast-growing trend among preservationists is the act of community storytelling, described in several places within this Plan. The venues and organizations listed above serve as a preliminary list of potential resources to provide educational and interpretive services regarding Thornton’s history and historic resources. This list provides a brief review of community gathering spaces that could provide “low-hanging fruit” opportunities for early success in implementing many of the following actions.



*Captions are listed from top to bottom image: 1) Adams County Historical Society hosts a museum at the Riverdale Regional Park that highlights the county’s history, which includes Thornton. 2) A picture of the cover photo for the published Images of America: Thornton book.*



*Anythink Wright Farms, one of the several Rangeview Library District locations in Thornton, has offerings ranging from a cafe to 3D printers and provides a range of community services that could support historic preservation outreach goals.*

**Anythink Libraries (Rangeview Library District)**

The Rangeview Library District is the library district that serves Adams County and thus, Thornton. Rangeview is an innovative and expansive county library system, Anythink. Librarians across the country often organize a special room collecting specialized publications related to their community location, which may be possible for Thornton. Additionally, Rangeview’s Anythink Library locations offer space for community events and programs. Potentially, its facilities could provide space for temporary exhibits and its staff members may be able to help in other ways in the design of programs such as lectures. There are currently three Anythink library facilities in Thornton with a fourth planned.

**Thornton’s Community Facilities**

Thornton’s own municipal facilities also offer space for community events and programs, and in some cases space for temporary exhibits. In addition to City Hall itself, these include the Margaret W. Carpenter Recreational Center, the Thornton Active Adult Center, the Thornton Community Center, and the Trail Winds Recreation Center.

**Churches**

Thornton’s churches may have an interest in sharing information about their own heritage or helping to promote the heritage of their congregants, past and present. Besides their worship space, churches usually have space available for community gatherings.

**Schools**

As discussed further below, this Plan recommends cultivating a relationship with Thornton’s K-12 public schools. Schools sometimes make space available for community gatherings.

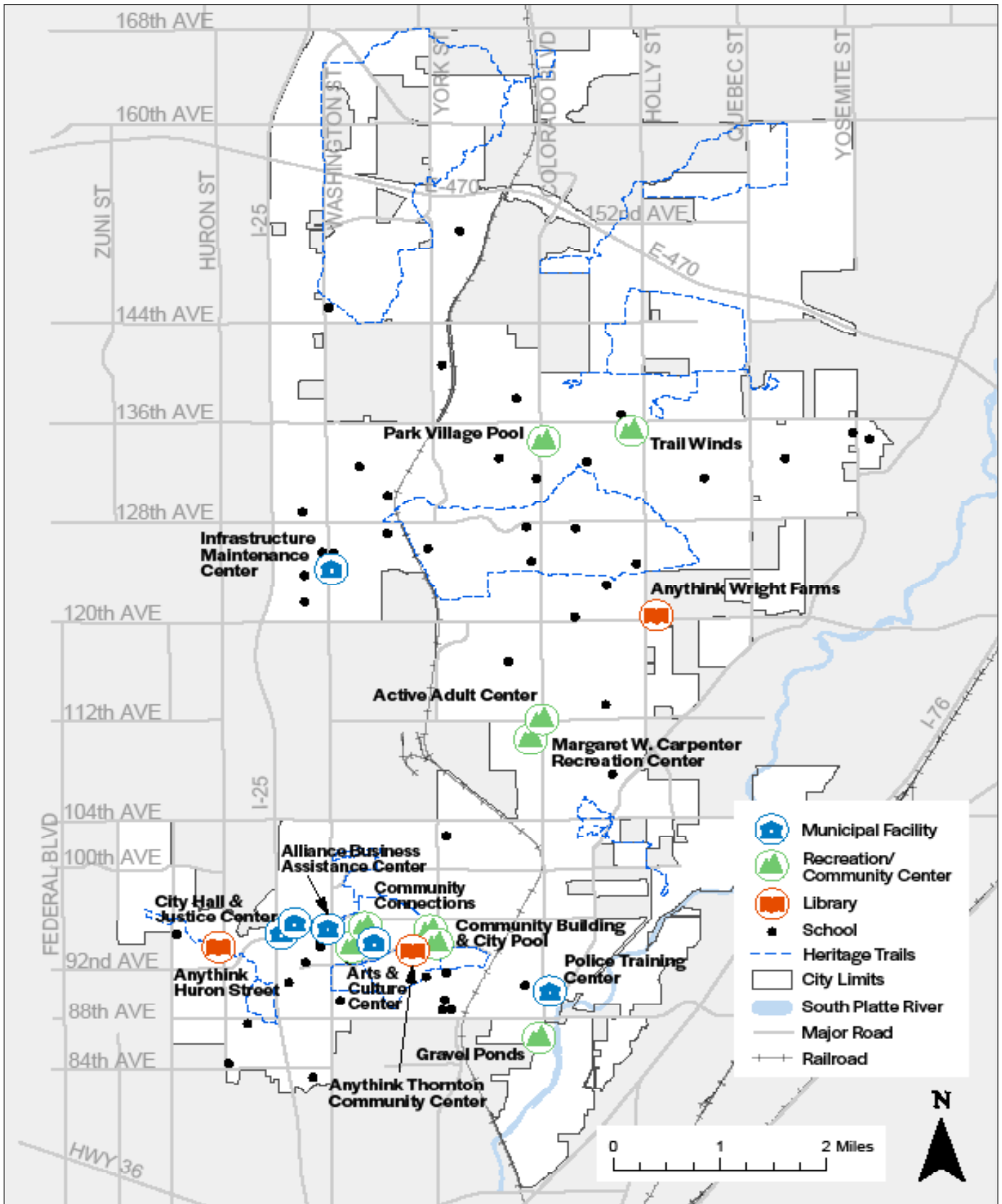
**Actions for Capitalizing on Community Venues for Interpretation**

**Action 5.2.A:** City staff, in cooperation with a Historic Preservation Commission (if established), should visit potential collaborators and venues to develop personal relationships and personal knowledge about existing programs and possibilities.

**Action 5.2.B:** If an HPC is established, community members already providing interpretation regarding history and preservation could advise the HPC on needs and direction. The HPC could convene occasional discussion groups to gain ideas from local and regional parties interested in offering interpretive programs in Thornton.



**Map 5.1 - Venues for Interpretation and Events**



**Map 5.1** illustrates a variety of community facilities throughout Thornton that could be used as locations for public engagement and/or historic preservation activities like interpretation or workshops.

**Action 5.2.C:** An early action associated with this Plan, and Thornton’s longstanding appreciation for its history in general, is to establish the Ken Freiberg Museum in the Carl Nelson Firehall. The museum could include the design and creation of one context exhibit covering Thornton’s origin and early years.

### 5.3 Community Outreach in Thornton

Historic preservation in any community does not happen by accident. The community and city need to work together intentionally to establish the kinds of programs envisioned for Thornton. The city should consider the two basic kinds of outreach that must be carefully balanced for Thornton’s preservation program – first to build public appreciation for stories and sites, and second to inform the public about historic preservation techniques.

There is a wide variety of possibilities for both, from creating a lecture series about Thornton’s history to holding hands-on workshops on the specialized repair needs of Original Thornton houses. The city can look for examples of what other preservation groups are doing around the Denver region.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation supports an annual Preservation Month every May nationwide with a toolkit filled with ideas for local activities. If established, the HPC could promote Preservation Month in Thornton. Currently, special annual events (e.g., ThorntonFest) and public art are successful examples of community engagement in Thornton. If the HPC is established, one way to keep the public informed about the HPC’s existence and programs is through an email newsletter by the HPC or information added to existing community-wide communications, including web pages. As survey information is completed, it would be possible to generate popular and simple-to-use online maps or webpages to visualize for the public what is being learned.

Once established, an HPC that has gained experience and early successes could take on some long-range planning. This could include multi-year strategic planning or undertaking a larger community-wide interpretive plan, working with TPRCP and its Arts & Culture Division. An obvious topic for such a plan is building out the system of outdoor interpretive exhibits and wayfinding signs that TPRCP has already established in many parks and extending them to residential and commercial areas where appropriate. The reason to undertake such a plan is to identify funding and interpretive gaps and seek to close them systematically rather than piecemeal. A system-wide approach also helps ensure that a diversity of stories is incorporated into the program – history, nature, cultural traditions, architecture, and other themes and topics can be carefully woven into the system.

Specific ideas to consider for the HPC, if established, include:

- Encouraging neighborhoods and local businesses to participate in interpreting Thornton by telling their own stories through arts installations, outdoor interpretation, brochures, and digital media.
- Mounting a temporary exhibit on a topic related to Thornton’s history in a public space as a pilot project.
- Supporting individual local historians and groups in the research and documentation of historic sites, organizations, and individuals. Where appropriate, such initiatives could be tied to public presentations or exhibits (and/or National Register nominations). The City’s Certified Local Government status, once obtained



*An exterior photo of the Mapleton School District’s North Valley School which shows an example of mid-century architecture on the school’s main entrance.*



(see Chapter 3), would allow Thornton to apply for funding to work on National Register nominations that can form the basis for such public presentations. (Note: a list of potential initial nominations is provided in Chapter 4 in the section on facilities owned by the City.)

- Figuring out how Thornton should participate in both Colorado’s 150th anniversary in 2026 and the nation’s commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War in 2025-2033, especially in 2026 (known as America250).

## **Actions for Community Outreach**

**Action 5.3.A:** If the city establishes a HPC, determine the Commission’s scope regarding community outreach and major initiatives related to historic preservation. The HPC, under guidance from staff and/or City Council, can consider implementing specific ideas, especially through an effort like creation of an annual or bi-annual work plan.

**Action 5.3.B:** Use existing community events and facilities to showcase Thornton stories and historic resources; and continue to use Arts & Culture’s public art programming to celebrate Thornton’s contemporary and historic cultural traditions.

**Action 5.3.C:** Inform the public about historic preservation initiatives with periodic outreach by City staff and the HPC, if established.

**Action 5.3.D:** If the city establishes a Historic Preservation Commission, build the HPC’s experience in community outreach by using a successful national model, Preservation Month, as an opportunity to share information with the public about preservation initiatives, local successes, and stories about the historic resources that make Thornton unique.

**Action 5.3.E:** Generate ArcGIS StoryMaps for Thornton’s neighborhoods, beginning with Eastlake and Original Thornton.

**Action 5.3.F:** Participate in Colorado’s 150th anniversary observation with specific programming related to Thornton’s history.

## **5.4 School-based Education**

Public educational outreach in Thornton should include cultivation of the next generations of community residents and leaders. Thornton and the Denver area are desirable places to live and work, and therefore it is likely that many of those who raise children here can expect them to return to raise their own families and find their own paths through life in the immediate area. The school system, then, is a logical place to create life-long interests in history and community affairs, including the civic action needed to keep history alive in Thornton and safeguard Thornton’s community character. Teachers who are interested in this topic would be a first resource, to help them in the classroom and to support them in taking their students to historic sites.

Over time, schools might be interested in developing a specific, multi-grade program to teach students about Thornton’s history, architecture, and civic processes – topics that someday Thornton’s young residents will find themselves participating in, as community leaders. Particularly resonant for such a history program in Thornton would be a focus on “how to build a city,” which schools could potentially partner with the city on. The program could support school tours, in-classroom presentations, and, for older students, independent studies or community service, or both. The city’s participation in one or more History Day programs at high schools may be an easy entry point for offering ideas to get students more involved in local history and historic preservation and identifying especially interested teachers.

Additionally, TPRCP could offer history-related programming during summer camps or individual events for residents of all ages. The parks and recreation program in Howard County, MD, offers a model for a successful

summer program that has included five-day camps on history and archaeology for children ages 6-10 and 10-13.

### **Actions for Educational Outreach**

**Action 5.4.A:** Confer with Thornton’s school districts on how the city can provide information or resources in support of the teaching of local Thornton history.

**Action 5.4.B:** Offer history-related programming through TPRCP at summer camps or as individual events.

### **5.5 Added Support for Outreach**

The kinds of programs imagined in this chapter require attention, budget, and prioritization among local policy makers. While volunteers and City staff can accomplish a great deal, developing additional, continual support for these programs is more likely to result in long-term success.

The work of public history at the community level is most effectively accomplished through one or more institutional arrangements. Locally, the Rangeview Library District might be a collaborator for exploring this approach, and nearby higher education institutions are the logical resources, especially those with public history programs. University of Colorado-Denver offers graduate-level programs in public history, archival management, and historic preservation. Colorado State University offers a master’s degree program in history and public history. Funding might be available from Colorado Humanities as well as foundations and other kinds of government grant programs.

Work by professors and their classes, interns, or resident scholars could include research and documentation of historic sites, organizations, and individuals. An initiative is also needed to enhance Thornton’s archives to support future scholarly research on the city’s late-century development, to help the city establish its profile in the storytelling of United States national history and the growth of mid-twentieth-century communities.

### **Actions for Added Support for Outreach**

**Action 5.5.A:** Explore opportunities for collaboration with the region’s higher educational institutions’ programs in historic preservation, public history, history, archival management, and related fields.

**Action 5.5.B:** Enhance Thornton’s archives to support future scholarly research on Thornton’s late-century development.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

While this chapter is brief, it may represent the most crucial strategy for promoting the success of a historic preservation program in Thornton. Community activities supporting public outreach and interpretation build public enthusiasm and local leadership – and therefore visible and lasting participation of Thornton residents in the program. While there is much that a dedicated planning staff can do to build available information on Thornton’s historic resources and write grants, there is a limit on the capacity of staff. Volunteers and community leaders are needed to bring the program – and the activities envisioned in each chapter – to vibrant life. Communities across the nation are proud of their local history. Effective public outreach and interpretation in Thornton can be expected to build similar enthusiasm for its history and historic resources.



*An evening view of the many lanterns sent afloat at the Denver Water Lantern Festival, which occurs in the summer at Carpenter Park.*



## Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.thorntonco.gov/arts/Pages/arts-culture-main.aspx>
- 2 [https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals\\_unique\\_info.php?ID=12008](https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals_unique_info.php?ID=12008)
- 3 [https://www.thorntonco.gov/arts/Pages/thornton\\_history.aspx](https://www.thorntonco.gov/arts/Pages/thornton_history.aspx)
- 4 <https://www.thorntonco.gov/arts/Pages/tashco.aspx>
- 5 <https://www.adamscountymuseum.com>
- 6 <https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/products/9780738558950>
- 7 <https://www.anythinklibraries.org>
- 8 <https://www.thorntonco.gov/recreation/facilities/Pages/carpenter-recreation-center.aspx>; <https://www.thorntonco.gov/aac/Pages/default.aspx>; and <https://www.thorntonco.gov/recreation/facilities/Pages/trail-winds-recreation-center.aspx>
- 9 <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cea22a609a1d4cccb8d54c650b595bc4>
- 10 <https://america250.org> and <https://www.historycolorado.org/colorado-150>
- 11 <https://clas.ucdenver.edu/nhdc/>
- 12 For 2023, see page 20 at <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/recreation-parks/resource/2023-camp-guide-web>. For 2022, see page 19 at <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/recreation-parks/resource/camp-activity-guide>.
- 13 <https://clas.ucdenver.edu/history/public-history-program>; <https://architectureandplanning.ucdenver.edu>; and <https://morgridge.du.edu/academic-programs/library-information-science/mlis>
- 14 <https://history.colostate.edu>
- 15 <https://coloradohumanities.org>





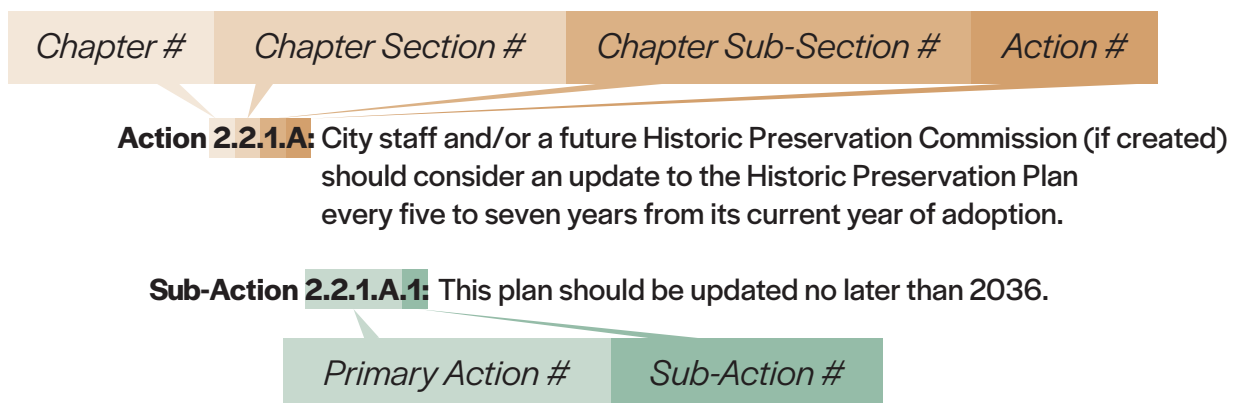
# CHAPTER 6



# CHAPTER 6. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 6 contains the Historic Preservation Plan’s recommended actions found throughout the HPP, compiled into a table format with recommended priorities, resources required, and potential departmental support envisioned to implement the recommendations. Many of the chapters contain expanded detail on the recommendations and why they are important for implementing this plan and subsequently creating a historic preservation program.

Below is a graphic that defines the numbering system used for the actions that can be used to determine which chapter to find additional information on the specific recommendation.



If additional City Council review or approval is needed to implement a recommendation, it has been noted with the recommended action in this chapter. Section 6.1 provides definitions and acronyms used in the table to further supplement the recommendations in this chapter. To implement recommended HPP actions, suggested lead

and support departments for “Tier 1” projects (as defined below) have been identified. It is also recommended that the City review the plan’s recommendations within five years of adoption to track implementation progress. Grant applications should be considered when feasible, taking into consideration the grant’s terms and impact on a specific historic resource or site.

## **6.1 Plan Recommendations, Definitions, and Acronyms**

Chapter subsections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 are intended to clarify items addressed in the tables throughout this chapter.

### **6.1.1 Recommendation Actions - Tier Classifications**

Each action has been assigned a tier classification, defined below, along with potential resources needed for implementation. General timeframes have been estimated for each tier but are subject to change based on funding availability, Council direction, or other community priorities .

It should also be noted that the city does not have capacity to work on multiple actions simultaneously and it is not anticipated that the city will work on all actions listed below. They are identified so that the city has a roadmap for efforts over the long-term, but some actions may be determined to not be implementable. Additionally, although many actions indicate that they can be achieved with current staffing levels, that is in consideration of the individual effort, not efforts combined. Some actions could be paired with other actions for efficiency; attempts have been made to identify these combinations. Actions would need to be phased to be achieved without additional staffing. Finally, funding needs are based on 2024 estimates.

**Tier 1** - Actions assigned the Tier 1 classification are considered for the short-term (approximately five years from the HPP’s adoption) implementation of this plan. Further, Tier 1 Actions are the most essential items for the creation of a historic preservation program and/or relate to preservation needs that are more immediate than actions identified in other Tiers. Tier 1 Actions do not need to be under the purview of a fully-fledged historic preservation program and may proceed ahead of amendments to the Historic Recognition Code (Chapter 19 of the Thornton City Code).

**Tier 2** - Actions assigned the Tier 2 classification are either supplemental to or build upon a Tier 1 Action. Further, Tier 2 Actions are best addressed after amendments to the city’s Historic Recognition Code have been implemented. Timing for the items identified as Tier 2 should occur approximately within five to ten years of HPP’s adoption.

**Tier 3** - Actions assigned the Tier 3 classification are considered recommendations for long-term implementation (10+ years), or are supplemental to a Tier 1 or Tier 2 recommendation. Tier 3 Actions will require additional review and development by a variety of city departments or City Council prior to their implementation. Actions assigned a Tier 3 classification may occur sooner than 10 years but should not be implemented before amendments to the Historic Recognition Code occur.

Some actions have the statement “Council direction required to implement” included in the “Resources Needed” column.” Actions labeled as such require either additional City Council review, a public hearing, or other public process at the direction of Council to implement this action. This additional review is in addition to the planning efforts related to the HPP; adoption of this plan does not constitute a change in zoning or other laws contained within the Thornton City Code.

In addition, Tier 2 and Tier 3 projects have been given approximate estimates for cost that range from low (<\$50,000), medium (\$50,000-\$100,000), and high (\$100,000+) ranges as they are expected to increase over time due to items out of the control of the city, like inflation. Lastly, listed departments and divisions in the “Resources Needed, Potential Partners” column are not meant to be all encompassing as other departments, divisions, or outside agencies could be determined as partners with further project scope development.



## 6.1.2 Acronyms and Abbreviations Used in Recommendation Tables

For brevity, acronyms are used in the tables below. The following are the intended use of acronyms used within the HPP's recommendations.

**Chapter 18** - Thornton Development Code

**Chapter 19** - Thornton Historic Recognition Code

**CDBG** - Community Development Block Grant

**ED** - Economic Development Department

**HSA** - Historic Structures Assessment

**HSR** - Historic Structures Report

**SHPO** - State Historic Preservation Office

**TASHCO** - Thornton Arts, Sciences and Humanities Council

**TPRCP** - Thornton Parks, Recreation, & Community Programs

**Table 6.1 - Actions for Surveying**

Action No: Recommendation Text	Tier	Resources Needed, Potential Partners
<p><b>3.4.1.A:</b> Design and undertake a phased series of surveys and research to establish and grow Thornton’s inventory of known or suspected historic and archaeological resources. Needs for this are supported by the following sub-actions:</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Approx. \$50,000-\$100,000, per survey; depends on scope and scale.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development, TPRCP, &amp; ED</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.1:</b> Complete and update Eastlake’s 2000 survey to include all buildings, the town’s cultural landscape, and its situation within the larger landscape.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Approx. \$50,000-70,000</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development, TPRCP, &amp; ED</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.2:</b> Undertake a survey of Original Thornton including buildings and cultural landscape features.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Approx. \$50,000-100,000</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development, and TPRCP</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.3:</b> Expand the preliminary context statement for Thornton as a whole, created during the planning process for the HPP, into a completed historic context statement to be used by future surveyors and to create a foundation for fact-based historic preservation planning choices.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Approx. Cost: High</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development, TPRCP, &amp; Communications Department</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.4:</b> Undertake a survey of Thornton’s unannexed Future Growth Area in both Adams and Weld counties, with county consent, to identify and document historic resources and areas that may be sensitive archaeologically.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Approx. Cost: High</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development; TPRCP, ED, Adams &amp; Weld Counties, and SHPO</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.5:</b> Using the guidance provided in Chapter 2, and from any developed or subsequently developed historic contexts, consider additional surveying work within Thornton and its Future Growth Area. Sites and themes identified in Chapters 2 and 4 are considered first priority for expansion of surveying work beyond the actions listed in this subsection.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Approx. Cost: High</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.1.A.5:</b> Using guidance provided in Chapter 2, as well as other supporting research, consider surveys, historic context statements, or other professional documentation regarding Native Americans who have inhabited and used the landscape Thornton occupies. Attention to the tribes known to the area such as the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Plains Apache, Kiowa, and Ute shall be considered in any research and surveying work.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Approx. Cost: High</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development; TPRCP, ED, &amp; Adams and Weld Counties</p>



**Table 6.1 Continued....**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>3.4.1.B:</b> Integrate information collected on Thornton’s surveys of its historic and archaeological resources into History Colorado’s digital management system.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development; requires coordination with History Colorado/SHPO
<b>3.4.1.C:</b> Integrate information collected on Thornton’s surveys of its historic and archaeological resources into the Thornton’s GIS system.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement  Possible Involvement: City Development

**Table 6.2 - Actions for National and State Register Nominations**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>3.4.2.A:</b> Upon completing surveying work of Eastlake as described in Action 3.4.1. A.1 work with the Eastlake community, if requested, to determine if there is interest in a nomination of a historic district locally or to the Colorado State Register. Eligibility shall be considered prior to nomination of any historic district.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Council direction required to implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development & ED
<b>3.4.2.B:</b> Nominate the Original Thornton City Hall to the Colorado State Register and, if warranted, to the National Register.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Council direction required to implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development
<b>3.4.2.C:</b> Upon completing surveying of Original Thornton as described in Action 3.4.1.A.2, work with Original Thornton residents, if requested, to determine if there is interest in a nomination of a historic district locally or to the National Register of Historic Places. Eligibility shall be considered prior to any nomination of any historic district.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Council direction required to implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development; TPRCP
<b>3.4.2.D:</b> Complete the context statement as described in Action 3.4.1.A.3 and, if warranted and desired, consider the filing of a multiple property documentations form with the Colorado and National Registers for historically significant properties.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement; should be performed after Action 3.4.1.A.3. Council direction required to implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development, TPRCP, & Communications Department.
<b>3.4.2.E:</b> Research and develop nomination materials for the Infrastructure Maintenance Center (IMC), near the intersection of Washington Street and East 124 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, to determine its significance to late agricultural development in the region and its potential for community programming.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Approx. Cost: Low Council direction required to implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development, Infrastructure, & TPRCP,

**Table 6.3 - Actions for Cooperating with the Colorado SHPO**

Action No: Recommendation Text	Tier	Resources Needed, Potential Partners
<b>3.4.3.A:</b> Review the Colorado State Historic Preservation Plan and identify how Thornton can employ best practices in supporting its implementation.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Possible Involvement: City Development
<b>3.4.3.B:</b> Seek to host regional workshops offered by statewide preservation leaders History Colorado and Colorado Preservation, Inc., as well as other non-profit or educational organizations/institutions.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Possible Involvement: City Development & TPRCP
<b>3.4.3.C:</b> If Certified Local Government (CLG) status is sought, work with the SHPO to align with requirements to become a CLG.	<i>Tier 2 or 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Possible Involvement: City Development, SHPO, TASHCO/HPC

**Table 6.4 - Actions for Establishing a Preservation Program in Thornton**

Action No: Recommendation Text	Tier	Resources Needed, Potential Partners
<b>3.4.4.A:</b> Review all city-owned properties for designations under Chapter 19 of the City Code and their priorities in surveying and nomination.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Should be pursued after Action 3.4.4.G. Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, Fire Department, Infrastructure, & TPRCP.
<b>3.4.4.B:</b> In order of priority, designate the Original Thornton City Hall, the Eastlake Farmers Cooperative Grain Elevator, and the Lambertson Lakes and Homestead site as local recognized landmarks.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Should be pursued after Action 3.4.3.A. Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, Fire Department, Infrastructure, & TPRCP.
<b>3.4.4.C:</b> Upon completion of the Eastlake survey identified in Sub Action 3.4.1.A.1, prepare general guidelines that guide future development to align with the architectural and urban form of Eastlake. Updates to the Linkage Design Principles in the 2017 Eastlake Subarea Plan could be considered.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Should be pursued after Action 3.4.4.G. Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, & TPRCP
<b>3.4.4.D:</b> Upon completion of the Original Thornton survey identified in Sub Action 3.4.1.A.2, prepare general guidelines that guide future development to align with the architectural and urban form of Original Thornton. Updates to the Original Thornton Pattern Book could be considered.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement, could benefit from outside consultation. Should be pursued after Action 3.4.4.G. Approx Cost: Medium Possible Involvement: City Development, ED & Community Connections.



**Table 6.4 Continued....**

Action No: Recommendation Text	Tier	Resources Needed, Potential Partners
<p><b>3.4.4.E:</b> Following a general archaeological survey of Thornton, determine inclusion of archaeology in Thornton’s preservation programming.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Would require outside consultation and or additional expertise on staff. Approx Cost: High  Possible Involvement: City Development &amp; TPRCP</p>
<p><b>3.4.4.F:</b> Explore programs to protect and restore key city-owned historic resources and support private property owner interest in preserving historic resources through grant funds and other sources of funding.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, Fire Department, Infrastructure, &amp; TPRCP.</p>
<p><b>3.4.4.G:</b> If and when desired by Council, revise Chapter 19 of the City Code to enable a process to designate historic resources such as individual landmarks or districts. An overall goal of the Code revisions should be to help preserve historic character and shall contain specified criteria for recognition of a landmark or district. This action include the ability to regulate changes to historic properties, demolition, and/or the design of new construction within historic districts.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement, could benefit from outside consultation (approx. \$50,000 for outside consultation).  Possible Involvement: City Development  <b>(Note:</b> This should be coordinated with action 3.4.4.G.1 but could be separate)</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.4.G.1:</b> If Chapter 19 of the City Code is amended, implement a design review process for any designated historic districts, landmarks, or historic sites based on historic preservation principles (derived from the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards).</p>	<p><i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Same description as Action 3.4.4.G.</p>
<p><b>3.4.4.H:</b> If and when desired by Council, consider a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to support the provisions of the revised city ordinance (described above), ensuring that the Commission’s membership conforms to requirements to achieve CLG status.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i></p>	<p>If and when desired by Council, consider a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to the provisions of the revised city ordinance (described above), ensuring that the Commission’s membership conforms to requirements to achieve CLG status.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.4.H.1:</b> Establish a routine training program for members of the HPC.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Would require a training budget, requires completion of Action 3.4.4.H.  Possible Involvement: City Development</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.4.4.H.2:</b> Establish accountable public processes: set periodic work plans based on this HPP (such as annual, biennial, or as otherwise directed by City Council), organize meeting agendas in part to reflect the work plan, make periodic progress reports before the Thornton City Council, and publish annual reports.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Could be implemented with staffing levels upon completion of Action 3.4.4.H.  Possible Involvement: City Development</p>

**Table 6.5 - Actions for Enhancing Administrative Resources**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<p><b>3.5.A:</b> Develop staff expertise and capacity within the City Development Department to administer a more robust historic preservation program and liaise with a new Historic Preservation Commission. Consider creating a historic preservation planner position to fulfill this role.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2 or 3 [Tier 1 for current staffing levels, no new positions]</i></p>	<p>Would require a dedicated training budget and, if new staff positions created, a salary for at least one position. Should be pursued after Actions 3.4.4.G. &amp; 3.4.4.H.</p> <p>Council direction required to implement. Possible Involvement: City Development</p>
<p><b>Sub-Action 3.5.A.1:</b> The city should establish the capability to inform private local commercial and residential owners about the possibilities and the process of gaining federal (commercial only) and state (commercial and residential) rehabilitation tax credits as well as other historic preservation incentives.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development &amp; ED.</p>
<p><b>3.5.B:</b> Grow working relationships with regional partners, in particular public, private and non-profit organizations that provide opportunities for achieving preservation goals.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement.</p> <p>Possible Outside Involvement: Adams and Weld counties and organizations relevant to historic preservation.</p>
<p><b>3.5.C:</b> Consider the role of other city initiatives and the collaborative role that a historic preservation program could provide in furthering community projects, programs, events, and goals established by City Council.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement.</p> <p>Possible Outside Involvement: Adams and Weld counties, organizations relevant to the recommendation.</p>



**Table 6.6 - Actions for Streets and Streetscaping**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.2.1.A:</b> For any local historic districts designated in Thornton, develop a distinctive street sign (or street sign topper) for use within the district. The city could design signage that is common to all future historic districts within the city, or specifically for each one as it is designated.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Approx Cost: High  Possible Involvement: Infrastructure, Communications Department or City Development
<b>4.2.1.B:</b> Consider updating, coordinating, and expanding the number of entrance signs displayed along Thornton’s perimeter, using a plan to be implemented in phases. Design of the signs should showcase Thornton’s commitment to the arts and placemaking, incorporating content that is noticeable, interesting, and interpretive.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Approx. cost: High  Possible Involvement: Infrastructure, Communications Department TPRCP, or City Development.
<b>4.2.1.C:</b> Involve Thornton Parks, Recreation, & Community Programs in long-term planning for identified historic districts to sustain or foster landscapes over time that reinforce the districts’ historic character.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Cost unknown.  Possible Involvement: City Development; potential support from TPRCP.

**Table 6.7- Actions for Parks, Trails, and Community Facilities**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.2.2.A:</b> Involve Thornton Parks, Recreation, & Community Programs in long-term planning for identified historic districts and landmarks in order to ensure that parks, trails, and pedestrian connections to other parks, trails, community gathering places, and neighborhood services are well-designed and maintained.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Cost unknown, could be paired with other transportation and trail planning efforts.  Possible Involvement: City Development, TPRCP, & Infrastructure.
<b>4.2.2.B:</b> If feasible, conduct an update to the Thornton Heritage Trail Linkage Concept Plan in light of the HPP’s recommended actions in Chapter 4.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels could implement, Approx. Cost: Medium-High  Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, TPRCP, & Adams County and Colorado based organizations relevant to historic preservation.

**Table 6.8 - General Approach Action Items**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.3.1.A:</b> Coordinate city facility directors to collaborate on designing an ongoing program to inventory historic structures under Thornton’s care, general protocols for ensuring best practices in managing them, and priorities for management actions (e.g., determining which buildings should receive a formal Historic structure report).	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  This action would benefit from a historic preservation expert’s consultation if Action  Possible Involvement: City Development and applicable Departments who manage and coordinate facility maintenance
<b>4.3.1.B:</b> Request city budget for expenses related to studying and maintaining historic structures, subject to City Council approval.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. This action is supplemental to Action 4.3.1.A.  Council direction required to implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development
<b>Sub-Action 4.3.1.B.1:</b> Consider budget for facility management expenses identified through any assessment or surveying to ensure ongoing maintenance of city historic resources.	<i>Tier 2</i>	This action would occur only upon completion of HSRs or HSAs.  Possible Involvement: Would depend on what department is managing the historic resource.

**Table 6.9 - Actions for Reitzenstein Barn and Big Dry Creek Open Space**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.3.2.A:</b> Develop both a cultural landscape report and a Historic structure report for the Reitzenstein Barn site to provide recommendations regarding the planning for this site, including preservation guidelines.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement with outside consultation; approx. \$30,000-50,000.  Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, & TPRCP
<b>4.3.2.B:</b> If the city updates Chapter 19 of the City Code, amend the landmark resolution of the Reitzenstein Barn to include the associated open space and related structures of the entire cultural landscape under the new ordinance.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development & TPRCP
<b>4.3.2.C:</b> Support Thornton Parks, Recreation & Community Programs in formal planning for preservation of the site. Identify potential adaptive reuses for the barn and design of the open space sensitive to the maintenance of the cultural landscape and opportunities for public education.	<i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development ED, & TPRCP
<b>4.3.2.D:</b> If the city determines that this landscape has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, & TPRCP



**Table 6.10 - Actions for Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.3.3.A:</b> Complete a current Phase 1 environmental survey to aid prospective developers in need of due-diligence information.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement; outside consultation likely needed for more technical aspects (approx. \$20,000-50,000k).  Possible Involvement: City Development & ED
<b>4.3.3.B:</b> Perform a Phase 1 archaeological survey of the entire property to determine whether any remaining archaeological resources may be of value for preservation and/or further study.	<i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i>	Outside consultation needed (cost unknown). Can be paired with Action 4.3.3.A, should be performed before any redevelopment of the site occurs.  Possible Involvement: City Development & ED
<b>4.3.3.C:</b> Complete a formal historic structure report covering all buildings on the site and ensure inclusion of ideas for treatment and adaptive use, including more passive uses that preserve the historic context of the site and its architectural features. Ensure consistency and inclusion of previous, related efforts such as the 2017 Eastlake Subarea Plan.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Outside consultation needed (Approx \$20,000-50,000).  Possible Involvement: City Development & ED
<b>4.3.3.D:</b> Consider historic recognition of all above-ground buildings associated with the Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any buildings associated with this important site.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. ; Consider timing of nomination with any redevelopment efforts.  Possible Involvement: City Development & ED
<b>4.3.3.E:</b> Develop a report on how to raise funds and otherwise pay for development of this site including potential historic preservation grants, tax credits, and other incentives.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement; outside consultation possible.  Possible Involvement: City Development & ED

**Table 6.11 - Actions for Lambertson Lakes Homestead and Open Space**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<p><b>4.3.4.A:</b> Develop a formal historic structures report (or update the HSA in the Lambertson Lakes Master Plan) for all buildings on the Lambertson Lakes Homestead site, with inclusion of preservation guidelines. Such a study should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers.</p>	<p><i>Tier 1</i></p>	<p>Outside consultation needed (Approx \$20,000-50,000).</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development, ED &amp; TPRCP.</p>
<p><b>4.3.4.B:</b> Consider historic recognition of the Lambertson Lakes Homestead site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement. Consider timing of nomination with any redevelopment efforts.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development &amp; TPRCP.</p>
<p><b>4.3.4.C:</b> Perform a Phase 1 archaeological survey of the entire Lambertson Lakes Homestead property to determine whether any remaining archaeological resources may be of value for preservation and/or further study.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Outside consultation needed (cost unknown). Can be paired with Action 4.3.4.A, should be performed before any redevelopment of the site occurs.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development or TPRCP</p>
<p><b>4.3.4.D:</b> If the city determines that the Lambertson Lakes Homestead has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement. Consider timing of nomination with any redevelopment efforts.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development, ED &amp; TPRCP.</p>

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**Table 6.12 - Actions for “Original Thornton Civic Center” Buildings and Sites**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.3.5.A:</b> Conduct a formal historic structure report with preservation guidelines for the First City Hall. Such study should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Outside consultation needed (Approx. \$20,000-50,000).  Possible Involvement: City Development, ED, Fire Department, & TPRCP
<b>4.3.5.B:</b> Consider historic recognition of the First Thornton City Hall site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development
<b>4.3.5.C:</b> If the city determines that the First Thornton City Hall has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Should be performed after Actions 4.3.5.A.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>4.3.5.D:</b> Conduct a survey and develop a historic context statement of the civic spaces and buildings within Original Thornton to support future planning efforts for historic preservation. Such a survey should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers. Consider a cultural landscape report for the Original Thornton subdivision.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Outside consultation needed (Approx. \$25,000-50,000).  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>4.3.5.E:</b> Consider including other civic spaces such as churches and schools within the Original Thornton boundaries in any surveying efforts.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Outside consultation needed; should be paired with Action 4.3.5.D.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>4.3.5.F:</b> Consider needed assessments and reports for maintenance of buildings and spaces identified as contributing to Original Thornton’s historic integrity.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Outside consultation needed.  Approx. cost: Medium  Possible Involvement: City Development, Infrastructure, & TPRCP.
<b>4.3.5.G:</b> Consider historic recognition of other important Original Thornton historic sites owned by the city. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Consider timing of nomination with any redevelopment efforts.  Possible Involvement: City Development.

**Table 6.13 - Actions for the Infrastructure Maintenance Center**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.3.6.A:</b> Conduct a historic structures report with preservation guidelines for the IMC building. Such a study should guide treatment and adaptive use and form the basis of a nomination to the State and National Registers.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Outside consultation needed.  Approx. Cost: Low  Possible Involvement: City Development; Infrastructure, & TPRCP.
<b>4.3.6.B:</b> Consider historic recognition of the IMC site. To the greatest extent possible, avoid demolishing any of the buildings associated with this important site.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development
<b>4.3.6.C:</b> If the city determines that the IMC Building has historic integrity, seek to nominate it to the State and National Registers.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Should be performed after Action 4.3.6.B.  Possible Involvement: City Development

**Table 6.14 - Actions for City Hall#3**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.3.7.A:</b> Complete a historic structure report with preservation guidelines for both buildings of the Thornton Civic Center Complex, and consider other assessments as needed. Such study should guide any changes made to the buildings in future. Include a review of the history and design of the buildings to assess their significance and quality toward a potential nomination to the State and National Registers.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Outside consultation needed (Approx \$20,000-50,000). Consider timing of facility maintenance and long-term city facility management when considering this action.  Possible Involvement: City Development & Infrastructure.

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**Table 6.15 - Actions for Supporting Existing, Older Homes**

Action No: Recommendation Text	Tier	Resources Needed, Potential Partners
<p><b>4.4.2.A:</b> Identify ways to expand or supplement Thornton’s CDBG program to address any locally designated historic districts (if created) and additional neighborhoods where the housing is reaching the age where additional upkeep may be required. Consider the role tax credits could play for recognized properties eligible for such credits.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Program development and research needed, cost unknown.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development; potential support from Community Connections division.</p>
<p><b>4.4.2.B:</b> Consider ways to assist property owners from losing historic properties due to lack of maintenance that creates a need for “demolition by neglect” for any locally designated historic resources.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development.</p>
<p><b>4.4.2.C:</b> Develop a historic context statement for Thornton’s manufactured home communities and note their significance as one of the nation’s most affordable housing types. Surveying of communities older than 50 years old should be given priority. Consider the role regional, state, and federal partners play in preserving them.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Outside consultation needed (Approx. \$50,000-75,000).</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development; potential support from Community Connections division within TPRCP.</p>

**Table 6.16 - Actions for Discouraging the Loss of Affordable Older Homes**

Action No: Recommendation Text	Tier	Resources Needed, Potential Partners
<p><b>4.4.3.A:</b> If Thornton has locally designated historic districts in the future, consider the role that certain regulations and/or programs could play in discouraging or preventing demolition of certain historic resources as determined by City Council.</p>	<p><i>Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement. This action should be performed after Actions 3.4.4.G and 3.4.4.H; districts shall only be created after appropriate survey work is complete.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development; potential support from Community Connections division within TPRCP.</p>
<p><b>4.4.3.B:</b> Consider the role historic preservation funds (locally, or through state or federal grants) can play in supporting existing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) efforts. Aim to supplement unmet needs and expand income allowances not permitted by CDBG funding.</p>	<p><i>Tier 2 or Tier 3</i></p>	<p>Current staffing levels can implement. This action should be performed after Actions 3.4.4.G and 3.4.4.H; districts shall only be created after appropriate survey work is complete.</p> <p>Possible Involvement: City Development; potential support from Community Connections division within TPRCP.</p>

**Table 6.17 - Actions for Sustaining Thornton’s Business Areas**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>4.5.A:</b> Consider the role historic preservation could play in the development of a “Legacy Business” program focused on businesses with long tenure (serving the community for 30+ years) in Thornton but which may not be located within a building considered to be historic.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: ED with potential support from City Development.
<b>4.5.B:</b> Survey Thornton’s commercial and neighborhood centers for Mid-Century architecture and early automobile cultural influences that are still reflected in the community today. Survey work should include buildings, streets, landscapes, public gathering places, schools, churches and other areas where community events and gathering have historically occurred.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Outside consultation needed.  Approx. cost: Medium  Possible Involvement: City Development with potential support from ED.
<b>4.5.C:</b> Consider the role historic preservation could play in providing incentives, programs, tax credits, repair programs, and other similar tools that assist with maintenance and repair of Thornton’s historic structures of at least 30+ years of age.	<i>Tier 3</i>	Current staffing levels can implement, could benefit from outside consultation.  Possible Involvement: ED with potential support from City Development.

**Table 6.18 - Actions for Capitalizing on Community Venues for Interpretation**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>5.2.A:</b> City staff, in cooperation with a Historic Preservation Commission (if established), should visit potential collaborators and venues to develop personal relationships and personal knowledge about existing programs and possibilities.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. This action should be performed after Action 3.4.4.H.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>5.2.B:</b> If an HPC is established, community members already providing interpretation regarding history and preservation could advise the HPC on needs and direction. The HPC could convene occasional discussion groups to gain ideas from local and regional parties interested in offering interpretive programs in Thornton.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. This action shall be performed after Action 3.4.4.H.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>5.2.C:</b> An early action associated with this Plan, and Thornton’s longstanding appreciation for its history in general, is to establish the Ken Freiberg Museum in the Carl Nelson Firehall. The museum could include the design and creation of one context exhibit covering Thornton’s origin and early years.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement, action actively in progress.  Possible Involvement: Fire Department, Communications Department, & TPRCP.



**Table 6.19 - Actions for Community Outreach**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>5.3.A:</b> If the city establishes a HPC, determine the Commission’s scope regarding community outreach and major initiatives related to historic preservation. The HPC, under guidance from staff and/or City Council, can consider implementing specific ideas, especially through an effort like creation of an annual or bi-annual work plan.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. This action shall be performed after Action 3.4.4.H.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>5.3.B:</b> Use existing community events and facilities to showcase Thornton stories and historic resources; and continue to use Arts & Culture’s public art programming to celebrate Thornton’s contemporary and historic cultural traditions.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement; outside consultation may be needed depending on scope of the project.  Possible Involvement: TPRCP
<b>5.3.C:</b> Inform the public about historic preservation initiatives with periodic outreach by City staff and the HPC, if established.	<i>Tier 1 and Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. This action should be performed after Action 3.4.3.E.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>5.3.D:</b> If the city establishes a Historic Preservation Commission, build the HPC’s experience in community outreach by using a successful national model, Preservation Month, as an opportunity to share information with the public about preservation initiatives, local successes, and stories about the historic resources that make Thornton unique.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. This action should be performed after Action 3.4.4.H.  Possible Involvement: City Development, Communications Department, ED, & TPRCP
<b>5.3.E:</b> Generate ArcGIS StoryMaps for Thornton’s neighborhoods, beginning with Eastlake and Original Thornton.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>5.3.F:</b> Participate in Colorado’s 150th anniversary observation with specific programming related to Thornton’s history.	<i>Tier 1</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: Citywide participation.

**Table 6.20 - Actions for Educational Outreach**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>5.4.A:</b> Confer with Thornton’s school districts on how the city can provide information or resources in support of the teaching of local Thornton history.	<i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement. Possible Involvement: City Development.
<b>5.4.B:</b> Offer history-related programming through TPRCP at summer camps or as individual events.	<i>Tier 1 or Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement.  Possible Involvement: City Development & TPRCP

**Table 6.21 - Actions for Added Support for Outreach**

<b>Action No:</b> Recommendation Text	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Resources Needed, Potential Partners</b>
<b>5.5.A:</b> Explore opportunities for collaboration with the region's higher educational institutions' programs in historic preservation, public history, history, archival management, and related fields.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement, outside consultation may be needed (cost unknown).  Possible Involvement: TPRCP
<b>5.5.B:</b> Enhance Thornton's archives to support future scholarly research on Thornton's late-century development.	<i>Tier 2</i>	Current staffing levels can implement, outside consultation may be needed (cost unknown).  Possible Involvement: TPRCP



# **APPENDIX A. 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICY SUPPORT FOR HPP**

Below is a listing of the key items that link the HPP to the Comprehensive Plan and that helped guide development of the HPP. As a more detailed Functional Plan of the Comprehensive Plan, the HPP has more specific actions to develop a preservation program. In other words, the Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for the HPP: the goals and recommendations for the HPP follow guidance in the Comprehensive Plan. Within the Comprehensive Plan are eight individual “Vision Themes” around which the HPP is organized. Each theme has its own goals, policies, and implementation strategies. Each implementation strategy is then further refined with a lead and support department/division as well as potential sources of funding.

Below is a graphic that displays all eight “Vision Themes” as they are displayed in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and which are guiding themes for the HPP as a Functional Plan

The “Vision Themes,” goals, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan are found within Chapter 3, Policy Framework; “Implementation Strategies,” categorized by the applicable “Vision Themes,” are in Chapter 5, Implementation Strategies.

Below are selected Comprehensive Plan items relevant to the development of the HPP (some text omitted for brevity).

## **Vision Theme: Cultivating Identity and Image (CII)**

During the community outreach during development of the HPP, a recurring comment among residents was a desire to have uniquely Thornton experiences. Further, community members wanted to see a greater array of events and educational tools to promote the founding efforts, and the cultures of those who have made Thornton the city it is. Vision Theme CII “...seeks to celebrate the character, culture, history, and environment that makes Thornton a special place to live, work, and play.”

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme CII include:

Goal CII 1: Cultivate and embrace an identity that is distinctly Thornton.

Policy CII 1.2 - Public Realm.

Policy CII 1.4 - Community Events.

Goal CII 3: Recognize and appreciate our history and significant natural features.

Policy CII 3.1 - Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Policy CII 3.2 - South Platte River and Corridor Preservation.

Policy CII 3.3 - Riverdale Road.

Policy CII 3.4 - Education and Storytelling.

Policy CII 3.5 - Historic and Cultural Resources.

Goal CII 5: Celebrate our cultural diversity.

Policy CII 5.1 - Community Events.

Policy CII 5.2 - Cultural Planning Efforts.

## **Vision Theme: Providing Great Services and Amenities (GSA)**

Historic preservation programming, when performed well, creates invaluable assets for a community and its residents. Thornton does not currently have a historic preservation program, but its creation can gain guidance from Vision Theme GSA. The Comprehensive Plan states, “Providing Great Services and Amenities reflects a desire for a city that is a destination for arts, culture, entertainment, and recreation. Members of the community want more diverse and unique amenities within Thornton, accessible for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.”

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme GSA include:

Goal GSA 1: Encourage the creation of engaging community gathering places that are unique to Thornton.

Policy GSA 1.2 - Placemaking.

Policy GSA 1.3 - Culturally Appropriate Gathering Spaces.

Policy GSA 1.6 - Cultural Diversity and Acceptance.

## **Vision Theme: Fostering Economic Vitality (EV)**

An equally important but less obvious benefit of historic preservation is the ability to positively impact the local economy. In 2017 Colorado Preservation Inc. published a report titled Preservation for a Changing Colorado that



stated, “Every \$1 million spent on historic preservation in Colorado leads to \$1.03 million in additional spending, 14 new jobs, and \$636,700 in increased household income across the state.”<sup>1</sup> It is the intent of Thornton’s preservation programming to bolster the local economy. Further, the Comprehensive Plan’s vision theme, Fostering Economic Vitality, “...aims at cultivating small business support, educational opportunities, and options to ‘live, work, and play’ in Thornton.” As such, goals and recommendations within the HPP are designed to benefit the local economy.

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme EV include:

Goal EV 1: Create, attract, and retain employers that provide high-quality and well-compensated jobs.

Policy EV 1.4 - Business Retention and Expansion.

Policy EV 1.5 - Business Engagement.

Policy EV 1.6 - Public-Private Partnerships.

Goal EV 3: Preserve and enhance retail sales tax base.

Policy EV 3.3 - Commercial Revitalization.

### **Vision Theme: Providing Resources and Building Relationships (RR)**

Historic preservation programming is rooted in the history and culture of the people who connect to a specific place across all points in time. As such, no historic preservation program would be complete without a network of committed community members to tell Thornton’s story. It is important to build capacity, resources, and relationships pertinent to accomplishing the goals of the HPP. In addition to the items within the HPP, this Vision Theme emphasizes a need for increased community support for youth, seniors, and others in need whose voices and stories can add to Thornton’s relationships; the goals of the HPP should be no different.

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme RR include:

Goal RR 3: Develop and support leadership and representation that reflects the diversity of the community.

Policy RR 3.1 - Boards and Commissions.

Policy RR 3.2 - Community Partnerships.

### **Vision Theme: Creating Quality and Diverse Neighborhoods (QDN)**

This Vision Theme is aimed at creating and sustaining affordable and balanced housing options and quality neighborhoods for the diverse populations throughout the city of Thornton. Creation of new neighborhoods is not under the purview of historic preservation, of course, but a historic preservation program can discover and preserve historic resources in order to support quality neighborhoods as they have evolved over time.

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme QDN:

Goal QDN 2: Promote revitalization and reinvestment in established neighborhoods.

Policy QDN 2.1 - Partnerships.

Policy QDN 2.2 - Retention of Existing Housing Stock.

Goal QDN 4: Advance the creation of walkable neighborhoods.

Policy QDN 4.3 - Neighborhood Connections.

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<sup>1</sup> Preservation for a Changing Colorado: The Benefits of Historic Preservation, p. 18. (Denver: Preservation Colorado, Inc., 2017. Available at: <http://hermes.cde.state.co.us/drupal/islandora/object/co:26224/datastream/OBJ/view>)

## **Vision Theme: Growing Smarter and Greener (SG)**

An often-quoted sustainability principle regarding historic preservation, from former president of the American Institute of Architects Carl Elefante, is “...the greenest building is one that is already built.” A study conducted by the National Trust for Historic preservation had a key finding that states, “...it takes between 10-80 years for a new building that is 30 percent more efficient than an average-performing existing building to overcome, through efficient operations, the negative climate change impacts related to the construction process.”<sup>2</sup> While not the only solution to reducing climate impacts, historic preservation serves as an imperative tool in Vision Theme Growing Smarter and Greener, which emphasizes a need for development that is environmentally and economically sustainable.

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme SG include:

Goal SG 2: Encourage infill and redevelopment in established areas of Thornton.

Policy SG 2.2 - Reinvestment and Revitalization.

Policy SG 2.3 - Priority Areas for Infill and Redevelopment.

Policy SG 2.4 - Neighborhood Compatibility.

Goal SG 3: Promote the use of sustainable development practices.

Policy SG 3.4 - Sustainable Development Practices.

## **Vision Theme: Connecting Community, People and Places (CPP)**

Vision Theme CPP aims to increase the effectiveness and equity of Thornton’s community services, transportation networks, and connectivity. It emphasizes the need to collaborate with local, regional, and state partners to develop an effective multi-modal transportation system for residents, businesses, and visitors to the city of Thornton. While largely about Thornton’s transportation networks and connectivity, Vision Theme CPP provides guidance to the HPP in pursuing local, regional and state opportunities for collaboration and can serve as a basis for how a historic preservation program could support other city development and planning initiatives. In particular, improved walkability through connectivity is a long-range strategy that supports the preservation of older neighborhoods, by making them more desirable to new generations who prize walkability and access to recreation, shopping, and community gathering areas.

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme CPP include:

Goal CPP 3: Collaborate with local, regional, and state entities and service providers on issues of mutual significance.

Policy CPP 3.2 - Cooperative Planning.

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## **Vision Theme: Building a Safe and Healthy Community (SHC)**

This last Vision Theme reflects the high value community members place on promoting a safe and healthy lifestyle. Community members expressed a desire for safe, crime resistant neighborhoods throughout the city of Thornton, through assuring an adequate cohort of public safety employees and in designing safe environments. In addition, but not directly related to the short-term work of a historic preservation program, community members have expressed a desire to preserve and maintain local agricultural uses which aligns with the SHC vision. Further, educational programming around historic preservation could support the vision's goal of providing a variety of educational and engagement opportunities for the Thornton community.

Goals and policies in support of the HPP from Vision Theme SHC include:

Goal SHC 2: Promote access to healthy, affordable food.

Policy SHC 2.1 - Local Food Production.

Goal SHC 3: Provide opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to lead active and healthy lifestyles.

Policy SHC 3.2 - Education and Outreach.

# **APPENDIX B. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES**

This appendix gives detailed summaries of the responses to the survey sent out to the community from October through December of 2023 regarding current and future historic preservation efforts in Thornton. In total, 89 community members submitted the survey.



## Question 1

Do you consider your neighborhood to be historic or to have a distinct character? Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Responses
Yes	44	49%
No	37	42%
I don't know	8	9%
Other (please specify)	0	0%

## Question 2

What neighborhood do you live in; or do you have a name or description that you use for your neighborhood (like Eastlake, Loma Linda, South Thornton, Riverdale)?

All Responses (89 total)		
Marshall Lake	Riverdale	Grange creek
Signal Creek	Eastlake	Original Thornton
Welby	Hunters Glen	New Eastlake
WOODGLENN	Hunters Glen	Cundall Farms
Original Eastlake	Walton Heath	Original Thornton
Eastlake	Hunters glen	Sherwood Park
Heritage Todd Creek	Meadow Park	Eastlake
south west Thornton	Ash Meadows	Wyndemere
Hunters glen Eastlake	Eastlake	Signal Creek
No	Quebec Highlands	Eastlake
Eastlake	Woodglenn meadows	Homestead Hills
Lambertson	Eastlake Village	Eastlake
Grange Creek	Eastglenn	Eastlake
Eastlake	East Lake	Park Meadow
Sage Creek Estates	work in Eastlake	Thornton co
Eastlake	Arras Park	Thornton
Southern Thornton	Todd Creek	Solo se que es Thornton
South Thornton	Rolling Hills	Thornton Original

Willow Bend	Original Thornton	Thornton
Parkridge Village	Woodglen	Washington Square Business Park
Cottonwood lakes	non resident	Sherwood Hills, 100th & York
Eastlake 2	Eastlake	Eastlake Lifestyle Community
Original Thornton	NE ward 3 brewer area	Loma Linda
Lake Avery Estates	Grange creek	Eastlake
Eastlake	Hunters Glenn	Quebec Run
Northstar	Sherwood 100 & York	Not in Thornton
Eastlake Living Community - four plexes	No name for my neighborhood that I know of	Marshall Lake - I remember when it was farmland in the 90s
Near Woodglenn Elementary school	I know longer live in Thornton but grew up in the rural Eastlake area	Original Thornton or old town Thornton
adjoining East Lake. I live in Terral Lago.	I no longer live in the Thornton area, but grew up north of Eastlake.	Prospects at Settler's Chase
Eastlake Lifestyle Community	Original Thornton or old town Thornton	Quebec Run but have iived in ward 1

### Question 3

When you think of Thornton's history, what do you think of; are there places, businesses, landmarks, neighborhoods, events, traditions, or people that you think of? Please list up to five answers.

Top 10 Words	Frequency
Eastlake	97
Original Thornton	64
Farms	47
Parks	39
Events	38
Community	35
Neighborhoods	24
Shopping Center	20
Railroad	15
Waterways	8



#### Question 4

What neighborhoods or areas in Thornton do you think have a strong history or character? Please list up to three answers.

#### Summary of Responses (83 total)

**Original Thornton**    **Eastlake**    **Washington St.**  
**“I don’t know”**    **None**    **Grant St.**    **Old Thornton**  
**Riverdale Road/Area**    **parks/open spaces**    **84th Ave.**  
**88th Ave.**    **92nd Ave**    **98th Ave.**    **100th Ave.**    **104th Ave.**  
**108th Ave.**    **112th Ave.**    **“New to Thornton”**    **Hunters Glens**  
**Thornton Schools**    **Welby**    **farm homes**    **Carpenter Park**  
**Lambertson Lakes/Farm**    **farms/barns**    **Lake Avery Estates**  
**agricultural properties**    **Thornton High School**    **South [Thornton]**  
**Skyview Campus**    **Northstar Park/area**    **Hoffman Homes**    **carousel**  
**brick homes**    **Original Thornton Streets**    **city areas**    **Merrit Hutton High**

#### Question 5

What neighborhoods or areas in Thornton do you think have a strong history or character? Please list up to three answers.

#### Summary of Responses (89 total)

**parks**    **open space**    **trails**    **Eastlake**  
**houses**    **lakes**    **trees**    **neighborhoods**  
**farms**    **streets**    **railroad**    **“sense of community”**  
**Original Thornton**    **“small town feel”**    **green spaces**  
**brick homes**    **Eastlake Grain Elevator**    **landscaping**    **neighborhood upkeep**

## Question 6

What do you think are the most important goals of historic preservation? Please select three answers from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Helps preserve a community's culture(s).	69	78%
Identifies historic buildings and landscapes.	55	62%
Enables preservation of historic places, buildings, and landscapes.	69	78%
Serves as an educational tool for the community.	53	60%
Provides sustainable development opportunities.	15	17%
Creates economic opportunities.	16	18%
Other (please specify)	8	9%
Not prohibit development, but encourage it. Guess that could be economic opportunity but don't want to see a blight just because it is historic and unusable or detrimental to neighborhood for looks or economic impact		
Helps owners of historic homes see value in designation and repair/upkeep		
Keeps commercial development separate from residential neighborhoods.		
Provides enticing areas to gather.		
Perspective on how Colorado acquired land from USA of which stole it from Natives		
Had to make a choice in order to move on. These are not on my list. Need to start with fixing the issues that our city has now. Then move on to what you are wanting to get out of this survey. Fix the crime, traffic and homelessness. Thornton is no longer a bed room community as it once was. If Thornton keeps going the way it is now, no one will want to live here.		
Provides a community identity		
Historic education		



## Question 7

Of the following options, which three are most important to preserve in your opinion? Please select three answers from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Public properties open or proposed to be open to the public (Examples: Eastlake Grain Elevator, Lambertson Homestead Site, Thornton civic buildings)	62	70%
Private property not open to the public or sometimes open to the public (Examples: historic churches, businesses, or homes)	14	16%
Historic districts and/or neighborhoods (Examples: Original Thornton or Eastlake)	63	71%
Historic architectural features (Examples: windows, building facades)	17	19%
Agricultural properties	27	30%
Open spaces	52	58%
Known archeological sites or future sites discovered through construction or research	28	31%
Other (please specify)	4	4%
Events		
n/a		
Had to make a choice in order to move on. These are not on my list. Again fix what is broken first, before spending tax payers money for preservation. We are long ways a way from preservation.		
all historical properties, public or private and archeological		

## Question 8

What are your top three preservation efforts that would be the most beneficial for the city of Thornton to consider investing in? Please select three answers from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Rehabilitation of historic structures	38	43%
Adaptive reuse (redevelopment) and preservation of historic structures	44	49%
Low-interest loan or grant programs for the preservation of residential structures	25	28%
Low-interest loan or grant programs for preservation of commercial structures	8	9%
Museums for community members to use and visit	35	39%
Programs and events that celebrate Thornton's cultures and histories	47	53%
Surveying, research, and planning to determine Thornton's preservation priorities	23	26%
Planning and policy creation to create neighborhood districts for preservation	24	27%
I don't think we need further financial support for historic preservation in Thornton.	7	8%
Other (please specify)	8	9%
Museum displays could be created at existing public facilities like recreation centers or city hall		
Traffic management actually done by qualified engineers and based on data.		
preserving open space		
Specific contributions by Indigenous peoples through their loss of land.		
Sustainable redevelopment of Thornton's shopping area at 88th and Washington. To include open space for gathering, cultural event center, space to provide retail opportunities for small local businesses and restaurants. No chain restaurants.		
Had to make a choice in order to move on. These are not on my list. Not a good time to spend more money on preservation, when tax payers are currently stretched to the limit now.		
No more tax breaks or incentive money for new developers.		
Crear estos espacios para la celebración como un edificio y centro cultural para Thornton		



## Question 9

Below are regulatory actions a local government could take to guide and influence preservation actions in the community, what two do you think the city of Thornton should consider implementing? Please select two answers from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Denial of demolitions in locally designated historic districts after careful review (note: this would require enabling legislation at the local level).	25	29%
Designate local historic districts with carefully reviewed and community-directed guidelines or regulations for existing and future development.	62	72%
Protect open spaces, agricultural assets, waterways, endangered and threatened species of plants and animals, and other similar landscape features.	74	86%
I don't think we need further regulatory action to support historic preservation in Thornton.	4	5%
Other (please specify)	7	8%
Mixed use, denser housing		
Revise the lighting ordinances. Night time in Thornton looks like the inside of Walmart.		
Revitalizing public areas, right-of-ways, parks, etc. to make older neighborhoods more friendly looking and picturesque		
protect open space		
Thornton should include ways to incorporate personality into it to attract more home buyers		
Study and protect ground water aquifers and natural aquifer recharge processes.		
preservation of affordable housing		

## Question 10

Which educational and/or commemorative tools and actions would you like to see used more in Thornton? Please select three answers from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Digitize and provide online access to information on historic properties and historic documents.	40	45%
Exhibits and public art in historic areas, parks, trails, commercial centers and in neighborhoods interpreting Thornton's history.	52	58%

Nominate more neighborhoods and individual properties to the National Register of Historic Places or Colorado State Register of Historic Places.	29	33%
Provide more educational events about historic places and the history of Thornton.	36	40%
Provide more information on the appropriate treatment of historic buildings and energy efficiency of and for historic buildings.	19	21%
Provide more neighborhood or community events that focus on Thornton's local history and culture.	41	46%
Provide more walking tours of historic neighborhoods, landmarks, and landscapes.	19	21%
I don't think we need further educational or commemorative action to support historic preservation in Thornton.	6	7%
Other (please specify)	6	7%
Community outreach. Take the history and education to classrooms, churches, libraries, ThorntonFest, etc.		
educate yourselves on why not to build on a space just because it's there		
Again thornton needs more charm to attract more home buyers		
Had to make a choice in order to move on. These are not on my list.		
No other		
Preserve lakes & streams, and land associated with native tribes.		

## Question 11

What three words come to mind when you think of Thornton's history and historic areas? Please limit answers below to one word per answer.

Summary of Responses (89 total)	
Answers	# of Similar Responses
Agriculture/Farms/Farmland	32
Community	24
None/Not much/Unknown/N/A/Nondescript/Negative statements about history	16
Nature/Open space/Waterways/Streams/Parks/Wildlife/Dinosaur	16
Railroad	12
Suburban/Suburbia/Bedroom community/Urban sprawl	12
Preservation/Protect/Preserve/Preservation efforts	11
Historic/History/Historic events	10
Family/Neighborhood/Neighbors/People	9



Midcentury architecture/1950s/Fifties/Post-WWII	9
New/Development/Growth/Redevelopment/Encroachment/Stop developing the land	9
Education/Educate/Knowledge/Culture	8
Limited/Lacking/Incomplete/Struggling/Underfunded/Visionless	7
Peaceful/Tranquil	6
Romantic/Beauty	6
Infrastructure/Foundations/Upgrades	6
Commercial/Businesses	5
Neglected/Overlooked/Underappreciated	5
Cultural/Inclusion/Cooperation/Interconnectivity/Union/Unity	5
Eastlake	4
Unique/Unusual	4
Water	3
Pioneers/Founders	3
Significant/Recognized	2

## Question 12

Are there any areas in Thornton that you feel are at risk of being lost and should be protected?

Summary of Responses (89 total)
Several common themes emerged from the responses.
<p>1. Concern for Open Spaces: Many respondents express concerns about the loss of open spaces, green areas, and undeveloped land. They emphasize the importance of preserving these spaces for various reasons, including wildlife habitat, community enjoyment, and maintaining Thornton’s character.</p> <p>2. Specific Locations: Certain areas are repeatedly mentioned as being at risk, such as Eastlake, Riverdale corridor, original Thornton, and specific landmarks like Rotello Park, North Valley, and Old Thornton.</p> <p>3. Overdevelopment: Respondents express worries about overdevelopment and urban sprawl, particularly in areas like Eastlake, where they feel there’s a risk of losing the rural character or historical significance.</p> <p>4. Commercial Areas: Some mention concerns about the preservation of original Thornton’s commercial properties, shopping centers, and historical buildings, highlighting a desire to maintain the city’s heritage.</p> <p>5. Environmental Impact: Concerns about the impact of development on the environment, including threats to wildlife, sky glow from light pollution, and potential harm from oil and gas development, are also mentioned.</p> <p>6. Lack of Knowledge: A few respondents admit to not having enough knowledge to answer the question confidently, suggesting a need for more awareness and information regarding preservation efforts in Thornton.</p>

### Question 13

Do you have any additional thoughts about historic preservation in Thornton?

#### Summary of Responses (89 total)

The responses varied widely. Some expressed a desire for greater public awareness and education about the city's history, while others emphasized the need to slow down development and preserve open space. Some residents were skeptical about the city's historical significance due to its relatively young age and rapid development. Concerns about the economic viability of preservation efforts and the risk of gentrification were also raised. Overall, there were mixed opinions about the importance and feasibility of historic preservation in Thornton, with some residents supportive of the idea while others were more skeptical or critical. 36 respondents answered "no," "none," "n/a," "not at this time" or something similar.

### Question 14

Would you be willing to provide some demographic information about yourself? Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Responses
Yes	69	78%
No	30	34%

### Question 15

What is your age? Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Responses
15 or under	0	0%
16 - 24	0	0%
25 - 34	3	4%
35-44	14	21%
45 - 54	12	18%
55 - 64	7	10%
65- 74	18	26%
75+	13	19%
I prefer not to answer	1	1%



## Question 16

How do you characterize yourself out of the following options? Please select all answers from below that apply.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Homeowner in Thornton	54	79%
Commercial property or business owner/operator in Thornton	8	12%
Renter in Thornton (residential)	6	9%
Renter in Thornton (commercial)	0	0%
Only work in Thornton	3	4%
Don't live in Thornton	0	0%
I prefer not to answer	1	1%
None of the above	1	1%
Other (please specify)	3	4%
Retiree		
grew up on a farm in the Eastlake area; family lived there until 2020		
Life in general		

## Question 17

How long have you lived in Thornton? Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Responses
4 years or less	7	11%
5 to 9 years	8	12%
10 to 20 years	11	17%
20+ years	36	55%
This question does not apply to me.	2	3%
Prefer not to answer	1	2%

### Question 18

Is English your primary language? Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Yes	64	94%
No	4	6%
I prefer not to answer.	0	0%

### Question 19

What is your primary language?

All Responses (4 total)
Espanol
Español
Español
Español

### Question 20

Please tell us about your annual household income (this includes everyone living in your house, not just you). Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Responses
\$24,999 or less	2	3%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	0	0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4	6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	7	10%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14	21%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	8	12%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	6	9%
\$150,000 to \$174,999	7	10%
\$175,000 to \$199,999	4	6%
\$200,000+	6	9%
I prefer not to answer	10	15%

## Question 21

What is your highest level of education? Please select one answer from the choices below.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Responses
Less than a high school diploma	1	1%
High school diploma	2	3%
Technical school	5	7%
Some college	5	7%
Associate's degree	6	9%
Bachelor's degree	25	37%
Master's degree / Ph. D. / post-graduate studies	24	35%
I prefer not to answer	0	0%
Other (please specify)	0	0%

## Question 22

What would you consider yourself to be? Please select all answers from below that apply.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	4%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1	1%
Black or African American	0	0%
Hispanic, Chicano/a, Latino/a	10	15%
White / Caucasian	59	87%
I prefer not to answer.	1	1%
Unlisted, please self-describe:	2	3%
Multiple		
Multiplev		



# APPENDIX C. Historic Preservation Terms Defined

Below are common phrases and terms used with regards to the profession/field of historic preservation. Many of these terms and phrases are used in the HPP and are added here for clarity.

**Adaptive Reuse:** Process of reusing an old building or site for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed for.

**Affirmative Maintenance:** Requirement in historic preservation ordinances that a building's structural components must be maintained.

**Archival Materials:** This refers to a historic resource provided to an archivist intended to share in the storytelling of a community, historic building, landscape, important person, or place.

**Colorado State Register of Historic Properties:** The Colorado State Register of Historic Properties is a listing of the state’s significant cultural resources worthy of preservation for the future education and enjoyment of Colorado’s residents and visitors. Properties listed in the Colorado State Register include individual buildings, structures, objects, districts and historic and archaeological sites. Properties listed on the National Register are automatically listed on the State Register.

**Community Character:** This term is often used to describe the physical form and historic context of a historic district, neighborhood or landmark.

**Comprehensive Plan:** Official plan adopted by local governments that guides decision-making about proposed public and private actions that affect community development. Thornton’s Comprehensive Plan serves as a long-term vision and roadmap for Thornton’s future and includes many component plans dealing with the growth and development of the city, as adopted and amended by Thornton City Council.

**Design Guidelines:** Criteria developed to guide land development to achieve a desired level of quality for the physical environment with regards to historic context. Design Guidelines function to preserve and enhance the desired character of existing neighborhoods and improve the aesthetic and functional quality of new development projects. Design guidelines are typically interpretive and are reviewed by a board or professional to determine if a specific development project meets the guidelines. When design guidelines are applied to historic districts or landmarks it is standard to follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation or other applicable development activity.

**Design Standards:** Similar to design guidelines but are typically required as opposed to negotiated through a public process.

**Designation (or Historic Designation):** Act of identifying historic structures and districts subject to regulation in historic preservation ordinances or other preservation laws.

**District, Historic District:** See “Local Historic District.”

**Easement (Preservation or Conservation):** Partial interest in property that can be transferred to a nonprofit organization or governmental entity by gift or sale to ensure the protection of a historic resource and/or land area in perpetuity.

**Historic Context Study/Statement:** A document that contains a research topic about a specific culture(s), heritage(s), historic building(s), historic district/neighborhood, landscapes and other historic resources and the larger context that they play in a community’s history. Historic context statements help tell the “How,” “When,” “Who,” and “Why” of a community’s historic resources in order to allow appropriate policy and programming development.

**Historic Preservation:** Historic preservation is a diverse field that aims to recognize and learn about a community’s heritage, cultures, historic buildings, landscapes and other historic resources. Historic preservation involves a variety of professions such as architecture, archeology, economics, engineering, environmentalism, law and policy development, non-profits and a variety of community organizations and businesses. Often historic preservation policy is set by local, state or national governments and creates policy and programming that encourages public and private action to preserve a community’s cultural landscapes and historic places and incorporate them into the community’s future.

**Historic Preservation Commission:** A board created by local governments to enforce and direct historic preservation actions and policy within the city’s boundaries. Currently, Thornton does not have a Historic Preservation Commission.

**Infill development:** Development on a vacant or substantially vacant tract of land surrounded by existing development.

**Institutional Properties/Uses:** This term is used broadly to include places like churches, civic spaces, libraries, membership-based gathering spaces (e.g. Elks Lodge) schools, and other similar types of gathering spaces.

**Interpretive Installations or Opportunities:** An alternative form of storytelling that involves signage, programming, events, and other organized activities that tell stories about a particular place's natural or built environment and history.

**Land Use:** Associated with zoning, land use expands on the broad categories of zoning and describes the types of activities that may occur on property within a local government's boundaries based on the property's associated zoning.

**Landmark:** A site or structure designated by a local preservation ordinance or other law to be worthy of preservation because of its particular historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance.

**Local Historic District:** A district established by a local government that contains a group of historic structures that are important to a community's cultural heritage. Typically districts will have specific development requirements that recognize the scale and history of the district; review of development, to certain intensities, is performed by a public review board (called a Historic Preservation Commission) to consider certain development proposals within the district. Districts can contain contributing structures and non-contributing structures.

**Contributing structures:** Building or structure in a historic district that generally has historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological significance that relates to the overall significance of the district.

**Non-Contributing structures:** Building or structure in a historic district that generally has little to no historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological significance. Typically, non-contributing structures were built after the relevant historical period important to the district and have little known context to the overall district.

**National Historic Landmark (NHL):** Property included in the National Register of Historic Places that has been judged by the Secretary of the Interior to have "...national significance in American history, archaeology, architecture, engineering and culture." Listing as a NHL is a separate nomination process from the National Register.

**National Register of Historic Places:** "A list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of national, regional, state, and local significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service under authority of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. To be considered eligible, a property must meet the National Register criteria for evaluation, which involves examining a historic property's age, significance, and integrity." – from the website of the National Park Service.

**Oral History:** An oral history is a form of storytelling from a personal perspective that can be recorded and used in guiding historic context studies and/or historic preservation policy.

**"Third Place:"** Describes a place in which people gather that is not someone's home environment ("first place") or a work environment ("second place"). Third places typically include places like churches, cafes, clubs, community centers, gyms, public parks or plazas, public libraries, or similar types of places.



**Placemaking:** A term used to describe the process of designing squares, plazas, parks, streets and waterfronts that will attract people because they are pleasurable or interesting. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets to create good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing. Additionally, placemaking can incorporate other aspects into a places design such as art installations, street furniture, signage, active commerce, and other features that encourage community gathering.

**Redevelopment:** The removal and replacement, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse of an existing structure or structures to accommodate modern uses and improve infrastructure associated with them.

**Survey; Historic Building Survey; Historic Neighborhood Survey:** A historic survey is a guiding document that evaluates a specific building's or neighborhood's historical significance. Surveys are typically used in preparing nominations to State or National Registers of Historic Places. Additionally, surveys can help guide future development and programming as it relates to a particular historic place.

**Zoning:** A regulatory tool adopted by the city to direct and shape land development activities. Thornton's zoning and development standards are contained within Chapter 18 of the Thornton City Code and reflected on the city's official Zoning Map. Zoning is typically a set of laws regulating the land use such as whether it may be residential, commercial, or industrial and restrictions on development such as minimum lot sizes, landscaping requirements, maximum building height/size, and so forth.

# **APPENDIX D. Advisory Group Meeting # 1 - July 31, 2023**

Below on the following pages are staff generated notes from the first Advisory Group meeting held on July 31, 2023. Notes reflect directly given answers and staff's interpretation of what was heard. The meeting was held in English with live Spanish interpretation. Group members were divided into two groups and asked a series of questions to garner input on Thornton's neighborhoods and community qualities to consider in developing recommendations for this Historic Preservation Plan or future updates/amendments.

## **Living in Thornton.**

### **What is it like to live in Thornton today? What is unique about living there?**

- Population diversity
- South Thornton - Everyone who lives here really cares about the community
- Original Thornton are “Forever homes”
- South Thornton - Feeling of community
- Amenities available
- South Thornton - Feels like home
- Want to see Original Thornton preserved, kind of like a time capsule
- There used to be big families with 7 kids that lived in the small Original Thornton homes – kids used to play in the streets
- Someone else noted kids in Original Thornton still play in streets, is safe
- Original Thornton didn’t have driveways originally
- There was discussion of differences between subdivisions. Mostly N/S divide, Also E/W divide (at I-25) Going farther east, away from the highway – fewer resources are available within a short distance – results in people living there needing to travel farther – more car dependent. It was expressed that a strong desire among Thornton’s population is to become a city that is less car dependent.
- North side residents often feel disconnected from the city culturally. Social separation. General sense of not being a part of the Thornton community.
- No one really knows Thornton, that’s the problem. You don’t know when you’re in or out of Thornton and this creates an issue with identity (also an issue in building community around schools [school districts split, but not at city-limits]).
- Discussion about the trees and birds helping live in the area; very easy to hang outside easily and play in nature (water included).
- Less traffic than Denver makes it a positive.
- Discussion was had about the beautiful parks (behind Sam’s Club, Margret Carp.)
- Discussed the feeling of community and the people who live here; additionally discussed the higher number of Latino peoples.
- City hasn’t always felt inclusive, discussion around a change about six years ago
- Schools being separate [from the city] means that there can’t be a central identity tied to the schools AND Thornton.
  - Kids can end up spending time somewhere else (e.g. Northglenn)
- Discussion was had about the various manufactured home parks in Thornton. They have been a part of the City for a long time and are a part of the story of Thornton. People here have taken care of Thornton and it needs to be recognized

### **Are there distinct neighborhoods or places that warrant preservation in Thornton?**

- Original Thornton – pioneers of the city – don’t overlook that
  - Heartwarming place
  - People that still live there from birth



- Original Thornton has always been diverse. It was the expansion of the American dream. One person mentioned they had a next door neighbor that was Latino right out of the war, so diversity is not just new.
- Old businesses – Jim’s Burger Haven
- Clinica Campesina building
- City Hall / bank
- Grange building was still standing into the 1960s

## **Understanding Thornton’s History.**

### **What can you tell us about Thornton’s history? What did you know before you moved to Thornton, and how did you learn more? What do you wish you would have known before moving here?**

- Rick - his wife is daughter of the developer of the Loma Linda neighborhood. They still live there. Loma Linda is a key historic Thornton neighborhood. Discussion about how Thornton residents put up the value of their homes as collateral to be able to fund the first water & sanitation system investments in the city.
- Discussion about Thornton’s good planning of looking forward to future water needs of the community.
- Split the schools in half
- Gates rubber factory – a lot of people worked there from Thornton
- Samsonite was a big draw; people in Thornton worked there
- Originally in Original Thornton – neighbors gave each other flowers and trees and shared with neighbors so everyone has same plants
- Grandparents had dim view of Thornton; Thornton was perceived as not a good place
- People got into fights long time ago when they said they lived in Thornton
- Latinos have high regard for Thornton as it was safer and factory smoke would dissipate, so cleaner air.
- Wanted to get away from the Denver flooding
- Discussed that people didn’t feel they really knew Thornton’s history.
  - Supplemented with discussion about how people learn about the history, through small conversations in the community
- People need to be able to connect to the history, need to know what it says, and this will help develop a sense of caring
- City is lacking information on where things are, especially with regards to history.
  - No videos, no Internet advertising, no Thornton info.

## **Maintaining Thornton’s neighborhood qualities:**

### **What would you like to change about Thornton?**

- suggested the possibility of trails and open spaces being linked together better throughout the community.
- Government – don’t like the small town vibe in government. Need to adapt to the diverse needs in

the city. City Council is not professional.

- There's really two Thorntons – south versus north. South Thornton has been systematically disenfranchised since the 1970s. Funding is clearly going to the north side of the city. Infrastructure is better up north. Few derelict vacant lots.
- South Thornton Post office closed – hard for older people to drive to the far away post office
- Nobody has post boxes
- Need to replace sidewalks in the south
- People don't take same pride of ownership.
- One lady indicated she has put in a Code Complaint for over two years without response. Government should act on Code complaints.
- Original Thornton does not have an HOA which is a blessing and a curse.
- Don't get the same sense of community at 136th and Kremaria versus Original Thornton
- People should lend lawnmowers to people who don't have them to help out.
- Why does City have sprinklers going all the time if they are telling citizens not to water grass.
- Would like the City to start doing composting
- City should start being green themselves
- Police Training facility should have xeriscaping – why did they put in so much lawn?
- Things have changed with landscaping.
- We need more open spaces; need to preserve the big open spaces.
- Murals throughout. Encourage people to paint their vision.
  - Bi-lingual, multi-cultural focus

### **What would you like to keep the same about Thornton?**

- Turn Thornton Shopping Center into something beautiful like old Town Arvada, like Cherry Creek Art Festival. Want to have market where people can go walk and get out and talk to neighbors. Farmers Market. Pocket Park.
- Pocket Park that commemorates original Thornton people. Nice gazebos and art fairs.
- Thornton Shopping Center in 1960s used to have an ice rink.
- Late 1950s – Village Market - Originally from 9-5 used to be open and everyone would go there every day, would carpool together. Also on Washington, there used to be stores where you could buy bread.
- Need something there that makes it feel like Thornton, place making. Do Mid Century Modern, 1950s – would fit into that strip. Make it nicer though.
- Tell the story – pay tribute to pioneers in the area at Thornton Shopping Center. Have project with the high school to do a play.
- Hop and Way used to be an open ditch. Kids used to go and play in the ditch. Water went down there from all the way to the city.
- Hoffman is currently torn apart to put in storm drains. Hope they put parkway back in. The one way is making it confusing. The stop sign on Pose and Hoffman has been confusing.
- Original Thornton should be more about how Thornton started

- Thornton-Northglenn water battles
- Really strong sense of community.
- Maintain what we have, don't let it deteriorate
- Thornton is a safe community, nothing really bad ever happens
- Natural areas
- Fourth of July celebration
- Schools [are good]
- Thornton [doesn't feel] isn't overcrowded like other cities
- There are lots of old, beautiful trees...typically don't see that many. City should work to preserve the trees (or at least maintain) Preserving the ecosystem, and providing maintenance to trees (many of them are dead or dying and they are not always "pruned")

### **How can the City of Thornton help?**

- Thornton does not have any fairs, it would make it feel like community.
- Continue with signs from 88th all the way around the community for Original Thornton. The planters are so cheerful - keep those filled and put more in
- Creating jobs
- Re-skilling for people who need to change careers
- Engage TASCHO more with these tasks. Leaning into the humanities and history parts.
- In Original Thornton, once one person starts taking care of yard, others do too. Domino effect.
- Brochures about Thornton, where are they?
- More visual advertisement [of history]; in Spanish as well
- More Spanish focus
- A local radio hour where history about Thornton is shared (English and Spanish)
  - source was an example of town a AG member lived in where the local radio station had a history hour program.
- There needs to be more information about what is going on.
- Questions about what resources the schools have, how can Thornton partner?
- Concerns about dry lakes in the parks
- City documents need to be translated into Spanish
- Making more inclusive places will help get more people involved
- More information should be provided on where city services are
- Provide assistance to aid manufactured park residents become owners of their property to create a more vested community
- Some issues were brought up regarding trash in the manufactured home parks
  - Need better recycling
- Discussed bringing water fill stations to parks and residential neighborhoods
- Organizations specifically that have additional information on the City of Thornton



- More “connection centers”
- Making it clear that Thornton has been making an effort throughout the years to help translate and become more inclusive and continue to maintain the effort to provide translations to be more inclusive we should expand to additional languages.
- Resources in how to become involved with the City of Thornton
- Do not currently have access to the history of Thornton for children that has also been translated – so that children are able to learn directly from parents.
- Not always aware what Thornton city limits are and what is considered Adams, Brighton etc. More readily available information regarding city limits. It is difficult to identify where you are and what city you are in if you are not familiar with the areas.
- How to help maintain the trailer parks and maintain the communities and find a way to see if it would be possible to allow ownership of the trailer areas.
- Water filling stations and fountains (there used to be many)

## **Preserving Thornton’s character and sense of place.**

### **How should historic preservation be used to help maintain Original Thornton’s character and sense of place?**

- General concern about the Thornton Post Office location closing and how this will impact the community.
- Would like to see support for culturally-iconic places in Thornton – such as Jim’s Burger Haven.
- Discussion on the importance for historic business sites to have thriving businesses within them – it is not ok to have a building on the National Register of Historic Places and for it to sit empty and degrade. The Forney Museum is now REI, for example. A failure example is the A-Frame gas station at the NWC of the I-76 / 88th Avenue interchange. Much discussion about this followed.
- A particular challenge is associated with the need/desire to actually make changes that improve a property – What is actually worth preserving? What about preserving only the exterior historic characteristics and features?
- comments about adaptive reuse of historic structures. indicated that adaptive reuse is the cornerstone of historic preservation efforts.
- Other things could be done with the Reitzenstein barn. Repurpose the building. She indicated that she has seen this sort of thing happen in Oregon. Sometimes incentives are available to help make this happen.
- Indication that there is minimal value to have a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places – minimal funding availability. If it is listed as historically significant locally, there is no age requirement. He also stated that it is important to preserve places where interesting activities take place.
- A company named Honey Bear Ceramics was located near 87th and Pearl for more than 20 years.
- Turn Thornton Shopping Center into something beautiful like old Town Arvada, like Cherry Creek Art Festival. Want to have market where people can go walk and get out and talk to neighbors. Farmers Market. Pocket Park.
- Pocket Park that commemorates original Thornton people. Nice gazebos and art fairs.

- Thornton does not have any fairs, it would make it feel like community.
- Thornton Shopping Center in 1960s used to have an ice rink.
- Late 1950s – Village Market - Originally from 9-5 used to be open and everyone would go there every day, would carpool together. Also on Washington, there used to be stores where you could buy bread.
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- Hop and Way used to be an open ditch. Kids used to go and play in the ditch. Water went down there from all the way to the city.
- Hoffman is currently torn apart to put in storm drains. Hope they put parkway back in. The one way is making it confusing. The stop sign on Pose and Hoffman has been confusing.
- Continue with signs from 88th all the way around the community for Original Thornton. The planters are so cheerful - keep those filled and put more in
- Original Thornton should be more about how Thornton started
- Promote the founders, provide information, include references on street names...could add historic photos across Original Thornton
- Panoramic scenes should be preserved (e.g. parks, open spaces, farms); Maintaining the panoramic views the City of Thornton provides and limiting the construction of large buildings within Thornton. Maintaining parks, ranches, trees, and other “green” areas
- Convert old houses, warehouses into museums for the kids [and community] – help teach people about Thornton’s history.
  - Should be interactive
  - Should be in English/Spanish
- Discussion about how it is easy to preserve your own place [i.e. home] but it is difficult to understand the value of preserving the City without understanding what is around you/in the community
- Discussed more fountain installations
- Bring back the mural programs in the schools
- Preserving Homes that have historical significance.
- Information plates in parks or other significant historical areas that have more information.
- Murals
- Involving youth preservation efforts and getting their opinions and views on the city
- Access to information, independent of an individual looking specifically for information on the city – i.e. Thornton on social media and their lack of presence.
- Would like to know the values [historical value, not actual] of their homes or the area by knowing the background information, it is easier to feel responsible on preserving the history.

## **How should historic preservation be used to help maintain Eastlake's character and sense of place?**

- Like the Main Street strip – beautify and maintain, highlight
- Have a farmer's market
- Incentives for preservation can be effective, but it helps if sites are included in a master plan to have an idea of how they fit into the broader context and what role each one should play.
- Comments about the Eastlake Grain Elevator and how efforts have been made in recent years to repurpose it.
- Sense of place established -agriculture, grain elevator, hallmarks of historic place, plaques and signs, fun beautification – like Idaho Springs. Highlight history and make it stand out.

## **Telling Thornton's Stories.**

### **How do we help bring Thornton's stories out into the community to engage residents and encourage them to understand and appreciate where they live? Should visitors be invited to Thornton to enjoy its sense of place and history, especially within Original Thornton, Eastlake and public property? Why or why not? How do we support existing efforts to interpret the City's history at publicly accessible sites? How do we increase and support the use of public art in storytelling and community engagement?**

- Concern expressed about the slow progress of the development of the Thornton Fire Department Museum.
- Desire for Thornton to have its own zip code.
- Interest in looking into hosting a native American celebration – 13 tribes historically in the area.
  - Something similar to this was formerly hosted by TASHCO. Many native American people attend St. Paul's Methodist Church.
- Visitors should be invited to Thornton – especially original Thornton except you need something to show them and sell them.
- If the area was cleaned up more in original Thornton would be more attractive, otherwise no reason for people to come
- teach in school, tell stories about Thornton, have original Thornton residents speaking about life,
- evenings at museum,
- tell kids to join the preservation society, have school field trips.
- Acknowledge all of the history – the good, bad and ugly and start from native americans.
- Take kids to multiple spots in the city, like Eastlake, have a small working farm museum.
- Put storyboards in lobbies for example in City Hall. You could put the storyboards in libraries, plaques
- In Longmont – Teddy Roosevelt stopped there for a whistlestop tour, and they put a plaque with him on a train and made it very compelling
- Recommendation to put plaques of important locations and/or events
- Discussion about Brighton as an example of historic preservation; sited the parks highlighting the natural landscape, the fauna, animals...need more of this everywhere.



- There needs to be a specific place to come and learn about Thornton.
- Involving the kids [presumably in the schools or through programming] in teaching the history is key; will help develop the sense of the importance of the local history to the kids
- A hyperactive museum
- A way to demonstrate the relevance for the Latinx population and their specific contributions to the City.
- More historical information about the city being taught in schools.
- Thornton Magazines, newsletters, etc. are currently only in English and it would be beneficial to have many translations.
- Making it clear that Thornton has been making an effort throughout the years to help translate and become more inclusive and continue to maintain the effort to provide translations to be more inclusive we should expand to additional languages.
- Information about the history in large parks and significant Thornton landmarks
- Sharing old photos, information etc. with the public
- Social media presence in Spanish Specifically
- 2 hours segments of information translated or one-minute videos providing information in Spanish.
- Knowing what schools your kids correspond to, sometimes a student's home is in Thornton, and they are told their jurisdiction is a different city.

### **Uncategorized Notes.**

- Rick – offered background about TPD, improvements made by Chief Jim Nursey, increased professionalism and training
- Chad – gave background about H&H Metals including that they have worked on historic buildings and Thornton residences
- Barb – is a retired librarian and archivist – worked for the National Institute of Standards & Technology mostly.
- Roberta – when she was in middle school, she was in a group that Mayor Margaret Carpenter was involved with.
- Chris – Formerly with History Colorado – was deputy state historic preservation officer – was also an archaeologist and planner in Scotland for about 20 years. Now director of museums for city of Greeley.
- Barb – Moved to Thornton (Eastlake area) because her daughter lives in Northglenn and she wanted to be close. She previously lived in an unincorporated part of Maryland. Where she now lives is more densely populated.

# **APPENDIX E. Advisory Group Meeting # 2 - January 10, 2024**

Below on the following pages are staff generated notes from the second Advisory Group meeting held on January 10, 2024. Notes reflect directly given answers and staff's interpretation of what was heard. The meeting was held in English with live Spanish interpretation. Group members were divided into two groups and asked a series of questions to garner input possible actions and recommendations that could be placed in the final Historic Preservation Plan.

## Group A, Engaging the Public on Preservation (Prompt)

**Challenge:** The task of preservation would be incomplete without a careful examination of strategies for engaging Thornton’s residents and the public at large in the processes and values of historic preservation. Many of the comments at the first Advisory Group meeting can be addressed in the plan, although some cannot (for example, providing Thornton with its own zip code(s) is outside the City’s powers).

**Requested Action:** What are your two top priorities for engaging the public with regards to Thornton’s cultural heritage, landscape and historic landmarks/buildings? (You are welcome to write more in the time provided!)

### Sample Actions:

- Install outdoor story-telling sites at key public locations throughout the city (modeled after the story-telling signs already provided by the Parks Department on its recreational trails).
- Develop a series of community events that honor the historic heritages of the people who live and have lived in Thornton.

### Typed Actions/Notes of Group A Discussion Directly From Group A:

- Education; Education; Education....student involvement
- Finding and interviewing as many of the Original Thornton residents before we lose the opportunity [to].
- Meetings to inform the communities held in the area they represent.
- Have events at important historical landmarks with different cultures represented (school groups),”
  - “...with students from the areas (school groups bring people!)
- North Line [N-Line, RTD-FasTracks] Engagement – as best with all historic elements, Northline will be a driving economic element for Thornton
- Place preservation exhibits in AnyThink libraries
- Create instruction guide with activities for schools to use
  - Have students go to specific sites
- Create a museum –
  - physical and online – for assistance with both [seems to refer to field trip idea]
  -

### Staff Notes of Group A Discussion:

- Update the COT history book done by Tanya Casteneda
- Engage with schools in Thornton to educate students on Thornton history
- Produce public education to help the broader community understand what historic preservation planning is and how it affects residents, businesses, etc.
- Implement various types of communications media to share information about historic preservation planning.
- Design annual community events on historic themes which are unique to Thornton. These could be stand-alone events (such as neighborhood gatherings, games, dances, potlucks, etc.), or incorporated into existing festivals.



- Interview long-term residents who have interesting stories to tell and record them for posterity, either in written or recorded oral form.
- Work with the Anythink Library system to incorporate Thornton history into their programming. . . exhibits, presentations, etc.
- Turn the Eastlake grain elevator structure into a Thornton history museum.
- Install signs around the city with QR codes to enable visitors to access historic stories, photos, etc. on their devices.
- Conduct meetings in specific parts of Thornton to highlight and enhance their unique historic elements – not just the history of the entire city.
- Conduct events at historic sites or landmarks around the city. Involve students in these.
- The N-Line is becoming a significant economic driver in the Thornton community, and Eastlake is a key location where considerable economic growth is likely to take place. Plans have been made for this, but economically challenges and the coronavirus pandemic have delayed progress. It may be time to update those plans based on the realities we are experiencing now and adjust plans for economic growth in this and other areas.
- Reach out to seniors throughout Thornton – many of whom do not use the internet. Need to develop more print-based ways of communicating with them.
- The City Voice newspaper should be expanded and improved to include more about Thornton’s history. Generally improved communication from the city to its residents.
- Offer tours of Thornton. We have many resources, especially good parks, trails, recreation facilities, etc. Many new residents are not aware of all there is to offer in the community.
- Identify and preserve historic buildings throughout the community.
- Further develop the Thornton Fire Department museum.
- Provide education about the importance of performing arts.
- Develop a new Thornton history book.
- Meetings held in each smaller area [e.g. Original Thornton, Eastlake]; have events at the historical landmark with different cultures presented

## **Group B, Strengthening Thornton’s Historic Neighborhoods and Commercial Areas**

### **(Prompt)**

**Challenge:** Historic preservation programs can support Thornton’s goal of strengthening its residential neighborhoods and supporting commercial areas. While the roughly 2,500 homes in Original Thornton and early buildings in Eastlake have been identified for initial attention from Thornton’s new historic preservation program, other early neighborhoods and commercial areas are also distinctive. Historic preservation can support housing and economic development by identifying ways to protect existing homes and commercial areas, thereby maintaining the existing neighborhood’s supply of existing residential and commercial land uses.

This could include not only support for owners of existing, historic properties to assure appropriate upkeep (such as repair programs), but also ways to discourage the demolition of smaller, historic buildings with larger, new ones that are more expensive (such as a review process for demolition of historic homes).

“Support” as referenced above can include a variety of programs that a local government has control over (such as home repair programs) but would be focused on historic neighborhoods for the purposes of historic preservation programming.

**Requested Action:** What are your two top priorities for improving Thornton’s historic neighborhoods (including commercial areas), keeping existing, older neighborhoods and connecting to nearby commercial areas and parks? (You are welcome to write more in the time provided!)

**Sample Actions:**

- Develop home (or business) repair programs for historic neighborhoods like Original Thornton and Eastlake.
- Develop a program to recognize and retain “Legacy Businesses.”

**Typed Actions/Notes of Group A Discussion Directly From Group A:**

- Open spaces for stories [seems to refer to storytelling and/or making spaces available for the public].
  - Examples [include presenting] the history [from the meeting] of today, [could] have access to that information
- Make historic neighborhoods accessible to all of the public and community members regardless of whether you walk or bike
- Instead of replacing existing buildings, provide maintenance and care needed [to preserve]
- Share the story of Thornton through:
  - murals,
  - bilingual books
- such as a book about who managed to bring water to the community
- Maintain green areas, agricultural [areas], & lakes
- Protect and remodel existing trails and open spaces
- Think about the next generations and citizens that they are included in the plan/program; so they can know about the historic places and stories
- Maintain the trees so that they can have more life [so that they can live longer?]
- Preserve nature reserves/natural spaces; agricultural land
- Spaces to share preservation stories:
  - Murals
  - Museums
  - Books “Did you Know?”
  - Programs/information for the kids
  - Create plaques with descriptions of owners/creators
- Maintain/Preserve/Support historic places
- [Create a] book and introduces to the new generations that it is important to remember that they will help create the wonderful city of Thornton to grow.
- Preserve the trails, [even if] they have to remove them in order to renovate them
- Places should be recognized and that they remain as they are

- Extend the life of the trees (maintenance)
- Recognize historic places
  - Maintain historic buildings and neighborhoods
- Permit [could be interpreted as require] architects and construction works to elevate neighborhoods and buildings with qualities and characteristics that represent Thornton
- Recognize the people that live in Thornton, from its beginnings, and those who helped found this city.
- Offer the opportunity for business owners, in existing commercial areas, to have the opportunity to give their opinions, to participate.
- Tour of [known/existing] historic places and proposed [properties proposed for recognition]
- A timeline of Thornton's history.
- Highlight the [Thornton's] community of color that cultivates the fields [or the neighborhoods; rural community?]
- Preserve agricultural areas
- Preserve areas with lakes (like the lake in Eastlake)
- [Create] design guidelines for matching local, existing architecture for homes, buildings and agricultural [land]
- Add plaques to parks and historic areas providing additional historic information and [information on] important people
- Partner with schools and/or libraries to tell stories of neighborhoods
- Include [plaques with] information on public spaces, including smaller spaces (e.g. benches, power/utility boxes)
- [Provide] tours of Thornton that highlight historic areas and provides a timeline
- [Group discussed] Thornton Shopping Center as Town Center

**Staff Notes of Group B Discussion:**

- No additional staff notes were taken



# **APPENDIX F. Advisory Group Meeting # 3 - September 30, 2024**

Below on the following pages are staff generated notes from the third Advisory Group meeting held on September 30, 2024. Notes reflect directly given answers and staff's interpretation of what was heard. The meeting was held in English with live Spanish interpretation. Group members were asked to provide individual feedback on two questions to garner input on the overall project and to derive some lessons learned for future planning efforts.

## Question 1, What are your main takeaways from participating in this Advisory Group?

### Typed Advisory Group Member Notes:

- [Orig. in ESP]: That the project does not stop if all those interested at the moment leave, that there is someone who continues it.
- [Orig. in ESP]: History is an important part of the future of the city. It can even help growth and preservation. Take care of the city and through history appreciate the place where we live.
- [Orig. in ESP]: My conclusion was that I learned about the history of my city and that they appreciate the preservation of it. I think it is very important so that this information is not lost for our future residents and children.
- [Orig. in ESP]: I would like this to continue, to present this plan to the community, but it would be great to present it personally and listen to the citizens, it is very interesting.
- [Orig. in ESP]: It is very important to involve and also inform all families in the different communities.
- [Orig. in ESP]: It gives me more sense of caring for my city and increases my affection for the place where my home is.
- Learning about Thornton origins and the place I live, knowing where you come from is fundamental to know to no lose your identity and “keep yourself authentic” to what it means to be a Thornton citizen.
- I was surprised that most of the consideration for historic places were city owned but was pleasantly surprised on how well private property has been respected in this process. I thought this would have been something restrictive to growth but it seem to no be focused as much on restrictions by putting in place long term goals for what is and isn’t “history” to be preserved.
- Fairly new resident [of] six years
  - Learned about Thornton’s history
  - Learned, to a small degree, about city planning efforts
- Thornton would not – could not – be the fast-rising city that it is in 2024 if the early founders had not found ways to purchase and finance the N.W. Utilities
  - The utility company became the city water utility
- Did not participate in the Advisory Group
- Have a strong interest and knowledge of the city[’s] history
- Different parts of the city are involved – different aspects of the plan – to accomplish goals somewhat related to historic preservation
- How hard it is to get City Council to go with the issues brought before them to have them come to fruition
- The hard work that has gone into the different programs [that] falls through on installation
- City Council allows project to complete
- Stop doing lack of projects because City Council has not done their research

## Question 2, What could the city improve upon for future historic preservation efforts?

### Typed Advisory Group Actions

- [Orig. in ESP]: Well, the resources are very important, so the city is aware of this and provides the necessary resources since the project is of public interest.
- Emphasizing how long the meetings will go to make sure or hope that people will share their ideas and frustrations with time to take them into consideration.
- Other than that, I enjoyed the process. However, doing something more interactive, such as a tour (outside of the meeting) to visualize the proposals.
- [Orig. in ESP]: I think that something very important is to continue teaching each step, whether in newspapers and news so that residents realize the change and become more involved.
- [Orig. in ESP]: We will take a tour of the facilities to learn more and to record history in your memory.
- [Orig. in ESP]: I would like to have more information about how the city was created and these places that exist within this story.
- [Orig. in ESP]: A timeline with photos and interesting points about each one
- [Orig. in ESP; seemed to be a sub of above]: that are in schools, in some museum, in libraries, online books, and are an important part of Thornton's cultural celebrations
- I feel the improvement can come from knowing the needings of both groups, I feel most Spanish speaking group had a lot of learning about city and origins, but the other groups they could feel that they [are] reviewing something that they already know. I understand the need to be bilingual but it is distracting to have a person talking while presenting. Almost create more table chatter on other tables than should have been. Might help to have interpreter in other room listing and broadcasting.
- Tie together info on city website
- More info on libraries – AnyThink – Kiosk
- What is the impact on taxes?
- Coordination w/ Adams County historic preservation?
- Tie in with schools?
- A better job of detailing some of that history [referring to the financing and purchase of N.W. Utilities re: water rights] into Thornton's beginning should be included
- Better communication
- The city not dragging its feet, showing a little interest in historic preservation interest and helping to make it the best it can be.
- Establish PR campaign to keep bilingual informed, updated
- Remember that a lot of the questions that the city is looking for [answers to] is way too late, 2nds and 3rd generations [now]
- Finish projects
- Stop telling the citizens their work does not count
- Your agendas are not the citizens