

# North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan

MAY 2010

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# North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan for Greeley & Weld County

## Executive Summary

### Section 1. Introduction

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- A. Purpose
- B. North Greeley Rail Corridor Plan Area
- C. Planning Process
- D. References & Related Information

### Section 2. Land Use & Transportation Analysis

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- A. Existing Conditions & Characteristics
  - 1. General Area Description
  - 2. Zoning and Land Use Descriptions
  - 3. Industrial Development
  - 4. Natural Resources
  - 5. Demographics
  
- B. Physical Characteristics & Infrastructure
  - 1. Railroad
  - 2. Utilities
  - 3. Transportation Infrastructure
  - 4. River Corridor
  - 5. Gravel Mining
  
- C. Public Services
  - 1. Schools
  - 2. Emergency Services
  - 3. Community Services & Facilities
  
- D. Business & Industry
  - Classification
  - Profile
  - Prospects

### Section 3. Vision for the Subarea

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### Section 4. Economic Goals & Policies

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### Section 5. Land Use & Transportation Goals & Policies

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Adopted Subarea Map

North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Area Map

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Appendix

A. Area History

B. Study Data

1. Open House Meeting Notes
2. Stakeholder & Focus Groups Meeting Notes
3. Field Data

C. Supporting Study Maps

## **Executive Summary**

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The North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan is an adopted element of both the 2008 Weld County Comprehensive Plan and the City of Greeley 2060 Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Greeley Council adopted this Subarea Plan and incorporated it into the 2060 Comprehensive Plan on July 6, 2010, by Ordinance Number 23, 2010. The Weld County Commissioners adopted this Subarea Plan on July 12, 2010, effective July 20, 2010, by as Ordinance Number 2011-4.

This Subarea Plan is designed to create opportunities for landowners in the area defined as the “North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea” to attract diverse, job-producing industries to locate in this Subarea. Industries will be attracted to the Subarea because of the thoughtful planning for, and availability of, key infrastructure such as the short-line railroad track, principal roads, and central water and sewer.

The Subarea Plan consists of Goals & Policies designed to support and realize this vision.

The Plan also inventories the status of certain demographic, land use, site, social, and economic conditions in the Subarea, suggests implementation strategies that would complement the subarea’s strengths while addressing the subarea’s constraints.

Furthermore, the Subarea Plan supports City and County comprehensive plans, providing more specific guidance for future uses. Its success will rely upon its consistent implementation and management by both governments.

## **Section 1. Introduction**

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### **A. Purpose**

The North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan provides a shared vision of the rail corridor within a defined area in a planned service area north of Greeley. This shared vision will help Weld County and Greeley coordinate infrastructure and land use in order to promote economic development of the corridor.

The North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan is a component of the Weld County Comprehensive Plan and City of Greeley 2060 Comprehensive Plan, adopted plans that provide goals and policies for the general area. The purpose of the Subarea plan is to refine the elements of the comprehensive plans through goals and policies that are specific to the Subarea. The Plan will be an essential tool for making future land use decisions and attracting industry.

Furthermore, the Subarea Plan:

- Identifies the status of certain transportation, demographic, physical structural, site, land use, social, and economic conditions in the Subarea.
- Ascertains the level of potential opportunities and constraints.
- Provides Goals and Policies relevant and unique to the Subarea.
- Identifies implementation strategies that would develop or preserve the Subarea's strengths, and address the Subarea's constraints.

Landowners, the County and the City can utilize the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan to guide future development in the Subarea, both in the consideration of individual land use proposals, and in the creation of Capital Improvements Plans.

The Plan has been prepared for use by:

- Area landowners, businesses, and residents
- Local & regional railroads and their consumers
- The Greeley City Council, Planning Commission, and staff
- The Weld Board of County Commissioners, Planning Commission, and staff
- Upstate Colorado Economic Development
- The development community and other investors in the region's economic future
- City and County public works departments, regional transportation planning organizations, and the Colorado Department of Transportation
- Utility companies, emergency services, and other service providers

As is the case for any other planning document, the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan should be considered as part of an evolving process. The Plan must be regularly reviewed and changed over time in order to maintain its relevance. Ongoing trends in development practices and markets, innovations in transportation systems and changes in resource delivery are all factors that will have an effect on future growth. A newly developing area such as the North Greeley Rail Corridor will experience these changes over the next coming decades, and the City and County should be prepared to respond appropriately.

### **B. North Greeley Rail Corridor Plan Area**

The Subarea Plan area is a defined geographic area for which the Goals and Policies of this Subarea Plan were developed. (See *Map A*.) The Subarea is generally located up to a half-mile on either side of the Great Western Railway railroad track, from the eastern Windsor city limits, to near the intersections of “O” Street and 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue/County Road 31.

Within the Subarea – labeled and targeted for “Rail-Centric Employment” – is another defined area, the “Railroad Principal Corridor,” generally defined as a quarter mile on either side of the railroad tracks.

The Subarea – including both the “Rail-Centric Employment” area and the “Railroad Principal Corridor” – is 2,900 acres in size.

A larger study area was also examined in conjunction with the preparation of the Plan. This expanded study area was bounded by U.S. Highway 392 on the north and approximately bounded by the 2010 Greeley city limits on the south, US Highway 85 on the east, and County Road 23 on the west. (See *the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Map for the exact location*.)

The overall study area is approximately 24 square miles in size with limited urban-scale development, with the exception of the railroad line itself and the southeast corner, which is a developed portion of Greeley. Several rural residential subdivisions have been platted within the County and are served by water wells and individual septic systems. The City of Greeley annexed a very large property in the middle of the study area in the mid-1980s known as the North Poudre Annexation (and planned “Poudre Ridge” development). Although this area remains zoned for urban-scale development, there has been no appreciable development on the site to date. (Goals and Policies for the Subarea do not apply to existing, built subdivisions.)

### **C. Planning Process**

The North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan was initiated as supported element of both the City and County’s comprehensive plans. It is also consistent with planning documents from Upstate Colorado, the regional economic development organization. Comprehensive plans from all three organizations reinforced the idea that the rail corridor would be experiencing future growth. A common perspective had developed that the rail line is an important physical asset that could be used to attract primary jobs and support the continued economic growth of the area.

The City and the County entered into a joint Memorandum of Understanding to begin developing the Plan in May 2008.

This document has been developed utilizing a traditional planning approach. The process began with a site analysis, with environmental and jurisdictional data collected, evaluated, and synthesized to generally identify development opportunities and constraints. Much of this data has been compiled as maps, which accompany the narratives that follow.

The planning process was public and transparent. An introductory open house was conducted on July 14, 2008, at the Poudre Learning Center located in Greeley and central to the study area. Additional open house meetings with area landowners took place on November 19, 2009, and April 15, 2010. Meetings were held with focus groups, consisting of representatives from the rail industry, public works, and other stakeholders (see Appendix B). The site analysis, public input, and stakeholder discussions were used to develop specific goals and policies for the Subarea, as well as a conceptual land use plan and roadway network.

#### **D. References & Related Information**

In addition to the County and City comprehensive plans, various other existing policies and information are relevant to the Subarea. In order to assure consistent visions and goals, the following information has been used as source and/or reference documents in the preparation of the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan:

- Cache la Poudre River Flood Study (accepted by FEMA, not regulatory yet)
- Coldbank Creek Basin Flood Study (accepted by FEMA, not regulatory yet)
- Colorado State Highway 392 Access Control Plan (2006)
- Greeley 2060 Comprehensive Plan (2009)
- Greeley Transportation Master Plan (2002)
- North Front Range 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, 2007)
- North Greeley By-Pass Study (1980s)
- "O" Street Alignment Study (2008)
- Poudre Trail Study (2009)
- The Town of Windsor Comprehensive Plan (2007)
- Two Rivers Parkway/WCR 27 Alignment (Weld County/City of Windsor, 2008 )
- Weld County Comprehensive Plan (2008)
- Weld County Open Space Study (1995)
- Weld County Strategic Roadway Plan (2002)
- U.S. Highway 85 Access Control Plan (1998)

## **Section 2. Land Use & Transportation Analysis**

### **A. Existing Conditions & Characteristics**

This section examines the existing conditions within the Subarea and identifies the key opportunities and constraints that would influence implementation of the Plan’s vision, goals and policies.

#### **1. General Area Description**

As noted, a larger study area was examine, defined by Colorado Highway 392 on the north, U.S. Highway 85 on the east, Greeley municipal limits on the south, and Weld County Road 23 on the west. A comparison of the larger study area and the Subarea is found below.

	<b>Study Area</b>	<b>Subarea</b>
<b>Area</b>	<b>15,632 acres</b>	<b>2,900 acres</b>
<b>Parcels</b>	<b>1,341</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Primary Structures</b>	<b>2,058</b>	<b>357</b>

#### **2. Zoning and Land Use**

The Subarea is comprised primarily of land within unincorporated Weld County, with a limited number of properties located in City of Greeley city limits. Of the land area within Weld County, the majority of the properties are zoned “A” (Agricultural), with uses ranging from farming to limited commercial. A limited number of rural subdivisions lie within the study area, including the 1970s era Seeley Lake subdivision.

Located in or near the Subarea are two small rural subdivisions that are zoned Planned Unit Development (“PUD”) within the County. These total 106 acres, with the total build-out potential of 16 single-family residential homes. The County subdivision of Bracewell is located west of 83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (WCR 27) and immediately south of the rail corridor, consisting of 76 acres and eleven single-family lots. Hillcrest Estates, also located in unincorporated Weld County, is located northwest of Bracewell Subdivision and consists of 30 acres and five residential lots.

The Subarea also includes two properties consisting of 142 acres that were annexed to the City of Greeley in 2009 as part of the Hall-Irwin Annexation. One of the properties is in the transitional zoning district of “H-A” (Holding Agriculture) and the other property is zoned “I-M” (Industrial Medium Intensity), which is anticipated to be a regional and builder supply lumber yard.

To the west of the Subarea, the Town of Windsor has zoned and platted several industrial properties, known as Great Western Industrial Park. The industrial businesses in this area include Vestas, Owens-Illinois Glass, and an ethanol plant.

The Poudre River Trail is an over 20-mile long trail that was completed in 2009 that extends from Island Grove Regional Park in Greeley, west along the Cache la Poudre



River for the full length of the Subarea, just past the Weld/Larimer County line to the west edge of Windsor. The larger Cache la Poudre River area, from the foothills in Larimer County to the river's connection to the Platte River east of Greeley, was designated a National Heritage Area by Congress in 1996. The Heritage Corridor is one of 37 nationally designated locations and is the first to be established west of the Mississippi River.

### 3. Industrial Development

Industrial zoning is the fourth largest land use type in the proximity of the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan, currently comprising approximately 384 acres. The proximity of the rail corridor to existing industrial and commercial businesses within the cities of Greeley and Windsor has encouraged this area to further develop industrial uses. Due to the costs of developing new rail corridors, existing rail systems represent an important and unique existing resource.

### 4. Natural Resources

#### *Oil and Gas*

The North Greeley Rail Subarea includes significant oil and gas drilling, more and more of which is done directionally in response to directionally drilling's increasing economic feasibility. Energy interests consider the area important to their overall operations and have secured railroad crossing and setback agreements with the rail companies operating in the area. Typical agreements dictate a drill rig, wellhead and tank battery setback from the railroad right-of-way of 200 feet, or one and one-half times the height of the oil rig.

Colorado law recognizes that the surface and mineral estates are separate and distinct interests in land that may be severed from one another. Owners of oil and gas interests have certain legal rights and privileges, including the right to use that part of the surface estate reasonably required to extract and develop their subsurface oil and gas interests, subject to compliance with all applicable regulations. The State has a recognized interest in fostering the efficient development, production, and utilization of oil and gas resources, particularly in the prevention of waste of a valuable resource. Likewise, local governments also have a recognized traditional authority to regulate land use development within their jurisdictions, including use for oil and gas drilling. The City of Greeley considers oil and gas drilling a Use by Special Review land use activity, as does Weld County for operations in all zone districts other than Agricultural.

#### *Gravel*

Gravel is a necessary resource for a community, needed for construction projects to serve a growing population, and essential to the local and regional economy. In 1913, the Colorado State Legislature set policy which requires that commercially viable sand and gravel be extracted prior to any surface development that would preclude the eventual removal of the minerals. Gravel deposits should be extracted according to a rational plan that avoids waste of the minerals and causes the least practicable disruption of the ecology and quality of life of the citizens of affected areas.

Policies at both Weld County and the City of Greeley require the reclamation of sites after resources are removed. The State Mined Land Reclamation Board has developed basic standards and procedures for reclamation plans. Within their authority, the County and City work with mining permit applicants to identify appropriate additional uses and landscape forms for the reclamation plan. Preferred uses are those consistent with the

reclamation plan for the particular use or those providing quality recreation or open space, water storage, and wildlife habitat opportunities. Much of the North Greeley Rail Corridor is river terrace, the level surface on the river valley flanking and parallel to the river channel and above the river level. The river terrace represents the uneroded remnant of an abandoned floodplain or river bed and has little or no economic value for aggregate mining. Some parts of the Subarea are simply not feasible for mining due to a large amount of overburden soils.

#### *Natural/Environmental (Areas of Ecological Significance)*

The southern boundary of the Subarea contains wildlife and wildlife habitat area along the river corridor. The value of this wildlife is realized in terms of recreation, economic, and the educational and enjoyment aspect of just seeing wildlife in this natural environment. One notable area for wildlife in the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea is on the lake adjacent to the Bracewell subdivision, which is home to bald eagles. A portion of the Subarea is delineated by the City of Greeley as an “Area of Ecological Significance,” a designation that requires a biologist’s review to assure that wildlife mitigation has been considered as part of any proposed development.

### 5. Demographics

#### *Weld County and Greeley Projected Growth*

The Colorado State Demography Office identified the Weld County population to be about 244,000 in 2007 and projects a population of around 550,000 in the year 2035. This growth represents an increase of 310,000 people in less than 28 years — an average increase of a new town the size of Fort Morgan every year for the next 28 years (approximately 11,000 people). While most of the growth will be in municipalities, there also will be market incentives for industrial development along the rail corridor adjacent to existing industrial areas and a range of other development throughout the remaining North Greeley/Weld County Subarea.

#### *Age, Ethnicity*

The Subarea is made up of a variety of age groups, ranging from younger, first-time home buyers with children to “empty-nesters” or retirees.

#### *Owner occupancy*

The majority of the homes within the study area are owner occupied.

## **B. Physical Characteristics & Infrastructure**

### 1. Railroad

The railroad has been an integral part of this Subarea since its construction in the late 19th century, when it was originally built to haul sugar from a network of sugar beet factories. The railroad in this area is currently owned by the Great Western Railway of Colorado and operated by OmniTRAX. The railroad line runs diagonally, southeast to northwest, through the Subarea and connects to Class I long haul railroad lines to the east and west.

A key element of the Subarea Plan is recognizing the strong existing and potential relationship between the railroad, land use, and industrial development. In addition to larger continuous parcels of land surrounding the rail line, a key characteristic is the fact that there are several stretches of rail line nearly a mile long that are largely uninterrupted by road crossing or other barriers. This length of rail corresponds to the

length of unit-trains of 100 railcars, which has become the industry standard for long-haul rail carriers.

Opportunities afforded by this physical condition include potential development of double (parallel) lines, or perpendicular spurs for railcar switching yards or transload facilities. A variety of other options exists as ways to increase use of the current rail line.

These physical characteristics of the rail line are largely unique in Northern Colorado. Coupled with access to significant central water and sanitation services, as well as a large local educated labor pool, the physical characteristics of the rail line through the Subarea support the idea for greater use of the railroad, which could continue to draw industrial development in the north Greeley area.

## 2. Utilities

### *Sewer*

The entire Subarea is within the Greeley Sanitary Sewer “208” service area. Although sanitary service is currently concentrated primarily south of the Poudre River, service is also provided to the Weld County Business Park and Espanola subdivisions, located in the southeast portions of the study area, the Greeley Trading Company, and Pronto Foods, located at “O” Street and the Great Western Railway railroad line. Additionally, service is provided to the former Monfort facilities northeast of the study area. The remaining area surrounding the Subarea is served by septic systems. The Greeley Sanitary Sewer Master Plan was completed in July 2000, which indicates that the Greeley Sewer Treatment currently has sufficient operating capacity to accommodate projected growth, and the capability to significantly expand its capacity.

### *Water*

Central drinking water service is provided by the City of Greeley and the North Weld Water District. Generally, Greeley serves city properties and North Weld Water serves the remainder of the area. North Weld and Greeley utilize an exchange service agreement for areas that are annexed into Greeley. Service to this area will continue to be negotiated between these entities. The City currently provides non-potable pressurized irrigation water to the parks located in the study area. The City is reviewing and revising its current policies concerning raw water dedication requirements with the goal of creating policies that will be more encouraging for development in this area.

### *Stormwater*

Both the City and County require that historic stormwater flows from properties are maintained when development takes place. The two subdivisions within the Subarea were required to maintain historic stormwater rates and provide on-site detention as a result of the increased runoff created by the development.

### *Gas, Electricity, Phone and Cable*

Phone service is provided by Qwest, gas by Atmos Energy, and electricity by Xcel in Greeley with Poudre Valley REA in the unincorporated portions of the Subarea. Greeley has a franchise agreement with Comcast for cable services inside Greeley City Limits. Main lines for Comcast are located along SH 257 and 392, with fiber optic lines along 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Full service is provided throughout the Subarea plan by all four utilities and meets industry standards.

### *Key Utility Considerations*

The City's water and sewer master plan does not currently include a design or timeline for providing these services to the Subarea, though this master plan is actively under revision to determine these opportunities. The City already does provide water service to the City of Windsor through an extraterritorial agreement, so the key physical and legal infrastructure is already in place to provide such serve to the Subarea in the nearer-term future.

The opportunity also exists for the City and County to proactively identify, for future use, designated utility corridors into and through the Subarea and larger study area. Early designation of common corridors for gas lines, water and sewer lines, and electrical and cable lines can minimize the number of potential conflicts with future land uses, and preserve the future functionality of the Rail-centric Employment and Railroad Principal Corridor sections of the Subarea.

### 3. Transportation Infrastructure

The two major arterials in the proximity of the Subarea are US Highway 85 and Colorado State Highway 392. An access control plan for US Highway 85 was adopted in 1998 and an access control plan for Highway 392 was adopted in 2006. Additionally, the County has conducted several alignment studies in the area and adopted preferred and planned alignments in conjunction with the *North-South Study*, the *O Street Study*, and the *Two Rivers Parkway Study*.

#### *US Hwy 85*

US Highway 85 is located at the eastern edge of the larger study area and provides a key transportation corridor between Greeley and Cheyenne to the north, Greeley and Denver, as well as connectivity with State Highway 392.

#### *State Highway 392*

State Highway 392 is located north of the Subarea plan and provides a main thoroughfare for vehicular and truck traffic between Windsor, the Windsor/Fort Collins area, and Greeley. State Highway 392 also provides connectivity to US Highway 85.

#### *Streets*

Dramatic increases in road and highway traffic are likely, in response to potential industrial development in the west and central regions of the Subarea, along with mixed-use residential and commercial development in the central and eastern portions. The planned future development of Two Rivers Parkway at 83rd Avenue (WCR 27) will help address north-south local and pass-through traffic. Other future issues impacting the Subarea include straightening "O" Street between 35th and 47th Avenue, improving road alignments, minimizing railroad crossings with roadways, and improving intersection safety where major roadways connect to State Hwy 392. For County Road 23, realignment options have been studied by Weld County, with a revised alignment adopted.

#### *Rail*

The existing Great Western Railway short line rail line that traverses through the Subarea connects to the east to Greeley and the Union Pacific long haul rail line, a major north-south connector between Denver, Cheyenne, and points beyond. The short line also provides a connector between the Union Pacific line and a Burlington Northern Santa Fe long haul rail line located to the west of Greeley, connecting at Fort Collins to the north, Loveland to the west, and Longmont to the south. Current factors challenging

the current rail line's increase in utilization include track switching conditions and a trestle in need of replacement located near the 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue intersection.

#### 4. River Corridor

##### *Parks & Open Places*

Parks in proximity of the Subarea include Island Grove Park, Rover Run Dog Park, Rodarte Park, and Ramseier Park. All of the parks are maintained by the City of Greeley. The City of Greeley has plans to open a fishing pond in the Island Grove area and in an area known as the "Poudre Ponds." The Poudre River Trail along the southern boundary of the Subarea is now complete, providing a continuous open space trail corridor along the Cache la Poudre River.

##### *Area/Parcel Conditions*

The area is primarily agricultural with limited single-family residential/estate lots. Two recently annexed and zoned parcels are within the Subarea, which are planned for industrial uses.

##### *Structure Use/Condition (Windshield Survey)*

Agricultural structures are the predominant buildings within the Subarea. There are a variety of structures within the Subarea, including agricultural, industrial/business, and residential. Residential structures vary from both older and newer farm homes, to newer single-family estate homes within a subdivision

Larger, industrial structures are located west of the Subarea in the Town of Windsor.

#### 5. Gravel Mining

There are currently several mining operations south and east of the Subarea. The City of Greeley uses some of these reclaimed gravel ponds for water storage. As these sites are reclaimed, much of the area will consist of a series of lakes or ponds and largely undevelopable land. These present and future lakes are described as the "string of pearls," a concept that envisions linking those areas that get dedicated for recreational and environmental uses. As such, these properties have the potential to eventually enhance the larger National Poudre Heritage Area by continuing the open space and natural areas along the Cache la Poudre River and tying into the Poudre River Trail System.

### **C. Public Services**

The Subarea is primarily agricultural uses and therefore, the services within this area are limited.

#### 1. Schools

There are no schools currently located within the Subarea or the immediate area surrounding the Subarea, which is served by the Greeley/Evan School District Number 6, the Windsor School District, and the Eaton RE-2 School District. There are no plans to build schools within the Subarea, and development of new schools in the area is unlikely, if the Subarea is built out as envisioned. Students living within Greeley attend Greeley/Evan School District Number 6 schools and the Windsor School District. The Greeley School District generally extends from 40th Avenue east and south of "O" Street. The Eaton School District extends to 71st Ave (WCR 29) from the east, and the Windsor School District covers the remaining area.

## 2. Emergency Services

### *Fire*

The Union Colony Fire Rescue Authority provides fire and other emergency services to the area inside Greeley City Limits, which includes two recently annexed parcels within the Subarea. There are no plans for Union Colony Fire Rescue Authority to provide services to areas outside of city limits. However, as properties within the Subarea are annexed into the City of Greeley, Union Colony Fire Rescue Authority will have more presence in this area. At some point in the future, it is anticipated that there will be the need for Union Colony Fire Rescue and Windsor/Severance Fire to have a mutual aid agreement for this area. The Windsor/Severance Fire District provides fire service in the remainder of the Subarea.

Almost all of the homes and businesses in the Greeley area are within 400 feet of a fire hydrant, and most of the homes and businesses outside of Greeley in the Subarea are beyond 400 feet from a fire hydrant. Areas with limited fire service are still adequately served with the current buildout level, although this will change as the area develops.

Several issues confront emergency services in the area. The Union Colony Fire Rescue District cites water availability as the most significant issue in the area. The Subarea contains very little water infrastructure for fire suppression, and the use of non-potable water systems is usually impractical. Windsor-Severance Fire District contends three major issues hamper emergency services in the area: 1) Limited access points in the area; 2) the future locations of stations in the area; and 3) North Weld County Water District does not have the ability to provide flows for industrial or residential uses.

Additionally, the existing road network is a challenge for emergency vehicles because of limited connectivity and narrow rights-of-way. There is currently the potential for rail and road crossing conflicts. While large unit-trains, for example, have the ability to temporarily restrict intersection access, Great Western Railway's coordination with emergency service providers within the Subarea has been successful in avoiding such conflicts to date. However, as growth and train service increase in the area, the risks of restricted access at the time of an emergency may also increase. Careful planning and preservation of key rail crossing points can mitigate future conflicts.

The Subarea has other existing characteristics that are considerations for emergency personnel. General conflicts between urban commuters (cars) and rural commuters (farm equipment) are present throughout the Subarea. Several locations present specific concerns:

- Between 83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue on State Highway 392, there are no controlled intersections.
- The area surrounding the Kodak complex in Windsor presents traffic and accessibility challenges. Rail traffic in this location can block emergency response providers from the other side of the rail line.
- 83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue/Two Rivers Parkway area is of concern because there has been a history of accidents along this corridor due to higher vehicular speeds, fog, and controlled burns.

### *Law & Code Enforcement*

The Greeley Police Department provides law enforcement services to areas within Greeley City Limits, and the Weld County Sheriff provides law enforcement services to

the unincorporated areas. The Greeley Police and Weld County Sheriff also have mutual aid agreements for the area.

Zoning and land use code enforcement services in Greeley are provided by the Code Enforcement Division of the Community Development Department, both on a proactive and complaint basis. Zoning and land use code enforcement in the unincorporated area is provided by Weld County Planning on a complaint basis.

### 3. Community Services & Facilities

There are currently no community services or facilities in the City, County or otherwise in the Subarea. The most notable community facility located just outside of the Subarea, but central to the larger study area, is the Poudre Learning Center, located at 8313 West F Street.

#### **D. Business & Industry**

Great Western Industrial Park, located at the western edge of the Subarea, is within a United States Foreign Trade Zone and a State Enterprise Zone, both so designated as to entice large industrial users to locate in the area. Existing industrial uses along the rail corridor, as well as existing spurs and the potential for additional spurs, have encouraged interest for future industrial growth in this area. While the City of Greeley 2060 Comprehensive Plan currently identifies the future land uses for this area as industrial, the Subarea plan refines the vision and provides policies specific to the corridor. The Plan will be an essential tool for making future land use decisions and attracting industry.

### **Section 3. Vision for the Subarea**

Create opportunities for landowners to attract diverse, job-producing industries to locate in the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea because of the availability of key infrastructure such as the short-line railroad track, principal roads, and central water and sewer, as well as a nearby diversely skilled and educated workforce.

### **Section 4. Economic Development Goals & Policies**

This Section specifies Goals and Policies adopted by Weld County and the City of Greeley for the geographic area identified as the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea. These Goals and Policies support, and are in addition to, those found in the 2008 Weld County Comprehensive Plan and the City of Greeley 2060 Comprehensive Plan.

- A. NG-Econ.Goal 1: Encourage a variety of industrial and commercial businesses within the Subarea that provide primary sector jobs and encourage a diversified economic base.
- B. NG-Econ.Goal 2: Develop key infrastructure along the rail/transportation corridors to accommodate large industrial or commercial users.
  - 1. NG-Econ.Policy 2.1: Preserve, to the extent legally possible, designated road corridors and ensure adequate width, classification, and structural capacity to support industrial uses within the Rail Centric Employment area.
  - 2. NG-Econ.Policy 2.2: Limit rail/road crossings to those shown on the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea Plan Map.
  - 3. NG-Econ.Policy 2.3: In situations where a developer of industrial land has been required to construct (or pay for) regional or system-wide infrastructure, support a mechanism or program to provide reimbursement to the development interest for such infrastructure from future landowners who develop in that corridor.
  - 4. NG-Econ.Policy 2.4: Obtain and preserve, to the extent legally possible, designated utility corridors and ensure adequate width, access, and capacity to support industrial uses within the Rail Centric Employment area.
- C. NG-Econ.Goal 3: Create permit-ready sites for primary industrial and commercial businesses.
  - 1. NG-Econ.Policy 3.1: Both parties agree that development pays its own way and will request developers to construct roads in key locations around the Rail Centric Employment area designated on the Subarea Plan map.
  - 2. NG-Econ.Policy 3.2: Identify key Capital Improvement Program improvements within the Rail Centric Employment area designated on the Subarea Plan map that are needed to achieve the goals of this plan.
  - 2. NG-Econ.Policy 3.3: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to support the rezoning of parcels within the Rail Centric Employment area to a County or City industrial zone district. The County may, at its discretion, use its land use



authority to permit industrial uses in the “A” Agricultural zone district via a Use by Special Review process.

3. NG-Econ.Policy 3.4: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to encourage the formation of joint City-County development standards and fee structures for the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea, or designated areas within it.
4. NG-Econ.Policy 3.5: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to develop joint City-County buffer standards for mitigating impacts between different uses, such as industrial and residential.

## **Section 5. Land Use & Transportation Goals & Policies**

- A. NG-LU.Goal 1: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to promote and attract strong and stable industrial and commercial businesses within the North Greeley Rail Corridor Subarea, while attempting to promote an appropriate balance of land uses.
  1. NG-LU.Policy 1.1: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to coordinate the location, intensity, and mix of land uses with transportation resources as shown on the Subarea Plan Map.
  2. NG-LU.Policy 1.2: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to preserve designated road corridors and coordinate adequate road widths and classifications with planned land uses for the entire Subarea.
  3. NG-LU.Policy 1.3: Both parties will make a good-faith effort to develop common City-County street and lighting standards for roads within the Subarea.
  4. NG-LU.Policy 1.4: The City and County should require dedication of necessary additional right-of-way or easements for the purpose of a utility corridor during any land use process (e.g., subdivision, annexation, special use permit, etc.).
  5. NG-LU. Policy 1.5: Weld County will encourage property owners to zone the property within the Subarea industrial. However, the County may at its discretion use its land use authority to permit industrial uses in the “A” Agricultural zone via a USR process, as requested by the property owner.
  6. NG-LU. Policy 1.6: Both parties will make a good faith effort to address issues impacting the Subarea including the straightening of “O” Street between 35th and 47th Avenues, improving road alignments, minimizing railroad crossings with roadways, and improving intersection safety where major roadways connect to State Highway 392. For County Road 23, realignment options have been studied by Weld County, with a revised alignment adopted. Both parties shall recognize the “O” Street Corridor alignment delineated in the “O” Street Alignment Corridor Study that was adopted by the Weld County Board of Commissioners and supported by the City Council of Greeley.

- B. NG-LU.Goal 2: Preserve functionality and future use of the existing railroad line for rail and associated uses within the Subarea Plan boundary.
1. NG-LU.Policy 2.1: Within the planned Railroad Principal Corridor on the Subarea Map, residential subdivisions are not encouraged. (The Plan acknowledges that there is an existing rural subdivision in the Railroad Principal Corridor.)
  2. NG-LU.Policy 2.2: Within the remainder of the Rail Centric Employment area on the Subarea Map (i.e., the Subarea beyond the Railroad Principal Corridor), residential subdivisions will be considered when found to be compatible with commercial and industrial uses. Where such residential subdivisions are supported within the Rail Centric Employment area, they should be designed in such a way as to manage rail/residential use conflicts such as noise, street access, and nuisance conditions.
  3. NG-LU.Policy 2.3: To the extent practical, the City of Greeley will annex properties within the Subarea that are contiguous with existing city limits. The City of Greeley may also support annexations that do not have immediate contiguity with existing city limits using “flagpole” and other methods of annexation.



## Appendix

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### A. Area History

#### NORTH GREELEY HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

##### History

The land in this subarea has been a rich and important part of the Greeley, Windsor, Weld County legacy. Recent significant growth west of the study area, proposed developments in the central and eastern portion, and the high level of mineral extraction throughout the study area, prompted the City of Greeley and Weld County to examine coordinated infrastructure and land use opportunities, hearing first from the residents, businesses and property owners to help determine what happens next.

The history of the study area generally follows the history of the City of Greeley and the surrounding area. Many of the historically significant events in the City had impacts on the study area.

Throughout the years, there have been many different Native American tribes that have settled within the study area. Most of the tribes were continually moving; therefore, throughout the years, the composition of Native American tribes had been continuously changing. The main tribes that settled within this area included the Apache, the Comanche, the Ute, and the Pawnee.

Different trade routes and trading posts developed within the area. The first trading posts were developed from 1835 to 1837, and lasted for several years after that. Many of the trade posts acted as stops for western settlers and different hunters within the area. As more people were moving west on the trade routes, many different colonies and developments sprung up in the western part of the United States.

In the 1870's, Nathan Meeker intended for irrigated agriculture in this area to sustain the newly established Union Colony — no doubt he understood the value of locating the settlement along a railroad. He purchased 60,000 acres of land lying between the two rivers from the existing settlers and the Denver-Pacific Railroad. Begun in 1868 and completed in 1870, the Denver-Pacific Railroad ran from Denver through Union Colony to Cheyenne, connecting Colorado to the transcontinental railroad. While the original Union Colony is not within the study area, it is an integral part of the background behind the development patterns in this area.

The Great Western Railroad rail line traverses northeast to the southwest through the north Greeley area. The Great Western Railway of Colorado operates about 80 miles of track in Colorado and connects with the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad, as well as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway. The line was constructed in 1901 to serve the Great Western Sugar Company and other sugar, beet and molasses companies in Colorado. It also operated passenger services from 1917 to 1926. This route consists of a line from Loveland to Johnstown, where it splits to Milliken and Longmont. North of Kelim the rail extends to Windsor, where once again the line splits to go to Windsor's industrial park, and on to Greeley or Fort

Collins. The line includes service to customers such as Anheuser-Busch, Eastman Kodak, and Simplot. The Union Pacific Line runs through East Greeley and borders the study area on the eastern boundary. It was developed as a lifeline for Denver and the Front-Range Towns of Colorado. When the Transcontinental Railroad was built it completely bypassed Denver and ran through Cheyenne. Analysts at the time felt that if Denver did not have a connection to the rail that it would become a ghost town and Cheyenne would become the main city in the western part of the country. The line connected Denver to Cheyenne, and in turn to the Transcontinental Railroad. This is one of the main reasons that Nathan Meeker developed the Union Colony in its location.

Early settlers of the Union Colony area also started to develop irrigation ditches to water their land for farming. Within the first two years from the establishment of Union Colony, there were over 37 miles of irrigation ditches built, successfully watering over 25,000 acres of farmland.

Greeley Canal No. 3 was constructed in 1870 and was the first large-scale irrigation project constructed by the Union Colony. Due to a water dispute with Fort Collins, the “first in time, first in right” resolution of the water allocation rights for this canal became known as the “Colorado System.” The water and delivery and measurement systems for Canal No. 3 were also a first in the nation, and are still in use today.

The area became increasingly agricultural over the years since most of the area was irrigated. As the demand for agriculture increased, so did the need for migrant workers to work the land. Migrant workers emigrated from many different countries, including Germany, Japan, and Mexico. The main immigrants came from Mexico to aid in labor shortages during World War II. A small settlement was developed for migrant workers within the study area called the Spanish Colony. Spanish Colony was an area where migrant workers could stay at night. Spanish Colony now includes Guadalupe Center, which is a place for migrant workers to get meals and spend time.

Of the European settlers in the area, one of the main groups that emigrated to the North Greeley area was Germans from Russia. They immigrated to the United States due to the economic depression in Russia and many of them settled just north of the developing Union Colony.

Throughout the years, this historically agricultural area mainly remained agricultural. The Monfort Feed Lots were moved into the area, but while providing many positive aspects, also had negative impacts on the area’s image and air quality. In the 1970’s, the lots were relocated several miles east of Greeley.

As the area developed, roadways also were developed within and adjacent to the study area. The original north-south route and the eastern boundary of the study area, US Highway 85, was built in 1926. US Highway 85 originated in El Paso, Texas, and ended in Greeley. In 1963, the US Highway 85 Bypass was built through the City of Greeley. Limited sewer service developed in the area over time. A majority of the study area still uses septic systems. While the first sanitary sewer plant in this area opened in 1963, when Greeley’s population was close to 15,000 people, few properties within the study area were served by the plant.

The Poudre River Trail is a 20-mile long trail that was completed this year and which extends from Island Grove Regional Park in Greeley, west along the Cache la Poudre River for the full length of the study area, just past the Weld/Larimer County line to the west edge of Windsor. The Cache la Poudre River was designated a National Heritage Area by Congress in 1996. The

Heritage Corridor is one of 37 nationally designated locations and is the first to be established west of the Mississippi River.

### **Weld County and Greeley Projected Growth**

The study area, City of Greeley, and Weld County have historically experienced tremendous growth. In the two decades from 1970 to 1990, the population of Greeley doubled. The land area of Greeley has also grown. In 1982 and 1985, Greeley annexed a large area of land in the study area, also known as the “Anheuser-Busch Annexation.”

The Colorado State Demography Office identified the Weld County population to be about 244,000 in 2007, and projects a population of around 550,000 in the year 2035. This growth represents an increase of 310,000 people in less than 28 years—an average increase of a new town the size of Fort Morgan (or the same size as Windsor’s 2007 approximate population of 11,000) every year for the next 28 years. While most of the growth will be in municipalities, there also will be market incentives for industrial development along the rail corridor adjacent to existing industrial areas and a range of other development throughout the remaining North Greeley/Weld County Study area.

### **Industrial Development**

Industrial zoning is the fourth largest land use type in the North Greeley/Weld County Study area, currently comprising approximately 384 acres. The proximity of the rail corridor to existing industrial and commercial businesses within the cities of Greeley and Windsor has encouraged this area to further develop industrial uses. Due to the costs of developing new rail corridors, existing rail systems represent an important and unique resource that is difficult to replace. For these reasons, City and County leaders believe it is important to preserve and encourage existing rail corridors. By bringing City, County, stakeholder and community interests together, appropriate areas for potential industry and employment can be geographically defined.

A range of land use development scenarios have been prepared for consideration and comment at the open house and online. The scenarios range from limited estate development to a designated rail corridor that would limit new residential development to outside a one-quarter mile of the railroad.

The objective of the Subarea Plan is to provide the City and County with guidance on land use decisions for the industrial corridor by anticipating and encouraging future development, as well as meeting the needs of existing landowners and users. The intent is to create policies within this plan that will create an industrially-competitive environment along the corridor, while building on the existing characteristics of the area.

### **Infrastructure Summary**

**Railroad**– The railroad has been an integral part of this area since its construction in the late 19th century. The railroad in this area is owned by Great Western Railroad and operated by OmniTrax. The railroad cuts diagonally through the study area. A key element of the study is the railroad/land use/industrial development relationship. Greater use of the railroad could continue to draw industrial development in the north Greeley area.

**Phone, Gas, Electricity and Cable**– Phone service is provided by Qwest, gas by Atmos Energy, and electricity by Xcel in Greeley with Poudre Valley REA in the unincorporated portions of the study area. Greeley has a franchise agreement with Comcast for cable services

inside Greeley City Limits. Full service is provided throughout the study area by all four utilities and meets industry standards.

**Water – Potable –** Drinking water service is provided by the City of Greeley and North Weld Water. Generally, Greeley serves city properties and North Weld Water serves the remainder of the area. North Weld and Greeley utilize an exchange service agreement for areas that are annexed into Greeley. Service to this area will continue to be negotiated between these entities.

**Non-potable –** The City currently provides pressurized irrigation water to the parks in the area.

**Fire–** The Union Colony Rescue and Fire Protection Authority provides fire and other emergency services to the area inside Greeley. The Windsor/Severance Fire District provides fire service in the west end and the Eaton Fire District in the eastern area. Almost all of the homes and businesses in the Greeley area are within 400' of a fire hydrant, and most of the homes and businesses outside of Greeley in the study area are beyond 400 feet from a fire hydrant. Areas with limited fire service are still adequately served.

**Parks-** Parks in the area include Island Grove Park, Rover Run Dog Park, Rodarte Park, and the future Ramseier Park. All of the parks are maintained by the City of Greeley. The City of Greeley has plans to open a fishing pond in the Island Grove area. The Poudre Trail along the southern boundary of the study area is now complete.

**Schools–** There are no schools located within the study area. Elementary-aged students living within Greeley attend Winograd K-8 School. Middle School-aged children attend either Winograd K-8 School or Franklin Middle School. High School aged students attend Northridge High School. There are no plans to build schools within the study area at this time. The Greeley School District generally extends from 40th Avenue east and south of "O" Street. The Eaton School District extends to 71st Ave (WCR 29) from the east and Windsor School District covers the remaining area.

**Law Enforcement–** The Greeley Police Department provides law enforcement services to areas within Greeley City Limits and the Weld County Sheriff provides law enforcement services to the unincorporated areas. The Greeley Police and Weld County Sheriff also have mutual aid agreements for the area. Zoning and land use code enforcement services in Greeley are provided by the Code Enforcement Division of the Community Development Department, both on a prospective and complaint basis. Zoning and land use code enforcement in the unincorporated area is provided by Weld County Planning on a complaint basis.

**Street Lights–** In the City of Greeley, public street lights are typically placed every 250 feet in residential areas, and approximately every 100 feet on arterials such as 20<sup>th</sup> Street. In the Country, street lights are generally not provided, except occasionally at intersections.

**Sewer-** The entire study area is within the Greeley Sanitary Sewer "208" service area. Although sanitary service is currently concentrated primarily south of the Poudre River, service is also provided to the Weld County Business Park and Espanola subdivisions in the southeast portion of the study area, the Greeley Trading Company, and Pronto Foods, located at "O" Street and Great Western Railroad. Additionally, service is provided to the former Monfort facilities in the northeast corner of the study area. The remaining area is served by septic systems. The Greeley Sanitary Sewer Master Plan was completed in July 2000. The Greeley Sewer Treatment currently has sufficient operating capacity to accommodate projected growth and has the capability to significantly expand its capacity.

**Sidewalks**– Sidewalks are provided throughout the Greeley neighborhoods, streets and parks. There are generally no public sidewalks in the unincorporated portions of the study area.

**Roads** – Dramatic increases in road and highway traffic are likely, in response to potential industrial development in the west and central regions of the sub-area, along with mixed-use residential and commercial development in the central and eastern portions. The planned future development of Two Rivers Parkway at 83rd Avenue (WCR 27) will help address local and pass-through traffic. Other future issues include straightening “O” Street between 35th and 47th Avenue, improving road alignments, minimizing railroad crossings with roadways, and improving intersection safety where major roadways connect to State Hwy 392. The City of Greeley and Weld County are currently working on their respective Transportation Master Plans and will consider these issues in the development of their city-wide and county-wide plans.

## **B. Study Data**

1. Open House Meeting Notes





## North Greeley Rail Corridor Sub-Area Study

*Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 2:00-3:00 P.M.*

The City of Greeley and Weld County are conducting a joint study in the North Greeley/Weld County area (see attached map) to provide a shared vision of the rail corridor and to facilitate coordinated infrastructure and land use for future development opportunities in this area. We want to hear input and/or concerns from the schools, parks, trails and wildlife agencies.

### **SCHOOL LOCATION, DESIGN, AND OPERATION**

- A Locate schools at sites appropriate to the attendees; maximize the use of public funds for school site development; and, create a positive focal point for the neighborhood in which the school is located
- B Pursue intergovernmental cooperation and joint use opportunities between public entities and educational facilities to maximize taxpayer investment with public institutions
- C Limit land use and operational conflicts between school sites and adjacent uses and assure the public infrastructure is available to support the safe, efficient and productive use of the school site
- D Retain the vitality of neighborhoods in proximity to educational facilities
- E Promote the health, safety and well-being of students in their journey to and from school as well as within the school setting

### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

- A Build cooperation and maximize taxpayer return on investment in educational facilities and operations

A set of guidelines called "School Site Selection and Design Criteria" was developed with the City and area school representatives to evaluate proposed school locations and opportunities.

### **PARKS**

Greeley 2002 Parks & Trails Master Plan

1. Ahead of population projection for 2010 (only by 2,000), how are we for parks
2. Parks plan didn't address areas west of 59<sup>th</sup> north of the Poudre or in Poudre Ridge (all industrial at time)
3. Co-locate parks & elem schools
4. Aggressive & specific criteria for parks, open space, trails, wetland protection
5. Provide responsible stewardship of one of the community's environmentally sensitive areas
6. Work with County – suggestions, recommendations?

### **TRAILS LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Trails – 2002 Plan has nothing north of Poudre Trail – e.g. Coal Bank Creek

Provide networks for pedestrians and bicyclists which are equal in priority, design and construction to the system provided to motorists

Make contact with potential gravel mining areas early in the mining review and permitting process to optimize use of the completed gravel site for complementary open space uses as part of the overall Opens Space & Parks & Trails Master Plan and system

**Wildlife** - Areas of Ecological Significance update.

## 2. Stakeholder & Focus Groups Meeting Notes

### 3. Field Data



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23



21



24 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. and C St.



22



19



17



20



18



15



13



16



14



11



9



12



10



7



5



8



6



21<sup>st</sup> Ave. and B St.



7<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 3<sup>rd</sup> St.



47<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 3<sup>rd</sup> St.

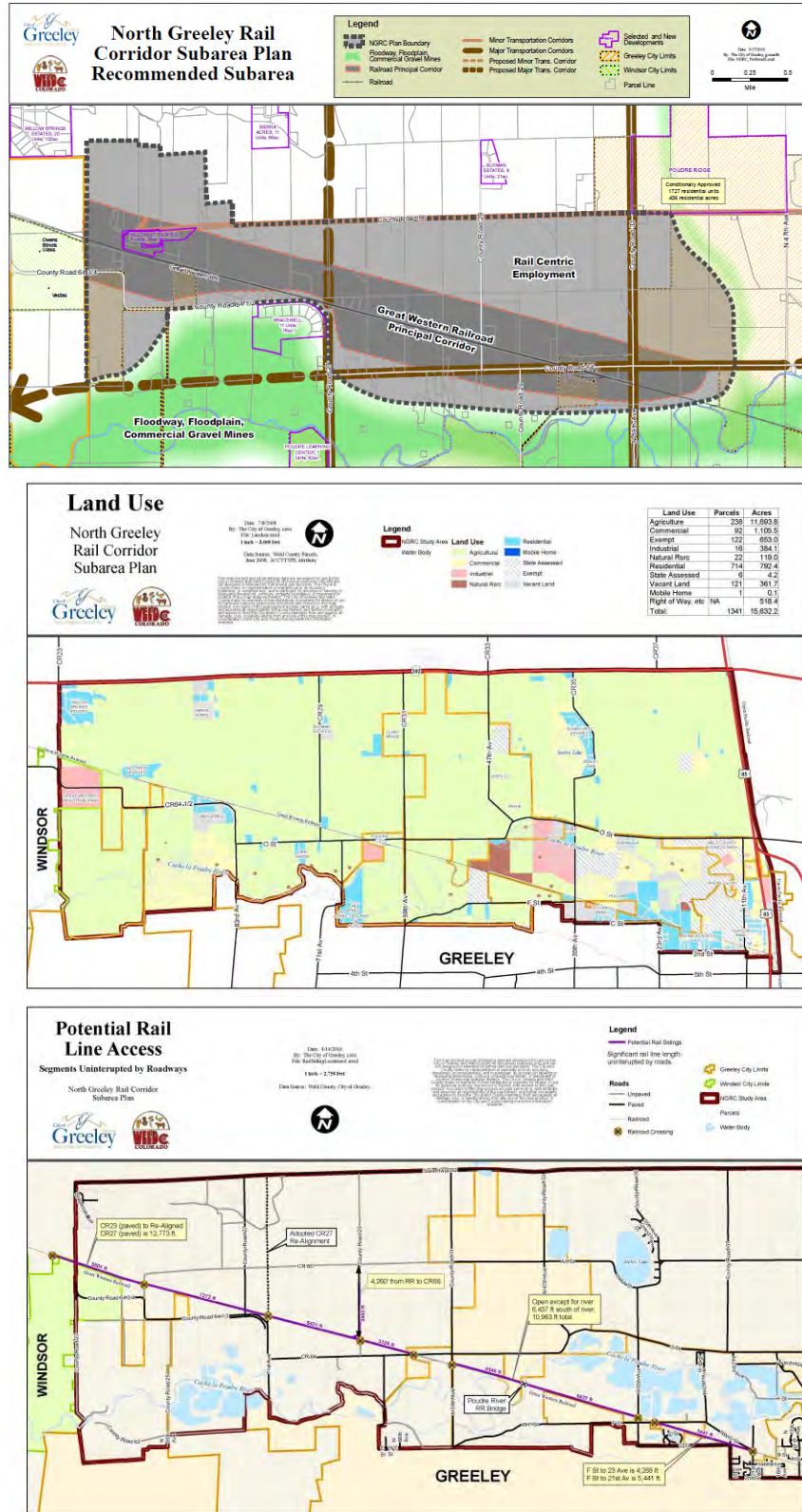


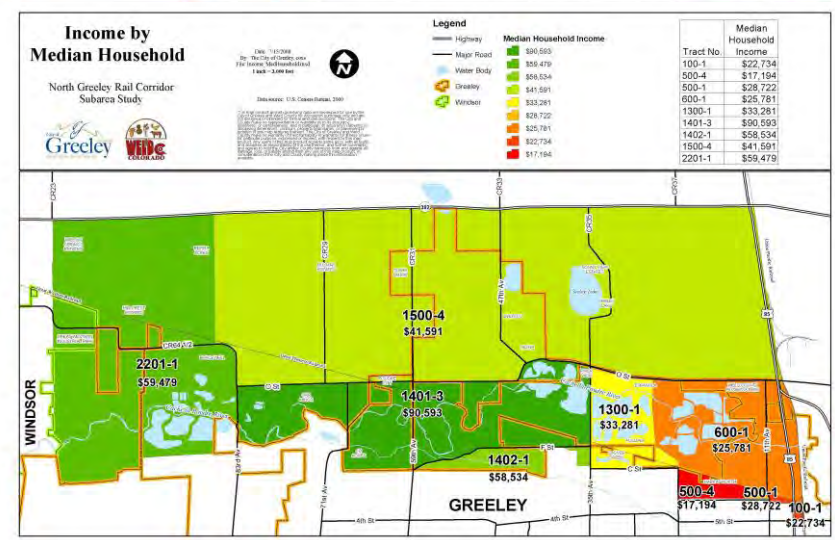
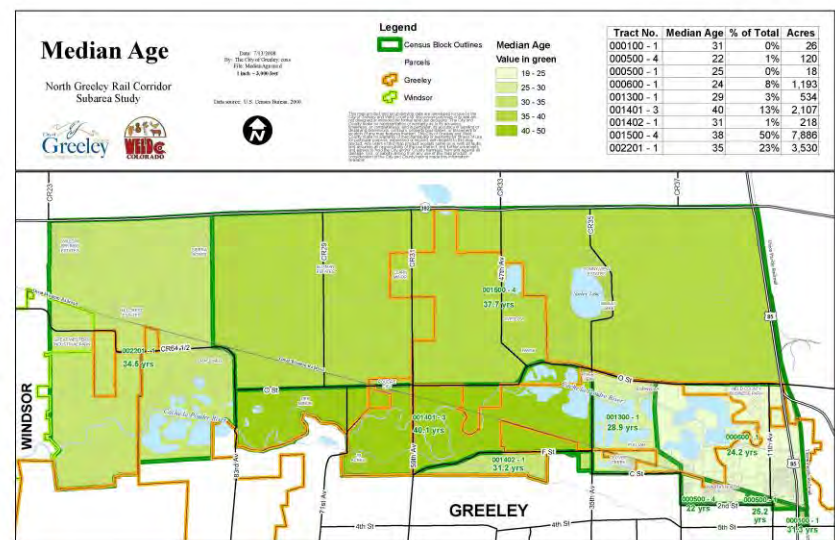
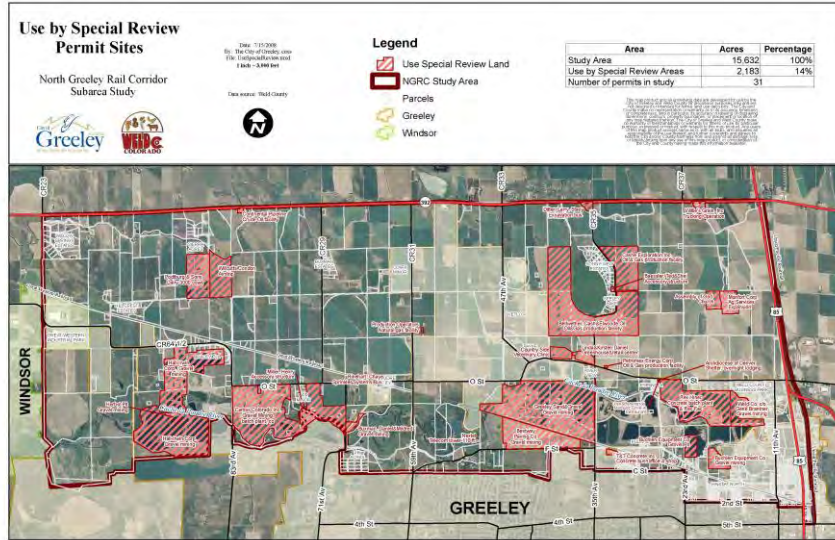
11<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 1<sup>st</sup> St.



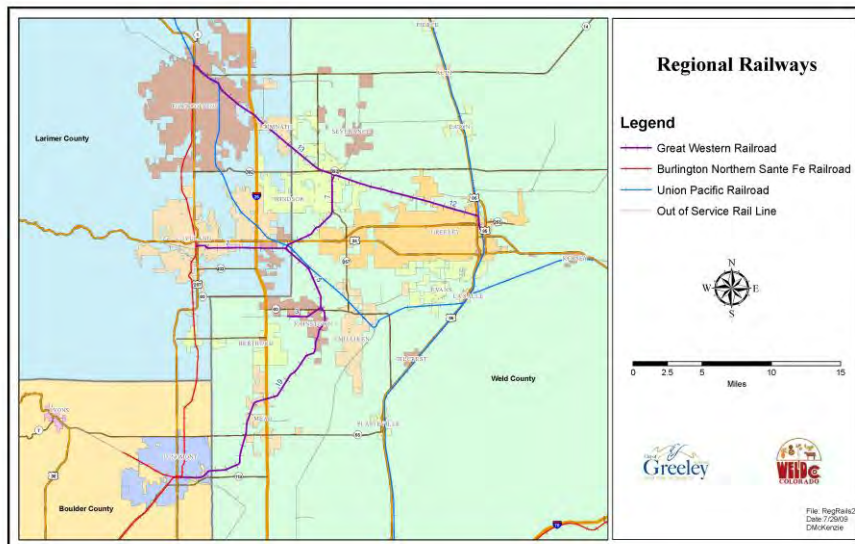
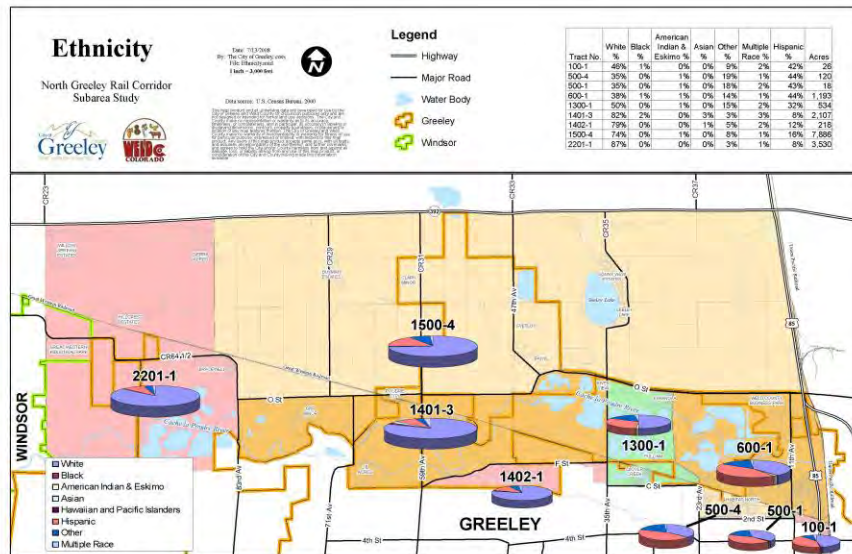
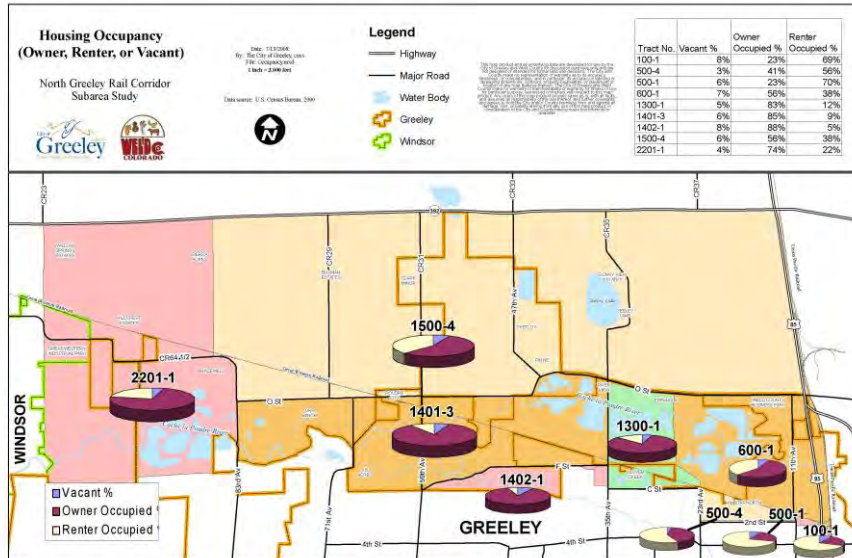
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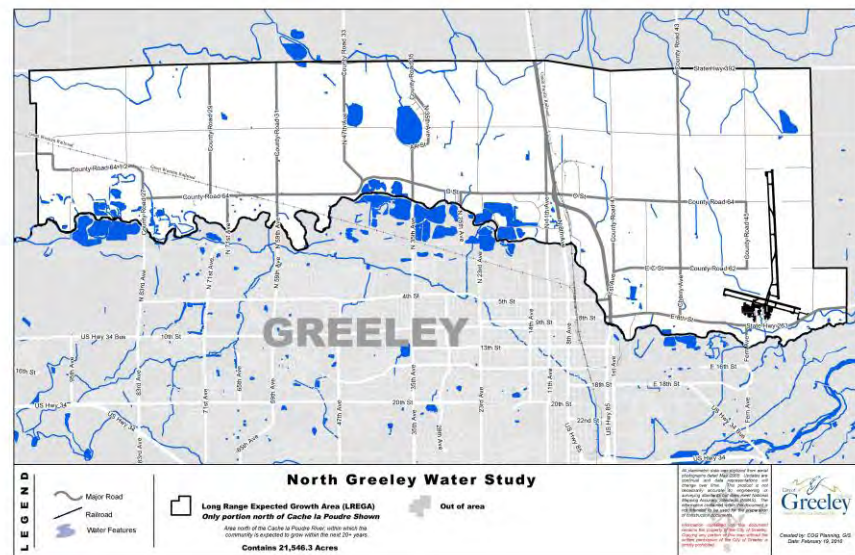
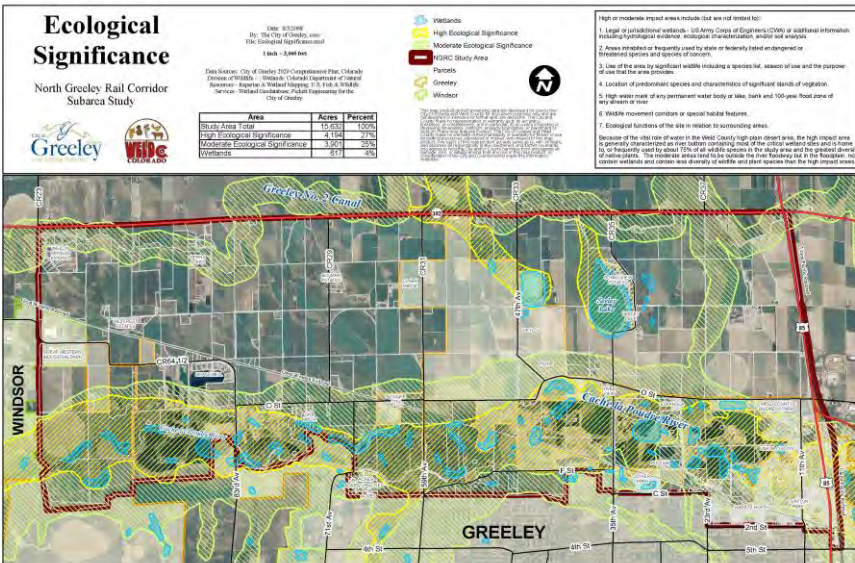
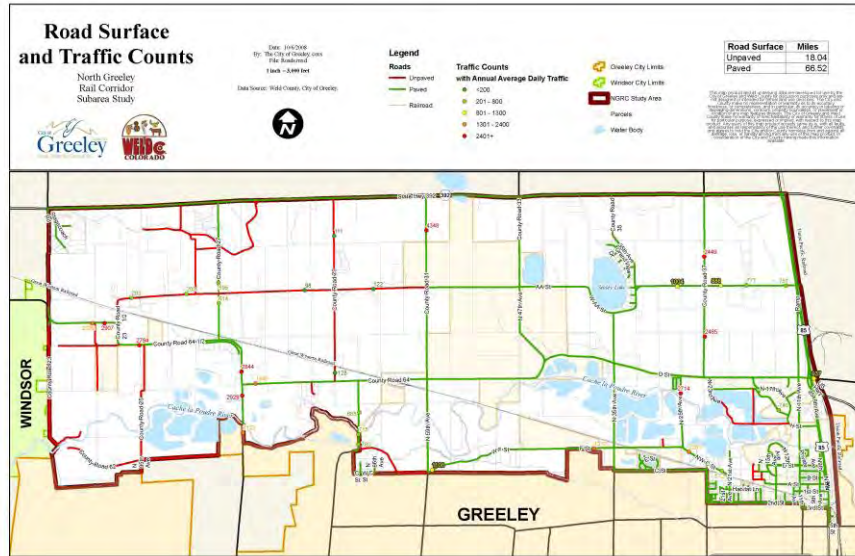
### C. Supporting Study Maps

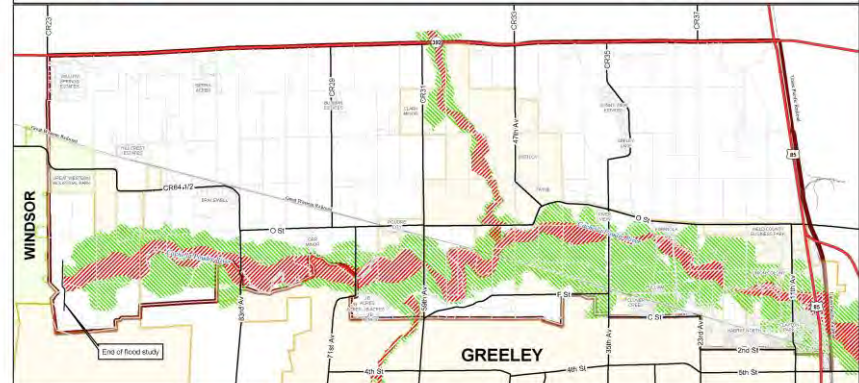
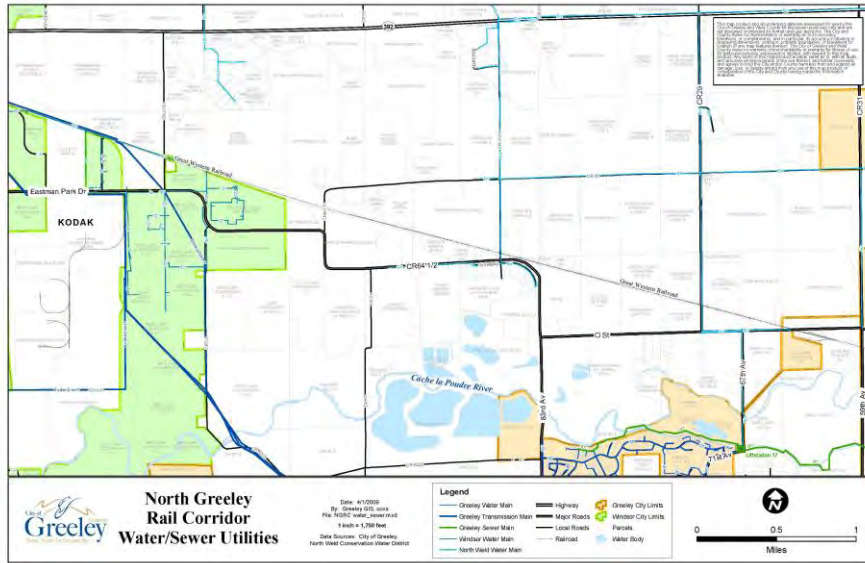


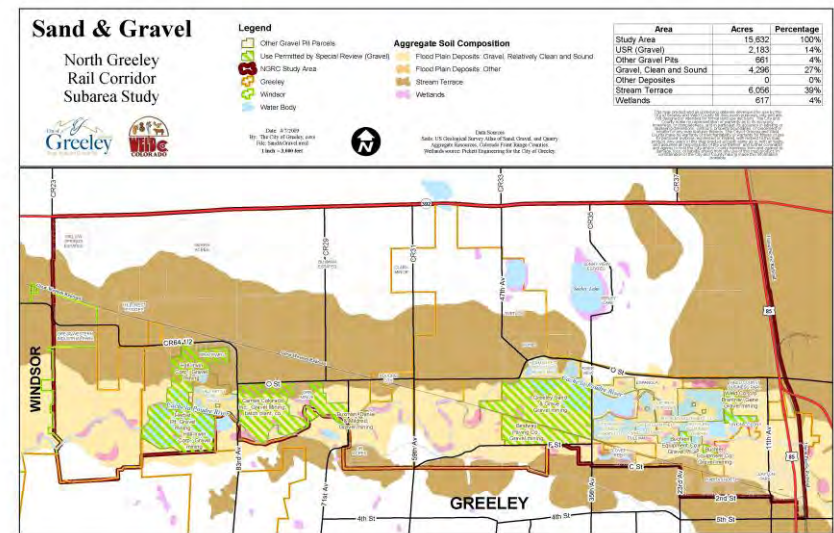
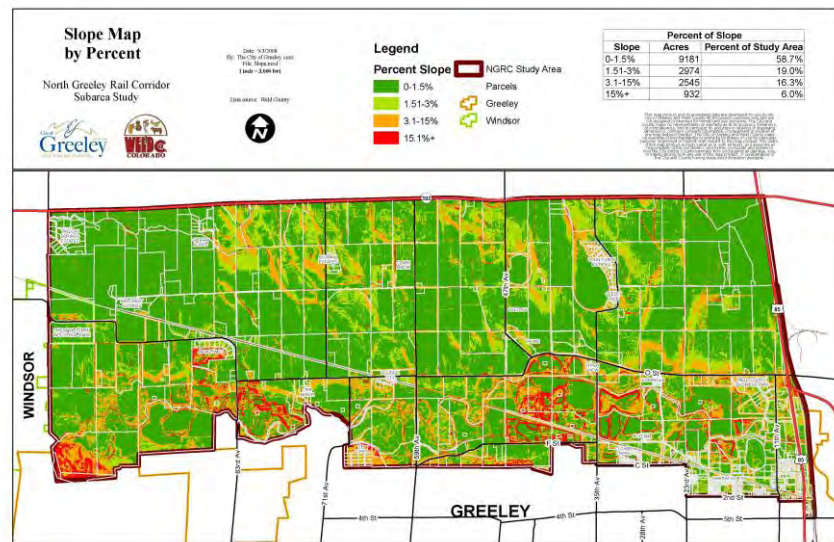
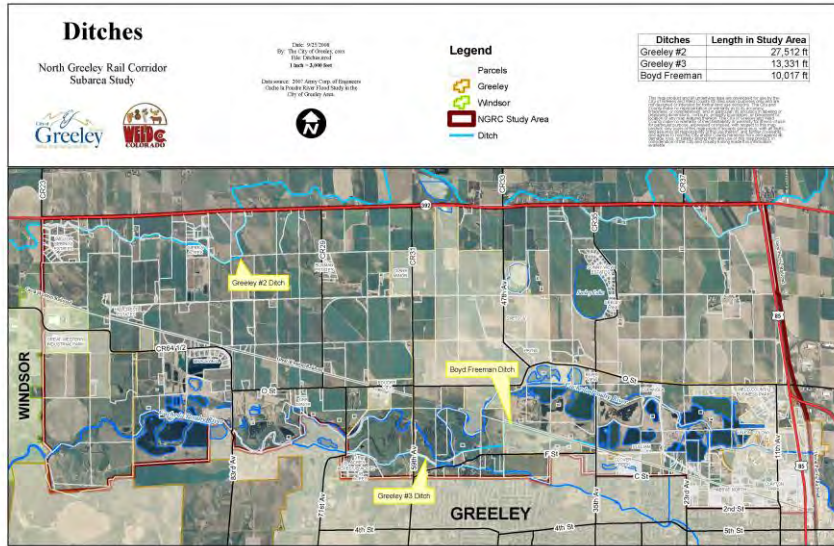


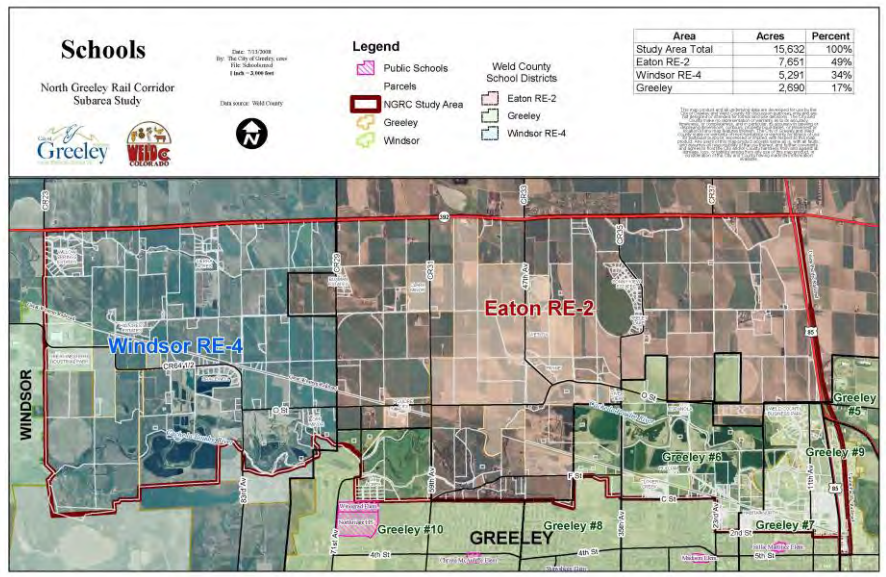
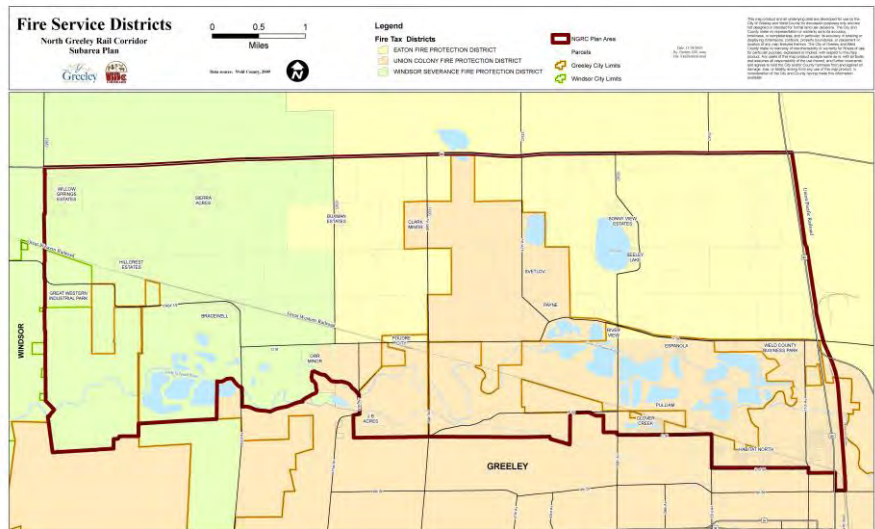
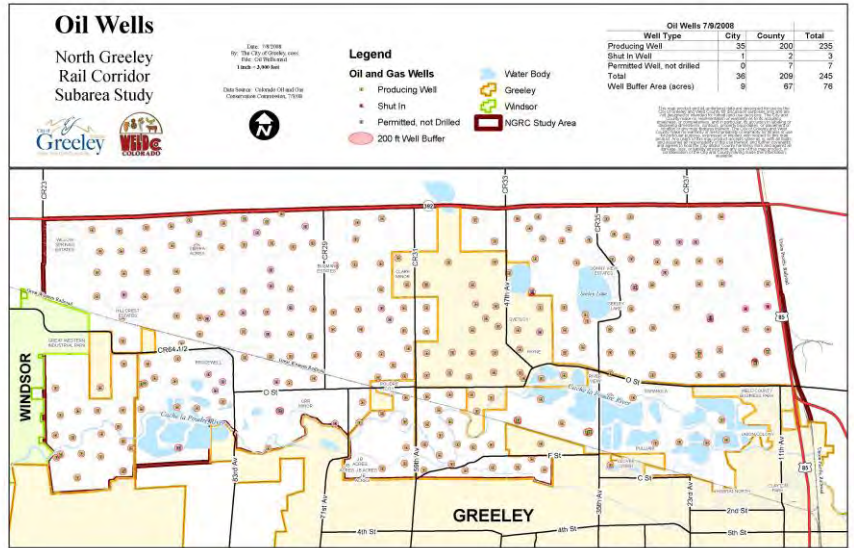


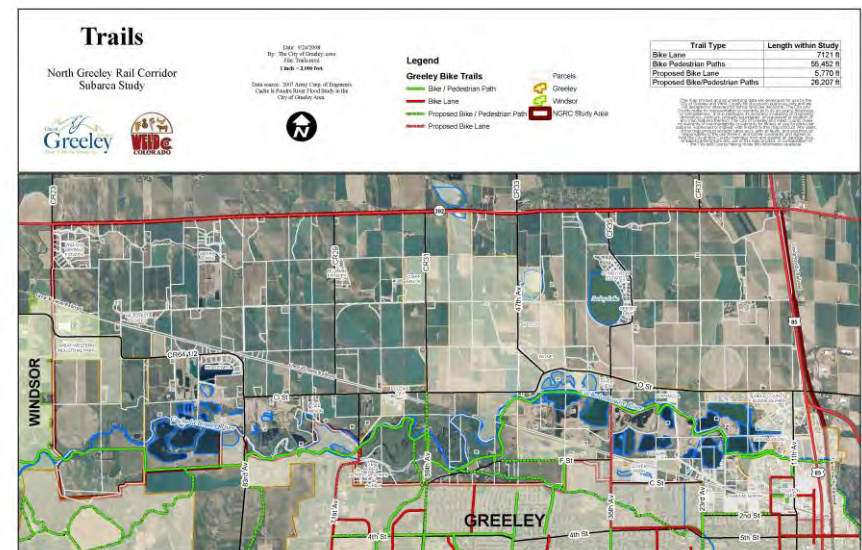
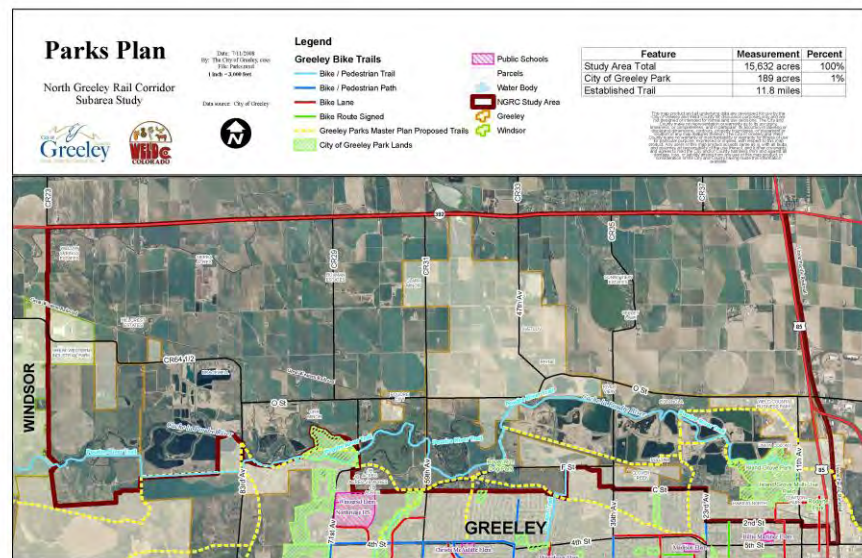
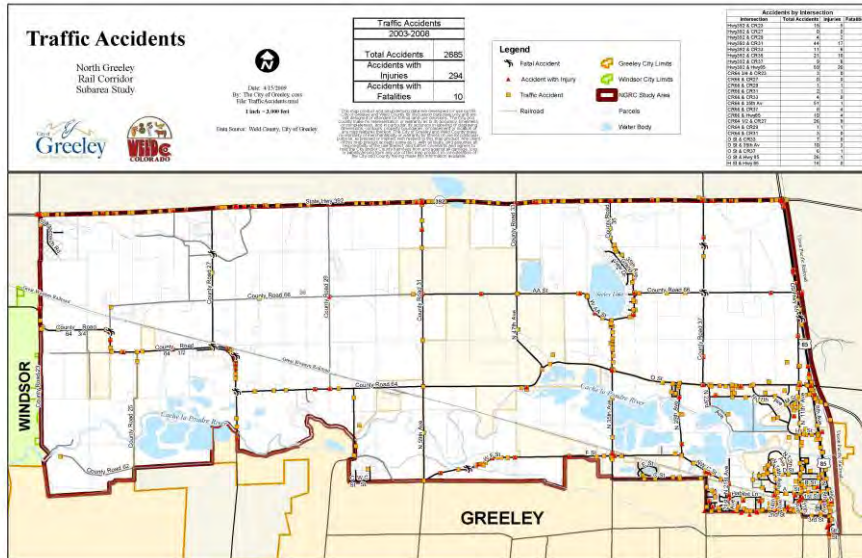




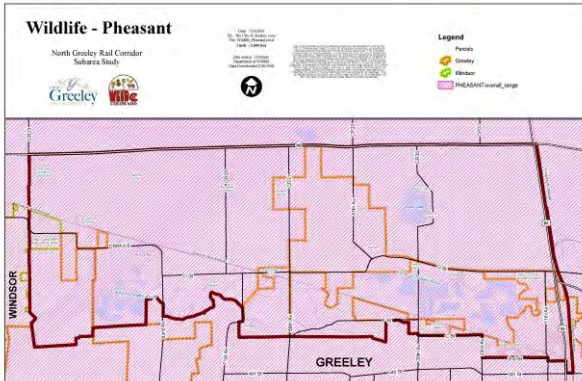
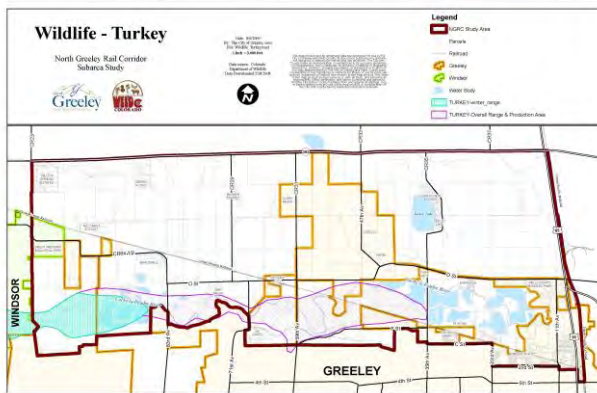
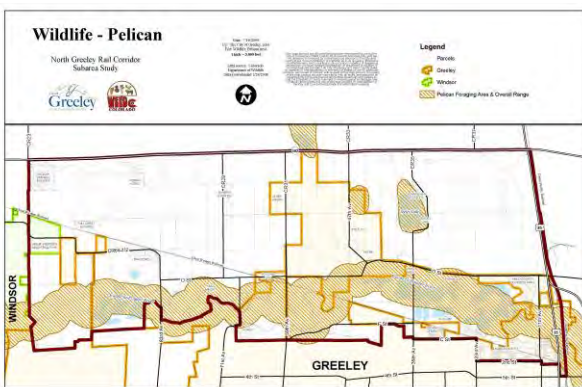
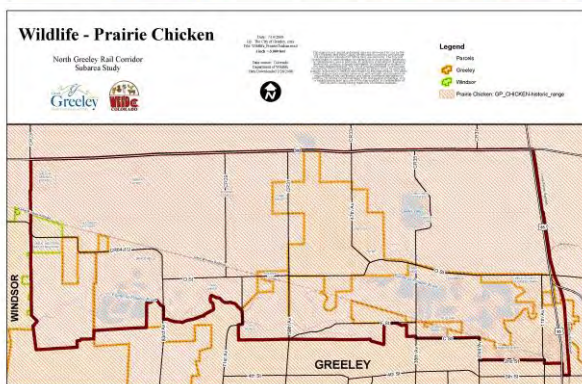
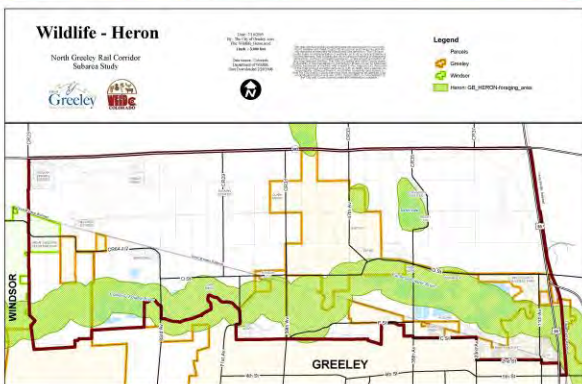
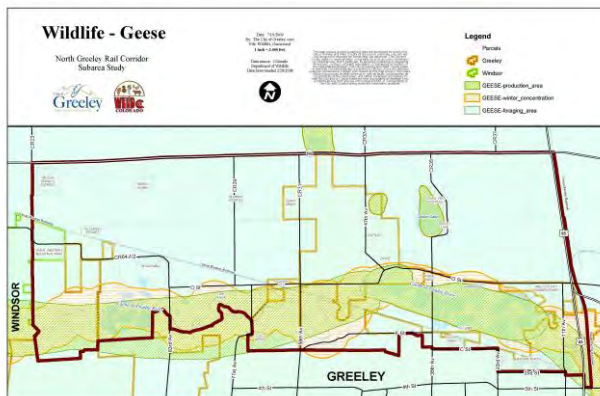
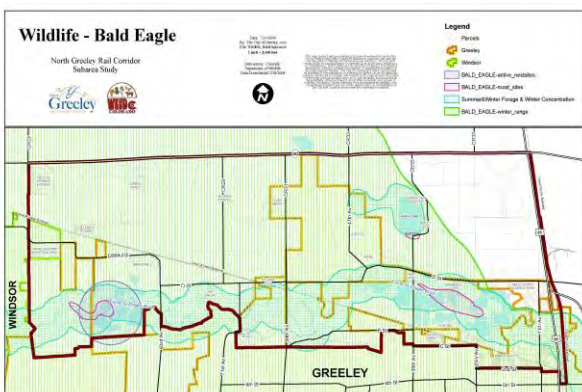


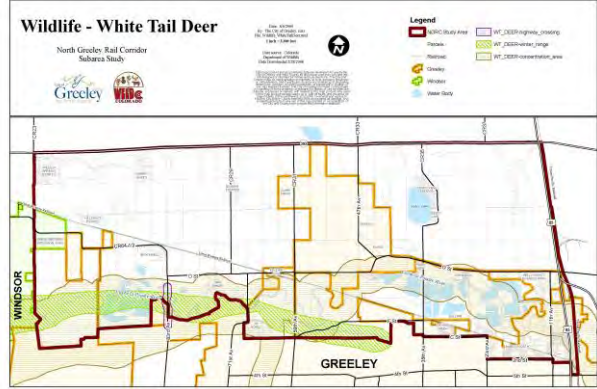
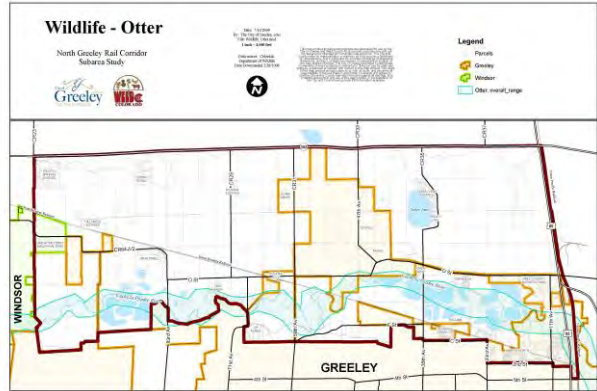
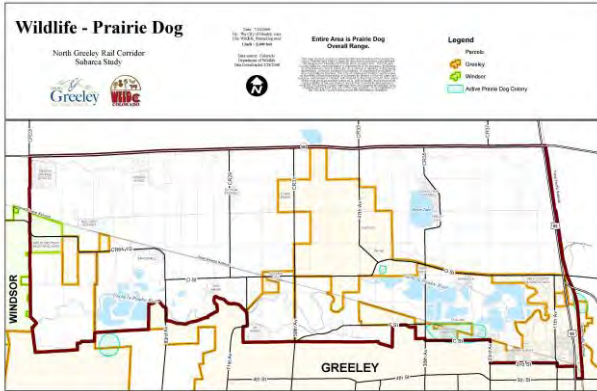






# North Greeley Study Area – Wildlife

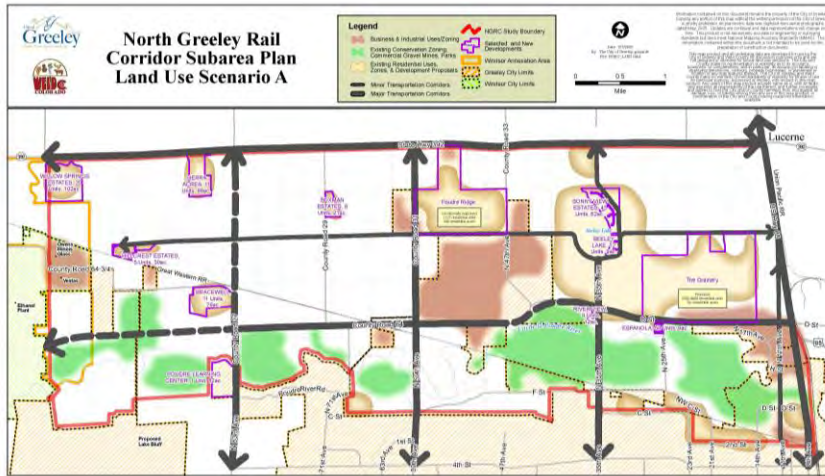




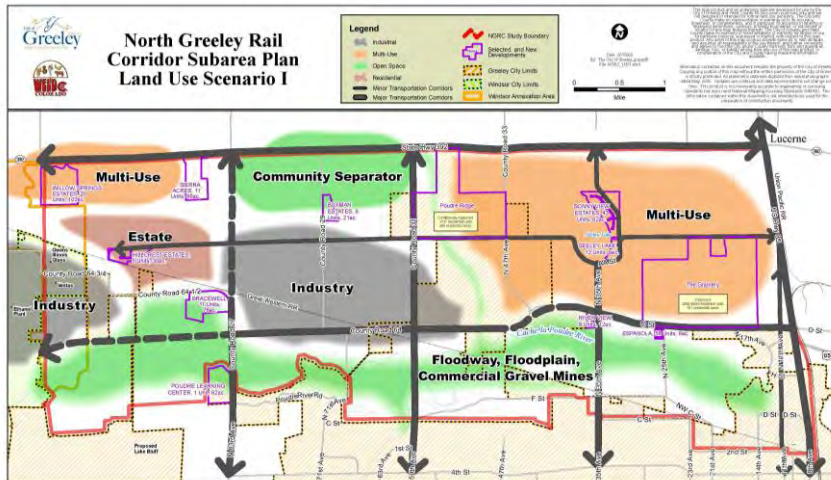


# 1. North Greeley Study Area Land Use Scenarios

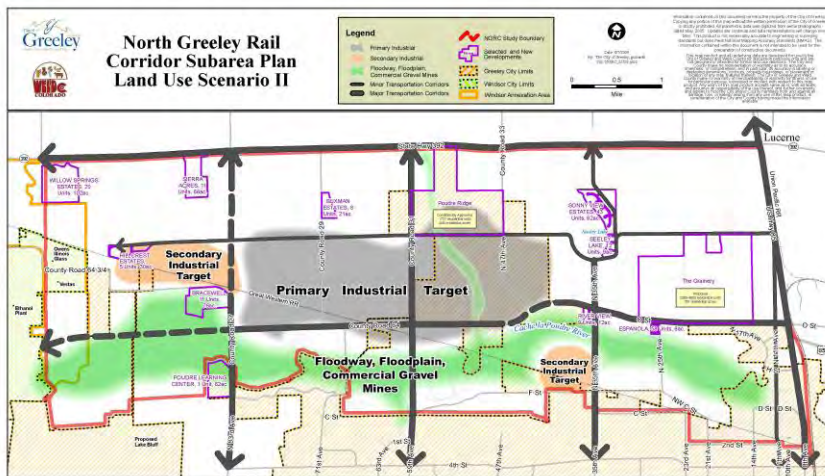
## a. Scenario A (Base Map, No Change)



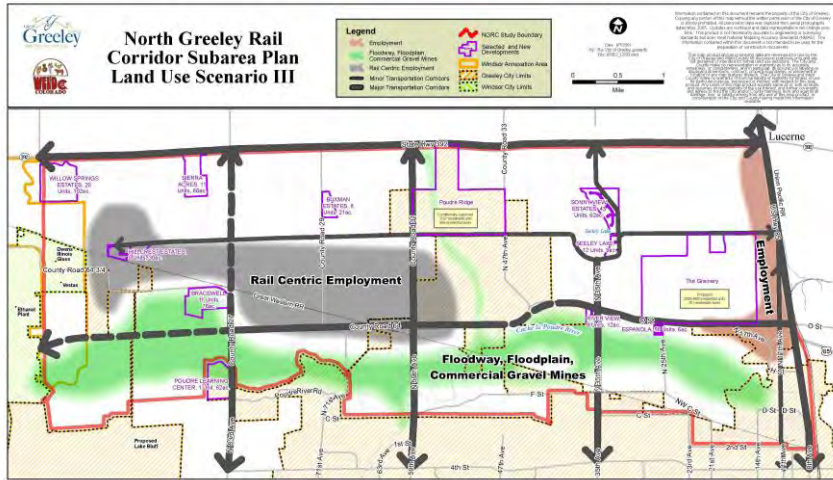
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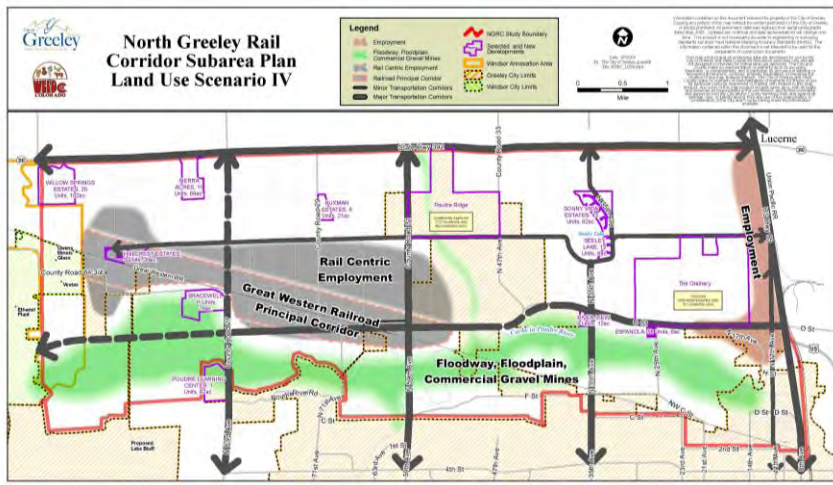
b. Scenario II



c. Scenario III



d. Scenario IV



e. Scenario V

