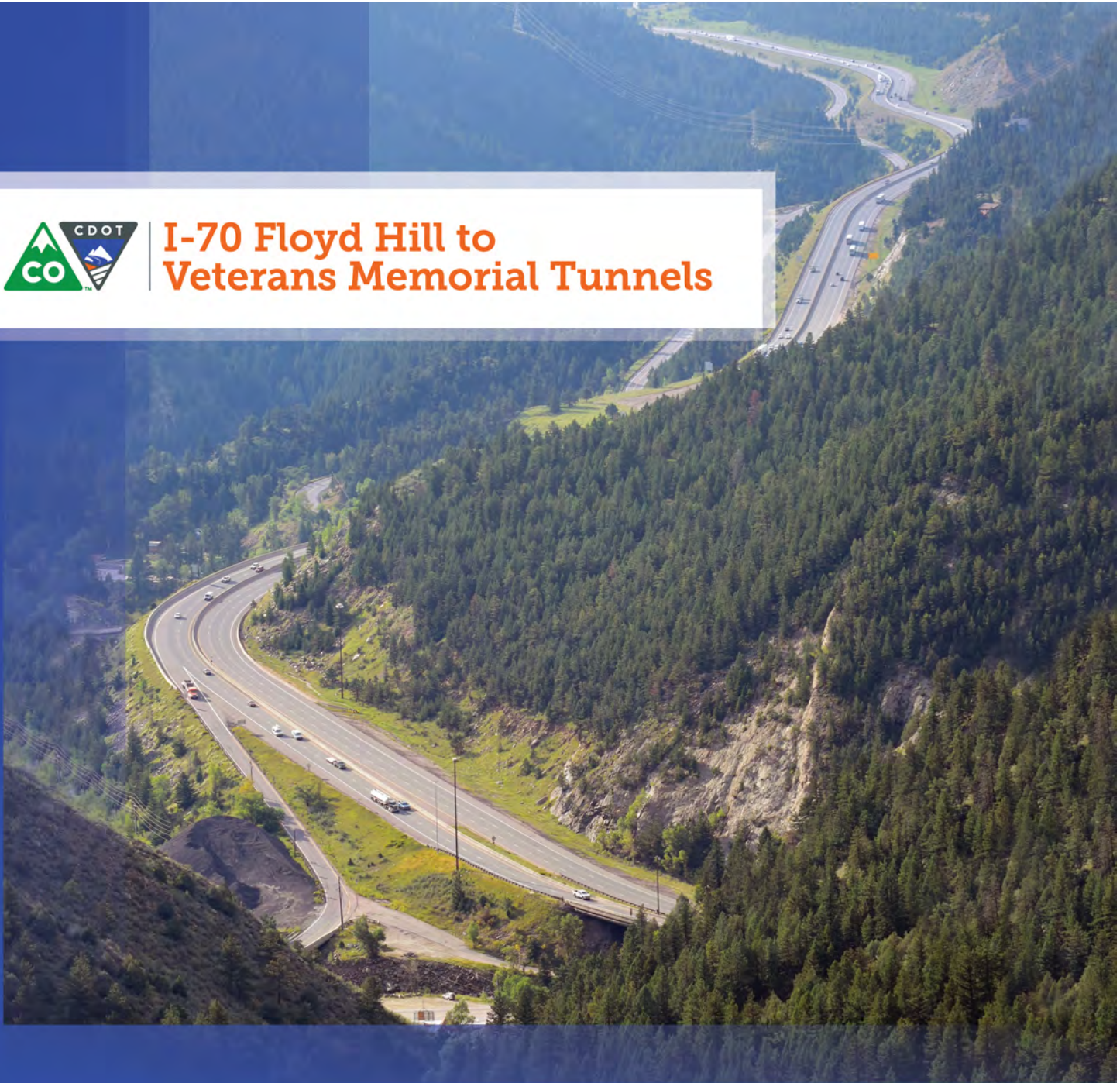




I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels



Land Use Existing Conditions Report

May 2019



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List of Acronyms

CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CSS	Context Sensitive Solutions
EA	Environmental Assessment
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
I-70	Interstate 70
MP	Milepost
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PEIS	Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
PUD	Planned Unit Development
ROD	Record of Decision
RTD	Regional Transportation District
US 6	U.S. Highway 6
US 40	U.S. Highway 40
USFS	U.S. Forest Service



1. Introduction and Purpose of this Report

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with local communities and other agencies, are conducting the Interstate 70 (I-70) Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels Environmental Assessment (EA) as a Tier 2 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This EA is a Tier 2 NEPA process that advances a portion of the program of improvements for the I-70 Mountain Corridor identified in the 2011 Tier 1 *Final I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (PEIS) and approved in the 2011 *I-70 Mountain Corridor Record of Decision* (ROD).

The purpose of this technical report is to document the existing conditions and context for existing and future land use. This report also includes a description of applicable laws and regulations and a summary of the resource analysis and mitigation framework from the PEIS and ROD.

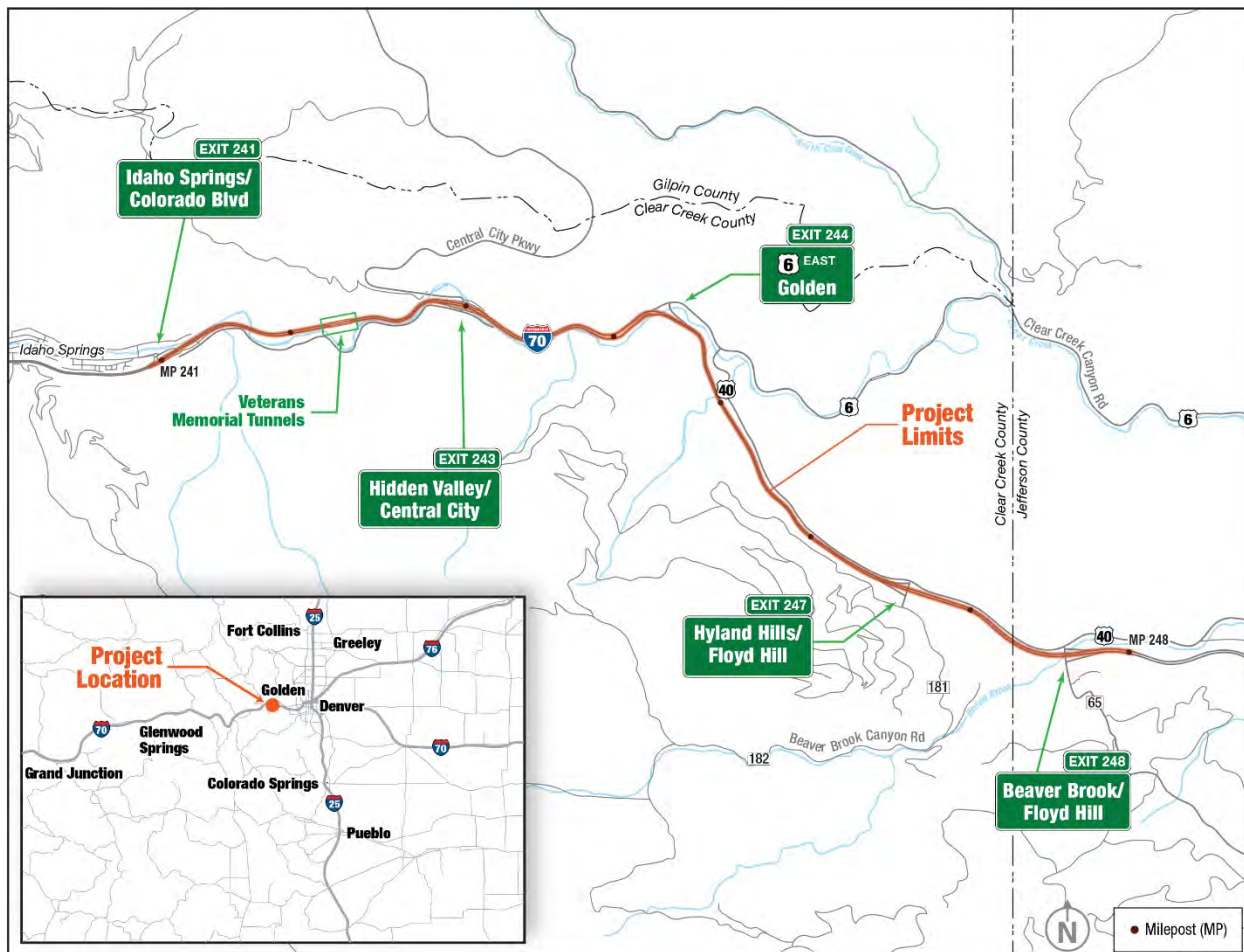
2. Project Description

The purpose of the I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels Project (Project) is to improve travel time reliability, safety, and mobility, and address the deficient infrastructure on westbound I-70 through the Floyd Hill area of the I-70 Mountain Corridor. The Proposed Action addresses specific highway improvements defined in the ROD, including providing three-lane capacity for westbound I-70 from Floyd Hill to the Veterans Memorial Tunnels; a multimodal trail and frontage road between U.S. Highway 6 (US 6) and Idaho Springs; and physical and/or operational improvements to two interchanges—the junction with US 6 (Exit 244) near the base of Floyd Hill, and the Hidden Valley/Central City interchange (Exit 243). The Project also would improve curves through the Corridor, consistent with the recommended 55 miles per hour design speed from the 2016 *I-70 Mountain Corridor Design Speed Study* (CDOT, 2016).

2.1. Project Location

The Project is located on I-70 between milepost (MP) 248 (just east of the Beaver Brook/Floyd Hill interchange) and Exit 241 (Idaho Springs/Colorado Boulevard, west of the Veterans Memorial Tunnels). It is located mostly within Clear Creek County, with the eastern end located within Jefferson County. See Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1 Project Location



2.2. Proposed Action

The major elements included in the Proposed Action are:



- Adding a third westbound travel lane to the two-lane section of I-70 from the current three-lane to two-lane drop (approximately MP 246) through the Veterans Memorial Tunnels
- Constructing a new frontage road between US 6 and the Hidden Valley/Central City interchange
- Improving interchanges and intersections throughout the Project area
- Improving design speeds and stopping sight distance on horizontal curves
- Adding an eastbound auxiliary lane to I-70 on Floyd Hill between the US 6 interchange and the Hyland Hills/Floyd Hill interchange
- Improving the multimodal trail (Clear Creek Greenway) between US 6 and the Veterans Memorial Tunnels
- Reducing animal-vehicle conflicts and improving wildlife connectivity with new and/or improved wildlife overpasses or underpasses
- Providing two permanent air quality monitors at Floyd Hill and Idaho Springs to collect data on local air quality conditions and trends
- Coordinating rural broadband access with local communities, including providing access to conduits in the interstate right-of-way

A detailed description of the Proposed Action and other design concepts considered can be found in the *I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels Alternatives Analysis Technical Report*.



3. Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Guidance

Important considerations for land use are the compatibility of a proposed project with the surrounding land uses and management policies, and how a proposed project affects future land use patterns and policies. As described in the CDOT *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Manual* (CDOT, 2017), "... there are no land use specific regulations that FHWA and CDOT must comply with; however, the land use discussion should assess the consistency of the alternatives with the comprehensive development plans adopted for the area and (if applicable) other plans used in the development of the transportation plan required by 23 USC 134." Planning documents reviewed for this report are summarized in Section 5.3, Data Sources and References.



4. Land Use in the Tier 1 PEIS

4.1. Context

The I-70 Mountain Corridor runs through five counties—Garfield, Eagle, Summit, Clear Creek, and Jefferson—and is surrounded by both federal and non-federal lands. Federal lands include the White River National Forest, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, and the Colorado River Valley District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Non-federal lands along the Corridor include state-owned lands, private properties, county open space, and urban and rural development. Private land along the I-70 Mountain Corridor is located primarily in the numerous communities adjacent to the interstate (FHWA/CDOT, 2011); additional communities more distant from the highway are dependent on access provided by the I-70 Mountain Corridor. Corridor community and land use plans for these mountain towns project considerable population and employment growth, and many communities are approaching build-out where infrastructure, water supply, and housing cannot accommodate anticipated growth, particularly in the western portions of the Corridor in Summit and Eagle Counties. Growth projections for Clear Creek County were more modest, and during the development of the PEIS, Clear Creek County anticipated being able to accommodate projected growth through 2030.

The PEIS noted that land use related concerns vary greatly by county and between federal and non-federal lands. No federal lands are present in the Study Area. For the counties within the Study Area, Jefferson County noted concerns with I-70 congestion that affect land use and require attention, and both Jefferson and Clear Creek Counties identified concerns with the competing interests of through-traffic on I-70 and the needs of residents to use the highway for local trips.

The PEIS evaluated right of way with land use and noted that CDOT owns the right of way for most of the existing I-70 highway facilities, although some of the highway is constructed on easements with the United States Forest Service (USFS). Right of way is the most limited in Clear Creek County. The PEIS noted that where the current I-70 highway right of way is narrower than the proposed footprint of an alternative, CDOT would need to acquire additional right of way, and right-of-way acquisition has the potential to affect land use, especially in communities with limited developable land. CDOT evaluates right-of-way needs separately from land use to understand the resulting impacts on individual properties within a proposed footprint (FHWA/CDOT, 2011).

The PEIS noted that the Preferred Alternative would directly impact properties because of the I-70 highway expanding into currently developed lands, which will create a need for right-of-way acquisition. Although concerns surrounding induced growth and affordable housing were raised during the PEIS, most of the land surrounding the Project is not available for development, so induced growth was not identified as a particular concern in this area. The PEIS noted that large construction projects could require temporary worker housing in the Corridor throughout the construction period because affordable housing is not available, especially in the western portions of the I-70 Mountain Corridor, where it is difficult for workers to commute from the Denver area. The reuse of temporary worker housing after construction is complete also was raised as a concern for communities.

4.2. Analysis in Tier 2 Processes

During future project-specific Tier 2 processes, CDOT committed to further analysis of changes that affect the functionality of parcels near I-70, such as changes in access, visibility, and noise levels. The analysis will include coordination with individual communities and agencies to determine functional impacts on businesses, homeowners, and other property owners and to determine appropriate mitigation (FHWA/CDOT, 2011).

A key commitment of the ROD was that all projects on the I-70 Mountain Corridor would use the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS), an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist, and includes early, continuous, and meaningful involvement of the public and stakeholders throughout project development. Consistency with community land use plans and values is an important consideration of the CSS process. The I-70 Mountain Corridor CSS process also includes Corridor-specific design criteria and aesthetic guidance that should be considered and applied to transportation projects within the I-70 Mountain Corridor (FHWA/CDOT, 2011).



The Twin Tunnels EA addressed Tier 1 commitments through: (1) coordinating with individual communities and agencies to determine functional impacts on businesses, homeowners, and other property owners, and to determine appropriate mitigation; (2) identifying an I-70 Mountain Corridor CSS Manager and agency staff liaisons who can serve across the entire Corridor to provide process continuity; and (3) providing communities with possible alignments as early as possible to allow them to make timely land use decisions.

The Eastbound and Westbound I-70 Peak Period Shoulder Lane Categorical Exclusion documents were Tier 2 projects that addressed Tier 1 commitments through forming a Project Leadership Team, a Technical Team, and numerous Issue Task Forces. The teams developed a context statement and core values for these projects. The core values were used to develop goals, objectives, and evaluation criteria, which guided the development and evaluation of alternatives.

4.3. Mitigation Strategies

The ROD outlined the mitigation strategies to avoid or minimize environmental and community impacts. Primary mitigation strategies to avoid or reduce direct effects to adjacent properties include design refinement—particularly at interchanges—and physical measures—for instance, the use of retaining walls or elevated structures (FHWA/CDOT, 2011).

CDOT committed to promoting and assisting communities projected to be affected by induced growth in the adoption of more comprehensive, regional growth management plans that can be applied to Tier 2 NEPA processes. Potential growth management strategies include exploring the possibility of creating grants for communities that lack the resources to develop a growth plan; working with local councils of government and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to assist with funding; and promoting the consideration of open space as community separators, or view sheds distinguishing communities, including studies led by the USFS and the BLM. However, the PEIS noted that efforts to control growth are greatly dependent on local planning and community political direction (FHWA/CDOT, 2011).



5. Existing Conditions

This section describes the existing land use, existing zoning, and future land use in the Study Area. Because the proposed Project is expected to maintain or modify existing conditions and not add additional accesses, the Proposed Action should be consistent with the counties' land use plans that envision the same relationships between land uses and I-70.

While the future land use context in the Study Area is not expected to change and the Proposed Action is expected to be consistent with broad community land use plans, right-of-way acquisition may be needed and may affect the development of individual parcels. Right-of-way needs and impacts to individual parcels will be assessed separately through the right-of-way analysis when the EA impact analysis advances.

5.1. Study Area

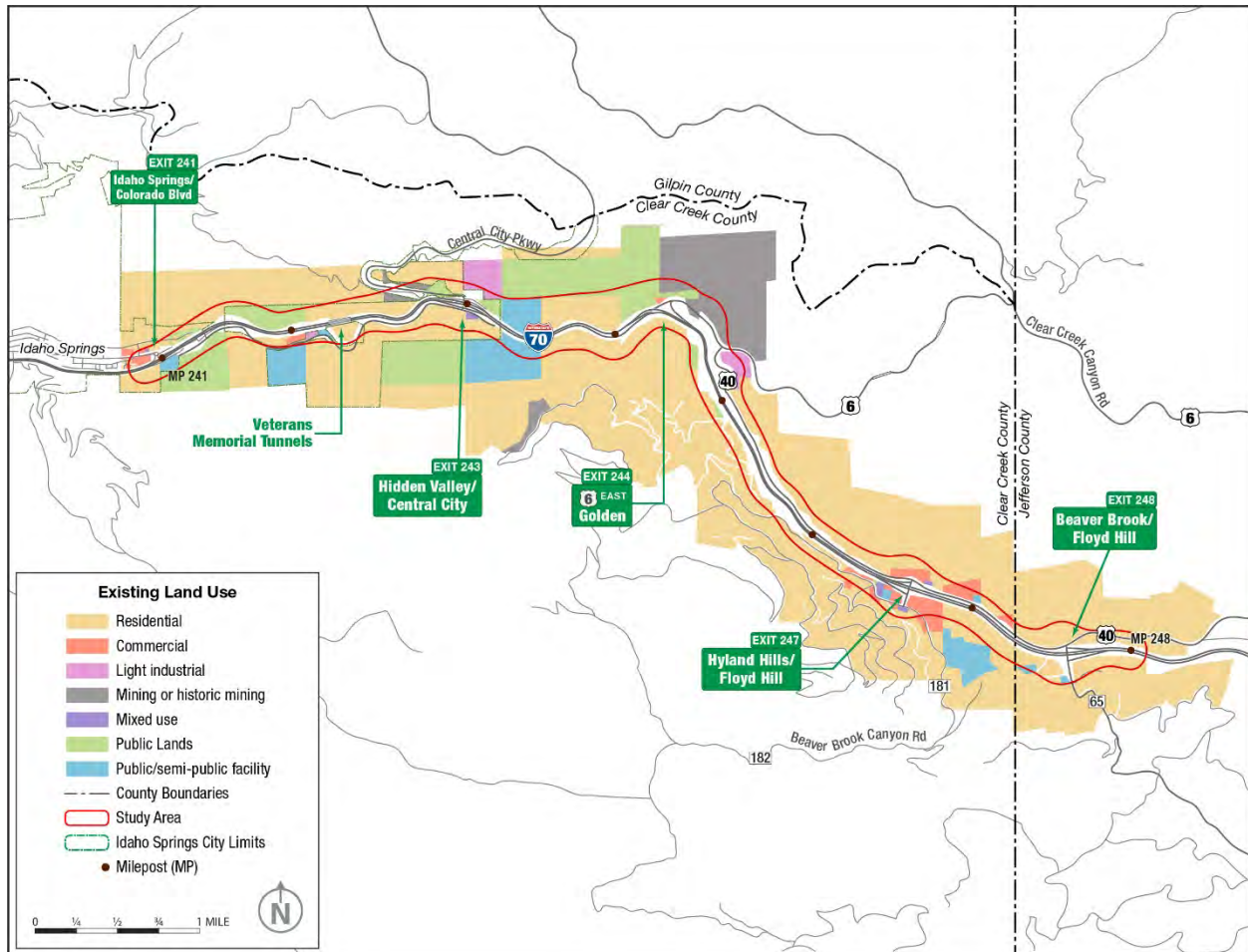
The Study Area for the land use analysis includes land parcels generally within 500 feet from the centerline of the highway on both the north and south sides and 1,000 feet around the interchanges. The western limit of the Project is within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Idaho Springs. The eastern limit of the Project is within the unincorporated boundaries of Jefferson County. The remainder of the Study Area is in unincorporated Clear Creek County. Exhibit 1 in Section 2 of this report illustrates the Project location.

5.2. Environmental Conditions

5.2.1. Existing Land Uses

Land uses within the Study Area consist of residential, commercial, public, industrial, and agricultural uses, as illustrated in Exhibit 2. Throughout the Study Area, I-70 serves as the essential access into/out of the adjacent lands and links the communities where most of the population and economic activities are located.

Exhibit 2 Existing Land Uses



Numerous recreational resources are present in the Study Area and further described in the *I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels Recreational Resources Existing Conditions Technical Report* (Atkins, 2019a).

Because interchanges have a greater effect on land use, the uses near each interchange area are described in more detail below:

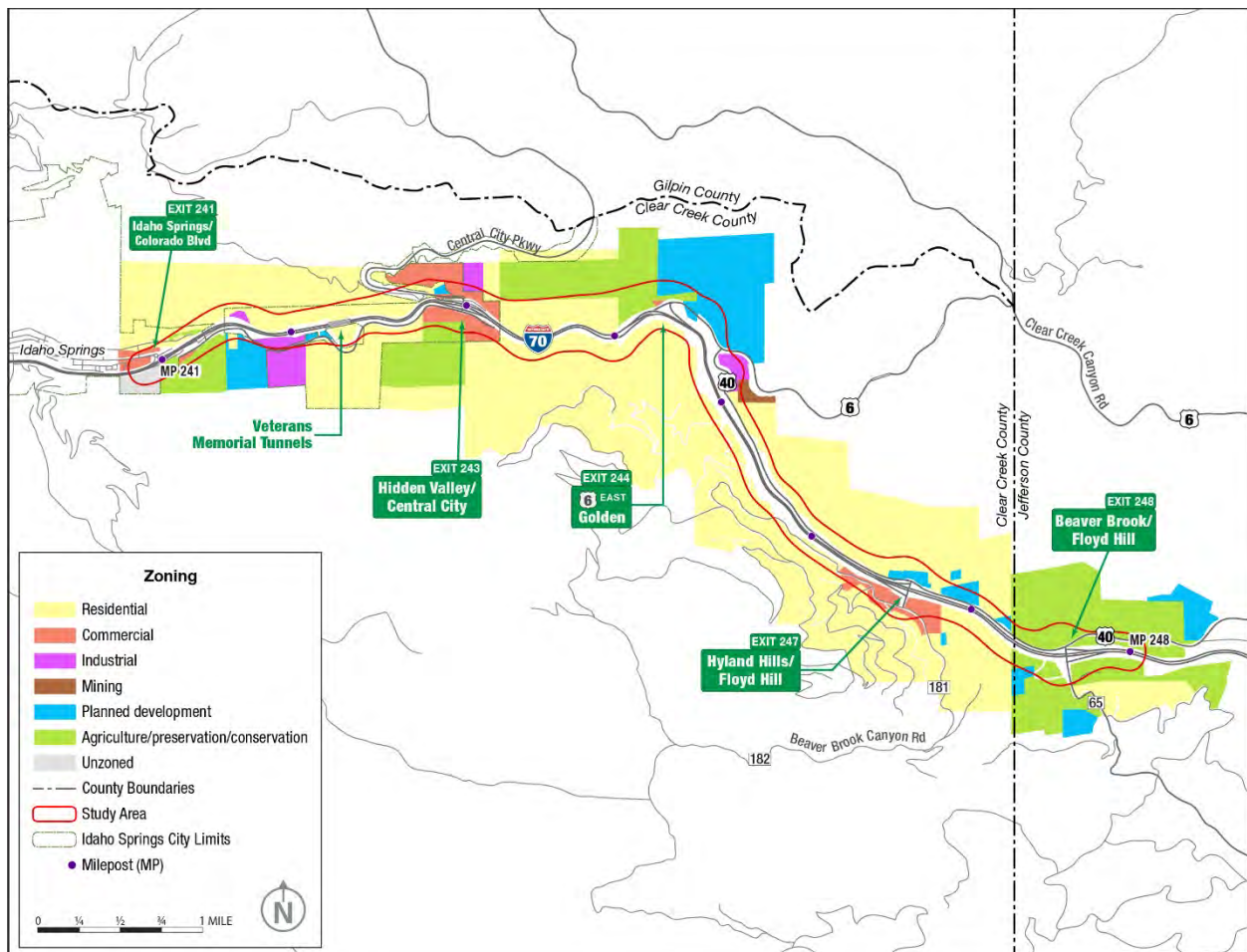
- The Beaver Brook/Floyd Hill interchange area land uses include low-density commercial (such as a show home business), agricultural (a buffalo ranch), and vacant land.
- The Hyland Hills/Floyd Hill interchange land uses include low-density commercial (such as a storage facility and a few other small businesses), mixed use (such as an informal carpool lot), residential, public, and open space. The Floyd Hill Business Park, with several offices, is located east of the interchange.
- Near the US 6/Golden interchange, land uses consist of industrial, public, and commercial uses, including a quarry and a restaurant (Two Bears Tap and Grill).
- The Hidden Valley/Central City interchange is surrounded by public, commercial, and low-density residential uses, including a wastewater treatment plant and CDOT maintenance yard.
- The Idaho Springs/Colorado Boulevard interchange is the eastern entrance to Idaho Springs and provides access to commercial (such as restaurants and shops), public, and residential lands.

5.2.2. Existing Zoning

Zoning is a common regulation tool used by municipalities to control the land uses that may be developed on a property. The existing zoning within the Study Area is shown in Exhibit 3. Most of the Study Area within Clear Creek County is zoned for residential use with single-family units. Most of the land in the Jefferson County portion of the Study Area is zoned for agriculture/preservation/conservation intended to provide for the conservation and preservation of public and private lands and meet agricultural, open space, recreation, and scenic protection needs; this category is a combined zoning type based on the two counties' zoning categories.

Other areas zoned for development are found throughout the Study Area. Most of the land surrounding the Hidden Valley/Central City interchange was annexed into the City of Idaho Springs, and it is zoned for residential and commercial use based on the City's zoning map. A major concentration of Planned Unit Development (PUD) is found adjacent to the US 6/Golden interchange. PUD does not necessarily indicate a type of future development but allows for creative and flexible development concepts that usually will contain a mix of uses or specific uses not allowed in other zoning districts. A commercial zone is clustered south of I-70 near the Beaver Brook/Floyd Hill interchange. A few small parcels zoned for light industrial and mining are found in the northern section of the Study Area.

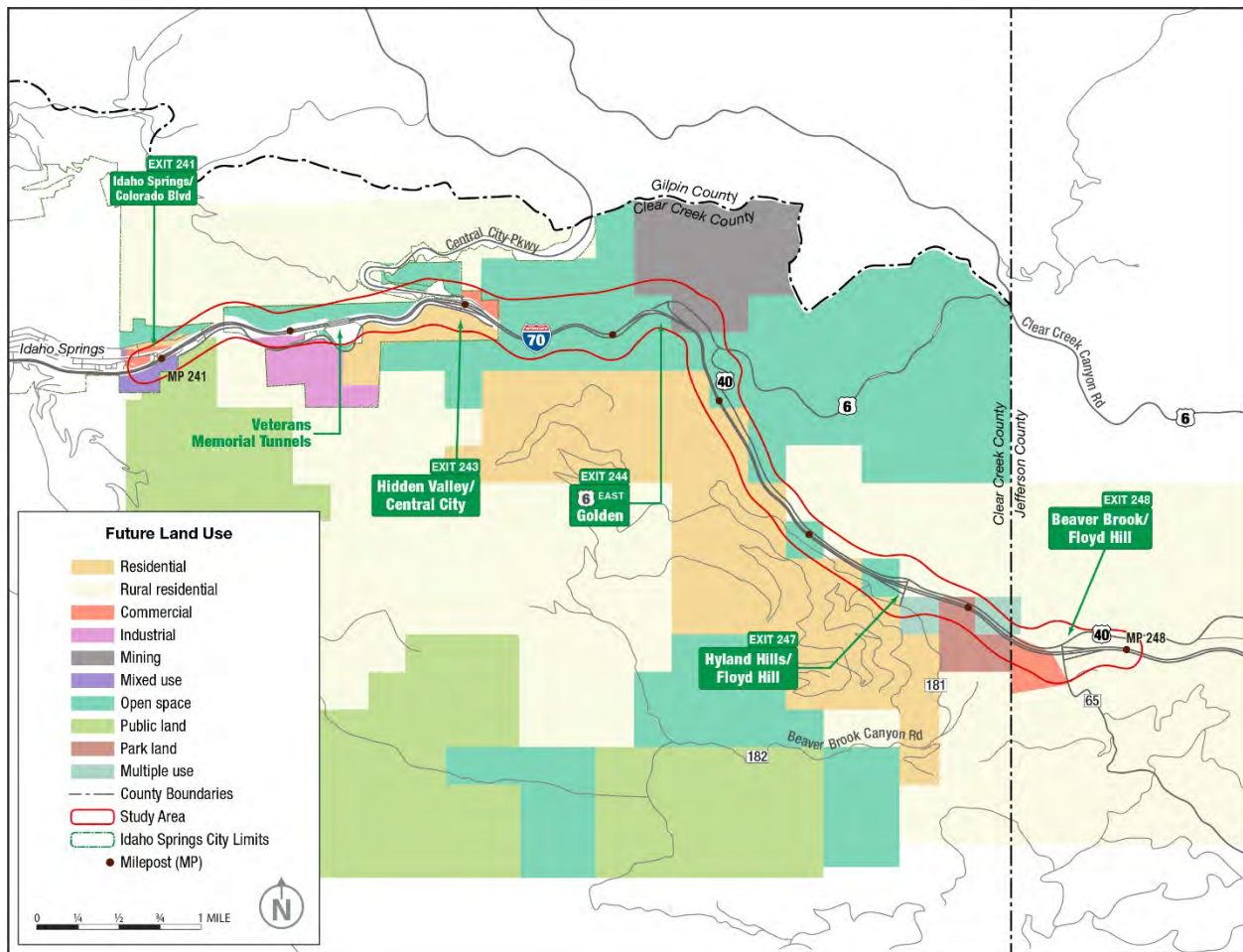
Exhibit 3 Existing Zoning



5.2.3. Future Land Uses

As illustrated in Exhibit 4, the *Jefferson County Comprehensive Master Plan* (2013) identifies the land use within the Jefferson County portion of the Study Area to be predominantly residential with a small commercial area south of I-70 just east of the county border. The *Clear Creek County Community Master Plan* (2017) identifies that future land uses in the Study Area will remain largely residential, with open space north of I-70 and mining (at the existing quarry) near the US 6/Golden interchange. Future land uses in the Clear Creek County plan are generalized to a few major categories rather than identifying parcel-specific land uses. The intent is to establish the important land use strategies that serve as a general guide, along with the land use goals and policies, and to help promote community-made decisions on future land use changes. The multiple-use designation in the Study Area is intended to provide for various uses, with an emphasis on preserving existing conditions and keeping the level and intensity of the current land uses. The Clear Creek Greenway Trail, as envisioned in the *Clear Creek County Open Space Plan* (2005) and the *Clear Creek Greenway Plan* (2005a), will connect the existing recreational resources and provide additional features such as trailheads, restrooms, and rest areas within the Study Area. The *I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels Recreational Resources Existing Conditions Technical Report* (Atkins, 2019a) describes the planned Greenway in more detail.

Exhibit 4 Future Land Uses



5.3. Data Sources and Relevant Land Use Plans

Existing planning documents that guide land use within the Study Area were reviewed by the Project team. Relevant information identified in each of those plans is summarized below.



5.3.1. Clear Creek County Community Master Plan (Clear Creek County, 2017)

This plan establishes a policy framework and a set of specific goals and objectives for important aspects of future planning decisions in Clear Creek County. Goals and objectives identified in the transportation element of the plan include: (1) an increase in public interest that future I-70 projects be completed with sensitivity to the communities; (2) a desire to create multimodal options that are accessible to a broad range of County residents and employees; and (3) a need to maintain the County road system to ensure adequate and safe circulation and access for both residents and visitors.

The plan recognizes the impact and influence of I-70 on the County and indicates that the County's relationship with I-70 has continued to be a major source of both opportunity and challenge. The plan proposes potential actions for the County to take related to I-70 improvements, including: (1) improving the County road network through multimodal improvements to streets that approach I-70 interchanges and to the frontage road network, (2) establishing land use policies that support the desired development along the I-70 Corridor, (3) planning for future transit service to increase mobility within and to the County, and (4) ensuring that future I-70 projects support development of a County trail network.

5.3.2. Clear Creek County Vision for the I-70 Mountain Corridor (Clear Creek County, 2014)

This Clear Creek County visioning document provides an evaluation system that incorporates the values of the County and strategies for future development of the I-70 Mountain Corridor. The document includes an evaluation system to guide development projects in Clear Creek County along the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

5.3.3. Clear Creek County Greenway Plan/Clear Creek County Open Space Master Plan (Clear Creek County, 2015)

These documents outline plans for the construction of a countywide Greenway that links the communities together with a string of open spaces, parks, recreational facilities, and commercial facilities along Clear Creek. It is intended that the Greenway incorporate, enhance, and create many types of active and passive recreational opportunities along Clear Creek.

5.3.4. Floyd Hill Gateway Development Master Plan (Clear Creek County, 2009)

This plan provides recommendations that help inform decision making regarding land uses and infrastructure in the Floyd Hill area. The recommendations for transportation and emergency access include: (1) applying for a service annexation into the Regional Transportation District (RTD) for the Floyd Hill area, (2) working with landowners and agencies to design and construct new egress and access roads, (3) maintaining and enhancing the existing emergency egress route at Pat Creek, south of the Study Area, (4) adopting a County standard for a maximum number of residential units that may be constructed off a single point of access, and (5) working with CDOT to provide a westbound off-ramp at the Hyland Hills/Floyd Hill interchange with I-70.

5.3.5. Jefferson County Comprehensive Master Plan, Evergreen Area Plan (Jefferson County, 2014)

The Evergreen Subarea Plan was integrated into the Jefferson County Comprehensive Master Plan as an Area Plan. The plan recognizes the competing needs of residents and travelers through the community and recommends that this should be resolved in a way that preserves the visual amenities and the integrity of the mountain community. It calls for the use of context-sensitive design approaches and processes for all transportation improvement projects in the Evergreen area.

The Plan also recommends multimodal transportation options that include: (1) continued, new, and improved RTD service, (2) continued coordination between RTD and CDOT for new Park-n-Ride sites, (3) continued Call-n-Ride service with periodic review of potential expansion opportunities of this service, (4) consideration of bicycle trails or widened roadway shoulders when new roads are constructed or existing roads are improved, (5) connecting trails with Park-n-Ride lots to link bicycle/pedestrian facilities with transit.

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