



Urban Land Institute (ULI) Colorado

Creating a Town Center for Erie

A Technical Advisory Panel Report



A Report from Erie's Four Corners Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)

By ULI Colorado

July 11-12, 2019



Table of Contents

- I. Introduction.....2
- II. Overview.....4
- III. Findings.....8
- IV. Recommendations.....11
- V. Conclusion.....24
- VI. Index of Panel Answers to Questions25
- VII. Stakeholders.....28
- VIII. ULI Volunteer Panelists.....29

Supported by:

The Town of Erie and the Denver Regional Council of Governments

Writer:

Marianne Eppig, Manager, ULI Colorado



ULI volunteers speak with local city council members during the Technical Advisory Panel.

Overview of ULI Advisory Services

Since 1947, the national ULI Advisory Services program has assembled 400+ ULI-member teams to help sponsors find solutions for issues including downtown redevelopment, community revitalization, and affordable housing, among other matters. In Colorado, ULI Advisory Services have provided solutions for such key sites as the Colorado Convention Center, Coors Field, Fitzsimons, and the Denver Justice Center.

Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs)

ULI Colorado’s Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs) offer the same expertise at the local level. Each panel is composed of qualified and unbiased professionals who volunteer their time. Panel chairs are respected ULI members with previous panel experience. Since 2003, ULI Colorado has completed more than 50 TAPs leading to positive policy changes and built projects.

I. Introduction

Located north of Denver in Boulder and Weld counties, the Town of Erie combines the resources of a growing bedroom community with a treasured historic commercial and residential core dating from the coal-mining era. Erie residents love their town, but they also mention their frustration over the lack of community amenities and retail services, variety, and vitality. Meanwhile, the Town faces serious financial constraints and sees sales tax revenue as a potential way out, despite repeatedly being told they don’t have enough demand to support retail development.

In July 2019, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel composed of volunteer experts to help the Town of Erie resolve some challenging and at times competing objectives.

The Context

In each of the past 10 years, the Town has issued more than 450 new housing permits and nearly doubled its population to over 28,300. Despite this population growth, the Town continues to be told the same narrative by developers: “In order to attract the development the community would like to see, the retail and commercial developers need to see more rooftops to support the proposed businesses.”

While the Town has done just that over the past decade, the market for housing is still much stronger in Erie than for commercial development. With these market conditions, developers often ask the Town to amend the Town’s comprehensive plan and rezone commercial areas into residential. This matter is of critical concern for Erie’s Four Corners area, which includes about 390 acres around the intersection of Erie Parkway and County Line Road and is the focus of this TAP. Four different property owners have development plans, covering a total of 116 acres, in various stages of entitlement in the Four Corners area. Town staff wonder what to do next to accomplish its many goals for this area.

The Town of Erie staff hope to create a Town Center in the Four Corners area, with a mix of uses and economically thriving retail that serves the community and brings in needed sales tax revenue. Local residents would like to be able to walk or bike to a grocery store and additional community amenities in the area. Given current and likely market conditions in Erie, however, the volunteer panelists warned that a “build it and they will come” approach to retail will not likely be successful in this area.

Despite the recent population growth, more than 95 percent of residents leave Erie for employment during the day. Without a daytime population to support local businesses and retail, at a time when consumers increasingly shop online, a Town strategy focused primarily on retail sales will not help the Town meet its financial needs.

To help Town staff determine the best path forward, the TAP panelists provided the findings and recommendations in this report with the combined goals of creating a unique sense of place and an economically thriving center around Erie’s Four Corners.

“We have significant retail leakage in Erie and people don’t want to have to drive to get to the grocery store or restaurants.”

- Ben Pratt, Economic Development Director, Town of Erie

“Erie is missing a sense of downtown and the density needed to create enough demand for retail.”

- Bruce Savett, CEO and Co-Founder, Granite Management Group (Parcel 1)



ULI volunteers tour the study area with local stakeholders during the TAP.

II. Overview

On July 11-12, 2019, ULI Colorado convened a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide guidance regarding future development in Erie's Four Corners area. For this two-day TAP, ULI Colorado assembled six land use experts (see panelist bios on page 29) who volunteered to offer objective, third-party advice. The panel reviewed a detailed advance packet of prior studies, toured the study area, and interviewed local stakeholders, including Town staff, elected officials, property and business owners, and local residents and organizational leaders (for a list of stakeholders interviewed, see page 28).

The Town of Erie gave the panelists the following problem statement and questions to address during the TAP:

Problem Statement

The goal for this study area is to determine how best to create a unique sense of place and an economically thriving center around Erie's Four Corners (the intersection of Erie Parkway and County Line Road), given current and likely market conditions in Erie. Within the study area, which includes about 390 acres, four different property owners have development plans, covering a total of 116 acres, in various stages of entitlement (see Entitlement Status in Exhibit A). Without delaying projects, the Town wants to ensure these individual developments are complementary and all contribute to creating an attractive community center with the right mix of retail, office, residential, park and open space uses that will thrive in Erie's market. Further, we want to achieve the goal of an attractive community center while also strengthening Erie's existing historic Downtown, which is located just northeast of the study area, and is starting to see new commercial development. In summary, the Town wants ULI's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to work with the Town and stakeholders to help develop the framework for a clear and realistic vision for the center of Erie.

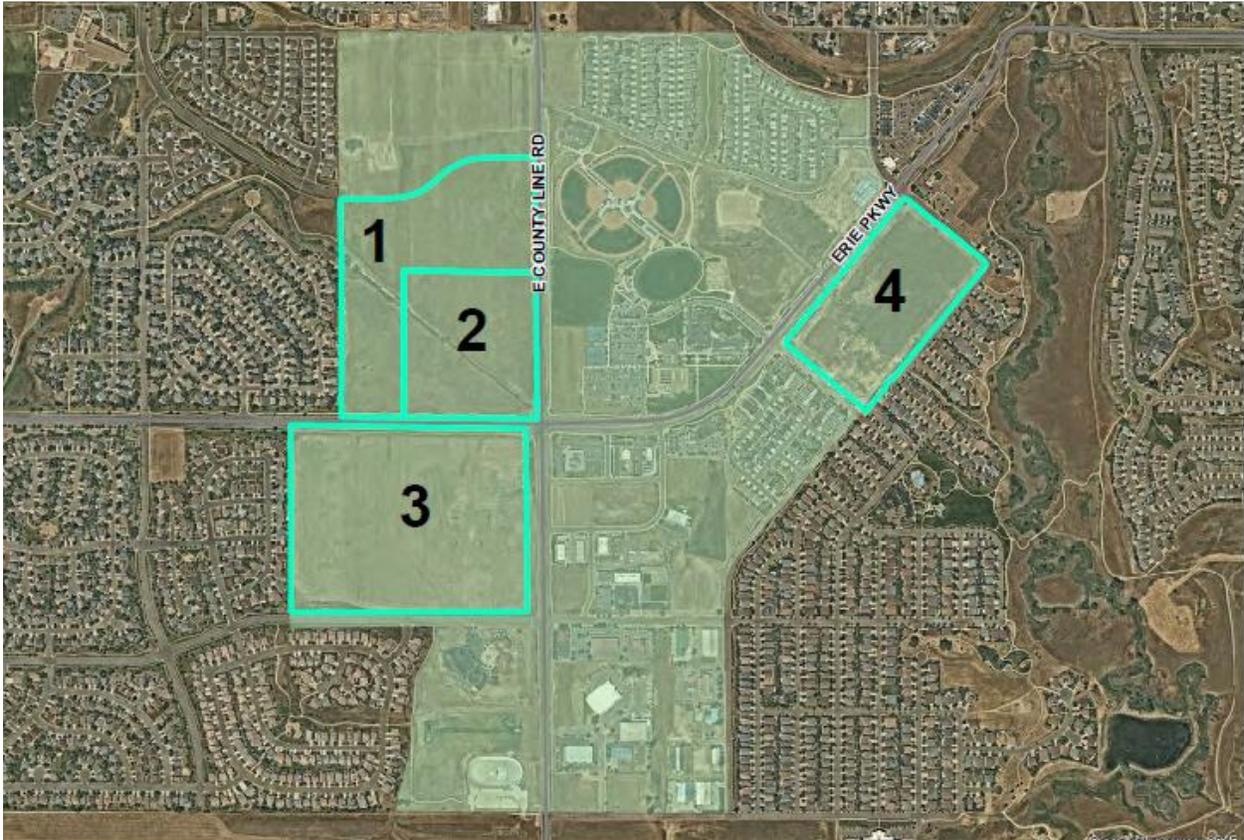
The Town of Erie wants areas zoned for commercial/community commercial and business to develop as zoned, but the Town recognizes that not all land configurations are viable for full retail or commercial development. We request the TAP's assistance in (1) evaluating the viability of the current zoning, (2) identifying ULI's best practices in affordable housing, economic development, placemaking, healthy communities, walkability, public-private partnerships and infrastructure that would be applicable to and promote more sustainable development in this area, and (3) determining whether converting any of the commercially zoned land to residential is necessary, and if so, what would be the financial impact of that action.

The City seeks the panel's insight and recommendations in answer to the following questions:

1. How much and where is commercial development viable? What best practices or criteria can Erie use to evaluate requests to convert commercially zoned parcels into residential?
2. What development elements will most effectively promote a sense of place and economic vitality? Also, what other tools (design guidelines, design overlay, other) should Erie use to create and maximize the placemaking opportunities throughout the study area?
3. How can we coordinate development despite multiple ownerships?
4. How can we achieve the vision without delays that might jeopardize viable projects?
5. Are there ways to use or better leverage the URA tools to promote commercial and retail development in the area?
6. How can we support development in Four Corners in a way that also supports development in historic downtown Erie? What is the overall development potential of this area?
7. How might the I-25 and Nine Mile developments affect the viability of commercial/retail development in the study area in the immediate future and after the Nine Mile buildout (1 to 3 years) and the I-25 master plan is developed (3 to 10 years)?
8. What can we do to help support existing businesses and still foster more walkable development and a unique sense of place?
9. What key insights can you share that will help inform the Town's update of its Unified Development Code (UDC), so the UDC provides a clear, predictable and swift path forward to develop individual properties in ways that are consistent with the community vision?

This report includes findings and recommendations related to each of these questions. For an index of panel answers to each question, please see pages 25-27.

About the Study Area



The map above illustrates the study area and the four parcels of focus within the study area.

The Town of Erie requested that the TAP examine four independent development plans from four different private developers (Ranchwood, Regency Centers, Foundry Builders, and Erie Commons) who have worked independently to submit development proposals for each site. All have requested a zoning, planned development, or comprehensive plan modification to change either the residential density or land use within their project area. The study area is approximately 390 acres and lies at the heart of the community.

This development area is informally known as the Four Corners. The Four Corners is the geographic center of town. Parcels one through three are located at the intersection of County Line Road and Erie Parkway. Parcel four is located to the East of Four Corners intersection at Erie Parkway and Briggs streets.

The four different parcels of land are undeveloped and identified on the Land Use Plan Map as Community Commercial (defined as areas that allow for a full range of community-oriented retail and service commercial uses). Surrounding land use consists of low and medium density residential, mixed use, Public/Quasi Public, Parks/Public Open Space, Industrial and Business.

“We want to create a great development on the four corners site that attracts people here. We also need sales tax, which is the most politically palatable revenue source.”

- Malcolm Fleming, Town Administrator, Town of Erie

Parcel 1: Ranchwood (28.54 Acres)

This developer is in the middle of the sketch plan process. This property is zoned Commercial Mixed-Use. However, it is difficult to meet the commercial requirements on the parcel given the unique shape and size, and its immediate proximity to a Parcel 2 – Regency’s Commercial Corner. This is a bank-owned property that has partnered with Chartered Development to create this mixed-use development. Chartered Development has successfully built a medium density residential development on Highway 7 in Erie. Their initial plan included similar medium density residential and apartment buildings. Chartered intends to maintain ownership of the residential properties and lease.

“We’ve heard from the community that they want a walkable, inviting town center. A mix of uses with outdoor eating spaces would attract people here.”

- Bruce Savett, CEO and Co-Founder, Granite Management Group (Parcel 1)

Parcel 2: Regency (20.34 Acres)

Regency Centers is a national developer of shopping center-anchored developments. They acquired the property in 2007. The parcel is zoned Business. In past years, Regency told the Town that housing densities and traffic volumes were insufficient to successfully support development of the site. In recent conversations, however, Regency suggested that development may be viable. Surrounding property will likely benefit from development on the Regency site.

Parcel 3: Foundry Builders (45.1 Acres)

Foundry Builders is the owner & developer of this property, which comprises two parcels and zoned as a planned development. The 11.2 acres that border County Line Road on the east of the property is planned commercial and has an established Business Improvement District. The remaining 33.9 acres is planned for mixed-use residential. The Town approved a Metro District to support this portion of the development. Foundry has completed the entitlement process for an initial phase of commercial development on the south east corner of the property. In 2013, the Town and Town of Erie Urban Renewal Authority (TOEURA) approved an Urban Renewal Area for this entire property. The developer is currently working on resubmitting plans for the remainder of the site while securing financing.

Parcel 4: Erie Commons (21.1 Acres)

The owner/developer of this property is Community Development Group (CDG). CDG has operated in Erie for more than 20 years and is responsible for a significant amount of the town’s recent growth. This parcel is currently zoned community commercial. For more than seven years, this property has been vacant despite being an active listing. There is currently a metro district with a residential mill levy on this parcel of 164 mills. The owner and Town staff believe this high mill levy is one of many factors that may be limiting the ability to develop this property. The developer is in the process of refinancing bonds for the metro district, contingent on rezoning half of the parcel as medium density residential. This property is part of the TOEURA Historic Old Town Urban Renewal Area.



Signs at the intersection of East County Line Road and Erie Parkway in the study area show continued housing development.

III. Findings

During the workshop, the panelists toured the study area, spoke with local stakeholders, and reviewed materials from the Town of Erie about the study area and its surrounding community. Before diving into recommendations, the panelists came up with the following findings.

Community Assets

Panelists agreed that the Town of Erie has a strong community with a beautiful historic downtown and the financial tools—like the Town of Erie Urban Renewal Authority and local Business Improvement Districts—to move toward its goals for great placemaking. Some of the specific assets serving the area include:

- Small town character
- Strong community
- Access to the outdoors
- Old Town
- Town of Erie Urban Renewal Authority
- Special Districts (Business Improvement District and Metro District)
- Mixed-use zoning
- High median household income
- Community Center
- Open space and trail system

Challenges

The Town of Erie is wise to proactively examine the economic and placemaking potential of this study area before development takes place. Transforming this auto-oriented intersection into a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area will take time and expense, and must be accomplished in a way that supports the Town's financial future. Some of the identified potential challenges include:

- 72.1 percent sales tax leakage
- Town's need for fiscal stability is urgent
- Local desire for retail, but lack of enough demand to support it
- Comprehensive Plan doesn't match board's vision
- Outdated codes
- Inconsistent, unpredictable entitlement process
- Lack daytime population
- Difficult to get a grocer
- Regency's land holding strategy
- Concerns about traffic
- Concerns about density
- Concerns about apartments and affordable housing
- If only housing is built in the center of town, retail will be pushed to the periphery and more people will need to drive

Market Analysis

In addition to general findings, the panelists provided a cursory market analysis for the study area. They recommended that the Town of Erie hire professionals to complete a more comprehensive market analysis in the near term and provided suggestions on what to include along with their market findings below.

Market Findings:

- Need for additional rooftops and daytime population to support desired retail
- 4,300 households in 1.5-mile radius of the study area currently
- There is grocery demand, but not enough to support a grocery store (there is demand for about 12,000 square feet of grocery, but would need demand for 25,000 square feet at a minimum)
- Smaller format grocery stores (e.g. Lucky's) look for 10,000 households in a 1-mile radius
- Current retail demand in the study area: About 50,000 square feet of restaurant demand

Changing External Economic Environment:

- Retail Sales Shifts
 - Commodity sales shifting to online, e.g. Amazon
 - Contraction of hard goods retailers, e.g. department stores

"We need sales tax. If we don't do something, we risk going into deficit."

- Steve Felten, Director of Finance, Town of Erie

SAMPLE CRITERIA FOR RETAIL DEMAND

While grocery criteria for site selection change all the time, these are a sample of current criteria:

- **Safeway:** 10,000 households in 2-mile radius
- **Lucky's:** 10,000 households in 1-mile radius
- **Sprouts:** 100,000 population within 10 minutes

There are around 4,300 households in Erie's 1.5-mile radius currently.

Another important note is that most grocery stores are not focused on adding stores right now, as they deal with online competition.

- Grocery industry in transition to respond to online shopping and many chains are not currently investing in new stores
- Retail-Developer Capital Access Constrained
 - Public REIT values stressed
 - Retail investment out of favor, lenders and investors
- Construction Costs High
 - Tight labor market
 - High material costs

Panelists determined that additional market analysis would be needed to refine demand estimates and to provide detailed sales tax revenue information by category over time.

While the commercial market always follows the residential market, panelists did offer further recommendations on concrete ways to build market demand in the next section.



Coal was discovered in the area in the 1860s and by 1870, the Denver-Pacific Spur Railroad stopped in Erie. The railroad made it much easier to transport coal to the surrounding communities and to Denver, helping the town grow quickly.



ULI volunteers discuss options for the study area during the Technical Advisory Panel.

IV. Recommendations

In answer to the questions posed to them, the panelists divided their recommendations into the following categories:

- Building Demand (page 11)
- Placemaking & Connections (page 15)
- Development in the Study Area (page 18)
- Updating the Vision & Entitlements Process (page 22)
- Recommended Chronological Steps (page 23)

Building Demand

Although there is not currently sufficient demand to support the kind of retail development that the community would like to see, the panelists suggested strategies for building market demand for future development.

Add Multifamily Housing to the Study Area:

For the study area to become a mixed-use town center with community amenities, Erie must bolster its daytime population and number of households. Panelists suggested allowing developers to add multifamily housing—such as townhomes, condos, and apartments—to the mix of uses throughout the study area, as they’ve already proposed.

“Why hasn’t there been more interest in commercial development on this land? Because demand isn’t there yet.”

**- Leslie Jones,
representative for estate of
Ellen Lumry (land north of
Parcel 1)**

Add Anchor Uses to the Study Area that Attract People & Make Them Want to Stay:

“Do we need to introduce more employment? Is this a viable area for that?”

Panelists also suggested focusing on potential anchor uses that would attract people to the study area, such as:

- Up to 25,000-30,000 square foot grocery store (in the long term)
- 20,000-30,000 square foot office
- 20,000-40,000 square foot civic/entertainment use, like a museum

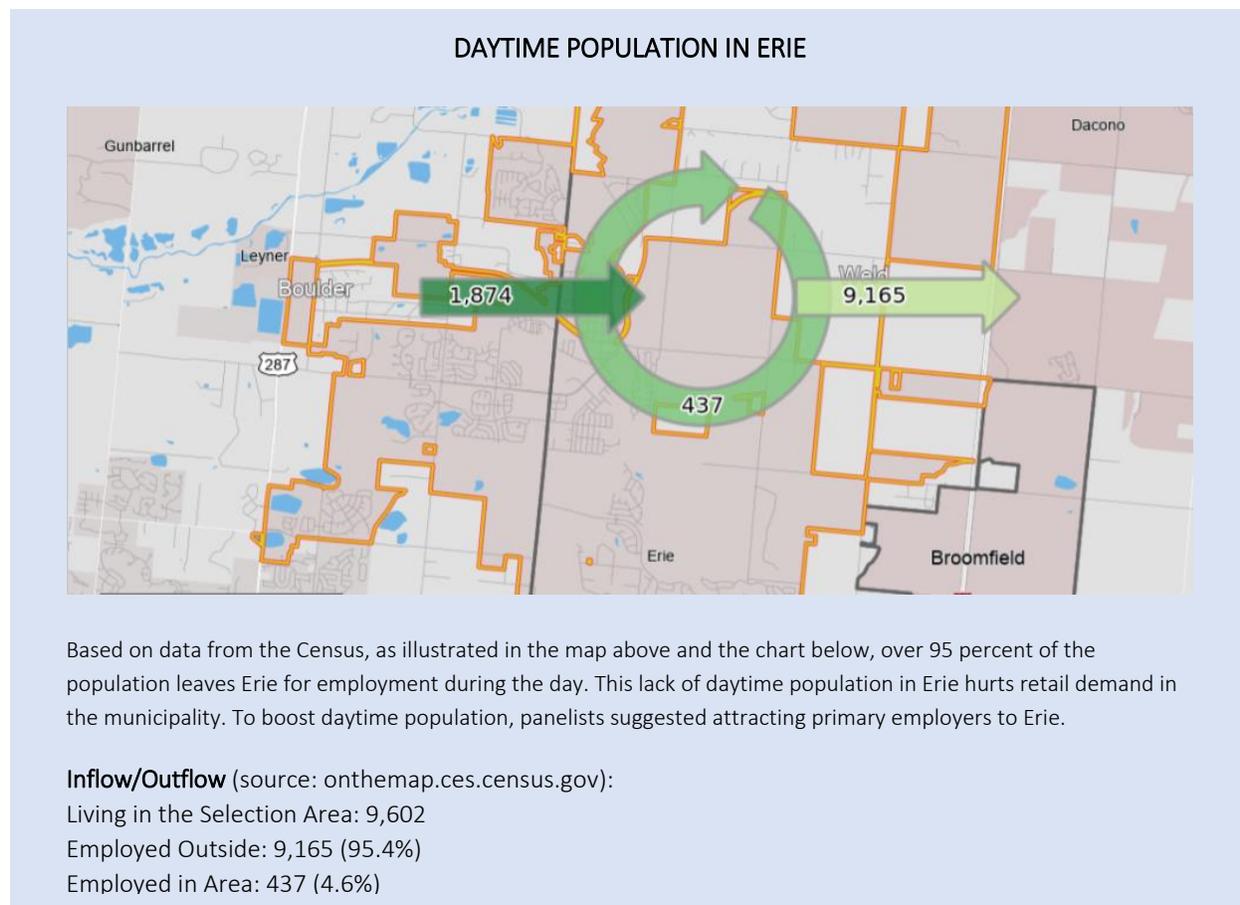
- Ben Pratt, Economic Development Director, Town of Erie

Focus on Primary Employment:

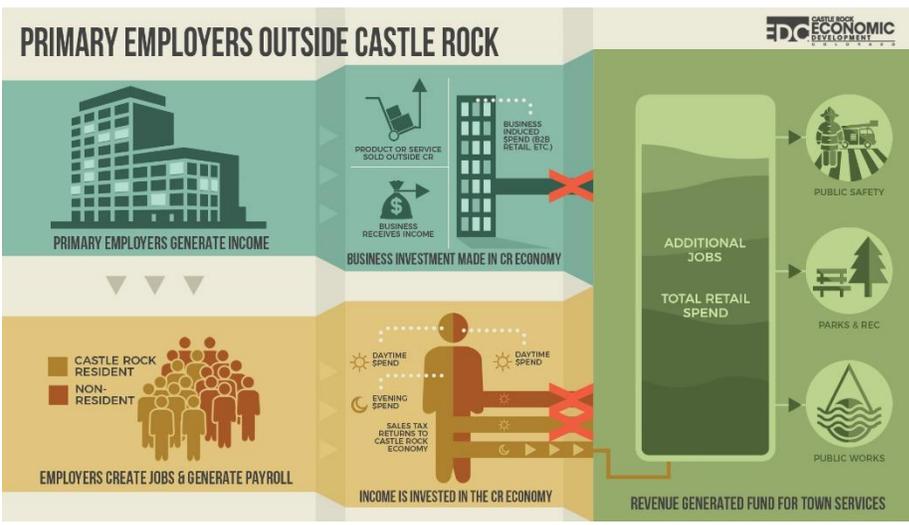
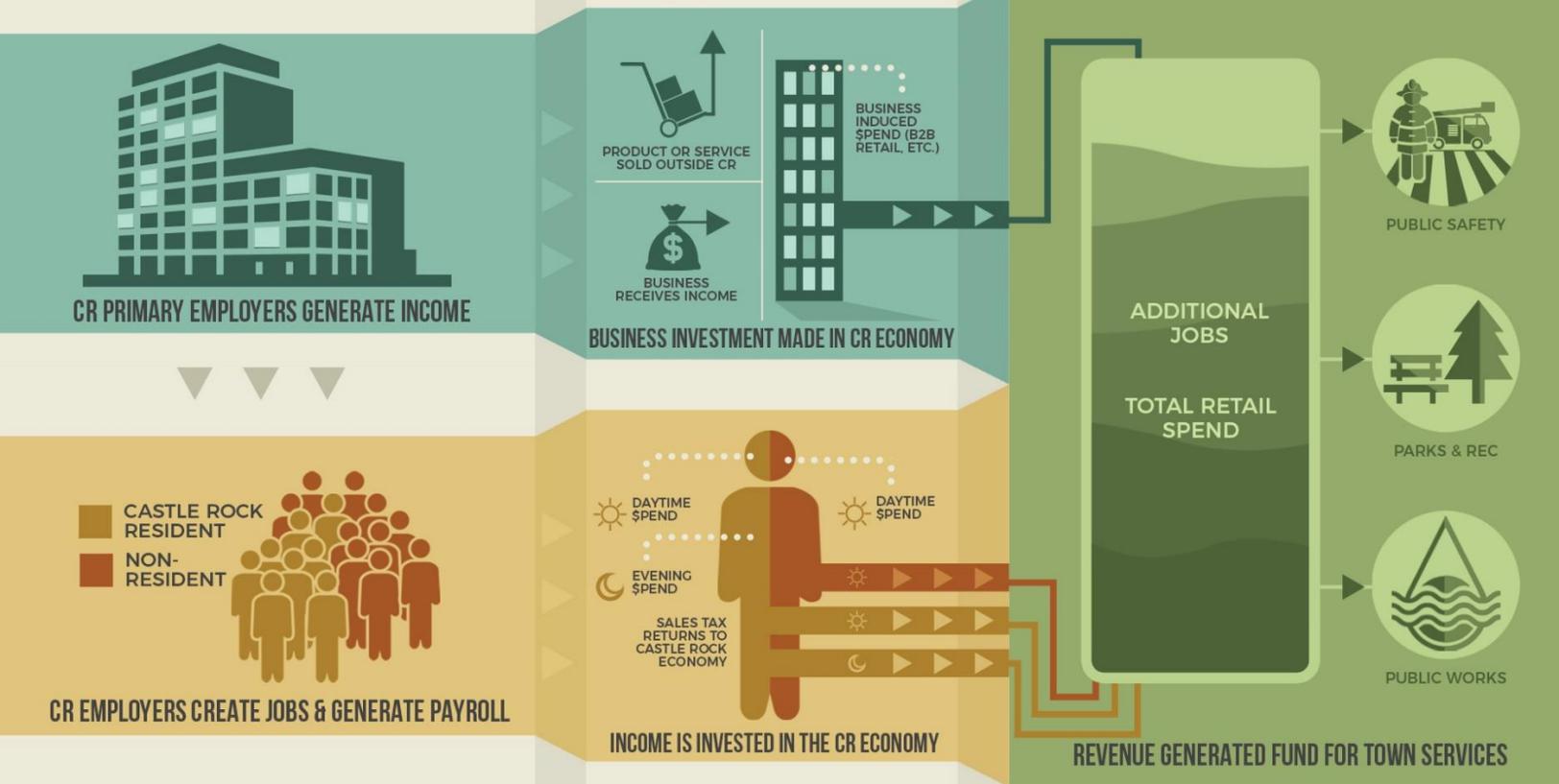
To bolster Erie’s daytime population, the panelists recommended an economic development strategy that focuses on recruiting primary employers to the Town.

A Primary Employer sells at least 50 percent of its goods or services outside of the municipality. This helps bolster the local economy and provides employment opportunities for residents. Since primary employers can locate anywhere, they can be difficult for municipalities to attract.

Panelists suggested using incentives to attract primary employers. They also recommended creating a sense of urgency by letting the primary employers know that this is a unique opportunity to be part of a special place.



PRIMARY EMPLOYERS IN CASTLE ROCK



The infographics above and to the left illustrate the influence that primary employers have on the local economy in Castle Rock (infographics courtesy Castle Rock Economic Development). They have both direct and indirect impacts on the economy through their sales income and the jobs they create.

Without primary employers (illustrated by red crosses in the infographic to the left), three quarters of the economic benefits are lost, leaving only nighttime spending by residents.

Learning from Castle Rock

Located between Denver and Colorado Springs, the Town of Castle Rock (pop. 60,000) offers some interesting comparisons with the Town of Erie. Like Erie, Castle Rock is a growing suburban community built around a historic downtown core. But Castle Rock has been more successful in attracting the type of retail that provides local services and feeds the local tax base. During the TAP, Marcus Notheisen, Vice President of Castle Rock Economic Development, shared his strategies for attracting primary employers (and thus a larger daytime population to feed retail growth).

To attract primary employers, Castle Rock Economic Development created the following incentive programs:

Job Creation Incentives:

\$1,000 per job created or relocated (a primary employer must stay in the municipality for at least 2 years to receive all the incentives):

- \$500 if position is held by a Castle Rock Resident
- \$500 if the position is paid above the County Average (\$64,000)
- \$1,000 if the position meets the definition of a “targeted industry” as defined in the Town’s Economic Development Policies

Office Lease Program:

Objective: Attract primary employers by investing in new office development.

Proposed Structure:

- Town leases the lesser of 25 percent or 10,000 square feet
- Rate determined at the time of project for unoccupied core & shell
- Master Lease phases out proportionate to the amount of space leased above 75 percent occupancy

Eligibility Criteria:

- Class A office building with a minimum of 40,000 square feet
- Site that can accommodate at least two, 40,000 square foot buildings
- Promotes and establishes a primary employment market
- At least 25 percent pre-leased to primary employer

Overall, the panelists determined that there are multiple ways of bolstering the city’s tax base beyond retail development. In particular, they suggested:

- Focus not just on retail, but on community uses and amenities that attract people and employers:
 - Activate the area as much as possible
 - Without enough rooftops to support desired retail, identify civic uses and employers to attract people to the area (examples in the following sections)
- Economic development strategy:
 - Identify specific retailers that would be interested in moving or expanding to the area (direct outreach in addition to contacting the International Council of Shopping Centers)
 - Work with the Erie Economic Development Council and others to identify specific office users (survey, outreach)
 - Reach out to potential civic/entertainment anchor uses, like museums

“We don’t have people here during the daytime, which is needed to support businesses.”

- Ed Byrne, attorney

“We want to promote primary employment, keep businesses here, and bring in new businesses.”

- Shannon Dodge, Erie Economic Development Council

Placemaking & Connections

As important to building demand as it is to building community, the panelists recommended developing a master plan for this area. A larger vision for this area can be included in the Town’s updated Comprehensive Plan. The benefit of planning for the sites comprehensively, as opposed to parcel by parcel, is that then the Town can contribute to creating a cohesive community gathering place that leverages and contributes to surrounding uses.

“This area can capitalize on proximity to Old Town and can add needed daytime population to support retail in both areas.”

- Ben Pratt, Economic Development Director, Town of Erie



The map above illustrates the study area’s relationship to Old Town (in orange), which is an essential anchor to build from and leverage. It is rare to have available sites of this size adjacent to a historic downtown, and the Town can invest in infrastructure—such as bike and pedestrian amenities—that connect the hubs to ensure they are symbiotic over time. (Map by panelist Brent Lloyd.)

“Civic investments through access, connectivity, and community amenities will be important.”

- Ben Pratt, Economic Development Director, Town of Erie

“We need places that we can walk or bike to. We have a ton of bikers, dog walkers, and kids in our community.”

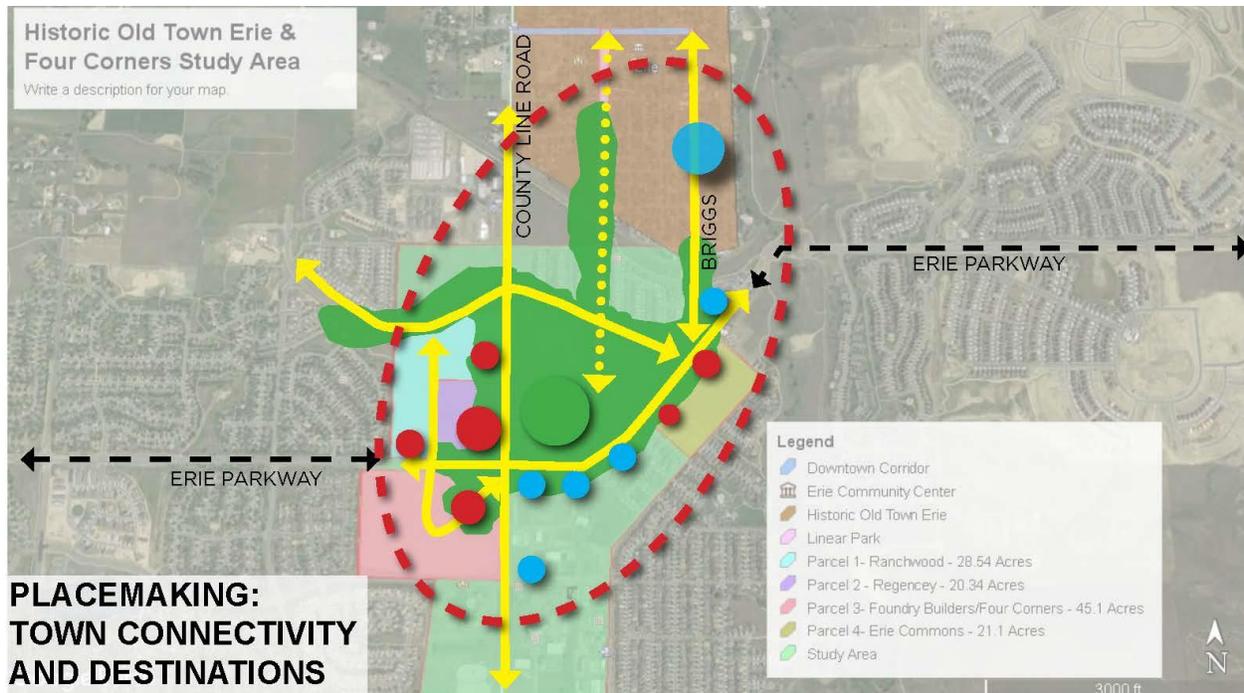
- Cindy Stewart, Erie Commons



Existing commercial uses (blue dots) and the Erie Community Center (green dot) show a linkage and draw between Old Town and the study area in the map above. (Map by panelist Brent Lloyd.)



Proposed commercial developments (red dots) create opportunities for future community gathering places that could increasingly tie the area together for the community. (Map by panelist Brent Lloyd.)



The major transportation corridors coming through this area are an asset for retail and commercial development, especially if traffic is calmed near future pedestrian-oriented areas. The panelists suggested investing in bike and pedestrian amenities and green infrastructure to connect the study area to Old Town and surrounding communities, so that people can get to the destinations without relying on cars. The map above by panelist Brent Lloyd illustrates connectivity (yellow), green infrastructure (green), existing commercial uses (blue dots), and proposed commercial developments (red dots).

To make the area safer for bicyclists and pedestrians, the panelists recommended slowing traffic. Pedestrian crosswalks, street parking, street trees, bulb outs, and buildings that are oriented along the streets all help calm traffic and reduce the risk of conflict at intersections. Orienting buildings along the streets instead of behind parking lots could also add visibility to buildings and their uses, which gives them a better chance of viability.

The panelists recommended leveraging Maxwell Avenue, which is calmer than Erie Parkway, for bike and pedestrian connectivity between Old Town, surrounding neighborhoods, and the study area. The proposed roundabout at the intersection of Maxwell Avenue and East County Line Road would help to improve traffic safety as well. Overall, redefining these corridors for people, as opposed to just cars, will help to strengthen and connect the community.

“We would like to make East County Line Road more interactive with the street.”

- Bonner Gilmore, EnerTia Consulting Group (Parcel 1)

“We need to weave the town back together using this crossroads. We also need to recapture people’s imaginations. New Urbanism, with an old fashioned street grid and mix of uses, really needs to be called Old Urbanism. The good news is it’s been done for centuries.

The bad news is it hasn’t been done in the last 50 years.”

- Ed Byrne, attorney



Panelist Brent Lloyd provided the images above as inspiration for placemaking in and around the study area. By connecting people to the outdoors, to local farms, and to the regional bike network, this area could become a vital community hub. Adding civic uses to the study area would draw people to this Town Center and attract other uses around them.

Development in the Study Area

Development in the study area should account for what the community needs and what is viable. **The panelists recommended allowing the existing development proposals to move forward and to focus the most density and mixed-use on Parcel 2, creating a true Town Center. To accomplish this, the panelists recommended a holding strategy for Parcel 2, waiting until there is enough demand for development.**

Other overall recommendations for the study area include:

- The Town should be cautious of permitting too much commercially zoned land in the parcels to be converted for residential uses.
- There are areas on these parcels where retail uses in the short- and mid-term might not be viable.
- Broaden the focus from retail and sales tax generating uses to include offices and other community uses.
- Civic investments can attract sales tax generating uses.
- The retail environment has changed since the original zoning. The amount of commercial required on each site should be reviewed and coordinated across the study area. Public-private partnerships may be required if acceleration beyond current market demand is needed to support the development of desired uses. Overall, the Town needs to be proactive to get what it wants.



CRITERIA FOR COMMERCIAL

“Current criteria for the amount of commercial on each parcel are arbitrary. Think about the area as a whole and allow for the right amount of commercial based on market demand and the community vision.” - Panelists

- Reduce setback requirements to slow traffic and create a more comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Don't shy away from franchises if their design and development is sensitive to the community context. Many franchises look like local businesses, although they may be more financially sustainable.

Parcel 1 (Ranchwood)

- This parcel is the transition between the best retail corner (parcel 2) and existing single-family development.
- The adjacent single-family development would benefit from denser residential uses—like townhomes, condos, and/or apartments—that buffer it from commercial and civic uses.
- Move proposed townhome development forward.
- Commercial uses should be focused on the street frontage of East County Line Road and Erie Parkway.
- The commercial spaces should be designed to be as adaptable and flexible as possible, especially since the retail environment is in flux.
- Too many small-scale retail spaces would be challenging because it is difficult to replace many tenants over time. Allow flexibility of uses instead.
- Civic uses, office space, and food and beverage retail will likely be the most viable and desired commercial uses in this area.



Ranchwood Concept Plan provided by Town of Erie staff.



Rendering of proposed townhomes at Ranchwood provided by Town of Erie staff.



Rendering of proposed commercial development at Ranchwood provided by Town of Erie staff.

“Residents want a gradual transition between neighborhoods, higher density and commercial.”

- Jennifer Carroll, Mayor, Town of Erie

“Think about adaptability of the space and what happens when the market shifts.”

- Malcolm Fleming, Town Administrator, Town of Erie

Parcel 2 (Regency)

- This parcel is the most viable retail corner and it is buffered from single family homes by the development proposed on Parcel 1.
- Regency does not currently seem motivated to develop the site and grocers are not currently interested in the site due to insufficient demand.
- A holding strategy would make sense. The Town could wait and consider opportunities to purchase the property for future desired development.
- This parcel could be suitable as a neighborhood Town Center, which could contain higher residential densities, mixed use (apartments or offices above, retail below), community facilities, and ideally a grocery component when it is viable.



The panel proposed mixed-use development on parcel 2. (Rendering of Eastbridge Town Center, which includes local restaurants and community amenities, in Stapleton courtesy The Kitchen.)

“Regency has owned this parcel for over 15 years—land banked, which is atypical for the company. We would say allow retail to stabilize over time and for this area to be an anchor with a community gathering space. For us to be successful with a ground-up development, we would need multi-family to make the project work financially.”

- Will Damarath, Regency Centers (Parcel 2)

Parcel 3 (Foundry Builders)

- This parcel is the farthest along with site planning. Panelists support the proposed commercial frontage, moderate density multi-family housing like townhomes and low-scale apartments, and single family detached homes.
- The plan should be reviewed to determine if it could eliminate subsurface storm detention to redirect Urban Renewal Authority resources for uses that the community will be able to see and use, like trails.



Rendering of proposed development on parcel 3 by Foundry Builders provided by Town of Erie staff.

Parcel 4 (Erie Commons)

- This parcel is at the gateway between Old Town and the Four Corners area and, ideally, the design of future development here should make a good first impression as it is one of the primary entrances to the Town.
- Low density multifamily would be suitable as a transition between the existing single family and future commercial uses.
- The commercial uses should be oriented to the street frontage.



Rendering of proposed development on parcel 4 by Community Development Group provided by Town of Erie staff.

Updating the Vision & Entitlements Process

Attracting Quality Commercial Developers with a Predictable Entitlements Process

Commercial developers can go anywhere. What they look for is predictability in the entitlements process, which can save them significant time and money. To attract developers who create high-quality projects, make the development review process less subjective and based on clear criteria coming from the Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Code, both of which should be based on the community's vision for the Town.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Several Town staff, including the Town Administrator and Planning & Development Director, mentioned that the current Comprehensive Plan does not reflect the Board of Trustees' perspectives on where the town needs to go in the future and that it should be updated. Updating the Comprehensive Plan must be a public process so that it reflects the community's vision. As part of the Comprehensive Plan, Town staff will need to prepare a clear and realistic vision based on community input and market information for commercial development in different areas of Erie.

With regard to the vision, panelists recommended focusing on placemaking for the community:

- Create destinations where people want to go and hang out (food helps)
- Allow for flexible spaces that support the incubation of uses and accommodate shifts in the market
- Consider greater height and density in the Town Center
- Add bike and pedestrian infrastructure that will connect community spaces
- Reach out directly to retailers and office users to see if they would be interested in coming to Erie

Unified Development Code (UDC) Update

While the Comprehensive Plan provides a vision and guidelines for future development, the Unified Development Code (UDC) is the instruction manual for how to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Panelists recommend updating the UDC so that it is consistent with the community vision, allows flexibility of uses, and enables a more predictable entitlements process.

The update should include:

- (1) Eliminate the need for all development applications to resort to PUDs.

"People are concerned about the length of time needed for development approvals and higher fees here."

- Shannon Dodge, Erie Economic Development Council

"The Comp Plan doesn't reflect the current board's perspective on where the town needs to go. It needs to be updated."

- Malcolm Fleming, Town Administrator, Town of Erie

"We need to start with the code instead of picking winners and losers. We could also use a tracking system for development proposals."

- Farrell Buller, Deputy Town Administrator, Town of Erie Urban Renewal Authority

"The UDC is not a friendly code for creating quality development. Anything that gets done here is a PUD and the current process isn't predictable. There are no guarantees that things will go through even if you check every box."

- Jon Lee, Community Development Group (Parcel 4)

- (2) Allow Town staff to be independent and autonomous for the initial Sketch review.
- (3) During formal development application process, follow the UDC (once it's updated) as criteria to reduce subjectivity.

A clear, predictable, and swift path for planning review processes will help the Town of Erie attract the kind of development that aligns with its vision for the town's future.

Recommended Chronological Steps

- (1) Allow development proposals to move forward efficiently. Coordinate with Foundry Builders, Community Development Group, Chartered Holdings, and Regency on public improvements and development cohesion.
- (2) Conduct a more thorough market analysis for uses.
- (3) Set vision for the town (update the Comprehensive Plan).
- (4) Update the development review process to make it more predictable and consistent (update the UDC).
- (5) Establish economic development policies (incentives for primary employers).
- (6) Make civic investments, such as bike and pedestrian connectivity between Old Town and Four Corners.

“With our current sketch plan review, developers walk away with no assurance, and with all the political turnover, there are a lot of upfront costs with no guarantees. Since sketch review is supposed to be for rough conceptual plans, we could give staff more autonomy over that step in the process. It should be more about whether proposals meet the criteria or not—and not discretionary for the trustees to decide.”

- Fred Starr, Planning & Development Director, Town of Erie



View of housing facing parcels 1 and 2 in Four Corners.

V. Conclusions

The panelists concluded that the study area has great potential for a mix of uses that will support the community in the long-term. A diversity of uses and users will allow this area to thrive over time. By adding housing options, community gathering spaces, and connectivity throughout the study area, the Town can support local retail and commercial uses that contribute to the Town's financial sustainability.

The panelists urged the Town to engage in a proactive economic development strategy, including the appropriate use of incentives and partnerships to address financial gaps and to promote desirable redevelopment opportunities. Attracting primary employers and office space would add to Erie's daytime population, which is needed to support the kind of retail and amenities that the community desires.

Regarding process, the panelists recommended allowing the existing development proposals to move forward and to focus the most density and mix of uses on Parcel 2, creating a true Town Center. To accomplish this, the panelists recommended a holding strategy for Parcel 2, waiting until there is enough demand. Coordination of development in this area should begin with a more comprehensive master planning process for the area. They also recommended making the development review process more predictable and consistent to allow the private sector to help fulfill the Town's goals, which can be made clear in an updated Comprehensive Plan and Unified Development Code. The market will inevitably change over time, but flexibility in the plans and codes can allow this area and others to respond accordingly.

Overall, this is a fantastic opportunity for the Town of Erie to create a great place!

VI. Index of Panel Answers to Questions

1. **How much and where is commercial viable?** Developers in Erie, including some in the study area, regularly request zoning changes to convert commercial (Business, Community Commercial, Community Mixed-Use and Planned Development) zoned property to residential. Because the Town needs more retail sales tax revenue, the Town is reluctant to approve such requests. However, the Town also realizes commercial zoning is not viable in poor locations or beyond what the market will sustainably support. How can the Town more objectively determine retail/commercial viability? Specifically, based on industry standards, how much commercial, retail and office is viable in Erie today (population 28,000) and in the future (population 68,000 by full build out in 2045), and within a three-mile radius of the study area? What best practices or criteria can Erie use to evaluate requests to convert commercially zoned parcels into residential?
 - a. Please see the Market Analysis section on pages 9-10.
 - b. For suggestions related to conversion from commercial to residential, see page 18.

2. **What development elements will most effectively promote a sense of place and economic vitality?** Staff evaluation of “Main Street” vs “Strip Style” development patterns suggests a Main Street form of development creates significantly higher property value and tax revenue. Existing businesses in the southeast portion of the study area are set back from Erie Parkway and County Line Road in a traditional, low-density suburban layout. We want to evaluate the desirability of allowing—or requiring—development setbacks, streetscape and landscape design that would bring structures closer to County Line Road, and possibly Erie Parkway, to foster a more “Main Street” feel to the area and slow down traffic traveling through the area. Please critique the analysis and advise us on the merits and challenges of changing setbacks and other requirements in this area. Also, what other tools (design guidelines, design overlay, other) should Erie use to create and maximize the placemaking opportunities throughout the study area?
 - a. Panelists supported creating a Main Street feel in this area. For specific placemaking recommendations, see pages 15-18.
 - b. In terms of tools to support this vision, the panelists recommended updating the Comprehensive Plan, UDC, and entitlements process. See pages 22-23.

3. **How can we coordinate development despite multiple ownerships?** The multiple and separate ownership of land within the study area is a significant hurdle to a master development plan. Further, three of the four parcels are at the intersection of Erie Parkway and County Road Line, but the fourth parcel (Erie Commons) is located further east on Erie Parkway. This may present a challenge to incorporate Erie Commons into the overall plan. Additionally, the Erie Commons is located at the southern gateway of the historic Downtown, and the transition from the Four Corners site to the historic Downtown is critical to ensuring future development compliments rather than detracts from development in the historic downtown. Given these constraints and hurdles, what is the best way for Erie to coordinate development?
 - a. The panelists recommended developing a master plan for the study area. The benefit of planning for the sites comprehensively, as opposed to parcel by parcel, is that then the Town can contribute to creating a cohesive community gathering place that leverages and contributes to surrounding uses.
 - b. The panelists also recommended allowing development proposals to move forward efficiently. They suggested coordinating with Foundry Builders, Community Development Group, Chartered Holdings, and Regency on public improvements and development cohesion in this area. For recommendations related to each parcel, see pages 18-21.

4. **How can we achieve the vision without delays?** As noted above, within the study area, four different property owners have development plans, covering a total of 116 acres, in various stages of entitlement. The Town wants to ensure these individual developments are complementary and all contribute to creating an attractive community center with the right mix of retail, office, residential, park and open space uses that will thrive in Erie's market. How can we do that without delays that might jeopardize viable projects?
 - a. The panelists recommended allowing the current development proposals to move forward efficiently.
 - b. For a list of recommended chronological steps, see page 23.

5. **How to best use URA tools?** Parcels three and four in the study area are within existing Urban Renewal Areas (URA) established to remediate blight and barriers to development. These sites have infrastructure improvement barriers, including storm water mitigation, lack of water and sewer infrastructure, potential land subsidence from coal mining undermining, and major site grading requirements. These barriers may make development cost prohibitive. Are there ways to use or better leverage the URA tools to promote commercial and retail development in the area?
 - a. For specific recommendations related to parcels 3 and 4, see pages 20-21.
 - b. The panelists recommended redirecting Urban Renewal Authority resources for uses that the community will be able to see and use, like trails, as opposed to subsurface storm detention on parcel 3, if possible.
 - c. On parcel 4, CDG is already in the process of refinancing bonds for the metro district, contingent on rezoning half of the parcel as medium density residential, which the panel supports.

6. **How can we support development in Four Corners in a way that also supports development in historic downtown Erie?** Historic Downtown Erie is just to the northeast of the study area and just north of the Erie Commons (Parcel 4). The study area is connected to Downtown by the Linear Park, which is just north of the Erie Community Center at the northeast corner of the intersection of County Line Road and Erie Parkway, and by Briggs Street, which intersects Erie Parkway on the north side of Erie Commons. Historic Downtown Erie is starting to see new commercial development, including a new 18,000 SF mixed use/office building and two new restaurants adding to the roughly dozen existing restaurants, offices, civic uses (Town Hall and USPS Post Office) and commercial space. What is the overall development potential of this area? How can we support development in Four Corners in a way that also supports development in historic Downtown Erie?
 - a. Panelists recommended investing in bike and pedestrian connectivity and amenities between Old Town and Four Corners so that people don't have to drive and create traffic between them.
 - b. For specific placemaking recommendations, see pages 15-18.
 - c. Focusing on attracting civic, entertainment, and office uses to the study area can generate daytime population, which will support Old Town and future complementary uses in Four Corners.

7. **How will future development affect Erie's Four Corners and Downtown?** The Town is currently long-term planning a 1,200-acre master planned development at I-25 County and Erie Parkway, about four miles to the east of the study area. The Town also recently resolved a dispute with the City of Lafayette over development on the Nine Mile site (SH 287 and Arapahoe Road) that is about 4 miles to the west of the study area. Erie

and Lafayette are now jointly planning for the immediate commercial development on that 50-acre site (in Erie) and the adjacent 36-acre Tebo property (in Lafayette). How might the I-25 and Nine Mile developments affect the viability of commercial/retail development in the study area in the immediate future and after the Nine Mile buildout (1 to 3 years) and the I-25 master plan is developed (3 to 10 years)?

- a. Please see the Market Analysis section on pages 9-10.
 - b. Although there is currently insufficient demand to support the kind of retail development that the community would like to see, the panelists suggested strategies for building market demand for future development. Recommendations for building market demand are on pages 11-14.
 - c. Future retail development on the periphery of Erie needs to occur thoughtfully in order to ensure that there is sufficient demand to help support unique retail and commercial uses in the center of town.
8. **How can we work with existing suburban development and still achieve a unique “Sense of Place”?** There are existing businesses in the study area that, while contributing to the economic health of the area, also represent typical suburban chain development that may not contribute to the Town’s goal of creating a unique sense of place. These businesses include Walgreens, Burger King, a Shell gas station, and other businesses located in the southeast corner of the study area. What can we do to help support these existing businesses and still foster more walkable development and a unique sense of place?
- a. The panelists suggested investing in bike and pedestrian amenities, green infrastructure, and civic uses, all of which support local retail.
 - b. For specific placemaking recommendations, see pages 15-18.
9. **What key insights can you share that will help inform the Town’s update of the UDC?** We want to use information from this TAP study to inform the Town’s current effort to update its Unified Development Code (UDC), so the UDC provides a clear, predictable and swift path forward to develop individual properties in ways that are consistent with the community vision. What next steps would you recommend to help us best apply the insights from the TAP to foster high value development elsewhere in Town?
- a. The panelists’ recommendations for updating the Comprehensive Plan, UDC, and entitlements process are on pages 22-23.

“The idea that all the commercial development is being built on the outside of Erie is not great because it’s not walkable.”

- Dana Hodel, Canyon Creek South

VII. Stakeholders

Stakeholders Who Participated in the Workshop

Elected Officials:

- Jennifer Carroll, Mayor
- Adam Haid, Board of Trustees

Town of Erie Staff:

- Malcolm Fleming, Town Administrator
- Farrell Buller, Deputy Town Administrator, Town of Erie Urban Renewal Authority
- Steve Felten, Director of Finance
- Fred Starr, Planning & Development Director
- Ben Pratt, Economic Development Director
- Todd Fesseden, Public Works Director
- Joe Smith, Town Engineer

Property Owners & Representatives:

- Ward Ritter, Chartered Holdings (Parcel 1)
- Bonner Gilmore, Enertia Consulting Group (Parcel 1)
- Bruce Savett, Granite Management Group (Parcel 1)
- Jon Lee, Community Development Group (Parcel 4)
- Will Damarath, Regency Centers (Parcel 2)
- Leslie Jones
- Ed Byrne, attorney
- Gene Herbert, Land Design Studios
- Leonard Hobbs
- Bob Travis

Business Community:

- Shannon Dodge, Erie Economic Development Council
- Casey Cemet, Zenith Home Loans

Homeowner Associations:

- Dana Hodel, Canyon Creek South
- Cindy Stewart, Erie Commons
- Kimberly Mowate, Erie Commons
- Donna El-Hehiawy, Sunwest
- JP Manza, Sunwest North

VIII. ULI Volunteer Panelists



Panel Chair Arleen Taniwaki is Principal of ArLand Land Use Economics. ArLand Land Use Economics is a land use economics and planning consulting firm that provides economic, market, and financial feasibility studies, economic benefit, fiscal impact analysis, and implementation plans for land use plans (sub-area, comprehensive plans, regional planning efforts), Transit-Oriented Development, and transportation plans. Its findings and recommendations incorporate public policy considerations, opportunities for public-private partnerships, and an understanding of financial tools available for implementation. The firm has worked with a number of public agencies, private clients and non-profit organizations. Arleen has worked on dozens of small area plans including Denver Union Station, the Mariposa community at 10th and Osage, and the Welton Corridor. She is currently involved in market feasibility and planning activities at the National Western Center in north Denver. Arleen has worked on a number of suburban TODs, suburban master planned communities including Ken-Caryl and the (future) Aurora Highland, suburban and rural downtowns, and redevelopment areas. She was recently the Co-Chair of the ULI TAPs Committee and is also on the ULI Community Development Product Council. Arleen recently served a 6-year term on the Denver Planning Board. She has a Masters in City Planning from the University of California at Berkeley.



Scott Chomiak is the Director of Development for Koelbel and Company. He is a solutions-focused real estate development and business leader with proven track record of driving successful projects from inception to closing. His background is in mixed-use real estate development, resort properties, primary master planned communities, multi-family housing, and entrepreneurial business opportunities both nationally and internationally. Previously, he served as the Vice President of Development and Operations for Equilibrium Resorts/Tharaldson Hospitality Management, where he oversaw asset management, planning, development, sales and operations. He also served as a Principal of Development Services for Dunn + Kiley, as a Vice President of Planning and Development for the Western Division of Centex Destination Properties, as the Director of Development for Castle Rock Development with Sturm Financial Group, as the Director of Development for Intrawest Resort Development Group, and as an Associate with Design Workshop.



Mike Kercheval is the Executive Director of the Real Estate Center at the Leeds School of Business of the University of Colorado Boulder. In this role, he manages and promotes relationships between the real estate industry and the academic community. Previously, Mike served as President and CEO of the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), the world's largest commercial real estate trade association, for sixteen years. Prior to ICSC, Mike spent thirteen years as a portfolio manager and real estate investment banker in New York, at Equitable Real Estate Investment Management and its successor companies, the final three years working in Latin America as CEO of Lend Lease Latin American Realty Advisors. Earlier in his career, Mike was a senior economist with Equitable Life Assurance Society, taught Urban Economics at Columbia University in New York and worked in the 1980's as a staff economist on the Colorado Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Growth Management. A Colorado native and Boettcher Scholar, Mike holds a master's degree and PhD (ABD) in economics from Columbia University and graduated from the University of Colorado Boulder with a triple major in economics, political science and international affairs.



Brent Lloyd is a Managing Principal for BrightView Design Group. In this role, he is responsible for planning, design, preconstruction, and implementation of projects nationally and internationally. Previously, he served as a Senior Project Manager with Wenk Associates, one of the region's most respected landscape architecture and planning firms responsible for project management of primarily public sector urban design, sustainable development, and infrastructure renovation projects. He has also worked with Clark Condon Associates as an Assistant Project Manager and with the Wadsworth Golf Construction Company as an Assistant Project Superintendent. He has a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Georgia and a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University.



Marcus Notheisen is the Vice President of Castle Rock Economic Development. The Castle Rock EDC staff has in-depth knowledge of the local business community and commercial real estate market to help businesses, builders and developers find the location or local expertise needed in Castle Rock, which is comparable to Erie. Previously he served as an Investment Broker for Antonoff & Co. He assisted clients with real estate acquisitions, dispositions, and repositioning of commercial assets. Prior to working in real estate, Marcus was a teacher at Cherry Creek Schools and a Peace Corps Volunteer in Moldova.



Kiley Baham is an Architect with Hord Coplan Macht. Kiley has 17 years of experience as architect, project manager and builder. Kiley is a well-versed architect and project manager who has experience in a variety of project types, including commercial, mixed-use, multi-family and residential. Previously, he was an Associate Architect with KGA Studio Architects and a Project Architect and Project Manager at OZ Architecture. He has worked on a wide range of project types, from mixed-use and multi-family to a project in Antarctica. His goal is always to design buildings that are woven into the area they are located in and reflect the context of the community.

Special thanks to the ULI Colorado TAP Committee Chairs Al Colussy, Andrew Knudtsen, LaDonna Baertlein, and Anna Jones and to the hospitality and sponsorship of the Town of Erie and the Denver Regional Council of Governments.



ULI Colorado Leadership in Responsible Land Use

ULI Colorado is the 1,400-member District Council of the global Urban Land Institute. ULI Colorado consists of a four-person staff, 25-member executive committee, and 15 committees with more than 250 volunteers. More than 40 programs a year include advisory panels, leadership and mentoring programs, panels, project tours, publications, and community service. ULI is a non-lobbying educational and research institute supported by its members, sponsors, and foundations. Key issues include affordable housing, healthy communities, transit-oriented development, and sustainable design and planning.

Chair: Mike Zoellner, Managing Partner, ZF Capital

Treasurer: Mark Tompkins, Principal, Strae Advisory Services

Chair of Mission Advancement: Marilee Utter, President, Citiventure Associates

Governance Chair: Bruce O'Donnell, Principal, Starboard Realty

Chairs emeriti: Amy Cara, Kirk Monroe, Chris Achenbach, Bill Mosher, V. Michael Komppa, Marilee Utter, Julie Underdahl, James DeFrancia, Buz Koelbel, Byron Koste

Executive Director: Michael Leccese
Director: Sarah Franklin
Manager: Marianne Eppig
Senior Associate: Jack Tiebout

