

4.0 PLACEMAKING



CONCEPTUAL GRAPHICS:

Note that all graphics in this chapter are conceptual and further planning and design is anticipated.

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HUBS AND GATEWAYS

The Colfax Ave study area can be defined by four sub-areas, or “hubs”, based on the existing (and future) activities and desired character:

HUBS

- The **Civic** and **Culture** hubs “bookend” the study area, given their public-oriented uses with the State Capitol and Civic Center on the west and East High, Esplanade, future recreation center, and Lowenstein Complex on the east.
- The **Perform** hub is centered around the popular Ogden and Fillmore music venues and event centers.
- The **Mosaic** hub includes a potpourri of uses and activities with many eclectic businesses and popular destinations.

GATEWAYS

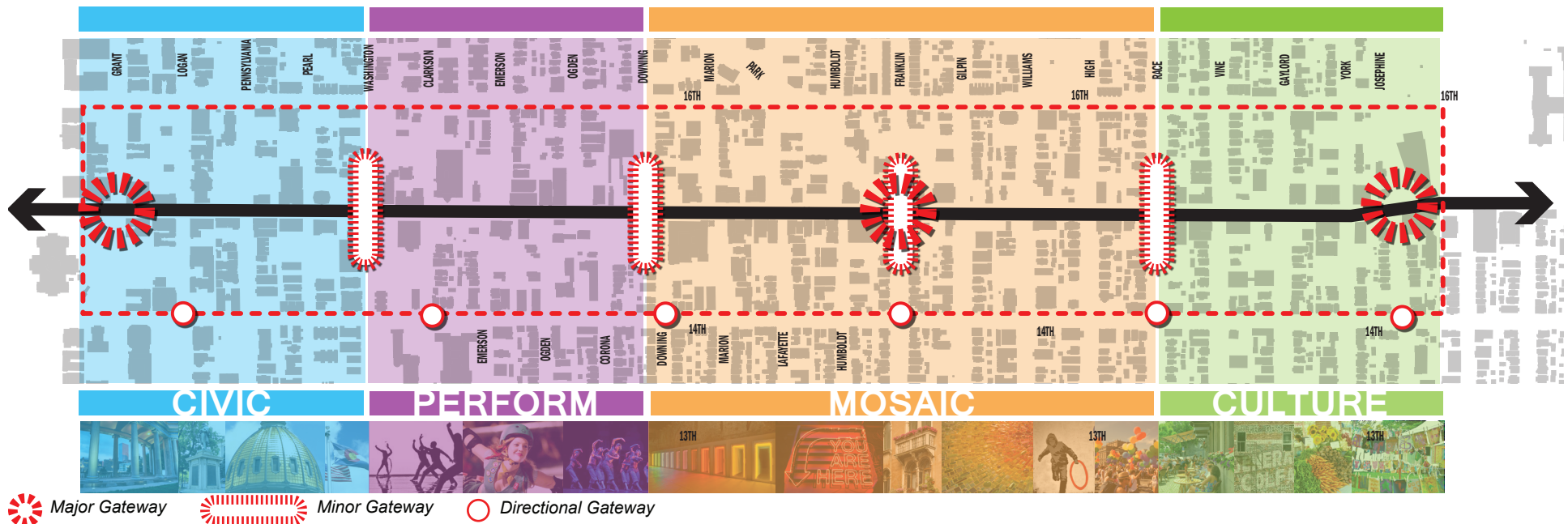
Major Gateway elements announce the passage into the district. Both the Civic and the Culture hubs contain the logical locations for the major gateways at Grant and Josephine Streets. A major gateway also occurs at the intersection of Park Avenue and Colfax, announcing the connection to the historic parkway (and proposed park) and via Franklin Street, the connection to Cheesman Park.

Minor Gateways to the adjoining neighborhoods also occur between the hubs. These gateways will serve as primary enhanced crossing areas to knit the neighborhoods north and south of Colfax together and to serve as “decision points” to direct people to major destinations such as: the Hospital District, Restaurant Row (17th Ave.), and Cheesman and City Parks.

Directional Gateways occur along 14th Avenue and are intended to direct automobile traffic traveling east on 14th to major destinations along Colfax Avenue. These are strategically located on northbound one-way streets (Logan, Clarkson, Downing, and Josephine) as well as Franklin and Race Streets.

“BIG IDEA” CONCEPTS

A “big idea” is presented for each hub to increase public space and connectivity along the corridor. The concepts presented herein are for illustrative purposes only. However, each proposal has a synergy with other city-wide initiatives, or relates to historic patterns, giving them merit to be taken seriously. Further study is required and should be pursued by the City at the request of Colfax Ave.



"THE CIVIC GATEWAY"

The intersection of Colfax Avenue with Grant Street is the westernmost boundary of the BID - it is where Downtown meets the Capitol Hill neighborhoods. This intersection also includes a future BRT station. Concepts for creating a grand entrance are included on the following page.

NOTE: conceptual rendering was produced early-on in the project. It may not represent fully all recommendations.



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GATEWAY FEATURE

Tall, colorful, eye-catching gateway features shall be placed on the east side of the intersection. These vertical elements will announce the entry into a special place and help tell the story of Colfax Ave. They will be unique, yet sophisticated and sleek.

LIGHTING

Enhanced lighting shall occur at this important intersection to portray safety and interest at night. These lights should be different than the existing pedestrian lights, but they should not overpower the gateway feature (which will also be illuminated).

STREET TREES

Street trees shall be placed on the north side of the street only, due the north side of the street receiving more sunlight as well as this area having high pedestrian counts combined with limited right-of-way and sidewalk width. Street trees in this subarea shall be an upright, columnar species in response to the strong architecture and column repetition that can be seen in the State Capitol and Civic Center Park.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

This is an important place for wayfinding signage and maps to orient pedestrians to specific destinations. And to even out the streetscape, the south side shall receive vertical placemaking elements (see Chapter 5 for more information).

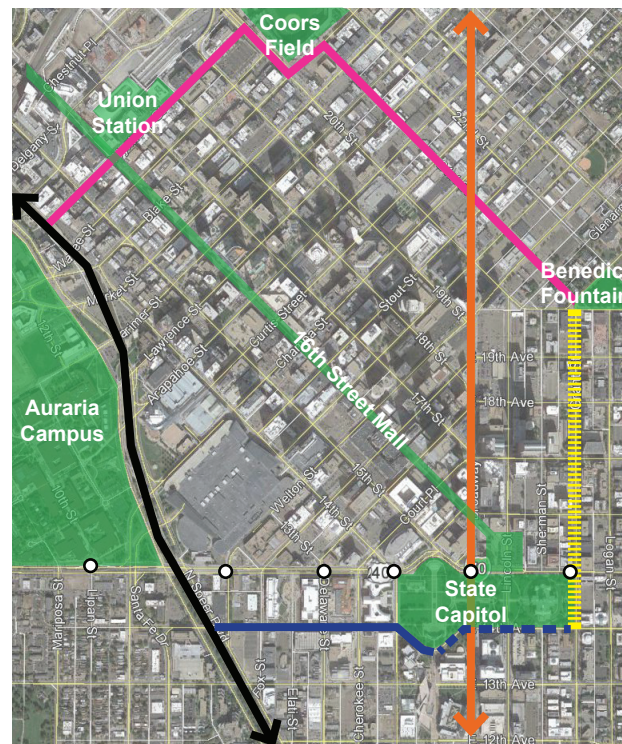
LANDSCAPING

The west side of the Colfax/Grant intersection includes a left turn lane that is not functional due to Grant being a one-way heading south. Therefore, there is an opportunity to include a landscaped median and pedestrian refuge in the center of Colfax Avenue.

PROTECTED BIKE LANE

To assist with “first and last mile” connections to transit, there is an opportunity along Grant Street to provide a two-way protected bike lane by either taking out a parking lane or vehicular lane (Logan Street - the other one-way of this couplet only includes two travel lanes while Grant includes three).

Grant Street leads to Benedict Fountain Park and 21st Street, which is slated to become the beginning of an “urban trail” that connects Benedict Fountain Park to Coors Field and then continue down Wynkoop Street to Union Station and the Cherry Creek Bike Path. Another planned protected bike lane is slated for 14th Avenue from Speer (Cherry Creek Path) to the Capitol. This crucial connection could link these three separate bike and pedestrian systems into one big urban loop that connects major attractions like the State Capitol, Coors Field, and Union Station (see diagram below). A future Broadway bike facility will also play into this network.



- Cherry Creek Bike Path
- Proposed 21st St./Wynkoop Urban Trail
- Planned 14th Avenue Protected Bike Lane
- Proposed Broadway Protected Bike Lane
- Proposed Grant Street Protected Bike Lane
- Proposed BRT Stations



Enhanced lighting shall portray safety and interest at night.



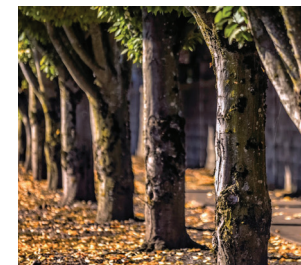
Lighting should be different than existing pedestrian lights.



Wayfinding signage and maps to orient pedestrians are important in this location.



A landscaped median west of this intersection would contribute to the sense of place.



Street trees shall respond to the strong architecture in the area with strong bases and upright, columnar form.



A protected bike lane on Grant could complete a larger “urban loop”.

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PERFORM

“PERFORMANCE PARK”

The big idea for the Perform hub is to create a linear park along the south side of Colfax where the sidewalk becomes the “stage” and the pedestrians become “performers”. This area would be popular for the nearby venues to provide people with activities prior to going to a show at The Fillmore or Ogden. Activities and games are planned for this area to encourage participation and activation.



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REMOVE TURN LANE

This section of Colfax includes a dedicated turn lane, however due to one-way streets that intersect with Colfax and an offset street grid, the turn lanes are either restricted or create conflict zones. Therefore, this proposal suggests that the turn lane be removed from the street and that 10-foot space be given to the pedestrian realm to create a better pedestrian environment.

The reasoning for locating the additional space on the south side of the street (as opposed to the north side) is to serve as a catalyst for new development in this area, as well as provide much needed additional pedestrian space at the intersection of Downing and Colfax on the south side, which will become a future BRT station. New development in this area should also include a setback to give the linear park some breathing room.

LINEAR PARK

A linear park is proposed from Clarkson to Emerson, by gaining space from removing the left turn lane. This additional ten feet (approximately) would be used for outdoor performance spaces and activities. Ideas for activation and performance include:

- *Small, informal stage or area for buskers to perform*
- *Bocce ball court*
- *Ping Pong tables*
- *Giant games (chess, Twister, Jenga, pool)*
- *Seating areas*

The BID may be responsible for programming and maintenance, so consideration of time and money for the BID to do this is necessary.

ENHANCED BRT STATION

The future BRT station at Downing Street is located in the Perform hub. The removal of the left turn lane would provide much needed space on the south side where the current 15L stop is located. In addition to creating a mini-plaza with a theme that relates to “perform” in this location, eliminating the left-turns would also help reduce crashes in this section (see Chapter 2).

STREETSCAPE DESIGN MASTER PLAN

“In managing downtown public spaces, good activity overcomes bad activity.”

- Fred Kent, Projects for Public Spaces



- ✓ Left Turn Allowed
- ✗ Left Turn Prohibited
- ! Left Turn Conflict Zone



Games and areas for social interaction create positive activation along Colfax that deter negative behavior.



Street performers go with the theme of “Performance Park” and contribute to placemaking and a safe environment.

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MOSAIC

“PARK AVE. PARK”

This big idea reflects the history and original alignment of Park Avenue, while creating a large public gathering space along Colfax Avenue and fixing one of the most dangerous intersections in the city for pedestrians.



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SAFER INTERSECTION

This concept came about as a way to solve the conflicting and dangerous intersection where Franklin, Colfax and Park Avenue meet. Turning the intersection into a four-way instead of a five-way stop would alleviate confusion for autos and pedestrians and create a safer alternative.

TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS

When Colfax becomes a true multimodal street, auto traffic will find other ways navigate through the city rather than using Colfax. The 17th/18th and 13th/14th couplets on either side of Colfax should continue to serve that purpose. With the proposed configuration, traffic heading southeast on Park Avenue en route to 14th Avenue, would be directed onto Humboldt Street (at Park Avenue's proposed terminus) or use Ogden (one-way southbound). Traffic seeking local access would do the same, or use 16th Street to access their desired street.

PLACEMAKING

From a placemaking perspective, repurposing Park Avenue West for one-block between Colfax and Humboldt, would open up a major opportunity to create a significant public park along Colfax, as well as highlight the original intent of Park Avenue's triangular parks that run the length of the parkway.

This urban park would supplement the great, historic public parks nearby (Cheesman, Congress, and City Parks) with active programming for Capitol Hill residents. Farmer's Markets, outdoor games, music and art festivals, clothing swaps or other "sharing economy" ideas and other programming would be necessary to keep the space active, vibrant, and safe. It would also be a premier spot for an oversized public art sculpture piece to add to Denver's iconic collection. Other opportunities exist for private development to orient to the park and help activate it and the other triangle parks on the Avenue.

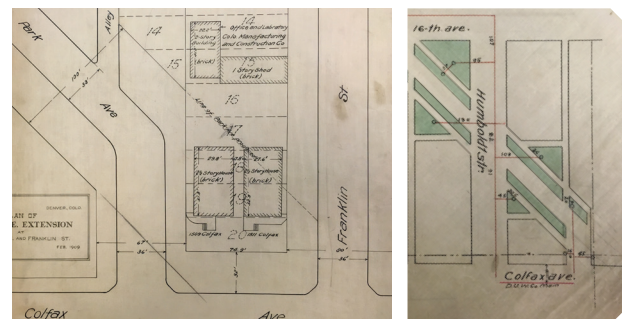
HISTORY

Further research regarding the historic parkway designation of Park Avenue revealed that the original design (1874) of the parkway began at 23rd and terminated around Humboldt Street. The primary purpose of Denver's first parkway was to provide views of Longs Peak, and to create a grand parkway that served as park space, with 12 designated triangular-shaped parks, and as a primary street for Denver - at that time serving a horse car route.

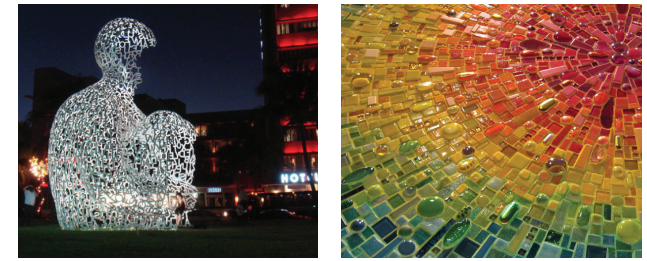
In the 1930s, Park Avenue was widened to accommodate modern vehicular traffic and at that time, the street was extended to Colfax to create the current five-way intersection condition.



Proposal for vacating Park Avenue from the intersection of Colfax to Humboldt Street.



Original drawing from 1909 showing the planned extension of Park Avenue and the two homes that were demolished.



Public art contributes to a sense of place and unique identity. The mosaic theme could be used in public art.



Giant "COLFAX" letters are envisioned in this space.



Places for people to gather and people-watch are desired.



Interactive features and street performers help activate.

CULTURE

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“THE CULTURE GATEWAY”

The gateway for the eastern entrance to the Colfax Ave district is at the intersection of Colfax and Josephine. This gateway concept is similar to the western gateway at Grant in that it includes placemaking vertical signage elements, wayfinding signage, and pedestrian and bike connections to the future BRT station. These concepts are explained further on the next page.



NOTE: conceptual rendering was produced early-on in the project. It may not represent fully all recommendations.

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GATEWAY FEATURE

Like the western gateway intersection, this one will also include the same tall, vertical elements that say “Colfax” to portray a sense of place and welcoming. These are to be located at the corners on the west side of Josephine on Colfax.

EXPANDED PLAZA ON SOUTH SIDE

The parcel on the south side of Colfax at Colfax and Josephine is envisioned as a major redevelopment opportunity due to its proximity to the future BRT station and current low building to site value ratio.

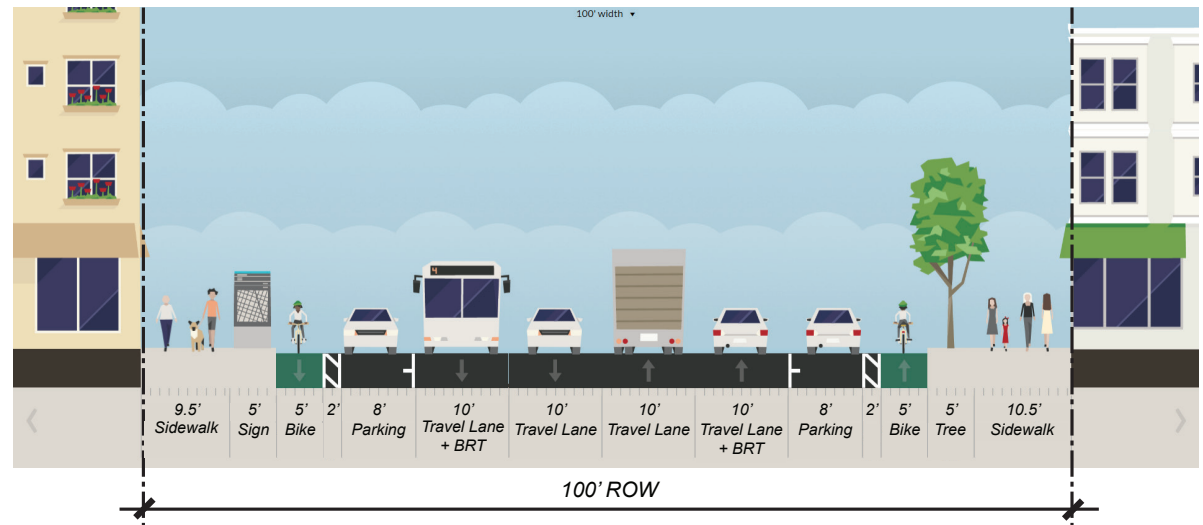
Due to the diagonal orientation of Colfax Avenue on this block, there is an opportunity to align any new structure with that of its neighboring properties to the west (along east-west axis). Doing so will leave a triangular-shaped plaza area between the building and the bus station (as well as protect views to the Storage Castle.) Outdoor cafe seating could help activate the plaza and wayfinding signage and enhanced lighting should also be provided.

PARKING PROTECTED BIKE LANE

This plan proposes a parking protected bike lane on both sides of Colfax from Gaylord Street to the City Park Esplanade. This is to provide safe and efficient “first and last mile” connections to the future BRT station at Colfax and Josephine.

Where a turn lane is not necessary, that space should be used to provide a bike lane and buffer. It is preferred that parking be provided in order to buffer the bike lane. However, where a turn lane is necessary (e.g. York to Josephine), parking could be removed in order to provide the buffered bike facility.

PROPOSED SECTION (when turn lane is not necessary)



Gaylord and Colfax bike facilities would connect the larger network and provide safe access to BRT stations.



The BRT station would be located as an “island” between the bike lane and the driving lane.



Denver has implemented parking protected bike lanes in downtown.



Opening up the southwest corner of Colfax and Josephine by the future BRT stop is desired, as it would allow more room for amenities like cafe seating to provide additional activation.

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ALLEY PLACEMAKING

Another class of opportunities reside in the “other” spaces between buildings - alleys. By looking at alleys differently, there is an opportunity to reclaim a substantial amount of public space. Portions of the alleys abutting Colfax could be transformed into outdoor open spaces that provide café seating for adjacent restaurants and taverns, and/or places for well-crafted, curated and lighted wall art. Such art and informal alley open space can bring another layer of interest and activity to Colfax while eliminating some of the unwanted activities and appearance that occur in the alleys today.

A photo survey of the alleys was conducted during the daytime hours in late August 2016. The survey was not extensive, covering only the first 100 feet or so from the alley's intersection with Colfax. However, several typologies became apparent:

FORM TYPES:

- **A** - One to three story buildings on both sides of the alley.
- **B** - A one to three story building on just one side of the alley.
- **C** - No buildings on alley ROW, but the nearby buildings being on the Colfax ROW property line;
- **D** - One to three story buildings on either one or both sides of the alley ROW, but the buildings being substantially set back from Colfax ROW.



South side alley between Logan and Grant:
Form Type A; Use Type 2; Architecture Type d

USE TYPES:

- **1** - Vehicular access only to parking in the rear or to service farther down the alley;
- **2** - Garbage dumpsters line one side of the alley and pick-up occurs in the alley close to Colfax.
- **3** - Alley is used as a drive aisle for parking located directly off of the alley either on one side or both sides;

A use that is ubiquitous to the alleys is overhead power and communication lines. Some utility lines are major power lines. A few of the alleys have security lighting and cameras.

ARCHITECTURE TYPES:

- **a** - Blank building walls along alley.
- **b** - Building walls have either lower story and/or upper story windows.
- **c** - Colfax oriented storefront windows wrap around into the alley, and/or the alley corners adjacent to Colfax are chamfered (oriented at 45-degree angle) to open up the view into the alley;
- **d** - Alley wall or walls have large scale murals



North side alley between Pearl and Washington:
Form Type C; Use Type 3; Architecture Type N/A

From the alley typologies, it can be seen that only a few of the alleys could be reasonably used for outdoor café seating or other social events. Only those that have buildings on both sides of the alley, are not used for parking, and can have their dumpsters relocated would be good candidates for such uses. Some already have windows and doors on the alley which can be an advantage in using them for more social purposes.

Most alleys would benefit from well-designed alley lighting. This would not only make the alleys safer, it would also make Colfax itself feel safer.

One last observation is that the alleys on the west end of Colfax, closer to the Capitol, are dirtier, smellier, and more unsafe looking than the alleys at the east end near East High and Tattered Cover.



North side alley between Ogden and Emerson:
Form Type A; Use Type 1; Architecture Type c

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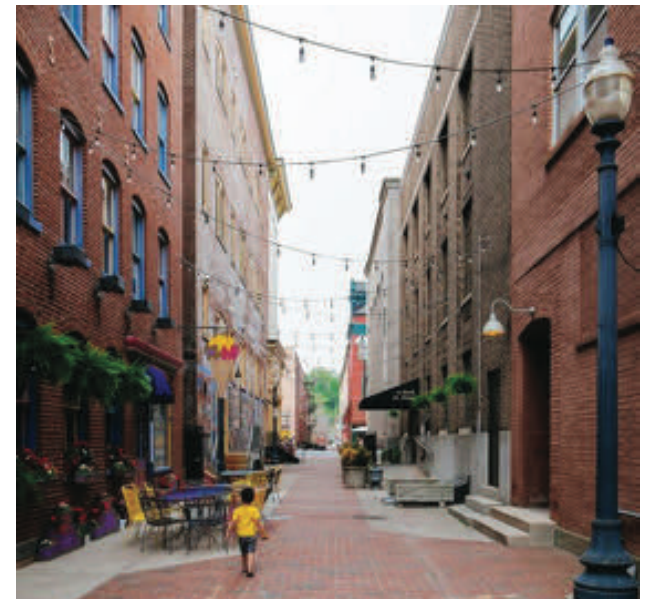
The alley between Cheeba Hut and Office Depot is a primary pedestrian corridor for residents traveling on foot to Vitamin Cottage. Closure of the alley to cars would create a much safer experience. It could also function as a large plaza-like public space for Colfax Avenue.



This alley in downtown Denver is occasionally transformed into "Brewer's Alley" featuring live music, appetizers, and of course...craft beer!



Fort Collins has implemented several successful alley transformation projects in their downtown.



By looking at alleys differently, there is an opportunity to reclaim a substantial amount of public space.

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SIDE STREETS

Due to the limited amount of sidewalk space along Colfax, especially in the western section where the right-of-way is narrower, corner properties should consider utilizing side streets for enhanced placemaking opportunities. Some properties are already utilizing side street right-of-way for cafe seating. Other activities like outdoor retail display areas, seating areas for restaurants, small plaza-like spaces, or areas for outdoor games like cornhole or bocce ball could be implemented. These activities, even though not directly on Colfax, will positively contribute to the overall street and district.



Outdoor display, such as this flower shop display, adds delight to the pedestrian experience.



Sidewalk cafe seating is a popular side street activation tool.

PUBLIC ART

Introducing more public art to the streetscape can reduce crime and provide interest along the street. A goal of Colfax Ave is to make Colfax an “open air art gallery”. The streetscape design should plan for opportunities to incorporate planned for and future public art.

One project that has recently been implemented, and should continue, is the paintings by local artists on the transformer boxes on the street. Many communities around the nation have started doing this to make a pleasant sight out of what is normally seen as an “eye sore”.



A goal is to make Colfax Ave an “open air art gallery”. Colfax would be an excellent location for an oversized sculpture to add to Denver’s famous collection.



This side street plaza in the LoHi neighborhood is activated with colorful umbrellas, live music, and an ice cream parlor.



This colorful umbrella installation serves as public art as well as much needed shaded resting area in Portugal.

4.0 PLACEMAKING

PLACEMAKING “STREET SCENES”



Recent efforts have been made to create public art out of abandoned buildings along Colfax.



Some murals help tell the story of Colfax like this Jack Kerouac quote from the author who wrote about Colfax Avenue in his novel “On the Road”.



Murals can be seen on multiple alleys that intersect with Colfax. This trend should be encouraged. Better lighting and neon wall art are also encouraged to make the alleys feel safer.



Some businesses are already utilizing side streets for cafe seating.

PLACEMAKING IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

	DESCRIPTION:	DUTY:	ACTION ITEMS FOR BID:
PRE-CONSTRUCTION PHASE: 2017 - Design, Documentation and Mobilization Phase			
P.1 - PARK AVE. PARK STUDY	Study feasibility of closing Park Avenue from Colfax to Humboldt - downstream traffic effects, cost/benefit analysis, programming and conceptual design of park, etc.	PW CDOT PR	Meet with Public Works to present concept and understand process for preliminary design/engineering feasibility study.
P.2 - PERFORMANCE PARK STUDY	Study feasibility of removing center turn lane for 4 blocks in Perform subarea. Preliminary design of linear park.	PW CDOT PR	Meet with CDOT to present concept and understand process for removing turn lanes.
CONSTRUCTION PHASE 1: 2018-19 - Safety and Identity Improvements Phase			
P.3 - CIVIC GATEWAY	Create a “grand entrance” to the district with enhanced intersection, protected bike lane connection to bus station, wayfinding and signage, and streetscape enhancements	PW CDOT BID	Include in Streetscape design documentation process (see chapter 6 action items)
P.4 - CULTURE GATEWAY	Create a “grand entrance” to the district with enhanced intersection, parking protected bike lane connection to bus station, wayfinding and signage, and streetscape enhancements	PW CDOT BID	Include in Streetscape design documentation process (see chapter 6 action items)
CONSTRUCTION PHASE 2: 2020-22 - Beautification and Build-Out Phase			
P.5 - IMPLEMENT PERFORMANCE PARK	Reclaim additional space for south sidewalk to provide a “linear park” to catalyze redevelopment in the area and provide much needed additional space in front of eastbound 15L station at Downing.	PW CDOT PR BID	Work with adjacent property owners. Ongoing programming and maintenance.
P.6 - IMPLEMENT PARK AVE. PARK	Close Park Avenue from Colfax to Humboldt; turn into Park Ave. Park (see conceptual design).	PW PR BID	Work with adjacent property owners. Seek out specific vendors. Ongoing programming and maintenance.
ONGOING: As Resources Become Available or Properties Redevelop			
P.7 - IMPLEMENT ALLEY TRANSFORMATION(S)	Transform an alley that currently operates as a “utility” into a place by redirecting auto access and trash pick up to behind building(s).	BID PW	Work with adjacent property owners. Priority locations = south side of Colfax between Pennsylvania and Pearl (Lost Highway Brewery) and between Pearl and Washington (Cheeba Hut/ Natural Grocers)
P.8 - PUBLIC ART	Continue to curate and promote public art throughout the corridor by way of murals, sculpture, and other means.	BID	Work with property owners who may be interested in locating a mural on the side of their building facing alleys. Hire local artists. Include lighting.

PW = Public Works Department
 BID = Colfax Ave Business Improvement District
 CDOT = Colorado Department of Transportation

DDP = Downtown Denver Partnership
 RTD = Regional Transportation District
 CPD = Community Planning and Development

PR = Parks and Recreation Department
 CC = City Council
 HD = Historic Denver