



REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION City of Sacramento

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915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2671

STAFF REPORT
May 27, 2010

To: Members of the Planning Commission

Subject: Florin Road Corridor Plan (LR07-008)

Location/Council District: The Florin Road Corridor from Tamoshanter Way to Stockton Blvd. Council Districts 5 and 8

Recommendation: Receive and File.

Contact: Remi Mendoza, Associate Planner, 808-5003
Desmond Parrington, AICP, Infill Coordinator, 808-5044

Summary: The Florin Road Corridor Plan is a joint planning effort between the City and the County of Sacramento to promote coordinated planning and economic revitalization along the corridor. The boundaries extend along Florin Road between Tamoshanter Way and Stockton Boulevard (Attachment 1).

The Florin Road Corridor Plan includes specific strategies to address housing, economic development, infrastructure and financing, public safety, and design needs of the corridor. These strategies will encourage well-designed infill and economic development along Florin Road.

Staff will be returning to Planning Commission in August with specific actions to implement the strategies outlined in the Florin Road Corridor planning effort. However, the purpose of this staff report is to provide the Commission with an update on the Florin Road Corridor planning effort and outline the actions to be brought forward in August. Specific actions proposed for August include:

- ◆ Rezone sites;
- ◆ Create design review district;
- ◆ Add new Community Plan policies;
- ◆ Establish a transit village district;
- ◆ Adopt a new streetscape plan;
- ◆ Adopt environmental review; and
- ◆ Review and accept background studies.

This report is an informational update, but staff is also seeking input from the Commission on this effort and subsequent actions that will be brought forward later in August.

Background Information: The City's new 2030 General Plan identified Florin Road as one of the opportunity areas for future growth. In order to lay the foundation for growth and revitalization of the entire corridor, City Council directed staff in 2007 to partner with the County in a joint planning effort for the entire corridor. The resulting effort called the Florin Road Corridor Plan consists of a number of coordinated planning studies and actions designed to foster well-designed infill and redevelopment along the corridor. This effort has taken on greater urgency as the economic recession has had a negative impact on the corridor resulting in high vacancy rates and the closure of almost all the auto dealerships that have operated there since the early 1980s.

As a result of the recent closure of the auto dealerships on Florin, City staff initiated a focused redevelopment strategy for the 43-acre area near Florin Road and Franklin Boulevard. Launched as part of the City's Shovel-Ready Program, the goal is to work with the property owners and their broker to identify all the current obstacles to redevelopment of the auto dealer sites and develop strategies to attract new investment there. This has been coordinated with the larger Florin Road Corridor planning effort and the actions taken as part of that effort will also advance the redevelopment objectives for the Florin Road auto dealer sites.

As noted above the specific actions that staff will bring forward to Planning Commission and City Council in August and September, respectively, include:

- ◆ **Rezone sites:** Almost all of the corridor is zoned C-2 (General Commercial). As a result the corridor simply has too much commercial, much of which is either vacant or is struggling (refer to Attachment 4). Staff proposes reduce the amount of C-2 by focusing it primarily around the major intersections at 24th and at Franklin where there is the highest visibility and greatest likelihood of long-term success. In between, staff is proposing to rezone many of the C-2 parcels to RMX in two phases (refer to Attachment 5). Changes will also be made around the light rail station area to encourage higher density, transit-supportive development. This implements the Florin Road Station Area TOD Concept and Guidelines that was accepted by Council in February 2009.
- ◆ **Create design review district:** One of the biggest obstacles to reinvestment in the corridor is poor site design and the overall design quality in the corridor. This action will establish new design guidelines and a design review district to ensure higher-quality development that is located closer to the street and over time establishes a more attractive environment.
- ◆ **Add new Community Plan policies:** This will put in place new goals and policies in the South Area Community Plan chapter of the 2030 General Plan that support the revitalization of Florin Road.

- ◆ **Establish a transit village district:** This resolution and supporting documents will establish the Florin Road light rail station as transit village district in accordance with the state's 1994 Transit Village Development Act. This will make the station area eligible for future state and federal funding.
- ◆ **Adopt a new streetscape plan:** One of the greatest challenges along Florin Road is the hostile environment that pedestrians face on the corridor. The streetscape master plan identifies significant street improvements to make Florin more accommodating of multiple travel modes including pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users. Improvements include wider, separated sidewalks with street trees; improved signage; street furniture; and crosswalks and bicycle lanes with greater visibility.
- ◆ **Adopt environmental review:** Staff will prepare an environmental review of these actions to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- ◆ **Review and accept background studies:** Several additional studies will be presented as background for the actions noted above. These will include an existing conditions report, a market study, a mobility plan, an infrastructure assessment, and financing strategy.

Environmental Considerations: There are no environmental considerations associated with this report.

Policy Considerations: This project is consistent with both the City's overall Strategic Plan Goals and the 2030 General Plan vision of becoming the most livable city in America. Specifically this project is consistent with the following Strategic Plan Goals:

- ◆ Increase opportunities for all Sacramento residents to live in safe and affordable housing
- ◆ Expand economic development throughout the city.

Respectfully submitted by:



Remi Mendoza
Associate Planner

Approved by:



Desmond Parrington
Infill Coordinator

Recommendation Approved:



Thomas S. Pace
Long Range Planning Manager

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Attachment 1

Background

As part of both the City's and County's new General Plans, City and County staff have assessed the potential for future growth, revitalization and reinvestment along existing commercial corridors. In the South Area Community Plan, the Florin Road Subregional Center is identified as an opportunity area (Attachment 3). In the City's new 2030 General Plan Florin Road is identified as an opportunity corridor with potential for future infill, reuse, and redevelopment. Florin Road is a commercial corridor with a history of auto dealerships and other existing commercial and retail services. The corridor is underutilized and it is in a state of transition.

In October 2007, Council directed staff to work in a joint effort with the County to develop the Florin Road Corridor Plan. Early in the process a Steering Committee was formed for project oversight. The Steering Committee is an advisory group that includes property owners, representatives from the Florin Road Partnership, agency representatives and community leaders. A City and County Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was also formed to collaborate on the corridor plan. The City TAC is made up of representatives from many departments including: Economic Development, Parks, Neighborhood Services, Planning, Design, Utilities, Development Engineering, Environmental, Development Services, Police, Fire, and the Department of Transportation. The TAC members collaborate and provide input based on their area of expertise. Both members of the Steering Committee and the TAC have also been important to the success of the first two community planning meetings.

Community Outreach

The City and County of Sacramento sponsored two community planning meetings for the Florin Road Corridor Plan project on February 28, 2008 and May 1, 2008. Both community meetings were well attended with over 150 people participating. In the workshops participants received an overview of the project and a presentation on planning and design concepts from across the country. Participants also prioritized projects and improvements that they would like to see along the Florin Road Corridor. Below is a list of the top priorities from each workshop:

February 28, 2008 workshop:

- ◆ More sit down restaurants/entertainment
- ◆ More gathering places (for all ages)
- ◆ More culture and arts
- ◆ More law enforcement
- ◆ Less undesirable uses

May 1, 2008 workshop:

- ◆ More streetscape improvements
- ◆ Support for creating districts on the Corridor
- ◆ Complete streets and sidewalks

- ◆ Additional entertainment such as theaters and dog parks
- ◆ Better police presence/security
- ◆ More activities for teens
- ◆ Beautification/façade upgrades
- ◆ Improve traffic enforcement
- ◆ Add cafes, bookstores, sit-down restaurant and farmers market
- ◆ Better bus connections/transit
- ◆ More jobs/employment centers
- ◆ More mixed use
- ◆ Need bicycle and pedestrian friendly roadways

On March 5th and 6th of 2008, stakeholder interviews were held with transit officials, parks officials, property owners, business and public agency representatives. Some of the themes that surfaced from these interviews include the following:

- ◆ The business makeup along Florin Road will change
- ◆ Property values are up
- ◆ Negative perceptions are still prevalent (security)

Additional outreach has included youth planning sessions and an online survey. Two youth planning sessions were held at Luther Burbank High School in March 2008. The students participated in a survey, a visioning exercise and a discussion about the future of Florin Road.

As part of the rezoning and design review efforts, City staff will be conducting additional community outreach in June and July.

Existing Conditions Report

One of the first work products on the project schedule is an assessment of existing conditions as well as research of successful programs and projects from other areas across the region and state. Staff has studied a number of other corridors to look at how they have been revitalized and believes that some of those same successes on Florin Road can be achieved. Key findings from this report include the following:

- ◆ Significant retail injection from people outside the area shopping along Florin Road, but also some retail leakage;
- ◆ Future projections for include a limited amount of additional office and retail, but an increase in residential units;
- ◆ There is a significant amount of vacant and underutilized sites which provide development opportunities;
- ◆ Florin Road is identified as a Transit Corridor in the Regional Transit Master Plan yet there is no Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or adequate bicycle facilities; and
- ◆ There are a number of infrastructure challenges in the area including inadequate sidewalks, water, sewer, and drainage.

Next Steps

As noted above, the next steps will include continued outreach as well as completion of the remaining components for the Florin Road Corridor Plan. Those include the following:

- ◆ Rezone sites;
- ◆ Create design review district;
- ◆ Add new Community Plan policies;
- ◆ Establish a transit village district;
- ◆ Adopt a new streetscape plan;
- ◆ Adopt environmental review; and
- ◆ Review and accept background studies.

The goal of the Florin Road Corridor Plan is to establish a similar set of standards and zoning along the entire corridor to encourage attractive and well-designed development.

Auto Dealers on Florin Road

As a result of the severity of the current recession, consumers across the region have cut back on purchases of automobiles and many local auto dealers have closed their doors. Since April 2008, almost all the auto dealerships have closed on Florin Road including Capitol City Chevrolet, Senator Ford, Senator Imports, Winter Volvo/Lincoln/Mercury, Florin Road Motors (Kia), and Certified Toyota on Florin Road. This has resulted in the loss of sales tax dollars and quality jobs in a key part of the south area. These auto dealer closures have raised concerns about the long-term viability of Florin as an auto row.

In light of these events Council requested that staff work with all of the auto dealers on the City's side of Florin Road to explore the possibility of doing a master plan to revitalize the former auto dealer area. Working with Councilmembers Hammond and Pannell, the Florin Road Partnership and the auto dealers, staff initiated a master plan effort to ensure that the 43-acre area, which includes all the auto dealer sites, will be developed in a comprehensive manner and will include development that would benefit the City, the community, and the property owners. New uses will generate sales and property tax revenue and new jobs. The City completed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the property owners in that area in 2008 to address the obstacles to development and to attract new uses to those sites. Additionally the City has completed the following tasks in effort to prepare the area for a master developer and redevelopment:

- ◆ City water infrastructure analysis
- ◆ Fruitridge Vista Water Company Infrastructure Analysis

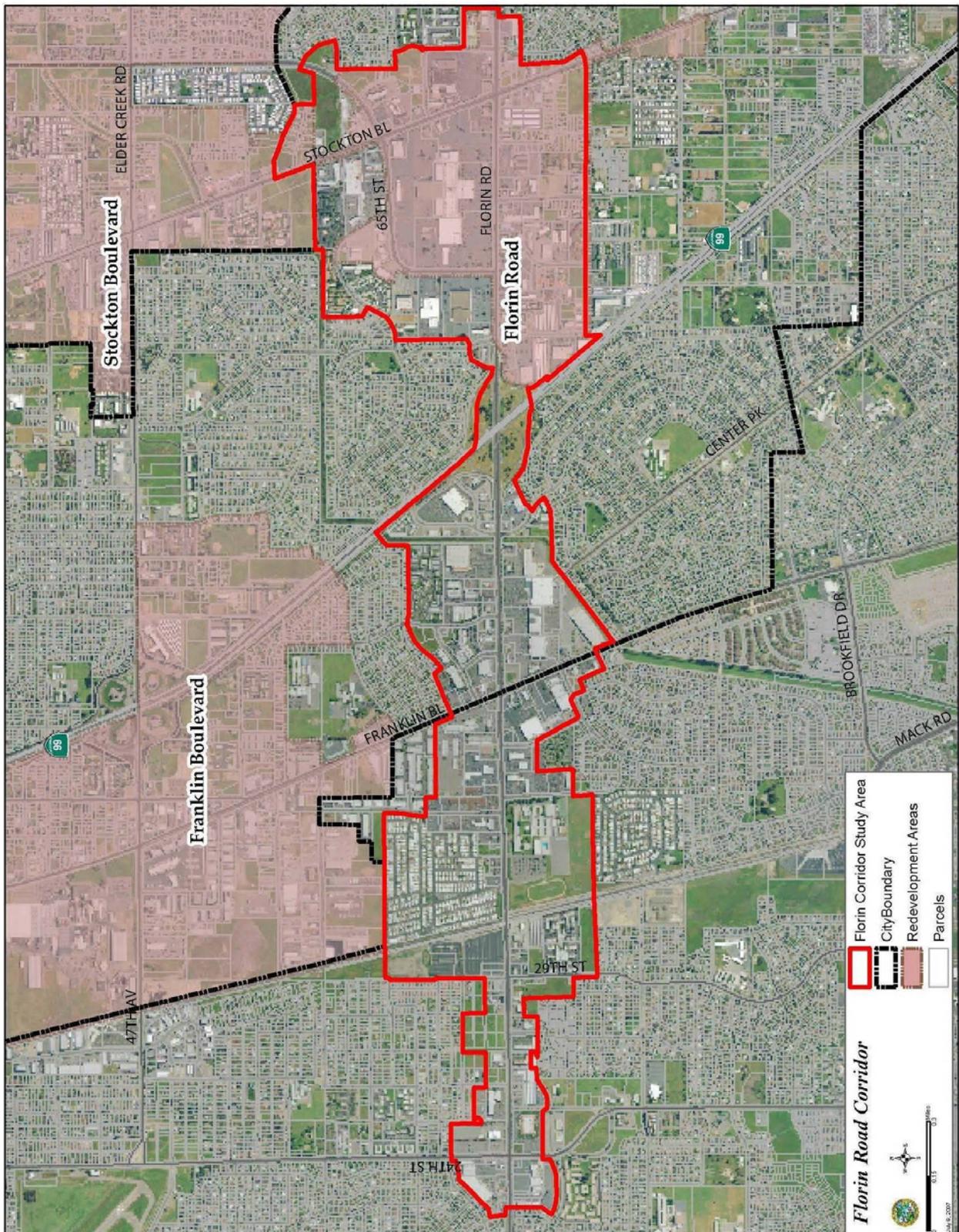
- ◆ SASD sewer infrastructure analysis
- ◆ Transportation access and circulation study
- ◆ Market study and economic opportunities study
- ◆ Brownfield assessment - Phase 1 – Completed
- ◆ Enterprise Zone application renewal

Next steps will include the following:

- ◆ **Marketing plan/business and developer attraction strategy:** To be done this summer with broker representing the properties - Grubb & Ellis
- ◆ **Finance strategy:** To be prepared as part of Florin Road Corridor Plan
- ◆ **Brownfield assessment - Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment:** Staff secured an EPA grant for this work. It will determine what areas actually have contamination and need further examination and what areas are ready for redevelopment. Work to begin in late spring 2010.
- ◆ **Redevelopment area designation:** City staff is working with SHRA to determine if the area would be eligible as a redevelopment area under California redevelopment law. If creation of a redevelopment area is feasible, future tax increment could be used to help finance the infrastructure improvements needed for increased development in the area.

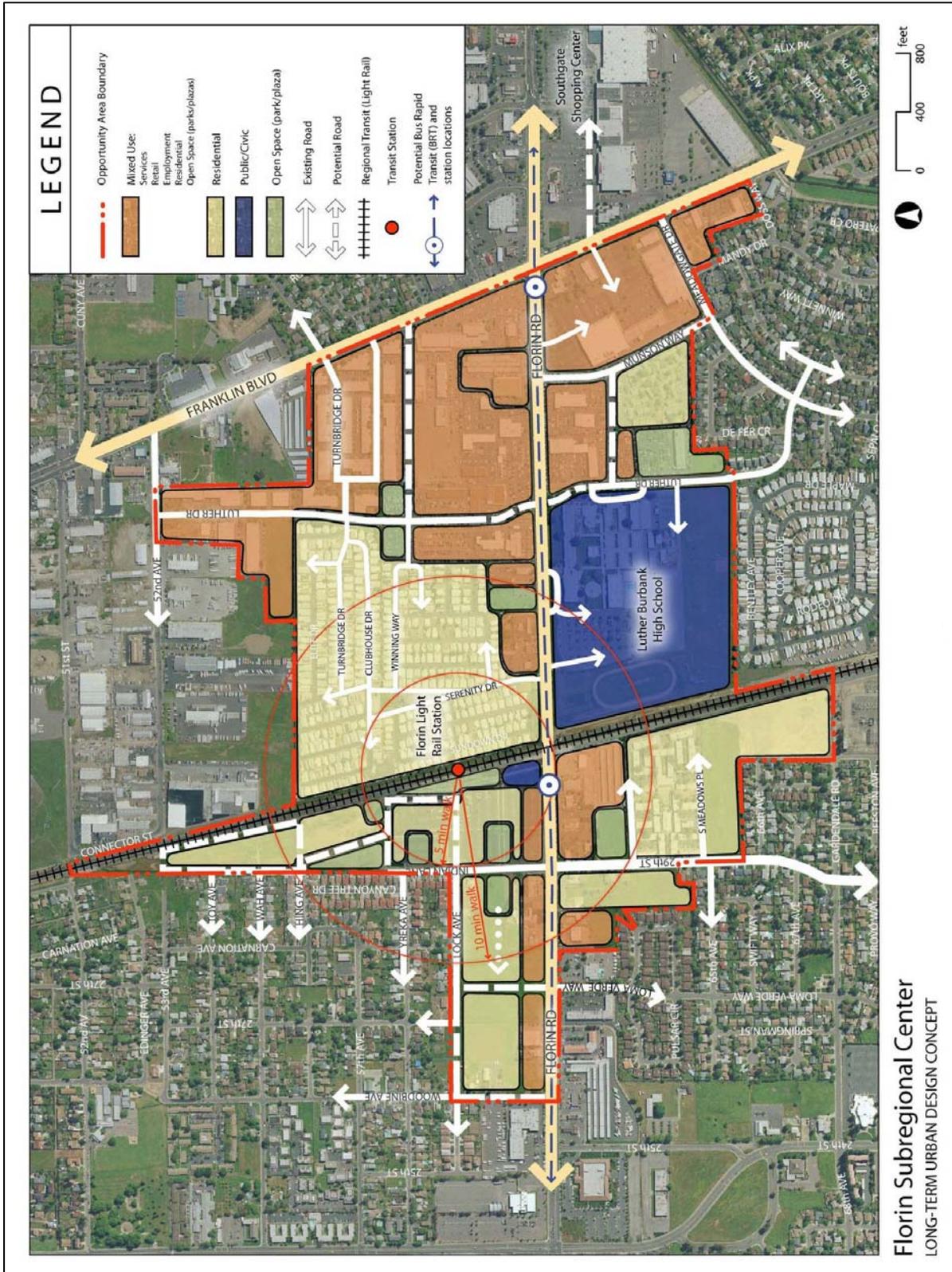
This work clearly identifies the needed improvements and will help inform the redevelopment of the area. This is the type of work would normally be done by a developer as part of their due diligence before acquiring these sites. However, given the expense of this work, the current economic situation, and the difficulty that Florin Road has often had in attracting major developer interest, the City and property owners undertook this effort to advance the goal of redeveloping this area. This work can be folded into to a specific plan or PUD guidelines that would give a developer the flexibility to master plan this site.

Attachment 2 Map of the Florin Road Corridor Plan Study Area

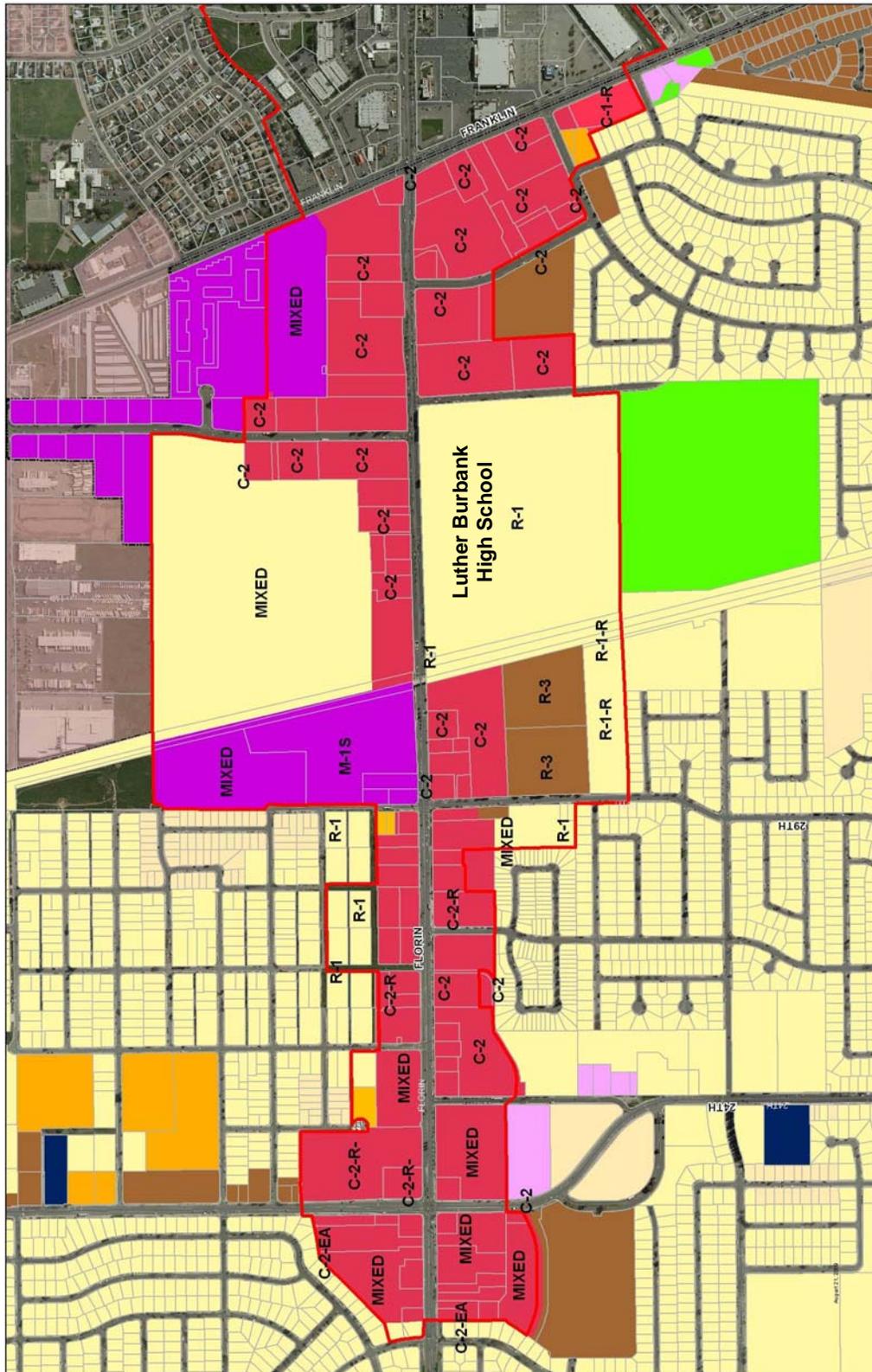


Attachment 3

Map of the Florin Road Subregional Center Concept



Attachment 4 Existing Zoning



Attachment 5 Proposed Rezone Map

