

CHAPTER 1.

## INTRODUCTION

Northern Colorado Regional Airport (FNL or Airport), jointly owned and operated by the Cities of Fort Collins and Loveland, is a vital asset to a major commercial center in the Fort Collins/Loveland area and a key component of the region's growing high-tech/innovation-focused economy. As both a commercial service and general aviation (GA) airport, it serves an important, niche role as a key component in the transportation infrastructure of the two cities and the surrounding region. A key consideration of this Master Plan is the compatibility with the surrounding environs and land uses, which will be a primary component in developing the Airport Influence Area (AIA) Plan that is included in **Appendix B**. Additionally, this Master Plan incorporates the goals and initiatives from the Airport's 2018 Strategic Plan Update, identifies space for potentially needed facilities, and includes the development of an on-airport land use plan. This Master Plan will serve as the 20-year roadmap to guide development at the Airport to meet current service levels while accommodating future demand.

Local, regional, and national aviation issues have evolved since the Airport's last Master Plan was completed in 2007. For most of its history, FNL has served the dual role of accommodating both GA and commercial service, but in 2012 Allegiant Air discontinued its commercial service at FNL; resulting in a significant decrease in enplanements, consequently reducing the annual entitlement funding the Airport receives under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). However, in 2017, the Colorado Division of Aeronautics (Division) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) NextGen Office selected FNL as the nation's first remote air traffic control technology test facility, which may present opportunities for the reinstatement of commercial service at the Airport.

The requirement of future facilities is evaluated not only from an aviation standpoint, but also regarding the relationship of Airport facilities to surrounding land uses and the community at large. The focus will be on the total aviation facility and its environs, with the overall planning goal being the development of an aviation facility that can accommodate future demand, is not significantly constrained by its environs, and does not adversely impact its surroundings.

### 1.1 Master Plan Study Goals

While the Airport Master Plan Update will consider a variety of issues with the formulation of a long-range development plan for the Airport, the primary goal is continued Airport improvement in a manner that is compatible with its surroundings and recognizes community goals.



To accomplish this goal, the Airport coordinated with stakeholders to develop the following Master Plan objectives:

- Prepare a Master Plan that is *Resilient, Flexible, and Adaptable*.
- Integrate compatible land use planning and the development of an Airport Influence Area Plan.
- Provide a planning document for the next 20 years that is technically accurate, realistically executable, and financially feasible and sustainable.
- Determine the current condition and efficiency of existing facilities.
- Prepare updated low scenario (without commercial service) and high scenario (with commercial service) forecasts of aviation activity.
- Develop a financial plan that considers the operating budget, revenue, expenses, and potential FAA grant funding.
- Integrate public involvement throughout the process to ensure that future development plans align with the values and vision of the community.
- Incorporate the strategic plan goals, objectives and initiatives outlined in the Airport's 2018 Strategic Plan Update.

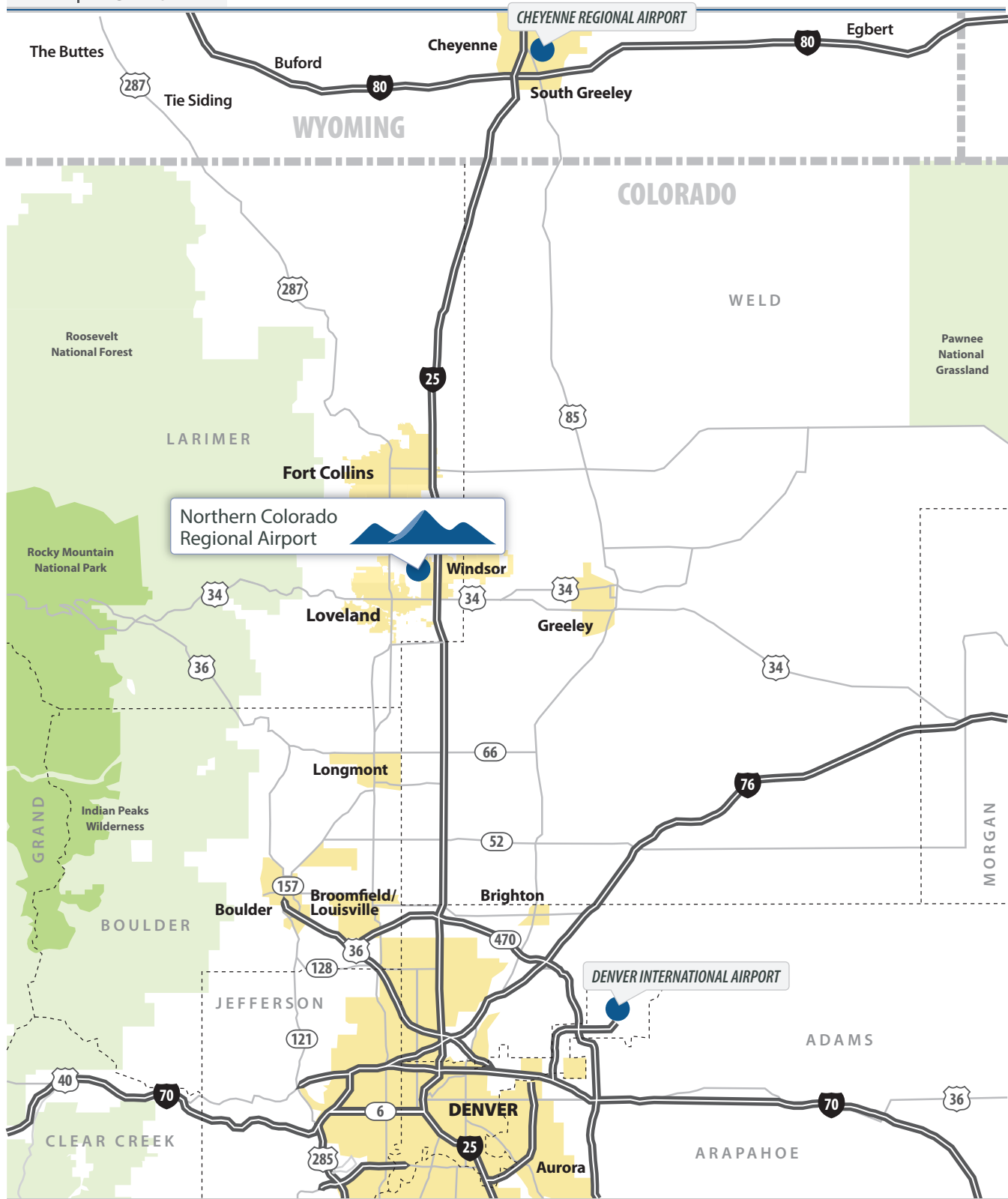
## 1.2 Airport Location and Vicinity

Northern Colorado Regional Airport is located in Larimer County, Colorado, the sixth most populous county in the state. Larimer County extends to the Continental Divide, which includes several mountain communities and Rocky Mountain National Park. More than 50 percent of Larimer County is publicly owned, with most public land being located within Roosevelt National Forest and Rocky Mountain National Park. In addition to these federal lands, Colorado State Parks and Recreation, and Larimer County Parks and Open Spaces, the County has some of the finest irrigated farmland in the state. There are also vast stretches of scenic ranch lands, forests, and high mountain peaks. FNL is one of 14 Colorado airports that are certified to provide commercial air service, and it serves as a northern regional gateway for commerce, tourism, and emergency access. The relative location of FNL within the state is illustrated in **Figure 1-1**.

FNL is situated on 1,050 acres along Interstate 25 (I-25), on the eastern perimeter of the City of Loveland and approximately ten (10) miles south of downtown Fort Collins. The Cities of Fort Collins and Loveland are located on the high plains in north-central Colorado, east of Rocky Mountain National Park. FNL is minutes away from downtown Loveland, Fort Collins, Greeley, Windsor, and Estes Park; and 50 miles north of downtown Denver. The Airport is located on the western side of I-25 and north of US Highway 34, east of Boyd Lake. FNL's location relative to the Cities of Loveland and Fort Collins is illustrated in **Figure 1-2**.



SOURCE | Google Maps, 2018



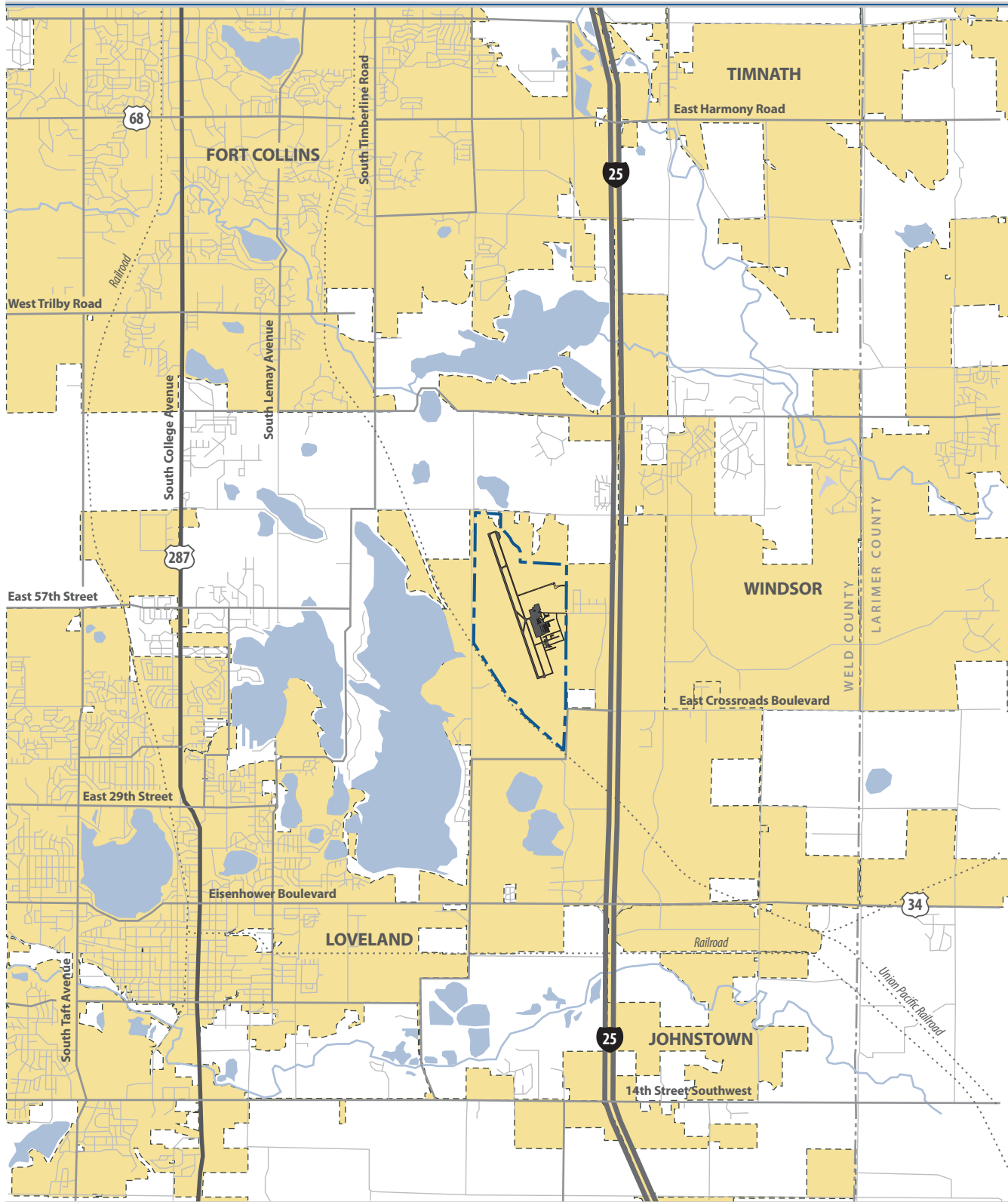
North | Approximate Scale: 1" = 15 Miles

FIGURE 1-1 **Airport Location Map**

**Master Plan**  
**Northern Colorado**  
**Regional Airport**



SOURCE | SOURCE: Google Maps, 2018



North | Approximate Scale: 1" = 1.5 Miles

FIGURE 1-2 Airport Vicinity Map

Master Plan Northern Colorado Regional Airport



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### 1.3 Airport Role

The current FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) report (2019-2023), classifies Northern Colorado Regional Airport as a *non-primary commercial service, regional airport*. Airports included in the NPIAS are eligible to receive federal grants for airport planning and various capital improvements to keep the airports current with design standards and to meet system capacity needs. The non-primary commercial service classification is for airports used mainly by general aviation aircraft that have facilities capable of accommodating commercial service.

Airports are defined within the NPIAS by their service level, which reflects the type of service the airport provides to the surrounding community. The regional subclassification is assigned to airports that are in metropolitan areas and serve relatively large populations. These airports support regional economies with interstate and some long-distance flying, and have high levels of activity, including some jets and multiengine propeller aircraft.

FNL is also included in the Colorado State Aviation System and it was classified within the state system as a *major commercial service airport* in the last update to the Colorado State Aviation System Plan (CASP), which was completed in 2011.<sup>1</sup> The Colorado Airport System includes a total of 74 public-use airports; 14 of which 14 are categorized as commercial service airports and 60 categorized as non-commercial service general aviation airports. that represented an essential element of the State transportation system and provided critical support to the State economy.

### 1.4 Airport Development History

The Cities of Fort Collins and Loveland agreed to jointly build and operate a regional airport in November 1963. Formerly known as the Fort Collins-Loveland Municipal Airport, the Airport opened in 1964 under joint agreement and ownership by the Cities of Loveland and Fort Collins. The construction of the Airport followed a significant rise in Colorado State University (CSU) enrollment due to the civil rights movement.

The name was officially changed to Northern Colorado Regional Airport in 2016 to better reflect the area served by the Airport. When the Airport was originally constructed, the population of Larimer County was about 65,000; now, the population is over 300,000.

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<sup>1</sup> All airports in the Colorado airport system are assigned to one of three roles: Major, Intermediate, or Minor.



Significant development projects and milestones at FNL include:

- Mid to late 1960s – Runway 6/24 was constructed
- 1977: Aircraft parking apron rehab
- 1980s: Runway 6/24 length reduced (for safety concerns associated with intersecting runways)
- 1982: GA area development (roads, utilities, and taxiways)
- 1989: Runway 15/33 rehab
- 1993: Airport Master Plan
- 2007: Airport Master Plan; Runway 6/24 rehab
- 2011: Runway 15/33 reconstruction
- 2013: Aircraft parking apron rehab
- 2017: Selected as the test facility for one of the first in the nation remote airport traffic control towers

## 1.5 Airport Management, Ownership Structure, and Airport Commission

The operation and maintenance of the Airport is a joint venture between the City of Fort Collins and the City of Loveland, with full management and policy-making authority vested equally in both Cities. The City of Loveland and the City of Fort Collins established the Northern Colorado Regional Airport Commission (the Airport Commission) through an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to serve as the governing body for the Airport. The seven-member Airport Commission is comprised of two members from the City of Loveland Council and staff, two members from the City of Fort Collins Council and staff, and three citizens.

The Cities of Loveland and Fort Collins are responsible for all Airport policy considerations, as well as compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations.

## 1.6 FNL Planning and Development Subcommittee (PDSC)

In January 2018, the Airport Commission, which includes elected members from both the City of Fort Collins and the City of Loveland, formed the Planning and Development Subcommittee (PDSC) to support the development of the 2018 updates to the Strategic Plan and the Airport Master Plan. The PDSC will serve in an advisory role to oversee the Master Plan process and provide recommendations to the Airport Commission. The PDSC will help to guide development of the plan and is comprised of an Airport Commission member, Airport tenants, stakeholders, and representatives from the Cities of Fort Collins and Loveland.



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## 1.7 Economic Impact

GA and commercial service airports are a major catalyst to economic development in Colorado's communities. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Division of Aeronautics (the Division) completed the last Economic Impact Study in 2020 to identify how commercial and GA airports support the State and local economies.

The economic contributions of FNL stem from on-airport activities and off-airport spending by visitors who arrive in Colorado via the Airport. The economic contributions of these activities are measured through jobs, associated payroll, and economic output. These initial economic impacts enter the economy and re-circulate, which generates successive rounds of spending, employment, payroll, and output in other economy sectors. In the Economic Impact Study, the impacts generated through recirculation are classified as "multiplier" effects.

As illustrated in **Figure 1-3**, the total economic contribution of FNL in 2018 was estimated to be almost \$161 million in output and 1,072 jobs, with an annual payroll of nearly \$52 million. These figures far exceed the direct economic impact of FNL as identified in the last study, which was prepared in 2013. At that time, FNL's total economic contribution was estimated to be \$129.4 million in output and 826 jobs, with an annual payroll of \$24.8 million.

**Figure 1-3: Economic Impacts of FNL**



**Source:** 2020 Colorado Airport Economic Impact Report, Colorado Aviation Economic Impact Study (CEIS) - Colorado Division of Aeronautics.



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