

303 ArtWay Heritage Trail and Montbello Loop Implementation Plan

Executive Summary

A Denver Regional Council of Governments Community-Based
Transportation Program Study
JANUARY 2026



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Introduction

The **303 ArtWay Heritage Trail** and the **Montbello Loop** are community-developed active transportation and placemaking projects in Northeast Denver that have emerged from nearly a decade of neighborhood-led planning, visioning, and organizing. Located in Northeast Park Hill and Montbello, respectively, both projects seek to improve safety, accessibility, health, cultural expression, and neighborhood connectivity in communities that have experienced historic disinvestment and mobility inequities. Despite strong community support and extensive prior planning, neither project has yet been fully positioned for implementation within the City and County of Denver's capital delivery framework.

The **303 ArtWay and Montbello Loop Implementation Plan** responds to this challenge by providing additional coordination, technical analysis, and feasibility review needed to advance both projects toward implementation. The plan translates long-standing community visions into realistic, phased recommendations aligned with current Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI) standards, funding programs, and capital delivery processes.

The project team includes the **Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)** as project lead; **The Trust for Public Land (TPL)** as project nominator; the City and County of Denver as the implementing jurisdiction; **Radian** as project manager and community engagement lead for the 303 ArtWay; the **Montbello Organizing Committee (MOC)** as project co-lead



and community engagement lead for the Montbello Loop; and **Toole Design Group**, providing technical analysis and design support. Through a collaborative, community-centered approach, the team reviewed prior plans, assessed existing infrastructure conditions, coordinated with DOTI staff on feasibility, and developed an implementation and phasing framework to guide next steps.

This executive summary provides an overview of the Implementation Plan and highlights key findings and recommended next steps for advancing both the 303 ArtWay Heritage Trail and the Montbello Loop.

Purpose and Approach

The primary purpose of this Implementation and Phasing Plan is to move both projects from vision to delivery. It does so by:

- Evaluating the feasibility of prior recommendations based on current infrastructure, right-of-way constraints, safety data, and funding realities.
- Identifying implementable design strategies and priority segments.
- Establishing phased implementation pathways that support near-term progress while positioning more complex elements for long-term delivery.
- Aligning recommendations with Denver's existing programs, funded capital projects, and competitive grant opportunities.

The plan consolidates and builds upon previous studies, including the **303 ArtWay Heritage Trail Corridor Study (2020)** and the **Montbello Loop Community Vision and Concept Plan (2023)**, and incorporates findings from the **303 ArtWay/Montbello Loop Summary Report (2025)**.

Shared Vision and Guiding Principles

Together, the projects envision a Northeast Denver where streets and public spaces are safe, accessible, and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities, while reflecting the cultural identity and history of the neighborhoods they serve. Implementation is guided by shared principles:

- **Equity and inclusion**, prioritizing communities historically impacted by disinvestment.
- **Safety and accessibility**, consistent with Vision Zero and ADA requirements.
- **Community-led decision-making**, with transparent communication about trade-offs related to infrastructure, transportation and design.
- **Health, sustainability, and resilience**, promoting active transportation and environmental benefits.
- **Cultural expression and placemaking**, integrating art and storytelling into infrastructure.

While aligned by these principles, each project responds to its unique context. The 303 ArtWay emphasizes cultural storytelling and regional connectivity to the 40th & Colorado RTD Station, while the Montbello Loop focuses on neighborhood-scale mobility, everyday access, and environmental resilience.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

The feasibility assessment confirmed that many pedestrian safety, accessibility, and placemaking improvements are well-suited for near-term implementation, particularly when integrated into existing DOTI programs such as sidewalk upgrades, safety projects, and repaving efforts. Bicycle infrastructure is feasible in many locations but requires context-sensitive solutions in constrained corridors.

Several lessons shaped the plan:

- Alignment with existing city programs and funded projects significantly increases feasibility.
- Pedestrian improvements are often more immediately achievable than full corridor bikeway retrofits.
- Phased implementation allows progress despite funding uncertainty and physical constraints.
- Transparent discussion of trade-offs—especially related to parking and right-of-way—is essential to maintaining trust and support.



Community Engagement

Community engagement remained central throughout this phase, building on years of organizing and co-design. Engagement focused on moving from visioning to implementation by helping community members understand real-world constraints and participate in informed decision-making. Safety, ADA-compliant sidewalks, everyday usability, and neighborhood character consistently emerged as top priorities across both projects. Community input directly shaped route refinements, design priorities, and phasing strategies.

Implementation Framework and Phasing

The plan establishes a flexible, multi-year implementation framework that balances near-term impact with long-term vision. Key priorities include:

- Near-term, high-impact safety and accessibility improvements, such as enhanced crossings at high-traffic intersections, upgraded curb ramps, traffic-calming measures on residential streets, LED lighting along corridors, and new sidewalks to fill gaps, drawing from successful interventions in both the 303 ArtWay and Montbello Loop.
- Early wayfinding, placemaking, and cultural expression investments, including gateway features,

interpretive signage, community-designed murals, and public art installations that celebrate local history and identity, reinforcing continuity and visibility along the corridor.

- Context-sensitive bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, such as neighborhood bikeways, protected bike lanes, trail connections, and interim treatments that can be upgraded over time, informed by the phased approaches used in Montbello Loop.
- Long-term preparation of complex segments, including targeted engineering studies, geotechnical assessments, cost refinement, and coordination with city departments and adjacent private developments to ensure feasibility and alignment with broader city goals.
- Integration with ongoing and planned city initiatives, such as stormwater infrastructure upgrades, streetscape improvements, transit stop enhancements, and utility projects, to maximize efficiency, reduce costs, and leverage existing investments.

Phasing emphasizes incremental implementation, where early actions provide tangible benefits while establishing a foundation for more complex, long-term interventions. Lessons from the 303 ArtWay and Montbello Loop highlight the value of pairing infrastructure improvements with public engagement, cultural programming, and interagency coordination to create corridors that are safe, vibrant, and reflective of community priorities.

Funding and Performance

Rather than committing specific funding, the plan positions both projects for success by aligning recommendations with adopted policies and established funding programs. It identifies opportunities to leverage DOTI capital projects, voter-approved bonds, grants, and philanthropic funding. Performance tracking focuses not only on constructed improvements but also on progress toward implementation readiness, secured funding, and integration into Denver's capital plans.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This Implementation and Phasing Plan provides a realistic, coordinated pathway for delivering the 303 ArtWay Heritage Trail and the Montbello Loop over time—incrementally, equitably, and in alignment with Denver's priorities. Next steps include integrating recommendations into existing city programs, pursuing phased funding opportunities, advancing pilot projects, and maintaining strong interagency and community partnerships.

By treating this plan as a living implementation tool and sustaining community-led momentum, Denver and its partners are well-positioned to transform long-standing visions into tangible improvements that enhance safety, access, cultural expression, and quality of life across Northeast Denver.

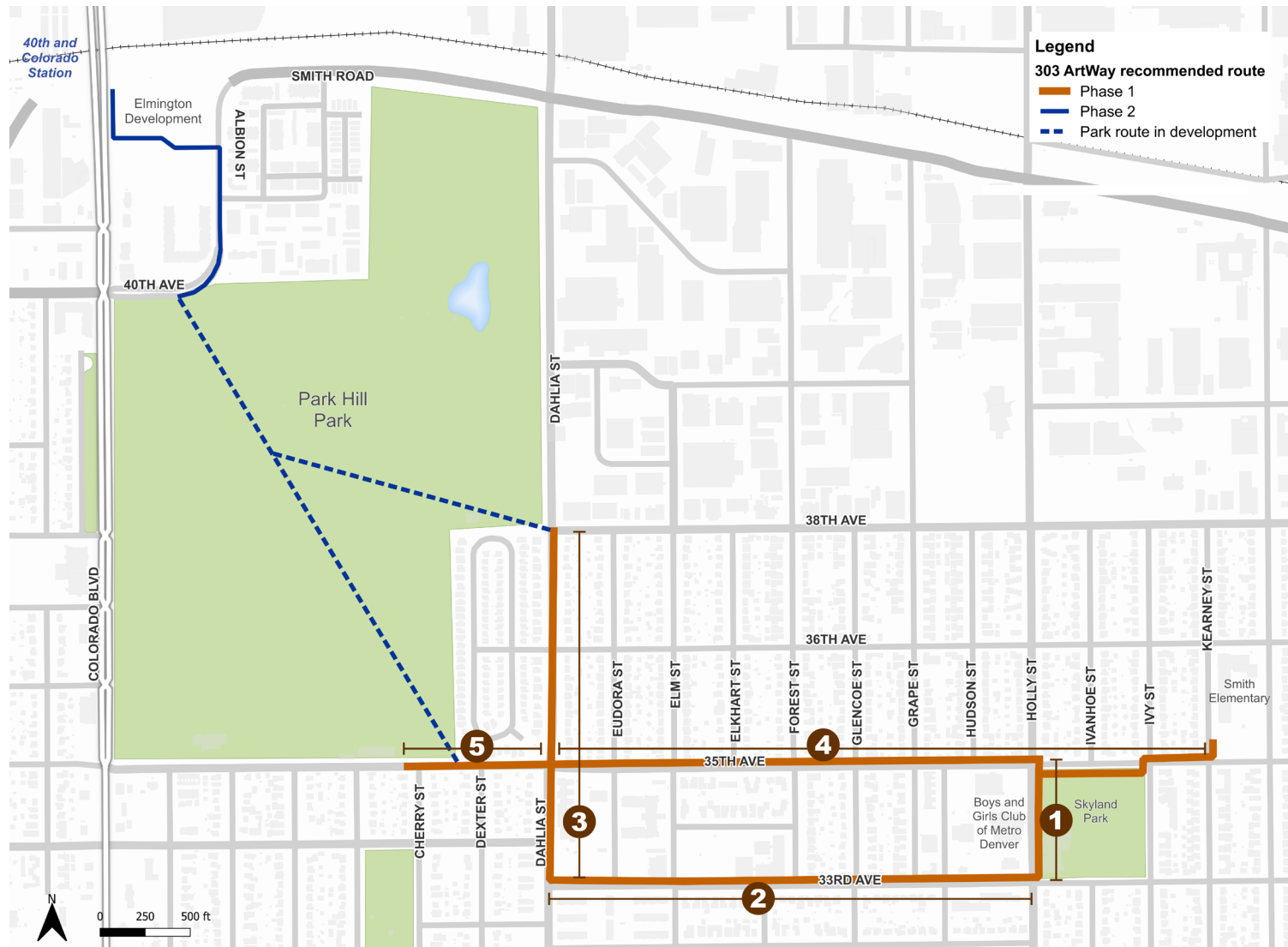


Figure 1. Proposed 303 ArtWay Heritage Trail

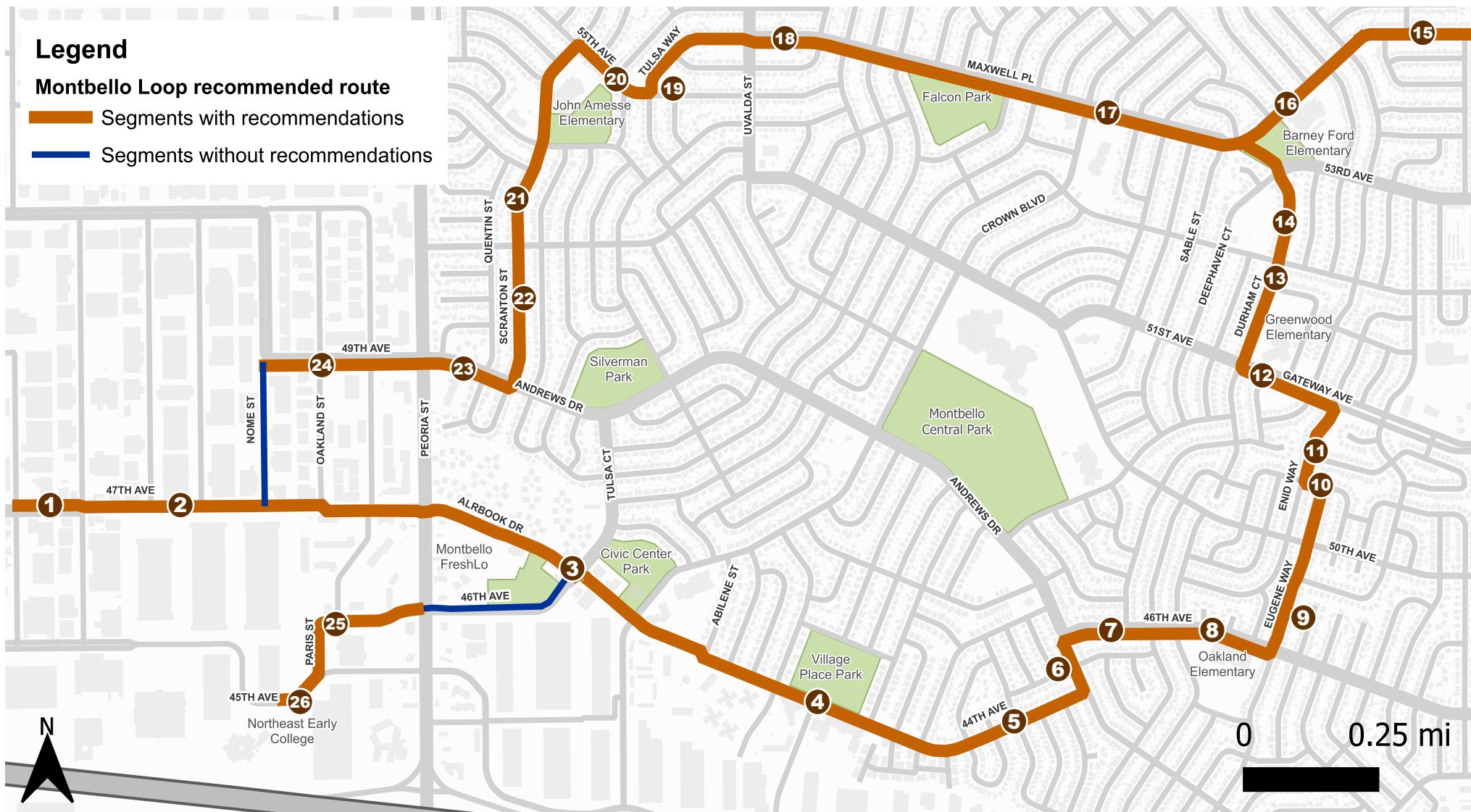


Figure 2. Proposed Montbello Loop

