

10 – Plan Implementation

Draft 09/16/09 (Contents included for review purposes)

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Introduction

The Envision Wheat Ridge Plan is a starting point for many of the activities the City of Wheat Ridge and its partners will need to undertake to achieve the plan’s vision. This chapter addresses a key aspect of the plan—how the City will implement it. This chapter contains:

1. A summary of the types of actions necessary to achieve the Plan’s goals, such as Code amendments, funding strategies, and partnerships;
2. A Priority Action table, which includes a list of actions for completion within the next five years. The table is intended to be updated periodically;
3. A description of more specific steps the City should undertake to achieve immediate and high priority actions;
4. The procedures for amending this Plan; and
5. Specific subarea plan amendments that are necessary to ensure consistency with this Plan.

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Plan Implementation

This Plan will be implemented through:

1. Strategic actions and partnerships,
2. Zoning and Development Code amendments,
3. On-going policy decisions, and
4. New programs and funding (based on public support).

What Types of Actions are Necessary?

Implementing the Plan will require many actions, such as these described below.

Strategic Actions/Partnerships

Much of what should be undertaken for this Plan will involve partnerships and economic development strategies to recruit, attract, and retain business, and ways to provide catalysts to spur redevelopment and investment in key corridors and commercial centers. The third part of this chapter describes the strategic actions and partnerships that may be necessary to accomplish economic development and redevelopment goals for target locations.

Code Amendments

For the City to successfully achieve many of its goals and to be consistent with this Plan, the City will need to amend portions of the Zoning and Development Code. Certain development regulations and zoning should be amended to achieve the development patterns or neighborhood protection this Plan aims to attain. In general, revisions to the Code should occur soon after plan adoption. The third part of this chapter describes focused amendments that could help spur appropriate desirable redevelopment by removing “barriers” and clarifying standards.

On-going Policy Decisions

The Plan identifies a number of policies that will be carried out during day-to-day decisions of City Council, Planning Commission, and staff. These groups will routinely make decisions regarding development proposals and plan amendments and will use the Plan to guide policy decisions as they occur.

New Programs

This Plan establishes a framework for the development of some new programs to carry out the goals. For example, the plan recommends continuing and establishing additional neighborhood-level planning. Recognizing funding limitations, the City will need to weigh issues and availability of funding prior to initiation of any new programs.

New Funding

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Some of the goals within this plan may entail establishing a new funding source, reprioritizing general funds, or seeking matching grants from State or Federal sources to leverage local funding. The City will need to continue to monitor public support for new funding sources.

A Guide to Priority Actions

The Priority Action Table, starting on the next page, provides a summary list of the necessary actions to implement this Plan. It identifies the overall actions, the related chapters and policies, and the action’s relative level of priority for a five-year timeframe.

Because the intent is to establish a manageable list of City actions, the table does not identify all of the actions identified in previous chapters of this Plan. However, the table still establishes a very ambitious program.

City staff and planning and elected officials will need to update the Priority Action table periodically (i.e., either annually or every two years), to keep the list relevant as actions are completed and to add new ones. In developing its annual work programs, the City may want to expand on the table to assign responsibilities and provide greater specificity.

The last column of the table identifies the **Priority Levels** (or time frame for initiating and completing actions). It should be interpreted as follows:

1 =	Immediate Priority	To be initiated with adoption of the Plan or soon thereafter;
2 =	High Priority	To be initiated as soon as possible and completed within one to two years after Plan adoption;
3 =	Moderate Priority	To be initiated and ideally completed within three to five years after Plan adoption;
0 =	Ongoing	Actions that are already occurring or that will occur continually.

The chapter section after the table provides more detailed descriptions for the immediate priority actions.

DRAFT Table of Priority Actions

Strategy	Description of Types of Actions	Chapter/ Goals	Priority
Economy and Land Use Strategies (Ch. 4)			
Promote/market Wheat Ridge	Enhance Wheat Ridge identity through promotion of unique assets (e.g., the greenbelt, unique business districts, events, recent investments such as the hospital renovation, proximity and convenience in the Metro area, established neighborhoods, and other features.	ELU 1.1, 1.2	1/0
Prioritize and assist with infrastructure improvements to spur redevelopment	Prioritize physical enhancements for the following areas: (1) Crossing at Clear Creek, (2) 38 th Avenue Main Street, (3) Kipling corridor, (4) Wadsworth/Town Center, and (5) the Ward Road transit station site. The following section identifies tools and actions.	ELU 1.1, 1.2	1/0
Retain and attract retail (revenue-generating activity)	Develop programs, tools, and partnerships to retain and increase retail and revenue-generating activities in activity centers. The following section identifies tools and actions.	ELU 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4	1
Address zoning and design standards for targeted areas	Amend/clarify commercial and mixed-use districts and design standards to help encourage redevelopment and infill only in targeted activity center areas with high quality design, higher density mixed-use, transitions, buffers, public gathering spaces, and landscaping, etc.	ELU 4.1, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2	1
Increase primary job opportunities	Develop programs, tools, partnerships, and funding to increase primary employment opportunities.	ELU 3.1, 3.2	2/0
Guide Town Center development	Amend regulations to accommodate a Town Center with a civic center, retail/services/dining, housing, and possible boutique hotel component. Provide incentives for, find partners, and financing for the center described in this Plan.	ELU 6.2	2
Neighborhoods and Housing Strategies (Ch. 5)			
Support neighborhood and sub-area planning to address neighborhood needs	Use neighborhood-level planning to work with residents to: (a) improve their identity and maintain character and stability (e.g., landscaping, tree protection), and (b) identify necessary infrastructure or other improvements and possible zoning amendments to achieve neighborhood/City goals.	NH 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2	0
Continue partnerships for housing revitalization	Continue working with Wheat Ridge 2020 to develop programs and strategies to promote new housing opportunities to meet the needs of changing households and to attract new residents.	NH 2.1, 4.1	2

Strategy	Description of Types of Actions	Chapter/ Goals	Priority
Maintain and update subarea plans	Make minor amendments to the Fruitdale, Wadsworth Corridor, and Northwest Subarea plans for consistency. Prepare new sub-area plans for other areas.	NH 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2	2
Promote investment in declining residential areas	Continue coordination with Wheat Ridge 2020 and other groups to promote investment and a variety of households in declining neighborhoods.	NH 3.1, 3.2, 4.1	0
Stimulate revitalization in Neighborhood Buffer Areas	Partner with Wheat Ridge 2020, the URA, the private sector, and others to stimulate redevelopment in Neighborhood Buffer Areas and residential areas in need of revitalization (identified through criteria on page 21) and to attract a variety of households to declining neighborhoods.	NH 4.1	0
Community Character & Design Strategies (Ch. 6)			
Improve gateways (image)	Prioritize gateways and enhance community identity through priority gateway improvements, including art, signage and landscaping, in gateway areas and identifying requirements for new development to convey a positive image. Use public/private partnerships.	CC 1.1, 1.2, 2.1	3
Integrate arts and culture in developments (public and private)	Modify streetscape standards to include greater art and design guidelines, so that arts are integrated throughout the community's public buildings rights-of-way, and parks. Explore a funding source (e.g., 1% for Arts in public projects).	CS 6.1	2/0
Increase arts and cultural offerings	Continue and enhance City arts and cultural offerings, building on the Public Art Action Plan, to identify measures to improve arts and culture in the community.	CS 6.1	3
Transportation Strategies (Ch. 7)			
Identify pedestrian and bicycle improvements funding	Explore possibilities for a new local funding source for pedestrian and bicycle system improvements, to be able to better tap into state and federal funding.	T 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5	3
Prioritize bicycle corridors (esp. north/south), and make improvements	Prioritize bicycle corridors (particularly north-to-south), identify local funding to match state and federal funding, and build priority bicycle corridors and enhanced trail system connections.	T 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4	3
Coordinate transit service improvements with new redevelopment sites	Coordinate with RTD to improve transit service and particularly to ensure adequate connections as future activity centers (including future rail station) develop.	T 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.1	0/3

Strategy	Description of Types of Actions	Chapter/ Goals	Priority
Target road improvements/“Complete Streets”	Prioritize corridors and develop new road cross-sections for priority corridors that accommodate future land uses and all modes of transportation. As future road improvements occur, ensure complete streets are implemented.	T 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 4.1, 4.2	O/2+ and beyond
Provide neighborhood-to-centers bicycle/pedestrian connections	Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and future activity centers and primary corridors.	T 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1	O/3 and beyond
Provide greenbelt connections (per Transportation Plan)	Implement the Transportation Structure Plan recommendations for connections between parks and the greenbelt.	T 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1	3

Community Services Strategies (Ch. 8)

Provide access to local government	Provide a diverse range of options for residents to actively engage in the civic process and volunteerism.	CS 7.1	O
Coordinate with non-city service providers	Continue to coordinate with non-city service providers including utility, fire and school districts.	CS 1.1, 4.1, 5.1, 8.1	O
Continue public safety and property maintenance programs	Continue and strengthen programs to enhance community safety and police protection and property maintenance (code enforcement).	CS 3.1	O

Sustainable Future Strategies (Ch. 9)

Improve standards for natural resource protection	Revise policies and regulations to require tree canopy preservation and replacement and natural resource buffers.	SF 2.1	1
Develop a Sustainability Task Force / Sustainability Action Plan	Appoint a Sustainability Task Force with a mission to develop a Sustainability Action Plan to prioritize the City’s activities toward becoming a more sustainable community.	SF 3.1	1-2
Coordinate actions for a Healthy Community	Coordinate with partners (including Jefferson County Health department) to identify strategies to improve community health and access to healthy foods; seek available grant funding to improve walkability, education about physically active community, etc.	SF 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	1*

* This immediate priority is due to the fact that Live Well Wheat Ridge funding will diminish significantly after 2 years. The City should start pursuing funding now if wanting to tap into that source.

Detailed Strategies

1. Economic Development and Redevelopment Strategies

An Economic Development Strategy

This Plan, and the process to develop it, has continually identified economic development of targeted redevelopment areas as a primary strategy for the City to accomplish its livability, fiscal, image, and identity-related goals. Wheat Ridge needs an economic development strategy that will address the following topics:

Organizational Structure

The strategy should clarify the organizational structure and roles and responsibilities of departments and agencies that address economic development, particularly of City economic development staff, Wheat Ridge 2020, and the Urban Renewal Authority. It should also identify roles related to particular geographic areas where the agencies overlap and work together or where gaps may exist. The strategy should also identify roles and responsibilities of each organization in retaining and attracting new development in retail, housing, and other sectors.

Primary Target Industries

The strategy should identify specific industries and businesses that staff should focus on and steps each organization should undertake in attracting, expanding, and retaining industries and business. For instance, the Fruitdale Subarea Plan suggested gardening and nursery industries as a favorable niche. Other members of the public have suggested industries relating to the hospital and senior services and “green” renewable energy-related industries. The strategy could confirm viability of certain niches.

Short- and Long-Term Priorities

The strategy should confirm, in discussion with policymakers and staff, short- and long-term priorities for redevelopment and geographic areas. For example, redevelopment priorities in the “target areas” should focus on the long-term desires as reflected in the Comprehensive and Sub-Area Plans, while in other commercial and industrial areas, the priority may be to minimize vacancies. This plan identifies five target areas, in order of priority:

- a. The Crossing at Clear Creek (Cabela’s),
- b. 38th Avenue “Main Street,”
- c. Kipling Corridor,
- d. Wadsworth Corridor/Town Center, and

Economic Development Strategy

The strategy for Wheat Ridge should address:

1. Organizational Structure
2. Primary Target Industries
3. Short- and Long-Term Priorities

Five Target Redevelopment Areas

The five areas are:

- a. The Crossing at Clear Creek (Cabela’s),
- b. 38th Avenue “Main Street”,
- c. Kipling Corridor,
- d. Wadsworth Corridor/Town Center, and
- e. The Gold Line/Ward Road Station - Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).

- e. The Gold Line/Ward Road Station - Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).

Identify Appropriate Financial Tools

Public agencies can employ a number of financing tools to finance public improvements. The special districts, authorities, and other tools described in the following table are a short list of financing tools that are applicable to the redevelopment of key areas in Wheat Ridge. The list is by no means exhaustive and is meant to be a general outline of tools the public sector can use.

Table of Financial Tools

	Purpose	Financing Mechanism	Governance
Districts			
General Improvement Districts	Created to construct, install, acquire, operate and maintain certain public improvement facilities	Ad valorem taxes, rates, fees, charges	Mayor and Council are the ex-officio board
Special Improvement District	Created to assess the costs of public improvements to those who are specifically benefited.	Assessments	Municipality
Metropolitan District	Established by developers to service bonds issued to construct public improvements. Ongoing revenues can be used to cover O&M costs	Ad valorem taxes, fees, charges	Quasi-municipal autonomous district board
Business Improvement District	Constructs/maintains public improvements and funds marketing and economic development services.	Ad valorem taxes, property assessments	Appointed or elected board
Local Marketing District	Provides organization, promotion, marketing and management of public events; supports business recruitment, management and development ; coordinates tourism promotion	Fees and charges	Appointed or elected board
Authority			
Urban Renewal Authority	Designated urban renewal area allows for consolidation, demolition, construction, operation/maintenance of public improvements. In rare cases the City could use condemnation.	Sales/property tax revenue increment above pre-established base. The URA enables Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	Board appointed by Council
Other			
Public Improvement Fee	Instituted in lieu of or in addition to sales tax and used to finance public improvements / services	Fee charged on sales	Development agreement with City and private contracts with businesses
Tax Rebates	Typically instituted to help defray initial development costs. Subject to negotiation.	NA	Agreement with City
Land Write-Down	A method of encouraging new development offering land at lower than "market value."	NA	Typically found in urban renewal areas

Source: DOLA, ArLand, 2009.

Note: Any levies, taxes, and revenue increases must be instituted under the guidelines of Article X, Section 20 of the State Constitution (TABOR).

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The Crossing at Clear Creek is a prime 164-acre regional retail site located west of I-70.

Economic Strategies for Geographic Areas

a. The Crossing at Clear Creek (Cabela’s)

Background

This site is the best opportunity for Wheat Ridge to start “reinventing” itself. Wheat Ridge faces similar challenges as other inner-ring suburban communities of revitalization and reinvigoration. Redevelopment opportunities in these communities are usually incremental and it is often difficult to change market perceptions on a small project site basis. Because of the site size, The Crossing/Cabela’s is Wheat Ridge’s best opportunity to not only garner needed sales tax revenues, but to also begin to change market perceptions.

Potential Public Financing Tools

- Urban Renewal Authority,
- Metropolitan District,
- General Improvement District,
- Public Improvement Fee,
- Use tax rebates, and
- Others.

Action Items

The Crossing at Clear Creek is one of Wheat Ridge’s top priorities. The City has already been working with partners to facilitate improvements on the site. It will likely take several years for the site to build out.

Short-Term	5 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Coordinate / plan infrastructure with CDOT and other agencies (ongoing) ♦ Create Urban Renewal District and Plan (ongoing/ completed) ♦ Work with Cabela’s and master developer in marketing the site at ICSC and other appropriate venues. ♦ Work directly with potential retailers and other commercial services potentially interested in the location. ♦ Work with master developer and tenants in implementing high quality site planning and architectural design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Work with master developer to attract other high quality land uses compatible with the Cabela’s master plan area and Wheat Ridge’s Comprehensive Plan

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b. 38th Avenue “Main Street”

Background

Establishing a small locally oriented retail center at 38th Avenue is a high priority for residents of Wheat Ridge. Challenges include the perception that there is “no market,” checkerboard zoning, the lack of funding for significant improvements, and land assembly. Initial action items are focused on market creation.

Potential Financing Tools

- Urban Renewal Area,
- Local Marketing District, and
- Business Improvement District.

Action Items

While 38th Avenue is important in the community, the issues identified above will make it a challenging and long-term process to facilitate redevelopment.



Continuation of the recent streetscape improvements to 38th Avenue will help create a pedestrian-friendly “Main Street”.

Short-Term	5 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Public private partnership with the merchants and owners along 38th Avenue to start making the area attractive for private investment (i.e., local marketing district, merchants association or special events committee). ♦ Work with a commercial broker and medical center to identify a potential location for redevelopment of a medically-oriented office building. ♦ Identify interim uses that would be acceptable to the merchants and the community. ♦ Work with broker to identify appropriate location(s) for neighborhood-oriented restaurant anchor(s) to help attract local residents to the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Prepare a 38th Avenue Subarea Plan. ♦ Develop a Streetscape Plan. ♦ Attract / work with a private developer to identify potential assemblages and redevelopment potentials. ♦ Business Improvement District to help fund public improvements and beautification efforts.

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The Kipling Corridor features several large vacant sites which would be suitable for infill.

c. Kipling Corridor

Background

The Wheat Ridge Recreation Center located along the Kipling Corridor serves as one of the informal centers of the community. Parts of the Kipling Corridor are also within Wheat Ridge’s new urban renewal area. The Kipling I-70 intersection has good regional access and visibility and is potentially suitable for a regional commercial use or mixed-use center.

Potential Financing Tools (long-term)

- Urban Renewal Authority,
- Metropolitan District,
- General Improvement District,
- Special Improvement District,
- Public Improvement Fee,
- Use tax rebates, and
- Others for specific projects.

Action Items

Kipling appears to be an “easier” candidate geographic location for facilitating redevelopment because there are some vacant parcels and the corridor is a bit less fragmented than other redevelopment areas. It will still take many years to affect desirable redevelopment.

Short-Term	5 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Begin to identify vacant, underutilized and other suitable parcels for redevelopment along The Kipling corridor. ♦ Begin a dialogue with relevant property owners and businesses about their future plans, relocation, and redevelopment potential. ♦ Identify viable potential assemblages. ♦ Work with a broker to identify potential regional commercial users. ♦ Begin dialogue with private developer on redevelopment potentials along the corridor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Develop a Kipling Corridor Subarea Plan, if appropriate. ♦ The Kipling Corridor is one of Wheat Ridge’s key areas. Care should be taken with interim projects along the corridor to ensure that they are compatible with the Comprehensive Plan.

d. Wadsworth Corridor/ Town Center

Background

The Wadsworth Corridor between 38th and 44th Avenues has been identified as the preferred location for a Town Center that would have a small civic component such as a library, retail development, and places for public gathering. The URA owns the site just east of the 1st Bank at 44th and Wadsworth and has been working with public and private partners to foster its development. Redevelopment of the Wadsworth Corridor hinges on actions by CDOT to widen and/or improve the road.

Potential Financing Tools

Specific parcels may require land write-down assistance, environmental remediation, assistance with current property ownership. Other tools to encourage redevelopment in this corridor area are listed below. Their use will depend on the specific situation.

- Metropolitan Districts,
- General Improvement Districts,
- Urban Renewal Area,
- Special Improvement Districts,
- Public Improvement Fees, and
- Use tax rebates.

Action Items

Redevelopment of Wadsworth has long been important to Wheat Ridge. However, land vacancies and other complexities of the area have made it challenging to facilitate redevelopment. Consequently it is seen as a longer-term undertaking than other areas of the City.



A future Town Center proposed along the Wadsworth Corridor will be a convergence of private development and community gathering spaces.

Short-Term	5 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Identify vacant, underutilized and other suitable parcels for redevelopment along corridor. ♦ Begin a dialogue with relevant property owners and businesses about their future plans, relocation, and redevelopment. ♦ Continue to work with CDOT on Wadsworth Boulevard requirements and highway concerns. ♦ Work with Exempla Lutheran on interest in developing office buildings along the Wadsworth Corridor or in a location close to the Town Center area. ♦ Discuss with library district their potential interest in opening a branch library in/near the Town Center location. ♦ Work with other potential users to assess interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Identify viable potential assemblages. ♦ Attract / work with a private developer to identify potential assemblages and redevelopment potentials. ♦ The Town Center area is one of Wheat Ridge’s key areas. Care should be taken with interim projects along the corridor to ensure that they are compatible with the Comprehensive and Sub-area plan.

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The future Ward Road Station area will be a transit-oriented mixed-use setting with convenient transportation options.

e. The Gold Line/Ward Road Station - Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Site

Background

This site is seen as having longer term importance to the City; however, potential projects are not likely to materialize until after the commuter rail line is close to completion (Gold Line station estimated completion for 2016).

Potential Public Financing Tools

- Urban Renewal Authority,
- Metropolitan District,
- General Improvement District,
- Special Improvement District,
- Public Improvement Fee,
- Use tax rebates, and
- Others for the specific TOD project.

Action Items

Even though the area around the station will likely not develop until 2016, the City can begin taking actions in the next several years to accomplish the desired mixed-use pattern and the station area and to avoid steps that would make it more difficult in later years.

Short-Term	5 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Monitor and stay involved with ongoing RTD / Gold Line activity to ensure that Wheat Ridge’s interests are upheld. ♦ Monitor development at the Arvada Ridge station and other Gold Line stations. ♦ Work with property owners to begin to assess environmental conditions, remediation, other infrastructure needs, and potential costs. ♦ Develop an overlay zone or new TOD zoning district (See “Code Amendments”). ♦ Allow “short-term” uses, such as storage, and parking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Update the subarea plan. Include market analysis.

2. Code Amendments to Achieve Economic and Land Use Goals

Overview

Wheat Ridge’s Zoning and Development Code has been in place since the 1970’s and has been amended periodically over the years to achieve a variety of goals. Recently, the City undertook a comprehensive reorganization of the Code but generally did not amend the regulations, aside from some precise changes in residential zoning districts and a few procedural requirements.

In general, the perception of Wheat Ridge’s development review process is that it has become more challenging over the years—in part because Wheat Ridge is mostly built out, but also because the Code and regulatory structure is overly complex, somewhat out-of-date (standards and procedure), and unpredictable. It also contains regulatory “barriers” to achieving desirable patterns, such as mixed-use development.

The sections below address some focused amendments the City could undertake to address Code deficiencies and/or inconsistencies with this Plan. Fortunately, the City has some good foundational resources to address mixed-use and streetscape design (e.g., its two design manuals and the Planned Mixed Use Development zoning district), so suggested amendments will not begin with a “blank slate”. The City has also recently addressed and amended problems in residential zoning districts, so the zoning districts, subdivision standards, and other residential standards in the Code are of lesser priority than commercial/mixed-use areas. Also, the City can build on and promote strengths, such as agricultural (estate-style) zoning and a variety of residential lot size options.

Code Amendments - Mixed Use Centers and Commercial Corridors

Background

Wheat Ridge needs to update its Zoning and Development Code to accommodate contemporary development patterns and market demands (such as pedestrian-oriented mixed-use), and to maintain particular features of neighborhoods that residents value. Some of the problems and issues are further described below.

Lack of Mixed-Use Zoning to Implement the Plan

Currently the Zoning and Development Code lacks mixed-use zoning districts (or effective overlay districts) and standards to implement the desired character of Centers and Corridors proposed through the Structure Plan and in Chapter 3. While the Code contains a

Code Issues to Address

Some of the issues that the city should address to improve its code include:

- ♦ Lack of mixed-use zoning districts to implement the Structure Plan,
- ♦ One-size-fits-all commercial zoning,
- ♦ Over-reliance on Planned Development (PD) process,
- ♦ Architectural and Site Design Manual that has unclear application and relationship to zoning and in need of clearer site planning standards,
- ♦ Streetscape and Architectural Design Manual with limited usefulness in Wheat Ridge’s built environment,
- ♦ Industrial zoning that is inflexible and not in alignment with the Structure Plan,
- ♦ Residential zoning districts that are generally working but may need fine-tuning as addressed through neighborhood planning.

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Planned Mixed Use Development (PMUD) district, the PMUD would likely need to be adapted to accomplish the aims of the Structure Plan that suggests different character districts for different corridors (e.g., along the Wadsworth Corridor versus along 38th Avenue).

Commercial Zoning

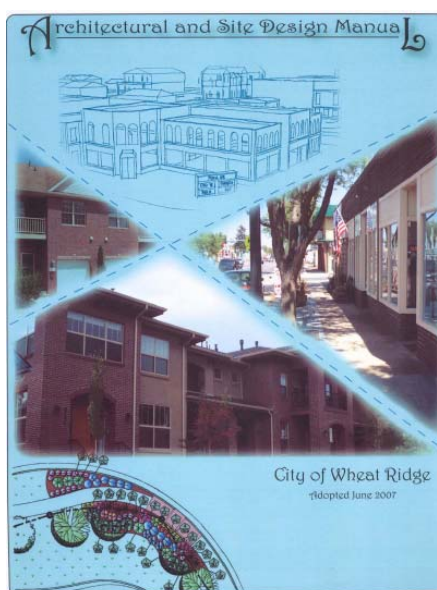
The commercial zoning districts (e.g., C-1) are somewhat dated and universally applied along corridors. They tend to foster “strip commercial” patterns of the 70s, rather than advancing more contemporary commercial development patterns (such as buildings near the street, integrated landscaping, and walkways and plazas). The application of commercial zoning also does not correspond with the general pattern and location of centers and corridors identified on the Structure Plan. The C-1 zoning district does not allow residential. The one-size-fits all approach to commercial zoning generally does not work well, if the City is trying to foster different types of places being built over time. Additionally, certain allowed uses may not be appropriate in target redevelopment areas, such as automotive and drive-through facilities.

Planned Developments – Over Reliance and Unpredictability

In addition, the Code promotes over reliance on Planned Developments (PDs) for new development instead of using straight zoning districts and standards. This means that development projects require multiple review steps and are subject to a high degree of discretion rather than objective standards. As a result, predictability for developers, neighborhoods, and decision-makers is low. In addition, the requirement for rezoning to PDs adds another step to the process and adds uncertainty for new developments uncertainty, which can be expensive and unpredictable for businesses and industries and frustrating for neighbors.

Architectural and Site Design Manual Use Unclear

Finally, the City’s Architectural and Site Design Manual begins to address many issues related to urban design, mixed-use, and walkability; however, its relationship to zoning districts and standards in the Code is unclear, and the process by which a developer should use it is vague. For example, its guidelines do not supersede underlying standards such as landscape requirements. Site planning standards also need fine tuning as they apply to certain uses.



The Architecture and Site Design Manual's relationship to zoning and application is somewhat unclear.

General Recommendations for New Mixed-Use Zoning Districts

New mixed use zoning districts could help facilitate desired development. The City could pursue several approaches to mixed-use zoning.

Summit Meeting Regarding Mixed-Use

First, the City could start by holding a Mixed-Use Summit Meeting (and/or mailed information and survey) with property owners in each target area (e.g., 38th Avenue Main Street, Kipling Corridor, Wadsworth Corridor, and TOD site, respectively) to discuss potential options. Discuss whether it is more palatable and easier to proactively rezone properties in the corridors, or to provide incentives for incremental rezoning to new mixed-use zoning district(s).

Develop New Mixed Use Zoning

Drawing from the Architectural and Site Design Manual, the City could develop new mixed-use zoning district(s). Standards would not only ensure quality architectural design, but also address site planning. For example, they could require new projects to provide transitions or buffers near single family neighborhoods, allow for shared parking, relax front setback standards so buildings relate to the street, provide ample pedestrian features, and encourage (not just allow) public gathering spaces and public art. New projects would also need to maintain essential components of Wheat Ridge’s character, including landscaping and trees, and other appropriate themes.

Determine how/whether to rezone the C-1, RC designated properties along the corridors and possibly some of the R-3 or NC, so that the corridors are more logical and provide buffers/transitions for neighborhoods.

Alternatively, the City could implement the mixed-use district through an overlay district(s) that supersedes underlying zoning.

Restrict Inappropriate Uses in Target Areas

Prevent certain uses along the corridors in areas where they are not appropriate, including automotive-related and drive-through facilities, and outdoor storage adjacent to the street.

Recommendations for Target Sites

Allow Vibrant Mix within Regional Commercial at the Crossing at Clear Creek

This Plan has identified the Crossing at Clear Creek as a future regional commercial center that should entail a vibrant mix of commercial uses with supporting services, offices, and possibly some multi-family housing. Commercial development would be the

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predominant land use, as established in the approved Outline Development Plan (ODP). The City (with the owner) should consider amending the ODP prior to the Final Development Plan to allow for the desired mix of supporting uses to realize a vibrant and inviting site and accommodate some community needs, such as primary jobs and senior housing.

[Allow for Mixed-Use Primary Commercial Corridors \(Kipling and Wadsworth\)](#)

The Structure Plan identifies two primary corridors as appropriate for mixed use: Kipling and Wadsworth. Both are generally zoned C-1, but not entirely. The City should develop a new Primary Corridor mixed-use zoning district (or overlay), with standards adapted from the PMUD. The district could provide incentives for high quality development/redevelopment (e.g., reduce parking requirements, or ease front-yard setback requirements, so buildings can be near the street), and encourage offices and lofts on upper floors. At the same time, standards for tree planting, quality architecture, and transitions to neighborhoods need to be rigorous.

[Achieve “Main Street” and Neighborhood Corridor Mixed-Use \(38th and 44th Avenues\)](#)

To achieve the desired smaller-scale mixed-use described in the Structure Plan for the 38th and 44th Avenue corridors in particular, the City (after meeting in the Summit, should amend the Code to develop a new Neighborhood Corridor mixed-use zoning district(s) (or overlay(s) that is lower intensity than the Primary Corridor zoning district and allows for residential on upper floors and behind commercial development, again relaxing parking and possibly setbacks along the street and for side-yards. The zoning district should include strong standards to address building relationship to street, sidewalks, and provision of public gathering places.

[Develop T.O.D. Mixed-Use Zoning District for Ward Road - TOD Site](#)

To implement the future station area Transit-Oriented Development, develop a new T.O.D. zoning district to emphasize commercial, employment, and some multi-family residential (e.g., loft-style) to be served by the transit station. Allow for temporary transitional uses on the site (e.g., parking, temporary structure warehouses, storage lots), because the station area development will not occur until 2016 and beyond. Do not approve housing in the area unless it is part of a planned development that includes a mix of transit-oriented uses.

Code Amendments - Employment Areas

Background

Industrial Zoning

The industrial (I) zoning district does not provide for flexibility to accomplish office and professional uses or light manufacturing, and locations of the I district do not align with the employment areas identified on the Structure Plan.

Recommendations

The City should consider amending the Code as follows:

Develop a New Employment (E) District

Develop a new Employment (E) district that allows for light manufacturing, flex office space, and certain commercial services to support offices (e.g., dining, mail, other services). Apply the zoning district to areas designated as Employment on the Structure Plan. Up zone A districts north of I-70 to allow for and encourage light industrial, consistent with the Structure Plan designation that is generally east of Tabor and west of Kipling. Up zone the A district north of I-70 along Ward Road to be consistent with the Structure Plan designation and the Northwest Subarea Plan.

Modify the Industry (I) District

Modify the Industry (I) district, assessing if all the allowed or special review uses are still appropriate (e.g., commercial uses, contractor plant or storage yard, car wash, auto service repair). Add contemporary uses (e.g., offices/flex), and consider whether other light manufacturing uses should be allowed by right instead of through special use review.

3. Neighborhood Goals/Planning Strategies

Neighborhood Planning

This Plan has suggested the City develop a neighborhood planning program that would enable neighborhoods to organize at a “grass roots” level to identify conservation features and necessary physical improvements. The City should establish a process by which neighborhoods can apply to work with the City to prepare a plan, apply for small grant funding, and propose zoning amendments to be completed through a public process.

Code Amendments – Residential Zone Districts

Background

The City has recently addressed and amended residential zoning districts and dimensional standards, so these parts of the Code may be of lesser priority. However there is still some unnecessary complexity with multiple zoning districts and a checkerboard pattern within neighborhoods. Several Code amendments that could help achieve plan and neighborhood goals are described below.

Recommendations

Consolidate Seldom-Used Residential (R) Categories

The multiple categories of zoning add complexity and are somewhat confusing. Consider consolidation of certain categories that are rarely used (such as R-2A with R-2).

Clarify Residential Checkerboard Zoning

Determine if certain R-3 areas should be rezoned (e.g., to R-2) to be more consistent with established neighborhoods. Also, determine how and where to allow small neighborhood-oriented commercial uses along collector streets. Should be allowed in R-3 zoning (on neighborhood collectors)?

Retain and Provide Trees

This topic is further addressed under Strategies for Natural Resource Protection, below.

Retain/Promote Agricultural Districts South of I-70

Background

Many large properties in the western part of the City are zoned Agriculture. The Agricultural (A) zoning districts can be viewed as an asset, in an era where people are showing renewed interest in local food and energy production.

Recommendation

Retain Residential Agricultural Districts South of I-70

Retain the A districts south of I-70 that align with neighborhoods on the Structure Plan. Promote the areas as Metro Area Agricultural Areas appropriate for greenhouses, small-scale food production, small-scale energy production (such as solar panels), and the like, continuing to allow estate-style residential. Otherwise, revisit the zoning district allowed uses to ensure they are appropriate and consistent with the subarea plans and intent of this Plan.



Communities are increasingly seeking ways to promote local produce.

4. Transportation Strategies

Background

This Plan recognizes that achieving the transportation goals and connections on the Transportation Structure Plan will be a long-term assignment. This is due to limited local funding and necessity to coordinate with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on the arterial improvements and “complete streets”.

Short-Term Recommendations

Coordination with CDOT

On-going coordination is necessary and important to achieve streets that will accommodate multiple forms of transportation (i.e., vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and transit).

Prioritizing Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements

Throughout the process of developing this Plan, the public has repeatedly suggested that bicycle improvements and some pedestrian improvements are important, particularly those identified on the Transportation Structure Plan. Prioritizing routes is a necessary early implementation step.

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Identifying bicycle routes is a priority.

Local Funding for Bicycle/Pedestrian Priority Improvements

Another early implementation step will be to identify local funding sources. Participants during the planning effort have expressed interest in seeking additional funding to provide citywide bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The City could slightly re-apportion local transportation funds to put Wheat Ridge more on par with neighboring jurisdictions—Arvada and Lakewood—that provide fund bicycle and pedestrian modes at a slightly higher rate than the City. Wheat Ridge residents may even be willing to support local funding (taxation) for specifically-identified improvements, such as north-south bicycle improvements, and connections within the fragmented pedestrian system along neighborhood collector streets. The City should consider polling residents and businesses over coming years to determine support for local funding.

Dedication Requirements/Streetscape Design Manual Amendments

While the Streetscape Manual contains helpful background and contextual information about Wheat Ridge, and guidance appropriate to “greenfield” (large vacant parcels) development situations, the requirements for dedication do not apply well in a built out environment where isolated properties redevelop. Using the approach set forth in the Streetscape Manual it would take decades for the City to accomplish connected sidewalks and cohesive street design. The City should explore alternative dedication (fee in lieu requirements) that could be used on a district-wide basis.

5. Natural Resource Protection and Conservation Strategies

Background

The Code does not contain tree canopy protection standards.

Recommendations

The City could take several angles to achieve resource protection and conservation goals.

Tree Conservation Standards

Develop new standards to conserve mature, healthy trees and replace tree canopy. Standards would apply to new development.



Wheat Ridge was the first Denver metro area community to be designated as a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation.

Remove Sustainability Barriers

Remove barriers in the Code to achieving “sustainability” goals, such as restrictions or extra process to install solar panels or small wind turbines. Allow for gardening/small food production, and possibly small fowl in appropriate residential districts.

Plan Updates and Amendments

The planning process is ongoing and does not stop when the Comprehensive Plan is adopted. Additional elements or planning studies may be necessary to address new issues or opportunities from time-to-time, and the City may need to update the plan as conditions change, and to keep it relevant by updating it on a five-year time schedule.

Plan Updates—Every Five Years

For this Comprehensive Plan to serve the City well over time, the City must periodically review and amend it to reflect changes in the community. A plan update approximately every five years will enable the City to assess changes in economic conditions, development trends, and community values, and to validate whether the vision and goals are still relevant and add new ones as changing conditions merit.

The City can determine whether to initiate an update depending on changing economy, environment, housing affordability, traffic congestion, local priorities, projected growth, or other conditions. A Plan Update will then include a thorough re-evaluation of the vision, goals, and policies as well as review and update of all information. An update should include ample and appropriate opportunities for involvement by the public, boards and commissions, elected and appointed officials, City staff, and other affected interests. The update may result in changes or removal of policies, and new additions in some instances and will provide new implementation strategies.

Minor Plan Amendments

The City will follow a separate process for Plan Amendments—to be performed on a yearly or periodic basis as needed, but no more than four times per year. Plan amendment requests by City Council, City staff, Planning Commission and annexations may be initiated any time.

Plan Amendments may include revisions to one or more sections of the Comprehensive Plan as a result of adoption of subarea plans or

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a specific issue/policy plan, or by directive from City Council or Planning Commission, or upon request by staff or a landowner or development applicant. Plan Amendments may include changes to the Structure Plan map. Small non-substantive corrections to text errors do not require process or criteria.

Process for Minor Plan Amendments

The process for making these amendments is described below.

1. All Plan Amendments shall be considered by the Planning Commission.
2. Based on its consideration of the recommendations from staff and evidence from public hearings, the Planning Commission could then adopt the Plan Amendment (with or without further revisions) or reject it.

Criteria for Minor Plan Amendments

When considering a plan amendment (other than minor corrections), the City shall consider the following criteria and make a finding that the amendment meets the intent of the criteria:

1. The existing Plan is in need of the proposed amendment because of changing circumstances or conditions;
2. Strict adherence to this Plan would result in a situation neither intended nor in keeping with the goals and policies of this Plan;
3. The proposed amendment is compatible with the surrounding area, and the goals and policies of this Plan;
4. The proposed amendment will have a positive benefit (or impacts that can be mitigated) on fiscal balance, economic development, transportation, services and facilities, and is compatible with planned service provision; and
5. The proposed Plan amendment will promote the public welfare and will be consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

Subarea Plan Amendments

For existing Subarea plans to align with the vision, goals and policies in this Comprehensive Plan, the following Subarea Plan amendments are recommended:

Northwest Subarea Plan

The Northwest Subarea Plan generally corresponds with the goals, policies, and Structure Plan map contained in this Comprehensive Plan. However, the City should amend the Preferred Future Land Use map and recommended mix of uses in the Northwest Subarea Plan to reflect the proposed Employment/Commercial Center with new emphasis on increasing primary employment opportunities in this area, as shown on the Structure Plan.

Wadsworth Corridor Plan

The City should revise the Wadsworth Corridor Plan to reflect the new Community Commercial Center locations shown on the Structure Plan. The Wadsworth Corridor Plan references a future Town Center development in the same location at this plan, but the Corridor Plan should reflect the desired uses and character within this center, as well as its connection to the proposed Main Street Corridor on 38th Avenue.

Fruitdale Subarea Plan

The Fruitdale Subarea Plan is generally consistent with this Plan. The City should amend the Fruitdale Subarea Plan to reflect the proposed Neighborhood Commercial Corridor and Center along 44th Avenue (as shown on the Structure Plan) and the proposed north/south bicycle and pedestrian connections through the subarea (as shown on the Transportation Structure Plan).