



KEY ISSUES for the Comprehensive Plan

Draft – 01/12/09

This list of issues identifies some of the topics and trends that the Envision Wheat Ridge plan needs to strategically address to be successful. The list has been prepared with input from the staff team, the Citizen Advisory Committee, interviews with individuals, and a study session with the City Council and Planning Commission. Additional topics, feedback, and refinement will be included after the public meeting on January 13, 2009.

Some of the key issues identified by all these groups include:

- Establishing a long-term vision for the community that addresses how it should grow (e.g., balanced land use, desirable residential, commercial position in the region), incorporating technology, and partnerships,
- Making the plan update as strategic as possible,
- Addressing economic development and fiscal stability,
- Addressing how to provide competitive and appropriate housing choices,
- Attracting people to Wheat Ridge and improving the image,
- Providing a balance of land uses (jobs and retail),
- Improving options for multi-modal transportation (especially sidewalks and bicycle lanes),
- Continuing investment in parks and recreation, on of the city's major assets, and
- Making Wheat Ridge a more sustainable and healthy community.

These topics are explored in a bit more detail below. The "Community Profile" (under separate cover) also identifies pertinent data and trends.

Economic Development and Fiscal Stability

The Comprehensive Plan should address the following Economic Development and Fiscal Stability issues:

- **Economic Strategy:** The city needs to define its big picture economic aims and roles and responsibilities of various organizations, including Wheat Ridge 2020, the Urban Renewal Authority, the City's Economic Development Department, and how to partner with other organizations and businesses on advancing a strategy.
- **Future Employment and Retail Centers—Economic Opportunities:** The plan should address opportunities for future employment and retail centers in the community

(e.g., near FasTracks station or future Cabelas) and opportunities and niches for Wheat Ridge.

- **Redevelopment and Infill Opportunities:** The plan should identify areas prime for redevelopment and/or infill development and address barriers to make the community friendlier to and ready for such development. (Key sites include 44th and Wadsworth, along 38th Avenue (East of Wadsworth), 38th and Kipling, on Kipling between I-70 and 44th, and the Urban Renewal Area around I-70 and Ward Road. The future Gold Line Ward Road station is also important, and potentially there is land around Exempla Lutheran for some small infill.)
- **Fiscal Stability:** The plan should address the fiscal realities of the city (as an inner-ring suburb, if staying with the status-quo model) and address how to achieve sustainable revenue sources to maintain current levels of City services.
- **Information Technology:** The plan should pave the way for the city to support new technology that advances the community's economic and neighborhood goals. The City's Strategic Plan (2006) recommends developing an Information Technology Plan is a high priority for the city.

Land Use, Housing, and Design

The Comprehensive Plan should address the following Land Use and Housing issues:

- **Housing Stock and Neighborhoods:** Wheat Ridge is a city of long-standing neighborhoods with multiple generations of home ownership and pride. It also appears to have a high rental rate in some areas and neighborhoods in need of revitalization. The plan should recognize the importance of some single family neighborhoods but also address how to increase the variety of housing options for sale and rental beyond the single-family ranch home or older apartment(e.g., explore options for accessory dwelling units in some existing neighborhoods). It should also address how to reinvest in existing neighborhoods to make them more appealing and address what kind of senior or other special needs housing might be necessary in the future.
- **Balanced Land Uses:** The plan should address how to achieve a sustainable balance of housing, retail, and employment land uses over time as the city and region grows.
- **Density and Design:** The city's Charter defines the maximum density and height for commercial and residential areas, and the community has indicated a desire to leave the citywide language in place. The issue of appropriate density and design can be explored in a more fine-grained way by determining which parts of the city are appropriate to retain low density development whereas which areas are

appropriate for mixed-use and more compact development and redevelopment, and how design standards can ensure quality development.

- **Activity Centers:** The plan should identify areas for future activity centers (including smaller scale neighborhood or larger scale “town center”, such as a possible downtown area, civic center complex, and/or medical service area near the Exempla Lutheran Medical Center) to promote a sense of place and to encourage investment.

Community Character and Livability

The Comprehensive Plan should address the following Community Character and Livability issues:

- **Community Identity and Image:** The plan should address how to promote the community’s assets (i.e. proximity to downtown, sense of community, and outstanding parks and open space system) to attract new residents to live, work, shop, and recreate in Wheat Ridge. The city corridors and gateways also need clearer identification and branding.
- **Addressing a Changing Community—Diversifying Age Groups and Culture, Aging Population:** The aging population and increased presence of young families and ethnic groups makes it necessary to address how the community accommodates the needs of different types of households.
- **Schools:** The plan should address how quality schools are needed, and work with the school district to identify ways to improve performance to attract primary employers and young families to the community.
- **Active, Healthy Community:** The plan should identify barriers for active lifestyles (i.e., pedestrian connectivity) and focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle for residents.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space:** The plan should address how to continue to maintain parks, recreation, and open space facilities along Clear Creek and how to make them safe and accessible for all user groups.
- **Public Safety and Community Engagement:** The Strategic Analysis For Effective Response (S.A.F.E.R.) Wheat Ridge Community Policing Model should be utilized to decrease high crime rates in certain locations of the community (i.e., I-70/Kipling hotel area) and to engage the neighborhoods to address traffic and code enforcement issues.

- **Sustainability:** The plan should include elements on promoting environmentally conscious, energy-efficient, fiscally-responsible development and conservation.

Transportation

The Comprehensive Plan should address the following Transportation issues:

- **Comprehensive Transportation Framework/Multiple Modes:** The plan should update the comprehensive transportation framework to address all future modes of travel—vehicles, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- **Transportation Funding:** The plan should examine how to fund transportation projects and maintenance of existing facilities, given state and federal shortages of funding.
- **Bicycle, Pedestrian Facilities and Connectivity:** Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plans are difficult to implement within the existing infrastructure and the trail systems lack connectivity.

Other Topics

The Comprehensive Plan should address the following other issues:

- **Role of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS) and Other Plans:** The plan should also identify and carry forward relevant policies, land uses, and strategies proposed by the NRS and recent subarea plans as well as the 2000 Comprehensive Plan.

Strategic, Implementation Focus. The plan needs to address specific actions, priorities and ways to achieve goals, including financing, partnerships, code reform and new standards, and possible programs).

- Orchard Theme/Tree City
- Art in Public Places (along I-70)
- Code Enforcement