



# Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Wednesday, June 24, 2009

Topics: Policy Framework and Structure Plan

## Attendance

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- ♦ **Committee:** 11 members present: Susie Seeds, Tom Abbott, Don Seyfer, Carol Salzman, Sally Banghart, Diana Lopez, Denise Stephens, Jim Williams, Joyce Jay, Suzanne Teale, John Marriott
- ♦ **Staff:** City – Sally Payne, Ken Johnstone, Ryan Stachelski, Adam Tietz
- ♦ **Consultants:** Clarion – Lesli Ellis, Shelby Sommer

## Update on Planning Effort

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The planning team presented a brief recap feedback received from the May 6<sup>th</sup> CAC meeting and highlighted the differences in feedback received at the May 20<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting.

- ♦ Common themes from the CAC meeting included:
  - Fiscal and Economic/Market
    - Need a balanced economic approach (more emphasis on primary jobs)
  - Transportation
    - Vehicles and bicycles are funding priorities
    - Local and matching funds are key
    - North-south bike corridor
  - Design and Density
    - 5-6 story threshold?
    - Concerns about multi-family housing
    - General support for removing charter restrictions
- ♦ Common themes from the community meeting included:
  - Fiscal and Economic/Market
    - Need a balanced economic approach that includes retail, primary jobs, and residential
  - Transportation
    - Some willingness to fund improvements
    - Pedestrian, bicycle improvements priority
  - Design and Density
    - 3 to 4 stories is the maximum height threshold
    - Mixed feedback about charter issue
    - More concern about neighborhoods

## Policy Framework Discussion

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The team presented an overview of the Policy Framework and asked CAC members to select their top items for discussion. Key discussion points included:

### Town Center

- ♦ The committee and the plan need to clarify what a Town Center is, and what it can do for the community.
- ♦ A Town Center might help make Wheat Ridge identifiable (like Old Towne Arvada or BelMar in Lakewood) and also would help give residents a local destination and gathering place.
- ♦ Potential public uses to incorporate into a Town Center include a full City Hall or select city departments, library, and/or outdoor gathering spaces.
- ♦ Possibilities exist for a variety of smaller-scale centers with unique attributes, such as a Civic Center, Recreation Center, and various mixed-use centers
- ♦ The location of a future Civic Center should probably more central to the entire community than the current Town Hall location (e.g. it should be further west).
- ♦ A Town Center similar to BelMar is unrealistic in Wheat Ridge due to its size and the amount of land available.
- ♦ The amount of land in the area surrounding the current Recreation Center and future park is very limited – this area functions as a Recreation Activity Center and is not well suited to become an urban or Civic Center.
- ♦ The Town Center would ideally mix some public uses and spaces with commercial businesses and services (including offices, cafes, shops, etc.).
- ♦ Based on a finger poll, the majority of committee members favored having civic use(s) anchor a Town Center development, which would also incorporate commercial uses and public gathering places (e.g. patios, fountains, etc.) located at 44th and Wadsworth.
- ♦ Many committee members indicated that the site at 44th and Wadsworth is most realistic for a future Town Center (for a variety of reasons including access and transportation options, proximity to hospital and Greenbelt, location along the community’s most “urban” corridor), and noted that the charter restrictions limit the site’s development potential.
- ♦ Staff stated that the current municipal building is in need of additional space (especially the police department), but overall the building is adequate.

### Transitional Areas

- ♦ Transitional Areas on the Preliminary Structure Plan generally correspond with defined or proposed Urban Renewal Areas.
- ♦ The area between 32nd and 38th Avenues, between Wadsworth and Sheridan should not be designated as a Transitional Area (there are some discrepancies between the Preliminary Structure Plan map and the Policy Framework text).
- ♦ The area north of 44th Ave, along both sides of Kipling is transitional, while the neighborhood area to the east of Kipling is in need of some revitalization (it is not an area in transition).
- ♦ The Policy Framework and the Structure Plan need to clearly differentiate and define transitional areas and revitalization areas.

- ♦ Transitional Areas should function as buffers between neighborhoods and future activity centers and primary corridors.
- ♦ The Transitional Areas need to be more clearly delineated (e.g. how wide?).
- ♦ There is concern that a map that is not parcel-specific will leave the door open for too much change or potential for change in “fuzzy” areas.
- ♦ The plan should designate most residential areas as areas of little future change and focus investment and change in defined mixed-use and non-residential areas.

## Charter Limitations on Height and Density

- ♦ The Wheat Ridge 2020 Board recently voted in favor of recommending the removal of the height and density limitations from the City Charter, so that such issues can be addressed through zoning regulations.
- ♦ Some committee members indicated that the most important issue for the plan to address is the charter limitation on height and density.
- ♦ When discussing the political feasibility of a charter amendment, several members said that it may be most realistic to exclude certain areas from the charter language (e.g. primary corridors, TOD area, Cabela’s site).
- ♦ An educational campaign to explain zoning’s role in limiting height and density would be necessary if seeking a charter amendment.
- ♦ Many agreed that the previous charter amendment was confusing and worded poorly.
- ♦ One member added that addressing height and density through zoning may actually increase public participation in the development process (right now the public is not engaged since the charter covers everything).
- ♦ The charter limitations add to the perception that the Wheat Ridge is hard to develop in and the city is difficult to work with.
- ♦ The Comprehensive should be more general (less prescriptive), while zoning should address specifics such as height and density.

## Transportation

- ♦ The plan and the city need to consider and evaluate the traffic impacts and consequences that will result from redevelopment and increased densities (e.g. traffic studies and transportation plans).
- ♦ In addition to north/south bicycle and pedestrian routes east of Wadsworth, there needs to be a north/south route between Wadsworth and Kipling (perhaps near Tabor Road) that crosses the Greenbelt.
- ♦ Connectivity and crossing the Greenbelt are issues for pedestrians and cyclists traveling north/south.
- ♦ At a previous meeting there was discussion about the future widening of Wadsworth between I-70 and 35th Ave. While this is still a possibility, and the project is not yet funded. Also funding for the Environmental Impact Study is questionable, so until new information is available, the Wadsworth Subarea Plan will serve as the best available resource (which the Comprehensive Plan will reference).
- ♦ A sales tax increase to fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements is not likely to pass based on the failure of other recent ballot initiatives. Any new increases in taxes would need to emphasize community-wide benefits and not one select area.

## Structure Plan Refinements and Discussion

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Committee members worked in small groups to review and comment on the Preliminary Structure Plan and Preliminary Transportation Plan maps. Their comments included:

- ♦ Corridors
  - The Neighborhood Commercial Corridor along 44th Ave. east of Wadsworth could be higher intensity (like 38th Ave. without the “Main Street” emphasis).
  - The 38th Ave./Main Street Area needs to transition away from automobile-oriented uses (e.g. auto servicing businesses) and become more pedestrian-oriented.
  - Kipling Street north of 44th Ave. should focus more on employment, while Wadsworth should be emphasized as the main commercial/retail corridor.
- ♦ Town Center
  - The 44th Ave. and Wadsworth Center and 38th Ave. Center and Main Street concepts really fit together as one key redevelopment area.
  - Wadsworth between 38th and 44th Ave. should be a Commercial Town Center with some civic uses and public spaces (such as a library and some Town Hall functions).
  - The area at 38th Ave. and Kipling should be a Recreation/Activity Focus area.
  - The existing City Hall should become a political/justice center only.
- ♦ TOD Area
  - Retain employment and industry around the TOD site so that people ride the transit line to the end (Wheat Ridge).
  - The Plan should establish a clear transportation and a transit link between the TOD area and the Cabela’s site.
- ♦ Development and Redevelopment Priorities
  - Top development/redevelopment priorities areas include : the TOD area, Cabela’s site, the Wadsworth Commercial Corridor, the Kipling Corridor north of 44th Ave., and 38th Ave. Main Street/Neighborhood Commercial.
  - Other corridors, such as 44th Ave. needs the Cabela’s and the TOD areas to develop and act as catalysts to spur further investment and redevelopment.
- ♦ Neighborhoods
  - The neighborhood east of Kipling, north of 44th Ave. is a neighborhood in need of revitalization, not a Transitional Area.
  - Other identified neighborhood revitalization areas include: all residential areas north of 44th Ave., along 38th Ave. west of Kipling, and south of 38th Ave. near Sheridan.
- ♦ Transportation
  - There is need for additional north/south pedestrian/bicycle connection(s) across the Greenbelt between Wadsworth and Kipling and west of Kipling (maybe near Tabor Road). Several crossings exist, but none are very direct for regional bicycle commuters.

- There is interest/need a north/south grade separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing across I-70 in the Kipling vicinity.
- ◆ Other Topics
  - Remove the neighborhood portal arrow on the south side of 44th Ave. near Tabor Street.
  - Kipling north of 44th Ave. to I-70 is rundown (old hotels) and should be a commercial revitalization area.
  - Consider moving the existing truck stop north of 44th Ave. further east.
  - Show the city limits darker on the map.
  - The area south of 44th Ave. just east of I-70 should be a commercial revitalization area or Highway commercial area.
  - The area north of I-70 at Kipling is really half commercial and half employment (not all commercial).

## **Next Steps: Schedule and Next Meeting**

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- ◆ Check the website [www.EnvisionWheatRidge.com](http://www.EnvisionWheatRidge.com) for latest work products, project news, and updates.
- ◆ The next CAC Meeting will be held sometime in mid to late August. Topics will include the draft plan and strategies.