



## Community Meeting #3 Summary

Wednesday, May 20, 2009- 6:30 p.m.

Recreation Center



### Attendance

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- ♦ **Public:** Approximately 30 community members attended the meeting
- ♦ **City Staff:** Sally Payne, Ken Johnstone, Patrick Goff, Ryan Stachelski, Adam Tietz
- ♦ **Consultants:** Clarion – Lesli Ellis, Shelby Sommer

### Update on Planning Effort

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#### Vision and Key Values

The planning team presented a brief overview of the revised Vision and Key Values, and feedback received to date. Community members received handouts of the revised vision and goals, and were asked to review and provide comments. Comments on the revised Vision, Key Values, and Goals will be provided in a separate document.

### Presentation and Key Pad Polling Questions

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#### Overall Summary of Results and Key Ideas

- ♦ **Market questions:** Participants generally agreed that the City's fiscal and economic development strategy should be based on a balanced approach (including retail recruitment and retention, and primary job recruitment).
- ♦ **Transportation questions:** Residents expressed significant interest in bike/pedestrian improvements – many would be willing to support such improvements with additional taxes. Top areas identified for transportation improvements (both for economic and traffic reasons) are Wadsworth and Kipling.

- ♦ **Design/density questions:** Participants generally didn't think structures taller than three or four stories were appropriate for Wheat Ridge. Many people didn't like a lot of the examples shown; people with more trees and greater setbacks and step backs, they may have found slightly taller heights acceptable.
- ♦ Neighborhoods need to be preserved and protected from incompatible development. Need improved design standards for infill in residential areas to prevent inappropriate/incompatible developments.
- ♦ Major concerns in the group about going down the same path regarding the City Charter. Those who would support amending the charter agree that it would need to be focused on certain locations only.

## **Fiscal Conditions, Economic Development, Market Requirements, and Redevelopment Areas**

The panel presented slides and asked the audience key pad polling questions. The panel consisted of Patrick Goff, Deputy City Manager; Ryan Stachelski, Economic Development Coordinator; and Sally Payne, Senior Planner. Key pad polling results are attached.

### **Verbal comments and discussion included:**

- ♦ The fiscal presentation made the point that Wheat Ridge doesn't have enough sales tax; however, there was no explanation that the City does not provide water, fire, or sewer (it isn't a full-service city like many others) so you can't realistically compare Wheat Ridge tax rates to other cities that are full-service. *Response: True; some of the comparison communities are also not full service cities.*
- ♦ We need information on how the City spends money and the current trends in order to see and understand the entire fiscal picture. *Response: This information is available on the Envision Wheat Ridge website: [www.EnvisionWheatRidge.com](http://www.EnvisionWheatRidge.com).*
- ♦ Wheat Ridge has a stigma for being very difficult for builders and developers to work with (many contractors and developers avoid it completely). *Response: The City has heard this and all departments are working to make the development process easier and more transparent.*
- ♦ Wheat Ridge needs to focus on attracting people who pass through the city or live on the fringe of the community (it is not an island). *Response: True; the Economic Development analogy was meant to demonstrate how money stays within or leaves Wheat Ridge.*
- ♦ How many Economic Development staff members does the City employ? *Response: Only one official position, though all staff members have an impact and play a role in economic development.*
- ♦ Are there any plans to redevelop the truck stop area? *Response: The property is within an Urban Renewal Authority area, but there are no active development proposals for the site.*
- ♦ Most people have to leave Wheat Ridge to shop and spend money because Wheat Ridge doesn't offer everything that people need (e.g. Home Depot in Arvada).

*Response: True; the Home Depot was interested in that location because of its proximity to I-70. I-70 is a huge community asset and should be used for Economic Development.*

Audience members were asked to add their ideas and comments about the key pad polling questions on comment forms. **Written responses and comments to key pad questions included:**

- ♦ **Question 1C (Appropriate uses and activities for I-70 and Kipling):**
  - Develop some distinctive, unique theme mall in this area.
- ♦ **Question 1D (Appropriate uses and activities for Cabela's):**
  - The Cabela's area is the only area to grossly increase our sales taxes. Do not use the Cabela's area for office buildings. A hotel is possible if part of a creatively planned area (to generate sales tax). The rest of the site should be for retail stores.
  - This area, as well as the industrial/retail corridor along I-70 east of the area, is best as a job development area for progressive, green industries, fed by the transit potential of the Ward Road TOD site.
  - This area should develop with a hotel and water park.
  - Keep the Cabela site primarily regional retail – it's a golden opportunity.
- ♦ **Question 1E (Appropriate uses and activities along Wadsworth):**
  - Wadsworth needs retail. There is no existing "Main Street" character there.
  - Develop regional retail along Wadsworth to capture the traffic passing through the city. The previously suggested plan (162' right-of-way) with access roads at sides) discourages regional retail capacity.
  - Wadsworth is now four lanes from Wheat Ridge to Alameda (at least). Unless CDOT insists on widening this entire length of the corridor Wheat Ridge should not advocate widening through Wheat Ridge alone.
  - Retail should be an option in this area (there are not enough options listed).
- ♦ **Question 1F (Appropriate uses and activities at TOD/Ward Rd):**
  - Wheat Ridge needs to be very rigorous in protecting that privately-owned land to assure that an excellent plan is adopted and executed.
  - Hotel development along I-70 at Kipling/TOD would be okay.
- ♦ **Question 1G (Sustainable Employment Center):**
  - Wheat Ridge should work with RTD to change the Ward Rd. station into something sexy like "Gateway to the West" station.
  - Sustainable area should be called "synergistic" (e.g. create a dog park, building housing with businesses that cater to dog lovers; or build office space with small convenience stores or restaurants).
- ♦ **Question 1I (Town/Civic Center location):**
  - This is an incomplete question.
  - Wadsworth between 38<sup>th</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> is the best location for a Town Center.

## Transportation

Lesli Ellis, Clarion, presented slides and asked key pad questions. Key pad polling results are attached.

### Verbal comments and discussion included:

- ♦ Boulder pays RTD additional money for increased service. This may be an option if Wheat Ridge wants additional bus service. *Response: True; this may potentially be an option to explore if the community supports the idea.*

### Written responses and comments to key pad questions included:

- ♦ **Question 2A (Additional local taxes):**
  - I would not support additional local taxes given the City's choices for projects (e.g. a \$20,000 facelift for City Hall).
- ♦ **Question 2D (Transportation improvement priority):**
  - This is a difficult question because bike, pedestrian, and transit modes overlap (and they should overlap).
- ♦ **Question 2E (Pedestrian improvement priority):**
  - The top priority should be sidewalks and pedestrian improvements along major corridors (e.g. Wadsworth, Kipling).
- ♦ **Question 2F (Bicycle improvement priority):**
  - The top priority should be in locations where people can use bicycling as transportation to and from work and businesses.

## Design and Density

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Lesli Ellis, Clarion, presented slides and asked key pad questions. Key pad polling results are attached.

### Verbal comments and discussion included:

- ♦ One of the benefits of density is sustainability – areas with higher densities use resources more efficiently and have a smaller environmental impact. *Response: True; the topic of sustainability is impacted by a number of factors, including density.*
- ♦ Are there any studies that show the financial benefits and economics of increased density? How do we know that this would benefit the City financially? *Response: There are no known studies, but the economics of redevelopment often require higher densities to make projects financially feasible. It also depends on the demographic make-up of multi-family. Higher incomes are generally more fiscally positive.*

### Written responses and comments to key pad questions included:

- ♦ **Question 3N (Remove City Charter restrictions on density and height):**

- Any changes in height and density need to be in character with existing neighborhoods. Bastardizing the neighborhoods will not bring more money to Wheat Ridge.
- Don't word the charter question as "remove height and density restrictions". Instead, try "amend/modify height and density restrictions".
- If certain interests are still trying to change the City Charter don't run another phony election. I would suggest charter amendments on density that are restricted to specific areas only (e.g. along I-70 or along the Gold Line).
- The question of changing the charter as presented did not consider the possibility for charter amendments for varying density – there are only options to repeal the charter provisions. This was misleading for people who do not understand these issues.

## General Written Comments

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- ♦ The Comprehensive Plan needs to be flexible to incorporate sustainability plans, designs, and goals when they are created in the future. We should also be considering as many sustainability "best practices" now (e.g. storm water management in street designs; bike and transit design and connectivity plans; development of retail and jobs in walkable areas; plans, zoning, infrastructure, incentives, and policy that attracts "green" businesses and encourages "green" consumer and homeowner practices).
- ♦ The entire survey was wrought with problems: poor/incomplete choices, poor photos, and leading questions – a waste!
- ♦ The danger of these questions is that they allow the answers to misconstrue and possibly even manipulate, leading to Wheat Ridge (with its limited area) becoming poorly developed. I have seen this happen to towns with much more area. Small areas must be well planned to retain the charm and free space to draw quality residents with thoughtfully developed areas.
- ♦ The answer choices are too vague and there aren't enough choices. They are a good way to lead us into choosing what you want, not what we want.
- ♦ The existing apartment complexes should be used for senior housing (e.g. convert them to condos).
- ♦ I think people want to describe the character of the community they want, not the logistics. I don't care if 32<sup>nd</sup>/Kipling is mixed-use while 44<sup>th</sup> and Wadsworth is senior housing or vice versa. I care that we have quality buildings, pedestrian friendly areas, and small neighborhood centers, etc. Just strictly polling on which intersection gets what zoning doesn't tell you much about what people want Wheat Ridge to look like. The same goes for attracting strong households – they don't care where it's done, but instead how it's done.
- ♦ We don't need more senior housing if we are trying to attract strong households.
- ♦ Stop the attempts to change the residential areas along the collector and other through streets. These areas are not suitable for higher density infill and scrape-off

projects. This trend has been tried and rejected in Highland, Sloan's Lake, Park Hill, and Washington Park. The public doesn't want this.

- ♦ One very serious observation related to the entire presentation and the questions is that there is no concern or study of the projection of the ultimate population. Will we really be better off as a community of 200,000 people in this area or does the quality of life matter in the community?
- ♦ I understand that economic impacts are important to consider, but it seems that most of the questions focus on "how do we want to make money with this area?"
- ♦ All of the economic section was vague in nature because the choices were so limited. This makes the use of this question session much less useful in my opinion than it could or should be.
- ♦ Every question's possible answers have "mixed-use" in at least two options. There is an obvious bias to this concept and therefore the questions are completely invalid.
- ♦ All questions about future uses need to include "retail" as an option.
- ♦ Develop a Senior Care Education Center (school or college) in the community. Wheat Ridge will have an increasing number of seniors demanding care.
- ♦ We need more and revitalized commercial centers so we can keep people buying stuff here instead of going to Arvada or Lakewood.
- ♦ The City should offer incentives for people who want to revitalize their businesses (e.g. tax credits). Face lifts to buildings should reap rewards.
- ♦ Wheat Ridge should seriously consider a development similar to Belmar on the TOD site. This area could be a live-work-play, higher density area (similar to "Sun City" Tokyo) away from the "majority" or main area of the city.
- ♦ There is really no central downtown Wheat Ridge area – hence, where is the community? We need a development that would be unique to Wheat Ridge and that would bring in lots of dollars.
- ♦ Lower income households are probably moving to Wheat Ridge because we have so many apartments. We don't need more!
- ♦ Road improvements are needed in order for Wheat Ridge residents to access the Cabela's site.
- ♦ Bikes should not be treated like cars. Don't just add bike lanes to busy roads. Instead, move the bicyclists to their own trails and less busy streets.
- ♦ The views in Wheat Ridge are really important. That is why I am totally against building any tall businesses west of I-70 or along Youngfield – they would block the mountain views! I do not want Wheat Ridge to look like Denver.
- ♦ We do not need high rise apartments or office buildings. The last thing we need is more high density housing.
- ♦ No examples on height and densities have been made to compare 35 and 50 foot heights and their affect on a project or buildings. What is a "standard height" for

mixed-use or commercial development? What are the densities of other mixed-use projects (outside of Wheat Ridge)?

- ♦ I would also like to see some areas like Old Town Arvada – with old-fashioned architecture, revitalized older neighborhoods, coffee shops, small stores, movie theaters, etc., and not big box type stores. Let the town centers have those types of stores.
- ♦ The entire set of example images lack landscaping or trees. What would these examples look like in the context of mature trees?

## **Preliminary Structure Plan Draft**

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The team presented and discussed a preliminary Structure Plan map. The Structure Plan is a work in progress and was based on the Character Areas identified by the CAC and at the last community meeting. Preliminary Structure Plan will be revised to reflect comments and presented at the next CAC meeting for discussion.

### **Structure Plan comments and discussion included:**

- ♦ Do a shopping survey of residents to determine where they are buying goods, if the City has not already done that.
- ♦ Structure Plan needs to err on the side of protecting neighborhoods and keeping commercial areas more focused, otherwise it needs to be more parcel-specific.
- ♦ Wheat Ridge needs a niche market (e.g., focusing on specialty nursery-related, senior products (e.g., comfort food), hospital-related services (what is happening with the blue house there?), up-and-coming generations and their needs – families).
- ♦ The plan should address uses that are NOT appropriate in certain districts (e.g., car parts along 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

## **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 Community Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Recreation Center.