



Agenda Memorandum

Agenda Item – {{section.number}}.C.

City Council Study Session May 1, 2023



Strategic Priority 1: Preparedness and Resilience

Build a system of intentional support for residents, businesses and the environment that mitigates risks and proactively seeks out ways to ensure the community not only endures, but thrives.



Strategic Priority 3: Shared Sense of Community

Foster equitable opportunities that help residents feel at home and connected in their community and empowered to live their best lives.



Strategic Priority 4: Quality of Life

Ensure that Westminster offers a diverse range of amenities and activities for residents, businesses and visitors that honor the city's history and support the arts, parks, recreation, open spaces, and libraries.



Strategic Priority 5: Robust Infrastructure

Provide safe and equitable access to core services and amenities by safeguarding, maintaining and improving the city's water, wastewater, stormwater, mobility and roadway systems.

Subject: Update on Westminster Station Area

Prepared By: Lindsey Kimball, Economic Development Director
John McConnell, Planning Manager
John Burke, Economic Vibrancy Manager
Stephanie Ashmann, Senior Planner
Heather Cronenberg, Real Estate and Development Administrator

Recommended City Council Action:

Receive a presentation on the Westminster Station area.

Summary Statement:

- Staff provided a presentation on the Specific Plans for Downtown Westminster and Westminster Station area during the December 5, 2022 Study Session.
- City Council requested an update on the Westminster Station area to include active and proposed developments.

- An overview and update presentation on the Westminster Station area will be provided during this Study Session.

Fiscal Impact:

\$0 in expenditures

Source of Funds:

Not applicable

Policy Issue(s):

Not applicable

Alternative(s):

Not applicable

Background Information:

Westminster Station Area Specific Plan

Staff provided an update on the Downtown Westminster Specific Plan and Westminster Station Area Specific Plan during the December 5, 2022 Study Session. Specific Area Plans are more restrictive than the Comprehensive Plan in the regulation of development in focus areas in the city. The Comprehensive Plan and the Specific Area Plans have separate development and approval processes. A Specific Area Plan functions as a master plan for an area to carry forward the City's vision, guide investments, and establish certainty for development applications with a codified set of standards for land uses, architectural design, the public realm, and a framework of programming and implementation activities. This makes the process of development review approval in these targeted areas more transparent and predictable than a negotiated PUD zoning process. Specific Area Plans give landowners and private sector developers a clear understanding of future developments around their properties and how best to leverage and complement other investments.

Critical components of the Westminster Station Area Specific Plan (WSASP) include distinct development character, a balanced housing approach, retention and adaptability for existing structures, organic approach to build-out, integrated mobility and access, emphasis on public and green spaces, opportunities for arts and culture, amenities with regional connectivity and impact, strong partnerships with landowners, a comprehensive approach for development needs such as parking, stormwater, public art, and a welcoming environment for creativity and innovation to thrive.

As a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) area, the Station Area is designed to embrace the Regional Transportation District (RTD)'s B-Line as well as other local and regional transit services. As such, residential development in the area is critical to leverage the significant investment in transit.

There are 341 existing residential units within the area boundary. The WSASP accommodates an additional 1,340 units to be developed, totaling 1,681 residential units. The configuration of unit type can range from single-family attached townhomes, condominiums, and multifamily for-rent

apartments. Every development in the Westminster Station area is reviewed by engineering teams in the Community Development and Public Works and Utilities Departments to verify that water, sewer, water quality, and transportation and mobility options are available and have capacity to serve the new development proposals.

The land uses contemplated in the WSASP are already accounted for in the Water Supply Plan developed in conjunction with the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, and thus do not create unanticipated future demands on the water supply. The recently adopted 2040 Comprehensive Plan continues this alignment regarding land uses proposed in the WSASP and the Water Supply Plan.

Process and Adoption

The WSASP was approved and adopted by City Council on May 8, 2017. The plan encompasses 135 acres bounded by West 72nd Avenue to the north, Federal Boulevard to the east, Little Dry Creek Park to the south, and Lowell Boulevard to the west. The purpose of the WSASP is to maximize the opportunity to support commuter rail from Downtown Denver to Westminster as envisioned with the RTD FasTracks program. City Council approved a concept plan for the Westminster Station Area in 2011 and conducted extensive public outreach between 2012 and 2017. The RTD B-Line opened to Westminster Station in 2016 and greatly exceeded ridership expectations until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when numbers decreased. Since the beginning of 2022, ridership levels have increased at a steady pace monthly.

Investments and Partnerships

To carry out the vision for this area, the City and its regional partners including the Mile High Flood District, RTD, CDOT, DRCOG, Adams County, and Great Outdoors Colorado invested over \$80 million in improvements including a public parking garage; water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure; a world-class train station; and the most significant new public park in Historic Westminster in decades: the Westminster Station Park and Nature Playground.

Below is a list of additional City investments in the TOD area since 2016:

- CDBG Block Grant - Hooker Street Improvements (71st Avenue and 72nd Avenue):
 - ADA ramps
 - Sidewalk widening
 - Pedestrian lights
- Fiberoptic line improvements down Hooker Street
- Quiet Zone establishment on Lowell, recently approved by City Council
- East basin regional detention and water quality pond
- Event Programming at the Station Area Plaza
 - Babe Walls Mural Event
 - Latin Fest
 - Catamounts – outdoor theater performances
- Parking enforcement, charging, and increased security

Challenges and Opportunities for Development

Partnerships with private property owners and the certainty provided by the WSASP are critical to the success of the Westminster Station Area. Within the WSASP, most of the property is not City-owned. Private property ownership is diverse, comprised of a significant number of small lots with existing, legal nonconforming uses. The City uses the nonconforming uses section of the WMC to work with existing businesses and property owners when finding new tenants to occupy vacant nonconforming spaces. Staff works to highlight the path for current businesses and property owners who are ready to make improvements or redevelop their sites. There are opportunities for the adaptive reuse of buildings that provide some measure of flexibility for new conforming uses to repurpose existing spaces.

As part of the City's 2022 Strategic Plan, Staff is working to create a Redevelopment and Adaptive Re-Use Toolkit (Toolkit), which seeks to identify roadblocks to redevelopment and adaptive re-use and recommend potential changes and incentives. A goal of the Toolkit is to increase private investment. There are many ways to leverage and incentivize private investment such as providing financial assistance to a local business to make tenant improvements to a space, utilizing and leveraging City-owned property, or filling a gap for a development project that delivers key elements for the larger neighborhood redevelopment. The Westminster Station area will likely be an area of focus within the Toolkit due to the many redevelopment opportunities.

New Business and Development Updates

Since the adoption of the WSASP, the area has seen an increase in creative businesses and food establishments. Some of the new creative businesses include Cabin House Studios and The Denver Dance Studio. Some of the new restaurants include Goodies Eatery and Taco Veloz.

There are also some exciting developments moving forward in the Westminster Station area. In negotiating projects, Staff evaluates the costs and benefits involved and identifies the appropriate tools to drive vision-aligned development positioned for long-term success and ongoing private investment. Economic returns are achieved through assisting local business expansion and recruiting vision-aligned developers. Below is a brief update on three development projects moving forward in this area:

The Ivy: Westminster Station Drive and Hooker Street

This luxury, mixed-use project by Lux Living wraps the garage adjacent to the RTD station and will include 138 market rate residential units, 9 live/work units, and approximately 9,000 square feet of commercial space. The Official Development Plan (ODP) was previously approved along with the Economic Development Agreement, Development Agreement, Parking Agreement, and the Repurchase Agreement. The developers are planning a Groundbreaking Ceremony for Spring 2023.

Diverse Blue: 3551 West 71st Place

This vacant property is owned by a local resident with experience in development. The team is proposing a 75-unit, market-rate multifamily apartment project. The project already has an approved ODP. However, due to high development costs and fees, particularly associated with the Public Land Dedication (PLD) fee, the developer plans to seek assistance from the City in the near future.

Westminster Station: Federal Boulevard and Westminster Station Drive

Sherman & Associates (Sherman) purchased this 4.18-acre parcel in July 2017 to develop as a catalyst project for the Westminster Station area. It is a highly visible tract along Federal Boulevard

and presents a prime redevelopment site. Sherman is currently working on a re-design option as the previous options have proved to be financially restrictive due to rising construction costs and increased inflation. The site is proposed to include 270 units of market rate housing with retail and commercial space along Federal Boulevard and Westminster Station Drive.

Staff will continue to keep City Council apprised of progress through Study Sessions and Information Only Memos, as well as updates in City Council emails, event invitations, and City Manager updates.

Receiving a presentation and update on Westminster Station meets the following City Strategic Plan priorities: Strategic Priority 1: Preparedness and Resilience; Strategic Priority 3: Shared Sense of Community; Strategic Priority 4: Quality of Life; and Strategic Priority 5: Robust Infrastructure, by ensuring thriving destinations that support formation of shared communities with a range of amenities, activities, and an intentional infrastructure system.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark A Freitag

Mark A. Freitag
City Manager

Attachments:

Westminster Station Update Presentation