

WESTMINSTER *FORWARD*

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Comprehensive Plan: Phase 1 + 2 Outreach Summary

Introduction

The City of Westminster is updating its Comprehensive Plan, the roadmap for future growth and development and the coordinating vehicle for coordinating public infrastructure and municipal services. Public input is critical to the success of the plan update. This effort began in summer of 2018, below is a summary of key events since project kick-off:

Date	Event	Location	Attendees/Respondents
Ongoing	Stakeholder Interviews	City Hall	40+
31 May	City Staff Meeting #1	City Hall	31
3 Jun	Imagine Westminster	Corner of 73rd Ave / Lowell Blvd	150
12 Jun	Planning Commission	City Hall	18
28 Jun	City Staff Meeting #2	City Hall	23
28 Jun	Online Survey #1	Online	149
24 Jul	Planning Commission	City Hall	21
26 Jul	City Staff Meeting #3	City Hall	17
14 Aug	Visioning Workshop	City Hall	52
14 Aug	Online Survey #2	Online	170
18 Aug	Youth Advisory Panel	City Hall	21
20 Aug	City Council	City Hall	15
18 Sep	Design Workshop	City Park Recreation Center	9
18 Sep	Online Survey #3	Online	200
11 Oct	City Staff Meeting #4	City Hall	22
20 Oct	Harvest Festival	Downtown Westminster	2,081 "votes"; 34,000+ overall attendance
8 Nov	Taste of Westminster	Ice Center on the Promenade	400
28 Nov	City Staff Meeting #5	City Hall	10
11 Dec	Planning Commission	City Hall	10
11 Dec	City Staff Meeting	City Hall	10

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Background

Why are we updating the Comprehensive Plan?

The City's existing Plan is being updated to build upon and integrate previous planning efforts to create a roadmap for the future of Westminster, through new and transformative ideas and recommendations. Additionally the purpose of the update is so that the Plan remains valid and effective while more accurately addressing current standards, goals, and future needs; to re-engage with the public and determine what components need updating; and to define measureable and realistic implementation strategies to achieve the community's vision.

Why does it matter?

The Comprehensive Plan is important to all members of the community, ranging from residents to business owners, city leaders, and decision makers. The Plan will identify community character elements, locations for future housing and recreational areas along with land use recommendations and development policies. Additionally, the Plan will identify policies, programs, and services provided by the city while also providing guidance on the budget, timing for capital improvements, and review of development proposals.

In short, the Plan will outline the vision to establish a consistent framework for land development and redevelopment while simultaneously serving to align land uses with economic vitality, community health, community resilience, energy/climate, water resources, services, and other relevant issues.

Link to the [Strategic Plan](#)

Westminster City Council uses a strategic planning process to help achieve its long-range vision of the city. Each year City Council reviews its vision for the future through a [Strategic Plan](#) to achieve that vision. The Comprehensive Plan Update works to further leverage and implement that vision.

City of Westminster Vision

“Westminster is the next Urban Center of the Colorado Front Range. It is a vibrant inclusive, creative, and well-connected City. People choose Westminster because it is a dynamic community with distinct neighborhoods, quality educational opportunities, and a resilient local economy that includes: a spectrum of jobs; diverse, integrated housing; shopping, cultural, entertainment, and restaurant options. It embraces the outdoors and is one of the most sustainable cities in America.”

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What does the Vision mean?

Participants were asked “How would you define and/or illustrate the Vision?”

Summary of Comments

The most common themes of the responses centered on having one or more defined urban centers in Westminster, sustainably managing resources, balancing the urban and suburban environments, and being an inclusive community. Other comments relating to the Vision emphasized financial sustainability, affordable housing, walkability, and a high quality of life.

What do we *LOVE* about Westminster?



Top 10:

1. Parks/Recreation
2. Open Space
3. Bike/Trail Network
4. Mountain Views
5. Convenience of the B-Line
6. Proximity to Denver and Boulder
7. Local Shops
8. Sense of Community
9. Standley Lake
10. Clean Water

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What do we want to **IMPROVE** about Westminster?

Below is a word cloud showing what should be improved in Westminster, based on comments received from public events, stakeholder interviews, and steering committee meetings. Public transportation components were indicated by many participants as areas where Westminster could be improved. Adding bike paths and increasing transit service were the two most popular responses. Opportunities for adding affordable housing, investing in local businesses, and addressing water & sewer concerns were also common themes.



Top 10:

1. Increase Transit Service
2. Add Bike Paths
3. Promote Walkability
4. Invest in Local Business
5. Diversify Recreational Opportunities
6. Add Affordable/Attainable Housing
7. Repair Roads/Infrastructure
8. Address Water
9. Expand Public Art
10. Grow Art/Food Trucks/Brewery

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Elements of the Vision

Based on input from the public and additional vetting with City staff an outline of key components of the City's vision have been identified:

Next Urban Center of the Colorado Front Range

- Needs an identity and identifiable center
- Define "center"; whole city? Or 5 focus areas?
- Define what "Urban Center" means to the rest of the city (seems downtown focused)
- Urban Center: One or many? - Traditional Downtown
- Concentrated Urban Center

Vibrant

- Quality of life and continued improvement
- Increasing choice for residents/lifestyle options
- I like it. It's aspirational and progressive. I would want to live here.

Inclusive

- Key: inclusive for all, not just for the "haves" like Boulder
- Internal inclusivity, creativity, and connectivity within city staff departments
- Community engagement at an authentic level to achieve equity and inclusivity

Well-Connected

- Need more transportation (multi-modal) options and safe ways to get to the B-Line by foot or bike
- Walkable and bike-able throughout
- Need more transportation options for people that actually use, such as roads.
- Retrofitting suburbia to ease mobility
- How and when will we realize true connectivity?

Distinct Neighborhoods

- Needs an identity and identifiable center
- Complete downtown
- "neighborhood downtown" areas
- Need a balance between dense, "urban" centers and the traditional suburban lifestyle that brought so many existing residents to Westminster.
- Westminster should strive to be unique and distinct. Who is the City's competition?

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Quality Educational Opportunities

- Education disparities among three districts

Resilient Local Economy

- Local jobs and employee housing
- Long-term financial sustainability - Urban density supports economic resiliency
- Expand opportunities to enhance workforce

Embraces the Outdoors

- Green space access for all
- The environment is changing and we have to plan accordingly
- The City should try to achieve the perfect blend of urban and natural
- Westminster should strive to be the “wildest urban center in Colorado”, in which ‘wild’ refers to ample access to nature

One of the Most Sustainable Cities in America

- Density in nodes near transit
- Lower density farther afield
- What does this mean? Everyone has a different idea (of sustainability)
- Financial sustainability
- Resource sustainability
- Long-term financial sustainability. Urban density supports economic resiliency
- The vision doesn’t address housing affordability or environmental health concerns (droughts, fragile water system).
- Sustainability and resiliency are essential to this plan update. Is “urbanism” sustainable?
- Need a balance of environment, economics, and equity
- Balance, balance, balance!
- Integration: Growth has a domino effect
- Water supply; wise use of limited resources

Diverse & Integrated Housing

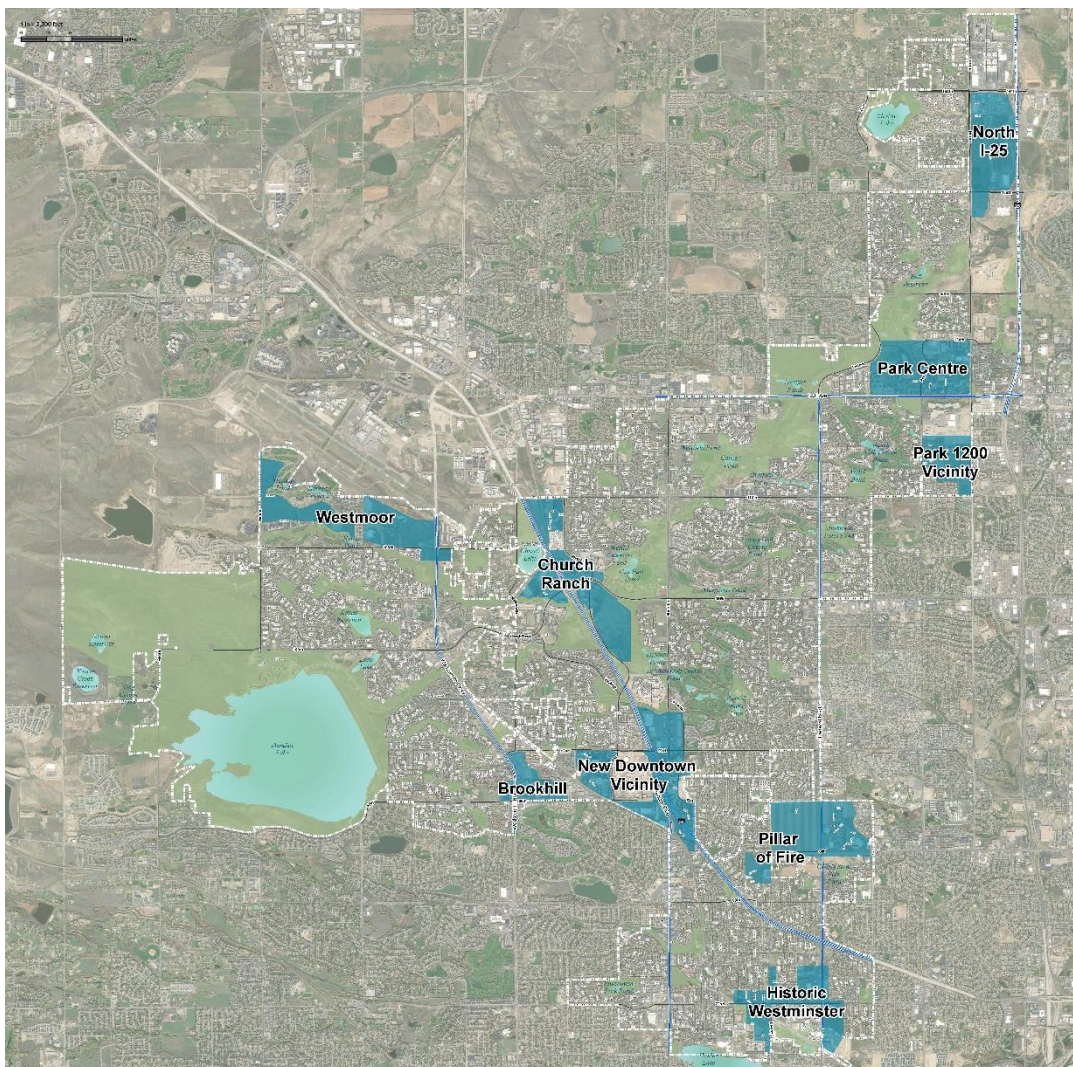
- Diverse housing should be affordable
- Flexibility with housing options; townhomes, condos, AirBnB
- Local jobs and employee housing
- Build out; When? How many people?
- Housing strategies; diversity
- Urban is the opposite of what people want

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There were several comments on how the Vision was too abstract or confusing. Additionally, several participants questioned the attainability of the Vision statement and inquired as to how success will be measured.

A second workshop series was about visioning for the City as it relates to future growth. Participants of this exercise were asked to identify “opportunity areas” – areas consisting of either vacant lands expected to develop in the future or areas that are ripe for revitalization or redevelopment to provide for future growth – and in addition, what land uses make sense in those areas, and for that land use, what character makes sense. These locations as shown on the map below represent 3.93 square miles, which is just under 12% of the City’s overall land area.



As shown on the map it is recognized that most parts of the City, particularly established residential areas and the 30% of the City preserved as parks or open

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space, will not change significantly in the future. Participants were presented with a series of images of different land uses and building typologies to populate these opportunity areas. While each individual opportunity area elicited different responses, some generalized preferences emerged through this exercise that are instructive to the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code updates.

Below is the specific imagery most selected by participants:



Housing above Retail



2-3 Story Townhome Apartments



Lofts



3-4 Story Townhome Apartments



Main Street Retail/Commercial



Amenity and Entertainment



Outdoor Gathering/Eating Areas



Urban-Format Employment



Vertical Mixed Use



Integrated Public Art



Plaza with Seating



Transit Stations

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Below is the specific imagery least selected by participants:



Large-Lot, Single-Family



Big Box Development



Small-Scale Industrial Warehouse



Campus-Style Employment



Large-Scale Industrial Flex



Loft Industrial Flex



Solar Farm



Urban Agriculture

The visioning exercise results can be interpreted as support for a generally urban format of development consisting of medium level intensities, and even the park/civic space images selected were urban in character with a lot of activity rather than passive spaces. Meanwhile, images provided in the survey of large lot single family, big box stores, campus-style employment and large scale industrial were among the least popular selections, portending a shift from a typical suburban development pattern to a preference for a more urban character.

A third exercise was a visual preference survey looking at specific design elements such as building mass and scale, materials, street frontages and landscaping. As of the date of this summary, the consultant and City staff are still analyzing the results of this exercise but initial findings again support a generally urban format of development provided that the appropriate design elements are provided relative to a mass and scale, materials, street frontages and landscape features.

Internal City Staff discussions have established some priorities for further development through this work including continued attention to financial sustainability with a cost-feasible plan, a goal of sustainability and resiliency with water and sewer as a subset of that and a goal to be “bold, innovative and different” that addresses changing demographics, regional leadership in housing, multimodal connectivity, City identity, inclusivity, neighborhood pride and refinement of the development process.

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STAFF PRIORITIZED KEY ISSUES

Ensure a cost-feasible plan.

Ensure water availability.

Address sewer capacity.

Be one of the most sustainable/ resilient cities.

**BE BOLD,
INNOVATIVE &
DIFFERENT.**

Address changing demographics (aging population, Millennials, Generation Z)

Be the regional model for affordable housing.

Ensure multimodal connectivity and safety.

Market the City's uniqueness in location and culture.

Address increasing diversity and ensure inclusivity.

Create neighborhood pride.

Refine the development review process.