



**WESTMINSTER**  
COLORADO

**Agenda Memorandum**

Agenda Item – 3.D.

City Council Study Session  
December 11, 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:** Presentation of the Unified Development Code

**Prepared By:** John McConnell, AICP; Interim Planning Manager  
Andrew Spurgin, AICP; Principal Planner

**Recommended City Council Action:**

Receive a presentation regarding the proposed Unified Development Code and offer feedback to Staff.

**Summary Statement:**

- Title XI of the Westminster Municipal Code (the Code) titled “Land Development and Growth Procedures” was adopted in 1997 after a nine-year process to review and revise the Code.
- Since 1997, the Code has been amended numerous times for specific purposes identified by City Council, but there has not been a comprehensive review of the entire Code since 1997.

- In addition to the Code, land development in Westminster is governed by separately adopted landscape regulations and six different design standards/guidelines documents. Projects with multiple land uses thus navigate multiple documents, which have not been consistently updated with the larger Code.
- The purpose of the proposed Unified Development Code (UDC) is to unify provisions within the Code, the landscape regulations, and the six different design standards/guidelines documents into a single document for land development.
- A draft UDC, prepared in 2021, is now not the recommended approach as that draft did not align with the changes to the City's vision statement and the draft was unnecessarily lengthy, complicated, and too difficult to apply to the limited remaining land inventory within Westminster.
- With the adoption of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2040 Plan) on March 27, 2023, the UDC project has been reset to ensure consistency with City Council's intent with the 2040 Plan, and a more precise approach is proposed to ensure ease of use and tailoring to the remaining land inventory.
- Strategic Plan Focused Objectives, specifically the Adaptive Reuse Toolkit and Housing Needs Assessment, will inform strategies to incorporate into the UDC.

### **Background Information:**

The existing Code was adopted on August 11, 1997, representing the culmination of work that began in 1988 to balance concerns both from residents and the development community over the City's procedures, standards, and organization of regulatory provisions. Since that time, the Code has been amended in response to City Council priorities, including changes to public hearing notification requirements, sign regulations, and the recently enacted Concept Plan Review (CPR) process. There has not been a comprehensive review of the larger organization and structure of the Code since 1997, and it is appropriate that an update reflect more recent planning considerations for land development such as water conservation, multi-modal mobility, and changing preferences and technologies that affect commercial and residential development patterns. Additionally, the City is now substantially built out and warrants a modified approach to development regulations that focuses on the remaining vacant, developable properties and the unique challenges related to infill development and redevelopment.

### **Prior UDC Work**

The UDC is informed by the goals, policies, and strategies of the 2040 Plan, Transportation and Mobility Plan, Sustainability Plan, and the forthcoming Parks, Recreation, and Libraries (PRL) Vision Plan. The UDC functions as Phase Two to the Growth Management program. Prior to Phase One, a pattern was emerging with proposed residential development achieving a declining share of points assigned for different design features. The former service competition resulted in fewer points every year while the number of residential service commitments allotted was not being utilized, effectively creating an unnecessary system of slowing residential projects featuring lower design quality.

The Phase One changes resulted in certain mandatory minimum standards for residential development design and established a new requirement where only City Council can approve exceptions. Providing an avenue where only City Council can approve exceptions increased transparency from past practices where a Planned Unit Development (PUD) may have modified development standards through notes in a Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) or Official Development Plan (ODP). Staff is also aware, however, that in some cases the exception process has caused frustration for developers about the necessity of this step in lieu of a modernized set of development standards. Recent introduction of the CPR process has helped Staff, developers, residents, and City Council better understand project benefits and/or impacts at an early stage.

After extensive community engagement in 2018 and 2019, an initial 543-page draft UDC was released in 2021, with the review by Staff focusing on procedures and administrative provisions since the 2040 Plan had not been finalized. Review of the draft UDC resulted in a concern that it was overly complicated and, hence, not an improvement in that regard over the current regulatory system. Also, the design concepts were not aligned with changes to the City's vision statement. A revised draft that stitched together additional sections of the Code grew to 710 pages. When City Council chose not to approve an earlier version of the 2040 Plan in 2021, it was decided that further work on the UDC should be paused until City Council established new policy direction for the physical growth of the City through a revised 2040 Plan.

### Current UDC Work

Based on discussions with City Council in 2022, the 2040 Plan shifted in focus to support further employment development with emphasis on opportunities for research and development and life sciences, supporting diversity in housing formats with an emphasis on home ownership opportunities, and reducing citywide water demand. As an implementation component of the 2040 Plan, the UDC will continue to respond to these three overarching themes.

Although the project scope unifies the Code landscape regulations and the six different design standards/guidelines documents into a single document for land development regulation, Staff proposes a more precise approach than the prior 710-page draft shown in 2021. The scope of work includes zoning, site planning, architectural design, and associated procedures. Key topics introduced with the 2040 Plan that will be incorporated into the UDC include zoning more closely aligned with comprehensive plan designations; strategies to support home ownership through smaller format single-family products, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units; standards for office and industrial development that are lacking in current standards; and standards for the public realm to support the City's continued high quality of life.

To keep the UDC focused and manageable for the City's limited remaining land inventory, the UDC will leave in place other development-related regulations including the City's building codes, construction engineering standards, and development-related topics incorporated elsewhere in the Code such as alcohol sales, short-term rentals, and animal management. Regulation of wildlife on private property, including but not limited to prairie dogs, is not included in the scope.

### Next Steps

An outline of the UDC is provided, see Attachment 1. The intent is to coordinate zoning districts and

uses that align with the 2040 Plan, consolidate standards for building and site development, ensure that procedural provisions are transparent and organized chronologically, and that appropriate administrative provisions are in place such as definitions and the authority to interpret and apply UDC provisions to specific situations in the future. The existing Code provision that requires new development to conform with the Comprehensive Plan will remain, which is critical due to the water supply planning work associated with the land uses and densities of the Comprehensive Plan. Only City Council may approve amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Prior feedback provided by residents, development stakeholders, and interdepartmental Staff has been retained, and these interest groups will be used to define upcoming participation in the UDC. The UDC will be further informed by current and upcoming Strategic Plan Focused Objectives identified by City Council including the Redevelopment and Adaptive Re-Use Toolkit; the Housing Needs Assessment; and the PRL Vision Plan. The UDC is not a Focused Objective identified in the current adopted Strategic Plan, therefore Staff will prioritize the Adaptive Re-Use Toolkit, Housing Needs Assessment, and PRL Vision Plan and continue preparation of the UDC once these Focused Objectives are more advanced. Broad public review is expected in mid-2024, including additional City Council briefings, with an eye toward completing the UDC in early 2025.

The primary benefits and/or impacts of the UDC will be in the few locations where new development occurs. Less than five percent of the City's land area is vacant developable land and, once sites with active development applications are removed, there remains only about 2.8 percent of the City's land area, as shown in Attachment 2. It is within this 2.8 percent, roughly 612 acres, where the UDC will primarily be applicable. The UDC may also be applied where redevelopment occurs and where major changes to an existing developed property occur, such as construction of a new building on a portion of a site currently used for parking. Most residential communities in Westminster are master planned through individual PUD districts, and there is no intent to amend the zoning within existing neighborhoods. The UDC would also not apply to Downtown Westminster and Westminster Station since those are regulated by Specific Plans that have separate zoning and design standards from the more general citywide standards that will be in the UDC. Dormant projects that are vested through PDPs may also be subject to the regulations in place with PDP approval. The limited applicability of the UDC further speaks to the need for a tailored approach that is more focused than the sweeping 710-page overhaul proposed in the earlier 2021 draft.

The City's Strategic Plan priority of Preparedness and Resilience is met by providing a framework to support quality development with an updated set of regulations in support of the 2040 Plan. The priority of Shared Sense of Community is met by fostering neighborhood designs that facilitate opportunities for home ownership and continued focus on the public realm. The priority of Quality of Life is met by integrating amenities and community institutions into an intentional pattern of development. The priority of Robust Infrastructure is met by ensuring new development supports delivery of the City's core services and planning to respect the city's water, wastewater, mobility, and roadway systems.

Respectfully submitted,

*Mark A Freitag*

Mark A. Freitag  
City Manager

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: UDC Outline

Attachment 2: Map of Vacant Developable Land

Presentation of the Unified Development Code

**Chapter 11-1 General Provisions**

- 11-1-1 Purpose
- 11-1-2 Title, Effective Date, and Archived Regulations
- 11-1-3 Authority
- 11-1-4 Applicability
  - (A) Generally
  - (B) Compliance Required
  - (C) City Exemption
  - (D) Effect of Comprehensive Plan
- 11-1-5 Legal Provisions
  - (A) Minimum Standards
  - (B) Consistency with Other City Requirements
  - (C) Relationship to Other State, Federal and Local Provisions
  - (D) Private Restrictions
  - (E) Severability
- 11-1-6 Transitional Provisions
  - (A) Intent and Applicability
  - (B) Existing Development Approvals
  - (C) Applications in Progress
  - (D) No Applications Submitted
  - (E) Lapsing
  - (F) Violations under Prior Code

**Chapter 11-2 Zoning Districts and Official Zoning Map**

- 11-2-1 Generally
  - (A) Applicability
  - (B) Permitted and Special Uses
  - (C) Dimensional Standards and Density
- 11-2-2 Zoning Districts Established
  - (A) Generally
  - (B) Districts to Regulate Development and Implement the Comprehensive Plan
- 11-2-3 Zoning Map
  - (A) Official Zoning Map Adopted
  - (B) Force and Effect
  - (C) Status of the Zoning Map
  - (D) Interpreting the Zoning Map
- 11-2-4 Dimensional Standards and Adjustments Applicable to All Zoning Districts
  - (A) Density
  - (B) Height Exceptions
  - (C) Landscaping Adjustments
  - (D) Setback Exceptions
  - (E) Setback Averaging
  - (F) Sight Distance Triangle

**Chapter 11-3 Residential Zoning Districts**

- 11-3-1 Residential Districts Established
- 11-3-2 Purposes
- 11-3-3 Standards Applicable to All Residential Zoning Districts
  - Summary Dimensional Table for Staff Review
- 11-3-4 Residential Estate (RE)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
  - (D) District Specific Standards
- 11-3-5 Suburban Residential (SR)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-3-6 Mixed Residential (MR)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-3-7 Mixed Medium Residential (MM)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-3-8 Mixed High Residential (MH)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards

**Chapter 11-4 Mixed-Use and Commercial Districts**

- 11-4-1 Mixed Use and Commercial Districts Established
- 11-4-2 Standards Applicable to All Mixed-Use and Commercial Districts
  - (A) Civic Space
- Dimensional Summary for Staff Review
- 11-4-3 Neighborhood Office (NO)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-4-4 Neighborhood Commercial (NC)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses

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- (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-4-5 Mixed Center (MC)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-4-6 Town Center (TC)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standard
- 11-4-7 Commercial Services (CS)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards

**Chapter 11-5 Employment Districts**

- 11-5-1 Standards Applicable to All Employment Zone Districts  
Summary Dimensional Table for Staff Review
- 11-5-2 Business Park (BP)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-5-3 Office Park (OP)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards
- 11-5-4 Industrial Park (IP)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards

**Chapter 11-6 Public and Open Space Districts**

- 11-6-1 Open District (O1)
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Permitted Uses
  - (C) Development and Dimensional Standards

**Chapter 11-7 Special Use Districts**

- 11-7-1 Downtown Westminster
- 11-7-2 Westminster Station
- 11-7-3 Church Ranch
- 11-7-4 Brookhill
- 11-7-5 North I-25

**Chapter 11-8 Overlay Zoning Districts**

**Chapter 11-9 Planned Unit Development (PUD)**

- 11-9-1 Purpose
- 11-9-2 Applicability
- 11-9-3 Uses
  - (A) Permitted Uses
  - (B) Prohibited Uses
- 11-9-4 Regulations for PUD District

**Chapter 11-10 Use Regulations**

- 11-10-1 Use Table
  - (A) Use Table
- 11-10-2 Use Regulations Applicability and Spacing
  - (A) Applicability
  - (B) Spacing Requirements
- 11-10-3 Adult Businesses
  - (A) Findings of Fact
  - (B) Purpose
  - (C) Applicability
  - (D) Separation Distances
  - (E) Building Occupancy
- 11-10-4 Automotive-Oriented and Convenience Buildings
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Applicability
  - (C) Separation from Residential Zoning Districts
  - (D) Criteria for Review of Special Use Authorization
  - (E) Automobile Rental, Sales and Leasing
  - (F) Automobile/Vehicle Repair, Minor or Major
  - (G) Car Wash/Vehicle Washing
  - (H) Convenience Markets (With or Without Fuel Sales)
  - (I) Drive-Through Uses
  - (J) Gas Stations (Service Stations)
- 11-10-5 Dumpsters and Trash Storage
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Applicability
  - (C) Location
  - (D) Screening
  - (E) Sight Distance Triangle
  - (F) Parking
- 11-10-6 Medical Facilities
  - (A) Purpose
  - (B) Patient Entrances

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- (I) Mixed Use Development
- 11-12-4 Building Design Standards
- (A) Applicability
- (B) Location and Orientation
- (C) Street Frontage
- (D) Building Typologies

- (D) Public Street Connectivity
- 11-14-6 Pedestrian Circulation
- (A) Sidewalks Required
- (B) On-Site Pedestrian Connections
- 11-14-7 Bicycle Circulation
- (A) Required Bicycle Access
- (B) Bike Lanes Required

**Chapter 11-13 Landscaping and Buffering**

- 11-13-1 Applicability
  - (A) New Development
  - (B) Infill and Redevelopment
  - (C) Existing ODP or Other Approval
  - (D) Proportionate Compliance Adjustment
- 11-13-2 Required Landscaping
  - (A) Streetscape
  - (B) Alley
  - (C) Parking Lot
  - (D) Buffering Requirements
  - (E) Common Area and Entrance Landscape
  - (F) Single Family Detached Residential
  - (G) Stormwater Infrastructure
- 11-13-3 Existing Vegetation and Preservation
  - (A) Protected Trees
  - (B) Credit for Existing Trees
  - (C) Surety
  - (D) Mitigation
- 11-13-4 Design
  - (A) General
  - (B) Planting Design
  - (C) Hydrozones
  - (D) Irrigation
- 11-13-5 Construction and Maintenance
  - (A) Construction
  - (B) Maintenance
  - (C) Landscape and Private Improvements Agreement

**Chapter 11-15 Parking and Loading**

- 11-15-1 Purpose
- 11-15-2 Applicability
  - (A) Off-Street Parking Required
  - (B) Prior Requirements
- 11-15-3 Calculation of Required Off-Street Vehicle Parking
  - (A) Required Parking
  - (B) Calculation of Required Parking
  - (C) Minimum Off-Street Parking
  - (D) Accessible Parking Spaces
  - (E) Maximum Number of Parking Spaces
- 11-15-4 Parking Credits and Adjustments
  - (A) Parking Reductions
  - (B) Reduction Allowed by Administrative Adjustment
  - (C) Alternative Parking Plans
- 11-15-5 Bicycle Parking
  - (A) Bicycle Parking Requirements, Location and Design
- 11-15-6 Vehicle Parking Location and Design
  - (A) Location
  - (B) Nonconformities
  - (C) Construction and Maintenance Standards
  - (D) Parking Structures with Active Uses
  - (E) Electric Vehicle Charging

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**Chapter 11-14 Mobility and Connectivity**

- 11-14-1 Purpose
- 11-14-2 Applicability
- 11-14-3 Multimodal Transportation System
- 11-14-4 Developer Responsibility
  - (A) On-Site Circulation
  - (B) Off-Site Circulation
- 11-14-5 Streets, Alleys, and Vehicular Circulation
  - (A) Compliance with City Standards
  - (B) Layout and Design
  - (C) Circulation Plan

**Chapter 11-16 Public Improvements**

- 11-16-1 Purpose
- 11-16-2 Applicability
- 11-16-3 General Provisions
- 11-16-4 Public Roadways, Easements, and Lands for Public Improvements
- 11-16-5 Dedication of Property for Public Purposes
- 11-16-6 Undergrounding of Electric and Communication Lines
- 11-16-7 Public and Private Improvement Agreements and Surety Requirements

Gray = Carryover Existing W.M.C. provisions

11-16-8	Design and Construction of Improvements	(E)	Complete Applications with Changed Status
11-16-9	Local Improvement Districts	(F)	Public Notice and Public Hearing Requirements
11-16-10	Procedures for the Establishment and Recovery of Participation Costs	(G)	Recommendation and Decision
<b>Chapter 11-17 Natural Resources and Environmentally Sensitive Areas</b>		(H)	Post-Decision Actions
11-17-1	Purpose	(I)	Extension and Lapsing of Approvals
11-17-2	Applicability	11-19-4	Administrative Decision, No Public Hearing Required
11-17-3	General Requirements	(A)	Administrative Adjustment
11-17-4	Wildfire Standards	(B)	Alternative Compliance
11-17-5	Wildlife Habitat Protection	(C)	Administrative Permit
11-17-6	Natural Resources	(D)	Code Interpretation
11-17-7	Floodplain Regulations	(E)	Conditional Use Review
<b>Chapter 11-18 Historic Preservation</b>		(F)	Final Plat
11-18-1	Declaration of Policy and Purpose	(G)	Minor Official Development Plan Amendment
11-18-2	Definitions	(H)	Minor Subdivision
11-18-3	Historic Landmark Board Created; Powers and Duties	(I)	Official Development Plan – Administrative Approval
11-18-4	Criteria for Designation	(J)	Plat Correction
11-18-5	Procedures for Nomination of Historic Landmarks and Districts	11-19-5	Planning Commission, City Council Decision, or Board of Zoning Appeals Decision - Public Hearing May be Required
11-18-6	Revocation of Designation	(A)	Annexation
11-18-7	Special Duties and Obligation of Owners of Historic Properties	(B)	Appeal of an Administrative Determination
11-18-8	Certificate of Historic Appropriateness	(C)	Comprehensive Plan Adoption
(A)	Action of Board Upon Denial of Certificate of Historic Appropriateness	(D)	Comprehensive Plan Amendment
11-18-9	Relocation of a Historic Landmark	(E)	Major Official Development Plan Approval or Amendment
11-18-10	Demolition of a Historic Landmark	(F)	Permit or Approval Revocation
11-18-11	Exemptions	(G)	Preliminary Development Plan
(A)	Hardship	(H)	Rezoning
(B)	Unsafe or Dangerous Conditions	(I)	Right-of-Way and Easement Vacation
11-18-12	City Council Review of Designation, Alteration, Removal, and Demolition	(J)	Special Use Authorization
11-18-13	Enforcement and Penalties	(K)	UDC Text Amendment
<b>Chapter 11-19 Administration and Procedures</b>		(L)	Variance
11-19-1	Decision-Making Authority	(M)	Vested Property Right
11-19-2	Summary Table of Review and Decision-Making Bodies	<b>Chapter 11-20 Nonconformities</b>	
11-19-3	Commonly Applicable Procedures	11-20-1	Purpose
(A)	Pre-Application Meeting	11-20-2	Applicability
(B)	Application Outreach Meetings	11-20-3	Nonconforming Uses
(C)	Application Submittal and Fees	11-20-4	Nonconforming Structures
(D)	Application Review	11-20-5	Nonconforming Lots
		11-20-6	Nonconforming Site Improvements
		11-20-7	Abandonment and Destruction

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11-20-8	Substantial Conformance Improvement Plan	<b>Chapter 11-22</b>	<b>Measurements and Definitions</b>
<b>Chapter 11-21</b>	<b>Violations and Enforcement</b>	11-22-1	General Rules of Interpretation
11-21-1	General Provisions	11-22-2	Measurements
11-21-2	Violations	(A)	Site Measurements
11-21-3	Penalties	(B)	Structure Measurements
11-21-4	Enforcement Procedures	11-22-3	Definitions

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SUBJECT TO CHANGE**



Vacant Land Status and 2040 Comp Plan

Vacant Developable Land

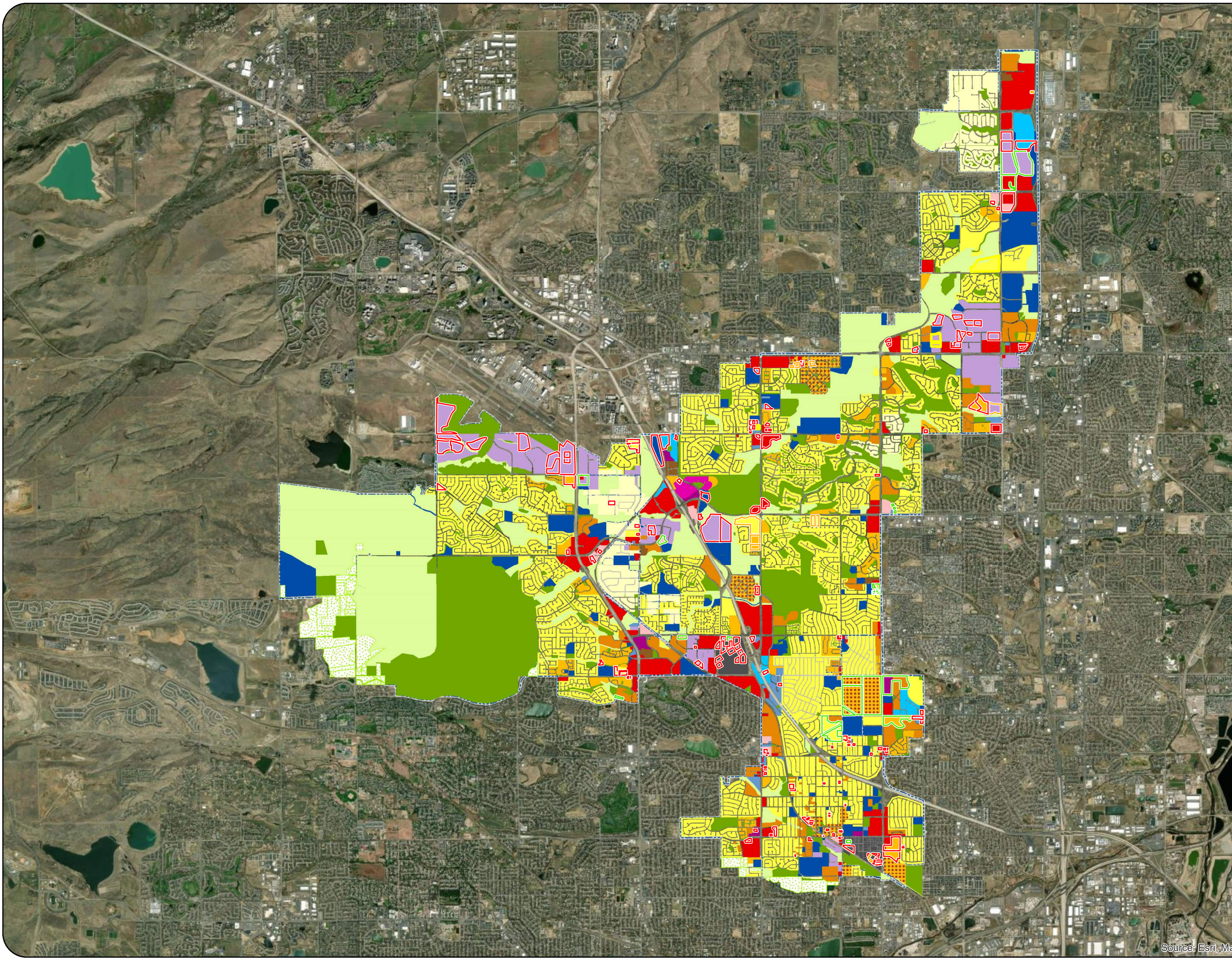
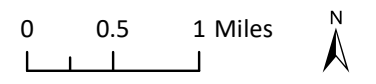
- No Development
- Project Approved
- Under Construction
- Under Review

Comp Plan 2040

- Residential Large Lot
- Residential Low Density
- Residential Medium Density
- Suburban Multi-Family
- Urban Multi-Family
- Mixed-Use Neighborhood
- Specific Area Plan
- Employment-Flex
- Neighborhood Office
- Employment-Office/Inst... Campus
- Public/Quasi Public
- Commercial
- Service Commercial
- Commercial Mixed-Use
- Mixed-Use Activity Center
- Parks/Golf Courses
- Open Space/Creek Corridor
- Agricultural/Conservation Area

City Limit

- City Limit
- Enclave





# UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE (UDC)

**December 11, 2023**

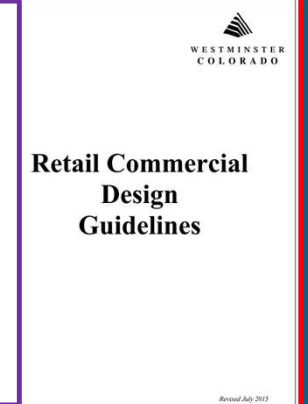
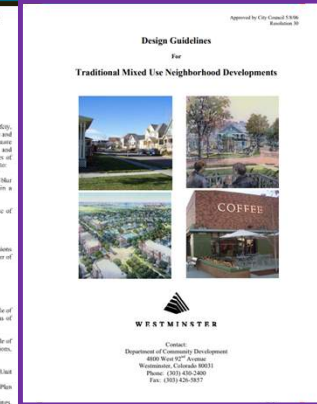
Purpose: Receive Presentation  
and Provide Feedback

## UDC BACKGROUND

- **Title XI “Land Development and Growth Procedures”, adopted 1997**
- **Amended numerous times but no comprehensive reevaluation**
- **Phase 1 changes**
  - **Select modifications in the areas of mobility, water conservation, and energy**
  - **Council approval of exceptions in residential projects**
- **Phase 2**
  - **Voluminous draft**
  - **Not aligned with City Vision and the revised Comprehensive Plan**
- **With adoption of a revised 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the UDC has been restarted**

# UDC PURPOSE

- Implement Comp Plan, Sustainability Plan, Transportation & Mobility Plan
- “Unify” regulations currently in 8 different regulatory documents
- Respond to remaining land inventory
- Fill in gaps (office, industrial)
- Predictability and transparency



# PROJECT SCOPE



## Primary Scope:

- Zoning and Subdivision
- Design Standards (Built Form)
- Site Planning (Landscaping, Parking, etc.)
- Procedures

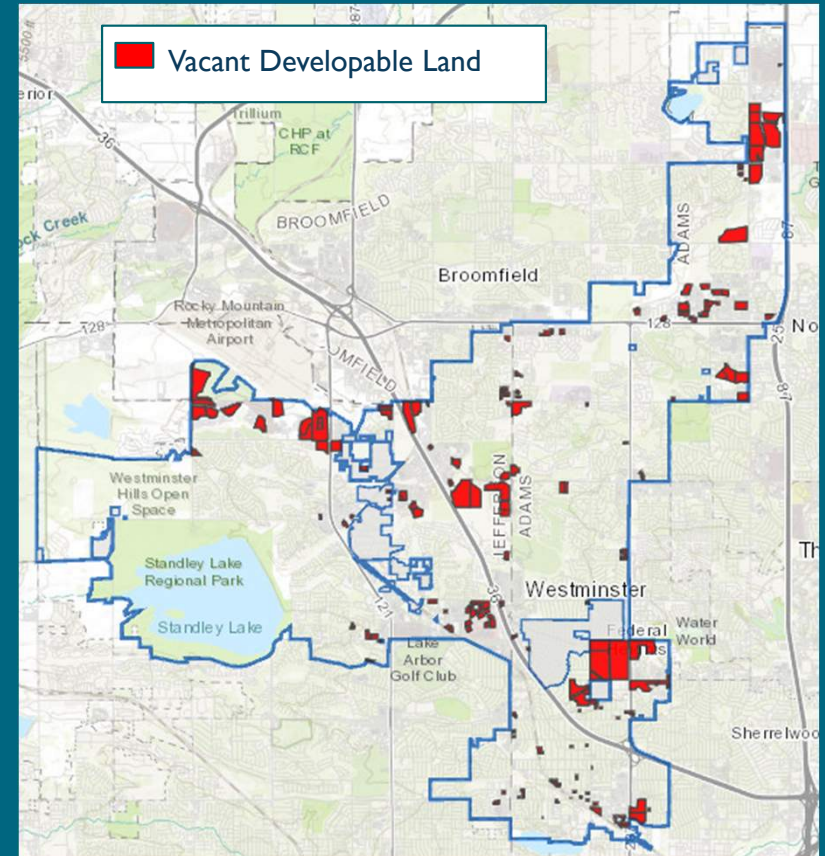
## Not Included:

- Public Improvements (PLD)
- Specific Plans
- Retroactivity to existing Planned Unit Development (PUDs)
- Alcohol Sales
- Short-term rentals
- Signs
- Oil & Gas
- Regulation of wildlife

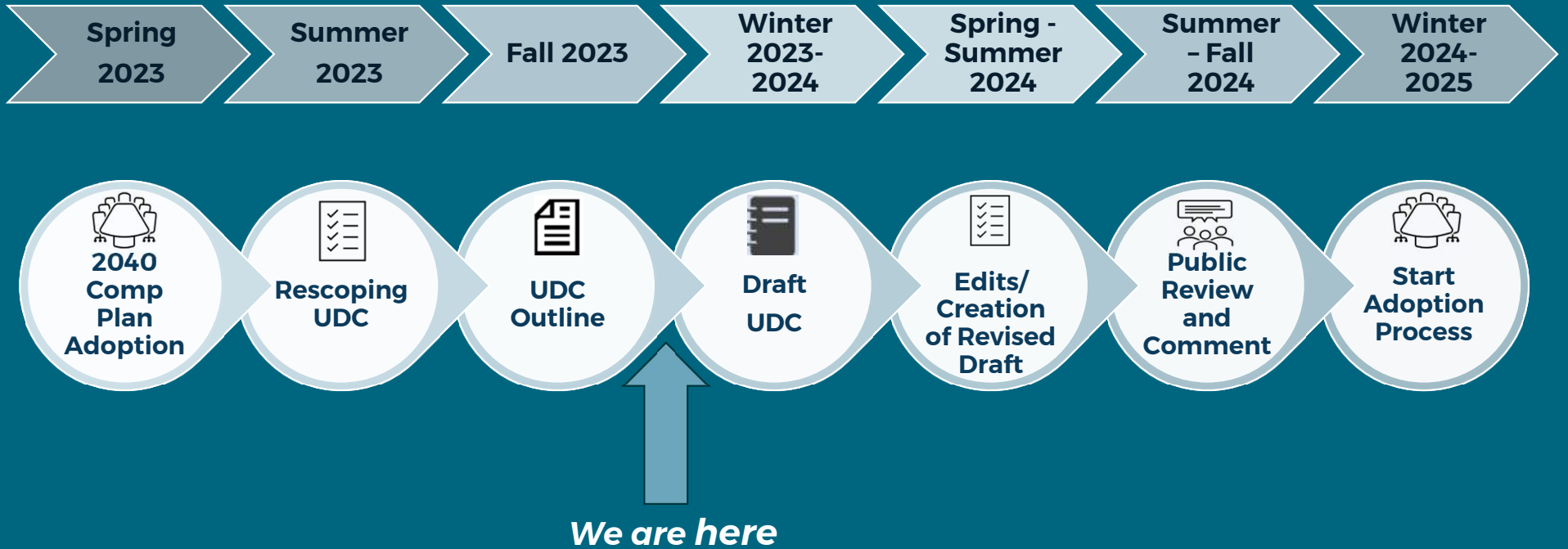


# UDC APPLICABILITY

- **Vacant developable land:**
  - <5% of city's area
  - 1,083 acres
- **Vacant developable land without pending development applications:**
  - 2.8% of city's area
  - 612 acres
- **Redevelopment locations**
- **Mandatory compliance with the Comprehensive Plan**



# TIMELINE & NEXT STEPS



**QUESTIONS?**