

## **STUDY SESSION AGENDA**

**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO

7500 W. 29th Ave.  
Wheat Ridge CO

October 24, 2016

Upon adjournment of Regular City Council Meeting

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Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to participate in all public meetings sponsored by the City of Wheat Ridge. Call Carly Lorentz, Assistant to the City Manager at 303-235-2867 at least one week in advance of a meeting if you are interested in participating and need inclusion assistance.

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Citizen Comment on Agenda Items

1. Wheat Ridge Ward Station Planning Update

ADJOURNMENT

## Memorandum

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Patrick Goff, City Manager 

**DATE:** October 19, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Wheat Ridge Ward Station Planning Update

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On July 22, 2016, the City entered into a contract with WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff to help the City define a development vision for the Wheat Ridge Ward Station area and to identify steps to assist in delivering that vision. The goals of the visioning process are to:

- Define a refined and focused Transit Oriented Development (TOD) vision that clearly communicates to citizens, stakeholders and the development community the vision for the area surrounding the station
- Identify implementable solutions that will assist in activating the station area

Staff and our consultant team will provide an update on the visioning process to City Council at the October 24<sup>th</sup> study session and discuss next steps. Attached is a draft version of a “cut sheet” that outlines the vision and relevant information developed within the process that will be suitable for distribution to project stakeholders, Wheat Ridge citizens and the development community. A refined version of the “cut sheet” will be provided to City Council at the study session.

An important venue for distribution of the “cut sheet” is at the Urban Land Institute TOD Marketplace forum that will take place on November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. This event provides an opportunity to present the contextual TOD vision to the development community. The consultant team is in the process of developing a number of interactive deliverables that will be exhibited during the event including:

- An interactive virtual reality (VR) application that will allow visitors to “visit” the future station while on the convention floor and showcase the type of development that is desired within the vision
- An oblique video of the station area that shows how the station could evolve from its current condition and into the future TOD vision

### **Background**

There has been a tremendous amount of planning efforts put into the future redevelopment of the northwest corner of the City of Wheat Ridge adjacent to the Gold Line commuter rail line and Wheat Ridge Ward station. Following are a few of the more notable accomplishments:

- In 2006 the Northwest Subarea Plan was approved by City Council to establish an initial

vision for future development around the commuter rail station. It included recommendations relative to transportation, infrastructure, bike and pedestrian facilities, economic development and urban design, calling for mixed use, pedestrian-friendly development.

- In 2009, during the development of *Envision Wheat Ridge*, the City's comprehensive land use plan, the Northwest Subarea was identified as one of five target areas for redevelopment in the City.
- In 2009, the Kipling/I-70 Corridors Urban Renewal Plan was approved which includes the properties in the Northwest Subarea.
- In 2009, a ballot measure passed exempting urban renewal areas in the City (except the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor URA) from the height and density restrictions found in the City Charter.
- In 2010, after the adoption of the new Mixed Use – TOD (MU-TOD) zone district, City staff met with property owners in the Northwest Subarea to discuss City-initiated rezoning of properties to the MU-TOD district. The former Jolly Rancher site (15.5 acres) has been rezoned to MU-TOD, so the property can be developed in a way that is supportive of the new rail line.
- In 2010, the City entered into an agreement with RTD concerning the construction and local financial assistance of the Gold Line. The agreement required the City to construct a storm sewer system adjacent to the Wheat Ridge Ward Station in the amount of \$1.5 million. The City received a grant from the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District in the amount of \$750,000 for this project.
- In 2012, City Council approved the service plan for the Ward TOD Metropolitan Districts 1-3 (15.5-acre former Jolly Rancher site). Metropolitan districts in Colorado have become a common tool for financing the public infrastructure portion of large development projects.
- In 2014, the Wheat Ridge Ward Station was chosen as a catalytic project site, to be used as an example and to provide valuable lessons for other transit station areas regarding redevelopment around these sites. A \$150,000 grant from DRCOG provided specific design recommendations for multi-modal improvements to Ridge Road between Miller Street and Ward Road.
- In 2014, The City received a grant in the amount of \$740,228 from the Federal Highway Administration and the City contributed an additional \$165,785 for improvements to Tabor Street. These street improvements will provide better access to the station from existing and future development immediately south of the rail line and the nearby area. Tabor Street has been upgraded to accommodate all modes of transportation to the station. The project will provide new bike lanes, continuous sidewalks and lighting.
- In 2015, the City partnered with the Colorado Chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to host a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) for the area surrounding the rail station area. The panel's recommendations included maintaining and building out a street grid to promote good principles of urban design and walkability; encouraging multifamily development to generate the necessary number of people to make the area feel like a neighborhood, and attracting industrial/office/innovation hub development since

attracting retail in the short term is more difficult.

- In 2016, City Council approved a zone change of 7.3 acres of property adjacent to the Station to Mixed Use-Commercial TOD and Mixed Use-Neighborhood for a potential multi-family apartment community and for-sale townhomes.
- In 2016, City Council referred a ballot question to the voters of Wheat Ridge asking for a temporary 0.5 cent sales and use tax rate increase and bond to fund, in part, \$12 million worth of street, bicycle/pedestrian, public amenities and other infrastructure improvements to address traffic growth and facilitate redevelopment and economic development opportunities in the area surrounding the Wheat Ridge Ward Station.

**Attachments:**

1. Wheat Ridge Ward Station TOD: Scope
2. Wheat Ridge Ward Station Final Draft TOD Vision, 10-19-2016

## **Wheat Ridge Ward Road Station TOD: Scope**

**07.19.2016**

The following scope consists of the recommended next steps to help the City of Wheat Ridge catalyze transit-oriented development at the Ward Road Station. It is designed to build upon the previous effort undertaken by the ULI Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), to help the City define a vision for the station area and help deliver that vision.

### **Process Goals:**

- *Identify implementable solutions that will assist in activating the station area*
- *Develop a refined and focused TOD vision that clearly communicates to citizens, stakeholders and the development community the vision for the area surrounding the station.*

### **Task 1: Visioning and Information Gathering. Total Task Fee: \$14,076.50**

#### **I. Stakeholder Information Gathering**

1. Meet with stakeholders to identify station area opportunities. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:
  - i. *RTD*
  - ii. *Land Developers*
  - iii. *City Council Members*
  - iv. *City of Wheat Ridge Staff*
  - v. *Land Owners*
2. Review current and past planning efforts for the Ward Road Station Area. Plans could include but are not limited to:
  - i. *Current TOD Zoning*
  - ii. *ULI TAP Findings*
  - iii. *The Pedestrian and Bike Plan*
  - iv. *The Northwest Subarea Plan*
  - v. *WRURA Plans*

#### **II. Visioning Process**

1. Using the findings of the previous "information gathering" sub task, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff will conduct a 1 day visioning session with City of Wheat Ridge staff. This process will end with the development of a contextually appropriate and market responsive land use, infrastructure and urban design vision. This process will allow the City to:
  - i. *To develop implementable, market responsive strategies for development*
  - ii. *To collectively develop an inter-disciplinary and focused vision for future development*



**Task 2: Solution Development and Final Vision Graphics: \$10,923.50**

**I. Solution Development**

Once the vision is defined, the WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff team will use process findings to develop a list of actionable strategies to better position the station for development. These strategies will be communicated in memo format to the City of Wheat Ridge.

**II. Final Vision Graphics and Deliverables**

The WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff team will develop visually rich materials that represent process findings for the City of Wheat Ridge. These materials will be tailored to their intended audience and could include:

1. A "cut sheet" document that outlines the final vision and relevant information developed within this process suitable for distribution to project stakeholders, Wheat Ridge citizens and the development community.
2. Detailed visualizations of process findings in various formats to be used during the ULI Colorado 2016 TOD Marketplace event and other presentations. The final format of the will be determined after discussions with City staff and the ULI TOD Marketplace committee.

## DRAFT Ward Rd Station Vision 10.19.2016



### Ward Road Station Vision

The exhibit above represents a future vision for Wheat Ridge's Ward Road Station. This concept is based on past planning efforts already completed by the City, contextual conditions of the site and feedback we have garnered from agency stakeholders, city staff, decision makers, the development community and land owners. The vision positions the station as the premier location in the metro area for outdoor recreation focused companies and employers by introducing outdoor recreation focused co-working spaces within the station area. The station area offers access to the world-class recreational amenities of the West Metropolitan area and the Colorado Rockies as well as convenient access to regional employment hubs and Denver International Airport. The outdoor recreation focus of the station area will be supplemented by on-site recreational amenities that will complement development. These include:

- A regional park that takes advantage of existing water features and topography to create a recreational hub and attraction
- A programed linear green space that includes facilities for multiple types of recreational endeavors
- Enhanced multi-modal connections to regional multi-use trails and amenities



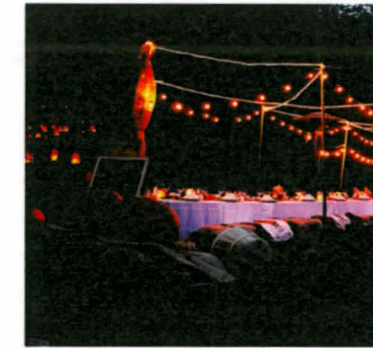
### Co-Working Space

Traditional conceptions of TOD development consists of mixed use buildings that incorporate active ground floors use, office or residential above and parking garages tucked to the interior of buildings. This traditional conception of TOD development is often desired irrespective of the contextual conditions of the station. The Ward Road Vision imagines an outdoor oriented, co-working development as a primary organizing element. Outdoor industry focused co-working development leverages the Stations existing employment patterns, reflects the locations primer access to west-metro recreational amenities and can be realized within a relatively easy to construct, land value appropriate development product. Similar uses are being developed across the metro area. However, Ward Road's iteration is the only type that visualizes a co-working environment for outdoor recreation companies and start-ups.



### Active Public Space

One strategy Cities can use to assist in driving development is the construction of public amenities that attract development. The vision suggests the development of a linear green space that permeates that station area. This linear green space would augment the outdoor industry focused co-working space by providing unique recreational amenities such as exercise tracks, soft surface trails, obstacle courses, skate parks and formal pocket parks for gathering. The linear green space would be an organizational element that future development could be focused around. Where the green space intersects with the station platforms the vision proposes two right-sized plazas at the base of an architecturally iconic pedestrian bridge.



### "Pop-Up" Uses

Ward Road station may see a longer lead time for development given its distance to the urban core and its end-of-line location. Within this context, early wins that build excitement for the station will be an important element of success. A number of "pop-up" events should be developed to build excitement within the community and across the metro area. Events could include:

- A farm-to-table train event that departs Union Station and takes participants to Ward Road Station.
- A summer concert series
- Outdoor recreation events

These uses would be a way to utilize the large RTD bus facility that will be largely unused due to a shift in transit ridership projections.



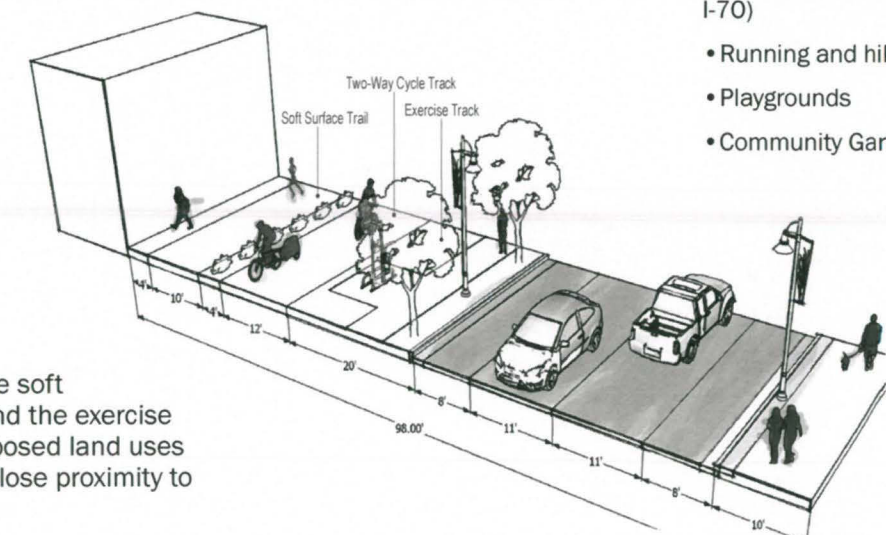
### Recreation

Recreation plays a large role in the stations future vision because of the locations access to premier regional recreational amenities. To augment this opportunity the vision advocates the development of a unique recreational node that can further enhance the stations recreational quotient. The vision suggests using the two ponds near I-70 and surrounding land for the development of a premier and uique recreational amenity. Amenities at this new park could include:

- A mountain bike park that takes advantage of topography
- Active water uses such as stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking and other water sports
- A boat / house recreation center that serves as the parks center
- Opportunities for private development (with visibility from I-70)
- Running and hiking trails
- Playgrounds
- Community Gardens

### Linear Green Space Conceptual Cross Section

This conceptual cross section shows the soft surface trail, the two-way cycle track, and the exercise track, all of which complement the proposed land uses and provide outdoor recreation within close proximity to future residents and businesses.



# Purpose of the Vision

The final vision for the Ward Road Station Area will:

- Present a contextual and focused TOD framework that clearly communicates to citizens, stakeholders and the development community the City of Wheat Ridge’s preferred concept for future development at Ward Road Station.
- Identify City of Wheat Ridge strategies, next steps and critical path investments that will result the realization of the Ward Road Station vision.

# Audience

Deliverables and outcomes will communicate the City of Wheat Ridge’s TOD vision to multiple audiences. It is imperative that multiple stakeholders, agencies and the development community clearly understand the Cities vision and corresponding expectations. Collaboration with these important partners is paramount for the realization of the final vision at Ward Road station as they form the contextual environment in which the TOD vision will be actuated. Identification of specific stakeholder needs lead to the development of a market appropriate and contextual vision. Stakeholders included: RTD, multiple members of the development community, City Council members and land owners.

# Vision Context

**In the Region:** Once FastTrack’s is complete a total of 74 rail stations will be located along various metro-wide rail transit lines. The large number of existing and future stations require the development of unique TOD visions that capitalize on the contextual opportunities of stations in order to spur appropriate development.

**In the Sub-Region:** Ward Road station is located in the western sub-market of the metro area. The Ward Road TOD vision was developed with the contextual elements of the sub-region in mind. These include:

Access to the vast outdoor recreational amenities of the foothills • Quick and convenient commuter rail service to downtown and Denver International Airport • Access to I-70 • Adjacencies to recreational transportation corridors. Including the Clear Creek Trail, the Van Bibber Trail and the future Peaks to Plains multi-use trail (Platte River - Clear Creek Trail - Clear Creek Canyon - Eisenhower Tunnel)

**The Site:** The location of Ward Road Station presents a number of opportunities for future development. The vision was developed with these opportunities in mind:

Robust existing employment • Access to recreational amenities • Easy access to multiple regional transportation modes (I-70 / RTD’s Gold Line / Hwy 93 / US 6 /58) • Adjacencies to future and existing City of Wheat Ridge Bike routes • Topography and views • Parcel Size • Existing and proposed residential patterns and development • Current RTD station design

# Building on Past Efforts

Ward Road Station’s Vision was not developed within a vacuum. A substantial amount of work in and around the station area has been undertaken and were incorporated into the development of the preferred vision. Past efforts will form the foundation of future implementation strategies. Including; the identification of appropriate funding mechanisms, agency coordination tasks and stakeholder engagement frameworks. Past efforts that were examined include:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • The ULI TOD TAP                      | • EPA Infrastructure Financing for TOD                      |
| • Northwest Subarea Plan               | • Gold Line Corridor Market and Community Services Analysis |
| • City of Wheat Ridge mixed use zoning | • Ridge Road Catalytic Project                              |
| • WRURA Plans                          | • Gold Corridor Housing Strategy                            |
| • Hance Ranch Development              |   |

# What We’ve Heard

Capturing the needs, ideas and thoughts of stakeholder and the development community is an important component in the development of a contextual and market appropriate TOD vision. Thought this process four types of stakeholders were contacted in order to identify their needs:

- Agency Partners (RTD)
- Developers
- Land Owners
- City Leadership

UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Information from outreach efforts were incorporated into the development of the final vision. Most importantly the lessons learned from these efforts will be used to develop specific implementation strategies that meet the needs of these vested interests.

# ULI TOD Market Place

An important venue for the distribution of the Ward Road TOD vision is the Urban Land Institutes upcoming TOD Market Place. This forum will take place on November 9th and 10th at the Hyatt Regency Denver. This event provides an opportunity to present the contextual TOD vision to the development community and jurisdictional partners. The team is in the process of developing a number of interactive deliverables that will be exhibited during this event including:

- An interactive virtual reality (VR) application that will allow visitors to “visit” the future station while on the convention floor. This VR application will be located adjacent to the commuter rail station and will showcase the type of development that is desired within the vision
- An oblique video of the station area that shows how the station will evolve from its current condition and into the future TOD vision. This application will be displayed on a monitor for attendees to view.

