

**STUDY SESSION NOTES**  
**CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO**  
City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue

**December 16, 2013**

Mayor Jay called the Study Session to order at 6:30 p.m. Council members present: Jerry DiTullio, Bud Starker, Zachary Urban, Tim Fitzgerald, George Pond, Genevieve Wooden, and Tracy Langworthy.

Absent: Kristi Davis

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; City Attorney, Gerald Dahl; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Community Development Director, Ken Johnstone; Public Works Director, Scott Brink; Staff Engineer, Mark Westberg; City Treasurer, Larry Schulz; other staff, guests and interested citizens.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

**Jesse Hill** (WR) thanked the City for the good staff reports. There are lots of good ideas about what's been done already and what's to be done in the future. What's missing is more information about how the funding will be handled – including

- 1) a baseline to measure growth in sales tax revenue from the area,
- 2) the business improvement district,
- 3) what future taxes may be necessary, and
- 4) whether this will be a neighborhood or citywide improvement district.

**Janece Hoppe** (WR) opened her business in 2011 based on the plans for 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue and later bought a house here. She said the plans look great for what's planned in front of her building.

**Mark Eskow** (WR) lives, works and plays on the 38<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor. It is growing and people are coming from nearby cities to support the corridor. Council's doing a great job.

**Larry Merkl** (WR) asked that if they're going to spend \$5½ million dollars it should go to a vote of the people. ~ He also explained traffic problems that now exist for the neighborhood south of the corridor as a result of the road diet. He lives south of 38<sup>th</sup> and east of Teller. They can't get out onto 38<sup>th</sup>, especially to make a left turn. He expressed the need for either an extended light at High Court with a left turn signal or a light at Teller. A street they could once use is now a traffic jam they avoid altogether.

**Roger Loecher** (WR) spoke about the speed reduction on 38th. It's fine, but there are still accidents; he suggested Council ask the Police Chief what is the safe speed for driving and window shopping. ~ Restricting the speed doesn't put customers in front of the cash register. He believes that lower property prices are luring businesses into WR

and customers can get more for their money on this side of Sheridan. He said Council should be realistic about what's happening in the country as a whole. The area may be attractive now, but after a time people will move to another area. He urged the City to get the flower pots off the street and get some traffic into our town.

**Frank Stites** (WR) has had a business on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue for 60 years. He spoke to the dangerous aspects of the street, listing 35 incidents he's recorded of cars hitting the flower pots, traffic jams that extend for 4-5 blocks, cars being totaled, two people on bicycles being taken to the hospital, when it snows you can't tell where the lines are, and recently a school bus backed into a car. He believes it's dangerous and someone is going to get hurt seriously. He noted 6 cities nationally that have tried a road diet and they all had to go back to their original design. He asked that the City get the flower pots off the street, gets four lanes moving and open the street back up again. To waste \$700,000 and end up with the problems we have – something has to change.

**Jerry Nealon** thinks 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is going in the right direction. There is a buzz out there; people are talking about it. As chairman of the Leadership Committee he represents 30-40 businesses and residents along the avenue, and they all support what's going on. He thinks the drawings are awesome.

**Eric Wilson** (WR) thanked Council for their work on 38<sup>th</sup> and encouraged them to maintain the road diet east of Pierce (where he lives) as he believes the two-lane road makes for a more pleasant neighborhood. He believes businesses have succeeded because of the road diet. Wheat Ridge Liquors says their business is up due to the road diet, and Mama Sannino's and Care Bear Bakery are new businesses on 38<sup>th</sup> Ave.

1. Staff Report(s)  
None

2. 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor ~ Ken Johnstone

a. Implementation and Metrics ~ **Ken Johnstone**

Mr. Johnstone addressed the implementation and accomplishments so far.

- Rezoning the corridor to MU-N
- Leadership Committee Activities with WR2020
- Pilot Road Diet: parallel/back-in parking, pop-up cafes, planters
- Branding/Marketing, including web site and mobile "app", street banners, popular "swag" (stickers, t-shirts, etc.)
- Special Events in 2012/2013 – including school district partnership
- Conceptual streetscape design developed
- Positive economic results

Transportation -- 18 months of post road diet data



- Traffic counts are up and down; there is indication of some diversion, but at an acceptable level.
- Speeds are down; travel time is slightly longer between Wadsworth and Sheridan.
- Bike/ped counts are up.
- Accidents are up, but at acceptable levels.
- Fire and emergency responders indicate no substantial change in response times.
- Data is what staff predicted and there don't appear to be any trends.

#### Economic indicators --

Business openings and closings trend positive.  
Sales tax data seems to be trending positive.

#### Road Diet Feedback (qualitative) --

- *Back-in parking* – It's had mixed reviews. Long term there won't be room for it as the space will be needed for sidewalks and amenity zones. Staff will recommend any parking be traditional parallel parking.
- *Planters* – They've had mixed reviews. They are temporary and were only meant to give an idea of what's possible.
- *Pop-up cafes* -- A couple of the pop-up cafes have been wildly successful. They have generated pedestrian and economic activity for the businesses they are associated with, so the concept of people in street cafes has proven to be successful.

Media Exposure -- Denver Business Journal, Colorado Real Estate Journal, Denver Post, Channel 4, various local publications

Marketing and branding continue. Events are planned for 2014, including a new Bike Criterium.

#### Things for Council to consider

Civic component? What will it be? Should we contemplate a major capital investment project in the area of Upham to High Court to add to the existing civic components (the Grange, the Fire Station and WR 5-8), and make it part of the success and the economic driver of a successful downtown? Would it be a cultural facility or an entertainment facility or a City Hall to serve as a consistent economic anchor?

The City would like to apply for an "Our Town Grant" from the National Endowment for the Arts. It could be for \$200,000.

"The Green" at 38<sup>th</sup> and High Court? Events there have been successful and we have a good partnership with the school district. Could we do some physical improvements there to make it better for holding events and identifying the Ridge?

Mr. Johnstone solicited input from Council if they are interested in pursuing a project at "the Green". He believes if we spend a little money on design work we could have a real strong application for a 2014 "Our Town Grant" ready by this time next year. A public process would be a necessary component.

#### b. Streetscape Design Alternatives

**Mark Westberg** from the Engineering Department and current project manager for 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue identified the design team and summarized the public outreach process. The main focus is from Upham to Pierce. 330 people completed the online survey in July and August; 40+ came to the public open house; block-by-block outreach contacted 25 participants; and the design team met with the Leadership Committee.

Ken Johnstone continued, noting that

- 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a unique opportunity to create a Main Street area.
- The idea of a street with less vehicular capacity is not something staff would recommend for the whole City. This area is small – making up only 3% of the commercial arterials in Wheat Ridge.
- In a public process in 2010-2011 participants were given three choices to prioritize. They ranked, in descending order of importance:
  - 1) sidewalks and amenity zones**
  - 2) on-street parking, and**
  - 3) bike lanes.**

This led to a plan for the 70' ROW area that has an 8 foot sidewalk and a separated 6 foot amenity zone on both sides of the street, with a 7 foot parking zone on the south side. In the 60' ROW area the 7 foot parking zone goes away due to lack of room.

Challenges identified by staff include space, utility poles, lack of ROW, driveway curb cuts, private parking that backs up to City ROW, ADA compliance, continuity issues with sidewalks, and lack of consistency

#### Goals that were set by staff:

- Permanent and consistent amenity zones to enhance pedestrian mobility and connectivity
- More and wider sidewalks and sidewalk apps
- Reduce the number of conflict points where sidewalks cross driveways (by eliminating some of the driveway entrances)
- Incorporate the Ridge at 38 logo as it is critical to the success of the plan implementation and the brand
- Public art
- Integrate unifying concepts throughout the sub-districts of the corridor



Community Survey

Mark Westberg explained the July 2013 online community survey which polled citizens on nine design areas. Of note: 66% prefer parallel parking on both sides of the street vs back-in-parking on one side as the back-in-parking was described as too difficult to navigate. Folks also said we need more trees.

Design Inspiration

**Deana Swetlik**, from the design consultant firm Entelchy, presented slides showing what design concepts the survey suggested: modern, contemporary, recall midcentury, forward thinking, more welcoming to younger people/families, unique – like no other place in WR and no other Main Street. Based on the surveys, two sets of design choices were prepared. Both are simple and streamlined.

- Design Group A has more wood and molded features, long shapes, lighter patterns/colors, and rounded lights.
- Design Group B is similar but with more embellishment, less wood, more metal, darker patterns/colors, and rectilinear lighting.
- Together there is additional signage (to complement existing signage that's come from the branding effort), informational kiosks, and (as specifically requested by WR2020) signage and way-finding for parking.
- The area between Upham and High Court is wider and offers more opportunities for public art and wider amenity zones.

The Concepts

Mr. Westberg highlighted similarities and differences and went through numerous slides of the different concepts.

Similarities: Both design groups

- Address access enhancement (dealing with/reducing the driveways)
- Identify conceptual changes to on- and off-street parking configurations
- Enhance and highlight bus stops

Differences: The seating, planting, lighting and kiosks are more flexible in Design A and more fixed in Design B. They can be mixed and matched.

Cost Estimate \$5.3 - 5.6 million would include:

- Survey and design work
- Full road reconstruction
- Access enhancement (driveways)
- Creation of amenity zone
- All new street lights and lower pedestrian lights
- Provisions for seating, landscaping and other main street amenities
- Electrical for special events: holiday lighting, etc.
- Special bus stops
- Information kiosks

Council's discussion should:

- select a preferred "kit of parts"

- select the preferred alternatives
- provide direction and budget approval to finish the conceptual design by April 2014
- provide direction to proceed with Street Width Designation (per Charter)
- direct staff to proceed with final design
- direct staff to bring forward funding options

Council questions, comments and general discussion followed. Things that came out of the discussion included:

- Any new street lighting would meet metro area "dark sky" requirements and not shine upwards.
- Neither design alternative includes bike lanes due to the lack of room.
- Regarding maintenance costs: Flower pots freeze in winter and need to be replanted every year. Raised planting beds (lower to the ground) are more labor intensive but offer better luck with perennials.
- Staff removed lawn grass as an option because it will get trampled during parades.
- We have a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the school district for special events at "the Green" in which we pay them a small fee.
- The cost of the project won't be recovered by increased revenues from 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- The 330 respondents preferred the mid-century look in all areas except the lighting. People preferred traditional lighting, but staff doesn't want to put traditional lighting if everything else is mid-century.
- What about references to farming heritage? The mid-century design follows the Ridge at 38 branding process. Reference to farming will be accomplished subtly by having a more yellow wheat color in the paving pattern in the amenity zone and in such elements as public art, walls, use of the wheat emblem, and the ornamental grass plantings.
- Complete reconstruction of the road is necessary to make the new street width compatible with the bulb-outs and wider sidewalks. There are issues with such things as sloping, drainage, and thickness of existing pavement.
- Survey and civil design work can be done in-house to save money, but staff would rather do the street width designation process first (before design). Staff can design the narrower road and wider sidewalks, but will need help with the amenity zones.
- The Street Width Designation process is actually the first step. Completing the conceptual design is necessary for that, and after the width is decided the actual survey and design work happens. Phasing option can be considered.
- Three feet is the minimum requirement for a bike path. We currently have five foot bike paths. Six feet would be better.

There was considerable discussion about whether or not to include bike paths.

Mr. Pond received consensus for the conceptual design to include

- A blend of the concepts
- Adding Pierce to Newland Street into the Main Street design scope



- Reference of a civic component in the concept design
- Adding bike infrastructure on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue and north/south connectors
- More detailed cost breakdown of the \$5.6 million

Mr. Urban stated disagreement to moving forward with this concept knowing there is a large contingent of residents who don't see this as a good path.

#### Funding?

Staff will come back to a regular meeting with a new scope of services and fees from Entelchy. Staff will also bring back funding options.

### 3. Mayoral Appointments to the Housing Authority

**Tracy Langworthy** doesn't care for the current appointment process and feels a formal application process would be more fair. That said, she spoke about wanting to be on the Housing Authority for four years. Being an accountant she knows money and how to get the most out of it. She also has the advantage of being able to hear what people say and balance that with what is financially feasible. She understands that the City may have to pass on the Fruitdale School.

Mayor Jay said Tracy was one of her first choices, but she selected Chad Harr because of his incredible strong volunteerism with WR2020 projects and his wonderful skills in the building industry, construction, and environmental (interior) design of commercial buildings.

**Chad Harr** was present and spoke about his experience in all aspects of the building trades, including tenant finish, remodeling, erecting large signs, and most recently the interior design of commercial projects and his company's first residential project. He's very interested in having great housing in the City to attract great people. When the Mayor asked him to look at this he was very excited.

**Zach Urban** was unaware an application was necessary to remain on the Housing Authority. He is unclear about the process and didn't realize that being elected to City Council precluded him from serving. ~ His background includes being appointed by Gov. Ritter to the Board of Real Estate Appraisers and being nominated by HUD to the White House Champion for Change in Housing. He has a breadth of knowledge in the housing arena well beyond cursory knowledge and is very passionate about it. He understands he will not be reappointed and to ease the difficulty of giving it up he offers his expertise and guidance to anyone who is appointed. ~ He believes this process should be discussed at some point.

**Jerry DiTullio** spoke of his desire to be the Council representative on the Housing Authority because he wants to make sure housing issues are addressed east of Wadsworth. He is familiar with the issues and areas of concern. While he helped start the Authority, his real desire is to get things done. There are several new people on the Authority and he'd like to ensure that the board is directing the staff, not the staff directing the board.

The Mayor stated she has already made a decision on who she will appoint.

4. Elected Officials' Report(s)

**Larry Schulz** provided a handout of the Treasurer's Investment Status Report. ~ He reported having attended a GFOA conference and hearing a presentation by Westminster about creative financing for long term energy conservation. He'd be happy to help get that presentation before the Council.


**Zach Urban** expressed support for Kristi Davis in the loss of her mother and recognized the force that Barbara Davis was for the community.

**Jerry DiTullio** said WRHS finals are Wed and Thurs. He also said he is always looking for folks who will let students job-shadow for a career class. If the Mayor would like to have students read proclamations let him know; they can get extra credit for it.

**Tracy Langworthy** reported the Aging Well committee is having their last meeting in December to firm up what they will be bringing to Council.

**Mayor Jay** attended a DRCOG seminar this morning with some of the councilmembers. She said it was very informative and interesting how much it tied in with what we're doing on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She'll be sharing with Mr. Goff about the consultant who helped Arvada on the Gold Line.

The Study Session adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

  
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Janelle Shaver, City Clerk