PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of Meeting
August 19, 2021

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair LARSON at 7:03 p.m. This meeting was held in person and virtually, using Zoom video-teleconferencing technology. As duly announced and publicly noticed, the City previously approved this meeting format in order to continue with normal business amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the related public emergency orders promulgated by the State of Colorado and the Wheat Ridge City Council. Before calling the meeting to order, the Chair stated the rules and procedures necessitated by this virtual meeting format.

2. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Commission Members Present:	Melissa Antol Kristine Disney Will Kerns Daniel Larson Scott Ohm Jahi Simbai
Commission Members Absent:	Ari Krichiver Janet Leo
Staff Members Present:	Lauren Mikulak, Planning Manager Tammy Odean, Recording Secretary

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. APPROVE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Commissioner SIMBAI and seconded by Commissioner DISNEY to approve the order of the agenda. Motion carried 6-0.

5. PUBLIC FORUM (This is the time for any person to speak on any subject appearing on the agenda.)

No one wished to speak at this time and public forum was closed. After the Lutheran Legacy Campus presentation, the Commissioners waived the rules for letting a member of the community speak because the resident was having issues connecting to the Zoom Virtual Meeting.

Everett Coleman, Resident
9395 W 38th Avenue

Mr. Coleman said he was an advocate for the land itself where Lutheran Hospital currently sits. He mentioned he values agriculture and is part of Regenerate Wheat Ridge. He would like to see gardens similar to Happiness Gardens at this site along with more open space.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Study Session – Lutheran Legacy Campus Master Plan Update

Jay Renkens, MIG
518 17th St., Ste. 630, Denver

Mr. Renkens gave a thorough update on the Lutheran Legacy Campus Master Plan process. He summarized public feedback received to date, shared market and traffic analysis, and described three conceptual land use plans as well as the respective public reactions to each concept.

In response to a question from Commissioner LARSON, Ms. Mikulak explained that this Master Plan is an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and a guiding document for this specific area. The next step of the process after the Master Plan is completed is the property will be put on the market and the future developer will be given the Plan to see what the City expects. She added that the next item the Commission will see regarding the Lutheran Legacy Campus, will most likely be a zone change for a mixed-use or planned development district.

Commissioner DISNEY made an observation that the 3 Concepts are paying the most attention to the east, west and southern sides of the campus as being low density and the north side is higher density. She explained that her concerns lie with the community to the north and the possibility of increased cut-through traffic. She agrees more with Concept A, with the exception of flipping the Civic and the Multi-Family Uses and she would like to see more park spaces or agricultural concepts. She prefers to see nonresidential uses along 38th Avenue. Commissioner DISNEY added she is very impressed with this process and the attention City Staff has given to its importance. She is also grateful that Lutheran is engaging in this process. She shared observations on the August public meeting.

Commissioner OHM asked for the peak hour and total traffic counts to be explained.

Mr. Renkens confirmed that the table shared in the slides showed the traffic volumes at the AM and PM peaks which is specific to the 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the evening with the highest traffic volume. It does not show traffic counts for the full day.

Commissioner OHM also had concerns about the addition families being added to the community and children trying to get to school. He would like to see better sidewalk connections to the schools in the area. His other concerns are the location of transit access and the parks being too small in this area, particularly the narrow open space at the northeast side in Concept C. He also added he appreciates the time and effort being put into this process.

Commissioner ANTOL is curious about how the 3 Concepts were created and what the Comprehensive Plan's projection is for the needs of the City; for example, what the demand is for apartments compared to townhomes.

Mr. Renkens clarified that prioritizing the different types of housing is not a part of this scope, but the absorption of different housing types is within the scope, adding that the market analysis looked at a 10–15-year absorption.

Commissioner ANTOL inquired how the housing will get distributed.

Ms. Mikulak explained that the Comp Plan is dated 2009 and predates a lot of the demographic shifts in the City and changes in the housing market. It calls for protecting the character of established neighborhoods and channeling growth to more appropriate areas. She added that City Council has adopted policy documents that call for diversification of the housing stock and vacancy rates are currently very low across all types of housing. Ms. Mikulak stated that the City fills confident showing this much residential is appropriate for the community and area needs; the City wants the Master Plan to be realistic.

Commissioner ANTOL would rather see a Concept with more open space/park area because she feels there is a deficit of open space in this area, and it would enhance the heritage of Wheat Ridge.

Commissioner SIMBAI commented that he envisioned a mini downtown with density and commercial uses on the edge and more open in the middle. He reiterated the need for the site to be a destination in the heart of the City.

Ms. Mikulak explained that there is not a lot of demand and/or acreage to fill the edge with more intense uses and it is not politically the most realistic, despite it being a very traditional urban design.

Commissioner OHM said it is very important to buffer the existing neighborhoods, and this is a unique site and should be mixed-use at the high spot in the center which will have some good views.

Commissioner LARSON asked about the potential of reusing the hospital building.

Mr. Renkens explained that the north tower is fairly new and great for reuse, but the rest of the hospital is less likely to be reused.

Steve Chyung, SCL (joined by Zoom)
8300 W. 38th Ave., Wheat Ridge

Mr. Chyung mentioned that the north tower accounts for about 1/3 of the total square footage of the hospital and it is new space. He added the challenge will be finding the infrastructure to support the north tower because it is tied to the Central Utility Plant (CUP).

Commissioner LARSON asked if an issue is being created by trying to reuse medical buildings with a different use, and if it will be appealing to others.

Ms. Mikulak said the City is not trying to get rid of anything; some of the buildings would be perfect for potentially a new City Hall facility. She added that developers would welcome building that are already built. None of the concepts rely on existing buildings nor preclude them from staying.

Commissioner LARSON asked how civic space is defined and if there is the potential for office space after the pandemic.

Mr. Renkens said there are many definitions of a civic campus including but not limited to a plaza space, flexible amphitheater, a large central park or all of the above. Ms. Mikulak added it could be a cultural gathering or performing arts area or more traditional government or municipal function. Mr. Renkens said there is potential for office space and the office community would like amenities nearby in a site such as this.

Commissioner KERNS said this is going to be an asset to the community and thought highly of Concept A but would switch the Civic and Multi-family areas. He likes the park space in Concept B and the main street proposed in Concept C surrounded by the retail. He wondered if the blue house and chapel could become part of the Civic area. Commissioner KERNS also had concerns about sidewalk connectivity to different areas in the community including schools and would like to see more transportation access onto 32nd Avenue which could mean another signal on 32nd Avenue. He recognized that

connecting the street grid may not be popular among neighbors but would help to distribute traffic.

Commissioner OHM also wondered if Rocky Mountain Ditch will continue to have pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Renkens said the plan assumes they remain, but it's up to the developers.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Upcoming Dates

Ms. Mikulak informed the Commission that the upcoming Planning Commission schedule has several land use cases and code amendments to hear and expects to utilize both meetings in September and October.

10. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner OHM and seconded by Commissioner ANTOL to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Dan Larson, Chair

Tammy Odean, Recording Secretary