
Wheat Ridge

NEIGHBORHOOD

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

UPDATE

2019

czb



Acknowledgements

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How to Use this Report

This update to the City’s Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS) does three things:

2019



First, it paints a picture of where Wheat Ridge is in 2019.

It presents a data snapshot that describes how Wheat Ridge sees itself and how the Wheat Ridge market measures up on a number of important demographic and economic indicators.

2019



Second, it hews closely to the collective pulse of Wheat Ridge in 2019.

It reflects a synthesis of nine months of community engagement, facilitated by a consulting team but led and implemented by a steering committee of more than two dozen Wheat Ridge residents, and drawing from the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of well over 1,000 residents who gave their time to this process in some form or fashion.

2030



Third, it lays out a focused workplan that should be complete by 2030.

It offers a set of recommendations to guide specific City-led community improvement efforts focused on resident engagement, corridor revitalization, and public process improvements aimed at positively managing neighborhood change. The priority recommendations and their inevitable follow-on actions will take the City a decade to complete, taking into consideration City capacity when it comes to workload, project timing, and resources.

The structure of the report is meant to draw a line between current market conditions in Wheat Ridge, existing community feelings and opinions, and then actions that the City can take to achieve its revitalization goals. Woven throughout is professional consultant analysis and, at times, political insights that provide guiderails to keep the recommended actions grounded in implementable reality.

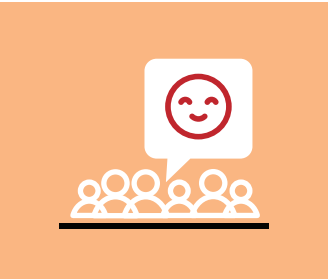
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6	Part 1: Background and Process <i>This section describes the history of the NRS in Wheat Ridge and the 2018-2019 process that shaped this updated version.</i>
10	Part 2: Wheat Ridge by the Numbers <i>This section provides data about how Wheat Ridge is doing, both in the eyes of its residents as measured from recent community surveys and as reflected in a variety of data sources.</i>
22	Part 3: Wheat Ridge Neighborhoods <i>This section offers a new way of thinking about neighborhoods in Wheat Ridge and shares additional data at the neighborhood level.</i>
34	Part 4: Priorities for Neighborhood Improvement <i>This section identifies neighborhood engagement and corridor improvements as the most important priorities. It proposes a way for the City to assess neighborhood issues and opportunities and to engage residents for the purpose of managing change. It also includes analysis and recommendations related to accessory dwelling units and the permitting process for rehabilitation projects.</i>
60	Part 5: Summary of Recommendations <i>The summary includes all recommendations related to the priorities for neighborhood improvement.</i>

Executive Summary

The Strategy at a Glance

Key Findings



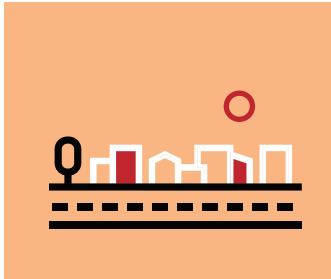
Community Contentment

Wheat Ridge is quite content with its quality of life and its overall position. **Community sentiment about life in Wheat Ridge is positive** and the city does not perceive itself to be at an existential crossroads.



A Strengthening Market

Wheat Ridge is enjoying the benefits of a robust post-recession Denver area economy with the real estate market as the primary indicator. While the market is still dominated by an older and relatively lower income population which limits new restaurant and retail offerings, **change is clearly afoot** as incomes and education levels rise.



Primary Corridors

There is a clear desire on the part of Wheat Ridge residents for more attractive **commercial districts along major corridors like Wadsworth, 44th, and Kipling**, and for better shopping and dining options, particularly those that are not national or regional chains.



Neighborhoods

When it comes to Wheat Ridge neighborhoods, there are many in the city—even if it is not a clear majority—who are at least somewhat **uncomfortable with changes** that are perceived to be too drastic, out of character with existing conditions, or both. Residents also express a **desire for positive connection and engagement** with their neighbors.



Priority Recommendations

CORRIDORS

- 1 Finalize and fund streetscape improvements on **38th Avenue**.
- 2 Complete design and reconstruction for **Wadsworth Boulevard**.
- 3 Complete corridor plan for **44th Avenue** from Wadsworth to Youngfield.

NEIGHBORHOODS



Hire two neighborhood **engagement professionals**.



Complete a citywide neighborhood **“listening tour.”**



Following the listening tour, design appropriate **neighborhood-based engagement, communication, and planning strategies**.

1

Background and Process

Why Undertake the NRS and Why Now?

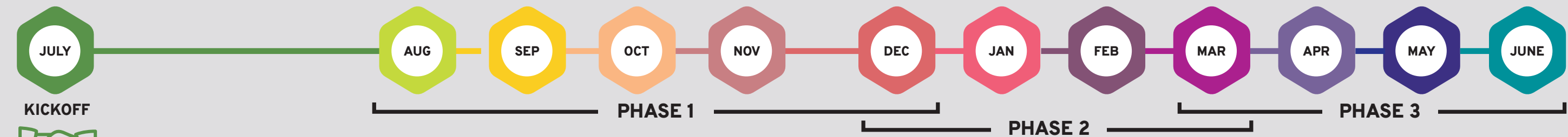
In 2005, Wheat Ridge completed and adopted *Repositioning Wheat Ridge*, its first-ever Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS for short). The City’s inaugural NRS was a full-scale community improvement plan. It planted the seeds for an updated comprehensive plan, for new corridor plans and zoning updates, and for new property and business developments. Since 2005, the City has focused on successfully reaching the goal of becoming economically stronger and more regionally competitive for businesses and new households by implementing the *Repositioning Wheat Ridge* recommendations.

The first NRS was about putting the community in a position to attract investment and that goal has now been achieved. The results are seen in a strengthening housing market, new businesses along 38th Avenue, and redevelopment along Wadsworth Boulevard. In addition to the City’s focused work, the Denver metro area has experienced positive economic and demographic change with spillover benefits for Wheat Ridge. Today and moving forward, Wheat Ridge faces a different set of opportunities and challenges which have less to do with achieving market success and more to do with growing into and accommodating its newfound prosperity. **The central question of an updated Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy is: How can Wheat Ridge maintain its fundamental values and character while managing inevitable change?**

NRS IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETE OR IN PROGRESS

- Updated Comprehensive Plan.
- Nearly 50 updates to the Zoning Code.
- Creation of mixed-use zoning.
- Northwest (Ward TOD) subarea plan.
- Fruitdale subarea plan.
- Corridor plans for Wadsworth Boulevard and 38th Avenue.
- Legislative rezonings for Wadsworth and 38th corridors.
- Updated design standards for new development in the Streetscape Design Manual and Architectural and Site Design Manual.
- Additional staff resources for Code Enforcement.
- Creation of a “Rapid Response” team in the Planning Division.
- Establishment of an “Open for Business” environment.
- Incremental steps in the evolution of 38th Avenue to a “main street” district.
- Strengthened position in the housing market and attraction of stronger households.
- Construction of new market-rate housing throughout the city.
- Ongoing housing investment through renovations and rehabilitation.
- New commercial development complete or ongoing at Kipling Ridge, The Corners, and Clear Creek Crossing.
- Increase in retail sales tax relative to neighboring communities.
- Encouragement of stronger retail buying power.
- Establishment of WR2020, now LocalWorks.
- Planning and Development Academy and Wheaties Academy.
- Establishment of the TLC program and neighborhood clean-up days.
- Marketing and branding efforts promoting business and residential life in Wheat Ridge.
- Economic development efforts to assist businesses and rehabilitate commercial properties.
- Redevelopment of the Fruitdale School.
- New and refurbished parks and improved access to trails and open space.
- Beautification projects at key locations throughout the city and improved gateway signage.
- Amended agricultural restrictions to encourage urban farming.

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Process



THE WORK BEGINS

Council impaneled a committee of 27 Wheat Ridge residents to guide the development of an updated NRS. They began working together in late summer 2018 to figure out which issues matter most, what the community is thinking and feeling, and how the City might best respond in order to both preserve what is great about Wheat Ridge and how to make improvements where they are warranted.

PHASE 1
Defining the Issues and Analyzing the Market

The steering committee met in July, September, and October to begin understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Wheat Ridge’s neighborhoods and to design public engagement activities. In September, the committee began small-scale outreach through discussion groups and pop-up events at local gathering places, seeking answers to the simple question: “What should change in Wheat Ridge and what should stay the same?” In October and November, outreach expanded to include small group discussions focused on hypothetical scenarios designed by the City’s consultants. The scenarios were designed to draw out community values and what matters most to Wheat Ridge residents in community decision making.

On November 5, the consulting team presented a draft interim report containing early data findings and observations about the Wheat Ridge market to the City Council and Planning Commission.

Small-Scale Community Meetings



City Council and Planning Commission Presentation



Community Open House
100+ Attendees



PHASE 2
Problem Solving the Wheat Ridge Way

In December, over 100 Wheat Ridge residents attended a community open house at the Recreation Center. Attendees provided their input and feedback on the key issues that the committee believed the NRS project should address. During January and February, the committee worked on analyzing and synthesizing all community input to date, and organized it into concepts to inform the substance of the updated NRS. A critical project milestone was achieved in February when the online survey went live. The survey, open from February 13 to March 1, aided the committee in gathering additional input on the work done to date as well as preliminary ideas for actions that had emerged through the process. March 18-21 was NRS Blitz Week with presentations and discussions at both City Council and Planning Commission, as well as four open houses across the city over two days. In total, nearly 100 people attended the open houses.

Online Survey



1,000+ Respondents

City Council, Planning Commission



Community Open Houses



PHASE 3
Crafting a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

In early April, City Council met in a retreat setting to discuss the findings of the NRS and the implications of the ideas that had emerged. Following the Council discussion, the consulting team went to work on crafting a draft NRS document for public review.

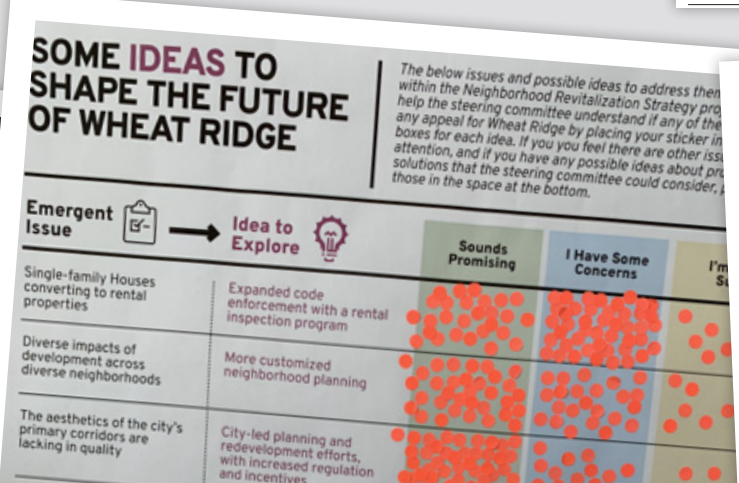
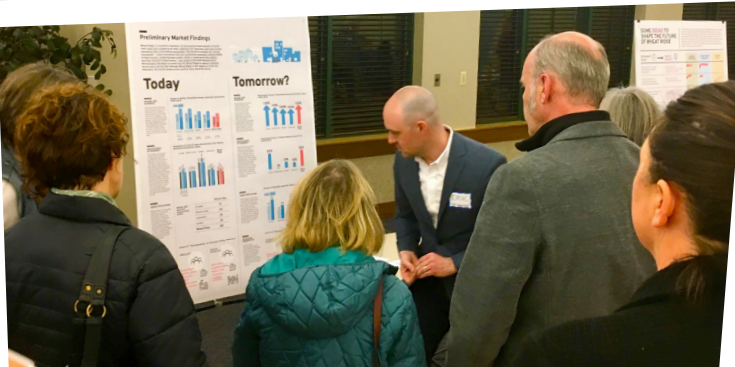
DRAFT STRATEGY



City Council



FINAL STRATEGY



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Wheat Ridge by the Numbers

Like all community planning exercises, the NRS was shaped by analysis of a number of data points. What follows in this section is a description of some of the most important data and trends impacting planning, development, and neighborhood issues in Wheat Ridge. It begins with survey data reflecting feelings and opinions of residents and is followed by objective data culled from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau (people, households, and housing characteristics), the Multiple Listing Service (real estate market), Jefferson County Assessor (housing and land values), and the City of Wheat Ridge (building permit activity).

What does the community think?

Wheat Ridge residents have had the chance during 2018 and 2019 to voice their opinions about the state of their city. Both the 2018 Resident Survey and the 2019 Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy survey reveal generally positive feelings amongst residents about the way their city is trending.

RESIDENT SURVEY

How do you rate the overall quality of life in Wheat Ridge?

81%

Good or Excellent

RESIDENT SURVEY

How do you rate Wheat Ridge as a place to live?

90%

Good or Excellent

NRS SURVEY

How has Wheat Ridge progressed over the past five years, considering factors like quality of life, overall appearance, and shopping and dining options?

58%

say Wheat Ridge has gotten better

24%

say Wheat Ridge is about the same

NRS SURVEY

What does Wheat Ridge need to do to improve on these and other topics?

72%

say Wheat Ridge should keep on its current path, or make only minor tweaks and adjustments

NRS SURVEY

How do you rate quality of life amenities like parks, recreation opportunities, parades, festivals, and restaurant offerings?

70%

Good or Excellent

RESIDENT SURVEY

How do you rate your neighborhood as a place to live?

79%

Good or Excellent

NRS SURVEY

How well do your neighbors maintain their properties?

79%

said either exceptionally well or to a good standard

RESIDENT SURVEY

How do you rate Wheat Ridge as a place to raise children?

77%

Good or Excellent

RESIDENT SURVEY

How likely are you to recommend living in Wheat Ridge?

90%

likely or very likely to recommend living in Wheat Ridge

RESIDENT SURVEY

think the quality of life in Wheat Ridge is likely to improve in the next five years.

62%

rate the overall quality of City Services as good or excellent

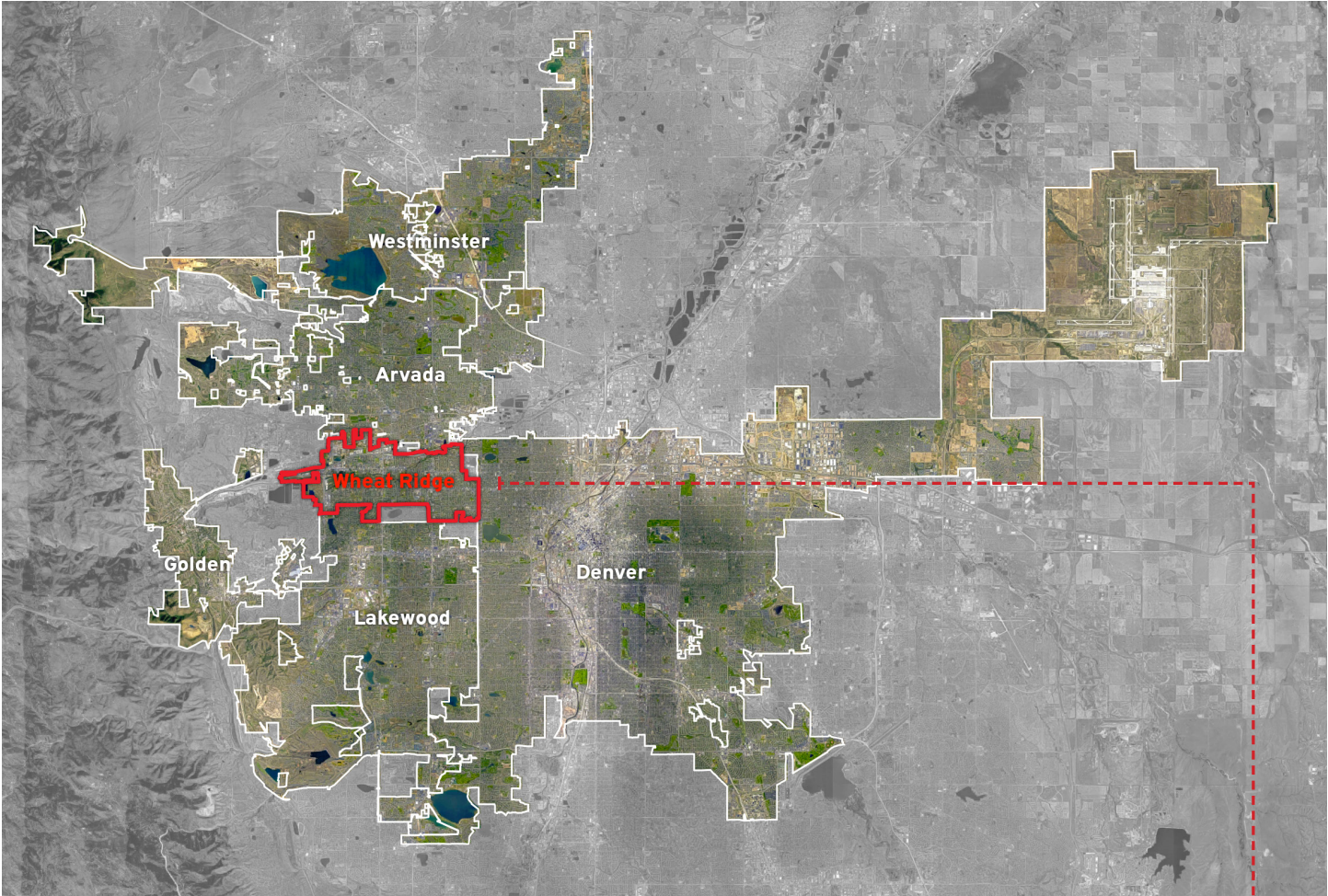
74%

10

Wheat Ridge Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Update

Wheat Ridge Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Update

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How Wheat Ridge and its Neighboring Communities Are Doing

Survey questions are a good way to test how people are feeling and what their perceptions are. But what do the objective data say? The Denver region has unquestionably become more economically vibrant in the past decade. The region performs well on economic and demographic measures and has gained a national reputation for its high quality of life. Denver’s success has created positive spillover effects for Wheat Ridge and its neighbors. Market conditions have historically been weaker in Wheat Ridge than in other nearby communities, and that is still true. But trends indicate that Wheat Ridge is strengthening at a faster pace on some key measures, putting it on track to catch up to the competition.

What’s happening in Wheat Ridge as reflected in available data sources?
How is Wheat Ridge doing in comparison to nearby communities?
And what does it mean for Wheat Ridge’s neighborhoods?

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all data comes from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey 2012-2016 5 year estimates.

Incomes Lagging but Positive Signs

Although Wheat Ridge has seen income growth in line with that of its neighbors – greater growth in fact than some of its neighbors – the city’s lower starting position means it still has not caught up. Wheat Ridge was at or near the bottom of the pack in household incomes in 1999 and that has not changed.

One possible explanation for this is Wheat Ridge’s status as a “naturally occurring retirement community.” A relatively large concentration of elderly retirees can depress income figures, but there is at least one positive trend in the data.

Wheat Ridge is more than holding its own in the growth of higher income households. Amongst nearby communities, only Arvada is adding \$100,000+ households faster than Wheat Ridge.

Fig. 1
Change in Median Household Income, Selected Communities (1999-2016)

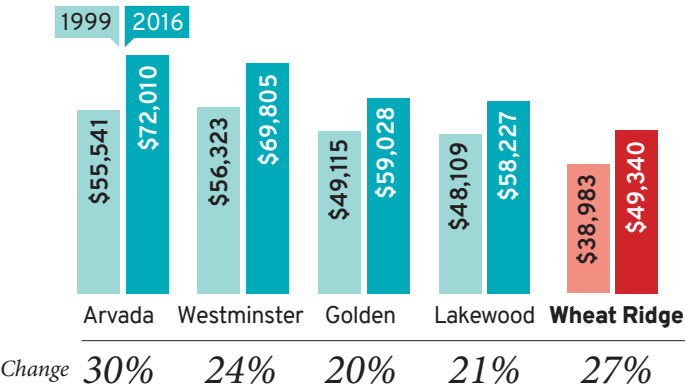


Fig. 2
Percentage of Married Couple Families with No Workers, Selected Communities (2016)

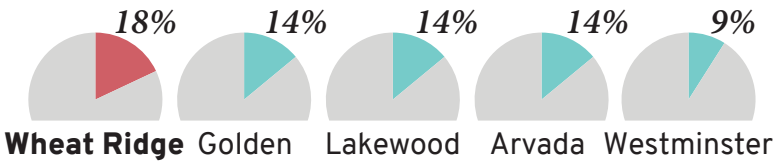
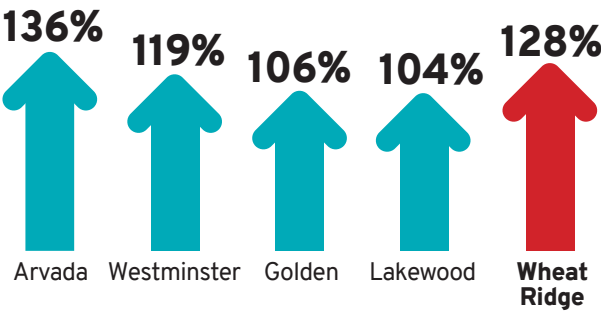


Fig. 3
Percentage Change in Households Earning \$100,000 or More, Selected Communities (1999-2016)



Population is Still Older but No Longer Aging

Wheat Ridge has long been known as a community older than others in the region. It may be some time before the gap closes, and in the meantime the city faces the realities of a relatively large elderly population.

Fig. 4
Median Age and Population Aged 65+, Selected Communities (2016)

	Median Age	% Population 65+
Arvada	41	15%
Westminster	36	10%
Lakewood	38	11%
Golden	31	16%
Wheat Ridge	42	19%

Fig. 5
Wheat Ridge Median Age (2009-2016)

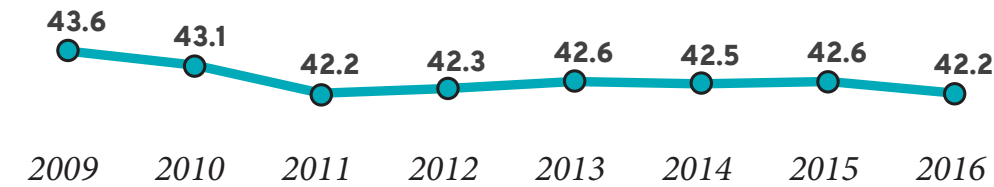
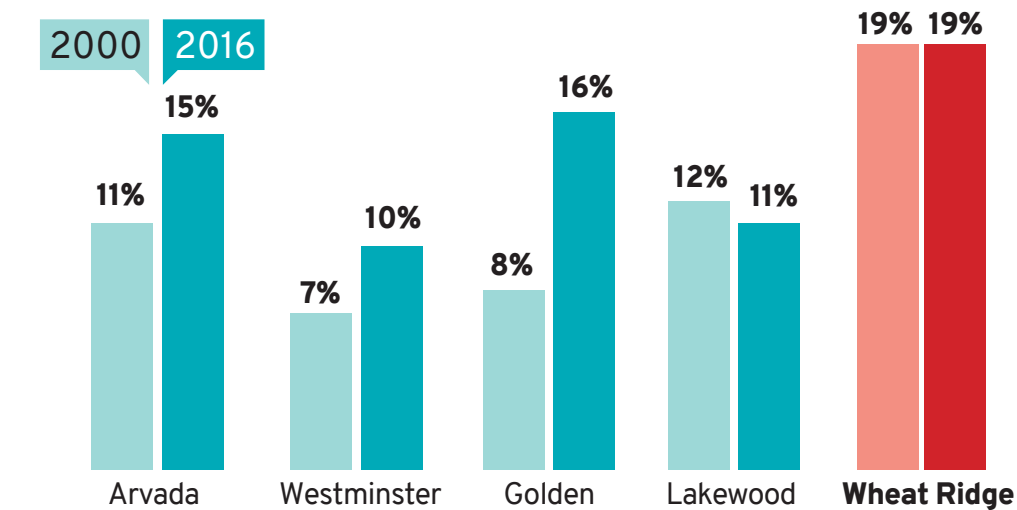


Fig. 6
Percent of Population Aged 65+, Selected Communities (2000-2016)



However, Wheat Ridge’s median age has stopped increasing and its elderly population, as a percentage of all residents, is now holding steady. Wheat Ridge was early to the aging population trend, but other neighboring cities are on their way to catching up. The rebalancing of the demographic scale should be positive for the city’s future vitality.

Younger Residents are Increasingly Well Educated

The median earnings for a high school graduate in Jefferson County is \$35,000. For someone in Jefferson County with a four year college degree, the median is approximately \$55,000 while an advanced degree fetches a median earnings of \$68,000. Wheat Ridge trails its neighbors in the percentage of college graduates living in the city, which means lower wages for workers who live there. This is especially true in some key age groups, including most importantly the peak earning years of 45-64. But the trends are positive for Wheat Ridge residents younger than 45.

Wheat Ridge has become attractive to younger college educated people in the important years of family formation, career building, and homebuying. Amongst peer communities, Wheat Ridge has the highest rate of growth in college educated people in their mid-twenties to mid-forties.

The most striking change is the college degree attainment rate of 25-34 year olds in Wheat Ridge, which doubled between 2009 and 2016. The percentage of college educated 35-44 year olds continues to lag behind other nearby cities, but is rising quickly. If Wheat Ridge can retain its well educated young adults in the next few years, it could contribute to a much stronger local market.

Fig. 7
Population at Least 25 Years Old with Four Year Degree, Selected Communities (2016)

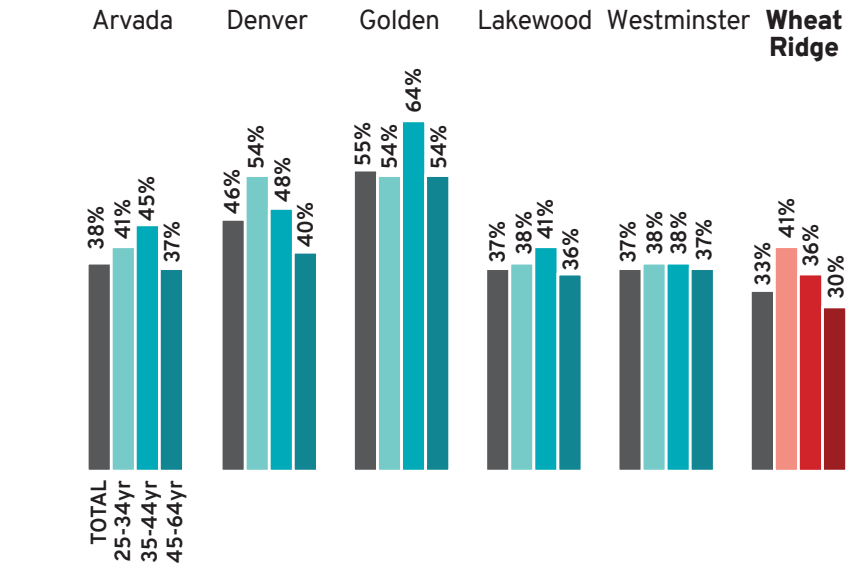


Fig. 8
Percentage Change in College Graduates Aged 25-44, Selected Communities (2000-2016)

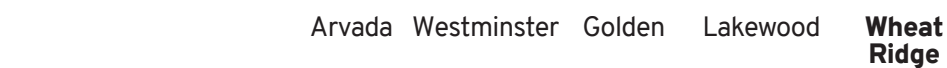
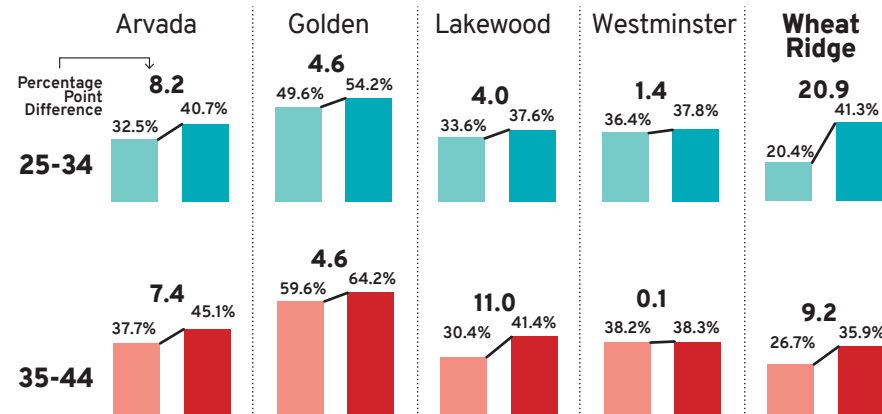


Fig. 9
Change in Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Rate for Ages 25-34 and 35-44, Selected Communities (2009-2016)



Older Single-Family Housing Stock

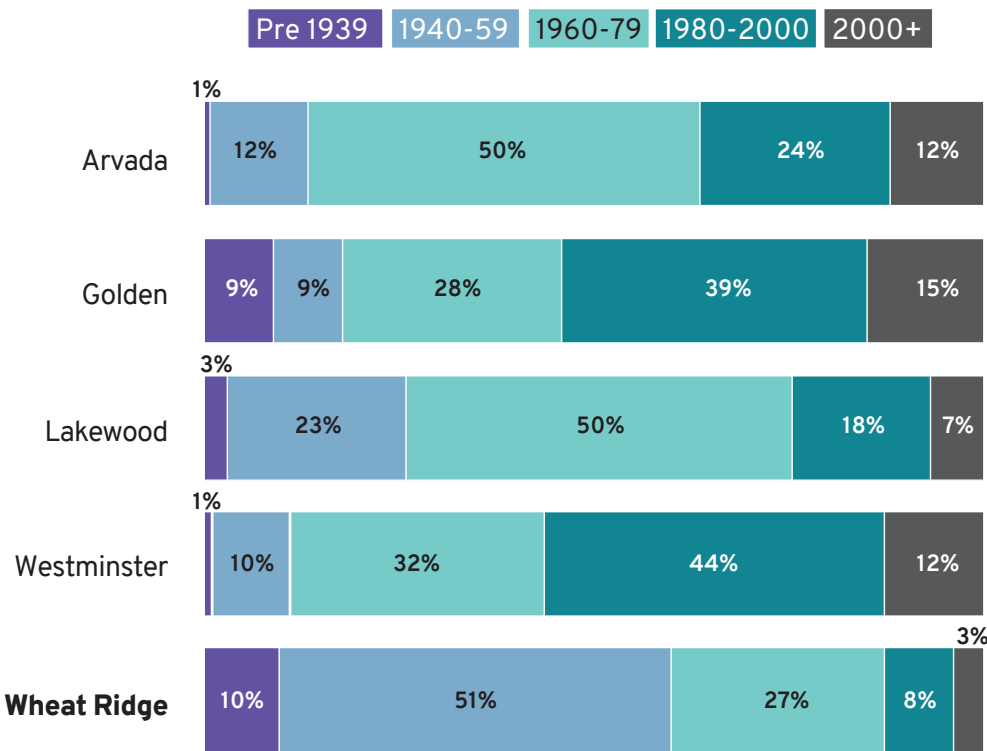
Wheat Ridge’s housing stock is mostly similar in nature to those of the comparison communities. Arvada stands out for being more heavily tilted toward single-family detached units and away from large multifamily structures.

What stands out about Wheat Ridge’s housing stock is its age. Nearly 80% of Wheat Ridge’s single-family units were built between 1940 and 1979. This is the most among west metro peer communities. Only 12% of Wheat Ridge’s single-family units were built 1980 or later and this is by far the least among the peer communities.

Fig. 10
Housing Stock Characteristics, Selected Communities (2016)

	Single-family Detached	Single-family Attached	# OF UNITS		
			2-4	5-19	20+
Arvada	70%	8%	4%	10%	7%
Golden	48%	8%	7%	14%	14%
Lakewood	49%	10%	6%	20%	13%
Westminster	59%	9%	4%	16%	11%
Wheat Ridge	53%	13%	7%	15%	11%

Fig. 11
Single-Family Housing Units, by Era Built, Selected Communities (2016)



Aging Single Family Units Converting to Rentals

Mid-century housing stock, unless of rare high quality or in rare desirable locations, is today near the end of its useful life and has long outlived the homebuyer preferences that it was built to meet. As a result, the buyer market is increasingly avoiding these aging units and they are in many cases converting to rental properties. This is true in suburban communities across the country and Wheat Ridge is no exception. Between 2000 and 2016, just over 500 single-family units converted from ownership to rental, and over 80% of those were built between 1940 and 1979.

Large Number of Aging Homeowners

One in three Wheat Ridge owner households is headed by a senior citizen, just as it was in 2000. West metro peer communities are catching up as their populations age, but Wheat Ridge still has the greatest percentage of elderly owners. Roughly 1,300 Wheat Ridge owners are 75 or older, with approximately 400 of those 85 or older. In addition, nearly 2,000 Wheat Ridge owner units built between 1940 and 1979 are currently occupied by a senior citizen head of household. The city ought to be anticipating the likelihood that some significant number of those 2,000 houses will convert to rental properties as their current occupants transition out.

Fig. 12
Change in Percentage of Single-Family Units that are Rentals, by Era Built, Selected Communities (2000-2016)

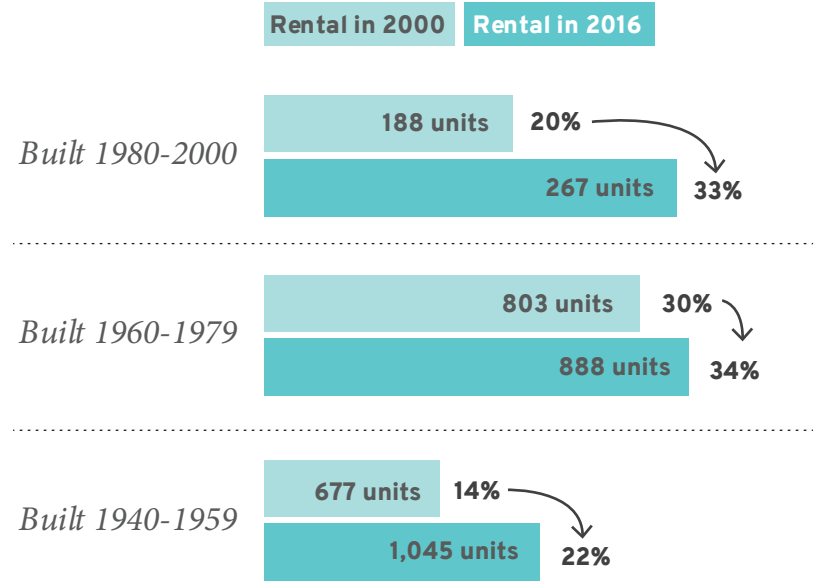


Fig. 13
Percentage of Owner Units Headed by Someone Aged 65+, Selected Communities (2016)

	2000	2016
Arvada	19%	28%
Golden	21%	24%
Lakewood	23%	30%
Westminster	12%	21%
Wheat Ridge	33%	33%

Fig. 14
Percentage of Owner Units Built 1940-79 and Headed by Someone Aged 65+, Selected Communities (2016)

Arvada	19%
Golden	11%
Lakewood	22%
Westminster	9%
Wheat Ridge	25%

Home Prices are on the Rise

In the last decade, Wheat Ridge has enjoyed strong real estate appreciation, especially compared to other nearby communities. As reflected in average sales, Wheat Ridge is still a bit more of a bargain than Arvada and Lakewood, but more expensive than Westminster. Price appreciation in Wheat Ridge proves that even with older housing stock and relatively lower incomes of existing residents, the market still values Wheat Ridge as a place to invest its housing dollars.

Appreciation across Wheat Ridge and neighboring communities is not uniform, however, as some neighborhoods have grown in value faster than others. The fastest appreciating parts of Wheat Ridge have been those east of Wadsworth, along 38th Avenue and especially close to the Denver line. Central Wheat Ridge and the Applewood area have also performed well, demonstrably better, in fact, than most areas of Arvada and Lakewood.

Fig. 15
Change in Average Sales Prices by Census Tracts, Selected Jefferson County Cities (2006/08 - 2016/18)

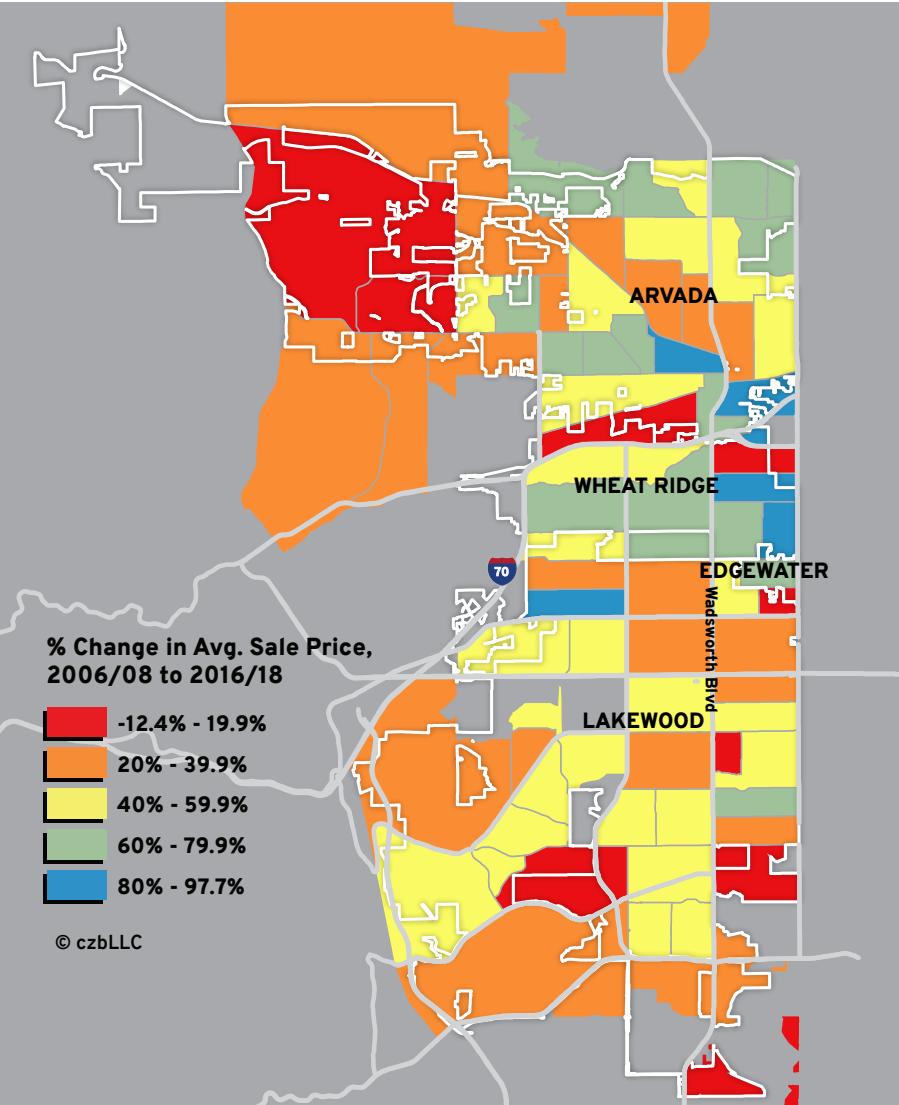


Fig. 16
10 Year Change in Average Single-Family Sale Price, Selected Communities

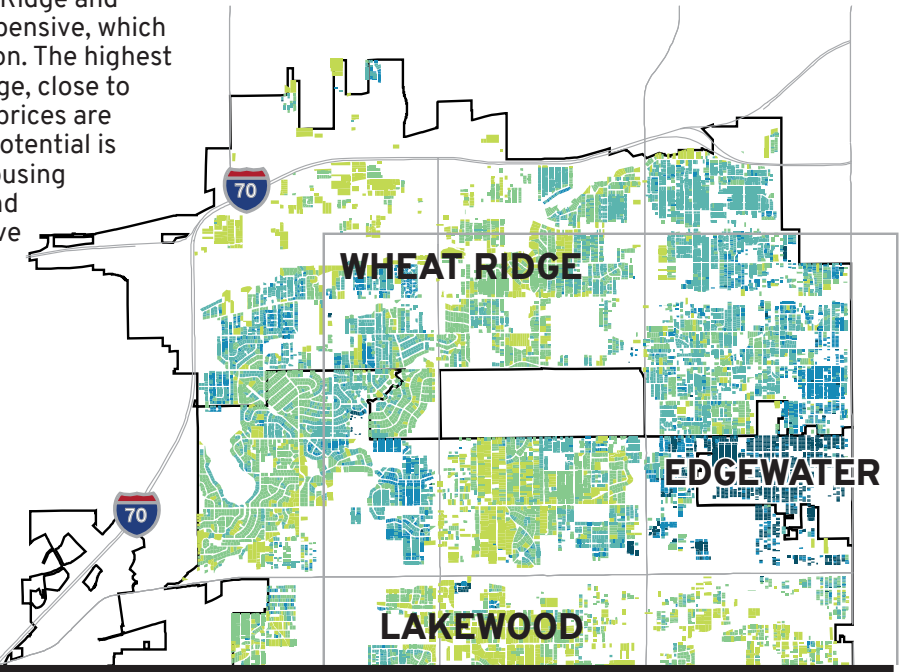
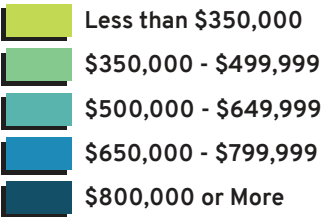
	Average Sale Price		% Change
	2006/08	2016/18	
Arvada	\$308,808	\$447,038	45%
Golden	\$447,564	\$541,682	21%
Lakewood	\$297,776	\$432,155	45%
Westminster	\$251,264	\$370,917	48%
Wheat Ridge	\$259,691	\$416,065	60%

Data Source: czb Analysis of Jefferson County Assessor Data

Land Values Drive Redevelopment Pressure

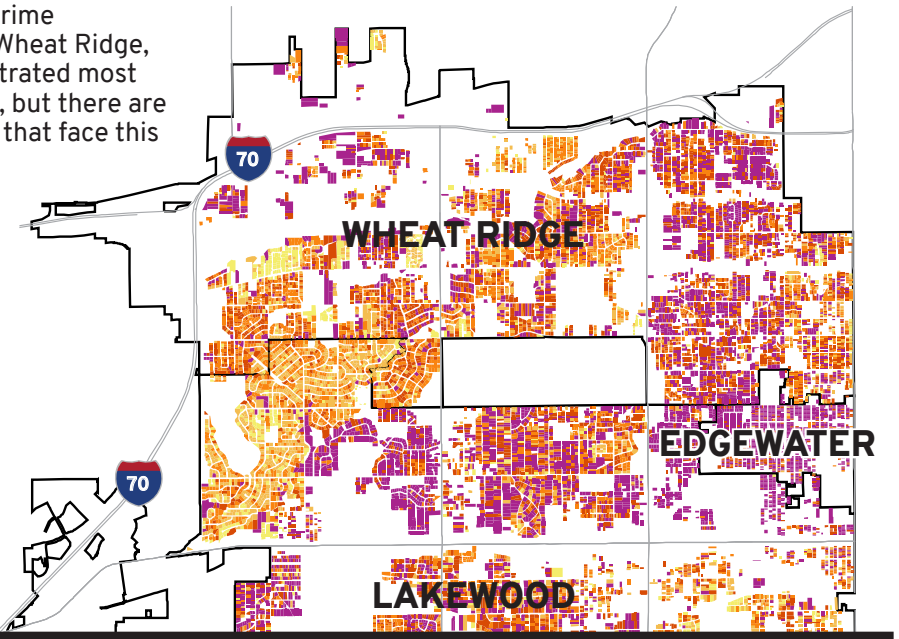
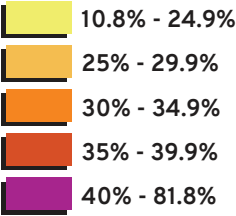
Residential land in parts of Wheat Ridge and surrounding areas has become expensive, which reflects the desirability of a location. The highest values are in southeast Wheat Ridge, close to Denver and Edgewater. High land prices are an indicator that redevelopment potential is strong. Physical changes to the housing stock are easy to find in Denver and Edgewater. There are only a relative few in Wheat Ridge to date.

Fig. 17
Land Value per Acre of Single-family Parcels



When demand for a location increases to a sufficient degree, and the residential structures in that location decrease in value *relative to the increasing value of the land*, market forces apply pressure to a property to maximize the land value. In plain English, aging and undesirable houses on valuable land become prime candidates for redevelopment. In Wheat Ridge, this possibility tends to be concentrated most heavily on the east side of the city, but there are properties scattered all over town that face this kind of pressure.

Fig. 18
Ratio of Land Value to Total Value of Single-family Parcels



Data Source: czb Analysis of Jefferson County Assessor Data

Residential Permit Values Increasing

A strengthening real estate market with rising prices combined with a housing stock mostly too old to meet modern buyer preferences is a recipe for residential reinvestment. Wheat Ridge has averaged about 90 major residential permits on existing structures (defined here as basement finishes, additions, and interior remodels) per year for the last decade. There have been lulls and spikes, but the trend is stable.

The value of the investments, however, is on an upward trajectory, meaning that property owners have recently been investing more when they take on big projects. This makes sense as owners tend to rationalize home improvements on two important financial criteria. First is the value of their home. Second is whether they believe their home will grow in value. Significant investments are a sign of confidence in future value.

Fig. 19
Number of Residential Permits (Basement Finish, Addition, Remodel) 2009-2018

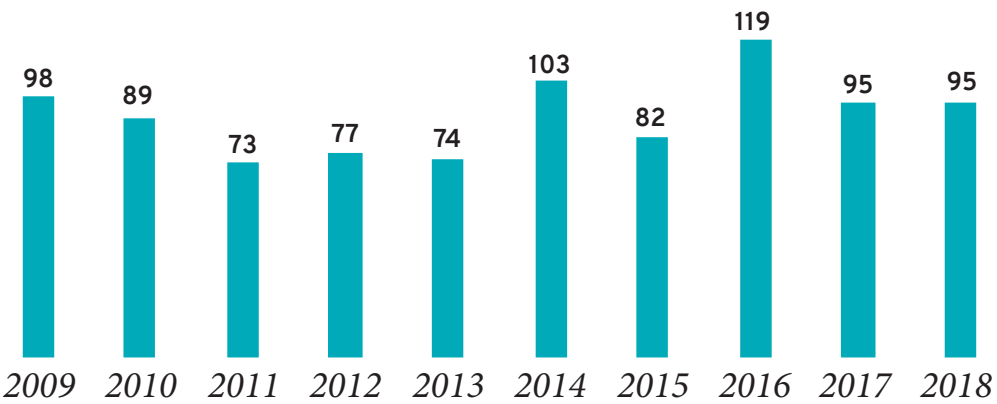
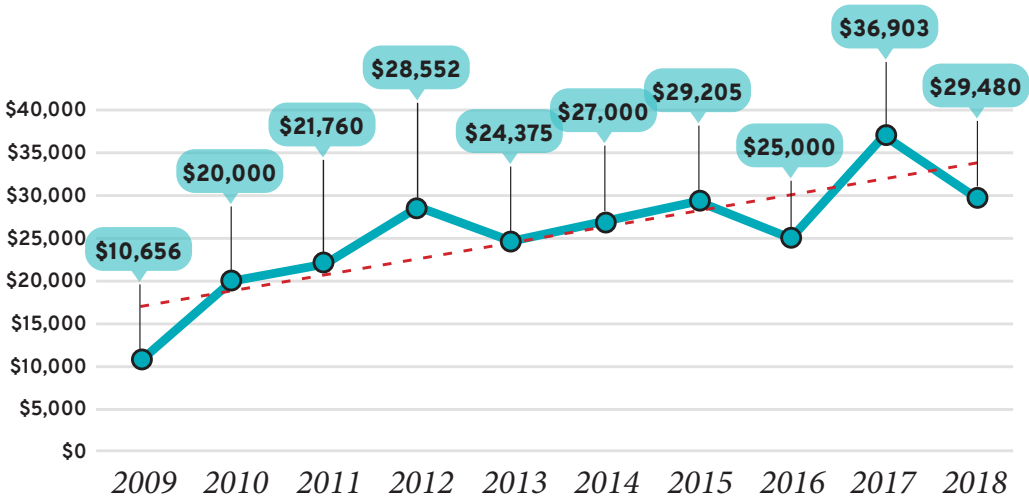


Fig. 20
Median Value of Residential Permits (Basement Finish, Addition, Remodel) 2009-2018



Data Source: City of Wheat Ridge

Change in the Housing Market Impacts Neighborhoods Across Wheat Ridge

The net result of a changing market is that Wheat Ridge is experiencing an influx of investment in its residential real estate. This is a positive trend for the city as houses and neighborhoods gradually turn over with new residents. These new residents will keep Wheat Ridge neighborhoods vibrant for yet another generation.

As Wheat Ridge’s desirability increases, and values rise, the economics of large-scale investments in the city’s aging houses make more and more sense. If these positive market trends continue, the community should expect to see increased investment in the city’s aging housing stock which will, in turn, result in more physical change in neighborhoods.

These development pressures, a fact of life in a strengthening housing market, are resulting in changes to residential neighborhoods that have been largely unchanged for decades. This change, often unexpected and usually outside the control of neighborhood residents, can make people uncomfortable. Wheat Ridge is not reflexively against change just for its own sake; in fact many in Wheat Ridge are not against change at all. But when your own block or street experiences something radically new, it can be jarring.

There are two potential implications explored later in the report:

- 1** Neighborhood change creates both issues of discomfort and opportunities for vibrancy. **Building resident capacity to manage neighborhood change** therefore is imperative. This is discussed later in Part 4, Priorities for Neighborhood Improvement.
- 2** Despite potential anxiety around changing single-family properties, Wheat Ridge buildings need a new lease on life. Investment in aging houses and commercial structures is non-negotiable. To continue the trend of investment, the **City should be thinking carefully about creating the best environment possible for those seeking to rehab older structures.** This is discussed later in Part 4, Priorities for Neighborhood Improvement.



3

Wheat Ridge
Neighborhoods

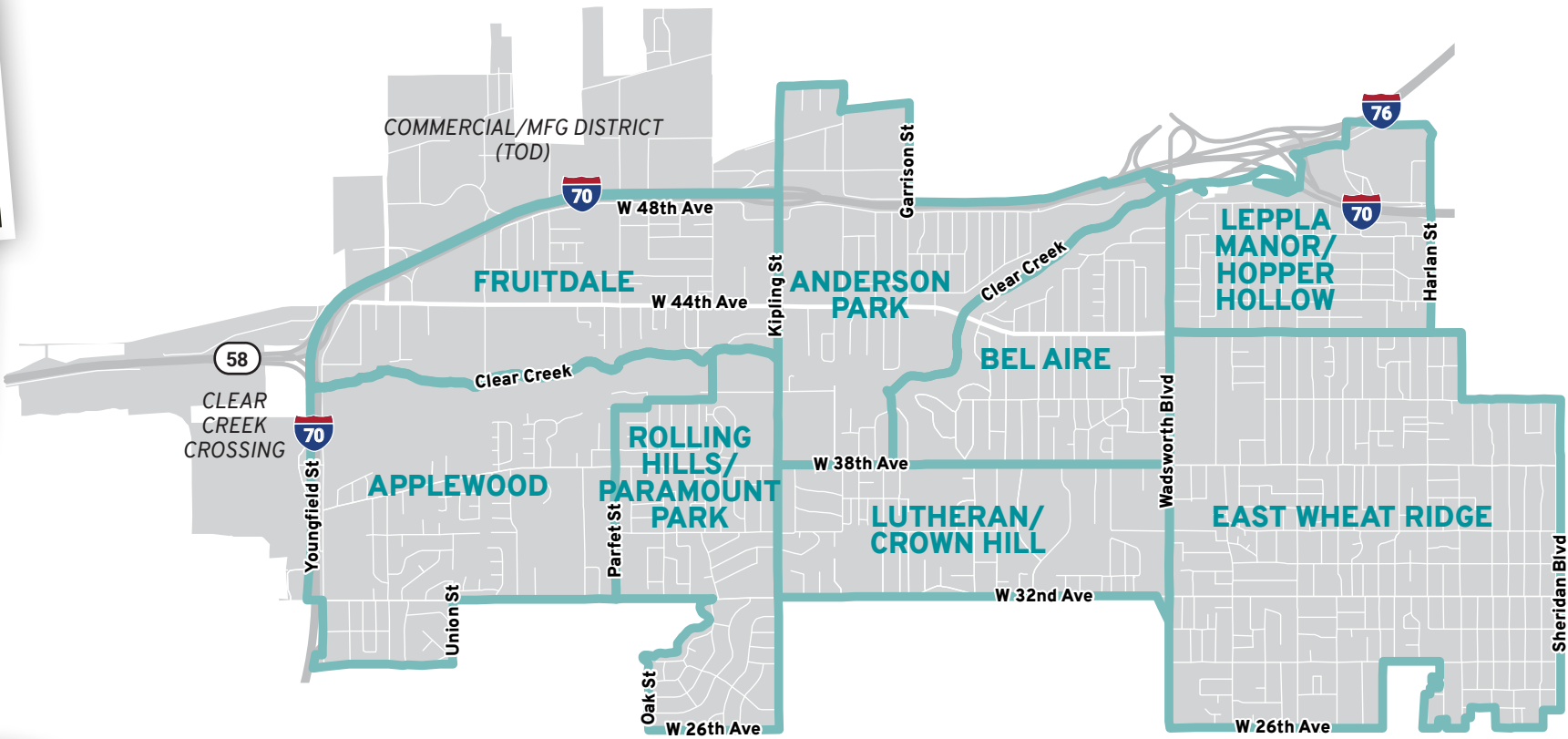
Wheat Ridge
Neighborhoods

Like most suburban jurisdictions, Wheat Ridge developed on a piecemeal basis with the residential subdivision as the most frequent unit of development. Suburban development of this kind does not lend itself to easily defined neighborhoods. To understand how Wheat Ridge views its neighborhoods, the steering committee asked attendees at the December 2018 open house to map their neighborhoods. The results clearly indicated a lack of community consensus about neighborhood boundaries.

That being the case, the consulting team attempted to distill 85 ideas of neighborhood boundaries into one preliminary Wheat Ridge neighborhood map, which can be seen at right. These were the boundaries used for the neighborhood based analysis that follows and could be a starting point for neighborhood based engagement work in the future.

MAPPING
NEIGHBORHOODS

85 residents
mapped their
neighborhood at
the December Open
House



Data is Critical for Understanding Neighborhood Change

While it is important to assess citywide market conditions, managing neighborhood change means knowing what’s going on at the neighborhood level. There is no shortage of data to examine in Wheat Ridge neighborhoods, so picking a handful of the most important indicators can be a difficult task. The dashboard below, and the neighborhood profiles that follow, are based on a few select indicators that paint a picture of the similarities and differences between neighborhoods today. **These indicators are drawn only from single-family house data**, as that is the property type that dominates land use in all neighborhoods and allows for consistent analysis across neighborhoods. They are chosen because they speak to the intersection of market forces, land values, investment activity, and property conditions that are shaping Wheat Ridge neighborhoods today and for the future.

The turnover rate (calculated here as the number of sales divided by the total number of houses) indicates the briskness of sales activity. Applewood and Rolling Hills/Paramount Park are the clear leaders, while Bel Aire and Anderson Park have seen the lowest levels of sales activity in recent years.

The relationship between the value of a structure and its land is a key driver of reinvestment potential. An inexpensive structure on expensive land is a candidate for redevelopment. This bears watching in East Wheat Ridge for example.

The concentration of code violations (calculated here as the number of violations divided by number of single-family houses) is important for understanding where neighborhood conditions may be deteriorating. For now, Fruitdale and East Wheat Ridge are leading the pack.

The concentration of major permits (calculated here as number of permits divided by number of single-family houses) is important for understanding where reinvestment activity is occurring or not. Rolling Hills/Paramount Park is getting the most investment and Anderson Park and Fruitdale the least.

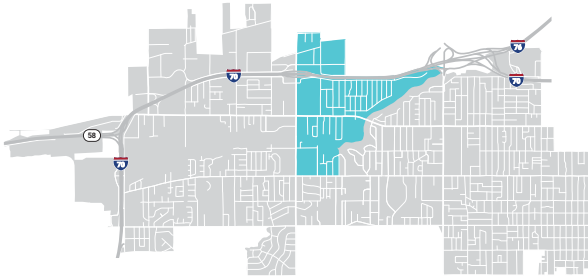
In addition to the number of permits, it helps to know how much value might be added through home investment. Though Fruitdale has the fewest number of permits per house, it has the largest average permit, meaning a smaller number of more expensive projects. Another outlier is Lutheran/Crown Hill where value per permit is roughly 40% above the norm for other neighborhoods.

HOW NEIGHBORHOODS COMPARE ACROSS KEY INDICATORS

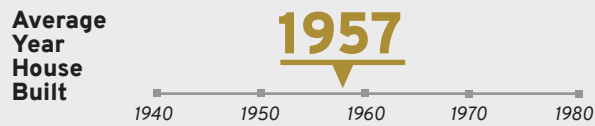
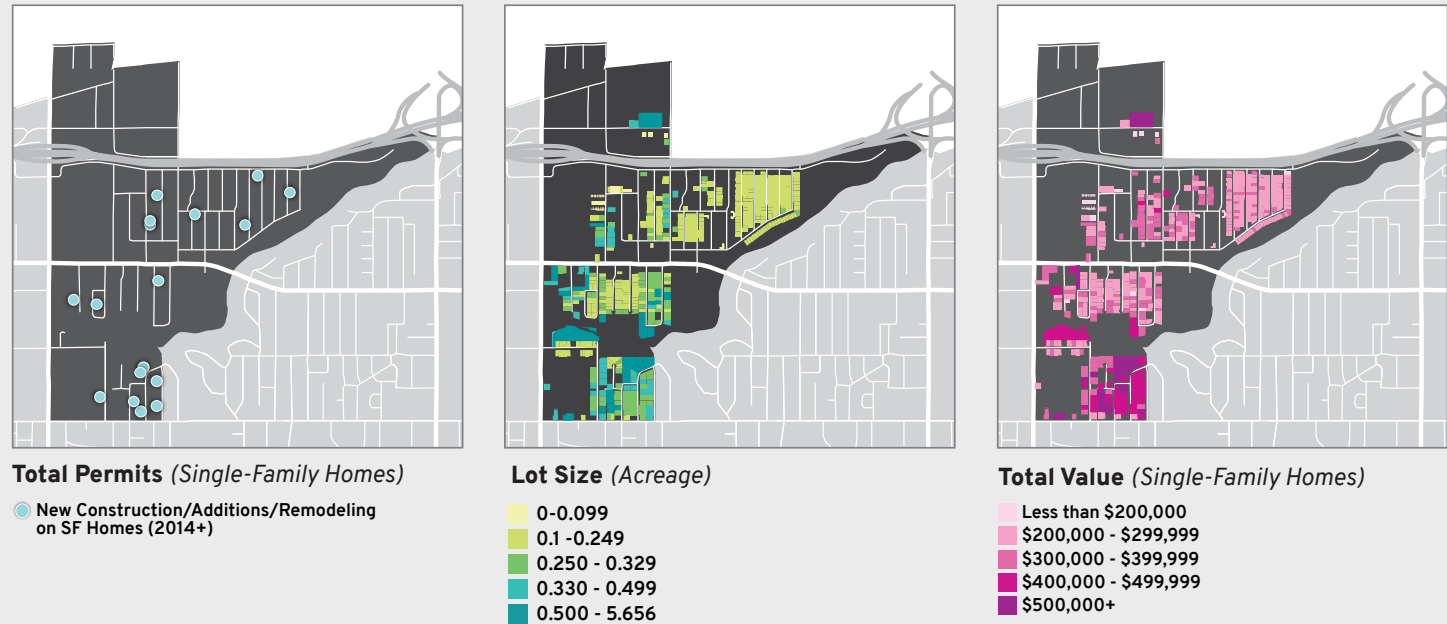
	Turnover Rate (2010-2018)	(2018) Improved Value per Sq. Ft. Land Value per Sq. Ft.	Code Enforcement Violations per House (2009-2018)	Major Permits per House (2009-2018)	(2009-2018) Average Value per Permit Permit Value per House
Anderson Park	4.9%	<div><div></div></div> \$129 \$28	1.05	Anderson Park <div><div></div></div> .08	<div><div></div></div> \$35,322 \$2,926
Applewood	9.0%	<div><div></div></div> \$165 \$15	0.48	Applewood <div><div></div></div> .11	<div><div></div></div> \$35,123 \$3,806
Bel Aire	4.4%	<div><div></div></div> \$156 \$28	0.73	Bel Aire <div><div></div></div> .11	<div><div></div></div> \$38,484 \$4,402
East Wheat Ridge	6.6%	<div><div></div></div> \$153 \$35	1.14	East Wheat Ridge <div><div></div></div> .12	<div><div></div></div> \$33,822 \$3,980
Fruitdale	5.7%	<div><div></div></div> \$92 \$17	1.11	Fruitdale <div><div></div></div> .07	<div><div></div></div> \$61,472 \$4,360
Lutheran/ Crown Hill	7.6%	<div><div></div></div> \$154 \$30	0.59	Lutheran/ Crown Hill <div><div></div></div> .11	<div><div></div></div> \$45,026 \$4,788
Leppla Manor/ Hopper Hollow	6.7%	<div><div></div></div> \$145 \$32	1.06	Leppla Manor/ Hopper Hollow <div><div></div></div> .11	<div><div></div></div> \$33,322 \$3,628
Rolling Hills/ Paramount Park	8.4%	<div><div></div></div> \$162 \$34	0.52	Rolling Hills/ Paramount Park <div><div></div></div> .14	<div><div></div></div> \$32,223 \$4,399

Neighborhoods

Anderson Park Neighborhood



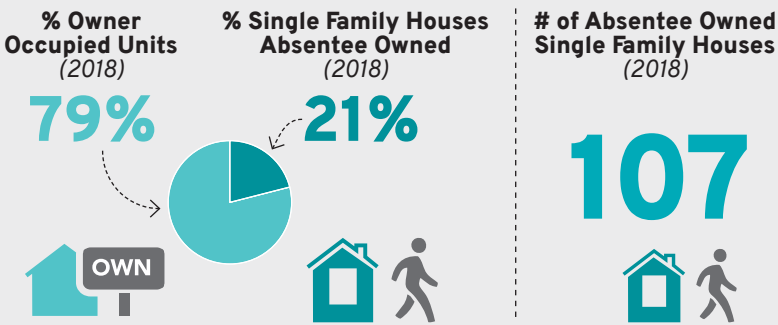
507 Single Family Homes



Turnover Rate (2010-2018) 4.9%

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$129

Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$28

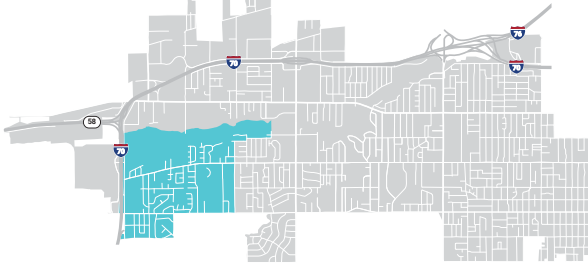


Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) 1.05

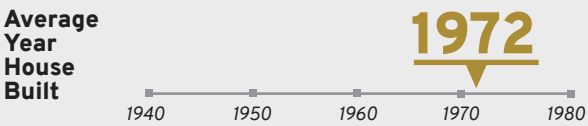
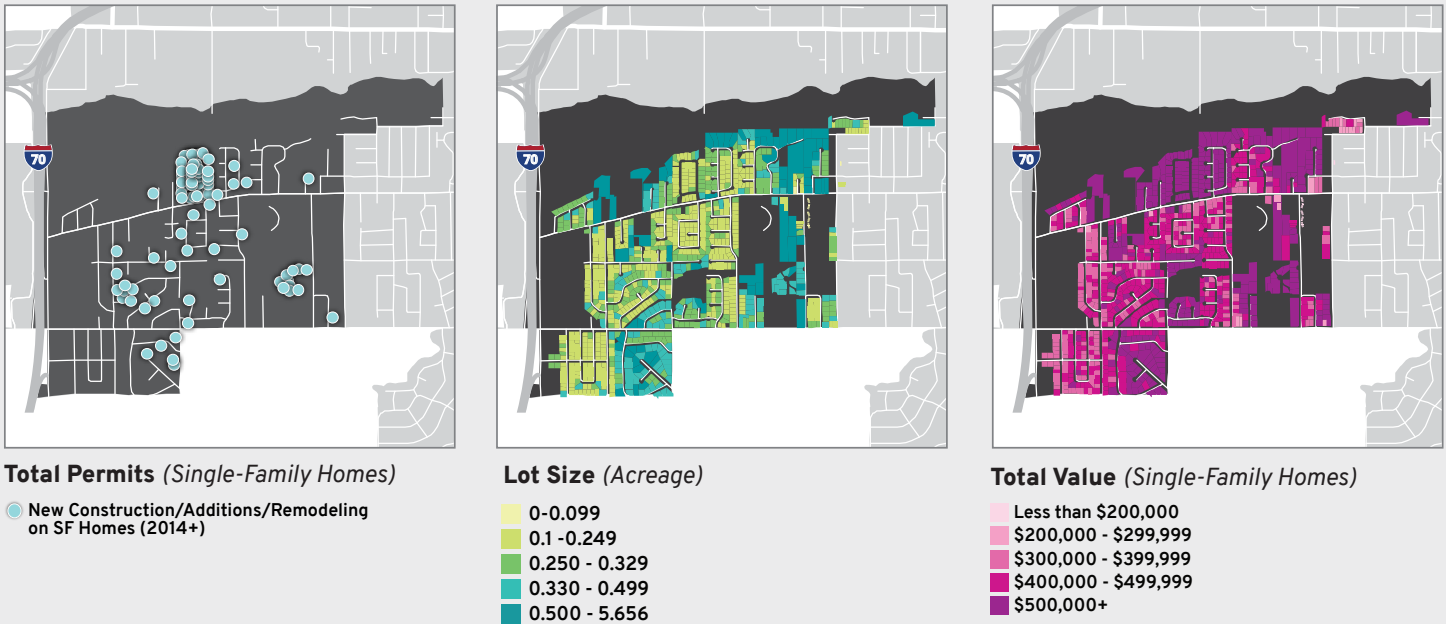
Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) .08
Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$35,322
Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$2,926

Neighborhoods

Applewood Neighborhood



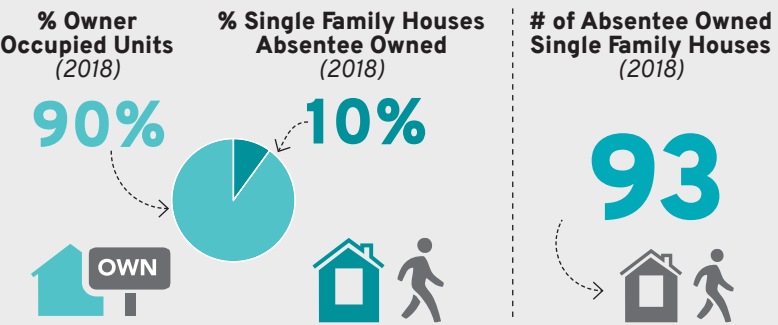
969 Single Family Homes



Turnover Rate (2010-2018) 9.0%

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$165

Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$15



Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) 0.48

Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) .11
Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$35,123
Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$3,806

Neighborhoods

Bel Aire Neighborhood



883 Single Family Homes



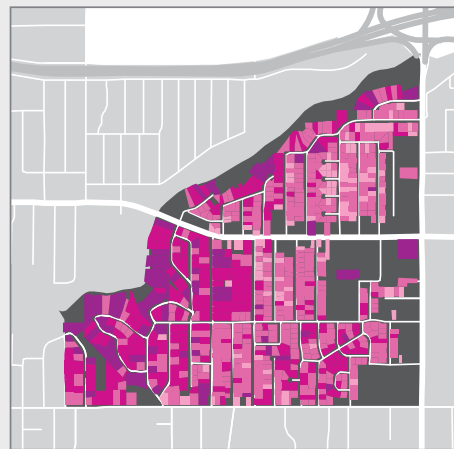
Total Permits (Single-Family Homes)

● New Construction/Additions/Remodeling on SF Homes (2014+)



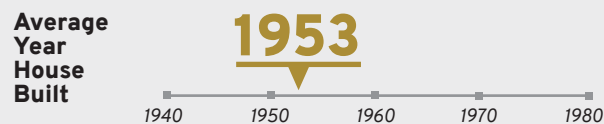
Lot Size (Acreage)

0-0.099
0.1-0.249
0.250-0.329
0.330-0.499
0.500-5.656



Total Value (Single-Family Homes)

Less than \$200,000
\$200,000 - \$299,999
\$300,000 - \$399,999
\$400,000 - \$499,999
\$500,000+



Turnover Rate (2010-2018)

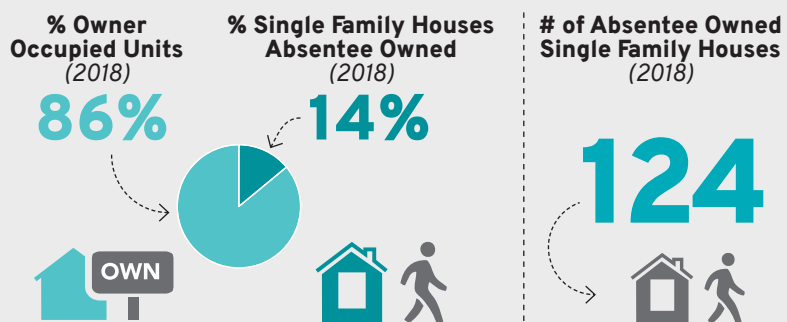
4.4%

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018)

\$156

Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018)

\$28



Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018)

0.73

Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018): **.11**

Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018): **\$38,484**

Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018): **\$4,402**

Neighborhoods

East Wheat Ridge Neighborhood

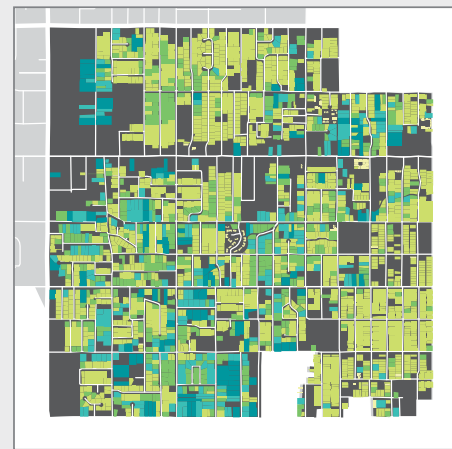


2,881 Single Family Homes



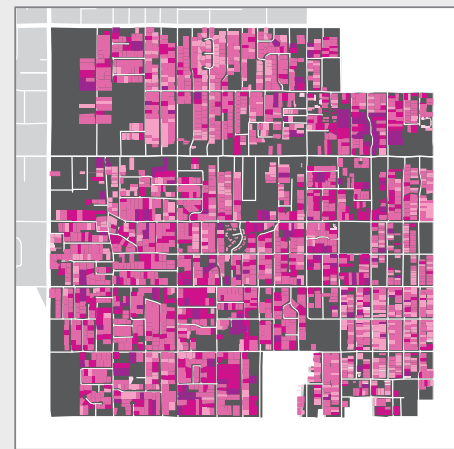
Total Permits (Single-Family Homes)

● New Construction/Additions/Remodeling on SF Homes (2014+)



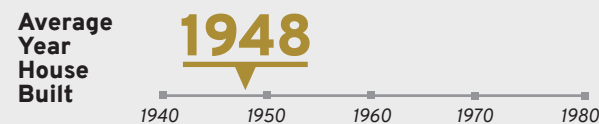
Lot Size (Acreage)

0-0.099
0.1-0.249
0.250-0.329
0.330-0.499
0.500-5.656



Total Value (Single-Family Homes)

Less than \$200,000
\$200,000 - \$299,999
\$300,000 - \$399,999
\$400,000 - \$499,999
\$500,000+



Turnover Rate (2010-2018)

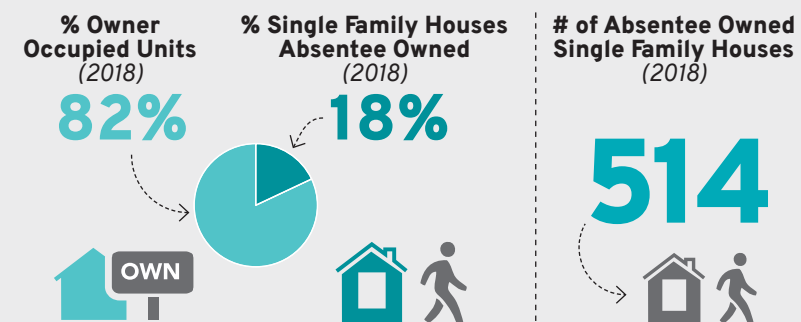
6.6%

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018)

\$153

Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018)

\$35



Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018)

1.14

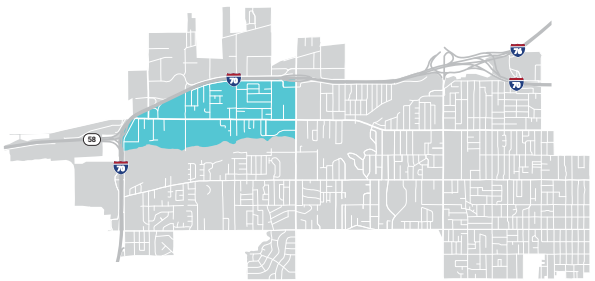
Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018): **.12**

Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018): **\$33,822**

Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018): **\$3,980**

Neighborhoods

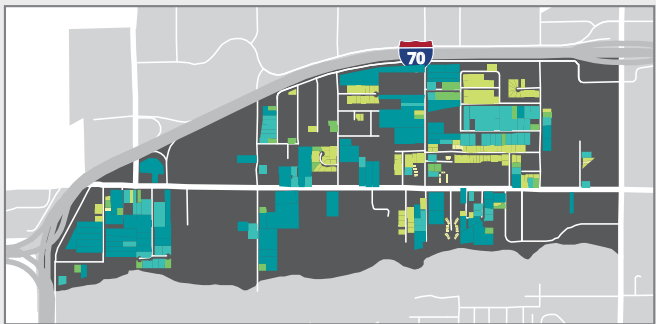
Fruitdale Neighborhood



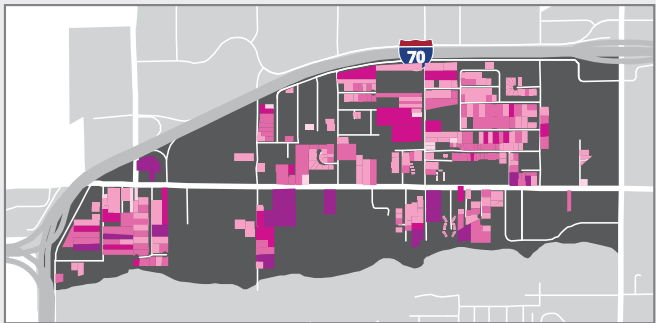
282 Single Family Homes



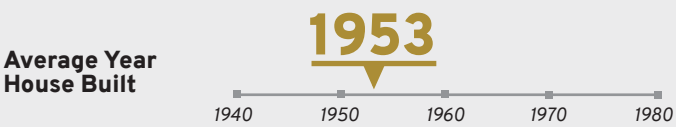
Total Permits (Single-Family Homes)



Lot Size (Acreage)

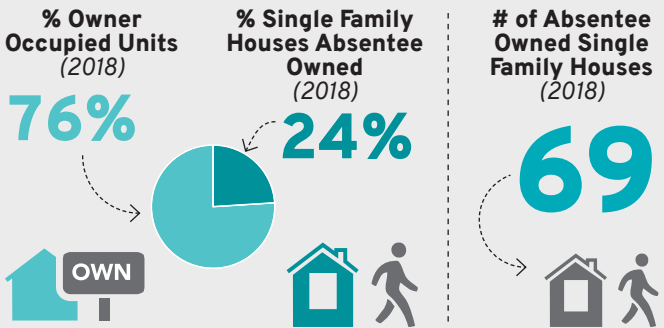


Total Value (Single-Family Homes)



Turnover Rate (2010-2018) 5.7%

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$92
Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$17

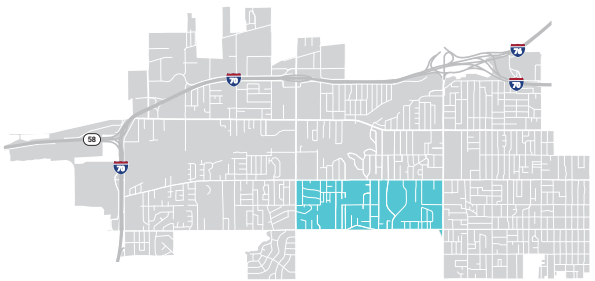


Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) 1.11

Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) .07
Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$61,472
Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$4,360

Neighborhoods

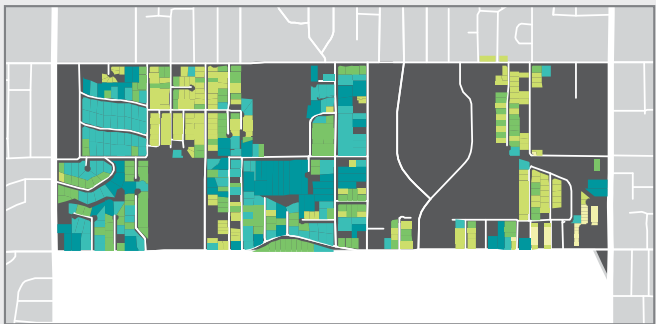
Lutheran/Crown Hill Neighborhood



536 Single Family Homes



Total Permits (Single-Family Homes)



Lot Size (Acreage)

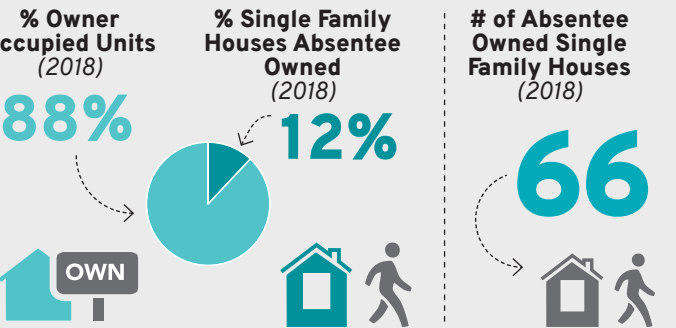


Total Value (Single-Family Homes)



Turnover Rate (2010-2018) 7.6%

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$154
Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) \$30

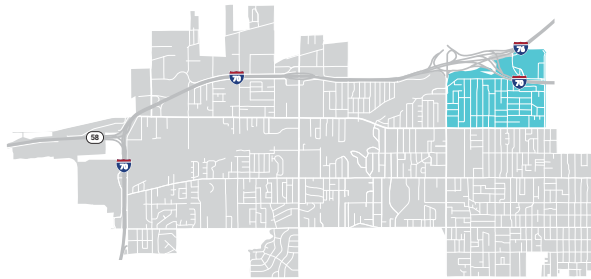


Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) 0.59

Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) .11
Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$45,026
Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) \$4,788

Neighborhoods

Leppla Manor/Hopper Hollow Neighborhood

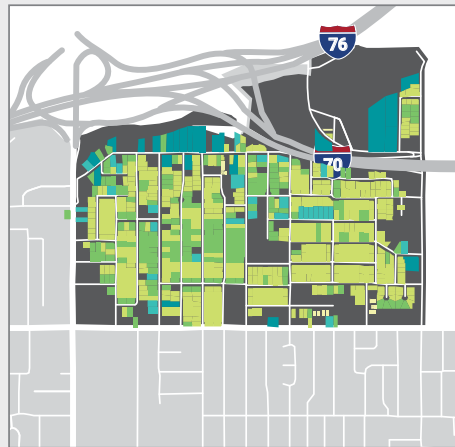


744 Single Family Homes



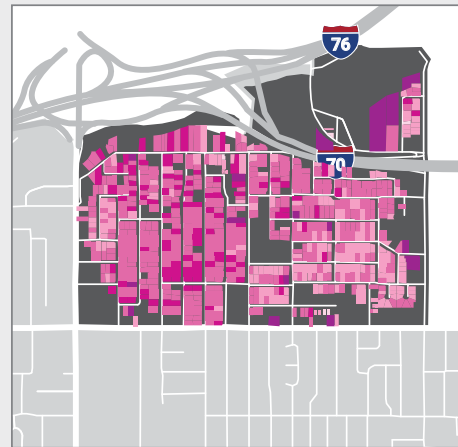
Total Permits (Single-Family Homes)

● New Construction/Additions/Remodeling on SF Homes (2014+)



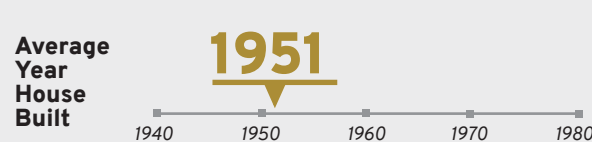
Lot Size (Acreage)

0-0.099
0.1-0.249
0.250-0.329
0.330-0.499
0.500-5.656



Total Value (Single-Family Homes)

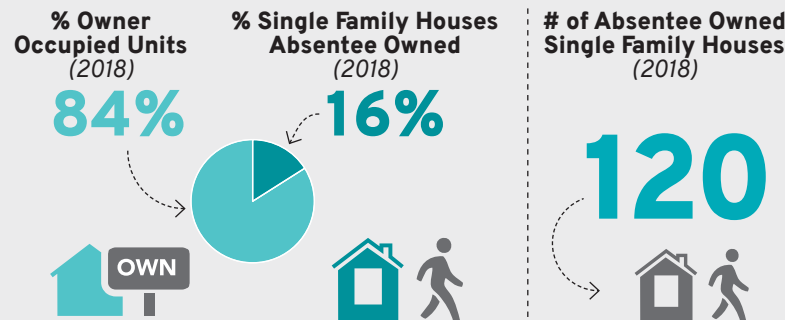
Less than \$200,000
\$200,000 - \$299,999
\$300,000 - \$399,999
\$400,000 - \$499,999
\$500,000+



Turnover Rate (2010-2018) **6.7%**

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) **\$145**

Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) **\$32**

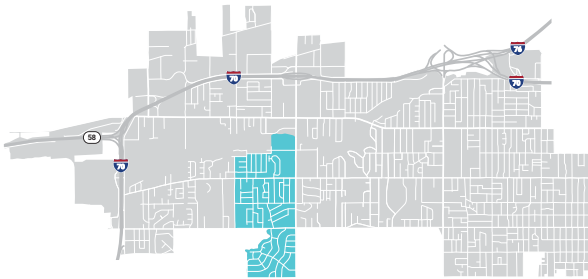


Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **1.06**

Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **.11**
Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **\$33,322**
Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **\$3,628**

Neighborhoods

Rolling Hills/Paramount Park Neighborhood



857 Single Family Homes



Total Permits (Single-Family Homes)

● New Construction/Additions/Remodeling on SF Homes (2014+)



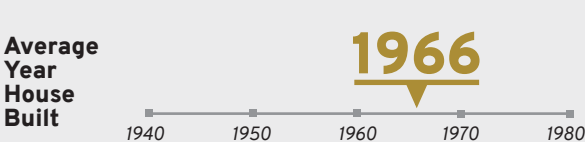
Lot Size (Acreage)

0-0.099
0.1-0.249
0.250-0.329
0.330-0.499
0.500-5.656



Total Value (Single-Family Homes)

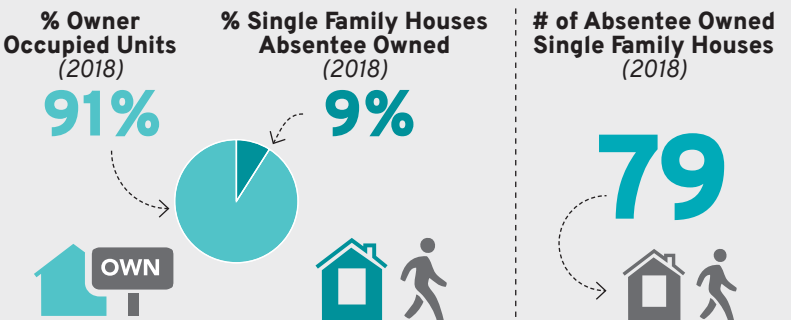
Less than \$200,000
\$200,000 - \$299,999
\$300,000 - \$399,999
\$400,000 - \$499,999
\$500,000+



Turnover Rate (2010-2018) **8.4%**

Single Family Improved Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) **\$162**

Single Family Land Value per Sq. Ft. (2018) **\$34**



Code Enforcement Violations per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **0.52**

Major Permits per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **.14**
Average Value per Permit (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **\$32,223**
Permit Value per House (Single-Family, 2009-2018) **\$4,399**

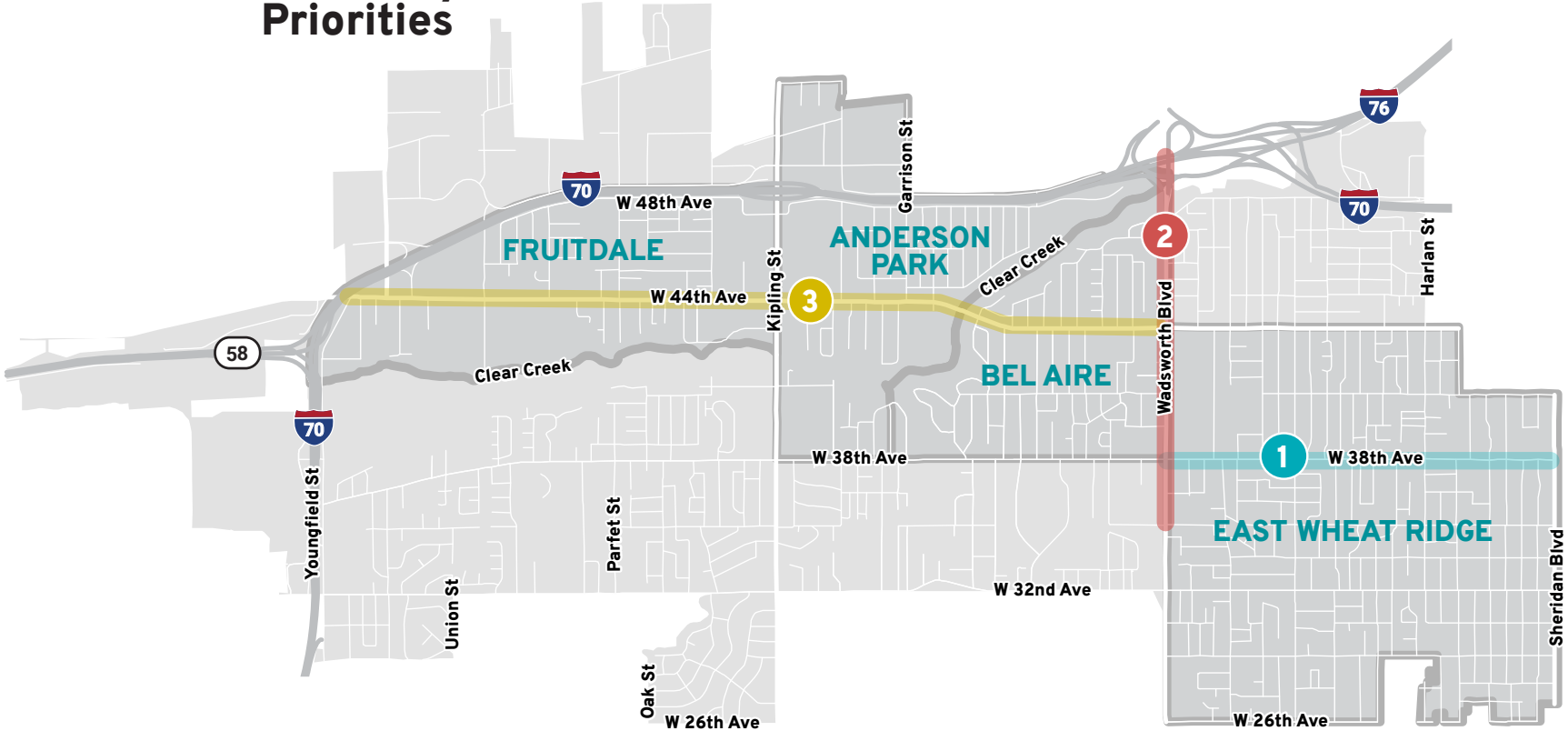
4 Priorities for Neighborhood Improvement

The priorities that follow in this section represent the most important and achievable initiatives that should be pursued in the next decade.

The main strategic challenge of revitalization planning is converting a set of identified issues into a workable implementation plan. The City has already completed or begun a number of revitalization projects, many of which followed from the 2005 NRS. This ongoing work currently requires attention and resources, even before the NRS process identifies potential new initiatives. A useful NRS is not a laundry list of desired projects, all of which may undoubtedly be worthy. A useful NRS will instead prioritize and recommend a workplan that reflects political reality, financial and time constraints, and community bandwidth to endure public projects. The priorities that follow in this section represent the most important and achievable initiatives that should be pursued in the next decade. The next page offers a summary of priorities, with additional detail found in the following pages.



Summary of Priorities



Neighborhood Listening Now and Neighborhood Planning Later

The City should undertake a “listening tour” to better understand what issues and opportunities are most important to residents at the neighborhood level. The following **neighborhoods should be included in the initial round of engagement** given their proximity to the City’s primary corridors:

- East Wheat Ridge
- Anderson Park
- Bel Aire
- Fruitdale

Connecting the Community by Reinvesting in Primary Corridors

Prioritize completion of existing projects and fresh planning efforts on:

- 1

38th Avenue
(from Sheridan Boulevard to Wadsworth Boulevard)
- 2

Wadsworth Boulevard
(from 35th Avenue to I-70)
- 3

44th Avenue
(from Wadsworth Boulevard to Youngfield Street)

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- Table discussion of ADUs for at least two years. There is not enough public support to justify spending resources on the issue at this time.

Facilitating Investment Through Customer Service:

- Continue improvements to permitting and review processes to enhance the experience for business owners and homeowners undertaking rehabilitation projects.

Listening is the First Step in Planning for Wheat Ridge Neighborhoods

In the past, Wheat Ridge’s residential neighborhoods were deprived of the investment needed to appeal to a new generation of residents. Today, that particular challenge is on its way to being solved. The challenge of today and tomorrow is to engage residents and build their capacity to effectively manage inevitable neighborhood change. This can be done first via resident engagement and later with neighborhood plans.

City planning is often about envisioning big changes. But planning is also an important tool in managing change.

The City has an established tradition of citywide planning (e.g. the original NRS and the Envision Wheat Ridge comprehensive plan) and subarea planning along major corridors (e.g. 38th Avenue and Wadsworth Boulevard) but it does not have an established tradition of subarea planning in largely residential neighborhoods. This makes sense insofar as planning is often viewed as a precursor to desired change and there has not been a stated public desire for change in residential neighborhoods. However, change is now coming to residential neighborhoods in Wheat Ridge, whether it was desired or not.


The purpose of planning efforts in any community, including Wheat Ridge, should not be reduced to a binary choice between creating change and stopping it. A sophisticated planning approach instead should be aimed at managing change, which may sometimes mean creating it, or shaping it, or stopping it. It is a flexible, living, breathing system that can adapt to a changing community and market. Wheat Ridge could benefit from developing such a system that can work in a residential neighborhood setting.

What the NRS Survey Says About Neighborhoods


59% said small town life where people know their neighbors is **very or extremely important.**




76% said there is value in **neighborhood initiatives uniquely tailored to individual neighborhoods.**



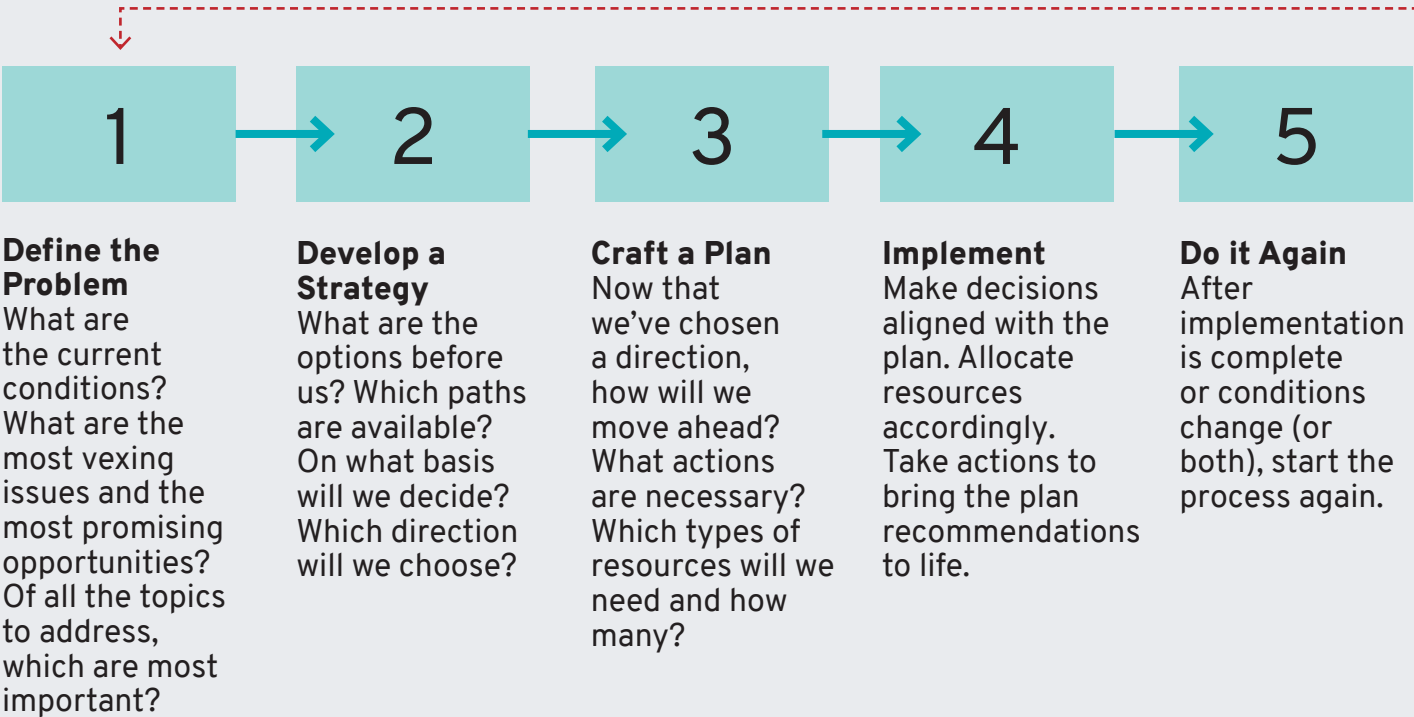
79% **agreed or strongly agreed** that there is a need to **engage or reengage neighborhoods on planning and development issues** that directly affect them.



62% said they would **participate in a new neighborhood organization** if their neighborhood did not already have one.



Good planning work should generally follow a well-worn path.
Each of these steps requires professional expertise but, when done right, each step also includes meaningful conversations with the community.



How to Move Forward

Recommendation

Wheat Ridge should undertake a neighborhood “listening tour” across the entire city in order to “Define the Problem.” In other words, the City needs to better understand what issues and opportunities are most important to residents at the neighborhood level. Over time, this may reveal a need for ongoing neighborhood engagement, neighborhood plans, or other neighborhood-based public investments. At a minimum, a “listening tour” will reconnect city government with residents and provide an opportunity to take the community’s pulse at a granular level.

Wheat Ridge today is a strengthening market which is funneling new demand into its neighborhoods. More and more, it is making financial sense to dramatically alter existing residential properties and this is causing discomfort among some long-time residents. In addition, Wheat Ridge neighborhoods all have their own basic issues and opportunities requiring municipal attention, such as those related to sidewalk connections, traffic, problem properties, parks and trails, and other topics. Today, the response to neighborhood issues is mostly reactive, which puts city government behind the curve and does not instill resident confidence in the idea the the City is on top of the things that matter to residents close to their homes.

In the years immediately following the adoption of the NRS, the City should use the listening tour to reconnect with residents at a neighborhood level and allow them to “Define the Problem.” There should be no preconceived notions about what city government might learn from residents throughout this process, nor what next steps might be necessary based on what is learned.

“Listening Tour”



Define the Problem


Good Planning and Engagement Requires Knowledge of Process

When it comes to big picture planning, communities need to get the big things right, plan for what is known, and create a framework for responding to the unforeseen. When it comes to specific property investment decisions, communities need to provide predictability in their laws governing development. To do all this, communities undertake planning activities and pass laws that shape development. **Residents must understand these processes if they are to meaningfully engage in discussions about development issues that matter to them in their neighborhoods.**

General


Specific

The Comprehensive Plan




At the highest level, cities plan generally using a tool called a comprehensive plan. This is the city’s primary and overarching plan for the direction the community wants to go, in view of present conditions and trends and best guesses about the future. In a comprehensive plan a city establishes priorities, budgets for those priorities, determines what generally goes where, what land uses are to be allowed where, and how it all should fit together. In this document, a general future for each part of a city is described. Comprehensive plans are legally non-binding; they are followed and implemented if the elected officials believe in their content.

Subarea Plans



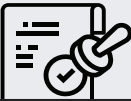
A subarea area plan further interprets the comprehensive plan and gets more specific about what should happen in a smaller area. A comprehensive plan might articulate that a certain part of the city needs to have a park and some housing and some retail space and some educational institutions. The subarea plan would more specifically describe where in the small area the park should be, and what kind of park with what kinds of amenities. The comprehensive plan might articulate that this is a residential area, overall. But the subarea plan would be more detailed in specifying how much of that the housing should be multifamily and how much might be single family. The subarea plan might go as far as describing the goal that this area have buildings that are modest in massing and height and still allow for the community to see the mountains from most sidewalks.

The Development Code



It is in the development code (including zoning) that specific height limits and densities and floor to area ratios and setbacks would be described. Development codes are legally binding documents. It is the tool cities use to implement the broad vision articulated in the city’s comprehensive plan and further spelled out in a small area plan. The code is the “fine print” of planning. Permissions in the zoning code are considered entitlements, and, as such, mean that an owner is entitled to assume they and the value they confer exist and cannot be taken away without compensation or because of a superseding public interest. Most development code is prescriptive and nearly black and white. In some cases, however, codes may combine a certain level of flexibility with a higher level of review. For example, special uses may not automatically be allowed but they can be approved by City Council if the application meets certain criteria.

Permits and Land Use Approvals



Where development becomes real is in the permitting and approval process. At this point, the parameters should be clear. While there are always many details to be worked out for any project, there should be little debate about what is allowed or not. Projects which meet the development code are usually approved “by right,” meaning they require little to no review by a discretionary body, such as the Planning Commission. These applications are usually approved by professional staff who are authorized to make such decisions within the code. If any part of the project is subject to a flexible part of the code, the Planning Commission will consider approval within an established process and set of guidelines for decision making.

- Example: At a high level, Neighborhood X should

 - be mostly residential in nature
 - have a park
 - be connected to the trail system

Example: Within Neighborhood X

 - these are the blocks that should remain single-family residential
 - these are the blocks that could have higher density residential such as townhomes or three-story stacked flat apartments
 - this is the type of architecture and design that we desire for higher density residential


Example: Within the higher density residential zoning district of Neighborhood X

 - these are the height limits
 - these are the floor to area ratio limits
 - these are the open space requirements
 - these are the parking requirements
 - these are the architectural requirements

For a specific development proposal

 - does it meet requirements under the development code?
 - if anything about the project is subject to discretionary review by the Planning Commission, is the project within the established parameters or guidelines for approval?

Community Engagement



Public discussions are broad, focusing on big issues and priorities. Participation is for everyone citywide. A focus on community values is critical. Engagement is about determining high altitude vision.

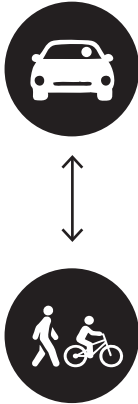
Public discussions are more narrow, focused on a smaller area, and the issues are more specific. The range of stakeholders is smaller, more heavily involving those who live or have a business interest in the area. Engagement is about moving from vision to reality.

Developing code is best left to professionals. However, assuming code writing is in support of a subarea plan, it is appropriate to consult with stakeholders who have been involved previously, to ensure that code is honoring the subarea plan as the stakeholders understand it.

By the time a project is seeking approval, it is a technical exercise. The need for public engagement should be minimal. Issues of vision and neighborhood character should have been handled previously. However, informal public meetings to share plans before official review are increasingly a best practice.

Connecting the Community by Reinvesting in Primary Corridors

The city’s commercial corridors present an image of Wheat Ridge to all who travel those routes—residents and visitors alike. The quality of the city’s main corridors – **most notably 44th Avenue, Wadsworth Boulevard, and Kipling Street** – has long been noted by residents as below the level of finish they would like to see. Problem issues include pavement condition, lack of attractive streetscape, unattractive buildings, lack of adequate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and sometimes traffic flow and safety issues.



38th Avenue
(between High Street and Reed Street)

What the survey tells us

Whether questioned about sidewalks or street trees and landscaping or the quality of buildings, the ranking for specific corridor features never exceeded a score of “average.”

NRS SURVEY (2019)

85% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that “Corridors and Retail Nodes” are an important focus area for the city.

NRS SURVEY (2019)

81% *strongly agreed* or *somewhat agreed* with the statement, “**promote efforts to revitalize business corridors such as 38th Avenue, 44th Avenue, Wadsworth Boulevard and Kipling Street.**”

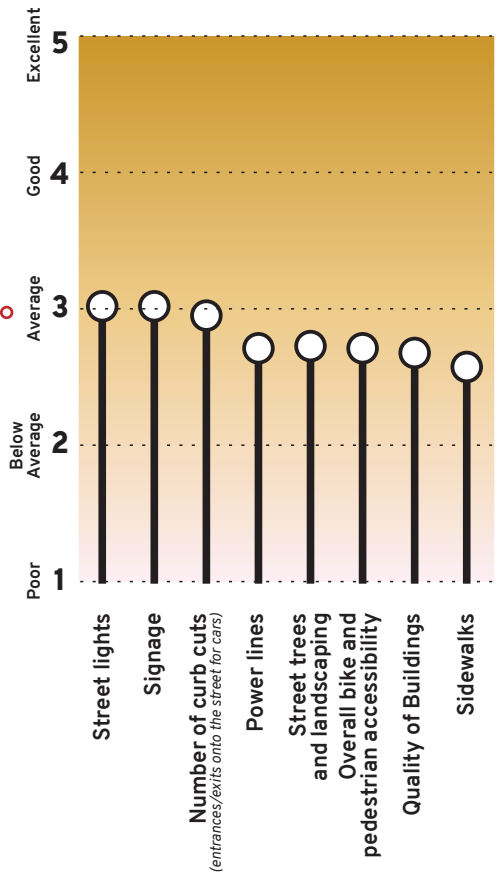
RESIDENT SURVEY (2018)

83% *strongly agreed* or *somewhat agreed* with the statement, “**promote efforts to revitalize Wheat Ridge’s business areas.**”



NRS SURVEY 2019

Please rate the quality of each of the following items that exist in the City’s primary corridors:



Current Picture of the Primary Corridors

The NRS process revealed early on that corridors were an issue requiring attention.

The corridors in most need of improvement are the primary corridors, defined for the purposes of the NRS as those main streets with the highest traffic counts and concentrations of commercial development. These include Youngfield, 44th Avenue, Kipling, Wadsworth, and 38th Avenue.

The city also has secondary corridors, which carry less traffic and are more residential in nature. While there are opportunities for potential public improvements and business development in secondary corridors, they did not rise to the same level of priority as primary corridors.

- PRIMARY CORRIDORS
- SECONDARY CORRIDORS



After Wadsworth, 44th Avenue was rated as being second worst among major corridors. The City has budgeted for a 44th Avenue corridor plan to be completed in 2019/2020.



Wadsworth Boulevard received some of the lowest marks for corridor quality, but there is a corridor plan in place and design and engineering work has already begun for a reconstruction project. In addition, funding commitments have been secured that will allow the project to move forward in 2020.



Youngfield Street was identified as a corridor where some improvements could help, but its ratings were not as low as others. The corridor has received recent public investment, ongoing private investment, and the impending Clear Creek Crossing development will change conditions on the west end of the city.

While Kipling Street is noted as a corridor in need of improvement, especially around the I-70 interchange, the project is heavily dependent on the State of Colorado, which has not made any near-term commitments to fund improvements.



38th Avenue received the highest marks for corridor quality, and the community process revealed generally positive feelings about the way the corridor is gradually developing. Substantial planning efforts have positioned the corridor for continued work in the near term, including the implementation of streetscape improvements.

How to Move Forward

Recommendation

The City already has a number of efforts underway which are not yet complete. Because the projects address current or past corridor improvement needs, and align with community input, these projects should be completed before all others.

38th Avenue:

The City has an adopted streetscape plan for 38th east of Wadsworth. Funding, final design, and construction should be completed. Funding may come from a future bond, following the successful completion of the current package of Investing 4 the Future “2E” projects.

Wadsworth Boulevard:

Complete the planned public improvements and reconstruction of the road, as expected, starting in 2020.

44th Avenue:

Complete a corridor plan for 44th Avenue from Wadsworth Boulevard to Youngfield Street. While all of 44th Avenue could use a plan for improvement, specific drivers for the section west of Wadsworth include the impact of transit oriented development at Ward Road, a need to revisit the Fruitdale subarea plan because of changed market conditions, and a need to connect to an improved Wadsworth intersection.

What about other corridors?

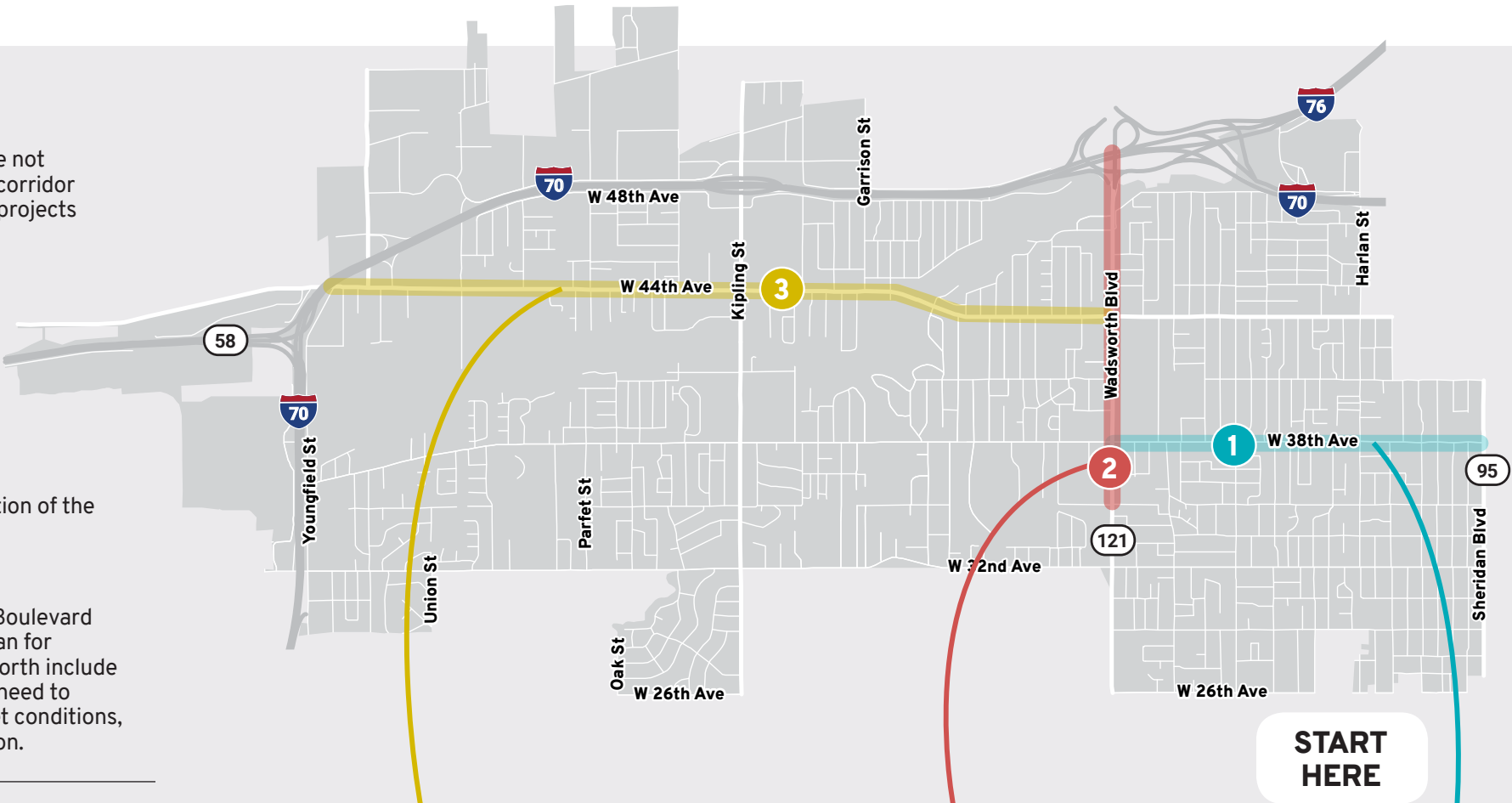
The corridors described above represent not only a coherent east-west strategy that addresses identified challenges, but it also leverages work that is already taking place. These projects alone, if fully completed from the planning stages to construction activities, will keep the City busy for a decade at current staffing levels.

In future years:

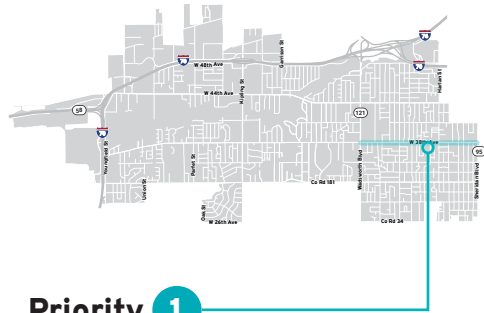
44th Avenue east of Wadsworth should be the next area selected for corridor planning.

Youngfield should be revisited following the development of Clear Creek Crossing.

Planning for secondary corridors should be undertaken as part of possible neighborhood plans, with business development opportunities pursued opportunistically as described later in this report.



Phase of Work			
Corridor	Planning	Design	Implementation
38th Ave	✓	✓	Ongoing
Wadsworth Blvd	✓	Ongoing	Future
44th Ave	Future	Future	Future



Priority 1
**Implement the
38th Avenue
Corridor Plan**



The evolution of 38th Avenue, or some portion of it, into a “Main Street” has been a priority since the original NRS in 2005. Since that time, planning and implementation work have continued robustly, from the 2009 Downtown Colorado Inc. Community Revitalization Report, to the 2011 corridor plan, to the 2012 restriping, and most recently a multi-year community engagement process focused on the design of streetscape enhancements.

In 2014, City Council adopted a streetscape design but did not approve a street width designation. In 2016, Council endorsed a public process—Cre8 Your 38—through which participants supported reconstruction of the street to provide continuous sidewalks and amenity zones. What has been lacking is the funding to implement the design. Successful completion and repayment of debt for the current package of “2E” bond projects will provide an opportunity for the community to reprioritize 38th Avenue funding should the community support another set of bond-funded capital projects in the future.

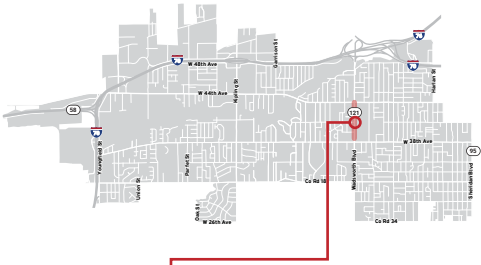


Source: Downtown Colorado Inc. (DCI) Community Revitalization Report (2009)

**How to
Move
Forward**

Recommendation:

- 38th Avenue continues to evolve as new businesses have opened their doors – Right Coast Pizza, Colorado Plus, Teller Street Art Gallery, Posey Girl, Clancy’s, Infinitus Pie, Bardo Coffee, etc. The City should continue to support this type of business development, develop The Green near the school, and pilot streetscape enhancements “behind the curb” on a case by case basis.
- Allow a few more years of living with the current striping configuration (three lanes) and continue to monitor the ongoing private development patterns along the corridor.
- Where appropriate, support additional residential development close to the corridor, like Perrin’s Row and Incarnation. Additional households will help support more retail development.
- The streetscape plan for 38th Avenue will only be possible with funding via a future bond. This will require an extensive community outreach effort to ensure citywide understanding of the goals related to the creation of a Main Street district.
- If the City wants to advance the implementation timing, it will need to reallocate existing resources or develop a new funding source. As existing bonds are paid off or as additional tax dollars are generated as a result of new development (e.g. Clear Creek Crossing), there may be opportunities to expedite the implementation of the 38th Avenue project.

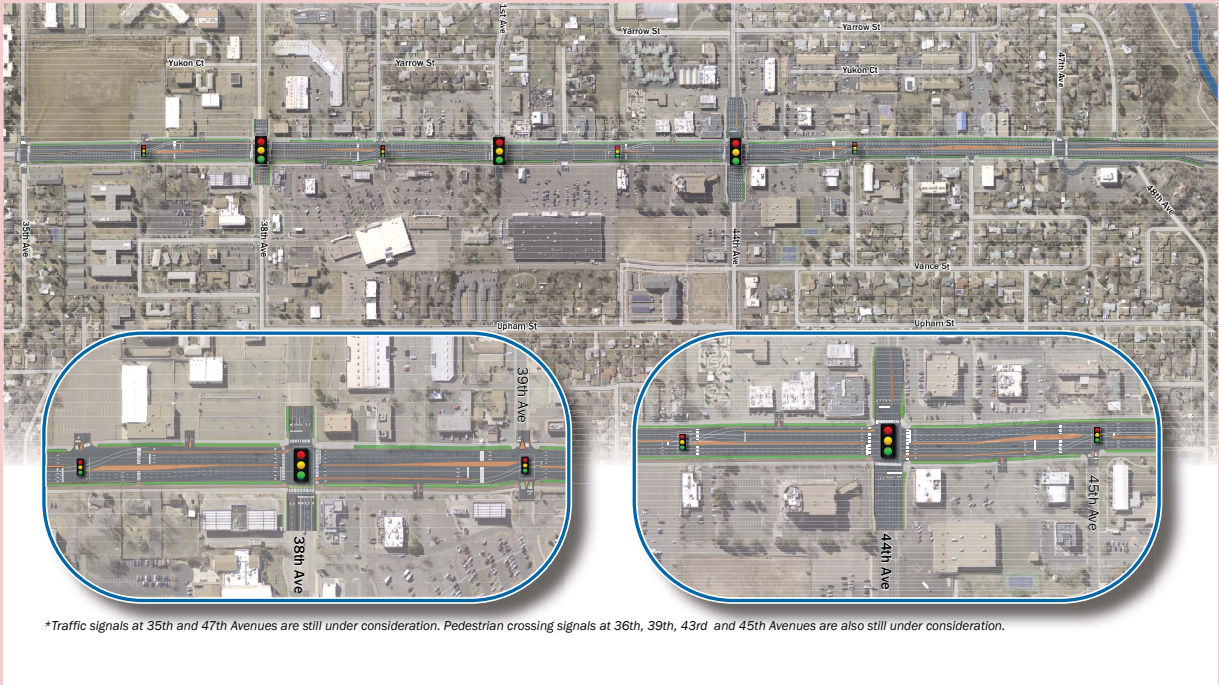


Priority **2**

Implement Improvements Along Wadsworth Boulevard Between 35th Avenue and I-70

The Wadsworth Boulevard Widening project is a \$45M project that is primarily funded through a Transportation Improvement Program grant and supplemented by \$7M in City “2E” funds as well as some funding from CDOT. As of the writing of this report, there is still a small funding gap. The City should prioritize closing the gap in order to construct the entire project. The full extent of the project is from 35th Avenue north to I-70. The project includes the following components:

- Capacity improvements allowing a 52% increase in traffic throughput
- Average rush hour travel speeds that improve from 10 mph to 20 mph
- Continuous sidewalks along both sides of Wadsworth Boulevard from 35th Avenue to Clear Creek Trail
- Improved transit facilities to complement RTD’s increased frequency of bus route 76
- Enhanced streetscape with 10-feet of landscaped tree lawn
- ADA access to Clear Creek Trail



*Traffic signals at 35th and 47th Avenues are still under consideration. Pedestrian crossing signals at 36th, 39th, 43rd and 45th Avenues are also still under consideration.

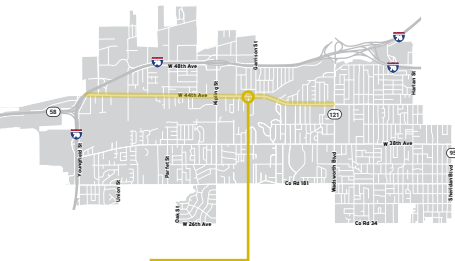
Wadsworth Blvd. Widening Plan

How to Move Forward

Recommendation:

- The City has gone to great lengths to facilitate private reinvestment in the Wadsworth corridor, with the Corners and Lucky’s Market as the most notable examples. These efforts should continue.
- Fortunately, the widening project offers a chance to address the challenging conditions in the public right of way, which the public has strongly noted. It is critical that the City complete public improvements such as landscape areas, street trees and bike/pedestrian enhancements. These streetscape amenities are necessary to ensure ease of connectivity to the proposed 38th Avenue improvements.
- The final design is underway and, similar to the 38th Avenue Corridor Plan, an easily understandable site plan should be included on the project’s webpage so that the community fully understands the scope and benefits of the project.



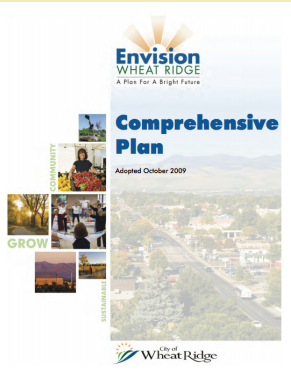


Priority **3**

Complete 44th Avenue Corridor Plan Between Wadsworth Boulevard and Youngfield Street

44th Avenue represents an opportunity for the City to improve a corridor that links the proposed Clear Creek Crossing development (located west of I-70 and south of 44th Avenue) to the remainder of the community. The Envision Wheat Ridge Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2009, classified 44th Avenue as a Neighborhood Commercial Corridor and the primary east/west corridor for the city. Most notably, Wheat Ridge residents are demanding improvements to the overall aesthetic characteristics of this corridor, which are impacted mostly by the condition of private property outside the public right of way.

In addition, the existing Fruitdale subarea plan is no longer adequate to guide development of the area. It was completed in 2007, before the comprehensive plan, and market conditions have shifted significantly in the ensuing dozen years.



Envision Wheat Ridge Comprehensive Plan 2009

Properties along the corridors will contain a broad mix of activities, including small-scale pedestrian-friendly mixed-use retail, commercial businesses, and residential. They will focus on promoting a compatible mix of uses to supply the daily services and needs of adjacent residential areas and could also function for senior housing. These corridors need streetscape, trees, and pedestrian and bicycle amenities to increase vitality, create a “sense of place”, and encourage walking and biking from adjacent neighborhoods.

44th Avenue today has a mix of conditions that create a unique context for future planning and redevelopment work. Although the sidewalks, curbs, pavement and lighting in the public right of way are in fairly good condition, there is, broadly speaking, a lack of private property investment and maintenance that undermines the overall visual appeal of the corridor.

The City has taken some important steps, such as updating the Streetscape Design Manual to require street trees behind the curb. The example at right, at Swiss Flower, shows why this benefits the corridor as redevelopment occurs. But a broader rethink of land use, transportation circulation, neighborhood connections, and redevelopment standards is appropriate for the corridor.

NRS SURVEY (2019)

Out of nine city corridors, **44th Avenue and Kipling Street** were ranked at the **bottom** for visual quality.



How to Move Forward

Recommendation:

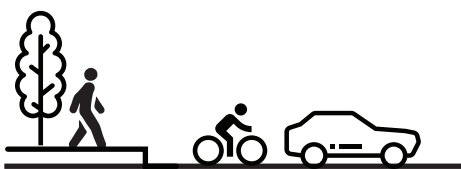
- Complete a corridor plan for 44th Avenue from Wadsworth Boulevard to Youngfield Street. While all of 44th Avenue could use a plan for improvement, specific drivers for the section west of Wadsworth include the need to address connections to important activity centers in the western end of the city (e.g. TOD area, Clear Creek Trail, Clear Creek Crossing, Applewood Village) and the need to revisit analysis and recommendations in the Fruitdale subarea plan due to changed market conditions.
- Attempting a corridor plan for all of 44th Avenue at once would be too ambitious, lengthening the process, straining the public’s attention, and diffusing the implementation efforts over too great an area in too short a time. A better approach is to complete the western section and begin plan implementation before turning undivided attention to the unique needs of the eastern section in future years.
- 44th Avenue east of Wadsworth should be the next area selected for corridor planning. If City capacity allows for another corridor plan before 2030—after completing all other recommendations in this NRS—then the project should be undertaken.

What A Plan for 44th Avenue Ought to Address

Corridor planning is complicated on many fronts – the geographic scope, the public/private domain conflicts, multi-modal requirements, streetscape amenity needs, etc. – and requires a holistic approach to ensure the community’s goals are satisfied. To that end, the following topics should be addressed in the 44th Avenue planning process:



Make people a meaningful part of the plan.
Create a steering committee made up of 10 – 20 business owners and residents that own/live along 44th Avenue corridor, including adjacent residential neighborhoods.



Within the public right of way, build upon the existing assets and address challenges.
There are already buffered continuous sidewalks from Youngfield Street to Wadsworth Boulevard and the public infrastructure is in fairly good condition. A particular challenge is the preponderance of curb cuts which complicate access between the road and private property and creates potential safety issues for motorized and non-motorized users alike.



Focus on land use and revisit the regulatory framework.
To the extent that an improved corridor is tied to private reinvestment in existing properties, it is critical to understand how the market views the corridor and what kind of uses may work best there. Following a market and land use analysis, review the existing zoning and design standards to ensure they are in alignment with community desires and market forces.

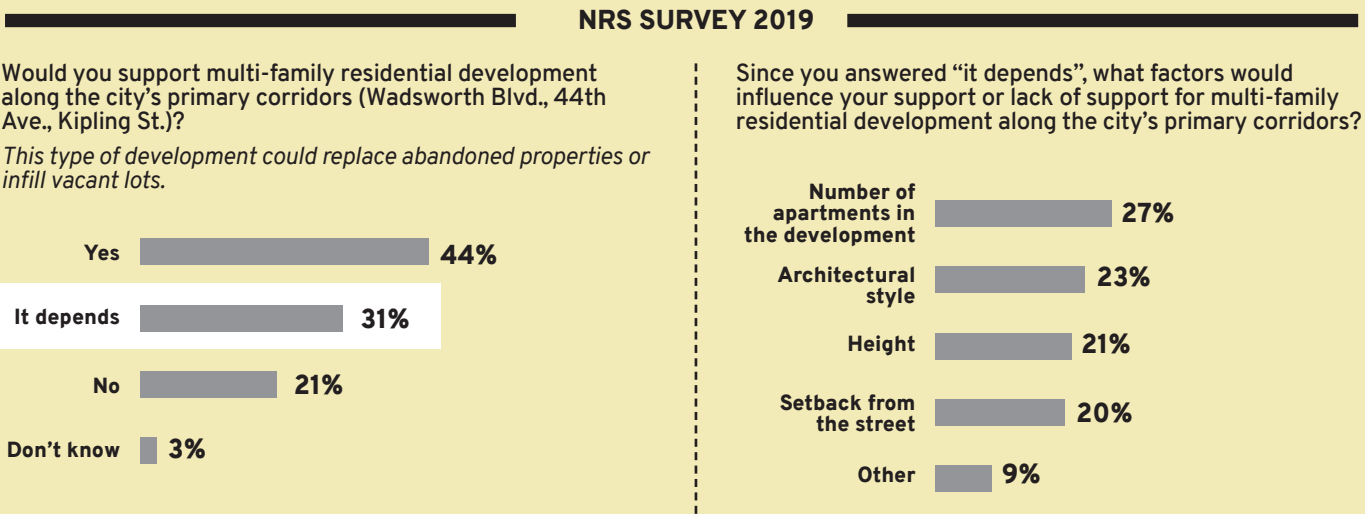


Be prepared to use the economic development toolkit.
Although market conditions are strengthening in Wheat Ridge, it is still possible that the community’s vision will be beyond the capacity of the private market to deliver. Economic development and property improvement financing incentives may therefore be necessary to bring some redevelopment to fruition. In that case, partnership between the private sector, the City, the URA, and the Business District comes into play in an important way.



Connections are key.
The western end of 44th Avenue is not just a corridor in its own right. It is the connective tissue for the eastern and western portions of the city, for the TOD, for Clear Creek Trail, the future Clear Creek Crossing, and for numerous adjacent residential neighborhoods. A new corridor plan for 44th should feature a strong focus on opportunities for connections between activity centers that can be strengthened within the corridor.

Exploring possible land use changes: It should not be assumed at this point, but respondents to the NRS survey indicated a potential openness to higher density residential uses along corridors.



Local Restaurants and Retail Can Strengthen Neighborhoods

What do we mean when we say “neighborhood retail” and where might it go?

Neighborhood retail differs from general commercial activity in a few very important ways. Retailers include everything from a grocery store to a shoe repair shop; an expensive restaurant to a corner cafe. If it's a brick-and-mortar location into which anyone can walk and procure a good or service, it's a retail business. With few restrictions on the types of uses allowed, limits on the size of the structure(s) and the enforcement of design guidelines are central to ensuring compatibility with the neighborhood character. These efforts, combined with pedestrian and bike connectivity, can begin to solidly embed these small retail establishments and restaurants/cafes into the existing neighborhood fabric.

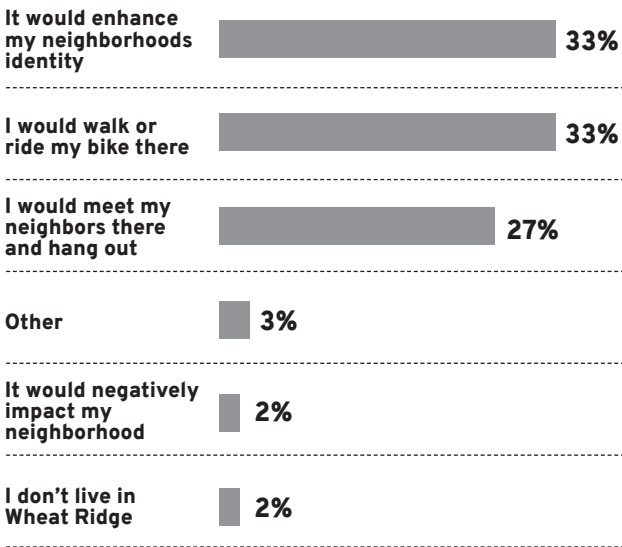
Typically, neighborhood retail that is located along a secondary corridor that is zoned residential, such as 29th Avenue or 32nd Avenue, might include just one or two businesses – a coffee shop, a restaurant, an antique store, a daycare center, etc. The City’s zoning ordinance is quite progressive and currently supports these types of neighborhood retail businesses in the Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MU-N), Restricted Commercial (RC), and Commercial – One (C-1) zoning districts. Neighborhood planning and engagement efforts, one neighborhood at a time, are the most effective way to begin to identify possible future locations appropriate for neighborhood retail.

Neighborhood retail centers, typically located along a primary corridor, such as 38th Avenue or 44th Avenue, may include more restaurants and/or retail establishments. While the scale is slightly larger, what Wheat Ridge residents expressed definitively was a desire for these centers to maintain architectural compatibility with the neighborhood character and be easily accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists.



NRS SURVEY (2019)

How would more local restaurants or small retail establishments within a 15 minute walk from where you live impact your quality of life?



NRS SURVEY (2019)

When asked about the possibility of more local restaurants or retail establishments within waking distance of home...

I would stay in town more often instead of driving to Golden, Arvada or Lakewood.

More local businesses and fewer chain restaurants and stores. Absolutely!

Please focus on this! It is integral to quality of life here and is a major gap.

It would increase property values and overall impressions of the City.

This can't happen soon enough!

It would be great and add to the community feel.

How to Move Forward

Recommendation:

- The planning and zoning tools exist - most primary and secondary corridors in Wheat Ridge have zoning allowances in place for neighborhood retail and restaurants.
- Be patient as the market grows; new shops will respond to rising residential demand in locations with favorable zoning. Where appropriate, support additional residential development nearby. Additional households will help support more retail development.
- The neighborhood “listening tour” will provide an opportunity for residents to identify any new areas that should be incentivized for neighborhood retail opportunities, including possible rezoning following a subarea planning effort.
- Once the input is received from the neighborhood residents, the City should maintain open dialogue with property owners and potential investors about possibilities, plan for possible opportunities, and be ready to assist with financial incentives.

Facilitating Investment Through Customer Service

Although Wheat Ridge was incorporated as a city in 1969, the city’s development patterns date to an earlier era. The Applewood section of Wheat Ridge is the only part of the city in which the average house was built after incorporation. But even in Applewood, the average age of a house is now 47 years old. There are many beautiful and well-built homes in the city, but even those houses require updates to their systems over time, as well as new kitchens and baths for modern buyers now shelling out many hundreds of thousands of dollars to live in Wheat Ridge. The story is the same for much of the city’s commercial properties.

In the period from roughly 1980-2000, Wheat Ridge largely missed out on a generation of new property investment. This was part of the reason the original NRS was commissioned in the first few years of the new century. The market, however, has since rediscovered Wheat Ridge and new investment is finding its way into the city’s aging residential and commercial structures. There are clear signs of this investment in businesses along 38th Avenue, new construction around the intersection of 38th and Wadsworth Boulevard, and the increasing value of major residential renovation permits. While this is positive news, two things remain true.

First, aging structures, especially those with deferred maintenance, pose technical and financial challenges even to the most sophisticated contractor or “do-it-yourselfer.” Upgrades within modern codes can be tricky, and properly retrofitting an older home can result in sticker shock.

Second, while the real estate market is strengthening, it is not yet a no brainer for many Wheat Ridge homeowners and business owners to make large investments in aging buildings. As confidence continues to grow in Wheat Ridge, this will shift for the better. But in the short-term, steps are still needed to convince a transitional market that Wheat Ridge is more than the risky bet it used to be.

The City has made incredible strides in the past decade, modernizing its approach to permitting, incrementally updating a woefully inadequate development code, creating commercial design standards, and generally increasing the level of professionalism and sophistication in its development-related processes. These efforts toward facilitating and rewarding investment in Wheat Ridge should not only be continued, but gradually improved upon in a process of continuous improvement.



What does the community think?

NRS SURVEY

“Is it important to you that City staff is fully resourced to proactively assist residents and business owners as they begin a rehabilitation or construction project?”

72% *agreed or strongly agreed.*

“New methods for public outreach and education are necessary as are updated permitting processes to improve the experience and outcomes for both the public and private sectors when it comes to reinvestment in the city.”

82% *were in support.*

How to Move Forward

Recommendation:
To continue the trend of investment, the City should create the best environment possible for those seeking to rehab older structures.

There are a number of barriers for homeowners and business owners taking on rehab projects in older buildings. Larger, more expensive projects are more likely to involve contractors who are sophisticated enough to navigate old buildings, new codes, and permitting and inspection processes. But for those owners who may be working on smaller projects or who do not hire a skilled contractor, the City should give special attention to the customer experience and therefore proactively reward the investment that Wheat Ridge buildings need.

Specifically, the City should:

- Seek feedback on a regular basis from homeowners, business owners, and contractors on their experience with rehab projects in Wheat Ridge. Do so in a structured manner, via focus groups and surveys, with an emphasis on constructive conversation instead of simplistic complaint sessions. Consider the use of outside professional assistance.
- Explore the possibility of a case management approach that would match an inspector and a project for the duration of the project. The purpose would be to maintain consistency of approach and expectations across multiple inspection visits.
- Explore the possibility of employing a rehab specialist who could act as a resource for applicants undertaking rehab projects. A rehab specialist would be able to provide not just expertise, but also additional time helping applicants to troubleshoot code issues in permitting and inspection processes.
- Consider the condition of Wheat Ridge building stock when updating building codes and adopting local amendments. Incorporate the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) to the greatest extent possible for remodeling and repurposing aging structures. The IEBC allows options for controlled departure from full compliance with the International Codes, while maintaining basic levels of fire prevention and structural and life safety features for a rehabilitated building.
- Above all, experiment with ways to achieve the outcomes related to customer experience and investment. These recommendations, unlike some others in the report, are more flexible and less prescriptive, because review, permitting, and inspection processes have many moving parts and are a good candidate for tweaks and fine tuning on a regular basis. This is where staff expertise becomes key.

Accessory Dwelling Units



An accessory dwelling unit (ADU), sometimes called a granny-flat, a mother-in-law apartment, or a secondary unit, is a smaller, separate living unit on a property that has a single-family home. It is complete with its own kitchen, bathroom facilities and separate entrance.

Wheat Ridge does not currently allow accessory dwelling units. The City first began exploration of the issue in 2015 and conducted public meetings in 2016 to gauge support for allowing ADUs. Though the public outreach seemed to indicate support for allowing ADUs, the City Council decided not to move forward at that time, questioning the community’s true desires and where ADUs might be appropriate.

The 2018 resident survey again asked about support for ADUs. The results were not exactly conclusive, with 27% strongly in support, 13% strongly opposed, and the remaining 60% somewhere in the middle.

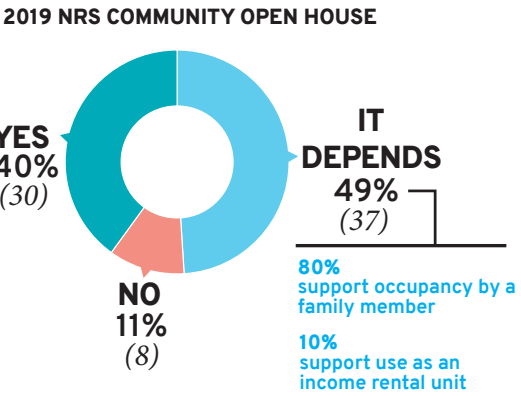
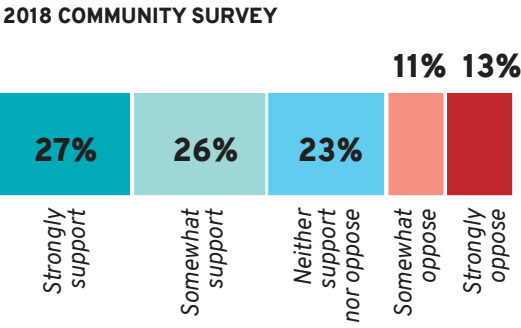
The NRS process did not reveal much energy around the issue of ADUs. It did not rise to the top of the list of important issues to address, nor did it come out often in casual conversation with participants in the various engagement activities. During the Blitz Week open houses, attendees were asked their thoughts about ADUs. The input they provided indicated 40% support, 11% opposition, and 49% in the category of “It Depends.”

The “It Depends” category was a mechanism devised to draw out more nuanced perspectives on the issue. Attendees provided clarity on three important points:

1. The physical changes to a property are not the critical issue. Instead the critical issue is one of use.
2. Occupancy of the ADU by a family member of the main house has strong support.
3. Using the ADU as a rental unit for a non-family member has virtually no support.

There is no realistic regulatory approach for the City to both allow ADUs and restrict their occupancy to a family member of the main structure’s occupant.

What does the community think about ADUs?



How to Move Forward

Recommendation:
Table the consideration of ADUs for a minimum of two years.

At this time, political acceptance of ADUs is premised on making a promise that the City cannot keep: that an ADU will only be occupied by a family member. The bases for ADU allowance in other cities – affordable housing and rental income to homeowners of expensive homes – are not winning arguments in Wheat Ridge. In the meantime, the resources dedicated to debating ADUs, which would become a niche housing product at best, would be better spent on more pressing matters.

- Specifically, the City should:
- Conduct a full round of neighborhood engagement, in the form of a “listening tour,” to understand what residents care about at a neighborhood level and how they feel about potentially divisive topics like ADUs.
 - Observe and track the progress and results of ADU ordinances and/or programs in other nearby jurisdictions like Denver and Lakewood.
 - See if a desire for ADUs is a durable public issue, or if it is simply a “flavor of the month.” If ADUs are truly important in 2019, they should also be important in 2021.

Open house participants were asked questions about the function (use) and form (type of structure) of ADUs. Many residents expressed support for ADUs if they were limited for use by a family member (elderly parent, disabled family member, boomerang kid, etc.) but not for a long-term rental by a non-family member.

The City has no realistic ability to regulate who lives in an ADU. Over the next couple of years as the neighborhood “listening tours” are underway, residents should focus any ADU discussions around the form or type of structure only (see images). Some neighborhoods may recommend certain types of ADUs and not others; other neighborhoods may reject ADUs altogether. But most importantly the discussions should be limited to what the City has the ability to regulate.



An ADU that is detached and located in the rear yard



An ADU that is built on top of a freestanding garage



An ADU that is an addition to the existing house





An ADU that is located in the retrofitted basement or attic area of a house (no visible change to the house/yard)

* The City has the authority to regulate short-term rentals (AirBnB, VRBO, etc.) and setting aside the ADU issue does not preclude the City from discussing short-term rentals.


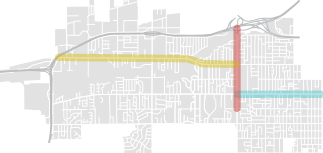
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Summary of Recommendations

Building Resident Capacity to Manage Neighborhood Change


What's the Issue?	Change or potential change in Wheat Ridge neighborhoods, resulting from a strengthening real estate market, is making some residents uncomfortable. At the same time, some other kinds of change are desired but difficult to bring to fruition. The City must begin to engage neighborhoods with the aim of building resident capacity to manage change at the neighborhood level.
What's the Recommendation?	<div><div></div><div><ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Undertake a citywide neighborhood listening tour to understand what is working in different Wheat Ridge neighborhoods, what is not, and what residents need from city government to address challenges and opportunities at the neighborhood level. The listening tour should take no less than one year and no more than two years.2. Use the neighborhood boundaries or an alternative system of boundaries to break the city into understandable and manageable smaller geographies so that residents feel that listening sessions are customized for their part of the city. Focus on the issues within discrete neighborhoods and avoid discussing citywide issues.3. In the event that one or more neighborhoods offers a rich enough mix of challenges and opportunities that a neighborhood plan would be helpful, the City should complete plans for those neighborhoods and commit to implementing them.4. Hire two (2) neighborhood engagement and/or planning professionals to fulfill the following roles:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the neighborhood listening tour.• Be experts in explaining city operations, development processes, and projects, especially as they relate to residential neighborhoods.• Be a resource to neighborhoods and city departments for communicating between the two.• Manage special projects, including neighborhood plans.</div></div>

Connecting the Community by Investing in Primary Corridors

What's the Issue?	Primary corridors in the city are an issue of high interest and importance. In most cases, residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the condition of infrastructure and streetscape features, both of which are within the public right of way. There is also a desire for improved property conditions and reinvestment, particularly when reinvestment could support new local shopping and dining options.
What's the Recommendation?	<div><div></div><div><ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Secure funding, likely through a future bond, and implement the adopted streetscape plan for 38th Avenue. This is most likely to become possible following the completion of the current package of "2E" projects. If the City wishes to advance the timeline for streetscape work, it will need to reallocate existing resources or find a new, as yet unidentified funding source.2. Finalize design work and reconstruct Wadsworth Boulevard in accordance with existing plans. Construction scheduled to begin in 2020.3. Complete a corridor plan for 44th Avenue from Wadsworth Boulevard to Youngfield Street.4. Take a proactive but patient approach to neighborhood scale retail at appropriately zoned locations along 26th, 29th, 32nd, and 44th Avenues. Market conditions nearly always lag behind resident desire for nearby, walkable retail and restaurant development. Maintain open dialogue with property owners and potential investors about possibilities, plan for possible opportunities, and be ready to assist with financial incentives.</div></div>




Facilitate Investment Through Customer Service

What's the Issue?	Renovation and rehab is the future of the city's housing market, but updating the structures can be difficult. The same is true of aging commercial structures. There are a number of barriers for homeowners and business owners taking on rehab projects in older buildings. Larger, more expensive projects are more likely to involve contractors who are sophisticated enough to navigate old buildings, new codes, and permitting and inspection processes. But for those owners who may be working on smaller projects or who do not hire a skilled contractor, the City should give special attention to the customer experience and therefore proactively reward the investment that Wheat Ridge buildings need.
<div>What's the Recommendation?</div> <div></div>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seek feedback on a regular basis from homeowners, business owners, and contractors on their experience with rehab projects in Wheat Ridge. Do so in a structured manner, via focus groups and surveys, with an emphasis on constructive conversation instead of simplistic complaint sessions. Consider the use of outside professional assistance.2. Explore the possibility of a case management approach that would match an inspector and a project for the duration of the project. The purpose would be to maintain consistency of approach and expectations across multiple inspection visits.3. Explore the possibility of employing a rehab specialist who could act as a resource for applicants undertaking rehab projects. A rehab specialist would be able to provide not just expertise, but also additional time helping applicants to troubleshoot code issues in permitting and inspection processes.4. Consider the condition of Wheat Ridge building stock when updating building codes and adopting local amendments. Incorporate the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) to the greatest extent possible for remodeling and repurposing aging structures. The IEBC allows options for controlled departure from full compliance with the International Codes, while maintaining basic levels of fire prevention and structural and life safety features for a rehabilitated building.5. Experiment with ways to achieve the outcomes related to customer experience and investment. The exploratory recommendations above may not prove to be the exact right answer to the issues in question. Review, permitting, and inspection processes have many moving parts and are a good candidate for tweaks and fine tuning on a regular basis, taking advantage of staff expertise and customer feedback.



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

What's the Issue?	A number of forces have come together to spark local interest in the allowance of accessory dwelling units, which are currently prohibited in Wheat Ridge. These forces include a desire to age in place, but in a smaller dwelling; an increasing lack of affordable housing in the Denver area; and financial incentive to maximize the use of expensive properties.
<div>What's the Recommendation?</div> <div></div>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do not allow ADUs at this time. There is not sufficient community support to do so. Specifically, there is little support for and potentially strong opposition to the use of ADUs as rental properties for tenants who are not family members of the primary unit's owner. This is an outcome that cannot be easily regulated and enforced and thus represents an insurmountable obstacle at this time.2. Continue to monitor ADU ordinances and programs in nearby cities such as Denver and Lakewood to gauge performance and costs and benefits in those cities.3. Table the topic of ADUs for a minimum of two (2) years. See if a desire for ADUs is a durable public issue, or if it is simply a "flavor of the month." If ADUs are truly important in 2019, they should also be important in 2021.

Wheat Ridge

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