

# Memorandum

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Patrick Goff, City Manager

**DATE:** June 1, 2022 (for June 6<sup>th</sup> study session)

**SUBJECT:** Strategic Plan Update

---

**ISSUE:**

City Council met on February 20, 2021, to hold a strategic planning retreat. Eight priorities were established to be implemented over a two-year period. A series of study sessions have been held where staff presented information, work plans, ideas and sought clarification on some of the items from the City Council. This memorandum provides a short description of the priority and status of the eight priorities.

**BACKGROUND:**

**1. New Efforts of Engagement in Government; Understanding City Processes**

- a) A reorganization of the communications division has occurred to prioritize citywide strategic communications. With the former public information officer's departure and the repurposing of an existing FTE to a full-time Police Department PIO, the citywide position has been retooled to focus on engagement, storytelling and driving the city's key messages. A recruitment is underway for the communications and engagement manager who will implement an integrated and effective citywide approach to meaningful communication, collaborating internally and externally to drive civic engagement through transparent, clear and proactive communication. The part-time social media specialist, approved in the 2022 budget, joined the City in January and is providing dedicated focus to social media platforms. Staff will continue to monitor and evaluate resources to determine if the need for additional staffing is necessary to meet council's goals once the new communications and engagement manager is on board.
  
- b) The first in the "demystifying Wheat Ridge government" video series, named "Wonders of Wheat Ridge" is in final production and will roll out in the coming weeks. The first video focuses on ways to stay informed and get involved. Additional topics in the coming months include the local legislative process, the rezoning process, how to start a business, how to request traffic calming measures, how to report a crime and more.
  
- c) A website refresh project is underway, focusing on the look and feel of the home page with an update to the main navigation based on usage data.

- d) A full-page graphic dedicated to promoting the many ways to contact, learn about and get engaged with the City of Wheat Ridge appeared in the March and May editions of Connections.
- e) City Council approved an ordinance expanding notification requirements for public hearings for land use applications: expanding the geographic scope for notice and including occupants, in addition to owners.
- f) The City has hired the new GIS technician, which was approved in the 2022 budget. The new team member will join the City in mid-June. An internal team is working on preliminary items related to the creation of the interactive construction and development map. Work on the map itself will begin in earnest once the new technician is on board.
- g) Still to come is an onboarding toolkit for councilors, board and commission and committee members so that involved members of the community are best armed to educate and inform neighbors about the ways to get involved in their local government. Staff are focused first on refining the boards and commissions recruitment and appointment process and will begin work on the toolkit later this year.

## **2. Implement Bulk Plane in all Residential Zone Districts**

Bulk Plane regulations are a common tool that cities can use to control the mass and bulk of single-family homes beyond just the typical setback and building height standards. City Council adopted residential bulk plane standards in 2016 and initially chose to apply them to single-unit homes in the Residential-One C and Residential-Three zone districts. At the May 3, 2021, study session, staff provided an overview of the topic and outlined a process that could adopt such standards more broadly in other residential zone districts throughout the City. It was City Council's consensus at that meeting to have an additional study session discussion at a later time with more detailed examples of what the implications would be of adopting these regulations more broadly across the City. A City Council study session was held on May 16, 2022, with City Council providing direction for staff to present an ordinance for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. The public hearing (2<sup>nd</sup> reading) is tentatively scheduled for August 8, 2022.

## **3. Re-examine, advance sidewalks on 38<sup>th</sup> Ave**

The desire for greater walkability along 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue has come up frequently as a topic over many years. 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Sheridan and Wadsworth has been identified as the City's "Main Street" in various policy documents and through various community outreach processes, including recently through the *Let's Talk East Wheat Ridge* engagement process. Better sidewalks and streetscape amenities would be one clear way to improve that "Main Street" character the community desires. Better and safer walking and biking facilities also

come up frequently when thinking about the west end of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between Kipling and Youngfield. Making such improvements to either section of this vital corridor would require relatively significant capital construction dollars and further design work.

City Council gave direction in December 2021 to move forward a conceptual design process for improvements to 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Kipling and Youngfield, focused on building a complete street and providing improved bike and pedestrian improvements. Staff is finalizing a consulting services scope of work for a conceptual design process which would include significant public involvement. Staff will present that scope of work and a design cost estimate to City Council at the June 6<sup>th</sup> study session before going out to a bid process.

Staff anticipates bringing back a discussion to City Council concerning 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the east side of town, between Wadsworth and Harlan, in first quarter of 2023..

#### **4. Review the Vision, Mission, and Funding of Localworks**

This priority is complete; however, with the resignation of Kate Cooke as Executive Director, staff has been having discussions with Localworks concerning their role in providing certain programming and services in the future. It has been mutually agreed that in order to serve the community in the most efficient and economical manner, a shift in responsibilities between the City and Localworks may be warranted. Staff will bring forward a proposal to City Council at a study session on July 18, 2022.

#### **5. Streamlining Permit Processes**

- a) In June, 2021, Megan Schmitz joined the City's finance team as the licensing technician. Megan has provided exceptional customer service to businesses with a particular focus on short-term rental, tobacco retailing and hotel customers for the past year, and was the 2021 ACTION Award winner for her exceptional work. The City is now entering the second year of the STR program with approximately 165 license holders. The first round of inspections of tobacco retailers resulted in nine business in violation of the ordinance, and staff are working collaboratively with the police department to educate businesses and enforce the ordinance for the health and safety of the community. Again, with members of the police department, Ms. Schmitz and her team are working to educate hotels about all aspects of the hotel ordinance while developing procedures for enforcement
- b) Council adopted changes to chapter 22 of the municipal code and approved an agreement joining the state's sales and use tax system in August 2021. The City officially joined the state's program, which makes it much easier for businesses who are active in multiple jurisdictions to remit sales taxes in Wheat Ridge.
- c) Work to improve business processes and analyze the City's enterprise resource planning

needs (ERP) is underway. Work with the project consultant, BerryDunn, began in earnest in January 2022 with intense "fact finding" work involving approximately 100 employees taking place in February 2022. A request for information of prospective vendors was completed in April and several meetings were held in April and May to finalize the requirements for the request for proposal. The project is on track to select an ERP system(s) by the end of the year, with implementation in 2023-2024. A major driver of this work is improved customer service through public-facing portals and improved business processes. Throughout the analysis so far, it has become apparent that the deficiencies with the current system result in siloed information because different functions such as licensing, building permits and planning are unable to see each other's information related to a case. Modernizing our systems is a big step toward streamlining the permitting processes.

Once the ERP systems are selected, staff will enter a change management phase with the help of the consultant. The change management associated with implementing the chosen systems will further refine the processes which can then be properly documented and developed into a comprehensive educational campaign.

- d) The economic development manager has been active in providing "concierge" services to businesses by helping them navigate City processes and increased collaboration internally has helped improve customer service. The bi-annual "business walk" is scheduled for June 14 where staff and volunteers will check in with approximately 125 businesses, providing educational materials about doing businesses in Wheat Ridge.

## **6. Commercial Corridor Code Review**

City Council recognizes the crucial role that commercial corridors play in building healthy and vibrant communities. They are not just places where residents shop and gather but places where people build wealth through small businesses, find jobs, and share, celebrate and preserve community culture. Staff will review with City Council City Codes to determine what additional tools and resources should be considered to help the city's commercial corridors improve, thrive, and grow. Due to current workload, this item will likely be scheduled for a future study session in the fourth quarter of 2022.

## **7. Policy on non-conforming accessory dwelling units**

Non-conforming accessory dwelling units (ADUs) exist throughout the City. The circumstances leading to the creation of such units over the years vary widely. Because of that, several years ago, City Planning Staff developed a detailed policy to assist in evaluating the legality and safety of such units when they come to our attention. Staff and City Council had a productive study session discussion on October 18, 2021. City Council gave staff direction to begin work on an ordinance allowing new ADUs within the City and to look into ways for existing non-conforming dwelling units to be legalized. Staff returned to City

Council on April 18, 2022, to propose a regulatory framework to address new ADUs and existing units. Council gave direction to staff to prepare a final ordinance for review and approval at public hearings before Planning Commission and City Council in mid-2022. The City Council public hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 11, 2022.

#### **8. Develop Solutions and Work with Partners to Address Homelessness**

The City continues to work diligently on the issues surrounding persons experiencing homelessness. To date, the Homeless Navigator has completed an intake with over 120 clients in Wheat Ridge, Golden and Edgewater. At this time, 23 of those clients have secured permanent housing and 14 of the clients have exited to transitional housing. The Homeless Navigator currently has a caseload of 53. Consensus was just reached by City Council on April 4<sup>th</sup> to add a Housing Navigator to staff to partner with the existing Homeless Navigator to connect the City's unhoused population to resources and housing. In addition, consensus was reached by City Council at that same meeting to allocate over \$1 million over the next five years for this homeless and housing navigation program.

On April 4<sup>th</sup> consensus was reached by City Council to fund and partner with Family Tree in the amount of \$500,000 to provide housing navigation and case management for persons experiencing homelessness. This effort will supplement what the City is already doing in-house. Council also directed staff to provide \$146,000 in funding to Community Table to assist individuals and families at threat of homelessness by helping them with security deposits or rental payments to keep them housed.

Jefferson County recently contracted with a developer for professional services for two Housing Navigation Centers in Jefferson County. The Centers will provide housing navigation and day resource centers to accommodate an approximate daily flow of 200 persons seeking resources; emergency short-term overnight beds to house up to 100 persons per night; and 80 units of permanent, affordable workforce housing and 70 units of permanent supportive housing for individuals who formerly experienced homelessness. An initial site has been identified for one navigation center in Arvada. A search for a second site is ongoing. City Council gave consensus on April 4<sup>th</sup> to allocate \$730,000 to this navigation center as the City's share towards this regional initiative.

In February, Jefferson County launched their Built for Zero cases conferencing. This movement is made up of more than 90 cities and counties that have committed to measurably ending homelessness, one population at a time. The goal is to achieve a milestone known as [functional zero](#) — an ongoing state where homelessness is continuously rare and brief. Built for Zero is an effort of the entire Denver area, broken up by counties. The Veteran population is often the first population that this movement focuses on. Since starting case conferencing, six Jefferson County veterans have secured housing.