WESTMINSTER

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update
Guiding Principles
March 2013
The update process for the City of Westminster Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) includes an evaluation of the City’s planning priorities originally established in 1997 with the first CLUP. The city, economy and development trends have evolved significantly since these priorities were originally drafted. Several key planning issues will need to be addressed with the CLUP Update, including:

- The City is nearing its physical build-out and little vacant land for development remains. As a result, the majority of new growth in the City will likely be accommodated in redevelopment and infill areas.

- Much of the future development in the City will rely on existing infrastructure and resources, planning for which will need to be closely tied to land uses and development intensity in order to provide adequate services and maintain the City’s high quality of life. Water availability, in particular, will have a significant impact on the intensity and potential location of new development.

- Many of the City’s District Centers would benefit from more detailed direction for land use and development intensity to ensure that new development occurs in desired areas and in concert with the City’s vision, growth management efforts and infrastructure capacity.

- New or revised land use classifications are needed to address development trends for vertical mixed-use projects, such as buildings with ground floor retail with office or residential uses above. Likewise, a refined palette of commercial, office and industrial land use classifications will allow the City to better articulate and implement its vision for new development.

As the CLUP Update process continues, identifying the priorities upon which future planning decisions will be guided is essential. The following Guiding Principles are meant to be the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan and serve as the platform for the goals and policies of the plan. They express a community vision for Westminster’s continued growth and evolution into an active, diverse and livable city.
1. Distinctive City with a Strong Identity

Westminster is a distinctive community along the Front Range with its extensive open space network, well-designed infrastructure and high quality built environment. The Plan will continue to emphasize the city’s community identity and presence both citywide and regionally. Efforts toward revitalization and city building will be focused in Westminster Center and South Westminster as well as key corridors like Federal Boulevard and retail centers with high vacancies. Redevelopment of the Westminster Center site will establish the city’s identity at both the citywide and regional scale, by creating a prominent physical presence along the US 36 corridor with high intensity mixed-use development. In South Westminster, the continuation of streetscape improvements and historic preservation efforts, as well as the infusion of activity and new development planned around Westminster Station, will enhance the area’s image and establish its core as a key destination in the city. Other areas in the city, including regional retail and employment centers along the US 36 and I-25 corridors, Wadsworth Parkway and Sheridan and Federal boulevards will be the focus of strategic improvements, intensification and new development. The Plan will also emphasize the city’s natural amenities and views to the mountains and Downtown Denver as distinctive visual and physical qualities of the city. Finally, the city will continue to develop Westminster’s identity through cultural events and amenities, preservation of the city’s unique history and buildings, and new opportunities for public art.
2. Vibrant Community with a Diverse, Healthy Economy

With its central location between Denver and Boulder, the City of Westminster is strategically positioned to capitalize on economic growth opportunities in the Denver Metro area. The city's diverse housing supply, open space and recreational amenities, and access to transit make Westminster a desirable place in which to live, work and visit. Furthermore, the city's proximity to Denver and Boulder provides an ideal location for employers wishing to attract and retain a high quality labor force. Building on the city's assets, the Plan will focus on growth and diversification of the city's employment and retail base to create a vibrant, active city environment. Employment development efforts will focus on establishing and reinforcing business and industry clusters in the city, with an emphasis on attracting technology, medical and biotech, and product development jobs. Likewise, the Plan will reinforce the city’s retail base through planning for strategic growth, improvements and mixed-use opportunities to ensure a balanced approach to retail retention and growth in the city. Redevelopment of Westminster Center will play a central role in expanding both the employment and retail base for the city.

3. Comprehensive, Integrated Parks and Open Space System

Unique among other communities along the Front Range, Westminster’s network of open space, trails and high quality parks defines the physical character and image of the city. This extensive network of trails, open space corridors, and conservation areas weaves through the fabric of the city, connecting with parks, neighborhoods, schools, community facilities, employment centers and activity districts. Residents, workers and visitors have access to a range of recreation opportunities and benefit from the protection of sensitive environmental habitats, water bodies and view corridors. The network also connects residents to regional trails, neighboring jurisdictions and transit stations. The Comprehensive Plan will continue the City’s efforts to preserve and enhance the open space and parks system.
4. Well-Designed, Attractive Neighborhoods

Westminster is defined by its distinctive and varied neighborhoods and integrated open space network. The city’s choice and quality of neighborhoods provides a range of settings and environments—from single family residences in pastoral settings to mixed-use live/work and multi-family dwellings in urban, walkable settings. The Plan will continue to foster a range of high quality living options within the city, with emphasis on providing an appropriate mix of land uses that support the city’s active lifestyle. Parks, neighborhood shopping and services, schools and other community facilities will serve the needs of residents, reinforcing neighborhood character and cultural identity. Connections to employment centers, transit, commercial centers and the City’s open space and trails system will be emphasized. Where mixed-use neighborhoods are planned, a mix of uses, range of densities and residential types, and interconnected street network will further foster an active, walkable environment throughout the city.

5. Balanced Housing Mix

Providing a balanced mix of housing opportunities in the City will continue to be a focus of planning efforts in the city. Ensuring that a wide range of incomes, age groups and lifestyle choices are accommodated will reinforce the city’s identity as a diverse, attractive place in which to live and work. The Plan will focus on maintaining the city’s diverse housing supply and locating complementary land uses and infrastructure to serve the needs of all community members. In addition, the City will pursue a variety of strategies to maintain the affordable housing stock that currently exists in the city.
6. Mixed Use and Transit-Oriented Development

The city is quickly approaching its physical build out of existing vacant land. As the city continues to evolve and grow, new development will be strategically focused as infill or redevelopment. The Plan will provide a framework for accommodating this new growth, and fostering development trends toward a vertical mix of uses, walkable setting and higher intensities of development. New mixed-use development will be focused in neighborhoods that have access to major transportation and transit corridors. New infrastructure and development in these mixed-use and transit-oriented areas will foster an active public realm with an interconnected street grid with blocks sized for walkability, building design that shapes and activates the pedestrian realm, and parks and public spaces that reinforce and foster community identity. Supporting policies and implementation efforts will ensure these mixed-use areas are both vibrant and viable.

7. Balanced Transportation System

The City of Westminster has worked to establish a balanced transportation system that allows for safe and efficient travel throughout the city for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. The Westminster Comprehensive Roadway Plan and Bicycle Master Plan provide a framework for travel through the city with a network of streets, sidewalks, bicycle lanes and trails. The Plan will integrate these planning efforts with land use and transit planning to ensure that all modes of transportation are accessible in the city. The existing well-functioning street network will be maintained and improved with streetscape, sidewalk and intersection improvements. New street connections and alignments will ensure the city’s employment and activity centers are easy to access both locally and regionally. Likewise, expansion of the on-street bicycle network will provide improved commuter access to employment and other key destinations in the city. Expansion of transit service in the city will also be a focus of the Plan, with new and improved bus rapid transit and park and ride facilities along US 36 and I-25, as well as RTD FasTracks commuter rail through the heart of the city. Bicycle and pedestrian connections to transit stations, as well as high intensity mixed-use development adjacent to stations, will support and encourage transit ridership within the city.

The city’s growth management program and conservation of resources including water, energy, habitat and natural areas provide the framework for a sustainable environment that will continue to impact all aspects of physical planning in the city. The Plan emphasizes conservation and management of the city’s water supply, with policies and land use planning that will ensure water availability at citywide buildout. The extent and efficiency of water use for each development will become a key consideration in the location, type and intensity of land uses and development within the city. The Plan also supports expansion of the city’s reclaimed water system and maintaining high quality surface and drinking water. Infrastructure and improvements will continue to be planned in concert with or in advance of new development to ensure the city’s high service standards are maintained. Finally, the city will encourage the efficient use of land and resources through encouragement of higher intensity mixed-use development near transit, “green” building, context-sensitive site design and energy-efficient building systems and infrastructure. These sustainable planning, building and site measures will all contribute to improved water and air quality in the city and regionally.

9. Safe and Healthy Community

Westminster enjoys a high quality of life that is supported by a sense of safety and confidence throughout the community. The ability to enjoy the city’s natural amenities, residential neighborhoods, employment and activity centers, and transit connections in a safe, secure environment is a key priority for the City. The City of Westminster police and fire departments will continue to maintain high standards for service response and emergency preparedness, and will maintain and improve functionality of mutual aid relationships with surrounding jurisdictions. The Plan will also ensure that mobility options are safe and well-designed, from providing missing sidewalks and bicycle lanes to designing safe, highly visible transit stops. The design of public spaces will also promote safety by ensuring visibility and ease of access. Finally, the Plan will promote access to a healthy lifestyle, through promoting connectivity to and use of the city’s open space, trail and park network and a wide range of recreation facilities for all ages, and ensuring residents and workers have access to health and human services.