

City of Lakewood
Policy Report 2005-4

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

THRU: Rebecca P. Clark, Director of Community Planning and Development
Roger Wadnal, Manager, Comprehensive Planning and Research Division

FROM: Kate Cooke, Senior Planner

DATE: November 29, 2005
City Council Study Session Date: December 5, 2005

SUBJECT: Approval of the West Colfax Avenue Action Plan, Case No. PL-05-003, as an Amendment to the Lakewood Comprehensive Plan

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that City Council:

- A. Approve the West Colfax Avenue Action Plan as an amendment to the Lakewood Comprehensive Plan.
- B. Direct staff to prepare a resolution to be brought forward at City Council's regular meeting on December 12, 2005, to approve the West Colfax Avenue Action Plan as an amendment to the Lakewood Comprehensive Plan.

BACKGROUND

Colfax Avenue has been a major transportation route for over 100 years. Within the Denver Metro area, Colfax Avenue extends a total of 26 miles from the plains to the mountains through the cities of Aurora, Denver and Lakewood. In addition to being a major arterial in the Denver Metro area, Colfax is one of the longest continuous streets in the United States functioning as U.S. Highway 40.

Throughout the history of Colfax Avenue in Lakewood, transportation and industry have served as catalysts for development and redevelopment. Many new developments have taken place in the last several years including the Denver West Shopping Area, Mills, and Wal-Mart. Another major opportunity on the near horizon is the development of light rail transit on 13th Avenue. Recognizing that these developments are shaping the future of West Colfax and wanting to use these successes to catalyze new successes, the West Colfax Corridor Advisory Committee was appointed in April of 2004 by Mayor Steve Burkholder. Members of the Committee included business owners, commercial property owners, residents and representatives of the registered neighborhood organizations adjacent to Colfax Avenue. The Committee has been chaired by Councilor Bob Murphy and has met steadily over the past 18 months to develop a vision,

guiding principles and action steps to guide the future growth of West Colfax Avenue. By working together, the Committee has developed an Action Plan that is intended to enhance the image the corridor, enhance the vitality of the corridor and create a place that celebrates the unique and eclectic character of the area and connects the community.

KEY ELEMENTS

The West Colfax Avenue Action Plan was developed through a community-based planning process that included twice monthly meetings of the Advisory Committee, education sessions from subject matter experts, two design workshops, and two community open houses.

As the Committee worked through the planning and visioning process for Colfax Avenue, the over-riding theme was a belief that Colfax Avenue is more than just a road. Specifically, the Committee believed that Colfax Avenue should be:

- A vibrant, unique and attractive *place* that provides a mix of small and large businesses and unique housing opportunities.
- A *place* that unites neighborhoods and celebrates the historic and eclectic character of northern Lakewood.
- A *place* that effectively and attractively balances vehicular needs with those of the pedestrian and the transit user.

Using these concepts as a framework, the Committee developed a Vision Statement for Colfax Avenue that states:

West Colfax Avenue **Vision Statement**

“As a celebration of the historic and eclectic character of north Lakewood, Colfax Avenue will be a place that unites neighborhoods and provides a variety of vibrant businesses and housing opportunities for generations to come.”

Seven Guiding Principles were developed to achieve the Vision for Colfax Avenue. These Guiding Principles provide the structure of the Plan. The Guiding Principles are as follows:

Guiding Principles
Achieve the Vision
Make it Sparkle
Make it Vibrant
Maximize Transit
Invest Wisely
Value History
Get the Zoning Mix Right

The following is a summary of the Guiding Principles and Action Steps.

Achieve the Vision

Enhance the Image of West Colfax Avenue

As the Committee developed ideas and concepts for the future of Colfax Avenue, they were ever mindful of the need to ensure that the Action Plan for West Colfax Avenue will truly be implemented and not just sit on a shelf collecting dust. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Achieve the Vision” include a range of activities designed to build excitement about Colfax Avenue, market the corridor, and result in events that draw people to the corridor.

Make it Sparkle

Improve the look of the corridor

As the Committee developed ideas and concepts for the future of Colfax Avenue, they heard themselves saying “Colfax should sparkle” and it’s eclectic, funky, quirky character needs to be celebrated. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Make it Sparkle” include a range of activities that: result in a set of design standards that celebrate the unique and special character of Colfax; proactively assist property and business owners with their redevelopment efforts; protect views and vistas; keep the corridor clean; and, ensure that is incorporated along the corridor.

Make it Vibrant

Make Colfax Economically Vibrant

The Guiding Principle “Make it Vibrant” represents the wholehearted agreement by the Committee that Colfax Avenue needs to be vibrant and bustling, and not appear as though it is in decline or stagnant. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Make it Vibrant” include a range of activities designed to eliminate vacant buildings and vacant lots along the corridor, identify and build upon niche markets, support family owned businesses, and attract businesses that draw people to the corridor.

Maximize Transit

Capitalize on the light rail line

A major opportunity adjacent to Colfax Avenue is the development of light rail transit along 13th Avenue just two blocks south of Colfax Avenue. This line is slated for operation in 2013. The Committee recognized this incredible opportunity but was also very aware that design and layout of new development at the light rail stations could result in limited access between Colfax Avenue and the light rail stations. As a result of these discussions, the Committee developed ideas and concepts for the future of light rail transit in Lakewood and specifically for how Colfax should interface with the light rail stations. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Maximize Transit” include a range of activities designed to create solid connections between Colfax Avenue and the light rail stations, result in superior design at the station areas, and build on the unique character of Colfax Avenue.

Invest Wisely

Improve the Infrastructure along the Corridor

While many public improvements have been made along West Colfax Avenue, namely landscaped medians, sidewalks, and brick pavers, there are many areas along the corridor where these improvements are not in place. Also, floodplains and floodways represent a major hurdle to development and redevelopment efforts. The Committee recognizes that public improvements have the ability to shape the look of the corridor. Also, the Committee recognizes that it is possible to leverage investments of these types to get additional and better improvements along the corridor. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Invest Wisely” include a range of activities designed to create a cohesive urban design image for West Colfax Avenue, to address the drainage issues and limitations along the corridor, address areas where there is insufficient parking, and address safety needs of the area.

Value History

Preserve history and assets

One of the most unique aspects of Colfax Avenue is the sheer amount of history in place along the corridor. Historical businesses include Davie’s Diner, Rockley Music, the Westland Shopping Center and the JCRS (Jewish Consumptive Relief Society) Shopping Center, and the former JCRS facility which is now the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design. The Committee recognized this incredible and unique asset and wanted to ensure that historical aspects of the corridor are preserved and enhanced. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Value History” include a range of activities designed to protect historical assets, form solid partnerships to protect and enhance the historical character of the area, and use these assets to build excitement and interest along the corridor.

Get the Zoning Mix Right

Revisit Zoning and Land Uses along the Corridor

Colfax Avenue is a key commercial corridor within Lakewood. As such, the primary land uses along the corridor are commercial, office and industrial. Although these uses are important to the community, the Committee recognized the need for Colfax Avenue to provide housing opportunities as well. By mixing residential uses with commercial and office uses, the corridor will begin to achieve a vibrancy that can only happen with a true mix of uses. The action steps associated with the guiding principle “Get the Zoning Mix Right” include a range of activities designed to create a mixed-use environment, to ensure that mixed use areas blend with the adjacent neighborhoods, and to encourage reinvestment in the housing stock that currently exists in the area.

SUMMARY

It is requested that City Council direct staff to prepare a resolution to be brought forward at City Council’s regular meeting on December 12, 2005 to approve the West Colfax Avenue Action

Plan as an amendment to the Lakewood Comprehensive Plan.

Submitted by:

Reviewed by:

Kate Cooke
Senior Planner

Joni Inman, Director
Mayor and City Manager's Office

Roger Wadnal, Manager
Comprehensive Planning Division

Michael J. Rock
City Manager

Rebecca P. Clark, Director
Community Planning and Development