LAKEWOOD PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING
MINUTES
September 25, 2019

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:
Dale Miller, Chair
Alex Bartlett
Johann Cohn
Alan Heald
Henry Hollender

Absent:
Glenda Sinks

STAFF PRESENT:
Roger Wadnal, Manager, Comprehensive Research and Development
Paul Rice, Manager, Planning-Development Assistance
Holly Boehm, Principal Planner, Comprehensive Research and Development
Christy Horber, Planner, Comprehensive Research and Development
Laura Pemberton, Secretary to the Planning Commission

Following are the minutes of the September 25, 2019 Lakewood Planning Commission Public Meeting. A permanent set of these minutes is retained in the office of the City Clerk.

Minutes are not a verbatim transcription, but rather an attempt by the Secretary to capture the intent of the speakers.

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 2: ROLL CALL

The roll having been called, a quorum was declared and the following business was conducted:

ITEM 3: PL-19-001, UNION NEIGHBORHOOD VISION PLAN

ROGER WADNAL introduced fellow staff who have been involved in the project: Holly Boehm, Principal Planner and Christy Horber, Planner. The action requested for tonight's meeting is to adopt the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan as an implementation plan and to recommend approval to Lakewood’s City Council. This plan is a component of the Development Dialogue meeting process, which looks at citywide development related issues such as development, density, and design. City Council’s Development Dialogue Ad Hoc committee identified the
Union Corridor as a specific area with potential for change. City Council directed planning staff to create a focused neighborhood plan for the area. This plan focuses on land use, design, and mobility within the boundaries of the Union neighborhood. Previous planning efforts in this area include: The Federal Center Master Plan, the Federal Center Union Boulevard Connectivity Plan in 2011, the Urban Design Plan in 2011, and the Union Transportation Study in 2018. Should this plan be adopted and approved by City Council, next steps include developing an overlay district for this area that will look at land use adjustments, as well as design guidelines for the new Design Review Commission.

HOLLY BOEHM first discussed the outreach and process for the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan. Outreach included two direct mailings to approximately 2,000 residences and businesses within the planning area and two direct mailings to each contact person for HOAs and registered neighborhood organizations. Email notifications were sent to the HOA and neighborhood organization contacts to notify them of the Planning Commission and City Council Hearings. Other engagement efforts included reaching 6,500 people through Next Door Posts and contact with the Union Corridor Professionals’ Group. The planning process included five community meetings and four surveys. The surveys were available at every meeting and were also available on the Lakewood Together website. A study session with City Council was held on August 19th to review the plan’s recommendations.

Ms. Boehm then discussed the five community meetings. Planning staff identified three planning areas in the Union neighborhood. These areas were determined based on current land use and function, adjacent land use, proximity to the Federal Station and Transit Center, landscaping, the relative size of each area, and location within the neighborhood. The first and second meetings asked attendees to develop a vision statement for the Union neighborhood and to identify how each planning area should function in the future. The third meeting discussed building and site design. The outcome of the meetings informed land uses, key principles for design, and the policies for mobility and accessibility. The fourth meeting discussed draft recommendations for the plan and the final meeting focused on final recommendations.

Planning Area 1 has been identified as a destination and gateway to the city. Staff recommended no additional change to land use permissions for the M-E-T and M-C-T Zone Districts in Planning Area 1. Planning staff recommended adding a requirement to mandate a vertical mix of uses for new development adjacent to Union Boulevard for the M-G-T Zone District. Planning Area 2 was identified as a mixed-use neighborhood that supports both employment and residential uses. Planning staff recommended this area includes ground floor retail and restaurants, as well as quality connections to Union Square Park. Staff recommended no land use changes to the M-E-S, M-E-U, and M-C-T Zone Districts. Staff recommended adding a mandate for vertical mix of uses for new developments adjacent to Union Boulevard for the M-G-T and M-G-U Zone District. Staff recommend bolstering the existing uses in Planning Area 3 to increase its vitality. Planning Area 3 can serve the community with retail, restaurants, industry, arts with local flair, and co-working hubs. It is recommended to prohibit residential use in this area. In the L-I Zone District, it is recommended to add the following permitted uses: bar/brewery, gallery, studio, school, and indoor entertainment center.
Ms. Boehm stated the four main principles for the Design Guidelines Recommendations are contextual, expressive, lively, and sustainable. Contextual means buildings should respond to and be respectful of adjacent areas. Expressive means that buildings should be unique and not have a single architectural style. Lively means that building and sites should offer a variety of experiences. Sustainability means that buildings and sites should use sustainable elements, such as environmentally friendly features and materials.

Ms. Boehm stated there are two recommendations for Mobility and Accessibility. These recommendations are in response to concerns stated by attendees of the meetings. The mobility and accessibility policies are consistent with, and based on, the previous plan recommendations for the area. Policy 1 is to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and safety. Policy 2 is to manage traffic flows on Union Boulevard by implementing measures identified in the Union Area Transportation Study.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the Union Vision Neighborhood Plan as an implementation plan and recommend approval to the City Council.

Public Comment OPENED at 7:31 p.m.

ROGER BALL reviewed Attachment B and expressed that he would like to focus on low density housing in this area. He stated that the voters passing Ballot Initiative 200 demonstrates Lakewood residents are interested in lower density development. He proposed new roads for the M-C-T Zone in Planning Area 1. He noted reports from Colorado Department of Public Heath that recognize toxic pollution in this area. He stated it would be an enormous cost to the City to acquire this area. He stated there needs to be a provision that the federal government will be responsible for clean-up of this area if the property currently under federal ownership is purchased. He also stated he is concerned about the 10-foot shared use path in the Connectivity Map. His concern is that it will create more congestion. He also would like to see how changes due to the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan will impact storm water drainage and management.

FRANK KING stated traffic concerns west of Kipling. He stated that for people who live west of 8th and Union there are only three ways in and out. He stated that the traffic in the last 5 years has become ridiculous. He stated the development of Solterra did not impact traffic because it is single family homes. He stated that apartments make traffic worse because multiple people with multiple cars live in a single unit. He stated that the Union corridor is currently at capacity and there are not enough employers in this area to support more residents. He stated that residential should not be allowed in this area and no one east of Kipling will drive to Union Boulevard as a destination.

MIKE MULLER stated he is disappointed in the attendance of the previous community meetings. He stated this is due to the City failing to notify people, and he was not notified of these meetings. He stated it is not good representation to have only seven citizens at tonight’s Planning Commission meeting. He said the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan needs to state how tall residential buildings are and density and that the plan should indicate how Union
Boulevard will be widened to support traffic and storm water measures. He stated that the people in this City do not want more apartments or high-density housing. He recommends that this plan not be approved and wants to see a more detailed plan.

COMMISSIONER MILLER clarified height of buildings are included in the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

Public Comment CLOSED at 7:42 p.m.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked planning staff if they know the number of survey respondents.

HOLLY BOEHM answered there were 2,200 visitors to the Lakewood Together site and there were 161 survey responses. She stated she would like to verify that number.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked due to the proximity to U.S. Highway 6 if there should be services for automobiles in this area.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the intent of Planning Area 1 is to make it a gateway to the whole district and make it pedestrian focused and inviting to businesses. He stated that there are automobile services nearby that can serve the Union Corridor.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if the Zoning Ordinance would be amended to prohibit residential use in Planning Area 3.

ROGER WADNAL answered yes.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if there are potential legal issues with making zoning changes to one specific area of the City.

ROGER WADNAL answered that there have been overlays previously implemented in Lakewood including Alameda and Colfax avenues. He stated planning staff will work with City legal staff to make sure any overlay is implemented correctly.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked how the addition of dwelling units, compared to revenue generating businesses and services, will generate tax income for the City.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that they complement each other. She stated that residents spend money. If residents are near a business or a place that they want to go to, they will spend money and bring in tax revenue.

COMMISSIONER HEALD stated it is widely known that pollution is present at the Federal Center property, and mitigation is needed. He stated that large apartment buildings with parking structures and retail are planned near light rail areas in both Englewood and Westminster. He asked if a use like those in Englewood and Westminster make sense for Planning Area 1.
ROGER WADNAL answered the 59 acres just north of the station are owned by the federal government. To do anything with those properties the federal government would have to sell the property or work with a developer on a project. If a private owner bought the property, they would be required to mitigate the contamination. He then stated that the developments Commissioner Heald described can happen but would require working with the property owner.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked if the plan is intended to be binding or a vision.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan is a set of non-binding recommendations.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked if going forward with this plan is recommended because his understanding is that staff’s recommendation is to remove older planned developments.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the plan does not recommend addressing existing planned developments but recommends changes to the zoning ordinance.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that the plan does not have the same effect as a planned development, because a planned development is legal zoning on a specific property. The Union Vision Plan is a policy recommendation for what land uses and design guidelines should be. The vision plan is not legally binding.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if the goal is to amend the Zoning Ordinance for these properties.

ROGER WADNAL answered the recommendation would be to develop an overlay district with changes to zoning for this area.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked what the transportation plan is to address and pay for infrastructure to accommodate growth.

ROGER WADNAL answered that it would be an implementation step of the previously developed transportation plan.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked if there is a concrete plan to address potential impact of more people or a parallel commitment to transportation that would accompany this plan.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the transportation study, completed last year, addresses these concerns. City staff will work with developers during the site plan process to make sure they are meeting traffic requirements.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked why looking at this area parcel by parcel as a rezoning proposal comes in is not a viable way forward instead of looking at an overall plan.
ROGER WADNAL answered the changes that will be implemented if this plan moves forward are slight adjustments in the uses allowed.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked about placing incompatible uses next to each other. One example is having a shooting range next to Beacon 85 which creates an issue with noise. He stated he is well acquainted with helicopter noise associated with Flight-for-Life and asked if it is compatible to have residential near a Flight-for-Life station.

HOLLY BOEHM answered the plan does not necessarily require residential in all areas. That is the choice of the developer or landowner for what they want to bring in that area. A developer may consider potential noise concerns to not be a problem and instead focus on other items that make it attractive, such as proximity to a light rail station.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked how is reducing suburban zoning to add urban zoning and density consistent with the principle of respecting adjacent areas.

HOLLY BOEHM answered there have been changes to the current Zoning Ordinance that require buildings to step back as they get taller. Through the overlay, setbacks can be modified as can height requirements. The plan gives staff the idea of where the community wants to go and then standards can be researched and addressed. Good design guidelines will help development look and feel how the community wants it to.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked will the public be involved in the process of creating the overlay.

HOLLY BOEHM answered yes.

COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked if the plan can be more polished. For instance, Map 1 is not introduced in the text, and there is no scale or legend on maps. He also recommended defining the intent of the plan. He noted a comment from Lakewood Speaks stated the language in the plan is planning verbiage and recommends making the language in the plan clearer for the public.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked that staff add callouts to the zoning code in the plan so people can easily refer to items in the zoning ordinance such as height and density. He then asked for clarification between an implementation plan and a vision plan. He also asked staff to clarify that this plan is a first step.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the introduction in the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan will clearly state it is policy not regulatory. The Comprehensive Plan is a policy plan. The Union Neighborhood Vision Plan has recommendations for regulatory changes, but changes to regulations will require a public process.

COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked for additional images in the plan.

HOLLY BOEHM answered staff is working on adding additional images.
COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked how recommendation C3 on page 30 to reduce the height permitted would look moving forward.

HOLLY BOEHM answered current height is 180 ft. which is approximately a 15-story building. Staff has heard feedback that this number should be reduced. One suggestion has been to consider reducing the height to 90 ft.

COMMISSIONER HOLLENBERG asked if there was a study session for the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan.

COMMISSIONER MILLER answered that there was not a study session.

COMMISSIONER HOLLENBERG asked if planning staff have figures or numbers that show how many people who live in Beacon 85 work at the Federal Center or St. Anthony. He also asked if there were numbers on Beacon 85 residents who take the light rail.

ROGER WADNAL answered that they do not have those numbers, but will provide that to the Planning Commission.

COMMISSIONER HOLLENBERG asked if previous transportation studies determined that higher density reduces traffic and congestion in the Union Corridor.

ROGER WADNAL answered that he does not have the details, but the transportation study looked at scenarios and the impact on traffic based on 20-year projections.

COMMISSIONER HOLLENBERG asked if respondents of the survey represent less than 1% of the Lakewood population.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the focus of the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan is a specific neighborhood and the intent of the outreach was to focus on people directly impacted by the plan.

COMMISSIONER HOLLENBERG asked if there has been an analysis on what adding more commercial will do in this area.

HOLLY BOEHM answered staff was not looking at that. Rather, staff is looking at this area from a design stand point and what land uses will help achieve what the community wants.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked staff if they knew whether St. Anthony and the Federal Center have records of their employees’ commuting patterns.

ROGER WADNAL answered that the Transit Management Association Executive Director is looking at issues related to that and staff will follow up with Planning Commission on that question.
COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked if there was a recommendation for the last mile issue for people getting to the light rail.

ROGER WADNAL answered that was a focus of the previously adopted connectivity plan and part of the recommendations in the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if newer structures will be closer to the street and if parking will be in the back or another location.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that setbacks will be looked at for this neighborhood because of comments from the community that they do not want buildings close to the street. She stated specific setbacks are not included in the recommendations but will be included in the overlay.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if progress has been made on funding a bridge at Routt Street across U.S. 6.

ROGER WADNAL answered that he is not aware of any funding that is currently available.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that new development may spur construction of the bridge.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if the sign code will change, especially for signs on buildings.

HOLLY BOEHM answered no changes will be made to the sign code.

COMMISSIONER HEALD asked to view the slide with the outreach map. He asked if staff knows the percentage of HOAs in that area.

HOLLY BOEHM answered she does not know the percentage. She reiterated what the outreach efforts were as shown on the outreach map.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if people commenting on Lakewood Speaks were outside of the notification areas.

HOLLY BOEHM answered she would need look into it. She believes meeting notifications may not have been communicated by registered organizations due to a variety of reasons.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if affordable housing was discussed when preparing the plan.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that staff did not discuss affordable housing. Even though it is a concern, it is not a part of the vision plan.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if landowners were encouraged to respond to the survey, since there are potential zoning changes.
HOLLY BOEHM answered that landowners received the same survey and were notified the same way. She stated the Union Corridor Professionals’ Group was notified and staff announced the meeting dates at Union Corridor Professionals’ Group meetings. The organization included meeting announcements in their e-newsletters.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked what a contractor shop is.

HOLLY BOEHM answered it is where a contractor, such as a landscaper or construction company, has its services and equipment.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if contamination clean-up on the 59 acres is the federal government’s responsibility.

ROGER WADNAL answered that clean-up is currently the responsibility of the federal government, and any future property owner would be responsible for clean-up.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if storm water control is already in place and well managed in the Union Corridor.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that is a question for the City’s engineering division. The City refers new developments to water districts to ensure the district can manage the development’s impact.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if new residential buildings in the Union corridor are subject to zoning, building codes, and new municipal codes such as residential growth limitations from Ballot Initiative 200.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that any new residential proposal would be subject to the new allocation process from Ballot Initiative 200.

COMMISSIONER MILLER stated there should have been a Planning Commission Study Session before this meeting, so the commission can better understand the vision plan.

Public Comment OPENED

MIKE MULLER stated it bothers him that there is no definition for the vision in this plan. He stated that high quality jobs and open space should be the vision in this area. The vision should be how wide the boulevard should be and make recommendations based on what people nearby want, which is not apartments.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if the Federal Center was involved in the Union Neighborhood Vision Plan process.

ROGER WADNAL answered the Federal Center was notified of the process. The Federal Center’s interest is to see how the 59-acre parcel develops.
ROGER BALL stated he appreciated the Planning Commission’s thoughtful questions and believes housing affordability is an important consideration.

FRANK KING stated that he does not believe high density housing reduces traffic. He commented that the setbacks need to be far enough back to expand the street. The only way is to eliminate business on the east side of Union Boulevard. There is currently not enough parking for the smaller businesses. Additional parking would solve problems.

Public Comment CLOSED

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if there will be future community meetings.

ROGER WADNAL answered yes, should this plan be adopted the public will be involved during the overlay process.

COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked if the draft Union Neighborhood Vision Plan is a result of the City Council study session.

HOLLY BOEHM answered that staff gave the same presentation to City Council but did not present a draft of the plan.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked why the Planning Commission study session was cancelled.

ROGER WADNAL answered it was due to the project time frame and City Council wanting to adopt the plan in a timely manner.

COMMISSIONER MILLER stated he would entertain a MOTION.

COMMISSIONER HEALD made a MOTION to continue the meeting for a future date since Ward 1 Planning Commissioner Glenda Sinks was not present. The area under discussion tonight is in Ward 1 so it is important to have her present to bring Ward 1’s perspective.

SECONDED by COMMISSIONER HOLLENDER.

COMMISSIONER MILLER stated that the proposed motion needs to have a date.

PAUL RICE and the Planning Commission determined October 16th to be the continuation date. Tonight’s presentation is recorded on Lakewood Speaks for COMMISSIONER SINKS to listen to before the October 16th continuance if requested by her.

Planning Commission requested additional traffic information. Roger Wadnal suggested that John Padon, Lakewood’s Traffic Engineering Manager, attend the next meeting to answer questions because he co-managed the previous traffic study.

COMMISSIONER HOLLENDER wants information on how people living in apartments in the Union Corridor impact traffic congestion.
COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked if there is RTD information for how popular or frequented the Federal Center light rail station is in relation to the other W line stops.

COMMISSIONER COHN asked if there could be a briefing on the current adequacy of storm water management in this area.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if planning staff can reach out to local businesses for surveys on commuting patterns or what commuting programs businesses in this area offer.

COMMISSIONER MILLER stated he supports this motion because there was not a Study Session discussing this topic prior to tonight’s meeting.

VOTE TAKEN –

Four Ayes – Commissioners BARTLETT, COHN, HEALD, HOLLENDER, MILLER

Zero Nays.

MOTION PASSED

ITEM 4: General Business

PAUL RICE told the commission that staff will update the Planning Commission about a potential hearing date in December for the Board of Adjustment appeal. He reminded the Planning Commission about their retreat this upcoming Friday. He told the Planning Commission that Tim Cox, the City Attorney, will not attend the retreat. The attorney representing the Planning Commission during the appeal process will attend the treat to give the Commission legal advice.

COMMISSIONER MILLER asked if the Planning Commission can insist on holding a Study Sessions in the future even if the Study Sessions are canceled.

PAUL RICE answered that this is a continuation of the Lakewood Development Dialogue. The Union Neighborhood Vision Plan is an implementation plan that focuses on land use. There are no standards in this document. If there were standards to be adopted and approved, that’s when the Planning Commission will go into further details regarding overly, zoning, and the Design Review Commission. He then informed the Planning Commission that they can request to hold a meeting, even though it is canceled, but the City Manager and City Council set the schedule. City Council set the schedule and wanted a plan approved by the end of the year.

COMMISSIONER BARTLETT asked why there was not a joint study with City Council on August 19th.
PAUL RICE answered that City Council decides if they want a joint study session.

COMMISSIONER MILLER stated that since the Zoning Ordinance will be amended, he believes there should have been a study session with Planning Commission's input.

ADJOURNMENT
Meeting adjourned at 9:26 PM.

11-14-2019
Date Approved

Laura Pemberton, Secretary
to the Planning Commission