BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO DOWNTOWNS, COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND TOWN CENTERS IN COLORADO THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, INFORMATION AND COLLABORATION
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INTRODUCTION
Welcome to the W. 38th Avenue Commercial Corridor assessment for the Colorado community of Wheat Ridge. Colorado communities have the opportunity to apply for assistance through the Community Revitalization Partnership (CRP) program, a collaborative program between the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI), a non-profit membership organization, and the local community. The assessment team appreciates the invitation to learn about and assist your community. The team worked diligently to provide relevant and realistic input toward the betterment of your Main Street, West 38th Avenue.

The assessment team was assigned to evaluate land use and real estate market conditions, business development, corridor marketing and promotions, streetscape urban design and revitalization strategies for W. 38th Avenue between Sheridan and Wadsworth in Wheat Ridge. This corridor is the community’s “Main Street.”

Wheat Ridge 2020 (WR2020) is a local non-profit development corporation that promotes civic engagement, public policy and economic development initiatives to make Wheat Ridge a more sustainable community. WR2020 applied for CRP funding on behalf of the City of Wheat Ridge and hosted the CRP consultant team visit, gave feedback throughout the process, and, along with the city, did an outstanding job of providing relevant data, additional support from local market experts, and organized business, resident and City of Wheat Ridge government participation in the process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
In September 2009, Wheat Ridge 2020 contacted Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) to seek assistance in completing a sub-market analysis of the 38th Ave. corridor between Sheridan and Wadsworth. While DCI does not conduct market analyses, the ensuing Community Revitalization Partnership (CRP) team visit from Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) held on December 2-3, 2009, was geared toward the development of a corridor revitalization strategy which included some preliminary market analysis of the area from real estate and customer perspectives. The purpose of a DCI technical assistance visit is to bring a team of consultants to a community that specialize in downtown and community revitalization to provide tools, insights, and direction to help the host community realize its downtown revitalization goals. The Wheat Ridge visit included additional preparation and the team size was increased to accommodate the additional objectives of analyzing the market, comparisons with neighboring or similar communities, and understanding how to better direct the urban design of the street towards a more New Urbanist format. In anticipation of this visit, WR2020 conducted consumer, business owner and property owner surveys, planned focus groups, arranged for work and presentation spaces, and provided extensive background information about the history and status of Wheat Ridge’s W. 38th Avenue revitalization efforts and the issues facing the community.
Before the team arrived in Wheat Ridge, WR2020 provided a series of background documents, surveys, plans, regulations, ordinances, and the City’s goals for the CRP. This information was reviewed by the team prior to the visit. Upon arrival in the community, team members met with WR 2020 and City of Wheat Ridge staff to discuss the current state of W. 38th Avenue, ongoing revitalization efforts, and goals and objectives for CRP team visit. WR2020 staff took the team on a tour of W. 38th Avenue to help frame the discussion and orient the team members to the community. Four well-attended, 60+ person, focus group sessions with corridor property owners, businesses, residents, WR2020 board and community members, and City staff, were held on the first day. The focus groups’ purposes were to allow the team to hear about issues facing the corridor directly from the community and to obtain input about the perceptions, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of W. 38th Avenue. Team members gathered after the focus groups, to discuss their observations and prioritize issues through four perspectives (organization, promotions, economic restructuring and design taken from the National Main Street Center Four Point Approach) to ensure a comprehensive approach to analyzing and developing recommendations for this corridor. On day two of the visit, the team met to formulate their final recommendations. On the evening of December 3rd, team members presented their findings to the community at City Hall and stayed for a question and answer session. The report which follows summarizes the findings of the consultant team and provides an Action Plan of strategies which constitute a recommended work program to revitalize the W. 38th Avenue corridor.

OVERVIEW AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

Wheat Ridge was a small, rural farming community for much of its history and was once the carnation capital of the world. The carnation industry migrated to South America and the population of Wheat Ridge declined from its peak of 60,000 to 30,000. Farms were slowly subdivided and developed after World War II as the community emerged as an auto-oriented, inner-ring suburb of Denver. Wheat Ridge remained relatively rural compared to surrounding communities and did not incorporate until 1969. Wheat Ridge’s most significant commercial and retail development took place between 1970 and 1990, forming of auto-oriented strip development along major corridors including 38th Avenue. Housing development continued steadily after World War II, mostly in the form of single family, ranch style homes. Although most of Wheat Ridge’s housing stock is aging (a majority being more than 50 years old), the homes are situated on large lots along quiet streets with mature trees. The “hot” housing market to the east in the Highlands neighborhood has begun to spill over into Wheat Ridge where young families and first-time home buyers can often find housing on larger lots and at lower prices.

The major issues presented by Wheat Ridge2020 and City staff include:
• The community needs a Main Street, and W. 38th Avenue has been consistently identified as the Wheat Ridge’s Main Street in many planning documents. However, W. 38th Avenue does not have the look and feel commonly associated with many Main Streets. What does the community need to do make W. 38th Avenue clearly distinguishable as the Main Street of Wheat Ridge? What is the vision for Main Street Wheat Ridge? How will this image be promoted locally and regionally?

• Out-of-date regulations and a historically adverse stance toward development rendered Wheat Ridge unable to capitalize on commercial and retail growth to the extent of neighboring communities such as Arvada and Lakewood. Although the City has become much more proactive in pursuing quality development, how can the community target new and revitalize existing development along W. 38th Avenue?

• What role does residential development play in a revitalization plan for West 38th Avenue?

• How can mixed-use development be incorporated along the corridor and where?

PARTNERS AND RESOURCES


Resources considered for use in implementing the recommendations of the report (see attachments for full details) include: the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Energy Impacts & Minerals Assistance Funds, University of Colorado at Denver – Political Science, private contractual services, Colorado Department of Transportation, Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI), Colorado Municipal League, and Colorado City/County Managers Association.

With the CRP visit, the community is setting the stage for an ongoing and strengthened relationship with the DCI, DOLA, other local governmental agencies and the local business sector. During the two day visit, the community interactions with the CRP team members resulted in a strong, consensus building foundation. This foundation will be increasingly important for the many efforts that may result from the visit.
FOCUS GROUP OBSERVATIONS

- W. 38th Avenue is the heart of Wheat Ridge.
- Wheat Ridge is authentic and retro, “not trendy”.
- Wheat Ridge has a small-town atmosphere yet is proximate to a big city.
- Quality housing, parks, trail corridors, recreation amenities and excellent schools.
- Outstanding personal service at many neighborhood businesses.
- Businesses once used to “own” and promote W. 38th Avenue.
- Exempla Lutheran Medical Center is a major asset on corridor.
- Regional draws: Wheat Ridge Cyclery, Cress Kitchen and Bath, Lewis Candy, Wheat Ridge Lanes
- Would like to see: coffee shop, book store, sports bar, wine shop, place to congregate adjacent to or near 38th Avenue, enhanced walkability and parking.

ASSESSMENT TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Many communities struggle to find their own unique niche to help promote their Main Street or downtown in a way that separates their community core from other competing commercial and retail centers. Many downtowns are aging and may be neglected or struggling today, but possess the “bones” to build upon (i.e. existing building stock of historically significant buildings, established civic/community functions located downtown, a historic identification as being downtown, site planning that pre-dates the automobile and encourages walkability, etc.). Wheat Ridge’s downtown, however, contains few of the “bones” commonly associated with downtown. Additionally, although W. 38th Avenue has been consistently identified as the “Main Street” of Wheat Ridge, it is an auto-oriented and its commercial and retail format is dominated by strip centers and individual pad sites that evolved in the post WWII era. It finds itself “dated” in terms of appearance, customer market appeal and lacks the type of space desired by today’s retailers, leaving it with high vacancies.

To revitalize W. 38th Avenue, a true identity must be crafted and embraced by the community at large, including residents, business owners, advocacy groups and the City. Since Wheat Ridge is missing some of the “bones” of a traditional downtown, existing attributes that do exist must be capitalized on and re-branded to help strengthen and create the corridor’s identity as downtown. Wheat Ridge possesses numerous assets to attract and support a thriving Main Street and finding ways to effectively communicate and build support for an articulated vision is the key element to downtown success. Success will occur only when the driving forces behind downtown revitalization learn to gently guide change in customer and resident perception. This is done through strong connections with downtown audiences, consistency (and persistence!), and the patience to find a message and stick with it.
The following observations and recommendations will help frame and direct how W. 38th Avenue can develop an identity as Wheat Ridge’s Main Street, cultivate partnerships to promote revitalization, discover resources to implement programs, and continuously engage community support.

**ORGANIZATION**

To be effective, commercial corridor revitalization cannot be a haphazard undertaking or a set of disparate visions, policies and projects. It requires collaboration, focus and continuity. Organization is about integrating diverse interests in the community and focusing them on a shared, long-term agenda for restoring downtown’s physical beauty and economic viability.

Organization, one point of the Main Street Four Point Approach ™, is about marshaling the human and financial resources to implement a comprehensive downtown revitalization process. Indeed given the absence of an organization for W. 38th Avenue, revitalization will rely on the creation of a management structure and its effectiveness in outreach to the community and setting the standard for transparency, governance, and accountability.

The following observations and recommendations present specific ideas for improving W. 38th Avenue and provide suggestions for helping city staff, WR2020, businesses, and residents in adjacent neighborhoods coordinate activities and perform effectively.

**Observation:** Multiple organizations work with businesses in Wheat Ridge but there appears to be little focus, communication, or resources dedicated specifically to W. 38th Avenue. Many examples exist from other communities of best practices which can provide guidance in the area of professional downtown management. However, revitalization strategies for W. 38th Avenue will require active and transparent management of DESIGNATED financial, staff and volunteer resources.

**Recommendation: Focus on W. 38th Avenue.** An established commercial area is the heart and soul of any community. To a great extent, the perception of a city as a great place or just another place depends on vibrant commercial areas. Being vibrant means being lively, a place to go, and a place to do things. W. 38th Avenue is in a position to be the gathering and entertainment center of Wheat Ridge. But, it will take work and commitment from many parties.

- Commit to revitalizing W. 38th Avenue The City has to “buy in” to the importance of W.38th Avenue and announce intentions to prioritize its revitalization by directing resources there. Consensus of the entire City Council is needed. Identical support is also necessary from the Urban Renewal Authority given that the area is a designated urban renewal district.

- Develop leadership, a champion or umbrella organization for the corridor to guide the revitalization process. Establish one organizational point of contact. This contact should be accountable for W. 38th Avenue. Establish a leadership position or organization that has the ability to build confidence, credibility, consistency, and continuity. While financial support will be necessary in the initial stages, this entity must eventually become self-sustaining. A business plan for sustainability should be developed from the outset. It would be useful to look to a self-funded entity like a redevelopment agency,
a non-profit or business district for ideas on financial sustainability. Plan to include a cap on the percentage of administrative costs allowable as a requirement for external funding. The cap on the percentage of administrative costs allowable is to encourage sustainability in the organization. By limiting the use of City funds for administration, it will encourage the organization to see other more sustainable means of paying these costs.

- Develop informational material on 38th Avenue. Create a “W. 38th Avenue Resources Directory” and Annual Wheat Ridge 101 Educational Event. An informational open house for organizations providing services to businesses, property owners, or residents in the area. This event is not only for the businesses, but also for residents.

- Maintain consistent and clear communication lines for corridor stakeholders. Develop a clear two way communication system for residents, businesses, city staff, and non-profit providers. Create clear materials and distribute information to businesses and residents. Create consistent times and methods of communication with all constituencies. Develop a monthly message posted in the newspaper, on a website, and in local gathering places. Look for a time once a month when stakeholders know there is an opportunity to talk with elected officials, city staff, business organizations etc to discuss issues, both positive and negative impacting the area

- Connect all of the organizations through collaborative activities and the leadership of the designated umbrella organization. Conduct outreach and collaboration activities with all organizations and entities working in the area. Focus on your community first. Who are you to the diverse residents of Wheat Ridge? Build trust, excitement, interest and belief among them. Unite them. Respond to demographic changes in the area including a variety of ethnic and age groups.

- Build collaboration. All community groups need to understand the identity of W. 38th Avenue and their role in its identity and success. All groups can have unique identities, but they need to be working towards the same goal. Identify the W. 38th Avenue Organization. Divide the responsibilities for strategies to achieve objectives. Only by breaking tasks into workable pieces will W. 38th Avenue be able to achieve community and economic revitalization. Develop relationship with the school to include students, parents, teachers, and administration in the revitalization of the area.

Observation: Incentive programs to promote property revitalization and individual business operations are a critical component in most redevelopment efforts. However these types of incentives should flow from a clear vision for the corridor and an Action Plan that targets incentives in support of overall goals and objectives. Programs to encourage business and property owners to revitalize their properties and enhance business operations are only effective if the types of improvements encouraged are consistent with the vision for the community.

Recommendation: Be consistent and proactive with economic development tools and incentives. Develop and utilize transparent guidelines and higher standards for all grants and loans. Be sure that your policies are consistent with design guidelines, community vision, etc.

Identify meaningful training and development programs for business revitalization.
Collaborate with economic gardening through Jefferson County Business Resource Center.

- Partner with Jefferson County Housing Authority, Metro West Housing Solutions, and Archdiocesan Housing, to do quality housing projects.
- Work with CU/DOLA students to provide renderings of potential façade improvements, signage, etc.
- Coordinate training for businesses to utilize web resources and collaborative marketing.

IDENTITY

There is no clear identity or branding of Wheat Ridge’s W. 38th Avenue corridor. An identity will provide a focus on which to build a marketing campaign to “sell” the area. The identity should focus on W. 38th Avenue’s assets and highlight its uniqueness.

The area is both the historical and the defacto Main Street of the city. It was one of the earliest streets to be used for transportation, commerce, and living. Most of the businesses on the corridor understand the significance of its history, but many of the residents and visitors do not have the same appreciation. Incorporating the street’s history into a clear identity will help to promote it as a singular entity. This will help position or establish W. 38th Avenue as an interesting, unique destination for visitors and residents as well as incite pride in the community.

**Observation:** W. 38th Avenue is not being embraced as Wheat Ridge’s Main Street.

**Recommendation:** Declare W. 38th Avenue as your Main Street. The corridor was and still remains the Main Street for the city. It is the heart of Wheat Ridge. Historically, an important pedestrian-scale shopping enclave along the corridor existed where the location of Wheat Ridge Cyclery is today and remains the HEART of the City.

**Recommendation:** Celebrate W. 38th Avenue Main Street with a Grand Re-Opening Ceremony. It is important to train the community to get back into the habit of viewing W. 38th Avenue as Wheat Ridge’s Main Street. This will be accomplished by a number of steps that fall under both Identity and Promotion; however, it is important to incite excitement in the community and businesses. Plan an event that will draw people to W. 38th Avenue to give them a positive experience and create memories of a downtown experience. This Grand Re-Opening should not be designed to make money for merchants at the time; but rather to make people aware of what the area has to offer. In turn, they can become future customers it is a first step toward creating a habit of coming to W. 38th Avenue.

**Observation:** There are many organizations working for the economic and community enhancement of Wheat Ridge, but not one that is solely dedicated to promoting the W. 38th Avenue corridor.

**Recommendation:** Identify who will be responsible for focusing on the W. 38th Avenue corridor. This may be one of the existing organizations or could be an advisory group comprised of members of the existing organizations as well as representatives from the 38th Avenue businesses. This advisory group should work to create two-way communications
with 38th Avenue businesses; this could include regular newsletters, meetings, or visiting the individual businesses in person.

**Observation:** There is no clear identity for Wheat Ridge’s W. 38th Avenue.

**Recommendation:** An advisory group should work with the Wheat Ridge Historical Society and other stakeholders to collaborate on an image for the corridor. Wheat Ridge is ripe in history, especially along W. 38th Avenue. Many of the buildings still conjure up historical images. If only other Colorado communities had such a framework to build upon!

**Recommendation:** The historical buildings on W. 38th Avenue are the key building blocks in recreating a vision and identity for the area. It was one of the first streets to be used for transportation, commerce and living. But times have changed and economies have changed and this image must be rebranded and put into a newer context.

**Recommendation:** W. 38th Avenue’s owners/operators/businesses/tenants lack a vision of what a Main Street IS and COULD BE. As stated throughout this report, the community needs to come together and re-create and understand what the vision is for their future.

**Recommendation:** Define the image for the corridor. This will be determined by examining its assets, market potential, community members’ values, and local buy-in.

**Recommendation:** Identify W. 38th Avenue’s assets. What are the unique and desirable buildings, shops, and social gathering spots? Include people, buildings, heritage, and institutions. Wheat Ridge Cyclery is a destination business. Are there others? Examine the entire physical environment. Look at not just the buildings, but also landscape, sidewalk condition, lighting, traffic, etc. Which positive images should be promoted more strongly? Which negative images can be changed?

**Recommendation:** Review the attitudes about the corridor from the data gathered from the consumer and business owner surveys and focus groups during the consultation team visit.

**Recommendation:** Identify the corridor’s niche in marketplace. Consider current and potential target markets: local families, females, baby boomers, tweens, college students, office workers, tourists, ethnic groups, artists, neighbors etc.

**Recommendation:** Write a Positioning Statement. In no more than two sentences, create a summary of W. 38th Avenue. Incorporate all that you have learned in the above steps. An example might be: “W. 38th Avenue in the Heart of Wheat Ridge provides locals and visitors a personal service experience at a neighborhood business. It’s an authentic, small-town environment just steps from the big city.”

**Recommendation:** An advisory group should educate community, businesses, and city
staff about Wheat Ridge’s identity, vision, and goals. This will be disseminated through a variety of methods, including face-to-face meetings, website, and marketing materials.

Observation: A perception exists that Wheat Ridge is not a business-friendly community.

Recommendation: Develop a business attraction plan. Develop cohesive marketing package for new and potential businesses to be used by realtors and economic developers.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING INTRODUCTION

During the consultant’s preliminary analysis and after holding the focus groups, the team observed some frustration, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of a cohesive economic development plan for W. 38th Avenue. After creating a Main Street vision for the corridor, the city, WR2020, the Urban Renewal Authority and others can revamp economic development initiatives to help implement the vision. In the meantime, these organizations can utilize the preliminary market information presented in this report as a starting point for more in-depth market and real estate evaluations to help identify market and site specific opportunities for the area.

THE W. 38TH AVENUE TRADE AREA

The first step in assessing the corridor was to define a W.38th Avenue trade area. A trade area is the maximum extent of geographic space surrounding the corridor where people would travel from to utilize services on W. 38th Avenue. To assess a large-scale regional shopping destination such as Flatiron Crossing Mall, a 5-mile geographic area radiating out from the site is typically used. A smaller neighborhood scale cluster of shops would generally require a 1-mile trade area because users would primarily visit the corridor by foot for convenience versus traveling a larger distance to shop at a regional destination. Although Wheat Ridge Cyclery may be a regional draw, for customers from throughout the metro area, most stores along W. 38th attract a majority of clientele from the surrounding neighborhoods. The team considers W. 38th Avenue to be between a regional and neighborhood scale trade area corridor. A preliminary 3-mile trade area was used as delineated by the oval-esque red line. Internally, the team further restricted the trade area to account for significant barriers or competing shopping districts that would deter people from using W.38th Avenue such as I-25 and the railroad tracks to the north and Colfax Avenue which is evidenced by the polygonal, thick red line. The team’s data analyses and projections are based on this specific trade area.

COMPARABLE CORRIDORS

Survey results and the discussions with focus groups indicated that attributes exist in comparable corridors such as Highland Square, Tennyson Street, Olde Town Arvada, Colfax Avenue, etc. that appeal to W.38th Avenue users.
Overall, the W. 38th Avenue neighborhood trade area has a lower residential population than most comparable corridors. It lacks the ideal “critical mass” of residents needed to cultivate a 24/7, diverse, thriving street environment. Additionally, a critical mass of residents enables a corridor to have more diversity within its business community. For example, two or three restaurants on a corner have a better chance of surviving if there are many potential patrons within walking distance. Residents may go out to dinner multiple times a week or month and frequent different establishments. Unlike office workers, residents are located in the neighborhood at night and on weekends, expanding times when purchases can be made.

Average retail rent per square foot is significantly cheaper than comparable corridors. (assume a chart will document this) This market condition is a reaction to high vacancy rates (significantly higher on W. 38th Avenue compared to other corridors), some deteriorating and obsolete retail spaces and buildings, and a lack of foot traffic that may be found in comparable corridors. Nonetheless, the lower rents may make the corridor more “entrepreneur-friendly” for start-up businesses that need to save on operating expenses. W. 38th Avenue could be re-branded as an incubator environment for new or start up entrepreneurial retail ventures.

Although the corridor doesn’t possess a significant amount of office space outside of the Exempla Lutheran campus, the rents and vacancies are lower than comparable areas. Residential populations are ideal for creating a lively street atmosphere but office workers also make a significant contribution. Employees often shop in locations proximate to their offices in order to save time since they may live outside of Wheat Ridge. In addition, the low rents may be attractive to entrepreneurs and start-up businesses looking to minimize
operating costs or businesses that do not necessarily require Class A (refers to prime office) space to operate.

**MARKET ASSESSMENT: RESIDENTIAL DEMAND**

To develop reasonable forecasts of market demand for residential real estate products, we suggest you use a model based on projections of household growth within the residential trade area. To arrive at a reasonable growth rate the team’s analysis looks at two sources of projections: local small-area forecasts (in this case, Denver Regional Council of Governments’ forecasts for Traffic Analysis Zones approximately matching the trade area), and statistically trended projections from a Census-based national source (in this case, Claritas, a widely-used demographic data supplier). For our trade area, DRCOG projects household growth from 2005 to 2015 of 0.6 percent per year. Claritas, on the other hand, using recent historical trends, actually projects slight negative “growth”. Following the rationale that national data providers tend to underestimate infill potential, the team used the higher, DRCOG, growth.¹

Once a baseline count of households is established and a reasonable growth rate is determined, residential demand is modeled as a function of household growth over some period of time (ten years was used here as a reasonable time frame for small-to-medium scale). Household growth is apportioned across household income groups (estimated by Claritas), which are then translated into housing price points (for both rental and for sale) using assumptions about long-term interest rates and affordability (approximately 7 percent APR and 30 percent of income, respectively). A sliding scale of propensity to rent is applied across income groups, such that the total percent of renters is equal to the existing percent of renters, leaving total ten-year demand for rental and ownership units across price points.

At an aggressive but attainable capture rate (market share) of between 11 and 13 percent, the W. 38th Avenue Corridor could absorb between 20 and 30 market rate condo/townhome/loft units and between 60 and 70 apartment rental units by 2020.

¹ Suggestions for analysis made by Leland Consulting Group.
MARKET ASSESSMENT: RETAIL DEMAND

To develop reasonable forecasts of market demand for retail real estate products, a model was used based on projections of household growth and consumer expenditure patterns within a defined trade area. Depending on the nature of the retail establishment, demand may be sourced from a larger trade area (as is the case with Wheat Ridge Cyclery). In this analysis, estimates of trade area consumer spending potential (modeled on Census-based Consumer Spending Patterns data) are compared to estimates of existing retail supply across several spending categories. Discrepancies in these supply and demand estimates are considered indicative of potential gaps or “voids” – areas where local retail supply is not meeting local demand. The trade area used in this analysis shows substantial leakage of retail dollars in the categories of Clothing & Accessories and Health & Personal Care (in addition to smaller voids in Furniture and Misc. Retail). Of these, the leakage/void in Health and Personal Care spending is the most realistic target for new corridor businesses for recapturing lost dollars, as clothing spending tends to gravitate towards major regional centers and malls.

In addition to demand from retail voids, this analysis looks at demand generated from projected household growth in the trade area. Such growth is expected to create demand across spending categories based on those same estimated spending patterns. Finally, some measure of future retail demand is expected to result from anticipated replacement of obsolete existing retail space in the trade area. The rate at which this occurs is an estimate based on judgment factoring in the age and quality of existing retail space relative to competition in the region.

Based on these combined factors, and the 0.6 percent annual projected household growth rate, the W. 38th Avenue Corridor could realistically capture almost 50,000 square feet of net new retail space – out of almost 500,000 s.f. of total trade area new demand by 2020. This implied capture rate of 10 percent is historically aggressive, but considered attainable with a coordinated revitalization effort. Note that this absorption level does not include enough demand for a full-scale grocery center, but could include smaller format specialty neighborhood grocers, two to four restaurants depending on size, approximately five to ten thousand square feet of health and personal care related space, and other specialty and miscellaneous retail (especially tenants capitalizing on proximity to Wheat Ridge Cyclery – the area’s most successful regional draw. The King Soopers center at Sheridan and the hospital are also huge draws.

Suggestions for analysis made by Leland Consulting Group.
MARKET ASSESSMENT: OFFICE DEMAND

Note that office demand, in the form of speculative credit-tenant office buildings (credit-tenant financing is designed specifically to fund the purchase, refinance and construction of commercial property that is (or will be) occupied by a single tenant with good credit. is not considered a realistic prospect for the corridor. But due to proximity to the hospital and neighborhoods, some office demand may be included within demand totals for retail (in the form of storefront professional and/or medical space) and residential (in the form of live/work studio space). (we see lots of medical office space for doctors and other wanting to be off campus from the hospital, medical tenants are high quality, they want to project a good image and are stable)

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING: OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observation: There is some frustration, unrealistic expectations, and lack of cohesive plans for economic development of the corridor.

Recommendation: Complete a Potential to Change Map for W. 38th Avenue corridor. Compile the following information for W. 38th Avenue from Sheridan to Wadsworth: existing land use(s), planned land use(s), current zoning, infrastructure including roads, official bicycle trails/paths, RTD routes, parking layout (if applicable) and requirements, property ownership, property value, proximate amenities and community facilities, cost of improvements to make property meet City standards, etc. Input as much of this information as possible into a GIS database to analyze the corridor visually. Identify parcels and assemblages of parcels that have the most potential for change (i.e. zoning allows for increase in floor area ratio and/or building footprint, amicable land owner that is willing to develop, location at multi-modal transportation intersection, etc.).

Recommendation: Using the Potential to Change Map, identify locations (catalyst nodes and sites) that have the highest potential change. Nodes are the junctions and crossings of paths to incubate a variety of activity and energy with concentrations of retail, residential, office or civic uses or a mix of uses. Cross these areas with the community’s vision for W. 38th Avenue to determine what is envisioned for the catalyst areas. Create a “development prospects” package with information about each catalyst site and node including traffic counts near the site, transportation links to/from the site, average price per square foot for the property itself and/or comparables along the corridor, existing and planned land use and zoning, number of people who live within 2-3 miles of the site, etc. and contact information for a representative from the City and broker (if applicable). A “development prospects” package summarizing information regarding a limited number of defined catalyst nodes and sites along W. 38th Avenue that are recognized by key stakeholders, citizens, investors, etc. as priorities for redevelopment and/or enhancement. (the city and WR2020 have actually been doing-so this reinforces a great idea)

Recommendation: Create a regular developer-oriented tour program. Use the community’s vision as a base to start compiling a list of “ideal” developers in Wheat Ridge. For example, if the community envisions a mixed-use corridor with New Urbanist
style design, assemble a list of developers that embrace Wheat Ridge’s values, vision and
have experience with that type of development in Colorado. Communicate with “ideal”
developers and send them the “development prospects” pamphlet, invitation to a tour of the
corridor and catalyst sites/nodes, and any other relevant demographic, market or promotional
material. Encourage them to invite colleagues. Post information regarding the tours and
contact information on the Wheat Ridge 2020 and City websites so other involved in the
development industry can find out about the tours. This increases corridor awareness amongst
the development community and increases interest in properties from potential developers.

Recommendation: After a community vision has been formulated for W. 38th Avenue,
consider/evaluate funding mechanisms reviewed in the CRP Report to determine
which resources are best suited to fund downtown improvements. Create a downtown
improvement organization with a dedicated stream of funding. Review potential types of
entities, a list of which is located in the appendix.

Recommendation: Continue efforts to become familiar with regional organizations.
Wheat Ridge2020 and City staff should continue efforts to become members of development-
oriented associations and advocacy groups. Pay for their membership if financially feasible.
Welcome development-oriented associations and advocacy groups to conduct workshops,
trainings, social events and seminars and conduct studies on W. 38th Avenue. Positive
relationships, more publicity for W. 38th Avenue and the sharing of information between Wheat
Ridge and local organizations will result

PROMOTION

Observation: A business district’s image determines its potential for vitality and prosperity.
This is not limited to only the physical image. Promotions can change community attitudes by
highlighting your commercial district’s best assets and building a unified image by targeting
a defined, specific market niche with printed collateral, website presence and marketing
campaigns.

Remember that promotions generate fresh activity by helping to re-establish the corridor as the
hub of activity, thereby attracting more investors, shoppers, and new businesses.

Recommendation: Create a Shop Local campaign. “Shop Local” has become a powerful
slogan in many communities as consumers begin to view this as a principled decision and an
investment in their community. A good first step for Wheat Ridge is to create new merchant
window stickers (e.g., Heart of Wheat Ridge) to unify and promote stores on the W. 38th
Avenue corridor.

Recommendation: Develop unified business promotions. Local advertising campaigns should
focus on clustering businesses for promotions: For example, a Valentine’s Day ad might read:

• Shop W. 38th Avenue…the Heart of Wheat Ridge!
• Romantic dinner: Red Tango
• Create your own Valentine: Your Paper Garden
• Bicycle built for two: Wheat Ridge Cyclery
Recommendation: Conduct cross-retail promotional events. Consider a niche promotion, such as “After-School Specials” for students. Or utilize destination stores, such as Wheat Ridge Cyclery and Kress Kitchen & Bath, to promote lesser-known stores, e.g., customers can receive a coupon for other stores. (Note: businesses don’t have to even be related!)

Recommendation: Conduct a “fam tour.” A familiarization or “fam” tour is a great way for the businesses on W. 38th Avenue to learn about other businesses on the corridor. The more retailers know about one another, the more likely they are to direct customers to other businesses on W. 38th.

Recommendation: Build local media relations. Get to know your local media. Build a media list. Send out press releases of newsworthy events. Provide story ideas. Media personnel are very busy. If you can help them to find and angle on your event, you are saving them time and energy. Submit event details through online events calendars for local newspapers and Denver Post.

Observation: There are no current marketing materials for W. 38th Avenue.

Recommendation: Create a W.38th Avenue business directory and map. Distribute it! Build awareness of the W. 38th Avenue corridor as a center of community activity as well as what the individual retail and businesses have to offer. This should list everything in the corridor, including designated parking areas, public restrooms, and historic sites. Sell advertising to businesses to pay for maps. Also, include a calendar of events, store hours, and special offers.

Recommendation: Develop a strong online presence. Design a website or utilize a current website to promote W. 38th Avenue as a single entity. This should include an online business directory with contact info and links to business websites if applicable, special events, promotions, etc. Also utilize social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) to promote businesses, special events, and retail promotions. Keep in mind that social media only works if you make daily updates. This could be a good student internship project.

Observation: There are many empty storefront windows on W.38th Avenue which makes the corridor less visually-appealing.

Recommendation: Fill those empty windows! Attractive window displays can be used in a variety of manners. Some communities have held art contests for kids with an evening set aside for judging. This gets parents and kids out and about and crowds will attract more crowds. Other ideas could include holding an art opening for local artists or allowing current retailers to create displays. This will not only direct traffic to stores, but also increase attractiveness to potential lessees.
Design

Historically, W. 38th Avenue extended west out of Denver as a two-lane farm to market corridor. As Denver and its western suburbs (eventually Wheat Ridge) continued to grow, the corridor evolved as a residential arterial. Neighborhoods grew along the corridor, and W. 38th Avenue became a two-lane arterial street with on-street parking serving the homes that were built to face the corridor. As W.38th Avenue continued west, new neighborhoods created increased traffic demand on the corridor.

Primary regional traffic flow in Wheat Ridge extended east-west from Golden to Denver.

Regional growth continued to follow the roadway expansion; higher traffic volumes required W. 38th Avenue to become four lanes, lose its on-street parking and introduce a center left turn lane in locations. This widening of the road narrowed the sidewalks and the frontage of many residential properties, compromising the livability and pedestrian safety of the corridor, as well as compromising stability of adjacent residential properties.

Over time, this portion of W. 38th Avenue adapted to commercial uses with a strong focus on higher levels of automobile traffic. Neighborhood-serving strip commercial properties emerged along W. 38th Avenue in response to the increased traffic flows and the east-west orientation of the regional traffic.

Unfortunately for the corridor, the opening of Interstate 70 in 1967 and the emergence of Lakeside Mall and other regional malls shifted traffic patterns and began the slow erosion of the commercial properties along many of the city’s east-west corridors. Regional traffic patterns shifted from an east-west pattern, accessing Denver and Golden, to a north-south pattern, accessing Interstate 70 and many of the regional suburban commercial centers.

Today, the land uses for properties along W.38th Avenue have evolved from a continuous strip pattern of development to a nodal pattern of neighborhood centers. As a result, the operational and geometric conditions of W. 38th Avenue are not aligned with the land use’s nodal pattern of development and the transportation realities of the corridor.

General Observations:

- Lack of Vision for the W.38th Avenue Main Street Corridor
- W. 38th Avenue’s geometric deficiencies limit the safety and friendliness of the roadway for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transit, as well as the residential opportunities along the corridor.
• Negative impacts of struggling mid-corridor commercial properties on adjacent residential properties
• The corridor appears cold and uninviting and lacks visual appeal
• Lack of a public gathering places along the Corridor
• There is a lack of strong character at the activity nodes
• Lack of streetscape amenities and quality signage
• City is perceived as non-business friendly

Observation: Lack of vision for W. 38th Avenue which is the heart of Wheat Ridge.

Recommendation: A cohesive vision and strategy are needed to ensure the evolution of W. 38th Avenue along with accompanying regulations governing development along the corridor to preserve and enhance its historic character, and better support new and existing economic development activity. City residents envision the W. 38th Avenue corridor as the heart of their community and many identify this corridor as their “Main Street.” In order to make sure that the W. 38th Avenue Main Street corridor becomes that desired community-gathering place, attracting redevelopment while retaining the character of existing neighborhoods, the City (in partnership with Wheat Ridge2020, the Urban Renewal Authority, businesses and commercial and residential property owners) should prepare a W. 38th Avenue Main Street Corridor Plan to be adopted as a subarea plan of the 2009 Envision Wheat Ridge Comprehensive Plan. Concurrent with the Corridor Plan, a minor plan amendment to the 2009 Comprehensive Plan should be prepared accordingly.

Facilitate a community engagement process for a Corridor Plan, Comprehensive Plan amendment and a City Charter amendment. As with all planning efforts, public outreach, collaboration, consensus building and ownership of the Plan is the key to its ultimate adoption and implementation. The City should consider the following community engagement strategies to ensure that issues, aspirations, and concerns are consistently heard, considered and feedback is provided on how public input influenced decisions:

• Identify your leaders - form a Mayor appointed Task Force. Their role will be to provide guidance and community insight throughout the development of the Corridor Plan to ensure community ownership and support of the adopted document.
• Gather public feedback about community desires for the corridor (utilize community surveying, visual preference surveys, workshops, stakeholder interviews, etc).
• Provide a transparent process for how public input is used. Be transparent and inclusive.
• Utilize the City’s website, direct email notification and social media tools (i.e., twitter and facebook) to provide information about the project including background materials, draft documents, meeting summaries, as well as notification of upcoming community meetings and upcoming events.
• Conduct Community Outreach events (i.e., Enterprise Wheat Ridge meeting, Wheat Ridge Carnation Festival, Live Well Wheat Ridge activities, etc.)
• Partner with Wheat Ridge 2020 to facilitate a Corridor Plan Education Program with the middle school as well as the WR2020 Planning and Development Academy. Use the programs to teach students about planning and as a tool for the City council and Planning Staff to use. This would be an excellent opportunity to build a positive relationship with the school.
• Publish articles in the Connections newsletter.
• Foster participation of Elected and Appointed Officials (find a respected champion). Facilitate joint meetings with City Council and the Planning Commission.
• Re-engage the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), Technical Advisory Group (TAG) as well as the newly formed Infill and Redevelopment Committee.

Observation: W. 38th Avenue’s geometric deficiencies limit the safety and friendliness of the roadway for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transit, as well as the residential opportunities along the corridor. The roadway is oversized and does not accommodate the needs of all users. The middle portion of the corridor is carrying 16,000 cars a day along a roadway designed to carry approximately 24,000 cars a day. This surplus capacity allows the corridor’s design to be reconsidered for a road diet (technique in which the number of travel lanes on a road is reduced in order to achieve overall transportation improvements) allowing better accommodation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and landscaping to better support the residential opportunities.

Recommendations: Consider altering the size of the road with on-street parking, in commercial areas and improved landscaping and bicycle facilities in residential portions to encourage slower speeds, alternative transportation, stronger neighborhoods, and more shopping. The capacity of W. 38th Avenue between Sheridan and Wadsworth is much greater than the current traffic volumes require. The current width of the street, with minimal usage actually encourages traffic to go faster because there is so much space and so few vehicles. Consider reducing the middle portions of the corridor from four lanes to three lanes. This will introduce a dedicated center left turning lane throughout the corridor, improving efficiency and freeing up space for other community considerations.

As previously noted, the current street configuration allows a lot of cars to
move quickly, but it does not accommodate the needs of other users. By allowing for more through traffic, there has been less attention paid to other users who could be more involved in the community. Encourage a number of different transportation means, including bicycling, walking, and transit through a simple redesign of road striping. This would allow on-street parking, bike lanes, and would assist in making the area feel more inviting to non-automobile users. The on-street parking not only allows drivers more opportunity to stop and shop, but also provides a buffer between the traffic and pedestrians and store fronts. It would make it more desirable to sit on a bench or to have an outdoor café. Bike lanes will encourage the connectivity to residential areas as well as creating a friendlier feel to the street.

**Observation:** Struggling mid-corridor commercial properties have impacted adjacent residential properties and allowed for an inconsistent delineation between commercial and residential properties. This regulatory anomaly introduces commercial intrusion into the neighborhood, destabilizing lower density residential property values and enabling a domino of unintended negative consequences on the corridor’s adjacent neighborhoods.

**Recommendation:** Defend the neighborhoods by defining a residential line. The stabilization and reemergence of the residential areas are key components of the W. 38th Avenue corridor. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly define and not allow deviations from the borders of the single family neighborhoods and create transitional design guidelines to preserve the single family character. The residential areas should be insulated from development to ensure residential stability and concentrate commercial opportunities and higher density residential opportunities in appropriate locations along W. 38th Avenue.

**Observation:** City corridor appears cold and uninviting. Buildings, residences, shops appear vacant and do not encourage new owners to step into vacant shops.

**Recommendations:** Extend the streetscape and other urban design improvements completed between Sheridan and Harlan along the W. 38th Avenue Corridor to provide a walkable and distinct gateway to Wheat Ridge’s historic commercial area between Wadsworth and Pierce Street. Clean up pavement, paint striping, lot spaces, traffic lanes, etc. Remove half or more of the “For Sale” signs. There is no need for several signs on the same building for the same realtor. If multiple buildings appear on the same block then they should be jointly signed by one or the multiple realtors. Fill vacant property windows with displays, paintings, curtains, Wheat Ridge history. Empty shops are low value shops. Show activity and pride in the property.

Where possible, it is desirable to have building frontages and signage facing W.38th Avenue. Entrances are where the activity takes place, which, much like an advertisement, invites in customers who happen by. When discussing façade improvements or signage, encourage
property or business owners to face W. 38th Avenue to announce their presence and create some connectivity along the street.

**Observation:** There is a lack of public gathering places along the Corridor. There is no one location where public can gather for farmers markets, concerts, city events or to meet other shoppers. Open space along the corridor appears to be used for parking lots, undeveloped land, or open lawn areas.

**Recommendation:** Create public plazas or space along the corridor at the activity nodes for public gatherings, celebrations, focus of family activities. These plazas often have seating and feature outdoor restaurants, vendors, fountains, kiosks for local information signage, child play areas and nighttime lighting. Plaza’s can be included around retail activity areas like the High Court intersection. Use of the large middle school lawn for concerts, tented events, art fairs, craft fairs, bicycle events, and neighborhood celebrations will further strengthen this node along the corridor.

**Observation:** The corridor lacks visual appeal as it is cluttered with automobile bumpers, parking lots, signage, and scattered residential developments. Driveway access from the roadway is scattered and often poorly defined. Parking is often over the top of public walk ways and these walk ways are not continuous along the corridor.

**Recommendation:** The form of land use should be designed to encourage retail activity areas at specific nodes along the corridor. These nodes then transition to segments of residential character and then back to the retail/mixed use character at the next node. This transition will create a unique and well defined character along the corridor and eliminate the confusion of residential and retail mix. Land use planning can be used to create a rhythm of commercial to residential and/or mixed use land uses along the corridor. Activity nodes can be located at Sheridan, Harlan, High Court and Wadsworth. Focus small-scale mixed-use infill and redevelopment activities primarily between Wadsworth and Pierce.

**Observation:** There is a lack of strong character at the activity nodes. Retail centers appear the same as the residential segments along the corridor. One activity area has a strong regional retail presence at the Wheat Ridge Cyclery location at High Court and W. 38th.

**Recommendation:** Create a lifestyle shopping center near High Court. This center would fill shops with other active lifestyle merchandise and offices. Examples include shops that sell jogging clothes and shoes, bicycle and other athletic supplies, etc can cluster around the High Court area to create a themed lifestyle center. Professional offices might include physical therapy, non-profits, event promotions, white water excursion agents, and so forth. Retail nodes should be strengthened with defined pedestrian crossings, streetscape...
improvements, and lighting. Street pavement changes as initiated at Harlan and 38th might be incorporated at the High Court location. All of the latter reinforces the synergy between land use activities and the streetscape and ultimately provide a pedestrian oriented atmosphere for walking and socializing.

**Observation:** There is a lack of pedestrian lighting throughout most of the corridor but especially at the activity nodes. Characteristic lighting is provided over most of the corridor but it does not specifically light the walks or the shop frontages. This leaves the corridor looking like it is unoccupied and closed for business during the evening hours.

**Recommendation:** Study pedestrian lighting along the whole corridor. Clean existing lamps and standards. Add or include lighting that illuminates the sidewalk and building facades. This lighting might included “twinkle” lighting on the building as well as light standards within the sidewalk. Lights should all be downcast and should definitely be on during evening hours after shops are closed for business. Ultimately, design standards for lighting should be developed as part of an overall urban design streetscape pattern.

**Observation:** There is a noticeable lack of street furniture, bike racks, benches, trash containers, newspaper stands, etc. This lack of streetscape amenities points to a lack of pedestrian usage or to a disregard for pedestrian use. Again, these features should be part of an overall streetscape design.

**Recommendation:** Activity nodes should be the main location for streetscape amenities, pedestrian and bicycle improvements (i.e., crosswalks and striping, generally every half to one-mile, corresponding with transit stop enhancements as shown on the Transportation Structure Plan in Chapter 7) to increase safe and inviting pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to the corridor. Including these amenities will encourage pedestrians, promote shopping opportunities, assist in selling or leasing vacant properties and provide a safe environment to leave a car and shop.

**Observation:** Signage along the corridor is run-down, identifies shops that have long since closed, and is poorly organized to actually be safely seen from the roadway at 30mph. The predominant signs are the “For Sale” or “For Lease” signs. Often buildings have these signs in each of the vacant shop windows. One shop had 3-4 signs all identifying the building as
vacant and available to the same realtor. This also gives the impression of a low rent district in disrepair and is not promoting the character that was expressed at the public meetings.

**Recommendation:** Ensure quality new signage along the corridor and encourage upgrades to existing non-conforming signage. All signage in the corridor should be studied, inventoried and from those findings, a definitive set of design guidelines developed. There is no need for uniform signage along the corridor but they should be clean, informative and visible. Where possible signs should be combined to back-of-walk standard signage to alert the driver to what is within the development. Realtor signs can and should be coordinated to eliminate the clutter in shop windows and reduce the “no one is home” appearance of the corridor retail outlets. Where possible vacant shop windows can be used to advertise Wheat Ridge community events, other nearby shop inventories, etc. Shop windows should be full of shop items.

**Observation:** City is perceived as non-business friendly. Throughout the series of focus groups, there seemed to be an overall perception that the City’s development review process is challenging and cumbersome. This, coupled with the lack of a “can do” attitude among staff and City officials limits retention and enhancement of existing businesses and discourages new development and redevelopment. The root cause of these perceptions rests within the existing Zoning and Development Code and regulatory structure that is overly complex, unpredictable and rather out-of-date. While some citizens expressed concern about the corridor’s appearance and decline, they thought the city needed to adopt higher standards. Additionally, we heard most stakeholders thought the city’s land use requirements were too stringent and limited the ability of infill and redevelopment along the corridor. The City has made progress with the six (6) ordinances adopted to be more “open for business” citywide. It is apparent, however that the existing land use regulations and City Charter’s height and density restrictions present significant regulatory obstacles that deter business attraction and development along the W. 38th Avenue corridor. The obstacles are:

- Regulatory “barriers” to property assemblage.
- Corridor is over-zoned for commercial uses (Commercial One C-1 district), does not allow residential uses, and might not do enough to restrict inappropriate uses such as automotive, drive-through facilities and outdoor storage adjacent to the street.
- Unpredictability of Planning Developments (PD’s). Development proposals are required to rezone to PD, which leads to unpredictability due to multiple review steps and high degree of discretion rather an objective standards.
- Lack of mixed-use zoning districts.
- Lack of usability and applicability of the Architectural and Site Design Manual as well as limited usefulness of the Streetscape and Architectural Design Manuals.
- Overly restrictive building height and density restrictions per the City Charter.
Recommendation: Conduct a regulatory process assessment.
Audit the existing regulations, standards, and policies associated with infill and redevelopment projects. Examine what has worked well and what has not. Establish and engage an Infill and Redevelopment Committee that includes representatives from financial, development, commercial and governmental entities throughout the audit. This type of committee can provide valuable insight as to where a particular code or regulation inhibits infill and redevelopment processes. The audit should be built on a series of questions that identify gaps between current code and infill and redevelopment projects.

Recommendation: Update Zoning and Development Code and Subdivision Regulations.
The evolution of land use zoning has largely been based on an assumption that land uses are static, unchanging, and separated; thereby, working against market changes that favor infill projects. The traditional concept and application of zoning codes could be enhanced to better meet new market opportunities and the special considerations of infill projects along urban corridors. The key is to set forth regulations that ensure the ability to shape pedestrian scale, mixed use, fine-grained urbanism, enforceability, and ease of use. Code revisions can range from simply adding overlay zones on existing zoning districts to address infill challenges to rewriting particular zoning regulations to better reflect infill and redevelopment project characteristics. Once the desired vision and character of the W. 38th Avenue Main Street Corridor is secured through adoption of the Corridor Plan, the Zoning and Development Code, Subdivision Regulations and City policies will need to be amended to accommodate contemporary development patterns, meet market demands and to maintain valued features of existing neighborhoods along the corridor. The following are possible Code amendments that would ensure successful implementation accordingly:

- Facilitate a community engagement process as previously noted but be sure to collaborate with service providers, the city’s Public Works and Parks departments and test the regulations with developers, business owners, and civic associations to validate their ability for implementation and achieving desired goals and objectives for the area.

- To achieve the desired smaller-scale mixed-use character described in the Comprehensive Plan’s Structure Plan, consider adopting a Neighborhood Corridor Mixed-Use zoning district(s) or overlay(s). The new zone district should include strong standards to address a building’s relationship to street, sidewalks, and provision of public gathering places. Additionally, the new zone district or overlay should be lower intensity than the majority of commercial zoning along the corridor and allow for residential uses, reduced parking requirements, and setbacks along the street and for side-yards. A mixed use zone district classification(s) or overlay(s), in combination

Code audit should include a review of the following code components:
- Code Intent and Purpose
- Code Applicability
- Permitted Building Types and Land Uses
- Code Development Standards and Requirements
- Review Criteria
- Code Special Use Standards
- Application Form/Submittal Requirements
with a clearly defined abutting residential property line or border and strong transitional
design guidelines (how the area between residential and commercial uses will look)
will improve, not weaken the adjacent neighborhoods. The City might want to consider/
explore adopting a form-based or hybrid form-based code for the 38th Avenue Main
Street corridor.

• Examine the palatability of a city initiated rezoning of properties along the corridor or
provide incentives for incremental rezoning by the private sector into a new mixed-use
zoning district(s).

• Allow for increased residential and commercial densities and establish criteria for
accessory residential dwelling units (ADUs) such as apartment above garages or in
carriage houses.

• Establish density bonuses and expedited approval for residential development.

• Amend the City Charter to exempt W.38th Avenue corridor or allow for flexible densities
and heights on the street

• Restrict inappropriate uses such as auto-related, outdoor storage adjacent to the street
and drive-through facilities.

• Set forth administrative review processes (Community Development Director approval)
for projects in the corridor’s new zone district.

• Set forth an alternative compliance development approval process within this new
overlay zone or zoning district. Upon request of an applicant, the city may approve an
alternative approach for a plan that does not meeting one or more of the development
standards contained in the new zone district. This approach should only apply in
circumstances where the end result is equal to or superior than what would have been
achieved under strict compliance to the zoning regulations

• Amend subdivision regulations to create a more defined and predictable review process
— allow for administrative approval and ease of parcel assemblage or combining one or
more smaller parcels to create a larger development site.

• Fine tune site planning standards to help implement the community’s vision for W. 38th
Avenue.

• Provide a “How to” section and include graphics to convey intent of the regulations in
the new zone district.

• Consider adopting a W. 38th Avenue Main Street Development Handbook that includes
flowcharts, checklists, submittal requirements, application forms, illustrations,
resources (technical assistance and sources of funds) and incorporates the various code
requirements for the district(s) or overlay(s) zone into a single document for ease of use
by property owners, business owners, developers, citizens, and city staff.

**Recommendation:** Adopt incentive-based design guidelines to complement and
supplement the newly adopted zoning and development regulations. The 38th Avenue
Main Street Design Guidelines should address building siting, access and circulation,
architecture, landscaping, streetscape design, lighting, parking, signage and public art.
The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure that infill and redevelopment along the corridor
proceeds in a manner consistent with the vision set forth in the Corridor Plan by promoting
concentrated, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use activity center/nodes.

**Recommendation:** Redirecting staff resources in the Community Development Department, such as dedicating a staff member/team to be assigned to the W. 38th Avenue corridor may be useful to accelerate regulatory approval processes and reduce regulatory friction from the developer/business owner as well as convey a pro-business attitude. Because local planning expertise is often focused on traditional development projects, the City might want to consider out-sourcing these types of review and approvals. Infill projects can often require extensive adjustments to utilities, demolition, hazard mitigation, traffic impacts, and structure improvement requirements resulting in significant increase in the number of permits required for project review. Outsourcing or dedicating a staff member(s) to expedite development approvals of projects along the corridor will ensure projects are processed through the various City departments/City system quickly – possibly providing over-the-counter approval of developments proposals along the W.38th Avenue Main Street Corridor. (note that Wheat Ridge is an infill community, so this corridor is not unique in that regard.)

**Recommendation:** Facilitate continual education efforts. Educate/train staff on newly adopted W. 38th Avenue Main Street Corridor Plan, updated regulations, design guidelines, and new City policies. Schedule topics as components of the Wheat Ridge 2020 Planning and Development Academy agendas. Facilitate outreach to Middle School as well. (it would be more effective to do educational efforts with the organizational structure formed via the recommendation for such in this report. The academy is mostly residents from the city at large and while we could certainly discuss, it won’t hit your target audience which should be corridor businesses, property owners and residents in adjacent neighborhoods.)
Axonometric (skewed bird’s eye view) renderings of an enhanced and more pedestrian-friendly 38th Avenue. Note the expanded streetscaping and altered street layout that may help cultivate the diverse activities and energy needed to sustain a thriving mixed-use corridor.
FINANCING MECHANISMS

PROMOTIONS

• Booth Fees – These are charges applied to concessionaires at events, parades, community gathering places.

• Heritage Tourism Office/Colorado Tourism Office Grants – The West Jeffco Chamber should work together with other chambers, the county and regional entities to apply for a Colorado Tourism Office Marketing Matching Grant Program, which provides funding to not-for-profit organizations in the State of Colorado for the purpose of promoting the state or a region as a tourism destination.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

• Tax Assistance from General Funds – Allocate specific funds for a dedicated stream of funds for a Capital Improvement Plan exclusively for W. 38th Avenue. Consider allocating by Council Resolution a percentage of the existing sales tax to fund the CIP. Alternatively consider the passage of a dedicated sales tax for the CIP.

• Public Improvement Fees: Consider implementation of impact fees for improvements of the public infrastructure to accommodate new business development. Such fees could be used in improve on street parking.

• Tax Increment Financing (TIF): Because this is a designated urban renewal area, TIF may be available to help support W. 38th Avenue revitalization projects.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

• Consider re-allocating the existing Enterprise Zone along interstate 70 in Wheat Ridge to benefit the W. 38th Ave Corridor. This will allow the Jefferson County Economic Council (JEC) to assist the community with low interest loans for new businesses and business expansion and Enterprise Zone Tax Credits.

• Governor’s Office of Economic Development and International Trade – This agency has several programs from ranging from conducting area economic development assessments to establishing small business development centers.

• Governors Energy Office (GEO) and USDA Rural Development (RD) Energy Programs – Both agencies have new funding programs to retro-fit both public and business HVAC and lighting systems. Wheat Ridge businesses could utilize new technology and renewable energy sources to reduce costs. The City could also upgrade its existing facilitates to achieve long term energy cost savings. One project may be the conversion of streetlights to more energy efficient LED type lights.

• Small Business Administration and Economic Development Administration – These are two federal programs that can assist local businesses in business startup, expansion and relocation.

• Locally, business training is readily available from the Jeffco Business Resource Center.
**W. 38th Avenue Specific Tools**

Colorado allows commercial and business areas traditional downtowns the ability to create several types of public entities to help a city, property owners and tenants organize to implement revitalization strategies like those recommended in this report. The CRP Team recommends that Wheat Ridge investigate and consider the applicability of a downtown development authority (“DDA”). An alternative would be a business improvement district (“BID”).

If selected, a DDA would be created by a city ordinance after an election where eligible voters within a defined area, such as the property owners bordering W. 38th Avenue between Sheridan and Wadsworth, vote to approve the DDA. The DDA would have the power to create and implement a “plan of development” that could include projects for infrastructure and capital improvements along the street and plans for business promotion activities as marketing and educational promotions. If approved by the voters in a TABOR election, the DDA’s funding could come from a property tax of up to 5 mills and tax increment financing from growth in the existing sales tax and/or property tax that is already collected in the area. The DDA Board of Directors would be appointed by the City. DDAs exist in downtown Ft. Collins, Greeley, Longmont and Colorado Springs (among others).

The alternative, a BID would be started by a petition signed by the owners of taxable commercial property representing over 50% of the assessed value and 50% of the acreage along the corridor. The BID would be created after a public hearing and adoption of a City ordinance. After approval by the BID’s voters in a TABOR election, the BID could be empowered to collect property taxes and/or special assessments in the amounts that were approved in the election. The BID would have the power to fund public improvements, business promotions and marketing, security services, and a wide range of other business-related services. Annually an operating plan and budget would be proposed by the BID’s Board of Directors and approved by City Council. Depending on Wheat Ridge’s preference, the BID’s Board of Directors can either be elected by the eligible voters in the BID or appointed by City Council. BIDs exist in downtown Denver, Boulder, Colorado Springs, Black Hawk, and about 30 other locations in Colorado.

“Getting organized” is the single most important next step in implementing a plan to improve the competitive position of W. 38th Ave. in Wheat Ridge. The issues on corridor are bigger than a single business can handle, but there is strength in numbers and strength in working together. A dedicated association, organization, district, or authority can provide the structure for all of the recommendations in this report and give W. 38th Avenue the same competitive advantage that is found by in the management structure of single-owner shopping centers and large discount retailers.

Other Resources, e.g. Downtown Colorado, Inc., etc. – As a member of Downtown Colorado, Inc., Wheat Ridge will continue to be eligible for DCI services, training, and educational programs. It would be beneficial to review programs such as the Development & Improvement Program that might offer some on-going training and support to Wheat Ridge’s W. 38th Corridor efforts.