

# Advancing a 15-minute City by Igniting our Neighborhood Centers

*Market factors, limited tools, and programs, ownership patterns and rising development costs hinder us from accelerating our goal for everyone to have daily goods, services and transit within 15-minute walk or bike ride from their home.*

## Work Plan Items:

The long-range vision and goals for this priority are established in multiple plans including City Plan, the Economic Health Strategic Plan and the 15-minute City Analysis. The following is a compilation of achievable, short-term goals to advance these plans. It incorporates work already in progress.

### 1. Phase 2 Land Use Code Update: Commercial Corridors

- Description: Develop scope, process, and timeline on the next phase of Land Use Code updates related to our neighborhood centers, employment areas and corridors. Will coincide with monitoring state law proposals. Work Session scheduled for June 2024.
- Resources: Additional funding will be needed to complete the Land Use Code Phase 2 scope.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: This effort will include robust, citywide community engagement at the onset of the process until final adoption. The community will inform problem identification, establishment of guiding principles and recommended approaches.
- Deliverable/Council Action/Council Role: Work session feedback and Council action on draft code(s); heavy Council role.
- Timeline:

### 2. Business Process Improvement

- Description: Evaluate existing tools, processes, and resources to go from complexity to simplicity with common permits for new businesses. Some examples include work already underway such as implementing development review website accessibility and navigability improvements, launching a streamlined “mini-Conceptual Review” process for easier access to go/no-go decision-making information, commercial space/lease education to be mindful around zoning and use types, and rolling out State of Development Review reporting and evaluation that will outline guiding principles and mid-term action items. These more tactical efforts will complement the Digital Transformation work underway to implement a new enterprise system for licensing, permitting and inspections. As part of this priority, Community Development and Neighborhood Services (CDNS) and the Economic Health Office (EHO) will collaborate on a proposed program that could replace the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded Small Business Technical Assistance Program to support existing customers.
- Resources: ARPA funding for the Small Business Technical Assistance Program will conclude at the end of 2024. If there is support for this program, new funding (enhancement to apply EHO funding) will be needed for direct support to customers and a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) (development Business Liaison).
- Community Engagement and Outreach: The focus of community engagement will be with the various customers and users of our systems. They will consult on problem identification and

improvements to processes, tools, and technology. Further outreach may be necessary to inform our customers of new tools, programs, and resources.

- Deliverable/Council Action: New tools and resources for customers; updates to Council on progress and improvements; Council action on proposed funding.
- Timeline:

### 3. **Building Place-Based Knowledge and Strategy**

Description: Prepare an internal, high-level assessment and information exchange of the emerging opportunities and challenges for the neighborhood centers in our community. This assessment will include inputs from direct business conversations, relevant data analysis and adopted plan principles. A goal of this effort is to orient all the multi-disciplinary/multi departmental team to a common definition and have deeper, shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities. This foundation will inform developing resources and work plan integration. There will also be a particular focus on how neighborhoods and centers can increase connection. Staff will also focus on how to shape the City's role in these opportunities. This will support and inform our work and of relevant partners such as the URA as they establish criteria for future URA plans. Potential examples of geographic areas of focus include West Elizabeth corridor (e.g., Elizabeth and Taft), MAX Line/Midtown Improvement District, South College Avenue and we will consider areas adjoining major capital projects. This effort also presents an opportunity to begin evaluating the 2018 City Plan and whether it continues to align with community priorities, in anticipation of a future update.

- Resource Requirement: The focus is cost neutral solutions using existing resources and staff time. Additional resources may be needed if special events are organized to engage businesses, landowners and nearby residents.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Staff will need to calibrate the outreach approach to the different Neighborhood Centers. Staff will focus on one-on-one engagement with businesses and nearby neighborhoods, as well as targeted listening sessions for commercial center owners and tenants around education of 15-minute cities and potential opportunities.
- Related Projects: The Transfort Optimization Study will be an important parallel effort that will need to integrate at critical points along the way to ensure a strong link between future transit routes and micro transit solutions and our neighborhood centers.
- Timeline:

### 4. **Public/Private Partnerships**

- Description: Explore and determine optimal private/public partnership opportunities (either new or enhanced) for deeper understanding of the goals and challenges of the 15-minute City, identifying collaboration and implementation actions. These may need to take an opportunistic approach as projects and proposals come forward. Examples of existing collaborations include Foothills Mall redevelopment, master planning of new neighborhoods at Montava and Bloom, and the Front Range Passenger Rail Station Planning.
- Resource Requirement: The focus for short term actions are cost neutral and focus on relationship building and socializing the 15-minute City principles with our partners.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Stakeholder discussions with various board members and leaders.
- Timeline: On-going oversight.

## 5. Albertsons

- Description: The Fort Collins Urban Renewal Authority has been negotiating the purchase of the former Albertsons building at 1636 North College Avenue. The purpose for buying the property is to build a community hub that would be targeted towards Spanish speaking community members with an affordable housing component.
- Resource Requirement: The Urban Renewal Authority would use unpledged tax increments to purchase the property.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: After purchasing the property, the Urban Renewal Authority will re-engage with community members to finalize the programming desired in the community hub. The Urban Renewal Authority will then issue a RFP for qualified developers to build the community hub and develop affordable housing. The Urban Renewal Authority will also begin building a partnership of community organizations to run the community hub.
- Timeline: Urban Renewal Authority staff are waiting for the property owner to terminate its lease with Albertsons to move forward with selling the property. Staff anticipates completing the purchase of the property in 2024.

## 6. Coalition Building

- Description: Test and demonstrate diverse ways to engage community in conversations about the benefits and opportunities of biking, walking, or rolling to nearby goods and services. A pilot event staff is testing this year is “Shift Your Ride: Neighborhood.” This concept is modelled after the neighbor block party trailer to help businesses build relationships with their business and community neighbors. This could be a more formal event hosted by the City or provided to businesses to host their own.
- Resource Requirement: The first Shift Your Ride: Neighborhood is funded for 2024 and will occur later in the year. Future neighborhood events and collaborations with businesses would need funding dedication (this includes sponsorships, donations, vendor fees and other revenue sources).
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Mayor and Council could consider attending or co-hosting events as an effective way to grow awareness and coalitions of support in their Districts.
- Timeline:

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**How did Council define success?** (Note: This does not change, based on Council input.)

1. Identify and remove barriers to achieve a 15-minute City.
2. Minimize obstacles to implementation of 15-minute City through public outreach, public private partnerships and consolidating funding.
3. Use metrics to measure success.
4. Easier and faster adaptive reuse in our centers.
5. Show business the “happy path” to permitting.

**Department Lead:** Co-sponsorship between Community Development and Neighborhood Services (CDNS) and the Economic Health Office (EHO)

**Department Partners:** Social Services, Natural Areas, Parks and FCMoves

### Are we already doing anything as it relates to this priority?

- Land Use Code Update will include process improvements, clear and predictable standards, and realign expectations for commercial corridors (especially near high frequency transit) to incorporate greater density, intensity and mix of uses.
- Through the use of ARPA funds, CDNS manages the Small Business Technical Assistance Program which offers staff support and mini grants to offset costs of design and engineering services.
- CDNS and other departments responsible for permitting and inspections are leading business process improvements and digital transformation solutions. This applies citywide and will benefit our neighborhood centers seeking re-occupancy of tenant space, proposing infill development and larger scale redevelopment proposals.
- EHO and CDNS have formed a cross functional group to better assist businesses navigating the Development Review process. This group works on specific cases, as well as creating digital educational tools for broader distribution. The footprint of this effort is currently Citywide, and focus could be tightened to support more commercial redevelopment in Neighborhood Centers.
- “Shift Your Ride: Neighborhood” program will start with first neighborhood this year and is an effort to connect with residents about the benefits and opportunities in their neighborhood to bike, walk or roll for daily goods and services.
- Economic Health.

### Challenges:

- **Market Factors:** The quickly changing retail trends of existing, auto oriented shopping centers is driving increasing vacancies and loss of major tenants. As a result, our neighborhood centers are challenged in offering daily goods and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.
- **Funding/Tools:** Limited tools available to the City to support and those that are available distributed based on different criteria and are not prioritized based on 15-minute city analysis.
- **Business Inputs:** We have City Plan to identify specific locations in the City. However, we do not have a collective assessment of these centers to compare and understand readiness for reinvestment or to identify predictive signals.
- **Community Engagement/Support:** Behavior change and a growth mindset for our community is critical to meeting these goals. Public opposition and lack of willingness to change behaviors can be an obstacle to implementation.
- **Not One Size Fits All:** Our centers have different characteristics in terms of design, demographics and the adjoining neighborhoods have varying needs. Strategies need to honor those neighborhood characteristics and avoid a one size fits all approach, or presumptive solutions that overlook equitable solutions.
- **Ownership Patterns:** Our Neighborhood Centers have a collection of ownership patterns. Some are under single control and others have multiple ownerships creating varying conditions for change. Some changes can be more holistic and others will be piecemeal.
- **Rising Development Costs:** Infill and redevelopment of these centers face significant costs for infrastructure upgrades and tap fees; and increasing expectations and regulatory control related to site planning and architecture design and discretionary review authority.

**Tradeoffs:**

- The City's permitting process ensures safe and intentional building transitions that incorporate community standards for landscaping, tree canopy, traffic circulation, aesthetic and signage considerations, site lighting, and other considerations. AND these processes can be a source of strain and confusion for new business owners on a tight budget and timeline. This can also prevent or limit creativity and adaptive reuse of spaces for temporary periods.
- Common practices to incentivize investment and create more capacity for business would include reducing parking requirements. This can create tension with adjoining neighborhoods if this results in spillover parking.