

A New Downtown for Westminster



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Merit Award: General Planning Project

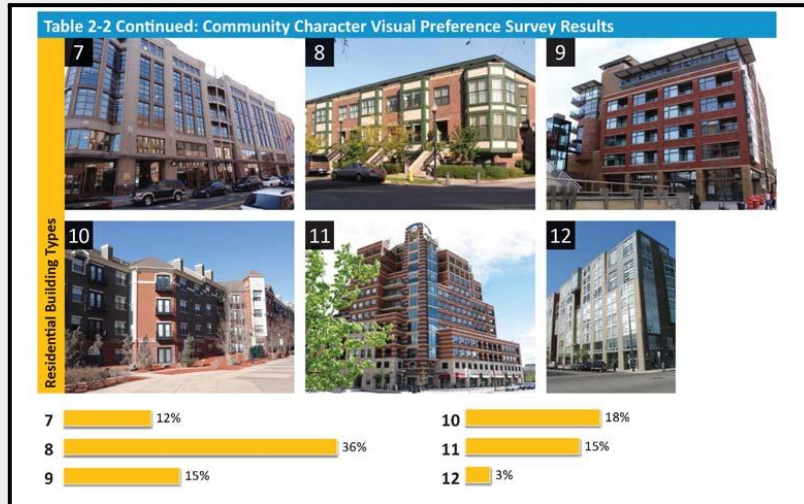
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When was the last time a city attempted to build a downtown, not as a “project” but as a place? A place that is designed to grow organically, incrementally over time, that becomes the center of public life in a community that has evolved from a purely suburban growth model? Like so many of its suburban counterparts, the City of Westminster has grown rapidly over the past 100 years with little remnant of the city’s original footprint. Lacking a true urban, social, and cultural center, and anticipating significant growth in population and jobs over the next 20 years, the City of Westminster has strived through this Downtown Specific Plan

to create a true downtown that will last and evolve over time, becoming the center of life, activity and economic growth in the city.

The vision for this new downtown comprises a cohesive and sustainable mixed-use district with a well-defined hierarchy of blocks and streets and a distinct community identity. The downtown will be a transit-oriented, walkable, diverse neighborhood composed of rental and home ownership units as well as regionally serving retail, office, and civic spaces in a tight network of trails, parks, and plazas. Designed with substantial community and stakeholder input, the plan is expandable, i.e., it is anticipated, and designed to accommodate future expansion of the Downtown



to adjacent areas.

The purpose of the Downtown Specific Plan is to provide the regulatory framework with which to implement the City's vision. As such, the Plan establishes land use, intensity, and design standards that ensures a mix of uses in an urban, pedestrian-oriented environment. Design standards in the Plan are primarily form-based, providing direction for shaping a distinctive public realm through block, building, and frontage standards as well as additional qualitative standards and guidelines. The Plan also lays out a street and block framework that supports multimodal travel throughout the downtown with off-street trails, bicycle lanes, wide sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks, and street design that reduces vehicle speeds. The public realm is also clearly delineated in the plan, with multiple park spaces and plazas, most notably establishing public venues with a central public square and 2.9-acre central park. Finally, the Plan's cohesive approach to regulation of land use, design, circulation, public spaces, and infrastructure facilitates a streamlined development review process meant to incentivize new development, a first phase of which is already underway.



