



Memorandum

To: City Council
CC: Mark Relph, City Manager
From: Jennifer Henninger, Community Development Director
Date: December 3, 2019
Re: Recommendations for Incrementally Addressing Downtown Redevelopment

Background

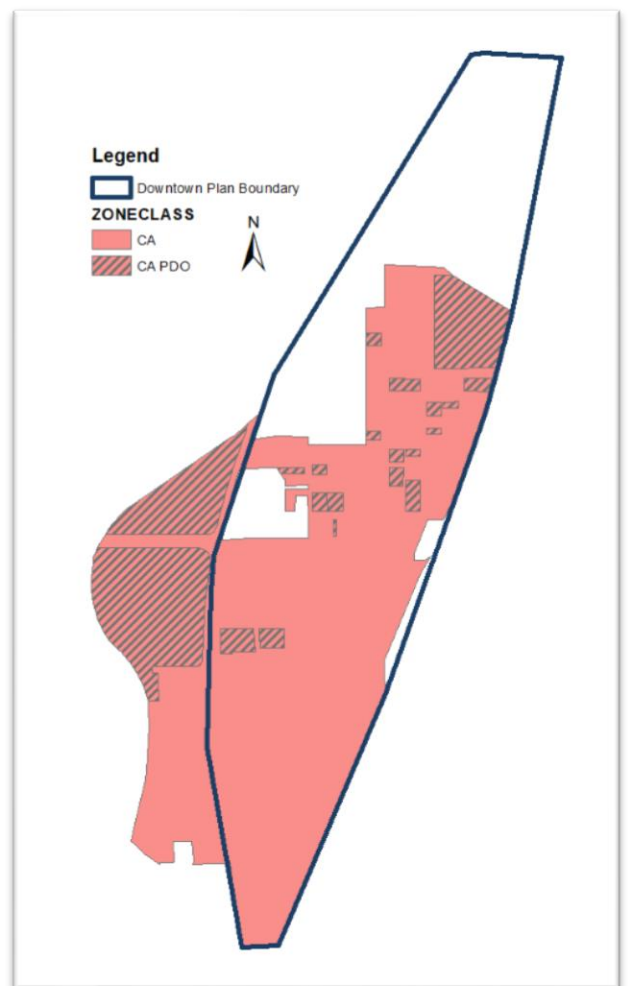
Over the past several years, there has been significant investment in Littleton's downtown area (primarily within the Central Area and R-5 zoning districts as shown in the illustration to the right). This is a welcome sign of proven desirability and vitality in our City. Along with significant growth through redevelopment, there are some "growing pains" that are not uncommon within the region. These include but are not limited to:

- Parking
- Traffic congestion
- Concerns about density and intensity of development related to
 - Building height
 - Setbacks
 - "Crowded" lots
- Housing attainability
- Neighborhood input in the redevelopment process
- Building design
- Preservation of downtown character

According to county land use assessments, the potential for even more redevelopment in the downtown area is high.

Council recently adopted the Comprehensive Plan and staff is currently engaged with Kendig Keast Collaborative (KKC) in the creation of a unified development code that aligns with the Comprehensive Plan. This is a major work program for the department in 2020 with adoption anticipated in 2021.

Staff and KKC will engage the community and stakeholders to reconcile our Comprehensive Plan with the unified development code and address issues currently identified as "growing pains" in all of Littleton's neighborhoods, including downtown. Meanwhile, development in the downtown area continues and staff has identified regulations in the City's current code that are not in full alignment with the Comprehensive



Plan. Below are some possible methods to address development downtown over the next 18 months.

Alternative 1: wait for KKC and staff to engage the community and stakeholders and update the codes as necessary

Considerations

- On one hand, KKC may be able to address downtown concerns early in their process and “roll out” sub-area codes as they are ready.
- On the other, the complete code may not be ready until the end of the process.
- If downtown development is viewed as “controversial,” waiting for KKC may let an opportunity pass for short term wins.

Alternative 2: enact regulations to change the development review process in the downtown area and / or enact simple code changes to help address some key areas

Staff has heard concerns from downtown residents regarding the site development applications. Some residents would like opportunity to be more informed about development downtown. In 2018, Council adopted revisions to the site development plan process to allow more neighborhood involvement and the ability for neighbors to appeal an administrative approval. On an interim basis, council could have all site development plans in the downtown area go to the planning commission for consideration at a public hearing.

Staff identified several areas within the code which cause the most confusion for both citizens and developers. These include:

- Clarifying the code definition for building height
- Defining the term “building”
- Allowing setback encroachments for eaves and architectural projections
- Redefining site-distance triangles to be more in line with regional standards
- Requiring construction plans for all site development plans
- Refine the Downtown Design Standards to address
 - Front “porch” definition and requirements
 - Define “courtyard” and “passageway” related to front door requirements
 - Require at least two front doors on the front plane of residential structures

Considerations

- If immediate action is needed, process changes or clarifications could be a quick and relatively non-controversial way to address concerns about “growth pains”
- Depending on needs, Council could implement process changes or code clarifications independently.
- Littleton recently made process improvements to site development plan appeals, this would be an additional interim measure for the downtown area.

Alternative 3: Targeted Moratorium

A targeted moratorium can be established for a narrow range of proposed development (only redevelopment of single-family homes, for instance) in a very narrow area of downtown (only the R-5 zone district, for instance). It would not allow any new land development applications that fit the prohibited development types for a specific period of time.

Considerations

- This is a more dramatic measure and indicates the city needs to study solutions more thoroughly.
- Moratoriums are very controversial, especially among property owners and builders.
- If necessary, moratoriums help insure that no additional detrimental development occurs until solutions are agreed upon and implemented.

Alternative 4: General Moratorium

A moratorium can be established for all of downtown for all types of land development activity for a specific period of time. This would ensure that there would be no possibility for any land development application to be processed until the new Code was adopted or other solutions are implemented.

Considerations

- A general moratorium is the most severe response and indicates the severity of the problem.
- Moratoriums, especially general moratoriums, inhibit growth and vitality of a downtown area for as long as they are in place.

Recommendation/ Next Steps: Community Development recommends utilizing temporary regulations rather than a moratorium.

1. Develop specific clarifications to existing regulations and interim process changes requiring Planning Commission approval of site development plans in the downtown neighborhood until the new code is adopted.
2. Present the changes to Council and Planning Commission at study sessions in early 2020.
3. Adopt downtown specific code changes in spring of 2020.