

Westminster officials approve down

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WESTMINSTER — Westminster City Council has approved a proposed downtown master plan looking at ways to reinvigorate the area.

While the plan was accepted unanimously last week, Mayor Brian Ramey said the vote doesn't mean the city will tackle all the ideas and projects outlined in it.

Katherine Amidon, a senior environmental planner for Bolton & Menk, presented the plan to council at its meeting on April 18. She said participants included Mayor Brian Ramey, city administrator Kevin Bronson, council members, city staff, long- and short-term residents and business owners.

"In the end, this isn't our plan — it 100 percent has to be your plan," she said.

Amidon added early conversations with participants showed they were excited about the downtown area.

"There's a lot of love for Main Street and the Depot being this crown jewel of downtown and the ability to run into a neighbor and some of the holiday celebrations and great



COURTESY PHOTO

Turning Retreat Street into a "festival street" was among the proposals included in Westminster's downtown master plan, approved last week by city council members.

events that you host downtown," she said. "Those were things that we heard time and time again, and people really just wanting more places to celebrate and have public spaces was something that came out of some of those conversations. ...

"People want to move around downtown," Amidon added. "It was really loud and clear that they wanted more pedestrian-focused connectivity."

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Amidon said the plan includes four "guiding

principles," which she said is "what calls itself out throughout the public engagement process and the stakeholder process."

Those guiding principles, which each have symbols to represent them, are:

• **Connect to Main Street:** "How do we get to and from where we want to go?" she asked. "How do we get North Avenue and Main Street and Windsor better connected? And what does that look like?"

• **Open for business:** "We know that there's several successful businesses

right in downtown, but how can we make it more welcoming to include more diverse businesses downtown in the district to make (Westminster) more of a destination for shopping, retail, dining, what have you?"

• **Leading with vibrancy:** "This really is just this question of does this idea make downtown a more vibrant place," Amidon said. "And if the answer is yes, then it's a recommendation we want to run with."

• **Westminster to the core:** "We really enjoyed

she said. "It's not overly safe. It's kind of a huge, underutilized area of your downtown, just the way the topography works and how the roadway connects."

"The big idea is to reclaim that space, utilize it more as a public-facing space, close the road off to vehicular traffic and make it pedestrian only," Amidon added. "You can basically utilize this space for any festival, but also day to day, it can act as a nice place to watch trains, which you guys have them go through downtown, and people love coming to watch trains, especially kids, so kind of creating that space."

town master plan

seeing several different ways that Westminster is really unique. You have more murals than towns that are five times your size. You have apples kind of randomly placed — including on your water tower. And then, of course, the Apple Festival, which only happens once a year, but maybe how can we broaden that?"

BIG IDEAS

Amidon also presented a list of "big ideas" that could be part of downtown:

• **Roundabout:** "People love traveling Windsor Street," she said. "They kind of come into Westminster and go out of Westminster where a lot of the activity is happening on Main Street, especially because most of the businesses are fronting Main Street, and they're less activated on the backside. One idea is to (have a) roundabout. ... It allows you to kind of really make it obvious of, 'Hey, I'm driving through Westminster, and this is your gateway to the moun-

• **Lighted Intersection**
"The other bookend is making (a) right angle onto Windsor Street, so that you can have this lighted intersection. ... It

would enable you to put crosswalks, which helps build that connectivity," she said.

• **Retreat Street Park:** Amidon presented a rendering of Retreat Street Park and Retreat Street with a "curbless street."

• **Railroad Park:** "Walking under the gray street underpass earlier, it currently is not functioning well from a vehicular perspective or a pedestrian perspective."

The full plan is available on the city's website.

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