

January Project Update: Future Use at 73rd and Lowell

Progress Update

Since presenting the results of the community meetings to City Council and receiving guidance from City Council to move forward with the concept, Staff began the process of satisfying federal administrative requirements to make the project a reality. We are happy to report that Staff completed the “Change of Use” amendment to the City’s filed 2020-2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Consolidated Plan with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This action is a key milestone in developing an open-air market and community event space.

Why was a “Change of Use” Necessary?

The corner property at West 73rd and Lowell, and the second vacant parcel located on the south side of the Penguin Building, were purchased in 2012-2014 to develop housing. Due to the fact that federal money was used for the acquisition, the property was required to meet a HUD national objective to provide housing for residents, 51% of whom would earn up to 80% Area Median Income. After multiple attempts to develop the property, the community requested that the City pivot and try a different approach at this site. Under the newly established “Change of Use” amendment with HUD, the property is no longer required to be used for housing and may support a community use that benefits area residents.

Community Engagement Recap

The development of an open-air market and community event space was chosen by area residents during four community meetings in August and September. Residents produced a list of desired options that would activate the corner. Input from residents identified that the site could be lightly landscaped and developed to support arts events, music events, and open-air market uses including crafts and flea markets, farmers and grocery truck markets and other vendor-supported events.

What’s Next?

City staff will perform analysis to determine what is needed to prepare the site and identify options to manage and operate the site. Once the City has local market information to support the planning, we will reconvene the community to share findings and receive input. This process should be completed within the next three months. Last Fall, when the event space was proposed, City Council asked staff to aim to have the space ready for community use in the Spring. That is still the goal, and we look forward to working with you to plan a Grand Opening event that brings area residents together – hopefully by June.

Please look for a community survey in coming weeks as we gather additional input and test ideas. And as always, you can reach out to Molly Tayer, Housing Coordinator, at 303-658-2414 or at CDBG@cityofwestminster.us with questions or ideas to share.