



Commerce City

7887 E. 60th Ave.
Commerce City, CO 80022
c3gov.com

Council Communication

File Number: Pres 24-507

Agenda Date: 12/9/2024

Version: 1

Status: Agenda Ready

In Control: City Council

File Type: Presentation

Joint Meeting with the Derby Review Board

Summary and Background Information:

At the July 22, 2024 City Council Study Session, staff was directed to set a meeting between Council and the Derby Design Review Board (DRB) to discuss the progress of the Deign Review efforts and on-going challenges and opportunities for revitalizing the Derby commercial district. The DRB, met on September 17th to brainstorm topics for this discussion.

This memorandum provides background on those efforts and recommends actions for future city involvement.

Derby, is one of the original small-town communities in Adams County, and holds a unique historical significance dating back to 1889. The area's rapid development between the 1940s and 1950s, was largely due to its proximity to the U.S. Army Rocky Mountain Arsenal and Stapleton Airport. In 1962, Derby merged with Commerce Town to form Commerce City, further adding to its historical legacy.

The City recognized the historical value of the area and this commitment was solidified with the adoption of the Derby Master Revitalization Plan and Design Standards in 2007. Efforts dedicated to preserving Derby's rich history.

The intent of the Master Revitalization Plan was to revitalize the commercial district and make it a destination once again. The Design Guidelines adopted the 1950s unifying architectural style, specifically the mid-century modern/Googie motif. In 2015 the Derby Review Board (DRB) was formed to oversee exterior façade improvements and the distribution of the Commerce Catalyst Program. The catalyst fund provides loans and grants to property owners and tenants for improvements. The \$83,000 fund is earmarked each year from the City's general fund.

Over the past several years there has been an increase in crime, vandalism, homelessness, trash, code compliance issues and deterioration of public infrastructure.

City Staff, in response to this noticeable decline began focusing on Derby. A number of programs and activities including: the opening of a Cop Shop; hosting a 'National Night Out'; 'Hispanic Heritage Celebration'; creation of a business toolkit on

Homelessness for business owners; increased Code Enforcement actions; creation of plans to reconstruct the derby Diamond; installation of an entryway sign, and; weekly trash and maintenance operations, funded by the URA.

At the July 22nd study session, following an update on City actions, Council members provided the following feedback:

- Update the Derby Design Guidelines
- Update the Master Plan
- Move away from the mid-century modern motif
- Host a joint study session with the Derby Review Board (DRB)
- Transform the Derby Diamond intersection into a green gathering space
- Underground utility lines
- Foster entertainment in the sub-area
- Bring back Derby Days and hold farmers market
- Work with business owners to prevent displacement.
- Expand Joe Reilly Park

Topics and ideas brought forth by the DRB included the following:

- Update the Derby Master Plan
- Move away from the Derby Design Guidelines, specifically, the mid-century modern design motif.
- Consolidate the Master Plan, Urban Renewal District, and Planned Unit Development boundaries.
- How to restructure the commercial catalyst program
- Explore utilizing funds for interior project to assist businesses
- Create a list of existing businesses in the area
- Create pamphlets to better advertise the commercial catalyst program
- Enhance security through increased lighting
- Maintenance and trash pick-up
- Repave or rethink how the Derby Diamond is utilized
- Host Music at the Park in Derby
- Encourage improvements for ADA accessibility
- The police substation and security presence
- The status of a historic preservation ordinance and district

Many of the major ideas were consistent between the City Council and DRB comments.

These include:

- Updating the Master Plan and Design Guidelines
- Reconsider the mid-century modern design theme
- Increase the variety of activities, festivals and entertainment options
- Improve the public infrastructure and public spaces
- Increase safety, access and mobility

An area where staff believes it needs more information is understanding the underlying market forces in the area. The Derby commercial area is dominated by Mexican restaurants, auto-related uses and institutional uses. Few commercial or residential properties have been redeveloped nor made significant improvements for reasons that should be explored and discussed. While the physical environment of Derby is important, if the uses and activities in the area aren't attracting customers or investors, physical improvements alone are not likely to be effective on their own.

Staff is therefore recommending that the Master Plan for Derby be updated including inclusion of a market analysis to identify and prioritize actions, timelines and milestones. The existing plans provide a foundation for much of the work and the Economic Development division has already established a number of outreach efforts on which to build community engagement, so the overall effort should be focused to conclude by end of first quarter 2025.

The Master Plan update would include a number of efforts and ideas such as:

- Amending the Derby Design Guidelines to reflect the property owner and business needs and input
- Amending the Derby PUD or explore a new zoning district in conjunction with the new Land Development Code adoption to encourage more active retail and commercial uses and discourage auto-oriented uses
- Exploration of restructuring of the Commercial Catalyst program
- Better effective use of the Derby URA Funding:
 - Completing the E. 72nd Place and Monaco Street Improvements

Staff looks forward to the discussion and direction from City Council.

Staff Responsible (Department Head): Jason Dennison, Director of Strategic Partnerships

Staff Member Presenting: Terrance Ware, Urban Renewal Authority Director

Financial Impact: N/A

Funding Source: N/A