



August 14, 2020

Heather Lamboy
City of Aurora
15151 E Alameda Parkway, Suite 5200
Aurora, CO 80012

**Re: Metro Center #1392138
Master Plan, Public Improvement Plan, Design Guidelines
Letter of Intent**

Dear Heather:

Enclosed is the Master Plan, Public Improvement Plan and Design Guidelines for Metro Center. We have enjoyed working with the City thus far and greatly appreciate the time and assistance you have provided; we look forward to continuing to work with you and the City of Aurora staff through the approval process. This application has been prepared by and for the following parties to the benefit of the residents of Aurora:

Developer

Parkhill Development
Company
631 High Street
Denver, CO 80218
303-829-8811
Contact: Bill Parkhill

**Planning/Landscape
Architecture**

Norris Design
1101 Bannock St.
Denver, Colorado
80204
303-892-1166
Contact: Eva Mather

Transportation

Felsburg Holt & Ullevig
6300 S. Syracuse Way
Suite 600
Centennial, CO 80111
(303) 721-1440
Contact: Ryan Saline

Civil Engineer

Innovative Land
Consultants
12071 Tejon Street,
Suite 470
Westminster, CO
80234
(303) 421-4224
Contact: Tess Hogan

Surveyor

Aztec Consultants
300 E. Mineral Ave.,
Suite 1
Littleton, CO 80122
303-327-7503
Contact: Jim Lynch

The following items are including in this submittal package:

- Letter of Intent
- Response to Pre-Application Comments
- Title Commitment
- Legal Description

- APO list
- Neighborhood Referral List
- Mineral Notification Affidavit
- Master Plan
- Public Improvement Plan
- Traffic Report
- Master Drainage Report
- Master Utility Study
- Zoning and Station Area Plan Variances

INTRODUCTION

General Overview

Metro Center is positioned to fit into the neighborhood context as the “missing piece” surrounded by regional retail on the west, neighborhood service retail on the east, civic facilities on the north, and residential on the south. In response, Metro Center will develop a mixed-use project to stitch together the neighborhood by combining elements of each of these adjacent land use types into a mixed-use master plan.

Metro Center is an exciting mixed-use transit-oriented development along Aurora’s R Line light rail, that will combine urban living with suburban benefits. It will feature a dynamic mix of modern residential, office, restaurant, hospitality and retail spaces. Metro Center’s pedestrian friendly planning will encourage safe and energetic interactions throughout the public realm to make it a signature destination in Aurora.

Metro Center will redefine traditional expectations with the promise of urban living in an unexpected suburban place. Metro Center will be a place where residents returning home on the R Line can step off the train to a community with inspired public spaces, vibrant street art and inspired architecture. The combination of the master plan, architectural design guidelines and focus on public realm will guide the project to the successful identity that will be recognized throughout the city.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Post Covid-19 and A New Era

For those born between 1980 to 2005, the Millennials and Generation Z, who are coming of age and moving into the workplace, they have been re-shaping lifestyle and thought. These changes had been moving slowly and incrementally over the last 10 years but have now been accelerated by Covid-19 and its resulting economic crisis. With the accelerant of 2020’s crisis, the changes that will shape the next generation of real estate development are happening in months instead of years. Based on this observation, Metro Center is undertaking the design of its Master Plan as a pro-active vision to the changes that are coming rather than a reaction to crisis that has happened.

Understanding key macro-economic trends are important to create a sustainable development that will last for multiple generations. Metro Center has identified several significant trends are important to guide the Metro Center master plan. These trends are (a) flight to the suburbs, (b)



reliance on technology (c) workforce flexibility (d) online retail (e) mobility and (f) social justice & diversity.

Flight to the Suburbs

Millennials are now forming families at a greater rate since the Baby Boomer generation even though at a slightly older age. Affordability of housing and availability of schools were prompting a shift to the suburbs over the last 4 years. Now concerns for the transmissibility of the virus in dense urban settings is forcing this new generation to re-think city-dwelling. Metro Center is planned in the image of a walkable mixed-use transit community the city centers such as downtown Denver embodies, while providing the affordability and safety of suburban real estate values.

Technology

Business and commerce have been forced to embrace technology at a faster and deeper rate due to Work-From-Home requirements. This has produced a need for flexibility that will allow employees to work, shop, and play at hours that are tailored for each individual. Metro Center will respond by providing a Total Workplace Ecosystem that allows different building types and spaces to support convenience, function and well-being. All buildings withing the Metro Center project will provide access to work and technology.

Workplace Flexibility

Flexibility, social distancing, cost efficiencies and reduced commute times are all forcing business to re-think the traditional single central core office location. Hub and spoke business strategies will drive office “nodes” in suburban locations while maintaining a presence in downtown. Metro Center will create high-quality office as part of the Total Workplace Ecosystem that integrates the entire mixed-use Master Plan. Office buildings may trade density for workplace safety that result in lower density single tenant buildings in the first generation of development.

Online Retail vs. Brick & Mortar Retail

Retail is undergoing the most dramatic changes as the Covid-19 crisis accelerates the move towards online shopping. At the same time retail delivery has increased, changing how brick and mortar stores find market share. Meanwhile, as suburbs undergo an evolution to urbanized nodes, many of the amenities that Millennials grew to enjoy in downtown will need to occur in the suburbs. Metro Center will combine a boutique grocery with right-sized experiential retail to create a sustainable retail asset base.

Mobility

Public transit ridership has been deeply impacted by Covid-19 and will take a long period of time to recover. In a nationwide office poll conducted by JLL, 34% of respondents have said they will not likely return to public transit. Metro Center can be influential to increase the ridership on the R Line by providing a destination for living and working that encourage easy access to nearby destinations such as Fitzsimmons. In addition, the plan will accommodate last-mile transit with ride share locations located in the main plaza to encourage access to the surrounding neighborhood.

Diversity



The City of Aurora is defined by its diversity that bridges economic and racial boundaries. Metro Center will embrace this diversity by creating a range of economic options for the built assets to create opportunities for all income ranges and age groups. The public realm will be designed as the egalitarian gathering places to promote social interaction from all walks of life.

CITY BUILDING

1st Generation & 2nd Generation

Cities and neighborhoods evolve over time responding to changing market conditions, population increases and demographic shifts. Metro Center will grow organically, in two distinct periods called First Generation and Second Generation development. The master plan for Metro Center is designed to create the public realm and infrastructure to allow the community to grow over multiple generations.

1st Generation

The 1st Generation for this project is defined as any initial greenfield development activity that will occur on the property. This development will take place in multiple phases on the various parcels in the total land assemblage. The 1st Generation will probably extend over two successive real estate market cycles (7-10 years each). 1st Generation development will build the infrastructure and public realm necessary to support successive generational development.

2nd Generation

The 2nd Generation for this project is defined as the increase in density through additional development that expand on the assets already located there. This can be accomplished with multiple strategies including adding structured parking and additional buildings, adaptive re-use and additions to existing structures. As the community's needs change over long periods of time, Metro Center will have the flexibility to accommodate new assets that fit into the overall established framework.

Phasing

Phasing is not to be confused with generational development and re-development. Phasing is the successive development of various assets within each generation. The primary reason for phasing is to deploy each project strategically to enhance the image and economic sustainability. Further phasing within each asset class (e.g. multi-family) will prevent internal lease-up competition which, in turn, forces lease rate reduction.

DESIGN & PLANNING

Land Planning Overview

The total property is currently 60 acres of vacant land subdivided into three Parcels (A, B, & C) that are separated by the existing Centerpointe Avenue and the Arapahoe County property. The master planned development, called Metro Center to coincide with the name of the RTD light rail station and also indicative the project's place within the City of Aurora.

Metro Center's master plan will subdivide the larger parcels into smaller Lots using streets and public spaces. Each of these smaller lots will respond to its respective design factors relative to both the internal connections and the bordering neighborhood context.



Metro Center will develop the greater density immediately adjacent to the RTD light rail stop and stratify into lower densities further from the rail stop. The mixed-use project will include retail, commercial office, and diverse range of multi-family residential properties. Commercial properties will front along Alameda Parkway to benefit from identity and traffic count, while residential land uses will make up the southern portions of the overall land assemblage.

Public Realm “String of Pearls”

As the signature planning tool, Metro Center will utilize a variety of public realm techniques for placemaking, and to also stitch together the various parcels and disparate land uses. Metro Center will create a series of plazas, parks and gathering areas located throughout the development that are connected by landscaped pedestrian pathways, much like a string of pearls.

The primary “string” is the redevelopment of Centerpointe Avenue to narrow the vehicular lanes and increase pedestrian paths and landscape areas that will connect all three parcels. Secondary streets will branch out in smaller “strings” to connect the “pearls” of the plazas and parks. These “pearls” will range from active parks in residential lots to hardscaped plazas that enhance commercial uses to small surprise pocket parks.

The feature plaza will exist on Parcel A to serve both developed property and the RTD station area to activate the entire project with day-to-day uses as well as host events such as farmer’s markets, etc. Retail spaces and outdoor dining will be placed along this plaza to activate its use. This public space will also serve as the focal point for the mobility hub for last mile transit from the RTD station to outlying neighborhoods and the project itself.

The primary park on Parcel B will combine active uses and features such as fountains with passive landscape areas that combine shade trees with open lawns. This signature park will provide open spaces and active uses such as play equipment that will serve the surrounding residential and office uses.

Small Parks and Plazas are a crucial element to the urban feel of the development. These provide the surprise of discovery and help break down the scale and mass of surrounding buildings. These parks will include curated art and, if planned correctly, can have far greater impact than larger parks, sized merely to gain PLD credit.

Density & Height

An important component of Metro Center is balancing the appropriate density during the 1st Generation development with the ultimate build-out during the subsequent 2nd Generation development. Varying the density for different projects within Metro Center allows for multiple products with different rental rates which, in turn, promotes economic diversity. Building heights want to respond to the surrounding context without overwhelming the scale of the public realm.

Street Layout and Lot Size

The Metro Center master plan provides streets that subdivide the larger parcels in smaller lots. The street layout matches the concept outlined in the 2015 City Center Zoning Overlay. The



lots on the master plan will be further broken down with private driveways and building massing to allude to smaller lots during individual site planning.

Parking

Metro Center will be strategic in how parking is deployed to meet the current 1st Generation development while creating the area and vision for 2nd Generation increases in density and assets. Mobility issues such as ride-share, driverless cars, and light rail transit will feature in the strategies that inform parking densities. Metro Center will consider peak hour / off hour parking uses to determine reduced and shared parking counts. Parking will need to be visible to vehicular traffic as part of the way finding methods and will be integrated into each project to eliminate large expanses of surface or structured parking. Structured parking is the destination, but surface parking will be part of the journey.

Design Guidelines

Metro Center will utilize the Design Guidelines to help navigate the architectural vocabulary of the development. Art and architecture will be the dominate driver for the design language of the buildings. Unlike many design guidelines, Metro Center intends to provide overview concepts and materials, but avoid detailed design rules (i.e. percentage of masonry, etc.). However, this does not mean lower design expectations, but higher expectations while allowing architects more freedom to express.

Adjustment Requests

In order to fulfill the vision laid out for Metro Center and ensure a successful development that meets current market demands, the Applicant is requesting the following Adjustments from the existing City of Aurora Unified Development Ordinance:

1. Code Section 146-2.4.6.H Streets and Public Space.

This request is for an adjustment from block length requirement of 300 and 500 feet in length and no more than 1,800 feet around the perimeter at time of Master Plan. The blocks currently shown in the Metro Center Master Plan generally match those shown in the City Center Station Area Plan. This adjustment would allow the master plan to be approved with the street grid as proposed.

To support this adjustment, block widths will be reduced at time of site plan with the use of alleys, private drives, public realm, and building articulation. This requirement is written into the Master Plan and the Design Guidelines.

2. Code Section 146-2.4.6F Motor Vehicle Parking.

This request is for an adjustment to the 80% structured parking requirement in Parcel C to 50%.

As Metro Center develops and density is achieved, structured parking will follow. Parcel C is prime for 1st Generation, phase 1 development. In this initial phase and generation of Metro Center, relief from the 80% structured parking standard is required to meet current market demands. To support this adjustment, 50% of the parking in Parcel C shall be structured, providing a transition from the Edge District in Parcel B, to the higher

density in Parcel A, Lot 3. Parcel A within the Core District will maintain the 80% structured parking requirement.

3. Code Section 146-4.3.C Minimum Required Parking (Table 4.6-1)

This request is for an adjustment from the maximum permitted parking in Parcel B should it develop as office uses. The adjustment allows up to 4.0 spaces per 1,000 sf gfa in Parcel B for office developments.

The suburban office market is evolving with a renewed focus on safety, distance and convenience. The Metro Center commercial office will respond by providing a Total Workplace Ecosystem where safe distance begins in the parking area and extends throughout the buildings. In the near term, office users will rely on their ability arrive on their own schedule and park their own car utilizing best-practice social distance. This will require parking ratios of 4:1000 in the 1st Generation of development to meet market driven criteria for a successful office environment.

4. Code Section 146-4 (Table 4.2-3)

This request is from minimum residential densities of 60 units/acre in Parcel C of the TOD-Core Subdistrict. This adjustment allows minimum densities of 40 du/ac for residential development in Parcel C.

Metro Center believes that a variety of housing types to provide choices for residents will result in a diverse community. Allowing a lower minimum density requirement on Parcel C to 40 du/ac will vary the density over the entire site by creating a middle tier of housing density. Parcel C density minimum will be bracketed on one side with 60 du/ac (Parcel A) and the other side with 20 du/ac (Parcel B). The resulting stratified density will result in different building types with different rent structures that fully integrate into a diverse community.

5. UDO Table 4.2-3

This request is for an adjustment from the minimum 3-story building height in Core Subdistrict on Parcel A, Lot 2. This adjustment allows a minimum building height of 20' for commercial retail on Parcel A, Lot 2.

As a visible location on Alameda and Dawson, the parcel has a high potential to be developed in the 1st Generation, phase 1. This site may increase in height with redevelopment in the 2nd Generation but providing such relief at this time would help serve the current market demands. If this parcel develops as commercial retail in phase 1, the applicant is requests a minimum 20' building height.

6. UDO Table 4.2-3

This request is for an adjustment on the maximum build-to requirements of 10' in Core Subdistrict and 18' in General Subdistrict for curved streets.

With several curved streets and unique situations, we would like to increase the maximum setback to 125' along curved streets. To help fulfill the goal of active street

scenes, the 50% build-to requirement will still be met and that the space between the street-facing building façade and the street shall be designed as a small urban park/plaza/public realm.

Approval Criteria

1. Consistency with Comprehensive Plan, the purpose statement for the zone district(s) where the property is located, the use regulations in Article 146-3 for the zone district(s), the adopted Aurora City Center Urban Renewal Plan and all other adopted plans and policies of the City Council.

Metro Center (as well as the Town Center at Aurora, Aurora City Plan, and the Aurora Municipal Complex) is located in an Urban District Placetype. Urban Districts are critical to the economic and fiscal health of the city because it is a center of employment, culture, and activity. The Placetype calls for a mix of uses in an urban fabric which has a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment. Primary land uses include multi-family residential development, restaurants, commercial retail, commercial service, office, and entertainment and arts districts. Through the city's Aurora Places adoption, it was clearly determined by the community that this site should serve as the primary location within Aurora's Downtown. The Metro Center Master Plan is a mixed-use, urban, walkable TOD community that will be a hub for entertainment, retail, multi-family housing, hospitality, and commercial uses. The Metro Center Master Plan is consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan, the City Code, and plans and policies adopted by City Council that apply to the site.

2. Identifies a Master Developer and Master Plan that will foster future development of the property which complies with all applicable standards.

The master developer is Parkhill Development, LLC and property owners are: Aurora Parcel A, LLC & Aurora Parcel B, LLC & Aurora Parcel C, LLC. Please see the Metro Center Master Plan and Design Guidelines that accompany this letter.

3. Results in a coordinated system of streets, trails, sidewalks, open spaces, and infrastructure systems that are integrated into the surrounding area and does not create significant adverse impacts on the surrounding area.

The Metro Center Master Plan and Design Guidelines provide a cohesive, connected and coordinated system of streets, trails, sidewalks, open spaces and infrastructure that are integrated into the surrounding area and does not create significant adverse impacts on the surrounding areas. The Metro Center Master Plan provides enhanced connectivity compared to what is currently existing on site, for both vehicles and pedestrians.

4. It will improve or expand multi-modal with park and open space connections to adjacent sites, neighborhoods, and urban centers.

The Metro Center Master Plan improves and expands multimodal transportation throughout the site. Bikeways and enhanced pedestrian areas are proposed, including a vibrant public



realm that includes art, and a series of urban parks and plazas. Metro Center will be an urban, walkable community that brings urban energy to the suburbs.

CONCLUSION

Metro Center will become a place where art, architecture, food and commerce are magnetic and create the gravitational pull of a great destination. The project will be developed using lessons of the past, the events of today, and a vision for the next generation. At all times the renewed vigor of the suburbs, new ways to work and play, technology and diversity will become the guiding principles the development will be founded upon. The result will be a great neighborhood designed for a great city in a place that is ready to rise.

We look forward to continuing to work with the City on this exciting new community!

Sincerely,

Bill Parkhill