



City of Westminster
2009
Comprehensive Plan

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 28, 2009



City of Westminster Comprehensive Plan

Adopted September 28, 2009

RELEASED FOR REVIEW on Friday, July 17, 2009

PUBLIC HEARING conducted on Tuesday, September 22, 2009 before the Westminster Planning and Zoning Commission

APPROVED by the Westminster Planning and Zoning Commission on Tuesday, September 22, 2009

ADOPTED by The Mayor and Common Council of Westminster on Monday, September 27, 2009

The information contained in this Plan is current as of the date of Plan adoption and approval. As the programs, policies, and procedures described herein are subject to change, the City of Westminster makes no guarantee regarding the accuracy or timeliness of the information presented.



City of Westminster Comprehensive Plan

Adopted September 28, 2009

The Mayor and Common Council

Kevin R. Utz, Mayor
Damian L. Halstad, Council President
Suzanne P. Albert
Tony Chiavacci
Gregory L. Pecoraro
Dr. Robert P. Wack

Planning and Zoning Commission

Margaret R. Bair, Acting Chair
Suzanne P. Albert, *ex-officio*
Kevin W. Beaver
Nancy B. Palmer
Lori J. Welsh-Graham

City Administration

Marge Wolf, City Administrator
Thomas B. Beyard, Director of Planning, Zoning & Development
Jeffrey D. Glass, Director of Public Works
Chief Jeff Spaulding, Chief Police Department
Ron Schroers, Director of Recreation & Parks
Gary Ehlers, Director of Administrative Services
John B. Walsh, Jr., Esquire, City Attorney

Department of Planning, Zoning & Development

Melissa K. Hynes, Comprehensive Planner
Tim Rogers, Natural & Cultural Resources Planner
Stan Ruchlewicz, Administrator of Economic Development
Sandra Anderson, Community Development Specialist
Barbara Sardi, Engineering Specialist
Harrison Bloom, GIS Technician

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Executive Summary

The staff of the City of Westminster Planning, Zoning and Development Department has worked hard to make the 2009 Comprehensive Plan a document that will become an everyday tool for the City of Westminster administration. The planning staff set a goal of ensuring that the public, local officials and City staff are able to refer to the 2009 Comprehensive Plan to not only better understand the community vision for the future but to also understand how planning can facilitate creating that vision. Incorporated throughout the plan are principles and concepts, adopted by various national organizations, which will be used to educate the public, local officials and City staff on how to implement the goals, objectives and actions of the plan.

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan embraces the principles of Smart Growth, and the State of Maryland's 12 new State planning visions, to serve as guidelines for future growth and development while protecting the City's limited resources and land. The two new elements, Water Resources Element and the Municipal Growth Element, set the pace for future development in Westminster. This plan also works to give recognition to Westminster's community partners in State, County and local organizations and agencies. As a small city, Westminster depends on these partnerships to build a sustainable and vibrant community.

A new addition to the Comprehensive Plan is the Public Participation and Neighborhood Planning Element. The 2009 Comprehensive Plan update started with the coordination of the first Westminster resident survey in the summer of 2008. The survey was a success and triggered new initiatives within the City to improve residents' access to information and enhance communication between local officials and residents. The survey was followed by a series of community workshops in the fall of 2008 that offered residents the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns about the future of their community. In the winter of 2009, the planning staff combined the results of the survey and the feedback from the workshops, to create the 2008 Community Vision Report. This report served as the base of the comprehensive plan update process. Each element in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan begins with a description from the 2008 Community Vision Report that relates to the element and an outline on how the element promotes a principle of Smart Growth and/or a State planning vision.

The City will use the Public Participation and Neighborhood Planning Element as a guide to create neighborhood-specific plans. The citywide vision and policies describe an overall preferred growth strategy for Westminster, while neighborhood planning establishes a specific vision and strategy for each neighborhood area

2009 Comprehensive Plan

Foreword

The City of Westminster initiated the 2009 Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”) update in October 2007, long before our country found itself in the midst of a significant economic recession. The approved Plan provides the means and methods to build a strong foundation for the future, and its goals, objectives and implementation plan create the roadmap to promote the orderly growth and development of the Westminster community.

Due to the economic slowdown from 2007 to 2009, development slowed to a crawl and tax revenues became flat. Unforeseen and unprecedented State budget cuts, with the possibility of significant additional County budget cuts, will likely cause the Mayor and Common Council to reconsider the timing of implementation of various elements of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. We fully anticipate the goals and objectives of the approved Plan will remain the same; however, the timeframes involved and who is responsible for implementation will likely change as City officials deal with the new financial reality.

The Mayor and Common Council look forward to the challenge of working to build a future of sustainability and self-sufficiency, albeit with limited resources. The Mayor and Common Council have come to believe that Westminster should strive to become self-reliant and not depend so heavily on State and County funding. The body is working on a financial plan that will outline how to continue providing high-quality municipal services with fewer resources and may also suggest the curtailment of services. Many recommendations in the approved Plan will further the goal of self-reliance and may be quickly implemented; other recommendations may have to wait until better times return to Westminster.

The City’s staff intends to provide a status report on the implementation of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan at yearly intervals. This will provide the Mayor and Common Council and community with information on the status of Plan implementation vis-à-vis the financial situation. In the end, the Mayor and Common Council and staff believe that the realistic implementation of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan is one of the best tools available to guide decisions on difficult choices, so that Westminster remains positioned for economic growth and recovery when the current financial crisis ends.