

Claire Leighou

Client: Lone Tree

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The City of Lone Tree is a growing community in the suburbs of southern Denver. The City is home to the Entertainment District of Lone Tree, a site with entertainment venues and a variety of dining options. The District was established in the late 1980s, prior to Lone Tree gaining cityhood, and is entirely privately owned. Beginning with the movie theater and bowling alley, the District built out over the following decades and filled with restaurants and eventually another entertainment anchor, the indoor skydiving facility.

Flash forward to present day, and the District still has many restaurants, the three entertainment venues, and office space filling a large portion of the District. Due to tenancy turnover, there are multiple vacant properties. The District as a whole has an auto-centric design, with wide roadways and large parking lots. With the vacancies and large scale design, the space is not walkable and lacks 24/7 activation, often only being busy on weekend nights.

The purpose of this capstone project is to create a new plan to fill in empty lots and revitalize this space to be an exciting and vibrant entertainment destination. This project includes a site plan with detailed programming and policy and funding recommendations, to allow the City to shape development by the private sector.

## The Vision Book

The Entertainment District Vision Book was created by multiple private firms in collaboration with the City in 2013. The purpose of this book was to design a new plan for the space. The Book also included a community participation section. The information collected from community members and business owners gave guidance to this project by providing insight on how the community currently views the District, and what they want to see this space become in the future. Many of the ideas included filling vacancies, providing a mix of new uses including residential buildings and different types of retail and entertainment opportunities.

## Background Research

This project utilized a variety of sources to create the foundation for the site plan and policy recommendations. Using a mix of articles, case studies, academic sources, and examining existing planning documents, best practices and new ideas were compiled into a new plan for the District. The background research focused on mixed-use and walkable development and how centers across the US have revitalized their own sites through the addition of new land uses and density, to create human scale and walkable destinations where people want to spend their day.

## Recommendations

The recommendations portion of this project is composed of three main parts: the site plan, funding mechanisms, and policy recommendations.

The site plan focused on creating new uses in previously vacant parcels as well as new infill development in underutilized parking lots. The primary new elements in the plan is adding apartment and townhomes; a mixed-use grocery store and apartment housing anchor; a central parking garage with a rooftop park to host community events and activities; and a new walkway network throughout the space which connects to surrounding neighborhoods and the nearby light rail stop to encourage reduced use of personal vehicles when visiting the site.

The funding mechanisms section explores a mix of options for both the City and private developers to initiate and fund new components of this site plan. The main methods include business improvement district projects; private public partnerships; and public improvement fees.

The policy change focused on changing and updating existing planning documents which dictate change in the space to guide future development towards the end vision. The planned development plan for the District, the Westbrook Entertainment & Sports District Planned Development, 4th Amendment, is the top-ranking planning document for the District, meaning it has authority in changes and improvements across the site. The current version of this plan is 15 years old, last updated in 2007, and is only four pages long. This project recommends updating this plan. This entails a robust community engagement component which will inform detailed chapters on vision; short-term and long-term goals; general land uses; and specific types of businesses which would serve the community and create a thriving entertainment destination.

## Conclusion

The Entertainment District is partially established and represents a wealth of potential. The office space is well leased, and the existing entertainment anchors are successful independently and help draw in visitors to the other establishments around the site. The auto-centric design and vacancies are the primary challenge that must be addressed to help this space become a thriving destination. Based on public comment in the Vision Book, many community members see more potential in this space as a mixed-use neighborhood with more housing rather than a strictly entertainment-based destination. This would still be beneficial for the City economically, and would serve community residents both nearby and across the town in numerous ways. With the addition of a new mix of uses, infill development and increased density, and the focus on the person - not the car - moving forward, the Entertainment District will become the resilient and thriving destination it is meant to be.