

AGENDA
STUDY SESSION MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
VIRTUAL MEETING
CITY OF LAKEWOOD, COLORADO
VIRTUAL MEETING
JULY 7, 2025
7:00 PM

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ITEM 1 – CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 2 – ROLL CALL

ITEM 3 – COUNCIL PLANNING SESSION REVIEW

ITEM 4 – COMMITTEE REPORTS

ITEM 5 – ADJOURNMENT

[MEET_FOOT]

STAFF MEMO

DATE OF MEETING: JULY 7, 2025 / AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Ben Goldstein, Deputy City Manager
Subject: **Council Planning Session Review**

SUMMARY STATEMENT: Following the City Council's April 26th Planning Session, a follow-up meeting was scheduled to ensure that the Council's goals were accurately captured. The July 7th Study Session is an opportunity for City Council to affirm that its goals for the remainder of the year were accurately captured by the facilitation team and staff. The Study Session is not intended to be an opportunity to request new goals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: In 2024, the City Council identified six primary goals for the City, with over 60 supporting tasks. The goals identified were:

- Trust and Accountability in Government
- Affordable Housing
- Homelessness
- Public Safety, Transportation, and Infrastructure
- Sustainability
- Thriving Economy

In 2025, City Council conducted two full-day planning sessions to review the previously identified goals and supporting tasks. The first session took place on January 31st, during which staff provided the Council with detailed updates about the progress of each goal and all of the supporting tasks. City Council asked numerous clarifying questions during this initial session to prepare for the second planning session.

The second day of the planning session was held a few months later, on April 26th, to allow for the participation of the two newly elected Council Members. During the second session, City Council worked in both small and large groups to review all goals and tasks, with an emphasis on those items that were not yet completed. The Council also utilized this opportunity to collectively add new items to the list, such as implementing single-hauler trash service, among other new projects. As a result, staff and the facilitation team took detailed notes throughout the final session summarizing the City's 2025 goals and tasks. The meeting notes have been attached for City Council's review and discussion at the July 7th Study Session.

BUDGETARY IMPACTS: No budget impact is anticipated from this review of the planning session outcomes.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommend that the City Council use the July 7th Study Session to affirm and prioritize the tasks that were created at the April 26th Planning Session.

ALTERNATIVES: If the City Council collectively feels that staff and the facilitation team did not summarize the tasks and priorities from the planning sessions, then the Council can use the July 7th Study Session to clarify the 2025 goals and tasks, to ensure that both staff and Council are working towards a common goal.

PUBLIC OUTREACH: This item has been promoted through the regular communication channels to be considered by the Lakewood City Council.

NEXT STEPS: None

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Summary of the April 26, 2025, Lakewood City Council Planning Session

REVIEWED BY: Kathleen E. Hodgson, City Manager
Benjamin B. Goldstein, Deputy City Manager
Alison McKenney Brown, City Attorney

Lakewood City Council Retreat
April 26, 2025
Lakewood, Colorado
Meeting Summary

ATTENDANCE

Council members: Isabel Cruz, Ken Cruz, Bill Furman, Roger Low, Sophia Mayott-Guerrero, Paula Nystrom, David Rein, Jeslin Shahrezaei, Glenda Sinks, Jacob LaBure, and Wendi Strom

Staff: Ben Goldstein and Kathy Hodgson

Facilitation team: Dominique Ashe and Heather Bergman

WELCOME, AGENDA REVIEW, AND INTRODUCTIONS

Wendi Strom, Lakewood Mayor, welcomed meeting participants. Her opening remarks are summarized below.

- Council is learning from past planning experiences and adapting. Council is shifting from a one-year plan to a more efficient two-year cycle aligned with elections.
- Last year's attempt at a one-year plan resulted in 65 tasks—too many to accomplish in the available time. Today, Council members will revisit that plan, working in small groups to determine which tasks to move forward with and how to sequence them, recognizing staff's limited time and capacity to accomplish Council's requests.
- Council's role is to set strategic direction, not to manage daily operations. Council members are encouraged to shift their mindset from task generation to providing strategic guidance to staff. Clear communication with staff is essential so they can effectively act on Council's direction. Council will have the opportunity to clarify their intent for specific tasks during today's discussions.

OVERVIEW OF RETREAT GOALS

The facilitator provided an overview of the goals for the meeting. Her overview is summarized below.

- Council members will self-select into three groups composed of different ward representatives for two rounds of small group discussion. Each small group will discuss two of the Council's six goal areas through two rounds: *affordable housing, sustainability, public safety, homelessness, trust/accountability in government, and a thriving economy*.
- Small groups will revise the tasks for their assigned goal areas. They will clarify each task's original intent and then sequence them based on seasonality.
- Each small group will present the logic behind its sequencing strategy to the full group. Council members will then comment and ask questions. As a full group, Council may need to identify tasks to be eliminated or delayed until 2026.
- Council members are encouraged to think strategically about which tasks can unblock or enable future work. They are also encouraged to remember that tasks identified in this process do not represent the full scope of work staff manage.
- Council members can revise the status of tasks that staff have categorized:
 - **Done:** Staff are finished with the task.
 - **Done and ongoing:** The framework is established, but the work continues in some form.
 - **Underway:** Staff have identified ways to advance the task.
 - **On deck:** Staff have not yet started the task.
- By the end of the meeting, Council will determine how to respect existing work while integrating new or emerging work, as unexpected priorities will inevitably arise.

OUTLINING THE YEAR: OVERVIEW OF TASKS (ROUND 1)

Ben Goldstein, Deputy City Manager, provided an overview of the existing tasks for the first three Council goal areas for small groups to discuss. Highlights of his overview are summarized below.

- During the first round of discussion, small groups will discuss one of the following goal areas: *affordable housing, sustainability, or public safety, transportation, and infrastructure*. These goals and the task groupings were explained in depth at the January 2025 City Council retreat.
- The size of the physical cards represents the level of staff effort required for each task. They are categorized as large, medium, or small and color-coded by goal area. The cards also indicate the relevant department or supporting departments required to accomplish the task.
- Items currently underway or on deck represent actions that staff need the most direction from Council on regarding the sequencing of tasks throughout the next several months.

Overview of Affordable Housing Tasks

- An example of a done task is the Colorado Gives Bring it Home Fund.
- An example of a done and ongoing effort is the 90-day permitting process. Staff successfully established a framework, but the framework has not yet been applied to any projects; this task still represents a high-lift initiative.
- One item currently underway is creating a frequently asked questions (FAQ) factsheet for mobile homes.
- No tasks are currently on deck.

Overview of Sustainability Tasks

- Completed efforts include creating a sustainability department, completing an electric vehicle (EV) action plan, hiring a new zero-waste employee, and ensuring compliance with state zero-waste laws.
- An ongoing effort includes highlighting the enhanced development menu for developers. This has been a high-lift task. Staff will provide Council with a report on these efforts and on sustainable budget requests for 2024 and 2025. Staff are also continuing to purchase EVs as part of the ongoing work on the EV action plan.
- A high-lift task underway is updating the code and incentive structures through zoning updates. This task falls into the largest bin of staff effort.

Overview of Public Safety, Transportation, and Infrastructure (PSTI) Tasks

- Completed efforts include identifying opportunities to incorporate art placemaking and trees, as well as completing the public art plan. Staff also finished facilitating a resident survey, but need to compile City Council considerations, and assess the possibility of a November ballot measure.
- Done and ongoing efforts include continuing to utilize crime data analysis to support and implement strategies that contribute to crime reduction, developing innovative strategies such as Community Outreach Court, Veterans Court, and Law Enforcement Assistance Development (LEAD), and aligning the Capital Improvement Fund with City Council goals.

Questions Regarding Round 1 Goal Areas and Tasks

Council members asked Ben clarifying questions about the goal areas and related tasks. Their questions are indicated below in italics, and corresponding responses are in plain text.

If the Council is interested in staff repeating a task (e.g., Colorado Gives Bring it Home Fund) that has been done, can Council ask staff to do so?

Yes. Council should indicate this interest while sequencing the tasks.

Is the timeline for the zoning code update and the comprehensive plan going to be pushed back?

The timeline has been loosely discussed and is likely to shift to July rather than June 2025. During the upcoming May 5 workshop, Council will evaluate the most important time-related considerations, specifically community outreach efforts, and identify potential challenges. Staff suggest that Council avoid rushing any part of the process.

For the task of defining code incentives, are staff considering options for residents, such as home energy upgrades, or only incentives for developers?

Enhanced development incentives are intended for developers, while other incentives are aimed at individuals. This aligns with the ongoing effort to create a sustainability incentives resource on the City website, which will outline existing incentives.

Can Council members revise the language of a task to clarify the original intent?

Yes. However, staff have limited capacity to take on new initiatives. If existing assignments need clarification or revision, Council members should write them on a card of the appropriate size for discussion as a full group.

Comments on the Round 1 Goal Areas and Tasks

- There has been a noticeable gap between staff's interpretation of the tasks Council identified. Some Council members expressed frustration with the misalignment and indicated interest in revising tasks to reflect their original intent.
- The information presented to Council members during this activity lacks the level of detail provided in the Council handbook. Additionally, there is insufficient differentiation between measures and tasks. These issues are contributing to confusion about the hierarchy among overall goals, how progress is measured, and which tasks support those goals and measures. "Measures" seem to reflect what Council has expressed, while "tasks" seem to represent staff's interpretation of those directives. A Council member suggested that staff refine the conceptual representation of the two-year plan to clarify the relationships among these three elements.
- A Council member suggested that Council and staff check in mid-year to ensure that staff interpretation matches Council's intent.
- **Decision:** Council members in attendance agreed that the City Manager will plan a mid-year check-in to address any interpretation gaps and receive updates on the status of tasks and measures.

OUTLINING THE YEAR: SMALL GROUP REPORTS ON TASK SEQUENCING (ROUND 1)

Council members broke out into small groups to discuss task revisions and sequencing for the first three goal areas. They then returned to the full group and reported on their ideas. Below are summarized highlights of their thought processes per goal area, as well as key points from the full group discussion.

Affordable Housing Group Report

- The group determined that the tasks of prioritizing a plan at the housing workshop that is implemented with the zoning code and scheduling updates to the zoning code were a single, interconnected effort tied to the broader housing plan.
- A medium-sized task is creating a recommendation on how to raise funding for affordable housing, which will be discussed at the housing workshop. This task is considered done and ongoing.

- Another task is developing strategies for the affordable housing fund with measurable targets. The group suggested addressing this in the late summer.
- The group expressed concern about the utility of developing a frequently asked questions (FAQ) resource to support mobile home residents. This small task is tentatively scheduled for winter or next year.
- A key challenge that the group identified regarding the 90-day approval process for affordable housing is the lack of a pipeline, as no projects have utilized it. Although the fast-track option exists, it may be inaccessible, poorly understood, or insufficiently promoted. The group indicated interest in ensuring that Council has the insight and information needed to act or improve the process.

Discussion on the Sequencing of Affordable Housing Tasks

- The City's zoning update is part of its responsibility to create more housing opportunities and address physical infrastructure needs.
- The affordable housing fund is connected to the Housing and Building Zoning (HBZ) plan. There is a structural distinction between treating the fund as a cost center (which is more administrative) versus a true funding source. Council should not lose sight of the fund's original purpose and potential.
- There is an opportunity for the City Manager to inform Council on the steps, procedures, and outcomes of the 90-day approval process and any projects in the pipeline. Council could also consider defining "affordable housing projects."
- The FAQ for mobile home residents should focus on tenant education. The group discussed moving the task to "not doing" as it is potentially covered by other efforts, such as the Local Advisory Committee (LAC).
- The City's primary way to directly support affordable housing is through County collaboration (e.g., property tax abatements), highlighting the need for a coordinated City-County approach.
- Staff emphasized the need for clearer guidance on regional collaboration, noting that necessary social, financial, and infrastructure systems are not yet in place.
- The Jefferson County Housing Steering Committee, known as the Jeffco Community Network, continues to lead regional housing efforts and could be invited to present to Council on opportunities.
- Some Council members support adding a discussion with the Housing Policy Commission (HPC) to the summer agenda. Others suggested sending a mid-summer invitation for Council members to attend an HPC meeting to stay informed and discuss priorities.
- Staff expressed an urgent need to discuss fundraising options for the affordable housing fund, as it will be part of the budget presented to Council in September. Council could consider discussing this off-cycle to ensure it gets the attention it needs.
- **Decision:** The group decided that the City Manager and Mayor will attend and bring Council's ideas to an HPC meeting, as well as review the existing housing plan. They will report back to Council after the summer for a broader discussion on creating a strategy recommendation for how affordable housing funds can be used, to be reviewed with the HPC.
- **Decision:** Council members agreed on periodic updates from the City Manager, specifically about the number of affordable housing units in the pipeline and how the 90-day approval process is making a difference via email. This action also includes updates related to Proposition 123 reporting.

PSTI Group Report

- No new categories were created, but some tasks were reclassified from “done” to “done and ongoing” to reflect continued work.
- The group proposed allocating 1 percent of the capital project budget to identify opportunities for art placemaking and incorporating trees.
- They suggested increasing small business safety by incorporating economic development funds to support small businesses and expanding outreach grants through the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) framework.
- A study session was recommended to prioritize bike facilities. The group wants updates on the traffic calming plan and “Safe Streets for All” after the zoning code is complete. A new County request for proposals (RFP) on safe streets was noted as a timely opportunity to pursue.
- The group wants to ensure that the police department (PD) continues to focus on using crime data analysis to enhance public safety and community engagement. They suggested that Police Department staff present ongoing initiatives (e.g., community outreach) to Council.
- The Capital Improvement Fund should be aligned with the City Council’s goal areas. The group introduced the “1 percent philosophy,” which involves allocating a portion of the fund specifically for streetlights and safety improvements. However, any proposed budget changes would need to be introduced soon, as the budget process begins in June. The proposed budget is submitted to the Council in September, at which point Council can make adjustments.
- Facilitating a resident survey or exploring a ballot measure was suggested for next year. The broader discussion will include the possibility of additional ballot measures, not limited to those for the 2026 ballot. However, these conversations should take place well in advance to ensure adequate preparation and alignment with the planning timeline.

Discussion on the Sequencing of PSTI Tasks

Polling for Measure 2A took place in March, which some staff and Council members felt was rushed. It may be beneficial to conduct initial polling on the ballot measures before next February to help inform the goal-setting process. However, the intention could also be for Council to gather and present information first, see what emerges from discussions in May, and then establish clearer priorities. This timeframe would allow Council and staff to refine ideas before moving forward with polling. The polling effort is considered a new task for staff.

Sustainability Group Report

- The City’s task to update code and incentive programs is underway.
- The group suggested strengthening the incentive programs, specifically those related to electric and water efficiency for residents. Additionally, the group emphasized the need to improve access and visibility of individual incentives. Information on incentives should be made available not only on the City’s website but also during budget discussions to ensure transparency and citizen engagement.
- The group recommended developing a publicly accessible “menu” of available incentives, allowing residents and developers to easily access and utilize sustainability offerings. This menu could be enhanced beyond code requirements to encourage developers to make greater voluntary sustainability commitments.
- The group encouraged exploring new actions such as improving the implementation of incentive programs, increasing reporting, and identifying new seed funding opportunities.
- There is currently a gap in shared understanding between Council and staff on the status and scope of sustainability efforts. Staff views many initiatives as ongoing, while Council

perceives them as completed. The group emphasized the importance of continued investment and clarified communication to align expectations.

- The group expressed interest in expanding the City's investments, particularly in solar energy and EV infrastructure.
- The group suggested establishing a sustainability committee, which would coordinate with existing groups like the LAC. The committee's purpose would be to increase the City's capacity and sustainability expertise. The committee would also set policy priorities that help guide future budget decisions through formal recommendations.
- For the 2024–2025 budget cycle, the group expressed interest in receiving a clearer summary and broader understanding of sustainability investments, particularly during the fall budget discussions. A recommendation was made to include sustainability line items as a visible component of the City's budget process.
- The group noted that while many waste-related tasks are marked as completed, additional action is desired. The group proposed a future Council discussion on transitioning to a single-hauler system for waste services, recognizing that such a move would have both political and operational implications.

Discussion on the Sequencing of Sustainability Tasks

- Work is underway on EV charging stations, and staff could begin internal discussions regarding solar panels and solar garden development.
- The City will require additional staff capacity to comply with state waste diversion mandates, including potentially hiring a new employee.
- **Decision:** Council members agreed to move forward with forming a sustainability committee. Establishing a committee will require a formal Council decision, including time for discussion and a vote. While this is a priority for long-term planning, a committee does not need to be in place before the 2025 budget process.
- **Decision:** Council members agreed to discuss whether to use a single-waste hauler towards the end of the summer.

OUTLINING THE YEAR: OVERVIEW OF TASKS (ROUND 2)

The Deputy City Manager provided an overview of the three remaining Council goal areas for the small groups to discuss. Highlights of his overview are summarized below.

Overview of Homelessness Tasks

- The City has completed a restroom desert study, identifying areas that lack adequate sanitation access for individuals experiencing homelessness. Although water and sanitation access were addressed through the restroom desert study, a shower trailer program, and capital improvements planning, the broader measure of safe water access for the homeless population has not yet been fully achieved. Staff would appreciate further direction and clarification from Council on this task.
- Several ongoing efforts are in place, including the use of Community Assistance Teams (CAT) and crisis responders, acquisition of a building for services, inclusion of unhoused voices in future housing development planning, staff capacity assessments, evaluation of service barriers, increased foot patrol presence, partnership with the Jeffco Workforce Center, and the provision of regular updates with current homelessness numbers.
- Work will be underway later this year to purchase properties for the development of permanent affordable housing.

- An upcoming effort is expanding the safe parking program and ensuring subject matter experts are available to support ordinance development. This effort remains a significant challenge due to the lack of existing partners, requiring the City to take nearly full responsibility for this initiative.
- The City is in the process of acquiring property for permanent affordable housing. An update on this matter is expected during an upcoming executive session.
- **Action:** The City Manager and Deputy City Manager will schedule an executive session to discuss progress and next steps for the acquisition of permanent housing properties.

Overview of Trust/Accountability in Government (TAG) Tasks

- Council has completed the establishment of policies and procedures to enhance transparency and accountability in governance.
- Ongoing efforts include expanding the City's social media outreach, attending and presenting at business association meetings, and delivering regular staff presentations on current topics during Council meetings.
- Additional work includes increased engagement with underrepresented demographics, creation of GIS story maps, development of a communication matrix dashboard, and providing more detailed background information in staff memos and supporting documents.
- The City has adopted a process where large projects include public training to help the community understand the implications and details of major initiatives. This process is intended to enhance community input and foster trust between the City and its residents. While this process is intended to align with zoning reform, it is categorized independently to ensure clear public engagement opportunities. The draft zoning proposal is currently incorporating this idea, and the sequencing of implementation will follow the zoning update.
- A task on deck includes further clarifying and formalizing Council actions that promote transparency, such as improving the public's ability to understand which projects or decisions are open to input and which are not.

Overview of Thriving Economy Tasks

- There are no items marked as fully completed at this time. However, several initiatives are ongoing with continued attention and development.
- Ongoing work includes continued education and training opportunities, development of enforcement strategies, mapping the permitting process with the intent to share relevant metrics with Council, and conducting outreach to support women- and minority-owned businesses.
- Staff are also updating tax compliance guidelines, monitoring regional and state trends in economic wages, and supporting equitable workforce development.
- The City is also working to provide Council with information on ways it can align with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) to ensure strategic regional collaboration.
- Initiatives currently underway include connecting entrepreneurs with mentors and industry professionals, preparing a Council presentation on designated renewal areas, creating a revitalization plan, and actively engaging with Adelante and other economic organizations serving Black communities.

- Staff have yet to present to Council the mapped permitting process and related time metrics. Additionally, staff noted that there is a common conflation between the 90-day expedited review process for affordable housing and the full permitting process for businesses.

OUTLINING THE YEAR: SMALL GROUP REPORTS ON TASK SEQUENCING (ROUND 2)

Council members broke out into small groups to discuss task revisions and sequencing for the remaining three goal areas. They then returned to the full group and reported on their ideas. Below are summarized highlights of their thought processes per goal area, as well as key points from the full group discussion.

Homelessness Group Report

- The City's task of acquiring a building and beginning operations to support homelessness services is marked as done and ongoing. The group suggests that Council revisit the task during the upcoming budget season.
- The purchase of a property intended for permanent supportive housing is currently underway, with a deadline to complete the transaction before December 2025, based on the seller's timeline.
- The group expressed the importance of increasing foot patrol in Regional Transportation District (RTD) stations, which remains a priority. The recommendation is to revisit this item closer to the budget season to ensure sustained support and prioritization.
- The group expressed significant interest in renewing the partnership with the Jeffco Workforce Center. While the City ended its contract last year and the County is now discontinuing it, the City should continue the effort independently. This topic is scheduled for discussion at the end of May and should be addressed early in the budget cycle.
- The continuation of certain efforts from the spring season, including actions related to navigation services and temporary response infrastructure, has been categorized as done and ongoing.
- The group proposed revising the language of a task from "Evaluate, remove barriers hosting shelters and housing, update code for temporary shelters and housing, buy property" to better reflect the City's direction by distinguishing temporary shelters from permanent affordable housing. Cold weather sheltering continues to be identified as a top need. The City requires greater leadership from the County in this area and seeks to reduce barriers for private property owners who are willing to participate in temporary shelter programs. In addition to cold weather solutions, the group highlighted pallet shelters (small, private transitional housing units) as a critical short-term priority. These differ from shared-space navigation centers and are seen as an essential alternative, especially since permanent supportive housing is not expected to come online in the near term.

Discussion on the Sequencing of Homelessness Tasks

- Given uncertainty in the economy, the City should prepare for potential economic downturns that may affect housing development timelines and strategies.
- Temporary shelters and permanent affordable housing are both key components of the City's homelessness response. The City needs to shift from offering day shelters to more permanent, overnight models through the navigation center. However, the implementation of permanent structures will be more complex and is anticipated to occur later this year. The navigation center's role is to facilitate longer-term housing, while temporary shelters will address immediate needs during the transition.
- Recovery Works has faced internal delays, with the navigation center completion date now extended past the original November timeline.

- City staff continue to focus on engaging with the unhoused community and have considered creating an Unhoused Advisory Council. This council would include individuals with lived experience of homelessness and community advocates to ensure strategies reflect those most impacted. Engagement with these individuals will be critical in developing more effective policies and solutions.
- There is a need to ensure public sanitation facilities are available in areas with high homeless populations, particularly in Wards 1 and 2, Bear Creek Greenway, and Peak View. The bathroom desert study highlighted the lack of facilities in these areas, and efforts will be made to prioritize restroom access as part of the City's infrastructure improvements, especially while the navigation center is under development. This initiative will be incorporated into the capital improvement budget for the upcoming fiscal cycle.
- There is a lack of collaboration from the County on homelessness services, particularly regarding shelter vouchers and regional support. The City of Lakewood could propose to Jefferson County that cities contributing more financially to homelessness services receive a larger share of shelter or housing vouchers.

Staff Actions Related to Homelessness

- Follow up on how grant funding to support eviction prevention efforts aligns with other homelessness efforts and provide updates to Council.
- Elevate cold weather shelter planning as a top priority and engage regional partners.
- Work on removing legal barriers to the development of pallet homes and transitional housing.
- Ensure the availability of restroom facilities in Wards 1 and 2, with a focus on Bear Creek Greenway and Peak View.
- Establish the Unhoused Advisory Council to ensure community-led solutions.

Trust/Accountability in Government Group Report

- The group suggested moving the task of convening an Ad Hoc City Council Committee to the beginning of 2026.
- Staff have been providing more detailed memos and support on high-profile projects. This ongoing effort is meant to improve proactive communication with the Council and the public.
- The group noted that key performance indicators (KPIs) could be more consistently used across departments. While police stats are easily tracked, it is more difficult to define measurable outcomes for programs like the CAT housing efforts or affordable housing pipelines, which are of interest to some Council members. The group suggested that staff identify similar KPIs across various departments to provide Council updates with clearer metrics of progress.
- The communication matrix dashboard tool is updated monthly and provides a quick update on Council resource pages and reports.
- The framework for the new GIS concept map has been completed. It will continue to be updated with staff resources to ensure its usefulness for City planning and communication.

Discussion on the Sequencing of Trust/Accountability in Government Tasks

- Staff view the communication matrix dashboard as a useful tool for quick updates, but suggest that the efforts may evolve into an annual report. While the dashboard is not critical for adjusting strategies, it could serve as a tool for offering talking points in broader discussions.

- The effort to promote openings to underrepresented populations is closely tied to the work of the LAC. Council will vote on a proposal to elevate this initiative into an LAC project in the mid-summer.
- Staff are actively improving the City's website, with a focus on better serving residents and integrating social media. As part of the \$50,000 website update, navigation features may shift toward a search bar with links to resources (e.g., Looking @Lakewood) rather than adding a navigation bar with tabs, which is an outdated model.
- The process for adopting public hearings should be related to the zoning update. This task is ongoing, with the goal of improving public engagement in the decision-making process.
- Discussions regarding updates to the City's charter are set for fall 2025, with proposed outcomes to be sent to voters via ballot in 2026.
- Staff have been excellent at delivering presentations on various topics at City Council ward meetings. These improved presentations are an ongoing effort, with presentations conducted as topics emerge and staff capacity allows.

Thriving Economy Group Report

- City staff continue to provide economic training to the public, a commitment that requires significant time and resources. As part of ongoing efforts, conducting three tax workshops each year and monitoring livable wage trends remain important.
- Staff are preparing to present to Council on potential areas of alignment with the DRCOG, with a rollout planned for June. DRCOG has developed a comprehensive strategy that may offer funding opportunities to members starting in the third quarter. This will require tracking beginning in June.
- Ongoing engagement with the Adelante community and Black communities continues. This work overlaps with other initiatives and is seen as part of broader equity-focused efforts.
- Council presentations related to a new urban renewal area are currently on hold until a new Economic Development director is hired. These are expected to resume at the end of the year. Likewise, the development of a citywide revitalization plan is postponed until the new director is in place, with discussions to resume in January. The intent is to take a holistic approach, potentially resembling an urban renewal strategy.
- Economic retention and expansion tactics are being applied in conjunction with infrastructure improvements. Small businesses are currently facing challenges due to high labor costs as well as crime, loitering, and drug use on business fronts. The group suggested combining economic development with creative placemaking—such as public art—and offering grant or loan programs for small businesses.
- Four outreach actions aimed at supporting women- and minority-owned businesses have been conducted, but staff noted challenges in tracking effectiveness. The outreach was intended to inform business owners on how to access City procurement opportunities. The lack of measurable goals and unclear alignment between tasks and outcomes diminished the impact.
- Through the task related to mapping the permitting process and sharing time metrics, the City is working to track data and improve the permitting and licensing experience for businesses. The group suggested revising the task to “mapping the business licenses and permitting process” to hone in on the intent to improve transparency and efficiency for business owners. They also suggested that staff map out the entire permitting process for businesses of all sizes and gather data on how long it takes to complete each step of the process. This includes all necessary steps for a business to open its doors, from obtaining permits to securing business licenses. The intention is to identify inefficiencies or delays and explore ways to streamline the process for future businesses.

- The group expressed renewed interest in supporting entrepreneurs by reconnecting them with industry professionals. Council could consider hosting a business summit, similar to a past event, for 2026.

Discussion on the Sequencing of Thriving Economy Tasks

- Identifying minority-owned businesses is difficult due to vague self-reporting criteria. This outreach effort may not reach those typically excluded from City processes.
- Some Council members expressed concern about limited outreach to minority-owned businesses and emphasized the need for more intentional engagement. While the City's past efforts provided valuable education on procurement processes, they lacked follow-through and measurable outcomes. Moving forward, some Council members want to combine this work with the City's small business training program and launch an education campaign focused on economic inclusion. Setting clear goals for engaging underrepresented businesses will be a key step, and future progress is expected once a new Economic Development director is in place.
- One item that may be postponed for another year is the Charter Commission. This will be discussed further during the January 2026 retreat. However, the ongoing parkland issue is a compelling reason for Council to consider addressing the charter sooner, as this topic has been delayed for several years.
- The City is in the early stages of developing enforcement strategies for the Vacant Building Ordinance, with a focus on commercial properties. Staff are exploring a mix of enforcement and incentives to encourage property owners to activate unused spaces.
- **Action:** The City Manager will gather additional information on the status of the Vacant Building Ordinance, specifically as it relates to commercial properties. She will provide a verbal update to Council within the next two months. This update will help clarify the progress made so far and outline the next steps for implementation.

Next Steps for the Staff Work Plan

- When an action requires Council adoption, it must first be discussed in a committee. Wendi and Kathy will meet to review and discuss the details of the action. Afterward, Council will receive the proposal in advance for review. Staff will make any necessary modifications based on feedback before Council votes to either approve or delay the action.
- Council members previously requested that future reports clearly indicate which departments are involved in each project. To address this, staff will organize the work plan by the lead department for better clarity and accountability.

EXAMINING THE BIG PICTURE: DISCUSSION ON BALANCING STAFF WORKLOAD IN LIGHT OF SHIFTING PRIORITIES

Council members discussed how they might consider respecting the work plan that has been established for staff while remaining flexible to immediate changes. Highlights of their discussion are summarized below.

- When a new idea is proposed, it is added to the Council dashboard, and a request for Council action is submitted. The idea is then discussed at the end of the meeting, and if prioritized, a vote is taken to add the work to staff's work plan without necessarily removing other tasks.
- The Lakewood Mayor typically consults with staff to explore ways to implement ideas without overburdening staff's current workload.
- Some Council members expressed a desire to slow down the process of bringing new ideas to the dais to allow for more vetting. This would provide time for discussions with staff and ensure informed decision-making.

- A Council member expressed their preference to maintain the current system, noting that recent updates to policies and procedures have created a more balanced approach. They also acknowledged that new ideas could overwhelm the agenda, suggesting that, instead of taking up City Council time, study sessions could be a better way for Council to review ideas.
- While several Council members indicated their belief that the process has not been abused or derailed, they acknowledged the risk of inefficiency and the need for additional refinement to existing legislative policies.
- Some Council members suggested scoping feedback after a new idea is proposed to assess its impact on staff. Understanding how a new idea affects the current budget and priorities is crucial for making the most informed decisions.
- There is an interest in developing policies beyond Robert's Rules to appropriately manage the workload and allow for flexibility when Council proposes new ideas. Some Council members suggested that co-sponsorship could help focus priorities and ensure the work is manageable.
- Sequencing tasks and understanding the realities of the staff workload are crucial for effective decision-making. The process should strike a balance between flexibility and maintaining a manageable staff workload.
- The Mayor and City Manager are seen as key figures in normalizing these conversations. The City Manager's role in highlighting the implications of proposals before they are introduced to Council is crucial.
- **Decision:** Council members agreed to collaborate with one another and communicate with the Mayor and City Manager before submitting ideas to avoid overloading staff. They also agreed that scoping conversations should happen before or after the vote, depending on the timing. These conversations are important, especially for new Council members, to understand the scope of the work that they are asking of staff and what other tasks will need to be deprioritized or eliminated as a result.

NEXT STEPS

- Peak Facilitation will draft a summary of today's discussion and digitize the sequenced tasks. Staff and Council will have this documentation as a shared reference of the discussion.
- The City Manager will create a work plan and share it with Council and then set up a Council review meeting.
- Based on today's discussion, the Mayor, City Manager, and Deputy City Manager will bring back a proposal to Council that incorporates best practices for making mid-cycle changes to staff's work plan, including a framework for Council to present new ideas and a systematic check to address the tendency for Council to be overly agreeable during discussions.

ACTION ITEMS

City Manager	• Plan a mid-year Council check-in to address any interpretation gaps and provide Council with updates on the status of tasks and measures. • Provide Council with periodic email updates about the number of affordable housing units in the pipeline and how the 90-day affordable housing approval process is having an impact. • Gather additional information on the progress of the Vacant Buildings Ordinance, specifically as it relates to commercial properties, and provide a verbal update to Council within the next two months.
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City Manager and Deputy City Manager	Schedule an executive session for Council to discuss progress and next steps for the acquisition of permanent housing properties.
Mayor, City Manager, and Deputy City Manager	Bring a proposal to Council that incorporates best practices for making mid-cycle changes to staff's work plan, including a framework for Council to present new ideas and a systematic check to address the tendency for Council to be overly agreeable during discussions.