

Westminster Mall Specific Plan FAQs

What is a Specific Plan?

A Specific Plan is a comprehensive planning and zoning document for a defined area. It is a planning tool used to guide future land use, mobility, and design to achieve a unique vision for that area.

Per State law, a specific plan must include the following information:

- Standards and guidelines for development (building heights, setbacks, parking requirements, etc.)
- Program of implementation measures including infrastructure and financing
- Text and diagrams showing the distribution, location and extent of desired land uses
- Proposed distribution, location, extent, and intensity of essential facilities needed to support the land uses
- Statement of the specific plan's consistency with the General Plan

Why is the City creating a Specific Plan for the Westminster Mall?

Several years ago, during the General Plan update process, the community expressed the desire to see the Mall site be revitalized into a mixed use site that is an integrated, accessible, attractive, economically viable, and exciting place to be. The Westminster General Plan designates the Mall site for mixed commercial and residential uses, and states that a master planning process would be used to implement that vision. The Westminster Mall Specific Plan (WMSP) is a city-initiated effort that has produced a new document that will manage the future development of the Westminster Mall Site and is the result of that master planning process.

In the past few years, some major stores operating at the Mall have experienced downsizing or closure, including Sears and Babies R Us. As a result, the property owners on the Westminster Mall site have been evaluating how to reposition their properties for long-term success and to respond to changing market conditions.

The City prepared the WMSP to ensure the community's vision is represented in future changes at the site. Additionally, from a technical standpoint, a Specific Plan will allow development entitlements from multiple property owners to be evaluated in a cohesive and efficient manner over time. This is especially important as Westminster Mall includes several properties and owners.

What types of topics are addressed in the WMSP?

The specific plan will cover the topics listed below:

- **Community Input.** The specific plan will reflect input collected from the community during multiple community workshops.
- **Vision.** The image, functionality and type of place that the Mall site should be in the future.
- **Land Use.** The desired future land uses allowed on the site, including densities and intensities. The WMSP allows for residential uses to be built on the site, which were not previously permitted under the current zoning.
- **Mobility.** A multi-modal system that facilitates all types of mobility (automobile, bus, bike, pedestrian) and supports the planned land uses.
- **Infrastructure.** An assessment of water, wastewater, drainage, and other essential systems needed to support future uses.
- **Development and Design Standards and Guidelines.** Architecture and landscaping standards and criteria to guide the character of future development or redevelopment. The WMSP allows for taller buildings (up to 10 stories near the freeway) to accommodate more uses on the site.
- **Implementation.** A series of actions to be taken by the City or other stakeholders to achieve the vision. This can include financing, phasing and programming. A general timeframe for completion is identified for each action to help prioritize when and where resources should be focused. The WMSP includes a retail preservation policy to ensure sales-tax generating uses are retained in the area.
- **Environmental Impacts.** Environmental documentation will be prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

Why is this opportunity important for the Westminster Community?

Invigorating this large site could have significant benefits to the community. For the City, sales tax revenue from Westminster Mall is an important contributor to our budget and something we monitor closely. Improving our City's financial position is critical to affording high quality services and facilities, such as police, fire, parks, and roads. A lively destination-type project with residential, retail, hospitality, office and medical uses could improve the image of our community and attract more visitors to stop and shop in Westminster.

What happens when the Specific Plan is adopted? Does the Specific Plan approve construction?

No. The Specific Plan does not approve construction or development of a specific project. It does provide development "rules" such as maximum densities, required amounts of open space, quality standards, etc. Any development or redevelopment of the Mall site would first require the property owners to submit the entitlements called for in the specific plan. If the entitlements are approved, then plans would be submitted for plan check before a permit can be issued.

How big is the current Westminster Mall?

The Westminster Mall currently houses approximately 1.3 million square feet of retail space on nearly 100 acres of prime real estate with direct access to the I-405. The main mall structure is approximately 72 feet tall or almost 7 stories at its maximum height.

Will the current Westminster Mall be closing? What new businesses will be going in? When will businesses need to leave?

While property owners have been evaluating different concepts and mixes of uses for their sites, the City does not yet know which businesses will be proposed in the future for the Westminster Mall site. Similarly, current businesses at the existing Mall site will continue to operate as normal. If any changes are made in the future, they will be led by the Washington Prime Group, who owns and operates the mall.

Why are some current stores closing? Can't they fill empty spaces with retailers I like?

Retail has changed dramatically over the last 15 years as online shopping has become increasingly common. When selecting locations, retailers look at data such as competition in the market area, quality of the space, proximity to housing (customers), and local demographic characteristics like income, age, and household size. Retailers have had to completely rethink where they locate and how many storefronts to have. Rethinking how to reposition and make aging shopping malls thrive is happening countywide and nationwide; it is not unique to Westminster.

We need open space in this area, will the new development provide that?

The City's General Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan (adopted in 2016) identify the WMSP site as an opportunity for open space uses. As a result, the WMSP includes provisions that require 9.5 acres of public open space in addition to private open space requirements for residential and non-residential uses to help address this identified deficiency and need.

The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan can be found here:

www.westminster-ca.gov/our-city/project-w/projects/westminster-parks-master-plan

When will construction start at the mall? Will the existing structures be torn down?

It is not known at this time when new construction will begin. If the WMSP is adopted in November 2022, it will be up to each individual property owner to determine if and when they will submit new plans for their sites. It is not known, but we anticipate it may take a few more years before any new development (or demolition of current buildings) could occur.



I am concerned about new traffic that would be generated by new uses. What is the City doing to address that?

Early on in the WMSP process, the City hosted a workshop with adjacent residents to learn about their biggest concerns related to future traffic generated by new uses in the WMSP area. The WMSP includes provisions in the Mobility chapter that minimize cut-through traffic and promote internal circulation to minimize traffic on surrounding roadways, and it also provides recommendations for and illustrations of traffic calming improvements for residential roadways that intersect Bolsa Avenue and Edwards Street. In addition, the WMSP contains illustrations of new roadway sections (including bike lanes and landscaping treatments) and it also promotes new linkages to the Navy Trail regional bikeway corridor.

What is the schedule of next steps?

It is expected that the Planning Commission and City Council will review and act upon the WMSP and related environmental documentation by November 30th.

Changes at the Mall could take months or years after that point and may be something that occurs over time as the different property owners have different perspectives and timelines. Each individual project must be reviewed for its compliance with the Specific Plan so there may be additional hearings and opportunities for public input as each project is submitted by individual property owners. This is another reason the Specific Plan is important – to assure a single vision is adhered to, even if redevelopment takes place in phases.

How can I get involved or learn more about the project?

The City has scheduled a community workshop on September 22, 2022 from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM in the East/West Room of the Community Services Building (8200 Westminster Blvd., Westminster, CA 92683). At this meeting, City staff and consultants will provide an overview of the WMSP's content and main objectives. You can stay updated by visiting our website <https://www.westminster-ca.gov/WMSP>, by following us on social media (Facebook or Instagram), or by submitting your name to our interest list for emailed updates. You may submit your name to the interest list by filling out the short form on the webpage linked above.

