



**Public Works Committee
Meeting Summary**

March 18, 2008 **1:30 p.m.** **Room 391**

Members Present: **Johnson, Brown, Lehmann, López, Nevitt**
Members Absent: **None**
Others Present: **Garcia**

1. Local Maintenance Districts Information Update

Randy Schnicker and Brendan Kelly of the Special Districts Office (SDO) and Bo Martinez, Office of Economic Development (OED) reported on improvements in communication and dissemination of information regarding the various local maintenance districts (LMDs).

Highlights included the following:

- Denver has 26 LMDs across the city.
- SDO has created web-based information on LMDs
www.denvergov.org/District_Management/LocalMaintenanceDistricts/tabid/384930/Default.aspx.
- Information sheets on 16 LMDs have been completed, each containing:
 - a description of the boundaries and an aerial photo of the district
 - a description of the improvements maintained by the district
 - contact information for the Board of Directors
 - information on the district's annual budget
 - information and contacts for OED and the Business Assistance Center
 - other city contacts, such as 311 and the SDO.
- SDO is planning a forum for the LMDs, which will be held prior to submission of the LMDs 2009 budgets.
- Forum topics will include procedures, policy, scheduling, and budgeting.

Committee members suggested:

- Add the District Councilperson's name/phone number to the info sheets.
- Send the appropriate information sheets to each Councilmember.
- Send the LMD information website address to the Councilmembers.
- Get a catchier website address.
- Enclose the information sheet with the notice of assessments mailed to property owners within the district.

- Compare property value and sales tax collected to similar corridors without the streetscape improvements. Discuss this at the forum.

Committee members were pleased with these improved communications tools and the planned forum and thanked Mr. Schnicker, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Martinez for their work.

2. Remnant Parcel Project

Frank Trujillo, Facilities Planning & Management (FPM), and Gayle Weinstein, Parks & Recreation Natural Areas Director, reported on progress in addressing issues involving remnant, or orphan, parcels and surplus property. Remnant parcels are pieces of land, often small, that do not appear to belong to any person or governmental agency. These are sometimes referred to as orphan parcels. Once identified as remnants, some can be sold to adjacent property owners; others cannot be sold but must be maintained by some agency.

City Council identified the problem several years ago. These parcels are not maintained and no person or agency is willing to take responsibility for them. In July of 2006, a cross-functional interagency task force was formed. The task was to identify all City-owned parcels and which agency was responsible for each.

FPM compiled a list of 2,224 City-owned parcels. Parks & Recreation determined it owned 745 of the parcels. Public Works Right-of-Way determined that 1,036 parcels were ROW parcels, 140 of which could be surplus parcels.

Vacant City-owned land (exclusive of DIA and Stapleton) totals 1,189.

Vacant City-owned Land

Agency	Parcels	Acres
Public Works	1,066	189
Parks & Recreation	761	981
FPM Surplus	79	18
Total	1,906	1,189

Parks & Recreation determined that 200.8 acres (892 parcels) of the vacant land could be added to the Natural Areas program inventory.

The Task Force devised a short term solution to the remnant parcel maintenance problem. Mr. Trujillo is the main contact when anyone has a complaint about the condition of a parcel. He puts out a call to Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Solid Waste, Urban Drainage & Flood Control, Colorado Dept. of Transportation, and others to determine which agency owns the parcel. If no one claims the property, a contractor is called in to clean it up. One measure of the program's success is that contractor work decreased from \$12,000 in 2006 to less than \$12,000 in 2007.

For the long term solution, City Council aides were offered GIS training so they could determine

from the on-line maps if a problem parcel is publicly-owned or private, in which case they should call Neighborhood Inspection Services. The lead agency is Natural Areas; the contact is Darrell McHone at 303-698-6677. The Public Works contact is Russell Luxa, 720-865-3030.

FPM continues working on selling the surplus parcels identified through the project. Eight parcels, including three carriage lots, were sold for a total of \$31,300. A large parcel at 52nd and Monroe sold earlier this month for \$1.1 million.

Work toward cooperative maintenance continues with CDOT, Xcel, Urban Drainage, the railroads and others, some of which are easier to work with than others.

Many of the orphan parcels can be taken into the natural areas program, which is run by Gayle Weinstein. Started nine years ago to restore or naturalize certain areas in parks, two years later, the program took on eradication of noxious weeds. Goats are utilized in that effort.

Parks & Recreation and Public Works compiled a list of undeveloped City-owned land that might qualify as natural area. This is being merged with the list of parcels with no known responsible party, the orphan parcels. Mapping of the natural areas on GIS is underway.

Ms. Weinstein said 80% of our potential natural area has noxious weeds, and the program is working toward getting rid of the weeds, stabilizing the areas, and promoting better vegetation.

Committee members had questions about increasing wildlife, such as the coyotes in southeast Denver. Ms. Weinstein said Parks & Recreation will soon have a wildlife ecologist on staff to help with education programs for the neighborhoods near the natural areas.

Councilman Brown said that the City has trapped beaver in the past, which led into a discussion of "rotational cropping" of different varieties of trees for the beaver and installation of floats in creeks where the beaver build dams.

Councilwoman Lehmann said people still call and ask when these "awful" areas will be planted in bluegrass. Councilman Lopez suggested signage to explain that an area is a "natural area" and what that means.

Councilwoman Lehmann remarked that proceeds from sale of parcels do not go into the nature areas budget, and she asked what help the program needs. Ms. Weinstein said the department is still waiting to receive the promised 2007 expansion funds. She needs more staff.

Mr. Trujillo concluded by saying the program has been a success. Properties have been taken off the City's maintenance list conveying them to private owners. City agencies are better coordinated and more efficient. What would make it even more successful would be better coordination with the outside agencies and more staff.