

Loretto Heights Area Plan Steering Committee Meeting # 9



Date and Time: Tuesday, June 25th, 2019 from 6:00-8:00pm
Location: Library, Loretto Heights Campus

Attendees

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS (AND ALTERNATES)

In attendance: Tara Durham, Norma Brown, Andrew Rogge, Clare Harris, Councilman Kevin Flynn, Sister Mary Nelle Gage, Father Joseph Dang, Mark Witkiewicz, Jim Gibson, Zachary Wallace (Denver Public Works), John Olson, Larry Ambrose, Adriana Pena, John Moore, Melissa Thate (Denver Economic Development and Opportunity)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT STAFF

Jason Morrison, Jenny Buddenborg, Brandon Shaver, Fran Peñafiel, Courtland Hyser

Meeting Summary

1. WELCOME

Jason started the meeting at 6:05 and began by reviewing the agenda. He thanked the steering committee members who attended and assisted with Community Meeting #2. Looking ahead, the July steering committee meeting will focus on public feedback received for the draft plan. Both Jason and Brandon will share presentation duties for the evening.

2. COMMUNITY MEETING #2 IMPRESSIONS

Jason began by reviewing the numbers and demographics of the community meeting attendees. Roughly 89 attendees filled out the sign-in sheet, 94 report cards were returned, and a head count estimated 100 attendees. The demographics were like the first community meeting (based on 79 responses). Jason noted that we are not getting representation of the Latino/Hispanic community equal to the percent of their population within the plan area and asked the steering committee for ideas on how to improve. He shared that there has been concerted engagement by the City through various outlets and outreach methods. CM Flynn mentioned the success of kids backpack flyers but now that school is out that is not possible. Sister Mary Nelle suggested that flyers be made available at the SouthWest Improvement Council and places of worship with Hispanic/Latino congregations (e.g., All Saints Church); request that churches include the information in their bulletins. Clare shared that there are churches serving other diverse congregations like in the Asian community that could be engaged, too.

3. QUALITY OF LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE

Jason began the community meeting feedback discussion by reviewing the comments related to Quality of Life. This topic received the most consensus from the community. Healthy and Active Living, Open Space, and Green Infrastructure are within this category. Sustainability of

infrastructure like storm water management was raised by several attendees. CM Flynn clarified that the plan covers the entire plan area and not just the campus. Larry requested that an inventory of green infrastructure be undertaken and included in the plan to help guide recommendations. Mark responded that there is an existing tree inventory. Larry suggested that the plan include recommendations related to WiFi and related infrastructure. Jason responded that the plan will not include that level of detail. CM Flynn asked about the recent sales tax increase to provide healthy food and food education to low-income and at-risk youth in Denver and suggested that it could be included in the plan to help meet Quality of Life recommendations.

4. COMPLETE STREET NETWORK

The community shared a lot of consensus about the pedestrian, bike and complete street networks that were shared at the community meeting. Improving safety and accessibility of Federal Boulevard was one of the issues that rose to the top. Wayfinding opportunities were also emphasized as a priority. Tapping into existing trail networks and improving connections to them was also raised. The non-vehicular connection of Dartmouth Avenue was praised. The last mile gap and accessibility for all related to mass transit is an important factor that still needs more consideration. The Englewood Light Rail Station via Dartmouth Avenue was another specific interest. Norma raised a discrepancy in the area plan regarding a road in front of the Admin Building—one showed vehicles allowed and another did not. Jason responded that this will be a shared street. Larry asked that different networks speak to one another regarding connectivity. John Olson noted that a shared street to provide access to the existing core of buildings is important; he also recommended a ceremonial pathway from Federal Blvd leading to the Admin Building. Mark shared the desire to construct a curbless street for the ceremonial pathway. CM Flynn suggests that Public Works is updating street design requirements which should be included in the plan. Several steering committee members recommended that the ceremonial pathway not allow for vehicles. Mark responded that not allowing vehicles would restrict retail in that area. There seemed to be group consensus that the ceremonial path should be indicated in the area plan maps.

Regarding the complete street network, Jason shared the community's comments that they 1) don't want to link the campus road to Irving at Dartmouth, 2) have concerns about the amount of connections to Irving Street, 3) have a desire for traffic calming measures (esp. at Irving and Amherst), and 4) are confused about Dartmouth punching through the campus. Jim cautions that we should consider all eventualities in relation to what traffic engineers, Fire and others will ultimately allow in development. CM Flynn suggests strengthening statements in area plan to share a clear vision for the site as a destination to help guide final traffic engineer approvals. Jason emphasized that public communication does not stop with the completion of the area plan, allowing for continued input on the final development. John shared that Dartmouth Heights residents would like specific mention of traffic calming measures to allow for compatibility with existing residential nature. Steering committee members want to make sure that input from Public Works and Fire is solicited at this juncture to make sure the area plan vision is attainable. CM Flynn asked if Public Works and Fire can provide a review of the proposed complete street network before the July steering committee meeting. Zack from

Public Works shared that he presented the network proposal to Public Works engineers and no concern was raised. Zack also suggested that he can present it to them again for more detailed feedback. Updates to the complete street network in response to community feedback include offsetting campus road connection at Irving, reducing the number of potential connections at Irving Street, providing clarity on the Dartmouth Ave “punch through”, and specifically calling out more traffic calming measures along Irving Street and Amherst Street. CM Flynn emphasized a special focus on Lowell and Amherst given the difficult topography/geography and existing street pattern. Tara shared interest in safety focus. CM Flynn asked about extending sidewalk into right-of-way to calm street. Zack responded that is not common practice but that other solutions could be explored.

5. FUTURE PLACES AND BUILDING HEIGHTS

Brandon shared the community feedback, including: 1) support for a “campus” classification at the campus core and 2) concern over residential being too dense/intense in areas, specifically west towards S Irving, and more mixed use in northeast corner of site. The City responded by improving transitions between residential areas, reducing density in the western portion of the plan area, more like-for-like along S Irving, and providing increased mixed use along Federal Blvd. Campus zoning has significant open space requirements and allows for 150 feet in building height. Brandon explained that campus zoning is intended to be intense at the core with gradual lessening of intensity into the neighborhood. It provides flexibility like allowing buildings to not orient to the street. Larry shared that he doesn’t like the Community Corridor classification that allows for five stories that could block existing campus buildings. John suggested that the future places needs to be dialed back. CM Flynn suggested overlaying maps to visualize how all the recommendations correlate with one another. Larry asked about open space allowance. Brandon noted that land use allows for open space, but the plan will not specifically identify where that will be located.

Brandon introduced the conversation on maximum building height allowances. Community input emphasized maintaining the prominence of the Admin Building and to improve transitions between residential areas. Many shared that the placement of an 8-story zoning allowance was too large. In response to concerns related to allowable heights, the City changed the 5-story zoning along the west to 3 stories, and reduced the area allowing for 8 stories. Larry pointed out that this campus, given its topography, allows for shaping varying heights and one way to do it is through height allowances. Brandon pointed out that the community desires varying building heights, which could be done in a variety of ways including custom zoning and design standards and guidelines. Clare is interested in learning about ways to ensure variability with building design and placement, including size of footprints, architectural design, etc. John Olson agreed with the opportunity to utilize topography to allow for proposed building heights. CM Flynn suggested that the southern end of the plan boundary could allow for a 5-story max at the bottom of the hill; it could be a stepped approach starting at 3 and moving to 5.

Brandon shared that current zoning allows for up to 150 feet building height. The Ruby Hill Park View Plane restricts building height for a portion of the campus in the NE and center. The

view plane does not have any control over the western and southern portion of the area plan. The zoning allowances provide control over the area that is not restricted by the view plane. A cross section of the campus was provided to illustrate height allowances with the view plan restriction in place. The Admin Building tower pierces well above the view plane; the view plane allows for the Admin Building to be 67' in height although the tower reaches 160' (the view plane was put in place decades after the construction of the Admin Building and several other buildings on the campus). The theatre height falls below the view plane at 68' high. CM Flynn said that it would be helpful to provide footprint locations of the first point on the hill where a 100' tall building could be placed. Larry recommended that people walk the campus to understand the topography. Sister Mary Nelle asked what use an 8-story building could serve in the redevelopment. Mark answered that he does not know right now but that the concept is to build around the core and make a public gathering place. Larry wanted more specificity for the appropriate location of tall buildings on the site and thinks the steering committee should include this as part of their recommendations. John M asked about views westward as envisioned by the developer. Mark responded that is why there is lower building allowances on western portion of campus. CM Flynn asked if group would be comfortable with restricting 8-story allowance to only areas that would allow for it. Brandon summarized points as provided in presentation.

6. CONCLUSION

Courtland suggested reviewing the project schedule before jumping into more general draft plan feedback. He emphasized that our current timeframe does not allow for many more major edits and feels like consensus is being achieved especially as seen in the most recent community feedback. The final draft plan will be made available in late July. CM Flynn and Larry requested that more visuals on the 8-story height allowance be provided to help inform consensus on height allowance in time to meet area plan timeline. Courtland responded that we could make the plan more specific on this point with text. Comments on draft plan are due July 12. The group did not have time to provide further comment on the draft plan. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY PREPARED BY COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – JUNE 25TH, 2019