

City and County of Denver, Community Planning & Development
Advancing Equity in Rezoning project

Focus Group Session 5 Notes – Successes and Opportunities

April 19, 2022 5:00pm – 6:30pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Discussion Questions:

- What are your general experiences with rezonings? Both successes and challenges.
- What were the biggest barriers you experienced navigating the rezoning process?
- What were the challenges you faced working with the various entities, including city staff and the community?
- What issues would you like to see the project address?
- What goals would you like to see the project achieve?

Discussion Notes:

- Projects moving ahead even with opposition
- CPD pre-application meeting and city planner is helpful
- City does a good job at presenting data
- Addressing the housing shortage, circle back and show why affordable housing is important
- Allow surveys as an alternative to community meetings and noticing to gain a wider net of opinions.
- Affordable units shouldn't be allowed to be grouped in one area of the building creating an "affordable ghetto"
- Email communication from CPD is busy. All caps, or distorted by cells. Not user friendly
- Creating a system that allows for community members to provide feedback without going somewhere in person.
- Communicate why we have rezoning. Are exceptions requiring rezonings actually exceptions, or are they things we just want to allow?
- What is sufficient community input? Shared expectations on community engagement
 - Greater clarity from the city is needed, but there must be shared clarity from the community.
- Noticing: why is the automatic noticing system for one 200ft within the project.
 - Signage and posting are required 2 weeks prior to the public hearing, which isn't enough time for many community members.
 - Signs posted on the property does not cast a wide enough net to fully engage the community.

- Balance between the developer and the community needs to be considered. Developers have money, legal support, etc. which the community does not.
 - RNOs, and the broader community, are less powerful than developers. This should be leveled.
- Technology, email, surveys etc. are not inclusive to disenfranchised communities
- Community engagement on rezoning needs to occur in advance of 2 week noticing
- Some aspects of current noticing has worked to engage community members
- Developer timelines have overridden community concerns. City Council does not have tools in place within criteria to slow the process down
 - The rezoning bringing significant value to the space is often used as a positive, when it can have unintended consequences if not considered carefully.
- Having a city planning staff member working with you makes navigating the rezoning process much easier.
- It would be helpful to have the city talk about the goals of the city when discussing rezoning. Things like reducing traffic being a positive brought around by building without parking spaces.
 - Explaining where higher density building, affordable housing, etc. is and why it's important to place it in an area would be appreciated.
- Rezoning should be clear, concise, short-term, inclusive, and rare
- CPD and City Council need to support the neighborhoods not the developers, city can be out of touch with it's own constituents, city should want community to feel included and heard
- Short timelines and in-person meetings are barriers
- Notice and consider why people aren't providing feedback, not just the feedback that is received.
 - Reacting to passive feedback/trends, like usage of closed roads during covid, alongside active feedback.
- How to foster communication within neighborhoods outside of a public health crisis
- If certain amounts of oppositional feedback comes in, there should be a clear mechanism for the process to pause and reconsider.
- A sign-in sheet at public meetings with a comment section, anonymous comment boxes, or a way to value the less-formal input methods will provide perspectives that otherwise would not be heard.
- A mix of methods to capture feedback is important to capture all voices.
- CPD and city council often speak with one voice, but CPD should be able to talk freely on issues.

- Developer or community/city council communication is very one-directional. City council doesn't often communicate back to the community, making it feel more like the community is just sending things to council.
 - Can an intermediary exist to convey information between city council, CPD, developers, and the community?
- Revisit who do we serve? Is it the people who are moving here? Is it the people who already live here?
- There's generally a 4-6 month timeline to complete a rezoning project, but it can have impacts for generations on a community.
 - The process currently is very easy to work through if you can check the boxes. There should be more intentional approaches to approving rezonings to truly support the community.
- Who helps facilitate in neighborhoods who do not have a recognized RNO?
- Can we have equity in zoning throughout the city so that multi-unit construction isn't happening in only 25% of the city.
- What can be done for the common good via rezoning. Development is killing parks and open space
- Standardize the non-standard process that is rezoning.
- Meet cultural needs