

Project: Advancing Equity in Rezoning
Subject: Task Force Meeting #11
Meeting Date: Wednesday, August 23, 2023
Meeting Time: 3:00pm - 5:00pm
Meeting Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Meeting Notes

Meeting Objectives:

- Follow up on Task Force questions about Strategy #1: Proposed approach to tailoring rezoning process.
- Discuss Strategy #2: Create accessible and clear opportunities for public engagement/involvement.

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

- Meeting participants introduced themselves by sharing their name, organization, and their favorite hobby when they were 16.

CPD Presentation

- Brandon Shaver presented the meeting agenda and project timeline.
- Rob Haigh presented staff responses to key takeaways from Taskforce Meeting #10, including a summary of Strategy #1: Tailored Approaches to Rezoning Applications and a follow-up on taskforce questions.
- Joe Green and Fritz Clauson presented proposed draft approaches for Strategy #2: Create accessible and clear opportunities for public engagement/involvement:
 1. Reach more community members earlier in the process
 - For all proposed rezonings, include renters and business tenants in mailed notices and post noticing signs at the time of application submittal.
 - For proposed rezonings in the proposed Enhanced Equity Consideration category, require an expanded noticing radius and require a community engagement plan.
 2. Update notification materials and rezoning webpage
 - Noticing materials and webpage need to be updated to ensure that they use simple language, rely on graphics when it would convey information more effectively, and are translated and accessible to everyone.
 - Need to make it easier for people to quickly access more information about a proposed rezoning through QR codes and a redesigned website.
 3. Encourage public engagement and participation
 - Create public engagement guides that clearly explain where public input fits into the rezoning process, how the feedback people provide is used, how the criteria for a rezoning are applied, and the process differences in between the proposed rezoning types. Engagement guides should be translated and made available online, along with translated versions of application forms and other key documents.
 - Explore ways to provide more opportunities for people to give their feedback and perspective outside of the existing public hearing process. Community feedback should be shared with Planning Board and the public earlier in the rezoning process to provide greater transparency.

Rezoning applicants for Enhanced Equity Consideration cases could collect public comments received in the initial review period and share responses with the community.

4. Other City efforts

- The University of Colorado has been conducting a study on improving community engagement and constituent services.
- There is a City-wide effort underway to scope out a system where any interested person (or group) can sign up to receive email notice for new applications, based on a chosen geographic area.
- CPD's newly formed Programmatic Plan Implementation team is working across agencies and departments in the City to create and expand tools like participatory budgeting and annual reports on our progress toward Comprehensive Plan and Blueprint Denver goals.

Task Force Clarifying Questions & General Statements

- The Process Relief rezoning type should be city-led and limit what bypasses Planning Board.
- If a notice sign is posted at the time of submittal, would that stay posted until its City Council hearing? There can sometimes be a long lag between the initial application submittal and a City Council hearing.
- Is the city moving toward a system that requires a site plan is submitted along with a rezoning? This would be a significant change from the current process, and this should be carefully thought through.
- Uniformity is a form of equality. Equity is about recognizing that different folks need different things to participate fully. There should be some flexibility in the rezoning process to allow all communities to participate fully, since there are inherent differences in communities. It is important to keep equity in mind.
- Will need to manage expectations from the community and applicants. There is a clear need to approach certain types of rezonings differently, we just need to ensure we can explain why.
- Will city staff serve as facilitator at the proposed community meetings? It can be helpful for staff answer questions that are more city related. What will be Community Planning and Development's role be in the enhanced community engagement requirements?
- Strategy #2 seems to have the most consensus from the Task Force.

Polling Questions

Question 1: Do you agree with the general approach described of earlier notification and accessible/clearer materials for all rezonings?

- 12 Task Force members voted "yes".
- 1 Task Force member voted "no".
- 2 Task Force members needed more information or clarifications.

Question 2: Do you agree with the general approach described of earlier notification and accessible/clearer materials for all rezonings?

- 9 Task Force Members voted "yes"
- 1 Task Force Member voted "no"
- 4 Task Force Members needed more information or clarifications.

Breakout Room Questions

Question 1: For all rezonings – is there additional information you would like to see on public facing materials? This includes notices, signs, websites etc.

- Things were generally captured in the proposed approaches
- Are we still considering these approaches, or are these our proposal?
- Like the QR code and direct link to website idea
- QR codes should link to a place to leave a comment or ask a question. The landing page should also answer questions like “what does this mean?” or “what would this new zoning change?”
- Should be able to translate when you get website
- Worry that the community might be frustrated with lack of clarity at early stages without knowing project. Rezoning are not projects – there is a real challenge with this level of communication.
- Signs – QR code would be a great tool. Linked to complete application, staff report, presentations, etc. Much easier to access.
- Current signs are like the 90s – not easily accessible
- Direct link to the individual rezoning website. Populate the website more as the process goes on.
- Should we allow a developer to post materials, e.g., a presentation from a community meeting?
- A video talking about the proposed rezoning would be a good idea. Like the Lakewood Speaks example.
- Worried about expectations among the community if projects are outlined during a rezoning. There has been a big change with the utilization of office space, which is indicative of the need to be consistent with adopted plans. Things will change too much in the future, an office building proposed 5-years ago is no longer viable. Community could perceive this as someone lying to them.
- Need to have a number to call in addition to QR codes that link directly to rezoning. Some individuals don’t have a phone that can access a QR code.
- When would an applicant be required to provide an individual website? It could be a barrier for lower resourced rezoning applicants.
- A Frequently Asked Question document/website page would be helpful
- It is important to understand what communities need, rather than planning for them.
- No additional comments, agree with the outlined approaches
- Need to receive direct feedback from community members and better understand social health indicators
- Would like to see more rezonings in neighborhoods without single-family homes.
- Provide information in bullet points, keep information simple. Where does the neighborhood where a rezoning is taking place stand in terms of number of housing units compared to rest of city?
- Some context about why the rezoning may be needed, example: “housing is needed” and an equity statement that could be standardized.
- Equity is different than equality. There are a few neighborhoods in this city that don’t see many rezonings or development. It is tricky, there is a reality of availability and cost of land. The scrape-and-build will be rare for some neighborhoods, especially to create affordable housing.
- The example from another city was inspirational, much clearer. Big, simply stated, what is being proposed, no jargon, date of hearing, QR code would be great.
- Visuals are a good idea, but possibly problematic if it shows maximum building height and the project does not build to the maximum height.

- Notices need to be in different languages and less technical is better. It is hard to provide input on something you don't understand.
- May be helpful to have a better idea of the uses a site has in mind. Vancouver does this and it's helpful for the community. Can help with community feedback.
- There are a lot of rezonings listed on the website, which can be difficult to navigate. Can the website allow you pick your location and get rezonings within the area? Addresses are often not ones the community associates with a site. An interactive map with layers should be explored.
- Registered Neighborhood Organizations are relied on for a lot, and we need more options. There is not an easy way to get information, which makes it appear like the city is gatekeeping information and not being transparent.
- It can be hard for communities to visualize how tall buildings are and how things develop over time. What is the impact of a 12-story building on a particular site?

Question 2: For Enhanced Equity Considerations – what elements would help ensure meaningful engagement?

- During a recent rezoning in Villa Park, no neighborhood feedback was discussed, and no community members were present.
- Concerned if the system isn't applicable citywide, then it creates less predictability for all stakeholders. Expectations management could be difficult. Concern that if the criteria/threshold is subjective; lobbyists will figure out how to argue out of it.
- Concerned about using jargon; should make it more accessible. Write out what the district means.
- Need to manage expectations. When I see rezonings go badly, it's because the expectations of the applicant and the community do not match. Community members may not understand when they had more say for one type of rezoning than another.
- Need to be clear about the parameters that trigger a rezoning into the Enhanced Equity Considerations category and need to be clear about what is required from the applicant. It could be a difficult process to manage without hiring a consultant.
- Currently, the Registered Neighborhood Organizations provide a lot of guidance and are relied on to recommend an engagement process. It's often different between RNOs.
- CPD attending community meetings has been very beneficial in the past.
- Identify community leaders and build trust. Center outreach with community and build lines of trust. Do not rely on RNOs, engagement should be block by block.
- Meeting should provide food and drinks, etc.
- How do we provide applicants with information on how to effectively interface with community leaders/members and how do we create those tools?
- Meeting format is important. Having applicant representatives spread out across the room can help folks form smaller groups in a larger meeting format, which can be helpful for folks that tend not to speak in large groups. It also helps folks who are loud and angry not monopolize the conversation.
- Be clearer about the rezoning process: what is a pre-application, how do staff analyze applications, what are the equity metrics, etc.
- CPD should understand the equity concerns specific to each neighborhood. For example, Far Northeast still doesn't have all the infrastructure required, because much of it is being built by Metro Districts. More developed neighborhoods already have that infrastructure and very different concerns.
- Community navigators are very helpful. How can the city better operationalize this resource?

Question 3: Is there anything missing from the approach for strategy #2? If you did not agree with the approach, what would you change?

- Other cities have developed really good ways to interact with the community over time.
- Living website where folks can provide comments could facilitate conversation. Need to ensure there is a feedback loop, where a conversation between the community and the applicant can take place.
- Need to rely less on RNOs. Some are very well-organized, others are not, or don't have champions.
- Use less jargon
- Right now, a staff report is provided. But folks need to know how to read them. What was allowed before vs what's allowed now. What are the forms that are allowed. Residential before, mixed use now, etc. Plain language is needed.
- Add language stating that there will be a public hearing to determine if this proposal implements or furthers the neighborhood plan. List the plans – if people see their neighborhood plan name, they'll know that it's a hearing to consider their plan.
- Finally, questions of equity should lean more toward general language. Take from language from the comprehensive plan and vision and values: where we going as a city, reminder of our vision and values.
- The majority of outreach happens right around the site. We forget that people who want to, but do not, live in the city or that neighborhood may want to give input. Outreach should be broader, not just to adjacent neighbors.
- Often people would prefer to keep others out. That's not what the extra outreach is about, but it can be the dynamic. In areas of less privilege, try to highlight how the change is additive and beneficial. If a neighborhood plan has identified deficiencies in the area, or need for more things, discussion should be on how the rezoning enables/meets those identified need. It's not "tell me about the project," but more about how you'll help this area with these needs. Right middle path.
- There is a big difference between the general public and a professional developer. Would like to see more support given to less-resourced rezoning applicants when it comes to the Enhanced Equity Considerations category requirements. Possibly have staff join those outreach meetings.

Public Comment

- No members of the public provided comments.

Closing Statements

- Brandon briefly described the approach to small working groups (beginning in late September) and encouraged task force members to sign up when dates are released in the coming weeks.

Attendees:

Task Force Members:

CM Alvidrez, CM Gilmore, CM Sandoval, Anna DeWitt, Brittany Katalenas, Bruce O'Donnell, Caitlin Quander, Joel Noble, Kate Hilberg, Lindsay Miller, Londell Jackson, Lou Raders, Steve Harley

Project Team:

Brandon Shaver, Liz Weigle, Andrew Webb, Rob Haigh, Joe Green, Fritz Clauson