

Lowry Community Advisory Committee Meeting Summary for May 15, 2012

Committee members in attendance: Walter Barbo, Pat Brown, Mary Carr, Gwendolyn Crenshaw, John Fischer, Gayle Jetchick, Kathleen Ruby, Elliott Simonberg, Lew Taylor, Deb Wallace, Debbie Walters, Rolf Werner, Mary Nell Wolff and Chuck Woodward.

LRA staff: Monty Force, Jean Lindholm, and Hilarie Portell
Denver City Council: Mary Beth Susman
Consultant: Marcus Pachner

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Mary Nell Wolff, Vice Chair

INTRODUCTIONS

Mary Nell welcomed everyone and asked that they introduce themselves. Councilwoman Susman gave a brief background of the cooperation between Denver and Aurora in the formation of the LRA and her involvement with Lowry from the time it was announced for closure in 1991. She thanked the committee members for their willingness to serve.

LOWRY REDEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

Lowry AFB was a technical training center for the Air Force for 65 years with more than 1 million men and women going through training here. Flight operations ended in 1965. The base was announced for closure in 1991 as part of national defense cutbacks. Lowry officially closed in September 1994.

An 18-month community planning process resulted in the Lowry Reuse Plan in 1993, which has been the guiding document for all of the Lowry redevelopment. The vision was for Lowry to be a sustainable (smart growth), mixed use, urban community where people can live, learn, work and play. The master plan very closely followed the land use layout that the base had. Housing is where the military housing was located; the educational campus is where the main portion of the training center was, etc.

Lowry is centrally located in the metro area and is within a 30 minute drive to any major destination. This central location has made Lowry very appealing to homeowners and businesses.

The LRA was created in 1994 through an Intergovernmental Agreement between Denver and Aurora. The LRA is a nonprofit master developer responsible for the planning, finance, engineering, infrastructure improvements, marketing and land sales. The governing body is a 9-member board of directors appointed by the mayors of Denver and Aurora. The board is comprised of experienced professionals in real estate, business, law, finance and affordable housing. The board makes final policy decisions on LRA programs.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is a 21-member body appointed by the mayors of Denver and Aurora to advise the LRA board on potential community impacts of development decisions. The CAC is made up of individuals from the various neighborhoods surrounding and within Lowry. Common issues discussed are traffic, density, housing mix, site plans and proposed development projects. The CAC can recommend that a project be advanced to the board of directors for their review and decision, or that the project be modified or denied. The advice of the CAC is strongly weighed by the LRA board.

The Lowry Reuse Plan called for a full range of housing types and prices. Today there are homes ranging from homeless transitional and affordable starter up to luxury. Neighborhoods were to be urban in character, with sidewalks, alleys and neighborhood parks. Design guidelines encouraged urban architectural styles, from tudors and craftsman to international, and details like porches and use of stone/brick/stucco.

Commercial development was planned to create at least 7,000 jobs to replace the Air Force jobs lost when the base closed. Today there are more than 7,000 workers occupying more than 3.4 million square feet of space. 70% of Lowry employers are small businesses, 30% are healthcare firms. The target industries were medical office, financial services, government and insurance. There was also a goal for 10% of residents to work at Lowry. The retail merchants are mostly made up of locally owned businesses within the town center or small business districts at Lowry.

There is approximately 800 acres of public parks and open space at Lowry. Several parks are regional and serve the whole city and others are smaller pocket parks within a neighborhood. Lowry also has two big assets left behind by the Air Force: an 18-hole golf course and the Westerly Creek Dam.

Education is Lowry's legacy. There are 14 educational facilities at Lowry from preschool to college level.

There has been a public process in place since the earliest days of the LRA. The Planning Disposition Subcommittee reviews proposed projects in great detail and looks at the use conformance and sound planning principles, compatibility with other uses, traffic and access impacts, effect of the development on Lowry economic goals and property values, benefits and challenges of the proposed development, overall density and pedestrian and vehicular connections.

After the Planning Disposition Subcommittee the potential development project is presented to the CAC who reviews the proposal and potential impacts to not only Lowry but to the surrounding communities and makes recommendations to either table a vote for more information, recommend approval, modification or denial for the project.

The board of directors then makes the final decision on any development project.

There is also the Lowry Design Review Committee that reviews the conformance to the design guidelines for architecture, materials, landscaping, colors, etc. for any new construction project.

Side by side with the LRA approval process is the City and County of Denver process that includes the submittal of a General Development Plan to the planning board, and a zoning application, which has to go before the city council for review and approval.

The LRA understands that there is broad community interest in the Buckley Annex project and has put the tools in place to provide for transparency and responsiveness during its implementation. The website, www.lowryredevelopment.org/annex, will be a central repository for information about the project. Content includes the redevelopment plan, fact sheets, meeting agendas and minutes, etc. Please encourage neighbors to register for a free e-newsletter to receive ongoing information, and contact Hilarie Portell with any questions about the project.

BUCKLEY ANNEX PLANNING PROCESS

The Buckley Annex was announced for closure in 2005 and a public planning process was begun in mid-2006. After many many public meetings involving hundreds of citizens the Buckley Annex Redevelopment Plan was produced and submitted in February 2008 to the Air Force and HUD for approval. That plan was approved by the Air Force and HUD in May 2010. At the time the plan was being formulated Congressional legislation only allowed for a public bid process for sale to a private developer so there was a lot of discussion as to how to assure that the developer followed the community approved plan. In late 2009 legislation changed to allow for economic development conveyances (EDCs) to local redevelopment authorities. The LRA approached Denver and Aurora with the recommendation that an application be submitted so that there would be more local control over the development in the same vein as the rest of Lowry. There was concurrence and the LRA produced a business plan and application that was submitted to the Air Force. That application was accepted by the Air Force and an

agreement in principle was completed. Since April 2011 the LRA and the Air Force have been in negotiations over the final language and terms of an agreement and conveyance of the Buckley Annex property to the LRA. Transfer of the property is contemplated at the end of May 2012. The last government groups vacated the property in September 2011 and the Air Force has been maintaining and providing security until such time as the deed is transferred to the LRA.

BUCKLEY ANNEX PROJECT OVERVIEW

Of the total 70 acres, only 35 are developable as for-sale property due to drainage requirements, roadways, and 20% for parks/open space, etc. Conceptual plans are for 120 single family detached and 230 single family attached homes and 450 apartments. The plan also was for 200,000 square feet of commercial space with 50% for neighborhood retail and 50% for office space. This might be modified based on market driven demands. The conceptual plan responds to several key community concerns:

- 800 residential units rather than 1,200

- Building heights limited to 65 feet/5 stories based on building and fire code thresholds and situated toward the center of the site

- 70 parking spaces reserved for Schlessman Family Library

The next steps include:

- Submittal of the GDP and zoning – summer 2012

- Demolition and start infrastructure improvements – fall 2012

- First land sales to homebuilders – winter 2012 to spring 2013

PLANNING/DISPOSITION SUBCOMMITTEE FORMATION

This item was deferred to a later meeting.

ELECTION OF CAC CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

It was suggested, and the members agreed, that the current chair, Brian Wert and vice-chair, Mary Nell Wolff remain in those positions for several months until the members get to know each other better. The election was tabled.

DISCUSSION

In response to a question about the conveyance process it was explained that the title will be transferred from the Air Force to the LRA with an agreement that no up front payment be made for the property. Rather, at the end of the redevelopment the Air Force will share in any profit made from the redevelopment activities. Because there is a great amount of front end costs to prepare the land for sale, the LRA will have loans, much as any other developer would have to get, to cover those early expenses. There is also an agreement for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to cover demolition costs.

Another question was asked about the use of any funds at the end of the project, to enhance the Lowry community. There is a public art program as pursuant to the TIF agreement. Otherwise, the Air Force requires all funds expended to be necessary to the redevelopment of the Buckley Annex site.

There was some discussion that routes needed to be determined for truck traffic during demolition and construction. There are plans to recycle materials salvaged during demolition and to recycle on-site and reuse the old runways as road base. Logistics for traffic routes and recycle sites have not been determined yet.

Councilwoman Susman again thanked the members for their willingness to serve and expressed her support for this very important project and offered her assistance whenever needed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.