

Lowry Planning/Disposition Subcommittee Meeting Summary for July 26, 2012

Committee members in attendance: Mary Carr, Gayle Jetchick, Kathleen Ruby, Rolf Werner, Brian Wert, Mary Nell Wolff and Chuck Woodward.

LRA staff: Dave Andrews, Monty Force, Jean Lindholm, Hilarie Portell
Denver: Bar Chadwick
DPS: Jim Looney
Consultants: Patrick Chelin (Matrix Design Group, civil engineers)

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Brian Wert

INTRODUCTIONS

Brian welcomed the audience of approximately 20 people.

MINUTES

A motion with a second was passed to approve the minutes from the June 21, 2012 meeting as presented.

The committee members made the decision to change the time of future meetings to be from 5-6:30. This change will be posted on the website at www.lowryredevelopment.org

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The General Development Plan is not a detailed planning document so some proposed improvements are not shown in detail yet.

- Proposed First Avenue Improvements – overhead and cross-section depictions were shown of proposed parking, detached sidewalk and enhancements to the berm.
 - Width of First Avenue is now 38 feet and would reduce to 36 feet, one travel lane in each direction with parking in some places (bulbed out at ends of parking lanes) with consideration of a bike lane.
 - Parking bulb outs in some sections of First Avenue would have openings for traffic and pedestrian crossings.
 - South side parking in bulb out areas would be from just east of Monaco to Niagara with no parking along the berm area from Niagara to Oneida, then parking bulb outs would resume from Oneida to Poplar.
 - There is still an open question for parking or a bike lane on the north side.
 - A tree lawn would be added with a detached sidewalk on the south side.
 - Conceptual drawings of plantings might be too expansive and don't want people to expect the conceptual drawing to become exact reality. LRA is not at the detailed planning stage yet.

First Avenue discussion/comments (LRA response in bold)

The overhead drawings are deceptive on the scale of the intersection crossings so need to be clarified that the crossings are the same width as the streets north of First Avenue.

Has the sidewalk ice issue been addressed? **Moving the sidewalk north and making other changes should take the sidewalk out of the shadow line of the trees on the berm. The previous shadow study could not be located but a new study is planned. It was pointed out that even if the berm was removed and replaced with housing, there would be a certain amount of shadowing.**

As a Mayfair Park resident who has not attended previous meetings what will the impact be to my neighborhood with connecting streets and whether or not the berm remains? **There would be five instead of seven connecting streets if the berm remained. The opinions on keeping the berm have been split 50/50. Some like the aesthetics of keeping it and others think it is a barrier and limits connectivity. No decision has been made yet, this presentation is just to show concepts if the berm remains.**

- Traffic Study
 - The 2008 Transportation Network Guiding Principles and Transportation Hierarchy do not change with the proposed refinements.
 - Placement of traffic signals on Lowry Boulevard would still be at Monaco, Pontiac and Quebec and on First Avenue there would still be signals at Monaco and Quebec with a three-way stop sign at Pontiac.
 - The study is based on the DRCOG 2030 regional model that takes into account current activity as well as expected growth through the year 2030.
 - 88-95% of traffic is regional with only 5-12% being generated from the Buckley Annex site. This projection of traffic is the same as when the DFAS center was fully operational with 9500 vehicle trips per day.
 - With more detailed plan it was realized that the site was being split into two separate neighborhoods with a five-lane Lowry Boulevard. Reducing Lowry Boulevard from five to three lanes would create a more walkable, sustainable neighborhood, and still move vehicles smoothly and reduce construction costs.
 - The 2012 traffic analysis done in preparation for the GDP submittal shows what happens if Lowry Boulevard is reduced from five to three lanes.
 - Lowry Boulevard with 5 lanes = 17,000 vehicles per day and with 3 lanes = 14,000
 - First Avenue if Lowry Boulevard is 5 lanes = 5,600 per day and with 3 lanes = 6,100
 - First Avenue current volume is approximately 5,500 vehicles per day and will drop when Lowry Boulevard is built and then increase back to current levels by 2030
 - Alameda if Lowry Boulevard is 5 lanes = 35,000 per day and with 3 lanes = 38,000
 - It is felt that taking Lowry Boulevard to a three-lane road would make the neighborhood more walkable and attractive and is more consistent with sustainable development standards.
 - Intersection function is given a grade that ranges from A to F. With either a five or three lane Lowry Boulevard the intersection grades remained the same. Most intersections have the heaviest volume in the morning (1st grade) and late afternoon (2nd grade) with driving commutes.

Updated Traffic Study discussion/comments (LRA responses in bold)

What were the intersection grades on First Avenue? **First Avenue and Monaco intersection grades were B and C. The grades for First Avenue and Quebec were C and C.**

There is a stop sign at Pontiac and First Avenue. Is there any potential for a stop sign at Niagara for student crossing? **The City would make that determination.**

Did the study address the impact of the connector roads crossing First Avenue? **The regional model can't distinguish that level of detail of five or seven connector roads.**

Any possibility of an enhanced crossing at Pontiac for pedestrians crossing to the library? Most pedestrians will not go to either Quebec or Pontiac to cross First Avenue. **The exact location for the**

parking lot for the library has not been determined and it will ultimately be a Denver decision on crossings.

Is it feasible to have a bike lane shared with bulb out parking or could the bike lane be on the north side of First Avenue? **Lowry Boulevard has an off-street bike path so bikers might be inclined to use that rather than First Avenue.**

As has been mentioned in previous meetings there are those who use First Avenue as a bike route to Cherry Creek so a bike lane needs to be included. **Perhaps an enhanced bike connection along Monaco from Lowry Boulevard to First Avenue could be considered.**

Please prepare an overlay showing the functionality of the bulb outs, a bike lane and showing road connections to scale.

Was the expected growth of Lowry Vista considered in the traffic model? **The DRCOG model is regional in nature and does look at all areas of growth potential.**

- Denver Public Schools (DPS)

Jim Looney is with DPS long range planning.

- All of the schools in the general area around the Buckley Annex are at over-capacity. The only one with open capacity is Ashley at 95%, which is located at Syracuse and 19th, which is not a real solution to this situation.
- The location of the Whiteman Elementary building is between Newport and Niagara a few blocks north of First Avenue.
- Anticipated student count from the Buckley Annex development is around 120 based on a specific formula related to housing type. 75-80 being elementary and 40-45 being middle school students.
- Denver Language School (DLS), who is currently leasing the Whiteman building, is a charter school. Jim will research the expiration of that lease.
- If Whiteman Elementary is re-designated as a neighborhood school it would be added to a boundary map posting.
- When the lease was signed with DLS an expansion of space for an additional 120 seats was part of that agreement.
- To build a new school it would require 10 acres, which is not a good solution with the current Buckley Annex plan; it would put the planning efforts back two years and would cost DPS approximately \$10-15 million.
- Exploration has begun of relocating DLS and reopening Whiteman with the potential of expanding it to relieve overcrowding at other locations.
- There is a bond issue coming up in 2013 that would include \$2 million to add 150 seats at Lowry and \$1.8 million to add 100 seats at Whiteman.

DPS discussion/comments (LRA responses in bold, DPS responses in italics)

When would the first occupancy of homes at Buckley Annex be expected? **Probably by late 2013, then a ramp up in 2014 and phasing to build out in five years.**

Please provide a rendering of the cottage concept expansions.

When could Whiteman Elementary be reopened? *Probably at the expiration or termination of the DLS lease and will have an answer to that question after review of the lease terms.*

The citizens in the Mayfair Park neighborhood would not be inclined to support a bond issue if it will not directly solve the problem that has been ongoing in this neighborhood. *If the bond issue is not successful there will be problems all over town.*

Realistically, what is the chance of relocating DLS and then vacating the Whiteman building by the time it is needed for the Buckley Annex growth? *Usually leases are for a five-year term and there might have been an automatic extension to that time, but will know more after review of the lease. Solutions will be based on when the needs are there.*

Is it possible to relocate DLS to another location at Lowry? *The campus on the northeast side of Lowry has been suggested, but we would have to explore if space is available and if an Aurora license agreement would be necessary or allowable.*

It has been a very long time since the needs of the Mayfair Park neighborhood have been met by DPS and the time is now to get a school that will serve this community. When Lowry Elementary opened ¼ of the Mayfair students were sent there and then DPS made the decision to close Whiteman because there weren't enough students to support it. Appeals have been made to the DPS School Board with no success. Mayfair residents were told not to drive their students to school so air wouldn't be polluted, which meant 5-year olds were crossing Alameda. The DLS doesn't fit the model for a neighborhood school because English isn't taught. This community is highly frustrated and pleads to get this resolved with a neighborhood school. During some phone calls it has become clear that some DPS officials don't even know this school and neighborhood exists. Please plan now to make the right decisions that will reopen Whiteman Elementary as a neighborhood school to support Mayfair Park and the growth from the Buckley Annex.

Please correct the mill levy information on the DPS website and explain in a very clear way how the funds from the ballot initiative will be allocated. Most people want to know how or if the bonds will benefit their neighborhood.

No one is saying that DLS needs to move immediately. The request is to plan for Whiteman in the correct way and with the proper timing to make it available to the neighborhood when the growth will support it. There are other issues that arise if Whiteman opens too soon and DPS buses students in from other areas just to fill a gap until the Buckley Annex growth is there.

Could the DPS website have a section devoted to this issue exclusively? The LRA public relations staff would prefer not to disseminate information on behalf of another organization. It would be better to provide a link from the LRA website to the DPS website.

It would have been poor planning for DPS to sign an automatic extension to the DLS lease knowing that the Buckley Annex growth was coming. *DPS will work toward having something in place by 2015 at the latest with one of the two strongest options, either cottage expansion at Lowry or have DLS moved out of the Whiteman Elementary building.*

It has been difficult to pass mill levy initiatives over the past few years around Colorado. If assurances are there that the bond initiative will solve this issue and give us a neighborhood school, this community will rally in support of it.

Feedback action requested from DPS – Term of the DLS lease, rendering of cottage expansions, corrected information on the website about the bonds and allocations.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.