

## **Lowry Community Advisory Committee Meeting Summary for July 10, 2012**

**Committee members in attendance:** Kim Baltz, Walter Barbo, Bruce Berman, Pat Brown, Nadine Caldwell, Mary Carr, Gwendolyn Crenshaw, John Fischer, Gayle Jetchick, Brad Pierce, Kathleen Ruby, Elliott Simonberg, Lew Taylor, Michael Uhlenkamp, Rolf Werner, Brian Wert, Mary Nell Wolff and Chuck Woodward.

LRA staff: Dave Andrews, Monty Force, Jean Lindholm, Hilarie Portell, Al Sigman  
Denver: Councilwoman Mary Beth Susman; Denver Public Schools, James Looney  
Consultants: Todd Johnson (Design Workshop)  
Public attendance: 70-75

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Brian Wert, Chair

### INTRODUCTIONS

### PUBLIC COMMENT

No one signed up for public comment.

### MINUTES APPROVAL

**A motion by Nadine Caldwell seconded by Rolf Werner was passed to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2012 meeting as presented.**

### BUCKLEY ANNEX UPDATE

- Overview of Site Plan

At the June 5 CAC, the June 21 Planning/Disposition and at the June 26 board meetings approval was granted to move forward with a submittal of the General Development Plan (GDP) that would include suggested revisions. The submittal of the GDP is not the end of input and comment. There was intention of presenting an updated traffic study, however that study is not complete so there is only preliminary information available at this time and some sample depictions of the First Avenue improvements and the berm. It is hoped to have the traffic study ready for full review at the Planning/Disposition meeting. There will be more opportunities through the process with additional public meetings to gather public comment. By the time of the next Planning/Disposition meeting there will be additional information gathered from the Mayfair Park community about concerns specific to their neighborhood.

A brief history was given to benefit those who might not have heard it before:

2005 - DFAS/ARPC facility at Lowry was announced for closure (known as the Buckley Annex)

2006 - Federal screening process for public benefit conveyance and homeless assistance requests (one received from the library for additional parking and one from a consortium of homeless assistance providers)

2007 - Redevelopment planning was conducted through approximately 20 public meetings and many more with the consulting team and neighborhood groups

2008 - The plan was approved by the LRA Board of Directors in January and submitted to the Air Force and HUD for review and approval, which was granted in May 2010.

During the planning process stakeholders were identified as the Air Force/HUD, the local real estate market, the local community, City and County of Denver and LRA, all with various interests. Task forces were formed with 45 members including state and local officials and staff. Those task forces covered the topics of market research/economic development, transportation, housing and planning. The project challenge for the task forces was to reconcile the many priorities and expectations with a vision to investigate alternatives that balanced the needs and wants of the diverse interest groups.

A subarea plan was created to define the different elements of development that mirror like uses around the edges. Those elements are shown as:

- First Avenue Residential
- Neighborhood Center West
- Townhome Boulevard
- South Residential
- Community Park Mixed-use
- Community Park South Residential.

The proposed GDP plan remains consistent to the 2008 development summary of:

- 800 residential units
  - 120 single-family detached
  - 230 single-family attached
  - 450 apartments
- Up to 200,000 s.f. commercial
- Approximately 14 acres of parks, open space

The plan evolved during the public planning process with community input:

- Reduced the number of residential units from 1,200 to 800 (approximately overall 11 d/u/a like the town center district)
- Reduced maximum building height from 12 to 5 stories
- Mirrored existing land uses
- Provided library parking

At the time of the planning process the developer was unknown. However, federal legislation changed in 2009 opening the opportunity for the LRA to acquire the property and become the developer. As of May 31, 2012 the LRA owns the property. As any developer would, the LRA is looking at the plan in more detail and is proposing some refinements in response to the current real estate market and economic conditions.

- Proposed Refinements

The LRA is proposing several refinements to the site plan, most affecting the transportation network. At five planned lanes, Lowry Boulevard would pose a significant barrier to pedestrians and bisect the neighborhood. The LRA is proposing that Lowry Boulevard be three lanes, which could enhance neighborhood cohesiveness and still accommodate projected traffic volumes. By eliminating Southmoor Drive, an east/west street between First Avenue and Lowry Boulevard, the LRA could standardize interior blocks and add a greenbelt. Retaining the First Avenue berm would maintain existing landscaping and site contours and contribute to a sense of neighborhood identity. Connectivity with neighborhoods to the north would be maintained by five rather than seven connector streets. There was much discussion about the berm during the public planning process and the neighborhood was split 50/50 on the issue.

- Traffic Study Results

The 2008 transportation network guiding principles and the roadway hierarchy does not change with these proposed refinements. The transportation network analysis from 2008 was based on the DRCOG 2030 regional model and showed the majority of perimeter traffic to be regional with only 5-12% to be generated by the Buckley Annex development. The projected Buckley Annex traffic would be the same, at 9,500 vehicles per day, as that generated when the DFAS center was fully operational. The traffic analysis is being updated as part of the GDP process with only preliminary numbers currently available. These preliminary numbers show that with a five-lane Lowry Boulevard there would be 17,000 vehicles per day and with three lanes there is a reduction to 14,000 per day. Vehicles per day on First Avenue show at 5,600 with a five-lane Lowry Boulevard and 6,100 with a three-lane Lowry Boulevard. Those preliminary numbers also show an increase of approximately 3,000 vehicles per day would be diverted to Alameda with a three-lane Lowry Boulevard. There is an intersection level of service grading system from A (best) to F (worst). The intersection grading on Monaco Parkway at Alameda, Lowry Boulevard and First Avenue remained the same in either scenario. The level of service for the intersections on Quebec at Alameda, Lowry Boulevard and First Avenue also would not change.

A cross section depiction of Lowry Boulevard demonstrated the relationship of the street width to the height of the development next to the street—a key criteria for the LEED-ND designation.

A cross section of existing First Avenue shows a 38 feet street width with no parking and an attached sidewalk with power poles distributed through the middle of the sidewalk from Monaco Parkway to Quebec Street. Proposed changes would have two travel lanes, one in each direction, with parking on both sides of the street to serve residential and commercial areas as well as the library. On-street parking also serves as a traffic calming measure. The sidewalk on the south side would be redone to become detached with a tree lawn on the street and the overhead utilities would be replaced and buried. There would also be an opportunity to push back the edge of the berm with a short retaining wall and additional landscaping to enhance the aesthetics of the berm.

- GDP Process

The initial GDP submittal will be made upon the completion of the traffic and infrastructure studies that are required during the first phase of the process. The LRA expects to submit the initial GDP in late July; there will be several rounds of comments and reports back to the committee.

This is a formal process that is signed off by the City's Development Review Committee (DRC) when all reviews are done and comments addressed. There are several steps within the GDP process:

- Phase 1 – Pre-application and technical study with the applicant doing research and due diligence including work sessions and meeting with city staff, council members, public. Applicant completes all required technical studies, plans, documents and submits to City agencies for approval.
- Phase 2 – Application is submitted to City, including technical studies and legal description that includes an Application Review meeting. A public meeting is facilitated by Community Planning and Development (CPD) where the applicant presents the GDP to the public. Public comments are submitted to CPD.
- Phase 3 – Technical Review by various agencies with comments transmitted to the applicant for response and/or resolution. This re-submittal can be done up to three times. There is a required public meeting once the final GDP is ready for presentation. Initiation of zoning discussions that relate to the GDP.
- Phase 4 – Approval and Recordation, the presentation is given at a Planning Board public hearing with a recommendation to DRC to approve or deny.

A targeted timeline is to have the studies done and the submittal ready by the end of July. It is anticipated that the other three phases would be completed by the end of December 2012, which includes more presentations and discussion at Planning/Disposition Subcommittee and Community Advisory Committee meetings. Again, it was emphasized that the submittal of the GDP is just the beginning of a long process and not the end of the process.

Lagging about a month behind the start of the GDP process are early discussions with the City about potential zoning districts. The GDP must be approved before a zoning application can be presented to and approved by City Council.

- Sustainability Framework (LEED Neighborhood Development)

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Neighborhood Development designation program has only existed since 2010. It is a rating system that combines elements of smart growth, urbanism and green building that leads to improved quality of life and a sustainable neighborhood. The point system has a total of 110 possible points in four categories with 12 mandatory prerequisites before a development can even be considered. Forty points are necessary to get certified and the goal for the Buckley Annex development is fifty points to attain silver level.

The program looks at the three main elements of Where, What and How of the development design. Important pieces of meeting the prerequisite requirements is for building height to street width at a 3:1 ratio, reduced street width to facilitate walkability and a variety of housing types and prices. The development should use design techniques and systems to reduce environmental impacts during and after construction. The Buckley Annex site plan currently meets 47 points so we should be able to meet the goal of 50 points for a silver designation. There are 81 LEED Neighborhood Development pilot programs in the US with five in Colorado. Only three projects have been certified to date.

**DISCUSSION (questions/comments in *italics* with response in **bold**)**

*Mary Nell Wolff, who chaired the transportation task force, pointed out that all of the multiple parts of a transportation system were the focus of the task force, which included vehicle traffic plus bus routes, pedestrian and bike pathways.*

**Did I hear that First Avenue will be four lanes? There would be two traffic lanes (one in each direction) with parking lanes on both sides of the street.**

**What about a bike lane on First Avenue? A bike lane could be shared with a parking lane.**

**Why parking on both sides of street? On-street parking would be utilized on some sections of First Avenue by adjacent neighborhoods, commercial areas and the library. It also tends to slow traffic. There is the potential of bulb outs at intersections and where parking is not required.**

**Was the traffic count of 9500 at full operational capacity of the DFAS center taken after Lowry had been developed? 9,500 was the projected traffic at DFAS when operating and the study was done in 2007 as part of the Buckley Annex planning process, so most of Lowry had been developed.**

**Wouldn't merging from five lanes to three lanes on Lowry Boulevard cause a traffic jam? The intersection at Quebec and westbound Lowry Boulevard already exists as a five lane road that dead ends, so conditions wouldn't be expected to change with Lowry Boulevard continuing on to Monaco. Traffic light synchronization and signage would also be explored as part of the GDP**

**reviews to mitigate any potential traffic jams at the intersection of at Quebec and west bound Lowry Boulevard.**

*Would the wooden fence on the north edge of Park Heights be repaired or replaced? Don't know who owns or is responsible for the maintenance of the fence and planning is not at that level of detail yet.*

*Will the flooding issue at Monaco and Bayaud be addressed? That detention pond is part of a regional drainage system that is designed to hold the water and gradually release it downstream. There is another detention pond on the east side of the site that will remain and they are designed to handle heavy rain situations and are functioning as designed.*

*Wouldn't it make sense to put a park around the drainage pond? The drainage ponds in the site plan are either part of a park or greenbelt. All drainage systems will be reviewed through the GDP process.*

*What are the plans for an elementary school? Denver Public Schools (DPS) was engaged in the planning process in 2007 and indicated that there was enough capacity within the existing schools to handle the Buckley Annex growth. However, today is a different situation with DPS schools at over capacity, a DPS representative responded. He said they are currently in the process of future growth planning. It was recommended that DPS be invited to an upcoming Planning Subcommittee meeting for further discussion.*

*The president of the Mayfair Park Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) requested that careful consideration be given to this DPS planning. The closing of Whiteman Elementary has caused many problems for their neighborhood.*

*Have the transportation studies caused these changes to be made to some roads? No, the refinements are improvements to the site plan that the LRA believes can still accommodate projected traffic volumes.*

*With the current speeding on First Avenue it is difficult to turn east bound onto that street from Magnolia. How will that be cured? The First Avenue improvements are designed to return First Avenue from a regional corridor to a neighborhood street. The on-street parking, south side tree lawn/sidewalk and a new stop sign at Pontiac will all help calm traffic. Ultimately it will be up to the City to classify the street and set the speed limit, but it would not go above its current limit of 30 mph.*

*The LEED designation goal is laudable. Have any net zero energy requirements been set yet? Discussions are ongoing with the Office of Economic Development (OED). Net zero is very difficult to attain, but the LRA is researching its financial and market feasibility.*

*The Crestmoor Park Neighborhood has interest in the status of the berm on the Monaco edge. A portion of that berm will have to be removed for Lowry Boulevard to extend through to Monaco. The exact amount is yet to be determined.*

*Will there be some open space on the south backing to Park Heights? There will be a 30 feet wide pedestrian connection between Park Heights and Buckley Annex. The existing*

**maintenance/delivery road will be gone and a row of single-family homes will back to Park Heights.**

*How will all the meetings be communicated to the public and will the GDP plan be available for review? A website is active now at [www.lowryredevelopment.org](http://www.lowryredevelopment.org) where all Buckley Annex plans, meetings notifications, presentations, meeting notes, maps, etc. are posted. There is also a place on the website to sign up for e-newsletters. It will probably be easiest to provide a link on this website to the Denver site where the GDP documents will be posted.*

*There is a family of coyotes on the site. Do you have a relocation plan? The LRA does not have the expertise so will contact the Division of Wildlife or City on the appropriate action to take.*

*Retaining the berms presents a long-term maintenance issue. If berms are preserved, maintenance would likely be managed by the Lowry Community Master Association.*

*What about the issue of ice on the sidewalk if the First Avenue berms are retained? Shadow studies were conducted during the public planning process in 2007 and will help inform design of the berm, on-street parking, sidewalk and tree lawn.*

*It appears that there are a lot of dry areas. Is watering being done? Yes, there are select areas being irrigated and water trucks are transporting water to a number of trees. Unfortunately, it is too costly to irrigate the entire site as had been done by the Air Force.*

*Is it feasible to replace the commercial space with an elementary school? There has already been a planning process that took nearly two years to complete the approved plan. To make a change of that magnitude would open up a whole new planning process. Also, a typical school site is approximately 10 acres and only 35 acres are developable at the Buckley Annex.*

*The neighborhood desires that Whiteman Elementary be re-opened as a neighborhood school. Enrollment from Mayfair Park plus the Buckley Annex growth would be enough to support Whiteman and planned pedestrian pathways would be there for Buckley Annex students' paths to the school. The Denver Language School using the building now could be moved to Stapleton, where they want to be anyway.*

*It was pointed out that the question about keeping the First Avenue berm was thoroughly discussed in 2007 and opinions were truly half and half. Since then there could have been opinion changes or residency changes so more discussion of the pros and cons are underway with more outreach to the most impacted community.*

*It was recommended that DPS be represented at the next Planning/Disposition meeting to try to resolve the school concerns.*

*When will the studies be complete? The LRA pushed hard to have the study available for this meeting but ran out of time. Every effort will be made to have them for review at the Planning/Disposition meeting later this month and to complete the GDP for submittal by the end of the month.*

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.