

## Arvada City Council Workshop, December 8, 2014

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Councilmembers in attendance were Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, Jerry Marks, and John Marriott. Public attendance: Approximately 50 people at 6 p.m., down to around 11 people at 7 p.m.

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Reno Park neighborhood residents are requesting rezoning of the area from Ralston to Grandview, between Zephyr Street and the alley just east of Yarrow. Their concern is that the present zoning of Residential--Multifamily places them in danger of having too many homes demolished and the character of their neighborhood destroyed. The residents are requesting rezoning to R-SL, which is Residential Small Lot Residential and would restrict development to single family dwellings. They were invited to the workshop to provide input and to receive Council feedback.

At the outset, Mayor Marc Williams advised the group, "I don't normally take testimony during workshops," but that because this was a very important issue to people he wanted to hear directly from the citizens. Mike Elms said that notices of the meeting had been sent to everyone in the affected area. If the City Council decides to assist with the rezoning request, then the City becomes the applicant, the matter goes to the Planning Commission, and then to public hearings in front of City Council.

Reno Park resident and leadership coach Deanell Sandoval spoke first. Sandoval said she has lived in the Olde Town area for about 17 years, and that, while she and her husband could have moved west, they stayed where they are mainly because they love the community in that part of town. She began by making it clear that she is not against change--that she is a fan of change and a fan of doing things with intention; pointing to a photo of a boxy modern house next to a bungalow in the Berkeley neighborhood, Sandoval said, "This doesn't seem intentional to me."

Sandoval first became aware of the zoning problem about a year ago, she said, and has had plenty of thoughts about the long-term concepts associated with it. She said it doesn't make sense to her to envision apartment buildings next to these small homes from the 1930s. "Reno Park is where the collective memory of Arvada is held," said one of her slides, "Let's protect it."

Property owners in the area are largely in favor, according to Sandoval. Of the 55 homes, Sandoval and her group have spoken directly with 48 owners; 45 are in support ("most are adamantly in support," said Sandoval) and eight have not responded.

Sandoval pointed out that there are only five neighborhoods along the entire front range which have the characteristics of an historic business district connected with a historic housing district, in this way. She emphasized how vital it is to protect Reno Park, Arvada's oldest neighborhood, both because there are so few of its kind remaining, and also because of

the stabilizing and authenticating influence the housing area has on the business district. The two types of zoning being discussed in this workshop are vastly different in intention. RM zoning is "to encourage a wide range of home types and costs, especially multi-family." If the zoning is changed, Reno Park residents are requesting that the few properties which are not single family would be grandfathered in; they have been there for thirty or forty years and do fit within the neighborhood. RSL zoning is intended to preserve the characteristics of a single-family home neighborhood.

Sandoval showed a photo of a home within the district which sits on land which was homesteaded and which is still occupied by members of the original family. Noting the great care this family took with renovations of their home, Sandoval called them a "model for the neighborhood."

Councilmember Bob Dyer wondered when the zoning for the area was changed to RM. Sandoval said it had been that way since 1971. Director of Community Development Mike Elms did not know why it is that way. Dyer said, "It's obviously designed for small single family lots--I'm baffled why forty years ago they decided multi-family would be appropriate...it would be nice if we had some rationale we could look at."

Speaking in favor of the zoning change, resident KaraAnn Clouse pointed out that there are plenty of areas around Arvada which are zoned appropriately for multi-unit housing. She said that there is no need to destroy the Reno neighborhood for that purpose, when there are other places that housing can go.

Several other residents spoke in favor of rezoning. One said that the major issue for him is to preserve the homes in the Reno Park area which contribute to its designation as an historic district. Another outlined a scenario involving her home and her neighbor's home which could easily have resulted in two adjacent lots being purchased by one developer and turned into multi-family units; her neighbor lived next door for 27 years but was foreclosed upon, and at the same time her own family had a job offer in another state. She also said it is frequent that realtors and strangers passing by will knock on the door and ask what she would take to sell her house. A young girl asked that the tall apartment buildings be built downtown, "where they belong."

Stocke-Walter resident Jane Schnabel said that property owners there had wanted their neighborhood to be rezoned, but at the same time there was strong opposition to changes in the design guidelines. She said the rezoning there almost fell through because of that opposition. She urged Reno Park residents to push forward with the rezoning, citing the "peace of mind" it gave to the Stocke-Walter neighborhood once they had that done. Opposing the zoning change was architect and resident Marcia Becker. Becker is in favor of leaving the zoning as it is, but changing the design guidelines. She said that there are only five lots in the area under consideration which are even large enough for anything more than a single-family dwelling, and did not find it likely that the homes in Reno Park would need any protection beyond design guidelines.

There was extended discussion on the merits of changing only the zoning, changing only the design guidelines, or both. Sandoval said the neighborhood does intend to consider the design guidelines, but after zoning; she said there could be some conflict and the residents decided to first focus on the zoning. Councilmember Dyer said he is not sure doing one without the other will achieve what residents want. He listed some neighborhoods he has lived in and is very familiar with--the Cherry Creek North area, North Denver around Tejon, and Wash Park--all of which now suffer aesthetically as the result of not having had strong design guidelines in place. Dyer said, "If the Reno Park neighborhood wants protection, they need rezoning and design guidelines."

Mike Elms pointed out the time and expense needed for changes to design guidelines. He recommended the neighborhood rezone, for the initial level of protection, and then pursue whether or not the property owners support changes in the design guidelines.

Mayor Williams and Councilmembers John Marriott, Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, and Mark McGoff all indicated their support for the rezoning. Williams advised the group that modern design next to old houses is still permissible under the new zoning; that people could do pop tops and scrape offs and that, if the goal is not to have that, City Council needs to hear that from the neighborhood sooner rather than later. He said he would like to hear at a public hearing that this is really the will of the whole neighborhood, saying, "I'm loath to sit here as Big Bad Government dictating terms." As things stand, he said, any developer could do just what Councilmember Dyer said, which is pick up lots one by one and sit on them until they had enough accumulated for whatever they wanted to build.

Williams continued, "There's obviously lots of community spirit here, and if this is the will of the neighborhood I would urge you to make it clear; as long as the message continues, I can fully support the City initiating the rezoning, but you need to also work on the design guidelines, quickly...All of us will bring an open mind, and rule accordingly. It's always great to see a united community."

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Wadsworth Cultural Corridor: One of City Council's Strategic Goals is to evaluate the Wadsworth Corridor, including the Arvada Center, for a cultural and activity district. As explained by City Manager Mark Deven, this means that a decision needs to be made, one way or another, by 2017 unless City Council decides to extend that deadline.

Consultant Roy Close of Artspace, has performed the evaluation and appeared at the workshop to present his findings. Artspace is a nonprofit organization devoted to finding ways to blend art and artists into communities; their mission statement is "to create, foster, and preserve affordable space for artists and arts organizations." Close was asked to evaluate the possibility of turning the space between the Arvada Center and Olde Town into a "cultural corridor." He explained what is usually meant by a cultural corridor: a linear space, such as a street or mall and generally walkable, which is characterized by cultural attractions, activities, and amenities, such as the Short North Arts District in Columbus, Ohio, or the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Close found the characteristic in favor of a cultural corridor there is the fact that Olde Wadsworth connects the Arvada Center with Olde Town. A lot more items were not in favor, however: the inconsistent character of the area in between the Arvada Center and Olde town, which encompasses all sorts of land uses but not cultural uses; the topography (hilly) and the two miles distance. When all those arguments against a cultural corridor are considered, there isn't much to recommend what would surely not be a good fit. However, Close is very much in favor of developing the two areas separately. He recommends the City seek to be certified through Colorado Creative Industries as a designated creative district, and also to consider live/work space for artists as a long-term goal. In addition, Close said the City should reserve the vacant land south of the building for future growth, help the Arvada Center acquire some of the existing housing across 68th for resident artists, and adopt civic policies that help the Center grow and thrive.

Next steps Close is encouraging: Establish a cultural commission; Close says that over the course of the next 20 or 25 years, this by itself can make a huge difference in how the arts are perceived and treated, here. Next, seek designation as a Colorado Creative District, a time consuming but ultimately very rewarding process. Then, capitalize upon existing assets such as Reno Park, and consider affordable live/work space in the city for a permanent population of artists (also a hedge against gentrification).

City Manager Mark Deven is working on a timeline for establishing a Cultural Commission, and said he expects to have that information for Council in the first half of 2015. He offered as well to collect whatever other information the Council requires to make decisions about the other recommendations by Close.

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Olde Town Business Improvement District (BID): In 2014, business owners in Olde Town supported the formation of a Business Improvement District, which would be funded through an 8.5 mil levy increase on the affected properties, plus matching funds budgeted by City Council. The item was voted on at the regular November election in 2014, and 73% of business and property owners voted to approve the district and mil levy.

This evening's presentation was an update for Councilmembers on the results of the election, and the draft operating plan, budget, and baseline services document. In January, City Council will be voting on an agreement between the City and the BID, as well as having the opportunity to amend the ordinance creating the district, in order to add two board members. HOTA is in the process of being merged into the BID, although its exact future has yet to be decided.

The ordinance to increase the number of board members will most likely appear in the agenda of a January City Council meeting.

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The final discussion was about Sunday's water main break at around 76th and Webster. At times it was gushing 4,000 gallons per minute, causing backups into adjacent homes. City Manager Deven said staff worked with the residents to manage the problem. He said this breakage was the result of having fallen behind, in 2013, in replacement of underground pipes; the flood was such a huge event that much of the scheduled maintenance is behind schedule. "Missed it by that much," said Deven. Councilmember Fifer noted that the staff did a great job, especially considering that the problem began on a Sunday during the football game.

The workshop concluded at around 8 p.m.