

Arvada City Council Workshop, April 14, 2014

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Six City Council members attended this workshop, with John Marriott being absent.

Public attendance at 6 p.m. was about 12. At 7 p.m. it had dropped to 6.

The first item was the Arvada Comprehensive Plan. Kevin Nichols was joined by a transportation consultant as well as two people from Logan Simpson Design.

Interaction with the public: The Plan is now in step 5 of 6 steps. Committees and commissions have been consulted including the Planning Commission and the Transportation Committee, in joint session. A preliminary draft plan is to be published in early May, and there will be three workshops in a three-week period plus youth activities at all the area high schools. Plans are to meet with over 500 people in person and 1,000 via social media. Over the next four months, six more events are planned: three in May, and one each in June, July, and August.

Using map slides, three segments of the Comprehensive Plan were laid out:

Roadway: Changes will include the Jefferson Parkway and surface street connections; some two-lane, currently rural roads, may need to be widened to four lanes; and those roads where the travel demand is expected to exceed current capacity, such as Wadsworth, Sheridan, and Ralston Road, may need a detailed study as to how to better utilize a combination of signals, widening of the road, and better accommodation of buses.

Transit: Expand existing service, especially to those developing areas, and enhance Wadsworth and Sheridan to facilitate bus movement. Also under consideration is a system of circulating shuttle buses.

Bike/Pedestrian: The focus is on "key corridors", good plans for off-street trails, and on-street bike lanes. Surveying where there are gaps in sidewalk coverage. Looking where the key pedestrian activity centers are, and linking them. Improving the width and condition of sidewalks.

Councilmember McGoff commented that some areas of town have no sidewalks, or very narrow sidewalks, making walking an uncomfortable experience. He pointed out that there are so few ways to get north and south by foot--Wadsworth is good, but only to about 64th, where it ends and pedestrians are basically stranded. He asked if there is some way not to just look at activity centers, but at how people would get from one center to another. In addition, McGoff said that there should be some kind of statement in the Plan that the grand design is to include walkways.

The next part of the discussion focused on Indiana Corridor Land Use. "Opportunity Areas" have a lot of change happening, or the potential for a lot of change. Staff is suggesting adjusting how the city looks at mixed use. Currently, "Mixed Use" requires there be some non-residential uses included. The suggested change would be to "encourage" but not "require" non-residential. In addition, there is an identified need to maintain housing diversity because of Arvada's changing demographics. An area could be all retail, all industrial, or all housing.

The Highway 72/Indiana area was previously designated industrial or commercial, and staff now recommends changes to allow medium density housing, defined as 5 to 12 houses per acre in the form of duplexes, small-lot single family homes, or townhomes. This change is desired in order to support the cost of road improvements in the area.

Transit to and from the west side of Arvada also needs to be improved.

The area on the north side of Ralston Road at Garrison needs to be kept for employment or retail, not for housing.

Councilmember Dyer said that what was just brought up about increasing density to "medium" on the west end should not be looked at as a "minor adjustment," given that it is a significant change to past policy. That policy has always held that density decreases going westward, and Dyer recommended not being cavalier about amending that. He is concerned about adjacent neighborhoods, where density is lower than four units per acre. He further said that, because Indiana is a state highway, he doesn't see that ever being four-lane, and is not in favor of using development to pay for major road improvements; some of that burden belongs to the state and city.

Mike Elms said that with the canal on the west side, any improvements will require a significant offset. He continued, it is "economically infeasible to do low density there." The neighborhood meetings have brought up concerns. Staff says, let's be realistic. Design is an issue and Council will have to decide if it's appropriate.

Mayor Williams predicted that "this is the struggle we're gonna have, there."

Councilmember Allard agreed with Dyer, saying that it's a very important question; the city's had this opinion that density lowers proceeding westward, and we want to preserve the rural atmosphere out there. He said sooner or later we'll have to decide what we want to happen in that part of town.

Councilmember Fifer said there will be other major improvements happening before the Jefferson Parkway goes in, and he's concerned about having enough density to attract jobs, restaurants and stores. "If you don't have some density to support business, they won't come."

Next item was the Arvada Ridge TOD. Red Rocks plans to expand, and staff suggests that the area north of Ridge Road, south of Red Rocks be designated high density. Mixed use would allow housing, educational, and non-residential. For better access, a new intersection could be inserted at the crest of the hill on Kipling. The city plans to work with Red Rocks.

Mayor Williams said that the potential expansion of Red Rocks could be a game changer in a positive way.

Next item was the Ralston Road Corridor between the Triangle and Olde Town. Staff suggests mixed use, perhaps including medium density housing, following more detailed planning and work with the community to determine what would be appropriate there. At that point a brief detour was made, to discuss an item recently circulating in social media: The recent bantering at an AURA meeting regarding an "overlay" of "higher density" housing along such streets as Grandview and 57th. Those following this page might remember some talk and joking about renaming Grandview "Microhousing Boulevard," etc.

Staff would like citizens to know that there is no plan for high density housing in that area, that it is not even being considered in the planning process. "We feel that is a mature, stable neighborhood, not appropriate for higher density." Mayor Williams added that this was raised as an issue by one member of the AURA board at that meeting, and that Williams said, yeah, we can look at it. However, he said, "There is no agenda of trying to do that at any time in the foreseeable future. It's not being done as part of this Comprehensive Plan."

Mark Deven agreed, saying, "We think it's a very bad idea."

Next up was the Wadsworth Corridor:

Staff wants to retain current land use guidelines. Wadsworth has a volume of 60,000 cars per day, and has healthy retail for the most part. In the future it will need enhanced transit service. Staff is looking at a "cultural corridor" and is looking at a number of options for Ralston, Olde Wadsworth, and Olde Town, in collaboration with a design group called Creative Spaces.

Councilmember Allard returned to the question of development of rural areas. He said on page 7 of the policy manual it states that Arvada will preserve established rural areas. He said that, in the plan if things are stated in some other way, "in a year a question comes up and they say, 'look at the comprehensive plan' and then we say, 'Good grief, did we really word that thing that way?' and so care should be taken to get this correct now rather than later.

Nichols reiterated that there will be much more citizen input collected, and at least six more major opportunities for public feedback.

Councilmember Fifer asked if city council members can partake or listen in to upcoming meetings, Nichols said yes, and Mayor Williams said that this is not a quasi-judicial process.

Next segment:

Strategic Business Plan: Gordon Reusink, Director of Parks, Golf, & Hospitality

Reusink began by saying that his department is recommending a name change to Department of Parks, Golf, and Conventions. This suggestion later met with comments by several councilmembers not liking the change.

For Parks & Golf, Reusink pointed out that no parks system is ever complete, needing both maintenance and new, upgraded facilities over time. His department will have goals for setting and maintaining standards, plans for eventual replacement of equipment and facilities, and plans to set aside funds for those upgrades. He said that many of Arvada's parks are already over fifty years old, and in need of revitalization. The Park Maintenance Facility is in its sixth decade as well, and Lake Arbor is almost fifty years old.

For Convention services, he noted that Arvada has very limited services for conventions (it should be noted here that his use of the word "convention" is mainly in reference to such things as weddings, sports tournaments, etc.) He recommends that a strategic partnership be formed with the Visitors' Center, and to put a convention facility into the Master Plan.

Councilmember Dyer brought up the clubhouse at West Woods, noting that its use as a convention facility defies the fact that it was never designed for that purpose and that it is inadequate in many ways. He asked if the parks department would integrate, in the Master Plan, the golf course and a convention center there.

Mayor Williams objected to changing the name to Department of Parks, Golf, and Conventions, saying that "convention" carries more of a business connotation rather than such things as weddings. He feels that might scare people away, and that more discussion should happen before any change to the name. Councilmembers Fifer and Allard agreed. Mark Deven said more discussion can happen when the full plan is looked over.

Councilmember Dyer brought up the Bicycle Advisory Commission, and was told they will actually be hiring a new coordinator.

Councilmember Fifer asked if there are any goals around the regional sports complex. Reusink said that in 2, 6, and 10 years there will be more information about how many new ballfields will need to be constructed.

Fifer asked about special use parks, for example dog parks, and Reusink replied that there will be an annual report from the Special Use Park Subcommittee, which will become part of the updated Park Master Plan.

The next item on the agenda was a report by City Manager Mark Deven. As Arvada's various departments move into performance-based budgeting, they are being required to determine what things will require focus and action, which are identified here as "strategic issues," and what the plans currently are for monitoring or instigating activities relating to those issues, which are identified here as "strategic results."

Issue: Increasing demand for services, combined with limited resources.

Result: By 2018, manage financial resources so plans achieved while maintaining good bond rating. May require adjustments in strategy/timing, for example, regarding when to build new facilities.

Issue: Increasingly diverse population (aging, ethnic)

Result: Allocate resources according to popular need/interests

Issue: City of Arvada does not have a brand

Result: By 2016, will work to establish recognized brand, including possible change of logo

Issue: Lack of emergency preparedness (Allard later objected to that, saying in his opinion Arvada has good emergency preparedness, as exemplified by excellent work during floods; Deven said this is about not letting our guard down, and managing things before they reach the critical stage, by strategizing the result of NOT lacking emergency preparedness.)

Result: "In progress."

Issue: Citizens not involved in current affairs.

Result: Organize neighborhoods, create opportunities to interact & communicate internally and externally with citizens.

Issue: Desire to achieve and maintain excellence

Result: 2015 performance-based budget, by 2017 evaluation of employee management system, by 2019 culture of "focus on customer."

Issue: Lack of shared values by city employees (Williams questioned this one and Deven said this is about what could happen due to the turnover caused by an aging workforce.

Result: By 2016, Arvada will rank as top public sector employer as evidenced by the Denver Post's poll.

Finally, Judge David Cooke gave a similar presentation for the municipal court. He said that, to get at the performance metrics for this exercise, they needed to get into a certain mental format; that, "to get the right outcome, we have to say, 'this is on our radar to measure going forward.'"

Issue: Increasing perception that defendants not completing their sentences.

Result: Learning to use the query system in existing software in a new way, to be able to measure that.

Issue: Concern that juvenile offenders not receiving appropriate services

Result: Improved time frames around community service, classes, restitution, and the collection of court fines.

Issue: Potential loss of effectiveness from staff burnout/turnover

Result: In progress

Issue: Recidivism

Result: Goal of less than 10 percent juvenile recidivism within two years; similar goal for adults.

Cooke admitted he has no hard data as to whether those really are good targets, but says that within three to six months he'll have a better idea.

Councilmember McGoff responded to the fact that baseline data will need to be gathered, by suggesting that in some cases rather than wait while gathering it from this point forward, perhaps some data could be collected by working backwards. Cooke agreed, saying that the Court Enterprise system has possible untapped potential for data mining.

Issue: Security

Result: Magnetometer, security screening, goal of 95 percent of days without a security failure.

This completed the workshop and adjournment was at 7:55.