

## **Arvada City Council Meeting Workshop, August 10, 2015**

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

*This workshop centered on four topics: The City's new and improved website, a major update to the Parks and Trails Plan, an update to the Arterial Beautification Plan, and a presentation and Q&A by Bryan Archer about the 10-year Capital Improvements Plan.*

Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff was absent. Present for the workshop were Mayor Marc Williams and Councilmembers Don Allard, Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, Jerry Marks, and John Marriott.

Public attendance at 6:00 was 12, and at 7:00 it was 8.

The City's website has undergone extensive work and the new product is set to launch in late August or early September. Tonight was a sneak preview of the most significant changes.

Each year there are 1.4 million visitors to [arvada.org](http://arvada.org). Coming up, Arvada Police Department will be "coming home" to the City's website, so all the departments will be under one roof. Visitors to the site will have easy access to a variety of articles, information on City services, news, upcoming events, and essential information on City Government.

There will also be, in every area of the website, FAQ's from Ask Arvada, as well as other third party resources. There is also a greatly expanded ability to find vital information for addresses, City staff and elected officials, rotating articles, and a calendar.

### **Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan Update**

Meredith Wenskoski of Design Workshop presented the current state of progress of this collaborative effort with interested Arvada citizens. There have been public meetings, a roundtable, feedback on the comprehensive plan, and an online survey, as well as in-depth analysis on the part of Design Workshop. The report by Design Workshop can be seen here:

[http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current\\_week/02.B.%20Park,%20Trail%20and%20Open%20Space%20Master%20Plan%20Update.pdf](http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/02.B.%20Park,%20Trail%20and%20Open%20Space%20Master%20Plan%20Update.pdf)

Arvada's previous master plan for parks was done in 2001. Since then, population growth, changes in demographics, and different perspectives on wellness and sustainability play a part in the need for updates to the plan.

Arvada is home to 109 parks, covering more than 1500 acres. While that may seem like a lot, as our population grows, the parkland acreage per thousand people will decline, obviously, if more parks are not added. The norm for this part of Colorado is about 16 acres per thousand people.

Some current challenges are: weak north-to-south trail connectivity, gaps in wildlife corridors, public information about the full range of parks available, amenities, programming and accessibility, the underserved condition of southeast Arvada, continued maintenance, and the need for new urban parks.

Some other ideas floated by Wenskoski include cutting edge parks with unique features; seeking certifications and awards, such as from the National Audubon Society; expanding contiguity of open space lands; and developing access to water resources, while using those resources wisely.

Councilmember John Marriott said he'd like to see us make the most of what we have right now, and that the limited trail connectivity seems like a high priority. He said that's not only maybe the most important thing we can do, but also might be the most achievable. He said he'd encourage the consultants to focus not only on park-to-park connectivity, but regional connectivity as well.

Councilmember Jerry Marks mentioned the need for restroom facilities at many parks.

Mayor Marc Williams passed along comments from the absent Councilmember Mark McGoff, who also wanted to point out the lack of restrooms. He said it doesn't do a lot of good to have great parks and trail systems if people shy away from using them due to the scarcity of facilities. McGoff also pointed out, through Williams, that urban parks need shade and seating, and that the most beautiful parks still need to be usable by people. Williams added that he agrees with Councilmember Marriott, that connectivity and useability of the trails and parks we have are the top priority, as opposed to spending resources seeking certifications and awards.

Councilmember Bob Dyer noted that he gets a lot of feedback from people about the parks. Many people like the playgrounds a lot, and think the parks are fine, but that we have fallen drastically behind in the area of restrooms and other needed amenities which allow people to linger in an area for a matter of hours.

Councilmember Marriott encouraged Wenskoski to look for innovative ideas for ways to better serve southeast Arvada. He pointed out that Olde Town's town square has to be, per square foot, one of the most used parks here, yet it's atypical. Marriott said he would love to see the plan advocate for creative thinking.

Wenskoski agreed, adding that sometimes things such as streetscapes can turn out to be another sort of park, because of the way people end up using them.

Councilmember Bob Fifer remarked that he found that to be true, and that more trees are needed along sidewalks, to create the sorts of spaces that function as parks, and to create buffers between traffic and homes and pedestrians.

### **Arterial Beautification Plan Update**

By December of 2016, one of City Council's stated goals is to have one key project underway, beautifying one of the many arterial roads around town. The primary reasons for arterial beautification are to enhance the city's image, to align with the Parks Master Plan, and to create safer routes for pedestrians and bicycles.

Meredith Wenskoski of Design Workshop presented information and options, then took questions and input from Councilmembers. Her report can be seen here:

[http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current\\_week/02.C.%20Arterial%20Beautification%20Plan%20Update.pdf](http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/02.C.%20Arterial%20Beautification%20Plan%20Update.pdf)

Upgrades would focus on such things as landscaping of medians, buffers between sidewalks and roads, adding trees, enhancing crosswalks and bike lanes, creating islands for pedestrians mid-crosswalk, adding warm paving materials and planter beds, and the use of lighting to create an atmosphere of a destination.

Councilmember Don Allard pointed out that Wadsworth Boulevard, as a state highway, might not be a good candidate for the pilot project of this program. City Manager Mark Deven agreed, saying, "If I was to suggest a pilot project, I would probably not suggest Wadsworth, for that reason." Allard continued, noting that snow removal on Wadsworth is an ongoing problem, and could present practical problems because the salt content of snow placed on landscaping would be detrimental.

Councilmember Bob Fifer said he thinks we need to create a more walkable community. The crosswalks, he said, seem weak enough to appear as "guidelines" to drivers, although by law cars are supposed to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalks. Fifer said one community made wider crosswalks, colored yellow, around schools.

Councilmember John Marriott wondered about the water consumption when adding trees and grass. Wenskoski said it depends on the type of grass--native grasses would clearly be a better choice in most places--but also agreed that trees really are a big user of water. Marriott suggested that pedestrian connectivity be a driving factor, to double the bang for the buck. He said places should be chosen where arterial beautification can make the most difference, primarily at intersections as opposed to where cars will just speed by and not see what's there. He said he's not sure about a comprehensive study at this point, due to Arvada's many unfunded capital needs. He thinks a study might get stale before most of the recommendations could be implemented.

Mayor Marc Williams said, "Over the years I have talked to a lot of people ... Mr. Keller from a major paving company we use said, 'the stupidest thing is to put in medians--you gotta water them, and then the water causes street problems.' " Williams said the medians can cause long-term degradation of the streets, and agreed with Marriott that the intersections are where people really see beautification efforts. He also likes the widening of crosswalks, calling them "a real big plus at a lower cost." He also doesn't want to spend a lot of money on studies which could sit on a shelf, preferring to look for areas where the City could get the biggest bang for the buck.

Councilmember Jerry Marks advised caution in the placement of trees so as not to cause obstructed vision for drivers.

### **10-Year Capital Improvement Plan, Update**

Arvada Finance Director Bryan Archer provided Council with new information and a rundown on the current state of finances. There will be an additional presentation at the September 14 City Council meeting, in which Archer will be looking for recommendations from Councilmembers; then, in October, Council may approve the final plan.

Arvada's sales tax revenues are spent according to a formula which sends 80% of the money to general operations, and the remaining 20% to capital improvements. In addition to that money, capital improvements can be done using money the City already has, and there is also the possibility of a bond issue of approximately \$55 million, sometime during the next ten years.

Councilmember John Marriott said he would like to see how the numbers work out if bonding does not happen. He conjectured that a bond issue might be the best option, but maybe it wouldn't, and the difference comes down to the difference between inflation (making projects cost more as Arvada waited to accumulate the needed funding) or the interest that would be paid out on bonds. He also pointed out that \$55 million worth of projects would be impossible to do all at once, anyway, and that some of those projects could be further refined or phased over a longer period of time. Councilmember Bob Fifer agreed, and said he'd like to see estimates showing cash-funded projects vs. bond-financed.

Mayor Marc Williams said the same, that he'd want to know how the City could get the most spending power, by doing things in a lump sum or spread out over years. Fifer asked when a bond issue would have to go to the voters; Archer said it could happen at any time, but not later than 2018.

Marriott expressed concerns about the road project needs on the west side of town, saying CIP should "start taking some bites of that elephant." He suggested doing some internal borrowing of funds Arvada already has, to finance work at 72nd and Indiana. Councilmember Don Allard agreed. He said the City needs to start seriously looking at northwest Arvada; with 5,000 or 6,000 new homes, it's a small city, and he thinks needs in that part of town should supersede some of the other items on the list. "We'll have to address that, or pretty soon we're going to have a crisis out there," he said, adding that he'd like to see four or five projects be settled soon.

Fifer gave his view that transportation is the City's biggest problem, and that the longer problems are on hold the bigger they get, and "we'll never climb out of that hole." Meanwhile, traffic continues to increase, and can be expected to do so over the next ten years as well. He recommended combining the desire for a pilot project for arterial beautification, with the need to do improvements at 72nd and Indiana, saying it should be a priority and strongly encouraging expediting that project.

Councilmember Bob Dyer thanked the others for their support of northwest Arvada, and said he'd like to see the 72nd and Indiana project happen sooner than 2017. Dyer also identified two big-ticket items, which are the parks maintenance building and the Ralston Road Corridor Project; he said those wouldn't be able to be phased, and so might be good candidates for a bond issue. City Manager Mark Deven asked if Council would be open to a lower bond issue to get some of the big projects done. Williams said they should look at all the different scenarios. Marriott pointed out that, regarding the Ralston Corridor Project, "a third, at least, will happen organically," because of the Ralston Creek developments and grant money for work on the extreme east end of Ralston.

The workshop ended at 7:40.