

Meeting of the Planning Commission, January 20, 2015

Notes taken by Nancy Young

6:30 pm. All Commissioners were present (Caswell, Goff, Hannan, Sullivan, Crouse, Connell, Rothschild). Citizens present - 19. Presenters and representatives present – 6.

Chairperson Sullivan opened the public hearing regarding Solana Olde Town, including rezoning, a Preliminary Development Plan (PDP), and an height exception. These three items were considered together.

Solana Olde Town is a proposed development of 352 rental apartments east of the Wadsworth ByPass (and east of the storage place), south of Grandview and the railroad tracks, west of Lamar/Marshall, with the southern boundary W. 56th Avenue. The development includes about 15 acres.

Jason Smith, of MKS, presented details regarding this plan, as follows:

- The proposed development is currently zoned heavy industrial (I-2). He needed to acquire 6 parcels with multiple owners, to develop this land and to rezone the land to residential, in line with the Transit Framework Plan adopted in 2009.
- MKS engaged in outreach to the City of Arvada (meetings with the Planning Department of Community Development and with Parks and Recreation), and with two neighborhoods - the Stocke-Walter Historic District and the Columbine Neighborhood).
- As a result of neighbors' concerns, the density was reduced from 485 (32 units per acre) to 352 units, or about 23 units per acre. The Transit Framework plan requires a minimum of 16 units per acre.
- Regarding parking, the plan calls for 620 parking spaces, with 72% of units having an attached garage, similar to single-family, owner-occupied homes. The parking ratio is 1.78 spaces per unit, and exceeds one space per bedroom.
- He noted that the interior finish of these rentals will be similar to single-family, owner-occupied homes. The plan calls for 1-bedroom apartments of about 660 square feet up to 3-bedroom apartments of 1,365 square feet.
- There will be a fence around the perimeter to respect the privacy of adjacent single-family homes, as well as to restrict access of the renters to adjoining commercial properties.
- The project includes a public park on the north side, by Grandview Avenue and the railroad tracks. The project envisions pedestrian access to Olde Town through this park at Saulsbury street. Also, the development will share the cost of the traffic light at W. 56th Avenue and the Wadsworth ByPass with the Trammell Crow development planned for the east side of the Wadsworth ByPass.

- Mr. Smith spoke to the overall design and amenities of the project, which will include a clubhouse, workout room, pool, and bike repair facility, among others. The project will have pitched roofs, and the exterior has been designed to allow lots of natural light to each unit and to present a varied appearance, rather than a flat wall.
- He concluded his remarks by noting that he and his team appreciate Arvada's "authentic" Olde Town and have made efforts to incorporate suggestions of the residents to compliment that "small town" charm.

The meeting was then opened to public comment.

- Maureen Phair, Executive Director of Arvada Urban Renewal (AURA) stated that the AURA Board supports this development. She said that the development meets the City and RTD's goals of for high density housing near transportation.
- Jon Luciano entered a plea for the development to beautify W. 56th Avenue. He expressed his thanks to Jason Smith, the developer. He also made a plea to the City to disallow parking on the south side of W. 56th to reduce noise and inconvenience to the residents of the Columbine Neighborhood.
- Geoffrey Bruce of Grandview Avenue, noted that this development is "an astonishing situation" because the developer came to the citizens and genuinely addressed their concerns. He stated "this guy is excellent" (referring to Mr. Smith). Mr. Bruce encouraged Arvada to let Mr. Smith "do more in Arvada".
- Harriet Hall echoed Mr. Bruce's comments. She stated that when she does not approve of a proposed development, she speaks out. So, she is now speaking out now in approval of this development, which she likes. She appreciates the developer's responsiveness to citizens through his outreach program. Not only that, but Mr. Smith also did what he said he would do.
- Charles Pfeifer, of the 5500 block of Saulsbury Court, noted that he is one of the oldest residents of the Columbine neighborhood - since 1974. He was concerned that this development compounds the difficulties of existing residents' ability to live there. Traffic is now a problem, and it is hard to get around the neighborhood. He was also concerned about the infrastructure, like water, sewer, and overhead electric lines.
- Jan Wright, of Wright's warehouse, noted concern about the impact of this residential area on the adjoining commercial area. She stated that she had not received notice about the development. NOTE: After her comments, Mr. Smith consulted directly with her, during the meeting.

In response, Jason Smith noted that traffic is always a concern. It is hoped that the new traffic light at W. 56th & the Wadsworth ByPass will help alleviate traffic within the Columbine neighborhood. He also noted that the commercial areas will be separated by a fence from the residential area to prevent residents from accessing the commercial area.

The meeting was then opened to questions from the Commissioners, summarized below:

- It appears that the Fire Protection District had concerns. While these concerns were addressed by staff, the Commission has previously asked to see these initial comments. The solution resulted in a major change in the interior of the development, with the grassy view through the development having more of a “paved road” appearance.
- When asked about the rents to be charged, Mr. Smith noted that they will be high. Rents are increasing in the Metro area, but construction costs are rising faster.
- The impact on Foster Elementary, now at 101% of capacity, could be meaningful. If the school fee is waived, what will be the impact on the schools? Staff responded that Jeffco did not respond to their request for comment. Also, school fees have been waived for any development within one-half mile of a transit station. This ruling can not be arbitrarily applied to some developments and not others.
- The application includes a request to rezone the site of a single-family home to residential from industrial - why? Jason Smith replied that this homeowner had requested this change to avoid a separate application fee, and Mr. Smith agreed to include it with his package.
- The pool to be included in the development, while located near the public park, will be clearly separated. It is an entirely different use.
- The proposed pedestrian crossing at Saulsbury requires Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approval. It appears that RTD has begun the engineering design in anticipation of a future application to the PUC. It was noted that the developer is responsible for pursuing this application. In the event that it does not succeed, then the City will need to decide the next steps. Some concern was expressed regarding the BNSF railroad and whether it might oppose the pedestrian crossing.
- W. 56th Avenue was built as a “collector” street (a way for residents to access a thoroughfare), and parking is now, and expected to continue to be, allowed on both sides of the street. Concerns were expressed that as additional apartments are constructed, the demand for this street parking will increase and could become a nuisance to the residents.
- Mr. Smith confirmed that the roof on all buildings will be a pitched roof. Some of the graphics might have given the appearance of being a flat roof.
- Regarding leases, most apartment leases are expected to be for one year.

During this discussion, many Commissioners thanked the developer for working closely with the citizens, noting that it was refreshing to see the cooperation and community support expressed at the meeting. The developer was also complimented on the amount of open space (which exceeded the requirement) and the aesthetic planning of the project.

All three requests of Solana Olde Town - rezoning (including the single-family property), the Preliminary Development Plan, and the height exception - were approved unanimously.

The Commission then voted to cancel the February 3, 2015, meeting, as there were no items for the agenda. The February 19, 2015, meeting will include four items regarding Whisper Creek III. After this public hearing, there will be a 15-minute workshop regarding Australia.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.