

## Meeting of the Planning Commission, October 20, 2015

Notes taken by Nancy Young

### **Headlines:**

- *Parks & Trails Master Plan Workshop - Open Space craved by citizens, especially in southeast Arvada*
- *Newest Candelas project - replacing multi-family residential with more “urban sprawl” - single-family homes*
- *Has Arvada exhausted water resources for residents? 86th & Alkire - request for Arvada water denied*

5:30 pm. Commissioners present were Hannan, Casswell, Goff, Crouse, and Connell. Commissioners Sullivan and Rothschild. Citizens present - 3, Presenters & staff – 6.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved as presented.

### **Workshop:**

Preliminary Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Mike Lee, Manager of Park and Urban Design, introduced Meredith Wenskoski, consultant with Design Workshop to present the overview of the preliminary Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. This plan was developed in meetings with about 90 stakeholders (unnamed), public meetings, and over 1,000 on-line participants.

- The #1 theme was citizen desire for natural, open space (in contrast to manicured parks). Southeast Arvada is particularly under-served in this regard, as is the entire East side.
- The greatest need for open space is wherever there is the greatest “development intensity”, like near transit stations.
- The #2 theme was citizens’ desire for a “green spine” linking trails, parks, and open space throughout Arvada, as well as linking to regional trails and open space.
- Also, citizens were interested in the health and wellness benefits of parks trails, and open space.

Arvada currently has 14 acres of parks/open space per 1,000 residents, or about average for comparable cities. As the City grows, to maintain our parkland at this average, additional parks/open space will need to be created.

Below is a summary of the recommendations, presented in four overlapping categories:

- Create new park types for “urbanizing” areas; create new parks; maintain and improve existing parks
- Complete trail “gaps”; connect to parks and regional trails; provide access to residents of all ages and all abilities.
- Conserve land for open space
- Increase knowledge about, and use of, existing parks/trails through social media and improved signage/wayfinding
- Enhance volunteerism and stewardship of parks/trails/open space by citizens.

Commissioner questions and comments:

- The Pomona Parcel (28 acres east of Lake Arbor between Vance Drive and Lamar, owned by the City) was not included in the inventory of Open Space presented at the meeting, even though there have been numerous meetings where citizens and the City agreed that this land would remain open space. NOTE: See City website for the March 2014 report of the public process regarding the Pomona parcel.
- Criteria for including land in the “open space inventory” includes environmental concerns (wildlife, flooding, etc.), community concerns (under-served areas), and a long list of other, related items.
- Goals for the amount of park/open space per 1,000 residents have not yet been defined. In 2001 (the date of the current the Master Plan), there were 10 acres/1,000 residents. Today, it is 14 acres/1,000 residents, or about average. The intent is to set the goal high, but assure that it is achievable.
- The City would need to acquire privately owned land (included in the “open space inventory”). Funds for such acquisition would need to be included in the City budget. Other funding sources need to be explored.

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**Regular meeting called to order:**

6:30 pm - Citizens present - 13, presenters & staff - 16

Three Public Hearings on the agenda: Candelas (3 items), 86th & Alkyre - Water Request, and update to official Flood Plain maps.

**Public Hearing:**

Candelas 3 items – 1. Amend Outline Development Plan (ODP), 2. Amend Preliminary Development Plan (PDP), and 3. Preliminary Plat (Plat) to allow single family homes in lieu of multi-family homes.

The Candelas project is a 1,451 acre development near the location of the former Rocky Flats facility. The original Outline Development Plan envisioned 734 acres with 2,206 residences (aka dwelling units). These three applications intend to reduce the total number of residences to 2,038 (or 168 less than the original plan) by building single family homes in areas originally planned for multi-family affordable housing.

Applicant presentation. Bonnie Niziloek, representing Tri Pointe Homes (the builder), presented details on specific parcels and revised plans. The intent now is to build 95 single family homes on three parcels, compared to the 165 multi-family homes originally envisioned. It appears that without the Jefferson Parkway, combined with the State construction defects law, there is little interest in financing multi-family homes on these parcels.

Matt Osborn of Tri Pointe Homes, stated that the proposed homes are “more affordable” than other offerings in the Candelas area. The proposed homes will be priced around \$350,000-\$400,000, with estimated closing price about \$400,000-450,000 (including customer add-ons). The homes will be two-stories, 2,000 to 2,700 square feet on small lots 45x95 feet (about 55% coverage by the building), with a two-car garage. Previously constructed homes in Candelas are closing at an average price of about \$500,000.

#### Public Comment:

1 person. Brandon Figliorino stated that he was alarmed by this proposal. Arvada needs diversity of housing types provided by multi-family dwellings, not the urban sprawl of Candelas. He noted that just two weeks ago, the Arvada City Council approved a “plat note” that provided relief to developers from the State construction defects law.

Matt Osborn rebutted that this project has been planned over many years and that the City’s action could not be incorporated in this proposal at this stage. Craig Veldheizer added that the Candelas Master Plan called for up to 2,400 multi-family homes, focused in the Candelas Town Center. Without “visibility” of the Jefferson Parkway, the market will not support these numbers. The proposal provides a transition from the larger single family homes to smaller single family homes, to eventually, a large complex of multi-family homes to the south.

#### Commissioner questions and comments, summarized:

This request appears no different than a sketch plan (presented to the Commission within the last year or so), in which the applicant sought to rezone industrial property to residential property (i.e., requiring a change to the Comprehensive Plan). In this case, the change is from approved multi-family residential to single family residential. It’s the same concept and appears to be a step in the wrong direction.

There appears to be a large segment of buyers looking for lower price points. The proposal provides a lower price for homes, although these prices might not be considered “affordable”. At the neighborhood meeting (attended by 10-20 persons, depending on the reporter), there was support for the lower density.

It was noted that there are probably about 180 occupied dwellings at Candelas at present. At the time of the neighborhood meeting last April, there were about 100 occupied dwellings. Closings are averaging about 20 per month in this project.

There were citizen concerns expressed about the parks. Bryan Daly noted that there are 6 parks planned in the Candelas project, of which 5 have been constructed. The developers wanted to have visible parks as an amenity to show potential homeowners. The last park will be constructed after nearby housing construction is completed.

It appears that there are a few remaining parcels designated “multi-family”. A total of 57 multi-family housing units are planned for these parcels. Note: It appeared that these numbers did not include potential housing units above retail in the Candelas Town Center, which appears unlikely to be constructed until the Jefferson Parkway is “visible”.

City Attorney Randall Samson noted that if the proposal meets the specific criteria, then it must be approved under the quasi-judicial rules governing this public hearing.

Three separate decisions, by motion and vote, were needed. Below is a summary of comments made by Commissioners prior to these votes.

- Developers, take citizen concerns about more affordable housing and parks to heart!
- There's a worry that we have "pulled our finger out of the dyke" and opened a flood of urban sprawl at the expense of housing diversity.

All three items were approved - 5-0, with two Board members absent.

### **Public Hearing:**

86th & Alkire - Request to receive Arvada water to obtain AFD fire protection by installing a fire hydrant.

Chris Elliot represented the applicant, Alkire Investments (Wildgrass developer), to receive Arvada water for a 56.3 acre development in unincorporated Jefferson County. This parcel is zoned agricultural by Jefferson County, with a minimum of 1 unit per 10 acres. The water service would entail only a fire hydrant on the western edge of the property adjacent to the Wildgrass development. Fire protection is needed for any development on this property.

While early efforts to designate portions of the property as a "conservation easement" were successful, the remaining property is not so designated. Efforts to resolve the future of the property with the city managers of Westminster and Arvada yielded no results, since both city managers left their posts.

Mr. Elliot stated that he saw no alternative to developing the property within the unincorporated Jefferson County zoning, even though his original expectation was to construct "urban-style, cluster" residences on part of the property, with the remainder being open space.

Due to concerns about storm water flowing into Standley Lake, and adversely affecting the quality of drinking water from this lake, it was agreed that the Church Ditch (on the western edge of the property) would act as a moat. Therefore, no developments would be allowed east of this ditch.

There were no comments from the public.

Commissioner questions and comments, summarized:

The property cannot be annexed to Arvada because of insufficient water resources. Jim Sullivan, Director of Public Utilities, stated that current water resources can serve 125,000 residents, while the expected "build out" in 2025 calls for 140,000 residents. In the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, "we had to draw the line" around areas that the City could provide water. This parcel was outside that line. The Candelas project is "inside" the line - water has been allocated for that project.

There appears to be a disconnect here between water quality/availability and the staff recommendation for denial. There appear to be benefits to the City by the lift station (required for the Whisper Creek development) and sewer lines across the property (from Candelas and Whisper Creek).

Underground water (i.e., aquifers) is not a sufficient drinking water source. Aquifers can dry-up, as Castle Rock has experienced.

City Attorney Samson noted that this was an administrative decision, not a quasi-judicial matter.

The motion to deny the application was approved, 4-1 (Commissioner Crouse voting against, with two Commissioners absent).

**Public Hearing:**

Amend the official Flood Plain Insurance Rate Maps in the Land Development Code (LDC) -

Jim Sullivan, Director of Public Utilities, stated that the only change was the date of the maps. He said nothing about the configuration of the updated maps compared to the current maps.

There were no comments from the public

Commissioner question - The 2016 date is necessary. The maps must be approved prior to their becoming effective.

The application was approved by motion, 5-0 (with two Commissioners absent).

Meeting adjourned: 8:00 P.M.