

Meeting of the Planning Commission, May 6, 2014

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

This meeting had two objectives: to decide whether or not to recommend certain changes in the City Center Outline Development Plan, to the City Council, and also discussion between commissioners and the Senior Planner about the upcoming release of a draft copy of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Five members of the commission were present: Chair John Sullivan, Patricia Connell, David Goff, Steve Hannan, and Ed Rothschild.

There were about fifteen members of the public attending.

Cheryl Drake presented the case for the City of Arvada. She briefly outlined the history of the area under consideration, which is the site between Grandview and 53rd Avenue, from Wadsworth to the Wadsworth Bypass, and a small area across the bypass on the southeast corner of Grandview and the bypass.

In 2007, the Transit Framework Plan was put into place for this area of Arvada, and in 2010 it became a new Urban Renewal area. Now, in 2014, these amendments to the City Center plan are intended to bring it into conformance with the Framework Plan.

What changes is the zoning. The parking garage and bus transfer station are expected to go just south of the light rail tracks. Current zoning designates the two parcels as General Retail, Commercial, Office, and Education Facility. The City wants to add Parking Garage, Bus Transfer Station, and Residential uses to these areas.

There was no public comment in favor of the changes. Speaking against the changes was Arvada resident Carol Zinanti, who asked if there is a change being planned for the area southeast of the bridge on Grandview. The answer is that it will be rezoned, adding residential to bring it into conformance with the Framework Plan. Zinanti asked about a height regulation and was told that the heights are established by the Land Development Code, and that it is thirty-five feet in that part of town unless there is further rezoning or exceptions.

Following a short discussion between members of the Commission and Cheryl Drake, the Commission voted 5 to 0 to recommend the changes to City Council.

Next was a presentation by City Planner Kevin Nichols and consultant Jeremy Call. Under consideration is the Comprehensive Plan, which is being updated. Members of the Commission have not seen a hard copy of the plan and would like more time to view a hard copy; it runs to over 300 pages and is difficult to view piecemeal online.

Based on that information from the Commissioners, Nichols and Call may decide to change the originally planned schedule for a rollout of the draft. The initial plan was for a draft to be released this Friday, followed by two open houses in May, which are opportunities for the public to review the plan; it will also be visible online at arvadaplans.org at some point.

Public hearings would begin in about July, a press release and email blasts would be sent out, as well as social media and info on the city website. There were also cards passed out at Saturday's Sustainability Festival giving information on the two open houses.

In about July or August the Planning Commission would again review the Plan, and it would be presented to City Council in about August or September.

As mentioned, this timetable is only tentative and was set up before Nichols and Call understood that the Commission needed a hard copy of the draft and time to read and digest that.

We could see last night that there are some changes to the land use plan in certain areas, notably a current liking by the planners for "mixed use" which doesn't include residential, and a new use for Light Industrial/Office which would allow mini-storages, plus a whole new category which is Industrial/Office Park, which would be high quality and not allow exterior storage. So that would be Heavy Industrial, which has a lot of exterior storage; Light Industrial/Office, which can allow moderate amounts of exterior storage, and Industrial/Office Park, with none.

Staff also would like to combine the categories "Commercial" with "Large Format Commercial" -- meaning big box stores -- with language added setting out conditions under which large format would be allowed.

There was brief discussion about the areas near 64th and Indiana, 72nd and Indiana, Ralston Road, and the big changes expected at Arvada Ridge, with the potential for expansion of Red Rocks Community College, and some non-residential uses along with high-density residential.

The area around Kipling between about 72nd and 80th will remain mixed-use, allowing flexibility so that, for example, if a small shopping center was struggling there it could be changed to housing if that would do better.

Discussion returned to the logistics of giving members of the Commission time to look over and digest the information for the updated Comprehensive Plan. Rothschild said he wants to especially focus on areas which will have public conflict and need evaluation. The commissioners would find it most efficient to have hard copies and be able to email each other and Nichols and Call; Rothschild specifically asked the City's legal counsel, sitting in attendance, whether that would present any conflict with the Open Meeting law.

The City's attorney (not Chris Daly) said that the commission has to avoid conducting any business as a body, because of the open meetings law, but that he does not think that includes email or other communication on this process of making alterations to the plan while it's in progress.

If the Open Houses proceed on schedule, they are set for Thursday, May 22, from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Arvada K-8 School, and Thursday, May 29 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the YMCA Community Room at 6350 Eldridge Street.

More information will become available at arvadaplans.org.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40.