

I didn't get to complete my comments and would like them on record fully.

Good evening, Councilmembers & members of the viewing public. My name is Candi CdeBaca. I'm a former City Councilmember and a fifth-generation resident of Swansea.

I'm also a board member of the GES Community Investment Fund and a participant on the Mayor's Community Outreach Workgroup for the National Western Triangle—but today, I'm speaking in my personal capacity, with the weight of history behind me and deep concern for where we're headed.

You're being asked to greenlight access to \$800 million in tourism tax revenue to build an equestrian center and hotel at the National Western Center. And once again, Denver is choosing horses and hotels over housing and human beings.

Let's be honest about what this is: an enormous public investment in amenities for tourists, not in solutions for the people who keep this city running. We have yet to invest anything near \$800 million in housing stabilization. Or in mental health care. Or in addiction services. Or even youth development as highlighted by our youth speakers last week. And yet we pretend this project—this gamble—is what will deliver us a better future?

I've seen this playbook before. Community engagement that is performative. Benefits that are vague. Promises that get thinner the closer you look. And now we're watching it happen again. I've listened to the presentation tonight and read media coverage this weekend and I'm disappointed but unsurprised. A completely false narrative about unprecedented engagement and outreach while our community stands firmly and loudly together rejecting that narrative. The project team reported all of the the outputs—or how many meetings were held but no outcomes—no content of those meetings to illustrate the constant lack of actual partnership, just countless hours of community members time spent to merely allow a list of numbers and boxes to be checked. Community choosing the colors in a building is tokenism and the standard of government engagement for most projects. There is a long list of people here tonight that will not get to speak—I hope you will listen to the meaning behind this hearing community requested tonight. These people are refusing to be used as pawns as we were in the narrative that justified the first 800mil toward this project.

I know the NWC project like the back of my hand—better than most of the city employees tasked with implementing it. I know it from the governance side AND the community side. We have yet to see any meaningful or proportionately appropriate benefits for the community from the FIRST

\$800mil we have spent on this campus. I know the Community Investment Fund has put forward a concrete, doable request—\$16 million—1% from the previous \$800mil and 1% from this next round. I support that ask. It's modest. It's visionary. It's a meaningful investment that illustrates a genuine effort to remedy harm to this community. Despite the long letter detailing the alleged community engagement on this project, we maintain that there was no true partnership in these negotiations. We again were stonewalled and sidelined until the last possible moment—despite our own consistent and frequent efforts to engage in a real negotiation.

If this is truly a city that believes in equity, then we cannot keep calling GES a “partner” while treating us like an afterthought. Other institutions on that campus have put real money in. Our communities have put in their homes, their health, their heritage. We're not asking for charity—we're demanding fairness. We are constantly told that the project cannot find millions for the community just lying around, but I challenge you to recognize that there is \$16mil just lying around for pre-development costs and we generally are manifesting \$800mil in money that does not exist for this here project that has not guaranteed profitability for the city nor has any feasibility study for this project been shared to show us the expected outcome profit or not. Yet here we are again, allocating dollars to window dressing projects in an economic downturn.

The vote you cast on this Project Support Agreement won't just fund a hotel. It will signal what—and who—you think this city is for. It will signal foreshadow for our community what is to come with a potentially performative National Western Center Triangle plan. It will signal to our suffering residents in a time of shrinking budgets, who and what we are willing to prioritize. I've heard tonight pleas for a worker justice fund, a food justice fund—our needs are so much greater in this moment in time than stadiums, arenas, horse homes, and hotels—especially when we are subsidizing with money that could be paying for the more dire needs. We can call all of this “economic development” but if we are not building a city people can actually live in, what is it all for? This community deserves impact fees that help keep people in the community, not an annual pittance that cannot even buy back a single home to split amongst many starving organizations and people. We deserve to be paid first, like any other expense being factored into this investment's pro forma.

Please, do not pass this agreement without amending it. It sounds like some of you do your homework, and if you indeed have, you will have spoken with this community about how they were engaged and you will have looked at the numbers deeply to see the inequity I am highlighting. You will see that in comparison to other projects like Ball Arena, there is no comparison at all to the meaningful benefits garnered by more powerful institutions in those negotiations. Our historic neighborhoods in GES ALSO love Denver and we believe Denver needs to stop investing in illusions and start investing in people.

Thank you.

Best,

Candi CdeBaca, MSW

In opposition to Denver City Resolution 25 -0548* Testimony

Rachael Lehman,
Legislative Affairs and Policy for Brown and Black Parents United Foundation
Our service area is Commerce City, North Denver, and Aurora.

In 2023 and 2024, Denver faced a significant influx of immigrants, many of whom arrived after being expelled from other states. I will be forever proud that Denver chose to respond with compassion Rather than responding with hostility - offering shelter—often to asylum seekers—under the Biden Administration. The city anticipated receiving \$24 million in federal compensation to support these efforts. However, according to Mayor Johnson, a letter from the Trump Administration stated that FEMA would no longer reimburse those funds.

As of January, there were approximately 5,000 unhoused people in Denver. Speaking from the nonprofit sector, I can attest that federal funding cuts have forced us to make challenging reductions to our operating budgets. This lack of fiscal support has left our city struggling to reconcile these expenditures, especially as we face widespread job losses and economic hardship. Adding more burden to communities already disproportionately impacted feels not only irresponsible but cruel.

Recent decisions by the city have only heightened these concerns. Denver has approved a massive data center that developers have already broken ground on that will divert resources from local neighborhoods and worsen environmental pollution—issues that already plague the community. Many residents face chronic health problems, and the prospect of further disruptive construction, akin to the I-70 expansion, is deeply troubling.

It is hard to justify providing financial incentives to corporations and developers for projects like a "Horse Hotel" when so many Denver families cannot afford their first home, and thousands remain unhoused or on the brink of homelessness. My mother once told me, "You can't go out to dinner if your rent isn't paid." That lesson has guided me throughout my life: take care of the basics first. Denver must prioritize the fundamental needs of its people before funding new ventures or luxuries. Our city's resources should go toward supporting our most vulnerable residents, not corporate interests.

A resolution approving a proposed Agreement between the City and County of Denver and National Western Center Authority to provide financial support for the design and construction of the Equestrian Center project at the National Western Center, upon execution through March 1, 2063, in Council District 9. Approves a Project Support Agreement between the City and County of Denver and the National Western Center Authority to provide financial support for the design and construction of the Equestrian Center project at the National Western Center, upon execution through March 1, 2063, in Council District 9 (FINAN-202579112). The last regularly scheduled Council meeting within the 30-day review period is on 6-2-2025. The Committee approved filing this item at its meeting on 4-23-2025.

Council Members thank you for allowing me to speak ,I know many of you personally and I have so much appreciation and respect for all of you.

It's never too late to vote NO for a bad development opportunity. It's been misrepresented in multiple ways.

Misrepresented: Not by the Stock Show Leaders, not by the Mayors Office and not by you, City Council, The most directly by the folks that call themselves, the Authority.

First, there is no real and meaningful connection or collaboration or equitable partnership that exists between the broader GES community, its recognized leaders sitting behind me now and the Authority. If you doubt that, please just ask them. Please also ask them what the "plan" is for the future displacement of multi generational families and a majority of their neighborhoods based on potentially well over \$3 billion development amazing improvements to the national Western center and all phases of the development, thus creating sky rocketing property values and hold costs and tenent rents. They will tell you there is no plan, there is no fully funded community investment trust to offset that displacement of an already environmentally toxic neighborhood.

As I mentioned to you last Monday the authority engages in age old power structure strategies to hand pick specific individuals within the community and then isolate them within the Authority Bubble and then assert the illusion over and over that there's true meaningful connectivity and collaboration with these individuals as leaders of the community and then they hold individuals up like posters or in a youtube videos inferring these good folks have seat at the table and there is true collaboration, equity, partnership, etc.,

Of course it's all nonsense. The GES community is not a true equity partner now nor have they ever been.

Please believe me that the future development funding of the additional phases of NWC Development will not happen in our lifetimes without the support of the GES community and the citizens of Denver.... It's not possible. The vote on the arena clearly taught us that.

So...if you're willing to call it quits with just an equestrian center and a poorly located hotel then Vote Yes tonight. It will in fact be the last major development on the NWC campus.

Recently, the GES leadership requested a feasibility study to better understand the potential profitability (or not) and why that hotel location and why now vs in later phases of a more stableized NWC Development . As you might know the latest, CoStar report indicates that the downtown denver and central business district is just now hitting 71% hotel occupancy. So, understandably the question is how a hotel located, funded and built at that location, competing with all of the river north hotels can do a 70% occupancy at one year post construction as represented by the Authority, It's a reasonable request to provide a feasibility study.

Feasibility and Performance studies are generally open books for all lenders, investors, and equity partners in any public or private project. It's beyond me to understand why that wouldn't be a useful tool for the authority to gain support

Lastly, My father was a Denver Policeman and died in the line of duty for this city, my family owns the corner located at 4700 Brighton Blvd? My family in wish to develop it in honor of my father in conjunction with the Denver Police Museum as a Community Outreach Facility to coincide with the dream of a fully developed national western center. I deeply support the NWC and full development of the remaining phases, however, I do not support the core leadership of the authority, and if significant changes and leadership improvements are not made quickly, The final phases will never be a reality.

Core values must change at the Authority and we need it now. Please make that happen and Vote NO to the request for \$800M in tourism tax dollars.

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