

July 1, 2016

Re: Public Comment to City Council for rezone application 15I00124\_Application\_03022016 (2015I-00124)  
City Council Meeting to be held on July 11, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to make a public comment **against** rezoning properties 1100 Meade St, 1100 Meade St (vacant unit) 1001 Meade St., 1000 Newton St., 1048 Newton St., 1049 Stuart St, and 1101 Perry St. to residential zoning. I am unable to attend your hearing on April 6th, so I am submitting my public comment in writing. I am asking that you either leave these parcels, as open space or give them to a sustainable neighborhood group or non-profit such as WeCan, Villa Park, Denver Urban Gardens, the West Colfax Food Coop, or some other neighborhood non-profit organization.

Several community members I have spoken with agree that turning open space into residential rezone is fundamentally wrong. I am finding that every person I speak with in the Villa Park neighborhood would like for these properties to remain open space. Many other neighbors in this area wish they could sign the petition, and some will be sending in a public comment. I will be submitting a petition of homeowners' signatures that qualify to participate in the protest petition process. I received this petition from your rezoning department and they also provided me names from the Denver County Assessor's office of eligible to sign homeowners.

There are large rocks placed on the lands indicating that the city was aware that these lots belonged to them. Community planning and Development (CPD) presented that zoning changed the parcels of land to open space erroneously in 2010. Well if this indeed was a mistake rather than a vision I think that this happening was beneficial to the dwindling ecosystem in our area that is caused from residential development and is resulting in a loss of area for organisms that co-exist, and vegetation that clean air. The comments made by CPD and the Parks department at the Sloans Lake Citizen neighborhood association meeting differ from a letter that is housed with the application. Gordon Robertson, Director of Parks had his office state at the Sloans Lake Citizen Group a Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) that he was never given notice that the lots belonged to the city, yet he states in the rezoning application that these lands have been owned by the city since 1992. Given this information it is perplexing that the city never investigates who is actually the owner of the lots and requires weed mowing and clean up from the owners. Since the city was the owner of these lots for 24 years they should have had a plan in place to maintain these lots for the past quarter of a century in which they were these lots' custodian. Additionally in Mr. Robertson's statement in the application he states not just these lots, but all of Lakewood Gulch was zoned residential. From what I understand the city's intent at one time was to sell the entire 100 plus acres, but then gave Lakewood Gulch the park designation, so it is plausible that a better way to develop these parcels would be to develop them as open space parkland.

Open Space more often than not means low maintenance trees, shrubs, fine fescues and that these fescues are un-mowed and lie down, and go unwatered other water that from rain, snow or in deep rooted vegetation case surface water. These lots would serve the public better if they were kept in an ecosystem state then as homes developed on small lots that will have to be built up thus casting shadows and leaving little room for trees.

**Precedence:**

When Gordon Robertson's states in this application "historic use", he is not going very far back in time as what has happens with Denver's Parks. Denver has precedence since Mayor Robert Speer the early 1900's to

model Denver into “city beautiful”. Mayor Speer believed that Denver should have parks, plays and open space to stop it from being ugly. Mayor Speer adds flair to Denver with parks and open space being a huge part of his model. We see this when he builds civic center park, puts gold on the capital’s dome, makes a speedway from the heart of downtown to the Denver Country Club, builds the wall and yes the bike lane that runs by the Platte River, and gives away thousands of trees to the citizens. Many of us are concerned about the quality of the residential development and the preservation of our parks and open space. I personally grew up in the Denver Metro area, and it has always been a place with quality air, water and wildlife. Now I have notice things like fewer birds, less trees, and the absence of insects. Moreover I get my neighbors to agree with me. Here are some likeminded testimonials that echo the sentiments of many in our community

**Testimonial:**

One:

... I think it would be a shame if these were developed for residential use. Big trees, a small path, somewhere for kids to explore. Maybe the city just wants to skirt its responsibilities of managing the space (weeds/litter). IF ANYTHING, it should be rezoned for community use, such as a garden. Open space just like this, albeit small, serves the neighborhood with ecosystem services, different from the blue grass mono-culture parks- habitat for bees and other insects, birds, rabbits and foxes, trees that cool and clean the air and water. It gives the neighborhood charm- not everything has to be built up to the lines and slathered with concrete (just look what happened to Jefferson Park, turned that place in to a sterile, concrete jungle). I understand the city probably wants property taxes from these lots, and our schools could use the money. I understand that the city probably doesn't want to have to take care of these lots. But I think that if it managed to survive this long without being cemented over, the open space deserves to stay and the residents of Villa Park deserve to keep and benefit from it.

Two:

I am surprised how few people see the importance of ecosystems....

**Concluding Remark:**

Paul Lopez is submitting this application on behalf of the Denver City Council. Councilman Lopez said he approached the Parks Division and asked Gordon Robertson if he wanted the land to develop. When I spoke with the deputy director of parks he told me that the rezone was being driven by CPD and Councilman Lopez. At that point parks employees must be loyal to their employer and go along with CPD and Councilman Lopez. They really have no room for a push back in favor of Denver’s residents. Additionally I am told by the auditor’s office that prior to 2002 the city would just give these orphan lots away to adjacent homeowners to make sure they were maintained. It seems that if the city does not want to take care of the open space then they could just give parcels to the community to manage. There are two RNOs in the area, Villa Park neighborhood association and the WeCan neighborhood association. Both of which I believe vie to hold themselves out as sustainability neighborhoods, and would volunteer to take ownership of these parcels, as would some of the nonprofits in the area.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

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