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January 24, 2012

Councilwoman Jeanne Robb  
City and County of Denver  
City and County Building  
Denver, CO 80205

Dear Councilwoman Robb:



We are writing in opposition to the rezoning application to be heard before the City Council on January 30, changing the zoning at 1532 and 1540 Monroe, in our capacity as homeowners living at 1539 Monroe Street. Although we respect, and have participated in the work of SPCNA in developing an MOU with Rosen Properties et. al.; and Rosen's work in developing the site, we believe that there are fundamental flaws in the project and its rezoning beyond their immediate, and damaging effect on us.

As many on the Council know, we have been active participants in making our City a better place to live for many years. Frankly, I am embarrassed to say I never fully appreciated or tried to solve the problems of food deserts before, and only now appreciate their significance for many parts of Denver. Clearly there is a need for small grocery stores on bus lines or in walking distance for many Denver neighborhoods. These may even need subsidies to help them locate conveniently to families whose lack of transportation make moderately priced fruits and vegetables inaccessible. Building one more grocery with parking capacity for 100 automobiles, however, is not the solution. Many grocery stores, closer to the size (not the price) of the new Marczyk grocery, or, the Whole Foods located at 12<sup>th</sup> and Ogden, is what is needed. Smaller – neighborhood grocery stores that do not disrupt the flow of traffic or bring additional traffic into our residential neighborhoods are called for – consistent with the Colfax corridor discussions completed in 1999 and the only recently approved Denver's new zoning ordinance.

As we wrote the Planning and Zoning Commission, we are very concerned about the presence of a retail operation requiring, perhaps as many as 75 automobiles an hour, coming and going through the neighborhood. We have always understood that the point of the Main Street zoning was to minimize the impact of auto traffic and to encourage public transportation. The very idea of a commercial property with 100 parking spaces, placed in the middle of our two block neighborhood, flies in the face of more than ten years of planning and neighborhood discussion. We, along with our neighbors, are frightened by the prospect of so many cars flowing along Garfield and Monroe streets. Some cars will wait at the light at Garfield and Colfax; but most will not. This will be particularly due to the misalignment of the two sides of Garfield, with traffic to 14<sup>th</sup> inevitably backing up in the absence of new turn lanes (and street widening). Many will turn into the neighborhood, taking 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue home, instead. The problem of delivery trucks through the neighborhood has been mitigated by the Rosen design team, but it doesn't eliminate semi-trucks, loaded with groceries at the busy Colfax and Colorado intersection, slowing traffic through that area even further, then backing traffic up still again on Colfax, waiting at light at the misaligned Garfield. Our recent experience with the City Park Jazz influx of traffic on lazy summer nights has added to our caution.

We want the concept of pedestrian shopping and the character of our neighborhood to be preserved. We respect the Rosen Family's attempts to remove the blight of the past 6 years from this corner and to develop a financially viable project. They are just doing their job, and have done it conscientiously. But we are more than a little bothered that the City has failed to assume responsibility for facilitating suitable growth here that realistically recognizes the character and needs of the neighborhood. The best minds went into preserving the Lowenstein Theater and converting it to the Tattered Cover complex; as well as 2.5 million dollars. If the only economically viable way to address the apparent food desert in which we live is to build a 25,000 square foot building with 100 parking spaces, then the City is obliged to help the developer meet the neighborhood need for groceries while simultaneously conforming to the ten year planning effort. Why are we so quick to revise our hard fought urban design plan for the mere price of a parking garage; or in a rush to remove 6 year old blight in the absence of innovative urban strategies such as a two story grocery stores rather than a suburban knockoff. It is incumbent on the city to help the developer and architect conform to plans developed and negotiated over more than ten years work.

Our stately and beautiful historic Denver square was built in 1918 – close to Colfax, true. From our first, and second story windows, we still view homes built during the same era. Our new view will be a parking lot, surrounded by new growth trees and brick walls, though it may be. Our home and neighborhood deserve an urban neighborhood market which compliments them and meets the needs of the residents of South City Park and Congress Park, preserved, consistent with years of community dialogue and 100 years of thoughtful city leadership. With your approval of the zone change across the street from our home since 1995, it is only a matter of time before we come to Council requesting our own zoning change request allowing commercial zoning conversion of our property to enable a law office or an office for my child and family therapy practice. Our house will no longer be viable as a residential property, and we may not be able to sell it as a residence.

At the City Park South Neighborhood Association this week, Councilman Brooks said that you and he will be addressing the traffic, growth and development concerns of our chunk of Colfax. Taking the long view, we see the rezoning as the first salvo in commercialization and redevelopment of the East end of City Park South. It is inevitable. As you have foreseen, now is the time to bring National Jewish Hospital and the Colorado Department of Transportation, as well as the four neighborhood associations at the intersection of Colorado Blvd and Colfax, to the table to begin preparing for redevelopment on a huge scale. Like the Denver Tech Center which didn't exist 40 years ago, growth, development and change are only a matter of time. If we are to preserve the residential character of East Denver as we know it, we need to be thinking and planning now.

We say all the above, knowing that the neighborhood is enamored by the elimination of blight as well as the presence of not just any market, but a Sunflower market. Nevertheless, we support and ask for your continued leadership in preserving the essential nature of this beautiful, but vulnerable area.

Sincerely,



Barbara Allen Ford



Chuck Ford