



Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Summary Minutes

Tuesday, August 21, 2012 10:30 AM City & County Building, Room 391

Committee Members: Robb, Chair; Montero, Vice-Chair; Brown; Lehmann; López; Shepherd

Committee Staff: Gretchen Williams

Council Members Present: Lehmann, Lopez, Robb, Shepherd, Brooks, Kniech, Susman

Members Absent: Montero, Brown

Bill Requests

- BR12-0551 Approves an Urban Redevelopment Plan for the Welton Corridor, an area approximately 85 acres centered around Welton Street and generally bounded by Broadway, Glenarm, 24th and Downing in Council District 8.**
Tracy Huggins, Denver Urban Renewal Authority

Tracy Huggins, Denver Urban Renewal Authority, presented the plan to the Committee.

The proposed Welton Corridor Urban Redevelopment Area contains approximately 85 acres in 29 blocks, and is centered on Welton Street and generally bounded by California and Glenarm between Broadway and Downing. There are over 200 property owners within the corridor, which includes the Five-Points Business District

This urban redevelopment area has its roots in the 2007 Downtown Area Neighborhoods Plan, which recommended a small area plan for the Arapahoe Square area. During that planning process, it was recommended that the Welton

Corridor also be considered as an urban redevelopment area. The Welton plan is now ready to move forward.

The required Conditions Study found that at least four blight factors are present within the area, as required by the State Statute. However, not every one of the subareas delineated within the corridor contained blighted conditions.

DURA sent out notices to all property owners of record in November 2011, as required by statute, concerning a public meeting. That meeting was well-attended. The conditions study was finalized in August 2012.

The urban renewal plan is in conformance with and supports several adopted City plans, including Comprehensive Plan 2000, Blueprint Denver and the Northeast Downtown Neighborhood Plan. It also conforms to the Five-Points Vision Plan.

Goals and objectives include elimination of blight through appropriate redevelopment; encouragement of residential, retail and commercial development; protection and enhancement of historical structures by promoting reuse where appropriate; and encouragement of development patterns that reduce auto demand, encourage pedestrian activity, and provide for a more environmentally sustainable city.

Committee discussed the failure of the existing light rail to stimulate business along Welton; in fact, some argued, the impact on existing businesses has been negative. The City has learned many lessons from the experience.

While the proposed urban redevelopment plan does authorize use of tax increment financing (TIF), neither a TIF area nor any specific TIF project is identified at this time. If any TIF is proposed in future, City Council would have to approve that action.

As with TIF, the proposed plan authorizes use of eminent domain, but any use of that tool would require action by City Council. Councilman Brooks said that since 1980, DURA has used eminent domain only three times. The last of these, in the mid-1990s, was to acquire an easement necessary to preserve a historic building.

Public Comment

Scott Davis said he bought and restored his home in the block between 29th and Welton long before anyone thought of redevelopment of the area. He said he never received any notification of any meetings or proposed plans, and he knows other owners who were not notified. He would also like the eminent domain provision removed from the plan.

Joel Noble, representing the Curtis Park Neighbors organization, said the group supports the plan, which implements a key strategy expressed in the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan and is a critical next step in the Five Points

Sustainable Main Streets Initiative Vision Plan & Final Report.

Brother Seku opposed the plan, which he called a plan for the relocation of the black population from this area. The white urban settlers are the people who attend those meetings. We are the powerless people.

Committee Discussion

Councilman Brooks discussed the process, stating that everyone has been invited and many have been involved, but there are misunderstandings about the process. Currently, there is no one at the table ready to do any projects. Wil Alston started the process to get this redevelopment plan done years ago, going door to door to be sure to involve everyone. An important factor to note is that in 2010, more white babies than black babies were born in this neighborhood for the first time ever. We are in the middle of gentrification, and it is tough, but we are trying to do this correctly.

Councilman Lopez wished this had been done a long time ago so we did not have to argue about if the black population was included. It is a multi-cultural area now, and the redevelopment plan supports the area. We do need to look at the affordability of the housing stock, but we need to preserve the area. This is a model for Morrison Road.

Councilman Brooks said the issue is to have a vision for the future but to hold onto the historic elements. His fear is that if we do not move forward with this plan now, the surrounding areas of the city will see all of the redevelopment, and this neighborhood will turn into a "no-man's land". He added that we need to keep working on the community process.

A motion offered by Councilmember Lehmann, duly seconded by Councilmember Shepherd, to file the bill carried by the following vote:

- AYES: Susman, Lehmann, Lopez, Robb, Shepherd(5)
- NAYS: (None)
- ABSENT: Montero, Brown(2)
- ABSTAIN: (None)

Presentations

Better Denver Bond Projects: 2012 2nd Quarter Report

Scott Hergenrader and Lotte Dula, Better Denver Bond Program, and Dominic Vaiana, Public Works Finance, presented the report. The PowerPoint presentation and a summary sheet are attached to this summary.

As of the end of the second quarter of 2012:

- 279 projects were completed (87% of the total 319);
- 17 projects were under construction (Federal Blvd; Museum of Nature & Science facility; and a number of street improvements);
- 6 projects were in pre-construction phases;
- 4 projects are post-program (cannot complete within the 5-year program):
 - two Boettcher projects;
 - Central Denver Recreation Center; and
 - 38th Avenue Underpass improvements.
- Over \$439 (87%) of funds had been contracted or committed;
- Scheduled Performance Index (SPI) = 0.96 (very good);
- 5 bond tranches had been issued

During the 2nd Quarter, two major land acquisitions were accomplished:

- Lowry Fire Station site; and
- West Denver Library site (ground breaking on Aug. 24).

The bond program has \$75 million worth of work to be completed through 2013, which includes some of the more difficult projects as well as a few new projects.

Councilman Lopez noted that the Barnum Park land acquisition was supposed to be accomplished by now, but the State could not proceed with the 6th Ave. ramp reconstruction. The Barnum Park project is dependent on that State project, so it will have to wait.

Mr. Hergenrader said in addition to the small Project team, 150-200 City staff people have been involved, working on bond projects in addition to the regular day-jobs they already had. The projects could not have been completed in this timeframe without those City employees.

Priorities for the balance of 2012 are:

- Move remaining projects through construction procurements to Notice to Proceed;
- Manage the reserve shortfall in purpose and project funds;
- Achieve complete documentation of finished projects;
- Complete migration of Bond Management Systems, Processes and Tools to the City.

Mr. Vaiana said he has worked to organize all of the City's capital projects into the same categories as the bond projects, preparing for the transition of the management systems to the City.

LEED Certifications have been achieved on several projects, one of which is

platinum, and there is one possible award pending.

A meeting with potential contractors and CDOT for the project on US 6 between I-25 and Federal will be held on Aug. 23. Councilman Lopez wants to be certain that the neighborhood folks who concrete work and other construction work know when contracts are available. They should be getting some of the work.

The big public meeting on this project will be held Sept. 12.

Councilwoman Robb said we will schedule an overview presentation of this project at LUTI in near future.

Councilman Lopez commended the Department of Public Works for getting these projects completed and for working with the businesses and residents in the area.

Mr. Hergenrader said the Parks Department has been a great partner as well.

Ms. Dula announced she is leaving the project in September for other pursuits.