



Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Summary Minutes

Tuesday, November 08, 2011 10:30 AM City & County Building, Room 391

Members Present: Lehmann, Lopez, Montero, Robb, Susman
Members Absent: Shepherd
Other Council Present: Kniech, Nevitt, Ortega

Committee Staff: Gretchen Williams

Presentations

1 Denver Urban Renewal Authority Overview
Tracy Huggins, DURA Executive Director

Tracy Huggins, Executive Director of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA), presented an overview of the City's redevelopment agency, which was created by State Statute in 1958. She said the primary objective of DURA is the elimination of slum and bright in Denver. If blight is not a factor, DURA cannot participate in a project. A formal finding of blight by City Council must be made by adoption of the urban renewal plan for a project in order for DURA to be involved.

DURA has funds available to help redevelopment in areas that struggle with attracting developers. Sometimes there is a gap in the financing for a project, and DURA can close that gap, after everything else possible has been done to limit that gap.

DURA can make a difference in viability of projects in several ways: 1) Address a market failure, i.e., Dahlia Square site, with significant environmental issues; 2) Act as market catalyst, i.e., Arapahoe Square; 3) Make a project happen sooner; and 4) Enhance market outcome, i.e., helped save historic buildings in many downtown projects.

DURA's 10-year old strategic plan identifies seven strategic niches where DURA can make a difference:

1. Downtown - DURA still has millions of dollars invested there that must be managed.
2. Housing - A core goal of DURA is to improve housing conditions in Denver.
3. Neighborhoods - Address blighted conditions.
4. Retail and mixed-use development - Failing shopping centers leave holes in the community.
5. Transit-Oriented Development - Make the most of Denver's FasTracks station areas.
6. Brownfields - Help redevelop under-utilized sites.
7. Major redevelopment opportunities on large parcels of land - i.e., Gates, Stapleton, Lowry.

The DIRA work plan for 2012 includes: 1) identifying and engaging partners, such as the City, the Downtown Partnership, and those who benefit from DURA's involvement; and 2) ensuring DURA's mission and competencies jive with the City's and the alignment is made clear.

Goals include the following: 1) to hold one-on-one meetings with the Council Members, the Development Council (City department heads); 2) hold monthly meeting with the Mayor and senior staff and with key state legislators; 3) encourage adoption of a citywide housing plan; 4) help develop a retail strategy for Denver; 5) repay Downtown bonds; 6) work along Morrison Road and in West Denver; and 7) be as effective and efficient and move as quickly as possible.

The Arapahoe Square project is underway, and DURA sent letters yesterday to property owners along the Welton Corridor concerning possible creation of a new urban renewal area. The Marycrest project in Council District 1, including commercial, senior apartments, and other residential, is in the planning stages. The 9th/Colorado Health Sciences redevelopment may benefit from DURA's capabilities.

Councilwoman Kneich expressed concern about alignment of DURA's agenda and Council's priorities. DURA's plan is 10 years old, which is probably too old. We all need to be more inclusive in conversations about priorities since we don't have resources for everything.

Ms. Huggins said she is happy to engage in that conversation. DURA revisited its strategic plan two years ago and determined it is still valid. As we look to undertake new urban renewal areas there is extensive community engagement with lots of opportunity for the community to participate in the plans for each project.

Councilman Lopez asked to follow-up with a discussion about Alameda Square now that Lowe's, the anchor tenant, is leaving. Ms. Huggins said she is meeting with Athmar Park Neighborhood organization next Saturday about Alameda Square.

Councilwoman Ortega asked how infrastructure debt is paid back, and about taxing city services in whole new neighborhoods. Ms. Huggins said tax increment financing (TIF) impact on other taxing entities is a conversation she and Finance Director Carey Kennedy can join the

Committee later to discuss. She noted that over \$8M will come to City from Stapleton at the end of this year. Five schools will be built at Stapleton out of TIF money.

2 FasTracks EAGLE P3 Project Overview & Public Outreach (East and Gold lines)

Kevin Flynn, RTD

RTD has contracted with Denver Transit Partners (DTP) to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the East and Gold corridors and the electric portion of Northwest corridor and the commuter rail maintenance facility. This is the EAGLE P3 (Public Private Partnership) Project. The presentation was an update on progress, plans and public outreach ahead of a series of five public open houses for the East Corridor between Nov. 9 and Dec. 1.

The civil engineering design is nearly complete. In the field, crews have completed 31 utility relocations and continue work to move a major long haul fiber duct bank supporting multiple vendors in the Union Pacific right-of-way. Demolition of some buildings has taken place. Project managers are working with Coors Field officials on scheduling work in order to avoid disruptions during the baseball season. DTP has begun to stockpile the new transit rails for future installation.

Crews are transitioning into construction. In early 2012, completion of several of the individual projects will be seen. Reconstruction of 40th Ave. between Blake and York is a big project, involving utility relocations and construction of water and sanitary sewer lines. 40th Ave. will be completely closed for 14-16 months. Partial closures would cause the project to take at least three years, which is more inconvenient and also poses safety issues.

DTP is committed to keeping the public informed. More than 3,000 names are on the email notification list. Flyers will be distributed to home, businesses, churches and schools (including 6,000 flyers in backpacks). Officials will be making presentations to neighborhood associations and homeowner groups as well as business groups and chambers of commerce. Follow-up phone calls will be made as needed. DTP will participate in neighborhood fairs to help keep the public informed.

Media outreach will include TV, community newspapers, radio, the RTD and DTP websites and RTD's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Mr. Flynn was particularly proud to announce that interactive Google maps will be in use to direct drivers to alternative routes during construction. Contracting and employment opportunities are all published on the DTP website.

The project team has a strong commitment to notification about construction impacts. Thirty days in advance, notice is sent to all impacted businesses, often followed with personal outreach. Door hangers in English and Spanish will be placed on businesses and residences within two blocks of a construction segment at least a week prior to activity.

Workforce Initiative Now (WIN) is a regional collaborative designed to leverage existing training providers to identify, assess, train and place community members into careers on transportation and mixed-use development. DTP is also committed to minority and small

business outreach and participation. So far, over \$149 million has been committed to DBE/SBE firms, 84% of which will be under contract by the end of 2011.

The Peoria Crossing is a grade-separation project being executed by a partnership among Denver, Aurora and RTD. The goal is to improve safety and travel reliability where Union Pacific and RTD East Line tracks cross Peoria Street. There will be a public scoping meeting on Nov. 16. Peoria Crossing construction requires a separate NEPA environmental process.

Councilman Lopez left the room at this point.

During construction, numerous signs will be posted directing people to detour routes as well as access points for businesses.

Councilmembers Robb and Kniech questioned the timeframe for making decisions about additional stations in the northeast area. Design is at 90%, but double tracking and additional stations have not been precluded, according to Mr. Flynn. The City needs to tell RTD what it wants to do.

Bill Requests

BR11-0797 Approves an agreement with and accepts \$25,000 from the Denver Housing Authority for multi-disciplinary planning for transit-oriented development in the Decatur-Federal light rail station area, including DHA's Sun Valley Homes community in Council District 9.

Barbara Frommell, Community Planning & Development

The proposed Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Denver Housing Authority (DHA) relates several planning activities being undertaken with a \$660,000 planning grant Denver and DHA received from the Federal government (Housing & Urban Development and Federal Transit Administration). The main purpose of the IGA is to allow Denver to accept \$25,000 (DHA's contribution as matching funds), establish a grant fund and appropriate the funds.

Components of the planning work include the Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan, including the Sun Valley homes owned/operated by DHA; Federal/Colfax interchange study, including alternative land uses after the reconfigured (less land intensive) interchange is constructed; and a General Development Plan (GDP) to devise a collective vision for the whole Federal/Colfax area. Working with Office of Economic Development, CPD will also prepare a Human Capital Development Plan, the first of its kind for Denver.

Councilwoman Montero asked for an explanation, noting that the area already has a station plan. Community Planning & Development (CPD) did prepare a draft plan in 2009 with lots of community input. Unfortunately, that process raised more very

good questions than it answered.

Councilman Nevitt left the meeting.

The budget includes extensive public outreach. After a rigorous RFQ/RFP process, Design Workshop will lead a team comprised of all local firms. Twenty-five percent of the contract work will go to an SBE (Small Business Enterprise). The schedule calls for project kick-off in the first quarter of 2012 and a timeframe of 18-months to 2 years.

Councilwoman Montero said that in some ways, the structure is very similar to the Lincoln Park process with DHA and the City. We will be able to go back to HUD with an application for implementation of the plans developed through this process.

Councilwoman Montero added that the GDP will give some predictability in the area and help calm some of the land speculation that has been occurring.

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

AYES: Lehmann, Montero, Robb, Susman(4)

NAYS: (None)

ABSENT: Lopez, Shepherd(2)

ABSTAIN: (None)

BR11-0798 Approves a \$660,000 contract with Design Workshop for planning activities regarding the Federal Station Area Plan and General Development Plan, and the Colfax/Federal Interchange Study near the Decatur-Federal Light Rail Station in the Sun Valley neighborhood in Council District 9.
Barbara Frommell, Community Planning & Development

This is an ordinance request to approve a contract with Design Workshop for the Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan and General Development Plan process, including the Colfax/Federal Interchange Study.

See discussion of BR11-0797 above for details.

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

AYES: Lehmann, Montero, Robb, Susman(4)

NAYS: (None)

ABSENT: Lopez, Shepherd(2)

ABSTAIN: (None)

