From:	Janet Caspers
To:	dencc - City Council; City Council District 5; distrtict9@denvergov.org; kneichatlarge@denvergov.org; Deborah Ortega - Councilwoman At Large; Herndon, Christopher J. - CC Member District 8 Denver City Coun
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] Re: In Opposition of Council Bill 19-0744, approving the East Colfax Corridor Urban Redevelopment Plan
Date:	Monday, August 26, 2019 11:43:31 AM

Dear Council,

I have lived in the East Colfax Neighborhood since 1998 and have been actively involved in the RNO serving as the RNO Treas. from 2016 - 2017. I am a semi-retired self-employed licensed massage therapist living off of my Social Security and part time massage practice. I was at the recent meeting on August 20th concerning this issue and was one of the 8 people who voted against this approval. For your records, this is the 3rd meeting we've held with DURA present, and the RNO chose to vote 8-4 in *opposition* of the approval. I watched part of the video of last week's city council meeting and I heard Amanda Sawyer who now represents this RNO say "I can't say strongly enough how much our community and how much the city is doing to make sure that does not happen, how they recognize exactly what's going on and how they share that concern and are doing everything they can to get community involved to make sure that doesn't happen". I disagree with her position on this because I do not think that the needs of the East Colfax neighborhood are being properly considered. We are a neighborhood that has a 35% poverty rate. Our local food bank opened in the past year, has to date distributed approximately $120,000 in goods and services. Children who live just up the block from me (right off the Colfax Corridor) have gone to the food bank because they have absolutely no food in their houses. These members of our community have not had their needs considered. Increased development would just lead to increased displacement of our most marginalized communities. We do not need to be incentivizing development by giving tax breaks to developers right now. Those tax dollars could be put to better use than to line the pockets of the developers. In fact, our entire RNO has been designated an "opportunity zone" which offers federal tax breaks to large corporate investors and developers. Why would we also want to invite in more developers with City tax incentives in the form of TIF's. In my opinion DURA does not have the best track record of developing "affordable housing". We do not want to become another 5 points or Sloan's Lake. What this neighborhood needs is more than 1,000 units at 0-30% (this is according to the CEO of Rocky Mountain Communities which manages Garden Court at 12th and Syracuse). DURA in no way can provide for that. They are looking at housing up to 70% AMI, and many in our neighborhood (approximately 3-4,000 who live in poverty) are already maxed out. We do not want to lose the character and diversity of community, something we've seen happening all across Denver, including in the East Colfax Neighborhood. We are losing our green spaces (NY City has more green space than we do), and we are also a city that is actually losing our diversity. I still live in a somewhat diverse neighborhood. We still have modest homes with big yards that aren't totally taken up by huge houses that take up the entire plot. I fear that increased development will only lead to increased gentrification.

That brings up the point of affordability. In 1998, I bought my house for $105,000. After recently putting on a small 400 sq. ft addition so my friend could move in (so we both could afford retirement), my house is now valued at around $425,000. I do not call this an affordable neighborhood anymore, and property taxes are rising steadily. This huge increase in home value and property taxes has happened in the last 10 years under this current City Administration. I have been approved for the senior tax credit, but it only applies to the first $200,000. For that I get a 50% credit, but I still have to pay the full mill levy on the remaining value of over $200 thousand. This is more than double of what I was paying 10 years ago, and being on a fixed income since 2015, this trajectory is not sustainable. Incomes have not followed the same trajectory, and what I am seeing is a very different socio-economic class moving into this neighborhood. In fact, we are already being gentrified. Now, to afford a home in East Colfax, you need a 2 income earner family, usually professionals. These tend to be white people who are looking at this neighborhood as their first home. When a $400 K house is your "starter home", I wonder who can afford that. I certainly never could have. For some of these reasons, I strongly am in opposition to this bill at this time. In our RNO, we are making efforts to reach out to the marginalized communities so that we can help bring forth their voices. Many of them are hesitant to get involved, being that they are immigrants and refugees. There is a huge language barrier, and a huge gap in understanding these complex issues. One meeting with them and an interpreter does not constitute a valid attempt to get them involved. Many of these people have been displaced due to horrific conditions. I fear they are at risk of being displaced again.

Sincerely,
Janet Caspers

janetcaspers2@gmail.com