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To: [Flynn, Kevin J. - CC Member District 2 Denver City Council](#); [dence - City Council](#); [Morrison, Jason P. - CPD City Planner Senior](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Loretto Heights
Date: Monday, September 30, 2019 9:39:56 AM

The Loretto Heights Large Area Plan

Denver Residents, along with the Denver City Planning Department, have outlined 6 distinct criteria/goals that the Loretto Heights Small Area Plan must address.

It will be imperative that the Large Area Plan reflects these criteria and goals with a design and implementation of infrastructure that enables the developers and contractors to MEET these 6 Goals:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->**By 2040 ... Denver is an equitable, inclusive community with a high quality of life for all residents, regardless of income level, race, ethnicity, gender, ability of age.**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->**By 2040 ... Denver's neighborhoods are complete, unique and reflective of our diverse history.**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->3. <!--[endif]-->**By 2040 ... Denver is connected by safe, high quality, multimodal transportation options.**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->4. <!--[endif]-->**By 2040 ... Denver is a global city with a robust economy that reflects the diversity of our city.**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->5. <!--[endif]-->**By 2040 ... Denver is a thriving, sustainable city connected to nature and resilient to climate change.**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->6. <!--[endif]-->**By 2040 ... Denver is a city of safe, accessible and healthy communities.**

If not **NOW**, then **when** are we going to implement development/construction plans that allow us to fulfill these goals, not just talk about them?

As Greta Thunberg says..... "People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are at the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"

The Large Area Plan will need to address ALL these criteria, not just some of them ... and it needs to address these criteria in a meaningful way - not simply in an empty "Talking Heads" manner so that the developers can quickly flip the property and make their money in the short-term. Right now, Westside Investment Partners is on track to take a 72 acre property that was purchased for "peanuts"(\$15 + million), get a Metropolitan Districting "group" to build unnecessary roads and "non-green" infrastructure (and make a lot of money doing so), and then sell off the "development

package” to other smaller contractors. Westside Investment Partners has absolutely NO interest in this project for the long term. And this is very troubling.

This is nothing but a “FLIP” project for Westside Investments. And they are paying interest on a \$15+ million loan ... every month. The interest payment is their imminent concern about the Loretto Heights property at this point - not the project’s long-term potential for the City of Denver or its residents.

We have heard mention about other projects that Westside is comparing Loretto Heights to, namely:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->**Mary Crest** – which is a very bad example of redevelopment unless you are simply interested in unit counts per acre and do not care about the natural environment (including parks) or the commercial development portion which – at this point - only includes a yuppie drive-thru Starbucks with an automobile focus, rather than a locally-owned business that fosters pedestrian access.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->**The old Elitch Gardens** – it might be considered OK, but the plan depended on a lot of public outcry, at the time, to get that unit count down to a reasonable level, rather than a “slum” level of units for the site. The old Elitch Gardens also “saved” the theater, which has now been empty and unused for approximately 20 years, as well as the “carousel” shell, where the valuable horse statuettes were all sold off years ago, leaving a rather ghostly and empty structure as one of the main entry points.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->3. <!--[endif]-->**Metro State University** has come up in a lot of conversations, as it ... apparently, was approached about purchasing the Loretto Heights site -for a dollar, but didn’t “want” it. Metro State University has a whole slate of issues to talk about. First, it must be pointed out that the Auraria Higher Education Campus **site** was once a thriving community with multiple businesses, residents, churches and other entities that make up a successful community, including a streetcar that allowed people to use public transportation instead of cars. The community was hit by a flood in the 1960’s which ruined a lot of structures for the short-term, but it was DURA (Denver Urban Renewal Authority) and the idea of a Colorado State Higher Education campus that really did the area in. DURA came in, offered residents and businesses low values/prices for their properties and then used eminent domain to get everybody out of there ... the residents and business owners really had no choice.

Then came the bulldozers that were indiscriminate in what they took down ... beautiful churches, old historic business structures, historic houses, and especially, mature trees and landscaping all came down so that Metro and the other schools could come in and build their large brick boxes with soul-less glass windows. In fact, I believe that the campus was built more to accommodate architects and contractors than it was to accommodate students.

That mentality still exists today. I do not consider the Auraria Campus a particularly beautiful campus in comparison to many throughout the U.S., or a place where students feel particularly comfortable to walk or study in. In fact, it is usually referred to as a “commuter campus” because students come on the

campus (mostly by car) and then leave.

The fact that Metro did not “want” the Loretto Heights campus is not really a surprise since Metro State and its architects are more interested in new construction and the money that new construction generates rather than a place with any REAL history or context. Let’s remember that Metro State University has done its best to **IGNORE** the displaced Aurarians, rather than remember or honor them.

When Westside stresses that it is a kind of “savior” for the Loretto Heights site, it really disturbs me.

For instance, what are Westside’s immediate plans for the Administration Building so that it can re-open? What is THEIR immediate plan for the Chapel so that it can function? These buildings were part of the reason and “deal” for the developers getting the property so cheap. Yet I am not hearing a word or seeing a deed that relates to getting these buildings back in shape for immediate use. Also, I would not be surprised to see the theater sit idle with a bad roof and then fall into total disrepair given the way the developers are dependent on handouts from entities such as DURA to do anything for them, as they do not seem to have any money of their own set aside for development of the site and structures.

Also, any place on the Loretto Heights site that harbors animals or relates to the natural world is open to exploitation and disruption with the current Small Area Plan that only allows for 10% open space. This is just plain ridiculous and in no way conducive to the idea of environmental resiliency or to the idea of implementation of walking trails, open space and nature, in general.

The last and most distressing part of this whole thing is that the Sisters of Loretto Heights founded this site with its beautiful grounds and architecture, yet they are now in the position of having to beg for their little cemetery to be given any deference at all. The idea that the living and remaining sisters have some kind of choice in this whole ordeal is just plain B.S. They have been given the option of relocating their 62 “deceased sisters” to another cemetery altogether, or have their little cemetery left as a vestige postage-stamp-sized space next to obtrusive buildings with no context and then pay Metro District fees for the privilege of doing so. By the way, the Metro fees can continue to rise and rise and rise, given there are no checks and balances on the Metro District rates now that Westside and the other “owners” will become immune from even basic Tabor controls.

Please remember that a place such as Costa Rica, which focuses on the environment for its own sake, is in much better economic and political shape than

some of the South American Countries that have destroyed their forests, destroyed their nature and exploited their land for short-term gain rather than long-term use. It takes a special kind of long-term planning to facilitate good thinking for the benefit of its residents and it would behoove Denver to follow Costa Rica's type of lead, rather than Brazil's to make sure that the resulting Loretto Heights Large Area plan is designed properly for 2040 and beyond.

Thank You,

Karen Kalavity