

NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW WORKING GROUP
MEETING OF THE NWSS WORKING GROUP

August 16, 2011

MINUTES

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Bruce Alexander
Helen Berkman, Esq.
Dawn Bookhardt, Esq.
Councilman Charlie Brown*
Tracy Huggins
Councilwoman Judy Montero
Stan Raine, Esq.†
Paul Ryan
Rus Heise

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mario Carrera
Ty Holt
Jerry Glick

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dawn Bookhardt, NWSS Working Group Chairperson, called the Meeting of the NWSS Working Group to order at 4:37 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Bookhardt called roll. Please see above.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Berkman made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the August 9, 2011 meeting. Mr. Ryan seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2011 meeting was approved unanimously.

B. Presentation of the NWSS Station Area Plan

Kristin Fritz, Steve Gordon and Steve Nalley with the City of Denver's Office of Community Planning and Development were introduced and welcomed to the meeting by Ms. Bookhardt.

* Councilman Brown was present via telephone.

† Mr. Raine arrived at 4:40 p.m.

Ms. Fritz thanked Ms. Bookhardt for providing the opportunity to speak to the NWSS Working Group. Ms. Fritz then directed the Working Group to look at three handouts she had previously distributed. One of the handouts contained various maps of the NWSS Station Area Plan (the “Plan”), the second handout is a market overview for the Plan and the third handout was a memorandum providing real estate based recommendations for the Plan.

Ms. Montero asked Ms. Fritz to address the public input process involved in the NWSS Station Area Plan formulation.

Ms. Fritz stated that the public input process would be addressed throughout the presentation.

Ms. Fritz began the presentation by stating that the NWSS light rail station is the first station on the North Metro Rail Line that will eventually run from Denver Union Station to Thornton. The NWSS Station is the only station in Denver on the North Metro Rail Line and RTD has the funding to construct the portion of the North Metro Rail Line from Denver Union Station to the NWSS Station. Ms. Fritz stated that the Plan focused on the half mile area surrounding the NWSS Station. The half mile radius is considered a comfortable walking distance in transit-oriented development, but the general rule may not be the case in connection with the NWSS Station. They are trying to get the impact of the NWSS Station to reach beyond the half mile radius.

Ms. Fritz further stated that the Plan envisions the east side of the BNSF tracks as zoned for entertainment and that the west side of the BNSF tracks would be zoned industrial. Ms. Fritz said that the zoning around the NWSS site is generally industrial and that the Office of Community Planning and Development approached the NWSS about getting the zoning changed to campus but the NWSS wanted to keep the current industrial zoning.

Ms. Bookhardt asked if the zoning could be changed in the future.

Ms. Fritz responded that property owners can submit a request to have the current zoning changed but there must be support for the change.

Mr. Gordon stated that NWSS may be able to change the zoning legislatively or on a parcel by parcel basis.

Ms. Fritz then presented a PowerPoint slide entitled “Critical Elements for TOD” (transit-oriented development). The slide identified mobility, infrastructure, land use, urban design, health and social services as the critical elements.

Ms. Fritz then identified the NWSS station and an organized street network as important for the Plan.

Ms. Montero stated that health is really important to the area because of environmental justice issues in the area and the new plan would allow residents in the neighborhood to take advantage of the health benefits associated with the TOD aspects of the Plan.

Ms. Fritz stated that the area around the NWSS is a food desert and that part of the Office of Community Planning and Development's goals associated with the Plan was to get people in the NWSS area healthier eating options.

Ms. Fritz then presented a slide that outlines the public involvement in the formulation of the Plan. Ms. Fritz stated that all alternatives for the Plan had been shown to the public and that through the public input process the initial NWSS light rail station location was changed from its original site to its current northern site.

Ms. Fritz also stated that there was a technical advisory committee that was made up of various members of the community. Ms. Fritz further stated that they used many different ways to get the community involved.

Ms. Fritz then began an overview of the market study (handout #2) which identifies the NWSS station's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Ms. Fritz then began to give an overview of the market memorandum (handout #3) and identified the basic take away of the memorandum as (1) the NWSS neighborhood needs more density to support neighborhood services; and (2) to get density in the NWSS neighborhood there needs to be major public infrastructure improvements.

Ms. Fritz then presented a slide entitled the "NWSS Station Area Plan."

Ms. Fritz then presented a slide which outlined the Vision Statement for the Plan.

Mr. Gordon identified two dilemmas that face the planners as they try to put forth the Plan. The first dilemma is the NWSS. Is the NWSS going to stay in its current location or is it going to be relocated? The second dilemma is I-70. If I-70 is realigned, the Plan may need to be revised.

Ms. Fritz set forth a couple of options regarding I-70. The first was to realign I-70 to the north and reroute I-70 and various surface streets in the area (Ms. Fritz stated that this was not a very good option). The second option was to keep I-70 in its current location and widen to the north. Widening to the north would set in motion a few other changes to the NWSS area including relocation of an elementary school, the building of new connections for 48th Avenue, Purina would invest in odor control technology and better connection points at 46th Avenue under I-70 would need to be constructed.

Ms. Fritz stated that if I-70 was widened to the south, there will be a lot more issues to confront.

Ms. Fritz stated that it is hard to determine what will ultimately happen to I-70.

Mr. Gordon added that the key problem is that the City of Denver must make sure that CDOT has the money to undertake any of the options shown above.

Ms. Fritz then presented a slide entitled "Future Land Use Map Stock Show Staying." This slide identified a proposed riverfront park as part of the Plan.

Ms. Fritz stated that the goal was to make the NWSS area very walkable and that the NWSS liked the idea of the proposed park. Ms. Fritz further stated that the proposed park could transform the area into an entertainment campus and activate Elyria Park.

Mr. Brown asked that was the approximate acreage of the proposed park.

Ms. Fritz stated it will be large enough to be a regional park about 35 acres.

Mr. Brown stated that paying for staffing to take care of new parks could be difficult and that the City of Denver should reach out to partners to help maintain the proposed park. Mr. Brown further stated that Denver does not have a dedicated source of funds for new parks.

Ms. Fritz said that Mr. Brown had a good point and that they can make a recommendation in the Plan.

Ms. Fritz added that the proposed park will attract interest to the area but new connections from the neighborhood will be needed to make the proposed park accessible.

Mr. Brown asked how big the proposed park will be in terms of other parks in the City.

Ms. Fritz responded that the proposed park would be comparable in size to Commons Park.

Mr. Brown stated that Commons Park is a great example of park space because it drives the surrounding real estate market.

Ms. Fritz presented a slide entitled “Changes to Blueprint Denver Land Use Map – Stock Show Station.”

Ms. Fritz next presented a slide entitled “Changes to Blue Print Denver Land Uses Stock Show Relocates.” Some highlights from the slide were the stock show land would be used as a TOD, a town center would be added to the area (the area would be a good site for the town center because of good visibility from I-70, Brighton Boulevard access and the parcel is owned by one owner).

Ms. Fritz stated that mobility in the Plan area was very important in order to enhance connections in the area, improve neighborhood access and to implement complete streets.

Ms. Fritz stated that if the NWSS stays in its current location that the bridge across the Platte River is very important.

Mr. Brown asked if anyone had priced the Plan.

Ms. Fritz stated that some of the ideas are pretty expensive and are pretty long term. If the NWSS leaves the area, the town center could generate revenue to build some of the more expensive improvements.

Mr. Brown asked about the process for approval.

Ms. Fritz indicated the plan first goes to the planning board, then City Council. The Plan approval process will be done before the process surrounding the NWSS will be complete.

Mr. Gordon stated the Plan will go before City Council in late October.

Mr. Alexander asked if the NWSS inquired about possible locations for expansion or reconfiguration.

Ms. Fritz responded that the NWSS has always identified challenges.

Ms. Fritz stated that there are two considerations: (1) how much of the NWSS land is used for parking, the new rail station may alleviate some of the need for parking; (2) NWSS should be thought of as one campus served by the NWSS station. The goal is to gain efficiency and that the station will be something that can provide a year round benefit.

Mr. Alexander stated that there is no real plan to reconfigure if the NWSS stays in its current location. We need to figure out exactly what the NWSS is doing and evaluate the possibilities for reconfiguration.

Ms. Fritz stated that the NWSS has plans but that she does not believe that the NWSS is happy with them.

Mr. Gordon stated that the neighborhood needs to be evaluated because there is land available and room to expand the NWSS.

Ms. Montero stated that we need to take a longer view of the land use plan.

Mr. Gordon stated that this area has been in planning for a while and that there has been a lot of value added by the process.

Mr. Alexander stated that we need to give evaluations to the Mayor. We have heard about the limitations of the current site and now we need to know the real constraints of the current site.

Mr. Ryan asked that if the Plan is adopted does that mean it is set in stone.

Mr. Gordon responded that the Plan is advisory in nature and that other configurations can be explored.

Ms. Montero stated that we are in a window of opportunity and that we need to push the envelope to make good choices and that the Plan is not ready for prime time.

Mr. Gordon responded that the Plan is part of a bigger neighborhood plan.

Ms. Montero stated that the neighbors do not see themselves as separate.

Mr. Gordon responded the neither does the Office of Community Planning and Development; we see this as one great big area.

Ms. Montero stated that we need support from the neighborhood. We want to do this right.

Mr. Alexander asked what the Working Group wants to think about:

- (1) What has already been done by the NWSS;
- (2) Looking at the ownership make up of the area that surrounds the current NWSS site to see what opportunities may be available; and
- (3) Ask the Planning Board to look at options.

Mr. Gordon stated that they have mapping capabilities to determine the ownership and the size of lots in the NWSS area and they will provide the same to the Working Group.

Mr. Alexander stated that this will help the Working Group fully vet the issue.

Ms. Montero stated that Jeff Shoemaker will show the River Plan next week and connectivity in the neighborhood is a very big issue.

Ms. Fritz next presented a slide entitled “Economic Development.” The highlights of which are (1) capitalize on public property in the area (RTD station and former DPS bus site); (2) revitalize the neighborhood; and (3) construct a town center if the NWSS leaves.

Ms. Fritz presented a slide entitled “Community Health and Public Realm” and then Ms. Fritz presented a slide entitled “Transportation Project.” The highlights of the slide were: (1) use the RTD and DPS sites as catalyst for development in the NWSS neighborhood; (2) work on establishing a 48th Avenue connection; and (3) evaluate options relating to the various rail spurs in the area; and (4) use the possible town center to spur growth.

Ms. Fritz then presented a slide entitled “RTD and RTD Sites as Catalyst.”

Ms. Montero asked if DPS was looking at selling the site it owns in the area.

Ms. Fritz stated that DPS has not shared their timing regarding the site.

Ms. Montero stated that the DPS site is used for staging during the stock show.

Ms. Fritz then presented several slides showing proposed designs of the new park, including a slide entitled “Rail Spur Consolidation and New Park.” Ms. Fritz stated that the various rail spurs in the area will present challenges in designing the proposed park and that some or all of the rail spurs may need to be relocated.

Ms. Fritz then began to speak about the town center development. She stated that it is only a valid option if NWSS relocates, and that they would like the town center to address TOD.

Ms. Fritz then stated that the 48th Avenue connections in the area would be important to any redevelopment plan because they are necessary to improve connectivity in the neighborhood.

Ms. Fritz stated that the next steps surrounding the plan are in flux.

Ms. Huggins asked if there was a possibility that RTD will not build the station.

Ms. Fritz said no.

Mr. Gordon added that RTD wants to start development of the North Metro line.

Ms. Montero asked if there was a record of decision for the NWSS station site.

Ms. Bookhardt then thanked Ms. Fritz, Mr. Gordon and the entire Office of Community Planning and Development for all of their hard work.

Ms. Bookhardt asked Mr. Gordon to send an ownership map for the area surrounding the current NWSS site.

Mr. Gordon stated that they would supply the ownership map and that it was based on assessor records so it is 90ish percent correct.

Ms. Garcia-Berry asked if the Office of Community Planning and Development had talked to the City of Denver Public Works Department when developing the Plan because the infrastructure in the NWSS area is challenging. Ms. Garcia-Berry further asked if they could get public works to put together a table with some cost estimates.

Mr. Gordon responded that they recognized the costs but that there are a lot of factors involved and because they don't currently have any designs they can only get a ballpark number from public works.

Ms. Garcia-Berry noted that the NWSS station could be the end of the North Metro Line until 2042 unless a tax increase passes.

Ms. Montero then provided an update of the activities of the Denver City Council Special Issue Committee. Next week the Committee will be talking about the stock show leases and market trends. Ms. Bookhardt will give an update on the NWSS Working Group's activities and progress. The Denver City Council Special Issue Committee will allow the public to stay in the loop.

Ms. Montero stated that the Committee took a tour of the NWSS site and that it was a lot of fun.

Ms. Bookhardt stated that the Working Group would like a tour as well and that she would talk to Ms. Garcia-Berry and Ms. Kucera to set one up.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

None.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

VI. ACTION ITEMS RESULTING FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

VII. CARRYOVER AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Tour of National Western Stock Show.
- B. Review of Financial Information from NWSS.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Approved by Vote of the Working Group and
accepted by:

Dawn P. Bookhardt, Chairperson