

**District 5 Registered Neighborhood Organization Leadership Lunch**  
**Hosted by Amanda Sawyer, City Councilwoman for District 5**  
**February 2, noon-1:00pm**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Judy Baxter, Montclair Neighborhood Assn.; Mike Borquez, DPD District 3; Barb DeSarro, Lowry United Neighbors; Cari Ervin, Windsor Gardens; Jenn Gross, City Council District 5; Kathy Head, Lowry United Neighbors; Monica Hess, Preservation of Residential South Hilltop Neighborhood Assn.; Cat Holmes, Lowry United Neighbors; Paul Kashmann, City Council District 6; Adriana Lara, Denver Fire Department; Meredith Levy, Denver Parks and Rec Advisory Board for District 5; Jane Lorimer, Winston Downs Community Assn.; Roger Miller Rangeview Neighborhood Assn.; Patricia Mulligan, Mayfair Neighbors; Carrie O’Shea, Montclair Neighborhood Assn.; Steve Portenga, Bellevue-Hale Neighborhood Assn.; Wende Reoch, Cranmer Park – Hilltop Civic Assn; John Sadwith, Crestmoor Park (2nd Filing) Homes Association; Amanda Sawyer, City Council District 5; Dain Schiele, Lowry United Neighbors; Maya Thomas, East Colfax Neighborhood Cooperative; Sara Visser, City Council District 5; Diane Wunnick, Hilltop Heritage Assn; Brad Yoshimitsu, Preservation of Residential South Hilltop Neighborhood Assn.

\*Others may have joined partway through the meeting.

**Welcome & Introductions** - Councilwoman Sawyer

**Special Guest** - Councilman Paul Kashmann, District 6, [paul.kashmann@denvergov.org](mailto:paul.kashmann@denvergov.org)

Subject: RNO Proposed Changes - CM Kashmann is leading an effort to reframe the discussion around RNOs and possibly reform the way the City of Denver works with its RNOs.

- Denver’s Registered Neighborhood Organizations play a huge roll in citizen engagement.
- The Denver RNO system was crafted in 1979 and was done so primarily to inform communities when a rezoning or liquor (and now marijuana) license was being considered in their neighborhood. The RNO would hopefully let the City know what their residents thought about those plans.
- RNOs have also been instrumental in creating community.
- Since 1979, the City hasn’t done much to support RNOs in what is “an extremely important roll.” There is no training on City government process, how to run a great meeting or how to facilitate citizen engagement to get people to participate.
- Even with this lack of evolution, many RNOs function very well with information flow and creating community. However, a large cadre of RNOs are struggling and not getting what they need to get the job done.
- CM Kashmann began thinking about what the City can do to support RNOs. He spoke with several other cities: Los Angeles has an Office of Neighborhood Empowerment; Portland’s Office of Community and Civic Life works with neighborhood groups to facilitate their interests; Boston has an Office of Neighborhood Services; Nashville and

New Orleans each promote neighborhood engagement. All these offices have different parameters: some provide funding, some have established citizen academies for training. LA's City Attorney can provide legal advice to neighborhood groups.

- A survey was sent to all RNOs and CM Kashmann heard from 158, who responded that their primary needs are training, money and help getting thru the City's red tape.
- When asked "How does your group operate?" responses were widely inconsistent. Examples of different approaches: which community members have vote rights (dues paying, anyone who lives within the neighborhood boundaries), how often they meet, whether they feel the need to represent their neighbors in zoning issues, etc.
- An issue that CM Kashmann finds among the most interesting is overlapping neighborhood boundaries. Some cities he's spoken with see it as a problem, others an opportunity.
- Another issue is that citizens can't simply log onto a web page and check a few boxes to hear about only the things they want to know, i.e.– drainage but not zonings, etc. The City is working with its GIS department to see how close we can get to that type of facility and "to broaden citizens' ability to engaged in the process"
- CM Kashmann is interested in sending a survey to people who are not engaged with their RNO to ask, "Why not? What would be an easy way for you to engage?" We need to do more for the individuals. To do so, CM Kashmann would like Denver to create an Office of Citizen Engagement, with a director and two staffers.

Questions:

- ✓ *What was the sample size of RNO study?*  
158 responses - around 75%. The information is being compiled and should be available in one-two weeks.
- ✓ *How can we help push the initiative to create an Office of Citizen Engagement and what can we do in the meantime?*  
Other City Council districts are interested in making the job of the RNOs a little easier and make RNOs more effective. They are looking at whatever other avenues we can find. CM Kashmann is working with Mayor Hancock's office to schedule a meeting with the Mayor in the next couple of weeks to get his perspective. CM Kashmann suggests everyone do an internet search for "citizen engagement" to learn more about what other cities are doing. In Denver, it is on everyone's mind: Community Planning & Development (CPD) and the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI) are trying to do a better job to learn about how to "get into" underserved communities. CM Kashmann suggests everyone write a note to the Mayor and your City Council Member to let them know your thoughts.
- ✓ There was a brief discussion about other city groups that are trying to organize delegates of neighborhood coalitions: Brian Wilson in Congress Park was mentioned as trying to organize regional councils under citywide organizations. The Inter-Neighborhood Council was also mentioned. <https://www.denverinc.org/calendars/park-and-rec-meeting/>
- ✓ There were comments about how each RNO has different needs and their success depends on who the elected are within the RNO. What gets done depends on who is in

those positions. All neighborhoods need professional help with their website. CM Kashmann noted that some cities have large staffs working on virtual outreach which is important. Many RNO leaders may not be tech savvy.

## Community Partner Information Sharing

**DPD District 2** – Heidi Lewis did not attend, [Heidi.Lewis@denvergov.org](mailto:Heidi.Lewis@denvergov.org) 720-913-1094

**DFD** – Adriana Lara, [adriana.lara@denvergov.org](mailto:adriana.lara@denvergov.org) (720) 913-3482

- 700+ firefighters have been trained by hospitals to give the COVID vaccine. DFD is encouraging everyone to be vaccinated ASAP. Vaccine info. provided during the RNO and as follow-up:
  - <https://covid19.colorado.gov/for-coloradans/vaccine/where-can-i-get-/vaccinated>
  - <https://www.denverhealth.org/patients-visitors/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination>
  - <https://denvergov.org/Government/COVID-19-Information/Vaccination>
  - New State Vaccine hotline: 1-877-CO VAX CO (1-877-268-2926)
  - Text COVID to DENVER (336837) to receive notifications about COVID-19 public health and safety information.
- Like all City agencies, DFD's 2021 budget allocations have changed. Even so, DFD will be able to do entry level testing for new firefighters. More info on how to become a firefighter at [www.denvergov.org/Government/Departments/Fire-Department](http://www.denvergov.org/Government/Departments/Fire-Department).
- DFD is hoping to again host their summer camp for youth – an opportunity to inspire young people and empower them consider a firefighting as a career. Once it is confirmed, Adriana will share info with the District 5 office to get kids signed up.
- Question: *Is DFD still checking car seats?* DFP does not check car seats anymore, due to recommendations by the City Attorney's office. Adriana followed up with this information: Check the State of Colorado website for comprehensive information about child car seat checks: [www.codot.gov/safety/carseats](http://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats)
- Question: *Are fire house still Safe Havens for newborns?* Adriana followed up with this information about the Safe Haven Program and indicated she will update the District 5 office about how often a child has been received at a fire house.
  - Denver Fire Stations are partners with the Safe Haven Law.
  - The Safe Haven Law (**Colorado Revised Statutes § 18-6-401(9)**) allows a parent to legally surrender a newborn baby to a fire station or hospital within 72 hours of birth. Provided the baby is unharmed, there are no questions asked and it remains confidential.

**DPD District 3** – Mike Borquez, [Mike.Borquez@denvergov.org](mailto:Mike.Borquez@denvergov.org) 720-913-1183

- CAB meeting tonight – Commander's Advisory Board meeting is tonight at 6:00pm and is open to all. There is a link on nextdoor.com or email Officer Borquez for information.

- Neighborhood watch training – on 2/24 at 6pm – one hour. Email [d3neighborhoodwatch@denvergov.org](mailto:d3neighborhoodwatch@denvergov.org) for the meeting link. If you are in DPD District 2, you are welcome to attend. If you have questions about signing up, email Office Borquez.
- Crime stats: an uptick is still happening, but for the most part, they are not crimes against persons, but cars/homes break-ins and burglaries. We are all asked to help with messaging – remind neighbors, family friends not to leave anything in plain sight in our vehicles. Even small items are being taken - a small carrying case with headphones in it was recently stolen from a vehicle.
- Take garage door openers out of your vehicle so that thieves cannot enter your garage and/or home.
- Tamper-resistant license plate screws are available for free at the District 2 station at 1625 S. University until 9:00pm each day.
- District 2 was away club steering wheel locks. They are out of them now and waiting on funding for more.

#### Questions

- *Do you get a lot of calls about fireworks that seem to be happening many nights each week?* Around July 4<sup>th</sup> there is a 4n dedicated phone number and officers to handle firework specific complaints, but not right now. Officer Borquez will ask, but suspects DPD won't staff a fireworks car now. If you hear something you think is gunshots, call us. District 2 has shot spotter to help differentiate fireworks, but not District 3 right now. CW Sawyer recommends people report to 311 non-emergency and [pocketgov.org](http://pocketgov.org).
- *Who should attend Neighborhood Watch Training?*  
People who are trying to organize NW on their blocks. CW Sawyer emphasized that the District 3 training is excellent - "the gold standard," and that DPD District 2 residents can attend it, as well. District 2 is working to get a NW training up and running and Officer Borquez is working with them.
- *How do we access the online crime report?*  
The website is currently being redone and the information displays have changed. When the new page is ready, it will be easier to access.
- *Are people stealing the year stickers from license plates?*  
No. DPD is seeing the whole plate taken.
- *Are there stats on how often East Park/Lowry/Dayton & 6<sup>th</sup>/Yosemite & 6<sup>th</sup> is being patrolled?* Officer Borquez doesn't have specifics. Visit [denvergov.org/police](http://denvergov.org/police) for crime stats - on the right side of the page.  
CW Sawyer discussed that Council District 5 is working with DPD on a JAG grant to fund foot-patrols. Her office has created a sample letter for residents and businesses to personalize and return to the District 5 office. The District 5 office is also organizing a petition to be circulated. She asked for help in getting that to neighbors to show community support, which is very much needed. The purpose of grant is also to create deeper relationships with DPD and pay for a victim advocate to staff that area to help with violent gang-, drug-, and prostitution-related crime.

- *If there is a volunteer at DPD District 2 sending out NW updates, is there one for District 2? Not yet, but they are seeking volunteers. District 2 doesn't have the same level of engagement as District 3 because there are different challenges in the two areas. The grant District 5 is applying for is to help facilitate this type of restart.*
- *Some areas are perceived to have higher crime...can we break down the statistics more than what is offered on the website? The new website may address that type of breakdown. For now, you can only get statistics for a larger area.*

**Parks & Rec Advisory Board** – Meredith Levy, [meredithprab@gmail.com](mailto:meredithprab@gmail.com)

- Robinson Park Playground Updates – hoping to break ground March/April. Thank you to the community for raising \$63,000 to complete the updates.
- Meredith is advocating hard for more pickleball courts in District 5, and park planners are conducting an internal study due to increased interest. The closest to District 5 now is Congress Park. Regular tennis courts where USTA-regulated matches happen cannot be used for pickleball.
- There have been questions about acquisition: DPR is working on a strategic acquisition plan. There were 1,700 responses from the recent DPR survey and in June the results will be shared with the public. DPR is developing criteria to determine if acquisitions fall into the plan. If you have more questions, Meredith can put you in touch with real estate rep at DPR.
- Park bathrooms: during COVID bathrooms were closed, and they are now reopening. In District 5, the Lowry Sports Field bathrooms are open now. For a full list of bathroom openings, including when port-o-lets will be installed, email Meredith. If you have a request for a port-o-let in your park, request it!
- A comment was made that the INC meeting on April 15 will include discussion about park acquisitions.
- *How is the tennis court renovation at Montclair going? No new updates beyond the asbestos removal. The tent is up, and they are carefully demolishing the existing court. DPR is waiting for numbers to come back from contractor and if the proposal is under budget, planned renovation will continue on schedule.*
- *Last summer plantings in parkways were not done because of COVID. What about this summer? They will not be planted this year because of budget. If citizens want to plant and do the work will water get turned on? Meredith will investigate it. Park People is another resource to contact.*

**District 5 Updates** – CW Sawyer

Due to time constraints, District 5 Updates were not discussed. This is what CW Sawyer planned to speak about.

**City Updates**

- The final vote for the Group Living Proposal will be on February 8, 2021.

**District 5 Updates**

- Tree removal and replacement on Monaco Parkway between 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and 6<sup>th</sup> Ave., CW Sawyer read the following statement from Denver Forestry:

“This past Friday (01/29) trees were marked for removal. The yellow tape indicates which trees will be removed.

The long-term plan for replacement is a designated planting pattern so when a tree comes out, the replacement species is pre-determined to establish a lasting, diversified pattern. Not every planting space on the parkway was designated, only where Forestry believes it is appropriate. This is especially true where the encroachments in the parkway impact the pattern.

The pattern focuses on the front row, or street adjacent trees, to re-create the historic alley that looks similar in form and stature, mirrored on both sides of the parkway, north to south. The Pattern:

- 2 honey locust
- Kentucky Coffeetree
- Japanese Pagodatree
- Hackberry
- Repeat

The back row, or property adjacent trees, will be infilled with various species of maple, oak, elm to keep our diversity wide. Replacement of diseased locusts will take place over the next 3 - 4 years. No pre-determined locust sites will be replaced/planted until the final year when all infected trees have been removed. This means that there will be spots that remain empty until year 3, those will then be filled in with locust plant. Approximately 34 locust trees will be removed per year with other trees to be removed and replaced as designated when needed by Forestry.”

- Please take the 8th Ave. traffic survey by February 15 and encourage your neighborhoods to do so, as well. Here is the link: [bit.ly/8thAveSurvey](https://bit.ly/8thAveSurvey).
- A graphic for your use in social media or other communication is attached to the email that these Minutes were sent.
- On Wednesday, April 7 at 6:30pm, a Community Town Hall about the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Traffic Study will be held via Zoom. Visit this website to register for the Town Hall webinar, and feel free to share it with your neighbors: [www.bit.ly/8thAveTraffic\\_April7](https://www.bit.ly/8thAveTraffic_April7)
  - Webinar ID – 876 7326 7459
  - Webinar Passcode – 5555
  - Call in number (for phone only) – (720) 928-9299
- District 5 2021 Spring Park Clean-Up Day will be Sunday, May 16, 8:30am-11:00. Further information and a sign-up will be available soon.
- Regarding the JAG grant mentioned above, community support is critical. Please distribute the sample letter attached to the email that these Minutes were sent to residents and businesses in your neighborhood. Please ask them to complete the letter on letterhead and return in to [denvercouncil5@denvergov.org](mailto:denvercouncil5@denvergov.org) by February 28, 2021. Please share the letter with community members in District 5. Thank you!

The next RNO Leadership Luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday, April 1, noon-1:00pm

**Adjourn**

