



May 14, 2014

Larry Ambrose, President
Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation
Via email

Larry and INC members,

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to speak with the INC delegates in April, and to listen to their concerns. I felt it was a productive, instructive meeting and I hope it's a first step in strengthening the relationship between Denver Community Planning and Development (CPD) and the city's neighborhood associations.

I heard many perspectives during that meeting, and some common themes — transparency, trust and communication being foremost among them. To that end, we at Community Planning and Development have begun to identify some short-term and longer-term approaches to address some of the concerns.

- **EARLIER NOTIFICATION:** In response to a request for earlier notifications to registered neighborhood organizations (RNOs) about rezoning applications, CPD is implementing a policy change, effective immediately, to send notice to affected RNOs upon receipt of the first submittal of a rezoning application — effectively getting RNOs notice 30 days earlier than in the past. As you know, the Denver Zoning Code today requires that informational notice be sent to RNOs upon receipt of the second submittal (i.e., first *revised* submittal) of a rezoning application. In response to the concerns I heard at our meeting with the delegates I directed staff to intensely study our process to see if there were ways to get notice to RNO sooner in our process. In recent years, CPD staff have conducted more analysis, research and feedback in the pre-application stage, resulting in more complete rezoning applications. Thus, going forward we will be notifying earlier in our process — a full 30 days earlier. We believe this will allow us to offer RNOs more time to poll their members, and to meet on their regular monthly schedule and without scheduling special meetings, while still ensuring that the information we provide to them is accurate and complete.
- **OPEN SPACE AND GDP PUBLIC TASK FORCE:** In response to your concerns about open space in general development plans, or GDPs, I've committed to partnering with INC to convene an open space and GDP public task force to delve into the issue of context-based open space provisions for GDPs, and other related issues. We will convene a task

force of diverse stakeholders including, but not limited to, INC representatives, city staff, Parks and Rec staff, City Council members, developers, and other experts as are identified. After an initial scoping meeting, we will hold a series of meetings to review and discuss the issues identified, and to define approaches and implementation strategies. It is our intent to begin this process this summer or early fall, and to complete it within six months of the first meeting.

- **OPEN SPACE TEXT AMENDMENT DELAYED: I have decided to delay our text amendment clarifying our practice of defining the net area of a GDP for the open space calculation.** In the interim, we will be issuing a policy statement clarifying our process and practice of defining the net area of a GDP for the calculation of open space. We will then, along with any other text amendments that may come out of our open space and GDP public task force, put forth a bundle of text amendments including the clarification of net versus gross. Community Planning and Development has an obligation to accurately codify the code's intent and the city's practice in order to provide clear and predictable regulations for all users. This future text amendment will correct the existing text error regarding open space calculations in GDPs.
- **WHEN WILL TRANSIT COME? In response to concerns about last mile connections and enhanced transit corridors, we have submitted a federal TIGER VI grant application; if we receive funding we will begin an update of Blueprint Denver, our citywide land use and transportation plan. We are further submitting budget requests in the event we do not receive the grant funding to accomplish the same.** Denver residents by the hundreds worked with city government to lay the foundation for our city's present and future through Blueprint Denver. As with the first edition, a Blueprint Denver update will be an opportunity for residents to contribute to the plan and the future of our city and will be focusing on the last mile: making real connections for our neighborhoods to transit, and studying multi-modal solutions.
- **MORE COMMUNICATION: CPD is making a bigger effort regarding broad, citywide communications.** Since 2012, we have offered series of e-newsletters that anyone can subscribe to at DenverGov.org/CPD, and a Twitter feed featuring informal news and updates (@DenverCPD or [Twitter.com/denvercpd](https://twitter.com/denvercpd)). Recently, we updated our website and are now listing the rezoning criteria front and center on the rezoning page, DenverGov.org/rezoning. And, at Michael Henry's request, we've added the RNOs' websites to our RNO listing at DenverGov.org/RNO, to facilitate better connections among neighborhoods. In response to INC delegates' concerns, we are exploring opportunities to help the community learn more about planning/development processes and the purview of our boards and commissions. Most importantly, we are exploring better avenues for two-way communication so that we may be more responsive to community inquiries, needs and concerns.

- **COMMITTED TO EACH OTHER'S SUCCESS: We are studying approaches to providing education to neighbors regarding interacting with city processes.** We would like to build on the 2006 handbook that was co-produced by the city and INC — to update the document, create user guides or create online resources to help neighbors better understand city land use processes, communication opportunities and regulating agencies' purviews. We believe these steps can help increase key stakeholders' effectiveness in participating in the process to craft our public realm. Our outreach processes can only be effective if we're reaching our audience, and if our audience knows that their opinions matter to us. And they do.
- **PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENTS. We are looking to partner with related organizations to provide land use planning, sustainability and design events.** Whether a lecture series, online events, or Denver 8 TV features, we are dedicated to providing educational opportunities portraying best practices regarding land use, place making, transportation, preservation and sustainability.

I have been in office for just over two months, but in that time it's become clear that although there are many opportunities to improve city-neighborhood relations, there are also common goals around transparency, trust and respectful communication. I look forward to continued conversations with INC, neighborhood groups and individual residents as we strive to create a healthy, livable and connected city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Buchanan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brad Buchanan
Executive Director, Denver Community Planning and Development