

HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES & REDEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

February 29, 2024

Members Present: *Council Member, Chair Alison Coombs*
Council Member, Vice-Chair Ruben Medina
Council Member, Crystal Murillo

Others Present: Mayor Coffman, Jessica Prosser, Emma Knight, Andrew Rael-Trujillo, Olly Hanson, Angela Garcia, Jennifer Orozco, Alicia Montoya, Sarah Carroll, Melissa Mansfield, Joe Tai, Andrea Wright, Joseph DeHerrera, Scott Cambell, Rachel Whipple, Johnathan Harris

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Coombs welcomes everyone to the meeting.

MINUTES

Chair Coombs tries to start the meeting with the approval of the minutes, but faces technical difficulties with Council Member Medina's audio. Asks if anyone has any announcements and pauses the meeting to help Council Member Medina. Texts him some suggestions and confirms that he can hear later.

CM Murillo approves the minutes as written and suggests that Council Member Medina might have audio issues.

CM Medina joins the meeting late and has trouble hearing and speaking. Asks if others can hear him and says he is good on the minutes.

A male speaker provides technical assistance to Council Member Medina and tries to communicate with him via Teams and chat. Proposes some solutions and rejoices when Council Member Medina can hear.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jessica Prosser says she has no announcements.

NEW ITEMS

Chair Coombs states that they will proceed with the agenda as there were no announcements. They move on to discuss new business information regarding housing at 13th Avenue Station and the Strong Communities Infrastructure Grant Application through DOLA, sponsored by Council Member Bergan. Jennifer Orozco will be presenting, but it appears that only staff will be presenting. Chair Coombs thanks Jennifer and hands over the presentation to her.

Information on Housing at 13th Avenue Station and the Strong Communities Infrastructure Grant Application (Colorado Department of Local Affairs)

Summary of item

Jennifer Orozco, a project manager from the Planning Department, provided an overview of the planning process for the 13th Avenue Station Area Plan, focusing on housing development and a grant application. The current plan, adopted in 2009, is outdated, necessitating an update to

accommodate changes since then. Public engagement, including community meetings and surveys, is ongoing to gather input for the updated plan.

Highlighted on a map were two key areas for development: the RTD property to the north and the Bach Homes property to the south, totaling approximately 920 housing units. However, both sites face challenges due to their location at the end of dead-end streets, requiring a bridge over Toll Gate Creek to improve access and enable denser development.

Orozco emphasized the significant benefits of overcoming these challenges, citing the area's proximity to transit stations and numerous job opportunities. Furthermore, investments in the rail and trail corridors, as well as support from the city's Housing Strategy, further justify the development efforts.

She discussed a charrette held in 2022 to explore housing concepts, presenting architectural drawings illustrating potential housing types and configurations, though emphasizing that these were conceptual ideas subject to change.

Orozco then elaborated on the proposed development plans for the Bach Homes site, which is already approved for housing, with a phased approach including apartments and rental townhomes.

Regarding funding, Orozco explained the progress made in securing grants, particularly the Strong Communities Infrastructure Grant Program, aimed at supporting affordable housing infrastructure. The city submitted a formal application for the grant in February, seeking \$4 to 5.3 million, with a local match of \$800,000. Competition for the grant is stiff, with 58 entities initially expressing interest.

In conclusion, Orozco welcomed questions and reiterated her availability to provide further details or clarify any aspects of the presentation.

Chair Coombs thanked Jennifer Orozco for her presentation and opened the floor to Council Member Murillo for questions. Murillo inquired about the affordability aspect of the Bach Property development, noting that the RTD portion includes affordable housing and asking if the developer of the Bach Property was open to including affordability in their project. Orozco confirmed the developer's willingness to commit to affordability, stating they could provide between 10 to 15 years of affordability per the grant requirements. She explained that the affordability criteria were set at 140 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), which Orozco noted is not deeply affordable but still accessible to a significant portion of the population. Orozco also clarified that the AMI referred to the metro area used for financing by organizations like the Housing Authority of the City of Aurora (HAFA).

Chair Coombs sought clarification on the AMI reference, confirming it was based on the HUD-defined Denver–Aurora–Lakewood metro area.

Council Member Murillo expressed some concerns about the level of affordability but acknowledged the positive aspects of the project. She also asked if the Bach Property was the old Denver Meadows property.

Jennifer Orozco replied in the negative, clarifying that it was not related to Denver Meadows.

Council Member Murillo expressed her wish for more affordability in the project, noting concerns about the commitment to affordability and the potential for changes in market rates over time.

Chair Coombs echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the need for deeper affordability, especially considering the low Area Median Income (AMI) of the area's residents. Coombs highlighted the importance of the proposed bridge in addressing connectivity and access issues in the community, expressing appreciation for staff efforts in securing the grant and aligning with the Housing Strategy.

Council Member Medina echoed the importance of affordability and broader community inclusion beyond the campus area. He expressed gratitude for the presentation and emphasized the need to prioritize affordable housing in future projects.

Chair Coombs thanked Council Member Medina and invited Mayor Coffman to share any questions or comments.

Mayor Coffman asks Jennifer about the possibility of different types of housing on the RTD land and the RFP process. Relays the questions from the RTD Director, Bob Broom, about building multifamily housing over the light rail stop or the parking garage. Expresses his opinion that the parking structure was a bad decision and wonders if it could generate more ridership if housing was built over it. Asks about a vacant parcel on Colfax and if it has been considered for housing.

Jennifer Orozco answers the Mayor's questions and clarifies that the housing concepts are not fixed and will depend on the RFP responses. Explains the challenges and costs of building over the light rail line or the parking garage. Says the station is very underutilized and RTD is flexible about parking. Says the vacant parcel is not suitable for housing and is part of the RTD construction remnants.

Jessica Prosser adds that the city will be part of the RFP process and that RTD has a policy on affordable housing on their property.

Chair Coombs allows the Mayor to continue his questions and tries to clarify which station he is referring to. Agrees that the wrapped buildings are a great idea. Thanks the Mayor and Jennifer for their questions and answers. Suggests that the remnant parcels could be used for public art or other purposes.

Asks Council Members Medina and Murillo if they approve moving the project to a study session. Realizes that the project is information only and does not need approval. Thanks everyone for their participation and expresses appreciation and anticipation for the project. Reminds Jennifer to inform people about the community meeting.

Jennifer Orozco thanks Chair Coombs and agrees to let people know about the community meeting.

Outcome – This item is informational only.

City of Auora Housing Strategy

Chair Coombs introduces the next item on the agenda, which is the Housing Strategy Update, a document that outlines the challenges and actions related to housing and related services in the city. Invites Alicia Montoya to present on the item.

Alicia Montoya asks if the council members can hear her well.

Chair Coombs confirms that she can hear Alicia.

Alicia Montoya, the Housing and Community Development Manager in the city of Aurora, provided an annual update on the Housing Strategy, highlighting achievements and outlining the focus for 2024. The Housing Strategy, adopted in 2020, aimed to address the gap of 7,500 units for individuals earning less than \$25,000 per year and 12,000 families experiencing housing burden. Since then, efforts have been directed towards achieving 5,000 units by the end of the five-year strategy.

In 2023, significant progress was made, including six groundbreaking and grand openings of new housing projects. Efforts were made to engage with the development community and provide resources and training on affordable housing programs. The Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program was launched, and a three-phased annual review process was initiated to monitor the quality and safety standards of affordable housing units.

Furthermore, the city issued a request for proposals (RFP) for affordable housing development on city-owned land, receiving seven proposals and selecting a developer. Additional properties were cleared for development, and a study was conducted to identify revenue streams for affordable housing initiatives.

Community outreach efforts were intensified, including updates to the city's website, media coverage, and in-person engagement at events and classes. Impactful programs such as the Mortgage Assistance Program, first-time homebuyer education classes, and the Community Investment Financing Program were highlighted. In total, approximately 38.4 million was spent on housing initiatives in 2023.

Montoya pauses her presentation by inviting questions from the committee members, signaling a comprehensive effort by the city to address housing challenges and fulfill the goals of the Housing Strategy.

Chair Coombs led a discussion on the progress and future plans regarding Proposition 123 and the housing strategy in Aurora. Alicia Montoya, the Housing and Community Development Manager, provided updates on the programs funded by Proposition 123, including the Land Banking Program and Modular and Factory Built Financing Program, which have already received funding for housing projects in Aurora.

Montoya also discussed the recommendations from a housing study conducted with a state grant, aimed at identifying additional revenue sources to address the housing gap in Aurora. The recommendations included:

1. Land contribution: Utilizing city-owned land for affordable housing projects, potentially creating up to 725 units.

2. Inclusionary zoning on market-rate owner housing: Requiring 10% of new owner units to be affordable for individuals below 80% of the Area Median Income, potentially bringing 425-850 units.
3. Residential development impact fees: Imposing fees on new residential and commercial developments to generate revenue for affordable housing initiatives.
4. Voter-approved affordable housing bond: Implementing a bond funded by property or sales tax to finance affordable housing projects.

Montoya emphasized the need for additional revenue streams to support affordable housing initiatives in Aurora, paused her presentation and welcomed questions from the committee regarding the recommendations.

Chair Coombs expressed initial concerns regarding the proposed differential rate for commercial development impact fees, particularly between warehouse uses and other types of commercial developments. She questioned whether the justification for the lower fee for warehouse spaces adequately accounted for their indirect impact on housing and overall quality of life. Coombs suggested further discussion on this issue.

Regarding the voter-approved housing bond, Coombs expressed support for the idea but acknowledged it as a significant endeavor requiring careful consideration and planning. She encouraged ongoing conversation to explore how such a bond could be structured and implemented effectively.

Council Member Murillo expressed excitement about the recommendations, emphasizing the importance of addressing the shortage of affordable housing units and the value of having a diverse range of strategies to achieve this goal.

Council Member Medina echoed Murillo's sentiments, expressing satisfaction with the proposed portfolio of approaches to enhance affordability in the city.

Mayor Coffman was not present during this part of the discussion.

Alicia Montoya emphasizes that the housing recommendations are not final and that she wants to have more discussions with the council members and the mayor to explain the details and the impacts. Highlights the importance of spreading the cost of affordable housing among different stakeholders and not just the city. Outlines the next steps and timeline for 2024, which include implementing the recommendations, securing more funding from Proposition 123, strengthening the current programs, and conducting research and analysis. Concludes her presentation and invites questions.

Chair Coombs thanks Alicia for her presentation and asks the other council members if they have any questions. Says she has no questions and expresses her appreciation and anticipation for the housing update.

CM Murillo says she has no questions.

Outcome- Informational only

Resolution Approving IGA between the City of Aurora Youth Violence Prevention Program and Cherry Creek School District for Data Sharing

Chair Coombs introduces the next agenda item, which is a resolution regarding an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Aurora Youth Violence Prevention Program and the Cherry Creek School District for Data Sharing. Coombs mentions that the presenter is not specified but assumes it will be Joseph DeHerrera.

Joseph DeHerrera confirms that he will be presenting the resolution. He greets the council members and ensures that his audio is working fine, signaling his readiness to proceed with the presentation.

Joseph DeHerrera explains that there is no formal presentation for the agenda item but provides an overview of the proposed agreement between the City of Aurora Youth Violence Prevention Program and the Cherry Creek School District. He mentions that the agreement is similar to one previously established with the Aurora Public Schools. The focus of the agreement is to share data on students who may be facing issues such as truancy, chronic absences, expulsions, or disciplinary actions. Additionally, they aim to share information on grades and attendance to better understand and intervene with at-risk students. The ultimate goal is early intervention and prevention to support students and their families before situations escalate. DeHerrera offers to address any questions or provide further clarification.

Chair Coombs acknowledges DeHerrera's explanation and states that the purpose of the agreement is clear to them, expressing no further questions. They then invite Council Member Murillo and Council Member Medina to inquire if they have any questions or concerns.

Council Member Murillo asks Joseph DeHerrera about the sensitivity surrounding the sharing of youth's data and what information would be shared.

Joseph DeHerrera reassures that the purpose of sharing data is not punitive but rather aimed at providing resources and assistance to students. He explains that the data shared includes information on truancy, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and other relevant factors. DeHerrera emphasizes that data sharing is conducted securely via email and is accessible only to specific personnel on both the city and school district sides.

Chair Coombs thanks DeHerrera for his response, acknowledging the importance of ensuring the sensitive data is handled appropriately and securely.

Council Member Medina states that they are familiar with the process and express satisfaction with the information provided by DeHerrera.

Mayor Coffman inquires about the support systems in place at Cherry Creek Schools for students who are truant, specifically asking if they have social workers or outreach personnel.

Joseph DeHerrera responds, affirming that Cherry Creek Schools, as well as Aurora Public Schools (APS), have such resources. He details that APS has a more robust program, including a team of community engagement individuals who act as liaisons between the school district and families, along with counseling staff within the schools. Joseph explains that they are currently reviewing data received from APS and plan to collaborate with specific individuals within the school district to avoid duplication of services and ensure additional support complements existing efforts. He

emphasizes that APS staff actively reach out to students and families to prevent truancy and provide resources, with their city efforts intended to supplement rather than duplicate these services.

Mayor Coffman speculates that there might be a belief that truant students are more prone to youth violence.

Joseph DeHerrera acknowledges this possibility and emphasizes the importance of minimizing truancy and getting students back into class to prevent them from potentially turning to negative behaviors. He suggests that if a student is truant, there may be something missing in their lives, and efforts should focus on identifying and addressing those gaps to encourage school attendance.

Mayor Coffman requests clarification on how their efforts are aligned with the school district's, emphasizing the importance of collaboration rather than separate initiatives.

Joseph DeHerrera apologizes, stating that Mayor Coffman's question was unclear due to audio issues on his end.

Mayor Coffman seeks clarification on how their collaboration with the school district's outreach personnel is structured to avoid working separately.

Joseph DeHerrera explains that their approach aims to enhance existing partnerships with both Aurora Public Schools (APS) and Cherry Creek Schools. He emphasizes the importance of freely sharing information to facilitate this collaboration. By doing so, they can leverage resources beyond what the school districts alone can provide, including the involvement of the youth violence team and other networks to support students and their families comprehensively.

Mayor Coffman asks about the staffing situation for their collaborative efforts with the school districts.

Joseph DeHerrera clarifies that they are not hiring additional personnel for this initiative. Instead, they are utilizing existing staff resources, including a contracted case manager, a data analyst who works with both school districts to gather and analyze data, and a program coordinator already on the team.

Mayor Coffman acknowledges this information and expresses gratitude.

Joseph DeHerrera acknowledges the thanks and concludes the conversation.

Chair Coombs confirms that there are no further questions and asks if there's a request to move forward to a study session for this topic.

Joseph DeHerrera responds affirmatively, indicating that was his next step.

Chair Coombs approves.

Council Members Murillo and Medina both confirm their agreement, indicating a consensus to proceed to a study session for the topic under discussion.

Outcome- This item is moving forward to study session.

Council Members Murillo and Medina both confirm their agreement, indicating a consensus to proceed to a study session for the topic under discussion.

Chair Coombs acknowledges that Council Member Murillo has a hard stop at 11:30 and suggests that Emma's presentation on the Flex Fund may not fit within the remaining time. He expresses the importance of the information and program and proposes moving the presentation to the March meeting to ensure it receives adequate time for discussion.

Emma Knight agrees, explaining that the update on the Flex Fund is not particularly time-sensitive and can be deferred to the next month's agenda.

Chair Coombs confirms the decision to postpone the presentation to March, emphasizing the importance of the information and ensuring it is added to the agenda for that month.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Chair Coombs asks for any updates from community members, but seeing no hands raised, suggests adjourning the meeting. Before ending, he notes the need to confirm the date for the next meeting in March. Initially unsure of the exact date, he and Jessica Prosser discuss the possibility of it being the 28th but decide to confirm via email due to potential conflicts with other meetings.

Council Member Murillo points out that the 28th conflicts with another event.

Chair Coombs suggests discussing the matter over email. They agree to confirm the meeting date and time later. Finally, Chair Coombs bids everyone farewell, and the meeting is adjourned.

Next meeting: 3/20/2024 8:30AM

Meeting Adjourned: 2/29/2024 11:30AM

APPROVED: 
Alison Coombs (Mar 31, 2024 07:54 MDT)

Committee Chair, Alison Coombs