

AURORA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date: November 18, 2024

Time: 3:05 pm

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Mayor Mike Coffman called the Aurora Urban Renewal Authority Regular Meeting to order on Monday, November 18, 2024, at 3:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL: Kadee Rodriguez, Deputy City Clerk

PRESIDING: Chairman Coffman

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Baca, Bergan, Coffman, Coombs, Hancock, Gardner, Jurinsky, Lawson, Murillo, Sundberg, Watson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Medina

COMMISSIONERS ARRIVING AFTER ROLL CALL:

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Jason Batchelor, AURA Executive Director
Andrea Amonick, AURA Manager
Laura Perry, Deputy City Manager
Teri Velasquez, AURA Treasurer

Mayor Coffman requested the roll to be called. Kadee Rodriguez proceeded with the roll call, confirming the attendance of the commissioners. Mayor Coffman responded with his presence, followed by Commissioner Baca, Commissioner Bergan, Commissioner Coombs, Commissioner Jurinsky, Commissioner Lawson, Commissioner Murillo, Commissioner Sundberg, and Commissioner Watson, all confirming their attendance. Commissioners Gardner, Hancock, and Medina did not respond.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3.a. April 22, 2024, AURA Meeting Minutes

4. BILLS AND COMMUNICATIONS

4.a. Development Organization Feasibility Study – Update and Progress Report

Mayor Coffman introduced the Development Organization Feasibility Study – Update and Progress Report, inviting Laura Perry, Deputy City Manager, to provide an overview.

Laura Perry greeted the Commissioners and began her presentation on the Northwest Aurora Development Organization Feasibility Study. She explained that the session would cover the project scope, timeline, completed work, proposed engagement plans for 2025, and the next steps. L. Perry reminded the Board of her previous presentation in April, which outlined the feasibility study and its goal of determining how an entity or entities could advance community development goals in downtown Aurora. She noted that the Commission had approved entering a contract with Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) to further the work.

L. Perry emphasized the commitment to keeping the Commission updated and introduced PUMA's representative, Brad Segal, to provide insights. B. Segal expressed his gratitude to the Commissioners for the opportunity and introduced himself as a Denver native with nearly 40 years of experience in community and economic development. He noted his personal connection to the area, having frequented East Colfax as a child, and expressed his professional and personal interest in the project.

B. Segal described PUMA's expertise in working with communities to identify tools for revitalization, including Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and Community Development Corporations (CDCs). He explained that their role in this project was to create a plan and determine the best organizational tools for financing and partnering with the city to support redevelopment.

B. Segal outlined the project's objectives, which included creating an action plan for community goals, identifying priorities for improving Northwest Aurora, and evaluating organizational models to achieve these goals. He mentioned that their work began a few months prior and involved market research, community engagement, and analysis of the area's real estate dynamics. The ultimate deliverable would be a business plan to implement the development initiatives effectively. He also highlighted the involvement of subcontractors, including an urban designer and legal counsel, to support the project.

B. Segal then introduced the three primary organizational models under consideration: Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Business Improvement District (BID), and Community Development Corporation (CDC). He elaborated on each model, noting the benefits and tools they provided, such as tax increment financing (TIF) and mill levies for DDAs, and special assessments for BIDs. B. Segal also highlighted the relevance of DDAs and CDCs for addressing real estate development and attracting investments in multifamily housing along the Colfax Corridor.

He detailed the study area, centered on the Colfax Corridor between Yosemite and Peoria, and explained that DDAs and BIDs would likely focus on the commercial aspects of this area, while a CDC could potentially have a broader scope. B. Segal concluded by introducing Naomi Lacewell, the project manager, who would address the timeline and process. Mayor Coffman then invited questions from the Commissioners, beginning with Commissioner Bergan.

Commissioner Bergan raised a question regarding engagement with the business community, pointing out the importance of obtaining input from business leaders before finalizing a method for the proposed development organizations. B. Segal responded by confirming that no method had been decided yet, emphasizing that the project was still in its early stages. He explained that the process of meeting with business leaders and property owners was ongoing and highlighted the requirement for a vote by those affected, including

businesses, property owners, and residents, should a Downtown Development Authority be formed. Commissioner Bergan acknowledged the response and thanked B. Segal.

Naomi Lacewell, the project manager, provided an update on the project's progress and plans. She outlined the three phases of the timeline, starting with phase one, which focused on understanding the area through market condition analysis, site visits, and community engagement. She described the initial steps taken, including canvassing businesses, conducting site tours, and forming a working group with diverse representation from business owners, employers, and residents. N. Lacewell highlighted a planned tour of the Englewood Downtown Development Authority to gather insights and share experiences relevant to the Colfax Corridor.

N. Lacewell detailed the engagement strategy, emphasizing the importance of incorporating business owners' input since they would be directly impacted and involved in voting for the formation of districts. She explained that the team had reviewed existing plans and studies, conducted market and parcel analysis, and gathered crime data. Over 20 stakeholders had been engaged in small group or one-on-one discussions, and community meetings had been attended to gather diverse perspectives. Fact sheets and educational materials had been developed, and a project website was scheduled to launch in December to provide background information and facilitate feedback.

N. Lacewell outlined plans for more targeted outreach, including roundtables in January focused on specific groups such as property owners, small business owners, and residents. The goal was to collect feedback on action and prioritization for the area. Larger engagement efforts, including pop-up events and participation in community activities, were planned to ensure inclusivity. This input would inform the development of a draft plan framework, expected by the summer of next year, which would then undergo community review and feedback. The final draft would include recommendations on forming districts, followed by additional outreach and legal steps as needed.

N. Lacewell committed to keeping the Commissioners updated at key milestones, including the recommendation of appropriate districts in early 2025, the draft plan framework, and the final development plan. She noted that, if recommended, the formation of districts could culminate in a November election.

Commissioner Jurinsky raised a concern regarding the outreach strategy, asking whether homeowners, as opposed to renters, would be prioritized in discussions about the proposed districts, given the large number of renters in the area. B. Segal clarified that outreach efforts would target both groups, depending on the type of district being considered. He explained that, for a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) utilizing tax increment financing (TIF), there would be no immediate tax increase, but future revenue increases would be earmarked for neighborhood improvements. In cases involving a mill levy, outreach would include all stakeholders, as DDAs could impact both residential and commercial areas. B. Segal emphasized that boundaries for the districts would be drawn based on these considerations.

Mayor Coffman then invited Jason Batchelor to provide additional input. J. Batchelor elaborated that Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are typically commercial-focused, while Community Development Corporations (CDCs) differ as they lack taxing authority and do not require a public vote for their formation. These distinctions would guide decisions regarding district boundaries.

Commissioner Lawson highlighted the importance of incorporating public safety into the discussions, noting ongoing issues in the area. B. Segal assured that public safety was a primary concern, referencing feedback from earlier community conversations where safety emerged as the top priority. He provided examples of how a DDA could address safety concerns, such as improving lighting and activating public spaces like parks to enhance usability and security.

Mayor Coffman acknowledged the engagement efforts by PUMA and thanked B. Segal and his team for their involvement in previous community events. Commissioner Bergan followed up with a question about the financial mechanics of TIF, noting its reliance on new development to generate revenue. B. Segal explained that the promise of a DDA often serves as an incentive to attract development by reallocating incremental tax revenue back into the community. He noted that TIF mechanisms, combined with engagement with the development community, could help address economic and safety barriers to investment in the area.

Commissioner Sundberg inquired about the initial reactions from businesses and how the plan was being presented to them. B. Segal acknowledged initial hesitations regarding the term “tax” but explained that clarifying TIF as a reallocation rather than a new tax had resonated positively with stakeholders. He noted that the ability to reinvest in the community was viewed as a significant benefit. B. Segal added that ballot measures for forming a DDA could include separate questions for TIF, mill levies, and debt issuance, allowing flexibility in how the community supports the initiative.

Commissioner Coombs raised questions about voter eligibility within the proposed districts and the potential for gentrification. B. Segal clarified that electors would include residents registered to vote within the district, as well as designated representatives of commercial property owners and business tenants. On the issue of gentrification, B. Segal acknowledged community concerns and cited examples like the Colorado Springs DDA, which provided loans to businesses for property acquisition, helping mitigate displacement risks. He emphasized that such tools could be explored as part of the planning process.

Mayor Coffman referenced the success of the Havana BID in revitalizing a formerly depressed area, suggesting that a mix of affordable and market-rate housing could be effective for the Colfax Corridor. Commissioner Bergan expressed concerns about the funding sources for CDCs, emphasizing the need for private and public funding without reliance on city funds to avoid disparities in redevelopment efforts across the city. B. Segal acknowledged this concern, noting that funding for CDCs typically comes from grants, philanthropic sources, and corporate partnerships, and reiterated the potential for combining multiple tools, like a DDA and CDC, to diversify funding and maximize impact.

Commissioner Watson questioned Aurora’s lack of a defined downtown and how the proposed districts could address this. B. Segal explained that, historically, the Colfax Corridor functioned as Aurora’s central business district and met the statutory criteria for a downtown. He noted that the proposed developments could help Aurora establish a more defined downtown identity while facilitating growth and development.

Mayor Coffman invited further questions or comments. B. Segal expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work on the project, citing his personal and professional connection to the area, and assured the Commissioners that updates would be provided periodically.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Coffman adjourned the meeting of the Aurora Urban Renewal Authority at 3:35 p.m.



Mike Coffman, Chair

ATTEST:



Jason Batchelor, Executive Director/Secretary