

Greater Park Hill News, July 2009

By Patrick Horvath
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On the evening of June 1, a group of Northeast Park Hill (NEPH) residents and staff from local organizations met at Hiawatha Davis Recreation Center to discuss the redevelopment of the four-block area centered on and surrounding the former Holly shopping center.

The area, which is bounded by Hudson St. on the west, 33rd Ave on the south, Ivy St. on the east, and 35th Ave. on the north, includes several significant community resources, including the Recreation Center, the Pauline Robinson Branch Library, the Hope Center, Skyland Park, the post office, and the former shopping center site itself, which was recently purchased by the Urban Land Conservancy (ULC).

The ULC intends to use the property for community benefit, and the June 1 meeting was organized on the heels of the non-profit group's May 20 press conference at the site. At that event, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, District 8 Councilperson Carla Madison, community leaders Michele Wheeler and Terrance Roberts, and ULC Executive Director Aaron Miripol spoke with excitement about the opportunity that the shopping center purchase presented for redevelopment of the entire area.

The June 1 meeting was facilitated by staff from The Denver Foundation's Strengthening Neighborhoods Program, which has partnered with NEPH residents on neighborhood strengthening projects for over eleven years. The meeting's goals were (1) to bring together a group of residents and representatives of organizations with a strong commitment to the Northeast Park Hill neighborhood and to the redevelopment of the four block area; (2) to understand from the organizational representatives what their existing plans are for property they control in the four block area; and (3) to determine the best way to engage all interested community members in creating a plan for the redevelopment of the area.

Aaron Miripol from the ULC told the group that the ULC purchased the Holly parcel in large part because of the unique combination of assets that exist close by, and that the ULC is eager to take advantage of those assets. Because of the costs associated with holding the property, Mr. Miripol stated that the ULC is interested in having a solid plan that is ready for implementation within twelve months, and that youth-oriented uses are of particular interest to his group. Terrance Ware from the Denver Office of Economic Development, a partner with ULC in the purchase of the Holly, stated that the city is interested in uses that include job training and lifelong education and learning.

In the conversation that followed these brief remarks, participants made the following points:

- The community is tired of lengthy planning processes, and is ready for action, not another process.
- Community planning should begin with a large “town hall” meeting, widely advertised and open to everyone, to enable all community actors to brainstorm ideas and to make their voices heard at the very outset of the planning.
- As an outcome of the town hall meeting, working teams should be convened to research development possibilities and to follow-up in key areas. This will engage residents in the process more thoroughly and help people get a realistic sense of what is possible and what is not.
- Outreach should occur at the block and individual home level as well, since not everyone will be able to attend a large community meeting.
- Apartment residents, as well as apartment owners and managers, need to be included in planning activities.
- The community’s young people and Latino residents must be part of the process going forward.

Several meeting participants volunteered to be a part of the planning group that will design the initial town hall meeting. These included Terrance Roberts, Karen Holland, Michele Wheeler, Alisha Brown, Taliah Abdullah, Lillie Fuller, Jan Holloway, and Dr. Lawrence Lewis.

As of this writing, the date for the town hall meeting had not been set. It is likely to be in late July. Please keep an eye on these pages and other neighborhood news outlets for more information.

To be added to the contact list for updates or if you are interested in joining the planning committee for the town hall meeting, please send an email to LaDawn Sullivan of the Strengthening Neighborhoods Program, lsullivan@denverfoundation.org or call LaDawn at 303-996-7350. Questions can also be addressed to Patrick Horvath of the Strengthening Neighborhoods Program at phorvath@denverfoundation.org or 303-996-7356.