**Summary of INC Zoning and Planning Committee March 28, 2015 meeting**

The INC ZAP (Zoning and Planning Committee) met on March 28, 2015 from 9:30 to 11:30 am at the 1201 Williams meeting room. The Committee discussed the following topics: 1) Update on short-term rentals; 2) Overview of Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea neighborhoods and current issues they are facing; 3) Housekeeping issues.

**Short-term rental update**

Councilwoman Mary Beth Susman explained that her sharing economy task force has become part of the City Council Neighborhoods and Planning Committee and its meetings will be televised. It will meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month starting April 22, from 1:30 to 3:00 pm. Agendas and meeting summaries will be posted on the Council website.

The committee is seeking comments from neighborhoods on its draft approach. It is exploring allowing short-term rentals as a type of authorized home occupation, with regulations to be adopted by Excise/License rather than CPD. A set of PowerPoint slides explains the concepts, which include: having a homeowner obtain a zone use permit after filling out a questionnaire and showing proof of possession of the premises. A home must be the owner’s primary residence to qualify, to avoid the problem of short- term rental properties being purchased and offered as an investment. The owner would need to maintain safety equipment such as smoke and CO detectors and fire extinguishers, and provide emergency information to renters.

Councilwoman Susman answered some questions about the proposal. She noted the Portland experience with most hosts not registering because of onerous rules. There would be some kind of fine for failing to register and may be city taxes imposed on the rental income. One commenter noted it would be helpful if just one City department handles licensing and enforcement.

**Overview of Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea neighborhoods and current issues.**

Next the following speakers provided an overview of the Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea neighborhoods: Bettie Cram, Professor John Prosser, Anne Elizabeth, Armando Payan, and Drew Dutcher. The neighborhoods seek assistance from INC, in part to preserve the historic character of certain areas as Blueprint Denver is being re-written.

Professor Prosser described the importance of focusing on a one-mile square as a critical module for planning. He discussed how the population is less dense now with about 2. to 2.4 people living in most houses, compared to more than 4 people per unit in the past. These neighborhoods lack a supermarket. Prosser explained that a supermarket needs about four square miles of residents to serve, and that the decline in population density reduces the need for schools.

The speakers discussed neighborhood small area plans which have been produced for Globeville and Elyria/Swansea based a 2-1/2 year process. They noted that the master plans do not address education needs. The Elyria Swansea plan tries to integrate with the RINO and National Western neighborhoods. The National Western plan has proceeded more quickly, with essentially only two property owners there. These residents fear the plans are not protecting existing single-family homes, and they are concerned about the effect of gentrification on current residents. They are concerned that 8-story affordable housing units are replacing some single-family homes.

Mr. Payan discussed the neighborhood demographics, with a large Latino population. About 70-80% of the residents lack a high school diploma. Globeville’s northeast corner was an industrial site and has deed restrictions forbidding future residential use because of the previously contaminated property. Payan noted the lack of enterprise zones in the area, unlike Sunnyside on the opposite side of I-25.

Several of the speakers discussed continuing frustration with the existing location of I-70, which cuts through these neighborhoods, and with the current CDOT plan to widen and lower below ground level part of the I-70 corridor. I-70 is the elephant in the room--it dominates the local discussions. These speakers would prefer to remove I-70. They noted that car exhaust from the highway is next to the school and the class rooms get hot with windows shut. Some residents are still seeking to change the I-70 location, but Mayor Hancock and Councilman Albus Brooks (who now represents this area) present maintaining the current location as a “done deal.” Nevertheless, questions persist on how to fund the CDOT changes, and some residents want to hit the “re-set” button and replace I-70 with a boulevard. They see a CDOT plan for a new highway 30 feet below grade that is 10 lanes wide. Elyria will lose land wider than a football field.

Anne Elizabeth provided a description of key locations on a map of these neighborhoods to help committee members better understand these neighborhoods. It is difficult to walk across these neighborhoods because of the street layout and I-70 location.

The neighborhoods will be participating in the Denver Clean-up event on May 9 and would welcome volunteers for that.

Long-time resident Bettie Cram described how she arrived in Denver in the 1940s and worked at the Livestock Exchange building before marrying a cowboy and raising two children. She learned Spanish to communicate with many of her neighbors, and helped some learn English. Cram has sought to preserve these historic areas. She is skeptical of the value of the proposed new park on top of part of the new I-70 cap. Cram points out that Denver planning has added bike paths but not provided for the elderly residents who still need parking for their cars. She and other residents are concerned with proposed new high-rise buildings that lack adequate parking, and she points out the existing school is over-crowded. She would like to see planners focus on protecting existing businesses more than focusing on potential new businesses. Meanwhile, they see a land grab going on with developers buying available parcels. Cram is pleased with the National Western Plan and hopes it will help revitalize the area. She is glad those buildings will not exceed five stories. A street near the stock show site will be named Bettie Cram Drive.

Dutcher noted concern with the failure of Adams County and DURA to clean up the 80-acre contaminated ASARCO site. Instead the land is capped and deed-restricted for light industrial use. He and other residents would like to find a way to use this site for future residential buildings.

Prosser expressed his opinion that instead of protecting neighborhoods, the city for the past 4-12 years has been trying to exploit neighborhoods. He fears the neighborhoods will be destroyed by the CDOT I-70 proposal, with a 24-lane wide right-of-way for driving lanes, ramps, and service roads—as wide as I-25 near Louisiana and Washington. He notes that historic intersection of the transcontinental railroads was at the existing Denver Coliseum site. Prosser believes the current I-70 route was the result of a political pay-off in the 1960s, and that the alternative route near the current I-270/I-76 location would have worked better then and will still work now, at a lower cost.

Several committee members discussed preparing a draft INC resolution for the next meeting, demanding that the I-70 route be placed in the alternative location to the north. Other members asked to hear both sides of the debate.

**ZAP Committee housekeeping issues**

The committee discussed who should be eligible to vote at ZAP meetings. The INC bylaws allow any member of an RNO to serve on a committee, and the INC President can fill chair positions with any Denver resident. The issue of who should be allowed to vote came up a the December 2014 meeting because many people who attended who do not regularly attend ZAP meetings. Michael Henry suggested that the committee adopt the following sentence to the INC bylaws to clarify who can vote: “If a committee votes on a matter, only those attendees may vote who are members of INC member RNO’s.”

Committee members briefly discussed whether this change would exclude people who regularly attend ZAP meetings from voting. Katie Fisher noted that the Parks and Recreation Committee faces the same issue. Margie Valdez suggested that the INC Executive Committee discuss this question at its next meeting, and asked people to email ideas on voting to her.

Margie Valdez asked for a volunteer to maintain the INC Excise and License information currently kept on the cloud. She also noted the plan for ZAP to organize detailed training sessions beginning in September or October on zoning and planning issues including: alcohol and marijuana regulation and zoning processes and rules.

One member noted that with the rapid growth in University Park it make sense to seek a moratorium on further rezoning until solutions are found for traffic, sidewalks, and parking issues.

Margie Valdez noted two recent decisions on marijuana issued by the Excise and Licenses Director in cases involving properties at 745 E. Sixth Ave. and 4801 W. Colfax. Regarding the 4801 W. Colfax decision, the Director concluded that the preponderance of the evidence established the negative impact on the neighborhood including the health, welfare or public safety of the neighborhood in which the retail marijuana store is to be located and the Director was not limited to just issues of proximity of a location to schools.

Next ZAP meeting:

The next ZAP meeting will be on Saturday, April 25, 2015 at the meeting room at 1201 Williams Street, 19th floor.