Minutes for ECNA Feb. 20, 2024 meeting

6:30pm start

minutes created by Tim Roberts based on iphone audio

intro that was read out:

Land Acknowledgments

We are on the traditional territories of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe peoples.

Open comments

Fax partnership on "The Fax is holding a survey with DPD about safety", Veronica

New folks who have agreed to join the ECNA leadership team:

* Elizabeth Parker, resident at Rose on the Fax
* Mary Coffman, resident at Novi at Lowry
* Ken Stansberry, resident at Valor on the Fax
* Ah Nyo, new general board member
* and thanks to other board members present, so important

Outreach drive, going well, really great to have representative from the major apartment communities, door to door and mailing campaigns to pick up soon with a number of folks coming forward to help. Newsletter is moving along too, which helps with outreach. Don't forget that we'll give you an ECNA t-shirt if you sign up 5 new members!

Food bank is humming along and we've been having very informal board discussions at each Friday food bank, with 4 board members, Brenda, Ludi, Tim, and Isaac as regular volunteers, then other leadership showing up as well. We continue to meet new people at the food bank and get a good sense of neighborhood issues. Again the food bank is in its 6th year and has distributed over $2 million worth of food and other items.

Thanks to all who voted on the DO-8 zoning, which with in-person and email was approved 14 yes, 4 no, and 5 abstain. This is a pretty massive decision on the character of East Colfax and it's great that we were able to show up with a voice.

Along these lines, there's a statement or resolution that we can see here, one that we can send to city council that would mean that when they are presented with issues in East Colfax there is a point at which council is directly in touch with us. The proclamation positively highlights that ECNA leadership and resources often change, but that that doesn't mean we should not be consulted on major issues.

Proclamation

Whereas the East Colfax Neighborhood Association (ECNA) is elective and democratic at every level and therefore has all new leadership on a regular basis, which means that this leadership takes time to get up to speed with how city communication works and what the implications of city actions might be;

Whereas ECNA prioritizes non-English-speaking leadership that represents a large portion of its residents and businesses, this leadership potentially taking even more time to learn how the RNO operates;

Whereas ECNA is an independent organization that may have more or less resources at any given time;

Whereas ECNA is a volunteer organization whose leadership and members may be more or less available at any given time;

Whereas ECNA is and has been the sole body exclusively committed to representing the East Colfax neighborhood, now for more than half a century, since 1972;

Whereas East Colfax is one of the most socioeconomically diverse and integrated neighborhoods in the city of Denver and therefore is constantly subjected to city-facilitated change, involuntary displacement, and the negative aspects of gentrification, as has been proven time and time again;

Whereas ECNA is engaged in a long-term, community-based creation of a localized neighborhood plan that gives voice to and protects the people who live and work here now and has as its guiding principle anti-displacement, such plan being process-oriented and taking shape over time;

ECNA is hereby requesting that the city of Denver build into its review and approval processes the requirement that when any zoning or permitting affecting any structure or land within our boundaries is before the city that one or more of the city council representatives for our district have a documented direct confirming conversation, in person or via email, with existing ECNA leadership to be sure ECNA leadership is aware of such proposed change and has ample time to communicate such change to the East Colfax community, and that until such open communication is carried out no vote at any level of city government on such changes be engaged.

Comments?

Was hoping we could vote in this measure at our next meeting in March.

Wanted to bring into our discussion here that the nonprofit Elevation Community Land Trust seems to be looking at two properties, near Rose on the Fax, at 1551 and 1528 Verbena that would use 1.6mil in city funding to purchase. I think they will demolish 9 existing units (not sure where the folks who live there now will go) and be required to build at least 10. We have a note in with them to visit an RNO meeting but have not heard back.

We are looking at continuing to build the East Colfax neighborhood plan. We have one major step the RNO took some years ago, which is holding anti-displacement as a central principle, but want to see what makes sense to include next. We are mostly as well considering potential gaps in the East Area Plan and seeing what makes sense specifically for East Colfax outside of being in the collaboration with South Park Hill, Montclair, and Hale.

Stay tuned for our volunteer opportunities. Let's look at the new Volunteer web page.

Finally, come back next month, March 19, when we have scheduled Denver Police special discussion of guns in East Colfax, Councilmember Lewis and Gonzalez-Gutierrez.

--Tonight we're excited to hear from Janet Estrada, Interim Principal, Ashley Elementary, where the recent immigrant population has doubled enrollment

--Program Director Nicole Rice-Collins introducing Valor on the Fax

**--Neighborhood Equity and Stabilization Team (NEST)**

Recent statistics on East Colfax, including dramatic drop in poverty rate, with Deputy Director Elvis Rubio and Community Development Representative Kathleen Ferrick

Notes from audio:

Janet Estrada

* 300k budget
* with newcomers got new monies
* had powerpoint, showing shifts of students
* in 2mos restrurcted whole school
* prolems hiring spanish lang teachers
* very intentional about feedback from staff, needed Span. support
* 6 new para professionals
* new model program base of restructuring
* partnered with several community orgs.
* sidewalk poets collab.
* started inactive PTA, generated 30k
* academic learning services extended
* interrupted ed. meant lots of remedial work
* class cap at 32, some at 25, 28
* 2018 Black Excellence equity plan, working to improve
* questions: Corky: getting enough support from district central office? yes, definitely, J. could lean on all of her connections, DPS has "in a heartbeat" with support, knew who to go to and what to ask for, grateful for partnership
* how have newcomers affected performance? J. just got to job
* Ashely was on list of schools, how long have they been on there? small schools list, not sure how long on the radar, was up for a vote
* is music the only special class? no, have dance and pe, many students in bands, library rotation, started getting more money, STEP tech options too
* how do you filter your volunteers? J: very organically... got 2, then parents asking, behavior issues on playground, more involvement; survey sent; slow but great folks, person from Columbia with ed. degree, working on transition and trauma, great to have folks for needs they have
* J. introduces her two boys in the audience, they go to Ashley, she takes them everywhere they go
* Ken: wow, having your mom as principal of school
* Q: refugee enrollments, other schools refusing, was Ashley voluntary for this volume, or proximity, why some schools can say no? J: very good and loaded question: with certain boundaries certain schools get labelled, in larger area, an equity issue, all the surrounding don't get the right programming up and running, so Ashley gets everything, choice to go to newcomer school, way above her pay grade

Nicole from Valor on the Fax

* director of residential services
* little colorful building
* permanent supportive housing program
* Brain Injury handles services
* 72 units, all folks have brain injury, major or not
* chronically homeless, give them a safe place
* could pay no rent, or a little, based on ss, ssdi
* provide everything, furniture, do laundry, provide services, applications, resources, food, lots going to food bank
* whatever they need to thrive and stay house, might see them wandering around, hopefully nothing too crazy
* did bring Ken, maintenance man, Ken in my trusted man, will be coming to meetings, rely on Ken, love residents
* was in higher ed for years, worked at another 24hr shelter for women, catholic charities
* Valor thinking of ways to be part of community, what can do to make Colfax better, have gatherings and functions, glad to be asked to come to meeting, would like residents to be part of community
* homeless for 10+ years, how to live again, be in a house, take care of even themselves, not only injury but mental illness, past substance abuse, high risk population, be patient
* since she got there have changed things around, want to be part of the community
* Q: is it full? 70 filled and 2 units moving in, all there this whole year, one person has moved out
* Q from Ken, where sign up for little island down south? Blessed to be living at Valor, in construction all his life, pro maintenance person, put himself through school, transplanted from Grand Junction to Colfax, permission from neighbor to do a garden, trying to get network going since April. N: neighborhood has donated part of alley. Ended up at Valor by TBI hitting head on sidewalk, then got call to be at meeting for Valor, interview, sign here. 40 years of building maintenance. "Take care of the building and you take care of the people who live there."
* N: please stop by Valor and we'll show you around, will be coming around to meetings
* Q: is Valor permanent supportive? Yes, others are looking at the model.
* Ken: trying to create an environment that is conducive to...
* N: couple of residents transitioning out, Ken wants to find out about that, Ken offers maintenance, Nicole recommends

NEST

* Tim: we were in communication about East Colfax poverty rate going from 28% to 16%
* Kathleen Ferrick, grew up a couple blocks away, feels very connected to the community, today approached about poverty rate, Elvis will speak to, created NEST index, before we get to that providing brief overview about what NEST is
* Ken: were you here when Cpath was other things, K: yes, soccer goal factory...
* delay because projector went down
* NEST mission: preserves culture and heritage, elevating community voices, division of D opportunity office, D of small business etc., NEST created for NEST neighborhoods, experiencing most change, lots of change has happened, 5 divisions, providing support to people most at risk, due to cost of living, gentrification, those issues
* in terms of how they support, one way is through funding, different opportunities, ensure folks who have been there can stay if that is what they want
* equitable zoning, turning it over to Elvis
* new map of NEST neighborhoods
* Elvis to speak, calls up website
* Director of Policy
* really just wants to talk about what a NEST area is (skipping the poverty question?)
* how do we identify areas? zoning, infusion of people, education
* really want transparent, intentional
* talked to Tim some
* don't eval. just on poverty, 10 indicators
* Tim was worried about the change
* but let's look at how NEST identifies
* democratize data, for grantmaking, data wasn't avail.
* create database and website, big intention
* website identifies all this, grew up in D., has changed on Colfax
* influx of permanent supportive housing, wanted to show visual but intentionality
* showing before/after pics, this is what people generally see, happening across denver, everywhere
* not just low to moderate income areas, pic of 5 points, harlem of the west yadda yadda
* what really is impacting, what is our passion, influencing placemaking
* at first anti d, now more holistic, housing is important but what else do you need
* looks at neighborhood level, example of westwood, invested in one property, help of nonprofit
* placemaking takes time, preservation
* 10 NEST to 18 neighborhoods, was based on Blueprint Denver data
* now process can work with updated data to identify need, realtime
* social bucket, barriers to services, access to tech, foreign born pop, housing and jobs, poverty, unemployment, cost burdened, 30% of income on housing, business data first time
* from American Community Survey, census, treasury
* didn't rank, but gradient scale, categories of n'hoods facing similar pressures, all 78
* sharing website in chat
* looking at East Colfax data
* businesses losing customers with displacement, here's a visual and data from NEST
* Q: additional data behind these?
* didn't include home ownership, since at risk either way
* careful to avoid duplicating numbers or miscounting
* Q: the asterisk, previous and continued, NE Park Hill and West Colfax, Windsor has been added, things are shifting, other places that were affordable now susceptible
* don't usually think of Windsor
* intersectionality between race and injustice, can't prioritize some groups over others, but want to show how city breaks down racially
* holistic thinking of neighborhood...
* tech questions: how did you get to this map, full FAQ, live raw data, democratizing data, not always rely on gov't
* updated every 2-3 years, ACS, end of 25-26 update with new data, not forecasting much of a change, well, level of poverty, if you're bored on a Sunday email the team
* Q: things change with poverty but not other numbers, renter occup. housing, stagnant, any changes with economic, 15k or less, indiv. or fam., area plan change from then to now, influx of dense housing built generally for spectrum of affordability, diff income level, this changes data at census level, don't remember exact cenus tractk, providing housing but not at income level of neigh, increase of poc coming to East Colfax,
* hate to say it but I'm a gentrifier, college students who come back
* Meghan: will you play a role in mixed use props, her area can now to 8 stories, no penalty, will NEST play a role. E: doesn't just focus on housing, but that has a special formula, that dept. looking at... if you know there is an issue, NEST can get meetings, get the neighborhood to the table, before you had no seat at the table, help protest, NEST encourages developers to speak to community, be part of us
* Brendan: EAP has strong language around any project that uses tax incentive in URA should be passed through community in whether that gets approved, decent lang. to create community steering community. Is NEST aware of project on the way in, how can NEST partner with us to help us monitor that?
* E: TIFF is run through DURA, still not required, equity analysis, say need access to food, hospital, etc., share with developer, can say they heard from community, who have you talked to? biggest thing, quasi governmental, some developers will commit to community stuff, if things come up Tracy and DURA says talk to these folks
* Q: TIFF has to be voted on by council? not requirement, could council be that liaison? yes, use council. member to talk to them
* Q: internet costs not included in housing, were social? E: was access to tech
* Meghan: struggles, community plans, not seeing changes, not grocery, rec, loves data but it's lagging, can't get people back, struggles with, sounds like yelling but not yelling, all these plans, don't see the changes, who to go to, point of contact to make voice heard, unclear on who is contact for what, appreciate general offer to get someone's ear, frustrated on how new bills are voted on, seems not equitable, what to do with that, neighbor retired 387/yr with trash and all, who is addressing this, thanks for listening
* E: aspirational, as city can't make people do anything, long term plan, what we can do is there's an issue with area plan can make connections, NPI, moving away from small area, can give list of planners; siloing of services, income re sidewalks
* Q: can we come to you to voice those?
* E: can refer you to... council members... need more funding... yes, if you have issue please email us
* Tim: can advocate for sidewalks as RNO... looking at changes in NEST, Irene is here, founder of NEST, what's her take on this history,changes
* in 2018 it was clear that losing West Colfax, no reason, people just love Denver, more people working remotely, outdoor people, high tech jobs, she stayed engage in EC, one place that could still be saved, since it had investment, obviously Park Hill was going to expland up, Stanley mplace has had adverse effect, part of her frustration at end of day person who owns land has all the cards, city just not powerful enough, dates back to CO being red state, owners rights, I can do what I want, likes Elvis trying to work on econ. dev. potential who live in the community, college, trade school, start a business, before she left NEST buy as much land as possible since then you have control. Likes Elevation Comm. Land Trust, good partner to have, more people who buy that's the best hope, Fax Partnerhip owning Sand and Sage, EC3 looking toward Aurora, etc.
* E: gradient scale of prioritization,
* Q: how much of what nest does is data and how much advocacy? who do you adovate to?
* E: he is a data person, not statistics, have a team; advocate intentional development, not extracting but be part of us, very difficult to do, as Irene said, can't augment property rights, advocating on your behalf, takes back to city employees, what can we do rather than pass the buck? how can you tell developers this is what we want? sharing that is advocating for community. Equity analysis, no longer a blind eye, trying to get there, takes forever. He's left NEST and worked on stuff related to Valor and permanent solutions, came back to do this work, wants all to have a chance to stay in Denver if they want to, we all grow up and change
* Meghan: one more, are you when investments or efforts, do you look at ops across, coalition, how to connect these areas, voluntary, hard to get people out, finding common ground

Stay tuned for next month, guns in East Colfax, councilmember to attend as well

[END]