

***Park Hill Golf Course Visioning Roundtable #1:
Employment, Education and Job Training
Wednesday March 28, 2018***

Panelists:

Lorena Zimmer, Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce, Talent Pipeline Director for the Denver Youth Opportunity Initiative

Jennifer Newcomer, Gary Communities/Shift Research Lab

Don John Kulish, The Lab Founder

Stephanie Frances, Founder & Executive Director, Prodigy Ventures Inc.

Odalís Ibarra, Prodigy Apprentice

Panelist Discussion

Lorena Zimmer spoke first on the panel about her work with 16-24 year olds on workforce development. She noted that there is about 3% unemployment in the Denver region, which has caused workforce challenges, along with a big skills gap for the jobs which are currently available.

Her work has a focus on encouraging local businesses to develop talent in their communities instead of just consuming talent. Additionally, it is about moving beyond the perception that a four-year degree is required to enter the workforce and instead highlighting the need to acquire the right skills. In many cases, this can be done through an apprentice program where a participant comes out with an associate degree and skills greatly valued by employers.

Jennifer Newcomer gave an overview of the demographics of the Denver region and its roughly three million residents with a racial and ethnic mix which continues to evolve.

Some trends which Jennifer highlighted were the general change in family structures, as well as the fact that 1/3 of the jobs in the region pay under \$33,000.

Additionally, she noted that the unemployment rate in the surrounding area of the Park Hill Golf Course is about 2.5% higher than the rest of Denver. Median income varies depending on the zip code in the area from \$36,000-\$72,000 while 33% of residents in the surrounding area have a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 44% of residents in the rest of Denver.

Don Jon Kulish talked about his experience opening The Lab and how they do a wide variety of things at their facility from robots to crafts. Their main goal is to have kids come in and learn a skill set they cannot learn in school. While there are many online resources, they can be inconvenient and hands on instruction can be more useful.

The Lab host a number of free classes and their biggest operating hurdles is the money required for materials. They do not have a static model of what they should do and they work to teach people whatever they can when they come in.

In response to an audience question, he noted that there was opportunity for entrepreneurship, but it was not the focus.

Stephanie Frances spoke about Prodigy Ventures Inc. which is both a coffeehouse and apprenticeship program to which almost all youth participants walk or ride their bike to work.

They opened two years ago as a 501c3 non-profit and their sales go to their mission of supporting youth in Denver disconnected from school or work. Stephanie highlighted the need to think outside the box of traditional ways of employment and education as they do not serve the young people in the community.

Their job is to innovate and break down silos of work and education while hiring those not traditionally ready for success in the workforce. Their coffee shop model allows people to interact as community members and brings a social return on investment.

Barriers they face include lack of resources, increasing property taxes and business scaling challenges.

Audience Discussion

The audience split into small groups where they discussed the topic at hand before reporting back to the larger group.

In terms of the work being done by Prodigy, there was a general agreement that this work is important to the community and that properties should be more attainable for local small businesses.

One group discussed in great deal the need to be specific when helping small businesses and ensuring funds are effectively targeted. Some thought the City should donate excess buildings to help small businesses and that a workforce development center should be created in the area to help create an economic development hub and generate jobs within the community.

In the report back, another group expressed concern with the lack of affordable housing and the financial pressures on small businesses.

There was also discussion regarding the desire to keep the property as open space and that due to the conservation easement in place, the City should purchase the land and preserve it as green space.

***Park Hill Golf Course Visioning Roundtable #2:
An Equitable, Inclusive and Healthy Community
Tuesday April 10, 2018***

Panelists:

Rachel Bannon-Godfrey, Principal, Discipline Leader – Sustainability, Stantec

Tracey Stewart, Investment Director, Family Economic Security, Gary Community Investments

V. Sean Mitchell, RN APRN-BC CRNA CPHIMS MSN, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments – Colorado

Laura Aldrete, Community Planner experienced in both public and private sector development, formerly with Denver Office of Economic Development and Stapleton Redevelopment Corporation; currently Senior VP of Planning at DEN.

Panelist Discussion

Rachel kicked off the panel by giving an overview of what sustainability and resiliency looks like. Resiliency, in particular, comes down to timing and could be due to a sudden shock or long-term stresses.

There need to be a focus on people, systems thinking, adaptability, transformability, sustainability and courage. She also spoke about the Well Community Standard which is one of the first frameworks addressing what resiliency means to a community.

She closed with a focus on health noting that 70% of our healthcare outcomes are based on the physical and social environments we live in and that health is physical and mental, not just the absence of disease.

Tracey spoke next and began by speaking about the poverty statistics in Denver noting that 40% of those in Denver live below the self-sufficiency line and that rent has been growing significantly faster than wages.

She said there is an inequitable balance within communities and gentrification puts neighborhoods at risk. NE Park Hill was a community she said was at risk of gentrification.

Pressure around supply and demand makes it hard to grow and more people wanting housing than there is actually available are two other significant pressures faced by Denver. She said we lack the housing inventory at the levels affordable to households working in a large share of the region's occupations.

In terms of a resilient community, she highlighted Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

V. Sean Mitchell noted that the International Council of Nurses helped devise the world sustainability goals and noted that people are the focus.

She said people do not want to move once they are engaged in their community and we need to think of new ways to build and sustain as people want to be connected.

According to Sean, our mandate is to pass onto our children a better world than we got for ourselves and we must ask how future generations will view our actions today and if we acknowledged the realities we

face.

Laura closed the panel discussing urban planning and taking into account various perspectives and melding them into what is a community. She spoke of the need for transit, economic development and jobs.

In terms of what makes the potential Park Hill Golf Course project unique is its scale. With large projects in cities, you can be intentional about your vision for the community, while on small parcels it can be hard to build critical mass.

There is a tremendous opportunity to create a situation where you push together parks, a mix of housing and sustainability. Size and scale is not to be taken lightly and cities are complex and messy, but when you can bring in diversity you can create a richness of community. If you are static and do not change you will become an archeological site.

Audience Discussion

After the panelists spoke, the audience broke into small groups to discuss questions related to the topic.

In their report back from the small group, a few themes emerged.

Many were concerned with racial inequity and access issues in the community and the need to have this conversation so we are inclusive toward all.

Another common theme was that health was very closely tied to open space and green space. Some shared fears of super dense development or a lack of balance between green space and potential development. Walkability was mentioned as important to health.

In terms of what makes a community, there was hope that a compromise could be found and that we could have greater community which would bring the community together. Others said community may not be about proximity, but instead what we hold in common.

Affordability was mentioned on several occasions with some saying that affordability is healthy and that you need a mix of uses and income. If there were development on the site, perhaps some profits could go back to the community.

***Park Hill Golf Course Visioning Roundtable #3:
Parks, Open Space and Recreation
Tuesday April 24, 2018***

Panelists:

Dennis Piper, Former Director of Parks Planning and Implementation, Stapleton Development Corporation

Lori Catalano, Assistant Professor, College of Architecture and Planning, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Colorado Denver

Chris Hawkins, Urban Conservation Program Manager, The Nature Conservancy

Panelist Discussion

Dennis kicked off the panel speaking about how this roundtable was similar to his experience in Stapleton in 1999. Stapleton was 1,110 acres of different sites and he noted you can accomplish a lot with imagination.

Speaking about parks in general, he asked what role does the park play in the community? What regional role can it play? Who does it serve? What activities should be emphasized?

Looking at a park with similar acreage, he walked through what you could do, from soccer fields to open space. He noted that shade is very important in parks, but that it takes a great deal of time for trees to grow and take shape.

The challenge for a possible park at Park Hill Golf Course could be the connectivity to other areas but based on his example he showed that you can use a similar space in a variety of ways.

Lori presented next on her experience in creating a successful park and she stated that great parks are resilient and adapt over time. They are interwoven with the neighborhoods and residents feel a sense of ownership and that it is important to develop the right park for your current context.

You can use parks to connect natural systems with corridors for animals, fish, humans etc. to move through. This also creates variety within the experience.

It is important to look at what makes a park part of the neighborhood and what does the neighborhood need? What are the programming options in the park and how are they activated? Looping paths and connecting paths can help develop a community.

Chris began his presentation by noting that the Nature Conservancy has been in Colorado for a little over 50 years and they see themselves as creative problem solvers in the environmental space whose mission is to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends.

They are looking at how to help solve urban challenges and what the role of nature is in addressing urban challenges. They see an opportunity to connect people and nature.

In terms of the roles nature and natural systems can play, Chris noted, recreation, inspiration & discovery, community & gathering space, nutrition and connection, shade & air quality, water management and habitat.

On the Park Hill Golf Course site specifically, he noted the old growth trees, likely healthy soil, designed waterways, existing habitat and terrain, all could be thoughtfully incorporated into a park.

He closed by talking about other golf courses across the county which have undergone similar transformations, specifically courses in Wisconsin, Montreal and Los Angeles.

Audience Discussion

After the panelists had finished, the audience broke into small groups to discuss questions related to the roundtable topic before reporting back.

In terms of the hopes and fears for creating parks, open space, and recreation opportunities, there was a general desire for a large commitment of park land. Within a park, there was a desire for community-wide benefits to the broader community from water features for kids to shade for those wishing to have a picnic. It was said that the chance to preserve open space was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Those who wanted to see open space saw it as their last chance to preserve open space in the society and said that City Council needs to be lobbied.

Another common theme was that the adjacent land to the golf course should be the site of commercial development.

On the topic of who the park serves, some said it was the immediate neighborhood, while others said the transit station could help the park serve the rest of the city and region. Others expressed concern that it should not be a regional park if that means it will need more parking spaces.

There was also concern that park and open space only does not benefit the surrounding community which needs a grocery store and more affordable housing. It was stated that it's a diverse community and there are diverse interests about what should go on the land.

With regards to the long-term outlook, many saw a park on the PHGC property as being a community gathering place with connections to the surrounding area. The actual uses of the park included everything from sledding hills to community gardens.

*Park Hill Golf Course Visioning Roundtable #4:
Community Amenities
Tuesday May 01, 2018*

Panelists:

Cameron Bertron, of EFG Brownfield Partners

Chris Parr, Director of Development at Denver Housing Authority

Neambe Leadon, Program Director, Denver Food Rescue

Khadija K. Haynes, Political and Community Engagement Strategist K-Solutions

Panelist Discussion

Cameron was the first panelist to present and spoke about his experience with supermarkets, which he noted come in many formats. There are large format, medium format, neighborhood markets and corner stores.

He stated that supermarkets are a very low margin business and fresh foods are typically the lowest margins in the stores. Supermarkets have very specific real estate needs and the overall marketplace is changing extremely fast. In all, it is a very hard business to start up in a place where it is not already in place. You either have to be passionate about the business or a be a landlord and grocer at the same time.

To improve your odds of getting a grocery store into the community you need to get a market study done early so you can right-size your expectations. You need to design for success, incentivize, be patient, flexible, and ready to compromise.

Chris Parr spoke about his experience with the Sun Valley “eco-district” and how they looked at what the neighborhood needed and what they were trying to unlock.

Their community driven planning process started eight years ago and included focus groups which gave feedback on what the community needed and what their growth priority areas should be. They then took those growth priority areas and worked to make them show up in the neighborhood.

Neambe spoke next on her work with the Denver Food Rescue. She noted that there are low income, low access areas (food deserts) and that neighborhoods and populations are changing.

There is a need to be creative, for instance, you can build housing and put in a grocery store, but people need jobs and work to sustain themselves.

Khadija was the last panelist and spoke about the Montbello FreshLo Initiative which started with individual conversations with 2,500 individuals before moving onto larger meetings.

Their first goal was to build a cultural hub that would unify the diverse cultural perspectives of the community. The community is a desert of many kinds, from food, to culture, to transportation.

Their second goal was to expand the existing Montbello Urban Farms as a means of increasing local production and distribution of fresh and healthy food.

They created a communications platform to broader participation and looked at the assets they could build on, instead of focusing on what they needed to change.

She finished by stating her belief that a grocery anchored cultural hub is important to the community.

Audience Discussion

After the panelist discussion, the audience broke into small groups to discuss the roundtable topic before returning to report back to the broader group.

To ensure basic amenities, there was a focus on recreation and open space. Housing and grocery stores were also mentioned, although some people stated the community was already sufficient served by Park Hill Supermarket. Others had not heard of the store or stated it was not convenient for everyone in the community due to a lack of transportation options.

In terms of uses to bring people together, open space with programming was brought up. At another level, participants brought up the need to solve transportation challenges in the neighborhood which makes connectivity difficult and keeps the community apart.

Much of the programming mentioned was outside, such as farmers markets, picnic areas or outdoor concerts.

There was also talk about the need to think multi-dimensionally to address the needs of the community and combine uses.