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Parks and Recreation Committee

March 19, 2014

Response to the Mayor's Representative Viewpoint

In response to "A Representative View" by Mayor Hancock (Profile, March 2014), we are pleased to see that the Mayor understands the important value of parks as a "recreational, inspirational and essential respite from the hustle and bustle of city life."

However, it's not a question of the importance of parks to the City and citizens. Criticism has stemmed from ignoring public process, disregarding the intent of the City Charter and ignoring zoning to create adequate open space and parkland for our projected population increase in the City.

The current round of our City park designations came about because of citizens' outcry that the City had abused the language of our City Charter and swapped land that was a public park/designated natural area without the vote of the people. City Council and certainly the Mayor have a responsibility as elected officials to uphold the Charter and its intent to protect our parkland. Regardless what the Mayor's rationale was for the land swap, the decision should have gone to the vote of the people. Mayor Hancock abused his power when he made the decision to swap parkland without the vote of the people.

The City's parkland that was previously undesignated and is now being designated is happening because the Mayor abused his power. The designation is occurring because the citizens, RNOs, and pressure from the press are insisting on protection of our parks. The newly designated parks that were previously undesignated and vulnerable for many years were used by the current administration and previous administrations as an ace in their pocket to wheel and deal in development.

The City plans to acquire additional parkland is to be applauded and a necessary step for the projected population increase in the City. We also support a focus to increase parkland in our City areas with little or no parkland. What is missing in the Mayor's "Viewpoint" is the urgent need of finding new open space and parkland for the new high density population developments. Park/open space is not being addressed through zoning and will become a crisis if not faced now. The Transportation Oriented Developments with planned high density have little to no open space in the zoned areas for the large number of apartments and residents. Finding parkland in another part of the City to offset the lack of adequate open space in the high density development does meet open space needs.

Now is the time to address the open space/parkland issue as high density developments are being planned and zoned. In some areas these developments are going up very quickly.

Without a change in the City's code the increased pressure on our already overused parks will become a tipping point of conflict and dissatisfaction in our communities.

Is Mayor Hancock willing to stand up to developers and insist an immediate change in the zoning code for more open space in high density development? Does his newly appointed Community Planning and Development Manager, Brad Buchanan hold a vision for adequate open space in proposed development areas?

Actions speak much louder than words and the Mayor's actions so far haven't reflected his stated commitment to open space and parks for Denver citizens.

The Parks and Recreation Committee (PARC) of the Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC).

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