

July 23, 2019

Ms. Heather Lamboy
City of Aurora Planning Department
15151 East Alameda Parkway
Aurora, Colorado 80012

Re: Valley Arapahoe Land Development – Comprehensive Plan Amendment Letter of Introduction

Dear Ms. Lamboy,

On behalf of Valley Arapahoe Land Development, we are pleased to submit this Letter of Introduction for the Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the land located within the Valley Arapahoe Land Development annexation. We understand that there is a need for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment with the initial zoning and have drafted this letter of introduction and justification as well as a plan sheet showing this amendment.

CONTEXT

The parcel is located in the Southwest 1/4 Section 20, Township 5 South, Range 66 West of the 6th Principal Meridian, County of Arapahoe, State of Colorado; generally lying north of Arapahoe Road and east of South Helena Street. It consists of one parcel containing 15.759 acres which is currently occupied by a portion of a private golf course and country club. The parcel is adjacent to land in unincorporated Arapahoe County to the north and northwest, the City of Aurora to the south and southwest, and the City of Centennial to the east. The surrounding lands are generally single family to the east, private golf course and country club to the north and northwest, City-owned open land to the southwest and commercial land to the south.

Directly to the south of the site, the Cornerstar shopping center is designated in the Comprehensive Plan as a Commercial Hub, which is defined as a center of activity supporting adjacent neighborhoods with shopping, services, entertainment and community life. The existing Cornerstar shopping center provides opportunities for the Primary Land Uses found in the Commercial Hub placetype, including restaurants, commercial retail and commercial services. Supporting land uses allowed in this placetype include single-family attached residential and multi-family residential; the land found within the Valley Arapahoe Land Development can help provide these supporting uses to help ensure the success of the Cornerstar center.

GOALS AND POLICIES

We are confident that the annexation and initial zoning of the site will be complementary to the Aurora Comprehensive Plan vision and sensitive to surrounding land uses. The following items address the ways in which the proposal adheres to the Community Principles outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

A Strong Economy Principle: A strong economy with active urban places is essential for the wellbeing of residents, businesses and the community.

The proposed amendment will allow for new homes to be built in close proximity to the Cornerstar commercial hub, providing additional patrons to existing businesses, increasing activity in the center and generally supporting the local economy. Cornerstar, which is a retail 'power center' located just south of Arapahoe Road opened in the City of Aurora in 2008. The site is an Urban Renewal Area which had serious flooding and drainage obstacles along Cherry Creek, which discouraged development on the site. The center includes a variety of services, including groceries, restaurants and home shops. There are a number of retail vacancies in Cornerstar, including 50,000 SF at the former Dick's Sporting Goods, 35,000 SF at the former Sprouts, a 50% reduction in space by Office Depot and just over 25,000 SF of additional vacancies in the center. The supporting uses allowed within the Commercial Hub designation

provide opportunities for additional Aurora residents to have easy access to Cornerstar through an existing traffic signal with a future full movement at Arapahoe Road and S. Chambers Way. The potential for new residents will provide the benefit of an additional population base that can support the existing retailers and help the City grow sales tax revenue at Cornerstar and other nearby Aurora retail, including Arapahoe Crossings.

A Diverse and Equitable City Principle: Diversity and equity are assets to be nurtured and promoted by the city.

The supporting uses allowed within the Commercial Hub designation provide opportunities for additional housing and residents with easy access to commercial and retail services. The amendment will help encourage development, which will be required to include sidewalk improvements. These improvements will provide pedestrian connections to both the existing services and the existing RTD Bus Route 66 with stops located just east and south of the property. The bus route provides bus transit along Arapahoe Road with connections to light rail at Arapahoe at Village Center Station and Downtown Littleton.

Housing for All Principle: High-quality housing options enable people across all socioeconomic levels, cultural practices and stages of life to establish and manage households.

This principle recommends the practice of focusing residential placetypes around neighborhood gathering places, including neighborhood-serving commercial centers or other spaces. The supporting uses allowed within the Commercial Hub designation provide opportunities for additional attached and multi-family housing with easy access to commercial and retail services. These uses allow for higher density flats and townhomes including single-story, multigenerational senior-friendly housing that will add variety to neighborhood housing options, as much of the housing stock in the Parker and Arapahoe Road area consists of detached single-family homes.

A Healthy Community Principle: Eating healthy food, walking and exercising, living in a clean and safe environment and having access to medical care improves the lives of all Aurorans.

The site is within one mile of one full-service grocery store, a medical plaza and a fitness center. There are existing trail connections to Cherry Creek State Park to the north, the Piney Creek Trail to the east, Happy Canyon Trail and 17 Mile House Farm Park, both to the south. This proximity and access allow for quick and even walkable access to several amenities that are key contributors to a healthy lifestyle.

A Thriving Environment Principle: Stewardship of water, energy and natural open spaces is essential to the well-being and success of residents and the community.

The supporting uses allowed within the Commercial Hub designation provide opportunities for additional housing and residents with easy access to commercial and retail services, reducing distances between destinations and mitigation automobile traffic. Development of this site will strengthen trail connections to Cherry Creek State Park, the Piney Creek Trail, Happy Canyon Trail and 17 Mile House Farm Park.

Easy Mobility and Active Transportation Principle: An easy to use transportation network with multiple choices for travel supports a strong economy, healthy community and flourishing environment.

The amendment will help encourage development, which will be required to include sidewalk improvements. These improvements provide pedestrian connections to both the existing services and the existing RTD Bus Route 66 with stops located just east and south of the property. The bus route provides bus transit along Arapahoe Road with connections to light rail at Arapahoe at Village Center Station and Downtown Littleton. Additionally, many daily needs are within walking distance from the site in the Cornerstone shopping center directly to the south.

An Authentic Aurora Principle: The creation of great places, the preservation of traditionally unique places, and effective marketing and promotion are essential to improving Aurora's image.

This principle recommends a mix of residential and commercial uses; the supporting uses allowed within the Commercial Hub designation provide opportunities for additional attached and multi-family housing with easy access to the existing commercial and retail services. Further activating this stretch of Arapahoe Road will strengthen sense

of place along the corridor, provide walkable opportunities to residents, and contribute to the vitality of local businesses.

We look forward to working with the City of Aurora on the review and eventual approval of this application. Feel free to contact me directly should you have any comments, questions and/or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

Norris Design



Bonnie L. Niziolek
Principal