

Arvadans for Progressive Action

February 7, 2022

Mayor Marc Williams and Arvada City Council,

Arvadans for Progressive Action (APA) is a grassroots citizen volunteer group that empowers its community to take progressive actions on local, state, and national levels. We have over 500 members who care strongly about the community that we love. Recently, our members provided input on a number of local issues in our city. With this letter, we are sharing the major recommendations that arose. We expect that, as our elected leaders, you will carefully consider this feedback and take action.

Embracing Community Feedback

Arvada is an active and involved community. While we understand that not all folks follow Arvada City Council meetings and workshops closely, Arvadans for Progressive Action strongly believes in collaboration and feedback. **APA strongly suggests that ALL Arvada City Council Members host monthly or regular town halls to gauge community input.**

Affordable Housing

As you are aware, the City hired a consultant to prepare a Housing Needs Assessment at <https://arvada.org/source/Housing/Housing%20Strategy%202020.pdf>. This study identified the Top Housing Needs in Arvada as:

- Additional affordable rentals (or rental assistance), specifically for residents earning less than \$35,000.
- Starter homes and family homes priced near or below \$300,000.
- Increased diversity in housing stock with a focus on “missing middle” ownership. (“Missing middle” was defined as multi-unit or clustered housing types that can offer more affordability than large-lot single family homes).
- Options and product types attractive to aging seniors.

Since that study was conducted in 2019-2020, our housing crisis in Jefferson County has worsened. In addition, the recent Marshall Fire has only exacerbated the need for housing in our area (and the need to consider building code changes to make homes and developments

more fire-resistant.) We appreciate that the City has been supportive of several affordable housing developments (e.g. Allison Village redevelopment, Habitat for Humanity townhomes, Vance Street Flats, Ralston Gardens) but those take years to get constructed. We must be more aggressive in tackling our housing crisis, including housing for our lowest income residents (those living on 30%-60% of our Area Median Income), and our essential workers (teachers, firefighters, nurses, grocery workers) who may earn too much to qualify for subsidized housing but are struggling to afford rents or homeownership. APA is requesting that the City of Arvada:

- 1. Form a Housing Advisory Committee (one of the recommendations of the previously-mentioned study). This should have broad membership with different expertise (land trusts, affordable housing developers including developing sustainable/energy-efficient housing), real estate, nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity, etc.) and those who can think outside of the box.**
- 2. The City should devote resource(s) to heading up this effort, beyond those of the Arvada Housing Authority. Arvada must hire someone with time and expertise to write grant applications for affordable housing work (from state and federal grant programs), work with city planning and other staff, regularly meet with developers, as well as facilitate the Arvada Housing Advisory Committee. This individual would also work with similar staff in other Jeffco cities and the county on a county-wide Housing Continuum Task Force.**

For example, the State has set aside \$400 million of the funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to be used for increasing housing affordability and supply (a key component of this will likely be significant grants available to local governments and nonprofits.) Please note that Golden recently hired a Housing Policy Coordinator, who is already helping Golden obtain grant dollars from previous state stimulus for their affordable housing efforts.

Development and Growth

There are multiple overlaps between the Affordable Housing and Development arenas. In some cases, the two issues appear to conflict, and in others there is congruence. This tension needs to be recognized and embraced, which will help bring about more realistic and robust outcomes in both areas.

As Arvada embarks on a comprehensive planning process which will lead to an updated Comprehensive Plan, APA supports city priorities including bringing diverse and higher paying jobs to the city and creating the town center feel of Olde Town Arvada and Five Parks in other parts of the city. In addition to continuing and expanding these efforts, we strongly encourage the city to incorporate the following priorities related to development and growth into the plan, as well as involving APA in the ongoing planning process.

- 1. Urban Renewal – AURA is not serving the needs of the citizens of Arvada.**
- 2. Development near Rocky Flats and the proposed Jefferson Parkway should end due to safety concerns. Arvada should end its insistence on building the Jefferson Parkway and any development plans that rely on its completion. Improving transportation within Arvada is vital - developing a project with almost no chance of success, and tremendous environmental concerns is not! The currently undeveloped areas to the south and east of Rocky Flats should remain undisturbed FOREVER to keep from mobilizing plutonium.**

Environment

There are also overlaps between the Environment and Development areas. As Arvada updates the Comprehensive Plan, APA encourages the City to incorporate the following top priorities identified related to the Environment, as well as involving APA in the ongoing planning process.

The recent tragic fires are evidence that the climate crisis is a reality of our community. The City of Arvada must make reducing its carbon footprint a main priority. This includes how the city manages its buildings and provides services as well as encouraging residences and businesses to use alternative energy and energy conservation. Additionally, this means shortening commutes and supporting alternatives to driving to work.

The City of Arvada should also pursue water conservation efforts by removing City-owned and maintained unused/useless grass in the community. Examples would be road medians and non-pedestrian use areas around municipal buildings.

Finally, Arvadans for Progressive Action encourages the City of Arvada to xeriscape as many areas as possible to conserve water.

1) The City of Arvada should add staff support and funding to assist the Arvada Sustainability Advisory Committee (ASAC). We approve and support the List of Initiatives and Focus Areas that ASAC presented to the City Council on January 24th:

- a) Hire a Sustainability Coordinator**
- b) Support a Compost Transfer Station**
- c) More Effective Waste Diversion**

2) The City of Arvada should set up programs to collect household hazardous wastes and compostable materials and separate those from the solid waste stream.

a) We propose that the household hazardous waste collection system be set up for residents to drop off household hazardous wastes at a centralized location (or locations). There should be no fee assessed to individuals who are dropping off household hazardous wastes.

b) The compostable waste collection system should be a voluntary system where folks opt in to the program and should run year-round to accommodate grass clippings. The City of Arvada should collaborate with nearby municipalities to sponsor a compost transfer station. Any cost savings to the municipal waste contract due to the reduced volume of solid waste should be rebated to those who participate in the composting program.

3) "Just Say No" to the Jefferson Parkway as proposed (Indiana Street Corridor). The City should withdraw all future financial support for the proposed Jefferson Parkway that passes to the east and south of the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge and Rocky Flats Superfund site.

It is our understanding, since the Jefferson Parkway Public Highway Authority's inception in 2008, that the City of Arvada has spent millions of dollars for preliminary work for the parkway.

As we have suggested, we believe there are better uses for City funds.

We are asking the City Council to pass a resolution declaring that no future taxpayer funds will be spent for the Jefferson Parkway.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

APA and the Arvadans for Social Justice (ASJ) are keenly aware of the large equity gaps that exist in Arvada. APA and the ASJ have, will, and intend to work together moving forward to promote a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Arvada. APA and ASJ believe that listening to our community members that come from marginalized backgrounds is the most thoughtful, diligent, and effective way to create and implement equitable and inclusive policies.

- 1. One highlight for APA and ASJ is the City's work on creating a DEI Task Force. Our groups encourage the City to launch this new working group within the first quarter of 2022 to show how seriously the City takes creating an Arvada for all.**
- 2. Raise the city's awareness that equality does not mean equity. There are parts of Arvada that lack necessary resources, and this lack intersects with all the above referenced categories. There should be a greater focus on lower socioeconomic status parts of Arvada which lack access to food and transportation, and this should be considered throughout any decisions made to affordable housing, development and growth, and environmental implications.**

We appreciate the work that each Councilmember does to further the interests of Arvadans. We also want to state that there are many Arvada residents who share our concerns, beyond the

membership of our two organizations. We hope that you implement the requests that we've outlined above in the next two years.

Thank you for your service,

Arvadans for Progressive Action

Arvadans for Social Justice