

## **SCPNA Meeting Minutes-Wednesday, May 20, 2009**

The meeting was held in the Penthouse of the Montview Manor at 1663 Steele Street from 7 PM to 9:15 PM. Approximately 40 people were in attendance. President Jim Slotta asked for any introductions of new attendees and made a few announcements.

### **Denver Police Q & A-CRO Amy Esten**

Q: Can graffiti be gang-related? A: Absolutely, especially being this close to a high school. Basically, Colorado Boulevard is a divider for the gangs, with the Bloods on the east side, the Crips on the west side. They will spray paint on one another's turf. The best thing to do is call 3-1-1 immediately and ask for Graffiti Clean-up. They will respond within 72 hours and cover it up with paint. Or, you can get paint and cover it up yourself if it is on your property or on public property. The main thing is to act quickly, or it will promote more graffiti to occur. If you call 3-1-1, you need to give very specific locations. Any graffiti is likely to be gang-related. If you see it happening, it's a crime in progress, so call 9-1-1. Give the Dispatcher the best description you can of the person(s)--whether they are in a vehicle, on a bike, on foot, what they're wearing, male/female, age range, hair color, etc. If someone is caught applying graffiti, the law is pretty hard on them.

Q: Is video equipment helpful? A: Video surveillance, whether fake or real, can be a deterrent, if you want to go to that extreme. If real, thousands of dollars will be needed to produce video that can ID the persons; the crimes are most often done at night, and the criminals often wear hoods. Even if a great video is obtained, a witness ID is usually necessary for conviction. All things considered, use fake equipment as a deterrent.

Q: Can we legally record without someone knowing it? A: Yes, especially if they are outside your home, committing a crime. Again, it's a good deterrent, but an ID may be needed in addition.

Q: How active are these gangs here, and what are they doing? A: It's mainly going to be drugs, and the gang wars that go on every summer. This year it hasn't been too bad, yet. Crimes of one gang against another will perpetuate another '1-for-1' crime. So, killings, drugs, car theft, criminal mischief, graffiti, etc., especially in summer. Denver does have a gang problem, perhaps not as bad as say L. A., but it would be good to be aware of things like graffiti and react to them. It's like the 'Broken Windows' theory—if one window gets broken, and then another and another, and suddenly you're living in a neighborhood where gangs think it's their neighborhood and they run it. And then it takes a lot more police presence to get rid of that. So, once you see that graffiti, even though it's not your property, call 3-1-1, call the dumpster company, or paint over it yourself; just take care of it immediately.

(Comment) There's been a lot of drug activity in the 1500 Block of Harrison, but police presence has reduced it a lot. A: That's the kind of thing we need to know about. If it's going on, that doesn't mean you have to live with it. Call 9-1-1 if you see an in-progress crime or if someone's life is in danger. If you see a trend happening, call non-emergency (720-913-2000). The more you call us the more we know there's a need for a response.

Q: I've heard we're having a lot of problems with the bars on Colfax, like the RockBar and the Bluebird and others. Would you address that? A: If we don't know there's something going on, and you get upset because there's nothing happening. There are

people who go to those places to drink and will be obnoxious and rowdy when they're leaving. If you can call us, we'll be there as quick as we can. Friday/Saturday nights are busy for us, and it may take us a while. We may not get there right when they leave, but when the next group is coming out of the bar there will be a police presence. There will also then be a recorded request. We go off of our reported crime trends. Crime analysts look at the times and numbers of calls, and tell the Commander where more officer presence is needed. So, the more you call, the more we can help you. Getting irritated by the problem without making the call does not help us help you. Start when the problems are small—the graffiti, the noise coming from the bars, the rowdy bar patrons getting their parked cars—that's what we are paid to do, to help you.

Q: Do you now recognize this portion of Colfax as a 'bar scene' or a 'late evening entertainment scene' where you know you'll have these types of problems? A: We realize it's become more of a bar scene than it ever was before, and you don't want to see it go downhill. The difference between downtown and here is that this area is not nearly as bad. The downturn in the economy has reduced the police coverage. When people call and report problems, it increases the pressure to respond. Call the non-emergency dispatch number. It would be illegal for us to not show up on a call. Beyond the call itself, it is helpful to have a complainant. The more you're willing to put yourself out there and sign a complaint. The criminals don't have to know where you live. There are ways to get around the fear of retaliation. The problem is not going to get solved unless people step forward, even at two in the morning.

(Comment-Officer Esten:) I know the parking issue is a big thing, and this falls into the same category. We need you to call in order for us to help you. There are laws that say when a car is parked in a spot without any permit regulations, they can park there legally for up to 72 hours. If longer than that, we can put an abandoned car notice on the vehicle, which will allow it to be towed away to a car impound. If a car is illegally parked, like across a driveway, you can sign and the car can be 'short-towed' to a nearby legal place and the car will be ticketed.

Q: Has there been times when owners of bars have been approached and asked to help? (Comment by Tom Rutter:) We have agreements with the RockBar in which the owner has agreed to do many of the things that could help with many of the problems we are having with patrons. A conversation with the owner is needed. (Amy's response:) The structure of this meeting is very laid out, and we should adhere to that. If you do need mediation on an issue like this, I'll be happy to help. But for tonight, let's deal with the parking issues and keep the tensions down.

### **Discuss, Vote-SCPNA Parking Resolutions**

Jim Slotta and co-VP Nick Mancini led members in attendance through a process of discussing and voting on parking resolutions. A list of six resolutions had been developed for presentation at the meeting by SCPNA Officers, in consideration of recommendations by the SCPNA Parking & Traffic Committee, of ongoing conversations in the neighborhood, of email exchanges, of discussions held at the scpna.org web site, and of input from city-wide informational meetings about the Denver Strategic Parking Plan (SPP). The process: Preliminary comments by Jim and Nick; five minute statement by

Bonita Lahey for the Parking & Traffic Committee; five minute statement by Rob Hunsley about the SPP; two minute statements by attendees wishing to speak about the resolutions; further open discussion and voting on each of the resolutions.

Statement--Nick Mancini (1601 Garfield): I'm new to the neighborhood, and may be criticized for what I say, but this is how I see it. There's a lot of passion about this topic. A lot of people have put a lot of time and effort into discussing it, through emails and other ways. The overall issue is that we're all trying to make our parking better, and various people are trying to approach it in different ways. A benefit of our meetings is that we do have an officer here, and sometimes when there are visitors parking on our streets, disruptive behavior happens. That's a crime scene—something for the detectives. For this exercise, let's focus only on the issues of parking. We can't control people's behavior after the bars, but we can make decisions about how we would like our parking to be. Remember that Denver has their Strategic Parking Plan, and we might be somewhat limited on what we can do, but let's as a group of people try to focus on what we can do as a neighborhood association to put ourselves in the best position that benefits everybody in our neighborhood, and have the best parking. So, Tom, thanks for sharing about the RockBar. That's a sticky-pad issue for the end of the meeting. All of those issues that are sticky-pads, please save them to the end, and let's focus on the six issues here, and hear both sides of people who are really trying to do the ultimate goal of how can we make parking efficient and best for all the residents in this neighborhood.

### **5 Minute Statements**

Statement--Bonita Lahey (1600 Cook) (representing the Parking and Traffic Committee): The Committee started last October. We tried to get broad participation, but mostly it was Roger Lawson and myself and a few others. One thing is that parking is symptomatic. It's never been about parking, but it's been about preserving this neighborhood. I've been to four SPP meetings. In those times, the City has always been about preserving the neighborhoods, i.e., about not having the neighborhood destroyed by those bars on Colfax. Roger and I got involved because we live at 16<sup>th</sup> and Cook, which is one of the hardest hit areas for the Bluebird. Pretty much every night, from midnight to 2 am you're woken by somebody screaming and yelling, either at night or at 6 am when there's something going on in the park. So, the parking is symptomatic, and those working on the SPP recognize that it's an issue whenever you have neighborhoods in a business district. They understand there is a problem here. The way every other city has dealt with this is that it does become a residential permit only neighborhood, because that is the only way you can preserve the neighborhood. Roger and I talked to them, and they agree that the neighborhood needs to be protected. We're losing our neighborhood; our Neighborhood Watch is worthless. People we don't know come and go and cause property damage and do worse like peeing on my fence. That's why we came up with the parking recommendations. We're not anti-business, we're anti-bad business. We don't believe the neighborhood needs to take on the burden of a legitimate business expense, like providing parking for their customers. As they also mentioned in the SPP meetings, as long as our parking is free, people will park within a quarter mile of where they're going. If it were permit parking only in the evenings, it would not be free for them, and they would have to make other arrangements. Our problem is we're a little neighborhood, and

there's no place else to go. So, this is about parking but the issue is preserving the neighborhood for the neighborhood, so we can have a neighborhood that we all want to live in, where we're not being broken into all the time or woken up all hours of the night. The parking issue is symptomatic, and we believe the SPP committee agrees that we should have residential permit parking only. The resolutions we recommended were that we believe that the Colfax night businesses, East High School, and City Park should resolve their own parking issues that negatively and regularly impact the neighborhood. That's not the same as turning this over to the city to make a decision for us. This is a decision we should be able to make on our own. And that's how we differ from what is being presented here. (A request was made to read the committee's four resolutions.)

- (1) Colfax night businesses, East High, and City Park should resolve their parking issues that negatively and regularly impact the neighborhood;
- (2) The city should improve ordinance enforcement and police supervision in problem areas and times;
- (3) Apartment and condo managers and personal residences should encourage full use of available off street parking;
- (4) We should facilitate a neighborhood plan.

Statement--Rob Hunsley (Pinnacle Tower 1) (about the Denver Strategic Parking Plan): We need to be very careful and not address this in a vacuum. There is a city-wide zoning ordinance review going on; there is also the SPP. What the city is trying to do is, instead of looking at individual problems, to come up with a universal across-the-city plan to address parking, because it's not just us. They've hired consultants, whose educated opinion is that an ideal mix is an 85% use of all parking whether it be on-street or off-street. How that is achieved is by having a series of ever-increasing steps that produce a cost to parking. The way the residential permit parking has historically been in Denver is that it is exclusive—residents only can park, while customers cannot. That's what created the issue on Cook Street. People from the 1600 Block of Cook cannot park on the 1500 Block of Cook if the 1600 Block is full. What the city is looking to do is that a resident can have a permit and park as long as they want. Somebody from outside the neighborhood can park in an available spot, but for only a time-limited amount of time. So, they'd put that into place; if parking is at 85% or higher, then go to the next step, which would be imposing a cost to either guests or visitors to the neighborhood, be it parking kiosks or parking meters. Once that is put into place, then the next step as parking becomes more and more busy and 85 % is reached again, then either raise the fees or that's the point at which the city will start to support parking districts and garages. We've got to understand the economic situation the city's in right now. It doesn't have the money to build parking garages along this section of Colfax. Also, the city needs to have people understand that there's a cost to on-street parking, too. Property taxes don't come close to covering the costs of on-street parking. Sales tax represents 54% of the city's revenues. So, we've got to understand that in the greater scheme of things, it's not just residents, it's also customers, business owners, and all the stakeholders. In that light, the city wants to implement this SPP. It's going to look for 3-5 neighborhoods as a test study, to implement a few of these to see what the effectiveness of them is. We as a neighborhood should try to be one of those test markets. The Bluebird District here is an Office of Economic Development test case. This would be very synergistic in test-casing that. Plus, the zoning changes will dramatically impact this neighborhood. And then, we have the need for parking restrictions.

## **2-Minute Statements**

Statement--Richard Gonzalez (1560 Saint Paul): I want to comment on two things. First, I don't understand how the SPP process works. Perhaps Bonita or others who have attended meetings can fill us in about the consultants and what their philosophy is about parking. One of things about government that I do know is that if we were to volunteer to become a test site, once the government starts down a road, it tends to stay on that road regardless of what objections come along. I'm concerned about what kind of a test model we're going to be volunteering for that we might get stuck with. So, until we know more about who these planners are and what their philosophy is, I think we should object to participating in something we don't understand. The second thing is that as I look through these resolutions, the number one resolution is that residents have priority for parking. If we don't agree with that, then we are in two separate camps. We all respect businesses. There are things happening on Colfax that we like and things we don't like; those things we don't like tend to affect parking more than anything else. So we have to assert ourselves and say that residential parking is the number one priority. Good neighborhoods stay good because we pay attention to the details and to what is important to us and we assert ourselves and we manage for the outcomes. That's my point of view, and I'd like to hear more about the SPP philosophy. (Response from Bonita Lahey and others: There is background information at the city web site--denvergov.org/strategic parking plan.)

Statement--Jim Smirs (sp?) (Greektown section of South City Park): I've viewed a pilot program like this in a place where I lived. Last year Chicago decided to privatize its parking meters, and implemented it three months ago. So far, on this long-term lease, the city has been completely devastated by what is done. By installing meters, or adding to prices of meters, the current streets currently do not ever get used. Patrons and residents have deemed the price too high. Patrons have moved into the surrounding city blocks and taken over residential parking. The residents are unhappy. Also, people are not willing to stop at the small shops and pay money to park. They are going to the large stores instead of paying for the kiosk parking. Small businesses that have no customer parking are suffering. The neighborhood and shops are furious with the mayor. Those who have rubber-stamped the mayor's initiatives for 20 years are now calling for his head. I can't vote so I'm leaving now, but I urge you to not become a pilot program.

Statement--Drew Filchak (1521 Adams): I love the neighborhood and want it to stay a great neighborhood. I think a lot of great work has come through on these resolutions. We have to stay together as a neighborhood on this. Those of in the 1500 blocks have resident parking at this point; we've put up with it, and it's really been a help. The city has made a lot of money from this. One night between two blocks 187 tickets were given out. I was stunned. So, they come in, they go out. I don't want us to adopt any kind of plan that says we're going to be a pilot study because we all have loved ones. My friends and family come to visit me; I am limited to two people; I call Bill & Karen and say, "I need your parking passes for the night." We all do that; twice a year I can have 12 guests park there. We put up with that. The Bluebird has been a challenge, but this parking thing is 100 times the challenge. I don't want you to consider the idea that we're going to adopt

some kind of pilot program because it's not going to end with just one step. It's going to go to step 2, 3, and 4.

Statement--Rich Kadinger (1571 Steele): Jeff and I have seen a lot of changes in fifteen years. We love South City Park, and I think the changes have been good ones. Our neighborhood has become a very trendy place. There's something called the "Walk Score" that is one of the selling points for real estate. The reason people love our neighborhood is because of a lot of the things happening on Colfax. I know there are negatives that go along with that, but those places on Colfax don't have a lot of options for providing parking because of the set-up; physically it's just not going to work. I'm concerned that adopting residential permit parking only throughout all of South City Park is going to drive those businesses out of existence. Our block is one of those that does not have any restrictions in place, so I hope that gives me a little more credibility than I might otherwise have. So, I'm opposed to any more severe parking restrictions for South City Park, and I wanted to express that point of view. There are some real positives our neighborhood has experienced as a result of the resurgence that has happened in the Colfax Bluebird District.

Statement--Roger Lawson (1608 Cook): Meetings are more entertaining now. It's great to see involvement now, whereas the (parking) committee struggled to have involvement. Some agree, some disagree with the committee report, but at least now everybody's getting involved. I just want to encourage everybody to keep this going; it's a big issue to everybody, whether it's in front of your home or somebody else's home. Our community is growing--not 'out' and wide, but 'up'—and so we have to have room for those new residents. I'm glad to see the new zoning in place and agreements being made to take care of people's off-street parking needs. Part of our original proposal was to encourage single family dwellings as well to clean out that old garage or to move that back fence up into your property 15 or 20 feet to provide some off-street parking for yourself. Not to provide more parking for the bars, because that doesn't solve the problem. All of those businesses are going to exacerbate the problem. I agree with Bonita when she said we're not anti-business, we're anti-bad business. To me, a bad business is any business that puts their business expense on somebody else. There's no reason for the community of Colfax businesses not to work out all those spaces that go unused night after night. They can negotiate with National Jewish and the Rosen Properties and get those spaces used. My last comment is that the 'resident only' is misnamed and getting a bad rap. It's not resident only 24 hours a day; the blocks that are restricted are from 6 PM to Midnight. Except for maybe Steele, every other block has some kind of restriction. In closing I want to say think cooperatively as a neighborhood, don't think of just your own space.

Statement--CJ (1500 block of Milwaukee): I'm pretty much ground zero for the Rockbar and all the related problems. I'm opposed to restricting the parking because they're going to park there anyway. I have no problem with their patrons parking there except at 2:30 AM when I have had damage to my car. I have no problem with them parking there except that business contributes nothing to this community whatsoever. It's their job to be innovative to find a place to park their patrons. It's not our job to give them space so they can make money and then in turn throwing glass bottles and cans in our yards and

screaming. Is this really the type of neighborhood we want? Put the responsibility on them to figure out where they can park. My personal solution is to knock down the hooker motel and make a parking structure there; then the problem is over. I can conduct myself fine in a bar; I don't understand why there has to be a need for underage minors to get trashed, and to come to my neighborhood and act ridiculous. Making them pay is not going to solve the problem. It's going to prevent my friends from coming over; they're going to get tickets. I'll get my resident permit and that's about it. I want my family to come, et cetera. I don't want these people to be here, but it advantages the business and does nothing at all for us. Strong neighborhoods are through strong families and strong neighbors.

Statement--Tom Rutter (Park Hill): I own the 1550 Milwaukee apartments. I speak tonight as a business owner. I think it is important we make the distinction between two kinds of businesses we have here—the cupcake shop/hair salon/Tattered Cover/Stella's (fabulous family-run businesses) versus the bars. I came to Colfax at 1:30 AM St. Patrick's Night; it was scary with the drunk patrons on the street when the bars were closing. I think turning this over to the city by voting tonight to make this a pilot plan would be a disaster. I suggest we all get involved. We have the solutions to this. We have an agreement with Jesse Morreale of the Rockbar that he is not keeping. His parking lot is half full at night. I'm suggesting that there are solutions. We must make a distinction and talk about the issues with the problem bars and face them. We have the tools; many of them have been agreed upon. I call upon the leadership to postpone the vote on turning this over to the city. Let us talk about the solutions that we can bring to this problem. Don't turn this over to the city. We will have parking meters on our streets, and in this economy we will never get a parking garage.

Statement--Katy Kupecz (1608 Cook): I remember when I was in the 1500 block of Cook, when the Bluebird was just renewing itself as a business, and I was the only person to vote against the resident parking permit, because I knew it would impact my neighbors in the community. But I was outvoted. Interestingly, I moved to the 1600 block, and now I feel the effect of the decision that was made on the 1500 block, because it simply pushed them one block further north. This neighborhood is really changed in 16 years; I think it's a great neighborhood--wonderful people, the walkability, the park--and I'm really excited about most of the businesses that have come into our neighborhood. I try to support them. But it's the bad businesses that are making our neighborhood a difficult place to live, and likely a difficult place--in spite of the fact that we're a walkable neighborhood--to sell. The Rockbar is scary for those of us who are a little older, as might be the Bluebird or some other areas. That doesn't mean that I won't have a beer or go to a concert at the Bluebird, but I think we have to be respectful of how they impact our neighborhood. And we have to make decisions as residents of the neighborhood, who live here, and have invested a huge sum of our savings. I would also like to say that we do need to think about some alternatives for National Jewish properties, and there's a building near here with a parking facility not heavily used, and so on. So I'd like us to continue some sort of discussion to look into it and really frame it so we can guide our businesses that are really impacting our neighborhoods to not impact us so negatively.

### **Voting on the SCPNA Parking Resolutions**

A suggestion from the attendees: That Resolution 1 (Strategic Parking Plan Pilot) and the SCPNA Bylaws Amendment (Broadening the SCPNA boundaries) be considered at the end of the meeting, and even possibly be tabled to give the opportunity for more discussion, and that Resolutions 2 through 6 be voted on tonight. There was unanimous agreement that we proceed first with Resolutions 2 through 6, and then address the above-mentioned issues if time permits.

Resolution 2. (Recognized to be an action item for the association) A motion was passed to adopt the resolution as submitted:

**SCPNA will seek ways to reduce parking pressures from Colfax Businesses, East High School, and City Park events.**

Passed (33 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Resolution 3. (Recognizing the accompanying need for the association to publish police suggestions for crime reporting) A motion was passed to adopt the resolution as submitted:

**SCPNA will request improved parking ordinance enforcement and police supervision in problem areas, at problem times.**

Passed (33 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

Resolution 4. (Recognized to be an action item for the association) A motion was passed to adopt the resolution as submitted with a friendly amendment (underlined):

**SCPNA will encourage full use of available off-street parking by both single- and multiple-family residences, enforcing existing agreements as necessary.**

Passed (33 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain)

Resolution 5. A motion was passed to adopt the resolution as submitted with a friendly amendment (removing the parenthesized phrase “not negatively impacting other blocks”):

**SCPNA will support individual block efforts to cope with extreme parking pressures.**

Passed (19 Yes, 10 No, 3 Abstain)

Resolution 6. (Recognizing this has the highest importance of all the resolutions to the neighborhood) A motion was passed to adopt the resolution as submitted.

**SCPNA supports the philosophy that residents have “number one” but not exclusive priority for nearby curbside parking.**

Passed (25 Yes, 4 No, 3 Abstain)

Resolution 1. (Concerning a request to be considered as a pilot neighborhood for the Denver Strategic Parking Plan) (Recognizing that if we do make the request that only South City Park blocks should be included and not blocks in Congress Park) A motion was made/seconded to table this resolution.

(Passed (32 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

### **Voting on SCPNA Bylaws Amendment to broaden SCPNA boundaries**

A motion was made/seconded to table the vote on this Amendment.  
Passed (30 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

-Minutes prepared and submitted by Jim Slotta using a digital audio recording. They are available at the neighborhood web site, [scpna.org](http://scpna.org)