

Cherry Creek Chronicle

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Editorial

Can Denver's Neighborhoods Take Back City Hall?

Denver has been described as a city of neighborhoods. It has 78 recognized neighborhoods and many more registered neighborhood associations. There is even an umbrella organization called INC (Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation). Because candidates when running for City Council court and are always deferential to neighborhood associations, many everyday citizens think that their neighborhood associations are highly influential regarding the actions of their elected representatives. In the last few years neighborhood associations from Cherry Creek North to Hilltop to Mayfair to Congress Park to Crestmoor Park and across the city have had their innocence badly shattered.

As most people with an understanding of how Denver works know that neighborhood organizations are to be placated but the real power brokers in the city are real estate developers and powerful unions who fund and in some cases run the campaigns for city office. When citizens in the Highlands want to fight a Red Peak Properties development, or when the residents of Hilltop and Crestmoor wish to protest the giving away of open space at Lowry Vista, or when property owners in Cherry Creek North wish to slow down the massive mega developments in Cherry Creek North or when the citizens of Hampden Heights want to protest the giving away of a portion of Hentzell Park for development, they find themselves powerless with their only remedy to try to institute expensive and time-consuming lawsuits. The courts are in turn run by judges who are themselves government employees and can often be unsympathetic to groups trying to upset the established order. That is why the phrase "You Can't Fight City Hall" is so often accurate.

The city's Planning and Community Development Office is composed of ambitious individuals hoping to jump to the private sector with developers or are lifetime bureaucrats who do not want to rock the boat. It is difficult to remember the last time the Planning and Development Office significantly altered a project due to citizen input.



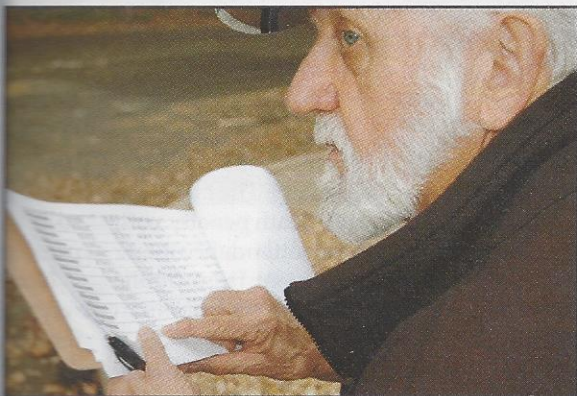
Citizens coming before City Council to fight excessive density in their neighborhoods or the giving away of parks and open space are either ignored or in some cases literally mocked or laughed at by some council members. It will take a city historian to trace back

to when a real estate development project was denied by City Council by a full vote. Protesting neighborhood groups usually lose by a vote of 10 to 3 or worse. The few votes in favor of neighborhood groups are usually simply for show and to obfuscate the fact that the game is rigged.

It is a widely recognized dirty little secret that if the councilmember whose district a project is in votes in favor it will inevitably pass. If a project is not going to be approved it will never come to a vote. So if you are going down to City Hall to urge denial regarding a park or open space giveaway or a high-rise development you are almost inevitably wasting your time. No one cares what you think, most of all the city council members, except in rare instances

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ols: Endangered By Education Reform



Ed Augden

ask. For example, did Michael Bloomberg actually donate half a million dollars to the DPS Board of Education 2013 election campaign? Being a New Yorker, what is his interest in DPS? Why would certain candidates, victorious ones, accept campaign contributions from individuals and organizations that offer no solutions (other than charter schools or turnarounds) or who do not appear to understand that racial and socioeconomic segregation constitute a danger to society and to the poor? Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) and Stand for Children (SFC) are two such organizations that have not yet taken a stand against this increasing segregation. Instead, they support programs and policies that result in increasing segregation.

The DFER website includes "What We Stand For" — new accountable schools and closing "failing schools"; supporting a governance structure holding leaders responsible with tools needed to make change; "empowering mayors to lead urban school districts so they can be held accountable by the electorate"; school principals and communities select teachers. Do DFER members value equity or understand that inequity is growing in DPS through the poli-

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Stand for Children purports to advocate for children. In Illinois, however, the organization successfully lobbied the state legislature for a law requiring teachers' unions to have the support of 75 percent of membership before striking. Aimed at the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU), the tactic backfired when 92 percent of Chicago

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Next spring there will be another municipal election in Denver. The question becomes whether in that election will average everyday citizens try to take back City Hall from the unions and real estate developers who control so much of what goes on in Denver. One encouraging sign is that candidates who are not associated with the unions or real estate developers are stepping up to the plate to run for city council in the 6th and 10th Districts which adjoin each other across Cherry Creek. Charlie Brown in District 6 and Jeanne Robb in District 10 are both term limited.

In District 10 former head of the Cherry Creek North Neighborhood Association, Wayne New, has thrown his hat into the ring. For eight years Wayne New has fought developers and City Hall to try to preserve the Cherry Creek area as a place where average citizens will want to live and work. He has gotten to see up close and personal how the system really works and how stacked the deck is against everyday citizens and their concerns. He knows how much developers will pour into the campaign of whoever is their selected candidate in District 10, but is willing to fight the good fight anyway.

In District 6 anyone running will have big shoes to fill to replace Charlie Brown, who was one of the few on city council willing to listen to everyday citizen concerns and fight the mayor's office on behalf of the good of Denver as a whole. It is rumored that Paul Kashmann, the publisher of the excellent local newspaper *Washington Park — The Profile* is considering running. We are readers of his regular column in *The Profile* and while most members of this editorial board do not necessarily share his prospective on life, we do think he would make a wonderful candidate and if elected he would be his own man on City Council.

As a practical matter, City Council has become in too many cases a type of revolving door. Many of the candidates for city council these days are simply aides or former aides to council members. They are well acquainted with the money men for the unions and real estate developers and just slide into the position assumed by the prior incumbent. A few desultory open houses with neighborhood groups and a few mass mailers and the beat goes on and nothing ever changes. Wayne New and Paul Kashmann would provide a unique perspective and at least shake up a system that badly needs shaking up. More candidates like them are needed throughout the city.

— Editorial Board

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Dunafon Considering Run For Governor

None of the potential candidates excite me for Governor. I hope Mike Dunafon decides to run. It will shake up the landscape and offer a viable alternative. Good for him.

Betsy Walker
Denver, CO

Park Advocates

Thank you for your coverage on John Case and David Felice in your parks article. I am thankful that some people are standing up for our parks and fighting city hall. Please tell them to keep fighting the good fight.

Nancy Lewis
Denver, CO