

Hester, Morgan

From: Daniel Smith <d.smith@ascensioncos.org>
Sent: Monday, September 26, 2022 8:48 PM
To: Plan - ReToolCOS - SMB
Subject: RetoolCOS appeal process

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Dear Morgan, Peter, and Planning Commission,

We're writing in support of the appeals process as presented in the RetoolCOS draft. We believe the 1,000 ft and 2 miles radii are appropriate.

At the recent town hall, Faith Table came to advocate for more residential uses in existing single family housing. This remains our first priority. However, we were surprised to hear so much discussion on the appeals process and want to speak on the matter.

The existing appeals process makes building more expensive as builders have to factor in the cost and time of an appeal. These added costs are even greater for multi-family and affordable housing projects which are more likely to be appealed, often frivolously. This is yet one more barrier to building more affordable housing in our city. (This doesn't even take into account the added cost and time for the city to address appeals, as was noted by at least one member of the commission.)

The rationale given at the meeting for expanding the geography of an appeal was that it enhances public input. This misses the mark for two reasons. First, as Peter Wysocki noted, the meetings are open for comment from anyone from anywhere. The change in appeals process does not change who gets to speak, just who gets to demand city and builder resources be spent to address their concerns. But furthermore, there is a difference between allowing more public input and getting a wider sense of the public's approval of a project. It's no secret that public hearings tend to draw in residents who are older, wealthier, and less racially diverse. Essentially, they draw in those who are able to cut out an hour or four from their day to comment after spending many more hours researching. (A quick look at who attended the town hall supports this point.) By limiting the radius of those who can appeal, the commission would actually make it more likely that those who appeal have a vested interest in the project, not just those with more time and resources and possibly an axe to grind.

It's paradoxical, but limiting the appeal will probably increase the likelihood that appeals come from a more diverse and more impacted community, all while reducing costs to the city and builders and making affordable housing projects more feasible.

If those beyond the 1,000 ft/2 mile radii want to appeal, they should work with community members more directly impacted. If they don't find a sympathetic ear and partner closer to the project, the appeal is likely not warranted anyways.

Thank you,
Daniel Smith and the Colorado Springs Faith Table.
Pastor, Ascension Lutheran Church
Co-Chair, Colorado Springs Faith Table

P.S. Morgan - we know that normally we write to you and not to Peter Wysocki or the commission. That said, given the next steps in the process, we would appreciate if Peter and the commission were able to receive this note before making requests to you and your team on the amended final draft. Thank you.