Community Development in the New Economy: An Overview

Sarah Rockwell, Kaplan Kirsch & Rockwell
Diane Barrett, Special Assistant to the Mayor, City and County of Denver
Steve Kaplan, Kaplan Kirsch & Rockwell

Wednesday, June 15, 2011
Topics for Today’s Discussion

• Unique Considerations of the Public Sector
• Public Financing
• Environmental Issues
• Air Quality and Transportation
• Land Use and Entitlements
• Public Involvement
Some Basic Themes

- Limited public funds means more creativity/greater scrutiny
- Track record is important
- Big projects can’t get done without federal/public assistance
- Policies don’t always translate to implementation
Considerations of the Public Sector

What Will the Public Sector Emphasize?

• Job Creation
• Developer track record
• Milestones
• More control over the land
• Development needs to pay its own way
• Greater emphasis on quality/placemaking
Considerations of the Public Sector

How will the public sector seek to promote development?

• Streamlining development review/zoning
• Removing barriers
• Acting as facilitator/promoting new arrangements (e.g. Urban Land Conservancy)
• Creating the building blocks (e.g. Arapahoe Square)
• Trying not to cannibalize existing tax base
Public Financing

- Tap multiple sources (Metro Districts, URAs, DDAs, BIDs etc.) to access property tax revenue, tax increment revenue, special assessment revenue, etc.
- Exploit federal and state funding available
- Search out substantial private investors looking for places to invest (but know that control or equity requirements may be steep)
- Bring patience, creativity and tenacity to the effort
Environmental Issues

• Focus on bargain hunting increases likelihood of environmental conditions that require remediation or management
• Managing actual or potential liability associated with environmental contamination is key to taking advantage of the bargains
• Public and private sector both more willing to be involved with environmentally contaminated property
Air Quality/Transportation

- Denver will be subject to stricter EPA air quality regulations – expected by end of July, 2011
- Regional Air Quality Council has been charged with coming up with new land use and transportation measures
  - More focus on concentrating development near transit
  - More consideration of transportation pricing to reduce VMT
  - Consideration of changed parking policies to reduce travel demand
- DRCOG’s role will increase in terms of transportation projects on the Regional Transportation Plan
Land Use and Entitlements

- Denver needs more active, strategic thinking about major projects
- Emphasis now on establishing building blocks (Arapahoe Square)
- New Denver Zoning Code focuses on locations for new development and appropriate density in each location
- In Denver, Development Services department provides some streamlined processes inter-agency
- Should anticipate increased fees
Public Involvement

- Public/community organizations and developers both getting smarter
- Early engagement
- Transparency
- New ways to communicate
Lessons from Major Projects

• Stapleton
• Denver Union Station
• Cherokee
• Westminster Mall
• FasTracks/TOD projects