

Neighborhood Information Meeting - FoCo Café and Eco-Thrift
February 19, 2014
281 N. College Ave., Conference Room A-D

This neighborhood meeting is being held to discuss two potential leases of City-owned properties: 225 Maple St. (for the FoCo Café), and 300 N. Howes St. (for a relocated Eco-Thrift retail resale store). A previous meeting was held on February 5, 2014 where City staff discussed the City's plans for its properties in the area and about the zoning and land use review process. Each applicant presented information about their plans for the leased sites. The remainder of the meeting provided an opportunity for questions and responses. This meeting is intended to provide information or changes based on the questions raised at the previous meeting.

Comments in italics were added for clarification or because it is new information following the meeting.

City Staff in Attendance:

Ken Mannon, Operation Services
Helen Matson, Operation Services
Kayla Ballard, Operation Services
Peter Barnes, Zoning
Seth Lorson, Planning
Jerry Schiager, Police Services
Beth Sowder, Neighborhood Services
Sarah Burnett, Neighborhood Services

Applicants in Attendance:

Tony Cooper, Eco-Thrift
Kathleen Baumgardner, FoCo Café
Jeff Baumgardner, FoCo Café

City Staff

City staff provided a brief overview of the lease process, city master plan for the area, and zoning regulations and process (quick review from the information shared at the February 5th meeting). Sarah also provided a list of issues and concerns raised either at the meeting or received since the last meeting. This list includes:

- Security/enforcement
- Parking impacts
- City's vision for Civic Center and how these businesses fit that vision
- Potential changes to lease terms
- Outdoor material storage – front/back (Eco-Thrift)
- Dog (Eco-Thrift)
- If/how/process for customers to work for meal(s) (FoCo Café)
- Hours of operation (FoCo Café)

Contact information was provided for City staff:

- Ken Mannon, Operation Services Director – kmannon@fcgov.com or 221-6894
- Peter Barnes, Zoning Supervisor – pbarnes@fcgov.com or 970-416-2355

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- Sarah Burnett, Neighborhood Development Review Liaison – sburnett@fcgov.com or 970-224-6076

Applicant Presentations

Each applicant provided an overview of their businesses and plans for each location.

Questions, Answers, Comments

Security/Enforcement

Q – What are the options to ensure a safe environment – other enforcement options like disorderly conduct, harassment, obstruction?

A – Deputy Chief Schiager – Needs the details of each situation to determine the best enforcement action to take. Could write a ticket for any of the issues mentioned, but they try to determine what the best action is. Sometimes there are other options. Law enforcement is not the answer to homeless issue. Many times they are not doing anything illegal. If there is illegal activity/behavior, then police can take enforcement action. There is no enforceable loitering statute. They are working on panhandling – some panhandling is protected by the 1st Amendment. He does not think these businesses will add to crime in the area. Police hear from both sides – some believe not enough while others believe too much being done about the homeless population.

Q – Do we need ‘No Trespassing’ signs posted at Penny Flats?

A – Deputy Chief Schiager – He believes they do need the signs so that Police can address any trespassing issues. He also offered to go take a look at the area to help them determine what steps would be best to address any issues. *(He also provided contact information to the residents following the meeting.)* The trash enclosure area is the main concern.

Hours of Operation

Q – What are the hours of operation for FoCo Café?

A – Jeff Baumgardner/FoCo Café – Yes, 11-2 – lunch and some other events through the year. They do not think individuals sleeping by the trash enclosures will choose FoCo Café because it is not a free meal – they have to participate. They can get a free meal up the street.

Parking Impacts

Tony Cooper/Eco-Thrift – He noted that a concern was expressed by a property owner about the potential for a line of cars waiting to donate. He said that does not currently occur, and does not expect to have a lineup of cars waiting to donate – it just doesn’t happen.

Helen Matson/City Operation Services – We met with Tony and Jeff to discuss parking. There is no parking currently allowed in front of the garage doors (at Eco-Thrift) – it is now posted with signs. We are planning for parking directly in front of each business as follows:

- FoCo Café - 4 spaces will be 1 hour parking - 8am – 5pm Monday through Saturday
- Eco-Thrift – 4 spaces will be 1 hour parking – 8am – 6pm daily

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Q – I'm concerned that this will create even more of a parking issue for residential parking.

A – Helen Matson/City Operation Services – This is not a permanent solution to the parking problems in the area – eventually a parking garage will be built. Businesses also need parking – not all on-street spaces can be long-term for residents.

Q – Can City employees be required to use the current parking garage?

A – Ken Mannon/City Operation Services – There is no City Policy requiring employees to park in the garage. The garage is usually full most of the time now. On-street parking is public parking. The City will be encouraging employees to use MAX, and provides Transfort passes to employees. The new parking structure will be built sometime after the Utilities Customer Service Building, but it is not known exactly when or how many spaces it will have.

Comment – I think the 1-hour parking spaces will actually help decrease the parking issues because employees won't be able to park there all day.

Q – What about off-street parking at the businesses?

A – Helen Matson/City Operation Services – The area would need to be paved to allow off-street parking, so it would be costly.

Tony Cooper/Eco-Thrift – is checking on whether permeable pavers would be allowed, which could allow for additional off-street spaces. FoCo Café only has part of the space, so there is no room for off-street parking.

A – Sarah Burnett/City Neighborhood Services – provided general guidelines for parking (information that she received from Randy Hensley with Parking Services). The new Brinkman building planned for the northeast corner of Maple & Mason (residential with the potential for some commercial on the first floor) will determine what the on-street parking will be. Parking will be allowed for a longer duration if the use is residential only; it will have shorter time limits if there are retail uses.

Civic Center Vision

A question had been raised about how these businesses fit into the vision for the Civic Center sub-district and the vision for the area.

Ken Mannon/City Operation Services –These businesses are temporary and not part of the long-term Civic Center vision. Eco-Thrift will have a 3-year lease with an option to extend. They can use the space until the next building is built in that location. FoCo Café will have a 5-year lease with the option to extend. The long-term plan is that these businesses will not remain in these locations, as the sites will be used for City facilities in the future.

Potential Lease Term Changes

Ken Mannon/City Operation Services – The FoCo Café lease will define the hours of operation (when open to the public) from 11 am – 2 pm, Monday - Saturday. It will be available other hours for private events and food prep. If they want to extend or change the public operating hours, they will need to go back to the neighborhood to get feedback first, then the changes would be brought back to City Council.

Kathleen Baumgarder/ FoCo Café – working on the possibility to do a few extra meals outside of those hours – a limited number of them. These might include Thanksgiving dinner, Mother's Day, etc.

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Ken Mannon/City Operation Services – The lease with Eco-Thrift will specify that outdoor material storage must be neat, orderly, and screened. The lease will allow display of items, during business hours, in the front (southwest corner) by the office. The dog will be required to be contained and they must comply with City Codes.

Tony Cooper/Eco-Thrift – He is also planning on adding some nice landscaping to make it look better.

Q – How were the properties advertised for rent and how was the market rate determined?

A – Helen Matson/City – They usually use a variety of effective ways to advertise City-owned buildings that are for rent. However, they were already working with the FoCo Café to potentially lease a building on Laporte Ave. when the City's Master Plan took over and they need to change the plans they had. They had to look for other available buildings that would work for them. FoCo needs 5 years to make it work. Eco-Thrift was not looking to move – the City is displacing them, so offered this building. To determine market rent rate, they looked at comparisons of warehouse-type buildings. The tenants are responsible for tenant improvements. Helen provided the prices of all the spaces. They did not advertise these buildings because they weren't looking at renting them since they thought the area was going to be developed.

Comment – You should advertise these to other commercial brokers so they know what's available.

A – Helen Matson/City – these were not advertised because they were planned for other uses.

Outdoor Material Storage Eco-Thrift

Helen Matson explained that the area in front of the office (to the south of the white portion of the building) will be used for display. The view of this area will be blocked from the Penny Flats building by the larger part of the 300 N. Howes building to the east.

Comment – There is concern with how the current Eco-Thrift space looks and how/if it will change in the new space.

A – Helen Matson/City - We have not had complaints at the current location. However, the new space is in more of a residential area, so we are adding lease requirements that state that it must be kept neat, orderly, and screened. *(The input from the neighbors has helped shape these and other lease terms.)*

Q – What will the outdoor storage area look like?

A – Tony Cooper/Eco-Thrift - He is still seeing what he can do to make it economically viable for him to use this space. In the back outdoor/fenced area, he wants to keep plants, garden supplies, bicycles, lawn mowers. The back garage will be used for Resource services – doors, windows – stored inside the garage – not outside. May put up 8-foot fencing and overhead screening, but wants to know what would be okay with the neighbors. *(Update since meeting: plant sales would be considered a nursery use, which is not a permitted use in the Downtown zone district.)*

Comment – Supportive of Eco-Thrift.

Dog Outside of Eco-Thrift

This topic was already covered; City codes regarding animals will apply.

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If/How Customers Work for Meal (FoCo Café)

FoCo Café – There are no free meals. Everybody either pays full price, less (what they can afford), or use time/talent – this can be both in and out of the café – include local farms, non-profits, etc. They will do a lot of communication explaining how it works. SAME Café in Denver has been operating in the same location for 7 years – no complaints – but the yoga studio next door was asked to leave.

Student perspective – students really like this model and the opportunity to volunteer and help pay for meals. They have had a lot of student volunteers already.

Turning Point – they are very interested in working with FoCo Café. They help at-risk youth who can work at gardens – it gives troubled kids a chance to work and learn. There are a lot of youth involved and different organizations. They need a lot of volunteer opportunities. There are a lot of people who want to volunteer.

FoCo Café – the typical customer is a hard-working individual just trying to stretch their money and eat healthy food.

CSU Faculty Member – teaches about global food security. Many students volunteer; they seek these opportunities. In the US, 15% of households experience some level of food insecurity. This might be their only chance to go out to eat, give back to their community, and eat together in the café.

Additional advocates for both businesses spoke. Murphy Center for Hope representative – explained homelessness. Expressed support for both businesses.

Q – What kind of opportunities for students at FoCo Café?

A- Kathleen Baumgardner/FoCo Café – A lot of opportunities – music, art, nutrition, hospitality management, etc. There is a lot of support in town. Explained King Soopers card fundraiser.

Q – How does the work equate to meals?

A – FoCo Café – 1 hour of work equals 1 meal. They also provide “farm to fork” training; participants may work in a garden in exchange for their meal.

Tony Cooper/Eco-Thrift – Volunteer opportunities are available at Eco-Thrift, too.

Closing Questions

Q – When will Eco-Thrift have a solid plan for what it will look like?

A – Tony Cooper/Eco-Thrift – He thinks he will have a plan in a week. He will be out in March having knee replacement surgery.

Q – How can residents be kept informed about the plans?

A- Sarah Burnett/City Neighborhood Services - explained that she can send the plans, once submitted to the City, to those on the email list – will use blind carbon copy so email addresses are not visible to all recipients.

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Next Steps

- Notes from tonight's meeting will be posted at fcgov.com/developmentreview/agendas.php and will be distributed by email to residents who provided their email addresses.
- When minor amendments are submitted by either applicant, attendees who provided their email list will be notified.
- The FoCo Café lease is scheduled for review by City Council at its March 18 Regular Meeting.
- *At the March 18 City Council meeting, Council will be presented with the following options regarding the hours for the Café to be open to the public. Staff plans to recommend Option 1 to Council:*
 1. *Restrict café serving hours to 11 am-2 pm, Monday through Saturday with up to five special dining events throughout the year.*
 2. *Restrict café serving hours to 10 am-3 pm, Monday through Saturday with up to five special dining events throughout the year.*
 3. *Do not restrict café serving hours.*