

BACKGROUND

This Letter by former City Councilwoman Cathy Donohue dealt with a proposed change to the Denver Zoning Code (**DZC**) in 2010. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to halt the change and it passed with the blessings of the City Council at the time. **It essentially removed control of Parks and Recreation from City Council, who were directly responsible to the electorate, and gave it to an unelected Bureaucrat- a political appointee of the Mayor.** This presaged much of what was yet to come and the overall change in attitude about Parks and Open Space.

In essence, the Hancock Administration showed time and again **they viewed Parks and Open Space not as places of solitude, rest, peace and sanctuary** against the constant clog and noise of Denver's streets and traffic, and neighborhoods filled with constant construction, **but as Revenue Generators.**

(Their real value was to generate revenue... for the City, for developers, for large events, etc. Like everything that's occurred under this Mayor, it was an extremely business friendly model for Parks, and disregarding of what many citizens actually wanted. Citizens who live near Parks and Open Space don't generally want more noise, traffic, trash, crime, damage to their green spaces, or disruption to the peace and quiet of their neighborhoods.)

A recent example of this includes the Grandoozy 3-day music festival in Overland Golf Course in 2018. Though neighborhood reviews actually ended up being mostly positive, Superfly (the Producer) isn't returning in 2019, and rumors of low ticket sales may have put the brakes on. But the model still stands and the Mayor likes it. How would you like to have this event in City Park Golf Course (**CPGC**)? Overland has some borders where warehouses and commercial zones act as buffers to surrounding residential areas. CPGC has residential neighborhoods right across the street on three of its four sides. CPGC is constructing a giant new glass and steel Club House right in its center. When the City used CPGC for Detention as part of Platte to Park Hill (**P2PH**) and called it the "City Park Golf Course Redesign", it didn't just get giant Detention on the west side but had the perfect excuse to redesign the entire course for large venues, maybe to sparkle up the fact they were destroying a historic Golf Course. How do we know this? One of the Defendants for the City made the following testimony as outlined in the **CPGC Ruling (Findings of Fact)** from Oct 2017:

"Mr. Rethlake testified that the current clubhouse is outdated and not very functional for the number of golfers and events held at the course... The new clubhouse will be sited outside of a floodplain, enjoy better views, will be screened from view by foliage, and be able to better serve the community by accommodating larger events." ---13/24

*(Another acknowledgment that "better serving the community" to this Mayor means **accommodating larger events**, which already crowded communities largely don't want, especially those living right next to the "larger events". Further, the access to this Club House isn't off of relatively uncrowded 26th Ave, but the already overcrowded 23rd Ave right across from the Zoo. Brilliant! A stop light is on its way and don't be surprised if we lose even more of CPGC going forward as more lanes get cut in due to this colossally stupid decision.)*

In addition to Parks under the Mayor being viewed as Revenue Generators, large old trees are no longer particularly valued. This is multifaceted. Many have noticed the general degradation on our Parks and Parkways of many trees that seem to need trimming, feeding, care. Budgetary constraints are often blamed, while the City is bringing in record Revenues. Clearly, maintenance and upkeep of what we have doesn't make Developers and Contractors as much money as constantly building new things. Our existing roads and giant potholes are another example of that. Many large trees have also been lost with the City's decision to use **Recycled Water** for Parks, Golf Courses, etc. Water conservation is a great idea in the arid west, but the process doesn't remove the salts (largely from urine) or pharmaceutical chemicals and many other toxins. And there is no plan to do anything about that because of cost. Though it's "safe for irrigation" according to **CDPHE**, there are no national standards for Recycled Water. Only guidelines. Much of Washington Parks forest of pines on the north end have died after using this water. Numerous other areas around the City show the stress of using this water, particularly if it's hot and dry and rain hasn't been washing away the salt build-up in the soil. CPGC used to have three large deciduous trees on the east side bordering Colorado Blvd. One by one they died and now one is left, looking rather scraggly and may not make it. Again, the timing is significant.

We can also point to the cutting down of hundreds of old trees in **CPGC** to create the Detention there for P2PH, and the "Golf Course Redesign" in progress. So CPGC will end up looking more and more suburban as time goes on. Why? Because the City doesn't replace large, old growth trees with other large trees (that grow slower but are an investment for future generations), but with many smaller, more ornamental trees (that grow faster so the City can say they put back as many leaves, essentially). They do this under the concept of "canopy coverage", as if a bunch of smaller trees can replace the grandeur and specialness of large trees. Here's the City policy as stated in the **Platte to Park Hill FAQs**, presented to the community in Apr 2016.

"Will this project take out any trees in the golf course?"

Conceptual studies show that it's likely that some trees will need to be replaced. The city is placing a priority on trying to avoid impacts to large trees – especially those on the edge of the course that create a visual buffer for nearby neighbors – to the greatest extent possible as the design is developed. The design process will include working with arborists and other forestry experts on strategies to minimize tree impact and preserve tree health. For those trees that do need to be removed as part of the project, **the city's policy is to replace the level of tree canopy coverage, not number of trees. This means that, rather than replacing one large tree with one smaller one, one large tree is typically replaced by multiple smaller trees that create the same level of canopy coverage.** ---3/4

(Again, welcome to suburbia. It's a shortsighted approach for short term gain, and the urban forest that took 100 years to grow here gradually diminishes to smaller trees everywhere.)

The City is now looking to slice and dice **Park Hill Golf Course (PHGC)** into smaller parks and Development, destroying one of our last large Open Spaces in Denver. This is under the guise of creating Affordable Housing, something they didn't seem too concerned about when all the other tens of thousands of units went up all over the City, and cost a fortune for people to live in. They're now ready to throw out a **Conservation Easement** the taxpayers paid for in 1997 to protect PHGC forever. This is because, again, Parks and Open Space should be Revenue Generators for the City and Developers, not for the health and wellbeing and peace of mind of all citizens in our ever growing and more crowded city.

The real issue here is this DZC change in 2010 took away citizens' rights and legal voice in saying "NO, we don't want this!!" Other than public outcry, there is no real legal recourse for citizens to have much of a say in any of this, or how our Parks and Open Spaces are being used. It is absolutely essential that this system of giving our valuable green spaces over to the Mayor is ended, and that Parks are put back under the control of City Council and therefore the electorate, who will have a say again because decisions will have to be made by Ordinance, not a Bureaucrat! This must be demanded by the Public, or it won't happen!