

Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

PRINT | CLOSE WINDOW

1/14/2011 - 11:25:27 AM

Save the Poudre position on floodplains 'evolving'

By Gary Wockner

On Aug. 16, 2010, Save the Poudre sent a letter to the city (of Fort Collins) expressing support for Option No. 2 in the city's Poudre River floodplain repurposing effort. That letter is included in the agenda item for the Jan. 11 city council worksession.

Since Aug. 16, Save the Poudre has had the benefit of new and additional input about the floodplain regulations from a variety of new sources including affected property owners, real estate agents, representatives from the downtown business community, city floodplain officials and the information provided in the council packet for the worksession.

Because of this new input, Save the Poudre is getting more educated about the effects of the proposed regulations as well as the exact, complex meaning of the current and proposed regulations. At present, our position on how the city should move forward with regards to development in the Poudre River floodplain through Fort Collins is "evolving."

Given what we have learned, we'd like to point out that there is significant misunderstanding in the community, with many people believing that the current and the proposed regulations completely prohibit development in parts or all of the currently mapped floodplain. Conversely, it is our understanding that the current regulations, as well as all of the proposed options, allow the privately owned land in the currently mapped floodplain (both floodway and flood fringe) to be developed using the FEMA LOMR process.

The question under consideration by the proposed floodplain regulations is not if development can occur in the floodplain, but rather how development can occur. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding is perpetuated by the city in the misleading wording of Option No. 2, as well as in the sloppy EPS economic study which falsely assumes that neither the currently mapped floodway nor part (or all) of the flood fringe can be developed.

Through our conversation with various stakeholders, we believe that the city has an opportunity to create a floodplain plan for the Poudre River that could achieve very broad consensus via the concept of "no adverse impact." The details about what "no adverse impact" means are hazy, but there seems to be significant goodwill and sincere interest in collaboratively finding a solution that protects the river, protects landowners, protects the city and can allow development to move forward that enhances the Poudre River corridor. We are especially optimistic that environmental restoration and development may be able to work together to create a vibrant, healthy river corridor that could be an even greater environmental and economic asset for Fort Collins.

We strongly encourage the city to find a positive, collaborative path forward for the floodplain issue.

Gary Wockner is director of Save the Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper in Fort Collins.