September 15, 2020

To: Lakewood Development Dialogue Ad Hoc Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday September 17, 2020

Dear Lakewood Development Dialogue Committee:

Hello. Let me introduce myself: I am Vince Harris, AICP, a senior owner with and currently working (last 14 years) at Baseline Engineering Corporation located in Golden, Colorado. I also have resided in Lakewood for the last 40 years. Baseline is essentially a full-service Civil Engineering, Land Planning & Land Surveying firm with 4 offices in the State with 50 employees.

This dates me, but prior to my private sector work with Baseline, I was a public sector planner and planning manager for 22 years with the Cities of Thornton (5 years) and Lakewood (16) years where I served as the Lakewood Planning Manager until 2006. During my tenure at Lakewood I oversaw the formation, review and approval of numerous Metro Districts (MD’s) within Lakewood. In addition, I have served on the Jefferson County Planning Commission from 2012 to 2018 and reviewed and made many recommendations to the Jeff Co Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on a variety of Metro Districts applications throughout the County. In my role at Baseline, I now represent numerous landowners and their requests for metro districts. So, I have a unique perspective and over 36 years of experience of understanding the public sector and private sector needs of metro districts.

I appreciate the City of Lakewood’s desire to formally review the role of Metro Districts and establish guidelines and welcome the opportunity to offer my thoughts. Jay Hutchinson, Public Works Director, put together a report dated June 11, 2020 which I believe is a very useful and complete explanation and background of Metropolitan District’s as they relate to Lakewood (and State of Colorado). As you know, MD’s throughout the state are the principle way of assisting with the financing, maintenance and contractual obligations of development. State MD regulations are outlined in the Colorado Statutes and Lakewood can adopt additional expectations that at least don’t conflict with the Colorado Statutes and can provide further protection and clarity for future and existing property owners.

I sincerely believe that, provided there are specific and well-framed guidelines, MD’s are an important and necessary mechanism to support and protect all parties concerned (i.e. The city of Lakewood, the landowner/developer and existing and future residents) in the development or redevelopment of residential, commercial, office, or recreational uses. There are numerous examples of successful MD’s that have been created in Lakewood: Grant Ranch, Denver West, Colorado Mills, and Belmar, to name a few. And over time, the guidelines have changed as our experience with MD’s evolved. I can honestly say that the Lakewood process in the past (being on-staff years ago) and presently being on the proposing side of MD’s now in the private sector, has been and continues to be a very encompassing and thorough review. A process in which we all strive to improve the way Metro Districts can function.
The City of Lakewood has seen the value of supporting the formation of MD’s in the past as evidenced by numerous approved and operating MD’s in the City; and those properties and developments like Denver West, Colorado Mills, Grant Ranch, and BELMAR now provide and play a SIGNIFICANT financial role of providing revenue to the Lakewood budget each year. These communities are places we live in or visit and are now an integral part what has shaped the City of Lakewood into what it is today. Without these communities and without their positive impacts – Lakewood would look much different than it does today. Many of these communities are known for their quality of life and provide excellent services that we all get to use. I can honestly say that an integral part of their success is due largely because the land owner and the City Council’s in the past had the vision and foresight to utilize MD’s as a means to provide the infrastructure and services beyond what is normally required.

I strongly recommend and support the use of MD’s as a viable means of accommodating positive well managed growth in the City of Lakewood while protecting the property owners’ rights and obligations over time.

Please don’t hesitate to connect with me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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CC. Kathy Hodgson, City Manager
    Jay Hutchison, Public Works Director
    Travis Parker, Planning Director
    Lakewood City Council Members